Conflicted Fatherhood in Greek Tragedy

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／# Abstract

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This thesis explores the depiction of fathers in Greek tragedy in terms of the conflict between the expectations and responsibilities of fatherhood and other areas of male activity and identity

Chapter 1 provides historical, literary and scholarly context. Chapters 2 and 3 examine the often difficult relationship between paternal responsibility and political concerns. Chapter 2 explores Agamemnon's decision to permit the expedition against Troy by sacrificing his daughter Iphigenia, as recounted in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* and depicted in Euripides' *Iphigenia at Aulis*. Chapter 3 focuses upon the interplay of politics and paternity in plays on Theban myths; it examines the depictions of Creon in Sophocles' *Antigone* and Euripides' *Phoenician Women* as deliberately contrasting responses to the challenge of establishing priority between political and paternal responsibilities, before moving on to a comparison of tragic accounts of Oedipus' curse upon his sons as an instance of a father's behaviour exerting considerable, damaging influence upon public life. Chapters 4 and 5 explore tragedy's depiction of various superhuman fathers. Chapter 4 demonstrates that tragedy sets the complex and extensive mythical, literary and religious traditions concerning Heracles at odds with the demands of conventional fatherhood. Chapter 5 considers the portrayal of divine fathers in tragedy; after outlining various trends in extant and fragmentary plays, it focuses upon Euripides' *Ion* as a case-study for the disruptive and distanced nature of divine paternity in the genre. Having explored these various conflicts between fatherhood and other areas of activity and responsibility, the thesis culminates in an examination of the conflict over fatherhood itself. Chapter 6 explores the competing representations of a specific father in Sophocles' *Ajax*, and the impassioned conflict over the duties of fatherhood more generally in Euripides' *Alcestis*, before culminating in an extensive examination of contested fatherhood in Euripides' *Orestes*. The thesis demonstrates that fatherhood in Greek tragedy is pervasively and significantly conflicted. This conflict is not only an important factor in our understanding of the plot, themes and characterisation of many of these works, but also a crucial point of contact and engagement between the plays themselves and the discourse of contemporary Athenian society.

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Abbreviations

A. Aeschylus
- *Ag.* *Agamemnon*
- *Cho.* *Choephori*
- *Eum.* *Eumenides*
- *Pers.* *Persians*
- [*PV* *Prometheus Bound*]
- *Sept.* *Seven Against Thebes*

Aesch. Aeschines

And. Andocides

Ar. Aristophanes
- *Ach.* *Acharnians*
- *Eccl.* *Assembly Women*
- *Eq.* *Knights*
- *Lys.* *Lysistrata*
- *Nub.* *Clouds*
- *Ran.* *Frogs*
- *Thesm.* *Women at the Thesmophoria*
- *Vesp.* *Wasps*

Arist. Aristotle
- *Ath. Pol.* *Constitution of Athens*
- *Gen. an.* *Generation of Animals*
- *EN* *Nichomachean Ethics*
- *Pol.* *Politics*
- *Rhet.* *Rhetoric*

Dem. Demosthenes

Dion. Hal. Dionysius of Halicarnassus

E. Euripides
- *Andr.* *Andromache*
- *Ba.* *Bacchae*
- *El.* *Electra*
- *Hcld.* *Children of Heracles*
- *Hel.* *Helen*
- *HF* *Heracles*
- *Hipp.* *Hippolytus*
- *IA* *Iphigenia at Aulis*
- *IT* *Iphigenia among the Taurians*
- *Med.* *Medea*
- *Or.* *Orestes*
- *Pho.* *Phoenician Women*
- *Supp.* *Suppliant Women*
- *Tro.* *Trojan Women*

Hdt.	Herodotus		
Hes.	Hesiod		
		Th.	*Theogony*
		WD	*Works and Days*
Hippoc.	Hippocrates		
H.	Homer		
		Il.	*Iliad*
		Od.	*Odyssey*
Is.	Isaeus		
Isoc.	Isocrates		
Lyc.	Lycophron		
Lys.	Lysias		
Men.	Menander		
		Dysc.	*Dyskolos*
Pind.	Pindar		
		Nem.	*Nemean*
		Ol.	*Olympian*
		Pyth.	*Pythian*
Pl.	Plato		
		Gorg.	*Gorgias*
		Lys.	*Lysis*
		Prot.	*Protagoras*
		Rep.	*Republic*
		Symp.	*Symposium*
Plut.	Plutarch		
		Alc.	*Alcibiades*
		Cim.	*Cimon*
		Per.	*Pericles*
		Them.	*Themistocles*
S.	Sophocles		
		Aj.	*Ajax*
		Ant.	*Antigone*
		El.	*Electra*
		OC	*Oedipus at Colonus*
		OT	*Oedipus Tyrannus*

	Phil.	*Philoctetes*
	Tr.	*Trachiniae*
Thuc.	Thucydides	
X.	Xenophon	
	Hell.	*Hellenica*
	Mem.	*Memorabilia*
	Symp.	*Symposium*

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Chapter 1: The father

1.1. The father in classical Athens

The relationship between Greek tragedy and its historical context has been the subject of considerable scholarly discussion.[1] On the most fundamental level, the subject matter of tragedy is removed from its fifth-century Athenian context; the extant tragedies are (almost) all concerned with the distant mythical past,[2] tend to depict monarchical societies,[3] and are often set in other Greek cities[4] or even further afield.[5] Nonetheless, the plays were the product of a particular historic context which informed aspects of their mythical plots and upon which they could in turn exert influence.[6] This relationship between tragedy and its society is made explicit in Aristophanes' *Frogs*; Aeschylus claims that his martial heroes are modelled on brave Athenian soldiers of the day, such as Lamachus, and that these depictions of mythical warriors in turn inspire courage and determination in the contemporary audience.[7] Indeed, the use of the heroic past could allow for more than simple reinforcement of martial virtues; Easterling argues convincingly that the grandeur and distance of the heroic settings of tragedy allow for an

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[1] Hall (2006), pp.1-2 offers a concise overview of the extensive work undertaken on the subject since the 1970s.

[2] *Persians* is the surviving exception, though Easterling (1997b), p.21 n.1 notes that, although set in the recent past, it is geographically and culturally remote from its Athenian audience. Phrynichus' fine for his upsetting *Sack of Miletus* (Hdt. 6.21) shows the perils of painfully current subject matter.

[3] Griffith (1998) considers at some length the possible motivations behind the apparent paradox of the tragedies of democratic Athens being so interested in monarchy and aristocracy.

[4] e.g. Thebes; see ch.3, esp. p.X n.1.

[5] e.g. E. *IT*, *Helen*.

[6] Hall (2006), p.5. Parker (2005) p.141 puts it rather neatly: "the characteristic manner of tragedy is not a simple reduction of the heroic to the contemporary but a complex and perpetual oscillation between perspectives."

[7] Ar. *Ran.* 1037-41; Hall (2006), pp.2-3. Redfield (1990) pp.325-6 sees the "shreds of topical reference" in tragedy in a similar light; he believes, for example, that Oedipus in S. *OT* resembles Pericles *not* primarily in order to make a point about Pericles, but rather so that the audience's knowledge of Pericles can inform their understanding and appreciation of Oedipus.

exploration of themes with contemporary resonance at a remove from the divisiveness of contemporary debate, and with some flexibility regarding the socio-legal standards of the classical Athenian context.[8] The depiction of women upon the tragic stage is an instructive example, as contemporary norms of (ideal) female behaviour are usually acknowledged even if only as they are inverted.[9] For instance, classical Athenian women of the middle and upper classes tended to live relatively secluded lives largely within the home,[10] but female tragic characters do appear beyond its confines and speak upon the tragic stage. They usually, however, stay relatively close to the doors of the house,[11] or a specific explanation of their conduct is offered.[12] It would be unwise to correlate tragic situations and characters to the events of classical Athenian history with too much specificity,[13] but this does not preclude all considerations of context. It is illuminating and important to consider the depiction of social and political phenomena upon the tragic stage with some reference to the customs of the time and the ideology of the audience.[14]

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[8] Easterling (1997b), esp. pp.22-5. In discussing the position of Tecmessa, Eurysaces and Teucer in Sophocles' *Ajax*, Easterling makes the point that, in a heroic setting, contemporary socio-legal issues can be suspended - Eurysaces is never considered a bastard, although he would qualify as one under Athenian law - or invoked, as in the case of the references to Teucer's illegitimacy; Easterling (1997b) pp.25-6. See ch. 6.1.1.

[9] Foley (2002), pp.6-7.

[10] Gould (1980) pp.46-7.

[11] Foley (2002), p.8.

[12] e.g. E. *Pho.* 88-102; the Tutor clarifies that Antigone has special permission from her mother to leave the women's quarters to look out from the wall, but is nonetheless careful to see that no citizens are around to rebuke either of them for this conduct.

[13] Easterling (1997b), p.21.

[14] It is of course important to remember that the audience of tragedy was not monolithic in its opinion or responses; Hall (2006), p.3; Easterling (1997b), p.25. Nonetheless, considering the main currents of contemporary thought on a particular issue can at least afford us some notion of the spectrum within which the responses of many spectators would fall. There is controversy over the composition of the 'tragic audience', particularly the presence of women. Henderson (1991) remarks on the lack of explicit evidence for the exclusion of women from theatrical performances at the Great Dionysia (p.138), and gathers various ancient sources which make most sense if (at least some) women did attend the theatre (e.g. Pl. *Gorg.* 502b-d; Ar. *Lys.* 1043-53, *Thesm.* 383-94). Conversely, Goldhill (1994) notes that there is no explicit reference to women's *presence* at theatrical performances (p.351), disputes Henderson's various arguments from probability rather than hard evidence, and, although cautious because of the limited evidence, disputes the likelihood of female participation in the City Dionysia. Goldhill (1997) repeats this caution, noting that nothing is certain about the audience except the participation of Athenian male citizens. Although neutral on the presence of women (see p.111, esp.n.37), Revermann (2006) provides an astute reminder of the wide array of socio-economic and educational levels found even amongst the men in an Athenian audience. Although more open to the presence of women than Goldhill, I think such caution is commendable given

In the case of fatherhood, as in so many other areas, our reconstruction of these norms can be only partial at best. Our sources, such as they are, are overwhelmingly literary; the varying contexts and purposes for the differing genres of texts which refer to fatherhood - often merely in passing - can significantly influence their tone and content.[15] Furthermore, these literary accounts can offer rather more information on the ideology of fatherhood than its practices,[16] although this is not necessarily fatal to the present thesis' purposes. Knowledge of the ideals and expectations placed upon fathers in classical Athens affords us some insight into the standards against which an Athenian audience might well measure the behaviour of tragic fathers, even if we cannot know how successfully the fathers in the audience would live up to those standards themselves. It is, for instance, useful to know that Athenian fathers were expected to feel and show affection towards their children[17] when reflecting upon the conduct of tragic fathers, even if we cannot know exactly how many Athenian fathers truly did. With these caveats in mind, let us now turn to a summary of the role, rights, responsibilities and ideology of the father in classical Athens, in order to establish a point of reference for the exploration of his tragic counterpart.[18]

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the parlous state of the evidence, and as such I avoid interpretations which require the presence of those other than Athenian male citizens.

[15] Strauss (1993) pp.18-9 makes the important distinction between public/performative texts - comedy, tragedy, oratory - and more private genres - history, philosophy - suggesting that the former category would better reflect popular mores. Whether we accept this particular claim, it is instructive to consider the differing contexts and purposes of our evidence; Aristotle, for instance, does not need to sway a jury. The production of all these texts, however extensive their audience, is also limited to those who are literate themselves or capable of hiring a logographer.

[16] Contrast, for example, the several literary references to the importance of respecting one's parents (see below), with the paucity of information on the ἀμφιδρόμια ritual in which fathers may or may not have participated; Hamilton (1984).

[17] See below.

[18] This section summarises legal and social phenomena explored in greater detail in standard works such as Lacey (1968), Harrison (1968-71), MacDowell (1978), Pomeroy (1997); Phillips (2013).

The father in classical Athens was a figure with significant but nonetheless limited power over his children.[19] The rituals which followed the birth of a child in classical Athens, the ἀμφιδρόμια and the δεκάτη,[20] granted the father the opportunity to acknowledge the newborn as his legitimate offspring;[21] the alternative would be to reject the child as illegitimate,[22] which could result in its exposure.[23] This was, however, the limit of the father's power of life and death over his offspring; in contrast to the Roman *paterfamilias*,[24] the Athenian father had no legal right to execute a child once he had accepted it as legitimate. The Athenian father nonetheless retained considerable authority over his children. Aristotle's ideal father rules over his children βασιλικῶς (*Pol.*1259b1), and children were expected to obey.[25] The father was κύριος over his children until his daughters married[26] or his sons reached the age of 18.[27] As such, he would represent his child in any legal transaction,[28] and could have his son adopted by another family.[29] Beyond the legal sphere, he could call upon his children's labour and, if he saw fit, discipline them with a beating.[30] In extreme circumstances, a father could repudiate even

[19] Golden (2015) pp.68-97 provides an excellent overview of parent-child relations in classical Athens, with a focus on the affective elements.
[20] The sources for both are limited and often conflicting; Hamilton (1984) offers an overview of the classical material. The ἀμφιδρόμια - as the name suggests - seems to involve carrying the child around the hearth at a run, or alternatively running around the child; despite frequent scholarly assumptions that the father does the running, Hamilton offers a persuasive case that the ceremony was a private, female affair (p.250). The δεκάτη was a feast at which the child was presented to relatives and named; Ogden (1996), pp.88-9, cf. Ar. *Birds* 922-3.
[21] Strauss (1993), pp.1-2.
[22] Dem. 39.22; a father would never perform a δεκάτη for an illegitimate child.
[23] Strauss (1993), pp.1-2. Despite the relative frequency of exposure in myth, Sallares (1991) p.151 observes that actual evidence for infanticide is notably scarce for the classical period. He suggests (pp.154-6).that abortion and contraceptives were probably a more usual means of controlling family size. The only classical evidence for the exposure of illegitimate children is tragic - Ogden (1996), p. 107-8 - and it is also worth noting the presence of numerous bastards in classical Athenian literature and history, such as Pericles the Younger, suggesting that illegitimacy was not necessarily a death sentence.
[24] The Greeks themselves made this comparison; Dion. Hal. 2.26 points out that Greek fathers had more limited power over their sons than their Roman counterparts had.
[25] e.g Lys. 19.55; Antiphanes fr. 262-3; Hdt. 1.31, 3.52.5; Dover (1974), p.273-4.
[26] Arist. *Rhet*. 1401b35-1402a1.
[27] At this point they were enrolled as citizens; see p. 7 n.57.
[28] e.g. Antiphon 3.2, where the father speaks in his son's defence.
[29] Strauss (1993), p.64.
[30] ibid.

an adult son whose behaviour was particularly objectionable by ἀποκήρυξις,[31] "proclaiming a separation", thereby depriving him of his inheritance and membership of the household, and leaving him vulnerable to attacks on his citizenship; this, however, seems to be have been a very drastic and rare measure.[32]

Despite these various and fairly considerable powers, a father's rule was not meant to be overly oppressive; Aristotle characterises it as resembling that of a king, rather than a tyrant, because his children are free,[33] and his rule is conducted κατὰ φιλίαν (*Pol.* 1259b11). Even beyond Aristotle's philosophical idealising, fathers showed - and were expected to show - affection towards and consideration for their children.[34] They could also take considerable pride in their children's achievements,[35] or, conversely, be shamed by their offspring's misdeeds.[36]

It is perhaps unsurprising, therefore, that classical Athenian fathers played, or were at least expected to play, a considerable role in the education of their (male) children.[37] Wealthier fathers would pay for their sons to receive professional education,[38] while skilled workers would teach their trade to their sons.[39] Even in the absence of a particular skilled trade, a father could provide informal training in agricultural work to his sons.[40]

Although fathers may provide their sons with the education necessary for some form of livelihood, arguably their single most substantial contribution to the material

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[31] Plut.*Them*.2.
[32] Strauss (1993), p.65.
[33] Arist. *Pol*.1259a40-1.
[34] Ar. *Nub*. 863-4,1380-3; Pl. *Lys*. 207d; Dem.28.20: ἱκετεύω, ἀντιβολῶ πρὸς παίδων, πρὸς γυναικῶν, πρὸς τῶν ὄντων ἀγαθῶν ὑμῖν. See Golden (2015) pp.78-9.
[35] Ar. *Vesp*. 1531-4; X. *Symp*. 3.12.
[36] Dover (1974), p.246; cf. e.g. Lyc. 1.110.
[37] Strauss (1993), p.82. Indeed, Plut. *Solon* 22.1 suggests that a Solonic law absolved a son of the duty to care for an elderly father who had not taught him a trade; see fr.56c, Leão & Rhodes (2015) pp.95-7.
[38] cf. e.g. X. *Mem*. 2.2.6.
[39] Pl. *Prot*. 328a.
[40] Strauss (1993), p.86.

needs of their children came from the division of their patrimony. Inheritance was the most common route to wealth in classical Athens, as land, the main source of material prosperity, was transferred between owners by inheritance more commonly than through the market.[41] Fathers were legally obliged to leave their property to living sons, and could even be sued by or on behalf of their heirs for squandering the estate![42] Daughters received their share of their father's estate in the form of a dowry when they married,[43] and sons could obtain their inheritance on the occasion of their own marriage, instead of having to wait for their father's death.[44] After such a "retirement", a father expected material support from his children,[45] and the duty of providing such θεραπεία (and, ultimately, burial) to one's parents was extremely important in classical Athens.[46] There was, however, clearly room for sons to fall short in this respect, and fathers could take suitable precautions; the speaker of Lysias 19 remarks that those who can afford to retain some portion of their wealth for themselves even after the division of their estate do so as a precaution against inadequate care from their children.[47]

As well as providing his children with the material basis for their life beyond the family οἶκος, the father also played a significant role in the processes and actions whereby they entered into their adult life. The father was responsible for introducing his son to his phratry;[48] this would entail a preliminary introduction within the first few years of the

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[41] Sallares (1991), pp.207-8.
[42] Ar. *Nub.* 844-6; Aeschin. 1.30.
[43] Lacey (1968), p.109; see e.g. Men. *Dysc.* 842-5, where the marriage formula includes a statement of the dowry's worth.
[44] e.g. Dem. 43.19.
[45] e.g. Is. 2.19, where the speaker explains how he married at his adoptive father's suggestion so that he and his wife might care for his father in his old age.
[46] e.g. Gorgias DKB6, ll.28-9. The provision of proper care and, ultimately, burial for one's parents was enforced by law (νόμος γονέων κακώσεως, referred to at *Ath.Pol.* 56.6 and parodied at Ar. *Birds* 1353-7); failure to meet these obligations could entail considerable penalties, such as losing one's right to speak before the Assembly (Aesch. 1.28). See Strauss (1993), p.65.
[47] Lys. 19.37.
[48] One joined one's father's phratry: Lambert (1993), pp.162.

son's life,[49] the so-called μεῖον, at which the father swore oaths declaring his son's legitimacy,[50] and a full enrolment in adolescence, the κούρειον.[51] Deme membership was determined by one's paternity,[52] and for a young Athenian male to be accepted as a demesman, he had to prove to the men of his deme that he was 18 years old, free, and born to two Athenian parents of citizen-status.[53] He would require his father, or, if his father were dead, a male guardian, to vouch for him and his status.[54] Given that, in normal circumstances, Athenian citizenship was determined solely by birth rather than by residency,[55] admission to these hereditary bodies formed the key criteria for determining and demonstrating citizen status.[56] Once enrolled amongst the adult male citizens at 18, an Athenian was free from his father's legal authority,[57] although, if his father were still alive, he might well remain financially dependent upon him until the latter's death or retirement,[58] a potential cause of tension.[59] As well as seeing his son enrolled among the adult males, the Athenian father[60] was responsible for arranging marriage for any daughters, whereby they would leave the οἶκος of their birth to enter a new household with their husband. The father would find bridegrooms for them[61] and was expected to

[49] Dem. 43.11, 57.54; Is. 8.19; Lambert (1993), pp.162-3.
[50] Dem. 57.54; cf. also Demotionid decree of 396/5; Osborne-Rhodes 5.
[51] Lambert (1993), pp.163-4.
[52] Whitehead (1986), pp.67-8; one joined one's ancestral deme, regardless of where one currently lived.
[53] *Ath. Pol*. 42.1; Whitehead (1986), pp.98-9. Before the Periclean citizenship law, and during its abeyance, an Athenian citizen father would suffice.
[54] Strauss (1993), p.42.
[55] Lambert (1993), p.27.
[56] Not every author always associates citizenship with deme *and* phratry membership; *Ath.Pol* only mentions demes, while Is. 3.37 only mentions phratries. However, both are linked to citizenship in Cratinus fr. 9 K-A, Isoc. 8.88, and extraordinary grants of citizenship to foreigners notably include enrolment in deme *and* phratry; Lambert (1993), pp.32-3.
[57] e.g. Dem. 18.259, 19.230; Lambert (1993) pp.63-4.
[58] Strauss (1993), p.67.
[59] Ar. *Nub.* presents a comic take on the conflict prompted by a father having to fund his son's expensive hobbies; Strauss (1993), p.103.
[60] Or another adult male relative in the capacity of κύριος (cf. Dem. 66.18), if the father were dead.
[61] Lacey (1968), p.107

provide a respectably large dowry in accordance with his means.[62] Failure to provide a marriage was a stain on one's honour.[63]

As well as playing a key role in his children's transition to adult life beyond the οἶκος of their birth, the Athenian father had a considerable influence on their identity in the world beyond the household. At the most fundamental level, the men of classical Athens would often be known by a personal name, a demotic and a patronymic;[64] their very name included their father's identity as part of their own. In more general terms, one's position and reputation - one's identity in a more general sense - was strongly influenced by that of one's father. Illustrious fathers - or forefathers more generally - could be a source of considerable pride to their children,[65] while less reputable fathers could bring opprobrium on their offspring,[66] or even the loss of citizen-status itself (ἀτιμία).[67] A son would inherit his father's property,[68] but also his debts,[69] his friendships,[70] and his enmities.[71] Miltiades' father Cimon, exiled from Athens by Peisistratus, was ultimately put to death by the late tyrant's sons,[72] while it is notable that Miltiades' own son Cimon,

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[62] cf. Is. 3.51, where to give a dowry of less than a tenth of the father's fortune would be outrageous.
[63] cf. Is. 1.39; "kinship, custom, and [fear of] disgrace before you" (καὶ ἡ συγγένεια καὶ οἱ νόμοι καὶ ἡ παρ' ὑμῶν αἰσχύνη) drive the speaker to seek marriages for his late uncle's daughters. Actively preventing a young woman from marrying could be presented as a terrible outrage; cf. Lys. 12. 21; 13.45.
[64] Strauss (1993); pp.25-6. *Ath. Pol.* 21.4 suggests that Cleisthenes intended the demotic to supplant the patronymic, but with little apparent success. There seem to have been political ramifications to using one or the other, though from the Periclean citizenship law of 452/1 the compromise of using both seems to have become more and more established: Whitehead (1986), pp.69-71 gives a brief but convincing overview. Given that deme identity was inherited through one's father (see above), the demotic can also be seen as owed to paternity, in a way.
[65] And.1.147. However, the interlocutors of Plato's *Laches*, Lysimachus and Melesias, are embarrassed by their paucity of great deeds in comparison to their fathers (179c); the prestige of having an illustrious father is balanced by the difficulty of being expected to match him.
[66] e.g. Aeschin.2.93, where Aeschines makes the clearly disparaging claim that Demosthenes is the son of a knife-maker; Lys. 10.28, where the speaker reviles Themonestus as both a coward and son of a coward.
[67] e.g. And. 1.74; Dem. 21.113; Lys. 20.35.
[68] The size of one's father's estate would determine the property class to which the son belonged; Lacey (1968), p.129
[69] Death did not cancel debt; if the deceased had outstanding debts, creditors could seize property from the inheritance in restitution, as at Is. 5.22.
[70] cf. Is. 4.1; Pl. *Laches* 180e.
[71] Is. 1.11; cf. Strauss (1993), p.77.
[72] Hdt. 6.103.

having attempted to defend his father on a treason charge launched by Xanthippus,[73] ended up embroiled in a prolonged political rivalry with the latter's son Pericles.[74] A man's position in Athenian life, economically, socially, and even politically, was significantly influenced by that of his father.

The extent of the distinction between public and private spheres in classical Athens - between πόλις and οἶκος - has been a matter of considerable scholarly debate.[75] The οἶκος is not quite an equivalent of a modern Western family, corresponding instead more closely to our idea of a household;[76] its lifespan seems to coincide with that of its κύριος, as new οἶκοι came into being when fathers passed on property to their sons,[77] and ended with the death of the male property owner.[78] There was also a considerable distinction of ethos between the male citizen's role in public life as a participant in an egalitarian and competitive public sphere, and his position in the οἶκος as the senior party in a number of hierarchical relationships.[79] The interests of the οἶκος, particularly in economic matters, could be set at odds with those of the city,[80] but, although the relationship between πόλις and οἶκος was not always harmonious, it was clearly extremely extensive, with considerable overlap and interplay between these two poles of Athenian life.[81]

The father represents one of these various points of considerable intersection and interaction between public and private in classical Athens.[82] A father's power over his

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[73] Hdt. 6.136.
[74] cf. e.g. Plut. *Per.* 7, 9-10; *Cim.* 14-6.
[75] Strauss (1993), pp.35-8 summarises.
[76] Parker (2005), pp.9-11 offers a helpful overview of the institution.
[77] Dem. 43.19.
[78] Is. 2.35.
[79] Humphreys (1993), p.1. For the hierarchical relationships of the οἶκος - parent-child, husband-wife, master-slave - see Arist. *Pol.* 1253b-55b (master-slave), 1259a-b (husband-wife, parent-child).
[80] Humphreys (1993), p.13.
[81] For instance, Humphreys (1993), pp.4-5 lays out some of the areas where Athenian law impinges upon the functioning of the οἶκος, while the primacy of descent in determining Athenian citizenship brings the domestic into the political sphere.
[82] Humphreys (1993) p.38.

children included the authority to act on their behalf in the public sphere of contracts and the law, and was itself regulated by legal restrictions.[83] Fathers (and mothers) were themselves afforded legal protection against mistreatment by their children, including failure to provide food, shelter, and proper burial.[84] Mistreatment of one's parents could incur considerable legal penalties; those who beat or failed to provide θεραπεία to their parents were forbidden from speaking before the Assembly.[85] The institution of fatherhood even imbued the very language of Athenian political and intellectual life. Many Athenian political institutions were described in language which drew from the notion of the πατήρ;[86] the Athenian homeland was of course the πατρίς,[87] while the vague but emotive notion of its πάτριος πολιτεία and the defence thereof was employed by various political factions.[88] Furthermore, fatherhood could be employed as a metaphor for intellectual and creative activity; in Plato's *Symposium*, Phaedrus, who suggested the topic of love for the discussion, is dubbed πατὴρ τοῦ λόγου,[89] a phrase also employed in *Phaedrus*.[90] The role of father was not discrete from Athenian public life, but rather in a process of dialogue with it; the father's power and position was both restrained and reinforced by the laws of the land, while his activities in public life could be judged in terms of his behaviour as father, and indeed his role as father could be subordinated to the demands of public life. His role even informed the very language of various spheres of Athenian activity.

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[83] See above.
[84] The νόμος γονέων κακώσεως (*Ath.Pol.* 56.6); see p.6 n.46.
[85] Aeschin. 1.28.
[86] Strauss (1993), pp.24-5, 57-60 offers a concise but inclusive account of the widespread use of πατήρ-cognates in terms describing features of Athenian public and political life.
[87] e.g. Lys. 2.6; Thuc. 7.69.
[88] For example, during the oligarchic coup of 411, Cleitophon encouraged the new regime to be guided by the 'ancestral laws' (πατρίοι νόμοι: *Ath. Pol.* 29.3) of Cleisthenes. Alcibiades, conversely, argued before the fleet at Samos that the oligarchic coup represented the abolition of the πατρίοι νόμοι (Thuc. 8.76.6). See Finley (1971), pp.3-12.
[89]Pl. *Symp.* 177d.
[90] Pl. *Phaedr*. 257b. By contrast, cf. Pl. *Tht.* 160e, where Theatetus is described as having 'given birth' to an idea. For the use of fatherhood as an image for creativity of various forms in Pindar, see pp.22-3.

Though prominent in Athenian language, fathers could be conspicuous by their absence from the lives of their children. Given various demographic factors, including low life expectancy[91] and a tendency for men to marry relatively late,[92] models suggest that roughly half of 18-year old Athenians were without a living father.[93] Orphans - to be fatherless in classical Athens was to be an orphan[94] - were under the protection of Zeus and the eponymous archon.[95] Those whose fathers perished fighting for Athens were maintained by the state,[96] while the rest often came under the care of other male relatives;[97] Alcibiades was famously raised by his cousin Pericles.[98] The lot of orphans was potentially a vulnerable one. Even orphaned sons could not inherit until they came of age, and their estates were vulnerable to the predations of their guardians. Demosthenes' rhetorical career began with a series of cases brought against his guardians for embezzling his estate;[99] despite being left with clear instructions from his late father,[100] they allegedly reduced an inheritance of 15 talents to merely one by the time of Demosthenes' majority,[101] and caused disruption to his education by failing to pay his tutors consistently.[102] If the father's death were the result of foul play, the son could be expected to avenge him; the speaker of Antiphon 1 presents himself as being compelled

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[91] Sallares (1991) p.122 suggests 23 as a possible life expectancy at birth for men born in the first half of the C4th B.C.
[92] Strauss (1993), p.67.
[93] ibid. The low life expectancies make grandfathers a relatively rare phenomenon, although not unheard of; Sallares (1991), pp.195-6. The presence of grandfathers in tragedy – e.g. E. *Ba.*, *Or.* - and the important institution of adult children caring for their aged parents suggests that at least some Athenians did live – or at least expected to live - to old age; Sallares (1991), p.141.
[94] Golden (2009), p.44.
[95] ibid.
[96] Thuc. 2.46.
[97] Golden (2009), pp.49-50.
[98] Plut. *Alc.*1.
[99] Dem. 27-31. Such cases were amongst the various forms of crimes within the family which were within the eponymous archon's purview; *Ath. Pol.* 56.6-7
[100] Worthington (2013), pp.14-5.
[101] Dem. 27.4; Worthington (2013), p.15, who also makes the point that the refusal of Demosthenes' guardian Aphobus to produce the elder Demosthenes' will left Demosthenes himself free to inflate or distort figures in support of his case; pp.23-4.
[102] Dem. 27.46.

to take the uncomfortable position of avenging his father despite opposition from his half-brothers.[103]

For an illegitimate child, even a living father could often be of little benefit. Those who were not recognised as legitimate[104] were effectively excluded from their family; they did not possess ἀγχιστεία in religious rites,[105] and as such were not allowed to participate in funerals.[106] Furthermore, with the exception of a voluntary legacy of no more than 1000 drachmas,[107] they were excluded from inheritance.[108] Given, as discussed above, the importance of legitimate Athenian parentage for admission to phratries, demes, and therefore citizenship, the illegitimate sons of Athenians were excluded from much of Athenian public life. Conversely, in contrast to legitimate children, they were absolved of all legal responsibilities to their parents.[109] There were opportunities for legitimation in exceptional circumstances; the Assembly granted legitimacy to Pericles' homonymous illegitimate son, seemingly including the right to use his father's patronymic.[110] The more usual route, however, seems to have been to attempt admission into the father's phratry or deme by deceit,[111] or alternatively to pass the child off - usually when newborn - as the legitimate offspring of another.[112]

The father was an important but not omnipotent force in his children's lives. He had the power to accept or deny them, and the responsibility to educate them and lead

[103] Antiphon 1.2.
[104] For the procedure, see pp.3-4. Fathers may possibly have afforded informal recognition of paternity to their illegitimate sons, but this did not grant them legitimate status; Ogden (1996), p.91.
[105] Dem. 43.51; Is. 6.47; Ogden (1996), pp.35-6.
[106] Ogden (1996), pp.99-100; cf. Is. 6.60.
[107] Ogden (1996), pp.38-9.
[108] cf. Ar. *Birds* 1661-6; Ogden (1996), pp.34-5 suggests that Aristophanes has combined two laws limiting the rights of illegitimate children.
[109] Plut. *Solon* 22.4.
[110] Plut. *Per*. 37.5.
[111] Ogden (1996), p.125.
[112] Ogden (1996), pp.108-10; Ar. *Thesm*. 502-16; Is. 6. 22. See p.183 n.89.

them beyond the confines of their birth family, as wives or citizen males. In turn, he was owed material support and was afforded legal protection from harm. There was a less formal, emotional element to Athenian fatherhood as well; fathers were expected to love their children. Though many fathers were dead by the time their offspring came of age, they could cast a long shadow after their death; their property would form the basis for their sons' households and their daughters' dowries, while their reputation might serve as something a son would aspire to emulate or a stain which he would have to endure or escape. The language of fatherhood coloured much of the discourse and terminology of Athenian public life, and the father himself was a figure whose roles within the household and in the city beyond it frequently overlapped, interacted, or contrasted.

1.2. The father in prior literature

In addition to considering the historical context in which the tragic fathers would first have found their audience, it is worth examining the literary tradition preceding them, in order to form a clearer picture of what, if anything, is distinct about the depiction of fathers in Athenian tragedy. The heroic world recounted in epic and lyric is a key source of material for tragedy,[113] and a consideration of prior literary depictions of the same figures of myth as populate the tragic stage can offer a fruitful point of comparison. The prominence of divine fathers in tragedy[114] encourages a comparison with the depiction of their behaviour in this capacity in earlier works such as the Homeric epics or Hesiod's *Theogony*.

[113] See Easterling (1997b) for an intelligent overview of the use tragedy makes of such material.
[114] Discussed more fully in chapter 5.

The fathers of epic are not without their problems and shortcomings. Perhaps the most striking instance of a hostile father comes in Phoenix's account of his rift with his father Amyntor and his subsequent exile.[115] Amyntor's affair with a concubine brought dishonour upon his wife, Phoenix's mother,[116] prompting her to entreat her son to sleep with the same concubine, and thus end his father's dalliance. Phoenix obliged, but instead of reconciling with his wife Amyntor brought down curses upon his son, including sterility.[117] This marks a significant rejection of his role within the family; not only does Amyntor thus prioritise a concubine over both his wife and son, but, in his anger, denies his son the possibility of becoming a father in turn and thus continuing the family line.[118] Amyntor's are not the only father's curses found in epic; fragments of the *Thebaid* retain two variants of Oedipus' curses upon his sons.[119] In the first, Polyneices sets a silver table and golden goblet before Oedipus, both of which belonged to the latter's father, Cadmus. Upon noting that his father's possessions were being used, Oedipus became enraged - μέγα οἱ κακὸν ἔμπεσε θυμῶι (fr.2.6 West)[120] - and cursed his sons to wage war over the division of their patrimony.[121] In the second, Oedipus, angry at being sent a haunch from his sons' sacrifice instead of his usual portion from the shoulder,[122] curses his sons to die by each other's hand.[123] Given the honorific quality of meat, particularly certain cuts, in

[115] *Il.* 9. 444-77.
[116] *Il.* 9. 450-1.
[117] *Il.* 9. 454-6. Hainsworth (1993) *ad* 454 acknowledges the severity of the punishment, but also of Phoenix's misdeed in dishonouring his own father thus. Griffin (1995) *ad* 454 notes the Erinyes' particular responsibility for avenging breaches of respect within the family.
[118] Scodel (1982) p.133 sees the narrative as a deliberately slightly ridiculous tale, in which Phoenix's own undignified flight after a quarrel over a concubine is intended to discourage Achilles from his planned departure for Phthia. One might feel, however, that Amyntor's effective destruction of his own family in anger at the loss of a concubine might serve as a more striking warning against disproportionate responses in such matters, given that Achilles' intense anger was prompted by the loss of Briseis. Whatever the analogy of Phoenix's autobiography to Achilles' situation, the depiction of Amyntor certainly provides an extremely striking foil for Phoenix's account of Peleus (see below).
[119] *Thebaid* frr. 2-3 West.
[120] κακὸν does not encourage us to see Oedipus' response as entirely appropriate.
[121] *Thebaid* fr. 2.9-10 West.
[122] Schol. Soph. *Oed. Col.* 1375.
[123] *Thebaid* fr. 3.4 West.

Greek epic,[124] it is plausible that receiving a lesser cut of meat than usual could be perceived as an insult, but Oedipus' response seems excessive. Much like Amyntor, Oedipus' anger at perceived slights leads him to bring destruction upon his own sons; his rage triumphs over paternal sentiment. There is even reference to strife between father and son amongst the gods; Hephaestus warns his mother Hera of Zeus' power by reminding her of his own fate when he attempted to protect her.[125]

Whilst some fathers in epic are actively hostile, others are absent, sometimes with unhappy results. Achilles' father Peleus, unable to be present himself, gave his son sage advice before the latter's departure,[126] and sent Phoenix as a companion to watch over the young man and to guide his development as μύθων τε ῥητῆρ' ... πρηκτῆρά τε ἔργων (*Il.* 9.442-3). Less happily, upon learning of Hector's death, Andromache offers an extremely moving account of the life their son Astyanax can expect as an orphan;[127] his lands will be stolen,[128] he will be forced to beg by his straitened material circumstances,[129] and will even face violent mistreatment from those children whose fathers still live.[130] The friendships of fathers - or forefathers - can continue for their sons and descendants; Glaucus and Diomedes discover that they are ancestral guest-friends in the heat of battle,[131] while Telemachus invokes the kindnesses performed for Menelaus by his father Odysseus in a successful attempt to obtain his aid.[132] Indeed, Telemachus' situation is perhaps the most complete epic depiction of the experience of fatherlessness.[133] In Odysseus' absence the household's wealth is being eroded by the suitors,[134] and

[124] cf. e.g. *Il.* 12. 311; *Od.* 8. 474-81; see Griffin (1980), pp.14-7.
[125] *Il.* 1.590-4.
[126] *Il.* 9.252-9; cf. 11.785-90.
[127] *Il.* 22.482-507.
[128] *Il.* 22.489.
[129] *Il.* 22.492-3.
[130] *Il.* 22.496-8.
[131] *Il.* 6.215-8.
[132] *Od.* 4.328-31.
[133] Wohrle (2009), p.169.
[134] *Od.* 2.48-9, 55-8.

Telemachus is not in a position to defend his patrimony.[135] He is reliant upon surrogate father-figures such as the herald Medon[136] and the swineherd Eumaeus - whom he addresses as ἄττα (*Od.* 16.31), "daddy"[137] - but the latter is not in a position to defend him from the dangers posed by the Suitors. Their plot to murder Telemachus as he returns from the mainland[138] is thwarted only by Athena's revelation of the scheme to Telemachus.[139] In epic, the absence of a father can pose considerable dangers to his children's material position, and even their lives.

It is notable, however, that as a general rule, the fathers of epic are concerned for the wellbeing of their children and have harmonious relationships with them. Achilles' effective father-substitute Phoenix characterises his own love and care for the hero in paternal terms,[140] while Achilles himself, when encountered by Odysseus in the Underworld, asks after his son Neoptolemus,[141] and derives considerable joy from Odysseus' favourable report.[142] Nestor, in a similar vein, recounts his father Neleus' pride in his martial achievements,[143] but also his attempts to keep his son from the risks of war;[144] fatherhood can combine a desire for one's sons to achieve with a concern for their safety in the face of the perilous activities of heroic manhood. Even divine fathers show concern for the welfare of their children, although they are often constrained in how they can manifest this.[145] Polyphemus demands vengeance for his blinding from his father

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[135] *Od.* 2.58-64.
[136] Od. 22.356-60; Worhle (2009), p.170.
[137] Worhle (2009), p.170.
[138] *Od.* 4. 663-72.
[139] *Od.* 15.28-42.
[140] Finlay (1980), p.269; cf. esp. *Il* 9. 494-5.
[141] *Od.* 11.492-3.
[142] *Od.* 11.538-40.
[143] *Il.* 11.683-4; Finlay (1980) pp.268-9.
[144] *Il.* 11.717-9.
[145] See also ch. 5.1.

Poseidon,[146] who honours his son's request and pursues Odysseus as far as fate and divine consensus permit him.[147] Zeus famously ponders whether to save his son Sarpedon,[148] and is dissuaded by Hera's warning that this would prompt the many other gods with mortal children to save their offspring from the fray.[149] He must ultimately content himself with a bloody rain in his son's honour (παῖδα φίλον τιμῶν, *Il.*16.460).[150] Despite the difficulties and dangers foisted upon Telemachus by his father's absence, upon Odysseus' return the two achieve an emotional reunion,[151] and set to co-operating in the scheme to restore Odysseus to his rightful position.[152] This collaboration of father and son culminates in *Odssey* 24, when Laertes, Odysseus, and Telemachus - grandfather, father, son - stand together to face the Ithacans in battle; Laertes remarks joyfully that his son and grandson vie in excellence (υἱός θ' υἱωνός τ' ἀρετῆς πέρι δῆριν ἔχουσι; *Od.* 24.515).[153] Even a long-absent father finds in his son a willing ally rather than a resentful or threatening figure.

Not all fathers in epic triumph over their foes as Odysseus does, and the obligation for a son to avenge his father is pervasive in the genre. The *Cypria*, for instance, offers an almost gnomic statement of the perils sons pose to their father's killers: νήπιος, ὃς πατέρα κτείνας παῖδας καταλείπει (fr. 31 West). The Odyssean accounts of Orestes'

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[146] *Od.* 9.528-35; Polyphemus himself expects there to be some limitation upon the vengeance Poseidon enacts, and so provides some alternative courses of action for his father to take according to the constraints operating upon him.
[147] *Od.* 5.288-90; cf. *Od.* 1.77-9.
[148] *Il.* 16.433-8.
[149] *Il.* 16.445-9.
[150] Janko (1992) *ad* 458-61 notes the pathos of the gesture, and observes at p.375 that Zeus thus joins the many grieving fathers who form a motif throughout the poem.
[151] *Od.* 16.213-7.
[152] cf. e.g. *Od.* 16. 270-320: Odysseus proposes his plan for vengeance and Telemachus suggests a small modification; 21. 118-29: Telemachus obeys Odysseus' signal and deliberately fails in the contest of the bow; 21.431-4: Telemachus takes up arms to fight beside his father.
[153]The ἀρετῆς πέρι δῆρις, much like Telemachus' advice and suggested amendments to Odysseus' plan in *Od.* 16, demonstrates that the relationship between the two is not one of utter submission of son to father; there is room for Telemachus to express and assert himself, and engage in constructive rivalry with his father, but this does not go so far as to jeopardise their collective efforts to restore the household; hence Telemachus obeys his father's command to fail to string the bow.

vengeance for Agamemnon demonstrate the wisdom of this pronouncement.[154] Many of the more troubling aspects of the narratives which loom so large in tragic accounts of the House of Tantalus are downplayed or absent.[155] Orestes is instead employed by Athena-Mentes as a paradigm of the faithful son in order to spur Telemachus to action; she remarks on the κλέος he has obtained by avenging his father and slaying Aegisthus.[156] Indeed, Aegisthus is the only person whom Orestes explicitly does slay;[157] while Clytemnestra's death is reported, there is no explicit reference to matricide,[158] much as there is no mention in Homer of Agamemnon's sacrifice of Iphigenia.[159] The Homeric *Oresteia* minimises internecine violence and emphasises the glorious consequences of a son avenging his father.

The generally positive cast of epic depictions of fatherhood is reinforced by the use of father-figures in similes. The father is often used as a symbolic paradigm of care and affection; Telemachus reminds the Ithacans that, in his rule over them, Odysseus was "gentle like a father" (πατὴρ δ' ὣς ἤπιος, *Od.* 2.47), while Phoenix describes Peleus' affection towards him in paternal terms: καί μ' ἐφίλησ' ὡς εἴ τε πατὴρ ὃν παῖδα φιλήσῃ / μοῦνον τηλύγετον πολλοῖσιν ἐπὶ κτεάτεσσι.[160] The father is also beloved as well as loving; the shipwrecked Odysseus rejoices at the sight of dry land as children do upon seeing their father recovering from illness.[161]

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[154] The *Oresteia* myth is referred to or recounted by a variety of interlocutors: *Od.* 1.35-43, 298-300; 3.193-98, 234-35, 255- 312; 4.90-92, 512-37, 546-47; 9..387-89, 409-34, 452-53; 13.383-84; 14.19-22, 96-97, 199-200; Olson (1990), p.57 n.1.
[155] Seaford (1994), p.13.
[156] *Od.* 1.298-300. Olson (1990) pp.61-2 notes that Athena omits various differences between the two sons' positions, particularly the fact that Odysseus, unlike Agamemnon, is not dead, and thus not (yet) in need of avenging.
[157] *Od.* 1.299-300; 3.307.
[158] Seaford (1994), p.11; *Od.* 3.306-10.
[159] Seaford (1994), p.12; the sacrifice of Iphigenia does, however, seem to have been depicted in the *Cypria*; *Cypria argumentum* 8 West.
[160] *Il.* 9.481-2; the simile invites a particularly harsh interpretation of Amyntor's conduct; whereas Peleus loves a stranger as a father would a long-awaited son and heir, Amyntor's anger at his son is such that he denies his line the prospect of such an heir continuing it by making Phoenix sterile.
[161] *Od.* 5.394-9.

In contrast to the generally harmonious father-son relationships in Homer, the depiction of divine fatherhood in Hesiod's *Theogony* is marked by frequent inter-generational hostility. Uranus so hates his children that he effectively attempts to reverse their birth, imprisoning them in their mother Gaia.[162] Cronus is prevailed upon by his mother to overthrow his father,[163] and so castrates him with a sickle.[164] Cronus in turn attempts to reverse the process of fatherhood, swallowing his own children so that none of them may challenge him for the position of royal power.[165] Much like his father, he is undone by the wiles of his consort[166] and overpowered by his son (νικηθεὶς τέχνῃσι βίηφί τε παιδὸς ἑοῖο, *Th.* 496). Zeus, however, does not succumb to the same fate as his father and grandfather; when faced with the prediction of being supplanted by the son born to him from Metis,[167] he successfully overcomes this challenge by swallowing Metis herself before the child can be born.[168] This sequence of intergenerational struggles is intended to reflect well on Zeus; his superiority to his father and grandfather is demonstrated by his succeeding where they failed in terms of forestalling their overthrow,[169] while Hesiod quite explicitly characterises Zeus' rule over the immortals as fair in the same breath as attributing it to his triumph over his father.[170] Indeed, while there is fierce conflict between generations of divine figures in an effort to avoid or achieve succession, the gods can also show greater care for their offspring. Zeus, for example, ultimately accedes to

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[162] *Th.* 155-8.
[163] *Th.* 164-75; West (1966) p.217 observes that the language of Cronus' speech (170-2) echoes that of his mother's appeal (164-6); this perhaps offers a linguistic emphasis of the prioritisation of mother over father.
[164] *Th.* 173-82; strikingly, Cronus is not named in the account of the castration, but referred to as ὁ ... πάις (178)
[165] *Th.* 459-67.
[166] *Th.* 485-91, the famous narrative of the stone-substitute for Zeus. Numerous deceptive wives are also found on the mortal plain in myth; Clytemnestra, Medea, Eriphyle etc.
[167] *Th.* 897-8.
[168] *Th.* 888-91.
[169] Dongen (2011), p.192.
[170] *Th.* 73-4: κάρτει νικήσας πατέρα Κρόνον· εὖ δὲ ἕκαστα / ἀθανάτοις διέταξε νόμους καὶ ἐπέφραδε τιμάς.

Prometheus' release because the feat will bring honour to his son Heracles,[171] while it is through her father Oceanus' influence that Styx takes up Zeus' offer of honours for those dispossessed by Cronus.[172] Indeed, one of the mechanisms for Zeus to punish mortal wrongdoers is depicted as his responding to the complaints of his daughter Dike whenever she is wronged.[173] The divine fathers of Hesiod can be extremely hostile to their children when faced with usurpation, but they are not unrelentingly so when their position is less threatened.

For the mortal fathers in Hesiod's work, succession is an inevitability, and as such should be prepared for rather than deliberately thwarted. One should aim to father an heir for the estate: μουνογενὴς δὲ πάις εἴη πατρώιον οἶκον / φερβέμεν (*WD* 376-7).[174] The ideal of a single child is perhaps rather pointed given the inheritance dispute between Hesiod and his brother Perses which informs much of the poem.[175] Hesiod offers further practical advice for fathers-to-be in particular, advising against conceiving children upon one's return for a funeral,[176] and specifying the 20th of the month as an especially auspicious day for begetting a clever son.[177] Fatherhood is also subject to moral, as well as practical, concerns. The mistreatment of parents is a considerable crime, incurring punishment from Zeus;[178] it is one of the crimes which characterises the wicked fifth race of men.[179] Fatherhood can serve as an indicator of morality; in the land of the just king,

[171] *Th*. 529-32.
[172] *Th*. 397-8; as West (1966), p.275 points out, however, it is not entirely clear why Oceanus, a Titan, would encourage his daughter to take up an offer conditional upon helping in the fight *against* the Titans (*Th*. 392)
[173] *WD* 256-62.
[174] μουνογενὴς seems to clash with the reference to ἕτερον παῖδ' (378), but West (1978), p.252 offers a sensible explanation of the "other child" being a child in a subsequent generation; the ideal is therefore to die with a son *and* grandson.
[175] Ulf (2009) pp.93-4. The observation that Zeus can provide sufficient wealth for larger families if they work (*WD* 379-80) is not a contradiction, but rather a typical Hesiodic practice of suggesting an exception to general rules as a result of divine will; cf. 483-90; West (1978), p.252.
[176] *WD* 735-6.
[177] *WD* 792.
[178] *WD* 330-4.
[179] *WD* 185.

children resemble their fathers,[180] while the moral collapse of the fifth race is signalled by the lack of resemblance between fathers and their offspring.[181] The knowingly false man's punishment from Zeus is the descent of his offspring and line into obscurity.[182] Like so many other activities in Hesiod, fatherhood is an area for applying practical wisdom and maintaining moral conduct; the success of one's activities in the sphere is governed by both of these factors.

Fathers, and indeed male relations and family more generally, are a pervasive presence in Pindar's epinicians.[183] Pindar frequently sets the achievements of the *laudandus* in the context of those of his father or other male ancestors;[184] in *Olympian* 13, for example, the victor Xenophon's athletic achievements are recounted along with those of his father and grandfather,[185] before the poet ultimately concedes himself unequal to relaying the full sum of the family's victories: ὡς μὰν σαφές / οὐκ ἂν εἰδείην λέγειν ποντιᾶν ψάφων ἀριθμόν (*Ol.* 13.45-6). In this ode, Pindar promises a truthful account of 'the inborn nature' (τὸ συγγενὲς ἦθος; *Ol.* 13.13); the praise of Xenophon and his male ancestors thus presents the victor's own athletic abilities as stemming from heredity. This is a key theme of the Pindaric corpus,[186] and is made even more explicit in *Pythian* 10, where Hippocleas' victory is attributed to Apollo's intentions and the athletic prowess of the victor's father.[187] The influence of heredity is also a feature of Pindar's mythical

[180] *WD* 235.
[181] *WD* 182.
[182] *WD* 282-4. cf. Hdt. 6.86, esp. 51, which strongly recalls *WD* 285.
[183] Kurke (1991), p.19. This is not an inevitable feature of the genre; Pavlou (2012) p.57, n.2 makes the interesting observation that family and kinship are very infrequent themes in Bacchylides.
[184] There are 37 instances in Pindar in which victories of other (male) family members are included with those of the *laudandus*; Kurke (1991), p.19.
[185] Pind. *Ol.* 13. 29-42.
[186] e.g. Kirkwood (1982), p.22; Hubbard (1985) pp.107-24 on φύσις and τέχνη in Pindar; Pavlou (2012), p.57.
[187] *Pyth.* 10.11-4, especially 12, where 'following in the footsteps of his father' (ἐμβέβακεν ἴχνεσιν πατρός) offers a particularly apt image for two generations of victorious runners!

narratives; in *Pythian* 8, Amphiaraus remarks upon the Epigoni's martial courage reflecting that of their fathers,[188] while it is as a son of Zeus that Polydeuces is offered the prospect of immortality in *Nemean* 8.[189] The influence of heredity need not always be positive; it is pointed that in *Pythian* 2 the would-be rapist Ixion's son is himself arrogant and lawless,[190] and goes on in turn to father the famously wild Centaurs. There are instances of individuals improving upon their forebears; Peleus fares far better than his intemperate father Tantalus in *Olympian* 1, for instance, while, although the victor of *Olympian* 2 is descended from Oedipus and his sons, whose crimes are recounted,[191] it is the influence of Polyneices' son Thesandrus, a successful athlete and warrior, which is presented as being most relevant to the *laudandus*' actions.[192] Fathers and forebears can exert a considerable though not inescapable influence upon the character and prowess of their sons, for good or ill; the victories of the son can thus serve to reflect and reinforce the capabilities and achievements of the father.

As well as reflecting the hereditary excellence of his ancestors, the victor's success can be depicted as bringing honour and pleasure to his father and forebears. A particularly striking example of this is *Nemean* 6, where the victories of Soclides' sons are sufficient to rescue their clearly less impressive father from λάθα.[193] In *Olympian* 8, Alcimedon's wrestling victories inspire his grandfather to strive against old age,[194] while the ode goes on to reveal that athletic prowess is of interest to male relatives even after their death; κατακρύπτει δ’ οὐ κόνις / συγγόνων κεδνὰν χάριν (*Ol.* 8.79-80).[195] The opposite principle is also true; as Pindar remarks in *Pythian* 1, “a father’s victory is one’s own joy” (χάρμα

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[188] *Pyth*. 8.44-5.
[189] *Nem*. 8.80-8.
[190] *Pyth*. 2.42-3.
[191] *Ol*. 2.38-42.
[192] *Ol*. 2.43-7.
[193] *Nem*. 6. 17-24; Kurke (1991), p.37.
[194] μένος / γήραος ἀντίπαλον; *Ol*. 8. 70-1. ἀντίπαλος, "wrestling against" - s.v. Slater - reinforces the link between the victor's athletic achievements and his grandfather's renewed vitality.
[195] cf. Achilles' posthumous interest in his son in *Odyssey* 11, discussed above.

δ’ οὐκ ἀλλότριον νικαφορία πατέρος, *Pyth.*1.59). The achievements of one's (fore)father can be a source of pleasure to one's descendants, as in *Pythian* 11; a man who has achieved greatness and avoided crime may die well, “having provided the mightiest of possessions, the boon of a good name, to his dearest family” (γλυκυτάτᾳ γενεᾷ / εὐώνυμον κτεάνων κρατίσταν χάριν πορών; *Pyth.*11.57-8).[196] It is unsurprising, then, that Pindar often refers to a victor's heroic or even divine ancestors and their exploits as well as their more recent forebears.[197]

The fathers and sons of Pindar are generally depicted as engaging in harmonious, respectful and affectionate relationships. Filial piety is a prevalent theme; in *Olympian* 3, Heracles institutes the Olympic Games and festival in honour of his father Zeus,[198] and travels to the Danube to procure a suitable tree to shade his father's precinct.[199] In *Pythian* 6, Cheiron's instruction never to dishonour one's parents is illustrated by Antilochus' self-sacrifice to save his father Nestor;[200] the young man’s filial piety brought him considerable renown amongst his peers.[201] Fathers also show considerable care and affection towards their children; in *Pythian* 9, Antaeus goes to the trouble of arranging a contest to ensure a more glorious marriage for his daughter,[202] whilst, less happily, in *Pythian* 3 both Cadmus and Peleus, despite their other accomplishments and honours, are saddened by the unhappy fates of their children.[203] There is, of course, the prospect of a less roseate reality behind this generally caring and co-operative vision of parent-child relations, but this is not explicitly acknowledged.[204] Pindar's depictions of family relations

[196] Kurke (1991), p.36.
[197] cf. e.g. *Ol.* 6.22-71, 7.20-4; *Pyth.* 9.103-5.
[198] *Ol.* 3.21-2.
[199] *Ol.* 3.23-6.
[200] *Pyth.* 6.26-39.
[201] *Pyth.* 6.40-2.
[202] *Pyth.* 9.111-20.
[203] *Pyth.* 3.86-103.
[204] Pavlou (2012) presents an intriguing but necessarily speculative account of the pointed *absence* of father figures from some of Pindar's poems, positing motives such as civic instead of familial patronage or even family strife.

focus upon caring fathers and pious sons bringing honour and renown to one another and their family as a whole.[205]

Indeed, this prevalent depiction of harmony and love within the family is even put to symbolic use. In *Olympian* 10, a father feels intense love for a late-born son and heir;[206] he is thus spared the unhappy fate of his estate passing to another.[207] Analogously, Pindar's poetry has spared the victor Hagesidamus from having his fame perish with him.[208] The simile thus uses fatherhood to convey the notion of preserving a posthumous legacy, the creative activity of the poet, and indeed to encourage a similarly warm reception for his verse as the father demonstrates for his son. This use of fatherhood as an analogy for poetic activity is made more explicit in *Pythian* 4, where Orpheus is described as "father of singing with the lyre" (φορμιγκτὰς ἀοιδᾶν πατήρ; *Pyth.* 4.176) while paternity as an analogy for creativity in the most general sense informs the reference to "Time, the father of all things" (Χρόνος ὁ πάντων πατὴρ, *Ol.* 2.16).[209]

1.3. The father in tragedy

The prevalence and significance of father figures in Greek tragedy has long been acknowledged by scholars.[210] Perhaps unsurprisingly, however, much scholarship on the tragic father has been conducted in the shadow of Freud's theory of the "Oedipus Complex." In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud famously used Sophocles' depiction of Oedipus in *Oedipus Tyrannus* as an exemplum of and justification for his belief in a

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[205] Kurke (1991), p.35.
[206] *Ol.* 10.86-7.
[207] *Ol.* 10.88-90.
[208] *Ol.* 10.91-6; Kurke (1991), pp.77-8.
[209] See Slater s.v. πατήρ 3.d.
[210] e.g. Griffith (1998), pp.32-3 notes the significance of tragic fathers both onstage and *in absentia* across the genre. On fathers in specific plays, see e.g. Roisman (1996) on *Antigone*; Siegel (1981) on *Iphigenia at Aulis*; Alaux (2000) on *Ajax*; De Poli (2013) on *Ajax* and *Orestes*; Padilla (1994) on *Heracles*; Mikalson (1986) on *Heracles* and *Trachiniae*; Lamari (2011) on *Hypsipyle*, *Antiope* and *Phoenician Women* etc.

universal tendency of children to feel sexual desire towards their opposite-sex parents and thus jealousy culminating in a death-wish towards the same-sex parent who stands in the position of love rival.[211] For boys, the resolution of the Oedipus Complex requires the stabilisation of gender identity and the acceptance of the father's power.[212] As well as this individual Oedipal complex, Freud postulated the importance of sons' ambivalent attitudes towards their fathers for human civilisation more generally. He developed the Oedipal notion into a theory of a long-repressed primeval parricide, in which brothers combined to kill the father who thwarted their desires for sex and power; the considerable remorse which followed this killing as a result of their lingering affection towards their father lead to his effective deification as a "totem" which they could honour and protect to offset their guilt.[213] Freud's influential theory presents inherent ambivalence, tension and guilt in father-son relationships, and posits that this underlies much human psychology, religion,[214] and even art.[215]

The Oedipal theories of Freud and his successors[216] are problematic. They suffer generally from the serious evidential issues inherent in psychoanalytical methods,[217] and from a classical perspective rely on an insensitive reading of Sophocles' depiction of the

[211] Freud (1995b), pp.271-5.
[212] Sharpe & Faulkner (2008), p.52.
[213] Freud (1995c), pp.883-8.
[214] Freud (1939) offers a peculiar theory of the development of Judaism as an attempt to offset collective guilt at the murder of a first, Egyptian Moses by synthesising him with a later, Midianite prophet of the same name; Sharpe & Faulkner (2008), pp.164-5 summarises effectively.
[215] Freud (1995b), p.276, suggests that *Oedipus Tyrannus* retains its power for modern audiences because we all share Oedipus' desires. Freud (1995c), p.894 also suggests (highly speculatively) that the hero of early tragedy is a totemic figure who suffers guilt to free the Chorus from their underlying, Oedipal remorse.
[216] e.g. Jacques Lacan developed the theory with further emphasis on the role of language in structuring the unconscious, while Melanie Klein laid contrasting emphasis on the child's ambivalent relationship with the mother; Featherstone (2009), pp.56-7.
[217] Numerous commentators have observed that psychoanalysis does not meet the evidential standards demanded of the natural sciences. Ernest Nagel denied psychoanalysis scientific status on the grounds that it does not make empirically testable predictions which can be verified in controlled experimental conditions; Sharpe & Faulkner (2009), p.174. Popper (2002), pp.44-51 similarly denies the discipline scientific status on the grounds that it is not falsifiable; any event *could* be interpreted in light of psychoanalytical theory, but the theory and its interpretations are not open to testing or refutation, unlike, to use Popper's example, Einstein's gravitational theory.

myth.[218] Nonetheless, in focusing on the father in terms of his relationship with and effect on his children, Freud presaged many of the developments and considerations of psychological and sociological treatments of fatherhood. Developmental psychology is significantly interested in the effect a father can exert on the development of his children,[219] including frequent concern in sociological or political thinking over his *absence* and the potential damage it can cause to his offspring.[220] Much scholarship on the father in tragedy has examined this figure in terms of his children and in particular his sons,[221] whether or not from a specifically Freudian perspective.[222] This approach is often highly fruitful; the complex and often troubled relationship between father and son is an important element of many tragedies.[223] To choose two particularly prominent examples, it is found in both Aeschylus' *Persians* and Euripides' *Hippolytus*,[224] and has been extensively explored in the scholarship on these plays.[225] In more general terms, considering a father in terms of his relationship and interactions with his children reflects

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[218] Vernant (1988) offers an extensive demonstration of the problems of Freud's reading of the myth, including his projection of his own beliefs back onto the Sophoclean drama without consideration for its context (pp.88-9) and his significant overestimation of the Oedipal element in tragedy as a genre (pp.90-1), as well as noting Oedipus' clear ignorance of his biological parentage (pp.107-9).

[219] cf. e.g. Lamb (2010). The importance of the father is a constant throughout the child's life, although in different ways at different stages; Featherstone (2009), p.81.

[220] Hobson (2002), pp.1-2; Dowd (2002), p.23.

[221] e.g. Follinger (2007); Griffith (1998) deals at some length with the difficult father-son relationships of *Persians* and *Antigone*; Strauss (1993), although admittedly writing with ultimately historiographical rather than literary-critical intentions, examines numerous tragedies in terms of their depiction of (frequently fractious) father-son relationships; Mikalson (1986). It is worth noting that the prevalent notion of father-son conflict and a 'generation gap' in late C5th Athens – see e.g. Bertman (1976), Handley (1990) - is not accompanied by evidence of a serious breakdown in father-son relationships or filial piety in the city at this time: Strauss (1993), p.144.

[222] Caldwell (1970) is one of the most thoroughly Freudian examples; he goes so far as to make the unconvincing claim that an Oedipal pattern of the father influencing his children is the key unifying theme of extant Aeschylus. Lloyd-Jones (1985), p.157 offers a pithy summary of the work's considerable imprecisions.

[223] Famously, Aristotle favoured tragic plots with conflict within the family: *Poet.* 14. 1453b19-22.

[224] See esp. *Persians* 197-9, 681-851; in *Hippolytus*, we see Theseus' difficult relationship with his son play itself out through condemnation, cursing, revelation, and a deathbed reconciliation from the king's entrance at 790 to the end of the play.

[225] On *Persians*, see e.g. Alexanderson (1967); Saïd (1981) pp.31-8; Griffith (1998) pp. 42-65; Papadimitropoulos (2008b); Garvie (2009) pp. xxix-xxxi, 273-6; Sommerstein (2010) pp.55-61; on *Hippolytus*, e.g. Mench (1976); Dover (1991), esp. p.173 & pp.181-2; Lloyd (1992), pp.43-51; Strauss (1993), pp.166-75; Mills (2002), 74-7.

the fundamental link between the two; the father is a father because he has children, while the children - usually[226] - exist because of their father's actions. Considering a literary father in respect of the relationship which confers his identity as such is perfectly sound.[227] It is notable, however, that there has been relatively little scholarly consideration of the tragic father *in himself*, exploring this figure not in terms of his conflicts with his children but the conflicting demands to which he himself is subject.[228] This is despite the work of modern social scientists on the father in himself, including examinations of the tensions fathers can face in reconciling their careers with their paternal responsibilities,[229] and the role of varied and often conflicting discourse in constructing the father's subjective understanding of his own position and responsibilities.[230]

The citizen fathers of classical Athens also faced varied potentially conflicting expectations and responsibilities, within and beyond the family.[231] As we have already seen, beyond the affective aspect of parenthood they had extensive material, social and educational obligations towards their children, but they were also citizens of a lively direct democracy. In the Thucydidean Funeral Oration, Pericles makes his famous pronouncement of Athenian contempt for those who refuse their proper share of public

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226 Biological fatherhood is most common in tragedy, but adoptive/foster fathers are found in both C5th Athens and its drama; Alcibiades was famously reared by his kinsmen Pericles and Ariphron after the death of his father (Plut. *Alc*. 1.1), while in Euripides' *Heracles* Amphitryon stands in an anomalous position as mortal foster/co-father to Heracles along with Zeus; see ch. 4.

227 Shakespearean studies are similarly well-furnished with works exploring the father in terms of his relationship with his children; e.g. Dreher (1986); Tromly (2010).

228 Roisman (1996) is the only explicit example of such an approach which I have found with regard to Greek tragedy. He discusses Creon in *Antigone* in terms of his various roles within and beyond the family; I expand upon this in chapter 3. MacFaul (2012) offers an example of such an approach within Shakespearean studies, although his focus on the father of Rennaissance drama as divided between a public and private self (p.2) is not directly applicable to Greek tragedy, given the far less clear-cut distinction between public and private spheres.

229 Featherstone (2009), pp.23-4.

230 Lupton & Barclay (1997), pp.18-9.

231 Sinclair (1988), pp.49-76 offers a helpful summary of the citizen's varied responsibilities, including the payment of taxation, military service, and religious participation; at pp.50-1 he notes the importance of protecting and perpetuating the citizen family amidst these other civic duties.

activity,[232] and states confidently that "the same men manage domestic and political affairs" (ἔνι τε τοῖς αὐτοῖς οἰκείων ἅμα καὶ πολιτικῶν ἐπιμέλεια; Thuc. 2.40.2), but this combination of public and private responsibilities was not always successful. Aeschines, admittedly an intensely hostile witness, condemns his long-standing foe Demosthenes for celebrating the death of Philip instead of properly mourning his daughter,[233] arguing that this failure of paternal duty has political implications: ὁ γὰρ μισότεκνος καὶ πατὴρ πονηρὸς οὐκ ἄν ποτε γένοιτο δημαγωγὸς χρηστός (Aesch. 3.78). Although less ferocious in their invective, Lysimachus and Melias, two upper-class interlocutors of Plato's *Laches,* complain that their fathers were too busy with public affairs to tend properly to their education and blame this for their lack of achievement in life.[234] Laches himself remarks that neglect of one's private affairs is a constant amongst those engaged in public life.[235] This is not to say that one always had to be seen to prioritise one's family affairs; the speaker of Lysias 21 bolsters his patriotic credentials by declaring his willingness to risk leaving his children orphans by fighting and potentially dying for Athens.[236] Such a line of rhetoric is predicated upon the potential difficulty in balancing the demands of family and state; the speaker emphasises his public-spiritedness by deciding this conflict in favour of his duty to Athens, but the emotive impact comes from the clear potential for negative domestic consequences.[237] The public and private worlds stood in a complex and shifting relationship in classical Athens, and the demands both of active citizenship and of patriarchal family values could not always be reconciled.

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[232] Thuc. 2.40.2-3.
[233] Aeschin. 3.77; cf. Dover (1974), p.302.
[234] Pl. *Laches* 179c-d.
[235] Pl. *Laches* 180b.
[236] Lys. 21.24; the speaker was indicted on a charge of bribery, and provides the earliest extant example of a legal defendant enumerating his (extensive) public services in detail (21.1 - 11); Usher (1999), p.72. It is perhaps unsurprising, therefore, that he wishes to emphasise his selflessness and patriotism, but he can express a willingness to do this at the expense of his children and still expect a positive reception.
[237] The speaker presents "a pathetic image of his destitute family"; Usher (1999), p.74.

Fathers are not, of course, the only conflicted figures in tragedy, and the fruits of existing scholarship considering *mothers* in terms of competing pressures suggests the potential merits of extending this approach to the father-figures of the genre. For example, Alcestis has been studied in terms of her dilemma between dying for her husband and living to protect her children; her attempt to resolve these competing loyalties involves aiming at the former's gratitude in order to secure the latter's future.[238] Clytemnestra in *Agamemnon*, conversely, has been examined in terms of totally prioritising her role as mother of Iphigenia over that of wife of Agamemnnon;[239] her attempts to ignore "the impossibility of acting *merely* as a mother *or* as a wife"[240] lead to her downfall. A persuasive argument has been made for interpreting Sophocles' sadly fragmentary *Tereus* as the only extant tragedy in which sisterhood trumps all male-female bonds or obligations,[241] while Medea famously agonises over whether to spare her children or complete her vengeance upon her husband.[242]

If applied more widely, consideration of tragic father-figures in terms of this 'conflictedness' could bear considerable fruit. While the mothers of the genre are generally limited to familial roles and responsibilities,[243] and as such the conflicts they face are generally between different familial pressures, the father-figures of the genre occupy positions and bear responsibilities both within the οἶκος and beyond it. They can also be sons, husbands, brothers, rulers, heroes, and even gods; they are almost always a combination of several of these. As such, it is unsurprising that they are so often depicted

[238] Dyson (1988), pp.13-7. See ch. 6.1.2.
[239] Chesi (2014a), p.350.
[240] ibid.
[241] Coo (2013), p.357.
[242] E. *Medea* 1021-80. Foley (2002) pp.245ff. offers a convincing case for reading Medea's monologue as gendered self-division, in which Medea's female, maternal instincts are ultimately suborned to her masculine, heroic desire for vengeance.
[243] There are, of course, several queens in tragedy, but we see very little exercise of political power in this capacity. Aeschylus' Clytemnestra (see *Ag*. 258-60, reference to her κράτος) seems to be an exception; Foley (2002), p.7

as subject to so many competing claims and pressures; the demands of their position in the world beyond the family can clash with those of their role within it, or their several roles within the family itself can leave them unable to satisfy all the conflicting demands upon them. By examining tragic fathers not only as figures engaged in conflict with their children, but as themselves labouring under a frequently extensive and complex network of competing demands and pressures brought about by the great variety of familial, political and social roles which they often hold concurrently, we can arrive at a fuller appreciation of the extent to which tragic characterisation, motivation and plot can emerge from this remarkably pervasive depiction of fathers as extensively, perhaps even inherently conflicted figures.[244]

This thesis will begin with the conflict most familiar to the classical Athenian fathers of tragedy's original audience, that between public and private commitments. The conflict of paternal and political responsibility will be examined through an initial chapter on Agamemnon's sacrifice of his daughter Iphigenia (chapter 2), before moving to a broader consideration of the interplay between fatherhood and fatherland in plays on Theban myth (chapter 3). The fathers of tragedy are not, however, limited to such earthly

[244] Another area of C20th theory may prove more useful to us than Freudian psychoanalysis. Role theory emerged in the 1930s with Ralph Linton's concept of the 'role': Hilbert (1981), p.208. Roles are behaviours and expectations characteristic of people in certain contingent contexts (restaurant patron, theatre audience member) and particularly in more established social positions (teacher, doctor, father, sister): Biddle (1979), pp.4-5. Each individual occupies various social positions – e.g. the teacher who is also a father – and each social position in turn brings with it a 'set' of roles; e.g. a teacher's behaviour towards a pupil is expected to differ from that towards a colleague, even though both roles are performed in the status of 'teacher': Merton (1957) pp.110-2. Unsurprisingly, the array of statuses and roles each individual must combine often proves problematic; one can experience role strain when too many roles must be fulfilled at the same time – Goode (1960), esp.484-5 – or role conflict when the demands of different roles stand in opposition: Biddle (1979), p.7. Some classical scholars have applied role theory to ancient Greek society – e.g. Humphreys (1978), pp.209-13, 245-52; Roisman (1996) – and aspects of Greek thought itself can be seen as prefiguring many of these developments. For example, Meno's belief in a distinctive ἀρετή for men, women, young, old, slave, free etc. (Pl. *Meno* 71e-72a) arguably reflects the variation in expected behaviours for those in different social positions which role theory posits, while Aristotle's distinctions between the tenor of the relationships between the male head of household and his wife, children and slaves respectively (see esp. *Pol.* 1259a-b) resembles a proto-role set. These ideas provide useful background for the approach this thesis will take to the responsibilities and expectations placed upon tragic fathers and the frequently unhappy outcome thereof, but the discussion will not confine itself strictly to the tenets and terminology of role theory.

concerns. The next chapter will consider the problematic combination of fatherhood and heroic activity through the tragic depictions of that greatest of Greek heroes, Heracles (chapter 4). Heracles is the child of - and ultimately himself becomes – a divine father, and chapter 5 explores how dramatic accounts of divine fatherhood emphasise the gods' disruption of mortal family norms despite their conspicuous absence from the stage. The fathers of the genre are not simply subject to this conflict of responsibilities and expectations, but are also the subject *of* conflict; the final chapter (chapter 6) demonstrates how other characters on the stage engage in powerful rhetorical contests over both specific father-figures (particularly in their absence) and the proper conduct of fatherhood more generally, all in pursuit of their own agenda.

Chapter 2: Between politics and paternity: Agamemnon at Aulis

2.1. The sacrifice at Aulis

Agamemnon's sacrifice of his daughter Iphigenia to allow the Achaean host to sail against Troy has an extensive mythical and literary history. Although the sacrifice is conspicuously absent from Homeric epic,[1] Proclus' summary of the *Cypria* establishes many of the features familiar in later versions.[2] Agamemnon boasts that Artemis is not his equal in the hunt, prompting her to send hostile winds, which an oracle of Calchas reveals can only be ended by the sacrifice of Iphigenia.[3] The Achaean leaders send for Iphigenia under the pretext of marrying her to Achilles, but she is saved when Artemis substitutes a deer for her and establishes her as a goddess amongst the Taurians.[4] The *Catalogue of Women* and Stesichorus' *Helen* offer a similar account of events.[5] An alternative tradition, however, proceeds on the assumption of Iphigenia's death upon the altar at Aulis; it is found in Pindar[6] and, most famously, in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*.

Aeschylus keeps Artemis' motivations obscure; the omen of the eagles[7] prompts Calchas' oracle and the sacrifice itself.[8] Faced with the deterioration of the Achaean host,[9] Agamemnon agonises over how to proceed, in one of the most famous passages in all Greek tragedy (A. *Ag*. 205-17):[10]

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[1] Seaford (1994), p.12.
[2] See Gantz (1993), p.582.
[3] West (2003), p.75.
[4] ibid.
[5] Gantz (1993), pp.583-4. The *Catalogue* may initially have presented 'Iphimede' as being killed, with her replacement by a phantom a possible archaic interpolation.
[6] Pind. *Pyth*. 11.17-25.
[7] A. *Ag*. 109-20.
[8] Gantz (1993), pp.584-5.
[9] A. *Ag*. 192-7.
[10] 214-7 is marked by some textual controversy. Page (1972), used here, follows Denniston & Page (1957) in accepting Bamberger's emendation to περιόργωι σφ' in 216; the manuscripts give περιόργως, thus making it ambiguous as to whose desire is being termed 'lawful'. Denniston & Page (1957) *ad loc*. note the unparalleled nature of ὀργᾶι περιόργως, refuting the examples Fraenkel (1950) adduces in support of

ἄναξ δ’ ὁ πρέσβυς τόδ’ εἶπε φωνῶν· [ἀντ. δ] (205)

“βαρεῖα μὲν κὴρ τὸ μὴ πιθέσθαι,

βαρεῖα δ’ εἰ

τέκνον δαΐξω, δόμων ἄγαλμα,

μιαίνων παρθενοσφάγοισιν

ῥείθροις πατρῴιους χέρας πέλας βω- (210)

μοῦ· τί τῶνδ’ ἄνευ κακῶν;

πῶς λιπόναυς γένωμαι

ξυμμαχίας ἁμαρτών;

παυσανέμου γὰρ θυσίας

παρθενίου θ’ αἵματος ὀρ- (215)

γᾶι περιόργωι σφ’ ἐπιθυ-

μεῖν θέμις. εὖ γὰρ εἴη.”

The language conveys the intensity of the dilemma. The balanced βαρεῖα μὲν … βαρεῖα δ’ (206-7) demonstrates the closeness of the decision, the great weight both paternal and political duty exert on Agamemnon.[11] The horror of the deed is in no way occluded; Agamemnon deploys graphically violent language (δαΐξω, 208[12]; παρθενοσφάγοισιν / ῥείθροις, 209-10) and makes his affection and sense of duty as a father clear: τέκνον … δόμων ἄγαλμα (208); πατρῴιους χέρας (210). Equally, however, Agamemnon is not

following the manuscript text. West (1990) pp.178-81 objects that θέμις should apply to actions rather than desires, and, drawing on the presence of αὐδαι as a marginal variation for οργᾶι, proposes ὀργᾶι / περιόργως· <ἀπὸ δ’> αὐδᾶι / Θέμις. Raeburn & Thomas (2011) “tentatively prefer” this variation to the *OCT*, but I find it rather too radical, particularly as it totally reverses Agamemnon’s sentiments from approval to condemnation, and so follow Page (1972).

[11] Raeburn & Thomas (2011), *ad loc*.

[12] Raeburn & Thomas (2011) p.90 consider the term ‘brutal’.

immune to the pressures from the army; he is appalled at the prospect of 'deserting' the fleet and failing his allies (212-3), and sees their – perhaps alarmingly – intense desire for the sacrifice and the ensuing change of wind (ὀρ-/γᾶι **περι**όργωι … **ἐπι**θυ-/μεῖν, 215-7) as perfectly 'lawful' (θέμις, 217). The fatalist stamp of his concluding words (εὖ γὰρ εἴη, 217) is perhaps unsurprising, given his acknowledgement of the difficulties of both courses of action; as he himself laments, "which of these options is without evil?" (211).

Agamemnon's decision[13] to favour the fleet and sacrifice his child encounters a rather mixed reception. The Chorus immediately emphasise the impiety of his course of action - δυσσεβῆ …ἄναγνον ἀνίερον, 219-20 – and condemn Agamemnon's ultimate decision as a willingness 'to countenance every act of daring' (τὸ παντότολμον φρονεῖν, 221). Their subsequent account of events, as Agamemnon dares to become 'the sacrificer of his daughter' (θυτὴρ … θυγατρός, 224-5[14]), is highly pathetic. Whereas Agamemnon initially balked at staining 'a father's hands' (**πατρώιους** χέρας, 210) with Iphigenia's blood, now no heed is paid to her 'cries for her father' (κληδόνας **πατρώιους**, 228). This

[13] There has long been controversy about how much agency Agamemnon has in the decision over Iphigenia's death: Lesky (1966), pp.80-1. Lesky (1966) pp.81-2 sees the situation as Agamemnon technically exercising his free will, but under such an extreme weight of circumstance that all alternatives are effectively precluded. Dover (1973) pp.65-6 posits what these alternatives might have been - disbanding the fleet, dismissing Iphigenia, even suicide - but considers these evidently unacceptable to Agamemnon's understanding of duty and honour, and feels that the sacrifice itself was justified by the requirement to punish Troy on behalf of Zeus: pp.64-5. More recent scholars have seen Agamemnon's array of options as rather broader, and thus have found his resolution to perform the sacrifice more blameworthy. For example, Parker (2009) pp.132-3 notes that Agamemnon is not setting out for Troy as the consequence of an explicit and unambiguous command from Zeus, and argues that the king could thus have refused to sacrifice his daughter, despite the consequences for relations with his allies and his personal glory. Going even further, Sommerstein (2010) pp.260-1 sees Agamemnon's actions as informed by his ambitions for the prestige and material gain provided by the war, and interprets ξυμμαχίας ἁμαρτών (213) as expressing the king's fear, not of failing his allies, but of *losing* them; Raeburn & Thomas (2011) *ad loc*. support this reading. In Sommerstein's account, Agamemnon's ambitions make him willing to pay any price to have his war: p.261. This perhaps undervalues the clear anguish Agamemnon feels at the prospect of killing Iphigenia, and the language of the play itself suggests at least some element of compulsion in Agamemnon's choice. The precise phrase used for his moment of decision - ἀνάγκας ἔδυ λέπαδνον (218) – encapsulates the complexity of his ultimate resolution. ἀνάγκη signifies force, necessity, compulsion – Raeburn & Thomas (2011) *ad loc*. identify it here with Agamemnon's obligations to his allies - as does the yoke-metaphor of λέπαδνον, and yet δύναι can be used of both voluntary (A. fr. 361 M; S. *Ant*. 1217) and involuntary (A. *Ag*. 1011f.) motion; Dover (1973), pp.65-6. This ambiguity suits the situation; Agamemnon may be under enormous pressure to follow a particular course of action, but he nonetheless considers the two possibilities (see above), favours the army's case (214-7), and decides to act accordingly.
[14] Note the wordplay.

young woman's father (πατὴρ, 231) treats his daughter like an animal; he orders her to be brought to the altar like a goat (δίκαν χιμαίρας, 232), and has her forcefully 'bridled' to prevent any curses upon the household, (βίαι χαλινῶν, 238).[15] Even her virginity is conveyed through an animal metaphor; she is termed ἀταύρωτος (245), 'unbulled', as though a heifer.[16] The political collective which Agamemnon has ultimately chosen over his daughter's life plays its part as well; the bellicose Achaean chieftains (φιλόμαχοι βραβῆς, 230) join Agamemnon as 'sacrificers' (θυτή-/ρων, 240-1). Nonetheless, despite the ultimate triumph of such political actors and concerns, the Chorus' account of Iphigenia's final moments confronts us with domestic scenes. Iphigenia is gagged to prevent any cursing, but wields her gaze as a weapon (240-1).[17] Her pleading glances to the leaders of the Achaeans gain their force from memories of happier occasions in Agamemnon's house; Iphigenia sang in her father's halls (**πατρὸς** κατ' ἀνδρῶνας εὐτραπέζους, 244) to do loving honour (φίλως ἐτίμα) to her beloved father's (**πατρὸς** / φίλου, 245-6) offerings. Indeed, although Agamemnon slaughters this loving daughter like an animal, the account is evocative of another ritual occasion, that of marriage;[18] beyond the repeated references to Iphigenia's status as a nubile virgin,[19] there is a veil,[20] and a προτέλεια (227) to Artemis, which all Athenian women performed before their wedding.[21] In this case, however, it is of course to allow for martial endeavours rather than matrimony (προτέλεια **ναῶν,** 227); the key paternal duty of arranging a suitable

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[15] Chesi (2014b), pp.20-1.
[16] Goldhill (1984), p.31.
[17] ἔβαλλ' ἕκαστον θυτή-/ρων ἀπ' ὄμματος βέλει φιλοίκτωι (240-1); given the archery metaphor – Raeburn & Thomas (2011) *ad loc*. – and repeated references to Iphigenia's virginity in the passage – παρθενοσφάγοισιν (209); παρθενίου (214); παρθένειόν (229); ἀταύρωτος (245) – one wonders if Artemis is being evoked. This might be ironic, given the goddess' role in Iphigenia's demise, or, given Artemis' violent wrath at the death of young creatures (134-7; see Lloyd-Jones (1983), pp.87-8), perhaps foreshadows the vengeful violence which Iphigenia's death will in turn provoke.
[18] Chesi (2014b), pp.15-6.
[19] Zeitlin (1965), p.466.
[20] 239; Chesi (2014b), pp.15-6.
[21] Lloyd-Jones (1983), pp.94-5.

marriage for one's daughter[22] is travestied by these allusions to marital practice as Agamemnon makes a sacrifice of, rather than for, Iphigenia.[23] Agamemnon's choice to favour the 'war-loving' Achaeans and sacrifice his child is cast into sharper relief by this insistent focus upon the love and devotion shown by this self-same daughter. Agamemnon may not have chosen to prioritise his daughter, but he is emphatically still her father, and his actions against her are presented and judged in such a light.

Although the Chorus break off before the moment of sacrifice itself, there is no suggestion in the *Oresteia* that Artemis substituted a deer for Iphigenia;[24] the trilogy proceeds on the assumption that Iphigenia died at her father's hands. Nonetheless, Agamemnon never expresses any hesitation over or regret for his actions during his time onstage.[25] This king and father confronted the demand for the sacrifice as a strict dichotomy between paternal and political forces, and sided with public duty. The Chorus offer a more nuanced view on the conflict which the sacrifice permits; they react with horror to Agamemnon's actions, but nonetheless hail the Trojan War itself as a righteous punishment upon the Trojans for Paris' crimes against hospitality and Zeus Xenios.[26] Nonetheless, they comment bitterly upon the human cost to the Argives[27] of a war waged "for another man's wife" (ἀλλοτρίας διαὶ γυναι-/κός, 448-9), and remark on the extent of such feelings; the populace's speech is 'weighty with anger' (**βαρεῖα** δ' ἀστῶν φάτις σὺν κότωι, 456; cf. 206-7). Agamemnon faced a 'weighty' dilemma between familial and political pressures, but his apparent resolution in favour of the political has in fact permitted a conflict fought in part for personal motivations and at considerable cost to the

[22] Lacey (1968), p.107. See p.7.
[23] This is taken further in Euripides' *Iphigenia at Aulis*, which follows the *Cypria* in having Iphigenia lured to Aulis with the (false) prospect of marriage to Achilles (e.g. *IA* 98-100); this is discussed more fully below.
[24] Gantz (1993), p.585.
[25] Nussbaum (2001), pp.36-7. Agamemnon's appearance onstage is, admittedly, brief.
[26] 355-66, esp. 362ff.; Dover (1973), pp.64-5.
[27] Esp. 438ff.

families of his subjects. The ramifications of Agamemnon's decision ultimately prove disastrous for the king himself; Clytemnestra repeatedly invokes the murder of Iphigenia as motivation for and in defence of her actions.[28] Agamemnon's dilemma is an almost perfect example of this conflict of public and private pressures on the individual level in tragedy. He is forced to choose between the weighty demands of political duty and paternal love; his prioritisation of the former ultimately brings devastating consequences in both spheres.

Agamemnon is the first of several tragic accounts of the sacrifice. In addition to the lost *Iphigenia* of both Aeschylus and Sophocles,[29] in the latter's *Electra* Clytemnestra engages in self-justification through condemnation of Agamemnon's motives in sacrificing Iphigenia,[30] prompting an alternative account of events by Electra herself, in which Agamemnon's boast incurred Artemis' wrath and so forced him, reluctantly, to conduct the sacrifice.[31] Euripides' *Iphigenia amongst the Taurians* follows the tradition of Iphigenia's substitution and thus salvation at the hands of Artemis, although she becomes a priestess, rather than the goddess of earlier accounts.[32] Iphigenia herself recounts the sacrifice and its causes. Artemis will not release the Greek fleet from Artemis until Agamemnon fulfils his earlier vow to sacrifice the most beautiful thing the year produced: in this case, his daughter Iphigenia.[33] Iphigenia was lured to Aulis on the pretext of marriage to Achilles,[34] but, at the moment of sacrifice, substituted for a deer by the goddess and transplanted to the land of the Taurians.[35] Iphigenia's lengthier, highly

[28] 1412-20; 1432-3; 1525-9: all discussed further below.
[29] A. fr. 94 Radt & S. frr. 305-12 Radt respectively. See Gantz (1993), pp.585-6.
[30] Soph. *El*. 530-51.
[31] *El*. 566-74.
[32] This may be a Euripidean innovation; Gantz (1993), p.586.
[33] E. *IT* 20-4; here too, Euripides may have been innovating: Parker (2016), p.59.
[34] *IT* 25.
[35] *IT* 28-30.

emotive account of her experiences at Aulis[36] includes references to her supplication of Agamemnon,[37] condemnation of the 'marriage' he has used to lure her to the place,[38] and a moving account of the embraces and farewells from her relatives, particularly the infant Orestes, which she turned down in the belief she would return to Argos.[39]

2.2. Euripides' *Iphigenia at Aulis*

Of the extant tragedies, however, it is only Euripides' *Iphigenia at Aulis* which does not simply recount, but actively depicts the fateful events leading up to the sacrifice itself. In this late Euripidean play, Agamemnon is consistently characterised by the conflict between his duties and feelings as a father and as a political figure. Attempts by other characters within the play to reduce him to either his public or paternal role for their purposes usually meet with resistance. Much like Tyndareus, whose conduct as father casts a long shadow over the play, Agamemnon ultimately subordinates his role as father to political demands from beyond the family. This is all the more marked, however, because *Iphigenia at Aulis* is not a play about the breakdown of family bonds. Other blood ties depicted within the play, such as brotherhood and motherhood, are conspicuous for their power and endurance; the fortitude of these familial roles in the face of extrafamilial pressure casts into sharper relief the ultimate surrender of fatherhood to public demands. The play dwells specifically upon the challenges posed to fatherhood by public and political forces and the frequent shortcomings of fathers in enacting their paternal duties in the face of such pressures.

[36] *IT* 342-91.
[37] *IT* 361-2.
[38] *IT* 364-71.
[39] *IT* 372-7. For the significance of the infant Orestes in *IA*, see below.

As a prelude to the literary analysis of the play, something must be said on the work's notorious and extensive textual problems. The text of *Iphigenia at Aulis* has reached us in a poor state,[40] and scholiasts preserve a tradition that it was left unfinished by Euripides at the time of his death and produced posthumously, perhaps by his son Euripides.[41] The most severe problems concentrate at the beginning and end of the play. The prologue has come under longstanding suspicion,[42] largely for its unprecedented structure; it opens with anapaestic dialogue before moving into a more conventional iambic expository speech, then returning to further anapaestic exchange. A common solution has been to treat the extant prologue as a conflation of two separate prologues,[43] of which only one part[44] - if any[45] - is Euripides' work. The arguments against the extant prologue on structural and linguistic are not decisive, however.[46] For one thing, the prologues of *Alcestis* and *Ion* include iambics and anapaests, although they admittedly begin with the former.[47] *Rhesus* begins with anapaestic dialogue, but it is unlikely to be Euripidean.[48] Accepting the reconstruction of *Andromeda* as beginning with a form of

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[40] Stockert (1992), p.63.

[41] Kovacs (2003), pp.77-8; cf. schol. in Ar. *Ran.* 67d; Chantry (1999), p.14. In view of this possible circumstance, Kovacs aims to reconstruct not Euripides' incomplete (as he believes) text, but a theatrically viable text which could have been used in the First Performance (FP); p.77. This is a very sensible approach, although I would exclude far fewer lines from such a text than Kovacs (2003) ultimately does.

[42] Since Musgrave (1762): Stockert (1992), pp.66.

[43] Willink (1971), p.345; Collard & Morwood (2017), p.236, although they note that both parts could conceivably have come from Euripides.

[44] Stockert (1992) pp.77-9 follows Fraenkel (1956) in coming down in favour of the anapaests, citing greater linguistic difficulties in the iambic passage. Page (1934), p.140 believes the iambics to be Euripidean, the anapaests the works of a (poetically skilled) interpolator, and the conflation of the two the work of the editor. Kovacs (2003) p.81-3 also comes down in favour of the iambics, accepting 49-105 as the authentic remainder of part of the prologue used in FP and subsequently mangled somewhat in the process of adding the anapaests.

[45] Bain (1977) p.25 rejects the iambics, suspects the anapaests, and is drawn to the notion of Diggle (1971), p.180 that Euripides left no prologue.

[46] O'Connor-Visser (1987), p.125; Pietruczuk (2012), p.569. Willink (1971) p.359 points out that even the anapaests, although less usual in a Euripidean prologue than iambic exposition, are not by any stretch exceptionally anomalous linguistically.

[47] Willink (1971), p.360. Willink attempts to salvage the majority of the extant prologue by reordering it 49-96, 1-48, 97-163. This removes the difficulty of a Euripidean prologue opening with anapaestic dialogue, but generates its own problems; Bain (1977), pp.11-5 offers a persuasive account of the abrupt transitions and gaps in sense such reordering would produce, to the extent that there is little reason to choose it over the transmitted order.

[48] On the probable inauthenticity of *Rhesus*, see Fries (2014), pp.22-47.

anapaestic dialogue between the eponymous heroine and Echo does provide us with a clear Euripidean precedent.[49] However, it is not impossible that the unprecedented structure of the prologue represents not interpolation, but rather innovation and evolution by Euripides himself, writing at the end of a long career.[50] The anapaests themselves also play an important role; they serve to introduce the letter which is so crucial for the fate of Agamemnon and his family,[51] and also demonstrate with great verve Agamemnon's heightened emotional state.[52] Similarly, arguments against the inclusion of the iambics in the midst of the anapaestic dialogue are not conclusive. It has been remarked that answering the Old Man's inquiry - τί νέον παρὰ σοί, βασιλεῦ; (*IA* 43) - with a length expository speech going back to the birth of Leda's daughters[53] is horribly artificial and thus suspect.[54] Euripidean tragedy is not, however, completely lacking in questions receiving extensive answers with formal beginnings.[55] The iambic speech provides some important background on the Trojan War and the events of the play,[56] and thus offers the audience guidance as to this particular work's position within the complex array of varied myths on the events at Aulis and their background.[57] The fact that Agamemnon answers the Old Man's question by referring to the distant past need not necessarily be taken as a mark of irrelevance or long-windedness,[58] but rather to emphasise the complexity of the backdrop to the events of the play and Agamemnon's dilemma, which requires a sudden,

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[49] Fraenkel (1956), pp.303-4; Collard et al. (2004), p.156 point out that, at the very least, *Andromeda* is generally accepted as beginning with the anapaests quoted at Ar. *Thesm.* 1065-72.
[50] Pietruczuk (2012), p.571; Knox (1979a), p.278.
[51] Fraenkel (1956), p.295. Torrance (2013), pp.159-60 also raises the intriguing but necessarily rather speculative possibility that Agamemnon, in rewriting his letter to alter the course of the events, represents the tragic poet attempting to innovate against the tradition.
[52] Knox (1979a) p.278.
[53] 49-110.
[54] Fraenkel (1956), pp.298-9; Willink (1971) pp.344-5, who objects not to the text *per se* but rather its ordering. Collard & Morwood (2017), p.241 feel the Old Man is “unconvincingly ignored” during Agamemnon’s exposition.
[55] cf. *IA* 697ff., *Or.* 866ff.; Knox (1979a), p.279.
[56] Stockert (1992), pp.73-4, although note Stockert's own greater scepticism towards the iambics on linguistic grounds.
[57] Knox (1979a), p.278.
[58] *pace* Fraenkel (1956), pp.298-9.

somewhat startling switch to the traditional prologue speech to be explained properly.[59] Neither portion of the prologue can be athetized on conclusive, objective grounds, and both serve a dramaturgical purpose, so for the purpose of this thesis the transmitted prologue is accepted as largely authentic.

The main obstacle to accepting the transmitted prologue as entirely authentic is the seeming inconsistency of 107ff. with 124ff.[60] The Old Man's question as to how Achilles will take news of his name being used to bring about the false marriage plot[61] seems unnecessary in light of Agamemnon's apparent revelation at 106f. that only he, Menelaus, Calchas and Odysseus have any knowledge of the scheme. This is more of a redundancy than true inconsistency, however, and may be seen as serving a useful dramatic purpose in emphasising the secrecy of the oracle demanding Iphigenia's sacrifice.[62] This does, however, draw us into the wider problem of whether Calchas' oracle was in fact delivered secretly or to the army as a whole; both possibilities have textual support within the play, but the former rather more so.[63] While 106-10 are very suspect,

[59] This would not be the only instance of Euripides drawing attention to the artificiality of the traditional dramatic prologue; the Nurse's justifications for delivering a prologue speech in response to the Tutor's challenge (Eur. *Med.* 57-8) offer a 'realistic' motivation for an entirely artificial tragic convention; Mastronarde (2002), pp.174-5. The artificiality of that same convention is thus emphasised by this attempt to evade it. Winnington-Ingram (2003) pp.50-3 provides a selection of examples of Euripides 'taking aim' at various tragic conventions, including the three actor rule and the Chorus' limited capacity for action.
[60]Collard & Morwood (2017), pp.241-3 offers a helpful overview of the issues.
[61] 124-6.
[62] Knox (1979a) pp.281-2 defends the presence of both passages on these grounds. Bain (1977), pp.16-7 sees it as a pointless ambiguity, raised only to be resolved very quickly, but this does not seem entirely fair. A secret oracle would represent an innovation upon the account of events in, for example, *Agamemnon* (A. *Ag*.214-7 suggests that the army is aware of the terms of the oracle, although 157 technically states only that Calchas offered his interpretation to the commanders); it would not be unthinkable to foreground this circumstance, particularly given Agamemnon's later desperation to preserve the secrecy of the oracle (e.g. 518ff.).
[63] Pietruczuk (2012) p.58 lists 106-7, 414-39, and 518-35 as suggesting that the oracle is secret, and 95-6, 513-4, 817-8, 1259-75 and 1345-8 as suggesting that it is known to the army. However, Collard & Morwood (2017) p.242 note that it is eminently plausible, particularly in light of 518ff., that Talthybius never actually made the pronouncement of the army's dissolution. The army clearly do know about the oracle by 1345-8, but technically 513-4 and 1259-75 only show Agamemnon's fear of their potential action; they do not confirm any knowledge on the part of the soldiery. Menelaus and Agamemnon engage in anxious discussion at 518ff. of the dangerous possibility of Odysseus revealing the oracle to the fleet (Willink (1971) pp.363's suggestion that references to Odysseus at 528ff. refer merely to his *reminding* the army seems very strained). We need only assume that he (or possibly Calchas) has done so by 1345-8; this is no way precludes the oracle being initially secret. 414-39 also support the secrecy of the oracle; Willink (1971),

they are not irredeemable,[64] and 124ff. represents a useful redundancy more than a true inconsistency. The secret nature of the oracle, at least at first, is thus the most sensible conclusion to draw from both the prologue and the play's text more widely.

The play's ending is also beset with textual problems.[65] The lines from 1578 until the end of the play are marked by considerable linguistic problems and metrical difficulties,[66] and are in a different, later hand in the manuscript.[67] Their current form is often taken as the result of a botched Byzantine restoration of a damaged manuscript,[68] and they are almost certainly not to be accepted in their transmitted form.[69] The question remains, however, of whether lines 1532-77, which they attempt to complete, are themselves an authentic part of the play. Ending with a messenger speech would be highly unusual for Euripides,[70] and the lines themselves have been considered an early (potentially C4th) interpolation on linguistic and metrical grounds.[71] This leads many scholars to place the play's original conclusion at or even before 1531;[72] this frees us of the exodus' problems, and means that the play concludes on the assumption that the sacrifice takes place, thus granting greater weight to Iphigenia's decision to die, Clytemnestra's threats for the future etc.[73] This is a much neater ending, but these fairly

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pp.362-3 sees these lines as gaining irony from the soldiers knowing more than the Messenger, but Kovacs (2003) p.80 offers a more convincing reading of these lines as deriving their irony from the soldiers' *ignorance* (he thus deletes them as interpolations based on the secret oracle). Although I am more sympathetic to the presence of the secret oracle within the play, it is notable that Diggle (1993) also casts the strongest doubt upon these lines, and I am reluctant to accord authenticity to them, although Agamemnon has to find out about his family's arrival somehow by his speech at 440-68.

[64] Collard & Morwood (2017) *ad loc*., for example, note the attraction of Vitelli's conjecture Μενέλεως <ἐγώ θ’>. ἃ δ’ οὐ / καλῶς [ἔγνων] τότ’, αὖθις.

[65] Stockert (1992), pp.79-80.

[66] Stockert (1992), p.84.

[67] Page (1934), pp.194-5.

[68] Page (1934), pp.196-9.

[69] Diggle (1993) *ad loc.*

[70] Stockert (1992), p.83. Then again, so is the move from anapaestic dialogue to iambic exposition in the prologue; here too Euripides could have been innovating.

[71] Kovacs (2003), p.98; Stockert (1992), pp.85; Page (1934), pp.192-6, although he commends the C4th interpolator for their poetic skill and knowledge of Euripides; p.193.

[72] Page (1934), p.196 and Kovacs (2003), p.98 advocate 1531 as the ending; Stockert (1992), pp.86-7 entertains the possibility. Collard & Morwood (2017) pp.621-4 advocate ending at 1509; like Diggle (1993), they set little stock in the choral lyrics at 1510-31.

[73] Stockert (1992), pp.81-2; Kovacs (2003), p.98.

subjective grounds are not quite enough to dismiss conclusively the exodus as we have it. A formally unorthodox exodus, in which an apparent conclusion is overturned by the unexpected appearance of a messenger, both matches the novel structure of the prologue and has considerable resonance with the frequent reversals and changes of mind within the play as a whole.[74] The possibility of an alternative ending for the play, which also follows the longstanding mythical tradition of Iphigenia's salvation, is presented by Aelian's quotation of a fragment of Euripides' "Iphigenia" (sic), in which Artemis recounts the substitution of a deer,[75] but it has not been preserved in the manuscript tradition of the play, and linguistic difficulties which argue against authenticity have been suggested.[76] The manuscript ending, for all its deformities, has the considerable advantage over a *deus ex machina* that the Messenger's report of Iphigenia's wondrous fate can be questioned by Clytemnestra, as indeed it is.[77] A potentially deceitful messenger speech at the end of the play would form a rather neat counterpart to the deceptive letter which Agamemnon seeks so desperately to countermand at its opening; although the audience would be aware of the tradition which vindicates the speech, Clytemnestra's scepticism is well justified by her experiences in the play.[78] The considerable injuries done in transmission make accepting the exodus as presented impossible, and encourages considerable caution in accepting the exodus at all; for the purposes of this thesis I will treat the play as ending at 1531. Nonetheless, the exodus'

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[74] See below.

[75] Aelian *On the Nature of Animals* 7.39:
ὁ δὲ Εὐριπίδης ἐν τῇ Ἰφιγενείᾳ
ἔλαφον δ' Ἀχαιῶν χερσὶν ἐνθήσω φίλαις
κεροῦσσαν, ἣν σφάζοντες αὐχήσουσι σὴν
σφάζειν θυγατέρα

[76] Kovacs (2002) p.161 follows Page (1934), p.200 in particularly objecting to αὐχήσουσι - the future of αὐχέω is not found in C5th/4th Greek - and the use of φίλαις, condemned by Page as "the adjective of a much inferior poet"! These objections do not seem insurmountable, but combined with the complete absence of this ending from the (admittedly troubled) manuscript tradition they do rather stack the odds against the authenticity of Aelian's quotation as a fragment of this play.

[77] 1616-8.

[78] Chant (1986), pp.88-9.

thematic resonances with the play proper make excising it completely and ending at 1531 a less appealing prospect than has sometimes been thought, considering the interest of the scene which has sadly reached us in such a mutilated form.[79]

Other textual issues are examined as part of the discussion of the passages themselves, but this overview of the key problem areas should convey the textually conservative approach I will be employing in discussion of *Iphigenia at Aulis*. For all its problems, the transmitted text of the play is dramatically workable and frequently very powerful.[80] While it would be foolhardy to disregard the work's many textual questions entirely, I feel that there is rather less in the play which absolutely demands excision than has sometimes been supposed, and as such err on the side of caution in accepting proposed deletions. The work's textual problems certainly do not undermine the literary power and interest of its depiction of Agamemnon as a desperately conflicted father, to which we now turn.

2.2.1. Agamemnon the conflicted father

Agamemnon in the *Iphigenia at Aulis* is perhaps the most explicitly and extensively conflicted father-figure in extant Greek tragedy. His situation is summarised succinctly in Iphigenia's final exchange with her mother (*IA* 1454-6):

Ιφ. πατέρα τὸν ἀμὸν μὴ στύγει, πόσιν γε σόν.

Κλ. δεινοὺς ἀγῶνας διὰ σὲ δεῖ κεῖνον δραμεῖν. 1455

Ιφ. ἄκων μ' ὑπὲρ γῆς Ἑλλάδος διώλεσεν.

[79] Chant (1986), p.91 n.5 offers a similar interpretation, seeing the exodus' problems as the result of faulty transmission rather than outright interpolation.
[80] Collard & Morwood (2017), p.58.

Agamemnon is πατήρ and πόσις; he is subject to various roles and responsibilities within his family. Nonetheless, these do not achieve primacy; he ultimately kills his daughter because of extra-familial, political factors - ὑπὲρ γῆς Ἑλλάδος (1456) - despite his (apparent) personal feelings on the matter: ἄκων (1456).[81] By subordinating his paternal and familial role to the demands of politics and the world beyond the family, Agamemnon destroys not only his daughter but the harmony of his family as a whole, paving the way for Clytemnestra's dark hints at his unhappy end - δεινοὺς ἀγῶνας - familiar from epic and tragic tradition.

The first scene in which we see Agamemnon alone with his dilemma[82] demonstrates the nexus of pressures under which he acts and against which he struggles. Agamemnon has resisted his brother's attempts to coerce him into returning to his initial decision to sacrifice Iphigenia, but the news of his daughter and wife's arrival at Aulis has cast him into despair.[83] He deplores his situation and the exigencies it forces upon him: ἐς οἷ' ἀνάγκης ζεύγματ' ἐμπεπτώκαμεν (443). The differences from Aeschylus are as important as the similarities; whereas the Aeschylean Agamemnon took conscious action in the face of necessity - ἀνάγκας **ἔδυ** λέπαδνον (A. *Ag*. 218)[84] - here Agamemnon has simply *fallen* into the same situation. Instead of making a conscious decision and accepting the concomitant responsibility, Agamemnon here surrenders to circumstance; he attributes the failure of his schemes to a δαίμων (*IA* 44). Even his emotional response to the crisis in which he finds himself is governed by concerns over his public persona

[81] For discussion of Agamemnon's responsibility, and the inevitability or otherwise of the sacrifice, see below.
[82] 440-68.
[83] As discussed above, I consider the current form of the Messenger's speech (414-39) an interpolation, although replacing an earlier speech in which Agamemnon was informed of the arrival of Clytemnestra and Iphigenia.
[84] Stockert (1992), pp.328-9

and role in society, and his dismay on this point merits quotation at some length (446-53):

> ἡ δυσγένεια δ’ ὡς ἔχει τι χρήσιμον·
> καὶ γὰρ δακρῦσαι ῥαιδίως αὐτοῖς ἔχει
> ἅπαντά τ’ εἰπεῖν· τῶι δὲ γενναίωι φύσιν
> ἄνολβα πάντα· προστάτην δὲ τοῦ βίου
> τὸν ὄγκον ἔχομεν τῶι τ’ ὄχλωι δουλεύομεν. 450
> ἐγὼ γὰρ ἐκβαλεῖν μὲν αἰδοῦμαι δάκρυ,
> τὸ μὴ δακρῦσαι δ’ αὖθις αἰδοῦμαι τάλας,
> ἐς τὰς μεγίστας συμφορὰς ἀφιγμένος.

Agamemnon's envy of the lowly echoes his remarks in the prologue,[85] although his focus here is not upon the relative safety of a humble social position,[86] but rather the freedom it affords. The lowly may express themselves fully, in word - ἅπαντά τ’ εἰπεῖν (448) - and in deed: δακρῦσαι ῥαιδίως (447). Conversely, although noblemen such as Agamemnon ostensibly occupy positions of power and responsibility, he claims they are in fact subordinate to the dignity demanded by their position - προστάτην δὲ τοῦ βίου / τὸν ὄγκον ἔχομεν (449-50)[87] - and, paradoxically, enslaved by the lowly mob which they appear to rule: τῶι τ’ ὄχλωι δουλεύομεν (450). Agamemnon personally is trapped between public and private duty. He is ashamed both at the prospect of weeping and of not weeping, with the repetition of αἰδοῦμαι in exactly the same metrical position bringing balance to his contrasting utterances; he is poised between two equal and equally unhappy possibilities. His situation is once again described in terms of motion - ἀφιγμένος (453) - as

[85] 16-27; Collard & Morwood (2017), p.362.
[86] ἀκίνδυνον / βίον (16-7).
[87] Agamemnon is termed πρόστατης at 373, although this line is corrupt and athetized by e.g. Diggle (1993), Collard & Morwood (2017).

Agamemnon depicts himself trapped in an inexorable progression of misfortunes rather than taking decisive action towards specific goals.

For all his agonising and apparent fatalism - εἶέν (454)[88] - Agamemnon decides upon the sacrifice; his concerns are for how to face his wife in the midst of his scheme,[89] about which he harbours few moral illusions: ἡμᾶς ὄντας εὑρήσει κακούς (459). Despite deciding upon a course of action, he is still tormented by the thought of his daughter's reaction to her fate: οἶμαι γάρ νιν ἱκετεύσειν τάδε· / Ὦ πάτερ, ἀποκτενεῖς με; (462-3).[90] The future tense ἀποκτενεῖς echoes Agamemnon's earlier resolution *against* killing Iphigenia in his rejection of Menelaus' demands that he do so: ἀμὰ δ' οὐκ **ἀποκτενῶ** 'γὼ τέκνα (396). His reversal has made a mockery of his previous determination, and yet Agamemnon ends his monologue much as he began it, by distancing himself from responsibility for his actions. Instead he rails against *Paris* as the one responsible for this state of affairs: αἰαῖ, τὸν Ἑλένης ὥς μ' ἀπώλεσεν γάμον / γήμας ὁ Πριάμου Πάρις, **ὃς εἴργασται τάδε** (467-8). This is not strictly untrue; Paris' abduction of Helen did set in motion the sequence of events which led to the gathering of the Greek army in Aulis.[91] However, Agamemnon's frequent abnegations of responsibility for his actions are called into question by the specific circumstances of the situation at Aulis. Calchas' oracle is explicitly framed as a choice (89-93):

> Κάλχας δ' ὁ μάντις ἀπορίαι κεχρημένοις
> ἀνεῖλεν Ἰφιγένειαν ἣν ἔσπειρ' ἐγὼ 90
> Ἀρτέμιδι θῦσαι τῆι τόδ' οἰκούσηι πέδον,
> καὶ πλοῦν τ' ἔσεσθαι καὶ κατασκαφὰς Φρυγῶν

[88] Cf. **εὖ** γὰρ εἴη (A. *Ag*. 217); Agamemnon here is (perhaps wisely) less optimistic than his Aeschylean counterpart.
[89] 454-5.
[90] Iphigenia does in fact supplicate Agamemnon at 1216ff.
[91] 71-7.

θύσασι, μὴ θύσασι δ’ οὐκ εἶναι τάδε.

There is no particular threat of punishment from the goddess, nor mention of hardships befalling the trapped fleet as in the *Oresteia*;[92] failure to sacrifice Iphigenia has repercussions solely within the political sphere, as the expedition against Troy will not proceed. Menelaus accuses Agamemnon of considerable enthusiasm for the expedition and political ambition,[93] but this supposed ambition turns to fear of the army and its potential for violent action even against the rest of his family.[94] However, in contrast to other fathers in Euripidean narratives of sacrifice, who reject the notion of their children being sacrificed despite the political and public implications,[95] Agamemnon succumbs to the pressures of factors beyond the family - be it personal ambition for political prominence or fear of the Greek host - despite his clear paternal feelings. For all that he attempts to deny responsibility for Iphigenia's death, his political ambitions lead to the situation in which her sacrifice is necessary[96] and his unwillingness - justified or otherwise - to challenge or defy the passionate lust for war on the part of the assembled army suggest a surrender of the paternal role to extra-familial, political pressures. Agamemnon is responsible for his daughter's death, despite his repeated attempts to deny it.

Much like his reaction to news of her arrival, Agamemnon's first encounter with Iphigenia is also characterised by his conflict between paternal and political

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[92] cf. A. *Ag*. 192-200.
[93] 337-43, discussed more fully below. Menelaus' claims contrast with Agamemnon's own account of his acquisition of the leadership as a favour to Menelaus (95), but Agamemnon does not refute the accusations: Luschnig (1988), p.13.
[94] 1259-68, discussed below.
[95] The key examples are Creon, at *Pho*. 963-4, and Demophon, at *Hcld.* 410-24, discussed below at ch.3.2.2. and 4.2.3. respectively.
[96] Siegel (1981), pp.257-8.

responsibilities. The meeting is pregnant with painful ironies,[97] largely born of the extensive emphasis upon his role as a father. Iphigenia's intense love for her father,[98] remarked upon by Clytemnestra - φιλοπάτωρ δ' ἀεί (638) - is apparent from her first words. She expresses her desire for an embrace with intense and remarkably physical language - πρὸς στέρνα πατρὸς στέρνα τἀμὰ προσβαλῶ (632) - and addresses him as πάτερ repeatedly throughout the exchange.[99] She shows concern for Agamemnon's distress,[100] and, when he remarks that her shrewd words have upset him, offers to speak nonsense to please him ([Αγ.] συνετὰ λέγουσα μᾶλλον εἰς οἶκτόν μ' ἄγεις. / Ιφ. ἀσύνετά νυν ἐροῦμεν, εἰ σέ γ' εὐφρανῶ, 653-4).[101] Iphigenia's focus is familial; she dismisses the war[102] and urges Agamemnon to remain with his family - μέν', ὦ πάτερ, κατ' οἶκον ἐπὶ τέκνοις σέθεν (656) - or, failing that, to hasten back to them from Troy once matters are properly resolved.[103] Agamemnon's distress at seeing Iphigenia,[104] try as he might to conceal its causes,[105] suggests the sincerity of his paternal affection and distress at his proposed course of action. However, even here, as he greets his beloved daughter, Agamemnon is not simply a father: πόλλ' ἀνδρὶ βασιλεῖ καὶ στρατηλάτηι μέλει (645). This is Agamemnon's problem in the play as a whole. His political position confronts him with challenges and pressures which cannot be reconciled with his paternal role;

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[97] Luschnig (1988), p.21.
[98] ibid.
[99] 640, 642, 662, 664, 656, 670, 673, 676, excluding 635 and 652, for which Diggle (1993) advocates deletion.
[100] 644.
[101] This light-hearted willingness to change rhetoric for her father's sake takes on darker significance later in the play, when Iphigenia embraces Agamemnon's Panhellenic rhetoric as justification for her death; see below.
[102] ὄλοιντο λόγχαι καὶ τὰ Μενέλεω κακά (658).
[103] σπεῦδ' ἐκ Φρυγῶν μοι, θέμενος εὖ τἀκεῖ, πάτερ (672). This compromise between her desires as Agamemnon's daughter and more public concerns perhaps foreshadows Iphigenia's more comprehensive submission to her notion of public interest later in the play.
[104] 644, 650, 655 etc.
[105] 651, 685-90.

Agamemnon's individual feelings as a man are ultimately subordinate to the demands placed upon him as a public and political leader.

Agamemnon's final speech[106] fully encapsulates the array of private and public pressures to which he is subject, and makes explicit his difficulties in attempting to reconcile the former to the latter. It is preceded by an impassioned plea for mercy from Iphigenia, in which family and fatherhood loom large. She supplicates Agamemnon,[107] and recalls childhood scenes in the family home. She was Agamemnon's first child: πρώτη σ' ἐκάλεσα πατέρα καὶ σὺ παῖδ' ἐμέ (1220). Iphigenia casts herself and Agamemnon as exercising almost a definitive function upon one another; she made him a father in language, much as he made her his child, in both a linguistic and biological sense. She reminisces about how she used to sit upon the knees which she now clutches in supplication,[108] and, in response to Agamemnon's questions about her future life as a married woman, clung to his cheek[109] and imagined her care for him in his old age: πόνων τιθηνοὺς ἀποδιδοῦσά σοι τροφάς (1230).[110] This anecdote serves to confront Agamemnon with his corruption of the paternal role. He has distorted the father's traditional role as an arranger of his daughter's marriage to bring about Iphigenia's death,[111] and in so doing denies himself the consolation and care in old age which fathering devoted children should provide. Iphigenia's speech draws upon the full array of family bonds in her defence; her pleas invoke Agamemnon's father and grandfather,[112]

[106] 1259-75.
[107] ἱκετηρίαν δὲ γόνασιν ἐξάπτω σέθεν / τὸ σῶμα τοὐμόν (1216-7).
[108] γόνασι σοῖσι σῶμα δοῦσ' ἐμὸν (1221).
[109] 1226-7. The chin is of course, like the knees, one of the body parts which the suppliant physically touches, or, if performing a verbal 'figurative' supplication, invokes: Gould (1973), p.77.
[110] For the importance of children providing care to their aged parents in classical Greece, see the Introduction.
[111] e.g. 98-100.
[112] 1233.

her mother Clytemnestra,[113] and her brother Orestes.[114] Even her reference to the cause for which she is meant to die emphasises the personal and familial over the public, speaking not of Troy or the Greeks but simply the marriage of Helen and Paris: τί μοι μέτεστι τῶν Ἀλεξάνδρου γάμων / Ἑλένης τε; (1236-7). Iphigenia's appeals to Agamemnon emphasises his role as a father and a family man almost exclusively.

Agamemnon's response, conversely, acknowledges his position as a father, but sets it in the context of the wider political pressures which have operated upon him throughout the play and are driving him to such drastic action against his own child. Despite his intention to sacrifice Iphigenia, he makes explicit his paternal sentiment: φιλῶ τ' ἐμαυτοῦ τέκνα· μαινοίμην γὰρ ἄν (1256).[115] His statement of the situation as he understands it, however, makes clear the dilemma in which he is caught: δεινῶς δ' ἔχει μοι ταῦτα τολμῆσαι, γύναι, / δεινῶς δὲ καὶ μή· ταὐτὰ γὰρ πρᾶξαί με δεῖ (1257-8). The balanced δεινῶς ... δεινῶς echoes his Aeschylean counterpart's language - βαρεῖα ... βαρεῖα (A. *Ag*. 206-7)[116] - but the wordplay points to Agamemnon's decision: **δει**νῶς ... **δεῖ**. Both options may be terrible, but one is also necessary. Powers and pressures from beyond the family largely inform Agamemnon's resolve; the army, whose scale Agamemnon emphasises - **ὅσον** στράτευμα (1259); ἄνακτες ... **ὅσοι** (1260) - cannot sail against Troy without the sacrifice of Iphigenia.[117] Agamemnon's description of the army's intentions employs the rhetoric of war against the barbarians which would be at home in

[113] 1234.
[114] 1240-8; for more extensive discussion, including issues of authenticity, see below.
[115] Agamemnon's madness has been something of a theme in the play up to this point; the Old Man in the prologue observes that, in his distress, Agamemnon is little short of madness - κἀκ τῶν ἀπόρων / οὐδενὸς ἐνδεῖς μὴ οὐ μαίνεσθαι. (41-2) - while Agamemnon will reject the notion that his change of heart against Menelaus' scheme makes him mad: εἰ δ' ἐγώ, γνοὺς πρόσθεν οὐκ εὖ, μετεθέμην εὐβουλίαν, / μαίνομαι; (389-90). Notably, Iphigenia remarked a few lines previously that a death-wish is madness: μαίνεται δ' ὃς εὔχεται / θανεῖν· (1251-2). Agamemnon loves his children, but also, as the element of self-preservation operative in his thought makes clear (see below), he does not wish to die because of the threat posed by the Greek army, which is itself driven by a certain madness (1264). It is his professed sanity which will prove fatal for Iphigenia.
[116] Stockert (1992), p.552.
[117] 1263-2; cf. 89-93.

contemporary political discourse;[118] Troy is barbarian soil,[119] and the expedition must avenge the abduction of Greek women.[120]

Despite such "public" rhetoric, however, Agamemnon presents his actions as, in a somewhat desperate fashion, aiming at the wellbeing of his family: οἳ [i.e. the Greek army] τὰς ἐν Ἄργει παρθένους κτενοῦσί μου / ὑμᾶς τε κἀμέ, θέσφατ' εἰ λύσω θεᾶς (1267-8). Although the probability of such action on the part of the army has been questioned,[121] the threats of violence Achilles faces from his own Myrmidons should the sacrifice fail to take place[122] grant a certain credibility to Agamemnon's fear. More importantly for our purposes, however, this prediction presents Agamemnon as at least claiming that his actions are still, in part, motivated by his paternal role; if he does not kill one daughter, his other daughters back in Argos - as well as the rest of his family at Aulis - will perish.[123] This adds a certain piquancy to the plural τέκνα at the opening of the speech; Agamemnon is not the father of Iphigenia alone, and thus his paternal role cannot hinge solely on her wellbeing. Family motivations are not, however, uppermost. Agamemnon rejects the influence of his brother and instead casts himself as beholden to the demands of Greece: οὐ Μενέλεώς με καταδεδούλωται, τέκνον, ... ἀλλ' Ἑλλάς (1269-71, with omissions).[124] Once again, we have the language of slavery, of subjugation,[125] and of necessity.[126] The war is presented as in the cause of Greek freedom,[127] but not Agamemnon's, whose wishes

[118] Mitchell (2007), p.xx.
[119]βαρβάρων ... χθόνα (1265).
[120] λέκτρων ἁρπαγὰς Ἑλληνικῶν (1266). This motivation is an established component of Panhellenic discourse; Hdt. 1.1-5 offers an extensive narrative of reciprocal abductions of women as a possible cause for the historical antipathy of Greek and barbarian, although Herodotus himself is sceptical of its historicity; Markantonatos (2011), pp.214-5.
[121] Siegel (1981), pp.262-3.
[122] 1351-3.
[123] It is perhaps worth recalling that this matches one of Clytemnestra's suggestions for a valid motivation for Agamemnon to sacrifice Iphigenia at E. *El.* 1025-6: τἄλλα τ' ἐκσῴζων τέκνα / ἔκτεινε πολλῶν μίαν ὕπερ ...; Rutherford (2011), pp.95-6.
[124] Saïd (1989), pp. 369-70.
[125] ἥσσονες καθέσταμεν (1272).
[126] δεῖ (1271, 1273).
[127] 1273-4.

are irrelevant: κἂν θέλω κἂν μὴ θέλω (1271).[128] Agamemnon, in this final[129] appearance upon stage, reaches the climax of the conflict to which he has been subject throughout the play. Although never totally renouncing his role and responsibility as a father, he ultimately subordinates his paternal duty, and indeed his personal agency, to the demands of politics and the Greek army.

Iphigenia at first laments her fate and rails against Agamemnon for refusing to prevent the sacrifice.[130] However, in a remarkable turn of events, she moves to embrace her death, citing in large part the importance of the war to the wellbeing of Greece as a justification for doing so.[131] The earnestness or otherwise of the Panhellenism within the play is a matter of some debate. Many of the Panhellenic ideas employed by the characters within the play reflect notions present in classical Greek political thought and rhetoric; the theme of 'war against the barbarian' had considerable symbolic potency,[132] and preaching the unity of the Greeks in pursuit of this aim was a popular topic for oratory.[133] The Trojan War itself gained considerable cachet as one of the first Panhellenic triumphs over the barbarian.[134] While the play has been taken as espousing serious and sincere Panhellenic sentiment,[135] the use of such rhetoric is more convincingly seen as undercut by inconstancy or intense irony. Menelaus' Panhellenic enthusiasm vanishes very quickly as he changes his mind about the sacrifice,[136] while Agamemnon does not espouse any Panhellenic enthusiasm until his final speech,[137] and even then much of it rings rather

[128] Vellacott (1975), pp.175-6 remarks on the irony of Agamemnon's 'enslavement' to the cause of Greek freedom.
[129] That is to say, final textually secure appearance; see above for discussion of the exodus.
[130] ὁ δὲ τεκών με τὰν τάλαιναν ... οἴχεται προδοὺς ἔρημον. (1312-4); φονεύομαι διόλλυμαι / σφαγαῖσιν ἀνοσίοισιν ἀνοσίου πατρός (1317-8).
[131] 1377-401; Gibert (1995), p.223.
[132] Mitchell (2007), p.11. cf. e.g. A. *Persians*, Pind. *Pyth*. 1.72-8 etc.
[133] e.g. Lys. 33, Isoc. 4.
[134] Saïd (1989), p.362-3. cf. Isoc. 10.67; X.*Hell*. 3.4.3, where Agesilaus wishes to include a sacrifice at Aulis at the outset of his expedition against the Persians in imitation of Agamemnon.
[135] e.g. Mellert-Hoffmann (1969), pp. 89-90; Foley (1985), pp.97-9; Markantonatos (2011), pp.217-8.
[136] Saïd (1989), pp.367-8; for a fuller discussion of this change of heart, see below.
[137] Saïd (1989), p.369.

hollow.[138] Iphigenia justifies her change of mind and willingness to perish in Panhellenic terms, but her rhetoric, although perfectly reputable in itself, is undermined by the circumstances.[139] She is willing to die for the freedom of the Greeks, to whom Agamemnon considers himself enslaved;[140] she will not allow Achilles to die for the sake of a single woman by opposing her sacrifice,[141] but this sacrifice will of course unleash a war in which countless men will die for the sake of one woman, Helen.[142] The conduct of the Greek army itself makes it even more difficult to accept the play's Panhellenism at face value. Agamemnon attempts to justify his decision by claiming that the Panhellenic army must prevent crimes against Greek women by barbarians,[143] but also fears that it will murder his own daughters in Argos.[144] The army is driven by a form of madness and lust for war,[145] and indeed all Greece is sick.[146] While we need not take the play as hostile to Panhellenism *per se*, the idea's application to the events of the drama and the Trojan War which will result from them is undermined and problematised by inconsistency and irony.[147]

Nonetheless, although undercut by circumstances, Iphigenia does use Panhellenic rhetoric in support of her ultimate decision to die. Her extreme change of heart and seemingly inconsistent characterisation has prompted comment since Aristotle.[148] This is not entirely fair. Iphigenia's change of heart is only the culmination of a series of

[138] Markantonatos (2011), pp.209-10. For example, see above for discussion of the irony of Agamemnon feeling 'enslaved' to the cause of Greek liberty.
[139] Mitchell (2007), pp.18-9; Rutherford (2011), p.94.
[140] 1401; 450, 1271; Saïd (1989), p.370.
[141] 1392-4.
[142] Saïd (1989), p.373; Luschnig (1988), pp52-3. Iphigenia is ἑλέπτολις (1476, 1511), an epithet only otherwise applied to Helen (A. *Ag*. 689); Gibert (1995), p.252.
[143] 1274-5.
[144] 1267.
[145] Markantonatos (2012), p.209. See 808-9, 1264ff.
[146] 411.
[147] Saïd (1989), p.367.
[148] τοῦ δὲ ἀνωμάλου ἡ ἐν Αὐλίδι Ἰφιγένεια· οὐδὲν γὰρ ἔοικεν ἡ ἱκετεύουσα τῇ ὑστέρᾳ. (Arist. *Poetics* 1454a31-3); Gibert (1995), p.228, Knox (1979b), pp.243-4.

considerable changes of position on the part of the play's characters.[149] Her *volte-face* has been explained in terms of a considered acceptance of her ineluctable fate,[150] a genuine enthusiasm for death in a noble cause,[151] or even an effort to save Achilles motivated by her romantic feelings for him.[152] However, it is significant for our purposes that Iphigenia's change of heart prompts her to embrace and repeat her father's rhetoric, Panhellenic[153] and otherwise.[154] Agamemnon's ultimate subordination of his paternal duty towards Iphigenia to the pressures exerted upon him by public and political forces is cast into the sharpest relief by the fact that Iphigenia herself remains in many ways such a loyal daughter even after his decision to sacrifice her.[155] Iphigenia not only repeats Agamemnon's rhetoric on the freedom of Greece, but also his claim of unwillingness,[156] and even pleads his case to Clytemnestra.[157] She makes good upon her earlier, light-hearted offer to alter her rhetoric for Agamemnon;[158] indeed, if the circumstances of her demise encourage a more jaundiced view of the use of grandiose Panhellenic rhetoric in the play, she really does speak ἀσύνετα for her father's sake.

Throughout the play, Agamemnon is confronted with the conflicting demands of his paternal and political roles. Although he ultimately subordinates his role as father to the demands of his public position and the pressures exerted by the Greek army, he never completely relinquishes his role as father. It is the constant juxtaposition of and conflict

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[149] Gibert (1995), p.202; Chant (1986), pp.83-4.
[150] Gibert (1995), pp.249-50.
[151] Foley (1985), pp.98-9.
[152] Smith (1979), pp.174-5. Gibert (1995), pp.238-9 notes that this is a silent motivation, and requires considerable inferences which are not necessarily supported by the text.
[153] Sorum (1992), pp.541-2.
[154] Neitzel (1980), p.69.
[155] ibid.
[156] 1456; cf. 1271.
[157] 1454.
[158] 653-4; see above.

between these twin poles of Agamemnon's position which characterises, indeed dominates his depiction within the play. Agamemnon is constantly and terribly conflicted.

2.2.2. Tyndareus

Agamemnon is not, however, the only father-figure in the tragedy who must mediate between the demands of his paternal role within the family and the pressures to which he is subject from those beyond it. Although he never appears onstage, the various references to Tyndareus[159] establish him as a counterpart to Agamemnon's situation and actions, broadening the notion of conflicted fatherhood within the play beyond Agamemnon himself.

Tyndareus' behaviour as a father is first recounted by Agamemnon in the prologue.[160] The familial question of the marriage of Helen becomes a 'national' crisis; the "youth of Greece" (Ἑλλάδος νεανίαι, 52) are cast into considerable hostility to one another in pursuit of Helen's hand.[161] It falls to Tyndareus, the *father*,[162] to resolve this desperate situation. His response, much like the crisis itself, marries public and private; the suitors are prevailed upon to swear oaths to one another, but also to conclude political treaties: σπονδὰς καθεῖναι (60).[163] Should anyone abduct the bride, the others vow not simply punishment for him but open war and the destruction of his state.[164] After the suitors have sworn this oath, Tyndareus proceeds to settle the marriage question: δίδωσ' ἑλέσθαι θυγατρὶ μνηστήρων ἕνα (68). Greek fathers generally chose husbands for their

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[159] Luschnig (1988), pp.84-5 notes that he is the most prominent member of the preceding generation in the play.
[160] *IA* 49-71. For discussion of the prologue's textual problems, see above.
[161] δειναὶ δ' ἀπειλαὶ καὶ κατ' ἀλλήλων φθόνος (53).
[162] Τυνδάρεωι **πατρί** (55).
[163] σπονδαί is the term used for political treaties; *LSJ* s.v. A.II.
[164] κἀπιστρατεύσειν καὶ κατασκάψειν πόλιν (64).

daughters;[165] by granting Helen choice in this matter, Tyndareus abrogates his responsibilities as a father in an attempt at political compromise.[166] The points of comparison and contrast with Agamemnon's situation and actions within the play are considerable. Agamemnon, like Tyndareus, must mediate between public and political pressures and his role as a father.[167] He does so, like Tyndareus, with an atypical marriage; whereas Tyndareus, however, allows his daughter more choice than was conventional, Agamemnon employs the ruse of a marriage to Achilles to lure his daughter to her death.

Tyndareus may at first seem a more successful counterpart to Agamemnon; he manages to resolve the threatening political crisis with far less of an abnegation of his paternal role than that represented by killing one's child. However, his scheme has dire consequences; in the aftermath of Helen's absconding, the oath of Tyndareus allows Menelaus to assemble the very fleet[168] whose confinement to Aulis is to be ended through Iphigenia's sacrifice.[169] Agamemnon's present plight is born, in part, of Tyndareus' actions.[170] Tyndareus' own shortcomings in mediating between public and paternal pressures are revealed more clearly in Clytemnestra's shocking revelation of her first marriage (1148-56):[171]

πρῶτον μέν, ἵνα σοι πρῶτα τοῦτ’ ὀνειδίσω,

ἔγημας ἄκουσάν με κἄλαβες βίαι,

[165] See above, pp.7-8.
[166] Luschnig (1988), p.112.
[167] Luschnig (1988), p.113.
[168] 77-8.
[169] 89-93.
[170] Lushnig (1988), p.85.
[171] Kovacs (2003) pp.95-6 sees no reason for Euripides to introduce this narrative, and considers it a later interpolation. Diggle (1993), Stockert (1992), and Collard & Morwood (2017) all retain the lines in question, however, and Gibert (2005) offers a persuasive account of the narrative's relevance to various thematic currents within the play, such as the enforced passivity of women in Greek marriage and the violence inflicted upon them by the failure of male political arrangements. I also endeavour in this chapter to show the narrative's relevance to the play's depiction of fatherhood, motherhood and brotherhood.

τὸν πρόσθεν ἄνδρα Τάνταλον κατακτανών· 1150

βρέφος τε τοὐμὸν †σῶι προσούρισας πάλωι†,

μαστῶν βιαίως τῶν ἐμῶν ἀποσπάσας.

καὶ τὼ Διός σε παῖδ’, ἐμὼ δὲ συγγόνω,

ἵπποισι μαρμαίροντ’ ἐπεστρατευσάτην·

πατὴρ δὲ πρέσβυς Τυνδάρεώς σ’ ἐρρύσατο 1155

ἱκέτην γενόμενον, τἀμὰ δ’ ἔσχες αὖ λέχη.

This first marriage seems to have been a Euripidean innovation,[172] and casts Tyndareus' mediation of familial and external pressures in a less favourable light. Agamemnon is revealed as having a history of infanticide, and Clytemnestra's language emphasises his brutality: βίαι (1149); κατακτανών (1150); βιαίως ... ἀποσπάσας (1152). Tyndareus, however, accepts this man who has committed such violence against his son-in-law and grandchild as a suppliant.[173] The suppliant's requests need not always be granted;[174] it is not clear why Tyndareus accepted that of Agamemnon and returned his daughter to a marriage achieved through force.[175] Much like the sacrifice of Iphigenia, we may see in Tyndareus' action here a father-figure seeking to manage relationships and events beyond the family at the expense of his duties to his blood relatives. *Iphigenia in Aulis* does not

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[172] Gibert (2005), p.229; Foley (1985), p.74.

[173] 1155-6.

[174] Gould (1973) pp.80-1 suggests that properly conducted supplications involving physical contact are not open to rejection. There does, however, seem to be room to reject even 'correct' supplication; Naiden (2006), pp.3-4, 78, 130-3. Supplications are rejected in Homer - e.g. *Od*. 22.312-5, *Il*. 6. 45-65 - and in tragedy; in Euripides' *Suppliant Women* Theseus rejects Adrastus' supplication at some length: E. *Supp*. 195-249. In contrast to Tyndareus' more accepting conduct, Agamemnon rejects Iphigenia's supplication in this play; see above, pp.50-3.

[175] Gibert (2005), p.232. *pace* Luschnig (1988), p.39, where the incident is presented as an example of Tyndareus' "good intentions and interest in compromise to prevent violence"; given the horrendous treatment to which Clytemnestra has been subject, it is hard to be so confident in Tyndareus' good intentions, and the military violence between the Dioscuri and Agamemnon - ἵπποισι μαρμαίροντ’ ἐπεστρατευσάτην (1154) - which Tyndareus seems to halt comes only after the hideous violence against Clytemnestra's first family.

only depict Agamemnon as a father struggling to negotiate between paternal and public pressures, but uses Tyndareus to present such a struggle as a feature of fatherhood more generally, with paternal pressures often losing out.

2.2.3. Brotherhood

The conflicted nature of fatherhood within the play is brought more clearly into focus by its juxtaposition with the striking commitment and tenacity of the bond of brotherhood. Menelaus' role in the tragedy serves both to increase the conflicting pressures to which Agamemnon is subject, and yet also as a point of contrast for his ultimate subordination of paternal love to political concerns. Initially, Menelaus himself adds to those political pressures, at least ostensibly. In a fiery speech to his brother, he paints the latter as extremely eager for command, resorting to forced affability[176] and even bribery[177] in his pursuit of power. Indeed, Menelaus presents Agamemnon's dismay and *aporia* as stemming from anxiety as how to resolve the threat to his ambition posed by the hostile winds;[178] the prospect of sacrificing Iphigenia was joyfully received as a *solution* to these political ills (**ἡσθεὶς** φρένας / **ἄσμενος** θύσειν ὑπέστης παῖδα, 359-60). Menelaus even interprets Agamemnon's decision against sacrificing Iphigenia - ὡς φονεὺς οὐκέτι θυγατρὸς σῆς ἔσηι (364) - not as the triumph of paternal feeling, but rather the failure of political will, adhering to a common pattern of such behaviour.[179] He rebukes Agamemnon's change of heart against the sacrifice as the thwarting of Greece's worthy efforts - θέλουσα δρᾶν τι κεδνόν (371) - against worthless and mocking

[176] *IA* 349-41.
[177] 342.
[178] 355-6.
[179] 366-9.

barbarians,[180] lamenting that this Panhellenic[181] vision has come unstuck because of mere individuals.[182]

Agamemnon's response does not reject Menelaus' accusations about his own political ambitions,[183] but rather exposes the private nature of Menelaus' own motivations. Despite the political content of his rebukes against Agamemnon and his grand invocations of Panhellenic endeavour, Menelaus is motivated by desire for Helen;[184] his enthusiasm for Iphigenia's sacrifice stems from motivations which are just as private as those driving Agamemnon's reluctance. Whereas Menelaus linked Agamemnon's paternal role to disappointment and shortcoming in the public sphere, Agamemnon places both men firmly within their families. While Agamemnon speaks to Menelaus as befits a brother,[185] he counteracts the latter's attempt to characterise him solely in terms of his political responsibilities and ambitions by emphasising his role as a father,[186] and refuses to subordinate it to Menelaus' desires as a husband.[187] Indeed, Agamemnon presents the entire expedition not as being thwarted by his familial concerns, but rather born of Menelaus'; he encourages Menelaus to campaign with an army of "suitors eager for marriage" (φιλόγαμοι μνηστῆρες, 392) drawn from those who swore Tyndareus' oath.

Rejecting Menelaus' invocation of public and political concerns does not, however, end the latter's attempts to pressure Agamemnon into sacrificing his daughter. Instead, Menelaus now adds private and familial pressures to his invocation of political concerns. In addition to continued invocation of Greece,[188] he attempts to exploit

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[180] 371.
[181] Saïd (1989), p.368. For discussion of the play's use of Panhellenism, see above.
[182] διὰ σὲ καὶ τὴν σὴν κόρην (372).
[183] Luschnig (1988) p.13.
[184] οὐ δάκνει σε τὸ φιλότιμον τοὐμόν, ἀλλ' ἐν ἀγκάλαις / εὐπρεπῆ γυναῖκα χρῄζεις, τὸ λελογισμένον παρεὶς / καὶ τὸ καλόν, ἔχειν. (385-7).
[185] σωφρονεστέρως, / ὡς ἀδελφὸν ὄντ' (379-80).
[186] 396,399; see above.
[187] 396-8.
[188] 410-1.

Agamemnon's φιλία,[189] and also the fraternal relationship to which Agamemnon himself had alluded.[190] He does not succeed; Agamemnon sets clear boundaries for what can be demanded of these personal and familial bonds - for example, the strikingly balanced statement of the limits of brotherhood: **συσ**σωφρονεῖν σοι βούλομ', ἀλλ' οὐ **συν**νοσεῖν (407)[191] - and so Menelaus ultimately accuses him of betrayal: σὸν κασίγνητον προδούς (412). Menelaus' attempts to pressure his brother into placing the demands of politics, friendship and fraternal duty before his sense of paternal responsibility do not succeed.

Both Menelaus and Agamemnon, however, famously reverse their respective positions, with various implications for the play.[192] It is striking how emphatic and extensive Menelaus' fraternal feeling is upon his reappearance upon stage.[193] Menelaus' very first word to Agamemnon upon he return is "brother" (ἀδελφέ, 471),[194] while the speech in which he makes clear his change of heart begins with a lengthy invocation of their shared ancestry.[195] This reference - τοὐμοῦ πατρὸς / τοῦ σοῦ (473-4) - recalls 406, throwing into sharp relief how significantly Menelaus' position - and his rhetorical use of brotherhood - has shifted in the interim. He now acknowledges how much he had demanded in asking Agamemnon to kill his child,[196] and explicitly rejects the prospect of

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[189] 404-5, 408.
[190] δείξεις δὲ ποῦ μοι πατρὸς ἐκ ταὐτοῦ γεγώς; (406).
[191] The pair of συν- compounds underlines Agamemnon's general commitment to joint action with his brother, despite this particular refusal.
[192] *pace* Kovacs (2003) p.87-9, where Menelaus' change of heart and indeed entire appearance in the play is condemned as irrelevant and attributed to the C4th Reviser. As Kovacs (2003) p.103 notes, he goes against Diggle's (relative) confidence in the brothers' speeches in this episode, and it is easier than he suggests to see the thematic relevance and implications of the exchange and reversal. For example, Menelaus' repudiation of his earlier demands that Iphigenia be sacrificed throws into sharper relief Agamemnon's responsibility for her fate; Conacher (1967), p.256. Furthermore, the reversal is one of the many changes which emphasises the theme of decision making in the play: Sorum (1992), p.527.
[193] Wilson (1979), pp.16-7.
[194] Menelaus again addresses Agamemnon thus at 497.
[195] 472-4; Πέλοπα κατόμνυμ', ὃς πατὴρ τοὐμοῦ πατρὸς / τοῦ σοῦ τ' ἐκλήθη, τὸν τεκόντα τ' Ἀτρέα.
[196] 490. Menelaus himself is also a father, although neither he nor Agamemnon ever make explicit reference to this fact. It is only Clytemnestra who suggests that Menelaus and his child take Agamemnon and Iphigenia's place (1201-2), although Calchas' oracle (as relayed by Agamemnon in the prologue) specifies Iphigenia as the victim (90). This oversimplification of Menelaus' family role arguably reinforces the emphasis upon his (ultimate) devotion as a brother.

gaining Helen at the cost of his relationship with Agamemnon: ἀπολέσας ἀδελφόν, ὅν μ’ ἥκιστ’ ἐχρῆν (487). Whereas in many ways Menelaus has changed his rhetoric and adopted Agamemnon's,[197] the theme of brotherhood remains from his prior speech. The irony is, of course, that in the interval in which Menelaus has had a change of heart, so too has Agamemnon; he feels he must kill Iphigenia to placate the army.[198] Menelaus has resolved to set the bond of brotherhood before his own desire for a war to reclaim Helen just as Agamemnon has determined to set the demands of the army before his role and feelings as a father.

This is not the only instance in the play in which the behaviour of brothers and fathers is contrasted. When recounting Agamemnon's murder of her first husband and child, Clytemnestra contrasts the response of her brothers and her father (1153-6):

> καὶ τὼ Διός σε παῖδ’, ἐμὼ δὲ συγγόνω,
> ἵπποισι μαρμαίροντ’ ἐπεστρατευσάτην·
> πατὴρ δὲ πρέσβυς Τυνδάρεώς σ’ ἐρρύσατο
> ἱκέτην γενόμενον, τἀμὰ δ’ ἔσχες αὖ λέχη.

Whereas Clytemnestra's brothers, the Dioscuri, were ready to wage war on her behalf against the man who had committed such violence against her family, her father protected him and even married her to him. The disjunction in conduct is reinforced by the language, such as the pointed πατὴρ **δὲ**, and the contrasting ἐπεστρατευσάτην and ἐρρύσατο. Clytemnestra describes both the Dioscuri as the sons of Zeus, in contrast to other versions of the myth,[199] thus casting them as ‘kinsmen’ (συγγόνω, 1153) to her

[197] 482-4 essentially accepts and restates Agamemnon's argument at 395-9, for instance; Collard & Morwood (2017) *ad loc*.
[198] cf. 450.
[199] cf. e.g. Pind. *Nem*. 10.

alone. Thus the Dioscuri's devotion to their sister is not tainted by disobedience to a father; their singular commitment to their blood relation throws Tyndareus' pointed prioritisation of Agamemnon, a non-relative, into sharper relief.[200]

The theme of brotherly solidarity may be further established within the play if we accept the presence of - or at least references to - Orestes within the play.[201] Agamemnon's imagining of Iphigenia's sacrifice may include the thought of the infant Orestes bewailing his sister's fate, with uncanny knowledge for a small infant: οὐ συνετὰ συνετῶς (466). This may reflect Agamemnon's guilt, in that he imagines even an infant understanding his crime, but it also suggests an expectation of almost instinctive fraternal support for Iphigenia. The transmitted text has Iphigenia's pleas to Agamemnon to let her live include an appeal to Orestes for aid (1241-3):[202]

> ἀδελφέ, μικρὸς μὲν σύ γ' ἐπίκουρος φίλοις,
>
> ὅμως δὲ συνδάκρυσον, ἱκέτευσον πατρὸς
>
> τὴν σὴν ἀδελφὴν μὴ θανεῖν·

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[200] This particularly clear-cut distinction between brotherhood and fatherhood, however, is conspicuous for its contrast to the complex array of family pressures and ties operating on Agamemnon. The Dioscuri are admirably loyal, but they are in a much simpler position than Agamemnon.

[201]Orestes' presence in the play is the subject of a longstanding controversy: Gibert (2005), p.239. Kovacs (2003), p.78, echoing England (1891), attributes Orestes' entire presence in the play to the C4th Reviser, and subsequently uses references to him or his presence as grounds for deletion. Page (1934), p.206 is more measured; he considers four of Orestes' appearances - 418, 602-3, 621-6, and 1117-9 - interpolations, and accepts 465-6, 1164-5, 1241-8 and 1449-52 as Euripidean, concluding that a later interpolator expanded, rather than invented, Orestes' part. Diggle (1993) also accepts some part of Orestes in the play, although with a little more hesitancy than Page (1934); he expresses some (relatively minor) reservations about 465-6 and 1241-52, but accepts 1450-2, which require the infant's presence upon stage. The absolute rejection of the infant Orestes' presence seems excessive, as Collard & Morwood (2017), pp.354-5 note numerous parallels for the depiction of infants onstage in tragedy, including the presence of Eurysaces in S. *Aj.*, Astyanax in E. *Tro*., and Andromache's infant son in her eponymous tragedy. A scene from *Telephus* in which the baby Orestes is taken hostage seems to be parodied at Ar. *Ach.* 325-46 and *Thesm*. 688-764 (Collard et al. (1995), pp.17-9), while vase paintings and the preserved hypothesis suggest that Melanippe's infant sons by Poseidon made an appearance in *Wise Melanippe* (Collard et al. (1995), pp.240-2). It seems perfectly possible for an nonspeaking infant to appear upon the Euripidean stage.

[202] Diggle (1993) has (relatively minor) reservations about the lines.

ἀδελφέ recalls Menelaus' language in his second speech;[203] Iphigenia is appealing to her brother as Menelaus did to his. Orestes achieves little - he does not even cry out[204] - but Iphigenia nonetheless remarks upon his aid when she bids him farewell: ὦ φίλτατ', ἐπεκούρησας ὅσον εἶχες φίλοις (1452).[205] Kovacs decries the line as ridiculous,[206] given how little Orestes has or indeed could achieve, but this is perhaps the point. Despite his clearly limited power as an infant, both Agamemnon and Iphigenia imagine Orestes supporting his sister's case and pleading for her life. This infant is consistently characterised as a devoted brother, in line with the fraternal commitment shown by the Dioscuri and (ultimately) Menelaus. His impact or otherwise on the situation is immaterial; he serves as yet another point of focus for the contrast within the play between the divided loyalties of fathers and the devotion of brothers.[207]

2.2.4. Motherhood

The ultimate subordination of blood ties to external pressures on the part of the fathers in the play is most extensively and powerfully emphasised by the consistent devotion of Clytemnestra to her role as Iphigenia's mother. Although the striking arrival on a chariot - evocative of her entrance in Euripides' *Electra*,[208] or indeed Agamemnon's arrival in the *Oresteia*[209] - has been judged interpolation,[210] the arguments are not

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[203] 471, 497; see above, p.61.
[204] ἰδού, σιωπῶν λίσσεταί σ' ὅδ', ὦ πάτερ (1245); Collard & Morwood (2017) p.353 defend the dramatic efficacy of such "poignant silence".
[205] Note how ἐπεκούρησας ... φίλοις picks up ἐπίκουρος φίλοις (1241).
[206] Kovacs (2003), p.98.
[207] Note also, in a similar vein, that the references to Atreus, who had a famously fractious and bloody relationship with his brother Thyestes (c.f. A. *Ag*. 1577-611, E. *El.* 699-746), have been "cleaned up" in this play (Luschnig (1988), p.84); there are no explicit references to fraternal conflict or infanticide on his part.
[208] E. *El.* 998-9; Foley (1985), p.70.
[209] cf. A. *Ag*. 906; Foley (1985), p.70.
[210] Kovacs (2003), 79; Page (1934), pp.166-8.

conclusive.[211] Far from being a case of clear irrelevance *spectaculi causa*,[212] the scene in fact demonstrates surprising sensitivity to and consistency with her characterisation in the less textually insecure areas of the play,[213] and merits some examination. Clytemnestra's words and actions demonstrate a persistently respectable domestic outlook[214] and maternal care which stands in contrast to her transgressive and often ferocious characterisation in earlier tragedy. She expresses her hopes for Iphigenia's marriage,[215] and oversees her daughter's alighting from the chariot (613-6):

> σὺ δ’, ὦ τέκνον μοι, λεῖπε πωλικοὺς ὄχους,
>
> ἁβρὸν τιθεῖσα κῶλον ἀσθενές θ’ ἅμα.
>
> ὑμεῖς δὲ νεάνιδές νιν ἀγκάλαις ἔπι
>
> δέξασθε καὶ πορεύσατ’ ἐξ ὀχημάτων.

Her remarks on Iphigenia's delicacy - ἁβρὸν ... κῶλον ἀσθενές θ’ ἅμα (614) - serve both to enhance the *pathos* of the violent fate for which this young woman is destined by her

[211] Page (1934), pp.161-2 notes the repetitive language at 613, 619, 620, 623, which perhaps has some merit, but the other linguistic objections (pp.161-3) do not seem fatal. The notion that the lines' resemblance to E. *El*. 998-9 demonstrates interpolation seems unnecessary; in a late play, so richly steeped in the tragic tradition, could Euripides not evoke his own contribution to that tradition? Clytemnestra's arrival in a chariot here certainly encourages fruitful comparison and contrast of her character in this play with the depiction in Euripides' *Electra*. cf. Zeitlin (1980) on *Orestes* as a play drawing on and reworking not only the work of other tragedians but also Euripides himself. Collard & Morwood (2017), pp.401-2 object that Clytemnestra’s references to marriage in her speech (607-10a, 628-9) conflict with Iphigenia’s “obvious ignorance” of her marriage in her encounter with Agamemnon (631-85a); I do not find Iphigenia’s ignorance at all obvious in this scene, and even Collard & Morwood (2017) p.401 note the “shy allusion” to marriage in 670. Despite their greater doubts of its authenticity, Collard & Morwood (2017) p.402 commend the scene’s theatrical virtues and thematic congruence.

[212] Page (1934), p.166.

[213] Collard & Morwood (2017), p. 402, although they are more sceptical than I with regards to authenticity.

[214] Luschnig (1988), pp.86-7 believe Clytemnestra resembles a bustling housewife, worthy of mime. Clytemnestra is clearly absorbed with domestic and familial concerns, but, given the fate intended for Iphigenia under the guise of the marriage to Achilles, this grants the scene more *pathos* than humour. Collard & Morwood (2017) pp.22-3 offer a concise but convincing case for taking the character seriously.

[215] ἐλπίδα δ’ ἔχω τιν’ ὡς ἐπ’ ἐσθλοῖσιν γάμοις / πάρειμι νυμφαγωγός. (609-10); ἐλπίδα δ’ ἔχω τιν’ is a rather diffident expression of her enthusiasm for a role in Iphigenia's marriage, contrasting strongly with the more confident and assertive Clytemnestra of much prior tragedy. It also highlights from the very beginning Clytemnestra's lack of control over the events to come; she has only "hope".

father, and to suggest an intense concern for her child's well-being. Her instructions to the Chorus to receive Iphigenia into their arms (ἀγκάλαις ἔπι, 615) further reinforces this maternal care. One's ἀγκάλαι often bear an infant or young child,[216] but are also used to embrace one's spouse; Agamemnon confronts Menelaus with the latter's desire to hold his beautiful wife 'ἐν ἀγκάλαις' (385).[217] The use of the term here thus reinforces Clytemnestra's familial concerns; she sees Iphigenia both as a child to be treated with care and love, and also as a young woman who is to be married. Of course, despite Clytemnestra's devotion, Iphigenia will neither achieve this marriage nor even retain her life.

Once we return to firmer ground textually, Clytemnestra's first encounter with Agamemnon both reinforces this depiction as a devoted mother,[218] and marks one of several attempts to prevent her from fulfilling her maternal role as she understands it. Clytemnestra shows sympathy to Agamemnon in his distress (only ostensibly at the prospect of the marriage),[219] and expresses once again her expectation of a role in the proposed wedding.[220] She goes on to ask a litany of questions of Agamemnon: about the bridegroom's ancestry, his upbringing, his home, the date of the ceremony, and the necessary preparations.[221] These questions represent highly domestic concerns,[222] and Clytemnestra's genuine interest in her daughter's prospective husband contrasts with Agamemnon's exploitation of the marriage to enable the sacrifice; note that he refers to Iphigenia as Clytemnestra's daughter: τοιόσδε παιδὸς **σῆς** ἀνὴρ ἔσται πόσις (711). Ultimately, however, the discussion of arrangements leads to Agamemnon's attempt to

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[216] cf. e.g. E. *Alc*. 190, *IT* 1251, *Ion* 280.
[217] cf. e.g. *Alc*. 351.
[218] Sorum (1992), pp.37-8.
[219] 691-2.
[220] ὅταν σὺν ὑμεναίοισιν ἐξάγω κόρην (693); ἐξάγω suggests a little more certainty than 609-10 - she has more than hope - but Clytemnestra still pointedly leaves the timing (ὅταν) to others; she does not attempt to be domineering.
[221] 695-723.
[222] Luschnig (1988), p.23.

exclude Clytemnestra from the wedding ceremony, in an exchange which merits quotation at some length (727-41):

Αγ.	ἡμεῖς μὲν ἐνθάδ’, οὗπέρ ἐσθ’ ὁ νυμφίος ...	
Κλ.	μητρὸς τί χωρὶς δράσεθ’ ἁμὲ δρᾶν χρεών;	
Αγ.	ἐκδώσομεν σὴν παῖδα Δαναΐδων μέτα.	
Κλ.	ἡμᾶς δὲ ποῦ χρὴ τηνικαῦτα τυγχάνειν;	730
Αγ.	χώρει πρὸς Ἄργος παρθένους τε τημέλει.	
Κλ.	λιποῦσα παῖδα; τίς δ’ ἀνασχήσει φλόγα;	
Αγ.	ἐγὼ παρέξω φῶς ὃ νυμφίοις πρέπει.	
Κλ.	οὐχ ὁ νόμος οὗτος οὐδὲ φαῦλ’ ἡγητέα.	
Αγ.	οὐ καλὸν ἐν ὄχλωι σ’ ἐξομιλεῖσθαι στρατοῦ.	735
Κλ.	καλὸν τεκοῦσαν τἀμά μ’ ἐκδοῦναι τέκνα.	
Αγ.	καὶ τάς γ’ ἐν οἴκωι μὴ μόνας εἶναι κόρας.	
Κλ.	ὀχυροῖσι παρθενῶσι φρουροῦνται καλῶς.	
Αγ.	πιθοῦ. Κλ. μὰ τὴν ἄνασσαν Ἀργείαν θεάν.	
	ἐλθὼν δὲ τἄξω πρᾶσσε, τἀν δόμοις δ’ ἐγώ,	740
	ἃ χρὴ παρεῖναι νυμφίοισι παρθένοις.	

Clytemnestra's perfectly correct[223] objections to Agamemnon's proposal to exclude her from the wedding focus overwhelmingly on the importance of her participation as the bride's *mother*. She is appalled at the prospect of Iphigenia being married without her mother - μητρὸς ... χωρὶς (728) - and at the notion of returning to Argos without her daughter: λιποῦσα παῖδα (731). Even Agamemnon's scheme to be rid

[223] She has νόμος on her side (734), and is "the very model of womanly virtue": Luschnig (1988), p.113.

of Clytemnestra attempts to use her motherhood to this end; he wishes to send her to Argos for the sake of their other daughters.[224] Clytemnestra points out that they are being properly cared for (φρουροῦνται καλῶς, 738); even at a distance she ensures the safety of her children, whereas Agamemnon has condemned Iphigenia by summoning her into his presence.[225] Clytemnestra seems to monopolise the parental position in this exchange; Agamemnon once again refers to Iphigenia as Clytemnestra's child - **σὴν** παῖδα (729) - while Clytemnestra claims her unequivocally as her own: **τἀμά** ... τέκνα (736) Earlier, Agamemnon had dissembled on the planned sacrifice of his daughter which caused his grief by suggesting that marriages are painful for parents - δάκνουσι τοὺς τεκόντας (689) - before moving on to describe the *father*'s role.[226] Here, however, Clytemnestra takes up Agamemnon's language and applies it to her role as mother: καλὸν τεκοῦσαν τἀμά μ' ἐκδοῦναι τέκνα (736).[227] τίκτειν is used equally of both men and women producing children,[228] and yet its use within the play can invite consideration on the differences between the male and female parenting depicted and recounted therein. The Chorus remark, after Clytemnestra's impassioned plea to Achilles for aid in saving her daughter,[229] on the great power of parenthood and the devotion it engenders: δεινὸν τὸ τίκτειν καὶ φέρει φίλτρον μέγα, / πᾶσίν τε κοινόν ἐσθ' ὑπερκάμνειν τέκνων (917-8). The language itself does not distinguish between parents along gender lines. However, the context of the utterance, namely a mother's plea for aid to save her daughter from the father, invites reflection on the *differences* between the behaviour of mothers and fathers in the play; prioritising one's child and striving to save them is *not* "common to all."

[224] 731, 737.
[225] cf. 440ff., where, upon hearing of Iphigenia's arrival, Agamemnon reneges on his earlier change of heart and despairs of keeping her alive; Conacher (1967), p.256.
[226] ὅταν ἄλλοις δόμοις / παῖδας παραδιδῶι πολλὰ μοχθήσας πατήρ (689-90).
[227] 736.
[228] *LSJ* s.v. A.1..
[229] *IA* 900-16

Clytemnestra's maternal devotion is further contrasted with and undermined by Agamemnon's conduct in her impassioned speech in defence of her daughter.[230] She begins with the shocking revelation of a former husband and child, both murdered by Agamemnon;[231] this violence against a child of hers now threatens to repeat itself.[232] Clytemnestra contrasts her role as mother with that of Agamemnon as father: τίκτω δ’ ἐπὶ τρισὶ παρθένοισι παῖδά σοι / τόνδ’· ὧν μιᾶς σὺ τλημόνως μ’ ἀποστερεῖς (1164-5). Once again, Clytemnestra appropriates τίκτειν for her part in the production of children; her creation is contrasted with Agamemnon's destruction.[233] The queen imagines with depsair the prospect of constantly reliving this loss, as empty chairs and chambers remind her of her bereavement: ὅταν θρόνους τῆσδ’ εἰσίδω πάντας **κενούς**, / **κενοὺς** δὲ παρθενῶνας (1174-5). However, in contrast to the clash over the wedding ceremony, in which the language emphasises Clytemnestra's role as mother to the exclusion of Agamemnon's as father, here Clytemnestra repeatedly reminds Agamemnon of the paternal role and responsibilities against which he is acting.[234] She imagines her lament for Iphigenia, killed by her own father - ὁ φυτεύσας πατήρ (1177) - and asks Agamemnon what he can hope to achieve by such a sacrifice.[235] She presents him with the prospect of greeting his surviving children as an infanticide,[236] and, reversing his language from their earlier dispute over the wedding arrangements, refers to Iphigenia as his and their child: παῖδα **σήν** (1200);[237] τὴν **σήν** τε **κἀμὴν** παῖδα (1208).[238]

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[230] 1146-1208.
[231] 1150-2. As discussed above at p.58, this first marriage is probably a Euripidean invention.
[232] Luschnig (1988), p.83.
[233] ἀποστερεῖς; cf. 1203.
[234] *pace* Vellacott (1975), p.75; Vellacott claims Clytemnestra never appeals to Agamemnon's fatherly love; this is perhaps true in a narrow sense, as she does not explicitly invoke his love for his children, but it is difficult not to see in the repeated references to Agamemnon's paternal role an implicit appeal to his fatherly instincts and affections in an effort to dissuade him.
[235] σφάζων τέκνον,1186.
[236] ἥκων δ’ ἐς Ἄργος προσπεσῆι τέκνοισι **σοῖς**; 1191.
[237] cf. 711, 729.
[238] cf. 1131, although note Diggle (1993)'s reservations about the text.

Clytemnestra's efforts to dissuade Agamemnon end in failure. The prospect of her daughter's death does not dampen Clytemnestra's maternal devotion, but her attempts to enact her role as mother end up being thwarted by Iphigenia herself. When Clytemnestra weeps in response to her daughter's impending death, Iphigenia intercedes (1433-45):[239]

Ιφ. μῆτερ, τί σιγῆι δακρύοις τέγγεις κόρας;

Κλ. ἔχω τάλαινα πρόφασιν ὥστ' ἀλγεῖν φρένα.

[Ιφ. παῦσαί με μὴ κάκιζε· τάδε δέ μοι πιθοῦ. 1435

Κλ. λέγ'· ὡς παρ' ἡμῶν οὐδὲν ἀδικήσηι, τέκνον.

Ιφ. μήτ' οὖν γε τὸν σὸν πλόκαμον ἐκτέμηις τριχὸς

μήτ' ἀμφὶ σῶμα μέλανας ἀμπίσχηι πέπλους.

Κλ. τί δὴ τόδ' εἶπας, τέκνον; ἀπολέσασά σε;]

Ιφ. οὐ σύ γε· σέσωμαι, κατ' ἐμὲ δ' εὐκλεὴς ἔσηι. 1440

Κλ. πῶς εἶπας; οὐ πενθεῖν με σὴν ψυχὴν χρεών;

Ιφ. ἥκιστ', ἐπεί μοι τύμβος οὐ χωσθήσεται.

Κλ. †τί δὲ τὸ θνήισκειν οὐ τάφος νομίζεται;†

Ιφ. βωμὸς θεᾶς μοι μνῆμα τῆς Διὸς κόρης.

Κλ. ἀλλ' ὦ τέκνον σοι πείσομαι· λέγεις γὰρ εὖ. 1445

Iphigenia is effectively forbidding her mother to grieve;[240] there is no need for Clytemnestra to sorrow - or, if we are more willing to accept 1435-9, to rend her hair and don black garments in mourning - because the usual funerary trappings, such as a τύμβος

[239] Diggle (1993) is hesitant about 1435-9, and Kovacs (2003), pp.97-8 finds them unattractive, advocating their deletion; Collard and Morwood (2017) retain them, but note *ad loc*. the smoothness of the transition from 1434 to 1440. The lines make the funerary content of the exchange more explicit, but are not crucial.
[240] Gibert (2005), p.228.

and μνῆμα, are replaced by Artemis' altar. Clytemnestra accedes to Iphigenia's request,[241] but she is nonetheless denied yet another opportunity to enact the maternal function which is so important to her; funerary ritual was a significant domain of female activity in classical Athens,[242] with close female relatives, usually wives or mothers, taking a key part in the ritual lament in particular.[243] Clytemnestra even wishes to be present for the sacrifice of her daughter, but in this too she is thwarted; Iphigenia will be escorted by one of Agamemnon's attendants,[244] thus leaving her mother: λιποῦσα μητέρ' (1465). This echo of Clytemnestra's confrontation with Agamemnon over the wedding arrangements, in which she refuses to return to Argos without her child - λιποῦσα παῖδα[245] - demonstrates both the consistency of Clytemnestra's commitment to her child and her increasing loss of agency; whereas she was able to defy Agamemnon and assert her place in the wedding, she cannot now overcome her daughter, who now echoes her father not only in the Panhellenic rhetoric which drives her to die,[246] but in denying Clytemnestra a place in her child's fate.

Although Clytemnestra has been seen as narrowly self-interested,[247] her most considerable devotion and energy is directed towards her role as Iphigenia's mother. In this respect, we find a point of perhaps surprising continuity with the otherwise notably fiercer Aeschylean Clytemnestra. In *Agamemnon*, Clytemnestra repeatedly recalls and invokes her position as mother of Iphigenia as the primary motivation and justification for her murder of Agamemnon.[248] At *Ag*. 1417-8 she rails against her husband for

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[241] 1445.
[242] Just (1989), pp.110-1.
[243] Garland (2001), pp.29-30; cf. Dem. 43.62 for Solon's law limiting female involvement in mourning to close relations. E. *Pho*. 1317-21 presents a tragic example; Creon seeks Jocasta, Menoeceus' effective surrogate mother (*Pho*. 986-9) to perform the funerary rites owed to his son; see below, p.96.
[244] *IA* 1462-3.
[245] 732.
[246] 1378-1401; cf. 1259-75.
[247] Foley (1985), pp.96-7; Conacher (1967), p.259.
[248] Zeitlin (1978), pp.157-8.

sacrificing Iphigenia: ἔθυσεν αὑτοῦ παῖδα, φιλτάτην ἐμοὶ / ὠδῖν'. While she is appalled at Agamemnon's sacrifice of his own daughter (**αὑτοῦ** παῖδα), the reference to Iphigenia as literally 'my birth-pang' (ἐμοὶ / ὠδῖν') emphasises Clytemnestra's biological role in bearing their daughter,[249] arguably suggesting a greater claim to their child. 'Most beloved' (φιλτάτην) evokes and extends the φίλος cognates deployed to describe Iphigenia's love towards her father in the Chorus' account of her sacrifice;[250] the Aeschylean Agamemnon may have served the fleet by sacrificing even such a loving daughter, but Clytemnestra emphasises her own, superlative maternal love for Iphigenia, and deploys it in explanation and justification of her actions against such a husband. Clytemnestra continues to contrast the parental conduct of herself and Agamemnon. At *Ag*. 1432, she presents "Justice for **my** child" (μὰ τὴν τέλειον τῆς **ἐμῆς** παιδὸς Δίκην) as one of her key motivations for the murder of Agamemnon, claiming Iphigenia as her own. Most strikingly, she deploys an agricultural metaphor to emphasise her maternity; she describes Iphigenia as "my shoot, lifted up by that man" (ἐμὸν ἐκ τοῦδ' ἔρνος ἀερθὲν, 1525).[251] This agricultural image is common for tragic accounts of birth and childbearing,[252] and recalls Clytemnestra's self-presentation as a cornfield in the immediate aftermath of the murder;[253] her use of the image supports her efforts to prioritise her maternity of Iphigenia over Agamemnon's claim upon their daughter, thus

[249] Chesi (2014b), pp.17-8.
[250] φίλου (246), φίλως (247); see above, p.35.
[251] Raeburn & Oliver (2011) *ad loc*. note the ambiguity of ἀερθὲν; they argue for seeing ἀείρειν as used in its normal sense of 'lift up', treating the term as a reference to Iphigenia's being lifted up for the sacrifice (ἀέρδην, 234-5). Denniston & Page (1957) *ad loc*. record suggestions based on various, relatively unfamiliar meanings of ἀείρομαι, including 'to grow up', 'to be reared', or 'to be conceived', but note the scant evidence for any of these interpretations.
[252] Cf e.g. S. *OT*. 1211-2, 1256-7, 1484-5, 1497-8; *Ant*. 569. There also seem to have been references to 'the ploughing of legitimate children' in Athenian marriage procedure (cf. Men. *Dysc*. 842): Rutherford (2012), p.140.
[253] *Ag*. 1388-92.

justifying her vengeance and violence.[254] Euripides' Clytemnestra, with her emphatically maternal focus, arguably vindicates these claims of longstanding maternal devotion on the part of her Aeschylean counterpart, while the terrible violence meted out against Agamemnon by Clytemnestra in the *Oresteia* serves as the fulfilment of the ominous – if vague – threats offered by the queen in *Iphigenia at Aulis*.[255]

Beyond her intertextual relationship with her Aeschylean forebear, Clytemnestra serves as a crucial foil to Agamemnon within the Euripidean play. She is an almost direct mirror image of her hapless husband: her role is singular and solely familial,[256] whereas his is plural and includes public and private responsibilities; she remains consistent, whereas he cavils and changes repeatedly. Clytemnestra's depiction in the play is the most extensive and powerful instance of emphasising and characterising the conduct of Agamemnon as a father by means of contrast. Her relentless prioritisation of her maternal role underlines the intensely conflicted nature of his fatherhood.

2.3. Conclusion

Agamemnon's decision at Aulis is a particularly striking and far-reaching manifestation of the conflicted nature of tragic fatherhood. In the Aeschylean rendition, the king is troubled by the contrasting demands of paternal love and political duty, but

[254] Chesi (2014b), pp.18-19. The claim stands until Apollo's infamous reappropriation of this agricultural metaphor to support absolute paternal priority and ownership in *Eum*.665-6; Chesi (2014b), pp.19-20. On the *Eumenides* passage, see below, p.247 n.161.
[255] See esp, *IA* 1455.
[256] There is nothing inevitable about this gendered division of attitudes; in Euripides' *Erectheus*, Alithea delivers an extensive speech *in favour* of sacrificing their daughters for the sake of the city: fr.360 Nauck.

decisively embraces his role as king and commander at the cost of both his daughter's life and, through Clytemnestra's maternally motivated vengeance, his own. Euripides' *Iphigenia at Aulis* offer a more expansive depiction of Agamemnon's conflicted position. This far less decisive incarnation of the character vacillates between the competing pressures of his role as a family man and a political figure, before ultimately being compelled to subordinate the former to the latter. The references to Tyndareus within the play further develop this depiction of the difficulty of reconciling fatherhood with the demands of political life. By contrast, the portrayal of other blood ties within the play - those of brothers, mothers, even daughters - emphasises the contrasting tenacity of these bonds. Agamemnon's sacrifice of his daughter Iphigenia, as recounted in Aeschylus' *Oresteia* and depicted in Euripides' *Iphigenia at Aulis*, thus demonstrates the potentially devastating disjunction between paternal and political responsibility, and, in Euripides in particular, presents the father's role as especially susceptible to such conflicts. Agamemnon's dilemma at Aulis is a particularly striking example of such conflict, but it is far from unique; as we shall see in the next chapter, the plays on Theban narratives demonstrate that the unhappy disjunction of paternal and political roles is felt as keenly by the banks of the Ismenus as on the shores of Euboea.

Chapter 3: Between fatherhood and fatherland at Thebes

3.1. Introduction

The city of Thebes and its storied mythical tradition are favoured material for Greek tragedy;[1] seven of the extant plays depict events at or closely connected to the city.[2] These plays very often depict the complex and transgressive family relations of the ruling house; Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus*, for example, recounts Oedipus' gradual discovery that he has killed his father and married his mother. This journey of discovery is prompted, however, by news that a terrible plague is afflicting the city as a whole;[3] this plague is the result of their unwittingly sheltering Laius' murderer (i.e. Oedipus),[4] thus demonstrating the capacity for the dysfunction of the ruling house to affect the city in a complex interplay of public and private. While the previous chapter dealt with tragic accounts of a single father facing a single confrontation of paternal and political responsibility, this chapter will explore the wide array of circumstances in which fatherhood and the fatherland conflict in Theban plays, and the variety of responses to that conflict. Sophocles' and Euripides' very different depictions of Creon, for example, respond in entirely distinct ways to the confrontation of paternal and public spheres, while Oedipus exercises his father's prerogative to curse his sons with little regard, but devastating consequences, for Thebes as a whole.

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[1] Zeitlin (1990), esp. p.115, suggests that Thebes serves as an "anti-Athens", a place where the norms of Athenian society are regularly transgressed and the proper order of things inverted. Easterling (1989) pp.11-4 is more cautious, noting that Theban characters in fact often express perfectly reputable attitudes and intentions. Parker (1997) pp.149-50 makes the sensible suggestion that, while the great disasters of tragedy befall cities at a safe remove from Athens itself, an Athenian audience could still see relevance to their own civic life.
[2] A. *Sept.*; S. *Ant., OT, OC*; E. *Supp.*, *Pho.*, *Ba.*: Zeitlin (1990), pp.131-2.
[3] *OT* 22ff.
[4] *OT* 95ff.

3.2. Creon

The depictions of Creon in Sophocles' *Antigone* and Euripides' *Phoenician Women* offer two diametrically opposed visions of the relationship between fatherhood and political concerns. The Sophoclean Creon totally conflates his paternal and political role, and brooks no challenge to his authority in either, although he proves to be disastrous and destructive in both spheres of activity. His Euripidean counterpart, conversely, despite evidence of patriotic sentiment and public-spiritedness, totally abandons all political perspective when confronted with any risk to his son. These wildly distinct representations of the same mythical figure offer powerful examples of the difficulties of successfully reconciling the paternal and the political on the tragic stage.

3.2.1. Creon in *Antigone*

In *Antigone*, Creon offers several statements on his political philosophy and the correct relationship between public and private interests as he understands it. In his first appearance in the play, he sets out a vision of the ideal ruler as guided by resilient public-spiritedness; he condemns those in power who are swayed more by popular opinion than sound policy,[5] and expounds a strong line on the relative weight of private and public interest (182-90):[6]

καὶ μείζον' ὅστις ἀντὶ τῆς αὑτοῦ πάτρας

φίλον νομίζει, τοῦτον οὐδαμοῦ λέγω.

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[5] *Ant.* 178-81.
[6] Griffith (1999), p.156.

ἐγὼ γάρ, ἴστω Ζεὺς ὁ πάνθ’ ὁρῶν ἀεί,

οὔτ’ ἂν σιωπήσαιμι τὴν ἄτην ὁρῶν (185)

στείχουσαν ἀστοῖς ἀντὶ τῆς σωτηρίας,

οὔτ’ ἂν φίλον ποτ’ ἄνδρα δυσμενῆ χθονὸς

θείμην ἐμαυτῷ, τοῦτο γιγνώσκων ὅτι

ἥδ’ ἐστὶν ἡ σῴζουσα καὶ ταύτης ἔπι

πλέοντες ὀρθῆς τοὺς φίλους ποιούμεθα. (190)

Creon presents himself as embodying the virtues of the ideal ruler of his speech. He would never keep silent if it imperilled the city (185-6), and, rather than choosing a friend who is hostile to the city's interests, he resolves to make his friends by means of the good and stable governance of the city: ταύτης ἔπι / πλέοντες ὀρθῆς τοὺς φίλους ποιούμεθα (189-90). φιλία was a broad concept in classical Greek thought, encompassing blood kinship, marriage, ξενία and friendship more generally.[7] Differing accounts of φιλία will recur throughout *Antigone*, and serve to demonstrate the distance between the world-views of many of the characters. Here, tellingly, Creon presents the personal bond of φιλία as not only subordinate to the interests of the state and the demands of good governance, but also a result of the correct management of these public interests.[8]

Creon's public-spirited speech contains perfectly reasonable sentiments[9] and received a favourable reception in antiquity,[10] but there are certain disjunctions between his rhetoric and his position which foreshadow the increasing problems caused by his totally politicised view of his position. Early in the speech Creon justifies his rule to the

[7] Belfiore (2000), p.6.
[8] Griffith (1999) pp.159 remarks on the "civic base" of φιλία in Creon's conception.
[9] Sourvinou-Inwood (1989), p.135 suggests that much therein would have seemed entirely sensible to contemporary Athenians.
[10] Liapis (2013) pp.87-8; the speech was quoted approvingly at Dem. 19.247, for example.

Chorus; ἐγὼ κράτη δὴ πάντα καὶ θρόνους ἔχω / γένους κατ' ἀγχιστεῖα τῶν ὀλωλότων (173-4). Not only do κράτη ... πάντα and θρόνους strike an undemocratic note at odds with the civic ethos Creon espouses,[11] but, for all his emphasis upon the primacy of public interest over personal bonds, Creon has obtained his position of power by means of family connection and inheritance: γένους κατ' ἀγχιστεῖα. This reflects Athenian inheritance law,[12] but means that Creon's rule is based upon the personal and family bonds which he is so eager to subordinate. Such family ties also complicate his political activity; while the denial of burial to Polyneices as a traitor[13] is commensurate with classical Athenian law and practice,[14] it goes directly against his obligation as the deceased's nearest living male relative to ensure proper burial.[15] The singleminded focus on political factors is reflected even in Creon's narrow use of the language and concept of φιλία; whereas Creon speaks of choosing and making φίλοι[16] - θείμην (188); ποιούμεθα (190) - φιλία also, and perhaps even fundamentally, applies to family,[17] whom we *cannot* choose. Despite the worthy sentiments and public-mindedness of his first appearance, Creon's singularly political outlook portends the difficulties he will face and the mistakes he will make when faced with the more complex reality of the relationship between public and private in Thebes.

Creon reveals the full extent of his entirely politicised perspective on the relationship of public and private life in his encounter with his son Haemon (659-76):

[11] Griffith (1999), p.156.
[12] Phillips (2013), pp.217-9. Technically, according to Solonic inheritance law, Oedipus' daughters Antigone and Ismene would inherit the late ruler's property but have Creon, as the senior male family member, act as their κύριος and manage the inheritance for them; there would be no question of their inheriting political authority.
[13] 198-208.
[14] Holt (1999), pp.663-4; see Th. 1. 138.6, X. *Hell.* 1.7.22.
[15] Blundell (1989), p.118.
[16] Griffith (1999), p.159.
[17] Blundell (1989), pp.39-40.

... εἰ γὰρ δὴ τά γ' ἐγγενῆ φύσει

ἄκοσμα θρέψω, κάρτα τοὺς ἔξω γένους. (660)

ἐν τοῖς γὰρ οἰκείοισιν ὅστις ἔστ' ἀνὴρ

χρηστός, φανεῖται κἀν πόλει δίκαιος ὤν.

ὅστις δ' ὑπερβὰς ἢ νόμους βιάζεται,

ἢ τοὐπιτάσσειν τοῖς κρατύνουσιν νοεῖ,

οὐκ ἔστ' ἐπαίνου τοῦτον ἐξ ἐμοῦ τυχεῖν. (665)

[ἀλλ' ὃν πόλις στήσειε, τοῦδε χρὴ κλύειν

καὶ σμικρὰ καὶ δίκαια καὶ τἀναντία.]

καὶ τοῦτον ἂν τὸν ἄνδρα θαρσοίην ἐγὼ

καλῶς μὲν ἄρχειν, εὖ δ' ἂν ἄρχεσθαι θέλειν,

δορός τ' ἂν ἐν χειμῶνι προστεταγμένον (670)

μένειν δίκαιον κἀγαθὸν παραστάτην.

ἀναρχίας δὲ μεῖζον οὐκ ἔστιν κακόν.

αὕτη πόλεις ὄλλυσιν, ἥδ' ἀναστάτους

οἴκους τίθησιν, ἥδε συμμάχου δορὸς

τροπὰς καταρρήγνυσι· τῶν δ' ὀρθουμένων (675)

σῴζει τὰ πολλὰ σώμαθ' ἡ πειθαρχία.

The analogy between private and public virtue is relatively common in classical Greek thought,[18] but Creon goes further than usual. He must maintain order in his family to maintain order in the city as a whole, because it is the privately virtuous man who is

[18] Griffith (1999), p.234. cf. e.g. Aesch. 3.78: ὁ γὰρ μισότεκνος καὶ πατὴρ πονηρὸς οὐκ ἄν ποτε γένοιτο δημαγωγὸς χρηστός.

revealed as a just participant in public life (659-62). This virtuous citizen, willing to rule *and be ruled* (669) is also steadfast in war (670-1). Political, military and domestic life are connected and conflated by an intense emphasis upon obedience (πειθαρχία, 676);[19] anarchy, and those who contribute to it by their unwillingness to recognise political hierarchies and the duty of obedience (τοὐπιτάσσειν τοῖς κρατύνουσιν νοεῖ, 664), are the greatest evil (672). Despite evoking the democratic practice of rotation of offices (669),[20] Creon's authoritarian account of public *and* private life demands obedience and conformism.[21]

It is perhaps unsurprising, then, that Creon's notions of fatherhood echo his more general political philosophy in demanding obedience. He outlines his understanding of the motives and expectations of fathers to Haemon (639-47):

Κρ. οὕτω γάρ, ὦ παῖ, χρὴ διὰ στέρνων ἔχειν,
γνώμης πατρῴας πάντ' ὄπισθεν ἑστάναι. (640)
τούτου γὰρ οὕνεκ' ἄνδρες εὔχονται γονὰς
κατηκόους φύσαντες ἐν δόμοις ἔχειν,
ὡς καὶ τὸν ἐχθρὸν ἀνταμύνωνται κακοῖς,
καὶ τὸν φίλον τιμῶσιν ἐξ ἴσου πατρί.
ὅστις δ' ἀνωφέλητα φιτύει τέκνα, (645)
τί τόνδ' ἂν εἴποις ἄλλο πλὴν αὑτῷ πόνους
φῦσαι, πολὺν δὲ τοῖσιν ἐχθροῖσιν γέλων;

[19] Rehm (2006), pp.195-6.
[20] Griffith (1998), p.68, noting that this particularly disrupts the analogy of public and private; the father remains the father.
[21] Roisman (1996), pp.32-3.

Creon's conception of a good son emphasises the importance of obedience and conformity.[22] Haemon is to prioritise his father's judgement over all else (640), as men rejoice in obedient sons - γονὰς / κατηκόους (641-2) - who follow their father's choice of friends and enemies. Filial obedience was extremely important in classical Greek culture,[23] but this is a very narrow conception of what makes a worthy son; Greek culture is replete with examples of fathers rejoicing in their offspring's deeds and prowess, for instance, as well as mere obedience.[24] Sons would effectively "inherit" their father's friends and enemies in classical Athens,[25] but following and continuing these attitudes was hardly the total of their activity and duties as sons. Perhaps most tellingly, Creon's account of fatherhood lacks any notion of reciprocity;[26] the father demands obedience from his son to avoid being laughed at (646-7),[27] but there is no mention of any duty on the part of the father. Creon's authoritarian political thinking infects his attitude to fatherhood specifically, as well as his conception of family more generally.

The failure of Creon's vision of fatherhood as a form of 'domestic tyranny' is revealed by his interaction with Haemon. Haemon is a conspicuously loyal son from his very first words: πάτερ, σός εἰμι (635).[28] He immediately sets the good opinion of his father above any marriage,[29] despite the suggestion earlier in the play that Creon's breaking of the engagement brought Haemon dishonour;[30] indeed, Haemon never

[22] Griffith (1998), pp.66-7.
[23] e.g. Antiphanes fr.263; Lys. 19.55; Dem. 40.13; Hdt. 1.31, 3.52.5; Dover (1974), p.273-4.
[24] e.g. *Od*. 24.515; Pind. *Nem.* 6.17-24.
[25] See above, pp.8-9.
[26] Roisman (1996), pp.32-3.
[27] cf. 483 and 839-41 for Creon's anger at the shameful prospect of being mocked; Griffith (1999), p.206.
[28] Blundell (1989), pp.121-2. *pace* Griffith (1999), p.233, who sees ambiguity in the fact that the phrase "could mean 'I am on your side', or merely 'I am <biologically> yours." The ambiguity is less clear to me; Haemon, in the context of an extensive initial protestation of loyalty (635-8), could quite reasonably invoke both his blood tie to *and* his partisan support for Creon in a show of filial piety.
[29] 637-8. By contrast, in Euripides' version Haemon and Antigone seem to have married and had a child; see E. *Ant.* test. ii.a & fr. 162a Kannicht: ἐγὼ γὰρ ἕξω λέκτρ᾽ ἅ τοι καλῶς ἔχειν / δίκαιόν ἐστιν οἷσι συγγηράσομαι
[30] 572.

mentions his engagement in this scene.[31] He is not, however, as totally subservient as Creon's conception of fatherhood demands; whereas Creon wants total obedience to his judgements as a *father* (γνώμης **πατρῴας**, 640), Haemon declares that he is guided by Creon's *good* judgement (σύ με γνώμας ἔχων / **χρηστὰς** ἀπορθοῖς, 635-6). Despite the generally respectful and obedient tone of his initial words, Haemon raises the possibility of an alternative to Creon's authoritarian vision of father-son relations.

Whereas Creon describes fatherhood solely in terms of the child's obligations to the father, Haemon expands this into a more balanced, reciprocal relationship (701-6):

> ἐμοὶ δὲ σοῦ πράσσοντος εὐτυχῶς, πάτερ,
> οὐκ ἔστιν οὐδὲν κτῆμα τιμιώτερον.
> τί γὰρ πατρὸς θάλλοντος εὐκλείᾳ τέκνοις
> ἄγαλμα μεῖζον, ἢ τί πρὸς παίδων πατρί;
> μή νυν ἓν ἦθος μοῦνον ἐν σαυτῷ φόρει, (705)
> ὡς φὴς σύ, κοὐδὲν ἄλλο, τοῦτ' ὀρθῶς ἔχειν.

Haemon continues to emphasise his loyalty as a son; he addresses Creon once again as πάτερ (701), and presents his father's wellbeing as his greatest wish. Nonetheless, he slightly amends his father's account of fatherhood; he supplements Creon's account of the potential for a disobedient child to make his father laughable with the much more positive prospect of fathers and children achieving mutual benefit and delight from one another's renown.[32] Haemon uses attractive language - θάλλοντος εὐκλείᾳ; ἄγαλμα - to present

[31] Griffith (1998), p.70.
[32] Blundell (1989), pp.121-2.

another common aspect of Greek notions of the father-child relationship[33] as an addendum to Creon's narrow focus upon obedience.

In the context of such emphasis upon reputation, the gentle admonishment to Creon to be open to suggestion (705-6) is more clearly reconcilable with Haemon's notion of filial piety. Much as a father's εὔκλεια is a source of delight for a son, δύσκλεια is (implicitly) painful. Creon is too frightening to the citizens ever to hear their criticism,[34] but Haemon is able to listen to the citizen body for him: ἐμοὶ δ' ἀκούειν ἔσθ' ὑπὸ σκότου τάδε (692).[35] Creon has resolved to kill Antigone to avoid appearing false before the city,[36] but Haemon suggests that the greater damage to his reputation before the citizens would be caused precisely by this action, as they pity Antigone and respect her actions.[37] Haemon's speech thus offers a "conciliatory and deferential"[38] critique of Creon's decision in accordance with Haemon's understanding of his place as a son. His greater emphasis upon mutual care and reputation in father-son relations over Creon's insistence on unyielding obedience allows him to remain a loyal son while offering polite criticism of his father's policy, because such criticism is intended to help his father.[39]

Haemon's actions not only respond to his own notion of filial piety, but also - to an extent - reflect Creon's rhetoric on the correct behaviour towards one's state. Creon vowed not to remain silent in the face of a threat to public interest: οὔτ' ἂν σιωπήσαιμι

[33] We have noted above the tendency of fathers to exult in their children's achievements. On the delight a father's renown can bring to sons, see e.g. Pind. *Pyth.* 1.59: χάρμα δ' οὐκ ἀλλότριον νικαφορία πατέρος.
[34] 690-1.
[35] Griffith (1998), p.71-2 notes that this resembles the surveillance undertaken by monarchical or oligarchic families; Haemon is acting as an agent of his father, though unbidden.
[36] 656-7.
[37] 692-700. Sourvinou-Inwood (1989), p.144 suggests that we have no evidence to corroborate Haemon's claim that the Thebans support Antigone, and notes Antigone's suggestion at 907 that she buried Polyneices βίᾳ πολιτῶν. Griffith (1999) *ad loc.* suggests that Haemon may be oversimplifying. Conversely, Erp Tallman Kip (1996) pp.522-3 notes that Creon, for all his anger, never actually disputes the accuracy of Haemon's claim, while the the Chorus encourage their ruler to heed his son's words (722-3); Sophocles gives us no encouragement to doubt Haemon's statement. I see no reason to suspect Haemon's claim, but even if treated more sceptically, this reference to popular opinion nonetheless establishes a civic rather than personal basis for the appeal to Creon for leniency.
[38] Holt (1999), p.682.
[39] Rehm (2006), p.192-3.

τὴν ἄτην ὁρῶν / στείχουσαν ἀστοῖς ἀντὶ τῆς σωτηρίας (185-6). Haemon, on behalf of the citizens, speaks out against Creon's policy, policy which is ultimately revealed to be ἄτη (1260), damaging not only the state[40] but Creon and his family as well. In contrast, however, to Creon's absolutely politicised conception of φιλία,[41] Haemon values his family bond to Creon, emphasising his continued loyalty to his father even as he reveals him to be, in certain senses, δυσμενής to the Theban people. Haemon tries to find a position which combines continued familial loyalty with the political candour and public-spiritedness Creon demands.

Nonetheless, Creon reacts angrily. He invokes the hierarchies of public and private life upon which he is so fixated: Haemon's attempt to 'teach' him violates the primacy of the old over the young;[42] any yielding to public opinion would be allowing the city to instruct its rulers,[43] which Creon cannot permit as the state is his property: οὐ τοῦ κρατοῦντος ἡ πόλις νομίζεται; (738).[44] Perhaps most infuriatingly for Creon, he sees Haemon as being led astray by the influence of a woman.[45] It is the sense of being challenged by a woman which has driven much of Creon's anger at Antigone's actions throughout the play;[46] such actions represent a significant inversion of proper Athenian gender hierarchies,[47] and it is reasonable therefore for Creon to react with horror at encountering similar inversion on the part of his son. However, Haemon's responses,

[40] 1015-8.
[41] See esp. 187-8, discussed at pp.77-8.
[42] 726-7; Roisman (1996), p.33.
[43] 734.
[44] Griffith (1998), pp.69-70.
[45] 740; 746; 748; 756; 760-1.
[46] See e.g. 484-5, 525, 678-80; Sourvinou-Inwood (1989), p.140.
[47] Sourvinou-Inwood (1989) pp.140-1 suggests that Antigone's actions and attitudes from the prologue onwards would strongly offend Athenian sensibilities on the proper, restricted place of women. This fits in with the often disruptive tenor of female action onstage, particularly that undertaken beyond the customary supervision or control of male relatives; see e.g. Hall (1997), pp.103-10. Foley (2002) p.179 acknowledges that Antigone does act against the usual expectations for women, but notes the character's emphasis upon being driven to do so only in the absence of any male relations able to take her brother's (and her family's) part (see esp. 904-20); p.177-8. As discussed above, at least some of the citizens are reported as praising Antigone's actions (694), and, although they may not fully endorse her actions, the Chorus remarks upon the glory she obtains in her death (817-8).

which retain a remarkable measure of forbearance, reject this accusation; instead, he constantly restates his sense of filial piety and the importance of his father's wellbeing to his actions. When accused of acting in favour of a woman, Haemon's response is striking: εἴπερ γυνὴ σύ· σοῦ γὰρ οὖν προκήδομαι. (741).[48] Again at 748-9, he insists that he is acting in Creon's interest: Κρ. ὁ γοῦν λόγος σοι πᾶς ὑπὲρ κείνης ὅδε. / Αι. καὶ σοῦ γε κἀμοῦ, καὶ θεῶν τῶν νερτέρων. Because of his obsession with obedience, Creon can see Haemon's criticism and suggestions only as an example of disloyalty, of setting the city and especially Antigone over his bond to his father. Haemon, by contrast, attempts a form of loyal opposition, performing his filial duty to look to his father's interests by attempting to correct his errant conduct.[49] Even as he grows more and more exasperated with his father,[50] Haemon emphasises their paternal bond: εἰ μὴ πατὴρ ἦσθ', εἶπον ἄν σ' οὐκ εὖ φρονεῖν. (755). This phrasing is partly a matter of decorum,[51] but does also seek to remind Creon that Haemon is still attempting to act within the remit of a son. As Haemon departs the stage in anger, vowing never to see Creon again, he suggests that his father be mad with those of his φίλοι who can endure him: ὡς τοῖς θέλουσι τῶν φίλων μαίνῃ συνών (765). This line has been read as Haemon excluding himself from his father's φίλοι,[52] but this does not seem quite right; the distinction seems to be amongst the φίλοι, not between those who are φίλος and not. In that case, Haemon offers a final retort to Creon's narrow conception of φίλοι as those chosen according to straightforwardly political qualities; he has remained loyal to the natural φιλία between father and son which endures despite political factors or interpersonal strife. Haemon has attempted to honour his bond of φιλία to his father and act in his interests, only to be met with accusations of disloyalty from

[48] This rhetorical flourish is powerful but perhaps ill-advised, given Creon's attitudes to women.
[49] Rehm (2006), p.193.
[50] e.g. 743;745.
[51] Griffith (1999), p.251.
[52] Griffith (1999), p.252.

Creon, whose overly close synthesis of his authoritarian politics and attitudes to family have made him unable to recognise the loyalty and good intentions behind his son's actions.

The consequences of Creon's failure to balance his political and personal views and relationships are revealed in the final scenes of the play. Creon at last softens his unyielding stance on political and familial obedience; he relents in the face of Tiresias' warning and the threat from the gods to the city as a whole,[53] and hastens to the cave in which Antigone is imprisoned to release her.[54] Creon's paternal sentiment is marked; his desperation for his attendants to break open the cave is prompted by hearing his son's voice within (παιδός με σαίνει φθόγγος, 1214). Upon encountering Haemon clasping Antigone's corpse and bewailing his ill-fated marriage and 'his father's deeds' (πατρὸς ἔργα, 1225), Creon, relinquishing his prior insistence on absolute mastery, makes an affectionate appeal to Haemon as a suppliant: ἔξελθε, **τέκνον**, **ἱκέσιός** σε λίσσομαι. (1230).[55] Unhappily for Creon, his change of heart is matched by that of Haemon. The enduring filial piety of earlier is finally undone; in place of his earlier conspicuous efforts at respect, "the son" (ὁ παῖς, 1231) now glares at his father savagely and spits in his face.[56] Haemon attempts the ultimate abnegation of his earlier loyalty; he draws a sword to make a vain attempt on Creon's life (ἐκ δ' ὁρμωμένου / πατρὸς φυγαῖσιν ἤμπλακ', 1233-4), before turning the blade upon himself.[57] Haemon ultimately unites with Antigone in an aberrant 'marriage in death' - κεῖται δὲ νεκρὸς περὶ νεκρῷ, τὰ νυμφικὰ / τέλη λαχὼν δείλαιος ἔν γ' Ἅιδου δόμοις, (1240-1)[58] – and thus fulfils Creon's initially

[53] Roisman (1996), p.37.
[54] 1108ff.
[55] 988-1116; Roisman (1996), p.38. Note Creon's use of the vocative τέκνον, preferred by parents in emotional scenes in which they wish to emphasise kinship with their children: Dickey (1996), p.68. This contrasts with Creon's use of the less emotive παῖ in the earlier clash (632, 639, 648).
[56] 1231-2.
[57] 1234-9.
[58] Holt (1999), p.73.

false accusations that he favoured Antigone over his own father. Creon's failure is made utterly clear by his final appearance onstage; he laments as he leads on his son's body,[59] only to be informed of his wife's suicide.[60] Eurydice's grief at the death of Haemon combined with that for their other son Megareus,[61] moves her to lament the deeds of Creon 'the child-killer' (τῷ παιδοκτόνῳ, 1305). Assonance reinforces the association between the suicides of Haemon and Eurydice: **παί**σασ' ὑφ' ἧπαρ αὐτόχειρ αὑτήν, ὅπως / **παι**δὸς τόδ' ᾔσθετ' ὀξυκώκυτον πάθος (1314-5). Despite ultimately relenting, Creon cannot escape the devastating consequences of his earlier rigidity for himself and his family. His paternal conduct, driven by his application of an excessively domineering understanding of political leadership to fatherhood, drives away the son who attempted so conspicuously to remain loyal to his father even as he disagreed with him, and ultimately destroys his family as a whole. Creon's attempt to combine fatherhood and political power is simplistic and dogmatic; he fails at both.

3.2.2. Creon in *Phoenician Women*

Creon in *Antigone* fails as a father because of the unyielding authoritarianism of his overly politicised conception of fatherhood. His behaviour as a father is determined by the inflexibility and emphasis on total obedience which also characterise his regime, with unhappy consequences in both spheres. The depiction of Creon in Euripides' *Phoenician Women* contrasts strongly with that in *Antigone*. The same mythical figure is presented as ultimately reaching entirely opposite conclusions on the relationship

[59] 1261-9.
[60] 1275-316.
[61] Griffith (1999), pp.350-1 notes the similarity of the myth of Megareus, as far as we can reconstruct it, and the fate of Menoeceus in *Phoenician Women*, although he points out that the two figures cannot necessarily be identified.

between politics and paternity; Euripides' Creon totally subordinates public interest and political factors to his responsibilities and feelings as a father, although with scarcely a happier outcome from the perspective of his paternal role.

The precise force and specificity of this contrast depends upon our interpretation of various textual issues in *Phoenician Women*. Euripides' *Phoenician Women* is a play bedevilled by considerable textual controversy and suspicions of substantial interpolation.[62] The position taken on these controversies has a bearing on our understanding of Creon's depiction in the play; while his appearance in the scene with Eteocles and the Menoeceus episode is uncontroversial, his reappearance with Menoeceus' body at 1308ff. and in the play's epilogue are both contested.[63] All of Creon's appearances can be defended to some extent, however. Despite objections,[64] Creon's reappearance at 1308ff. and presence during the second messenger speech can be defended with reference to other Euripidean examples,[65] while, though the epilogue (1539-1766) has extremely few champions of its transmitted form as a whole,[66] its inclusion of both the exile of Oedipus and the issue of Polyneices' burial - and Creon's involvement therein - can be defended.[67] Crucially, *Phoenician Women* is a highly intertextual play which extensively evokes and reworks earlier literature.[68] The

[62] Mastronarde (1994), p.39-49 offers a brief overview of the main controversies and establishes his own conservative stance on the transmitted text.
[63] Diggle (1993), for instance, considers both of these latter appearances to be interpolations.
[64] Fraenkel (1963), 71-80 lays out both general and specific objections to Creon's appearance at 1308ff, particularly the fact that he spends 1356-584 onstage in silence, and the second messenger speech is not addressed to him at any point.
[65] Mastronarde (1994), pp.513-4, as well as noting the subjectivity of many of the objections to specific lines within the scene, remarks that *Andr.* 1166ff. serves as another example of a violation of the general principle of messenger speeches being followed by a choral and then character response, while Adrastus is onstage for two extremely lengthy silences at *Supp.* 262-734.
[66] Diggle (1993) ends the play at 1582, Fraenkel (1963), p.117 and Mastronarde (1994), p.628 at 1736.
[67] Conacher (1967), p.100, although he notes that this acceptance of the themes does not mean accepting all lines related to them. As Mastronarde (1994), *ad* 1447-50 notes, these lines had escaped all suspicion until Hose (1990), meaning that at least one reference to the burial of Polyneices is generally accepted in the play. This of course in no way prevents scepticism towards other specific passages on the theme, but it does mean we are not compelled to treat any reference to the burial as automatically making a passage inauthentic.
[68] Lamari (2010), pp.136-7.

teichoskopia recalls the *Iliad*,[69] while tragic models abound; the plot draws heavily upon *Seven Against Thebes*, and the Tiresias scene offers reminiscences of both *Oedipus Tyrannus* and *Antigone*, as well as alluding to the self-sacrifice tragedy *Erechtheus*.[70] Although the relationship of portions of the play with Sophoclean tragedy has been seen as grounds for deeming them interpolated,[71] it is also reasonable, given the extensive and conspicuous reworking of numerous literary models and particularly tragic forebears even in the more textually secure areas of the play, to see such allusions and invocations as part of the authentic play's complex relationship with its literary past rather than later intrusions.

If we limit the presence of Creon in the Euripidean drama to the uncontroversial exchange with Eteocles and the central 'Menoeceus episode', then we have a strikingly different depiction of the mythical figure from that of Sophocles' *Antigone*, demonstrating the complexity of the relationship between paternal and political responsibilities upon the tragic stage and the wide array of potential responses. If we take a more tolerant line on some of the play's textual issues and also accept Creon's reappearance at 1308ff. and in the epilogue, then I believe that we may go further in our interpretation and see the Euripidean Creon not simply as very different from his Sophoclean counterpart, but actively responding to the character's presentation in *Antigone*. In a play marked by the complexity of both its familial and literary relationships, Euripides' Creon could then be seen as a deliberate foil to the Sophoclean depiction. The character's priorities on the relationship of public and parental affairs at the moment of crisis are totally inverted, but not his fortunes or the outcome. Euripides thus conveys the dangers and difficulties of *both* of the most decisive responses to the

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[69] Mastronarde (1994), p.9; Michelini (2009) pp.174-5 notes the more 'realistic' reworking of this familiar scene.
[70] Mastronarde (1994), pp.9-10; for the evocation of *Erechtheus*, see 852-7.
[71] Fraenkel (1963), pp.4-5.

conflict of political and paternal responsibility, namely coming down firmly in favour of one area of responsibility or the other.

Creon's first appearance in *Phoenician Women* demonstrates that he does initially possess considerable interest in public matters and concern for the city's well-being. He has been roaming the city's defences in search of Eteocles,[72] in order to convey important information of an imminent attack obtained from an Argive prisoner.[73] He serves as a foil to Eteocles' haste,[74] warning against a sortie from the city by pointing out the Theban disadvantage in numbers,[75] and pressing the importance of good sense in achieving victory: καὶ μὴν τὸ νικᾶν <γ’> ἐστι πᾶν εὐβουλίας (721). Creon demonstrates the weaknesses of Eteocles' various plans of action, before proposing the strategy of assigning an outstanding commander to each gate to fend off the Seven.[76] Eteocles accepts this counsel; in what has been considered "an almost idealised father-son scene,"[77] Creon employs his sober good sense to inform and guide the hotter temper of youth in the pursuit of the public good. Creon is clearly capable of patriotism and level-headed decision making, making his response to the oracle demanding Menoeceus' death all the more striking.

Creon's patriotic intentions remain pronounced when he meets with Tiresias to seek some route to the city's salvation,[78] as demonstrated in his explanation of the situation (859-64):

[72] 697-9.
[73] 705-11.
[74] Michelini (2009), pp.170-1.
[75] 715.
[76] 740-7.
[77] Luschnig (1995), p.215.
[78] Luschnig (1995), p.223.

ἐν γὰρ κλύδωνι κείμεθ’, ὥσπερ οἶσθα σύ,

δορὸς Δαναϊδῶν, καὶ μέγας Θήβαις ἀγών. (860)

βασιλεὺς μὲν οὖν βέβηκε κοσμηθεὶς ὅπλοις

ἤδη πρὸς ἀλκὴν Ἐτεοκλῆς Μυκηνίδα·

ἐμοὶ δ’ ἀπέσταλκ’ ἐκμαθεῖν σέθεν πάρα

τί δρῶντες ἂν μάλιστα σώσαιμεν πόλιν.

Creon's language is political and relatively impersonal. Despite the quarrel of the brothers which lies behind the city's peril,[79] he speaks only of a clash of states: κλύδωνι ... δορὸς **Δαναϊδῶν;** μέγας **Θήβαις** ἀγών. Eteocles is referred to as βασιλεὺς, with no indication of his blood relationship to Creon, and any reference to Polyneices is subsumed into ἀλκὴν ... Μυκηνίδα. Although acting individually on specific instructions from Eteocles,[80] Creon consistently uses plural verbs - κείμεθ’; δρῶντες; σώσαιμεν - reflecting the collective focus of his action. Creon's language reflects his public-spirited concern in the face of a national crisis.

Tiresias' reluctance to speak does not prompt hesitation on Creon's part, but still further emphasis upon his interest in the city's wellbeing. Tiresias fears for his safety, as he must reveal a source of salvation for the city - φάρμακον σωτηρίας (893) - which is bitter to those who are to provide it.[81] Creon, however, seizes upon Tiresias' language in his persistent eagerness to hear the oracle - φράσον πολίταις καὶ πόλει **σωτηρίαν** (898)[82] - and his declaration of Menoeceus' similar interest in the common weal: κλύων γὰρ ἂν

[79] Mastronarde (1994), pp.4-6.
[80] 863, see 766-70.
[81] 891-3.
[82] πολίταις καὶ πόλει seems to have been a common phrase in the language of in public prayer: cf. Ar. *Eccl.* 414, *Knights* 458, *Lys.* 343; Mastronarde (1994), p.409.

τέρποιτο τῆς **σωτηρίας** (910). Creon simply cannot conceive of a situation in which the city's safety is not his uppermost concern: καὶ πῶς πατρώιαν γαῖαν οὐ σῶσαι θέλω; (900). πατρῷος is one of the many πατήρ-cognates common in the language of Athenian public and political life,[83] but its use here is rich in irony given the content of Tiresias' oracle; Creon's devotion to his 'fatherland' will soon come into explicit conflict with his fatherhood.

Tiresias' final, reluctant revelation of the oracle similarly deploys the same political application of paternal language in its statement of Creon's predicament: σφάξαι Μενοικέα τόνδε δεῖ σ' ὑπὲρ **πάτρας**, / σὸν παῖδ', ἐπειδὴ τὴν τύχην αὐτὸς καλεῖς (913-4).[84] As Creon despairs, Tiresias' retort reminds him that he now has exactly what he asked for: Κρ. ὦ πολλὰ λέξας ἐν βραχεῖ λόγωι κακά. / Τε. σοί γ', ἀλλὰ πατρίδι μεγάλα καὶ **σωτήρια** (917-8). Public σωτηρία can be achieved, but the πατρίς will be saved only at immense personal cost to Creon, who, for all his prior patriotism, is now set in antithesis to Thebes (σοί γ', ἀλλὰ πατρίδι). Creon's response to this sudden disjunction is a total abandonment of his earlier political focus:[85] χαιρέτω πόλις (919). Having browbeaten Tiresias into revealing his oracle, Creon now pretends not to hear,[86] and begs the prophet to keep news of the prophecy from anyone else.[87] Having previously identified himself with the city, Creon now aligns his fate with that of his son: ἐμοὶ τόδ' ... καὶ τέκνωι κακόν (929). He ultimately goes on to express understandable horror at the prospect of killing his own child for the sake of the city (964-5), and presents his refusal as reflecting universal human tendencies: πᾶσιν γὰρ ἀνθρώποισι φιλότεκνος βίος (966).[88] This

[83] See above, p.10.
[84] The sacrifice is probably a Euripidean invention: Foley (1985), pp. 107-8.
[85] Luschnig (1995), pp.166-7.
[86] 919.
[87] 925-6.
[88] Creon thus expands upon Jocasta's earlier suggestion that love for children is natural to all *women*: καὶ φιλότεκνόν πως πᾶν **γυναικεῖον** γένος (356); Mastronarde (1994), p.422. One wonders whether the connection serves to feminise Creon; such intense parental devotion at the cost of public duty arguably runs

astonishing - and astonishingly rapid[89] - reversal in Creon's attitudes is remarked upon by Tiresias[90] - ἀνὴρ ὅδ’ οὐκέθ’ αὐτός (920) - and makes explicit his motivations. Such is the intensity of his love for his son that he suddenly and totally abandons his earlier public-spiritedness in an attempt to save him.[91]

The contrast of attitude with the overwhelmingly political focus of Sophocles' Creon is pronounced.[92] Moreover, it is worth recalling the Sophoclean Creon's famous remarks on the superiority of public to private interest,[93] as Creon in the *Phoenician Women* demonstrates much of the behaviour specifically disavowed and condemned by his Sophoclean counterpart. Creon in *Antigone* denounces the man who sets a loved one above the interests of the state,[94] and specifically refuses to indulge in such activity himself ;[95] Creon in *Phoenician Women* does just that.[96] Sophocles' Creon declares that he could never be silent if he knew of a threat to the city;[97] Creon here even attempts to silence others to save his son at the city's expense: σίγα· πόλει δὲ τούσδε μὴ λέξῃς λόγους (925). The Sophoclean Creon clings rigidly to his authoritarian notions of political and paternal behaviour, firmly subordinating the latter to the former, until it is too late. Euripides' depiction of the same mythical figure presents him as utterly rejecting the avowed political principles of his Sophoclean counterpart; we see the same man attempting an opposite course of action.

Although responding entirely differently to the conflict of public and paternal interest, Euripides' Creon fares little better than his Sophoclean counterpart; his

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counter to the strong emphasis on public as well as private life which informs classical Athenian conceptions of male activity; see, amongst many others, Th. 2. 40.

[89] Foley (1985), p.106.
[90] Mastronarde (1994) p.413.
[91] Fraenkel (1963), p.81.
[92] Steiner (1983), p.79.
[93] S. *Ant* 178-90, discussed above, pp.76-7.
[94] *Ant*. 182-3.
[95] *Ant*. 187-8.
[96] e.g. *Pho*. 919.
[97] *Ant*. 184-6.

efforts to enact his sentiments and save his son do not succeed. He offers brief, vain consideration of offering himself as a substitute victim;[98] this willingness to sacrifice his own life suggests it is not simple cowardice which motivates his actions. Creon induces Menoeceus to flee to safety: ἔστι σοι σωτηρία (975). The reworking of his own rhetoric evoking the σωτηρία of the state emphasises once again the almost total reversal of Creon's stance. Menoeceus feigns obedience[99] - the air of filial piety is reinforced by the repeated address πάτερ[100] - but reveals his true intentions upon Creon's departure. He complains that his father's plan would force cowardice upon him,[101] but is forgiving towards Creon: καὶ συγγνωστὰ μὲν / γέροντι (994-5).[102] Nonetheless, Menoeceus presents his sense of duty to his homeland by means of a particularly concrete statement of the metaphor of the 'fatherland': τοὐμὸν δ' οὐχὶ συγγνώμην ἔχει, / προδότην γενέσθαι πατρίδος **ἥ μ' ἐγείνατο** (995-6). Much like Haemon in *Antigone*, Menoeceus disobeys his father, but presents his actions as born of filial piety[103] and intended in his father's interests; citing the example of those risking their lives in battle for Thebes,[104] he suggests the impossibility of continuing to live (1003-5):

> ἐγὼ δέ, πατέρα καὶ κασίγνητον προδοὺς
> πόλιν τ' ἐμαυτοῦ, δειλὸς ὣς ἔξω χθονὸς
> ἄπειμ', ὅπου δ' ἂν ζῶ κακὸς φανήσομαι;

[98] *Pho.* 968-9; O'Connor-Visser (1987), p.77 notes the parallels in other Euripidean sacrifice tragedies.
[99] 977-89.
[100] 980, 985.
[101] 993-4.
[102] It is interesting to note that, whereas Menoeceus sees Creon's misguided action as explained by old age, in *Antigone* Haemon accuses Creon of being driven by immature thinking (ὡς ἄγαν νέος, S. *Ant.* 735).
[103] And patriotism described in terms evocative of filial piety: μ' ἐγείνατο, 996.
[104] 999-1002.

Menoeceus does not present himself as choosing his city over his father; rather, failure to accept his fate would be a betrayal, not only of his city, *but also* of his father (πατέρα καὶ κασίγνητον προδοὺς / πόλιν τ' ἐμαυτοῦ); he sees his political and filial duty as completely in alignment.[105] Creon's difficulty in reconciling paternal and political duty is thrown into sharper relief by his son's clear sense of the unity of his responsibilities to his father and to his fatherland.

Menoeceus' actions meet with considerable praise from the Chorus in the ode which follows.[106] In contrast to Oedipus, who initially saved Thebes but then brought disaster within and beyond his family,[107] Menoeceus has brought joy to Thebes, but grief to his father;[108] the Chorus pray for such a child (γενοίμεθ' ὧδε ματέρες / γενοίμεθ' εὔτεκνοι (1060-1).[109] Menoeceus' bravery also receives brief acknowledgement from the Messenger for having brought safety to the land - τῆιδε γῆι σωτηρίαν (1092) - but it is unclear exactly how his undeniably selfless act achieves this;[110] it seems to be a necessary but not sufficient condition for the survival of the state. It is the mutual killing of Polyneices and Eteocles, followed by the spirited action of the Theban army, which ultimately save the city.[111] Nonetheless - if we accept Creon's appearance onstage after the central Menoeceus scene[112] - his father's return to the stage demonstrates the human cost of Menoeceus' public-spiritedness. In an echo of the finale of *Antigone*, Creon returns to the stage to mourn his son and arrange funerary rites, possibly with Menoeceus' body

[105] Rawson (1970), p.119.
[106] 1019-66.
[107] 1043-55.
[108] 1054-9.
[109] Rawson (1970), p.119. If we accept Creon's reappearance with Menoeceus' body (textual issues discussed above, the scene itself below), the human cost of such 'glorious' parenting becomes more apparent.
[110] Foley (1985), p.110.
[111] Luschnig (1995), pp.209-10.
[112] See above for the textual issues of Creon's later appearances.

in tow.[113] It is notable that his earlier, conflicted position has now been resolved, but unhappily; Creon need merely choose whether to lament for his son or his city: πότερ' ἐμαυτὸν ἢ πόλιν / στένω δακρύσας (1310-1). He seeks his sister Jocasta, so that, as a substitute mother, she may perform the necessary preparations for burial: ὅπως / λούσηι προθῆταί τ' οὐκέτ' ὄντα παῖδ' ἐμόν (1318-9).[114] οὐκέτ' ὄντα παῖδ' ἐμόν has almost a double resonance: both "my child, who is no more", and also "he who is no longer my child." Creon has lost Menoeceus to death, but also to the city, which his son chose to save at the cost of his life despite Creon's desperate desire to save him. The pathos of Creon's position is enhanced by his marginalisation; the messenger speech and Antigone's entrance with the bodies and lament come to dominate the action of the scene, overshadowing Creon's private grief.[115]

The evocation of *Antigone* is particularly pronounced - although again textually controversial[116] - in Creon's appearance in the epilogue. In response to Eteocles' earlier instructions,[117] Creon, now ruler of Thebes,[118] demands that Antigone be married to Haemon. Antigone, however, threatens hideous violence: νὺξ ἆρ' ἐκείνη Δαναΐδων μ' ἕξει μίαν (1675). After some astonished questioning, and faced with Antigone's refusal to relent upon the marriage, Creon himself yields: ἴθ', οὐ φονεύσεις παῖδ' ἐμόν, λεῖπε χθόνα (1682). Not only are his intentions the opposite of his Sophoclean counterpart - to enforce,

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[113] Mastronarde (1994), pp.514-5 observes that, if Creon brings on Menoeceus' body, he would have to remove it from the stage during Antigone's monody, and return by 1584; he notes that this version of events is not without scholarly support.
[114] At 986-8, Menoeceus notes that Jocasta nursed him after the death of his own mother; she once again assumes the maternal role at the end of his life, having fulfilled it at the beginning.
[115] Mastronarde (1994), pp.513-4. It is also interesting to note that this forms a reversal of the *Antigone* finale, deliberately or otherwise; whereas in Sophocles Creon's entrance with his son's body and lament for the fate of his family comes to dominate in place of the issue of Antigone's actions, here Antigone's lament and entrance with the bodies of her family ultimately usurp the focus of the scene from Creon and his grief.
[116] Fraenkel (1963) pp.100-1 completely rejects the burial theme in the play as a whole, and thus Creon's exchange with Antigone, but, as noted above, Conacher (1967) defends the burial theme, and Mastronarde (1994) pp.611-2 defends the exchange between Creon and Antigone, suggesting that only 1653 is seriously problematic.
[117] 757-60. Mastronarde (1994), pp.364-5 defends the lines from the common charge of inauthenticity, although Diggle (1993) deletes Eteocles' 'testament.'
[118] 1586-8.

rather than prevent, the marriage of Antigone and Haemon - but Creon here reveals a prioritisation of his paternal over his political power. He is not a totally impotent ruler - he successfully enforces his prohibition against Polyneices' burial[119] and his banishment of Oedipus - but, when faced with enforcing his will as ruler at the cost of his son's life, Creon relents;[120] unlike in the case of Menoeceus, this time Creon will save παῖδ' ἐμόν.

The depictions of Creon in Sophocles' *Antigone* and Euripides' *Phoenician Women* offer strikingly distinct versions of the same mythical figure, although they both portray him confronting paternal and political duties and concerns. The Sophoclean Creon subordinates his conception of fatherhood to his authoritarian style of rule and his complete prioritisation of public over private matters. The Euripidean Creon, conversely, is willing to totally disregard prior public-spiritedness in the face of a threat to his son. Neither incarnation of the character achieves a successful synthesis of their paternal and political roles; they must both endure the loss of a son who cannot accept their demands, although the Euripidean Creon's prioritisation of paternal duty does at least save his son Haemon. This general failure to achieve a happy reconciliation of the pressures of fatherhood and political life is made all the more conspicuous by the fact that Haemon and Menoeceus both manage to unite action in the interest of the state with their understanding of their filial duties. Whether treated as strikingly different but independent interpretations of the same mythical figure, or a deliberate response on Euripides' part to Sophocles' earlier incarnation of the character, these two depictions of Creon offer the two extremes of potential relationships between fatherhood and politics, and demonstrate

[119] 1644-71.
[120] Mastronarde (1994), p.621.

the difficulties of reconciling these twin poles of male activity and concern upon the tragic stage.

3.3. Oedipus

For Creon, as for Agamemnon, political and paternal responsibilities come into conflict. In the case of both figures, it is an event or crisis in the public sphere which prompts the disjunction between these two areas of responsibility; an oracle demands the sacrifice of a child for the common good, or disobedience to an edict denying burial prompts defensive measures. Whether these characters ultimately prioritise the paternal or the political, this conflict is thrust upon them by public affairs.

The opposite can also be true, however; the actions of fathers within their parental capacity can ultimately lead to adverse consequences for the state and people as a whole. The most striking example of this is Oedipus' curse upon his sons, recounted in Aeschylus' *Seven Against Thebes*, Euripides' *Phoenician Women* and Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus*. Although the specifics vary from play to play,[121] tragic accounts of this curse have Oedipus condemn his sons to death at one another's hands, thereby causing war, invasion, and an existential threat to Thebes itself. In this case, Oedipus' actions as a father run counter to the interests of the state. As with Agamemnon and Creon, paternal feelings and political responsibility stand in conflict, with devastating results for Oedipus' family and his people.

[121] Discussed below.

3.3.1. Curses in classical Athens

In English, 'curse' is ambiguous. It can refer to an act; a spoken imprecation wishing misfortune upon the one responsible for some wrong, often invoking some divine or supernatural power.[122] It can also refer to an enduring accursed state - the so-called *Fluchzustand* - in which some moral or religious offence incurs divine displeasure, leading to misfortunes for the guilty party or those in association.[123] Both aspects of the concept have their place in Greek thought, and are often closely interlinked; the enduring *Fluchzustand*, for example, is often the result of a specific imprecation - an ἀρά / κατάρα[124] - in response to a misdeed, or conversely a *Fluchzustand* can prompt a specific spoken curse.[125]

Curses are common in Greek literature. In the *Iliad*, we have Chryses' prayer to Apollo for suffering amongst the Achaeans and Amyntor's curse of sterility upon his son Phoenix,[126] while in the *Odyssey* Polyphemus curses Odysseus for his blinding.[127] Tragedy abounds with both acts of cursing and the cursed state;[128] for example, Theseus curses his son in *Hippolytus*,[129] and Eurydice her husband in *Antigone*. The *Oresteia* makes numerous references to the curse dogging the House of Atreus, recounting its origins in the imprecations of Thyestes upon discovering the fate of his children[130] (it is important to remember that a state of accursedness can be inherited).[131]

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[122] Versnel (2015), pp.453-4.
[123] Watson (1991), pp.1-2.
[124] There is much overlap between the language of curse and prayer, as the two are closely related; both involve asking a higher power for a certain outcome: Versnel (2015), pp.447-8.
[125] e.g. the choral ode at A. *Sept*. 720-91, where Oedipus' cursing of his sons is set within the context of an enduring stain upon the family; see below.
[126] *Il*. 1.37-42; 9.453-7; see above, p.14.
[127] *Od*. 9.528-35.
[128] Waston (1991), pp.14-5.
[129] E. *Hipp*. 887-90.
[130] A. *Ag*. 1600-2.
[131] Watson (1991), pp.27-8.

Crucially, however, cursing was not simply a literary convention, but rather a pervasive feature of Greek life.[132] A frequent form of curse was the 'conditional' curse - if a perpetrator does X, then may Y follow[133] - and this was widespread in Greek public life. Meetings of the Athenian assembly opened with such conditional curses being cast upon anyone who might speak to deceive the citizens,[134] while an inscription of the early fifth century records the Teans seeking to protect their city by the annual issuing of the *Dirae Teae*, a series of conditional curses wishing destruction upon both anyone who harmed the city and their entire γένος.[135] Curses also had their roles in private life; they were often used to protect tombs,[136] and from the mid-C5th onwards we find in Attica evidence of the use of κατάδεσμοι or *defixiones*, "binding curses".[137] These curses, usually written on lead tablets which were then folded and buried,[138] lack something of the grandeur of their mythical counterparts; they usually sought to hinder or impair a personal rival or foe, and were aimed at rivals in love, legal proceedings, commerce and even in theatrical competition.[139] Curses were generally expected to be fulfilled in both literature and life,[140] with those issued by parents held to be especially potent.[141] Nonetheless, although curses were considered to have great power, they were generally the preserve of the powerless; both literary curses and κατάδεσμοι are frequently the work

[132] Watson (1991), pp.18-9.
[133] Eidinow (2007), p.140.
[134] Dem. 19.70; the curse is parodied at Ar. *Thesm.* 349f.
[135] Versnel (2015), p.454; ML 30 = Osborne-Rhodes 102.
[136] Watson (1991), p.22.
[137] Eidinow (2007), p.141. Sewell-Rutter (2007), pp.51-9 rightly points out the general scarcity of κατάδεσμοι in tragedy (the 'binding song' at A. *Eum.* 307-96 is a rare exception), noting that their secretive, usually written nature is a poor fit for the genre in contrast to the more dignified, performative ἀρά. Nonetheless, their presence in classical Attic society supports the notion of widespread belief in cursing of some form, and so is pertinent to the present discussion. Parker (2005), pp.121-35 provides a useful overview.
[138] Eidinow (2007), p.140.
[139] Eidinow (2007), pp.154-5.
[140] Watson (1991), pp.22-4.
[141] Pl. *Leg.* 931.

of those without recourse to other means of defence or revenge, such as military strength or legal redress.[142]

3.3.2. Oedipus' curses

Curses are prominent in literary and tragic depictions of Oedipus. This man's notorious actions are often set in the context of a cursed state[143] inherited due to the misdeeds of his father Laius.[144] Hence in *Seven Against Thebes*, the Chorus, amidst their concern for the fate of the sons of Oedipus and of the city, remark upon this as part of the enduring[145] legacy of Laius' disobedience to Apollo's oracle forbidding fatherhood,[146] which had also led to Oedipus' parricide and incest.[147] In Euripides' *Phoenician Women* - a response in many ways to Aeschylus' extant Theban drama[148] - Jocasta herself offers a summary account of Oedipus' unhappy fate[149] in which Laius' disobedience to an oracle of Apollo once again sets in motion Oedipus' wretched career,[150] and Oedipus' appearance near the play's close may include a lament on his role in both suffering and transmitting the curse of Laius to his children: ἀρὰς παραλαβὼν Λαΐου καὶ παισὶ δούς (*Pho*. 1611).[151]

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[142] Watson (1991), pp.39-40. For example, Philoctetes calls on the gods to curse those who have wronged him: S. *Phil*. 1035-6. At A. *Cho*. 139ff., Electra issues curses against the murderers of her father, as she does not (at that point) have an alternative route to redress.

[143] West (1999), pp.33-4 makes a distinction between the ancestral *curse* - i.e. an imprecation which also includes the victim's descendants – and ancestral *guilt*; he argues that most tragic accounts of the House of Laius include only the latter (pp.40-3). That said, it is not clear that the Greeks themselves observed such a neat distinction; for example, Electra refers to the guilt attaching to her and Orestes from the murder of Clytemnestra as μητρὸς φόνιοι **κατάραι** (Eur. *El*. 1324), while in the (admittedly textually problematic: see below) remarks of Oed. at *Pho*. 1611 there is a reference to ἄραι in the context of inherited guilt.

[144] Gagné (2013) pp.344-93 offers a thorough account of references to ancestral guilt in tragic accounts of Oedipus.

[145] Across three generations: αἰῶνα δ' ἐς τρίτον / μένειν (A. *Sept*. 744-5).

[146] *Sept*. 742-51.

[147] 751-7.

[148] Sewell-Rutter (2007), p.25.

[149] *Pho*. 13-62.

[150] 17-22.

[151] Diggle (1993) ends the play at 1581, while Fraenkel (1966) p.91 considers 1611 un-Euripidean in its obscurity, and indeed rejects 1595-614 as a whole (pp.94-5). Mastronarde (1994) p.598 defends Oedipus'

As well as being the victim of an inherited curse, Oedipus is himself frequently depicted as cursing others. The motivations for Oedipus' notorious curse upon his sons vary depending upon the source.[152] In fragments of the pre-tragic *Thebaid,*[153] Oedipus is angered by his father Cadmus'[154] silver table and golden goblet being set before him by his son Polyneices, or alternatively by being sent a haunch from his sons' sacrifice instead of his usual portion from the shoulder. The three main tragic accounts of Oedipus' curse and its consequences - Aeschylus' *Seven Against Thebes*, Euripides' *Phoenician Women*, and Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus* - also differ amongst themselves. The account in Aeschylus is somewhat enigmatic (*Sept*. 785-7):

> τέκνοις δ' ἀρχαίας
>
> ἐφῆκεν ἐπίκοτος τροφᾶς,
>
> αἰαῖ, πικρογλώσσους ἀράς

The ambiguity stems from how we are to take τροφή. τροφή can mean 'sustenance', and has been so taken in light of the scholion to *OC* 1375, which claims that Aeschylus followed *Thebaid* fr.3 in attributing Oedipus' anger to his being given a haunch.[155] However, the term can also be taken to refer to one's origin[156] or upbringing.[157] In this light, Oedipus curses his sons in horror at the discovery of their incestuous origins,[158] rather than as a consequence of their treatment of him. This stands in contrast to the other

account of his life overall, but admits the presence of considerable oddities in the passage: "the general import seems appropriate and necessary, but the details unsatisfactory."

[152] Bowman (2007), p.17.

[153] *Thebaid* frr. 2-3 West.

[154] Note the difference from the tragic genealogy.

[155] τὰ δὲ παραπλήσια τῷ ἐποποιῷ καὶ Αἰσχύλος ἐν τοῖς Ἑπτὰ ἐπὶ Θήβαις: schol. S. *OC* 1375.12; Roisman (1988), p.77.

[156] Hutchinson (1985), p.xxv, citing E. *Ion*. 262; S. *Phil*. 3, *Aj*. 1229. Hutchinson (1985) also emends ἀρχαίας to ἀθλίας.

[157] Roisman (1988), pp.80-1.

[158] Roisman (1988), pp.82-3.

two tragic accounts. In *Phoenician Women*, the sons incur Oedipus' anger and curse by confining him within the house in the hope of his crimes being forgotten.[159] In *Oedipus at Colonus*, conversely, we hear from Oedipus himself how the sons incurred his wrath by conniving in driving him *from* his home.[160] Although the reasons for the curse vary, the common factor in all accounts is the sons' relationship with their father, whether they incur his wrath by failing in or disregarding their duty to their father, or simply horrify him into cursing by the incestuous nature of their begetting.

Given the variety of causes depicted for Oedipus' curse, it is striking that the provisions of the curse itself remain relatively constant across the various tragic accounts. Aeschylus records its provisions as follows: καί σφε σιδαρονόμωι / διὰ χερί ποτε λαχεῖν / κτήματα (*Sept*. 788-90). The curse calls, in effect, for a violent inheritance dispute, of a sort not unfamiliar to a classical Athenian audience.[161] The Aeschylean terminology finds echoes in the succinct formulation of the curse in *Phoenician Women*:[162] θηκτῶι σιδήρωι δῶμα διαλαχεῖν τόδε (68). This curse combines the domestic and public; διαλαγχάνω can be used specifically of obtaining a share in an inheritance,[163] while the focus of the sons' dispute is cast in private terms: κτήματα, δῶμα.[164] Nonetheless, the references to iron[165] - σιδαρονόμωι; θηκτῶι σιδήρωι - connote weaponry[166] and violence. In Aeschylus and Euripides, Oedipus' curse, although aimed at his sons and presented as focused upon the

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[159] *Pho*. 63-5.
[160] *OC* 427-30, discussed in greater detail below.
[161] Berman (2007), p.117. Disputes between brothers over the division of inheritance were commonplace in classical Athens, and could turn violent; Is. 9 recounts a case in which one brother killed another, while Arist. *Pol.* 1303b33 recounts a civil war in Hestieia shortly after the Persian Wars which had its origins in an inheritance dispute between brothers: Berman (2007), pp.126-7.
[162] Mastronarde (1994) *ad loc*.
[163] s.v. *LSJ* A.II.
[164] Hutchinson (1985), pp.142-3 notes the distinction between Oedipus' moveable wealth in *Septem* and his property in *Phoenician Women*, but for our purposes the importance is that the curse speaks of a dispute focused on Oedipus' *private* property in some capacity.
[165] Mastronarde (1994) *ad* 350 offers a valuable summary of the prevalence of iron and iron-related terminology in both *Septem* and *Phoenician Women*.
[166] s.v. *LSJ* A.II.

division of his private wealth, contains within it the seeds of political strife and open warfare.

The curse in the *Oedipus at Colonus*, conversely, is much more explicitly political in its content and aims. This is unsurprising, given the variant context; the sons of Oedipus have already fallen out over the inheritance of *political* leadership - εἰσῆλθε τοῖν τρισαθλίοιν ἔρις κακή, / **ἀρχῆς** λαβέσθαι καὶ κράτους **τυραννικοῦ** (*OC* 371-2) - and seek to obtain Oedipus' body in order to triumph in this civil war.[167] Oedipus' curse is altered accordingly (421-7):[168]

Οι. ἀλλ’ οἱ θεοί σφιν μήτε τὴν πεπρωμένην
ἔριν κατασβέσειαν, ἐν δ’ ἐμοὶ τέλος
αὐτοῖν γένοιτο τῆσδε τῆς μάχης πέρι,
ἧς νῦν ἔχονται κἀπαναίρονται δόρυ·
ὡς οὔτ’ ἂν ὃς νῦν σκῆπτρα καὶ θρόνους ἔχει (425)
μείνειεν, οὔτ’ ἂν οὑξεληλυθὼς πάλιν
ἔλθοι ποτ’ αὖθις·

The public nature of the quarrel is clear; the ἔρις (422, cf.371) is a full-blown μάχη (423), while σίδηρος, the implicitly violent or martial term of Aeschylus and Euripides, is replaced by explicit references to the spear (δόρυ, 424). Oedipus does not refer to his private possessions, but rather explicitly denies both of his sons their aim of obtaining his political position: σκῆπτρα καὶ θρόνους (425).[169] Oedipus' motivations for this public

[167] *OC* 392-400.
[168] This is the first of two curses in *OC*, the other being delivered against Polynices in person at 1370-9; discussed below.
[169] Easterling (1967), pp.4-5 points out that the phrase σκῆπτρα καὶ θρόνοι is repeatedly used in passages emphasising the sons' ambitions.

curse are, however, as we have seen, focused upon his personal experiences as a father and mistreatment by his sons.[170]

Oedipus' curse thus represents an interaction of the paternal and political; his experiences and emotions as a father lead to a curse upon the issue of his sons' inheritance, but the political nature of this inheritance, given Oedipus' former status as a ruler, is more or less explicitly invoked in the language, and the potential for political violence and even open warfare thus encoded in the curse itself. We shall explore the public implications of this father's curse more thoroughly.

3.3.3. The curse and the city - *Seven Against Thebes*

Aeschylus' *Seven Against Thebes* is explicit on the public consequences of Oedipus' curse and the resulting conflict between his sons. The first half[171] of the play is conspicuously civic in its focus,[172] as is reinforced by the opening words of Eteocles (1-3):

> Κάδμου πολῖται, χρὴ λέγειν τὰ καίρια
>
> ὅστις φυλάσσει πρᾶγος ἐν πρύμνηι πόλεως
>
> οἴακα νωμῶν, βλέφαρα μὴ κοιμῶν ὕπνωι.

The play opens with a reference to the citizen body - Κάδμου πολῖται - while Eteocles characterises himself as a guardian of the city: ὅστις φυλάσσει πρᾶγος (2). He elaborates

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[170] 427-30.

[171] Roughly; the shift falls at 653: Sewell-Rutter (2007), p.27.

[172] Burian (2009), pp.20-1. We must of course remember that *Seven Against Thebes* is the concluding play of a Theban tragic trilogy, the rest of which remains extremely elusive; Hutchinson (1985), pp.xiv-xxx and Sommerstein (2010), pp.84-90 survey the evidence.

upon his position with the metaphor of the 'ship of state,' casting himself as the unsleeping helmsman (2-3); this image reinforces the sense both of Eteocles' power and his responsibility, as the one directing and preserving Thebes. In the speech which follows, Eteocles calls upon Theban men of all ages to fight in defence of their home,[173] sends them to posts with an encouragement to boldness,[174] and remarks upon his own precautions against being deceived by the enemy.[175] In this 38-line speech, Eteocles refers to the πόλις 5 times,[176] as well as invoking the Theban γῆ (16).[177] Emphasis is lain squarely upon the public character of the crisis and Eteocles' determination to resolve it for the city's well-being.

The exact nature of the threat to this public well-being posed by the quarrel between Oedipus' sons is made clear by the Chorus in a lengthy ode upon the terrors of the war and its possible consequences.[178] They remark in alarm on the enemies' massed attacks - **παν**δημεὶ **παν**ομιλεὶ (296) - and expound at length and in clear horror the fate awaiting a captured city.[179] The unhappy possibilities are many, and run the full gamut of society. The city as a whole cries out - βοᾶι / δ' ἐκκενουμένα πόλις (329-30) - and is defiled with smoke: καπνῶι / χραίνεται πόλισμ' ἅπαν (341-2). Men suffer: one man brings slavery, slaughter and fire to another - ἄλλος δ' ἄλλον ἄγει, φονεύ- /ει, τὰ δὲ πυρφορεῖ (340-1) - and death in battle is rife: πρὸς ἀνδρὸς δ' ἀνὴρ < > δορὶ καίνεται (346). Even worse awaits the women. Young and old women face being dragged off into captivity - τὰς δὲ κεχειρωμένας ἄγεσθαι, / ἒ ἕ, νέας τε καὶ παλαιὰς / ἱππηδὸν πλοκάμων (326-8) - in a manner which degrades them to the level of animals: ἱππηδὸν. The Chorus specifically

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[173] *Sept*. 10-3.
[174] 30-5.
[175] 36-8.
[176] 2, 6, 9, 14, 29.
[177] Discussed further below.
[178] 287-368. Hutchinson (1985), p.91: "The wide sweep and confusion of disaster is powerfully conveyed."
[179] 321-68.

laments the enslavement of those who have yet to reach marriage,[180] and these newly-enslaved women - δμωίδες δὲ καινοπήμονες (363) - must endure the sexual attentions of the victor from which only death offers escape.[181] Even infants face a violent death.[182] This vision of the city's capture nuances the emphasis upon public factors in the presentation of the brothers' war. Not only does this quarrel, born of familial disharmony and a father's curse, threaten the state with the military violence it engenders, but this military violence in turn threatens the ruin of family life throughout the state as a whole.

This familial origin of the strife is, however, largely relegated to the background in the earlier stages of the play. There are three references to Eteocles' family in this first half.[183] The Chorus address and describe him patronymically on two occasions: ὦ φίλον Οἰδίπου τέκος (203); ἄναξ ὅδ' αὐτὸς Οἰδίπου τόκος (372). More striking is the reference to Oedipus in Eteocles' prayer for the city (69-77):

Ετ. ὦ Ζεῦ τε καὶ Γῆ καὶ πολισσοῦχοι θεοί,
Ἀρά τ' Ἐρινὺς πατρὸς ἡ μεγασθενής, (70)
μή μοι πόλιν γε πρυμνόθεν πανώλεθρον
ἐκθαμνίσητε δηιάλωτον Ἑλλάδος,
[φθόγγον χέουσαν καὶ δόμους ἐφεστίους]
ἐλευθέραν δὲ γῆν τε καὶ Κάδμου πόλιν
ζυγοῖσι δουλίοισι μὴ δῶτε σχεθεῖν· (75)
γένεσθε δ' ἀλκή· ξυνὰ δ' ἐλπίζω λέγειν,
πόλις γὰρ εὖ πράσσουσα δαίμονας τίει.

[180] 333-5.
[181] 364-8.
[182] 348-50. Hutchinson (1985) *ad loc*. notes that classical warfare generally did not entail the massacring of infants upon the capture of a city; the exaggeration here nonetheless contributes to the emotional power of the passage.
[183] *pace* Sewell-Rutter (2007), pp.26-7, where only two are identified: he misses 372.

All three powers invoked in the opening line of this prayer were mentioned in Eteocles' opening speech,[184] but the sudden invocation of Oedipus' curse in 70 is startling. This attempt to include the paternal curse amidst the divine protectors of the city[185] falls within an intensely civic prayer;[186] Eteocles prays for the safety of his land and city - ἐλευθέραν δὲ γῆν τε καὶ Κάδμου πόλιν (74) - and invokes the religious 'generosity' of a prosperous city to induce the gods to do so.[187] The impression is thus of an attempt to recast the curse which poses such a threat to the city as a means for its protection; Eteocles invokes his difficult family background only to incorporate it - or at least attempt to incorporate it - into his position as civic protector.

Nonetheless, the curse is recalled. Burian sees in the first half of the play an "exclusive focus on Eteocles as ruler ... minimising Eteocles as son of Oedipus and inheritor of his curse,"[188] but this is not quite correct. We can, it is true, see an attempt on the part of Eteocles himself to minimise the perception of himself as the son of Oedipus. For instance, while Greek has an extensive array of metaphorical and political language derived from the term πατήρ,[189] Eteocles makes more extensive use of the metaphor of *motherhood*. In his opening speech, he encourages his men to defend their *mother*land (16-20):[190]

τέκνοις τε γῆι τε μητρί, φιλτάτηι τροφῶι·

ἡ γὰρ νέους ἕρποντας εὐμενεῖ πέδωι,

[184] Zeus at 8-9, Earth at 16-20, the local gods at 14.
[185] Sewell-Rutter (2007), p.26.
[186] 3 references to the πόλις in a mere 8 lines.
[187] 77.
[188] Burian (2009), p.21.
[189] See above, p.10.
[190] Hutchinson (1985), p.45.

ἅπαντα πανδοκοῦσα παιδείας ὄτλον,

ἐθρέψατ' οἰκητῆρας ἀσπιδηφόρους,

πιστοί θ' ὅπως γένοισθε πρὸς χρέος τόδε.

This is a full and explicit use of the metaphor, replete with emotionally charged terminology[191] - φιλτάτηι (16), εὐμενεῖ (17), ὄτλον (18) - and terms of parenthood and child-rearing: τροφῶι (16), νέους (17), παιδείας (18), ἐθρέψατ' (19). He also encourages obedience to his commands amongst the Chorus with a metaphor of motherhood: πειθαρχία γάρ ἐστι τῆς εὐπραξίας / μήτηρ †γυνὴ† σωτῆρος· ὧδ' ἔχει λόγος. (224-5). We can arguably see in this language of motherhood a careful avoidance of the paternal language which is common in Greek political metaphor; the only father-figure Eteocles invokes, other than with the unusual reference at 270, is Zeus.[192] It is pointed, therefore, that Amphiaraus, the famously accurate and virtuous prophet,[193] makes use of both maternal *and* paternal political metaphors in his chastisement of Polyneices:[194] πόλιν **πατρῴαν** (582); μητρός τε πηγὴν (584); **πατρίς** τε γαῖα (585). Although Eteocles may generally avoid language associating Thebes with his or any father, and thus make relatively minimal reference to the curse operating upon him and his brother, there is relatively little sense that *Aeschylus* is in fact doing so. Rather, while the greater attention paid to civic concerns in the first half of the play emphasises the public consequences of the war, the references to fatherhood and Oedipus, coupled with Eteocles' notable avoidance or redeploying of issues such as the curse and his paternity, are sufficient to

[191] Hutchinson (1985), p.45.
[192] 512.
[193] Hutchinson (1985), pp.132-3
[194] 580-9.

ensure that we do not forget the father's curse at work behind the events of even the 'civic' first half of the play.[195]

When Eteocles learns that he is to face Polyneices in battle, the familial factors which have been in the background burst to the fore (653-7):[196]

Ετ. ὦ θεομανές τε καὶ θεῶν μέγα στύγος,
ὦ πανδάκρυτον ἁμὸν Οἰδίπου γένος·
ὤμοι πατρὸς δὴ νῦν ἀραὶ τελεσφόροι. (655)
ἀλλ’ οὔτε κλαίειν οὔτ’ ὀδύρεσθαι πρέπει,
μὴ καὶ τεκνωθῆι δυσφορώτερος γόος.

We are suddenly struck by references to the hatred of the gods whom Eteocles has previously worked so assiduously to bring on side, the wretched state of Eteocles' family - πανδάκρυτον (654) - and Oedipus' curses, now achieving their intended hostile end rather than aiding Eteocles' efforts for the city: ἀραὶ τελεσφόροι (655). The metaphor of begetting in reference to weeping (657)[197] further strengthens this emphasis upon the familial origins of the present suffering. Interestingly, Eteocles *now* makes use of paternal political language: ἐν **πατρῴιας** μὴν χθονὸς κακουχίαι (668). The familial aspect of the violence which is to ensue is also brought to the fore,[198] and begins to separate the fate of the sons of Oedipus from that of the city. For instance, the Chorus argue against Eteocles' intended fratricide by contrasting the stain of internecine killing with the 'purity' of

[195] It is possible that Aeschylus might have lain sufficient emphasis on the curse in the preceding play in the trilogy, *Oedipus*, for it to overshadow the entirety of *Seven Against Thebes* without requiring frequent mention, although we simply cannot know: Sewell-Rutter (2007), pp.99-100.
[196] Burian (2009), p.21.
[197] Hutchinson (1985), p.150.
[198] Sewell-Rutter (2007), pp.27-8.

military violence between different states;[199] the Chorus has now heard of something even more horrifying than the war of which they were previously so afraid.

Whilst there is still an expectation of interest in the city's well-being on the part of its royal household - δέδοικα δὲ σὺν βασιλεῦσι / μὴ πόλις δαμασθῇι. (764-5) - the fates of the sons and the city are soon contrasted (792-802):

Αγγ. θαρσεῖτε, παῖδες μητέρων τεθραμμέναι·
πόλις πέφευγεν ἥδε δούλιον ζυγόν.
πέπτωκεν ἀνδρῶν ὀβρίμων κομπάσματα,
πόλις δ' ἐν εὐδίαι τε καὶ κλυδωνίου (795)
πολλαῖσι πληγαῖς ἄντλον οὐκ ἐδέξατο.
στέγει δὲ πύργος, καὶ πύλας φερεγγύοις
ἐφαρξάμεσθα μονομάχοισι προστάταις.
καλῶς ἔχει τὰ πλεῖστ' ἐν ἓξ πυλώμασιν,
τὰς δ' ἑβδόμας ὁ σεμνὸς ἑβδομαγέτας (800)
ἄναξ Ἀπόλλων εἵλετ', Οἰδίπου γένει
κραίνων παλαιὰς Λαΐου δυσβουλίας.

The Messenger's opening words - θαρσεῖτε, παῖδες **μητέρων** τεθραμμέναι (792) - establishes the contrast; the Theban Chorus may be happily identified by reference to their mothers, whereas Polyneices and Eteocles have succumbed to the curse of their father and the taint of his house. The city - πόλις appears twice in 3 lines - is safe, and the generally excellent outcome of the battle (799) reinforces the disastrous end of the sons of Oedipus (800-2), here identified by reference to the father who cursed them directly

[199] 679-82.

(Οἰδίπου γένει, 801) and the damaging misdeeds of their grandfather (παλαιὰς Λαΐου δυσβουλίας, 802).[200] Despite the salvation of the city, the public response is not joyful; the very landscape of the city mourns those it has lost in the battle: διήκει δὲ καὶ πόλιν στόνος· / στένουσι πύργοι, στένει / πέδον φίλανδρον (900-2), with the repetition of στένω-cognates reinforcing the sorrow. There is reference to the high casualties suffered by both the Thebans and Argives,[201] while the language of inheritance once again recalls the essentially private nature of the quarrel: ἔχουσι **μοῖραν λαχόντες** ὢ μέλεοι / διοδότων ἀχθέων (947-8).[202] Nonetheless, the role of Oedipus' curse in the suffering of both the family and the city is never forgotten: ὦ μέλαινα καὶ τελεία / γένεος Οἰδίπου τ' ἀρά (832-3); πατρὸς Οἰδιπόδα / πότνι' Ἐρινὺς (885-6); πότνιά τ' Οἰδίπου σκιά, / μέλαιν' Ἐρινύς, ἦ μεγασθενής τις εἶ (976-7).

We therefore see the public consequences of Oedipus' curse across the play. In the first half, in which Eteocles attempts to minimise his association with his father and his curse, there are still enough references to remind us of the family quarrel which lies behind such a powerfully depicted public crisis. Once Eteocles realises that he is to face his brother, the curse becomes much more prominent and explicit, and the fates of the city and the family deviate. Nonetheless, even though Thebes, unlike the sons of Oedipus, is spared total destruction, the play leaves us in no doubt as to the suffering the brothers' war has engendered. The origins of this war, in Oedipus' horror at his own paternity and the attendant curse upon his sons' inheritance, are essentially private, but the consequences of this father's curse embroil the city as a whole in fear, war and death.

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[200] It is worth remembering that Laius was explicitly warned against having a child for the sake of the city as well as himself: θνάισκοντα γέν-/ νας ἄτερ σώιζειν **πόλιν** (748-9). Oedipus is not the first generation of his family to harm Thebes with his conduct as a father.

[201] 922-5.

[202] cf. λαχεῖν in 789.

3.3.4. *Phoenician Women*

Euripides' *Phoenician Women* covers much the same subject matter as Aeschylus' *Seven Against Thebes*,[203] and can be seen as, amongst other things, "a finely and subtly nuanced response" to the Aeschylean play.[204] The emphasis in comparisons between the two tragedies often falls upon the lesser prominence of political and civic factors in Euripides' play; a greater distance between the fate of Thebes and its royal family has been noted,[205] as has the relative absence of the Theban citizenry, with the Theban Chorus of Aeschylus being replaced by the visiting Phoenician women of the title.[206] Nonetheless, although perhaps less heavily emphasised than in the Aeschylean tragedy, the threat posed by the crisis to the city is still prominent within the play, and the role of Oedipus' curse in engendering this peril is firmly acknowledged. Indeed, Euripides' play sets the curse of Oedipus within a broader context of aberrant fatherhood, noting the perils posed to the city by the paternal practices of the House of Cadmus from the city's inception.

Jocasta's account of her sons' response to Oedipus' oracle reminds us of the public implications of his curse (*Pho.* 69-77):[207]

τὼ δ’ ἐς φόβον πεσόντε, μὴ τελεσφόρους

εὐχὰς θεοὶ κραίνωσιν οἰκούντοιν ὁμοῦ, (70)

ξυμβάντ’ ἔταξαν τὸν νεώτερον πάρος

[203] Burian (2009), p.15.
[204] Sewell-Rutter (2007), p.25. Mastronarde (1994) pp.9-10 offers an overview of the broader array of tragic and literary works to which *Phoenician Women* can be seen to respond.
[205] Burian (2009), pp.16-7.
[206] Luschnig (1995), pp.187-8.
[207] Lamari (2012), p.233.

φεύγειν ἑκόντα τήνδε Πολυνείκη χθόνα,

Ἐτεοκλέα δὲ σκῆπτρ’ ἔχειν μένοντα γῆς,

ἐνιαυτὸν ἀλλάσσοντ’. ἐπεὶ δ’ ἐπὶ ζυγοῖς

καθέζετ’ ἀρχῆς, οὐ μεθίσταται θρόνων, (75)

φυγάδα δ’ ἀπωθεῖ τῆσδε Πολυνείκη χθονός.

Oedipus' curse, as relayed by Jocasta, referred only to the violent division of the household - δῶμα ... τόδε (68)[208] - but the sons' response immediately makes clear the political implications of such disharmony in the royal household. Eteocles does not simply possess Oedipus' house in Polyneices' absence, but also his political power - σκῆπτρ’ ἔχειν (73) - and refuses to relinquish either this high office or its trappings: ἀρχῆς, θρόνων (75). Polyneices' response is military: he gathers an Argive army to seek his inheritance: πατρῶι’ ἀπαιτεῖ σκῆπτρα καὶ μέρη χθονός (80).[209]

The threat posed to the city as a whole by this army should not be underestimated. The *teichoskopia*[210] reveals in both detail and specifics the scale and menace of the Argive army. The Tutor bids Antigone note the scale of the hostile force, which fills the Theban landscape - σκόπει δὲ πεδία καὶ παρ’ Ἰσμηνοῦ ῥοὰς / Δίρκης τε νᾶμα πολεμίων στράτευμ’ **ὅσον** (101-2) - and explicitly sets her brother amidst this sizeable military threat: οὐ γάρ τι φαύλως ἦλθε Πολυνείκης χθόνα, / πολλοῖς μὲν ἵπποις, μυρίοις δ’ ὅπλοις βρέμων (112-3). The reference to χθών recalls Jocasta's speech in the prologue,[211] and reinforces the connection between Oedipus' curse, the brothers' response, and the army at Thebes' gates.

[208] See above, ch. 3.3.2., for comparison of the tragic versions of Oedipus’ curse.
[209] Note the repetition of χθονός from 76; the language makes clear that all Thebes, not simply Oedipus' household, is at stake.
[210] 88-201. Mastronarde (1994), pp.168-73 offers a robust and persuasive defence of the scene's authenticity.
[211] e.g. 72, 76, 80. Rawson (1970), pp.112-3 notes the prominence and prevalence of this and other terms for the Theban land throughout the play.

Antigone notes the alarming, even monstrous appearance of the hostile forces; she compares Hippomedon to a giant - γίγαντι γηγενέται προσόμοιος (128) - and remarks upon Parthenopaeus' ferocious gaze: ὄμμασι γοργὸς / εἰσιδεῖν νεανίας (146-7). Although we do not hear the response of the citizen body at large, Antigone and the Tutor present a civic perspective upon the crisis; Antigone worries about the security of the city's defences,[212] but is reassured by the Tutor: τά γ' ἔνδον ἀσφαλῶς ἔχει πόλις (117). She laments that Artemis did not kill Parthenopaeus, one of the heroes who came to destroy her city (ὃς ἐπ' **ἐμὰν** πόλιν ἔβα πέρσων, 153). The scale of the threat posed to the city by Polyneices is thus highlighted, and the causal continuity between Oedipus' curse and the present crisis is clear.

When Polyneices and Eteocles appear onstage, the political consequences of their quarrel and thus Oedipus' curse are clear. Polyneices uses civic language in his self-presentation; he identifies himself to the Chorus as follows (288-90):

> πατὴρ μὲν ἡμῖν Οἰδίπους ὁ Λαΐου,
> ἔτικτε δ' Ἰοκάστη με, παῖς Μενοικέως·
> καλεῖ δὲ Πολυνείκη με Θηβαῖος λεώς.

This formal response[213] identifies Polyneices' mother and father, but also makes the city responsible for his name (290); both family and city have played their part in forming this man. In the emotional scene depicting his reunion with his mother Jocasta, Polyneices is moved by the sight of both public and private places within Thebes;[214] the τείχη πατρῷια (366), the home of his family, the altars, the gymnasia - γυμνάσιά θ' οἷσιν ἐνετράφην

[212] 114-6.
[213] Rawson (1970), p.115.
[214] 366-8

(368)[215] - and the waters of Dirce. Polyneices acknowledges the peril to the city his campaign poses; the Argives have provided painful but necessary help - λυπρὰν χάριν, ἀναγκαίαν δέ (431) - in aiding him, but he does not skirt the nature of his endeavour: ἐπὶ γὰρ τὴν **ἐμὴν** στρατεύομαι / πόλιν (432-3).[216] He appeals to Jocasta to find some resolution to the present crisis, not simply for his sake, but for her own and that of the city as a whole: ἀλλ' ἐς σὲ τείνει τῶνδε διάλυσις κακῶν, / ... / παῦσαι πόνων σὲ κἀμὲ καὶ πᾶσαν πόλιν. (435-437, with omissions). Polyneices himself is a product of his city as well as his family, and acknowledges the threat he poses to both.

The role of Oedipus' curses in prompting this situation, so perilous to city and family, is explicit. Near the start of the scene, Jocasta reminds us of Oedipus' presence within the house, and paints a moving picture of a desperate man constantly attempting suicide[217] in horror at what he has inflicted upon his sons: στενάζων ἀρὰς τέκνοις (334). Polyneices once again recounts his attempt to compromise over the inheritance with Eteocles in order to avoid the curse of Oedipus - ἐκφυγεῖν χρῄζων ἀρὰς / ἃς Οἰδίπους ἐφθέγξατ' εἰς ἡμᾶς ποτε (474-5) - and proposes the conditions upon which he would be happy to abandon his military campaign: οἰκεῖν δὲ τὸν ἐμὸν οἶκον ἀνὰ μέρος λαβὼν / καὶ τῷδ' ἀφεῖναι τὸν ἴσον αὖθις <ἐς> χρόνον (486-7). This resolution combines public and private; οἰκεῖν δὲ τὸν ἐμὸν οἶκον deals with the distribution of Oedipus' domestic property, but the provision for Eteocles to leave - and thus presumably to return Polynices' previous concession of power (δοὺς τῷδ' ἀνάσσειν πατρίδος, 477) - clearly signals a demand for political rule as well.[218] Eteocles' response is astonishingly frank about his

[215] Once again, the city - or in this case the public institution of the gymnasium - is accorded a role in the development and shaping of Polyneices.
[216] cf. 153.
[217] 327-33.
[218] Mastronarde (1994) *ad loc*.

hunger for political power, and would likely have shocked a democratic Athenian audience (504-6):[219]

> ἄστρων ἂν ἔλθοιμ’ †ἡλίου† πρὸς ἀντολὰς
> καὶ γῆς ἔνερθε, δυνατὸς ὢν δρᾶσαι τάδε, (505)
> τὴν θεῶν μεγίστην ὥστ’ ἔχειν Τυραννίδα.

Whilst we might sense in Polynices' references to his μέρος a certain subtlety about presenting his eagerness to claim inheritance of Oedipus' political power, Eteocles clearly has no such qualms, and indeed expresses a totally amoral approach to gaining political leadership: εἴπερ γὰρ ἀδικεῖν χρή, τυραννίδος πέρι / κάλλιστον ἀδικεῖν, τἄλλα δ’ εὐσεβεῖν χρεών. (524-5).[220] This is a remarkable reversal of the consciously public-spirited Eteocles of Aeschylus,[221] and is soon reflected in the more explicit ambition of Polyneices. After an increasingly threatening exchange between the two brothers, Jocasta invokes the curse of Oedipus once again in a vain attempt to restrain him: Ιο. πατρὸς οὐ φεύξεσθ’ Ἐρινῦς; Πο. ἐρρέτω πρόπας δόμος· (624). Polyneices makes an unconvincing pre-emptive attempt to shift blame from himself should some harm befall the city - κἄν τί σοι, πόλις, γένηται, μὴ ’μέ, τόνδε δ’ αἰτιῶ. (629) - thereby acknowledging that the present situation poses a threat to the state. His previous notion of sharing property and rule with his brother has been cast utterly aside, in favour of fratricidal hatred and naked political ambition to match that of his brother:[222] ἐλπίδες δ’ οὔπω καθεύδουσ’, αἷς πέποιθα σὺν θεοῖς / τόνδ’ ἀποκτείνας κρατήσειν τῆσδε Θηβαίας χθονός (634-5). It is

[219] Burian (2009), pp.17-8.
[220] Lamari (2012), pp.234-5.
[221] Burian (2009), pp.17-8.
[222] Luschnig (1995) p.210: "Both brothers' actions are finally the same: both endanger the city for the kingship."

interesting to note that Polyneices complains of being treated in a manner unbefitting his heritage: δοῦλος ὣς ἀλλ’ οὐχὶ ταὐτοῦ πατρὸς Οἰδίπου γεγώς (628). His actions and resolution in fact confirm his paternity; he is truly the son of Oedipus, and hence rushes to fulfil the terms of the curse by bringing violent death to his brother in an inheritance dispute. Eteocles' parting jab confirms this: ἀληθῶς δ’ ὄνομα Πολυνείκη πατὴρ / ἔθετό σοι θείαι προνοίαι νεικέων ἐπώνυμον. (636-7). Whereas previously[223] Polyneices had presented his name in terms of the city, Eteocles' jibe about etymology in fact casts it as Oedipus' doing; Polyneices and his fate are shaped more by his father - particularly his father's words - than he previously acknowledged.

As has often been noted, the duel of the two brothers, in contrast to Aeschylus, is divorced from the safety of the city; it is fought after an Argive attack has already failed,[224] and after Menoeceus' patriotic self-sacrifice.[225] Nonetheless, the duel does in fact convey the significant public implications of Oedipus' curse and the fraternal strife it generates, even though the salvation of the city as a whole is not tied to the outcome. If we accept it as authentic,[226] Eteocles' proposal of the duel[227] offers a reminder of the full-scale warfare which has ensued as a result of Oedipus' curse; he appeals to both Argives and Thebans to stop giving their lives for his or his brothers' sake.[228] Upon firmer ground textually, the account of the duel itself retains the public, indeed inter-*polis* aspect of the conflict. Polyneices looks to his adopted homeland of Argos and prays to Hera for aid;[229]

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223 290; see above.
224 Burian (2009), p.33. See 1075-85;1187-97.
225 985-1012, discussed above.
226 Diggle (1993) completely excludes 1221-58, and Mastronarde (1994) pp.446-7 notes the unusual length of this second Messenger speech. He admits the possibility of accretions (p.486), but largely defends the speech, pointing out that it offers a dramatic twist after Jocasta's happy response to the first speech on the salvation of the city and survival of her sons. The transmitted speech is rather long, but, conversely, the transition from 1220 to 1259 does seem somewhat abrupt.
227 1226-35.
228 1226-8.
229 1364-8.

the curse and his exile has embroiled a foreign power in the affairs of Oedipus' family.[230] The two armies observe the duel with clear partisan feeling; when Polyneices wounds his brother - with an Argive spear (Ἀργεῖον δόρυ, 1394) - the Argive army roars its approval,[231] while Eteocles' wounding of his own brother delights the Thebans; κἀπέδωκεν ἡδονὰς / **Κάδμου πολίταις** (1398-9). Even in their death, the brothers stir the two armies to conflict (1460-2):

> ἀνῆιξε δ’ ὀρθὸς λαὸς εἰς ἔριν λόγων, (1460)
> ἡμεῖς μὲν ὡς νικῶντα δεσπότην ἐμόν,
> οἱ δ’ ὡς ἐκεῖνον· ἦν δ’ ἔρις στρατηλάταις.

The renewal of hostilities soon ends in the Thebans' favour,[232] but the outcome serves as a reminder of the war between states which was born directly from the quarrel between brothers. Indeed, Oedipus' curse lies behind this quarrel, and this is made explicit; the Chorus, when they learn of the proposed duel, lament the role of Oedipus' curse - πότμος ἄποτμος ὁ φόνος ἕνεκ’ Ἐρινύων (1306-7) - and once again, immediately upon hearing of the brothers' death, set the events in the context of their father's vituperations: φεῦ φεῦ, κακῶν σῶν, Οἰδίπου, σ’ ὅσον στένω· / **τὰς σὰς δ’ ἀρὰς** ἔοικεν ἐκπλῆσαι θεός. (1425-6).

In contrast to *Seven Against Thebes*, Oedipus is still alive during the events of *Phoenician Women*, and appears onstage at the end of the play to hear what has happened from Antigone and lament what his curses have wrought. Given, as we have seen, the public and political consequences of Oedipus' curse, it is interesting to note that they are

[230] Note the terminology: ἧκε Πολυνείκης **ἀράς** (1364). The language of cursing and prayer is ambiguous - see Versnel (2015) - and ἀρά is used of Oedipus' curse at e.g. 67, 1425. Given the hostile content of Polyneices' prayer, it is tempting to see him following in his father's footsteps and cursing his kin.
[231] 1395.
[232] 1466-75.

discussed with an almost entirely familial focus.[233] When asked what is prompting the lamentation, Antigone's response concerns the sufferings of the family: οὐκέτι σοι τέκνα λεύσσει / φάος οὐδ' ἄλοχος (1546-7). Oedipus asks after the fate of his sons[234] and his wife,[235] but not the events which have befallen the city. Even Antigone's references to the warfare his curse has caused dwell on the familial over the political implications (1555-9):

> οὐκ ἐπ' ὀνείδεσιν οὐδ' ἐπιχάρμασιν (1555)
> ἀλλ' ὀδύναισι λέγω· σὸς ἀλάστωρ
> ξίφεσιν βρίθων
> καὶ πυρὶ καὶ σχετλίαισι μάχαις ἐπὶ παῖδας ἔβα σούς,
> ὦ πάτερ, ὤμοι.

There are references to the weapons and means of war – ξίφεσιν, πυρὶ, σχετλίαισι μάχαις - but it is strikingly inaccurate of Antigone to describe Oedipus' curse - σὸς ἀλάστωρ[236] - as bringing these military perils to bear only upon his sons: ἐπὶ παῖδας ἔβα σούς. Indeed, this partial account of the curse's effect aligns with its relatively focused provisions; as relayed by Jocasta, it refers only to the violent division of the δῶμα (68).[237] There is no sense that Oedipus intended to prompt wider civic or political crisis with his curse on his sons, nor indeed that he has any particular interest in such matters. His narrowly familial focus did not, however, prevent his curse from bringing war, death and peril to Thebes in its wake.

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[233] This is true of Antigone as well as Oedipus, in contrast to her civic outlook in the *teichoskopia.*
[234] 1551-4.
[235] 1566.
[236] Mastronarde (1994) *ad loc* points out that an ἀλάστωρ is an avenging spirit, but in this context the one born of Oedipus' curse and involved in carrying it out.
[237] See above, ch.3.3.2.

Although Oedipus may have had no explicit intention of menacing the city with his curse, he falls into a clear pattern of aberrant fathering on the part of the descendants of Cadmus, often with unhappy consequences for Thebes itself. While the oracle warning Laius against fathering Oedipus[238] specifically lacks the threat to the city found in its Aeschylean counterpart,[239] the Chorus provide a broader perspective upon the history of Thebes' ruling house.[240] In particular, they recount the deeds of Cadmus, and their implications for the present state of Thebes. Cadmus encountered the serpent, fathered by Ares[241] and born of Earth (δράκων ὁ **γηγενὴς**, 931). He slew it, and then sowed the earth with its teeth: γαπετεῖς δικὼν ὀδόντας / ἐς βαθυσπόρους γύας (668-9). Earth gives birth to a fully-armed brood, who slay one another: σιδαρόφρων / δέ νιν φίλαι ξυνῆψε γᾶι φόνος πάλιν. (672-3). Tiresias later reveals that it is to avenge this slaughtering of the serpent and thus assuage Ares that Menoeceus must be sacrificed.[242] Can we see in Cadmus' action a strange parody of fathering? He 'sows' mother-earth,[243] and offspring come forth. They are born to strife - the taint of strife is clearly not limited to the Labdacids, but affects the city more generally[244] - and then return to their mother,[245] *perhaps* echoing Oedipus' own incestuous 'return' to his mother Jocasta. In this reading, Cadmus created a brood of 'sons' who fell to mutually destructive warfare, and in turn laid a taint upon the city which manifests itself in the present crisis; it is worth noting that Antigone refers to one of the heroes threatening Thebes as 'earth-born': γίγαντι **γηγενέται** προσόμοιος (128). Oedipus is thus not the only Labdacid whose actions as a father - in his case real, rather than symbolic - have damaging implications for the state of Thebes.

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[238] 17-20.
[239] A. *Sept.* 748-9.
[240] Mastronarde (1994), pp.208-9.
[241] *Pho*. 657.
[242] 931-42.
[243] Agriculture as a metaphor for human procreation is common in Greek thought; see above p.73, n. 254.
[244] Sewell-Rutter (2007), p.42
[245] 672-3.

He does not seek to damage the city - indeed, there is little sense that he considers the city much at all in this play - but he nonetheless falls into the broader pattern of aberrant fathering which marks his family, the consequences of which are felt far beyond the royal household.

Phoenician Women has a reputation for a much less civic focus than Aeschylus' *Seven Against Thebes*, but it nonetheless does make explicit the political consequences of Oedipus' curse. The scale of the military threat to Thebes is no less than in the Aeschylean tragedy and, while the sons may ultimately aim at personal political power rather than the well-being of the state, the selfishness of their motives does not diminish the public implications of their quarrel. The fact that Oedipus himself appears uninterested in public matters makes the clear political consequences of his curse all the more striking. The power of this royal father's curse to threaten the state's internal stability and embroil it in open warfare is clear; in this way, as in others, Thebes is vulnerable to the dysfunction of its ruling family.

3.3.5. *Oedipus at Colonus*

In contrast to the relatively apolitical Oedipus of Euripides, whose effect on Thebes seems an unintended consequence of his anger against his sons, the depiction of this figure in Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus* presents a more complex relationship between Oedipus, his family, and the city.

As we have already discussed, *Oedipus at Colonus* offers a variant upon the usual chronology of Oedipus' curse. It is worth considering Ismene's account of the origins of

the strife between the brothers which, in contrast to the usual chronology, *precedes* Oedipus' curse[246] (*OC* 368-73):

> πρὶν μὲν γὰρ αὐτοῖς ἤρεσεν Κρέοντί τε
> θρόνους ἐᾶσθαι μηδὲ χραίνεσθαι πόλιν,
> λόγῳ σκοποῦσι τὴν πάλαι γένους φθοράν,
> οἵα κατέσχε τὸν σὸν ἄθλιον δόμον· (370)
> νῦν δ' ἐκ θεῶν του κἀξ ἀλειτηροῦ φρενὸς
> εἰσῆλθε τοῖν τρισαθλίοιν ἔρις κακή,
> ἀρχῆς λαβέσθαι καὶ κράτους τυραννικοῦ.

The sons initially attempt to set the welfare of the city before their own political ambition, granting Creon power for Thebes' sake: μηδὲ χραίνεσθαι πόλιν. Their caution is born from a knowledge of their family history (370-1); they understand the threat posed by the royal family's past to the city, and seek to minimise it. Nonetheless, they are driven to strife, as some combination of divine forces and their own disposition - ἐκ θεῶν του κἀξ ἀλειτηροῦ φρενὸς (371) - causes them to resemble and even surpass their family heritage: τοῖν **τρισ**αθλίοιν (372), in response to τὸν σὸν ἄθλιον δόμον (370). Although the sons are not operating under Oedipus' curse when they embark upon their political strife, the family background which they sought to escape for the city's sake clearly plays a role in inducing them to cast aside their patriotic scruples and fight for power.

It is striking, therefore, that Oedipus' curse[247] does not display the same civic sentiment which initially restrained his sons; he specifically rejects any peaceful

[246] Jebb (2004),pp.xxiv-v, although Kelly (2009), pp.40-1 notes that there is possibly some ambiguity as to whether Oedipus has also cursed his sons *before* the events of the play.
[247] 421-7, quoted above.

resolution to this political strife - ἀλλ’ οἱ θεοί σφιν μήτε τὴν πεπρωμένην / ἔριν κατασβέσειαν (421-2) - and curses both sons to perish in the ensuing violence. Oedipus' lack of civic loyalty to Thebes becomes more explicable, however, once we consider the city's role in his situation. In Aeschylus' *Seven Against Thebes* and Euripides' *Phoenician Women*, the actions which prompt Oedipus to curse his sons are private; in the former, horror at the discovery of their incestuous origins,[248] and in the latter, anger at being imprisoned within his own home.[249] In *Oedipus at Colonus*, conversely, Oedipus' present wretched state and past mistreatment is clearly not simply the work of his sons, but rather also Thebes. Having complained to Ismene of being exiled,[250] Oedipus pre-empts a suggestion that the city benefited him by doing so: εἴποις ἂν ὡς θέλοντι τοῦτ’ ἐμοὶ τότε / πόλις τὸ δῶρον εἰκότως κατῄνεσεν; (431-2). In fact, Oedipus did not receive the treatment he desired when he wanted it; when he was eager for death, no-one was willing to oblige,[251] while punishment did come only after he had changed his mind (440-4):

> τὸ τηνίκ’ ἤδη τοῦτο μὲν πόλις βίᾳ (440)
> ἤλαυνέ μ’ ἐκ γῆς χρόνιον, οἱ δ’ ἐπωφελεῖν,
> οἱ τοῦ πατρός, τῷ πατρὶ δυνάμενοι, τὸ δρᾶν
> οὐκ ἠθέλησαν, ἀλλ’ ἔπους σμικροῦ χάριν
> φυγάς σφιν ἔξω πτωχὸς ἠλώμην ἀεί·

Whilst Oedipus is incensed at the lack of support from his sons, laying emphasis upon the filial connection which they neglected - οἱ **τοῦ πατρός, τῷ πατρὶ** δυνάμενοι (442)[252] -

[248] *Sept.*785-7.
[249] *Pho*. 63-5.
[250] *OC* 430.
[251] 433-6.
[252] Markantonatos (2002), pp.62-3; see also the emphatically paternal τὸν φύσαντ’ ἐμέ (429); Markantonatos (2002), pp.59-60.

the initiative for his exile clearly lay not with his sons but the city:[253] **πόλις** βίᾳ / ἤλαυνέ μ’ ἐκ γῆς (440-1). This is not Oedipus' only complaint against Thebes; he blames the city for his incestuous marriage: κακᾷ μ’ εὐνᾷ πόλις οὐδὲν ἴδριν / γάμων ἐνέδησεν ἄτᾳ. (525-6). Oedipus defends himself by reference to his ignorance (οὐδὲν ἴδριν), but this is equally true of the citizens who offered him an honorific marriage into the royal house.[254] This account of his marriage's origins forms part of Oedipus' self-exculpation; he chides the Chorus when they lament his actions: Χο. ἔρεξας— Οι. οὐκ ἔρεξα. Χο. τί γάρ; Οι. ἐδεξάμην / δῶρον (539-40). Oedipus presents himself as the passive recipient of suffering inflicted by Thebes.

In the course of the play, Oedipus' relatives Creon and Polynices appeal to him to return from Athens to Thebes with them. Creon's appeal draws heavily upon the rhetoric of civic patriotism. He was sent to Athens by the Theban citizen body, because of his close kinship to Oedipus,[255] and presents his appeal to Oedipus as part of a wider public initiative: πᾶς σε Καδμείων λεὼς / καλεῖ δικαίως, ἐκ δὲ τῶν μάλιστ’ ἐγώ· (741-2). He combines public and domestic still further; Thebes has a greater claim upon Oedipus' reverence, as the city was his 'nurse' (οὖσα σὴ πάλαι τροφός, 760); Creon thus grants the city an almost familial hold over Oedipus. Oedipus rejects Creon's rhetoric utterly. He remarks on Creon's previous indifference to the bond of kinship,[256] and reveals his knowledge of Creon's true purpose (785-7):

> ἥκεις ἔμ’ ἄξων, οὐχ ἵν’ ἐς δόμους ἄγῃς,
> ἀλλ’ ὡς πάραυλον οἰκίσῃς, πόλις δέ σοι (785)
> κακῶν ἄνατος τῆσδ’ ἀπαλλαχθῇ χθονός.

[253] Bowman (2007), pp.18-9.
[254] Kelly (2009), pp.55-6.
[255] 737-9.
[256] 770-1.

Creon's emotive intermeshing of familial and civic claims is squarely refuted. He is motivated solely by political interests, rather than any family feeling for Oedipus; the contrast of δόμους and πόλις emphasises the disjunction between Creon's stated and actual aims. Creon is unable to persuade Oedipus, and in his anger casts Oedipus as a foe of both his family and his state (849-51):

> ... ἀλλ᾽ ἐπεὶ νικᾶν θέλεις
> πατρίδα τε τὴν σὴν καὶ φίλους, ὑφ᾽ ὧν ἐγὼ (850)
> ταχθεὶς τάδ᾽ ἔρδω, καὶ τύραννος ὢν ὅμως,
> νίκα.

The use of πατρίς (850) continues Creon's interweaving of political and familial language and appeal. This is reflected in his action; Creon takes Oedipus' daughters Antigone and Ismene hostage in an effort to induce their father to return to Thebes,[257] leading to a pitched battle between the Thebans and Athenians.[258] We thus see within the play itself the potential for war between states to be born from the interactions of the Theban royal family, an important precursor for the events which will transpire at Thebes between Polyneices and Eteocles.

Polyneices himself also comes to Thebes to plead with Oedipus to return, in a remarkable and intensely emotional encounter in which familial interactions are once again strongly coloured and driven by political concerns. At first, Polyneices proclaims

[257] 818ff.
[258] 1044-95.

his despair at the sight of his father's situation (τὰ τοῦδ’ ὁρῶν / πατρὸς γέροντος, 1255-6), and laments his wretched condition at some length.[259] However, the political concerns behind Polyneices' appeal soon emerge. He has been deprived of power (1292-4):

> γῆς ἐκ πατρῴας ἐξελήλαμαι φυγάς,
> τοῖς σοῖς πάναρχος οὕνεκ’ ἐνθακεῖν θρόνοις
> γονῇ πεφυκὼς ἠξίουν γεραιτέρᾳ.

The interplay of family and politics is conspicuous; Polyneices emphasises his position as a ruler - πάναρχος,[260] θρόνοις (1293) - but claims it on the basis of his status as Oedipus' older son (1294); the references to one's 'paternal land' (γῆς ἐκ πατρῴας, 1292) arguably also take on extra significance when uttered by a hereditary monarch. Polyneices complains that Eteocles was able to usurp his brother not through any particular superiority, but by enlisting the connivance of the state: πόλιν δὲ πείσας (1298). However, Polyneices also blames Oedipus: ὧν ἐγὼ μάλιστα μὲν / τὴν σὴν Ἐρινὺν αἰτίαν εἶναι λέγω (1298-9). His banishment is thus a combination of his brother's political manipulation and, he claims, the legacy of his father's inherited guilt.[261] Polyneices is explicit about the military nature of his planned response; he will invade Thebes with an Argive army,[262] and will do so as the son of Oedipus (1323-5):

> ἐγὼ δ’ ὁ σός, κεἰ μὴ σός, ἀλλὰ τοῦ κακοῦ
> πότμου φυτευθείς, σός γέ τοι καλούμενος,

[259] 1256-63. Easterling (1967) p.6 feels that he does so "in language of extraordinary tastelessness and artificiality."
[260] This seems to be a rare word; *LSJ* cites only this instance.
[261] Jebb (2004) *ad loc* identifies this Ἐρινύς as an *inherited* curse, rather than the curse Oedipus issues, because Polyneices knows nothing of Oedipus' curse at 421ff.
[262] 1301-7.

ἄγω τὸν Ἄργους ἄφοβον ἐς Θήβας στρατόν.

This unusual variation on a patronymic emphasises Polyneices' sense that Oedipus is responsible for his situation, and arguably embroils his father in responsibility for this invasion of their homeland.

It is in this context of a political struggle born of fraternal strife and a malevolent paternal inheritance that Polyneices seeks Oedipus' aid. Oedipus' support is the guarantor of κράτος (1331-2),[263] and Polyneices, highlighting their common experience of exile and beggary,[264] would use his political power to restore the both of them to their homes: ὥστ' ἐν δόμοισι τοῖσι σοῖς στήσω σ' ἄγων, / στήσω δ' ἐμαυτόν, κεῖνον ἐκβαλὼν βίᾳ. (1342-3). There is a notable domestic focus to this promise; Polyneices will restore Oedipus to his home, indeed to possession of his home (δόμοισι τοῖσι **σοῖς**). Oedipus is unswayed, however, and, in contrast to Polyneices' rosy vision of a happy domestic future, excoriates his son's misuse of his former political power (1354-9):

ὅς γ', ὦ κάκιστε, σκῆπτρα καὶ θρόνους ἔχων,
ἃ νῦν ὁ σὸς ξύναιμος ἐν Θήβαις ἔχει, (1355)
τὸν αὐτὸς αὑτοῦ πατέρα τόνδ' ἀπήλασας
κἄθηκας ἄπολιν καὶ στολὰς ταύτας φορεῖν,
ἃς νῦν δακρύεις εἰσορῶν, ὅτ' ἐν κλόνῳ
ταὐτῷ βεβηκὼς τυγχάνεις κακῶν ἐμοί.

[263] Bowman (2007), pp.20-1.
[264] 1335-9.

Once again, Oedipus stresses the failure of Polyneices' filial piety - τὸν αὐτὸς αὐτοῦ πατέρα τόνδ’ ἀπήλασας - and the consequences of this; Oedipus suffered both material discomfort - στολὰς ταύτας - and statelessness: ἄπολιν. Polyneices' misuse of political power denied Oedipus the duty owed to a father and even the protection afforded to a citizen.

It is in this context that an enraged Oedipus denies the paternal claim he once emphasised so forcefully,[265] and again curses his sons (1370-9):

> τοιγάρ σ’ ὁ δαίμων εἰσορᾷ μὲν οὔ τί πω (1370)
> ὡς αὐτίκ’, εἴπερ οἵδε κινοῦνται λόχοι
> πρὸς ἄστυ Θήβης. οὐ γὰρ ἔσθ’ ὅπως πόλιν
> κείνην ἐρείψεις, ἀλλὰ πρόσθεν αἵματι
> πεσῇ μιανθεὶς χὠ ξύναιμος ἐξ ἴσου.
> τοιάσδ’ ἀρὰς σφῷν πρόσθε τ’ ἐξανῆκ’ ἐγὼ (1375)
> νῦν τ’ ἀνακαλοῦμαι ξυμμάχους ἐλθεῖν ἐμοί,
> ἵν’ ἀξιῶτον τοὺς φυτεύσαντας σέβειν,
> καὶ μὴ ’ξατιμάζητον, εἰ τυφλοῦ πατρὸς
> τοιώδ’ ἔφυτον. αἵδε γὰρ τάδ’ οὐκ ἔδρων.

Much like the curse at 421-30, the political implications are clear; Oedipus explicitly precludes military victory for Polyneices (οὐ γὰρ ἔσθ’ ὅπως πόλιν / κείνην ἐρείψεις, 1372-3), rather condemning both sons to a violent death. In a pointed rejection of the political ambition of his son, Oedipus calls upon his curses to act as allies - ξυμμάχους (1376) - in

[265] ὑμεῖς δ’ ἀπ’ ἄλλου κοὐκ ἐμοῦ **πεφύκατον** (1369), evoking φύσαντ’ (427); Markantonatos (2002), pp.71-2.

enforcing not the political rule of one son or another, but rather the filial piety which both sons have so clearly lacked (1377-9). The exchange of Antigone and Polyneices after the curse reinforces the public consequences of the curse. Antigone appeals to her brother to escape personal and political ruin by abandoning his invasion[266] - στρέψας στράτευμ’ ἐς Ἄργος ὡς τάχιστ’ ἄγε, / καὶ μὴ σέ τ’ αὐτὸν καὶ πόλιν διεργάσῃ (1414-5) - but Polyneices, much as he acknowledges the devastation this war will cause, feels bound to persevere in it to fulfil the curse of his father.[267] The audience knows that he is correct, and Oedipus' terrible curse will come to pass in a destructive war for Thebes.[268]

In this play, Oedipus has been embroiled in a complex interplay of public and private. He has been mistreated by both his sons and the city, while attempts to lure him home have exploited civic and familial sentiment in an effort to achieve political ambitions. Oedipus' curse is correspondingly inclusive; in contrast to the generally domestic focus of the curse in Aeschylus and Euripides (despite the political consequences it will go on to have), the curse in *Oedipus at Colonus* is explicitly aimed at preventing his sons from achieving their political ambitions or from resolving their military conflict peaceably. Eteocles, Polyneices and Thebes will all suffer from Oedipus' use of his power to curse in asserting his rights to proper treatment as a father.

These three tragedies represent different accounts of the origins and effects of Oedipus' curses upon his sons, varying in the timing and causes of the curse, and offering

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[266] In contrast to the fantastically strained relationships between the male relatives of the play, Antigone in particular manages to maintain an impressive level of commitment to all her loved ones. Her devotion to her father is beyond doubt; Oedipus repeatedly contrasts the love and support of her and Ismene to the faithless treatment offered by his sons (337-56;445-9); Markantonatos (2002), pp.63-4. She also, however, displays considerable concern for her brother; at 1181-203 she pleads movingly with Oedipus to relent enough in his anger at her brother to let Polyneices approach and speak. At the play’s close, after Theseus clarifies that she and Ismene cannot be allowed to see the place of Oedipus’ last moments, she asks that they be sent to Thebes, to try to prevent the battle between her brothers (1768-72).
[267] 1432-4.
[268] Bowman (2007), pp.24-5.

subtly nuanced variations upon its content. Nonetheless, all three plays are united by a clear sense of the public consequences of this private strife between father and sons. Whether this is an inadvertent but perhaps inevitable consequence of the close relationship between family and power in a monarchy, or a more deliberate reflection of the interplay of public and private factors and agents in the mistreatment and consequent anger of Oedipus, the capacity for a father to express his anger in a curse which poses a substantial threat to the city reminds us with great force of the capacity for public and paternal interest to conflict, with potentially violent results.

3.4. Conclusion

In this chapter we have focused upon two fathers, Creon and Oedipus, across four plays by all three tragedians. Although the possibilities for variation and innovation between different tragic treatments of the same myth and characters are striking, one constant remains. Across all these depictions, the expectations and interests of the paternal role and political responsibility are in some way in conflict. The exigencies of public emergency can make demands which run against the most fundamental tenets of fatherhood, while equally the behaviour of the father can produce, unwittingly or otherwise, disruption and devastation in the wider public sphere. The relationship between public and private on the tragic stage is complicated not simply by conflict between institutions such as the οἶκος and the πόλις, nor indeed between individuals who align clearly with the familial or political sphere, but by the conflict enacted within the intentions and actions of individual fathers.

These plays have also been united by the omnipresence of Thebes, as a setting or a constant point of reference. For the father at the heart of the next chapter, however,

Thebes is just one of a myriad of geographical associations, born of a shifting complex of mythical, literary and even cultic traditions and representations. That father is Heracles.

Chapter Four: Heracles as father in Greek tragedy

4.1. Heracles in myth, literature and society

Heracles was by far the most popular hero of ancient Greece,[1] and perhaps also the most ambivalent.[2] His position in the cosmos was complex; he was the son of Zeus, endured trials and tribulations as a mortal man, and ultimately received cult – uniquely – as both a hero and an Olympian god.[3] He used his superhuman strength and capacity for violence to perform a variety of benefactions for all mankind,[4] but was also capable of terrible crimes;[5] indeed, his beneficent labours were undertaken to atone for the brutal murder of his first family.[6] Heracles had special associations with various places - Tiryns, Thebes etc.[7] - but, far from having predominantly Dorian connections, as is sometimes supposed,[8] the figure of Heracles in fact seems to have transcended geographic boundaries from an early stage, becoming a firmly Panhellenic hero.[9]

This variety and complexity is reflected in the diverse literary depictions of Heracles. In Homer, Heracles is a model for the Achaeans seeking to replicate his feat of sacking Troy,[10] but also a transgressor; he murders Iphitus through greed in defiance of the laws of hospitality,[11] and through his astounding strength competes with and even

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[1] Galinsky (1972), pp.2-3.
[2] Papadimitropoulos (2008a), p.131.
[3] Galinsky (1972), pp.5-6; cf. Pind. *Nem.*3.22, where Heracles is referred to as ἥρως θεὸς.
[4] See e.g. Lys. 2. 16.
[5] Galinsky (1972), pp.3-4.
[6] Gantz (1993), p.382. The relative chronology of the murder and the labours is discussed in greater detail below.
[7] Woodford (1971), p.211-2.
[8] Galinsky (1972), p.3.
[9] Fuqua (1980), pp.12-3.
[10] Heracles' example is invoked by his son Tleptolemus and contested by Sarpedon: *Il.*5.638-51.
[11] *Od.* 21.11-41.

harms the gods.[12] In the *Iliad*, he dies an early death despite his kinship to Zeus,[13] but the *Odyssey* records a strange dual afterlife; Heracles himself dwells in bliss with the immortals and his wife Hebe, but his shade is nonetheless present in the Underworld.[14] Hesiod's depiction of Heracles retains the apotheosis; Heracles, who benefits mankind by slaying beasts[15] and accomplishing various labours,[16] enjoys a carefree existence amongst the immortals in return for his toil upon earth.[17]

Heracles' literary popularity persisted; he featured in an epic of the 7th-6th century by Pisander of Rhodes,[18] several works of Stesichorus,[19] and the sadly highly fragmentary *Heraclea* of Panyassis in the early fifth century.[20] The *Homeric Hymn to Heracles*, unlikely to predate the sixth century,[21] proffers an ambivalent view; Heracles finds ease amongst the immortals,[22] but only after he has endured *and* perpetrated wicked deeds.[23] Heracles was the subject of particularly distinctive depictions in Pindar and Bacchylides. Pindar glorified and sanitised Heracles.[24] His relationships with the divine are more straightforwardly proper than in Homer; in *Olympian* 3 and *Olympian* 10 he founds the Olympic Games as a gesture of filial piety to his father Zeus before going on to ascend to Olympus himself, while Pindar explicitly rejects the tale of Heracles fighting with Apollo,

[12] *Od*. 8.223-5; *Il*. 5.403-4.
[13] *Il*. 18.115-21.
[14] *Od*. 11.601-5. This is a highly anomalous situation, leading many to suppose that 602-4 are interpolated; Heubeck & Hoekstra (1989), p.114.
[15] Hesiod refers to Heracles slaying the Nemean Lion (*Th*. 327-33) and the eagle which ate Prometheus' liver (*Th*.523-31).
[16] τελέσας στονόεντας ἀέθλους (*Th*.951).
[17] *Th*. 954-5.
[18] The scant surviving evidence is gathered at West (2003a), pp.176-87.
[19] *Geryoneis* (frr.5-83), which formed a substantial treatment of Heracles' expedition to acquire the monstrous Geryon's cattle and his slaying of their owner: Davies & Finglass (2014), pp.240-3; the self-explanatory *Cerberus* (fr.165); and *Cycnus* (frr.166-8), in which Heracles vanquishes the eponymous son of Ares, a brigand who behaded passers-by and built an obscene temple to Apollo out of their skulls: Davies & Finglass (2014), pp. 465-8.
[20] This originally totalled some 9000 lines, of which about 60 survive (by Matthews's reckoning, frr.1-23, 26-8, 30K); Matthews (1974), pp.21-2.
[21] West (2003b), pp. 17-8.
[22] *HH* 15.7-8.
[23] πολλὰ μὲν αὐτὸς ἔρεξεν ἀτάσθαλα, πολλὰ δ' ἀνέτλη; *HH* 15.6.
[24] Galinsky (1972), pp.29-30.

Poseidon and Hades in *Olympian* 9.[25] In *Nemean* 7, the divine Heracles is invoked with reference to his capacity to benefit mankind,[26] while Isthmian 6 offers a morally straightforward account of Heracles as a brave warrior and benefactor during his time on earth.[27] Bacchylides' Heracles, while not unheroic, is more emphatically human than superhuman. In the fifth ode, when he learns of the fate of Meleager in the Underworld, he weeps in sympathy,[28]and, echoing the emphasis on endurance found in Hesiod and the *Homeric Hymn*, pronounces the importance of persevering and accomplishing what one can in the face of the hardship of the human condition.[29] In his second dithyramb, we find the first extant reference to Deianeira poisoning Heracles,[30] but the tone is strikingly sympathetic; the poet laments for Heracles' wife - 'Ἆ δύσμορος, ἆ τάλ[αι]ν' (30) - and notes that φθόνος (31) has destroyed her. This depiction of Heracles as a wayward husband who perishes at the hands of a slighted wife is far from the emphatically glorious portrayal by Pindar; Bacchylides' Heracles is a flawed figure who succumbs to the almost mundane emotions of lust and jealousy.

Heracles was also a pervasive figure in classical Athenian life and literature. He was extremely widely worshipped throughout Attica, receiving offerings as both a god with a temple and a hero with a special 'Heracleion',[31] and with important cults at Cynosarges and Marathon. This latter cult claimed to be the first where Heracles was honoured as a god,[32] and led to him becoming associated with the Athenian victory over the Persians there in 490.[33] In the literary sphere, he was a mainstay of satyr plays

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[25] *Ol.* 9.30-9.
[26] *Nem.* 7. 96-7.
[27] Galinsky (1972), pp.36-7.
[28] Bacch. 5. 155-8.
[29] Bacch. 5. 160-4.
[30] Gantz (1993), p.458.
[31] Woodford (1971), pp.212-4.
[32] Paus. 1.15.2; Woodford (1971), p.217,
[33] Heracles was depicted in the painting of the battle in the Stoa Poikile along with Theseus, Athena and the eponymous hero Marathon; Paus.1.15.3; Woodford (1971), p.218.

and comic drama, often marked by his extreme appetites for food and drink.[34] Heracles nonetheless retained his capacity for both violence and benefaction on the comic stage, employing his brutish strength to overthrow tyrants and foreign despots in works such as Euripides' satyr-play *Syleus*[35] and Cratinus' *Busiris.*[36] Although seemingly a much less frequent character in tragedy, Heracles *usually* appeared as a saviour of some description.[37] *Prometheus Bound* predicts Heracles' intervention to free Prometheus,[38] as in Hesiod, while in Sophocles' *Philoctetes* his sudden appearance from Olympus at the play's conclusion resolves an increasingly tense and desperate situation.[39] In Euripides' *Alcestis*, although his extraordinary appetites and ebullience cast a certain strain on a household in mourning,[40] he nonetheless ultimately saves the titular heroine from death and restores the family of Admetus.

These plays all depict or recount Heracles' role in the narrative of others; he is a roving hero or even an interventionist immortal, appearing midway through the action to resolve or ameliorate the difficulties of others. If we consider the relatively few extant plays in which Heracles himself or his own family serve as central figures – that is to say, Sophocles' *Trachiniae*, Euripides' *Heracleidae* and *Heracles*[41] - a more difficult picture emerges. The complexity and ambiguity of Heracles as a mythical, literary and cultic

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[34] Fuqua (1980), pp.17-8. Aristophanes has one of his characters preclude the clearly stereotyped figure of 'Heracles deprived of his dinner' from the plot at *Vesp.* 60, and claims to have driven this worn-out trope from the stage with his superior writing at *Peace* 741-3. These claims seem distinctly tongue-in-cheek, as Aristophanes himself presents a spectacularly greedy Heracles in *Birds* and the lost *Sicon as Aeolus*: Galinsky (1972), pp.86-7.
[35] Galinsky (1972), pp.83-4.
[36] Galinsky (1972), pp.91-2.
[37] Silk (1985), pp.3-4.
[38] [A.] *PV* 771-5, 870-2.
[39] Heracles seems to have intervened as a *deus ex machina* in some of the lost tragedies as well, such as Sophocles' *Athamas*, in which he saves the titular protagonist from being put to death for murdering his family under the influence of madness sent by Hera: Galinsky (1972), p.46.
[40] See e.g. *Alc*. 746-72.
[41] It is important to remember that other plays dealing with Heracles' family have been lost; there is, for instance, a very fragmentary *Heracleidae* of Aeschylus: fr.73b-7 Radt; Galinsky (1972), p.45. It seems unlikely that this play bore any particular resemblance to its Euripidean namesake, although references to a pyre in fr. 73b may hint at some overlap in content with *Trachiniae*; Wilkins (1993), pp.xviii-ix.

figure - his unusual cosmic position between gods and men, his capacity for great benefaction *and* brutality, his wide wanderings and extremely diverse geographical associations – are generally hard to reconcile with the conventions of domestic and family life, even in the mythical past depicted in most tragedies. There are of course many differences between these three works, in terms of plot, style, and characterisation. However, so numerous and striking are the points of similarity in their presentations of Heracles and the hero's relationship with his family that, instead of discussing each play in turn, I will engage in a thematically-organised discussion of all three works in parallel. This will serve to highlight the central place in tragic explorations of Heracles occupied by the enduring, often devastating conflict between fatherhood and family life on one hand and the actions, attitudes and associations of this greatest of mythical heroes on the other.

4.2. Heracles the tragic father

4.2.1. Conspicuous by his absence

It is a simple but telling point that, at the beginning of all three of these plays, Heracles is absent. Paternal absenteeism was hardly unknown in classical Athens; given the later age of men at marriage[42] and relatively low life expectancies,[43] it is estimated that up to 50% of Athenians would have lost their father by the age of 18.[44] Married men with families could also be absent on a temporary basis due to military[45] or naval

[42] About 30: Strauss (1993), p.67.
[43] Sallares (1991) p.122 suggests 23 as a possible life expectancy at birth for men born in the first half of the C4th BC.
[44] Strauss (1993), p.67
[45] Hoplites, for example, were generally moved to a reserve for defensive duties within Attica from the age of about 40; Crowley (2012), p.26. This naturally means that many men of an age to have wives and children could expect to see active, potentially overseas service. The conspicuous place of war-orphans within

service,[46] or overseas trade.[47] The precise reasons for Heracles' absence vary between the tragedies, but in all three cases it is a consequence of his traditional heroic deeds or experiences, and causes distress and worse for the family he leaves behind.

In the *Trachiniae*, the precise causes for Heracles' prolonged absence are, at first, unknown.[48] What is clear, however, is that his absence is a source of anguish and perplexity, particularly for his wife Deianeira.[49] They met when he saved her from the unwelcome suit of the river-god Achelous (9-26), but marriage to the roving hero is marred by constant anxiety for his safety (27-30), and his travels and trials are ill-suited to family life (31-5):

> κἀφύσαμεν δὴ παῖδας, οὓς κεῖνός ποτε,
> γήτης ὅπως ἄρουραν ἔκτοπον λαβών,
> σπείρων μόνον προσεῖδε κἀξαμῶν ἅπαξ·
> τοιοῦτος αἰὼν εἰς δόμους τε κἀκ δόμων
> ἀεὶ τὸν ἄνδρ' ἔπεμπε λατρεύοντά τῳ. (35)

The analogy of fatherhood and farming is a common one in tragedy,[50] though the nuances of its deployment here convey much. The loneliness of Deineira and her family is

classical Athens – famously, those achieving their majority were paraded at the City Dionysia itself: Aesch. 3.154 – demonstrates that paternity was no barrier to military service.

[46] Both poorer citizens and metics served extensively in the fleet: Jordan (1975), p.211. Again, paternity was no barrier to service; the speaker of Lysias 24, by his own account a dedicated trierarch (24.3-11), remarks upon his patriotic willingness to risk life and limb in naval service for Athens despite having a wife and children (24.21).

[47] The sailing season, and thus the window for sea trade, lasted for over half the year; Reed (2002), pp.7-8.

[48] S. *Tr.* 40-1. We later discover that Heracles has been detained in servitude to Omphale (252-3) and then in sacking Oechalia (254-91; 351-74; the differences between these accounts are discussed below).

[49] Galinsky (1972), pp.46-7.

[50] See above, p.73 n.254. The agriculturally-inspired term φυτοσπόρος is used of the dedicated father Eurytus at *Tr.* 359-60 (discussed more fully below, ch.4.2.3), reinforcing the contrast between his conduct and the rather negligent Heracles; Segal (1981), p.63.

emphasised,[51] as is the repetitive, almost seasonal nature of Heracles' to-and-fro: εἰς δόμους τε κἀκ δόμων (34).[52] There is also, perhaps, a sense of Heracles' priorities lying elsewhere. This is an outlying crop - ἔκτοπον - and the reference to harvesting - κἀξαμῶν – suggests an instrumental attitude to children; this will be borne out in the hero's interactions with his son Hyllus later in the play.[53] In one sense, however, the simile is strikingly inapposite. While crops are of course entirely static in contrast to the roving farmer, Heracles' family have in fact endured displacement as a consequence of his actions; because of his murder of Iphitus, the family must live in exile: ἡμεῖς μὲν ἐν Τραχῖνι τῇδ' **ἀνάστατοι** / **ξένῳ** παρ' ἀνδρὶ ναίομεν (39-40). Heracles' general heroic career has led to absence and neglect, and a specific instance of violence has forced his family to endure some small part of his own nomadic existence.

This sense of Heracles' negligence is reinforced by the contrasting familial loyalty of his wife and son. Deianeira greets Hyllus warmly[54] - ὦ τέκνον, ὦ παῖ (61)[55] - and he in turn is affectionate in his responses to her.[56] She poses anxious questions about Heracles' welfare and whereabouts (61ff.), but Hyllus can offer only rumour (69-75). She invokes in the strongest terms Hyllus' duty to inquire about his father - τὸ μὴ πυθέσθαι ποῦ 'στιν αἰσχύνην φέρειν (66) - while Hyllus himself promises immediate action in response to the revelations of danger for Heracles in the oracle (86-91). This contrast, between Heracles' seeming disregard for his family and their clear loyalty to him and one another, is reinforced by the language Deianeira uses to describe her anxiety for Heracles: ἐμοὶ πικρὰς / ὠδῖνας (41-2). ὠδῖναι can refer to general anguish, physical or mental,[57] but

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[51] Easterling (1982), p.78
[52] Easterling (1982), p.78
[53] Discussed further below.
[54] Easterling (1982), p.81
[55] She again addresses Hyllus as τέκνον at 68 and 76, and as παῖ at 92. On the emotive force of τέκνον in particular, see above, p.86 n.55.
[56] As noted by Easterling (1982), p.81. Hyllus addresses Deineira as μῆτερ at 64, 78, 86, and is eager to act on her request.
[57] See 325, A. *Supp*. 770, *Cho*. 211, and S. *Aj*. 794; Easterling (1982), p.79.

technically refers to the agonies of childbirth.[58] Deianeira's anxiety for her husband thus serves to repeat the pain she endured bearing him the children from whom he is so often absent.

In Euripides' *Heracles* and *Children of Heracles*, the implications of Heracles' absence are even more serious; the very lives of his children are at stake. In the *Children of Heracles*, we are presented with the severe familial consequences of various traditional elements of the Heracles myth. Heracles, after his labours on earth, is gone; he has achieved apotheosis: ἐπεὶ κατ' οὐρανὸν / ναίει (*Hcld.* 9-10). Unfortunately, this triumphant culmination of his career is not extended to his earthly associates; neither his mortal children nor his attendant, Iolaus, who shared in his labours (πόνων / πλείστων μετέσχον εἷς ἀνὴρ Ἡρακλέει,7-8), have any share in his newfound divine status or his escape from earthly concerns. Heracles' children are thus cast into the proverbially wretched position of orphans,[59] and must endure the continuing hostility of Heracles' implacable foe, Euystheus. Indeed, Heracles' absence seems to have posed a threat to his family's life almost immediately: ἐπεὶ γὰρ αὐτῶν γῆς ἀπηλλάχθη πατήρ, / **πρῶτον** μὲν ἡμᾶς ἤθελ' Εὐρυσθεὺς κτανεῖν (12-3). Heracles' acquisition of immortality threatened his family with death. The prologue develops this contrast between the position of the father and his children, emphasising the causal connection between Heracles' absence and his offspring's suffering. Heracles may have been released from the earth and its cares - γῆς ἀπηλλάχθη (12) - but his children were forced to flee from their home (14-5), and are hounded from city to city as Eurystheus uses his political might to intimidate other

[58] *LSJ* s.v. A. cf. e.g. A. *Ag.* 1418, discussed above, p.72.
[59] e.g. *Il.* 22.482-507, discussed above, p.15.

rulers into denying asylum.[60] As the children are deprived of their father,[61] so too are they deprived of all Greece: πατρὸς **τητωμένους** (24); πάσης δὲ χώρας Ἑλλάδος **τητώμενοι** (31). The opening of the *Children of Heracles* thus offers a familial perspective upon Heracles' ultimate 'triumph' and apotheosis; his escape from mortality and its cares does not absolve his children of the same, but rather leaves them exposed to the consequences of Heracles' earthly actions and attachments without the benefit of his protection.

In the *Heracles*, the situation is much altered by mythical innovation. There is of course continuity with the tradition; Amphitryon is the mortal 'father' of Heracles, along with Zeus,[62] and Heracles, at the time of the play, is married to his first wife Megara.[63] However, we soon encounter a sizeable and significant deviation from the more traditional mythical chronology. In most cases, Heracles' labours seem to have come about after his bout of madness and the murder of his first family (the one depicted in this play); the labours are a punishment for this crime.[64] In this play, however, by contrast, it soon becomes clear that Heracles' labours are largely complete by this point; he has left his family to perform the final labour of bringing Cerberus out of the Underworld.[65] Heracles has undertaken the labours *not* as punishment for murdering his children, but rather to restore his father to Argos after the latter was banished for murder.[66] His labours are not, therefore, the consequence of his murderous failure as father, but rather reflect

[60] *Hcld*. 15-25.
[61] Iolaus refers to Heracles as πατήρ repeatedly in his opening speech, at 12, 24, 29, 53. This is perfectly understandable, given that he is describing the plight of those to whom Heracles is father, but it also prompts us to see the situation through the lens of the responsibilities and expectations of fatherhood, which Heracles does not (at this point in the play) seem to fulfil especially effectively.
[62] *HF* 1-3 discussed further below, pp.181-3.
[63] 9-12.
[64] Bond (1981), pp.xviii-xxx notes that there is fairly slim evidence for the relative chronology of the labours and the madness before Euripides, but cites an established tradition in later authors including Apollodorus of the labours following the madness. Foley (1985) p.152 and Barlow (1996), pp.3-4 are both more confident in seeing variation from the norm of the myths in the chronology Euripides follows here.
[65] *HF* 22-5.
[66] *HF* 13-21.

his devotion as a son.[67] Much as the account of Heracles’ absence at the opening of the *Trachiniae* establishes the characterisation of the hero in that play as a violent and inconsiderate figure, so too here does this variant motivation establish Euripides’ Heracles as a much more domestic and familial figure.[68] He is not even the cause of his family’s exile in this play - unlike the other tragedies under consideration - but is rather working to *restore* them to their proper home.

Nonetheless, Heracles’ absence has grave consequences for his family. Although Euripides’ innovative chronology has made the hero’s labours a reflection of his greater interest in familial affairs, the play’s other mythical innovation, the invention of Lycus,[69] poses a considerable threat to the family. This individual is the son of a previous ruler of Thebes, who has himself murdered Megara’s father Creon and exploited a state of civil war to seize control of the city.[70] He has murderous intentions for Heracles’ entire family (37-43):

> τοὐμοῦ γὰρ ὄντος παιδὸς ἐν μυχοῖς χθονὸς
> ὁ καινὸς οὗτος τῆσδε γῆς ἄρχων Λύκος
> τοὺς Ἡρακλείους παῖδας ἐξελεῖν θέλει
> κτανὼν δάμαρτά <θ’>, ὡς φόνωι σβέσηι φόνον, (40)
> κἄμ’ (εἴ τι δὴ χρὴ κἄμ’ ἐν ἀνδράσιν λέγειν,
> γέροντ’ ἀχρεῖον), μή ποθ’ οἵδ’ ἠνδρωμένοι
> μήτρωσιν ἐκπράξωσιν αἵματος δίκην.

[67] Barlow (1996), p.125.
[68] Foley (1985), pp.188-9.
[69] Bond (1981), p.xxviii.
[70] *HF* 26-36.

There is a certain irony to the whole situation. Heracles' absence as part of his labours for the sake of his father (37) has directly endangered that man, as well as Heracles' own wife and children; by acting in the interests of his family he is imperilling them. Unlike the hostility of Eurystheus in the *Children of Heracles*, Lycus does not seem motivated by the identity of the children's father; it is concern over their *maternal* connections - μήτρωσιν (43) - which motivates him to attempt a pre-emptive murder and thus ward off future vengeance.[71] Heracles seems to have acted as far as possible in the interests of his family, and yet despite his best efforts they are in danger because of his absence, an absence demanded by his traditional heroic feats even if they are, in this instance, undertaken with pointedly familial aims. This difficulty in reconciling Heracles' clear intention to serve the interests of his family with his heroic activities and identity only becomes more pronounced as the play proceeds.

The perilous implications of Heracles' absence for his family in *Children of Heracles* and *Heracles* are emphasised by the presence of substitute father-figures who are conspicuous both for their dedication and their weakness. Iolaus in the *Children of Heracles* is clearly devoted to protecting the children as best he can and standing by them in their difficult position, and his language makes this clear: ἐγὼ δὲ **σὺν** φεύγουσι **συμ**φεύγω τέκνοις / καὶ **σὺν** κακῶς πράσσουσι **συμ**πράσσω κακῶς (*Hcld*. 26-7).[72] He bids them shelter around him as the herald of Eurystheus approaches (47-8), and responds defiantly to the latter's haughty demands and threats: οὐκ ἂν γένοιτο τοῦτ' ἐμοῦ ζῶντός ποτε (66). Nonetheless, Iolaus' determination to protect the children is matched by his acknowledged lack of power to do so: τὰ κείνου τέκν' ἔχων ὑπὸ πτεροῖς

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[71] For the importance of avenging one's kin in Greek thought, see below, p.163 n160.

[72] Note also the many first-person plurals in Iolaus' opening speech which convey his sharing in the children's experiences: ἐξέδραμεν (*Hcld.* 14); φεύγομεν (15); καθεζόμεσθα (33); ἀφικόμεσθ' (38); οἰκιούμεθα (46); ἀπωθώμεσθα (47); διωκόμεσθ' (50)

/ σώιζω τάδ' αὐτὸς δεόμενος σωτηρίας. (10-1).[73] Although the usual mythical genealogy casts Iolaus as Heracles' nephew, in this play Euripides has chosen to present him as an elderly man, of a similar age to Heracles' mother Alcmene.[74] The Herald also remarks dismissively upon his infirmity - τὴν σὴν ἀχρεῖον δύναμιν (58) - and this disjunction between a willing spirit and a weak body will reach a climax in the arming scene (680-747). Here, Iolaus' determination to fight in the coming battle on behalf of Heracles' children, although indicative of a stout heart - λῆμα μὲν οὔπω στόρνυσι χρόνος / τὸ σόν, ἀλλ' ἡβᾶι, σῶμα δὲ φροῦδον (702-3) - defies all advice and apparent sense, verging even upon the absurd.[75] Iolaus is accompanied as guardian by Alcmene ,[76] who, upon her first appearance, speaks fiercely in defence of the children, despite her weakness:[77] … ἀσθενὴς μὲν ἥ γ' ἐμὴ / ῥώμη, τοσόνδε δ' εἰδέναι σε χρή, ξένε· / οὐκ ἔστ' ἄγειν σε τούσδ' ἐμοῦ ζώσης ποτέ (648-50)[78]. Alcmene is mistaken about the situation; the man whom she accosts with such spirit is in fact a herald from Hyllus, rather than from Eurystheus. Her desperate determination evokes sympathy for her situation,[79] but she is nonetheless clearly in a worse position than Iolaus; she fears what will become of her in the absence of even his limited strength: τί δ'; ἢν θάνηις σύ, πῶς ἐγὼ σωθήσομαι; (712). The devotion of these two guardians to the protection of Heracles' children and their conspicuous

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[73] Note the neat contrast of σώιζω with δεόμενος σωτηρίας in 11.
[74] Allan (2001), p.27.
[75] See esp. 720-47. Burian (1977), p.11 considers the arming scene "perhaps the most overtly comic in extant tragedy," but Wilkins (1993), pp.137-8 offers a more serious reading; he points out that Iolaus is justified in his faith in Heracles' power to aid him, comparing the 'comic' scene of the aged Tirerisias and Cadmus in ritual garb in *Ba.*, where the apparently amusing faith of the old men is vindicated by events. There is more place for humour in tragedy than is often supposed; examples are catalogued by Seidensticker (1982), and Rutherford (2012), p.64 n.142 offers a useful bibliographical survey. These 'humorous' moments do often have underlying 'serious' import - see e.g. Halliwell (2008) pp.130-9 on comic elements in *Alcestis* and *Bacchae*, and Goldhill (2006), esp. p.87 – and such an approach seems to make the best sense of this scene. Seidensticker (1982), pp.98-9 sees the comic elements as foreshadowing and enhancing the ultimate wonder of Iolaus' restored youth, while Allan (2001), pp.183-5 likewise sees in the arming scene both *pathos* and humour; the comic element enhances our affection for Iolaus while including us in the Servant's scepticism, thus granting the ultimate transformation greater dramatic effect.
[76] 41ff.
[77] Burian (1977), p.11.
[78] Note the echo of Iolaus' defiant language (ἐμοῦ ζῶντός ποτε, 66) in ἐμοῦ ζώσης ποτέ (650).
[79] Allan (2001), p.181.

physical weakness highlight the deleterious effect of the hero's absence; his famous strength is of no benefit to his family because he is not there to deploy it on their behalf.

In Euripides' *Heracles,* the hero's family are similarly forced to rely upon the questionable protection of others in the absence of his mighty strength. Amphitryon, much like Iolaus and Alcmene, is a willing but decrepit guardian (228-35):

> … πρὸς δ' ἔμ' ἀσθενῆ φίλον
> δεδόρκατ', οὐδὲν ὄντα πλὴν γλώσσης ψόφον.
> ῥώμη γὰρ ἐκλέλοιπεν ἣν πρὶν εἴχομεν, (230)
> γήραι δὲ τρομερὰ γυῖα κἀμαυρὸν σθένος.
> εἰ δ' ἦ νέος τε κἄτι σώματος κρατῶν,
> λαβὼν ἂν ἔγχος τοῦδε τοὺς ξανθοὺς πλόκους
> καθηιμάτωσ' ἄν, ὥστ' Ἀτλαντικῶν πέραν
> φεύγειν ὅρων ἂν δειλίαι τοὐμὸν δόρυ. (235)

His devotion and weakness sit side by side: ἀσθενῆ φίλον. He laments his old age (229-31), but, much like Iolaus in *Children of Heracles*,[80] he fantasises as to how he would employ youthful strength and vigour to drive off Lycus and save the children. The reference to the Atlantic (234) is pointed; this is the site of the famed 'Pillars of Heracles',[81] the limit of the inhabited world. It is precisely because Heracles is such a wide-ranging hero that he is not around to protect his family. However, in contrast to the apparent situation in *Trachiniae* or *Children of Heracles*, in this play Heracles has at least taken specific precautions for the protection of his family, appointing Amphitryon as

[80] Bond (1981), p.124. cf. *Hcld*. 740ff.
[81] Barlow (1996), p.135.

guardian before he departed for the Underworld (44-6). Indeed, the very altars upon which Heracles' family seek refuge are his handiwork: βωμὸν καθίζω τόνδε σωτῆρος Διός, / ὃν καλλινίκου δορὸς ἄγαλμ' ἱδρύσατο / Μινύας κρατήσας οὑμὸς εὐγενὴς τόκος (48-50). This altar ultimately comes to symbolise the extent to which Heracles' family are imperilled *despite*, rather than because, of his efforts. One of the play's choral odes contains the longest extant praise of Heracles' deeds and feats as a civilising hero,[82] but, as Amphitryon complains, the Greeks do not aid his children as they should.[83] In particular, the Thebans do not show Heracles the proper gratitude for his victory over the Minyans - commemorated by the altar - by aiding his children in their hour of need.[84] Nor does Heracles' divine father intercede as might be hoped in the hero's absence, in contrast to the devotion of the mortal Amphitryon, as the latter notes: σὺ δ' ἦσθ' ἄρ' ἥσσον ἢ 'δόκεις εἶναι φίλος ./ ἀρετῆι σε νικῶ θνητὸς ὢν θεὸν μέγαν (341-2).[85] The dedication of the altar to Ζεὺς Σωτήρ seems rather ironic.[86] Indeed, despite his determination, there is little Amphitryon can do; he is reduced to asking that he and Megara may die before the children, so they are spared the sight of the infanticide.[87] Heracles' mythical strength, his many benefactions for mankind, his kinship with Zeus and his careful arrangements before his departure all prove vain; despite his best efforts and intentions, his absence threatens death for his family.

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[82] *HF* 348-450; Galinsky (1972), p.61.
[83] 222-6.
[84] 217-21
[85] Mikalson (1986), pp.93-4. For further discussion, see below, pp.189-91.
[86] Barlow (1996), p.127.
[87] *HF* 319-25.

4.2.2. Being the children of Heracles

At the beginning of all three of these plays, the position of Heracles' family and children is marked by his absence. As the plays progress, the situation of Heracles' children continues to be dictated by the fact that he is their father. The actions, associations and reputation which are accorded to Heracles by the extensive and diverse mythical tradition exert a considerable influence upon his children's lot which is rarely entirely positive and usually at odds with the norms of fatherhood.

In *Trachiniae*, while Heracles' absence was a cause for distress,[88] his return proves to be intensely disruptive for his family as a whole, and his son Hyllus in particular.[89] Heracles' sack of Oechalia and the claiming of Iole are an established part of the mythical tradition by the time of *Trachiniae*,[90] but in this tragedy we see a full depiction of the domestic and familial consequences of this traditional feat. Heracles' wife Deianeira is understandably aghast at the prospect of sharing her husband with his new concubine Iole,[91] but, instead of committing deliberate murder,[92] she quite unwittingly[93] poisons Heracles in the mistaken belief that Nessus' blood will act as a love-charm to regain her husband's affections from the younger, more attractive Iole (555-

[88] See above.
[89] Heracles' treatment of his family in *Trachiniae* has aroused considerable scholarly condemnation; for example, Silk (1985), p.3 lambasts the hero as a "repellent husband and father, heedless of or insensitive to his wife and son".
[90] The sack of Oechalia, and Iole's role in prompting it, is first referred to in the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women* (fr. 26.31 ff. MW); Davies (1991), p.xxvi. The epic poet Creophylus of Samos wrote a *Capture of Oechalia*, probably in the seventh century; the sole surviving fragment (fr. 1 *PEG*) has Heracles address Iole; Gantz (1993), p.434.
[91] *Tr.* 536-51. cf. A. *Ag*. 1438-47, where Clytemnestra sets anger at Agamemnon's introduction of a concubine into the family home amidst her justifications for the murder. Deianeira strikingly does not blame Iole herself for this unhappy situation: 457-69; Fuqua (1980), p.41.
[92] cf e.g. Bacch. *Dith*. 2 [*Ode* 16].24-35, discussed above, p.135.
[93] Easterling (1982), p.146 notes the poet's careful emphasis on her innocence.

87).[94] Her well-intentioned actions have devastating consequences, and her son Hyllus denounces her angrily (734-41):

Υλ.	ὦ μῆτερ, ὡς ἂν ἐκ τριῶν σ’ ἓν εἱλόμην,	
	ἢ μηκέτ’ εἶναι ζῶσαν, ἢ σεσωμένην	(735)
	ἄλλου κεκλῆσθαι μητέρ’, ἢ λῴους φρένας	
	τῶν νῦν παρουσῶν τῶνδ’ ἀμείψασθαί ποθεν.	
Δη.	τί δ’ ἔστιν, ὦ παῖ, πρός γ’ ἐμοῦ στυγούμενον;	
Υλ.	τὸν ἄνδρα τὸν σὸν ἴσθι, τὸν δ’ ἐμὸν λέγω	
	πατέρα, κατακτείνασα τῇδ’ ἐν ἡμέρᾳ.	(740)
Δη.	οἴμοι, τίν’ ἐξήνεγκας, ὦ τέκνον, λόγον;	

Hyllus’ horror at Deianeira’s actions against his father is such that he cannot accommodate her as his mother (734-7). Deianeira wanted to regain a husband, but her misguided intervention has destroyed the man who fulfils important familial roles for her *and* for Hyllus: τὸν ἄνδρα τὸν σὸν; τὸν δ’ ἐμὸν …πατέρα.[95] Hyllus, despite his desire to do so, cannot escape or deny Deianeira’s relationship to him as mother,[96] but he prioritises his commitment to his father over this relationship, and curses her for her actions against Heracles (807-12).[97] He misunderstands her motives, of course, and, having discovered

[94] Papadimitropoulos (2008a), pp.134-5.
[95] Easterling (1982), p.165 suggests that Hyllus “recoils from the idea of a family tie between Heracles and his murderess”, but this does not seem quite correct; Hyllus instead seems to emphasise the enormity of Deianeira’s actions and justify his intense emotional response by evoking Heracles’ important family ties to them both.
[96] He addresses her once again as μῆτερ at *Tr.* 807, in the very moment when he curses her.
[97] Hyllus laments that Deianeira has killed ‘the best of all men upon this earth’: πάντων ἄριστον ἄνδρα τῶν ἐπὶ χθονὶ (811). As we have seen at 739, however, ἀνήρ also means ‘husband’, and in this respect Heracles, as depicted in this play, is rather less obviously ‘the best’. The double entendre underlines the disjunction between Heracles’ benefactions for mankind as a whole and his more baleful influence upon his own family.

the truth, bitterly laments his mother's suicide and thus the loss of both parents in a single day.[98]

It is striking, therefore, that after Hyllus has learnt the truth of the matter and recovered his devotion to both of his parents, Heracles attempts to force him to renounce once more his loyalty to his mother in favour of his father.[99] Heracles makes demands of his son from his first address to the young man, recalling the instrumentalist approach to his children suggested by the agricultural simile of the prologue (797-802):[100]

> "ὦ παῖ, πρόσελθε, μὴ φύγῃς τοὐμὸν κακόν,
> μηδ' εἴ σε χρὴ θανόντι συνθανεῖν ἐμοί·
> ἀλλ' ἆρον ἔξω, καὶ μάλιστα μέν με θὲς
> ἐνταῦθ' ὅπου με μή τις ὄψεται βροτῶν· (800)
> εἰ δ' οἶκτον ἴσχεις, ἀλλά μ' ἔκ γε τῆσδε γῆς
> πόρθμευσον ὡς τάχιστα, μηδ' αὐτοῦ θάνω."

This speech begins with warmer sentiment; Heracles addresses Hyllus paternally - ὦ παῖ - and is eager for his son's company amidst his sufferings.[101] However, Heracles' expressed willingness for his son to die with him rather than leave him (798), even if only a rhetorical flourish, demonstrates the relatively low place of paternity in the hero's priorities; rather than taking comfort in his son's survival,[102] Heracles demands

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[98] 932-42.

[99] Segal (1981), p.82 puts it more forcefully: "Hyllus' recovery from deluded hatred of his mother and his compassionate love for her still come up against his father's rigid, blind hatred."

[100] Friis Johansen (1986), pp.53-4 notes that Heracles exploits Hyllus' filial piety throughout his appearance in the play.

[101] We might compare Oedipus' desire to meet with his daughters one last time: *OT* 1466ff.

[102] Being outlived by one's sons is normally seen as a boon; for example, part of the outstanding good fortune of Tellus the Athenian is that he has seen his sons live and beget children of their own (Hdt. 1.30), while the shade of Achilles' sole consolation in death is hearing of his living son Neoptolemus' exploits (*Od.* 11.538-40). Even Sophocles' Ajax does not wish for his son to join him in his unhappy fate: ὦ παῖ, γένοιο πατρὸς εὐτυχέστερος, / τὰ δ' ἄλλ' ὁμοῖος (*Aj.* 550-1).

immediate succour, even at the risk of his own son's death. His request to be removed (799-802) further highlights the lack of sympathy between him and his family; while Hyllus and Deianeira were so anxious from the play's outset to have Heracles restored to them, Heracles himself is desperate to depart yet again, not even wishing to die amidst (the reminder of) his family.[103]

Heracles is (understandably) hostile to Deianeira, but his efforts to impose this hostility upon his son Hyllus serve as further demonstration of his self-centred approach to his family. Heracles rails against Deianeira for her actions, and demands that Hyllus side totally with his father,[104] even suggesting tests of his son's loyalty (1064-9):

ὦ παῖ, γενοῦ μοι παῖς ἐτήτυμος γεγώς,
καὶ μὴ τὸ μητρὸς ὄνομα πρεσβεύσῃς πλέον. (1065)
δός μοι χεροῖν σαῖν αὐτὸς ἐξ οἴκου λαβὼν
ἐς χεῖρα τὴν τεκοῦσαν, ὡς εἰδῶ σάφα
εἰ τοὐμὸν ἀλγεῖς μᾶλλον ἢ κείνης ὁρῶν
λωβητὸν εἶδος ἐν δίκῃ κακούμενον.

The emphatically repetitive[105] paternal language of 1064 reinforces Heracles' claims to his son's filial obedience, but this is specifically set in opposition to reverence towards his mother (1065).[106] Having enjoined Hyllus not to honour 'the name of mother',

[103] At 1147, by contrast, Heracles does ask for all his children to be gathered around him, but this brings its own complications; see below.
[104] The primacy of the father was famously espoused by Apollo in the *Orestaia* (A. *Eum.* 665-72), and various ancient theories of procreation reflected social gender hierarchies in attributing a more significant role to the male (e.g. Hippoc. *De genitura* 6, Arist. *Gen. an.* 737); Harlow (1998), pp.156-9. That said, a Greek's duty was to *both* parents (cf. e.g. Aesch. 1.28, X. *Mem.* 2.2.14), and Hyllus has a valid case to make on Deianeira's behalf, even if Heracles himself has little apparent interest in hearing it.
[105] Easterling (1982), p.207.
[106] As discussed above, Hyllus himself toyed with such a notion when he first learnt of Deianeira's actions, but never quite broke off his filial bond towards his hapless mother, even before he learnt the sad truth of the situation.

Heracles avoids using it himself, but nonetheless reminds his son of Deianeira's relationship to him: τὴν τεκοῦσαν (1067). The hero is determined to monopolise Hyllus' response to the suffering of both parents; he clearly expects Hyllus to be distressed on his mother's behalf, but characterises this response as a misdemeanour to be avoided in favour of total obedience to the father.[107] Hyllus' attempts to explain the reality of the situation to Heracles and rehabilitate his mother in that man's eyes meet with considerable hostility and further attempts to reinforce the primacy of his claim to Hyllus' devotion. When Hyllus attempts to speak of his mother to explain the situation, Heracles rebukes him by characterising her solely as the woman who killed his father: τῆς πατροφόντου μητρός (1125); πατέρα σὸν κτείνασα (1137).[108] Even once informed of the true nature of Deianeira's actions, he makes no further mention of her, instead moving on immediately to making demands of Hyllus.[109] Among these[110] is the demand that his son marry Iole. Hyllus refuses, and gives grounds for so doing; Iole is the reason both for the death of his mother *and* the present plight of his father,[111] and he would rather die than live with her.[112] Heracles does not justify or explain this request; he threatens Hyllus with curses for disobedience[113] and establishes his will as a father as his son's only moral guide: Υλ. ἀλλ' ἐκδιδαχθῶ δῆτα δυσσεβεῖν, πάτερ; / Ηρ. οὐ δυσσέβεια, τοὐμὸν εἰ τέρψεις κέαρ. (1245-

[107] Easterling (1982), p.208 classifies Heracles' tone here as "cruelly calculating," but Friis Johansen (1986) p.53 is more convincing in attributing Heracles' treatment of those around him to indifference towards the consequences of his actions rather than wilful cruelty.
[108] 1137 arguably echoes 739-40 - τὸν ἄνδρα **τὸν σὸν** ἴσθι, τὸν δ' ἐμὸν λέγω / **πατέρα, κατακτείνασα** τῇδ' ἐν ἡμέρᾳ. - but the differences are telling. Hyllus sets Heracles within his various family contexts, as husband and as father; Heracles makes no mention of his position as husband to Deianeira, the violation of which by bringing a concubine to the household led to the unhappy turn of events, but instead focuses solely upon his claim to Hyllus' loyalty as his father. This fits with Heracles' general failure ever to acknowledge Deianeira's plight and his part in it.
[109] Galinsky (1972), pp.50-1.
[110] The other demands, in particular the pyre, are discussed in more detail below.
[111] 1233-4.
[112] 1236-7.
[113] 1239-40.

6).[114] The dutiful Hyllus, for his part, concedes, accepting this primacy of his father's wishes.[115] Heracles' behaviour as father is markedly self-centred; he treats Hyllus solely as an instrument of his will, regardless of the young man's feelings or concerns. The limitations of Heracles' familial concerns are thrown into even sharper relief by his son's behaviour; the young man strives to do his duty by both of his parents, despite Heracles' misinformed hostility, and ultimately sets aside his (understandable) personal qualms to fulfil his father's wishes and enact the hero's strange requests.

Trachiniae does not simply characterise Heracles as an imperfect and self-centred head of the family, but specifically connects his shortcomings as a family man and a father to his identity and attributes as Heracles. We have already examined the adverse impact of Heracles' nomadic career and frequent absences upon his family life,[116] as well as the specific consequences of the sack of Oechalia for his long-suffering family. Heracles himself sets the domestic disaster of the play in the context of his exploits in the world, as he rails against Deianeira.[117] Heracles emphasises the number and difficulty of his feats - ὦ πολλὰ δὴ καὶ θερμά, καὶ λόγῳ κακά, / καὶ χερσὶ καὶ νώτοισι μοχθήσας ἐγώ (1046-7) - referring to his battles with the Giants (1058-9) and the many lands he has cleansed of beasts (1060-1). He laments that, after all that, he has met his end at the hands of Deianeira, a woman – **γυνὴ** δέ, **θῆλυς** οὖσα **κἄνανδρος** φύσιν (1062) - who didn't even use a sword (1063).[118] The audience knows that Heracles does not understand the truth of the situation, but his characterisation of it - and Deianeira - is revealing. His references to the many lands he has been purifying (1060-1) remind us of the wide geographical reach

[114] Filial obedience was an extremely important virtue to the ancient Greeks; see above, p.81 n.23. That said, Hyllus' initial reluctance to enact his father's wishes is a reflection of his sense of propriety and filial duty rather than any rebelliousness.
[115] 1249-51.
[116] See above, ch.4.2.1.
[117] 1046-63.
[118] Easterling (1982), p.207 suggests the phrase used of the deceptive Hera at *Il*. 19.97 - θῆλυς ἐοῦσα - as a model. If so, Deianeira's womanhood links her to the most implacable of Heracles' foes, furthering Heracles' depiction of her deeds in terms of the labours he has endured.

of his exploits, and the extensive and distressing absences from his family these entail. Heracles sees Deianeira's actions not in the context of his own behaviour towards her or the unhappy domestic situation he has left behind, but as part of the hostility of the wider world amidst which he performs his feats and makes his way; familial or domestic concerns seem scarcely part of his worldview. When he does - briefly - give a thought to his family,[119] we are reminded once again of the disruptive influence of Heracles' legendary labours upon his children. He asks Hyllus to summon all his children (1147) and his mother Alcmene, only to be told this is impossible (1151-6):

Υλ. ἀλλ' οὔτε μήτηρ ἐνθάδ', ἀλλ' ἐπακτίᾳ
Τίρυνθι συμβέβηκεν ὥστ' ἔχειν ἕδραν,
παίδων τε τοὺς μὲν ξυλλαβοῦσ' αὐτὴ τρέφει,
τοὺς δ' ἂν τὸ Θήβης ἄστυ ναίοντας μάθοις·
ἡμεῖς δ' ὅσοι πάρεσμεν, εἴ τι χρή, πάτερ, (1155)
πράσσειν, κλυόντες ἐξυπηρετήσομεν.

Heracles' traditionally widespread geographical associations - amongst them Tiryns and Thebes - and extreme fecundity conspire against a central, nuclear family and the reunion of Heracles with all his living children;[120] Heracles' belated presence for his son Hyllus is, we are reminded, accompanied by absence from other children of his elsewhere. Various aspects of the myth of Heracles are thus deployed in the play to explain or emphasise the difficulty of reconciling Heracles' traditional mythical actions and attitudes with the conventions of Greek familial life and paternal conduct. Heracles in the

[119] Segal (1981), p.80 sees Heracles' desire for his children here as "a human touch", but even this simply leads to a reminder of his family's wide dispersal and thus serves to demonstrate how far Heracles is removed from the norms of domestic life.
[120] Segal (1981), p.80.

Trachiniae is a father who is often conspicuous by his absence and, when present, remarkable for his indifference to the perspective and feelings of other family members.

In contrast to Heracles' portrayal in *Trachiniae* as a figure for whom family life seems an unwelcome burden intruding upon his legendary career, in Euripides' *Heracles* we see the hero as a dedicated 'family man', who clearly prioritises his children and has extremely benevolent intentions towards them, but who nonetheless commits terrible crimes against them precisely *because* he is Heracles.

Despite his absence, Heracles' attempt to make provision for his family while he is away hints at this more familially-minded interpretation of the character.[121] His dramatic entrance[122] reinforces this domestic focus (523-30):[123]

> ὦ χαῖρε μέλαθρον πρόπυλά θ' ἑστίας ἐμῆς,
> ὡς ἄσμενός σ' ἐσεῖδον ἐς φάος μολών.
> ἔα· τί χρῆμα; τέκν' ὁρῶ πρὸ δωμάτων (525)
> στολμοῖσι νεκρῶν κρᾶτας ἐξεστεμμένα
> ὄχλωι τ' ἐν ἀνδρῶν τὴν ἐμὴν ξυνάορον
> πατέρα τε δακρύοντα συμφορὰς τίνας;
> φέρ' ἐκπύθωμαι τῶνδε πλησίον σταθείς·
> γύναι, τί καινὸν ἦλθε δώμασιν χρέος; (530)

[121] See above.
[122] Barlow (1996) p.148 notes the impact of his sudden arrival after all had given him up for dead.
[123] Papadopoulou (2005), pp.77-8. Padilla (1994), p.283 notes the intensely domestic stamp of the play as a whole; amongst other things, words for the house appear in 79 lines.

Heracles begins with an enthusiastic and detailed greeting to his hearth and home - μέλαθρον πρόπυλά θ' ἑστίας **ἐμῆς** (523[124]) - and makes explicit his joy in returning to it: ὡς ἄσμενός (524). However, he is soon struck by the concerning realisation that all is not well for his family, and notices the troubling situation of his children (τέκν', 525), wife (τὴν ἐμὴν ξυνάορον, 527) and father (πατέρα, 528) in turn. Heracles in *Trachiniae* defies convention and decency by bringing a concubine into the home, but this rendition of the hero is driven by conventional 'family values'; he is startled that his wife should be outside in male company (527).[125]

Heracles' traditional mythical feats and legendary associations are also initially subsumed into his paternal and domestic concerns. Before Heracles' surprise return, Megara recalls sadly the plans he had for his sons; he assigned Argos to one to rule, after Eurystheus' defeat (462-4), Thebes to another in response to the child's wheedling (467-9),[126] and Oechalia to the third (472-3). These lands and regions all have longstanding mythical associations with Heracles; whereas in the *Trachiniae* the hero's wide geographical associations were reflected in the dispersal of his family, and the sack of Oechalia brought Iole into his home with fatal consequences, here this varied 'Heraclean' geography is presented in terms of the future grandeur and status he wishes to bestow upon his sons by means of his feats. Even Heracles' traditional accoutrements are turned to familial ends; in the same reminiscence, he distributes his lion skin, club,[127] and bow amongst his young children as temporary gifts for their delight. Heracles' various feats are themselves also incorporated into this highly familial characterisation. When he has learnt of the situation, Heracles issues threats of a grandiose revenge in line with his

[124] Padilla (1994) p.283 notes the significance of Heracles' address to the hearth as a sign of his domestic focus.
[125] Bond (1981), p.200.
[126] Bond (1981), p.186.
[127] As a 'pretend present' (ψευδῆ δόσιν, 471); Bond (1981), pp.186-7, noting the playful implications of the language.

mythical capacity for violence;[128] he will raze Lycus' palace, cut off the usurper's head and cast it to the dogs, then fill Ismene and Dirce with the bodies of those Thebans who failed to support his family as they ought. Heracles sets this vengeance within the context of his labours, and indeed presents them as secondary to this bold action in favour of his family;[129] what would be the point of having slain the Hydra and the Nemean lion, if he were not to 'labour' against the death of his children (τῶν δ' ἐμῶν τέκνων / οὐκ **ἐκπονήσω** θάνατον (580-1)?[130] Only by deploying his mythical strength for the sake of his family can he rightly retain his traditional epithet of ὁ καλλίνικος (581-2). Thus, in contrast to *Trachiniae*, where Heracles' heroic career is prioritised over and disruptive to his family, in *Heracles* the hero directs his heroic energies, attributes and deeds towards ensuring the wellbeing of his family and in particular his children.

He fails, of course, but through no fault of his own. We may perhaps see the seeds of this disastrous turn of events in his own words before he leads his children into his home (630-6):

> ἄξω λαβών γε τούσδ' ἐφολκίδας χεροῖν,
> ναῦς δ' ὣς ἐφέλξω· καὶ γὰρ οὐκ ἀναίνομαι
> θεράπευμα τέκνων. πάντα τἀνθρώπων ἴσα·
> φιλοῦσι παῖδας οἵ τ' ἀμείνονες βροτῶν

[128] 565-73. Burnett (1971), p.165 terms Heracles' plan "unusually indiscriminate in its ferocity", but Gregory (1975) p.266 notes that no suggestion of disproportion is ever raised in the play. Barlow (1996), p.149 adds the observation that vengeance upon a usurper, such as Orestes' against Aegisthus, was particularly worthy. The scale of the threats - Silk (1985) pp.12-3 feels they resemble those of a god - corresponds to Heracles' extreme strength and violence, but here this is notably turned to the defence of his family.
[129] Papadopoulou (2005), pp.77-8.
[130] cf. χαιρόντων πόνοι (575). Traditionally, Heracles undertook his labours as penance for the murder of his family; Euripides inverts the chronology in this play: Kamerbeek (1966), pp.12-3. *Heracles* in fact presents the hero as undertaking the labours to restore his father Amphitryon to Argos (13-21), thus transforming the traditional punishment for the destruction of his family into yet another example of his dedication to their interests; Barlow (1996), p175.

οἵ τ' οὐδὲν ὄντες· χρήμασιν δὲ διάφοροι·   (635)

ἔχουσιν, οἱ δ' οὔ· πᾶν δὲ φιλότεκνον γένος.

The nautical imagery seems to reinforce Heracles' earlier attempts to subsume his mythical exploits to his familial concern. Heracles was involved in the famous voyage of the *Argo*,[131] but here the idea of the ship, rather than the means for legendary voyages and the attendant absence from the family, is transformed to express Heracles' protective attitude towards his children.[132] However, the subsequent gnomic declaration hints at the trouble to come. Heracles pronounces the equality of all humanity in reference to their love for their children: πᾶν δὲ φιλότεκνον γένος.[133] This is true regardless of other differentiating factors, although the only one Heracles acknowledges here is variation in wealth (634-6). The problem is that this egalitarianism[134] does not truly apply to Heracles; he differs from other mortals in a great many ways, including his superhuman strength and his family connection with Zeus. Heracles clearly does love his children in this play, but he will not be allowed to do so like any other mere mortal; his specific identity will assert itself and destroy the family he holds so dear.

One of the key traditions in the myths of Heracles is the hostility of Hera, and this leads to the destruction of his family here. In a startling scene (822-73),[135] Iris and Lyssa, the goddess of Madness, discuss their instructions from Hera against Heracles. Heracles was protected for as long as he performed the labours for Eurystheus (827-9), but now those are concluded Hera can impose her desire for him to commit murder within the family: κοινὸν αἷμ' (831). Lyssa herself pleads for Heracles, remarking on his

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[131] e.g. Pind. *Pyth*. 4. 171-2; Gantz (1993), p. 343.
[132] Bond (1981), p.222.
[133] The sentiment is a common one; c.f. e.g. *Pho*. 965-6; Barlow (1996), p.152.
[134] Bond (1981), pp.223-4, citing various other examples of a similar sentiment elsewhere in Euripides.
[135] There are relatively few parallels for the appearance of gods mid-play after A. *Eum*.; *Rhesus* 595ff. and S. *Niobe* frr.441a, 442, 445 Radt are rare exceptions: Lee (1982), p.44.

achievements in civilising the world (851-3),[136] but Iris will not allow Hera's plans to be thwarted: οὐχὶ σωφρονεῖν γ' ἔπεμψε δεῦρό σ' ἡ Διὸς δάμαρ (857). ἡ Διὸς δάμαρ seems pointed; Heracles may have performed many feats to the benefit of mankind, but his very existence is a reminder of Zeus' philandering and thus an insult to Hera, not only Zeus' wife but the goddess of marriage as an institution.[137] Heracles' identity, not any specific crime, led to this terrible punishment.[138]

The connection between Heracles' identity and the fate of his family is reinforced by the manner of the infanticide. Heracles had used nautical imagery to convey his protective attitude towards his children, but such imagery is violently reworked when Iris encourages Lyssa to drive the hero to "set sail for slaughter" (φόνιον ἐξίει κάλων, 837).[139] Once driven mad, Heracles believes he is avenging himself upon his traditional foe Eurystheus (936ff.), and employs his traditional heroic accoutrements, the bow and the club, to murder his children (984, 992-4).[140] Heracles himself, when he reflects upon what he has done, presents the infanticide as the last of his labours:[141] τὸν λοίσθιον δὲ τόνδ' ἔτλην τάλας **πόνον**, / παιδοκτονήσας δῶμα θριγκῶσαι κακοῖς (1279-80). The architectural imagery - δῶμα θριγκῶσαι means 'to cope the roof of a house' - perhaps recalls Heracles' expression of his love for home and family through his greeting specific features of the family dwelling upon his first entrance.[142] Heracles' familial intentions have been completely thwarted, however; his attempts to prioritise his family's well-being and to deploy the famed Heraclean strength and feats to their benefit has been

[136] Papadimitropoulos (2008a), pp.134-5.
[137] Mikalson (1986), p.95. The consequences of Heracles' filial bond with Zeus are discussed more fully below, ch.4.2.4.
[138] Barlow (1996), p.160; Kamerbeek (1966), p.12.
[139] Literally, "let loose the murderous rope", an idiom from naval warfare found also at *Med.* 278: Bond (1981), p.284.
[140] Kamerbeek (1966), pp.5-7. Burnett (1971), p.172 n.22 notes the ironic recollection of the 'patrimony' scene at 462ff.
[141] The familial motivations for Heracles' labours in this play (17-21, discussed above) lend considerable irony to the hero's assessment here.
[142] 523, discussed above.

fatally undermined by the implacable hostility of Hera which is also part of 'being Heracles.' Although Euripides' Heracles is clearly a much more interested and affectionate father than his counterpart in *Trachiniae*, he nonetheless cannot prevent his traditional heroic attributes and actions from harming his family. For these two depictions of the character, being Heracles and being a (good) father are ultimately incompatible.

Euripides' *Children of Heracles* offers a more ambivalent picture. In this play, Heracles' absence is permanent; Iolaus proclaims that he has become a god (9-10).[143] Although the hero thus never appears onstage to intervene, his legacy upon earth exerts a considerable influence over the experiences of his children, connecting their fate to the identity and heroic career of their father.

This influence can be a positive one. Although Iolaus and Alcmene are, as we have already seen,[144] conspicuous more for their enthusiasm than their efficacy as guardians, Heracles' name and deeds can be invoked to secure more potent support for his offspring. Iolaus' appeal to Demophon to save the children[145] draws extensively upon the implications of their paternity. First of all, Iolaus is able to invoke ties of kinship between Demophon and Heracles' children to encourage the former to defend the latter.[146] He then moves on to more specific ties of obligation deriving from services rendered to Demophon's father Theseus (215-219):[147]

… φημὶ γάρ ποτε (215)

σύμπλους γενέσθαι τῶνδ' ὑπασπίζων πατρὶ

[143] The ultimate confirmation of Iolaus' claim, and Heracles' divine activity in the play, are discussed at ch.4.2.4.
[144] See above, pp.143-4.
[145] Hcld. 205-31.
[146] 207ff.; Burnett (1976), p.15.
[147] Wilkins (1993), Diggle (1984) and Allan (2001) all accept a lacuna of some description after 217.

ζωστῆρα Θησεῖ τὸν πολυκτόνον μέτα

< > (post 217)

< > (post 217)

Ἅιδου τ’ ἐρεμνῶν ἐξανήγαγεν μυχῶν (218)

πατέρα σόν· Ἑλλὰς πᾶσα τοῦτο μαρτυρεῖ.

The recovery of the Amazon queen’s girdle (216) was one of Heracles’ labours in which Theseus assisted, but in many versions of the tale Heracles rewards Theseus with marriage to the Amazon queen Hippolyte (or Antiope), who may even have been Demophon’s mother.[148] Although we cannot know if Euripides followed this version of the myth because of the lacuna, it is nonetheless possible that, as well as evoking Demophon’s gratitude for the salvation of his own father - πατέρα **σόν** (219)[149] - from Hades, Iolaus may be invoking Heracles’ role in bringing about the Athenian king’s birth. Demophon accepts Iolaus’ arguments, citing obligations towards the children as a reason for his acceding to their supplication.[150]

The implications of Heracles’ legacy for his children can be more ambivalent, however. The play famously contains the self-sacrifice of an anonymous daughter of Heracles to ensure victory in the forthcoming battle and thus save both her siblings and Athens.[151] The daughter’s rhetoric and conduct is many ways very admirable; as soon as she has established what course of action will save her siblings and the city, she accepts

[148] Pind. fr. 176 Sn. Theseus certainly seems to have been granted the Amazon queen as wife in recompense for his part in this labour in many accounts thereof; Wilkins (1993), pp.79-80, Gantz (1993), pp. 282-3.

[149] This picks up τῶνδ’ … πατρὶ (216), although a lengthy lacuna might have diluted the effect somewhat.

[150] 140-1; Burnett (1976), p.15.

[151] 381-607. Allan (2001), pp.161-2 notes that the authenticity of the scene has been questioned, and it is entirely self-contained: Burian (1977), p.8. Nonetheless, Zuntz (1947), p.51, Diggle (1984), Wilkins (1993), and Allan (2001) all accept its authenticity. Wilkins (1993), pp.xxvii-xxx discusses but ultimately discounts the possibility that 630-60 were interpolated to cover a lacuna where a scene mourning Heracles’ daughter has been removed. Burian (1977), p.8 and Allan (2001), p.32 argue persuasively that the scene serves various dramatic functions for the play as a whole, most importantly giving the suppliant children of Heracles some role in their own salvation.

it unflinchingly,[152] remarking on the importance of repaying Athens' willingness to protect them[153] and her determination to die for her siblings: κἀξαγγέλλομαι / θνῄσκειν ἀδελφῶν τῶνδε κἀμαυτῆς ὕπερ (531-2).[154] The daughter's words and deeds meet with considerable praise from those around her,[155] and the scene is one of "perfect heroism."[156] Nonetheless, it is worth noting that Heracles' legacy looms large in this scene as well. The daughter frames her decision to die in terms of living up to her father's standards,[157] and Iolaus presents her decision as confirmation of her illustrious paternity: ὦ τέκνον, οὐκ ἔστ' ἄλλοθεν τὸ σὸν κάρα / ἀλλ' ἐξ ἐκείνου· σπέρμα τῆς θείας φρενὸς / πέφυκας Ἡράκλειον· (539-41). These repeated references to Heracles arguably serve to further highlight his absence, particularly as the daughter explicitly addresses Iolaus as standing in for their father: σοὶ παῖδές ἐσμεν, σαῖν χεροῖν τεθράμμεθα (578).[158] The situation in which Heracles' daughter is moved to sacrifice herself for her family and the city of Athens comes about because Heracles himself is not there to protect his family. Indeed, the daughter herself loses any chance of a family of her own; if she failed to offer herself, her male relatives would perish, and with them any prospect of marriage,[159] while she notes that she saves Heracles' children while denying marriage and children to herself: τάδ' ἀντὶ παίδων ἐστί μοι κειμήλια / καὶ παρθενείας (590-1).[160] This does not prevent the sacrifice from being an example of selflessness and nobility, but it seems pointed that by living up to her father's legacy, the daughter is herself denied the prospect of children and the normal progression of family life. Iolaus is on hand as a substitute father, but is

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[152] 500-2; Allan (2001), p.172.
[153] 503-6.
[154] Echoing her earlier statement of concern for her siblings and herself: μέλει δέ μοι / μάλιστ' **ἀδελφῶν τῶνδε κἀμαυτῆς** πέρι (480-1).
[155] e.g. 535-8.
[156] Burian (1977), p,10.
[157] 509-10, 513, 563; Mendelsohn (2002), pp.94-5.
[158] Allan (2001), p. 176 sees the reference to Iolaus' 'virtual parenthood' as increasing the pathos of the scene.
[159] 520-4.
[160] cf. E. *IA* 1398-9, S. *Ant*. 917-8; Allan (2001), p.176.

imperfect in his support; he cannot bring himself to fulfil the daughter's request that he be on hand to cover her after the sacrifice,[161] but subsequently makes a very similar request for covering himself.[162] One wonders if this simply reflects Iolaus' weakness, or perhaps reinforces the sense within the scene that father-figures, like fathers themselves, cannot always be relied upon. Heracles' daughter dies to save his children and proves herself worthy of such noble parentage, but is forced to do so because of the situation arising from the gap left by his absence.

The ambivalence of Heracles' earthly legacy continues even after he has finally used his divine status to save his children.[163] A surprisingly reasonable Eurystheus[164] appears in the play's final scene,[165] and explains himself. He notes his kinship to Heracles,[166] attributes his hostility to the influence of Hera,[167] and, ominously, uses parental language to convey his anxiety; he was kept up all night 'begetting' schemes to save himself from his foes (καὶ πόλλ' **ἔτικτον** νυκτὶ συνθακῶν ἀεί, 994). Eurystheus goes on to explain continued efforts against the children after Heracles' departure (1000-4):

κείνου δ' ἀπαλλαχθέντος οὐκ ἐχρῆν μ' ἄρα, (1000)

μισούμενον πρὸς τῶνδε καὶ ξυνειδότα

[161] 560-4. Note that Diggle (1984), followed by Wilkins (1993) and Allan (2001), transposes 560-1 after 562-3.
[162] λάβεσθε κὰς ἕδραν μ' ἐρείσατε / αὐτοῦ **πέπλοισι** τοῖσδε **κρύψαντες**, τέκνα (603-4), echoing **πέπλοις** δὲ σῶμ' ἐμὸν **κρύψον** παρών (561). Mendelsohn (2002) p.107 sees this as a feminising gesture; if so, Iolaus' inadequacies as a substitute father (despite his best intentions) are all the more forcefully emphasised.
[163] Discussed in greater detail below, ch.4.2.4.
[164] *pace* Burnett (1976), p.24, who sees the king as justifying his cruelty with "cowardly bravado".
[165] The integrity of the final scene as transmitted has aroused much scholarly controversy. Diggle (1984) and Wilkins (1993) suspect a lacuna after 1052, with Wilkins in particular finding the Chorus' swift acquiescence in Alcmene's plans "unbelievable" (p.193). Zuntz (1947), pp.50-1, however, argues against such a lacuna, noting the smoothness of the transition and Alcmene's work in overcoming Choral objections at 1018ff., while Allan (2001), p. 222-5 offers a spirited defence of the transmitted ending as deliberately shocking and subversive. This controversy does not directly impinge upon the present discussion of the scene.
[166] 988.
[167] 989-90.

ἔχθραν πατρῴαν, πάντα κινῆσαι πέτρον
κτείνοντα κἀκβάλλοντα καὶ τεχνώμενον;
τοιαῦτα δρῶντι τἄμ’ ἐγίγνετ’ ἀσφαλῆ.

ἀπαλλαχθέντος echoes Iolaus’ description of Heracles in the prologue - γῆς **ἀπηλλάχθη** πατήρ (12) - and once again emphasises Heracles’ *escape*, in contrast to the ongoing troubles of those he leaves behind. For much of the play, we have seen the children suffering as a consequence of Eurystheus’ hostility to their father; we now learn that Eurystheus himself feared the consequences of their inherited hatred - ἔχθραν **πατρῴαν** - for himself. This assumption is not an unreasonable one,[168] but it presents the sufferings of Heracles’ children not as the result of the perverse or excessive hatred of that man, but as an almost inevitable consequence of their father’s actions and interactions upon earth. Ironically, for much of the play Heracles’ children have not been in a position to do Eurystheus any harm; they inherited Heracles’ enemies, but not his power.

The impact of Heracles’ life and labours upon his children is mixed in the *Children of Heracles*. His benefactions ensure a debt of gratitude from powerful friends such as Demophon, and his legacy of courage and nobility lives on in the self-sacrifice of his daughter. However, Heracles’ clear and frequently evoked influence upon events serves to underline his absence; his legacy is considerable, and in many ways very positive, but by his absence he has cast his children into the situation in which they must suffer and sacrifice so much.

[168] Vengeance for a father was to be expected in Greek thought and literature: νήπιος, ὃς πατέρα κτείνας παῖδας καταλείπει (*Cypria* fr. 31 West). cf. e.g. the laudatory reference to Orestes’ avenging of Agamemnon at *Od*.1.298-300, or the more complex portrayal in the *Oresteia*. Such vengeance could also be a feature of Athenian life; at Antiphon 1.2, the speaker remarks that he is taking up the role of avenger for his father which should rightly be performed by his half-brothers.

4.2.3. Heracles as a threat to other families

Heracles' interactions with and legacy to his own family are at best ambivalent and at worst fatal in these three plays. While in other literature, including tragedies such as *Alcestis*, Heracles is often a saviour who intervenes for the good of those beyond his own home, in these plays the conflict between his heroic activity and the norms of fatherhood is emphasised by the extent to which Heracles is a threat to other families as well.

In the *Children of Heracles*, the oracle which Heracles' daughter satisfies with her self-sacrifice does not specify that one of the hero's children must die. It simply states that, in order to win the battle which is looming as a consequence of Athens' decision to shelter Heracles' children, a virgin of noble birth must be sacrificed to Demeter (παρθένον κόρηι / Δήμητρος, ἥτις ἐστὶ πατρὸς εὐγενοῦς, 408-9). Demophon moves swiftly to pre-empt the threat this oracle poses to Athenian families (410-4):[169]

ἐγὼ δ' ἔχω μέν, ὡς ὁρᾶις, προθυμίαν (410)
τοσήνδ' ἐς ὑμᾶς· παῖδα δ' οὔτ' ἐμὴν κτενῶ
οὔτ' ἄλλον ἀστῶν τῶν ἐμῶν ἀναγκάσω
ἄκονθ'· ἑκὼν δὲ τίς κακῶς οὕτω φρονεῖ,
ὅστις τὰ φίλτατ' ἐκ χερῶν δώσει τέκνα;

[169] Parental hostility to human sacrifice is common in tragedy; cf. e.g. *Hec*. 286ff.; *Pho*. 965-6, discussed above, ch.3.2.3.; *IA* 396 (although the situation in this last play does of course change; see above, ch.2.2.1.); Wilkins (1993), p.105.

For Demophon, despite his clear willingness to help (410-1), infanticide is a step too far. Indeed, his absolute opposition to the death of his own child, and inability to conceive of a situation in which anyone else would willingly give up their own child for death, highlights the powerful protection a present and devoted father can offer. Not only is Heracles not around to provide such protection for his own children, but the situation caused by his absence now threatens to intrude violently into the family life of others.

In *Heracles*, the hero returns, and is determined to save his family. However, in the madness in which he kills his own children, it is notable that he believes he is massacring the offspring of his foe Eurystheus.[170] A capacity for extreme violence is an established feature of the Heracles myth,[171] and even this deeply familial rendition of the hero has demonstrated his brutal side in the terrible threats he made against Lycus and the Thebans.[172] Amphitryon raises the prospect that Heracles' present frenzy is related to his recent murder of Lycus and other foes: οὔ τί που φόνος σ' ἐβάκχευσεν νεκρῶν / οὓς ἄρτι καίνεις; (966-7). Through the influence of Hera and the attendant madness, Heracles is made to direct his strength and brutality against his own children, to his great horror, but he would clearly have been perfectly comfortable with employing such violent methods against the children of an enemy.[173] In contrast to other literary depictions, Heracles' heroic prowess and identity are not only unwittingly turned against his own family, but are also a menace to family life and fatherhood more generally. The futility of Heracles' attempts to subsume his heroic activity to his familial devotion is thus underlined.

The threat posed by Heracles to families beyond his own is most extensively realised in *Trachiniae*. We hear two divergent accounts of Heracles' activities in the

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[170] *HF* 969-71.
[171] See above, ch.4.1.
[172] *HF* 565-73, discussed above, pp.155-6.
[173] Barlow (1996), p.10.

fifteen months of his absence, but in both versions he brings death and destruction to another's family. In Lichas' initial account, Heracles complains of having received terrible treatment when a guest of Eurytus, including the latter boasting of the superior prowess of his own sons - λέγων χεροῖν μὲν ὡς ἄφυκτ' ἔχων βέλη / τῶν ὧν τέκνων λείποιτο πρὸς τόξου κρίσιν (265-6) - before ejecting Heracles from his home.[174] Heracles takes his revenge upon one of Eurytus' sons, Iphitus, hurling him from a vantage point when the latter was distracted.[175] Lichas claims that the action was justified, and only Heracles' use of guile prompted Zeus to punish instead of applaud him.[176] Heracles takes vengeance for a father's insult by murdering his son,[177] thus striking a particularly effective blow against a man whose children are such a clear source of pride to him. However, it soon becomes clear that Heracles' destructive actions against Eurytus' family are not simply deserved punishment for a malefactor, but a consequence of the hero's own unbridled appetites. The Messenger reveals that it was in fact Eurytus' *daughter* who was the most important motivation for Heracles' action: τῆς κόρης / ταύτης ἕκατι (352-3).[178] For all Lichas' grand talk of Zeus' verdict, Eros is in fact the only god involved in Heracles' decision,[179] and his anger against Eurytus stems from this thwarting of his lust: οὐκ ἔπειθε τὸν φυτοσπόρον / τὴν παῖδα δοῦναι, κρύφιον ὡς ἔχοι λέχος (359-60). The juncture of familial terms - τὸν **φυτοσπόρον** / τὴν **παῖδα** - emphasises the paternal relationship which Heracles seeks to distort; he asks Eurytus to give him his daughter not as a legitimate bride, but as a concubine (κρύφιον … λέχος).[180] One of an ancient Greek father's crucial responsibilities was to arrange a suitable marriage for his daughters;[181]

[174] *Tr.* 269.
[175] 270-3.
[176] 274-9.
[177] Easterling (1982), p.114.
[178] As Easterling (1982), p.121 notes, Iole is mentioned first to highlight her prime importance.
[179] 354-5.
[180] Easterling (1982), p.122.
[181] Lacey (1968), p.107.

Eurytus' rejection of Heracles' request is a perfectly sensible exercise of his paternal duties, but it nonetheless provokes Heracles to destroy his city in war and take his daughter captive.[182] During his absence, Heracles has destroyed another family through murder and war in order to fulfil his own selfish desires at the expense of familial norms. His actions before his arrival at Trachis prefigure the devastating effect his actions and disregard for the conventions of family life will have upon his own, ill-fated wife and son. At home and abroad, Heracles in *Trachiniae* is a threat to family life and to fatherhood.

4.2.4. Fatherhood between men and gods

As well as the implications of his heroic activity and attributes for his own family and others, Heracles' cosmic position is a matter of interest and discussion in all three of these plays, and his unusual situation as a being who participates in both the mortal and divine spheres exerts a considerable and ambivalent influence upon his conduct as a father and the fate of his family.

The issue of Heracles' place in the cosmic order is most controversial in *Trachiniae*. At the end of the play, Heracles is cremated on Mt. Oeta, and it has been a matter of longstanding controversy as to whether this signifies that he is to be apotheosised.[183] The main objection to this interpretation is that this apotheosis is never explicitly referred to in the play,[184] and some critics have found it difficult to reconcile the many objectionable aspects of this depiction of Heracles with such posthumous

[182] 362-7; Easterling (1982) and Lloyd-Jones & Wilson (1990) delete τὴν … πατέρα (362-4).
[183] Stinton (1990c) is the most thoroughgoing sceptic, while Holt (1989) is, I feel persuasively, much more open to notions of implicit apotheosis. Davies (1991) pp. xx-xxii calls for open-mindedness, while Easterling (1982) pp.8-11 is cautiously even-handed on the issue.
[184] Stinton (1990c), pp.479-80.

exaltation.[185] The tradition of Heracles' apotheosis was firmly established by the fifth century,[186] and in particular the pyre seems to have been a feature of narratives of this exaltation rather than an established part of the story of Nessus, Deianeira and the poisoning of Heracles.[187] Heracles' own utterances are ambivalent; he speaks of his death at several points,[188] but notably forbids any mourning.[189] Given that Heracles is relaying the content of oracles to his family,[190] it is entirely possible that he does not understand the implications of his instructions, but that the audience would appreciate that these are preliminaries for apotheosis,[191] and Hyllus' reference to the unknowability of what is to come[192] could be seen as an ironic reference to the apotheosis which will follow the events of the drama.[193] The sacred associations of Mt. Oeta with Zeus are also repeatedly highlighted throughout the play.[194] Though it is difficult to be certain on the matter, these various hints within the play, coupled with the strong tradition of Heracles' apotheosis and the general association of this event with the pyre on Mt. Oeta, make it most convincing to see in the play's conclusion implicit preparation for Heracles' apotheosis.

Although this preparation may have a happy outcome for Heracles, it is clearly a cause of considerable distress for his son Hyllus. Not only are the actions required of Hyllus horrific, but there is little compassion or care in the way Heracles goes about

[185] e.g. Galinsky (1972), pp.51-2.
[186] As noted above, there are references to Heracles' divinity in, amongst others, the *Odyssey*, the *Homeric Hymn to Heracles*, Hesiod's *Theogony*, Pindar, Sophocles' own (later) *Philoctetes* (*Phil.* 727-9) and Euripides' *Children of Heracles* (discussed below); Holt (1989), pp.70-1.
[187] Holt (1989), p.74, although Stinton (1990c), pp.481-2 doubts that the pyre and apotheosis were firmly enough associated by the time of the play's performance. There are references to the events involving the robe in Hes. fr.25, Bacch. 5 and 16 *without* mention of the pyre. Easterling (1982) pp.17-8 is a little more cautious about seeing the pyre and the apotheosis as intrinsically linked by the time of the play's production, but notes that the connection between Oeta and cult to Heracles of some description would be well-established in the audience's mind by the time of the play (pp.9-10).
[188] 1143-6, 1172-3, 1201-2, 1222, 1256; Holt (1989), p.75.
[189] 1199. Easterling (1982) p.223 notes the strangeness of this instruction.
[190] 1149-50.
[191] Holt (1989), p.75.
[192] 1270.
[193] Easterling (1989), p.11.
[194] 200, 436-7, 635, 1191-2; Holt (1989), p.75.

requesting them. For example, having demanded that his son burn him alive, Heracles shows little understanding for Hyllus' distress (1199-209):

…γόου δὲ μηδὲν εἰσίδω δάκρυ,
ἀλλ' ἀστένακτος κἀδάκρυτος, εἴπερ εἶ (1200)
τοῦδ' ἀνδρός, ἔρξον· εἰ δὲ μή, μενῶ σ' ἐγὼ
καὶ νέρθεν ὢν ἀραῖος εἰσαεὶ βαρύς.
Υλ. οἴμοι, πάτερ, τί εἶπας; οἷά μ' εἴργασαι.
Ηρ. ὁποῖα δραστέ' ἐστίν· εἰ δὲ μή, πατρὸς
ἄλλου γενοῦ του μηδ' ἐμὸς κληθῇς ἔτι. (1205)
Υλ. οἴμοι μάλ' αὖθις, οἷά μ' ἐκκαλῇ, πάτερ,
φονέα γενέσθαι καὶ παλαμναῖον σέθεν.
Ηρ. οὐ δῆτ' ἔγωγ', ἀλλ' ὧν ἔχω παιώνιον
καὶ μοῦνον ἰατῆρα τῶν ἐμῶν κακῶν.

As discussed above, Heracles forbids any weeping, demanding that Hyllus act without any tears or groans to prove his paternity: εἴπερ εἶ / τοῦδ' ἀνδρός (1200-1). The alternative is a terrible curse: ἀραῖος εἰσαεὶ βαρύς (1202).[195] Despite this threatening language, Hyllus expresses understandable dismay at being asked to commit such a bizarre and horrid action against his own father - οἴμοι, πάτερ (1203)[196] - only to have his status as Heracles' son once again made contingent on his accepting this request (1204-5). Hyllus is forced to make even more explicit the causes for his distress - namely, that Heracles'

[195] Although the request is less clearly related to the apotheosis, Heracles also threatens Hyllus with θεῶν ἀρὰ (1239) if he fails to marry Iole. Easterling (1982), p,227 suggests that he means that the other gods will enforce his curse as a father, but for the audience it may seem a foreshadowing of his own impending divine status.
[196] Easterling (1982), p.225 notes the emphasis on the father-son relationship throughout the scene; cf. 1137, 1146, 1178, 1223-4, 1244-5, 1250-1, 1258.

demands will make him a murderer and incur pollution (φονέα … καὶ παλαμναῖον, 1207) - before Heracles reveals that this act will, in fact, help him (1208-9) - and he goes on to concede that Hyllus may avoid pollution by having another kindle the fire.[197] This request is clearly extremely distressing for Heracles' son, and goes against his understanding of his duties and the law, but he has little choice; he has already been bound by an oath.[198] The audience may understand these actions as a 'necessary evil' to allow for Heracles' apotheosis, but it seems that neither character is aware of that. Nonetheless, Heracles makes little attempt to console or reassure his son, instead using threats to cajole him into performing seemingly criminal actions. The process of Heracles' apotheosis, the culmination of his traditional mythical career and one of the key aspects of his varied and varying place in the cosmic order, is thus achieved only by forcing his son to violate his understanding of his filial duty. Hyllus remarks bitterly on the negligence of the gods as fathers, who simply watch the suffering of their children: οἳ φύσαντες καὶ κληζόμενοι / πατέρες τοιαῦτ' ἐφορῶσι πάθη (1268-9). This is a reference to the apparent lack of any intervention from Zeus to save Heracles, but is worded quite generally.[199] Given that Heracles has been a consistently negligent or callous father in this play, willing to inflict considerable distress on his son and family more generally in pursuit of his own ends, we may see in this observation of Hyllus' ironic evidence in favour of his father's apotheosis; Zeus has simply watched his son's sufferings, but there is little sense that Heracles is very much better as a father.[200] In *Trachiniae*, both Heracles' heroic career and attributes on earth, as well as his divine associations and ultimate transition to the heavens, are all

[197] 1211.
[198] 1181-90.
[199] Easterling (1982), p.231.
[200] Friis Johansen (1986) sees Heracles' apparent lack of understanding of the effect of his demands upon Hyllus as a reflection of the divine aspect of his nature. For further discussion of Zeus' conduct as a father in *Trachiniae*, see below, pp.187-9.

conducted at the expense of his family and stand in conflict with the norms and duties of fatherhood.

Heracles' position between men and gods has an even more damaging outcome in Euripides' *Heracles*, although in this rendition the hero's cosmic progress tends away from the divine towards the human.[201] At the play's opening, Heracles' divine connections are prominent; Amphitryon speaks confidently of Zeus' role in fathering the hero,[202] doubted only by the villainous Lycus.[203] Amphitryon never wavers in his belief, but the positive implications of this connection become less clear. He remarks upon the lack of aid provided by Zeus for Heracles' family in the latter's absence,[204] which casts an ironic light upon Megara's confident pronouncement that the returning Heracles will prove as effective a saviour for his family as Zeus himself: ἐπεὶ Διὸς / σωτῆρος ὑμῖν οὐδέν ἐσθ' ὅδ' ὕστερος (521-2).[205] When the gods do at last intervene in the situation, it is not Zeus who is responsible, but Hera; a consequence of Heracles' divine paternity is the enduring hostility of Zeus' wife. Thus, despite the hope that Heracles' filial bond to Ζεὺς Σωτήρ[206] might contribute to the welfare of his family, it in fact leads to their destruction. Understandably, therefore, Heracles attempts to minimise Zeus' paternity,[207] before indeed offering a radical conception of the gods more generally (1341-6):

> ἐγὼ δὲ τοὺς θεοὺς οὔτε λέκτρ' ἃ μὴ θέμις
>
> στέργειν νομίζω δεσμά τ' ἐξάπτειν χεροῖν

[201] Silk (1986), p.12.
[202] *HF* 1.
[203] 148-50.
[204] 339-47, discussed above.
[205] Barlow (1996), p.148.
[206] cf. 48-50.
[207] 1263-5. He cannot, however, deny it.

οὔτ’ ἠξίωσα πώποτ’ οὔτε πείσομαι

οὐδ’ ἄλλον ἄλλου δεσπότην πεφυκέναι.

δεῖται γὰρ ὁ θεός, εἴπερ ἔστ’ ὀρθῶς θεός, (1345)

οὐδενός· ἀοιδῶν οἵδε δύστηνοι λόγοι.

There is extensive debate on how to interpret these lines.[208] They are extremely striking; the man who is perhaps the most famous consequence of divine adultery denies its existence (1341-2). This bold statement on the divine would make Heracles' status as a son of Zeus impossible, and therefore there would be no reason for Hera's hostility.[209] The situation is of course otherwise; we have seen Iris and Lyssa onstage enacting Hera's commands, and even Heracles himself does not fully deny Zeus' paternity.[210] Despite the hero's best efforts, Heracles' divine associations have prevented him from being the father he would wish to be. Heracles is right to rail against poetry (ἀοιδῶν … δύστηνοι λόγοι, 1346);[211] most of his sufferings in this play are the result of mythical and literary traditions concerning Heracles - including his divine associations - asserting themselves against his best efforts to be a family man and a dedicated father.

[208] Bond (1981), p.399 feels these lines should be seen as a specific response to Theseus' arguments at 1314-21, but this overly narrow interpretation is not widely accepted; for example, Foley (1985), pp.163 n.31 rightly emphasises that we cannot ignore the troubling broader implications of these lines. Yunis (1988) pp.160-3 sees these lines as expounding Heracles' conception of 'true' gods as morally upstanding; his words do not dispute the criminal activities of traditional Olympian deities such as Hera and Zeus, but rather suggest that such activities preclude them from (his definition of) divinity. Yunis (1988), p.160 n.37 rightly acknowledges the philosophical tone of the lines – parallels with Xenophanes 21 B 11, A 32.23-5 D-K are widely noted – but the position Heracles apparently postulates seems difficult to reconcile with the clear evidence of the play that the Olympian gods act in accordance with traditional accounts (e.g. 822-73); Heracles himself accepts Hera's role in his fate at 1392-3. More plausibly, Stinton (1990b) pp.263-4 sees Heracles' apparent rejection as in fact expressing condemnation of such divine conduct rather than true scepticism, while Lefkowitz (2003) pp. 119-20 similarly takes these lines as expressing the hero's hopes for virtuous divine conduct, rather than true beliefs as to the nature of the gods.

[209] Mikalson (1986), pp.96-7.

[210] 1263-4.

[211] A similar sentiment is found at Pl. *Rep.* 377e-278e; Bond (1981), p.400.

Children of Heracles, by contrast to the other two plays, offers a much more positive interpretation of Heracles' cosmic role, with happier consequences for his children. Iolaus is confident of Heracles' apotheosis from the outset of the play,[212] but we see no evidence of this for several hundred lines; his children pass through various crises, and indeed one of them gives up her life, without any intervention from their divinised father. Nonetheless, divine aid comes at last in the battle against Eurystheus (849-58):

> Παλληνίδος γὰρ σεμνὸν ἐκπερῶν πάγον
> δίας Ἀθάνας, ἅρμ' ἰδὼν Εὐρυσθέως, (850)
> ἠράσαθ' Ἥβηι Ζηνί θ' ἡμέραν μίαν
> νέος γενέσθαι κἀποτείσασθαι δίκην
> ἐχθρούς. κλύειν δὴ θαύματος πάρεστί σοι·
> δισσὼ γὰρ ἀστέρ' ἱππικοῖς ἐπὶ ζυγοῖς
> σταθέντ' ἔκρυψαν ἅρμα λυγαίωι νέφει· (855)
> σὸν δὴ λέγουσι παῖδά γ' οἱ σοφώτεροι
> Ἥβην θ'· ὁ δ' ὄρφνης ἐκ δυσαιθρίου νέων
> βραχιόνων ἔδειξεν ἡβητὴν τύπον.

Heracles' intervention is welcome, but unexpected; Iolaus does not pray to his divinised comrade, but to Hebe and Zeus (851). Divine intervention grants Iolaus miraculous youth, which he puts to use in defeating and capturing Eurystheus.[213] Heracles' various connections in the divine sphere are brought to bear to fulfil Iolaus' prayer and thus save his children. Iolaus issues his successful prayer as he passes through a sacred place of

[212] *Hcld.* 9-10.
[213] 859-63.

Athena (849), a famous divine ally and patron of Heracles.[214] Heracles' wife Hebe is of course the goddess of youth, a phenomenon with which Heracles himself was also strongly associated in cult.[215] However, while Heracles' connections to, and indeed participation in, the divine sphere are put to beneficial use, they also serve to underline his distance from his children. He does not appear onstage, as gods often do in Euripides,[216] nor does he even reveal himself to Iolaus; he and Hebe appear as stars - δισσὼ … ἀστέρ' (854)[217] - and only the interpretations of the learned identify Heracles' role in this intervention (856-7). Alcmene herself rejoices, but notes that this intervention overcomes earlier scepticism about Heracles' apotheosis.[218] By becoming a god, Heracles has gained considerable power which can be used to the benefit of his children, but he is also absent from them; he acts through mortal intermediaries such as Iolaus, and, like so much of the divine, is largely unknowable to his family on earth. The confirmation of his transition from mortal to divine has a much happier outcome than his complex cosmic position in the other tragedies we are considering, but it still prevents him from conforming to the conventional duties and functions of fatherhood.

4.3. Conclusion

Heracles is a highly varied mythical figure, with a huge array of geographical associations, a complex position in the cosmic hierarchy, and a vast catalogue of acts of both great benevolence and extreme brutality. There is considerable variety in the specifics of his depiction in these three tragedies, but one constant emerges; there is clear

214 Wilkins (1993), p.xxv.
215 Woodford (1971), p.214.
216 Although for the general absence of divine *fathers* from the stage, see below, ch.5.2.2.
217 Wilkins (1993), p.165 notes that the Dioscuri are recounted as appearing as stars at E. *Hel*. 140.
218 871-2.

difficulty in reconciling the traditional mythical attributes, actions and associations of Heracles with the demands and expectations of fatherhood. Heracles may be the greatest hero and one of the greatest benefactors of mankind in general, but these three tragedies all note, to varying degrees, the hardship this brings to his own family. His constant travel across and even under the earth, his myriad associations on both the mortal and divine plane, all render him ill-suited to the sedentary nature of family life. Heracles is capable of many astonishing things, but he cannot be an ordinary family man; his inability to reconcile his heroic and paternal roles in these plays emphasises his distance from the great mass of mortals, and raises the issue of his exceptional nature and abilities being not simply an object of admiration and wonder, but a cause of isolation and exclusion.

Heracles endures all this toil and hardship despite being the son of the mightiest of all the gods, Zeus. It is to the tragic depiction of such divine fathers, and the genre's emphasis on the gulf between the immortals and their mortal offspring, that we now turn.

Chapter 5: Divine fatherhood in Greek Tragedy

Tragedy abounds with characters who have a god as a father. The depiction of divine fatherhood in the genre, although born of extensive cultural and literary antecedents, is distinct from that found in, for example, Homeric epic. The divine fathers of Greek tragedy are also emphatically different from their mortal counterparts; they do not behave as mortal fathers would. While they can prove a boon or a bane to their offspring, their depiction emphasises the many and profound differences which exist between them and the mortal characters of the drama, including their own children. Although fatherhood is a phenomenon common to mortal and divine figures, tragedy demonstrates the very considerable gulf between divine action and the norms and expectations of fatherhood on the mortal plane.

5.1. Background

The notion of gods as fathers was widespread in the cultures of the ancient eastern Mediterranean. Divine beings were described or addressed with the language of fatherhood for symbolic purposes, such as to characterise their power over or to elicit favourable attitudes towards mortals,[1] or with more concrete generative implications.[2]

[1] Mesopotamian deities were often termed 'father' as a demonstration of power, while Akkadian prayers often termed the divine addressee 'father' to invoke a close relationship and thus elicit the aid a 'father' owed his children; Spiekermann (2014), p.73. The God of the Old Testament is described with extensive use of paternal language and imagery – sometimes of quite a direct nature, e.g. Psalms 2:7 – while nonetheless being conceived of as totally precluded from actual fathering; Spiekermann (2014), pp.73-4.

[2] Notions of divine paternity in ancient Egyptian religious thought are often quite direct; most cosmogonies recount the creation of the world and the other gods as a sexual act by an original male creator god; Lieven (2014), pp.22-3. Egyptian gods also fathered mortals; royal ideology from the Fifth Dynasty (c. 2500 BC) to the end of the Roman period claimed that the reigning pharaoh was the son of the sun-god Re, or later Amun-Re (Lieven, 2014, pp.24-5), and non-royal mortals could also claim to be the result of divine paternity; Lieven, pp.28-9. In the Syrian religion of Ugarit, the father-god El created both mortals and a distinctly quarrelsome family of gods; Speickermann (2014), pp.73-4.

The same was true of ancient Greece. The intensely anthropomorphic[3] Greek pantheon was described as taking its form through the reproduction of several generations of deities,[4] and many of these same male deities in particular were also held to have fathered children with mortal women. This combined with more symbolic deployments of the notion of gods as fathers. In the *Iliad*, for example, Zeus is repeatedly termed "father of men and gods" (πατὴρ ἀνδρῶν τε θεῶν).[5] Zeus is the father of several of the mortal and divine figures within the work,[6] and this is sometimes what the epithet serves to evoke: it is used when Zeus is soothing his wounded daughter Aphrodite,[7] and when he reluctantly accepts the death of his son Sarpedon (see below).[8] However, the epithet is also very often found in situations which convey Zeus' power to guide events;[9] Zeus is also termed thus when he hurls a bolt of lightning as a warning to Diomedes,[10] or when he dispatches Iris to direct Hector in stopping Agamemnon's onslaught.[11] The language of fatherhood is deployed to convey Zeus' power, and also to elicit the use of that power; many of the occasions on which the god is addressed as "father Zeus" (Ζεῦ πάτερ)[12] – an address very often used by those who are in no way his children[13] - are prayers or requests from mortals.[14]

The depiction of divine fatherhood in epic foreshadows much of what we shall encounter in tragedy, but with crucial points of contrast. Divine fathers are depicted as

[3] Henrichs (2010), pp. 29, 32-5.
[4] Most fully recounted in Hesiod's *Theogony*.
[5] *Il*. 1.544; 4.68; 5.426; 8.49, 132; 11.182; 15.12, 47; 16.458; 20.56; 22.167; 24.103.
[6] Nesselrath (2014), pp.37-8, where it is also noted that Zeus is not a creator god, and thus cannot literally be considered the 'father of men and gods' as a whole.
[7] *Il*. 5.426.
[8] *Il*. 16.458.
[9] Nesselrath (2014), pp.41-2.
[10] *Il*. 8.132
[11] *Il*. 11.182.
[12] The phrase appears 24 times in the *Iliad*; Nesselrath (2014), pp.42-3.
[13] Such as, for instance, his sister-wife Hera (5.757, 767; 19.121) and his brother Poseidon (7.446); Nesselrath (2014), pp.42-3.
[14] 2.371; 3.276; 4.288; 7.132; 15.372; 16.97; 17.645; Nesselrath (2014), pp.42-3.

intervening in earthly affairs in the interest of their children, in a more or less direct manner.[15] In the *Odyssey*, for instance, the blinded Cyclops Polyphemus calls on his father Poseidon to inflict suffering on Odysseus in vengeance;[16] we are informed that the god heeded his words,[17] and this forms the basis for the anger of Poseidon against Odysseus which endures until the latter reaches Ithaca.[18] More obliquely, it is revealed in Hesiod's *Theogony* that Heracles' freeing of Prometheus was in fact in accordance with Zeus' wishes; the god directed events to increase his son's glory.[19] It is striking however, that, in Homer in particular, the actions of divine fathers on behalf of their children are often prevented from matching their intentions by other forces or considerations. The most famous instance of this is Zeus' deliberation over the fate of his son Sarpedon.[20] As he reveals to Hera, he is torn - διχθὰ δέ μοι κραδίη μέμονε (*Il.* 16.436) – as to whether to whisk his son away to safety in Lycia or allow him to perish at the hands of Patroclus. Hera is astonished at this suggestion,[21] and reminds Zeus that the man's end is fated (ἄνδρα θνητὸν ἐόντα πάλαι πεπρωμένον αἴσῃ, 16.441). Any decision to save Sarpedon would dismay the other gods, who have children of their own fighting at Troy.[22] Hera advises Zeus to allow Sarpedon to fall, but to dispatch Death and Sleep to ensure he is brought safely to Lycia for proper burial;[23] Zeus accedes, but sends a shower of bloody rain as a sign of his grief.[24] We thus see the restraining forces at work upon the divine parents of the *Iliad*; even Zeus, for all his power, is expected to adhere to the established

[15] This is also true of divine mothers; for example, the goddess Thetis goes to Olympus to plead her son Achilles' case to Zeus in *Il.*1, while Aphrodite intervenes to save her son Aeneas from certain death at *Il.*5.311-7.
[16] *Od.* 9.528-35.
[17] 9.536.
[18] 1.20-1.
[19] Hes. *Th.* 529-31.
[20] *Il.* 16.431-61.
[21] 16.440.
[22] 16.458-9.
[23] 16.450-7.
[24] 16.459-60.

fate assigned to mortals, including his own son, and he must also consider the opinion of the other gods. He is not indifferent to the fate of his beloved Sarpedon, and, in accordance with Hera's suggestion, he uses his powers to ensure the recovery and proper burial of his son's body, but he cannot intervene as fully as he might at first wish. A little earlier in the poem, Ares, grieving at the death of his son Ascalaphus, is determined to avenge him whatever the cost, but is restrained by Athena, who warns him of the disastrous consequences which he would bring upon all the gods by rousing Zeus' anger.[25] Similarly, Poseidon's paternal anger may haunt Odysseus throughout much of the latter's wanderings in the *Odyssey*, but he cannot enforce it further than the other gods will permit.[26] Because the gods of Homer are highly visible in the narrative,[27] the audience is aware of their clear paternal feelings and intentions to act even in situations when other factors restrain them; as we shall see, this visibility (to the audience, if not necessarily to their children) is in marked contrast to the tragic depiction of divine fatherhood.

In Pindar, we find highly positive depictions of divine fathers as committed to their children and active in the pursuit of their well-being.[28] One of the most striking examples is found in *Nemean* 10. Pindar evokes several instances of Zeus fathering children in Argos as part of his praise of that city at the start of the poem; the superlative beauty of Argive women is attested by Zeus' encounters with Danae and Alcmene,[29] while, having aided Amphitryon in battle, he took his place in the marriage bed to father the mighty Heracles, who ultimately achieved marriage to the goddess Hebe.[30] The latter portion of the poem serves to explain the alternating immortality of the Dioscouri, and

[25] *Il*. 15.110-42.
[26] *Od*. 1.77-9.
[27] Kearns (1997), p.60.
[28] Kearns (2013), pp.67-8 provides various examples and links them to Pindar's general unwillingness to suggest wrongdoing on the part of the gods.
[29] *Nem*. 10.10-1.
[30] 10.13-8.

Zeus looms large in this narrative also; he destroys Polydeuces' opponents in battle by hurling his lightning bolt,[31] and, in response to his son's prayer,[32] appears to him in person: Ζεὺς δ' ἀντίος ἤλυθέ οἱ (*Nem.* 10.79). Zeus offers full immortality to Polydeuces, but to Polydeuces alone;[33] Castor is the son of a mortal man.[34] The alternative, which Polydeuces chooses unhesitatingly, is to alternate immortality with his brother.[35] We see in this narrative considerable generosity on Zeus' part towards his son; although he cannot totally overcome the limitations imposed by Castor's wholly mortal nature, he nonetheless presents Polydeuces with a choice between two fairly attractive possibilities, the latter of which elevates his half-brother Castor to share in the benefits of Polydeuces' own divine parentage.

The account of Apollo's fathering of a child with Cyrene in *Pythian* 9 also offers a markedly favourable account of divine fatherhood. In contrast to the seduction or even sexual violence which marks most acts of divine fathering in tragedy (and elsewhere),[36] here the emphasis is on the lawful and consenting nature of the relationship between Apollo and Cyrene. It is characterised as a "marriage of mutual consent" (ξυνὸν … γάμον, *Pyth*. 9.13); Apollo explicitly asks Cheiron whether it might be acceptable for him to act upon his amorous feelings (ὁσία κλυτὰν χέρα οἱ προσενεγκεῖν / ἦρα καὶ ἐκ λεχέων κεῖραι μελιαδέα ποίαν; 36-7) and is reassured that, through the power of Persuasion,[37] he will become Cyrene's husband (πόσις, 9.51).[38] It is prophesied that he will endow her with a

[31] 10.71-2.
[32] 10.76-9.
[33] 10.83-5.
[34] 10.80-2.
[35] 10.85-90.
[36] Discussed below, ch.5.2.1. In particular, Creusa provides a moving monodic account of being raped and impregnated by Apollo at *Ion* 859-922, discussed below, pp.204ff.; for an extensive comparison between the Euripidean and Pindaric accounts, see Kearns (2013).
[37] *Pyth*. 9.39-41.
[38] Kearns (2013) p.59 notes that the relationship cannot be a permanent one, but its representation in terms of marriage reinforces the exceptionally positive portrayal of this encounter between god and mortal.

prosperous city to rule,[39] and the son born of their union will himself become a god,[40] although it is worth noting that Apollo himself is *not* involved directly in this process.

The accounts of divine fatherhood provided by epic and Pindar present a relatively benign image. There is little clear sense of any particular suffering on the part of the mortal women who bear them children, and the gods themselves are usually concerned for the well-being of their offspring on earth. They either act accordingly or, if prevented by circumstances beyond their control, are nonetheless still visibly motivated by paternal sentiment and good intentions. They cannot always reconcile their own desires and intentions as fathers with their status as gods, but this is more usually the result of obstructive factors beyond their control than indifference on their part. As we shall see, tragedy offers a different and much less encouraging perspective.

5.2. Gods as fathers in Greek tragedy

5.2.1. Divine fathering

Tragedy offers numerous accounts of the conception of children by gods with mortal women. The details of such accounts often serve to reinforce the pronounced difference between human and divine power, experience and standards of behaviour. Although recounting a moment of considerable intimacy between human and divine, these conception narratives in fact serve to underline the distance between these two spheres.

Euripides' *Heracles* opens with a rhetorical question from Amphitryon (1-3):

[39] 9.54-5.
[40] 9.60-5.

Τίς τὸν Διὸς σύλλεκτρον οὐκ οἶδεν βροτῶν, (1)

Ἀργεῖον Ἀμφιτρύων', ὃν Ἀλκαῖός ποτε

ἔτιχθ' ὁ Περσέως, πατέρα τόνδ' Ἡρακλέους;

This introduction presents a highly anomalous family situation. For one thing, Amphitryon freely and proudly announces that he has shared his wife with another (Διὸς σύλλεκτρον), but is still confident in his own paternity over Heracles: πατέρα τόνδ' Ἡρακλέους. This joint paternity - human and divine – is quite common in Greek tragedy;[41] in Euripides' *Electra*, the Dioscuri are addressed as sons of both Zeus and Tyndareus,[42] while in *Hippolytus* Theseus is variously termed the son of Poseidon[43] and of Aegeus.[44] As we might deduce from Amphitryon's proud announcement of the fact here,[45] this dual paternity seems to have brought no particular ill-repute to the mortal father, but it nonetheless marks a significant departure from the norms of mortal family life. Classical Athenian society was marked by intense concerns about ensuring the legitimacy and paternity of children within marriage;[46] this arguably manifested itself in, amongst other things, the extremely strict penalties for both perpetrator and (female) victim in cases of rape, adultery and seduction,[47] the relatively confined lifestyles of many Athenian women,[48] and the right of an Athenian father to reject a child born to his wife as illegitimate and expose it.[49] As such, this cheerful acceptance of shared paternity on

[41] Barrett (1964), pp.333-4
[42] E. *El*. 1292-5.
[43] *Hipp.* 887, 1169, 1315, 1318, 1411.
[44] *Hipp*. 1283, 1431.
[45] Bond (1981), p.63.
[46] Ogden (2002), p.25.
[47] Ogden (2002) argues convincingly that Athenian law and practice concerning all three crimes was overwhelmingly guided by the need to protect bloodlines.
[48] Gould (1980), p.48.
[49] Strauss (1993), pp.1-2; see above, p.4.

Amphitryon's part emphasises the different standards to which gods are held and by which they operate. A breakdown of monogamy which would be outrageous if the culprit were mortal is transformed into a source of pride by the participation of a god.

Acts of divine fathering are not always so well-received. It is worth noting that, as the gods do not marry mortals, their acts of conception with mortal women in tragedy always fall under some category of illicit sex, be it seduction, adultery or rape.[50] These encounters often have terrible consequences, for the mother in particular.[51] Perhaps the most striking example is the rape of Creusa, which she herself recounts so movingly,[52] but fragmentary tragedy abounds in examples of young women who suffer for bearing the gods children. In Euripides' *Antiope*, for instance, the eponymous heroine and mother of twin sons by Zeus begins the play as a slave, having been taken captive in a war ordered against her royal husband by her own father, angry at her seduction by Zeus and the bearing of her sons.[53] As is so often the case in such narratives, she was forced to deliver her children in the open countryside and abandon them to be reared by another.[54] The hypothesis to Euripides' *Wise Melanippe* recounts that Melanippe, raped and impregnated by Poseidon, followed the god's instructions in hiding her newborn sons in an ox-stall before her father's return to escape his wrath, only to have to speak in defence of these same children when her father, taking them to be monsters born of cattle, ordered them burnt alive.[55] Melanippe herself pithily recounts the plight of a young woman caught between a predatory god and an angry father: εἰ δὲ παρθένος φθαρεῖσα ἐξέθηκε τὰ παιδία

[50] Scafuro (1990), pp.126-7 notes the relative lack of clear differentiation between seduction and rape in classical narratives of divine-human sexual encounters, but points out that the language used in many of the fragmentary tragedies discussed here does not preclude sexual violence (p.149).
[51] Such adverse consequences can be motivated by the threat such offspring pose to their other relations. In Sophocles' fragmentary *Danae,* Acrisius (most probably: see Lloyd-Jones (1996), p.29), warned by an oracle, states plainly his fear of the child whom his daughter ultimately bears to Zeus: τοῦ παιδὸς ὄντος τοῦδ' ἐγὼ διόλλυμαι (fr. 165 Radt l.2).
[52] E. *Ion* 859-922, discussed below.
[53] Collard & Cropp (2014), p.171.
[54] cf. frr.181-2.
[55] *test*. ia, Collard & Cropp (2014).

καὶ / φοβουμένη τὸν πατέρα …(fr. 485). Her fears seem to be well-founded; the existence of a *Melanippe Captive* confirms, from its title at least, that she had to endure some form of imprisonment.[56] Melanippe, for all her suffering, at least received some guidance from Poseidon in responding to her situation; in Euripides' *Alope*, the unhappy heroine, raped and impregnated by the sea god, is left to struggle through her pregnancy without any aid: πλήσας δὲ νηδὺν οὐδ' ὄναρ κατ' εὐφρόνην / φίλοις ἔδειξεν αὑτόν (fr.107). The gods achieve fatherhood through the suffering and disgrace they inflict upon these women, who endure the significant opprobrium which attaches to those who bear children out of wedlock.[57] The gods themselves are of course far beyond the power of mortal sanction, and do not share in any of the hardship they have caused by their acts of fathering.[58]

The gulf between human and divine in tragic narratives of divine fathering is made all the clearer by the numerous narratives in which the gods father their children while in non-human guises. Perhaps the most striking example is the conception of Dionysus in the *Bacchae*. According to tradition, Hera tricked Semele into binding Zeus with an oath to lie with her in the same form as when he slept with the goddess;[59] this was lightning (Σεμέλη λοχευθεῖσ' ἀστραπηφόρωι πυρί, 3). As Dionysus surveys Thebes during the prologue, he remarks that the ruins of Semele's home are still smoking;[60] these ruins (δόμων ἐρείπια, 7) arguably also serve as a symbol of the destruction which has already befallen and is also about to befall the House of Cadmus as part of the enduring consequence of this union of Zeus and Semele. There are numerous other, less destructive examples. In Euripides' *Helen*, the titular heroine relates the tale of her being conceived

[56] Collard & Cropp (2014), p.588.
[57] This reflects classical Athenian practice, as well as mythical convention. Women who were seduced or raped were considered polluted, and at least the former category were forbidden from attending public sacrifices; Dem. 59.87; Ogden (2002), pp.29-31.
[58] One of the most striking mortal complaints against this divine paternal conduct is found at *Ion* 429-50, discussed below.
[59] Apollod. 3.26-7; Dodds (1960), p.64.
[60] E. *Ba*. 7-8.

by Zeus in the form of a swan.[61] In the same playwright's fragmentary *Danae*, the heroine is revealed to have been impregnated by Zeus in the form of a shower of gold.[62] A fragment of that play, possibly spoken by Danae's father Acrisius,[63] suggests the significance of these non-human guises (fr. 324.1-4):

> ὦ χρυσέ, δεξίωμα κάλλιστον βροτοῖς,
> ὡς οὔτε μήτηρ ἡδονὰς τοίας ἔχει,
> οὐ παῖδες ἀνθρώποισιν, οὐ φίλος πατήρ,
> οἵας σὺ χοἰ σὲ δώμασιν κεκτημένοι.

Gold is set against all family bonds, and triumphs over them in its desirability and worth. This dichotomy is ironic, in the circumstances; it is precisely through becoming gold that Zeus has in fact become a father and engendered children! However, this apparent opposition reinforces the sense of distance between the divine father and the mortal family which he has expanded; he is unlike them in his nature. This transformation is also a demonstration of power; Zeus takes the form of gold to circumvent the efforts of Acrisius to prevent his daughter from getting pregnant.[64] The same is arguably true of the other instances in tragedy of gods taking non-human guises to father children; by reducing their resemblance to mortals, in the moment in which their behaviour is perhaps most intensely anthropomorphic, these gods demonstrate their difference and distance from humans, in power and nature. In this, as in other aspects, the act of divine fathering, as recounted in tragedy, uses a moment of closeness between mortal and divine to underline the significant distance between these two categories of being.

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[61] E. *Hel*. 17-21, discussed more fully below.
[62] Collard & Cropp (2014), p.324.
[63] Collard & Cropp (2014), p.333.
[64] cf. fr. 320.

5.2.2. The conspicuous absence of divine fathers in tragedy

Although we hear many striking narratives of divine acts of fathering in tragedy, we see very little of the fathers themselves. It is highly telling that at no point in extant Greek tragedy does the divine father of a character appear onstage or interact directly with his child.[65] This is not symptomatic of any general absence of the divine from the stage;[66] even plays which contain appearances by multiple deities, such as Euripides' *Hippolytus*[67] or *Ion*,[68] do not bring onstage the god who is a father to one of the other characters of that play. These divine fathers do still act and intervene, and in much the way as they do in Homer, through supernatural actions, portents and representatives. However, whereas in Homer the audience is able to witness the thoughts, feelings and actions of these divine fathers, and thus is reassured of their interest (whether or not these deities are in fact able to act as they wish), their absence from the tragic stage renders them much more distant, and the audience, like the characters who are children of these gods, must rely upon messages, intermediaries and signs.[69]

[65] This statement of course leans very heavily on the word 'extant'; we cannot be at all certain that this is the case in lost and fragmentary tragedies. The possibility of Zeus appearing at the culmination of Euripides' *Alcmene*, for instance, has been accepted by some scholars, although they are notably in the minority; Collard & Cropp (2014), p.102. Similarly, it is possible, but again uncertain, that Poseidon may have appeared at the end of Euripides' *Alope* (Collard & Cropp (2014), pp.116-7), or *Melanippe Captive*; Cropp & Collard (2014), p.588. I am not aware of any more securely identified appearances by divine fathers in fragmentary tragedy. We do, interestingly, have at least one appearance of a divine *mother* in extant tragedy; the Muse appears onstage to lament her son Rhesus' fate at the end of the eponymous tragedy (890ff.). Although *Rhesus* is generally no longer considered Euripidean, it is plausibly dated to the early C4th BC, and thus at no great remove from the other plays cited in this chapter: see Fries (2014), pp.22-47 for a recent survey of the 'authenticity question'.

[66] Although, of course, even the absence of the divine from the stage in no way prevents their considerable influence over the course of events; Easterling (1993), p.78.

[67] Aphrodite delivers the prologue, Artemis appears in the finale.

[68] Hermes delivers the prologue, Athena intercedes *ex machina* at the play's climax.

[69] This parity of perspective is unusual. In many other cases in plays with gods onstage, the audience is granted greater access to the divine than the characters, often being able to see divinities whom the characters can only hear; e.g. S. *Aj.*14-7, E. *Hipp*. 1391-3 (see Barrett (1964) *ad loc.*); Easterling (1993), pp.81-2.

There are many occasions in tragedy where this sense of distance is exacerbated still further by the fact that divine fathers often do not act or intervene in the interests of their children, and this frequently attracts hostile comment. Zeus' conduct as father of Heracles attracts criticism in both Sophocles' *Trachiniae* and Euripides' *Heracles*.[70] In Sophocles, the criticism forms the climax of the play. Heracles' son Hyllus, acceding to his father's demands to be set upon a pyre on Mount Oeta while still alive, sets about his allotted task while rebuking the callousness of divine fathers (1264-78):

Υλ. αἴρετ', ὀπαδοί, μεγάλην μὲν ἐμοὶ
τούτων θέμενοι συγγνωμοσύνην, (1265)
μεγάλην δὲ θεῶν ἀγνωμοσύνην
εἰδότες ἔργων τῶν πρασσομένων,
οἳ φύσαντες καὶ κλῃζόμενοι
πατέρες τοιαῦτ' ἐφορῶσι πάθη.
τὰ μὲν οὖν μέλλοντ' οὐδεὶς ἐφορᾷ, (1270)
τὰ δὲ νῦν ἑστῶτ' οἰκτρὰ μὲν ἡμῖν,
αἰσχρὰ δ' ἐκείνοις,
χαλεπώτατα δ' οὖν ἀνδρῶν πάντων
τῷ τήνδ' ἄτην ὑπέχοντι.
λείπου μηδὲ σύ, παρθέν', ἐπ' οἴκων, (1275)
μεγάλους μὲν ἰδοῦσα νέους θανάτους,
πολλὰ δὲ πήματα <καὶ> καινοπαθῆ,
κοὐδὲν τούτων ὅ τι μὴ Ζεύς.[71]

[70] Mikalson (1996), pp.89-90.
[71] In contrast to Lloyd-Jones & Wilson (1990), Easterling (1982) attributes 1275-8 to the Chorus. Easterling (1982), pp.231-2, noting that the controversy over ascription began even in antiquity, argues that these lines work best as a neutral corroboration of Hyllus' words, rather than a slightly redundant continuation on his

Hyllus' complaint deploys striking verbal contrast to emphasise the difference in attitude between Heracles' divine and mortal relations. Human sympathy is contrasted with divine apathy (**συγ**γνωμοσύνην … **ἀ**γνωμοσύνην, 1265-6); the intensity of Heracles' suffering elicits sympathy from his mortal companions but reflects shamefully on the divine father who failed to prevent such hardship; οἰκτρὰ μὲν ἡμῖν, / αἰσχρὰ δ' ἐκείνοις, (1271-2). The condemnation is aimed at Zeus in particular, but the tactful use of the plural allows this to serve also as a more general condemnation of divine fathers;[72] despite their superior knowledge (εἰδότες, 1267), they simply look upon the sufferings of their children (1269). This accusation of apathy is taken even further in reference to Zeus; he is not simply negligent, but actively held responsible for death and suffering on a grand scale and of a novel form (1276-8):[73] μεγάλους … θανάτους; πολλὰ δὲ πήματα <καὶ> καινοπαθῆ.

The play's conclusion does, however, contain latent portents of more positive action by Zeus on his son's behalf. The *Trachiniae* can quite plausibly be taken as foreshadowing the apotheosis of Heracles upon Mount Oeta (although this is never made explicit in the play).[74] Hyllus complains that the gods merely gaze upon the travails of their mortal children, before remarking - with the same verb - that no-one can foresee the future (ἐφορῶσι, 1269; ἐφορᾷ, 1270). This latter remark not only invites us to anticipate

part, and suggests that the slightly enigmatic παρθέν' (1275) is the Chorus addressing itself. I am not sure that these lines are redundant if spoken by Hyllus; they summarise Hyllus' position, certainly, but they are more concentrated and more explicit in their accusations of Zeus than those preceding them, and thus serve as a fairly potent finale. παρθέν' is unusual whether we attribute these lines to the Chorus or to Hyllus; it would be an exceptional way for the Chorus Leader to address her colleagues, but, if it comes from Hyllus, it serves as either a surprising address to the Chorus Leader, a highly unusual use of the singular vocative to address the Chorus as a whole, or an address to Iole; Vuorenjuuri (1970), pp.157-8. Vuorenjurri (1970), pp.157-8 points out how strange it would be for Hyllus suddenly to address the Chorus Leader specifically, while Easterling (1982), p.232 points out that there is no indication that Iole has re-emerged on to the stage. Although it is very unusual, the prospect of Hyllus using the singular to address the Chorus *en masse* seems to me the least unconvincing of the various possibilities.

[72] Easterling (1982), p.231.

[73] Mikalson (1986), pp.91-3.

[74] See above, pp.167-8.

events beyond the play's conclusion, such as the potential apotheosis,[75] but is also untrue, even within the play itself. Heracles has told us how his father Zeus once revealed a prophecy to him;[76] the divine fathers whom Hyllus castigates do not simply 'gaze on', but do also 'foresee'. Hyllus may take Zeus to task for failing to act to his son's benefit during the events of the play, but the audience can discern strong hints that Zeus will endow Heracles with substantial rewards after the play's conclusion. We need not, therefore, see Zeus as the totally apathetic father Hyllus would suggest, but we can nonetheless agree with some of his criticisms; even if we interpret the play as portending Heracles' apotheosis, the tragedy itself is dominated by the suffering of Zeus' son, and any consolation comes only after this anguish. The divine father does intervene, but, as is so often the way in Greek tragedy, he does so late and only after much hardship.

In Euripides' *Heracles*, the condemnation of Zeus' conduct as Heracles' father is even more forthright, and here there is no indication even of belated intervention. Condemnation is most explicitly forthcoming from Amphitryon, Heracles' mortal 'father';[77] at a point early in the play, when the death of Heracles' family seems imminent, Amphitryon launches upon a remarkable outburst against Zeus (339-47):

Αμ. ὦ Ζεῦ, μάτην ἄρ' ὁμόγαμόν σ' ἐκτησάμην,
μάτην δὲ παιδὸς κοινεῶν' ἐκλῄιζομεν· (340)
σὺ δ' ἦσθ' ἄρ' ἧσσον ἢ 'δόκεις εἶναι φίλος.
ἀρετῆι σε νικῶ θνητὸς ὢν θεὸν μέγαν·
παῖδας γὰρ οὐ προύδωκα τοὺς Ἡρακλέους.

[75] Easterling (1982), p.231.
[76] S. *Tr.* 1159-63.
[77] See above for the anomalous nature of Amphitryon's shared paternity over Heracles.

σὺ δ’ ἐς μὲν εὐνὰς κρύφιος ἠπίστω μολεῖν,

τἀλλότρια λέκτρα δόντος οὐδενὸς λαβών, (345)

σῴζειν δὲ τοὺς σοὺς οὐκ ἐπίστασαι φίλους.

ἀμαθής τις εἶ θεὸς ἢ δίκαιος οὐκ ἔφυς..

The language of Amphitryon’s denunciation is simple but increasingly powerful;[78] the repetition of μάτην conveys his sense of disappointment, while he is direct in addressing Zeus’ shortcomings in φιλία (341) and even implies that Zeus has betrayed his grandchildren (γὰρ οὐ προύδωκα 343). Amphitryon takes Zeus to task over the misuse of his considerable power. The god is active in fathering Heracles through furtive (κρύφιος) adultery (344-5), but does not act to save his family as a father should; the balanced ἠπίστω … ἐπίστασαι, with the shift of tenses, underlines this transition from previous ingenuity to present apathy. Amphitryon concludes that Zeus must be stupid or unjust (347); there is no notion of Zeus being *unable* to act, as Amphitryon’s accusation derives much of its force from the charge that Zeus is the lesser father *despite* his considerable power; ἀρετῆι σε νικῶ θνητὸς ὢν θεὸν μέγαν (342).

Amphitryon is right to complain; he is, as he laments, too old and weak to defend Heracles’ family as he would hope,[79] but is nonetheless a committed presence in the play; he delivers the prologue, seeks to reassure the anxious Megara,[80] defends Heracles’ use of the bow against disparagement by Lycus,[81] and, even when Heracles is coming round after his bout of madness and murder, stands loyally by his son:[82] ὦ τέκνον· εἶ γὰρ καὶ κακῶς πράσσων ἐμός (1113). Zeus, conversely, remains conspicuous by his absence,

[78] Bond (1981), p.145.
[79] *HF* 228-35.
[80] e.g. 95-106.
[81] 174-205.
[82] Gregory (1977), p.270.

although other divine influence looms large in the play; the goddesses Iris and Lyssa appear onstage and discuss their instructions from Hera to bring madness to Heracles and thus death to his family.[83] The highly visible intervention of Hera,[84] the malevolent stepmother, casts Zeus' enduring absence and inaction into sharper relief; he does not prevent Heracles' madness, nor intercede to offer any consolation to his son. Heracles is instead offered friendship, shelter and posthumous ritual honours by Theseus in Athens.[85] This consolation is distinctly human;[86] it stands in stark contrast to Zeus' total failure to protect his son, remarked upon forcefully by the Chorus (1087-8):[87] ὦ Ζεῦ, τί παῖδ' ἤχθηρας ὧδ' ὑπερκότως / τὸν σόν, κακῶν δὲ πέλαγος ἐς τόδ' ἤγαγες; Zeus' absence and non-intervention is juxtaposed with both the commitment of his mortal counterpart Amphitryon and the determined action of other gods; he is repeatedly chided for falling short of the expectations placed upon him in his role as Heracles' father.

5.2.3. The identity of divine fathers in tragedy

Given the general absence of divine fathers from the stage, and the frequent lack of evident action or intervention on behalf of their children, it is hardly surprising that claims of divine paternity in tragedy are very often met with scepticism. Doubts about paternity are not confined to tragedy; in an age long before any reliable paternity test, there must always have been some room for uncertainty. In the *Odyssey*, for example, Telemachus remarks to Athena-Mentes that he must take Penelope's word for his paternity, as no man can be entirely certain about his origins.[88] Classical Athenian society

[83] 822-74.
[84] Mikalson (1986), p.95.
[85] 1323-33.
[86] Silk (1985), pp.15-6.
[87] Bond (1981), pp.340-1.
[88] *Od*. 1.215-6.

seems to have been preoccupied with the vulnerability of paternal identity and the challenges to it; as well as the threat posed by seduction, adultery and rape (discussed above), the risk posed by the 'supposititious child' was widely acknowledged.[89]

Such doubts about divine paternity emerge easily amongst the mortals of tragedy, including the gods' children themselves. In Euripides' *Helen*, for example, the titular character offers a remarkably non-committal account of her own origins (16-21):

> ἡμῖν δὲ γῆ μὲν πατρὶς οὐκ ἀνώνυμος
> Σπάρτη, πατὴρ δὲ Τυνδάρεως· ἔστιν δὲ δὴ
> λόγος τις ὡς Ζεὺς μητέρ' ἔπτατ' εἰς ἐμὴν
> Λήδαν κύκνου μορφώματ' ὄρνιθος λαβών,
> ὃς δόλιον εὐνὴν ἐξέπραξ' ὑπ' αἰετοῦ (20)
> δίωγμα φεύγων, εἰ σαφὴς οὗτος λόγος·

Helen speaks as though she does not believe this tale herself,[90] although it is not entirely clear why, as she is certainly not a more general religious sceptic:[91] she believes that Zeus has taken an interest in her affairs and wellbeing (οὐ γὰρ ἠμέλησέ μου / Ζεύς, 45-6); she is aware of other equally elaborate supernatural actions, such as Hera's creation of a substitute Helen from cloud;[92] and has herself been whisked through the air to Egypt by

[89] The ruse of a wife smuggling in another's baby to pass off as the child of her and her husband famously appears in Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazusae* (339-40, 407-9, 502-17), but it was not simply the preserve of comedy; Demosthenes accuses his opponent Meidias of being a supposititious child (Dem. 21.149), and an apparently serious reference to the practice appears in Plato (*Menex.*237e); Powell (1988), pp.354-7. In tragedy, see E. *Alc*. 637-9, discussed below, p.229.
[90] Wright (2005), pp.142-3.
[91] Allan (2008) p.148 sees this scepticism as a justified response to her suffering, which is in line with scepticism over conspicuously absent divine parents in plays such as *Heracles* (discussed above), but it is worth noting that Helen herself does not feel abandoned by Zeus (45-6).
[92] *Hel*. 31-6.

Hermes![93] This scepticism raises issues of truth and belief,[94] an important theme in the play as a whole,[95] but it is telling that it is divine paternity in particular which is singled out for scepticism on Helen's part; she herself has few issues with the other incredible aspects of her situation.[96]

Helen is far from the only character in tragedy to be uncertain of their divine paternity; Theseus in *Hippolytus* and Phaethon in the eponymous fragmentary tragedy, for example, also require reassurances concerning their ancestry (discussed more fully below). Indeed, the children of the gods in tragedy can even express scepticism about the whole notion of deities fathering children. In Euripides' *Heracles*, the titular character expresses his scepticism towards the traditional mythical accounts of divine misdeeds (1341-6):

ἐγὼ δὲ τοὺς θεοὺς οὔτε λέκτρ' ἃ μὴ θέμις
στέργειν νομίζω δεσμά τ' ἐξάπτειν χεροῖν
οὔτ' ἠξίωσα πώποτ' οὔτε πείσομαι
οὐδ' ἄλλον ἄλλου δεσπότην πεφυκέναι.
δεῖται γὰρ ὁ θεός, εἴπερ ἔστ' ὀρθῶς θεός, (1345)
οὐδενός· ἀοιδῶν οἵδε δύστηνοι λόγοι.

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[93] 44-8.
[94] Wright (2005), p.142.
[95] See Allan (2008), pp.47-9.
[96] Helen's scepticism about her birth may emerge again more forcefully later in the play; at 257-9, she expresses considerable scepticism at the tale of her being born from an egg. The lines are, however, controversial. At 256, Helen asks whether her mother bore her as a 'marvel for mortals' (ἀνθρώποις τέρας), and there is a γὰρ in both 257 and 260. This has led various editors, including Diggle (1993), to delete 257-9 as an expansion upon 256. However, Allan (2008) defends the lines as they stand, suggesting that it is perfectly plausible for the γὰρ in 257 and 260 both to have as object line 256. In such a case, however, 257-9, although not defective in themselves, could be quite comfortably deleted to produce a smoother transition to 260. Wright (2005) pp.145-7 also retains the lines, but suggests adopting Stinton (1990b)'s emendation of the γὰρ in 260 to δ'ἄρ'. This seems a more persuasive argument, as all the lines are then incorporated into a logical flow from the 'marvel' of Helen's birth to that of her life and experiences (cf. 260ff.).

The reference to 'unlawful unions' - λέκτρ' ἃ μὴ θέμις – is somewhat vague, and its precise interpretation depends upon how broadly one sees fit to apply the passage.[97] Given Amphitryon's claim that Zeus seduced his wife against his will - τἀλλότρια λέκτρα δόντος οὐδενὸς λαβών (345) – the line can arguably be taken as evocative of the circumstances of Heracles' own conception. If so, this is an astonishing statement; the most famous of Zeus' children denies the possibility of his own conception. He is, of course, factually quite wrong to do so; the audience has witnessed the direct intervention of Lyssa and Iris on Hera's instructions,[98] confirming the goddess' anger against him as a demonstration of Zeus' infidelity.[99] Nonetheless, this outburst is entirely understandable given the events of the play; Heracles' status as the son of Zeus, and thus a foe of Hera, has led to madness and the massacre of his own family. Heracles' divine paternity proves to be the source of great suffering for the hero;[100] it is little wonder that he seeks to reject it.

Given the scepticism the children of the gods themselves express towards their divine paternity, it is little wonder that other mortals are so often doubtful. In particular, claims that a child has been fathered by a god are very frequently taken as a convenient fiction for a woman to disguise an illicit liaison with another mortal. Such an accusation is made against Semele by her sisters in the *Bacchae*,[101] and Dionysus reveals his determination to achieve recognition of his divine birth and vindication for his mother.[102] Cadmus himself seems to accept the truth of Dionysus' claim to divinity and descent from

[97] For the intractable debate concerning these lines, see p.172 n.208.
[98] 821-73.
[99] Mikalson (1986), p.95.
[100] Mikalson (1986), pp.96-7.
[101] *Ba*. 26-31.
[102] 39-42.

Zeus,[103] but nonetheless makes clear in his appeals to Pentheus that the honorific effect of such a relationship counts for as much as its veracity (333-6):

> κεἰ μὴ γὰρ ἔστιν ὁ θεὸς οὗτος, ὡς σὺ φῄς,
> παρὰ σοὶ λεγέσθω· καὶ καταψεύδου καλῶς
> ὡς ἔστι Σεμέλης, ἵνα δοκῇ θεὸν τεκεῖν (335)
> ἡμῖν τε τιμὴ παντὶ τῶι γένει προσῇ.

The appeal of such a falsehood is clear; in place of the disgrace and pollution attendant upon a woman who is unchaste with a mortal man,[104] liaisons with a god bring honour to her and her whole family. Dionysus, as a god himself, knows the truth of his ancestry, but in tragedy even the offspring of the gods are amongst those who doubt claims to divine paternity. In *Antiope*, Amphion, the heroine's own son by Zeus, reacts with blunt disbelief to her claims to have conceived a child by the god,[105] whilst, in *Ion*¸ the eponymous hero is similarly sceptical of Creusa's claim that her 'friend' has had a child by Apollo: Κρ.: καὶ παῖδά γ' ἔτεκε τῶι θεῶι λάθραι πατρός. /Ιων: οὐκ ἔστιν· ἀνδρὸς ἀδικίαν αἰσχύνεται (340-1).[106] Such scepticism is, of course, highly ironic; Ion and Amphion are, and are explicitly revealed to be, the product of the very encounters between mortal and divine which they attempt to rationalise away. The pervasive expectation that claims of divine paternity are a mere fiction to cover mortal impropriety adds dramatic power to these revelations of such paternity, but also serves to demonstrate the anomalous nature of divine fatherhood. The mortal children of gods are the product of illicit sexual encounters, excluded from any conventional concept of legitimacy; the uncertainty about paternity

[103] 180-3.
[104] See above.
[105] fr. 210. This is, of course, before the ultimate revelation of his and Zethus' birth; cf. fr.223.
[106] Ion's scepticism returns at 1521-7. cf. Hdt. 6.69-8.

frequently expressed by the children of the gods in tragedy is "a fundamental condition of illegitimacy",[107] and even the great Heracles was often thought of as illegitimate.[108] Those who suspect a human indiscretion instead of an encounter with the divine are of course always proven wrong about the identity of the male participant, but they are otherwise quite correct. The divinity of the fathers in such instances, but *only* the divinity of these fathers, elevates these acts of extra-marital procreation to, as Cadmus puts it, a 'source of honour for the whole family.' The power of divine status is thus reinforced, as is its distance from human social norms.

5.2.4. The intervention of divine fathers

Although generally absent from the stage, and on occasion lambasted for inaction, there are in fact several occasions in tragedy when divine fathers do intervene on behalf of their mortal children. These interventions often – although not always – have happy outcomes, but their very form serves to underline the essential difference between the divine father and his mortal offspring.

A particularly ill-starred form of divine intervention is the fulfilment of wishes. The granting of wishes by gods is a common motif in myth and fable, which arises in tragedy as a means of proving divine paternity.[109] In Euripides' fragmentary *Phaethon*, for example, Clymene encourages her son to seek proof of his paternity from his father, the Sun (fr. 773.45-53 Kannicht):

[107] Ebbott (2003), p.59.
[108] Hence the sanctuary and gymnasium of Heracles at Cynosarges were reserved for bastards; Woodford (1971), p.215. Aristophanes also jokes about Heracles' illegitimacy at *Birds* 1649-70.
[109] Kakridis (1928), pp.21-2.

(Κλ.) μνησθεὶς ὅ μοί ποτ’ εἶφ’ ὅτ’ ηὐνάσθη θεὸς (45)
αἰτοῦ τί χρήιζεις ἕν· πέρα γὰρ οὐ θέμις
λαβεῖν σε· κἂν μὲν τυγχάνηις <ὅπερ θέλεις>
θεοῦ πέφυκας· εἰ δὲ μή, ψευδὴς ἐγώ.
Φα. πῶς οὖν πρόσειμι δῶμα θερμὸν Ἡλίου;
Κλ. κείνωι μελήσει σῶμα μὴ βλάπτειν τὸ σόν. (50)
Φα. εἴπερ πατὴρ πέφυκεν, οὐ κακῶς λέγεις.
Κλ. σάφ’ ἴσθι· πεύσηι δ’ αὐτὸ τῶι χρόνωι σαφῶς.
Φα. ἀρκεῖ· πέποιθα γάρ σε μὴ ψευδῆ λέγειν.

This exchange is replete with tragic irony. Clymene’s reassurances to Phaethon about his father’s concern for his safety (50) are proven to be accurate, but this concern will not be enough to save him. Phaethon proclaims his belief in his mother’s words (53), but, fatally, persists in his plan; he still visits his father to gain proof of his paternity by means of his wish. This wish, to drive the Sun-god’s chariot, turns out to be disastrous; Phaethon, despite Helios’ attempts at guidance,[110] crashes and dies, prompting an impassioned accusation against the god from a mournful Clymene: ὦ καλλιφεγγὲς Ἥλι’, ὥς μ’ ἀπώλεσας / καὶ τόνδ’· Ἀπόλλων δ’ ἐν βροτοῖς ὀρθῶς καλῆι, / ὅστις τὰ σιγῶντ’ ὀνόματ’ οἶδε δαιμόνων. (fr. 781.224-6 Kannicht). Despite his apparent paternal concern, Helios’ offer to prove his paternity ends wretchedly. Phaethon’s attempts to ‘follow in his father’s footsteps’ end in his death; the filial bond is not enough to overcome the essential difference between his mortality and his father’s divinity.

In *Hippolytus*, Theseus similarly calls upon his divine father (887-90):

[110] fr. 779.176-7 Kannicht.

ἀλλ’, ὦ πάτερ Πόσειδον, ἃς ἐμοί ποτε

ἀρὰς ὑπέσχου τρεῖς,[111] μιᾶι κατέργασαι

τούτων ἐμὸν παῖδ’, ἡμέραν δὲ μὴ φύγοι

τήνδ’, εἴπερ ἡμῖν ὤπασας σαφεῖς ἀράς. (890)

Theseus is admittedly operating under the belief that Hippolytus attempted to rape his wife,[112] but this is still a shocking request.[113] Theseus exploits his paternity (ὦ πάτερ) to kill his own son (ἐμὸν παῖδ’); one family tie is invoked to destroy another. Although Theseus does not explicitly make fulfilment of this wish a condition for Poseidon to prove his paternity,[114] he certainly interprets its enactment as such a proof: ὦ θεοί, Πόσειδόν θ’· ὡς ἄρ’ ἦσθ’ ἐμὸς πατὴρ / ὀρθῶς, ἀκούσας τῶν ἐμῶν κατευγμάτων. (1169-70). Unfortunately for Theseus, he was utterly misled about the realities of the situation, as Artemis makes abundantly clear (1315-24):

ἆρ’ οἶσθα πατρὸς τρεῖς ἀρὰς ἔχων σαφεῖς; (1315)

ὧν τὴν μίαν παρεῖλες, ὦ κάκιστε σύ,

ἐς παῖδα τὸν σόν, ἐξὸν εἰς ἐχθρῶν τινα.

πατὴρ μὲν οὖν σοι πόντιος **φρονῶν καλῶς**

ἔδωχ’ **ὅσονπερ χρῆν**, ἐπείπερ ᾔνεσεν·

[111] Kakridis (1928), pp.23-5 expends considerable energy attempting to establish the occasion for the other two wishes and their order, an effort taken up again briefly by Barrett (1964), p.334; Three is, however, a very common number in folklore (Kohn, 2008, p.384), and Gregory (2009) pp.38-9 suggests quite sensibly that it is best seen as being chosen for its resonances, suggesting that the audience was unlikely to be much troubled by the whereabouts of the other wishes.
[112] *Hipp*. 885-6.
[113] Gregory (2009), p.43.
[114] Contrast Polyphemus at *Od*.9.328-30; Gregory (2009), pp.45-6. Indeed, the two passages contrast in other ways; while Polyphemus is careful to include caveats in his request (532-5), to allow Poseidon to bring at least some suffering upon Odysseus whatever the strictures of fate, Theseus is far less cautious; he simply wishes death upon his son as a knee-jerk response to Phaedra’s deceptive letter.

σὺ δ’ ἔν τ’ ἐκείνωι κἀν ἐμοὶ **φαίνηι κακός**, (1320)

ὃς οὔτε πίστιν οὔτε μάντεων ὄπα

ἔμεινας, οὐκ ἤλεγξας, οὐ χρόνωι μακρῶι

σκέψιν παρέσχες, ἀλλὰ **θᾶσσον ἤ σ’ ἐχρῆν**

ἀρὰς ἐφῆκας παιδὶ καὶ κατέκτανες.

Artemis’ condemnation of Theseus contrasts his behaviour as a father with that of Poseidon. The mortal father treated his own son as he should an enemy (1317); he awaited no proof or certainty, but acted rashly (θᾶσσον ἤ σ’ ἐχρῆν, 1323) and destroyed his child. Poseidon’s behaviour as a father (πατὴρ … πόντιος), conversely, is presented as exemplary; he was well-intentioned towards his son (φρονῶν καλῶς), and, in contrast to Theseus’ rashness and excess, acted only within the remit of necessity and his vow (ὅσονπερ χρῆν, 1319, cf.1323). The events reflect poorly on Theseus alone (1320). We might agree with Artemis, to an extent; much like Phaethon, Theseus bound a divine father to the fulfilment of an ill-advised wish,[115] with disastrous consequences. However, Artemis’ glowing account of Poseidon’s conduct does not disguise the clear limitations of his fatherhood. A somewhat analogous situation in Euripides’ *Alcestis* offers a useful point of comparison.[116] Admetus resents his parents’ unwillingness to die in his place (339-40), and, because of his father Pheres’ failure to fulfil this request, accuses him of being no true father: οὐκ ἦσθ’ ἄρ’ ὀρθῶς τοῦδε σώματος πατήρ (636).[117] Pheres, however, is present to answer these charges, and is able both to invoke past actions as proof of paternity and present his own understanding of what such paternity entails: ἐγὼ δέ σ’ οἴκων δεσπότην ἐγεινάμην / κἄθρεψ’, ὀφείλω δ’ οὐχ ὑπερθνήισκειν σέθεν (681-2).

[115] Kohn (2008), p.387.
[116] Discussed in greater depth below, ch.6.1.2.
[117] cf. *Hipp.*1169-70; Gregory (2009), pp.45-6.

Poseidon, however, is a divine father, and so is absent. He cannot invoke a shared family life with his child as a demonstration of paternity, any more than Helios could to Phaethon. Poseidon's proof of paternity is a demonstration of divine power from afar; he sends a monstrous bull from the sea to fulfil his son's request.[118] Poseidon is powerful and distant; he is not there to argue against Theseus' wish, nor does he even appear in the aftermath to express his feelings towards his son; we learn only from Artemis that he condemns Theseus' actions. The distance and difference of the gods, which arguably prompt such anxiety for their mortal children over their paternity, are also manifested in the fulfilment of these wishes intended to prove that paternity.

The intervention of divine fathers on behalf of their children can be much more positive, but nonetheless still takes a form which demonstrates the distance between a divine father and his mortal child. Consider Castor's appearance at the end of Euripides' *Helen*. Castor promises a fair wind on the voyage home for Helen and Menelaus,[119] and also reveals Zeus' intention to bestow upon his daughter posthumous deification: θεὸς κεκλήσηι … ξένιά τ' ἀνθρώπων πάρα / ἕξεις μεθ' ἡμῶν· Ζεὺς γὰρ ὧδε βούλεται (1666-9, with omissions). This is an act of considerable benevolence from Helen's divine father, but it notably comes at the end of a life full of travails and sufferings.[120] Indeed, the lateness is emphasised by Castor's remarks that the Dioscuri wished to use the divinity granted to them by Zeus to save their sister earlier, but were prevented by fate and the other gods, for whom this course of events was required.[121] Zeus, as a god, is only able

[118] 1210ff.
[119] 1663-5.
[120] Divine intervention often comes slowly in tragedy; e.g. A. *Ag.* 126, *Cho.* 61-5, *Eum.* 550ff; S. *Ant.* 1074f., *OC* 1536f.; E. *Or.* 28, 163-5, 416-20 (see ch.6), *Ba.* 882ff; Garvie (1986) *ad* A. *Cho*. 61-5 has further examples. Divine fathers prove no exception; in *Antiope*, for instance, Zeus intercedes only after the heroine and the sons she bore him have endured many years of slavery.
[121] 1658-61. Allan (2008), p.341 notes that such divine 'apologies' offer little comfort to the mortal characters.

to act intermittently and through intermediaries - Hermes, Proteus, the Dioscuri - while Helen is mortal; there is a distance between father and child, between god and mortal, which is ultimately only overcome by elevating Helen to divine status.

In *Children of Heracles*, we see a similar model for the intervention of a divine father.[122] Heracles intercedes to save his children in the battle against Eurystheus;[123] he and Hebe restore youth to Iolaus, faithful guardian of his children, and the latter uses this to defeat and capture the Argive king. It is telling that Iolaus does not pray to Heracles, but to Hebe and Zeus;[124] Heracles' intervention is clearly unexpected. It is nonetheless powerful, and reflects Heracles' position amongst the divine; Iolaus issues his successful prayer as he passes through a sacred place of Athena,[125] a famous ally and patron of Heracles,[126] while Heracles' wife Hebe is the goddess of youth, a phenomenon with which Heracles himself had strong cultic associations in classical Athens.[127] However, this miraculous intervention, while it turns the tide of battle and saves Heracles' children, nonetheless reinforces his distance from them as a god. He does not appear onstage, nor reveal himself directly to Iolaus; he and Hebe appear as stars (δισσὼ … ἀστέρ', 854). Indeed, the fact that Hebe and Heracles intervened at all must be deduced: σὸν δὴ λέγουσι παῖδά γ' οἱ σοφώτεροι / Ἥβην θ'· (856-7). Alcmene rejoices at the news, but it is notable that this intervention overcomes both scepticism over Heracles' apotheosis *and* despair of Zeus ever intervening on behalf of his own son.[128] Heracles uses divine power to save the day, but does so through Iolaus as an intermediary, and, once again, his help comes rather late in the proceedings; his children have endured exile and wanderings,[129] and one

[122] See above, pp.173-4.
[123] *Hcld*. 849-58.
[124] 851.
[125] 849.
[126] Wilkins (1993), p.xxv.
[127] Woodford, (1971), p.214.
[128] 869-72.
[129] cf. 14-6.

of his daughters has had to give herself up for sacrifice to ensure Athenian victory in the war fought for the protection of Heracles' family.[130] The gods of tragedy can and do intervene in earthly affairs for the benefit of their children, but even the form and timing of such intervention once again reinforces their distance from their mortal offspring.

5.3. Apollo as father in Euripides' *Ion*

Various key aspects of the depiction of divine fatherhood in tragedy have emerged: the abnormal or transgressive nature of divine acts of conception; the general absence of the divine father; the consequent scepticism towards claims of divine paternity; the distancing effect of even highly positive interventions by divine fathers on behalf of their children. All of these attributes of divine fatherhood in tragedy are present and prominent in perhaps the fullest tragic account of a god's paternal relationship with a mortal, Euripides' *Ion*.

The play opens with a divine prologue outlining the events preceding the play and Apollo's plans for the future. It is delivered not by Apollo – he never appears onstage in the play[131] – but by Hermes.[132] Hermes introduces himself with rather grandiloquent reference to his own birth as grandson of Atlas and son of Zeus,[133] and subsequently emphasises the role of his kinship to Apollo in the latter's appeal for assistance: κἄμ' ὢν ἀδελφὸς Φοῖβος αἰτεῖται τάδε· / Ὦ σύγγον' … (28-9; cf. 36-7). Hermes' account of Apollo's actions establishes many of the key themes of that god's conduct as a father. He declares unambiguously that Apollo raped Creusa (Φοῖβος ἔζευξεν γάμοις / βίαι

[130] 474-607; see above, ch.4.2.2.
[131] This does not prevent him exerting considerable influence upon events; he is "the absent centre of the *Ion*": Zacharia (2003), p.103.
[132] E. *Ion* 1-81.
[133] 1-4; Lee (1997), p.160.

Κρέουσαν, 10-1); this act is returned to repeatedly in the play.[134] While Hermes and Apollo, as both kin and gods, may quite directly interact, Apollo's interventions in mortal events transpire indirectly or through intermediaries; he somehow prevented Creusa's pregnancy from being discovered by her father (ἀγνὼς δὲ πατρί (τῶι θεῶι γὰρ ἦν φίλον), 14),[135] had Hermes convey the infant Ion to his shrine at Delphi,[136] and ensured that the Pythia took the newborn infant in.[137] The audience is given privileged access to Hermes' knowledge of Ion's paternity, acknowledged by Apollo himself,[138] but Ion's paternity is to be a mystery on earth to both Ion himself[139] and the priestess who raises him (she thinks he is the bastard of a local girl);[140] ignorance and scepticism over his birth dog the protagonist until the play's finale. Hermes also reveals Apollo's interest in and plan for future events;[141] an oracle is to persuade Creusa's foreign husband Xuthus to recognise Ion as his own child, so that he may return to his mother in Athens and receive his due.[142] The prologue thus establishes the nature of Apollo's paternity; he acts and intervenes from afar, his divine knowledge only intermittently revealed to the mortal actors, who must spend most of their time embroiled by ignorance, doubt or even deception. The prologue does not prove entirely prophetic of what is to come – events take a somewhat different route to Apollo's stated end[143] – but it nonetheless reveals the key attributes of

[134] Scafuro (1990), p.140. See e.g. Ion's horror at Apollo's use of βία (437, 445), and Creusa's account of the rape at 859-922.
[135] This spares Creusa the punishment which befell, for instance, Danae or Antiope; Lee (1997), p.162. This impersonal use of φίλος is relatively common (*LSJ* s.v. 2.b), but it nonetheless seems to throw into contrast Apollo's brutal treatment of Creusa a only a few lines before; his φιλία does not appear to extend to her.
[136] 29-34.
[137] 47-8.
[138] 35.
[139] 51.
[140] 44-5.
[141] 67-8.
[142] 69-73.
[143] Lee (1997), p.167. This is not uncommon in Euripides; events deviate from the prologue in *Hippolytus* (41ff.), *Suppliant Women* (25f.), and *Bacchae* (52); Dodds (1960), p.69.

Apollo's paternity, the implications of which for the mortal characters of the drama are drawn out more fully in the play as a whole.

Apollo fathered Ion by raping Creusa, and the suffering thus inflicted upon her is brought out forcefully at several points in the play. Perhaps the most powerful of these is Creusa's impassioned monody.[144] Creusa refers to Apollo's resplendent golden locks, acknowledging the divine splendour of his appearance even in her complaint.[145] The violence and terror of his actions are nonetheless made clear (891-6):[146]

> λευκοῖς δ' ἐμφὺς καρποῖσιν
> χειρῶν εἰς ἄντρου κοίτας
> κραυγὰν Ὦ μᾶτέρ μ' αὐδῶσαν
> θεὸς ὁμευνέτας
> ἆγες ἀναιδείαι (895)
> Κύπριδι χάριν πράσσων.

Creusa's desperate cries for her mother (κραυγὰν) emphasise her unwillingness,[147] and add considerable pathos to the account. They also foreshadow the destructive influence on her own family life which Apollo's attack will have. Creusa's mother was previously a source of safety for her,[148] but her present appeal is in vain. Indeed, Creusa is forced to hide her own pregnancy, the result of the rape, through fear of the same mother who was

[144] 859-922. Zacharia (2003) pp.78-9 notes the lack of clear precedent for such an explicit and 'down-to-earth' account of divine sexual violence, while Parker (2005) pp.143-4 notes the contrast with earlier accounts of divine fathering as an honorific boon for the mother.
[145] 887-9; Rabinowitz (1993), p.198.
[146] Kearns (2013) pp.61-2 notes that Apollo's actions here are characterised by ἀναίδεια, in contrast to his more respectful conduct in *Pythian* 9.
[147] Scafuro (1990), pp.143-5.
[148] 280.

previously her saviour (φρίκαι ματρὸς, 898).[149] Creusa ends up delivering and exposing Ion in the cave in which she was assaulted by Apollo;[150] the rape is topographically connected to Creusa's subsequent experiences of a lonely birth and the abandonment of her child, emphasising the connection between Apollo's attack and the further sufferings it engenders.[151]

Creusa refers bitterly to Apollo 'gratifying Aphrodite' by assaulting her (Κύπριδι χάριν πράσσων, 896). This highlights the contrast between divine and mortal action and even ethics; the gods can take pleasure, and even bestow favour upon one another, at the expense of mortal suffering. The contrast between the laws governing divine and human conduct is brought out most forcefully by the devout and pious Ion himself, unsettled by Creusa's earlier account of the rape of her 'friend' (434-51):

… νουθετητέος δέ μοι

Φοῖβος, τί πάσχει· παρθένους βίαι γαμῶν

προδίδωσι; παῖδας ἐκτεκνούμενος λάθραι

θνήισκοντας ἀμελεῖ; μὴ σύ γ'· ἀλλ', ἐπεὶ κρατεῖς,

ἀρετὰς δίωκε. καὶ γὰρ ὅστις ἂν βροτῶν (440)

κακὸς πεφύκηι, ζημιοῦσιν οἱ θεοί.

πῶς οὖν δίκαιον τοὺς νόμους ὑμᾶς βροτοῖς

γράψαντας αὐτοὺς ἀνομίαν ὀφλισκάνειν;

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[149] See Lee (1997), p.262.

[150] 896-901, cf.949. Hermes, conversely, claims that Creusa bore Ion in her home (16). This could be a simple slip on Euripides' part, but Rabinowitz (1993), pp.203-4 makes the interesting suggestion that the variance in this and other details of the rape narrative underlines the difficulty of knowledge – a key theme of the play – and reflects the various speakers' differing rhetorical agendas.

[151] Rabinowitz (1993), pp.201-2 sees the close linking of the rape with the birth and exposure as an effort to somewhat exonerate Apollo by highlighting Creusa's guilt as a would-be infanticide. While Creusa concedes that she wronged her infant child (963), the close association of the exposure with the initial rape seems to me to underline the role of the original divine transgression in the consequent suffering and actions of Creusa, rather than to minimise it.

εἰ δ’ (οὐ γὰρ ἔσται, τῶι λόγωι δὲ χρήσομαι)

δίκας βιαίων δώσετ’ ἀνθρώποις γάμων (445)

σὺ καὶ Ποσειδῶν Ζεύς θ’ ὃς οὐρανοῦ κρατεῖ,

ναοὺς τίνοντες ἀδικίας κενώσετε.

τὰς ἡδονὰς γὰρ τῆς προμηθίας πέρα

σπεύδοντες ἀδικεῖτ’. οὐκέτ’ ἀνθρώπους κακοὺς

λέγειν δίκαιον, εἰ τὰ τῶν θεῶν καλὰ (450)

μιμούμεθ’, ἀλλὰ τοὺς διδάσκοντας τάδε.

Ion laments that the great power of the gods (κρατεῖς, 339; Ζεύς θ’ ὃς οὐρανοῦ κρατεῖ, 446) is not matched by morality; indeed, the famed speed of divine action[152] leads to rashness and crime: τὰς ἡδονὰς γὰρ τῆς προμηθίας πέρα / σπεύδοντες ἀδικεῖτ’ (448-9).[153] Ion’s charges against Apollo are only partially answered; the god is not, in fact, heedless of the fate of his child, having saved Ion from death, but the play as a whole confirms that he *is* a rapist.[154] Ion examines the wider implications of Apollo’s actions. In an elaborate counterfactual, embracing not only Apollo, but the other notorious divine rapists, Poseidon and Zeus, Ion imagines the devastating effect upon divine finances of paying out the fines for their many transgressions.[155] The δίκη βιαίων (445) was a form of legal case which could be brought against rapists in classical Athens, and sought financial compensation for the victim;[156] its anachronistic invocation here serves to underline the gulf between the actions of these predatory divine fathers and the laws and norms of

[152] For example, *Il.* 1.193ff., where the brief moment of Achilles’ deliberation is enough for Hera to dispatch Athena to him and for the latter to reach and restrain him

[153] σπεύδοντες conveys a sense of haste as well as eagerness; *LSJ* s.v. II. The invocation of ‘forethought’ (προμηθίας, 448) further emphasises the excessive speed of divine action.

[154] Lloyd (1986), pp.36-7.

[155] 445-7.

[156] Scafuro (1990), pp.135-6.

human behaviour, norms which these gods would themselves claim to enforce,[157] but from which they are of course free. The discussion of Ion's violent conception in the play not only emphasises the suffering it inflicts upon the mortal Creusa, but the vast gulf in conduct and power not simply between Apollo and Ion, but all divine fathers and their mortal children.

Given the circumstances of Ion's conception and birth, his parentage is a mystery for the mortal characters of the play until its climax.[158] Apollo, as a god, is certain of his paternity,[159] but the first appearance of Ion himself within the play reveals his ignorance of his origin; indeed, he declares himself completely devoid of parentage: ἀμήτωρ ἀπάτωρ τε γεγὼς (109). This ignorance is underlined by forceful tragic irony. Ion, for instance, consistently describes himself as a 'servant' (λάτρις) to Apollo;[160] this makes him resemble Hermes, the attendant of the gods (δαιμόνων λάτριν, 4),[161] who proudly introduces himself by reference to his divine parentage.[162] Even more strikingly, Ion identifies Apollo as his father – after a fashion (136-40):

Φοῖβός μοι γενέτωρ πατήρ·
τὸν βόσκοντα γὰρ εὐλογῶ,
τὸν δ' ὠφέλιμον ἐμοὶ πατέρος ὄνομα λέγω (139)
Φοῖβον τὸν κατὰ ναόν.

[157] cf. 440-3.
[158] In the course of the play, Apollo, Creusa, Xuthus and the Pythia are all referred to as parents of Ion in some form; Swift (2008), pp.52.
[159] 35.
[160] 123, 130, 152.
[161] Rabinowitz (1993), pp.216-7.
[162] 1-4.

Ion identifies Apollo as a surrogate father; he acts as a father, but is not so biologically.[163] This is partly correct; Apollo is 'fostering' his own biological child. The confused situation on the mortal plain is exacerbated a little later in the play when Ion is falsely led to believe that he has encountered his 'real' father, Xuthus.[164] Beyond the various states of ignorance and illusion regarding his paternity, Ion is also unaware of the identity of his mother for most of the play, considering the Priestess to fulfil this role for him: χαῖρ', ὦ φίλη μοι μῆτερ, οὐ τεκοῦσά περ (1324). Ion's ignorance is once again underlined by dramatic irony when quizzing Xuthus about his origins: Ιων. γῆς ἄρ' ἐκπέφυκα μητρός; Ξο. οὐ πέδον τίκτει τέκνα. (542). Xuthus shows considerable forgetfulness here; his wife Creusa, Ion's mother, *is* in fact descended from one born of the earth,[165] and thus Ion's deliberately outlandish proposition is in fact true.[166] Creusa herself is also unaware of Ion's identity as her son; although biological realities mean that maternity is usually much more securely established than paternity,[167] Creusa cannot connect Ion to her experience of birth because of the abandonment forced upon her by difficult circumstances. Creusa is thus cast into the anomalous position of being stepmother to her own biological son, and displays the hostility towards him expected from one in her position.[168] The reconciliation and reunion of mother and son are ultimately achieved; Creusa recognises Ion as her son by means of various tokens.[169] This recognition, however, brings further uncertainty over Ion's identity in his wake, as he raises the prospect of Creusa claiming divine paternity for him as a cover for an illicit liaison with a mortal.[170] Only the

[163] Rabinowitz (1993), pp.193-4.
[164] 517 ff.
[165] 267-70.
[166] Lee (1997), pp.220.
[167] Rabinowitz (1993), pp.211-2.
[168] 610-1, 1290ff., 1329-30; Rabinowitz (1993), pp.204-5. On the generalised hostility to stepmothers in the ancient world, see Watson (1995) pp.2-19; for Creusa's participation in the Greek mythical tradition of 'wicked stepmothers', ibid. pp.20-49.
[169] 1395ff.
[170] 1523-7; cf. 340-1.

intervention of Athena and her divine reassurances of Ion's parentage establish the matter beyond doubt for him.[171] Divine fatherhood is very often the object of scepticism and doubt in tragedy, but the prominence and persistence of ignorance or deception regarding Ion's birth in this play underlines the epistemological difficulties of divine paternity for mortals; it takes the intervention of another god with privileged knowledge to establish the true state of affairs.[172]

For the audience of the play, in contrast to the characters, Apollo's paternity is confirmed in the prologue, as is his intention to act in of his son's interests.[173] However, despite the ultimately benign intentions of Apollo's intervention,[174] his plans and actions are characterised by their heedlessness of human feeling and their disregard for mortal custom and law. Apollo's scheme entails a (false) oracle informing Xuthus that Ion is his son, so that the latter may come to Athens and be recognised by his mother (μητρὸς ὡς ἐλθὼν δόμους / γνωσθῆι Κρεούσηι, 71-2), thus obtaining his due inheritance. Ion's paternity is to remain secret, but he will go on to achieve fame as the founder of Ionia.[175] At first, this plan works smoothly; Xuthus is absolutely delighted to discover Ion as his son,[176] and is eager to convey him back to Athens to be his heir: ἀλλ' ἐκλιπὼν θεοῦ δάπεδ' ἀλητείαν τε σὴν / ἐς τὰς Ἀθήνας στεῖχε κοινόφρων πατρί (576-7). This proposition is not well-received; Ion proves not to be 'of one mind with his father' – be that his supposed father Xuthus, or indeed his real father Apollo – and offers various sound reasons for his reluctance to leave Delphi for Athens.[177] He fears being the bastard son of

[171] 1560.
[172] For a discussion of the epistemic situation of mortal fathers with reference to Xuthus, see below.
[173] 67-75.
[174] At least for his son; Xuthus' fate is discussed below.
[175] 72-5.
[176] 517ff.
[177] 588-647; Lloyd (1986), p.38.

a foreigner amongst the proudly autochthonous Athenians[178] and is anxious at the prospect of a political career.[179] Significantly, in contrast to Xuthus and Apollo, Ion considers the effect his return to Athens would have on the 'childless' Creusa; he shows compassion for her sad situation,[180] but fears her (understandable) hostility.[181] He is proven prescient; Creusa laments her new plight,[182] and connects her present displacement in the household to her earlier rape by Apollo and the subsequent loss of her child.[183] In his present scheme, as in his prior assault, Apollo has paid scant heed to Creusa's response to her treatment, and has failed to plan accordingly. He intended Ion to return to Athens to be recognised;[184] Creusa is ultimately persuaded that it is not even safe to allow Ion to come to Athens to be murdered, and instead resolves to poison him in Delphi.[185] Apollo's overall design does not founder, however; Creusa's attempt to murder Ion is thwarted,[186] and his desire for punishment ultimately yields to mutual recognition and reconciliation. Athena confirms Ion's parentage, earlier than Apollo had initially intended,[187] and the play arrives at a seemingly happy ending.[188]

The precise tone of this ending is a matter of some controversy,[189] and it merits closer examination. Athena's speech resolves many of the problems in Apollo's initial plan for Ion and Creousa; Ion's anxiety about being a foreigner in Athens is resolved by

[178] 592.
[179] 595-606; Ogden (1996), pp.155-6.
[180] Esp. 618-20; Zacharia (2003), p,74.
[181] 607-15; Rabinowitz (1993), pp.204-5.
[182] e.g. 790-2.
[183] 865-9.
[184] 71-2.
[185] 1020-8.
[186] 1185-1210. The Messenger attributes Ion's salvation to Apollo (1118), but the young man's piety also plays a part; he is saved by pouring away the poisoned wine through religious scruple (1190); Lloyd (1986), pp.42-3.
[187] 1566-8.
[188] Lloyd (1986), p.33-4.
[189] For an example of the diametrically opposed interpretations the ending can engender, contrast Rabinowitz (1993), pp.212-7, where the play is seen as ultimately prioritising fatherhood and social ties over motherhood, with Stehle (2009), pp.258-60, where the conclusion is presented as marginalising fatherhood in favour of Creusa's role as mother and guardian of Athenian autochthony.

confirmation of his autochthonous, Erechtheid descent (ἐκ γὰρ τῶν Ἐρεχθέως γεγὼς / δίκαιος ἄρχειν τῆς ἐμῆς ὅδε χθονός, 1573-4), while Creusa's resented apparent childlessness is replaced with considerable fecundity; beyond the child she has now regained, Athena promises further children with her husband Xuthus.[190] Athena herself remarks on Apollo's fine handling of the situation, past and present: καλῶς δ' Ἀπόλλων πάντ' ἔπραξε (1595). From a mortal perspective there are, perhaps, a few wrinkles.[191] Athena reveals to Creusa that Apollo arranged for Ion to be rescued by Hermes,[192] but also that he intervened in the delivery itself: πρῶτα μὲν / ἄνοσον λοχεύει σ', ὥστε μὴ γνῶναι φίλους (1595-6). This contrasts with Creusa's account of events to the Old Man (944-9); she recalls giving birth alone, specifically denying any assistance in the birth: Πρ. ποῦ; τίς λοχεύει σ'; ἢ μόνη μοχθεῖς τάδε; / Κρ. μόνη κατ' ἄντρον οὗπερ ἐζεύχθην γάμοις (948-9). Apollo may have made the birth itself 'free from sickness' (ἄνοσον), but the Old Man nonetheless recalls Creusa's secretive suffering at the time (νόσον κρυφαίαν ἡνίκ' ἔστενες λάθραι, 944). As such, it is perhaps understandable that Creusa offers more qualified approval of Apollo's actions, contrasting his present praiseworthiness with past neglect; αἰνῶ Φοῖβον οὐκ αἰνοῦσα πρίν, / οὕνεχ' οὗ ποτ' ἠμέλησε παιδὸς ἀποδίδωσί μοι. (1609-10).[193]

Although Athena's speech may reveal the truth of the situation and thus seek to reassure Ion and Creusa, it establishes that Xuthus will continue to operate under the illusion that Ion is his biological son: νῦν οὖν σιώπα παῖς ὅδ' ὡς πέφυκε σός, / ἵν' ἡ δόκησις Ξοῦθον ἡδέως ἔχηι /σύ τ' αὖ τὰ σαυτῆς ἀγάθ' ἔχουσ' ἴηις, γύναι (1601-3). There is little doubt that the illusion is 'sweet' for Xuthus; he greets the discovery of his son

[190] 1589-94.
[191] Athena remarks that Apollo remains absent to avoid 'rebuke' (μέμψις, 1558); given the clear suffering his conduct has caused, one feels he is wise to do so.
[192] 1599-600.
[193] Lee (1997), p.319 observes within *Ion* "the recurrent theme that the suffering of the past is not obliterated by its happy consequences."

with delight and credence.[194] Why shouldn't he? Although the insecurity of paternity was a perennial source of anxiety in classical Greek culture, as we have seen,[195] Xuthus has received an oracle confirming his paternity of Ion (530-7):

Ιων	καὶ τί μοι λέξεις;	Ξο. πατὴρ σός εἰμι καὶ σὺ παῖς ἐμός.	(530)
Ιων	τίς λέγει τάδ';	Ξο. ὅς σ' ἔθρεψεν ὄντα Λοξίας ἐμόν.	
Ιων	μαρτυρεῖς σαυτῶι.	Ξο. τὰ τοῦ θεοῦ γ' ἐκμαθὼν χρηστήρια.	
Ιων	ἐσφάλης αἴνιγμ' ἀκούσας.	Ξο. οὐκ ἄρ' ὄρθ' ἀκούομεν.	
Ιων	ὁ δὲ λόγος τίς ἐστι Φοίβου;	Ξο. τὸν συναντήσαντά μοι	
Ιων	τίνα συνάντησιν;	Ξο. δόμων τῶνδ' ἐξιόντι τοῦ θεοῦ	(535)
Ιων	συμφορᾶς τίνος κυρῆσαι;	Ξο. παῖδ' ἐμὸν πεφυκέναι.	
Ιων	σὸν γεγῶτ' ἢ δῶρον ἄλλων;	Ξο. δῶρον, ὄντα δ' ἐξ ἐμοῦ.	

This is an uncharacteristically straightforward oracle, with no command or condition to fulfil on Xuthus' part;[196] the man is given perfectly reasonable grounds for his confidence that Ion is his son, despite the surprise of this discovery. Nonetheless, despite being led to believe that his paternity is rendered more than usually secure by the reassurances of divine knowledge, Xuthus has in fact fallen prey to that situation so feared – and thus so fiercely legislated against[197] – in classical Athens; he is unwittingly raising another's child as his own son. Xuthus is not granted the honourable position of being an informed co-father with Apollo, as Amphitryon is with Zeus in *Heracles*, but rather is divinely ordained to remain a dupe. Even though he and Creusa will have legitimate children

[194] 517ff.
[195] See above.
[196] Stehle (2009), p.256.
[197] See above for discussion of the strict penalties inflicted on seducers and rapists to deter threats to legitimacy.

together,[198] Ion will still inherit Xuthus' position as king of Athens.[199] Xuthus is a foreigner,[200] and thus perhaps his deception would be more palatable to an Athenian audience,[201] but the audience is still confronted with the cherished Athenian ideology of autochthony being maintained only through a deception which undermines the similarly crucial notion of legitimacy.[202] We thus see, in the conclusion of *Ion*, a solution devised and enforced by a divine father which entails a considerable transgression in terms of mortal social and legal norms. Apollo is a god, and not only acts differently from a mortal father, but ends up undermining the mortal institution of fatherhood itself through his own paternal schemes.

Ion pursues many of the aspects and implications of divine fatherhood to their fullest extent. Apollo's initial fathering of Ion is achieved only through sexual violence against Creusa, and the play provides ample scope for her to give voice to her suffering. The offspring of this union is himself left in ignorance for many years, and achieves knowledge of his true divine paternity only after a particularly convoluted process of deception, doubt, and ultimate discovery. Although absent, Apollo does consistently intervene in affairs on earth, but his interventions are often marked either by an insensitivity to likely human emotional responses, or indeed a total disregard for mortal norms and practices. Apollo may have good intentions for his son, but the consequences

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[198] 1589-94.
[199] 1572-3, cf. 659-60. Technically, in accordance with classical Athenian law Ion could inherit from his mother Creusa, if he were legitimate; Lee (1997), p.167. He is, however, the illegitimate child of Creusa and Apollo, and his public legitimation in Athens proceeds from the false premise that he is Xuthus' son; Ebbott (2003), pp.80-1. That said, the mythical world of tragedy need not always be held to to the letter of Athenian law.
[200] 63-4, 290.
[201] Lloyd (1986), p.38 makes this suggestion.
[202] Swift (2008) p.61 suggests that Xuthus is such a ridiculous figure as a foreigner and a cuckold that the Athenian audience would feel no discomfort at his fate. Given the extreme anxiety about maintaining legitimacy in Athenian culture, however, I am more inclined to side with Kearns (2013) p.66-7 and see room for at least some sympathy for this deceived husband.

of his divine fatherhood for the mortal characters of the play makes it difficult to agree with Athena that 'Apollo did all things well.'

5.4. Conclusion

The notion of gods as fathers, not simply in a symbolic but also in a concrete sense, could be expected to serve as a point of particular closeness and comparison between divine and mortal. There is closeness in a very physical sense, as gods engage in sexual unions of varying kinds with mortal women, and also the prospect of an uncharacteristic point of closeness in behaviour; mortals do not hurl lightning bolts and slip down effortlessly from Olympus on winged sandals, but they *do* also father children. However, tragedy, even more so than other Greek literature, uses the phenomenon of divine fatherhood to demonstrate the vast distance between the mortal and divine realms. Although often – though not always – influential figures, divine fathers are a conspicuous absence from the tragic stage, so much so that their paternity is frequently called into doubt by other mortals and even their own children. Their actions on behalf of those children, whether the outcomes are happy or not, underline their fundamental difference from their mortal offspring, and divine fatherhood, from conception onwards, is undertaken in total, striking defiance of numerous mortal laws and customs. The tragic depiction of divine fatherhood serves to emphasise through close juxtaposition the vast gulf between mortal and divine experience.

Chapter 6: Contested fatherhood in Greek tragedy

6.1. Conflicting accounts of fathers and fatherhood

As we have seen thus far in this thesis, the tragic father is a complex figure in a complex position. Not only are the demands and expectations placed upon him as a father numerous and often challenging, but fatherhood is simply one of his areas of activity and responsibility. As we have seen, the tragic father must also manage other family relationships and public or political concerns, while the expectations of mortal fatherhood clash with the actions and ethos of a hero or a god.

It is unsurprising, therefore, that fathers and fatherhood are depicted with such variety and complexity not only by the tragic poets themselves, but also by their characters. The array of activities and duties undertaken by any particular tragic father allow individual figures to be characterised in contrasting and even directly conflicting ways. Other characters, usually driven by their own motivations, draw upon different aspects of these complex *personae* to support their arguments. Beyond this conflict over individual father-figures, fatherhood as a whole can be subject to wildly differing interpretations, which are contested with force and eloquence upon the tragic stage. The conflicted position of the tragic father, born of the variety of additional and competing roles and responsibilities to which this figure is subject, leads to frequent rhetorical conflict over both specific fathers and the proper conduct of fatherhood more generally.

6.1.1. Contesting the father – Telamon in Sophocles' *Ajax*

Given the multifaceted nature of fathers within tragedy, it is unsurprising that a single father may be presented in highly varied fashion by numerous characters within a single play. This variety is most conspicuous when the father in question is absent from the stage, and thus only described through the speech of others. The divergence of these representations is rarely unmotivated. Agamemnon, for example, is the subject of condemnatory and exculpatory representations by Clytemnestra and Electra respectively in both Sophocles' and Euripides' *Electra*,[1] while both Odysseus and Philoctetes manipulate the memory of Achilles in an effort to win over the late hero's son Neoptolemus in Sophocles' *Philoctetes*.[2] Perhaps one of the most intensely and interestingly contested fathers in tragedy is Telamon, the protagonist's father in Sophocles' *Ajax*. Although he never sets foot onstage, Telamon is the subject of highly varied presentations by an array of the drama's characters: Ajax, Teucer, Tecmessa, even the Messenger and the Chorus all deploy different accounts of this particular father to support their rhetorical purposes. Although very different in their emphases, these accounts all draw to at least some extent on established norms of the paternal role in classical Athens; the father's position is one of such extent and complexity in Greek thought that a single father may bear this wide array of interpretation and presentation.

Although an old man by the time of the play, Telamon has an extensive history of martial and heroic achievement. For Ajax, his father's achievements in the expedition against Troy a generation earlier[3] add bitter emphasis to his own misfortune (434-40):

[1] S. *El.* 530-48, 563-76; E. *El.* 1018-29, 1041-5, 1069-75; discussed further in section on *Orestes*.
[2] See esp. Roisman (1997).
[3] This was traditionally led by Heracles, although Sophocles does not mention that until 1303, allowing for a purer antithesis here between Ajax and Telamon; Finglass (2011), pp.266-7.

ὅτου πατὴρ μὲν τῆσδ’ ἀπ’ Ἰδαίας χθονὸς

τὰ πρῶτα καλλιστεῖ’ ἀριστεύσας στρατοῦ (435)

πρὸς οἶκον ἦλθε πᾶσαν εὔκλειαν φέρων·

ἐγὼ δ’ ὁ κείνου παῖς, τὸν αὐτὸν ἐς τόπον

Τροίας ἐπελθὼν οὐκ ἐλάσσονι σθένει,

οὐδ’ ἔργα μείω χειρὸς ἀρκέσας ἐμῆς,

ἄτιμος Ἀργείοισιν ὧδ’ ἀπόλλυμαι. (440)

In a passage marked by "carefully balanced antithesis",[4] Ajax emphasises the familial bond between the two men - πατὴρ (434); ὁ κείνου παῖς (437) – and the identity of location: **τῆσδ’** ἀπ’ Ἰδαίας χθονὸς (434); τὸν **αὐτὸν** ἐς **τόπον** (437).[5] Ajax considers himself his father's equal in might - **οὐκ ἐλάσσονι** σθένει (438) – and yet this has not led to greater achievement: **οὐδ’** ἔργα **μείω** (439); the balance of negated comparatives reinforces the contrast. While there is extensive emphasis upon the renown his father achieved - τὰ πρῶτα καλλιστεῖ’ ἀριστεύσας (435); πᾶσαν εὔκλειαν (436), Ajax himself is dishonoured and undone (440). In seeing his father as a figure to match and ideally surpass in terms of accomplishment, Ajax is quite conventional;[6] this pervasive sentiment

[4] Heath (1987), p.180.
[5] It is notable that Ajax talks of Telamon *leaving* Troy to return home; Ajax discounts this very possibility for himself at 460.
[6] It is the extreme to which the hero takes this desire for emulation which proves problematic; De Poli (2013), pp.51-2.

is found in Homer,[7] in Pindar,[8] in Athenian rhetoric,[9] philosophy,[10] and elsewhere in tragedy.[11] Nonetheless, Ajax presents Telamon's probable response to the disappointment of such expectations as remarkably harsh. In contrast to his father's glorious homecoming, Ajax imagines his own return home (πρὸς οἴκους, 460; cf. 436) with dismay; his lack of honour (τῶν ἀριστείων ἄτερ, 464, cf. 435), contrasting with the repeatedly emphasised renown of Telamon,[12] makes the prospect of facing even his own father unthinkable.[13] Although Ajax is in part motivated by continued hostility to the Atreidae,[14] his concerns are primarily with his father;[15] his suicide is introduced as a means of demonstrating his worth to Telamon (470-2):

… πεῖρά τις ζητητέα (470)
τοιάδ' ἀφ' ἧς γέροντι δηλώσω πατρὶ
μή τοι φύσιν γ' ἄσπλαγχνος ἐκ κείνου γεγώς.

The emphasis on paternity in Ajax's language is once again pronounced,[16] and the lengths to which this consideration of his father's opinion will drive Ajax are reinforced if we consider the potential implications of ἄσπλαγχνος. The metaphorical meaning of 'spirit'

[7] For example, Glaucus recalls his father Hippolochus' entreaties that he be the bravest and thus not shame his forefathers (*Il.* 6. 206-11), while Hector's famous prayer for Astyanax (*Il.* 6.476-81; cf. S. *Aj.* 548-51) includes the hope that his son will far outdo him. Agamemnon does in fact attack Diomedes for having failed to match the prowess of his father Tydeus, a charge strenuously denied by Diomedes' charioteer Sthenelus (*Il.* 4.370-411).
[8] e.g. *Pyth.* 11.13-4; *Nem.* 6.17-24, where the sons' victories so far surpass the achievements of the father that they save him from obscurity.
[9] e.g. Isoc. 1.12
[10] e.g. Pl. *Lach.* 179b-c, where Socrates' interlocutors are ashamed by their relative lack of achievement in comparison to their fathers, whom they blame for neglecting their education and upbringing.
[11] e.g. A. *Sept.* 478-9.
[12] 465.
[13] 462-3.
[14] 469.
[15] Indeed, Telamon seems to be the *only* figure whose verdict matters to Ajax; Lawrence (2006), pp.21-2.
[16] Alaux (2000), pp.47-8.

or ‘courage’ is undeniably uppermost,[17] but σπλάγχνα also has an anatomical frame of reference as ‘the innards’; given that Ajax throws himself upon a sword in this play, we may see in ἄσπλαγχνος a rather graphic evocation of the lengths to which Ajax will go to prove to his father that he ‘has guts’.[18]

Ajax’s representation of Telamon as a harsh judge of his sons’ conduct receives corroboration later in the play from his brother Teucer. While Ajax believes the only way to escape his father’s censure is to perish at Troy, Teucer imagines the hostility he will face from Telamon for having failed to keep Ajax alive and restore him to the family home.[19] Much like Ajax, Teucer emphasises Telamon’s role as father (Τελαμών, σὸς πατὴρ ἐμός θ’ ἅμα, 1008), and sardonically imagines the reception he will receive.[20] He justifies his pessimism with reference to Telamon’s sour disposition,[21] characterising his father as an irascible old man of the sort more familiar from comedy.[22] Much like his brother, Teucer imagines savage condemnation from his father, but with a much more familial focus; rather than expecting to be criticised for his lack of glory or failure to match Telamon’s heroic achievements, Teucer anticipates harsh words on his shortcomings with regard to family obligations (1012-6):

> οὗτος τί κρύψει; ποῖον οὐκ ἐρεῖ κακὸν
>
> τὸν ἐκ δορὸς γεγῶτα πολεμίου νόθον,

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[17] Finglass (2011) *ad loc*.

[18] Alaux (2000) p.48 raises the intriguing possibility of ἄσπλαγχνος alluding to procreation, citing *Ant*. 1066, where Tireisias refers obliquely to Haemon as the product of Creon’s ‘innards’ (τῶν σῶν … ἐκ σπλάγχνων). However, Griffith (1999) *ad loc*. notes the striking novelty of using σπλάγχνα in reference to male reproduction in this way; the term much more commonly refers to the female reproductive organs. Nonetheless, if we allow for Alaux’s reading, the issue of paternity is even more fully emphasised in this passage.

[19] 1008-20.

[20] 1008-10.

[21] 1010-1, 1017-8.

[22] Alaux (2000), pp.54-5; cf. e.g. Ar. *Eq*. 40-3, Men. *Dysc*. (Handley (1965) *ad* 6 provides further examples from lost and fragmentary comedy).

τὸν δειλίᾳ προδόντα καὶ κακανδρίᾳ

σέ, φίλτατ’ Αἴας, ἢ δόλοισιν, ὡς τὰ σὰ (1015)

κράτη θανόντος καὶ δόμους νέμοιμι σούς.

Teucer imagines angry emphasis upon his illegitimacy (1013), and the charge of cowardice and betrayal (1014); the use of the third person (τὸν … γεγῶτα; τὸν ... προδόντα) adds a sense of disdainful distance to Telamon’s imagined accusations, brought out all the more forcefully by the sudden shift to the second person (σέ, φίλτατ’ Αἴας, 1015).[23] Teucer imagines with indignation charges that he connived in his brother’s death to usurp Ajax’s rightful inheritance (1015-6). Suspicion that illegitimate children may seek to supplant the lawful heirs to a household are not unheard of,[24] but Teucer’s emphatic acknowledgement of Ajax’s claim to the inheritance - τὰ **σὰ** / κράτη; δόμους … **σούς** – coupled with his clear devotion to his brother throughout the play,[25] put the lie to these imagined charges. Teucer, like Ajax before him, characterises Telamon as a father whose expectations he cannot match, and whose extreme hostility he therefore expects.

Unlike Ajax, however, Teucer is able to deploy his father’s past heroic achievements and enduring fame to more positive ends. while Ajax dwells upon Telamon’s prowess – and the implications of his failure to emulate that prowess – in

[23] Finglass (2011) *ad loc*.

[24] So-called ‘amphimetric disputes’, in which two women and lines of children attempted to be recognised as legitimate by the single male husband/father, are common in tragedy. For example, in *Hippolytus*, the Nurse uses the threat Hippolytus poses to Phaedra’s legitimate children’s position in the household as part of her efforts to cajole her to speak (304-9); Hippolytus himself expects such an accusation at 1010: Ogden (1996), p.198. Such conflicts also had their place in classical Athens itself, particularly as a result of the ‘bigamy concession’ of c.413: Ogden (1996), pp.72-5. The dispute of Boeotus and Matitheus, for example, which spurred the composition of Dem. 39 and 40, seems to have drawn force from Matitheus’ belief that Boeotus, his half-brother, was not truly recognised as legitimate by their father Mantias; Ogden (1996), pp.192-4.

[25] Teucer emphasises his bond with Ajax from his first appearance (ὦ φίλτατ’ Αἴας, ὦ ξύναιμον ὄμμ’ ἐμοί, 977; ὦ φίλτατ’ Αἴας, 996), rejects Menelaus’ attempt to prevent his brother’s burial (e.g. 1108-10), reminds Agamemnon of Ajax’s prowess on behalf of the Achaeans (1272-81), and ultimately sees his brother buried with all due honour (1396ff.). Patterson (1990), p.65 notes that Teucer’s devotion would have been all the more striking in a classical Athenian context as bastardy absolved one of all familial obligations and privileges.

reference only to himself, and thus treats this as a spur to choose death over dishonour, Teucer deploys that same history of achievement to bolster, rather than castigate, his own status and reputation. Agamemnon, in part of a speech attacking Teucer's earlier defence of Ajax against Menelaus, makes repeated, insulting accusations that Teucer is a slave and a barbarian,[26] even claiming to be unable to understand the man's 'barbarous' language.[27] Teucer offers a wholehearted rebuttal (1299-303):

> ὃς ἐκ πατρὸς μέν εἰμι Τελαμῶνος γεγώς,
> ὅστις στρατοῦ τὰ πρῶτ' ἀριστεύσας ἐμὴν (1300)
> ἴσχει ξύνευνον μητέρ', ἣ φύσει μὲν ἦν
> βασίλεια, Λαομέδοντος· ἔκκριτον δέ νιν
> δώρημ' ἐκείνῳ 'δωκεν Ἀλκμήνης γόνος.

Teucer proudly declares his paternity, and reminds Agamemnon of his father's famed prowess: τὰ πρῶτ' ἀριστεύσας (1300). Indeed, it was this act of prowess which lead to his own birth; Telamon was rewarded, by no less than Heracles himself, with Teucer's foreign but nonetheless royal mother: φύσει … βασίλεια, (1301-2), an effective retort to Agamemnon's claim that Teucer is ignorant of his own servile 'birth' (οὐ μαθὼν ὃς εἶ **φύσιν**, 1259). A father's achievements were a natural source of pride for his offspring,[28] while paternal misdeeds reflected poorly on his children as well;[29] this gives Teucer's retort about the terrible crimes of Agamemnon's father Atreus its force.[30] It is striking, however, that even as Teucer celebrates Telamon and thus reinforces his own status, he

[26] 1228; 1235; esp. 1259-63.
[27] 1262-3.
[28] e.g. Pind. *Pyth.*1.100: χάρμα δ' οὐκ ἀλλότριον νικαφορία πατέρος; *Pyth.* 11. 57-8; And.1.147.
[29] e.g. Aeschin.2.93; Lys. 10.28.
[30] 1293-4.

echoes earlier depictions of his father's stern and demanding attitude to his sons. Teucer refers to Telamon's prize for honour (τὰ πρῶτ' ἀριστεύσας, 1300), but it is the *lack* of such a prize[31] which leads Ajax to expect such a hostile reception from his father and thus choose death instead. Teucer offers an elevated and edifying image of his maternal line to suit his rhetorical purposes, but he has of course previously imagined his own father insulting such origins in his anger (τὸν ἐκ δορὸς γεγῶτα πολεμίου νόθον, 1013).[32] These echoes of earlier representations of Telamon in the play demonstrate the malleability of this absent father's depiction. Teucer is able to rework aspects of Telamon which prompted such dread in his sons to defend them against the calumny of a rival from beyond the family.

For all the harshness of old Telamon as imagined and described by his sons, other figures within the play offer a less menacing account of the aged father. The Messenger who announces Teucer's arrival to the Chorus recounts an anecdote about Ajax's departure for Troy to demonstrate the hero's lack of good sense.[33] In true Homeric fashion, Telamon dispatched his son to war with wise words on appropriate conduct: ὁ μὲν γὰρ αὐτὸν ἐννέπει, "τέκνον, δορὶ / βούλου κρατεῖν μέν, σὺν θεῷ δ' ἀεὶ κρατεῖν." (764-5).[34] Ajax rejects this advice, declaring his determination to obtain glory without divine aid.[35] The Messenger emphasises Ajax's arrogance and folly - ἄνους (763); ὑψικόμπως κἀφρόνως ἠμείψατο (766); τοσόνδ' ἐκόμπει μῦθον (770) – in contrast to the depiction of Telamon as a wise paternal advisor: καλῶς λέγοντος … πατρός (763). While Ajax himself is tormented and ultimately driven to suicide by his failure to match his father's deeds, the Messenger decries the hero's failure to adhere to his father's words.

[31] 435, 464.
[32] On the importance of context for tragic speech, see Dale (1954) pp.xxv-ix on 'the rhetoric of the situation', and then Pelling (2005), p.100.
[33] 762-70.
[34] Cf. *Il.* 9. 252-9; 11. 782-90; Finglass (2011) *ad* 762-70.
[35] 767-9.

The Messenger deploys this vision of Telamon as the wise, educative father to reinforce his condemnation of Ajax's destructive arrogance.

Depictions of Telamon as a stern and judgemental father, a wise advisor, or an illustrious forebear all focus upon his authority and agency, particularly towards his sons; no-one disputes his right to warn and to judge his offspring. Tecmessa and the Chorus, however, complement this image of paternal authority with a focus upon Telamon's human frailty and his corresponding dependence upon his son. In response to Ajax's decision – largely motivated by fear of disgrace before his father – to commit suicide, Tecmessa pleads with the hero to consider the implications of his death for his family.[36] Having confronted Ajax with the prospect of both her and their son Eurysaces enduring slavery and slander after his death,[37] she reminds him of the consequences of his suicide for his parents (506-9):[38]

> ἀλλ' αἴδεσαι μὲν πατέρα τὸν σὸν ἐν λυγρῷ
> γήρᾳ προλείπων, αἴδεσαι δὲ μητέρα
> πολλῶν ἐτῶν κληροῦχον, ἥ σε πολλάκις
> θεοῖς ἀρᾶται ζῶντα πρὸς δόμους μολεῖν·

There are two prongs to Tecmessa's invocation of Ajax's parents here. Tecmessa counters Ajax's obsession over his failure to emulate Telamon's glorious past by reminding him of his father's unhappy present and future.[39] Telamon is old, and will be lost without Ajax to provide him with suitable care and support amidst the hardships of his final years (λυγρῷ / γήρᾳ, 506-7). This invocation of the son's duty to care for an elderly parent

[36] 485-524.
[37] 496-505.
[38] De Poli (2013), pp,54-5.
[39] Sorum (1986), pp.367-8.

touches upon one of the central planks of filial piety in classical Athens, the provision of suitable θεραπεία and τροφεῖα,[40] and also has epic antecedents; Priam invokes Peleus' difficult old age to win Achilles' sympathy in *Iliad* 24.[41] Crucially, however, Tecmessa does not mention only Telamon; in contrast to Ajax's singular obsession with his father's judgement, Tecmessa places the old man in his context as one of two parents to whom Ajax owes support. The balance of her language - αἴδεσαι μὲν πατέρα … αἴδεσαι δὲ μητέρα (506-7) – reinforces the equal claim of these figures to Ajax's duty of care, and indeed Tecmessa actually affords more space to a pathetic depiction of the hero's anguished mother. This account of Ajax's death as a source of grief for both his parents is brought out even more emotively by the Chorus in the first stasimon.[42] They imagine the grief of Ajax's mother upon hearing of his madness,[43] a grief too great to be expressed even by the lament of the nightingale,[44] before turning to the father: ὦ τλᾶμον πάτερ, οἵαν σε μένει πυθέσθαι / παιδὸς δύσφορον ἄταν (641-3). One wonders if there is a faint verbal echo of the very name 'Telamon' in ὦ τλᾶμον; whereas Ajax links his name to lamentation at 430-3,[45] at the beginning of the speech in which he resolves to die to avoid disgrace before his father, the Chorus here perhaps use eponymy to suggest that Ajax's *death*, not his life, will grieve Telamon.[46] Tecmessa and the Chorus counter Ajax's emphasis upon Telamon's past and the expectations he derives therefrom with a reminder of this aged father's position as one of a pair, and the devastating effect Ajax's death will have upon the material and emotional life of both parents.

[40] See p.6 n.46.
[41] *Il*. 24. 486ff.; Zanker (1992), pp.22-3.
[42] 596-645; Finglass (2011), p.313.
[43] 622-34.
[44] 628-30.
[45] Alaux (2000), pp.46-7.
[46] Alaux (2000), pp.47-8 is incorrect to derive Telamon from τλάω; the etymology is τελαμών, a broad belt for equipment: Kanavou (2015), p.42. Nonetheless, this error does at least convey something of the similarity of sound, more pronounced here with the adjective form τλάμων.

This attempt to invoke Telamon as a reason for Ajax to live is not successful, owing to the latter's evasion and resistance. Ajax does not explicitly deny his filial duties to his aging parents, but transfers them;[47] he demands that Eurysaces fulfil the requirements of care in his stead (ὥς σφιν γένηται γηροβοσκὸς εἰσαεί, 570). Ajax is determined for his son Eurysaces to emulate him exactly; he is to be subjected to the same harsh regimen as Ajax and thus made identical in all respects except his fortune.[48] Instead of fulfilling his duty to his son, as Tecmessa asks,[49] Ajax seeks to deploy this identical Eurysaces as a placeholder to fulfil his own duties to his aging parents. Having thus disposed of the material aspect of his duty to his parents, Ajax, in his great speech before his death, reworks the affective claims made upon him (845-51):

σὺ δ', ὦ τὸν αἰπὺν οὐρανὸν διφρηλατῶν (845)
Ἥλιε, πατρῴαν τὴν ἐμὴν ὅταν χθόνα
ἴδῃς, ἐπισχὼν χρυσόνωτον ἡνίαν
ἄγγειλον ἄτας τὰς ἐμὰς μόρον τ' ἐμὸν
γέροντι πατρὶ τῇ τε δυστήνῳ τροφῷ.
ἦ που τάλαινα, τήνδ' ὅταν κλύῃ φάτιν, (850)
ἥσει μέγαν κωκυτὸν ἐν πάσῃ πόλει.

Ajax is keen for both his parents to learn of his death (849) but, tellingly, specifies that he expects his *mother* to lament;[50] there is no acknowledgement here of the claims made

[47] Lawrence (2006), pp.24-5, noting the obligations Ajax lays upon Teucer as well.
[48] 548-51; De Poli (2013), pp.52-3.
[49] 510-3.
[50] Ritual lament specifically was generally the province of women in classical Greece: Alexiou (2002), p.6. That said, there are examples of paternal mourning in tragedy, even if they take a different form; Creon bewails his loss as his son's body is brought onstage at S. *Ant.* 1261ff., while at E. *Supp.* 1080-1113 Iphis expresses grief at the loss of both his children and the dire consequences for himself. Ajax does not acknowledge the possibility of any such grief on the part of his father.

by Tecmessa and the Chorus that Telamon also will find his death distressing.[51] Telamon is prominent in Ajax's final words; as well as the explicit reference, Ajax refers to his homeland and house as, literally, 'of his father': **πατρῴαν** τὴν ἐμὴν … χθόνα (846); ὦ **πατρῷον** ἑστίας βάθρον (860). Despite the efforts of Tecmessa and the Chorus, Ajax clings to his characterisation of his home as the domain of a father who will not accept his return; his mother will mourn his death, but Telamon's attitude – as imagined by Ajax – still demands it.

In this play, the audience encounter Telamon repeatedly, but only through the representation of others. This single figure is presented in terms of his glorious heroic past and his unhappy future, condemning his sons and grieving for them, offering sage advice and requiring material support. All of these aspects of Telamon reflect aspects of fatherhood in both the heroic world of the play's setting and the classical Athenian context of its first production. Such is the complexity of the paternal role in Athenian thought that, though a single figure, Telamon can be characterised as demonstrating all of these widely varied attitudes and behaviours in pursuit of various rhetorical ends.

6.1.2. Contesting fatherhood – Euripides' *Alcestis*

The complexity of fatherhood in tragedy is reflected not only in such widely varied depictions of a single father figure, but by the array of opinions and expectations voiced concerning the paternal role itself.[52] One of the most explicit instances of such conflicting expectations over fatherhood is found in the *agōn* of Euripides' *Alcestis*.[53]

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[51] 506-7;641-3; see above.

[52] For example, much of the clash between Haemon and Creon in Sophocles' *Antigone* (635-780) centres on differing interpretations of the father's role and rights; see my discussion in ch. 3.2.1.

[53] Technically, the *agōn* in *Alcestis* concerns the proper behaviour of *both* parents, but the focus is on Pheres as father in particular; he is the figure who comes onstage to state the case for the pair, and some of the arguments put forth for and against their refusal to die apply only to Pheres as father.

The play begins with a prologue from Apollo. Foreshadowing the father-son strife to come, the god reveals that, in vengeance for Zeus' slaying of Asclepius, he killed some of the Cyclopes; his father decreed servitude to a mortal as punishment.[54] The mortal in question, Admetus, king of Pherae, showed suitable piety towards the god, and so Apollo contrived for him to escape death if another were to die in his place.[55] All refused to die for Admetus except his wife, Alcestis, and as the play opens the day ordained for her death has come.[56] Although, as Apollo reveals to Death himself, Heracles will ultimately come and restore Alcestis to life,[57] the household is plunged into grief. Alcestis herself bids an impassioned farewell to her home and family,[58] and obtains from a distraught Admetus the promise never to remarry and thus to spare their children the menace of a stepmother.[59] Alcestis dies, but amidst the mourning an oblivious Heracles arrives to seek hospitality; Admetus disguises the true nature of his loss and receives the hero.[60] Amidst the final funeral preparations, Pheres enters, and the clash of father and son takes place.

The decision of Pheres (and his wife) not to die in Admetus' stead has attracted repeated comment by this point in the drama.[61] Alcestis, when conveying her last wishes to Admetus, contrasts her own behaviour and the magnitude of her sacrifice with that of his parents;[62] despite their advanced age, and the possibility of a glorious death to save their son,[63] they betrayed (προύδοσαν, 290)[64] their only child, whom they have no hope

[54] 1-7.
[55] 10-4.
[56] 15-21.
[57] 65-71; see ch. 4.1.
[58] 158-95.
[59] 280-335; for hostility to stepmothers, see above, p.208 n.168.
[60] 476-567.
[61] Burnett (1971), p.40.
[62] 290-4; Dyson (1985), p.21.
[63] 291-2.
[64] Parker (2007) *ad* 291-2 translates as "failed", and sees no reproach in Alcestis' words; I feel that even "failed" is a term of reproach, and, while less forceful than Admetus' comments on the matter (see below), Alcestis' elaboration on the many reasons which *should* have lead the old pair to sacrifice themselves serves as at least implicit criticism of their failure to do so. Lloyd (1992), p.40 sees Alcestis' words here as more clearly condemnatory.

of replacing.[65] Admetus, speaking in the impassioned aftermath of Alcestis' speech, is more powerful and explicit in his hostility to his parents (**στυγῶν** μὲν ἥ μ' ἔτικτεν, **ἐχθαίρων** δ' ἐμὸν / πατέρα, 338-9), accusing them of demonstrating only rhetorical *philia* (**λόγωι** γὰρ ἦσαν **οὐκ ἔργωι** φίλοι, 339). The Chorus also find the refusal of Admetus' parents to die, at best, perplexing;[66] they make repeated reference to the advanced age of the pair (γεραιοῦ, 467; πολιὰν ἔχοντε χαίταν, 470), and, for their refusal to save their son, term them "unfeeling" (σχετλίω, 470). At the outset of the encounter between Pheres and Admetus, therefore, we are aware both of a reasonably widespread interpretation of the elderly parents' refusal to die as an illogical choice, given their advanced age and lack of other children, and of Admetus' intense hatred towards them for such a refusal.

Pheres' tone in his initial speech acknowledges no such strain to the father-son relationship.[67] He employs conciliatory, paternal language, twice addressing Admetus as τέκνον.[68] Both the content and the structure of the speech aim at establishing the unity of father and son. Pheres declares his sympathy with Admetus (κακοῖσι σοῖσι συγκάμνων, 614), and, in praising Alcestis' sacrifice, remarks on the benefits of this action for both himself and his wife *and* Admetus (620-2; 625-6: ὦ τόνδε **μὲν** σώσασ', ἀναστήσασα **δὲ** / ἡμᾶς πίτνοντας). For Pheres, Alcestis has spared him the hardships of childlessness and a grim old age (γήραι πενθίμωι καταφθίνειν, 622). The provision of care and material support for an aged parent was an extremely important aspect of filial duty in classical Athens,[69] and the grim prospect for those who lacked children no doubt informs the general horror at childlessness.[70] Pheres' reasons for appreciating Alcestis' sacrifice and

[65] 293-4.
[66] 466-70.
[67] 614-28.
[68] 614, 620; Jakobs (1999), pp.279-80. On the emotive weight of τέκνον, see above, p.86 n.55.
[69] See p.6 n.46.
[70] Cf. e.g. 903-11 in this play for an anecdote of unhappy childlessness; E. *Med.*1325, where Jason rails at Medea for, amongst other things, inflicting childlessness upon him (κἄμ' ἄπαιδ' ἀπώλεσας); Iphis' lament at E. *Supp*. 1087-8

thus the continued life of a son to provide for him in old age have been taken as self-centred,[71] but it nonetheless reflects a perfectly conventional view of at least part of the child's obligation towards their parent in classical Greek thought. Pheres' status as an aged father entrammels expectations of care from his son, and he is explicitly pleased that this expectation may continue to be met.

Admetus' response to Pheres' offer of consolation and funerary adornment retains the vibrant hostility of his earlier outbursts.[72] He rejects Pheres' claims of sympathy and the proffered funerary ornament;[73] indeed, he rejects the very notion of Pheres' paternity (636-9):

> οὐκ ἦσθ' ἄρ' ὀρθῶς τοῦδε σώματος πατήρ,
> οὐδ' ἡ τεκεῖν φάσκουσα καὶ κεκλημένη
> μήτηρ μ' ἔτικτε, δουλίου δ' ἀφ' αἵματος
> μαστῶι γυναικὸς σῆς ὑπεβλήθην λάθραι.

This striking remark is, of course, a powerful rhetorical turn rather than a sincere claim of servile origins.[74] Such is Admetus' anger at his parents for failing to offer their lives for his that he no longer considers them his parents; their failure to meet his expectations of parental conduct lead him to deny them the position of parents.[75] Admetus' declaration that Alcestis, who *was* willing to die in his stead, now stands as mother and father to him[76] reinforces his expectation of self-sacrifice as part of the parental role.

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[71] Jakobs (1999), pp.279-80.
[72] 629-72.
[73] 631-5.
[74] Griffith (1978), p.83.
[75] Rohdich (1968), p.34; Griffith (1978) pp.85-6 notes the emphasis on ὀρθῶς.
[76] 646-7.

Admetus' arguments as to why Pheres should have been willing to sacrifice himself also demonstrate and deploy his understanding of what proper parental behaviour entails. The advanced age of Pheres and his wife is a repeated point of reference,[77] but Admetus also invokes Pheres' experiences of fatherhood in support of the old man's death. The very fact of Pheres' paternity is presented as a great good fortune in his life; he has in Admetus a son and successor (παῖς δ' ἦν ἐγώ σοι τῶνδε διάδοχος δόμων, 655), thus ensuring the continuation of his line and preventing the alienation of his house. This posthumous boon is matched by Admetus' assertion of his filial piety towards his aging parents; Pheres cannot claim disrespect or mistreatment as justification for yielding up his son to die (οὐ μὴν ἐρεῖς γέ μ' ὡς ἀτιμάζοντα σὸν / γῆρας θανεῖν προύδωκας, 658-9).[78] Having denied his parents, Admetus absolves himself of any further filial duty towards them; he sarcastically bids them beget other children who will support them in their old age,[79] and refuses to have any part in his father's burial.[80] Admetus' rejection of this immensely important filial duty[81] is part of an attempt to undermine Pheres' prior joy at escaping childlessness.[82] Pheres' decisions would have seen Admetus perish, and so Admetus will not grant his father any benefit from his continued existence: τέθνηκα γὰρ δὴ τοὐπὶ σ' (666). He will instead bestow the benefits of his filial duty and care upon the one who saves him.[83] It is striking that, although Admetus condemns his father so forcefully, he is not entirely dissimilar from him. He complains that he has received poor recompense for his care from his parents, in that they refused to die for him: κἀντὶ τῶνδέ μοι **χάριν** / τοιάνδε καὶ σὺ χἠ τεκοῦσ' ἠλλαξάτην (660-1). Much as Pheres celebrated the

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[77] 635, 643, 649-50, 669-72.
[78] Dyson (1988), p.19.
[79] 662-4.
[80] 665.
[81] See Is. 2.18, 36-7; Dem. 57.70; X.*Mem*. 2.213; Strauss (1993), p.65.
[82] Burnett (1971), pp.41-2.
[83] 666-8.

continued life of his son primarily in terms of the benefits this would bring to him in his old age, Admetus presents his filial care towards his parents not as an end in itself, nor recompense for the care which he himself received from them in childhood,[84] but rather as a service for which he expects their lives as restitution. He presents this willingness for self-sacrifice as a natural part of the parental role, a role which he denies or assigns (at least in rhetoric) according to the fulfilment of this expectation.

Pheres' retort to this attack clarifies his understanding of the paternal role and defends his conduct therein.[85] Beginning with an ironic echo of the Chorus' paternal language (ὦ παῖ 675, cf. 674), he reminds Admetus of his status as a freeborn Thessalian, and, in a retort to his son's disparagement of the elderly, condemns the rashness of Admetus' 'young man's words' (νεανίας λόγους, 679).[86] Having established his right to speak,[87] Pheres exercises it in a defence of his conduct as father (681-9):

ἐγὼ δέ σ' οἴκων δεσπότην ἐγεινάμην
κἄθρεψ', ὀφείλω δ' οὐχ ὑπερθνήισκειν σέθεν·
οὐ γὰρ πατρῶιον τόνδ' ἐδεξάμην νόμον,
παίδων προθνήισκειν πατέρας, οὐδ' Ἑλληνικόν.
σαυτῶι γὰρ εἴτε δυστυχὴς εἴτ' εὐτυχὴς (685)
ἔφυς· ἃ δ' ἡμῶν χρῆν σε τυγχάνειν ἔχεις.
πολλῶν μὲν ἄρχεις, πολυπλέθρους δέ σοι γύας
λείψω· πατρὸς γὰρ ταὔτ' ἐδεξάμην πάρα.
τί δῆτά σ' ἠδίκηκα; τοῦ σ' ἀποστερῶ;

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[84] cf. 682; Arist. *EN* 1163b remarks that the son can never truly repay his debt to his father for giving him life.
[85] 675-705.
[86] cf. e.g. S. *Ant*. 735.
[87] Lloyd (1992), p.39.

Pheres regards his paternal duty as fulfilled through the transmission of material wealth and status.[88] Admetus is master of a household (οἴκων δεσπότην, 681) and a state (πολλῶν μὲν ἄρχεις, 687); he received rearing as a child (κἄθρεψ', 682) and possesses extensive landholdings as an adult (687). For Pheres, this is enough (ἃ δ' ἡμῶν χρῆν σε τυγχάνειν ἔχεις, 686); he declares that he has passed on to Admetus what he received from his own father (688), thus strengthening his account of the paternal role with reference to a precedent. As far as Pheres is concerned, the duties of a father emphatically do *not* include dying for one's child; this is neither an 'ancestral' (πατρῷιον, 683, with the literal sense of 'paternal' immensely apt in the context) nor a Greek (684) custom. Strictly speaking, Pheres is quite correct; there is no established notion in Greek thought or custom that a father *should* die for his child.[89] The self-sacrifice of a parent is, however, not entirely unthinkable; within tragedy, for example, Creon expresses willingness to die in his son's place in *Phoenician Women,*[90] while the Euripidean Heracles vows to die in defence of his children if need be.[91] Dying for one's child is not a duty, as Admetus would claim,[92] but neither is it quite as unimaginable as Pheres' emphasis upon individual self-interest would suggest.[93] Admetus expects too much of the role of father, but Pheres perhaps allows for too little; he focuses solely on the material aspect of paternity, and, while perfectly correct that there is no duty for him to die for his son, perhaps neglects the affective aspect of the relationship.

[88] Jakobs (1999), p.281.
[89] Parker (2007), p.178.
[90] *Pho*. 968-9 see above, ch.3.2.2.
[91] *HF* 577-8.
[92] Dyson (1988), p.19.
[93] 685-6, 690.

For all that father and son are at odds, Pheres goes on to declare one fundamental point of similarity between them: they both want to live.[94] The old man deploys strikingly balanced language to reinforce the comparison – **χαίρεις** ὁρῶν φῶς· πατέρα δ' οὐ **χαίρειν** δοκεῖς; (691)[95] – and in the ensuing stichomythia is well-furnished with retorts to Admetus' castigations over his unwillingness to die (e.g. 711-2, esp. 715-6: Αδ. μακροῦ βίου γὰρ ᾐσθόμην ἐρῶντά σε. / Φε. ἀλλ' οὐ σὺ νεκρὸν ἀντὶ σοῦ τόνδ' ἐκφέρεις;). These bitter exchanges form something of a dark counterpart to Pheres' suggestions of unity in his opening words, although any sense of harmony is gone. The clash over the parental role persists; Pheres once again defends his (and his wife's) conduct against Admetus' hostility: ἀρᾶι γονεῦσιν οὐδὲν ἔκδικον παθών; (714). This is a striking charge in itself; in Greek culture and myth, there are numerous parental curses, and such imprecations were notoriously powerful.[96] A son cursing his parents represents a remarkable inversion of the 'usual' practice. Admetus takes such innovation even further; he threatens to 'disown' his father: εἰ δ' ἀπειπεῖν χρῆν με κηρύκων ὕπο / τὴν σὴν πατρώιαν ἑστίαν, ἀπεῖπον ἄν. (737-8). ἀπολέγειν is the verb used for fathers disowning their children;[97] Admetus expands upon his earlier rejection of his paternity by once again abrogating a traditional aspect of the parental role and deploying it against his father.[98] Such innovations are not limited to Admetus' concept of the role of father. Pheres impugns Admetus' behaviour as a husband, accusing him of having murdered his wife (ταύτην κατακτάς, 696; cf. 730). He then takes this accusation further; he remarks that Admetus has made a 'clever discovery' (σοφῶς δ' ἐφηῦρες, 699) of how to cheat death forever; he can repeatedly

[94] Lloyd (1992), p.39.
[95] The line seems to have gained some notoriety; Parker (2007) *ad loc*. notes the parody at Aristophanes *Nub*. 1415, and direct quotation at *Thesm*. 194, almost thirty years after the original production of *Alcestis*.
[96] See discussion above, ch.3.3.1.
[97] Burnett (1971), p.42. Disownment was a possibility in classical Athens, most decisively through the (extreme) legal measure of ἀποκήρυξις, "proclaiming a separation" (Plut. *Them*. 2).
[98] Arist. *EN* 1163b4: sons simply cannot disown their fathers.

induce his wife of the time to die in his place.[99] Much as Admetus has presented an unconventional vision of the paternal role in his confrontation with Pheres, now the aged father charges his son with distorting the role of wife to include dying as a substitute for her husband. Such an innovation will not be without consequences; Pheres' parting shot reminds Admetus that Alcestis has a brother, Acastus, who will seek to avenge what he will take as her murder (730-3). Pheres accuses his son of consistently asking too much of those around him, and taunts him with the potentially dire consequences.

The interpretation of this scene is a challenge with implications for the tragedy as a whole. As well as the criticism directed at him within the play itself, Pheres has attracted scholarly condemnation for the tenor of his arguments.[100] Nonetheless, the logical basis of much of what he says,[101] the elevated nature of his social position,[102] and the fact that he speaks second, as is customary for the speaker with the stronger argument in a Euripidean debate (if there is one),[103] have all been taken to signify that he cannot be dismissed out of hand. Admetus' behaviour has equally received a mixed reception; some see his anger as entirely justified by Pheres' apparent hypocrisy,[104] but equally the excesses of his attacks upon his parents and the demands he places upon them weaken the persuasiveness and attractiveness of his case.[105] The nature of the paternal role is central to the debate; Pheres defends his (in)action in terms of his understanding of fatherhood, while Admetus attacks it on the same grounds. Admetus notably strays much further from established norms in his claims and demands; he presents a radical vision of

[99] 699-701; Rohdich (1968), pp.35-6.
[100] Burnett (1971), p.41; Jakobs (1999), pp.280-1.
[101] Lloyd (1992), p.39.
[102] Dyson (1988), pp.19-20.
[103] Dale (1954), p.106.
[104] Burnett (1971), p.40.
[105] Dyson (1988), p19; Dale (1954), p.106.

the duties of fatherhood in an effort to justify the extraordinary demands made upon it, while Pheres' sarcastic claims about Admetus' 'innovative' development of the role of wife reinforces the impossibility of accommodating self-sacrifice within normal family structures. The extraordinary nature of Alcestis' offer to die is thus reinforced, but so too is the elasticity of tragic fatherhood.

Telamon and Pheres are strikingly different, in many ways. Telamon is absent from the stage and we hear of him only in the words of others, while Pheres is present to put his own case most forcefully. Accounts of Telamon revolve around the great deeds of his past, whereas Pheres' depiction and reception are informed by what he has *not* done. Nonetheless, the characterisation of both these men is dominated by their paternal role. The depiction of fathers and fatherhood in these works draws upon the array of activities and responsibilities undertaken by classical Athenian fathers, and further complicates matters by including the extraordinary actions, attitudes and events of the mythical past. This combination of the complexity of fatherhood in contemporary norms and the extreme circumstances afforded by myth has great dramatic potential, and perhaps no work demonstrates this more effectively than Euripides' *Orestes*.

6.2. Contested fatherhood in Euripides' *Orestes*

We have examined specific case-studies of tragic conflict over both the nature of specific fathers and the rights and duties of fatherhood more generally. In the late Euripidean tragedy *Orestes*,[106] we find bitterly-fought examples of both such contests,

[106] First performed in 408 BC; *schol. ad* 371.

and unsurprisingly so. *Orestes* is a work marked by extensive interest in and discussion of the father, in general and specific terms, and this has been reflected to some extent in scholarship upon the play. For example, the preponderance of fathers and father-figures amongst the play's characters has been noted,[107] as has the importance of Agamemnon's legacy in guiding Orestes' actions and Orestes' manipulation of that legacy in support of his own aims.[108] These are fruitful approaches to the play, and I believe there are good grounds for taking them further; *Orestes* is a play which is intensely interested in the paternal.[109] The character and legacy of Orestes' late father Agamemnon are extensively manipulated and interrogated, while the fundamental values of fatherhood as a whole are vehemently contested. The paternal role of the many fathers depicted or mentioned – Tyndareus, Menelaus, Strophius, even Zeus - is crucial in determining their actions and reactions to the astonishing events of the play. Fathers and fatherhood are as important in *Orestes* as they are controversial.

6.2.1. Agamemnon in *Orestes*

Although he has been murdered long before the events of *Orestes*, Agamemnon is nonetheless a pervasive presence in the play. Orestes in particular offers several strikingly varied images of his father as part of his attempts to save his own and his sister's lives. However, these must contend with the alternative accounts of the late king which those within and beyond the family can bring to bear against such efforts.

[107] Zeitlin (1980), p.64; however, she interprets the world of the play as one marked by the weakness of patriarchal values; p.66.
[108] De Poli (2013), pp.57-63.
[109] This is not to say that the maternal is totally absent. We witness the interactions of Helen and her daughter Hermione (112ff.), and Clytemnestra's claims upon her children prove troublesome for their schemes in the play; see below. That said, fathers and their concerns are notably more prevalent.

Agamemnon is invoked in a variety of ways by his children, particularly Orestes. Electra's somewhat elliptical prologue refers to his murder,[110] but it is striking that the focus here seems to be more on Clytemnestra's actions and her fate. She is condemned as 'a most unholy mother' (μητρὸς ἀνοσιωτάτης, 24), who murders her husband for reasons too immodest for a maiden to recount.[111] There are also repeated references to the ensuing matricide and consequent torments,[112] but the only explicit motivation given for this drastic act is the instruction from Apollo.[113] A pattern is thus established which persists for the earlier portions of the play; Agamemnon's role in motivating the matricide is at first minimised in favour of emphasising Apollo's command. Electra repeats her claim of Apolline responsibility in her exchange with the Chorus[114] and, when she rails against her late mother a little further on in the play, she once again refers to Agamemnon as one of Clytemnestra's victims (ἀπὸ δ'ὤλεσας / πατέρα τέκνα τε τάδε σέθεν ἀφ'αἵματος, 196-7), but makes no association between him and the matricide. There is at most only an implicit suggestion of avenging Agamemnon which emerges at 191-3, when Electra laments Apollo's role in compelling Orestes and Electra to slaughter their 'father-slaying mother' (πατροφόνου ματρός, 193).[115] Perhaps the most interesting comment on the role of Apollo in prompting the matricide comes when Orestes, after his frenzy has subsided and he is able to lament his pitiable state, quite explicitly contrasts Apollo's influence with that of Agamemnon.[116] He rebukes the god (μέμφομαι, 285), suggesting he used curses (ἐπάρας, 286) to drive him to commit matricide. He imagines

[110] Wright (2006), pp.39-40 notes that Electra expects the events to be well-known (17, 20, 30), and is often a little reticent in giving details (14, 16, 27).
[111] 25-7.
[112] 29-32, 34-8, 46-50.
[113] 29-31: De Poli (2013), p.57.
[114] 163-5.
[115] Henrichs (2000) pp.178-9 notes Electra's rather startling use of sacrificial imagery in these lines (**ἐξέθυσ'** ὁ Φοῖβος ἡμᾶς, 191); later in the play, it is *Agamemnon*'s history of actual human sacrifice which is evoked; see below.
[116] 284-93.

Agamemnon, by contrast, seeking to *prevent* him from killing Clytemnestra, as such a crime would bring suffering to Orestes without bringing back his father.[117] In these earlier scenes, Agamemnon is most frequently presented as a victim of Clytemnestra's actions rather than as a motivation for her murder; indeed, he is even imagined as putting less stock in this act of vengeance than in the welfare of his children.

Nonetheless, this is Agamemnon as presented by others, and such presentation proves extremely malleable. The same Orestes who presented such a powerful image of his father (hypothetically) arguing against the matricide later offers a totally contradictory account to justify his deeds. When faced with the wrath of Clytemnestra's own father Tyndareus,[118] Orestes places much greater emphasis upon the importance of avenging Agamemnon as a motivating factor in his actions.[119] He does not defend the matricide in and of itself, but attempts to negate the crime therein by invoking his duty to avenge his father: ἐγὼ δ'ἀνόσιός εἰμι μητέρα κτανών, / ὅσιος δέ γ'ἕτερον ὄνομα, τιμωρῶν πατρί. (546-7, cf. 563, 587). This attempt to counterbalance the matricide by referring to Agamemnon's claims becomes even more direct; Orestes asserts, in direct contrast to his earlier image of Agamemnon as arguing against the matricide, that, had he failed to murder his mother, he would face the Furies of his *father*.[120] He still attributes significant responsibility for the murder to Apollo,[121] but Agamemnon's demands now coincide with those of the god, rather than countermanding them in his children's interests. Vengeance for Agamemnon is a perfectly comprehensible motivation, even amongst those who do not endorse it; Tyndareus notes that it motivated Electra, as he rails against her for encouraging Orestes to commit matricide through, amongst other things, invoking the

[117] De Poli (2013), p.57.
[118] Discussed in greater detail below.
[119] De Poli (2013), pp.58-9.
[120] 580-4; cf. A. *Cho*. 924-5.
[121] 591-9.

mistreatment of their father (ὄνειδος ἀγγέλλουσα τἀγαμέμνονος, 618). In a particularly striking comment, the Chorus describe Clytemnestra herself acknowledging that Orestes acts on behalf of his father (πατρώι-/ αν τιμῶν χάριν, 827-8), while pleading with him not to pursue this reasoning too far.[122] Nonetheless, this line of argumentation is not equally prominent throughout the play; it undergoes a sudden marked increase in prominence as part of the matricides' rhetoric as the drama progresses, and this shift from minimising to emphasising the pressure to avenge Agamemnon demonstrates the instrumental nature of the childrens' references to their father. Orestes in particular modifies his presentation of Agamemnon, sometimes drastically, to support his current line of argument and further his cause.[123]

To this end, Orestes also draws heavily upon Agamemnon's status as brother to Menelaus, in an effort to elicit the latter's aid. The news of Menelaus' impending arrival in Argos fills Orestes with hope; quite reasonably,[124] he expects to meet with assistance from a man bound by blood and obligation to his father: ἥκει φῶς ἐμοῖς καὶ σοῖς κακοῖς / ἀνὴρ ὁμογενὴς καὶ χάριτας ἔχων πατρός; (244-5).[125] In many ways, their encounter at first bodes well for Orestes' cause. Menelaus remarks on the many misfortunes of the house, beginning with the fate of his brother Agamemnon.[126] He refers to his desire to embrace his brother's son with loving hands (δοκῶν Ὀρέστην παῖδα τὸν Ἀγαμέμνονος / φίλαισι χερσὶ περιβαλεῖν 372-1), and asks the Chorus for the whereabouts of 'Agamemnon's boy' (Ἀγαμέμνονος παῖς, 376). Unfortunately for Orestes, his deeds, as

[122] 825-30: Kyriakou (1998), pp.290-1.
[123] De Poli (2013), pp.59-60.
[124] Griffith (2009), pp.291-2 notes that, in a classical Greek context, the most obvious and natural people to ask for help are one's φίλοι, including blood relatives.
[125] Kyriakou (1998), pp.283-5.
[126] 360-9.

well as his identity, have weight. Menelaus also wanted to embrace Clytemnestra,[127] but has heard of her fate, which he refers to in disapproving terms: τῆς Τυνδαρείας παιδὸς ἀνόσιον φόνον (374). The use of the patronymic also foreshadows the appearance onstage of Tyndareus, who will prove an especially determined foe of the young matricide. Orestes is not the only figure with a father who can be deployed in support of his cause.

Menelaus is not unsympathetic to Orestes' plight.[128] Although he condemns the matricide itself,[129] he is saddened to hear of Orestes' subsequent fate,[130] and tries to offer some encouragement.[131] Crucially, the bond between Menelaus and Agamemnon does seem to have some sway; the Spartan king is able to understand Orestes' actions in terms of vengeance for his father (πατρὸς ... τιμωρία, 445),[132] and defends his decision to address a matricide on the grounds of his kinship with the young man's father (φίλου μοι πατρός ἐστιν ἔκγονος, 482).

Orestes attempts to capitalise upon the relationship between Menelaus and his father, recalling the favours Agamemnon performed for his brother as an inducement to Menelaus to intervene for their salvation now. These are oblique allusions at first; Orestes appeals to Menelaus to aid him and his sister in their plight as recompense for his 'father's favours' (ἀλλ' ἀντιλάζου καὶ πόνων ἐν τῶι μέρει, / **χάριτας πατρώιας** ἐκτίνων ἐς οὕς σε δεῖ, 452-3). After the forceful appearance and intervention of Tyndareus (discussed in detail below), Orestes once again asks Menelaus to repay the debt owed to his father

[127] 372. Glaucus' account of Agamemnon's fate at 366-7 is sufficiently riddling for Menelaus (unlike an audience familiar with the tale) to be unaware that Agamemnon has been murdered by Clytemnestra; Willink (1986) *ad loc*. Willink (1986), Diggle (1994) and West (1987) all delete the much more explicit reference to murder at 361, although West also expresses reservations about 367.
[128] Porter (1994), p.70.
[129] 393, 413.
[130] See esp. 447.
[131] e.g. 399.
[132] De Poli (2013), p.59.

Agamemnon,[133] but this time he states much more explicitly the nature of the favours to which he is referring (646-59):

ἀδικῶ· λαβεῖν χρή μ’ ἀντὶ τοῦδε τοῦ κακοῦ
ἄδικόν τι παρὰ σοῦ· καὶ γὰρ Ἀγαμέμνων πατὴρ
ἀδίκως ἀθροίσας Ἑλλάδ’ ἦλθ’ ὑπ’ Ἴλιον,
οὐκ ἐξαμαρτὼν αὐτὸς ἀλλ’ ἁμαρτίαν
τῆς σῆς γυναικὸς ἀδικίαν τ’ ἰώμενος· (650)
ἀπέδοτο δ’, ὡς χρὴ τοῖς φίλοισι τοὺς φίλους, (652)
τὸ σῶμ’ ἀληθῶς, σοὶ παρ’ ἀσπίδ’ ἐκπονῶν,
ὅπως σὺ τὴν σὴν ἀπολάβοις ξυνάορον.
ἀπότεισον οὖν μοι ταὐτὸ τοῦτ’ ἐκεῖ λαβών, (655)
μίαν πονήσας ἡμέραν, ἡμῶν ὕπερ
σωτήριος στάς, μὴ δέκ’ ἐκπλήσας ἔτη.
ἓν μὲν τόδ’ ἡμῖν ἀνθ’ ἑνὸς δοῦναί σε χρή· (651)
ἃ δ’ Αὐλὶς ἔλαβε σφάγι’ ἐμῆς ὁμοσπόρου, (658)
ἐῶ σ’ ἔχειν ταῦθ’· Ἑρμιόνην μὴ κτεῖνε σύ·

Far from glorifying his father’s exploits at Troy, Orestes emphasises the morally questionable nature of Agamemnon’s intervention there (**ἀδίκως** ἀθροίσας Ἑλλάδ’ ἦλθ’ ὑπ’ Ἴλιον, 648), so that he can extract an unjust action in recompense from Menelaus. He requires such an action, as he acknowledges it is morally wrong to help him (646-7).[134] Despite the questionable morality of Agamemnon’s actions, Orestes nonetheless

[133] 642-3.
[134] West (1987), p.227, who notes the provocative nature of Orestes’ line of argument.

highlights the extent of his father's assistance; he risked life and limb in battle beside his brother (652-3), toiling for 10 years (657), all for the sake of Menelaus' wayward wife (650; 654). Second-person singular pronouns and possessives are widespread, as Orestes reminds Menelaus that all this was done for him: τῆς **σῆς** γυναικὸς (650); **σοὶ** παρ' ἀσπίδ' ἐκπονῶν (653); ὅπως **σὺ** τὴν **σὴν** ἀπολάβοις ξυνάορον (654). The greatest favour of all was the sacrifice of Iphigenia, the murder of a daughter for the sake of a brother and his wife. The oblique wording of the reference (ἃ δ' Αὐλὶς ἔλαβε σφάγι', 658) can be seen to minimise Agamemnon's responsibility,[135] but it also recalls the language used of Menelaus' receiving favours from Agamemnon (**ἃ δ' ἔλαβες** ἀπόδος πατρὸς ἐμοῦ λαβὼν πάρα, 643). Agamemnon's sacrifice of Iphigenia, one of the many events within the play with a rich literary pedigree,[136] an act vigorously deplored and contested in other tragedies,[137] is here presented by Orestes as part of a system of *quid pro quo* exchange, a bargaining chip to exert leverage on his uncle. The impact of this reference is reinforced by the sudden shift from the allusive to the extremely blunt; Orestes reassures his uncle that he does not ask him to kill his own daughter in recompense for Iphigenia (ἐῶ σ' ἔχειν ταῦθ'· Ἑρμιόνην μὴ κτεῖνε σύ, 659). He thus reminds Menelaus of the violence of this action taken on his behalf without explicitly attributing such violence to Agamemnon. This account of Agamemnon's favours to Menelaus does not primarily serve to glorify or justify the late king's actions. Instead, his deeds on behalf of Menelaus are presented by Orestes in such a way as to capitalise most effectively on Agamemnon's claims upon his brother's gratitude.

Orestes attempts to press the matter still further with his uncle. Having asked Menelaus to repay the debt of obligation to Agamemnon to himself instead, Orestes now

[135] West (1987), pp.227-8.
[136] Zeitlin (1980), pp.52-4 notes the breadth and depth of literary allusion in the play.
[137] See ch.2.1.

casts such an intervention as a favour to Agamemnon as well; it would prevent the destruction of his house.[138] Indeed, as the culmination of his appeal, Orestes brings his father back from the dead, at least rhetorically.[139] He once again invokes Menelaus' tie of kinship to Agamemnon - ὦ πατρὸς ὅμαιμε θεῖε (674) – and asks his uncle to imagine the ghost of Agamemnon hovering above them, speaking Orestes' words and making Orestes' pleas. Orestes' appeal to his uncle for aid draws upon his father's connection to Menelaus, and conversely that man's debt of obligation to his father, in an extensive and highly varied fashion; the desperate young man seeks to wring every last drop of persuasive power from his father's fraternal bond.

Orestes is not successful. Despite the many favours owed and the general expectation of assistance, Menelaus issues a surprising rejection of Orestes' plea.[140] He claims to feel for Orestes' plight and be eager to help his kin,[141] but laments that his relative political and military weakness in Argos prevents him from taking decisive action on behalf of his nephew; he can only offer attempts at persuasion.[142] Orestes has a rather different interpretation of Menelaus' reticence; he accuses him of valuing his relationship with his father-in-law more than that with his brother,[143] and assumes that Menelaus has designs upon the Argive throne which will be served by Orestes' death.[144] There is no explicit evidence of such intentions on Menelaus' part to support such accusations,[145] but these claims are nonetheless of interest because they represent the ultimate failure of Orestes' efforts to invoke Agamemnon in order to win over Menelaus. Orestes attempts

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[138] 662-4. Diggle (1994) and West (1987) delete 663; West *ad loc.* points out that Orestes has otherwise only been speaking of his own salvation, without mention of Electra.
[139] 674-7.
[140] 682-719. Willink (1986), pp.191-3 offers an overview of differing scholarly opinions on the reasons for Menelaus' shock decision.
[141] 682-6.
[142] 687-93.
[143] 752; see below.
[144] 1058-9.
[145] Kyriakou (1998), pp.300-1; Willink (1986), p.264 notes that the accusation, while plausible, "illuminates [Orestes'] thinking rather than [Menelaus']".

to use the tie of blood and obligation between Agamemnon and Menelaus to motivate the latter to help him and his sister, but this same tie of kinship brings with it the prospect of inheritance; the family tie Orestes seeks to deploy in his own interests in fact makes it in Menelaus' interest to do nothing.

For all of Orestes' speculations on dynastic intrigue, Menelaus' explicit justification for his lukewarm response is his limited power over the Argive citizenry. Not for the first time in this play,[146] Argive political life and public opinion threatens the interests of Orestes and his sister. As a king, Agamemnon himself was a participant in this political sphere, and consequently Orestes also attempts to deploy the memory of his father in the public arena to further his cause there. He and Pylades are not without hope of meeting with a favourable reception in so doing;[147] they intend to present his actions as just vengeance for his father,[148] and expect to meet with considerable sympathy.[149] This is not entirely implausible; the Messenger who informs Electra of the proceedings of the assembly remarks upon his favourable view of Agamemnon (σῶι γὰρ εὔνοιαν πατρὶ / ἀεί ποτ' εἶχον, 868-9), born of the extensive generosity he met with from the royal household.[150] Such favourable interpretations are found within the assembly itself. The honest Argive farmer[151] echoes Orestes' own claims, seeing the young man's matricide as rightful vengeance for his father (τιμωρεῖν πατρί, 924). Orestes' own speech before the assembly[152] attempts to capitalise on the public sympathy for Agamemnon's plight, combining as it does filial piety with public spirit (932-7):

[146] In the prologue (46-50), Electra reveals the role of the assembly in determining the fate of her and her brother; Romilly (1972), p.237.
[147] 775-85.
[148] 775-6.
[149] 784-5.
[150] 869-70.
[151] 923-9.
[152] 932-42, but the text is problematic. West (1987) deletes only 933, while Diggle (1994) follows Wecklein in also deleting 938-42. Willink (1986) is unique in deleting all of 932-42; he argues (pp.236-7), that the

ἔλεξε δ᾽· Ὦ γῆν Ἰνάχου κεκτημένοι

[πάλαι Πελασγοί, Δαναΐδαι δεύτερον],

ὑμῖν ἀμύνων οὐδὲν ἧσσον ἢ πατρὶ

ἔκτεινα μητέρ᾽· εἰ γὰρ ἀρσένων φόνος (935)

ἔσται γυναιξὶν ὅσιος, οὐ φθάνοιτ᾽ ἔτ᾽ ἂν

θνῄσκοντες, ἢ γυναιξὶ δουλεύειν χρεών.

In contrast to his appeal to Menelaus, in which he dwells upon the specifics of Agamemnon's favours to that man as his brother, here Orestes turns his late father into an everyman, a hapless husband whose violent end could befall *any* Argive should the matricide not be endorsed.

Unfortunately for Orestes, Agamemnon's public image and legacy is not the sole preserve of his son. Several figures in the public sphere have their own account of Agamemnon to offer, and these often oppose Orestes' attempts to appropriate his father to his own ends. This has proven a problem throughout the play. During their meeting, Orestes laments to Menelaus that Oeax, a relation of Palamedes, has been mobilising the citizens against the young matricide and his sister as revenge for the unjust execution of his kinsman at Troy.[153] Orestes' various claims to act in vengeance for his father are echoed by Menelaus' observation that Oeax, too, is seeking revenge (Παλαμήδους σε τιμωρεῖ φόνου, 433); Agamemnon and his actions have a legacy beyond his family which

excision leaves a smooth join of 931 to 943 (κοὐδεὶς ἔτ᾽ εἶπε· σὸς δ᾽ ἐπῆλθε σύγγονος, … ἀλλ᾽ οὐκ ἔπειθ᾽ ὅμιλον, εὖ δοκῶν λέγειν·), and suggests that the content of Orestes' speech could be inferred from 544-601. This seems a little stark; there is at least a brief summary of every other speaker's words, and Orestes' form the climax of the debate. West (1987) *ad loc* notes that even the full-length account of Orestes' speech is relatively perfunctory so as to maintain the momentum of the narrative (pp.247-8); it seems unnecessary to delete the speech entirely. Given the various problems of logic and repetitiousness in 938-42 (Willink (1986), pp.236-7), I am cautiously inclined to follow Diggle's text.

[153] 431-3.

can prove dangerous for those within it. During the assembly debate itself, Orestes' various presentations of his father and his fate are endorsed or contested. This can come from unexpected quarters; one of the speakers is Talthybius, who was Agamemnon's comrade at Troy (ὃς σῶι πατρὶ συνεπόρθει Φρύγας, 888), but nonetheless speaks in opposition to Orestes' interpretation of Agamemnon's death and the correctness of his response. He praises Agamemnon, but not Orestes' actions in avenging him.[154] Talthybius thus defies one of the central planks of Orestes' strategy; he is able to separate his opinion of Agamemnon from his judgement of his son. He is disparaged by the Messenger as under the influence of those with power (ὑπὸ τοῖς δυναμένοισιν ὢν ἀεί, 889), and he pays constant court to the relatives of Aegisthus as he speaks.[155] This demonstrates one of the risks of invoking, as Orestes does, the past deeds and connections of a late father; Talthybius' loyalty has been altered by subsequent adjustments in the Argive power balance, and Orestes' own actions in the interim (namely, the murder of Aegisthus), have started to bear unhelpful fruit. Agamemnon's legacy in the Argive public sphere is not sufficiently positive or enduring to help Orestes' cause as the young man would wish.

For all that it is condemned by the Messenger (hardly an impartial witness) as born solely of craven subordination to powerful interests, Talthybius' speech against Orestes does contain an interesting line of argument; he remarks that Orestes' actions set a dangerous precedent for parents: ὅτι καθισταίη νόμους / ἐς τοὺς τεκόντας οὐ καλούς (892-3). This identifies one of the greatest difficulties Orestes faces in his efforts to deploy Agamemnon in the play. Orestes' arguments depend upon the importance of the father, but the action which he often describes as 'avenging his father' entailed the murder of his

[154] 890-1.
[155] 893-4.

mother. This causes difficulties even with those who are not unsympathetic; as discussed above, Menelaus is willing to see Orestes' actions in terms of vengeance,[156] but is still horrified at the idea of matricide.[157] Tyndareus' more general condemnation of Orestes' actions (discussed in greater detail below) includes an impassioned reference to the famous scene of Clytemnestra baring her breast as she pleads with her son.[158] Even near the play's finale, when Orestes once again justifies his actions with reference to his father, he is confronted with the claims of the mother (1605-6): Με. τίς δ' ἂν προσείποι σ'; Ορ. ὅστις ἐστὶ φιλοπάτωρ. / Με. ὅστις δὲ τιμᾶι μητέρ'; Ορ. εὐδαίμων ἔφυ.

Orestes' response to the threat posed to his arguments by his late mother's legacy is twofold. Firstly, he establishes a qualitative difference between his mother and father (551-3):

> τί χρῆν με δρᾶσαι; δύο γὰρ ἀντίθες δυοῖν·
> πατὴρ μὲν ἐφύτευσέν με, σὴ δ' ἔτικτε παῖς,
> τὸ σπέρμ' ἄρουρα παραλαβοῦσ' ἄλλου πάρα.

Orestes distinguishes between the actions of fathering (ἐφύτευσέν) and mothering (ἔτικτε), using an agricultural analogy to show the inferior status of the latter.[159] This presentation of conception has a famous literary antecedent in the words of Apollo in Aeschylus' *Eumenides*,[160] but was not uncommon in Greek thought.[161] Here, it has

[156] 425.
[157] e.g. 397.
[158] 526-9; cf. A. *Cho*. 896-8.
[159] Willink (1986), p.175, noting especially the hierarchical implications of ἄλλου πάρα.
[160] A. *Eum*. 658-9.
[161] Willink (1986), p.175, citing Anaxagoras A107 *ap*. Arist. *gen. anim.* 4.1.763b; Rutherford (2012), p.140 gives various other tragic examples of the analogy of human procreation and agriculture. Apollo's famous verdict would not have sat at odds with biological understanding in Aeschylus' own day, but it is important to recall that many theories of conception, along with Athenian social attitudes, attributed greater importance than the god to the maternal role; Sommerstein (1989), pp. 207-8. The Hippocratic *De semine*,

obvious instrumental worth; Orestes can cast the secondary importance of the mother in conception as justification for the primacy of the father in his understanding of his filial duty.

The second strand of Orestes' response to the challenge posed by Clytemnestra's claims as his mother is to lay greater emphasis upon his mother's role and actions as Agamemnon's wife. We have already seen this in his assembly speech; in response to Talthybius' claims that he establishes dangerous norms for the treatment of parents, Orestes retorts that he has in fact prevented the establishment of dangerous customs for the treatment of husbands by their wives.[162] This echoes an argument used by Orestes in his clash with Tyndareus,[163] and the main focus in his speech here is in fact not upon his father but rather the misdeeds (real or potential) of women.[164] It is by minimising the importance and even identity of Clytemnestra as mother that Orestes seeks to justify his radical actions against her on behalf of his father.

As the play progresses, and the assembly's guilty verdict is revealed, the ultimate failure of the matricides' various efforts to rework and deploy their father's image and legacy in support of their cause becomes apparent. Nonetheless, Agamemnon does not slip from their thoughts. Instead, the father who had been central to various attempts to save their lives is now the key motivation for a worthy death. Upon news of the verdict, for example, Electra begs Orestes to kill her, lest her death serve as an opportunity for any further insult to their father's house.[165] Orestes himself declares that,

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for example, attributes the creation of sperm to both men and women, and describes conception as a combination of these two fluids (1, 4-5).

[162] 935-7. Arguments from precedent are common in Attic oratory; see e.g. Lys. 1.47, 12.35, 14.12, 22.19-20, 27.7, 30.23; Dem. 50.66, 54.43, 59.112: Carey (1989), p.85.

[163] 564-71.

[164] Lloyd (1992) p.128 notes that Orestes' speech does the complexities of the case no justice, instead offering a simple appeal to misogyny.

[165] 1037-8.

with all other avenues and hopes closed off to them, he and Electra can at least die worthily of their nobility and their paternity: ἀλλ’ εἶ’ ὅπως γενναῖα κἀγαμέμνονος / δράσαντε κατθανούμεθ’ ἀξιώτατα, 1060-1).[166] Once Pylades has suggested vengeance against Helen, Orestes expounds at greater length his understanding of his father's legacy and the role of that legacy in dictating his manner of death (1167-71):

Ἀγαμέμνονός τοι παῖς πέφυχ’, ὃς Ἑλλάδος
ἦρξ’ ἀξιωθείς, οὐ τύραννος, ἀλλ’ ὅμως
ῥώμην θεοῦ τιν’ ἔσχ’· ὃν οὐ καταισχυνῶ
δοῦλον παρασχὼν θάνατον, ἀλλ’ ἐλευθέρως (1170)
ψυχὴν ἀφήσω, Μενέλεων δὲ τείσομαι.

Although Agamemnon's legacy in political life was not enough to save his children, it nonetheless serves as motivation to die in a certain way. Orestes offers a detailed account (specifying, for example, that his father was a chosen, rather than hereditary, ruler of the Greeks),[167] but one which also slips into hyperbole (ῥώμην θεοῦ τιν’ ἔσχ’, 1169).[168] Despite all this great power, however, Agamemnon is dead; his legacy has not saved his children, and now serves only to motivate the manner of their own demise. Nonetheless, the fact that, even in their moment of death, the preoccupation of his children to prove worthy of him nonetheless demonstrates his continued importance. He determined their actions in life – he is a motivation for the matricide, and the justification for the appeal to Menelaus – and now concern to match their father's status informs the manner even of their demise.

[166] De Poli (2013), p.61.
[167] West (1987), p.264.
[168] Willink (1986), *ad loc.*

Indeed, having constantly invoked, reworked and manipulated their late father for others, the young matricides now call upon the deceased Agamemnon himself. The prayer to Agamemnon has antecedents in Aeschylus' *Choephori* and Euripides' own *Electra.*[169] It is perhaps telling that, while in the Aeschylean prayer the children make promises of what they *will* do for Agamemnon, predominantly in the form of ritual honours,[170] here the three avengers remark on what they are already doing or have already done for Agamemnon.[171] On the basis of these services rendered, they make their request for aid now: οὔκουν ὀνείδη τάδε κλυὼν ῥύσηι τέκνα; (1238). This shift in chronology is almost certainly partly a function of the later point in mythical time in which the play takes place, but it also serves to link this prayer to the other uses of Agamemnon in the play. Agamemnon's children have spent the play recalling and recasting the past, particularly the past deeds and experiences of their father, in order to defend their position in the present. They now apply the same process to Agamemnon himself;[172] he is not simply the material for their appeals, but even becomes their addressee. This is perhaps the culmination of their highly instrumental recasting of the figure of Agamemnon throughout the play. This absent father casts an extremely long shadow throughout *Orestes*. He is imagined arguing for and against an act of violent vengeance on the part of his children; he is presented as an everyman whose unhappy fate is a warning to every Argive, and a mighty leader whose illustrious status demands a worthy death from his children; he is invoked as a brother who sacrificed his own daughter and prayed to as a spirit who can save his surviving children. The considerable multiplicity of Agamemnon's presentation here serves as a particularly striking example of the

[169] A. *Cho*. 479ff.; E. *El*. 671ff.; Willink (1986), p.283.
[170] A. *Cho*. 483-8.
[171] e.g. οἵ σέθεν θνήισκουσ' ὕπερ (1232); Ορ. ἔκτεινα μητέρ' ... Ηλ. ἡψάμην δ' ἐγὼ ξίφους ... / Πυ. ἐγὼ δέ γ' ἐπεκέλευσα κἀπέλυσ' ὄκνου. / Ορ. **σοί, πάτερ, ἀρήγων**. Ηλ. οὐδ' ἐγὼ προύδωκά σε. (1235-7).
[172] De Poli (2013), p.60.

complexity and variety which is so often displayed by the fathers of tragedy more generally.

6.2.2. Fatherhood in *Orestes*

The presentation of Agamemnon is highly varied, and carefully modulated to the demands of the situation and the furtherance of his children's cause. However, Agamemnon is only one of many fathers depicted or referred to in the course of the play. They demonstrate an array of perspectives on the nature and duties of fatherhood, which frequently stand in contrast or even conflict with Orestes' presentation of Agamemnon in particular. Despite these differences, the wide array of characters whose identity and motivations are presented with reference to their position as fathers demonstrates the vitality and significance of paternity in the world of the play.

Orestes' attempts to vindicate his actions by invoking his father Agamemnon face their most vigorous opponent in the person of his grandfather Tyndareus, himself father of the murdered Clytemnestra. This is Tyndareus' only extant appearance upon the tragic stage, and it begins with great force.[173] Orestes' impassioned plea to his uncle Menelaus for aid is followed by the Chorus' unexpected announcement of the approach of the elderly Tyndareus, dressed and cropped in mourning for his daughter (μελάμπεπλος / κουρᾶι τε θυγατρὸς πενθίμωι κεκαρμένος, 457-8). The aged Spartan is thus characterised from the outset by his grief as a bereaved father.

[173] Will (1961), p.96.

Crucially, Tyndareus is not only a 'father' to Clytemnestra. Orestes is filled with dread at the prospect of facing the grieving Spartan, because the latter acted, in many ways, as a father to him (459-65):[174]

> ἀπωλόμην, Μενέλαε· Τυνδάρεως ὅδε
> στείχει πρὸς ἡμᾶς, οὗ μάλιστ' αἰδώς μ' ἔχει
> ἐς ὄμματ' ἐλθεῖν τοῖσιν ἐξειργασμένοις.
> καὶ γάρ μ' ἔθρεψε σμικρὸν ὄντα, πολλὰ δὲ
> φιλήματ' ἐξέπλησε, τὸν Ἀγαμέμνονος
> παῖδ' ἀγκάλαισι περιφέρων, Λήδα θ' ἅμα,
> τιμῶντέ μ' οὐδὲν ἧσσον ἢ Διοσκόρω·

Orestes' situation has been complicated immensely by the arrival of Tyndareus. Orestes has invoked his father Agamemnon as a justification for his actions and in support of his plea to Menelaus. but here is suddenly another figure whose behaviour at least bears a striking resemblance to that of a father. Tyndareus provided him with rearing (μ' ἔθρεψε σμικρὸν ὄντα), showered him with affection (πολλὰ δὲ / φιλήματ' ἐξέπλησε), and in short treated him as a son (τιμῶντέ μ' οὐδὲν ἧσσον ἢ Διοσκόρω). There is some sense here of the distinction between biological fatherhood and the actions of fathering - Orestes never loses sight of his identity as Agamemnon's son (τὸν Ἀγαμέμνονος / παῖδ') – but Tyndareus' past treatment of Orestes nonetheless complicates the young man's efforts to establish Agamemnon alone as a focus for his sense of filial duty and a justification for his actions.

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[174] Willink (1986) *ad loc*. remarks upon Orestes' debt of φίλια to Tyndareus for such care.

Tyndareus' words and deeds in the play are ultimately driven by his paternal role, but this does not manifest itself straightforwardly. He has come to Argos to make offerings at the tomb of his daughter Clytemnestra,[175] but his grief and anger at her fate also reveals itself in his virulence towards Orestes in particular.[176] He describes the young man in hostile and strikingly bestial terms (ὁ **μητροφόντης** ὅδε πρὸ δωμάτων **δράκων** / **στίλβει νοσώδεις ἀστραπάς**, **στύγημ'** ἐμόν, 479-80), and is incredulous that Orestes found within himself the strength to go through with the matricide despite Clytemnestra's powerful pleas.[177] Tyndareus repeatedly makes clear that he intends to push for the death penalty for Orestes and his sister as a suitable punishment.[178] Nonetheless, despite his strong emotions over the fate of his daughter, Tyndareus presents his case against Orestes in ostensibly dispassionate and legalistic terms. He condemns Orestes' actions on the grounds that they do not correspond to Greek legal customs and norms, to νόμος:[179] ὅστις τὸ μὲν δίκαιον οὐκ ἐσκέψατο / οὐδ' ἦλθεν ἐπὶ τὸν κοινὸν Ἑλλήνων νόμον (494-5). Orestes should not have murdered his mother, but rather exiled her, since reciprocal violence leads to endless vendetta.[180] Indeed, Tyndareus attributes his concern to promote legal measures over vendetta not simply to personal or familial interests, but to the collective interest of the body politic;[181] vendetta has devastating public consequences (καὶ γῆν καὶ πόλεις ὄλλυσ' ἀεί, 525).

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[175] 610-1.
[176] Will (1961), p.98; Tyndareus speaks of Orestes with "a brutal malice uncommon in Greek literature."
[177] 526-9.
[178] 536, 612-4; cf. 914-5.
[179] Lloyd (1992), pp.114-5. Tyndareus invokes νόμος repeatedly during his time onstage: 487, 495 (quoted above), 503, 523.
[180] 500-2; 507-11. Lloyd (1992), pp.116-7 notes how radically anachronistic this line of argument actually is, regardless of Tyndareus' careful framing of it as reflecting established Greek norms (see esp. 512). Despite its startling content, the specifics of the argument have no significant impact; Orestes makes no reference to the possibility of exile, nor is it discussed by the assembly; Scodel (2012), pp.117-8. Even Tyndareus himself soon strays from his statement here; he calls for the death penalty for Orestes and Electra at 536; Scodel (2012), pp.114-5.
[181] 523-5.

Tyndareus' self-presentation as a public-spirited champion of order and the commonweal is reinforced by an apparent rejection of any partisanship as a father. He makes no effort to defend Clytemnestra's actions,[182] and indeed offers more generalised condemnation of his daughters' conduct (518-22):

> ἐγὼ δὲ μισῶ μὲν γυναῖκας ἀνοσίους,
> πρώτην δὲ θυγατέρ', ἣ πόσιν κατέκτανεν·
> Ἑλένην τε, τὴν σὴν ἄλοχον, οὔποτ' αἰνέσω
> οὐδ' ἂν προσείποιμ'· οὐδὲ σὲ ζηλῶ κακῆς
> γυναικὸς ἐλθόνθ' οὕνεκ' ἐς Τροίας πέδον.

Far from showing any particular leniency or engaging in special pleading, Tyndareus asserts that his rigorous moral standards (ἐγὼ δὲ μισῶ μὲν γυναῖκας ἀνοσίους) apply equally, if not even more so, to his own children (πρώτην δὲ θυγατέρ'). He even goes beyond denunciation of Clytemnestra, the interpretation of whose actions forms an important part of the debate here,[183] to condemn his other daughter[184] Helen and the terrible consequences of her infidelity (i.e. the Trojan War). Tyndareus even concludes his speech by presenting his daughters as separate from other aspects of his life, an unhappy aberration: ἐγὼ δὲ τἄλλα μακάριος πέφυκ' ἀνὴρ / **πλὴν ἐς θυγατέρας**· τοῦτο δ' οὐκ εὐδαιμονῶ (540-1). This line of rhetoric complements the emphasis upon νόμος as a motivation; Tyndareus recalls his paternal connection to Clytemnestra and Helen only to condemn them, and to distance himself from their conduct. It is perhaps telling that he even attributes the law he follows to, literally, 'fathers of old' (πατέρες οἱ πάλαι, 512).

[182] 496-9.
[183] Orestes' speech to Tyndareus, for example, offers lengthy analysis of Clytemnestra's actions and their implications to justify his own response: 557-78.
[184] Helen's unusual 'dual paternity', as a daughter of Tyndareus and Zeus, will be discussed further below.

Fathers establish the νόμος against which they are empowered to judge and condemn even their own children.

Tyndareus is not the only father in *Orestes* to renounce his offspring thus. Pylades reveals to Orestes that he himself has been exiled; his father Strophius banished him for his part in the matricide, condemning him as unholy (ἀνόσιον λέγων, 767, cf. 518). This has been interpreted as demonstrating the weakness of patriarchal values in the play[185] – Strophius will condemn a son to uphold the rights of a mother – but this is not entirely convincing. Strophius' actions seem rather to reinforce Tyndareus' notion of a father as a moral arbiter, able to denounce his children and distance himself from them when they fall short of his expected standards of conduct. This self-presentation on Tyndareus' part is not unmotivated in his speech. In almost his final lines onstage, as he attempts to cajole Menelaus into rejecting the pleas of Orestes and Electra, Tyndareus encourages his son-in-law not to choose impious over moral friends (τοσαῦτ' ἀκούσας ἴσθι, μηδὲ δυσσεβεῖς / ἕληι, παρώσας εὐσεβεστέρους φίλους· 627-8). Tyndareus' account of fatherhood as a position in which moral judgement can overcome the bond of blood and the natural obligation to favour or assist one's children serves to reinforce the analogous behaviour he encourages in Menelaus here, namely to choose one's φίλοι on the basis of moral conduct. This is not Menelaus' instinctive response to the present dilemma; he instead lays initial emphasis upon the importance of kinship ties as a guide to behaviour.[186] Tyndareus' account of paternity not only serves to distance the man himself from the misdeeds of his daughters and strengthen his demands for justice by making him appear a less partial advocate, but also reinforces the line of argument he is using to turn his son-in-law against the matricides.

[185] Zeitlin (1980), p.65.
[186] 486.

Consequently, it is no surprise that this vision of paternal moral standards does not go unchallenged. Orestes strives to implicate Tyndareus as fully as possible in his daughters' actions. When reminding Tyndareus of Clytemnestra's adultery, Orestes emphasises the elderly Spartan's paternal relationship to the guilty party: **ἡ σὴ** δὲ **θυγάτηρ** (μητέρ' αἰδοῦμαι λέγειν) (557).[187] He takes matters still further in a direct accusation against Tyndareus (585-7):

σύ τοι φυτεύσας θυγατέρ', ὦ γέρον, κακὴν
ἀπώλεσάς με· διὰ τὸ κείνης γὰρ θράσος
πατρὸς στερηθεὶς ἐγενόμην μητροκτόνος.

Such a line of attack is not totally unprecedented. Tyndareus' attempts to distance himself from his daughters are perhaps given extra urgency by his close association with their misdeeds; it is as the father of notorious daughters that he is first mentioned in the play.[188] Such a direct imputation of blame on the father for the conduct of his child also has antecedents; in the *Iliad*, Ares attributes the hostility of other gods towards Zeus to the latter having fathered such a child as Athena.[189] The accusation here, however, seems to go one step further. Tyndareus is not simply open to rebuke for having fathered a wayward child, but, in Orestes' line of argument, can be held responsible for the specific deeds of that child and their consequences. If Tyndareus himself attempts to present fathers as distanced from the misdeeds of their children and in a position to pass

[187] Orestes notably lacks this scruple elsewhere in his speech; he refers to Clytemnestra as μήτηρ at 546, 562, 572, 580, and 583.
[188] 249-50. Willink (1986) *ad loc*. notes that the scholion cites Stesichorus fr.223 Page and Hesiod fr.176 M.-W in support of Tyndareus' unhappy paternal reputation here. These fragments between them claim that Tyndareus forgot Aphrodite in sacrifice; the goddess drove both of his daughters to adultery in revenge. The Chorus also refer to Helen patronymically when endorsing Pylades' suggestion that she should die, at 1154.
[189] *Il.* 5.875: West (1987), p.222.

judgement upon them, Orestes aims at the total inverse; he suggests that the father is totally and inextricably accountable for the deeds of his child. We do not have to accept either of these somewhat simplistic positions as entirely true;[190] Orestes' accusation is made very briskly, for instance,[191] and contains a great many causal assumptions, while Tyndareus' efforts to distance himself from his daughters are complicated both by the traditional connection between him and them and by the intensity of his quest for vengeance for Clytemnestra.[192] Nonetheless, these lines of argument demonstrate the potential for even quite a fundamental aspect of fatherhood – how far a father is responsible for the deeds of his children – to be questioned or contested, and with starkly contrasting outcomes depending upon the interests of the interlocutor.

Tyndareus' power, and the ultimate success of his efforts to win over Menelaus, do not fundamentally stem from the quality of his arguments, but rather the potency of his threats.[193] As his closing remarks to Menelaus make clear, he expects his relationship by marriage to that man to carry weight (τοὐμὸν ἔχθος ἐναριθμῆι κῆδός τ' ἐμόν, 627).[194] If Menelaus sides with Orestes and Electra, he is forbidden to return to Sparta (μὴ 'πίβαινε Σπαρτιάτιδος χθονός, 626). Tyndareus is not Menelaus' biological father, but the latter is nonetheless his heir.[195] As such, Tyndareus derives great influence over his son-in-law from his capacity to bestow – or deny – political and economic power by the processes of inheritance. These processes are vulnerable;[196] Orestes himself laments that the condemnation of the citizen body has prevented him from inheriting the

[190] Falkner (1983) p.18 notes the reductionist tendencies of both Tyndareus and Orestes in their debate more generally; the arguments on fatherhood are no exception.
[191] Willink (1986), p.178.
[192] Zeitlin (1980), pp.64-5.
[193] Porter (1994), p.73.
[194] West (1987) *ad loc*. Griffith (2009), pp.291-2 notes the considerable impact the play draws from the double meaning of κῆδος as both 'care' and 'marriage bond'.
[195] In contrast to Homer, where Menelaus is clearly ruler of Sparta in his own right by the time of the Trojan War (e.g. *Il.* 2.581-90); the precise arrangement between Tyndareus and his son-in-law is never made explicit in *Orestes*.
[196] Griffith (2009), pp.285-6.

throne from Agamemnon.[197] The threat to his inheritance sways, or at least is taken as swaying, Menelaus' decision; he never explicitly concedes it, but Orestes certainly interprets his ultimate rejection of their plea as reflecting his eagerness not to fall foul of Tyndareus,[198] a judgement generally accepted by scholarly readers.[199] Tyndareus thus employs his position as a father-figure (although not a biological father), and the attendant power over the process of inheritance, as his most effective weapon in the fight to punish Clytemnestra's killers. His manipulations of various factors of his paternal role demonstrate the flexibility of fatherhood as a concept, and reinforce his commitment to that role; he does all this to avenge his daughter.

As discussed previously, Orestes and Electra at first pin their hopes for salvation upon the same Menelaus over whom Tyndareus can exert such leverage, because of the former's fraternal tie to Agamemnon. When they are disappointed in these hopes, a different scheme to obtain (or rather, extort) Menelaus' aid emerges, this time centred upon exploiting his position and feelings as a father.[200] After the assembly's guilty verdict has been announced, Pylades suggests to Orestes that murdering Helen would be a suitable vengeance for Menelaus' betrayal;[201] should the attempt fail, they will set the palace alight and risk all in a glorious last stand.[202] Orestes embraces the suggestion, and is willing to hazard the attempt whether it brings a worthy death or unexpected salvation.[203] At this point, Electra intercedes. She informs Orestes of the presence in

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[197] 437-8.
[198] e.g. 752.
[199] e.g. Porter (1994), pp.72-3; Willink (1986), p.192; West (1987), pp.223-4.
[200] Euripides had already depicted the relationship of Menelaus and his daughter Hermione in *Andromache*, although the Spartan princess is a far less agreeable character in that work.
[201] 1105.
[202] 1149-52.
[203] 1168-74.

Argos of Menelaus'[204] daughter Hermione,[205] and encourages her brother to take the young woman hostage.[206] Thus, even after the murder of Helen, Orestes can use the threat of violence against Menelaus' daughter to compel his uncle to help them escape to safety; if Menelaus doesn't co-operate, Orestes will kill his child as well.[207]

Unlike the death of Helen, that of Hermione has no value in itself; Orestes and Electra demonstrate no particular animus against her. It is instead a bargaining counter in a process of negotiation,[208] and in this respect recalls Orestes' invocation of the death of another young woman, Iphigenia, in a similarly instrumental fashion earlier in the play.[209] Indeed, this is far from the only point of similarity between the sacrifice of Iphigenia and the prospective murder of Hermione. The language Electra uses for the killing of Hermione - σὺ σφάζε παρθένου δέρην (1199) – is that of sacrifice as well as murder.[210] The hostage-taking and threat to murder/'sacrifice' a young woman thus casts Orestes in the position of repeating this infamous action of his father Agamemnon.[211] This is perhaps not even simply a repetition, but a 'correction' of sorts. A famous complaint of Clytemnestra in tragedy is that Agamemnon sacrificed his own daughter when Menelaus' would have made a much more logical victim.[212] Orestes' 'replaying' of the sacrifice thus amends this flaw in the original scheme, but this in turn serves to contrast Agamemnon's conduct as father with that of Menelaus. The expectation is that

[204] Technically, Electra introduces Hermione as Helen's daughter ('Ἑλένης … θυγατέρ', 1183); one wonders if introducing the young woman by reference to her hated mother (even though it is the identity of her father which is relevant for the plan) serves to make Electra's violent suggestion more palatable.
[205] 1181-4.
[206] 1189.
[207] 1191-9.
[208] Griffith (2009), pp.295-6.
[209] 658-9, discussed above.
[210] σφάζειν is particularly the verb for the killing of sacrificial victims; *LSJ* s.v. A. II. Euripides uses the term frequently of human sacrifice - e.g. *Hcld.* 408, 490, 493, 502; *Hec.* 24, 188, 221, 433, 571; (of the sacrifice of Iphigenia herself) *IT* 8, 20, 563; *Pho.* 913, 933, 964, 1010 – as well as metaphorically; see e.g. Foley (1985), Henrichs (2000).
[211] Zeitlin (1980), p.67.
[212] S. *El.* 536-41. Orestes' comment to Menelaus that he need not kill Hermione (659) also arguably evokes this possible alternative sequence of events.

the latter will not be able to endure any threat to the life of his child; Agamemnon had no such qualms.

The siblings' expectations of Menelaus prove well-founded, up to a point. He approaches the palace and demands that his followers break down the doors so that he may save his child.[213] Although Electra proposed the threat to Hermione as a gambit for negotiations, Orestes repeatedly and explicitly threatens Menelaus' daughter with death without issuing any particular terms.[214] This has a powerful effect on Menelaus himself. He bluffs at first - κτεῖν'· ὡς κτανών γε τῶνδέ μοι δώσεις δίκην (1597) – but soon moves to pleading: Με. ἄπαιρε θυγατρὸς φάσγανον. Ορ. ψευδὴς ἔφυς. / Με. ἀλλὰ κτενεῖς μου θυγατέρ'; Ορ. οὐ ψευδὴς ἔτ' εἶ. (1608-9).[215] Orestes' imputation of dishonesty to Menelaus works in both an immediate sense (Menelaus has swiftly abandoned his earlier bluff) and more generally; Orestes believes him fundamentally untrustworthy.[216] If taken in this latter sense, we see Orestes using Menelaus' character as a justification for threatening Hermione. Menelaus' subsequent question can perhaps be taken as challenging this connection between his own behaviour and the threat to his daughter: is Orestes really going to kill Hermione because her father is false? Taken in this light, the scene provides a counterpart to the conflicting views of paternal standards found in the exchange of Orestes and Tyndareus. There the question was how far a father could be blamed for the action of his child; here we see contrasting views on the rightness or otherwise of punishing the child for the actions of the father. Menelaus does not attempt to deny Orestes' accusation. His concern is to save his child, and he asks how to achieve

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[213] 1561-3. Willink (1986) deletes 1563-4 to salvage 1565-6, believing that such a deletion alleviates the various objections aimed at 1564-6; Willink (1986), p.341. Neither West (1987) nor Diggle (1994) follow this, instead retaining 1563 and deleting 1564-6; I follow their ordering.
[214] μέλλω κτανεῖν σου θυγατέρ' (1578); παῖδα δὲ κτενῶ σέθεν (1586).
[215] The sequence of 1600-17 is disputed. West (1987) follows the manuscript ordering, but Willink (1986) pp.345-7, after commenting on the difficultiestransposes 1600-7 to after 1612; Diggle (1994) also accepts this reordering, and this is the sequence I have followed.
[216] Willink (1986), p.345.

this; Orestes demands more effective intervention amongst the Argives to prevent the death penalty and allow the young man to take his throne.[217] Despite his concern for Hermione, Menelaus is notably not immediately receptive to these terms – amongst other things, he imagines with horror Orestes performing the ritual functions of a ruler[218] – and demonstrates considerable self-pity[219] before finally seeming to relent: ἔχεις με.(1617). This, however, is not enough; for reasons which are not made entirely clear,[220] Orestes orders the firing of the house as a prelude to the murder of Hermione.[221] Menelaus' fears have come true; Orestes' distrust of the father serves as motivation for the murder of his daughter (prevented only by the intervention of Apollo). Although the initial plan was to invoke Menelaus' paternal feelings as a route to salvation, the ultimate course of action is to exploit them as part of a drastic revenge. Both this initial conception and the ultimate decision draw their efficacy from the clear strength of Menelaus' paternal feeling; it is strong enough to motivate and to torment him.[222]

It is worth noting briefly that, although the play (and this discussion) are dominated by the depiction of fathers from within the extended Tantalid royal family, the strength of paternal feeling at all levels of Argive society is made clear. Orestes' confidence in arguments based on filial piety and the importance of avenging a father

[217] 1610-1601 (Willink transposes 1608-12 to follow 1599).
[218] 1602-3.
[219] 1615, 1616.
[220] Willink (1986), p.349 does note that, while Menelaus has not precluded co-operation, he has been hesitant to commit to it; Orestes' scepticism is perhaps not entirely unfounded.
[221] 1618-20.
[222] Although the sacrifice of Iphigenia is the most obvious analogue for Orestes' threat against Hermione, there is a further antecedent from within Tantalid family history, namely the terrible banquet of children prepared by Atreus for Thyestes. The conflict between these brothers is referred to repeatedly in the play - 11-4, 807-18, 996-1010: Kyriakou (1998), pp.287-8 – and provides a precedent for the murder of children as a means for revenge; although Orestes' threat to Hermione begins as a gambit for negotiation, he has ultimately resolved to kill her to spite Menelaus before Apollo's intervention prevents this. Both the banquet and the hostage situation derive their effect, ultimately, from the strength of paternal feeling and the consequent pain when it is wounded.

was, ultimately, misplaced, as discussed above, but there are nonetheless other indications that fatherhood is valued and important amongst the citizens more generally. This is made clear by the treatment of Helen within the work. When advocating the death of Menelaus' wife, Pylades' argument in favour of her murder include the devastation her misdeeds have wrought on the families of Greece (1134-6):

νῦν δ' ὑπὲρ ἁπάσης Ἑλλάδος δώσει δίκην,
ὧν πατέρας ἔκτειν', ὧν δ' ἀπώλεσεν τέκνα, (1135)
νύμφας τ' ἔθηκεν ὀρφανὰς ξυναόρων.

The men for whose deaths Helen is held responsible are either fathers themselves or leave behind fathers (and mothers) to mourn them. Pylades is in fact quite vindicated in his expectation of widespread support for the death of Helen; the Chorus, echoing Pylades' comment (ὑπὲρ ἁπάσης Ἑλλάδος), remark that she brought misery to all Greece (δακρύοισι γὰρ Ἑλλάδα πᾶσαν ἔπλησε <—>, 1363). Even Helen herself is afraid to go beyond the palace into the city, and she specifies the *fathers* of the deceased as the reason for her fear: δέδοικα πατέρας τῶν ὑπ' Ἰλίωι νεκρῶν (102). Although Orestes' invocation of the importance of avenging *his* father specifically may not meet with the popular support he hoped, the Argive, and indeed Greek populace more generally are understood to place considerable importance upon the bonds of father and child, and consequently expected to seek vengeance either for or as fathers themselves.

Helen never does meet with violent punishment, however. She is spirited away from the swords of Orestes and Pylades,[223] and the explanation for this reveals that the

[223] 1494-9.

prevalence and prominence of fatherhood within the play is not limited even to the mortal plane. In Apollo's remarkable intervention at the play's conclusion,[224] the god outlines Helen's fate.[225] Despite Helen's relatively brief appearance in the drama, Apollo devotes almost as much time to resolving her situation as that of Orestes,[226] and the guiding force in her fate is her position as daughter of Zeus. Zeus ordered her saved,[227] and Zeus' paternity is sufficient to explain her ensuing immortality (**Ζηνὸς** γὰρ οὖσαν **ζῆν** νιν ἄφθιτον χρεών, 1635).[228] This account of Zeus' actions as Helen's father can be contrasted with the behaviour of Tyndareus. Tyndareus denounces Helen's conduct and distances himself from it, while Apollo is able to reveal that the Trojan War was born of a divine scheme to reduce the human population;[229] Helen was entirely innocent.[230] Given that this tradition of the war's origins often specifies Zeus' particular involvement,[231] we might even feel that Helen, who is repeatedly condemned within the play as responsible for the many lives lost at Troy,[232] has in fact been blamed for her (divine) father's actions, in contrast to Tyndareus being blamed by Orestes for his daughters' actions. The contrast between Tyndareus and Zeus as fathers is reinforced by the reference to the Dioscuri. They are first mentioned by Orestes as he reminisces about the care he received from Tyndareus.[233] Whereas there, the Dioscuri stood as the benchmark for the distinctly human care Tyndareus could offer – feeding, dandling and so forth – they appear here as the counterparts to Helen's divinisation (Κάστορί τε Πολυδεύκει τ' ἐν αἰθέρος πτυχαῖς /

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[224] 1625-90.
[225] 1629-37.
[226] Papadimitropoulos (2011), p.502.
[227] 1633-4.
[228] Willink (1986), *ad loc*., noting the word-play.
[229] 1639-42.
[230] Willink (1986), p.353 argues for transposing 1638-42 after 1663, but West (1987) and Diggle (1994) delete 1638 and leave the other lines in their original position.
[231] See e.g. *Cypria* fr.1; West (1987), p.292.
[232] e.g. 102, 1134-6.
[233] 462-5, discussed above.

σύνθακος ἔσται, 1636-7). Tyndareus (and Leda) may have honoured the Dioscuri (τιμῶντέ, 1465)[234], but Zeus has made them gods.

Divine fatherhood does not always have such favourable consequences. At the play's opening, Electra refers to Tantalus, the founder of her line: ὁ γὰρ μακάριος (κοὐκ ὀνειδίζω τύχας) / Διὸς πεφυκώς, ὡς λέγουσι, Τάνταλος (4-5). Tantalus' ultimate fate is far less obviously 'blessed' than that of Helen; he is tormented by a threatening rock in the underworld, for the crime of unbridled talk amongst the gods despite being a mortal (ἄνθρωπος ὤν, 8). Divine fatherhood is not a guaranteed boon; Zeus does not intervene to save all his children. We may find the decision of which child to save a little arbitrary; unlike her counterpart in *Helen*, who was conspicuously virtuous and free of any wrongdoing,[235] Helen in *Orestes* follows the more established model and is not obviously innocent. She attributes her voyage to Troy rather vaguely to "a divine madness" (θεομανεῖ πότμωι, 79), and her apparent vanity in offering only the very tips of her hair prompts Electra to dub her, rather scornfully, "the same woman as before" (ἡ πάλαι γυνή).[236] It seems that Zeus, in contrast to the ostensibly impartial moral judgement of Tyndareus, will intervene to save children of his who do wrong in accordance with his overarching plans.

The gods also ultimately support the cause of Orestes. As Apollo reveals, Orestes will endure only a brief exile for matricide, before winning his trial in Athens through divine intervention.[237] Apollo explicitly confirms Orestes in his inheritance of Agamemnon's throne,[238] and accepts full responsibility for the matricide after all: τὰ πρὸς πόλιν δὲ τῶιδ' ἐγὼ θήσω καλῶς, / ὅς νιν φονεῦσαι μητέρ' ἐξηνάγκασα (1664-5).

[234] Technically, here they are honouring Orestes, but *no less* than they honoured the Discouri.
[235] E. *Hel*. 16-67.
[236] Wright (2006), pp.36-7.
[237] 1643-52.
[238] 1660.

Apollo does not justify his actions here; unlike *Eumenides*, it is left to Orestes to invoke the famous argument about the primacy of fathers.[239] Apollo also does not seem to enforce the doctrine of paternal priority more generally upon the human sphere; he notes that Neoptolemus will be killed while trying to exact recompense from Apollo for his father Achilles,[240] and arguably usurps one of Menelaus' traditional roles as father in choosing Orestes as a husband for Hermione.[241] Although Zeus' actions with regard to Helen are motivated by paternal sentiment, the gods of *Orestes* are not presented as upholders of mortal patriarchal norms more generally; they instead apply an idiosyncratic and rather partial attitude to paternity.[242] In this respect, they are far from alone in the play.

Orestes is a play which is full of fathers and significantly concerned with fatherhood. From the anonymous vengeful fathers of the Argive citizen body to Zeus on high, fatherhood matters to countless characters within the play; it informs and motivates their actions and their utterances. There is considerable room for variation and even conflict in how both fatherhood as a whole and individual fathers – particularly Agamemnon – are to be represented and understood. Nonetheless, the variety and frequent inconsistency of conceptions of paternity found within the play reflect the breadth and complexity of the institution in the tragic genre more generally, but they do not undermine its importance.

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[239] See 551-3, discussed above.
[240] 1656-7.
[241] 1653-4.
[242] This is hardly surprising; see chapter 5 for a full discussion of the emphatically different conduct of gods as fathers to mortals in tragedy.

6.3. Conclusion

The fathers of tragedy are intensely varied, combining so many attributes and activities that even the same individual can be assessed very differently by different characters. The many distinctive interpretations of the nature and responsibilities of fatherhood itself further reflect the elasticity and complexity of the role. Although, as we have seen over the preceding chapters, this complexity can bring challenges and even disasters to individuals attempting to reconcile fatherhood with other roles and responsibilities, it also presents an opportunity. The highly variegated nature of tragic fathers and fatherhood can be exploited by other characters in drama to advance their own agenda or dispute that of another. These disputes over the paternal are hotly contested and rarely decisive, but their prevalence in the genre underlines the *importance* of fatherhood in tragedy. These arguments are worth having because fathers and fatherhood matter, and can serve as a powerful motivation for the individual or as effective persuasion for others around them. Fatherhood is worth contesting because the contradictions, challenges and inadequacies of this role and the men who fulfil it in no way undermine its central importance both on- and offstage.

Conclusion

In concluding this thesis, we must seek unity in diversity. The fathers we have discussed are weak and mighty, worn with age and flourishing in their prime, rulers and subjects, heroes, exiles, and gods. This vast array of roles and responsibilities clashes extensively with the demands of fatherhood in the genre, leading to innumerable conflicts. The outcomes of these conflicts are themselves highly varied: fathers may ultimately prioritise other roles over their paternity, as Agamemnon does at Aulis; suborn all other concerns to their fatherly duty like Creon in *Phoenician Women*; or indeed proceed with scant attention to the potential or actual conflict between their many responsibilities, like Oedipus when he curses his sons with little regard for the consequences for his dutiful daughters or the city of Thebes as a whole. This breadth of possibilities underlines the considerable dramatic potential of fatherhood and its challenges, born of the variety of fathers, dilemmas and decisions available to the poets of the genre. Not only is tragedy rich in powerful instances of conflict within the family, but also, as this thesis demonstrates, in conflict within individual family members, as the tragic father's full array of relationships, responsibilities and roles bring themselves to bear. The capacity for considerable disagreement and variation in the presentation both of specific father-figures and fatherhood more generally in the genre only reinforces this tendency to conflict.

The complex and frequently conflicted nature of tragic fatherhood reflects its classical Athenian context. As discussed in the introduction, Athenian fathers were expected to fulfil a wide array of functions within both their family and the public life of the democracy; they did not always prove equal to the task. In this light, the conflict between, for instance, public and private duty faced by Agamemnon, Creon and Oedipus

proves a more extreme but not totally alien counterpart to the struggles of many in these plays' original audiences. Tragic accounts of fatherhood do more than simply reflect contemporary social issues, however. No roving hero or immortal god ever took their seat in the Theatre of Dionysus, and yet, as we have seen, heroic and divine fathers such as Heracles, Zeus and Apollo are often important to events upon the tragic stage. In these works, the juxtaposition of something as everyday as fatherhood with beings so much further up the cosmological scale has a deliberately jarring effect. The tragic depictions of Heracles' fatherhood in some ways 'disenchant' myth as tragedy so often does;[1] we are confronted with the incongruity of so extreme a figure in a conventional domestic setting and the extensive suffering this produces for all concerned. Tragic accounts of divine fatherhood underscore that the intense anthropomorphism of Greek religious belief does little to offset the disquietingly vast gulf between mortal and divine. For a classical audience, tragedy's deployment of conflicted fatherhood thus serves as an opportunity for reflection upon one's position in both the city and the cosmos.[2]

The number and variety of fathers in the genre justify this thesis' focus upon them but prevent it from being comprehensive in its coverage; a natural next step in research on this topic would be to examine these remaining characters and assess their adherence to or deviation from the conflicted fatherhood model.[3] Subsequently, there is room for an examination of classical Athenian texts beyond tragedy in terms of role conflict, particularly that of men. Classical Athens was an intensely patriarchal society which operated on fundamental assumptions of male superiority, and yet this thesis has found numerous examples in this society's literature of, effectively, the shortcomings of male characters in fulfilling their responsibilities. This is sometimes powerfully contrasted with

[1] Parker (2005), pp.140-1.
[2] See e.g. Pelling (1997a), esp. pp.224-35, on tragedy as an opportunity for interrogating Athenian norms.
[3] Euripides' *Andromache*, featuring as it does three important father-figures – the absent Neoptolemus, the obnoxious Menelaus, and the aged Peleus – would be an interesting place to start.

the commitment of their female counterparts.[4] Is this all simply a reflection of the tragic genre's purposes? Do 'pity and fear' or 'the tragic' require failure and insoluble dilemmas, particularly for male figures who are otherwise endowed with power and agency? Or does this reflect a wider Athenian anxiety? Tragedy is not the only Athenian literature to depict the disjunction of various spheres and responsibilities. Aristophanes' *Wasps*, for example, depicts the strife which arises between father and son thanks to the former's obsessive participation in the great democratic institution of the lawcourts;[5] the protagonist of *Acharnians* despairs of Athenian foreign policy and makes a private peace with Sparta for himself and his family.[6] These are comic fantasies, but it is worth considering whether, in line with the tragic evidence discussed in this thesis, they could be taken as reflective of authentic contemporary concerns. Classical Athenian society made extensive demands upon its men. An ideology of male supremacy including expectations of civic participation, extensive military activity, and active control within the household brings great responsibility in both public and private spheres, and requires extremely (perhaps even implausibly) capable men to enact it.[7] This is naturally a speculative hypothesis for now, but a broader examination of Athenian texts with particular attention to instances of role conflict or role strain on the part of male characters would go some way towards supporting or disproving it.

Given this thesis' focus upon Greek tragedy, it is natural for democratic Athens to dominate our thoughts, but disharmony between political and familial affairs does not

[4] For example, the contrast between Agamemnon's ultimate abandonment of his paternal responsibilities and Clytemnestra's surprising devotion as both a wife and mother in *IA*, see above, esp. ch.2.2.4.
[5] Biles & Olson (2015) pp. xlvii-lxii. Part of the son's solution to his father's mania for jury service and the ensuing conflict between them is to bring that public institution within the home; one of the household dogs is put on trial (760-1008).
[6] Ar. *Ach*. 130-3. On the political implications of Dicaeopolis' actions, within and beyond the play, see Olson (2002), pp.xl-lii.
[7] There were certainly citizens who were *unwilling* to fulfil all the expectations and obligations laid upon them, particularly in public life; see e.g. Carter (1986); Christ (2006).

stop at the Attic border. In Thucydides' famed account of the Corcyrean civil war,[8] the excesses of the great purge include fathers murdering their sons, and ties of kinship are counted as secondary to those of political factionalism.[9] Many of the clearest conflicts between domestic and public duty we have seen in this thesis affect the kings of tragedy,[10] and in Athens' great rival Sparta monarchy was not simply a feature of the mythical past but an enduring component of the constitution throughout (and beyond) the classical period.[11] This was a hereditary monarchy; the two kings had to belong to one of two royal houses, the Agiads and the Eurypontids, and the process of succession was determined by strict rules in which birth played a central role.[12] For example, the Spartan king Anaxandridas had two sons; Dorieus was considered the outstanding man of his generation (τῶν ἡλίκων / πάντων πρῶτος, Hdt. 5.42), but the throne instead went to his mad[13] brother Cleomenes, because the succession was determined according to age rather than 'in accordance with excellence' (κατ' ἀνδραγαθίην, 5.42).[14] These succession laws could also be manipulated in pursuit of personal vendetta or political goals; the same Cleomenes conspired to have his co-ruler Demaratus deposed by having the latter (falsely) declared illegitimate and thus ejected from office.[15] Such events provide a historical counterpart to the succession conflicts which proved so damaging to tragic Thebes,[16] while the conduct of various Spartan kings provides interesting comparative

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[8] 3.81-3; see Hornblower (1991), pp.477-9, Macleod (1983).
[9] 3.81.5, 3.82.6. On the echo here of an earlier depiction of social and moral disorder at Hes. *WD* 174-201, esp. 182-6, see Edmunds (1975) pp.82-8, esp. p.86.
[10] We have of course examined Agamemnon (ch.2), Creon, and Oedipus (ch.3) in such terms.
[11] See Carlier (1984), pp.240-324 for a thorough account of Spartan monarchy.
[12] Carlier (1984), pp.240-1.
[13] Or so Herodotus says; Griffiths (1989) demonstrates the many elements of folktale and motif in the account of Cleomenes and his madness.
[14] cf. Hdt. 5.39, where Cleomenes' succession is explicitly attributed to birth rather than excellence (οὐ κατ' ἀνδραγαθίην … ἀλλὰ κατὰ γένος)
[15] Hdt. 6.64-70. This remarkable narrative includes one of very few serious allegations of corruption at the Pythia (6.66; see Hornblower & Pelling (2017) *ad loc*.) and a dramatic encounter between Demaratus and his mother as she swears to his legitimacy and explains the variable length of human gestation; Hornblower & Pelling (2017), pp.177-81.
[16] See ch. 3.3.

material for considering tragic depictions of the conflict between paternal and public duty. To name but one example from the early fourth century, Agesilaus' controversial intervention to prevent the execution of the father of his own son's beloved was presented as a response to his son's entreaties.[17] A more thoroughgoing examination of such material would provide a broader context for the anxiety over role conflict which we have identified in Greek tragedy and hypothesised in Athenian society.

These are all possible avenues for future research. In the meantime, we are left with a clear picture of the prevalence and prominence of conflicted fatherhood in Greek tragedy.

[17] Plut. *Ages*. 25; X. *Hell*. 5.4.25-34, although he presents his hero Agesilaus' calculation of Sparta's own interest as playing a significant part in his verdict (32-3); see Cartledge (1987), pp.136-8 on the incident.

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