The Drama of Scholarship

Versioning and Substitution in Euripides' *Iphigenia at Aulis* and *Alcestis*

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Henner Petin

Corpus Christi College

Faculty of Classics

University of Oxford

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Henner Petin, 24th September 2024

Contents

Abstract

The topic of this thesis is two plays of Euripides, the *Iphigenia at Aulis* (*IA*) and the *Alcestis*, together with their modern scholarly histories. Interested in questions of contingency and arbitrariness, this thesis aims to offer a new approach that combines close readings of the plays themselves with a historical analysis of the problems and discourses which have emerged in response to them. In studying plot and scholarship together, we find that issues of contingency in the plays, of versioning in the *IA* and of substitution in the *Alcestis*, are connected to the scholarly debates that dealt with the plays as objects of research. This argument is made across two parts, each one consisting of one chapter which offers an interpretation of a play and one which analyses historic and recent scholarship dealing with that play.

The contribution of this thesis is threefold. Two of its aims pertain directly to the sources of the study: the scholarly texts and the plays. On the one hand, I revisit important moments in the genealogy of two important issues for Euripidean criticism, textual and genre-criticism, as these emerged and were developed over the course of the last 200 years. On the other hand, I offer new interpretations of both plays, which contribute to a Euripidean poetics of the arbitrary. Independently, I show that the plays were a repository of language and themes for the formation of the scholarly problems and discourses. The third aim, therefore, is to make the case for a new heuristic which combines plot and scholarship and from which the overall argument of the thesis is made: we should consider the historically contingent but tenacious problems of textual and genre-criticism in Euripides as a continuation and mirroring of the themes and language which the plays themselves have provided.

Introduction

In his 1989 Sather Lectures, Bernard Williams made an argument for the value of ancient philosophy and literature in our modern world, clearly qualifying the place of tragedy in this study of ethics: "among the tragedians, the one who embodies in the most powerful and challenging form the ideas of action and responsibility that are in question is Sophocles."[1] Williams' point is this: for resonances with questions about freedom, necessity, and responsibility, we do not simply go to any Greek tragedy, but preferably to a specific type of Sophoclean tragedy.[2] The reason, as Williams says, is that plays like the *Oedipus Tyrannus* are "shaped" by a sense of necessity.[3] If, like Williams, one is interested in the experience of inevitability and in the questions it throws up about responsible and free action, Sophocles' canonical tragedies are great texts through which to think.

But the value of tragedy for those willing to think with and through it is of course not limited to a few Sophoclean plays, which "from around 1800 to the present [...] have been the touchstones of tragedy".[4] We now know that "the idealist philosophy of the tragic has obstructed our capacity to respond intelligently to most of this [other] tragic repertoire", which includes Euripides as well.[5] Thus, in further delineating and explaining what he calls

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1 Williams 1993, 17.

2 Building on the ideas of Szondi 1961, crucial contributions to this include Most 2000 and Billings 2014, who argues, 76, "that Greek tragedy was a privileged vehicle for the investigation of freedom within history", but also showed, 226, that "the assumption that *tragedy presents a form of meaning*" is actually "an idealist discovery or invention" (emphasis by Billings). For the purposes of Classicists, Silk 1996 compiled reflections on disentangling the texts from conceptions of the genre's essence. For an assessment of the history of Sophoclean criticism in particular and its importance for scholarship on tragedy, see the introductory chapter to Goldhill, Hall, and Easterling 2009.

3 Williams 1993, 130-132. The centrality of Oedipus to the historic conception of 'the tragic' is apparent also in Billings 2014, esp. 11.

4 Billings 2014, 12, speaking of the *Oedipus Tyranus* and *Antigone* specifically.

5 Hoxby 2015, 6-7, who specifically deals with Early Modern tragedy, showing the plays and discussions of this period to be an important corrective to the idealist concept of the genre.

the "Sophoclean effect", Williams eventually draws up a contrast with Euripides, whose "refusal of that effect is marked above all by his abandoning these expressions of a shaping necessity, and subjecting his audience as much as his characters to the uncertainties of an unnerving chance."[6] It is no exaggeration that "Euripidean arbitrariness" still causes his drama to fall outside of our most dominant conception of tragedy. Rehabilitation from this misconception was for a long time, if not continues to be, the professed task of scholars who work on Euripides.[7]

The topic of this thesis is two plays of Euripides, the *Iphigenia at Aulis* (*IA*) and the *Alcestis*, together with their modern scholarly histories. More specifically, it is prompted by and interested in questions of the arbitrary. If Sophoclean tragedy historically invited and sustained reflection on how to make sense of and cope with a perceived inevitability of fate, then Euripidean tragedy does the same for events that appear to be contingent, if not sometimes arbitrary. This gives rise to the broad hypothesis underlying the present dissertation: when Euripides is properly brought into the picture, Greek tragedy has as much to say about coping with the arbitrary as it has taught us about coping with necessity and inevitability.

We therefore know that Euripides' perceived divergence from our dominant model of the genre is really the product of modern intellectual history.[8] This has brought us a long way already in rehabilitating his drama from its history of disparagement. While early examples of this still held his plays up against the measure of a certain idealist model of tragedy, the later 20th century has brought significant advances and shown a number of ways in which Euripides and his drama can be characterised *ex positivo* rather than defined *ex negativo* against Aeschylean or Sophoclean models.[9] Thus, scholars have turned with a fresh mind to Euripidean drama to learn about its poetics, about its important and recurring themes as well as its characteristic style.[10]

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[6] Williams 1993, 148.

[7] Williams 1993, 150. On historic interest in Euripides, see Billings 2014, 13-14, with notes.

[8] On the disparagement, see Ernst Behler 1986 and Henrichs 2004.

[9] E.g. Grube 1941.

[10] Themes that have been identified as particularly important are gender, politics, religion, and philosophy, which have been studied individually or in connection by Wohl 1998, Rabinowitz 1993, Mendelsohn 2002, Foley 1985, Gregory 1991, and Hose 2008. These studies also reflect that interest in Euripides increased with the influence of literary theory in classical scholarship. His style and language have been studied in more depth byVellacott 1975 and Mastronarde 2010.

A useful initial map of the reappraisals of Euripides in the late 20th and early 21st century can be sketched by contrasting the view that his drama marked a deliberate departure from established conventions with a more dynamic and flexible conception of tragedy for which the surviving Euripidean corpus is, far from being an outlier, actually the most representative example. As the most thorough examination of these questions at its time, Ann Michelini's 1987 *Euripides and the Tragic Tradition* argued that "Euripidean drama can be defined in virtually every aspect by the rubric 'non-Sophoclean'", because the younger poet refused to follow the norms of his dominant predecessor and sought, through stylistic innovation, to surprise his traditionalist audience.[11] Crucially, Michelini's approach does not amount to a vindication of the idealist disparagment of Euripides and his aesthetic value. Rather, she makes the appealing case that the puzzling features of his drama "are keys to the aesthetic structure of the plays" and that when it comes to interpretation "a grasp of the incongruous will prove to be a valuable aid in threading the maze of the dramas".[12]

Not all scholars agree that Euripides can be considered as an unusual or innovative tragedian, drawing particular attention to the transmission history of his texts. The case for Euripides' plays as the most representative example of the genre has recently been made by William Marx in his 2022 *The Tomb of Oedipus*.[13] Peeling away modern clichés of what makes a tragedy tragic, Marx illustrates an important point about Euripides' so-called alphabetical plays, whose survival we owe to chance rather than ancient or Byzantine selection criteria. As a "control sample", this group (which includes the *IA*) is arguably a more adequate and neutral representation of the ancient genre than the Byzantine selections which were based on (still little understood) ancient predilections.[14] What this means for scholars of these plays has been illustrated by Matthew Wright in his 2005 *Euripides' Escape-Tragedies*.[15] Wright also rejects the anachronistic view of what constitutes a typical tragedy, a view which historically led to the assignment of other generic labels (e.g. 'romance' or

[11] Michelini 1987, quote at 64. Her study looks back to much of the important work on Euripides in the 20th century and gives an insightful summary of it, 3-51. I do not survey again all the lines of inquiry here.
[12] Michelini 1987, 67-68.
[13] Marx 2022.
[14] Marx 2022, 41-87, quote at 77.
[15] Wright 2005.

'tragicomedy') to some of Euripides' plays, including the *Helen* and *Iphigenia at Tauris* of Wright's study. Instead, he strengthens a definition which is detached entirely from any conceptions of 'the tragic' and derives instead from the actual ancient performance context which unites all of the surviving plays: tragedies are plays which were once produced for the *City Dionysia* in ancient Athens.[16] In this sense, no feature of any of Euripides' supposed 'melodramas', 'tragicomedies' or 'romance' plays, is — in the ancient sense — anything other than a tragedy.

Irrespective of how innovative one thinks Euripides was as a tragedian compared to Aeschylus and Sophocles, the extant plays merit attention on their own terms. This has been proven by many new and enlightening readings over the past decades. Interpretations of the *IA* and *Alcestis* will be more fully considered in their respective chapters, but a few studies have been especially important for my work in this dissertation, along with those just mentioned.[17] Anne Pippin Burnett's 1971 *Catastrophe Survived* showed the way for studying together Euripides' more formally and stylistically unusual plays as pursuing a coherent dramatic programme.[18] Burnett drew up a taxonomy of different plots which Euripides deployed in "formal experimentation", while all the plays are still united by "a divine pity and purpose that can, when it is ready, turn disaster into bliss."[19] As such, Burnett's study provides concrete language to pin down the unusual nature of these plays and explains the otherwise vague sense of their 'happy ending' as a result of Euripides' particular technique.

Thinking further about form in these plays, Victoria Wohl's 2015 *Euripides and the Politics of Form* also starts from the idea that many Euripidean tragedies "are, for lack of a better word, odd", but suggests reading their unusual dramatic form as having political meaning.[20] Submitting that "ideology is not something that aesthetic form contains, [...] but something that it *does*", Wohl shows how the *psykhagōgia* of Euripidean drama makes the audience experience various emotions which belong to the political world of classical Athens.[21] The

[16] Wright 2005, 17 and 18-43 with an elaboration of his definition.
[17] Other important monographs which have shaped my own thinking throughout the dissertation are those of Mastronarde 2010, Foley 1985, Rabinowitz 1993.
[18] Burnett 1971.
[19] Burnett 1971, 14.
[20] Wohl 2015, 1.
[21] Wohl 2015, 7.

considerable power which her argument attributes to the "formal peculiarities of Euripidean drama" is captured by the example of the *Orestes*, which Wohl reads as actually creating "the affective and cognitive framework in which the future [civil war of 404, 4 years after the performance of *Orestes*] can unfold".[22]

Finally, my work on Euripides reflects the influence of Arthur Verrall's *Euripides the Rationalist* of 1895, a perhaps unexpected addition to this list.[23] This was an important study for overcoming and debasing the historic disparagement of Euripides by explaining the perceived discontinuities in his plays as the result of a consistent rationalism, a sober presentation of the facts of each myth combined with rejection of conventional religious beliefs. To give but one example of this, Verrall contends that in the *Ion*, Apollo is "a superfluous hypothesis" and reads the play as a rationalist account in which Ion is really Xuthus' lost son and which debunks the myth of Apollo's and Creusa's parentage as a lie.[24] More than for the specific arguments about Euripides' purported criticism of religion, the ongoing import of Verrall's study lies in the mode of highly attentive and diligent readings of the plays. These also exemplify how a fundamentally different perspective can be attained if the details of language and plot are carefully considered on their own terms.

These approaches show where acquitting Euripides from the responsibility for tragedy's decline has taken us. In this dissertation, I want to illustrate and interrogate his poetics of contingency and arbitrariness further by developing a new approach, which combines plot and scholarship. When we take a closer look at the formative period of Euripidean criticism in and around the 19th century, the examples of the *IA* and the *Alcestis* show that the problems and discourses of scholarship continue and mirror the plots of these plays themselves. The *IA* presents multiple versions of the Aulis-myth at once and its central scholarly discourse concerns the variegated versioning history of the text. The *Alcestis* is a play about substitution, because a wife dies instead of her husband, and its central scholarly discourse concerns the fact that the play was itself a substitute, a tragedy performed instead of a satyr play.

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[22] Wohl 2015, quotes at 5 and 112, with a reading of the Orestes at 110-131.
[23] Verrall 1895.
[24] Verrall 1895, 146-53, quote at 147.

These observations form the basis for a new heuristic which combines interpretation, that is to say close reading of the plays themselves, with an historical and partly genealogical analysis of the key scholarly issues. The aspiration of this approach is to make visible and to scrutinise the direct connection between plot and scholarship in Euripides. For this, I have chosen the *IA* and the *Alcestis*, two plays which very clearly contain the thematic repository from which scholars in the 19th century have constructed important discourses in Euripidean scholarship, about different versions of the text and about a new 'substitute' genre. The possible implications are therefore broader, because both textual coherence and generic identification continue to be well-attended problems in Euripidean scholarship.

The thematic repository, what I call versioning in the *IA* and substitution in the *Alcestis*, gives concrete shape to Euripides' poetics of contingency. As the main themes in the respective plays, they shape the plot and language of each play, thereby making the abstract idea of contingency more clearly observable in my interpretations. By versioning as a theme of drama I mean that the story of the play never necessarily has to run its course in one way, but can be imagined, and indeed is actively imagined on stage, as going altogether differently. Substitution as a theme of drama in turn refers to the concerted engagement on stage with the experience that individuals can be replaced, sometimes in an act of deception, and with the resulting questions about identity. To give an adequate frame to each play and its scholarly history, the body of the thesis is divided into two parts: Part I focuses on the *IA* and on its history of modern textual criticism, and Part II focuses on the *Alcestis* and on the modern invention of the the 'pro-satyric' genre.

In Part I, I begin with a close reading of the *IA* in Chapter 1. Here, we see how the myth's different versions are set side-by-side to produce a persistent narrative multiplicity in the play which is sustained right to the very end. In one version Iphigenia is sacrificed, in the other she is saved. Building on the recognition that a dynamic of 'what if' is already part of the Aulis myth in Book II of the *Iliad*, I read Euripides' presentation of this episode as a serious engagement with the idea that Iphigenia's sacrifice and the Trojan War need not have happened. I thus identify a motor of multiplicity at the heart of the play, which allows a number of versions to co-exist within the audience's imaginary during one and the same

performance.

The multiplicity of versions, however, is also the defining theme of the play's scholarly history, which I discuss in Chapter 2. Given that the reading in Chapter 1 was based on the text as transmitted and that we are in fact dealing with a highly unstable text, the first half of the chapter defends this reading by close text-critical analysis. In response to the important and serious objection that my interpretation may be precisely the result of the many textual changes which the play has undergone, I answer that the motor of multiplicity is present throughout these versions and truly characteristic of the *IA*. The second half of the chapter revisits the *IA*'s modern scholarly history, which begins with Samuel Musgrave's discovery of a supposedly relevant fragment from Aelian in 1762. Building on and partly amending Sean Gurd's analysis of this scholarly history in his 2005 *Iphigenias at Aulis*, I analyse three key ideas which emerged and proliferated at different moments from the early 19th century to the present, first that the play existed in more than one version before its performance in 405 BC, second that actors and directors continued to produce more variations and finally that the text should be theorised as multiversal in modern editions. Seeing that scholars formulated their text-critical judgements and these paradigms by continuing the play's own central dynamic of versioning in the plot, I argue that the *IA* should be viewed as uniquely important to the modern history of textual criticism.

Part II then turns to the *Alcestis* and its scholarly history. In Chapter 3, I present a genealogical analysis of the discourse about this play, showing when and how the *Alcestis* and its genre became a matter of controversy in the 19th century. Focusing first on the play's paratext, in which the entire discourse is anchored, I examine the addition of a second prose hypothesis from which the controversy would eventually emerge. The pivotal moment for this debate was the 1834 discovery of a didascalic fragment by Wilhelm Dindorf, in which the *Alcestis* is listed in last place of Euripides' tetralogy of 438 BC. To explain this, I identify and discuss four ideas which came to shape both scholarly opinion about the *Alcestis* and some related ideas about the genres of tragedy and satyr play after Dindorf's discovery. This analysis suggests not only that the ongoing interest in the function of satyr play is a product of a specific set of considerations about the *Alcestis* at that time, but also that the problem

of the play's genre was actually created by predominantly German-speaking scholars after 1834 who, in response to the new didascalic evidence, crafted a history of this discourse which validated and substantiated their own puzzlement in the face of this specific play and its genre. Eventually, we see that the vocabulary of the 'pro-satyric' emerged in the early 20th century as a way of capturing, rather than solving, this puzzlement. Noting that scholars could have asked much broader questions about Euripides and genre during this debate, but instead focused on the *Alcestis* as a play *sui generis*, I argue that we must ask ourselves why this idea had such an appeal for and impact on scholarly thinking.

The answer, I argue in Chapter 4, lies in the plot, because the *Alcestis* is itself a play about substitution. It prompts thinking about exchangeability and unique identity, and reflects the questions and anxieties which come along with considering these themes. In my reading of the *Alcestis*, I begin with Heracles, whose experience in the play shows that substitution is a form of deceit and that the exchangeability of persons can be effective precisely when it escapes our notice. Before reading the substitution plot of the play in more detail, I show that the *Alcestis* contributed to an existing intellectual and literary interest in the replaceability of family members, as we see this theme articulated in Sophocles' *Antigone* and Herodotus' *Histories*. In the *Alcestis*, the replaceability is manifested in terms of a constant anxiety that Admetus can replace Alcestis again after her death. Readers have therefore been divided on whether Alcestis' restitution to Admetus is a happy and serious or a worrying and ironic ending. Moving beyond this binary of interpretations, I take the play's own hints about the elusiveness of substitutions and the anxieties about replaceability as a guide for re-reading the ending. In what is the final and most significant substitution of many in the play and one which has eluded its readers so far, I argue that Alcestis is not in fact resurrected, but actually replaced.

Overall in this dissertation, I make a threefold contribution. The first two contributions pertain respectively to the two kinds of sources which are studied, the plays themselves and the historic scholarly texts. First, the readings of the plays here proposed could stand on their own as contributions to our understanding of Euripidean poetics, not least because I show how each of them clearly resonates with and further elucidates themes which are

important to their original ancient context. But I also show that the plays were a repository of language and themes for the formation of the scholarly problems and discourses about them. Second, my presentations and analyses of the historic discourses about these plays constitute independent contributions to the history of scholarship, elucidating key aspects of Euripidean text- and genre-criticism respectively, their roots in the 19th century (and earlier) and their continued legacy today. I thus show what a crucial impact the *IA* had on the development and theorising of modern textual criticism and just how central the *Alcestis* was, and still could be, to our understanding of ancient dramatic genre. The connection between plot and scholarship, as the prologues explain, is precisely where each aspect is fully activated and my overall argument becomes clear. Illustrating this connection is the third contribution of this thesis.

Each of the two parts begins with a brief prologue, which connects the plot and scholarship of each play. The prologues' titles, '1762' and '1834', foreground two pivotal moments in the history of scholarship where critical interest in the *IA* and *Alcestis* respectively intersected with the themes and vocabulary of the plots themselves, shaping the questions and problems of importance for these plays and with broader implications for our understanding of Euripides' work. As such, these prologues do more of the introductory work for the arguments throughout the chapter, conceptual work which I do not pre-empt here. The resulting chiastic structure of the thesis, the sequential inversion of 'plot followed by scholarship' to 'scholarship followed by plot', reflects that the continuation of the plays' themes and language in the scholarly discourses can be observed from more than one standpoint. Part I begins with an interpretation of the *IA* and its deliberate versioning of the Aulis myth, and then observes that this central theme was continued by scholarly interest in the play's textual history as a history of versioning. Part II analyses the *Alcestis*' scholarly history first, which shows the creation of a genre discourse around the idea of a substitute play *sui generis*, and then turns to the play itself which clearly supplies this theme along with the vocabulary and imagery.

In his discussion of necessity and freedom in Greek tragedy, Williams alludes in passing to a remarkable episode in Book 2 of Homer's *Odyssey*. When two eagles appear above

Ithaca and are seen to be fighting in mid-air, the old hero Halitherses sees in this a foreshadowing of Odysseus's imminent return and his killing of the suitors (II.146-85). In the world of Homer's epic, we take Halitherses' words as assurance of the poem's reliable teleology: come what may, Odysseus *will* return in the end to take his vengeance. If this were the world of Greek tragedy, or rather of Sophoclean tragedy specifically, we could easily imagine the suitors as the tragic heroes: however they may struggle to avoid it, Odysseus is coming and they will die.

Yet one of the suitors, Eurymachos the son of Polybus, has a scathing response to counter Halitherses: ὄρνιθες δέ τε πολλοὶ ὑπ' αὐγὰς ἠελίοιο | φοιτῶσ', οὐδέ τε πάντες ἐναίσιμοι·[25] Williams' own translation of this comment brings home the exciting and radical prospect opened up by Eurymachos' objection: "lots of birds fly around under the rays of the sun, and they don't all mean something."[26] More than a characteristically stubborn and spiteful expression of the suitor's misdemeanour and short-sightedness, this objection to the augury of Halitherses is also a powerful expression of contingency and the discomfort of confronting it. This thesis is, if you will, an exercise in following Eurymachos' lead. It argues that Euripidean drama nudges us to take contingencies ever more seriously as a challenge to cope with. Independently, it shows that the plots of Euripidean arbitrariness had an observable and lasting impact on the scholarship dedicated to the study of these plays.

[25] Throughout this thesis, I give editions of Greek texts by the name of the editor, e.g. here Monro and Allen 1920. Unless otherwise stated, I quote from the most recent Oxford Classical Text edition, cf. the References at the end. I am grateful to Gavin Salam for his help with the formal presentation of the quotations.

[26] Williams 1993, 139.

Prologue I

1762

Euripides' *Iphigenia at Aulis* (*IA*) stages the events immediately before the departure of the Greek campaign against Troy. The Greek fleet, so the myth normally goes, must depart from Aulis and since the goddess Artemis is preventing their sailing, Agamemnon's daughter Iphigenia must die as an appeasing sacrifice. However, in staging this episode of the Trojan war myth, the *IA* emphasises the contingencies in this story and provocatively conjures alternative ways in which things might turn out. At the start of the play, Agamemnon has just reconsidered his earlier decision to lure Iphigenia to Aulis by falsely promising that she will marry Achilles there. After all seems too late, his brother Menelaos has a change of heart and abandons the cause of the war altogether. When, at a later moment, Achilles finds out about the pretend-wedding, he chooses to go through with that plan and to save Iphigenia from death. There are multiple versions of the story proposed and pursued by the characters throughout. Even to the last, when Iphigenia miraculously disappears, the mythical material repeatedly offers a window of opportunity to change the course of events once again.

At the same time, the transmitted text of the *IA* is appears to contain elements of multiple versions of the same play. Left unfinished by Euripides and originally staged by his nephew, the play is thought to have existed in a number of versions in antiquity and the Byzantine period, versions which modern scholars in turn have gone to great lengths to reconstruct from the one text which survives. This scholarly history begins with the discovery of a fragment of Aelian by Samuel Musgrave in 1762 and spans over 250 years of scholarly labour in striving for a *stable* text. This striving, however, has created an extraordinary state

of instability and has inadvertently turned the *IA* into a play which refuses permanence and evades clear interpretation simply because we often don't know exactly what happened in it. The result of this is an experience shared by anyone who wants to engage seriously with this play. To interpret it and to think about its themes and story, one has to come to grips with the text itself and the possible versions of it. The *IA* is therefore a play about the multiplicity of its own myth and a play that exists in multiple textual versions. To excavate the layers of this curious parallelism is the purpose of Part I of this thesis.

In order to do so, I propose a new and unconventional approach to the play. The accepted way of proceeding with the *IA*, which suggests itself naturally and has been followed by many readers of the play before me, is to acknowledge with Helene Foley that "of necessity, then, any reading of the text remains speculative".[27] But this approach is not without alternative if we choose to treat the problem of instability head-on and put it at the heart of our engagement with the play. Therefore, rather than prioritising the (probably impossible) establishment of a satisfactory and justified textual basis, I begin with interpretation itself. My reading of the *IA* in Chapter 1 of this dissertation shows that we have before us a plot that is provocatively but productively concerned with multiplicity within the Aulis myth and the story of Iphigenia itself. In it, the text is *prima facie* treated as relatively stable, thus making room in which the plot's own instabilities can be explored.

The text quoted is James Diggle's Oxford Classical Text (1994), but my reading is not strictly based on this particular edition.[28] I choose Diggle's text because it delivers an up-to date and thoroughly critical, yet minimally invasive editorial mode acknowledging that what has come down to us is a play which we *can* be read and interpreted from beginning to end before going back and asking where more caution is to be displayed. As a result, I shall have to ask those readers well-versed in the textual *minutae* to entertain for a moment, or rather for the duration of my first chapter, a new reading of the play as it is transmitted and without the usual text-critical qualifications.

In doing so, I am aware of incurring a debt of attention owed to the significant textual

[27] Foley 1985, 67. An exception to this is Billings 2021, 158., who has recently suggested that "we interpret [the textual problems] as part of an emphasis on the slipperiness of knowledge and truth."

[28] Diggle 1981, with the *IA* in volume III of 1994.

questions and uncertainties, a debt which I will settle in the first half of Chapter 2. There, the acknowledgement that many hands, ancient and modern, have been involved in the making of a play which I interpret as a unity brings a welcome challenge to my reading: is the presence of different versions of the story not a consequence of what happened to the text, which is to say a product of a unique transmission history? In answer to this challenge, I subject the central tenet of my interpretation, namely that the play is driven by a motor of multiplicity in the plot, to all the text-critical objections that could be made. This thorough editorial review shows that, if not in detail then certainly in substance, whichever one of the possible reconstructions of the play one might prefer, my reading remains not only intact but takes us yet further in our understanding of this play.

The answer to this text-critical challenge leaves another no less important question in its wake: is it really a coincidence that a play originally so obviously concerned with versioning and exploring the multiplicity of its own mythical story has produced such a multi-layered and heavily versioned text? By no means. What I turn to in the second half of Chapter 2 is how, in their treatments of the play since the late 18th century, scholars have produced a number of reconstructions of the play and in doing so have mirrored and continued the plot's theme and language of multiplicity. This means viewing the play's textual multiplicity, though some of it may go back even to antiquity and probably to the Byzantine period, also as the product of modern scholarship. In addition, it means acknowledging the unique position of the *IA* in the history of a disciplinary discourse in textual criticism and to conclude that the dramatic material, in the sense of plot, language and themes, actually contributes to and inflects our scholarly preoccupations in studying that play.

Chapter 1

Versioning Aulis: Mythical Multiplicity in the *IA*

1.1 La guerre de Troie n'aura pas lieu

The provocative title of Jean Giraudoux's play, premiered in Paris in 1935, suggests a strongly interventionist and possibly ironic perspective on the myth of the Trojan War. In it, Giraudoux speculates about how the Trojan war could have been prevented (but happened anyway and for other reasons) through Hector persuading Helen to return to Sparta.[1] This anti-traditional stance towards a supposedly immovable mythological fact is not, as one might think, the privilege of modern drama. That Euripides' *IA* is in fact of a similarly interventionist character, claiming that the Trojan War need not have happened, is crucial to my interpretation of the play. What is more, my reading is anchored in the observation that the contingency of the war, specifically the possibility of the fleet disbanding at Aulis, is prevalent in earlier sources of the myth. In the intellectual experiment of asking "what if it did not happen?", Euripides is building on an existing part of the tradition. Before turning to the ancient texts themselves, it is worth clarifying what is at stake in this claim.

Inevitably, the claim that Euripides' play constitutes a kind of interventionist experiment touches on a much broader and extensive discussion about the relationship of Greek

[1] Giraudoux 1935.

poetry, and tragedy in particular, with its mythical subject matter. Claiming, as I do, that a Giroudoux-like experimental and speculative intervention into the mythical 'facts' (such as the event of the Trojan War itself) is a possible and fruitful way of conceptualising an ancient dramatic treatment of the myth, requires some qualification. This is the case not least because scholarship overwhelmingly subscribes to a thinking about myth that considers certain elements of a myth to constitute an unalterable core, while other elements on the periphery may be subject to change by poets in individual texts. As a symptomatic example, consider Hans Blumenberg's definition of myth in *Arbeit am Mythos*:

> Mythen sind Geschichten von hochgradiger Beständigkeit ihres narrativen Kerns und ebenso ausgeprägter marginaler Variationsfähigkeit.[2]

Classicists working on the poetry of the archaic and classical periods have drawn so heavily on this model that it is nearly stating the obvious. As a case in point, we may consider William Barrett's commentary on the *Hippolytos*. Beginning his introduction with 'The Legend', Barrett is quick to state that "the essentials are always the same" and gives an overview of what is considered the core of the myth, i.e. that which cannot be changed.[3] After discussion of the legend outside of tragedy, Barrett goes on to organise the tragedians' different treatments of this myth (or at least those of which we know) according to the success of their productions. He then comes to Euripides in particular:

> at any rate he did produce a second play; and in it, though he kept closely within the traditional framework of the original legend, he yet produced so radical and so successful a recasting of his original treatment that [...] he won one of the only four first prizes that he achieved throughout his career.[4]

Barrett's views of the Hippolytos are not what is at stake here. Rather, I have recalled his introductory remarks as a representative example of how, even in a play that is much less obviously concerned with manipulating the mythological material, the core-periphery model is used not only to configure tragedy's relationship with its mythical subject matter, but also to explain the success of individual plays as the result of effective innovation within the

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2 Blumenberg 2006, 40.
3 Barrett 1964, 1.
4 Barrett 1964, 13.

traditional framework. There is, then, a *communis opinio* that when tragedians change their mythical material, they do so at the margins, not at the core.

And yet, there are instances where the poets and writers of antiquity are clearly more invasive and this usefully complicates the picture. In a 2005 collection of essays, Bernd Seidensticker and Martin Vöhler introduce the concept of *Mythenkorrekturen*.[5] In this, they speak of the "Mythopoetische Gestaltungsfreiheit" which is nonetheless bound by the confinement of a mythical core. Thus they insist, "dass zentrale Elemente bzw. Konstellationen eines Mythos nicht verändert werden können".[6] In support of this view, they draw on Blumenberg (see above) and on what is the most influential ancient source for theoretical reflection on tragedy, namely the *Poetics* of Aristotle. In this text, on which much of modern scholarship continues to base their assessments of individual plays, Aristotle comments on how tragedians ought to innovate within the myths available to them, but specifically on the limitations of this innovation:[7]

> τοὺς μὲν οὖν παρειλημμένους μύθους λύειν οὐκ ἔστιν, λέγω δὲ οἷον τὴν Κλυταιμήστραν ἀποθανοῦσαν ὑπὸ τοῦ Ὀρέστου καὶ τὴν Ἐριφύλην ὑπὸ τοῦ Ἀλκμέωνος, αὐτὸν δὲ εὑρίσκειν δεῖ καὶ τοῖς παραδεδομένοις χρῆσθαι καλῶς.
> (Aristotle *Poetics*, 1454b.)

When it comes to the myth of Iphigenia's sacrifice at Aulis, the supposedly unalterable core lies in the fact her sacrifice by Agamemnon was demanded as a prerequisite to the Trojan War. This picture, however, is complicated by a closer look at treatments of the myth in the epic tradition. This complication is important not only inasmuch as it illustrates a possible multiplicity of versions early on in the myth's transmission, but also because it specifically conjures a version of the army's gathering at Aulis in which the campaign is aborted before it gets under way. So I begin this chapter with considering the mythical material of the *IA* in the archaic Greek, and especially in the epic, tradition.

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5 Seidensticker, Vöhler, and Emmerich 2005.
6 Seidensticker, Vöhler, and Emmerich 2005, 3.
7 Burnett 1971, for instances, introduces her study with reference to the Aristotelian taxonomy of plots.

1.2 Remembering a Multiversal Aulis

As Aulis and the story of Iphigenia fall directly into the part of the Trojan war not treated in the *Iliad* or *Odyssey*, the fragmentary state of many relevant extant sources often limits our clarity and certainty about the story for the archaic period.[8] In a fragment of Hesiod's *Catalogue of Women* (fr.23a MW), we learn that, on their way to Troy, the Greeks sacrificed Agamemnon's daughter, here named Iphimede, but that Artemis, for whom the sacrifice was made, saved and immortalised her instead. Further testimony of Pausanias (1.43.1, Hesiod fr.23b MW) also confirms that according to Hesiod, Iphigenia did not actually die at Aulis. Separately (2.22.7), Pausanias records a tradition, including the poet Stesichorus, according to which Iphigenia was actually the daughter of Theseus.

The multiplicity of the Iphigenia myth is also found in sources around the classical period, prominently including tragedy. Thus, in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, Iphigenia's murder at Aulis is vividly remembered by the chorus (224-49), just as an enraged Clytemnestra in the *Electra* plays of both Sophocles (516-94) and Euripides (1011-50) invokes the sacrifice as justification for killing Agamemnon, in the latter case calling her by the variant name of Iphigone. Not least, in Euripides' own *Iphigenia among the Taurians*, the mythical version in which Iphigenia is saved and moved to a new life as a priestess at Tauris forms the very premise of the play. No less, Herodotus (*Histories*, 4.14) speaks of Agamemnon's daughter Iphigenia as the deity to whom the Taurians sacrifice, while Pindar (*Pythian* 11, 22-25) refers to Agamemnon's killing of Iphigenia as source of Clytemnestra's anger against him. As such, we know that the story of the Greeks at Aulis, Iphigenia's story of our play in question, had more than one version. My reading of the *IA* will ultimately build on this key observation, namely that in pointing out contingency and multiplicity in the *Aulis* episode, the play presents by no means a revolutionary intervention into an otherwise monolithic myth, but rather homes in on its inherent multiplicity as a key facet. If the *IA* presents, as I will argue, more than one version of the Aulis myth at once, then it is, in a sense, stating the obvious for an audience familiar with the myth.

[8] A full register of all variants and relevant sources is the article on Iphigenia in LIMC.

Here, I first want to take a closer look at the extant epic treatments of the Aulis episode. Surviving copies of later prose summaries of the *Cypria* by a certain Proclus are one key source here.[9] Through these summaries, we get a good picture of the *Cypria*'s basic story, from the origins of the Trojan War in the wedding of Peleus and Thetis up to a number of key events in the nice years at Troy before the start of the *Iliad*. In the following, I rely on Martin West's commentary on the Epic Cycle and on his assessment of the likely plot of the *Cypria* as it can best be reconstructed from Proclus' summaries.[10]

The most important thing is that, according to Proclus' summary, there were two Aulis episodes in the *Cypria* with very different outcomes. The first is summarised by Proclus as follows:

> καὶ μετὰ ταῦτα συνελθόντες εἰς Αὐλίδα θύουσι. καὶ τὰ περὶ τὸν δράκοντα καὶ τοὺς στρουθοὺς γενόμενα δείκνυται, καὶ Κάλχας περὶ τῶν ἀποβησομένων προλέγει αὐτοῖς.[11]

The elements contained in this story are *a* sacrifice (clearly not that of Iphigenia) and the prophecy of the snake and sparrows which Kalchas interpreted for the army. We will return to these elements again when they are invoked in *Iliad* II below. In the *Cypria*, however, this first gathering at Aulis includes neither Artemis' anger which led to the sacrifice of Iphigenia, nor does it bring the army to Troy. Instead, as the episode continues the Greeks come to Teuthra and falsely sack this city believing it to be Troy. This same story, told as an unsuccessful errand on the way to Troy, is also found in an elegiac fragment of Archilochus, in which we hear how the Aechaeans fled after loosing in battle against Telephus.[12] This substantiates the view of a double-Aulis in the tradition of archaic Greece, certainly for some point in the 7th century. Moreover, it seems that in the *Cypria*, this leads to the ultimate disbanding of the army: ἀποπλέουσι δὲ αὐτοῖς ἐκ τῆς Μυσίας χειμὼν ἐπιπίπτει καὶ

[9] On the *Cypria* as a whole Davies 1989, 32-50. West 2013, 7-11, specifically on the identity of Proclus. Sammons 2017, Appendix A, thoroughly assesses and defends the reliability of his summaries and uses them liberally as basis of interpretation.

[10] West 2013, 65-126 provides the full commentary on the extant fragments and prose summaries with much more detail than I give here. West's commentary is based on his LOEB edition West 2003, cited here.

[11] Arg. 6 in West 2013, 104.

[12] Fragment 17A, P.Oxy. LXIX 4708, originally published as a new Archilochus poem by Obbink 2006. See discussion in Swift 2019, 228-9.

διασκεδάννυνται.[13]

First in the *Cypria*, therefore, comes the anti-Aulis, the failure of the campaign. And only in its aftermath do we hear of the events as they are ordinarily remembered, namely as Aulis as the the point of departure to the Trojan war proper. Proclus' summary marks this gathering at Aulis as the second, but gives a concise account of all the events which we have in later versions of the Iphigenia myth:

> καὶ τὸ δεύτερον ἠθροισμένου τοῦ στόλου ἐν Αὐλίδι Ἀγαμέμνων ἐπὶ θήρας βαλὼν ἔλαφον ὑπερβάλλειν ἔφησε καὶ τὴν Ἄρτεμιν· μηνίσασα δὲ ἡ θεὸς ἐπέσχεν αὐτοὺς τοῦ πλοῦ χειμῶνας ἐπιπέμπουσα. Κάλχαντος δὲ εἰπόντος τὴν τῆς θεοῦ μῆνιν καὶ Ἰφιγένειαν κελεύσαντος θύειν τῇι Ἀρτέμιδι, ὡς ἐπὶ γάμον αὐτὴν Ἀχιλλεῖ μεταπεμψάμενοι θύειν ἐπιχειροῦσιν. Ἄρτεμις δὲ αὐτὴν ἐξαρπάσασα εἰς Ταύρους μετακομίζει καὶ ἀθάνατον ποιεῖ, ἔλαφον δὲ ἀντὶ τῆς κόρης παρίστησι τῶι βωμῶι.[14]

Here, in this second Aulis episode, we have the sacrifice of Iphigenia together with the provocation of Artemis that led to her demand and the role of Kalchas in explaining this.

West notes that the *Cypria* here distributes events into two gatherings which in an older tradition belonged to just one gathering. This raises a broader question, of considerable importance to scholars of Homer and archaic poetry alike, about the uniformity and coherence, or rather lack thereof, in the narratives told by the poems.[15] The Neoanalytical approach, which studies the intertextual relations between Homeric epic and other archaic texts, can also bear on the way in which we read the surviving evidence about the Aulis episode. One of its central contentions is that the process of composition and recomposition, catering to the specific needs of each time and place of performance of the oral poem, is thus reflected in our surviving text. According to Neoanalysis, therefore, the inconsistencies or contradictions, the different layers and stories within one and the same Homeric epic all testify to an inherent multiplicity of versions within the mythical tradition, versions which can often be

[13] Arg. 7b in West 2013, 107.
[14] Arg. 8 in West 2013, 109.
[15] Building on the seminal work of Albert Lord and Milman Perry, e.g in Lord 1960, the 20th century has seen a proliferation of debate in Homeric scholarship with the further development of oral theory as well as of Neoanalysis. That these schools of thought are not as rigidly opposed as they once were is shown by Montanari, Rengakos, and Tsagalis 2011. Previous incisive contributions to the debate include Kullmann 1984 on *Quellenforschung* in Homer and Nagy 1996, who emphasised the importance of a traditional oral poetry.

reconstructed with the help of other sources. Without staking any claim about the dating of any specific variant versions, our picture of the archaic Aulis tradition is thus complemented by the elegiac fragment 17A of Archilochus and the *Cypria* discussed above, because the multiplicity of narratives about the outset of the Trojan war serves as an example for a multiform tradition and chimes with the view of a dynamic compositional process that could draw on more than one version of a story.

In fact, the presence of Iphigenia in the *Iliad* provides a poignant example of just this phenomenon. For the story of Aulis, recalled in *Iliad* II (303-10) and which I am about to consider in detail, is poised against a moment in *Iliad* IX (144-49), where we hear Agamemnon speak about his children, alive and at home, among whom is a girl named Iphianassa. Whether Iphianassa is simply a variant name and this passage attests to a tradition in which Agamemnon never sacrificed his daughter at Aulis, or we have evidence here of an entirely different mythical backstory, the passage shows that incongruities are a part of the epic text as we have it. In this way, Neoanalysis would suggest that finding different versions of the same mythical episode within the epic sources, both Homeric and others, is in no way extraordinary but rather to be expected. For the story of Aulis itself, the crucial passage is situated in *Iliad* II, with the catalogue of ships recalling the campaign's outset early on in the poem and thus also sets up the beginning of the fighting proper. Earlier in the same book, however, we have another episode which is yet more fruitful to focus on here. This is the so-called *peira*, in which Agamemnon tempts his army to abandon the campaign with the purpose of testing and ultimately strengthening their resolve to fight. This episode and its development over the course of *Iliad* II deserves closer consideration for the present discussion, because it links back to Aulis in a way that is at once more explicit and more complex.

At the outset of the *Iliad* II, Agamemnon receives an order from Zeus, delivered by way of a dream, to launch an attack on the Trojans. However, his way of following this order, which he promptly reports to the other generals (II.48-72), is very peculiar. Instead of sending them into battle directly, he wants to do so indirectly after first testing them in a kind of (mock-) dismissal:[16]

[16] Quoted from West 1998.

> πρῶτα δ' ἐγὼν ἔπεσιν πειρήσομαι, ἥ θέμις ἐστίν,
> καὶ φεύγειν σὺν νηυσὶ πολυκλήϊσι κελεύσω·
> ὑμεῖς δ' ἄλλοθεν ἄλλος ἐρητύειν ἐπέεσσιν.
> (II.73-5)

It is from this tempting, the πειρήσομαι, that the episode has taken its name among scholars. For Agamemnon's reverse psychology reveals only that the soldiers' passion to actually go home is like an unstoppable storm-wave on sea (144-46). Though Agamemnon had planned for this scenario by asking the other generals to intervene at the important moment (75), we hear nothing of such an intervention and nothing comes of the herald's previous ability to settle the chaos among the army (96-8). The army is about to disband, when Hera intervenes by sending Athena to Odysseus with the order to stop the ongoing revolt (155-6). As such, the above lines capture the central difficulty of the episode: why do the *Iliad*'s many battles start in this extremely roundabout way and what does this imply about the poem's presentation of its central narrative?

In considering this challenge, I start with what is arguably the most puzzling idea in the passage quoted above, namely that such a plan should be a matter of θέμις. Agamemnon does not spell out the rationale behind his plan at all, and so we somewhat rely on the meaning of this word, often difficult to determine, if we want to know how this procedure is to further the professed cause of the Greeks' attacking. For Ruth Scodel, who translates θέμις in this passage as "customary-and-right", reads the word as fulfilling an apologetic function, a Homeric strategy for moments that are otherwise missing narrative credibility.[17] She thus explains that "by asserting that such testing is normal, Agamemnon asks the internal audience, and the narrator asks the external audience, to treat it as such".[18]

But more has been said on this word in the context of the *peira* episode, given that Agamemnon speaking of θέμις as a puzzling justification for a course of action precisely contrary to Zeus' orders. Geoffrey Kirk notes that the idea of testing the army in this way is both unexpected and generally unparalleled.[19] Seemingly at a pinch, he suggests that the formula might be for the poet a "means of disguising an awkward sequence of ideas

[17] Scodel 1999, 33-57, on such "Homeric Strategies".
[18] Scodel 1999, 49-50.
[19] Kirk 1985, *ad loc.*

or conjunction of themes" or otherwise that it could imply Agamemnon's justification for his behaviour by alluding to some custom.[20] The first of these suggestions is less than satisfactory because it requires us to take θέμις as a kind of one-size-fits-all excuse for any action, which would cause problems in any number of other passages where it occurs. The second defers the difficulty to something outside the text itself, some custom not explicitly mentioned but perhaps known to archaic Greek listeners and readers.

This line of inquiry is pursued by Ronald Knox and Joseph Russo in a paper that discusses precisely this testing of the army by Agamemnon. They suggest that θέμις here relates to a practice known from Hebrew texts, namely "the dismissal of cowards from the assembled ranks of the army immediately prior to engagement in Holy War".[21] Citing Judges 7 and Deuteronomy 20:8 as the source texts for this custom in the Old Testament, Knox and Russo argue that in virtue of Zeus communicating to Agamemnon the support of the Gods, the war against Troy becomes divinely sanctioned in a way that makes such a religious ritual a prerequisite for an attack. This, they argue, explains why Agamemnon tests the army instead of sending them to war: he considers it to be θέμις. For Knox and Russo, the portrayal of this ritual in *Iliad* II actually has a comic quality: "Agamemnon is made a fool of, and the poet allows us to see far more of the human chicanery that can go on in the application of the high rules of war and religion than Judges or Deuteronomy would grant us."[22] Whether or not we posit a shared heritage between the *Iliad* and Old Testament for this pattern, the idea of a potentially comic distortion of a ritualistic testing and purifying the army, is appealing for *Iliad* II. The "human chicanery" captures something important about the events of book II, to which I will return in my own reading of the episode below.

Another approach to the *peira* is to home in on the fact that the episode is concluded with a counterfactual, an unreal, conditional:

> ἔνθά κεν Ἀργείοισιν ὑπέρμορα νόστος ἐτύχθη
> **εἰ μὴ** Ἀθηναίην Ἥρη πρὸς μῦθον ἔειπεν
> (II.155-56)

[20] Kirk 1985, ad II.73.
[21] R. Knox and Russo 1989, 352.
[22] R. Knox and Russo 1989, 354.

On account of this εἰ μή, the *peira* episode has been included in scholarly discussions of so-called "Beinahe-Episoden" or situations of "if-not" in Homeric epic, an area of research which can significantly elucidate the episode as a whole.[23] This term refers to moments in the narrative where a counterfactual scenario is first invoked as possible if not almost inevitable, before it is averted in the last instance, sometimes by divine intervention, sometimes by spontaneous human action. Heinz-Günther Nesselrath, who has offered the most substantial review of such scenes in both Greek and Roman Epic under the title of "Ungeschehenes Geschehen" counts no fewer than 46 "Beinahe-Episoden" in the *Iliad*.[24] Categorising them according to the type of event that nearly happens, the density of such episodes in scenes of battle is striking. It is also, however, reflective of the many instances in which tension is increased by the conjuring of a hero almost dying and the favour in battle almost switching from Trojans to Acheans or *vice versa*.

Book II.155-56, which is in question here, doesn't quite fall into this pattern, which is indicative of it special nature. Nesselrath includes it within a group of more significant cases, that is "wirklich umfangreichen und großartig ausgeführten 'Beinahe-Episoden'".[25] By contrast with the shorter moments of pause or diversion in the narrative, Nesselrath thus counts this among a smaller number of scenes in which the whole course of the war, not just the outcome of an individual action, is called into question by the momentum of "if not".[26] "Agamemnon's Vorhaben", so his reading of the episode, "endet um ein Haar mit einem riesigen Fiasko: einer allgemeinen panikartigen Flucht auf die Schiffe."[27]

"Beinahe-Episoden", including the *peira* episode in book II, are a profitable topic within Homeric scholarship, and Nesselrath's is neither the only nor the first discussion of them. To illustrate how differently scholars have read such scenes of *if not* and how they have

[23] The term goes back to Nägelsbach 1861. The fullest discussion of such scenes across Greek and Roman epic is offered by Nesselrath 1992. Lang 1989 gives a categorised list of all unreal conditions in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. De Jong 1987, Kullmann 1955, and Kullmann 1992 include them in their studies of Homeric narratology and the presentation of divine action respectively. More recently, reference is made to "Beinahe" episodes, with further bibliography, in Grethlein 2006, 269-82.

[24] Nesselrath 1992, 5-27.

[25] Nesselrath 1992, 22.

[26] The other three are the fight between Agamemnon and Achilles in I, Achilles rejection of the embassy in IX.356-655, Achilles near death in 21.205-382. Nesselrath 1992, 22-24.

[27] Nesselrath 1992, 22.

consequently assessed the *peira* episode as one of them, I here want to single out two discussions. In 1955, Wolfgang Kullmann published a programmatic essay on new and old ways of analysing the *Iliad*, in which he used the *peira* episode as his example.[28] While his reading of the episode gives it a stabilising function inasmuch as it clears away the "Defätismus" and produces "eine gute Kampfstimmung", Kullmann makes a serious inquiry into the poetic function of the army's near disbanding.[29] He finds that the episode must be read before the background of an existing "Kriegsmüdigkeit", a mutiny of the army out of starvation, which he claims was part of the *Cypria* and thus of the early epic tradition in which the *Iliad* was first received.[30] Kullmann therefore explains the episode in terms of what his imagined audience would have known when hearing the poem originally and what made them expect Agamemnon to strengthen the army's commitment by way of testing it in this way. This explanation, by having recourse to another part of the story not in the text, would reject theological or ritualistic explanations focusing on θέμις in favour of a broader literary argument.

Another approach to the question which enriches the present discussion and is pertinent to the argument in this chapter is that of Irene De Jong. She analyses the *peira* episode as one of 38 "*If not*-situations" in her study *Narrators and Focalizers*.[31] De Jong has the scene revolving around II.155-56 as an episode of "near defeat" of the Greeks and shares Nesselrath's evaluation that Agamemnon's plan "adds a rather unexpected element of his own, viz. to test the morale of his troops, by suggesting to them to return home."[32] In addition, however, De Jong asks about the reasons, from a narratological point of view, for *if not*-situations like this. She posits that mentioning an alternative outcome or version of the story is "effectful, either because the counterfactual event x in itself contains relevant information [...] or because it places event y in a special light."[33] The events of book II clearly fall into the second camp and the special light in which they cast the Greeks'

[28] Kullmann 1992, originally printed as Kullmann 1955.
[29] Kullmann 1992, 43.
[30] Kullmann 1992, 44-45.
[31] De Jong 1987,68-81.
[32] De Jong 1987, 74.
[33] De Jong 1987, 78.

continued fighting is the light of uncomfortable contingency. For within the episode, the εἰ μὴ captures and thereby highlights the fact that Agamemnon has lost control over the situation and that the Trojan war could just as well have ended there and then with the army's going home.

Nonetheless, these scholarly readings of the *peira* abide by and continue to underpin what I have described above as the core-periphery model for thinking about the variability of Greek myth in poetic treatments. For Kullmann, there can be no doubt that the episode emphasises rather than questions the inevitability of the Greek's continued fighting, as it provides occasion for divine guidance.[34] De Jong, too, finds a similar conclusion in her narratological analysis. She draws on discussions by Wilhelm Füger and Gérard Genette on "alternative Verläufe" and "l'arbitraire du récit", according to which "a narrator at every point of his story has a limitless number of ways to continue his story."[35] The important distinction to be made in the case of the *Iliad* of course is that we think the limitless number of ways is still limited by the confines of the mythical tradition, within which the author has to manouvre. For De Jong, this is particularly relevant in cases where the counterfactual — the event almost happened — would have been contrary to tradition and fate and so emphasises that such an "*if not*-situation is not a real, but only an imaginary alternative."[36]

Whether or not we accept Knox and Russo's, Kullmann's or De Jong's explanations, as careful readers of *Iliad* II we are left with an undeniable sense that in this *peira* episode the text is, for whatever reasons, curiously interested in the contingency of the Trojan war itself. Rather than emphasising that the war nevertheless continued, my own reading of the episode takes this sense of contingency as its cue and considers the very significant resonances of Aulis in this scene for an interpretation of *Iliad* II more broadly. In this, I explicitly take issue with a way of reading *Iliad* II which Eric Owen has formulated as follows:

> But what is it all for? Does it make any difference in the sequel? Does it lead to anything? Would, for example, Bk.III necessarily have been any different if the testing of the army had not occurred? The answer to these questions is plainly, No; the events which follow could have been just the same without all

[34] Also in Kullmann 1956.
[35] De Jong 1987, 80.
[36] De Jong 1987, 81.

this to-do.[37]

On the contrary, I contend that, the opposite is true and the inclusion of the *peira* episode, particularly at this early juncture in the epic and in the way in which it is developed and 'resolved', does indeed change everything about how the epic conceptualises contingency in the mythical past.

As mentioned above, the *peira* is triggered by Zeus sending a dream to Agamemnon encouraging him to attack the Trojans. What appears to be the underlying plan, though it is only alluded to briefly in describing the dream as οὐλον, is that this is in fact an ill-advised attack and that the Greeks would suffer a first defeat. Zeus' way of influencing the events is therefore not one of direct force, but one of indirect manipulation and it leads, notably, to a momentary loss of control and to chaos. The same indirectness is of course the defining feature of Agamemnon's response to the dream. Rather than sending the army out directly, he employs a kind of reverse psychology and initially gives the army leave to depart. Both Zeus and Agamemnon are therefore trying to effect their particular aim by a plan that professes to advance the precise opposite. This is of course in keeping with what Knox and Russo have described as "chicanery", the unfolding momentum of which, namely that the army nearly does go home, is what makes the first half of book II such a rewarding read. But the overlapping and misfiring of plans, nearly throwing the campaign into dissolution, is also what gives occasion for the scene to hearken back to Aulis.

The chain of interventions necessary to return the war itself on course starts with Hera and assigns a key role to Odysseus' persuasive powers. On Athena's command, he goes around to calm the uprising and brings the disbanding army back into an assembly (182-211), where first Thersites, an important figure in his own right, attempts a further revolt and is chastised by Odysseus (212-69). In particular when read along with and against Achilles' very different refusal to fight, Thersites' provocations illustrate, the instabilities in the power structures and hierarchies of the Homeric army, not just for the opening sequence of the *Iliad*.[38] As such, the revolt of Thersites and Odysseus' response to the εἰ μή opens up

[37] Owen 1989, 18.

[38] Rose 1988. Reinhardt 1961 comments particularly, 115-16, on the connection between the near-failure of the campaign in book II and the figure of Thersites.

a long sub-clause to the main narrative; at its culmination, Odysseus highlights the need for the army's trust in their eventual success, but thereby also reveals if not outright advertises the contingency and volatility of the campaign even at this moment.

It is in this speech that he remembers Aulis and brings his interpretation of those events to bear on the critical juncture which the war has reached at the time of the *peira*:

> τλῆτε, φίλοι, καὶ μείνατ᾽ ἐπὶ χρόνον, ὄφρα δαῶμεν
> ἢ ἐτεὸν Κάλχας μαντεύεται, ἦε καὶ οὐκί.
> εὖ γὰρ δὴ τόδε ἴδμεν ἐνὶ φρεσίν - ἐστὲ δὲ πάντες
> μάρτυροι, οὓς μὴ κῆρες ἔβαν θανάτοιο φέρουσαι·
> χθιζά τε καὶ πρωίζ᾽- ὅτ᾽ ἐς Αὐλίδα νῆες Ἀχαιῶν
> ἠγερέθοντο κακὰ Πριάμῳ καὶ Τρωσὶ φέρουσαι·
> (II.299-304)

In recalling what Calchas prophesied at Aulis, Odysseus invokes the army's collective memory of a point in time when the success or failure of the Trojan expedition was similarly poised, as it is in the present moment.

Notably, this idea of the the war's still uncertain outcome was a key part of Odysseus' earlier reprimanding of Thersites, where he said:

> οὐδέ τί πω σάφα ἴδμεν ὅπως ἔσται τάδε ἔργα,
> ἢ εὖ ἦε κακῶς νοστήσομεν υἷες Ἀχαιῶν.
> (II.252-53)

Both when speaking to the army as a whole and in chastising Thersites, Odysseus' appeals to patience and endurance (τλῆτε, μείνατ᾽, 299). He associates this with the memory of Calchas' omen at Aulis and he uses similar formulations expressing contingency when he reminds the army and Thersites that the war's outcome is still uncertain. What is more, the phrasing of ἦε καὶ οὐκί (300) and ἢ εὖ ἦε κακῶς (253) defers the ultimate judgement of Calchas' prophecy, its truth value, to a later point. In addition, Odysseus emphasises the proximity of those events, remembering Aulis "as if it was yesterday or the day before" (303). As the Greeks are still in that tenth year of the war and Calchas' prophesy might yet prove true, this reminder is also remarkably risky: In saying "Let us see whether Calchas prophesied correctly or not" (300) Odysseus betrays an uncomfortable fact. Not only does the prophesy feel as though it could have been yesterday or the day before, but the material

situation of the Greek army is – despite nine intermediary years of fighting – not substantially different to what it was then: the war's outcome is equally poised and the army's motivation to fight still has only that one oracular promise, once uttered at Aulis, to rely on.

The oracle itself, however, complicates the picture yet further. After the passage quoted above, Odysseus goes on to remember specifically the portent which appeared to the Greek army at Aulis. There was a snake, sent by Zeus, which devoured nine sparrows in front of their eyes, a mother with eight fledglings (308-320). Calchas interpreted this as a sign that Troy would be captured in the tenth year, so Odysseus recalls. However, this portent of the snake and sparrows, or so our evidence from the *Cypria* would suggest, belonged to the army's first visit to Aulis and therefore to the failed initial start of the campaign. In remembering this particular episode, Odysseus evokes not so much the army's associations with the campaign's successful departure to Troy, but rather the experience of trial and error involved in this, the detour to and mistaken sacking of Teuthrania instead of Troy. This episode of erring is a much more appropriate background to Odysseus' repeated insistence on the contingency of the war's outcome, a sobering reminder of the many setbacks in the past and of those still to be expected in the future. In expressing this rather nuanced and ambivalent view about the war as a whole, we can see that even in the epic tradition Aulis was something of a mnemonic shorthand for the army's experience of contingency, for their hope in the prophecy and for the tension between these two.

This point about remembering an earlier episode again raises the question of the relationship between the *Iliad* and the epic cycle. Supposing that Odysseus is referring back to one of two Aulis episodes might suggest, but by no means proves, that the Homeric text presupposes knowledge of the *Cypria* in a neo-analytical sense.[39] On this view, the relationship between the *Cypria*'s memory of Aulis and that in the *peira* episode would be no less than a form of intertext. But one need not take this view, nor would a more fluid understanding of myth in early epic greatly detract from the substance of my argument. For then we might say that the *Cypria* with its double gathering at Aulis and the *Iliad* with its looking back

[39] Note that Kullmann 1955 offers a specifically neo-analytical reading of the scene and at 260-62 makes the case the Cypria is the basis of the *peira* episode. For the idea that the Homeric epics presuppose the epic cycle generally see e.g. J. S. Burgess 2001.

on the army's departure as a moment of contingency actually complement each other in the emerging picture of Aulis as an episode of uncertainty and "what if" in early Greek epic.

At any rate, it is no coincidence that Aulis is so prominently remembered in the *peira* episode in *Iliad* II. Far from excluding the other hypotheses which scholars have offered in explaining this curious early part of book II, this hearkening back to Aulis does not only place the ultimate Greek victory within a play of expectation and uncertainty. It also tells us a great deal more than we initially thought about the weight and force of the Aulis episode in Greek mythical memory, namely that the episode is not only in and of itself multiple and remembered as such, but also that it stood for considering a kind of "otherwise", an anti-version of the myth itself. From this, it will not seem like a far stretch to return to Euripides, given his reputation for conjuring alternate mythical pasts and his supposed propensity towards manipulating myth, which is after all a well-trodden path in research. Tragedy's relationship with myth is in some way mediated through epic in that for each of their pieces the playwrights would draw on the wider net of stories from the epic tradition.

As I have shown above, scholars tend to view tragedians, and Euripides perhaps more so than others, as indulging in a greater degree of freedom as well when it comes to selecting and altering details. In his chapter on *Mythenkorrekturen* in Greek tragedy, Bernd Seidensticker even presents Euripides as antiquity's most radical corrector of myths.[40] Focusing on the Atreid myth in his work, he discusses at length the *Electra*, *Iphigenia among the Taurians*, and *Orestes*, but not the *Iphigenia at Aulis*. This may well be no coincidence, since the *IA* most obviously challenges the core-periphery model, to which Seidensticker adheres even in his characterisation of Euripides as a "radikale[r] Neuerer und Mythoklast".[41] Many of the mythical corrections which Seidensticker identifies fall under what he calls "Detailkorrektur", for instance when the signs of recognition are questioned or changed, while other corrections have substantial theological implications, as when the ending of the *Electra* questions Orestes' ultimate safety. None of these corrections, however, touch upon

[40] Others do not go as far, but share the basic view that Euripidean tragedy was much about mythical innovation or adaptation of minor variants, e.g. Allan 2008, 25-6, on *Helen*, or Martin 2018, 13, on *Ion*. For a fuller discussion of the broader question, see Wright 2005, 56-157. For discussion of *IA* and the mythical tradition specifically, see Michelakis 2006, 21-29, Stockert 1992, 43-45 and 56-62, and Conacher 1967, 250-253.

[41] Seidensticker, Vöhler, and Emmerich 2005, 50.

what I have discussed at the outset as *communis opinio*, expressed by Blumenberg or by Aristotle, namely that each myth has its unchangeable core. Nor is the question of whether Euripides changed specific details in the *IA* what I am really concerned with at all. Instead, I suggest that Euripides actually followed the associations of Aulis with multiplicity and contingency, which I have shown to be part of its epic treatments already, and used the specific means available in his dramatic form to put pressure not on the periphery of the myth, but on its very core: the event of the war itself.

Euripides' *IA* thus presents a daring thought experiment that is slightly different from that of Giraudoux. Rather than through the rigid indicative of the latter's title, "n'aura pas lieu", Euripides' play explores the same question through a somewhat more tentative, but equally thought-provoking statement about a past potential: the Trojan War need not have taken place. In bringing the myth of Iphigenia at Aulis on the stage in this way, Euripides puts the issue of its multiplicity front and centre. Throughout the play, the audience is in equal measure asked and helped to imagine more than one possible version of Aulis, as the sacrifice of Iphigenia and the departure of the army is repeatedly called into question. Like Giraudoux, Euripides is therefore interested in the "otherwise", the "what if". Of course the play does not *expressis verbis* contradict the event in the way that the *Helen*, by contrast, claims that the heroine never actually went to Troy. And yet: if it was beyond doubt that Iphigenia will have to be sacrificed and that the Trojan expedition will successfully set off from Aulis, there would be, I argue, no plot and consequently no drama. What facilitates the dramatic success of this play is that it does not fit our core-periphery model, but instead asks us to engage with the aesthetic and intellectual capacity of the playwright and his audience to imagine even the core of the myth as contingent.

The idea of a radical break with the mythical tradition is in fact prominent in critical

work on the *IA*.[42] At the same time as recognising the play's extraordinary tendency to imagine a possible alternative to the supposed mythological necessity, or even inevitability, interpreters all view the play's ending as consistent with a return to that inevitability. The central interpretative challenge therefore comes in the form of a tension: between the plot's suggestions of avoiding a sacrifice on the one hand and the assumed inevitability of the myth on the other. This tension pervades a number of very perceptive readings of the play, which however can all be seen ultimately to be hoisted by their own petard of mythical inevitability. Together, these show just how tenacious the view of a stable and unchangeable myth remains for modern scholars in spite of the recognition that the play aims precisely at disrupting this. In Christina Elliot Sorum's interpretation, the *IA* is seen as a "critique of the potential of the dramatic action to alter the tradition, to be an agent of change."[43] As a way of understanding the many twists and turns in the play, Sorum sees the choral odes on the one hand as representing the traditional story, while the dramatic action tries to establish an alternative present and future against this. Her ultimate judgement, however, remains committed to a stable and ultimately singular myth: "the traditional story stifles the potential for a different outcome posed in the dramatic fiction" and the play therefore ends in "reintegration of the myth and human action".[44] The underlying view is that the Aulis myth has a red line that cannot be overstepped: the Trojan expedition needs to happen and Iphigenia needs to be sacrificed in order to achieve this.

Arguably, the *IA*'s biggest play with alternative versions lies in the marriage motif, which brings us to the work of Helene Foley, who sees the ironic interplay between the sacrifice and marriage motifs as the key to understanding the drama. She notes that "the middle scenes, although they expose the fiction of the marriage, ironically make this fiction so real a pos-

[42] A related and prolific thread in criticism has been the question of consistency and inconsistency in characterisation, notions which go back to Aristotle's critique (*Poetics*, 1454a) of the heroine's character. The pertinent discussion of the issue in Greek tragedy more broadly is Gibert 1995, in which the *IA* is afforded its own focused chapter in which all the changes of mind are discussed in detail, 202-254. Studies with a related focus include Synodinou 2013, Rabinowitz 1983, Schmidt 1999, Chant 1986, Battezzato 2017, Siegel 1980 and Siegel 1981 on Agamemnon and Clytemnestra respectively, D. Burgess 2004, Brindley 2018, 43-74. The *IA* also features prominently in Mastronarde 2010, in the context of consistent characterisation and changes of mind, 234-40. A thorough overview of recent scholarship on the *IA* is given by Hose 2005. Collard and Morwood 2017 add more recent interpretative and text-critical publications to this survey.

[43] Sorum 1992, 529.

[44] Sorum 1992, 538-40.

sibility that the entire myth of the Trojan war stands in jeopardy".[45] On this point, my own reading will be indebted to Foley, because the fiction which Agamemnon concocts and then loses control over is indeed a key feature for how the text offers and sustains a multiplicity of stories. Yet Foley's view of the ending, much like Sorum's, ultimately denies this recognition its full purchase. Focusing, too, on the moment of Iphigenia's self-sacrifice as the key to understanding the play, she reads the self-sacrifice as a "gesture [which] reconnects with its myth a plot that has threatened to run out of control".[46] For her, the (singular) myth clearly carries a kind of inevitability which ultimately has to displace the "otherwise" which could exist only for the brief duration of an ironic play on stage, meaning that the wedding itself, as suggested by Agamemnon, remains ultimately inconsequential.

In a reading which utilises contemporary philosophical thought on law and ethics, Nicolas Lema Habash has more recently found the counterfactual scenarios proposed by the *IA* to sketch a utopian dream, in which "a certain kind of (anarchistic) subjectification could challenge the law, could challenge the universal."[47] For Habash, such a subjectification would be an actual refusal of the characters to act against their own private interests. At the same time, he reads this as a potential refusal on the part of the story itself to comply with its normal outcome, which is the sacrifice of Iphigenia. Bringing into focus the ethical and philosophical stakes of the play, Habash formulates a number of counterfactual questions which the play poses, and which I too believe are key for the examination of the play overall: "what *if* the slave had gone to Argos with the letter telling Iphigenia not to come to Aulis? What *if* Menelaus had not insisted on the expedition to Troy? What *if* Agamemnon had never accepted Calchas's oracle? What *if* Achilles had been able to convince the army not to sacrifice Iphigenia?"[48] With this utopian possibility of subjective ethical action, tantamount to saving Iphigenia, Habash contrasts an objective universal law, the *nomos*.

Isabelle Torrance has furthermore argued that "abandoning the expedition is presented as a real possibility".[49] To her, this is manifest in the first letter, which Agamemnon sent

[45] Foley 1985, 77.
[46] Foley 1985, 90.
[47] Habash 2017, 188.
[48] Habash 2017, 188.
[49] Torrance 2013, 233.

before the start of the play and which represents the written fixity of the established tradition. The attempt to send a second letter is allegorical for Agamemnon's attempt to overcome this tradition. Just like the playwright, he is "constantly constrained by the limits of mythology" and so the attempt at rewriting the tradition, allegorically represented by the second letter, is doomed to futility.[50]

Their different points of focus notwithstanding, these readings fill in the same broader pattern: in much the same way as Sorum views the dramatic action as demarcating a space for exploring how things *could* be as opposed to how the choral odes know that they are, Foley views the marriage motif as a specific fiction that is ultimately displaced by the dominant myth. In Habash's reading of the play, the inevitability is the *nomos* of a society that trumps subjective utopian possibility. There is, however, one other crucial way in which inevitability creeps back into scholarly readings of the *IA*. For this, I turn to Celia Luschnig, whose monograph on the play is arguably the most extensive contribution to date when it comes to the particular interpretative challenge about the potentially different outcome of the Aulis myth in the *IA*.

In Luschnig's reading, the clearest expression of the myth's contingency comes on the cue of Menelaos' sudden abandonment of his claim that Helen has to be brought back (471-505). After this, Luschnig notes, "there is no one, not one of the characters in the play, who favours the sacrifice. Iphigenia need not be killed. Known facts are in suspense. The Trojan War need not take place. Menelaos can remarry."[51] Indeed, this is a crucial moment in the play as it not only formulates, but even substantiates the possibility of an alternative solution to the Aulis episode. Nevertheless, Luschnig too believes in the ultimate inevitability of the sacrifice. In articulating it she reveals a remarkable mode of thinking which problematically oversimplifies the matter. She claims:

> The tragic poet is after all limited by history [...] Tragedy is — is it not? — the statement in no uncertain terms of the inevitability of the unavoidable. We know the stories. The characters may try to avoid them but we know they cannot.[52]

[50] Torrance 2013, 235.
[51] Luschnig 1988, 16.
[52] Luschnig 1988, 31-33.

In this way, Luschnig defers the solution of the the *IA*'s central interpretative challenge to some kind of abstract necessity or inevitability, reduced to an idea of tragic essence, for which no other evidence is given. It is worth noting here that Sorum also adduces this category in her explanation for the play's ending when she says that "choices [i.e. human action within the drama] cannot bear the significance necessary to tragedy because they are limited by the imposition of the myth."[53]

All this serves to clarify and deepen the tension we face in interpreting the *IA*, but it does nothing to resolve or advance beyond it. If critics are indeed right in having recourse to the concept of an inherently stable myth as well as to a kind of tragic necessity, the outcome of the play is in fact known from the very beginning and the only point of the performance is to find a new way of telling an old story. This, however, is to mistake an *ex post facto* justification or explanation for an actual interpretation of the play's unique and uniquely confusing configuration. In other words, these interpretations somewhat ironically do exactly what they believe the play to be doing.

Against this, I propose a different hypothesis: rather than staging the vain struggle to evade an ineluctable all-conquering end to the story, let us assume that the play is actually interested in salvaging a more provocative and problematic way of thinking about Aulis. That is to say, let us assume that Euripides' *IA* is interested in this part of the myth precisely for the reason of its multiplicity. The matter of the campaign's starting or stalling at Aulis, though formally no more than a binary, exists within the context of multiple versions of the story: Iphigenia could, as Agamemnon at one points wants it, never come to Aulis. She could equally, as Menelaos first wants it, come and be sacrificed, or, as Achilles wants it, actually get married there. In all this, the campaign may or may not get under way. This amounts to a new interpretative premise: exploring this multiplicity and, as I will show, sustaining it to the last is the play's way of actualising an aesthetic and intellectual capacity for imagining the "otherwise". We have seen that such a capacity is present already in the epic tradition and associated there specifically with Aulis, giving this hypothesis a yet stronger basis. Rather than reading the play as an expression of inevitability, I take it that

[53] Sorum 1992, 542.

the *IA* is asking the following question: could things have gone differently at Aulis after all?

1.3 Mythical Multiplicity in the *IA*

As I have said in the prologue to this first part, the reading to be developed in the remainder of this chapter assumes that it is possible and worthwhile to interpret the text as it has been preserved, without first excising any of it or emending it to any significant degree. Since I will not summarise or discuss every scene and speech, I begin with a brief summary of the plot as we have it, marking also which scenes I am focusing on in my analysis.[54] In the opening scene of the play (1-162), the audience is transported to the camp of the Greek army having gathered at Aulis, where Agamemnon, alternating between dialogue with an old servant and a monologue, bemoans his difficult situation, which forms the premise of the plot: Calchas' interpretation of the winds as a sign of Artemis' anger means that the success of the Greek campaign against Troy depends on Agamemnon making a sacrifice of appeasement, a sacrifice of no lesser value than his own daughter Iphigenia. Already looking back on a good amount of deliberation before the play started, Agamemnon has just decided to send a message to Clytemnestra. In it, he revokes an earlier letter in which the promise of a marriage to Achilles was supposed to trick Clytemnestra into bringing Iphigenia to Aulis. My analysis of the opening scene will centre on this reversal, the respective planning and the two letters as keys to reading the play's myth-making. The parodos introduces a chorus of Chalcidian women, locals who are observing the army's gathering at Aulis. They sing of what they have witnessed so far and give their impressions of the army, leading finally into a kind of catalogue of ships that sets the scene as a clear prequel to the *Iliad* (164-302).

The events of the first epeisodion (303-542) are critical to my interpretation and discussed at greater length below. In short, Agamemnon and Menelaos first fight over their diametrically opposed views of the events leading to and at Aulis, with the latter accusing the former of disloyalty and betrayal in undoing their agreed plan of sacrificing Iphigenia for the campaign. Learning from a messenger that Clytemnestra and Iphigenia are approaching

[54] A good prose summary of the plot, which I have drawn on to produce my own here, is offered by Michelakis 2006.

Aulis, Menelaos has a change of heart and urges Agamemnon to dismiss the army. He, however, now thinks that the sacrifice is a matter of inevitability (a conviction which the play will by other means call into question again soon after). Following a brief interruption for the first stasimon (543-89), in which the chorus connect universal wisdom about love with the specific love of Paris leading to the Trojan War, the second epeisodion (590-750) revolves around different dialogues between Agamemnon and his family, all replete with dramatic irony and dark foreshadowing of the events to come. His attempt to send Clytemnestra back to Argos is unsuccessful and in the dialogue between them the tension of the plot is palpably coming to a head.

The short second stasimon (751-800) looks ahead to the events to come if the army will get to Troy and the chorus lament the destruction this will bring. The third (801-1035), fourth (1098-1275), and fifth (1336-1474) epeisodia are once again critical to my interpretation and subject to a more detailed discussion below. It is the encounter between Achilles and Clytemnestra which brings out the reverberations of Agamemnon's double planning and once again opens an opportunity for the plot to take a different direction. Achilles' potential marriage to Iphigenia develops as a real possibility when, together with Clytemnestra, he hatches a plan to save his new bride. After the third stasimon (1036-97), which looks mythologically backward to the wedding of Peleus and Thetis, Clytemnestra unsuccessfully confronts Agamemnon, equally blaming him and trying to persuade him to reconsider. At last, Iphigenia makes an (equally unsuccessful) speech of supplication before her father and then delivers a monody of lament (1276-1335). In the fifth epeisodion, Achilles' plan to save and marry Iphigenia resurfaces. All else having failed, he continues to vow his support, until Iphigenia's apparent change of heart spins the plot into a new direction altogether. She has decided to die willingly for the cause of the Greek army's campaign against Troy.

After the Chorus and Iphigenia sing a farewell (1475-1531), the play's epilogue (1532-1629) tells the events of the sacrifice through the report of a messenger and shows Clytemnestra's response to this. We learn that Iphigenia miraculously disappeared from the sacrificial altar and a deer was found in her place. Clytemnestra, notwithstanding the reassurances of Agamemnon, remains incredulous of this to the last, but the play concludes with

an army that is ready to sail for Troy. Our reading of the messenger report and his reading of the events at the altar will, finally, be the turning point of my interpretation of the play. At last, one final note before beginning with the prologue. The plot just summarised variously interacts with scenes and configurations from the *Iliad*. Rather than entirely anchoring my interpretation in these resonances, however, I will discuss them at the appropriate juncture when Achilles promises to save Iphigenia and thereby rebels against Agamemnon's plan.

1.3.1 The Prologue's Way Into the Myth

More often than not, Euripides' prologues foreground the before. Whether it be geographical or genealogical or both, they give background to the characters and actions the audience is about to witness on stage. In the surviving plays of Euripides, this before is generally provided by an individual speaker, whether divine or human, in the form of a prologue speech in iambics.[55] It is therefore not surprising that a number of scholars, including most recently David Kovacs, have wanted to excise the opening anapaests of dialogue from the *IA*.[56] Above all, beginning the play with Agamemnon's speech (from 49 onwards) would be to harmonise this prologue with those of Euripides' other plays and indeed, for Kovacs at least, this desire actually shapes the editorial decision. Such harmonisation, however, means avoiding a serious effort at interpreting these opening anapaests, which in itself is a point worth making. In fact, a closer look shows that they do not detract from the prologue-function of Agamemnon's subsequent 'ordinary' prologue at all, but rather add to it as a kind of pre-prologue that is particularly fitting for this plot. A quite remarkable sleight of hand by Euripides, this opening emphasises that even the prologue, which gives background to the play as a whole, has its own before, which the audience is invited to witness here.

The play opens *in medias res*. The image of the stillness of the winds (6-11) gives the objective cause for why the army is stuck at Aulis as well as aptly describing the state of tension and uncertainty there. The details of what has just happened remain elusive, however, and even though the audience may recognise the situation and the myth, the level of

[55] All other extant plays of Euripides open with such a monologue.
[56] Kovacs 2003b. A full discussion is offered in the next chapter. Stockert 1992, 157-226, gives a thorough overview.

precision and clarity usually afforded at the start of a Euripidean tragedy is clearly missing.[57] Appropriately, the old man calls upon Agamemnon to clarify the situation, to provide precisely the kind of background information which other Euripidean prologues provide, and which Agamemnon is about to give (28-48). What is more, this speech of the old man already entails the themes of multiplicity and openness, when he describes to Agamemnon what kind of impression he makes, namely one which we can assume was shared by the audience:

> cὺ δὲ λαμπτῆροc
> φάοc ἀμπετάcαc δέλτον τε γράφειc
> τήνδ᾽ ἣν πρὸ χερῶν ἔτι βαcτάζειc,
> καὶ ταὐτὰ πάλιν γράμματα cυγχεῖc
> καὶ cφραγίζειc λύειc τ᾽ ὀπίcω
> (34-48)

Agamemnon's state of confusion and doubt manifests in the letter which he is constantly re-writing. In particular, the vocabulary of composition and re-composition (δέλτον τε γράφειc followed later by ταὐτὰ πάλιν γράμματα συγχεῖc) comes together with that of opening and closing (ἀμπετάcαc and cφραγίζειc λύειc τ᾽ ὀπίcω).

The meta-poetic dimension of writing and re-writing in this scene, by which the poet's relationship with the mythical material is evoked and mimicked, has been observed already, not least by Isabelle Torrance in her detailed discussion of writing and myth-making within Euripidean drama.[58] As noted earlier, she argues that Agamemnon's writing of the second letter can be viewed as allegorical for the poet's own writing. However, in analysing this scene it is possible to go quite a bit further than the diagnosis of mythical self-consciousness, namely by paying attention also to the additional layer of self-consciousness pertaining to form and style. For the image of writing and re-writing stories is in fact embedded in the way that the scene comments on its own formal function as a prologue.

This comes out in particular when the old man continues:

> τί πονεῖc; τί νέον παρὰ coί, βαcιλεῦ;

[57] A summary of the views in modern scholarship of what Euripidean prologues usually do is given by Erbse 1984, 6-19, who also includes a discussion of the *IA* prologue, 269-80. A recent pertinent discussion of what makes for a Euripidean prologue is given, on the *Rhesus*, by Fantuzzi 2020, 142-45.

[58] Torrance 2013, 232-238.

> φέρε κοίνωcον μῦθον ἐc ἡμᾶc.
> (43-44)

"Tell us the *mythos*", the old servant asks Agamemnon and thus neatly sets up the subsequent 'ordinary' prologue speech in iambics while cleverly commenting on its style and function. The idea of sharing in κοίνωcον fits the communicative need for the poet in a theatrical setting in particular. Through his characters, he has to impart certain information to his audience to ensure a shared starting point for what is about to happen. At the same time, however, the idea of making something common, which is another resonance of κοίνωσον, speaks to how Agamemnon's prologue speech normalises this opening of the play, making it accessible as a play that shared in the specific context of the theatre generally and of Euripides' conventions in particular: "now please do the normal thing."

Further evidence for understanding the play's opening in this way comes from Aristophanes' *Frogs* which is arguably our most important source for direct contemporary perceptions of Euripides and his dramatic style. Here, in the notorious contest with Aeschylus, Euripides praises the virtues of his own prologues, saying:

> εἶτ' οὐκ ἐλήρουν ὅ τι τύχοιμ' οὐδ' ἐμπεcὼν ἔφυρον,
> ἀλλ' οὑξιὼν πρώτιcτα μέν μοι τὸ γένοc εἶπ' ἂν εὐθὺc
> τοῦ δράματοc.
> (Arist. *Frogs* 945-47) [59]

A particularly productive difficulty is posed by τὸ γένοc ... τοῦ δράματοc. At first glance, and to most commentators, it seems that the allusion to genealogy serves the practical purpose of setting up a punchline for Aeschylus. For Euripides' use of γένος here provokes the apparently much rehearsed slander about his own ancestry that his mother was a vegetable seller.[60] Although this joke is certainly in play here, the word γένος has two other possible and more complicated resonances. First, taken most literally, it can refer to the species of the drama, suggesting that Euripides' opening monologues leave no doubt about what kind of a play the audience is about to see. Second, Dover suggests and follows yet another meaning of γένος as "explaining how the situation with which the drama deals has arisen in the

[59] The edition quoted here is Wilson 2007.
[60] For the same joke in Aristophanes cf. *Ach.* 457, 478; *Knights* 19; *Thesmo.* 387, 465.

family history of its protagonist".[61] Indeed, this reading not only fits Aeschylus' punchline thematically, but it also chimes with the prominence of family lineages in Euripidean prologues generally. I want to take this resonance yet further, noting that the ancestry of a play also refers on some level to other versions of the particular myth as it was staged by other dramatists before. So a third reading of γένος emerges. As an image for these antecedent versions, the notion of heritage or ancestry here combines the indebtedness to a previous generation with the novelty of the present version. Aeschylus' actual punchline, κρεῖττον γὰρ ἦν σοι νὴ Δί' ἢ τὸ σαυτοῦ (Arist. *Frogs*, 947), lends further support to this reading, precisely because it would so often have been Aeschylus' versions of the myths forming the ancestry of Euripides' plays. Deriding Euripides' inferior family background is thus neatly combined with Aeschylus casting himself as a much superior ancestry in literary and poetic terms.

This scene from Aristophanes alerts us to the high degree of self-reflection inherent in the composition of prologues and thus gives us reason to press the peculiarities of the *IA*'s prologue a little further. By foregrounding the prologue *qua* prologue in this way, Euripides draws attention to its practical function as a proposed solution to the problem of mythical instability or multiplicity. When the old man phrases his request to Agamemnon as a plea to tell a plural "us" (44), he is in a way speaking for the audience and to the poet: "Go on, give us that starting point we need for the play to commence." The required clarification of the mythical co-ordinates is then promptly achieved by Agamemnon's iambic prologue, which gives the outward appearance of an opening monologue of the kind with which we are familiar from all other Euripidean plays:

> ἐγένοντο Λήδαι Θεστιάδι τρεῖς παρθένοι,
> Φοίβη Κλυταιμήστρα τ', ἐμὴ ξυνάορος,
> Ἑλένη τε·
> (49-51)

Even in its very first word ἐγένοντο, this prologue begins with the genealogical concern that the Aristophanic Euripides claims to be the best quality of his plays. The appearance and placement of the name Φοίβη here, particularly along with παρθένοι, is a potential red

[61] Dover 1993, *ad loc.*

herring because this will ring as the alternative name for the goddess Artemis, whose role in the myth the audience would already anticipate. This sets the tone: the multiple associations connected with one name is exemplary for the way in which the play provokes and embraces multiplicity rather than avoiding it.

Next, the prologue folds the mythical past into the dramatic present. As in many others of the surviving prologues, it is from the genealogy that the poet goes on to develop the broader mythical backstory. In this case, Helen's name serves as a cue for Agamemnon to recount the contest organised by Tyndareus and the oath forced upon the suitors, which of course is what has led to the situation at Aulis in which the play begins. In recalling this, however, and in speaking about Tyndareus and his difficult disposition, Agamemnon is actually also speaking about himself in the present moment:

> δειναὶ δ' ἀπειλαὶ καὶ κατ' ἀλλήλων φθόνος
> ξυνίσταθ', ὅστις μὴ λάβοι τὴν παρθένον.
> τὸ πρᾶγμα δ' ἀπόρως εἶχε Τυνδάρεωι πατρί,
> δοῦναί τε μὴ δοῦναί τε, τῆς τύχης ὅπως
> ἄψαιτ' ἄριστα. καί νιν εἰσῆλθεν τάδε·
> (53-57)

Without making the connection explicit, Agamemnon is describing not just how the suitors were threatening to take the virgin Helen, but also how Artemis is now threatening to take the virgin Iphigenia. Likewise, he is not just describing Tyndareus' doubting over giving or not giving his daughter away in marriage (δοῦναί τε μὴ δοῦναί τε), but also his own doubting over whether or not to give his own daughter to be sacrificed. Notably for this parallel myth too, Agamemnon is of course thinking of hiding that sacrifice behind the illusion of a marriage. Importantly though, this folding of past into present goes the other way as well and reveals the decision-making moment of Tyndareus as similar to that which Agamemnon faces right now. In their considerations about τύχη, and in trying to find a solution to their surprisingly similar predicaments, the two generals fit a pattern of individual decision making at the heart of mythical stories. Thus, in saying of Tyndareus that "this plan suddenly came to him" (57), Agamemnon is of course introducing precisely the kind of spontaneous plan which he is about to come up with for his own situation at Aulis. In this, the prologue sets up a structural element that will be key for the play again later on: thinking across

the mythical past and dramatic present shows how essential and revealing individual snap decisions can be in the shaping of the story.

The early scenes of the play present the audience with two different versions of events leading up to the present situation at Aulis. Agamemnon's own story, given in the prologue proper, will be countered by Menelaos' version of events soon after. The central point of contention is how the current difficulty arose in the first place. Agamemnon begins his story with Calchas' oracle which said that Artemis demands the sacrifice of Iphigenia before the Greeks can sail to Troy (89-93). His initial response to this is made clear:

> κλυὼν δ' ἐγὼ ταῦτ', ὀρθίωι κηρύγματι
> Ταλθύβιον εἶπον πάντ' ἀφιέναι στρατόν,
> ὡς οὔποτ' ἂν τλὰς θυγατέρα κτανεῖν ἐμήν.
> (94-96)

Unsurprisingly, Agamemnon will not sacrifice his daughter and since the oracle is not giving a command but rather stipulating a condition, he as the general in charge is free to abandon the expedition. In spite of all the reversals and complications about to ensue, it is crucial for the understanding of this particular play that Agamemnon's original response to the Aulis conundrum, at least in how he tells the story, was to end the expedition there and then.

It is crucial to remember this because the idea of Agamemnon being at once general and father and thus pulled in opposite directions, a view too easily taken from Aeschylus' eponymous hero in the *Agamemnon*, is not exactly pertinent here where the description of his wavering focuses on contingency rather than inevitability.[62] Initially, Agamemnon needs not a second of deliberation as the present participle κλυών and the description of the herald as ὀρθίωι κηρύγματι show. Agamemnon presents a version of events in which Menelaos caused all the complication by initiating the plan to send for Iphigenia on the pretence of a wedding to Achilles (97-100). Agamemnon describes this as a terrible thing and as a lie (ψευδῆ συνάψας, 105) and so we come to the end of his prologue which neatly ties into the play's beginning as well as reaffirming his commitment to family over army:

[62] On the reference here to Aeschylus, see Mastronarde 2010, 236. Siegel 1981 presents a number of different possible interpretations of what compels Agamemnon according to sacrifice Iphigenia, and argues that Agamemnon acts out of "fear" and "powerlessness", against his own convictions of what is right. Synodinou 2013, more recently and conversely, questions whether Agamemnon is sincere in wanting to save Iphigenia.

ἃ δ' οὐ καλῶc
ἔγνων τότ', αὖθιc μεταγράφω καλῶc πάλιν
ἐc τήνδε δέλτον, ἣν κατ' εὐφρόνηc ⟨...⟩
λύοντα καὶ cυνδοῦντά μ' εἰcεῖδεc, γέρον.
(107-10)

"Again I re-write", Agamemnon now says and thus brings the audience back from the mythological distant and recent past into the present moment in which the old man had addressed him. In contrasting the first letter, written οὐ καλῶς, with the present second letter, written καλῶς πάλιν, Agamemnon clearly acts now to rectify a previous wrong. If his agency as general is to count for anything, then the expedition is to disband.

This opening insists on a genuinely possible correction at the very core of the Trojan War myth. In what follows, the play develops what I would call 'another Aulis' or even an 'anti-Aulis', in which Iphigenia need not have been sacrificed and the Trojan War need not have happened. As such, I use the concept of 'an Aulis' or 'another Aulis' idiosyncratically to refer to a given version of events. A character or group of characters might either be trying to bring about a particular (version of the events at) Aulis or they might be believing that a particular Aulis is currently unfolding.

1.3.2 Another Aulis

Before the parodos, the long prologue returns to anapaests as Agamemnon reveals the contents of the second letter, which revokes the first, not only to the old man but also to the audience (115-123). The ensuing dialogue anticipates how narrative multiplicity will manifest on the level of plot, namely through the urgent question of who knows what version of the story at what point. Concretely, the old man asks how Achilles would be willing to forego the promised marriage (124-7). Agamemnon's answer that Achilles is part of the plan in name only (ὄνομ', οὐκ ἔργον, 128) evokes a distinction between name and fact that will become important again later on.[63] For now, though, having cleared this obstacle to Agamemnon's new plan, the old man is sent on his way with detailed instructions for how to put Agamemnon's anti-Aulis into action.

[63] The secrecy motif is discussed in detail in the next chapter. The distinction between name and fact is prominent also in *Helen*, on which see Kannicht 1969, Vol. 1, 57-60.

Menelaos' appearance after the parodos is best understood as a second beginning, structurally paralleling but narratively contradicting the original opening. This exposition to the play and its peculiar new Aulis, which Agamemnon presented in the course of the prologue scene, is immediately interrogated and questioned by Menelaos. Menelaos wresting the letter from the old man structurally inverses Agamemnon giving him the letter earlier. Moreover, contrary to Agamemnon's being asked to tell the story by the old servant, Menelaos forces his story on the old servant through the language of authority: οὐμὸc οὐχ ὁ τοῦδε μῦθοc κυριώτεροc λέγειν (318). Just as in the beginning the old man had asked Agamemnon for his μῦθος, that is to say his before in the form of a prologue to the play, so now the audience is led to expect an alternative prologue from Menelaos. As such, it is telling that the latter frames his speech as a cross-examination (ἐξελέγξαι, 335) of Agamemnon, furthering through legal terminology the idea of retelling the same events from a different perspective and questioning the account previously given. Here, Menelaos describes how Agamemnon was anxious to secure the command of the Greek army (337-48) and despaired when winds kept them at Aulis (349-57). Contrary to what Agamemnon had claimed earlier, we now hear that he was in fact very much delighted by Calchas' prophecy. Menelaos continues:

> καὶ πέμπειc ἑκών,
> οὐ βίαι — μὴ τοῦτο λέξηιc — cῆι δάμαρτι παῖδα cὴν
> δεῦρ' ἀποστέλλειν, Ἀχιλλεῖ πρόφαcιν ὡc γαμουμένην.
> κἄιθ' ὑποτρέψαc λέληψαι μεταβαλὼν ἄλλαc γραφάc,
> ὡc φονεὺc οὐκέτι θυγατρὸc cῆc ἔcηι; μάλιcτά γε.
> (360-4)

Menelaos emphasises that it was not through his persuasion, but by Agamemnon's own free will (ἑκών, οὐ βίαι), that the initial letter was sent and the false marriage was invented. As though he heard Agamemnon's earlier accusation (97-105) in the prologue, Menelaos makes a clever aside to reject it outright: μὴ τοῦτο λέξηιc. He also uses the image of re-writing (ἄλλαc γραφάc) in a direct address and rhetorical question to bring his version of events to the critical point: Agamemnon changed his mind to the detriment of Greece. Menelaos belabours this idea a little further, evoking in particular the image of the barbarians who might get away with shameful behaviour purely because of Agamemnon and his daughter (370-2). This is the first appearance of the anti-barbarian and pan-Hellenic theme which

will recur later in the play. Menelaos' speech gives a rhetorically refined narrative, which just like Agamemnon's prologue gives preference to one particular version of the story, thus contributing to the actual multiplicity of the myth.

Which of these two versions, Agamemnon's or Menelaos', is the audience to believe? Interestingly, it does not seem that Euripides wants to offer an answer or even provide an indication of whose prologue is taken as authoritative. Rather, the dramatic effect of this prologue and anti-prologue structure is to sustain the myth's multiplicity and simply to allow it to exist in more than one version.[64] This in itself is, and will continue to be in the course of the play, a phenomenon of great significance. Appropriately, the brothers' fundamentally different perceptions of past events also shape their outlook on and disagreement over the right course of action. Agamemnon brings into contention the crucial and disarming argument that Menelaos is making the Greeks suffer for the infidelity of his wife (382-3), while he also admits that he changed his mind to a better course of action (388-90). He remains committed to not sacrificing Iphigenia (396), because he considers it unfair that he and his daughter should pay the price for Helen's infidelity. His authority as the army's leading general, on which the very opening of the play had cast some doubt when Agamemnon was found wavering, is re-asserted here. Two outcomes are now possible, two versions of the story are in play: Agamemnon's plan — the campaign is to be aborted — stands as firmly as does Menelaos' plan — the campaign will go on.

This is the state of affairs when (at 414) the plot suddenly gains greater momentum with the messenger reporting that Clytemnestra has brought Iphigenia to Aulis. Agamemnon, seeing that his second letter has failed in its purpose, now despairs and falls into a rhetoric of defeat (448-50). The messenger's arrival thus paves the way for Menelaos' Aulis, that is to say Iphigenia's sacrifice. But the plot cleverly refuses to take this path and once again opts to sustain its state of multiplicity. To that end, Menelaos now undergoes a change of heart at least as profound as that which he had criticised in his brother earlier on. Literally "stepping back from his former words" (τῶν παλαιῶν ἐξαφίσταμαι λόγων) he now takes on what he (falsely) believes to be Agamemnon's position still (479-84). At the height of

[64] If not as an anti-prologue, this scene could be read as an *agon* (e.g. Mastronarde 2010, 235-37), or as closer to a comic fight (e.g. Matthiessen 2002, 228-29).

his speech, Menelaos employs all his rhetorical acumen in aid of an obviously preferable and more sensible course of action, namely not to sacrifice Iphigenia for the sake of Helen:

> τί βούλομαι γάρ; οὐ γάμους ἐξαιρέτους
> ἄλλους λάβοιμ᾽ ἄν, εἰ γάμων ἱμείρομαι;
> (485-88)

Menelaos here replaces the famous singularity of Helen with the seemingly obvious and natural possibility of remarrying. In doing so, he robs the war of its *casus belli* and he importantly does so by an act of re-interpretation. It is not a change of any outside circumstances, not a matter of a new development, but simply a case of pity (ὤικτιρα, 478) which caused this. Aligning himself in tone with Agamemnon's own change of heart from good to bad, he admits to his former foolishness and to changing his own mind now (489-4). His speech culminates in the clearest message possible:

> μέλλει. τί δ᾽ Ἑλένης παρθένωι τῆι σῆι μέτα;
> ἴτω στρατεία διαλυθεῖς᾽ ἐξ Αὐλίδος,
> (494-5)

In this final imperative, the gravity of the army's proposed dissolution comes out all the more clearly and shockingly. This is so because it comes from Menelaos who until now was the strongest champion of the war and whose positive ἴτω can say it so much more powerfully than Agamemnon's stubborn refusal could: the Trojan War need not take place.[65]

That a tragedy can, in this way, contain multiple possibilities for the course and outcome of its plot is not without close contemporary parallels, even if the outcome is considered as ostensibly predictable as the event of the Trojan War itself. Though it would be deserving of an independent study, I only want to mention Sophocles' *Philoctetes* here, which revolves around whether and how the titular hero can be successfully brought back from Lemnos to Troy along with his bow. Alexander Garvie's reading of Sophocles' play shows that the audience are presented with three possibilities open to Odysseus and Neoptolemus for retrieving Philoctetes, namely deceit, violence, and persuasion.[66] Garvie argues that these possibilities are variously considered and adapted by the individual characters throughout

[65] Luschnig 1988, 16, as discussed above, for more on this particular moment in the play.
[66] Garvie 1972.

the plot and thus weighed against each other before the audiences' eyes with the result of eliciting uncertainty over the play's actual path and outcome. Moreover, Sophocles also seriously confronts the audience with the possibility of failure in this campaign when he stages Neoptolemus' abandoning Philoctetes unpersuaded on Lemnos (l.1402) in what Garvie has shown works as the first of two endings to the play.[67] That the audience is indeed led to take this first ending as the conclusion to which the play convincingly leads, has been argued convincingly by David Robinson:[68]

> Sophocles was not writing for an audience who at I.1402 were going to think 'this is an episode of no real interest because we know the facts were not so'. It is probable enough that many Athenians in 409 B.C. still regarded the myths as basically historical; but they were fully accustomed to the existence of variant versions of the myths; if Sophocles presented a new version of the Philoctetes legend, those who took the myths historically would assume that Sophocles intended to give what seemed to him a truer account of historical probabilities.[69]

The *IA*, I argue, is to be read under a similar light, because in both cases the success of the Trojan War is at stake and in both cases an alternative ending is actively conjured. The difference, as I intend to show, is that in the *IA*, our doubts over the eventual outcome are sustained even to the last.

1.3.3 A Wedding After All?

Even though Agamemnon now displays the defeatist conviction that the war is a matter of ἀναγκαίας τύχας (511), Menelaos' abandonment of the *casus belli* presents a lasting turn in the play's treatment of the Aulis myths. The arrival of Clytemnestra and Iphigenia after the first stasimon falls right into the versioning process because it reminds us that Agamemnon has turned Aulis into a marriage story. Though originally concocted by Agamemnon as his anti-Aulis, it very much exists as a possible version at least inasmuch as Clytemnestra and Iphigenia believe in it. Their appearance and the stichomythic dialogue between father

[67] Garvie 1972, 224-5.

[68] Robinson 1969, 51-53. Schein 2013, ad 1402-8, explains that the metrical transition at this points signals closure and may have thus surprised an audience who expected the traditional myth. Somewhat differently, Manuwald 2017 reads this moment not as a first conclusion to the play but as part of a series of decisions to leave Lemnos, which now poises Neoptolemos himself against the Greeks, 15-16 and ad 1402-08.

[69] Robinson 1969, 52-53.

and daughter is of course replete with dramatic irony emphasising Iphigenia's naivety as opposed to Agamemnon's — and the audience's — distressing insight into what really awaits her.[70] A further level of meaning, however, is only gradually unlocked. When Agamemnon expresses the ironic wish for ignorance, at the end of his dialogue with Iphigenia (ζηλῶ cὲ μᾶλλον ἢ ᾽μὲ τοῦ μηδὲν φρονεῖν, 677), he also gives resonance to the many different plans, strategies and versions of events to come. When Iphigenia remarks that Agamemnon has already spent a long time ἐν Αὐλίδοc μυχοῖc (660), we are similarly reminded of the extensive delay and the many plans and confusions which have arisen during this time and exacerbated the contingency that was always inherent in the Aulis myth.

Before Menelaos' disappearance from stage, Agamemnon asks him (and the chorus) to ensure that Clytemnestra does not find out about the planned sacrifice.[71] In doing so, however, Agamemnon inadvertently consolidates the wedding plan. As the mechanism and patterns of dramatic irony are carried over to the dialogue between him and Clytemnestra, the audience slowly becomes aware of an actual clash between different versions of events, between sacrifice and marriage. Clytemnestra insists on not being foolish enough (οὐχ ὧδ' ἀcύνετόc, 691) as to be excessively affected by Iphigenia's going away in marriage. As this word recurs throughout the play when characters articulate a stance towards what is happening or about to happen, the word deserves closer attention. Both συνετός and its negative ἀσύνετοc are regularly used by Euripides to respectively denote clever and sensible or stupid and imprudent minds or actions.[72] Previously in the *IA*, Menelaos used the word (368) to describe the general experience of leaders suffering from a foolish decision made by the people; Agamemnon, justifying his breaking of the oath made by the suitors (394a), said that the gods are clever enough to recognise an oath that was made under compulsion (see below on l.1034-5). But just before Clytemnestra's use of the word here, namely in dialogue between Iphigenia and Agamemnon, the word also occurred:

[70] This is related to the view taken by Kovacs 2003b that a later reviser inserted a grand entrance for Clytemnestra and Iphigenia for dramatic effect, a view already advanced by Page 1934, 166.

[71] On the characterisation and importance of Clytemnestra in the *IA*, see Radding 2015, who reads her as gullible and thus a deliberate re-figuration of the Aeschylean model.

[72] Either or both of the pair occur at *IT* 1092, *Phoen.* 498, 1612, 570 *Or.* 921, 1406, *IA* 368, 394a, 653-4, 1034 (on which below), and 1255. In also occurs in the different meaning of "intelligible" (or its negative), at *Phoen.* 1506, 1731 *IA* 466, *Ion* 1205, and *Hel.* 352 (although here both meanings are plausible).

> Αγ. ἐc ταὐτόν, ὦ θύγατερ, ἥξειc cῶι πατρί.
> cυνετὰ λέγουcα μᾶλλον εἰc οἶκτόν μ᾽ ἄγειc.
> Ιφ. ἀcύνετά νυν ἐροῦμεν, εἰ cέ γ᾽ εὐφρανῶ.
> Αγ. παπαῖ· τὸ cιγᾶν οὐ cθένω, cὲ δ᾽ ἥινεcα.
> (665+653-55, following the order of lines in Diggle's edition.)

What Agamemnon refers to here as Iphigenia speaking cυνετὰ are statements which to him bring out the truth of his plans in an uncomfortable way, e.g. that Iphigenia just spoke of being left behind (664), and which cause him almost to reveal the duplicity of his plans for her here. Clarity of mind and sensibility therefore nearly causes the multiplicity to collapse, whereas foolishness would sustain it. Iphigenia's decision to speak ἀcύνετά therefore averts perspicuity and works as a sign to the audience that the duplicity of Agamemnon's actions will continue. In talking to Agamemnon about Iphigenia's marriage then, Clytemnestra uses the word to assert her sensibility in not grieving excessively at loss of Iphigenia when she gets married. But the repetition of the word, twice used by women in his family whom Agamemnon is lying to, also makes the point that Clytemnestra will have every reason to be excessively grieved once she really knows what will happen. In fact, the more Clytemnestra follows with Agamemnon's plan in the 'reasonable' way, the more the concocted marriage begins actually to become a plausible outcome of the plot.

First, Agamemnon is asked to give more than the name of Iphigenia's husband, to which he responds with the full story of Achilles' descent and upbringing. He is made inadvertently to legitimise and substantiate the marriage (712), which leads straight into Clytemnestra giving concrete shape to it in the form of the appropriate ceremony:

> ΚΛ. ἀλλ᾽ εὐτυχοίτην. τίνι δ᾽ ἐν ἡμέραι γαμεῖ;
> ΑΓ. ὅταν celήνηc ἐντελὴc ἔλθηι κύκλοc.
> ΚΛ. προτέλεια δ᾽ ἤδη παιδὸc ἔcφαξαc θεᾶι;
> ΑΓ. μέλλω· ᾽πὶ ταύτηι καὶ καθέcταμεν τύχηι.
> (716-19)

These lines reveal in exemplary fashion the key tension underlying this dialogue as a whole. Clytemnestra referring to the προτέλεια here is telling, not least because it hearkens back to the sacrificial language of Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* and also forward in narrative time.[73]

[73] The key discussion of this is that by Zeitlin 1965, Page 1972.

She is so firmly caught within her version of events that the blatant double meaning of the προτέλεια as a sacrifice "of the daughter to the goddess" eludes her. The word occurs three times in the *Agamemnon*, each time in the meaning of or with the connotation of a preliminary sacrifice to the war.[74] Rather than playing out the superiority of knowledge over ignorance, however, I argue that Euripides' particular use of dramatic irony here leaves both versions intact, a synchronous multiplicity in the most literal and direct sense.[75]

It is clear that, as the plot progresses, the alternative versions cannot but clash, which is why Clytemnestra shudders at the suggestion that Agamemnon and the Greek leaders will themselves administer the wedding:

> ΚΛ. λιποῦσα παῖδα; τίς δ' ἀνασχήσει φλόγα;
> ΑΓ. ἐγὼ παρέξω φῶς ὃ νυμφίοις πρέπει.
> ΚΛ. οὐχ ὁ νόμος οὗτος οὐδὲ φαῦλ' ἡγητέα.
> (732-34)

The problem with Agamemnon's plan now becomes abundantly clear: it is too close to reality, too realistic and therefore prone to impose its own νόμος, its own normative and absolute quality. Unable either to reject or to comply with the demands of his own fiction, which would mean divulging the secret or letting Clytemnestra go through with the wedding rites, Agamemnon resorts to an empty command, which fails to achieve anything:

> ΑΓ. πιθοῦ. ΚΛ. μὰ τὴν ἄνασσαν Ἀργείαν θεάν.
> ἐλθὼν δὲ τἄξω πρᾶσσε, τἀν δόμοις δ' ἐγώ,
> ἃ χρὴ παρεῖναι νυμφίοισι παρθένοις.
> (739-41)

Instead, Clytemnestra's version of events — marriage rather than sacrifice — continues to be developed as she adduces the proper social order of Greek life to justify her control over the nuptial rites. The divide between internal and external spheres (τἄξω vs. τἀν δόμοις) illustrates that by involving a fake marriage in his scheme Agamemnon has problematically encroached upon a sphere over which he has no control. Whatever Agamemnon may have had in mind when he initially concocted his marriage plan, and however the audience may

[74] At 65 (clearly referring to the opening of battle), 227 (referring specifically to the sacrifice of Iphigenia), and 720 (in a description of a lion-cub, combining the resonances of marriage and sacrificial ritual.

[75] The extraordinary proximity of the nuptial and sacrificial rites are noted by Foley 1985, 68-78 and 84-92. This is also noted by Chant 1986, 86.

have imagined this plan to be executed, it most certainly wasn't this kind of co-existence of the marriage and the sacrifice plan as real possibilities. In this dynamic, the *IA* may again be compared to Sophocles' *Philoctetes* where the risk that Philoctetes may not be brought back stems from the lie which Neoptolemus has told him.

Before the second stasimon, Agamemnon's speech reminds the audience of the concocted origins of the mock-wedding (746-59). After the chorus depart again, however, Achilles enters the stage for the first time, and launches an episode which makes this anti-Aulis seem yet more compelling and probable. Having introduced himself as eager for war, Achilles is already weary of waiting for the expedition to depart, not least because some of the warriors (including himself) have left their homes empty because they are unmarried (805-7). Achilles then meets with Clytemnestra and the two embark on a dialogue which deserves much more attention than it has hitherto received for the artful and complex way in which Euripides plays with the imbalances of knowledge.

Clytemnestra and Achilles make a fitting pair to define this sequentially central and in many ways pivotal scene of the *IA*, precisely because so far they have been deliberately kept out of the loop. Now, they are moved to the centre of the versioning process of the myth. Even though they have never met before, they quickly recognise each other and come to a mutual understanding. Stumbling over the social decorum forbidding Achilles to speak to an unaccompanied woman in the midst of the army, Clytemnestra makes herself known as his future mother in law. Achilles in turn is bewildered: he has neither asked for Iphigenia's hand, nor been told about a plan for him to marry her (841-42). With this, the two arrive at a critical moment and their exchange recapitulates in a way how the plot has developed so far:

> ΚΛ. τί δῆτ' ἂν εἴη; cὺ πάλιν αὖ λόγοιc ἐμοῖc
> εἴκαζ'· ἐμοὶ γὰρ θαύματ' ἐcτὶ τὰ παρὰ coῦ.
> ΑΧ. θαύμαζε· κοινὸν ⟨δ'⟩ ἐcτὶν εἰκάζειν τάδε·
> ἄμφω γὰρ ἐψευδόμεθα τοῖc λόγοιc ἴcωc.
> ΚΛ. ἀλλ' ἦ πέπονθα δεινά; μαcτεύω γάμουc
> οὐκ ὄντας, ὡc εἴξαcιν· αἰδοῦμαι τάδε.
> ΑΧ. ἴcωc ἐκερτόμηcε κἀμὲ καὶ cέ τιc·
> ἀλλ' ἀμελίαι δὸc αὐτὰ καὶ φαύλωc φέρε.
> (843-50)

Achilles' and Clytemnestra's disposition here is a clever reflection of how the plot in general, and Agamemnon in particular, has been treating them as characters. So far, they have featured as imagined accessories, at most following a script on the periphery of the main action, to the point where they sense themselves to have been cheated (ἐψευδόμεθα) and yet don't understand their actual roles within Agamemnon's ploy, the one as mother to the pretend-bride, the other as pretend-husband.

Most importantly, however, they are expressing their confusion in a way highly appropriate for the audience's own puzzlement at this point. When Clytemnestra is asking Achilles to conjecture based on her λόγοι, and when the latter in turn is asking her to join him in this project of conjecture (843-46), they allow the audience to rediscover Agamemnon's plan again from the characters' perspective. When Clytemnestra is expressing her shame at having believed the fiction of a marriage (847-48), she is also extending a perspective to audience members who, with Menelaos' unexpected resignation, may well have conjectured a different kind of Aulis unfolding. Achilles, also seeing himself tricked, halts further speculation and again we may see him turn one eye to the audience and their recently sparked imagination when he says ἀλλ' ἀμελίαι δὸc αὐτὰ καὶ φαύλωc φέρε (850) — don't take it all so seriously. Achilles' and Clytemnestra's disposition is therefore not so dissimilar even from that of the audience, who may experience similar puzzlement in the face of more than one version of the story coexisting at once. Achilles' imperative, however, not to take it too seriously will only provide very temporary and superficial relief from this uncertainty.

For having found themselves as mere characters acting within the authorial power of Agamemnon's fiction, Clytemnestra and Achilles are now offered an unexpected opportunity to become authorial figures themselves and to write their own version.[76] The material for this version, the marriage, is already right in front of them and the key to using it is delivered by the old servant, who stops Clytemnestra and Achilles from making a premature exit. This old servant, who says explicitly that his loyalties lie first and foremost with Clytemnestra rather than with Agamemnon (867-71), provides a solution to the current conjecturing and searching.[77] Just as he asked Agamemnon at the start of the play, Clytemnestra now

[76] D. Burgess 2004, esp. 48-51, reads this as part of the *IA*'s play with lies and convictions.
[77] For other instances of the loyal servant trope, see *Ion* 854ff. and *Hel.* 726ff. Stockert 1992, ad 867.

asks him to "reveal the story" (ἐκκάλυπτε ... λόγους, 872) and is promptly given the answer in full. Achilles and Clytemnestra learn not only that Agamemnon is about to sacrifice Iphigenia (873), that the prophecy of Calchas has ordained this sacrifice to be necessary for the expedition to Troy (879-81), but also that the marriage of Iphigenia and Achilles was a mere ruse to get the girl to Aulis (885). The dialogue continues as more details concerning the second letter and its interception by Menelaos' are filled in (891-5). Swiftly, however, the scene's centre of gravity switches to Achilles, who is the first to fully understand the multiplicity of versions, a fictional story and a real plan. Immediately, he foregrounds the distress of this situation, nearly interrupting Clytemnestra as he says ἔκλυον οὖcαν ἀθλίαν cε, τὸ δ' ἐμὸν οὐ φαύλως φέρω (897). By direct contrast with his earlier καὶ φαύλως φέρε (850), it is clear that he is now very much going to take this seriously. And so, he makes his stance more concrete: he will not take Agamemnon's actions ἁπλῶc, which is to say he will not accept his plan — and we read: his version — as absolute.

Accordingly, after Clytemnestra pleads with him the very reasoned cause of helping her and Iphigenia against Agamemnon's plan (900-16), Achilles responds at length:

> cὲ δ', ὦ cχέτλια παθοῦcα πρὸc τῶν φιλτάτων,
> ἃ δὴ κατ' ἄνδρα γίγνεται νεανίαν,
> τοcοῦτον οἶκτον περιβαλὼν καταcτελῶ,
> κοὔποτε κόρη cὴ πρὸc πατρὸc cφαγήcεται,
> ἐμὴ φατιcθεῖc'· οὐ γὰρ ἐμπλέκειν πλοκὰc
> ἐγὼ παρέξω cῶι πόcει τοὐμὸν δέμαc.
> τοὔνομα γάρ, εἰ καὶ μὴ cίδηρον ἥρατο,
> τοὐμὸν φονεύcει παῖδα cήν. τὸ δ' αἴτιον
> πόcιc cόc. ἁγνὸν δ' οὐκέτ' ἐcτὶ cῶμ' ἐμόν,
> εἰ δι' ἔμ' ὀλεῖται διά τε τοὺc ἐμοὺc γάμουc
> ἡ δεινὰ τλᾶcα κοὐκ ἀνεκτὰ παρθένοc
> θαυμαcτὰ δ' ὡc ἀνάξι' ἠτιμαcμένη.
> (932-42)

It is worth pausing for a moment on this speech. Achilles cleverly shows up Agamemnon for his central error of conjuring up the powerful idea of a marriage. He now calls Iphigenia his betrothed, ἐμὴ φατιcθεῖc' (936), emphasised by its run-over position to the start of the line and thus isopositioned with ἐγὼ in the next line. Thus, he rejects the functionality and fictionality of the marriage and so turns Agamemnon's anti-Aulis into his own real Aulis.

Moreover, he cleverly interweaves this assertion with a direct refusal of the way in which Agamemnon wanted to utilise him.

We remember how, at the start of the play, Agamemnon explained to the old servant that Achilles' involvement in the plan was only superficial and in name, not in actual fact (ὄνομ', οὐκ ἔργον, παρέχων Ἀχιλεὺς | οὐκ οἶδε γάμους, 128). Now, as though picking up the precise mechanism of Agamemnon's plan, the distinction between name and body, between pretence and reality, Achilles deliberately conflates these two, when he acknowledges that his name would indeed be committing murder (939), but that he will not give his actual self to Agamemnon's plans. More on this follows in the justification which Achilles goes on to offer. He claims that his decision is not about the marriage itself, but rather about the fact that he was not asked before his name was used (962-3). He was not unhappy with the creation of a fictional version, but only with being relegated and dishonoured by not knowing what was really happening (965-69). All this shows that for him the marriage is a means to an end but as such very much a serious business.

It is a means to the end of showing Agamemnon that he cannot alone decide on the course of events with others playing their parts as unwitting actors. This is where the play very directly and interestingly invokes the Iliadic Achilles in his relationship with Agamemnon and the consequences this has on the plot there. For in *Iliad* I, Agamemnon angers Achilles by taking away the slave Briseis (182-187), who later in the *Iliad* notably says herself that she was promised, by Patroclos, to become Achilles' wife upon his return to Phthia (XIX.297-99). In this, the *IA* draws on the precise dynamic and cause of Achilles' wrath to underpin his decision at this point in the play. Earlier in his speech, Achilles says that he is willing to follow the Atreides in war, but only if they lead well (928-9), which echoes the Achilles of *Iliad* I. The structural parallel implies that Achilles' discontent in the *IA* will also have serious consequences for Agamemnon. As in the *Iliad*, Achilles accuses Agamemnon of *hybris* (961) and is enraged that he was not more respected by the Greek generals. This last point in particular echoes Achilles' threat that Agamemnon and the Greeks will pay the price for not respecting him (*Iliad* I.241-4). In the *IA*, Achilles emphasises that he is not so much concerned with the specific wedding to Iphigenia as with a general point of honour:

> οὐ τῶν γάμων ἕκατι — μυρίαι κόραι
> θηρῶcι λέκτρον τοὐμόν — εἴρηται τόδε·
> ἀλλ᾽ ὕβριν ἐc ἡμᾶc ὕβριc᾽ Ἀγαμέμνων ἄναξ.
> (959-61)

In this, the *IA*'s Achilles arguably channels his Iliadic counterpart the strongest, because keeping Briseis was important to him *qua* being a demonstration of honour.[78] In terms of the multiple plots of the *IA*, the conflict between Achilles and Agamemnon at the heart of the *Iliad* provides an important narrative precedent and lends depth and credibility to Achilles' threats in his speech.

The subsequent exchange between Achilles and Clytemnestra gives shape to their plans for saving Iphigenia. She is to supplicate Agamemnon, as persuading him to desist from his plan would be easiest for all involved (1015-24). Failing that, Achilles says he will be watching and waiting sword in hand (1028). This leaves the stage to the chorus and to the third stasimon, but not before Clytemnestra has expressed, in all clarity, the reasons for being hopeful that this plan will succeed and that Iphigenia does not have to die.

> εἰ δ᾽ εἰcὶ ⟨cυνετοὶ⟩ θεοί, δίκαιοc ὢν ἀνὴρ
> ἐcθλῶν κυρήcειc· εἰ δὲ μή, τί δεῖ πονεῖν;
> (1034-5)

A word that stands out again here is cυνετοὶ (Diggle's emendation here). I mentioned Iphigenia's and Clytemnestra's usage of the word as an expression how they relate to the plot as it unfolded while they were kept in the dark (653-4 and 691). But in the instance here, it resonates more strongly with Agamemnon's earlier expression that the gods are reasonable enough to know an oath if it is sworn under compulsion (394a). At that moment, he evoked divine sensibility on behalf of his version of the events leading up to Aulis. Now, in much the same way, Clytemnestra is finding in the good sense of the gods a hope that Achilles' and her plan for the outcome of events will be successful. For the audience, this shows that Agamemnon's original arguments, later taken up by Menelaos and now favoured by Clytemnestra and Achilles, are now commended to the gods to make them see the possibility for an alternative ending in which Iphigenia need not die. Comparable to what Robinson

[78] The reference to *Il.* IX.395ff. is noted, but not explored further by Stockert 1992, ad 959f. He cites Hartung 1853 deleting the parenthesis as a later rephrasing of the Iliadic motif.

has shown in the case of Sophocles' *Philoctetes*, the audience is not presented with this alternative ending simply for the sake of innovation or playfulness, but because that ending is to be considered the plausible and right one.[79] Otherwise, so the play suggests and Clytemnestra is right to ask, "why should we struggle?" She and Achilles have taken control of their situation and are exploiting Agamemnon's mistake, which was to use them as unwitting agents for his scheme. This gives fresh power to the other Aulis, not only for the characters but for the audience too.

1.3.4 It Could Have Been Different

When Agamemnon now tries to continue with his deceit, Clytemnestra understands the sinister double meaning of the rituals of which he speaks. The fact that the tables have turned and that Agamemnon is now the one unaware of what is happening is captured neatly by Clytemnestra's aside to Iphigenia οἶσθα γὰρ πατρὸς | πάντως ἃ μέλλει (1117-18). The obvious distress shown by Iphigenia and Clytemnestra alike leads to a shift in mood and to the question being put openly to Agamemnon: τὴν παῖδα τὴν σὴν τήν τ' ἐμὴν μέλλεις κτανεῖν; (1131). His feeble attempts at denial quickly prove pointless and he admits to everything (1132-45). This admission of guilt and the discovery of the deceit, another turning point, are followed by supplication speeches by Clytemnestra and Iphigenia, which are well coordinated in their architecture and story-telling, reinforcing the good reasons for abandoning the expedition.

They do so, importantly, by foregrounding again that the versioning process, the writing of the story, is still ongoing. Both introduce their speeches with reference to speech itself. Clytemnestra, claims to uncover λόγοι and to leave behind riddling songs (1146). Iphigenia, in turn, compares her speech to the λόγος of Orpheus, thereby invoking testimony from the mythical past to the incomprehensible and yet famous possibilities of persuasion (1211-14). To evoke Orpheus in particular here as the purveyor of persuasive *speech* in the sense of rhetoric may seem a curious choice. But given his own myth and experience with a young woman's death, Orpheus turns out to be a highly fitting choice for someone who like

[79] Robinson 1969.

Iphigenia is hoping to escape from what seems a certain sacrifice. As we will see, the idea of bringing about the impossible through persuasion is in fact programmatic for both speeches.

In a move which once again structurally recalls Agamemnon's prologue to the play, Clytemnestra recalls past events to lend support to what she is saying now. Once again, past and present events are brought to bear on each other by virtue of the shared moments of contingency in them. The story of Agamemnon's destruction of her first family (1148-56) reminds him that he himself was once saved as a supplicant (1156). Bringing before him her merits as wife since then, her appeal culminates in a game of purely rhetorical questions (and answers):

> κἄν τίς σ᾽ ἔρηται τίνος ἕκατί νιν κτενεῖς, λέξον, τί φήσεις;
> ἢ ᾽μὲ χρὴ λέγειν τὰ σά; Μενέλαος Ἑλένην ἵνα λάβηι.
> καλὸν †γένος†, κακῆς γυναικὸς μισθὸν ἀποτεῖσαι τέκνα.
> (1166-9)

She is asking Agamemnon to imagine the story being told in the future and thus frames her argument in terms of a choice between versions: what story does Agamemnon want to tell and be told? This imagined re-telling of events *ex post facto* lets Agamemnon view himself through the eyes of an imagined posterity, with whom the audience too would identify. It is from this argument that Clytemnestra essentially develops the rest of her speech. She asks Agamemnon to imagine the kind of state in which he leaves the house and what kind of a return he will make after a campaign for which he gave the life of his own daughter (1171-95). While obviously embedding a reference to Aeschylus' canonical portrayal of these events in the *Oresteia*, Clytemnestra's rhetorical technique of several open-ended questions (1185-8) reinforces both Agamemnon's accountability for the present situation, but also his agency and choice in what will happen next.

Iphigenia, in her speech, proceeds with similar force and speed. As the story of Agamemnon as suppliant before Tyndareus is still resonating, Iphigenia takes up the pose of a suppliant and explicitly calls herself such (ἱκετηρίαν, 1216), begging Agamemnon in the most pitiful words not to kill her. Importantly, she too brings things back to the past, to stories from their home at Argos, calling upon Agamemnon to remember his special relationship with her as his first daughter (1220-22) and also offers Agamemnon a chance

to reflect on an alternative version. Cleverly, she does this through narrating a piece of dialogue, imagined or remembered, between her and Agamemnon:

> λόγος δ' ὁ μὲν σὸς ἦν ὅδ'· Ἆρά σ', ὦ τέκνον,
> εὐδαίμον' ἀνδρὸς ἐν δόμοισιν ὄψομαι,
> ζῶσάν τε καὶ θάλλουσαν ἀξίως ἐμοῦ;
> (1223-25)

By presenting Agamemnon with a bit of direct speech of his own, Iphigenia not only appeals to his former wishes for her future, but also reminds him of his own present ability to speak out. The λόγος in which she is ζῶσαν is still possible and indeed it is one that would be worthy of Agamemnon. She will, a little later, call herself "saved", quite possibly by her husband Achilles, at which point the audience may think back to this emotive appeal. Iphigenia lets her argument lead up to the emphatic question of what she should have to do with Helen and Paris, a question which was asked earlier the play already by Agamemnon (384) and, not least, by Menelaos (494). As such, she links her final appeal for life directly to a plausible and justified outcome which was conjured up by the preceding plot itself.

The idea of choice and agency, however, is vehemently rejected by Agamemnon in his response. According to him, the whole matter has the dynamic of a raging longing in the Greek army, one which he compares to the power of Aphrodite (1264). What forces him to sacrifice Iphigenia, he insists, is not Menelaos or any personal concern, but the collective will (1271-2), ironically invoking the "freedom" of Greece in explaining his own lack of free choice. Such a contradiction is also found in Iphigenia's subsequent monody. She recalls once again, but from her own perspective, the events of the mythical past from the birth of Paris to the present moment. Coming to the events at Aulis themselves, she focuses on Zeus' unfavourable wind, describing it as εἰλίσσων / αὔραν ἄλλοις ἄλλαν θνατῶν (1324-25). The idea of multiplicity here puts Iphigenia's monody into line with the narrative multiplicity of the plot as a whole, as she goes on to list the various simultaneous versions which are contained in the events at hand:

> λαίφεσι χαίρειν,
> τοῖσι δὲ λύπαν, τοῖσι δ' ἀνάγκαν,
> τοῖς δ' ἐξορμᾶν, τοῖς δὲ στέλλειν,
> τοῖσι δὲ μέλλειν.

(1326-29)

This gives a different resonance also to the somewhat gnomic statement with which Iphigenia closes her speech, calling her people twice πολύμοχθον (1330), in which the similar πολύμυθος could be seen to resonate too if articulated in the right way by an actor.

When Achilles now comes on stage, it becomes clear that the other Aulis, in which he will marry Iphigenia, is far from forgotten. Iphigenia still feels shame because of how unfortunate the wedding has turned out to be and Achilles relates his confrontation with the Greek army over his intention to marry Iphigenia. He once again insists that Agamemnon promised her to him (ἣν ἐφήμισεν πατήρ μοι) and Clytemnestra adds that it was for this reason that Iphigenia was brought to Aulis (1356). Agamemnon's anti-Aulis has maintained its momentum and more importantly it has found, in the person of Achilles, a notoriously stubborn proponent. Against the threat of Odysseus acting as leader of the army, Achilles insists on fighting for his cause and so he twice reassures Clytemnestra of his resolve to save Iphigenia (1361, 1365). Iphigenia's salvation will continue as an alternative version and rival the supposedly ineluctable collective will of the army.

This brings us to Iphigenia's decision to sacrifice herself, a passage intensely discussed in many interpretations of the play.[80] However, thinking back to the prologue at this point gives us an interesting and hitherto unexplored hint as to how her decision is to be read. Central to this are the words Iphigenia uses to introduce her change of heart: οἷα δ' εἰcῆλθέν μ' ἄκουcον, μῆτερ, ἐννοουμένην· (1374). This echoes directly, with differences only in the pronouns and order of words, Agamemnon's description in the prologue of Tyndareus' sudden inspiration to have the suitors swear an oath: καί νιν εἰcῆλθεν τάδε· (57). The parallel between these two moments, however, is much more substantial and important if we look closer at the circumstances. Iphigenia's idea to sacrifice herself "comes to her" at the moment when Achilles is openly anticipating a direct conflict with Odysseus: ἀλλὰ μὴν ἐc τοῦτό γ' ἥξει, 1368. Tyndareus' idea of the oath "came to him" when confronted with terrible threats from the suitors against each other in their quarrelling over who would get Helen (δειναὶ δ' ἀπειλαὶ, 53). This parallel betrays the real nature of the supposedly necessity-bound

[80] See the above review of scholarship.

decision in each case. Like Tyndareus' idea of the oath, Iphigenia's impulse to commit herself to sacrifice is in fact an extremely pragmatic, non-ideological and rather *ad hoc* solution to an urgent threat of the Greeks attacking each other. This context gives a rather different spin to Iphigenia' explaining of her decision:

> εἰc ἔμ' Ἑλλὰc ἡ μεγίcτη πᾶcα νῦν ἀποβλέπει,
> κἀν ἐμοὶ πορθμός τε ναῶν καὶ Φρυγῶν κατασκαφαί
> τάς τε μελλούcας γυναῖκας, ἤν τι δρῶcι βάρβαροι
> , μηκέθ' ἁρπάζειν ἐᾶν †τὰc† ὀλβίας ἐξ Ἑλλάδοc
> , τὸν Ἑλένηc τείcαντας ὄλεθρον, ἣν ἀνήρπασεν Πάριc
> . (1378-82)

It is worth taking this first and foremost in the most literal way. The reason why the Trojan War might never have happened is in fact because those who comprise Ἑλλάς, most prominently Agamemnon, Menelaos, Achilles and Odysseus, have proven that they are in fact too self-destructive to get the campaign under way on their own. What is more, the almost cyclical connection between Tyndareus' and Iphigenia's solutions to the very same problem highlights, not without causing some discomfort, emphasises the provisionality of any such solution which requires this anti-barbarian and pan-Hellenic sentiment in its defence. If anything, the play has shown that the oath did not really bind Agamemnon and that not even Menelaos himself insisted in his determination to win back Helen at any cost.

Even the moment of Iphigenia's decision then urges the provisionality of any one way of telling the story. For my own reading, this poses an urgent question: does Iphigenia's decision to willingly be sacrificed mean that the play's intellectual experiment of imagining a consistent multiplicity of synchronous versions is hereby abandoned and the myth reduced to a singular version? This is of course another way of posing what I have identified as the key interpretative challenge at the start of our discussion. If indeed, as I believe is the case, we ought to take the play seriously as presenting the aesthetic and intellectual capacity of imagining an "otherwise", we have to ask what remains of the multi-versioned Aulis after Iphigenia's speech.

1.3.5 Multiple Endings or No Ending

The end of the play leaves us with some important clues that the multiplicity persists because even after Iphigenia has said she will die willingly, we have good reasons not to believe her. There are, in the final scenes, a number of interpretative difficulties for deciding what actually happens in the end and what that ending actually amounts to.[81] Rather than offering one reading here as singularly true, I urge that the configuration of the plot so far and the structure of the final scenes in particular allow for more than one understanding of what happens, both for the original audience and for us.[82] The key is that some of the oddities of the ending are best understood if we take it that Iphigenia and Achilles have come silently but effectively to reverse Agamemnon's original plan and thus dupe everyone, including most readers of the play so far.[83] Whereas originally Iphigenia was to be sacrificed with the help of a pretend-wedding, she will now be saved by the cunning and stubborn Achilles, making a pretend-sacrifice out of a pretend-wedding.

This explains a number of puzzling features in the final scene. To begin with, there is Achilles' continued commitment to marry Iphigenia in which he openly ignores the finality and validity of her decision. In fact, he says that Iphigenia's conduct has made him all the more keen to marry her (1410-11), spoken in the sentiment of one who will in fact do so. Importantly, he also renews his offer of support:

> ὅρα δ'· ἐγὼ γὰρ βούλομαί c' εὐεργετεῖν
> λαβεῖν τ' ἐc οἴκουc· ἄχθομαι δ', ἴcτω Θέτιc,
> εἰ μή cε cώcω Δαναΐδαιcι διὰ μάχηc
> ἐλθών. ἄθρηcον· ὁ θάνατοc δεινὸν κακόν.
> (1412-15)

[81] The textual problem of whether or not the ending of the play can be interpreted in the current state at all will be discussed in the next chapter. The currently common view that "it is not known how Euripides intended to end the play" (Mastronarde 2010, 43) has not precluded attempts to reconstruct and interpret the ending. Textual problems aside, Matthiessen 2002, 234-37, considers the ending "inhaltlich ... noch ganz annehmbar" and gives the range of possible interpretations, in particular on whether it presents the war and Iphigenia's sacrifice as divinely sanctioned.

[82] Earlier, in 412 BC, Euripides staged an alternative version of the myth in *Iphigenia among the Taurians* where Iphigenia survived. The arising questions are discussed by Hulton 1962 and receive further attention in the next chapter.

[83] In this point in particular, I am greatly indebted to Bonnie Honig 2013, 151-189, on Sophocles *Antigone*, who shows that such undercurrents of plot can be elusive even in a play with a rich history of interpretation.

Iphigenia strangely rejects this assurance that Achilles is willing to fight for her, but the latter insists that he will be there, ready at arms, because she might change her mind: ὅμως δ' ἴσως γε κἂν μεταγνοίης τάδε, 1424. Achilles' reference to this possibility might seem puzzling, but by this point in the play μετάγνοιη resonates before the background of the many changes of heart and plans and is clearly not invoked as an empty word. The peculiarity of this moment seems the more plausible if we take it that Achilles and Iphigenia are in silent agreement about what they will really do — contrary to what they say. Achilles, at any rate, will do his part in ensuring that alternative ending and so he goes ahead to the temple to wait there for Iphigenia to arrive (1431-32).

Moreover, Iphigenia too thinks that she will be saved. Though she does not, and in light of her previous decision to sacrifice herself cannot, express this directly, she does her level best to convey the plan to Clytemnestra in secret. Taking up Achilles' σε σώσω (1418), she now confidently claims that she will be saved using the definitive ring of the perfect tense σέσωμαι(1440) thus covertly assuring her mother that she does not have to mourn over her. Asked by Iphigenia not to practice all the customary signs of mourning, black garments and the cutting of hair, Clytemnestra is offered a chance to glimpse what Iphigenia knows:

> ΚΛ. πῶς εἶπας; οὐ πενθεῖν με σὴν ψυχὴν χρεών;
> ΙΦ. ἥκιστ', ἐπεί μοι τύμβος οὐ χωσθήσεται.
> †τί δὲ τὸ θνήισκειν οὐ τάφος νομίζεταις†
> ΙΦ. βωμὸς θεᾶς μοι μνῆμα τῆς Διὸς κόρης.
> (1441-44)

No cause for grieving, no burial mound, but a memorial at the altar of Artemis is what Iphigenia sees for herself. The ambivalence here, between being sacrificed at the altar of Artemis at Aulis and Iphigenia's future life at the temple of Artemis at Tauris, known from Euripides' earlier Iphigenia play, serves to remind the audience that Iphigenia's death is certainly not the expected outcome of the myth.[84] Towards the end of their exchange, Iphigenia instructs her mother again not to mourn and specifically not to carry a grudge against Agamemnon for what he did, even though it was unworthy of him (οὐκ ἀξίως, 1457). It is particularly

[84] There is disagreement on the date of the play, but composition before 412 BC is probable, according to Kearns 2023, 2-3.

notable that this word is taken up by Iphigenia when she at last describes her own departure from the stage in what are her final words to Clytemnestra: ὡc ὁρᾶιc γ', οὐκ ἀξίωc (1465). The hint here lies in the combination of the language of trickery with that of (misleading) perception. Agamemnon had been described as unworthy of the trick with which he brought the whole situation about (δόλωι, 1457). Now, Iphigenia reminds her mother that her departure is ὡc ὁρᾶιc γ', making it a matter of appearance, of how things seem at any rate (to render the particle γ'), not necessarily of how they are. All this suggests that Iphigenia too is cleverly admitting to a trick which is precisely the inversion of that which Agamemnon had tried to play in the first part of the play.[85]

The paean which Iphigenia raises and sings together with the Chorus, a hymn to Artemis, concludes the play's action proper. All that is left now is for the messenger to come and report what has happened off-stage. This, too, however, leaves the action of the play suspended in multiplicity and inconclusiveness. What is remarkable from the outset is the emphasis on looking away, on witnessing but not seeing directly. Agamemnon, the messenger says, turned the other way and covered his eyes as soon as he saw Iphigenia (1547-50), and together with Menelaos and the entire army he emphatically looked to the ground while the sacrifice was actually to take place (ἐc γῆν δ' Ἀτρεῖδαι πᾶc cτρατός τ' ἔcτη βλέπων, 1577). At the moment of the supposed sacrifice, however, we learn how Iphigenia suddenly disappeared with a loud bang (1582-83). After everyone is looking again, which is now emphasised repeatedly (ἄελπτον εἰcιδόντεc...ὁρωμένου...ἰδεῖν, 1585-88), the messenger said that a deer was seen in Iphigenia's stead. Calchas is swift to interpret this substitution as the work of Artemis (1590-1601). According to him, Iphigenia was taken away by the goddess so as not to stain the altar with her blood (1594-95) and so he calls on the Greeks to leave the Αὐλίδοc κοιλοὺc μυχοὺc (1600). If the consonance between μυχοὺc and μύθουc is indeed at play here, then Calchas implicitly also tries to put an end to the story-telling and versioning, to literally leave Aulis and all its contingency behind, and to move on to the war itself. Yet the final words in the messenger's report sustain both versions in a phrase that perfectly encapsulates the double fate of Iphigenia, dead and alive at the same time:

[85] This may also be added to the discussion of role inversions offered by Chant 1986, which focuses on Iphigenia taking on the role of an Achillean saviour.

ἦμαρ γὰρ τόδε
θανοῦcαν εἶδε καὶ βλέπουcαν παῖδα cήν.
(1611-12)

When the messenger assures Clytemnestra again, however, that he was there and saw this all himself (ἐγὼ παρὼν δὲ καὶ τὸ πρᾶγμ' ὁρῶν λέγω·, 1607), we are instantly reminded that in fact, as he said himself, *they all looked away when it happened*. And so she meets the report with suspicions about its plausibility. Tellingly, she calls this yet different version of events, which the messenger relates to her, a *mythos*:

πῶc cε προcείπω;
πῶc δ' οὐ φῶ
παραμυθεῖcθαι τούcδε μάτην
μύθουc, ὥc cου
πένθουc λυγροῦ παυcαίμην;
(1616-18)

How indeed could she not believe that these are mere myths and how would the audience not believe this as well? For in the messenger's report we heard that the one person who was in fact paying attention and taking action was Achilles, who stood near the altar and took the tools of the sacrifice into his own hands (1568-69). He is also said to have run around the goddess' altar (ἐν κύκλῳ βωμοῦ θεᾶς, 1568), uttering a prayer. What could be understood as an otherwise perfectly normal participation in the ritual here cannot but seem strange, because Achilles has made such an explicit point about being present at the altar to help Iphigenia escape after all. The messenger, we remember, was keen on insisting that none of the Greeks saw what really happened, which raises the question: could Achilles have done what he said he would do and what Iphigenia was led to expect, namely his saving her at the last moment. All the messenger said was that a priest examined the girl's neck (1578-79) and then there was a blow and the shout from the priest (1584). There is room enough here for an audience to think that Achilles was the one to replace her with a deer when no-one was looking. This ending then follows the path of synchronous mythical multiplicity to its logical conclusion. The play's ending is characterised not so much by uncertainty as to whether or not Iphigenia is actually sacrificed, but rather by the productive discomfort that what the audience has seen over the course of the entire play allows for two entirely different

Aulis myths to co-exist even to the end.

1.4 Conclusion

I introduced my reading of Euripides' *IA* by reviewing the Aulis episode in the epic tradition as a reference point for how Greek literature before the classical period and the heyday of dramatic production in Athens probably knew and treated this interesting mythical episode. This showed that the *Iliad*, and probably the *Cypria* as well, knew Aulis as a story of contingency and that it had more than one outcome, both actually in the sources and in the way it was remembered. The *peira* episode in *Iliad* II in particular, which prompts a remembering of Aulis, shows that multiplicity was a key part of the Trojan War myth and that a particular interest in *if not*- or *otherwise*-scenarios went hand in hand with this. My reading of the *IA* amounts to seeing in the play a furthering of this same intellectual interest by the different poetic and formal means which the 5th-century stage afforded. In suggesting that Iphigenia need not and at least in one version did not actually die at Aulis, the *IA* is centering on and sustaining the myth's multiplicity in a more provocative way, rather than inventing a alternative version altogether.

Interestingly, *Iliad* II and its "Beinahe"-dynamic already provoked ancient scholars to think about tragedy. In a *scholion* on Book II.156, the very moment in which the *if not* is at once realised and stopped by Hera's intervention through Athena and Odysseus, we find the following perceptive remark:[86]

> εἰς τοσοῦτον προάγει τὰς περιπετείας ὡς δύνασθαι θεὸν μόνον αὐτὰς μεταθεῖναι. πρῶτος δὲ καὶ τοῖς πραγικοῖς μηχανὰς εἰσηγήσατο.[87]

Before making explicit reference to the tragedians, the scholiast here describes the episode in a way that appears to be inflected by his reading of the dramatic endings, using the term περιπετεία from Aristotle's description of tragedy. What is more, by his direct comparison and the claim that Homer here introduced a device for the tragedians' later use, the scholiast translates an epic episode into the language of dramatic technique, as μηχανὰς refers to the

[86] I take this observation from De Jong 1987, 74.
[87] Erbse 1969, vol I, 215, ad B 156.

physical contraption facilitating the *deus ex machina* interventions on the stage. It seems then that even for ancient scholars the propensity of drama to present myth in a way that draws stories to the most extreme and outwardly counter-factual scenarios stemmed from and was already found in the epic tradition, which after all provided dramatists with their source material.

And yet, it would be remiss to conclude this chapter without pointing also to the difference within this contiguity. Whereas the *Iliad*'s "Beinahe" stands at the relative beginning of the poem and thus looks back to a past Aulis and to all the future contingencies that the epic narrative will still bring, the *IA* sends the audience on their way with a final challenge. There is no *dea ex machina* at the end, no Hera who affirmatively decides which version of the myth is being played. Instead, we have a play in which the characters have conjured up and campaigned for various versions of events throughout, thus producing multiple plausible and possible outcomes. Specifically, the wedding motif and Achilles' involvement in the action give a plausible solution that sustains this multiplicity to the last. Knowing that in the existing versions and iterations of this myth, the army came to Aulis both in vain and successfully, that Iphigenia was both sacrificed but also saved and survived to become priestess at Tauris, the *IA* as I have read it constitutes an offer to embrace this mythical multiplicity rather than to move beyond it.

Or, perhaps, to move beyond it precisely by embracing it? Of course, the challenge of finding the actual story of the play in this multiplicity is extended to and almost forced upon the modern readers and scholars, because the *IA*'s text is uniquely unstable and the ending particularly contested. This first chapter has argued that the play, as it is transmitted, contains multiple versions of its own story. Equally though, the text of the play is also an aggregate of multiple versions. This different kind of multiplicity and its connection to the plot and myth itself will be the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter 2

Enter the Critic — Editions of the *IA*, their Challenges and Histories

2.1 Stable and Unstable Readings

> Literary treatments must be close to the text, and where the text is liable to fluctuate, the literary scholar's objects — and with it his or her truth — can vanish at the flinch of an editorial pencil.[1]

The image of the editorial pencil, used here by Sean Gurd, hits at the heart of the interpreters' central problem of textual instability, both generally and in particular when it comes to the *Iphigenia at Aulis*. The *IA* is one of the so-called alphabetical plays, which are preserved only once in the codex L containing all of the 19 plays attributed to Euripides.[2] The group of alphabetical plays take their name from the circumstances of their chance survival, for rather than being selected by Byzantine scholars as school texts, to which we owe the extant corpora of Aeschylus, Sophocles and the other plays of Euripides, these plays come from what seems to have been an alphabetically ordered collection of plays. In terms of the physical state of the text, this is highly significant: compared to other extant plays of Euripides, in particular those that were frequently copied as part of the Byzantine selections, the *IA* has been spared many of the vicissitudes of a medieval manuscript tradition and has thus come

[1] Gurd 2005, 12.
[2] Biblioteca Medicea Laurenzianus, plut. 32.2.

to modern classical scholarship in a remarkably stable form. And yet, in the hands of the same modern classical scholarship, in developments spanning some 250 years, the *IA* has become an extraordinarily 'unstable' text.

When approaching the text today, the *status quaestionis* shows that while some facts about the text and its history are generally accepted, there are many more on which opinions widely diverge. Two approaches, which are currently favoured and in which my own work is based to a substantial degree, are worth singling out at the start. First is the most recent Oxford text of James Diggle, which I used in the previous chapter.[3] This edition does not aim to offer a text that can serve as a justified basis for interpretation of the play, but rather gives the entire text found in L with a set of accompanying sigla. These sigla allow the reader to view each line in light of Diggle's judgement of how likely he thinks it is that Euripides himself wrote it. His four categories are: *fortasse Euripidei*, *fortasse non Euripidei*, *vix Euripidei*, and *non Euripidei*. The second important recent approach is that of David Kovacs, whose edition of the play proposes to give the text used for the first performance (henceforth FP) in 405, which for Kovacs is not what Euripides himself wrote, but rather what his nephew Euripides Minor produced in his name.[4] Between and on either side of these two recent but very different ways of presenting the *IA*, there are a great many possibilities for arguing what can and what should be our basis for interpretation. At the same time, these editions are testimony to the great amount of ink that has been spilled by scholars grappling with this peculiar text. For the purposes of this chapter, I want to consider two questions that arise from this.

First, does the textual instability of the *IA* detract from the reading proposed in the previous chapter? The fact of the matter is that considerable parts of the text with which I have worked in reading the play are under various degrees of suspicion. For the previous chapter, I had asked text-critically focused readers to allow me, if only for argument's sake, a degree of liberty and to accept the received manuscript version as a possible basis for interpretation. The reading I have proposed does not stake its validity on a specific version in which the play was written or performed at a given historical moment. Rather, I contend that the inter-

[3] Diggle 1981.
[4] Kovacs 2003a together with Kovacs 2003b.

pretative force of my reading extends across all these versions, including its original design as a piece for the theatre, however much of that text was lost or never completed in the first place. This claim is that the *IA* is first and foremost about the inherent multiplicity of its central myth and that it stages the processes of mythical versioning, both at the hands of the characters and through the audience's arbitration in how they read the events they see. On this view, the play always contained and contains what I would call a motor of multiplicity.

Even so, I must turn directly to the significant objections which will readily and rightly be made by readers familiar with the vexed textual state of the *IA*, particularly of its beginning and end. More concretely, the question to be answered is whether or not the motor of mythical multiplicity, which I have tried to capture and reflect in my reading of the play, stands the test of the most serious editorial pencils that have been (or could be) put to the *IA*. It matters to speak of "the most serious editorial pencils" here, because it clarifies the appropriate scope and level of detail in my consideration of the immense number of text-critical treatises on the play. In order to inspect possible editorial objections to my reading, I will proceed by working through those scenes and features of the play which are either constitutive for or strongly underpin the motor of multiplicity. Trying in a manner of speaking to be my own most critical reader, I have made a concentrated selection of those objections which I think pose the most serious challenge to how I read the play as a whole. While I do not cover every opinion or conjecture that has been made in relation to the relevant scenes, I concentrate on the most important point of contention and the disagreement in each case. The aim of the first half of the chapter is, in short, to let the editorial pencil do its worst. Doing so actually strengthens my argument that the play is driven by a motor of multiplicity which is there throughout the different possible versions.

The second question, which will be addressed in the second half of the chapter is of a broader and more reflective kind: to what extent should we view the scholarly preoccupation with textual multiplicity and with the reconstruction of the play's various versions really as a way of continuing and mirroring the plot's motor of multiplicity on the level of scholarly practice and interest? In answering this question, I make the case for connections between the *IA*'s foregrounding of mythical multiplicity and the way in which textual multiplicity

occupies scholarship on the play, both historically and still in the present. Throughout its modern scholarly reception, the *IA* has not only incited text-critical debate on its genesis but has also occupied a more prominent position in the formation and reflection of textual criticism as a discipline than many other texts.

Accordingly, I will revisit some crucial moments in the history of scholarship on the *IA* and by extension also in the modern history of textual criticism for tragedy. In order to answer my question about the continuation of the plot's multiplicity theme in the scholarly sources, I have identified three patently important moments in this scholarly history: the original emergence of the versioning theory in the early 19th century, the focusing on histrionic and directorial interpolation in the 20th century, and the theorising of multiplicity in textual criticism for the 21st century. Given that these are extraordinarily broad strokes across very different historical contexts, I acknowledge up front that while some of my arguments are specifically and directly about the *IA*, some of what I say could arguably be extended to other Euripidean plays, to tragedy generally, and finally even to classical literature *tout court*.

The text's scholarly history has received an incisive analysis by Sean Gurd in his 2005 *Iphigenias at Aulis*, a study to which my own work is heavily indebted. Here, Gurd offers some perceptive readings of the play's editions between 1762 and 2003 while paying particular attention to the evolving editorial principles behind them. In doing so, he also shows that the play's textual instability goes well with the moments of indecision and the changes of mind that are important for the plot. In my own analysis, I not only show that these kind of links are much more extensive even than Gurd suggested but I also address the nature of this relationship between the plot and its unique scholarly history, arguing that the connection is causal rather than coincidental. For this reason, Gurd's study occupies a peculiar position within the present chapter. His selection, prioritising, and ordering of modern editions of the play have charted the landscape of the the *IA*'s editorial history to the immense benefit of my own study. At the same time, his readings and analyses have served sometimes as a foil and sometimes as a starting point for asking different or further-leading questions. Lastly, Gurd's study is itself a key source for the argument that I am making in the second half of

the chapter, where I will turn to read his work in more detail and in its own right as the most recent step in the *IA*'s unique scholarly history.

Naturally, a degree of instability of the text alone does not make the *IA* incomparably unique among ancient works. In Classics, complex questions about the consequences of a pluriform text are at least as old as Karl Lachmann's methodological work for textual criticism, which I will consider again when looking at the history of the *IA*'s text below.[5] But the questions which Gurd has asked of the *IA* and its philological history also resonate directly with a specific methodological inquiry into the pluriformity of texts, the so-called New Philology as it emerged from medieval studies around the millennium, in large parts reflecting and responding to postmodern theory, with a foundational text being the 1990 special issue of *Speculum*.[6] Key to this approach was restoring the material reality of the medieval manuscript to the centre of philological work, resulting in a methodological premise expressed by Nichols as follows:

> If we accept the multiple forms in which our artefacts have been transmitted, we may recognize that medieval culture did not simply live with diversity, it cultivated it. [...] As medievalists, we need to embrace the consequences of that diversity, not simply to live with it, but to situate it squarely within our methodology.[7]

Arising from Medieval Studies, New Philology was initially and controversially discussed within this field, but it had an impact on methodological debates in text-based, or 'philological' disciplines more broadly.[8] The cross-disciplinary interest into which the ideas emerged is exemplified by a Harvard conference and the resulting volume edited by Classicists *and* Medievalist Jan Ziolkowski, bringing together different fields and treating adjacent but different questions from those posed by New Philology.[9]

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5 Lachmann 1850. See Section 2.2. below.

6 Nichols 1990, particularly the editor's introduction. The field is mapped out by Yager 2011, presenting also the theory's background in the editorial practices of the 19th and 20th century and its relationship to current computer-based editorial technique. Important precursors were De Man 1986, 21-26, and Cerquiglini 1989.

7 Nichols 1990, 9.

8 For reception within medieval studies, see E.g. Busby 1993, as discussed by Yager 2011, 1004.

9 Ziolkowski 1990 with the editor's introduction. More recent reviews of the legacy and continuation of this debate are to be found, *inter alia*, in Stock and Canitz 2015 and Ziolkowski 2005, a review article on the philological treatises by Gumbrecht 2003 and Lerer 2002. For considerations of the pluriformity of text in other fields, consider e.g. the recent work of Najman 2025 in Biblical studies with respect to the Dead Sea Scrolls.

The specific value of New Philology for Classics has been discussed, for instance, by Jacqueline Klooster, who gives a comparative overview of how this approach differs from the dominant models applied in Classics, particularly stemmatic and eclectic criticism, and suggests that Homeric and archaic poetry generally would repay the efforts of a New Philological approach.[10] Interested in this method's "theoretical benefits and problems", Klooster foregrounds the "paradox of the 'oral text'" as a place where New Philology may be applied productively, citing such examples as the Homer multitext project at the Harvard Center for Hellenic Studies.[11] Speaking further to the distinctions to be made between oral and literary production, André Lardinois reminds us that while New Philology may be appealing to the study of (partly) orally transmitted texts, "New Philology is different, however, from folklore or oral studies in that it is a study of texts and therefore of literate products".[12] He thus makes the case for a New Philological editorial practice in limited and specific cases which are comparable to medieval examples like the songs of Walther von der Vogelweide, particularly Greek lyric and elegiac poetry, "which went through a long period of unstable transmission and for whose transmission we depend to a large degree on citations by later authors".[13]

The nature of our surviving texts for Greek drama would also suggest some potential benefits of a New Philological approach. As Lardinois points out, the earliest period of transmission of the tragedians' text is characterised not by stability, but by pervasive change through reperformance, which illustrates by contrast the later desire for stabilisation of Aeschylus', Sophocles' and Euripides' texts in the Lycurgan project of creating the first standardised copies at the end of the fourth century.[14] Histrionic changes to the text, which will be considered below (Section 2.2.2), are an important reason for asking where the dramatic text is not a reflection of a single hand, but rather the product of multiple versions which stand,

[10] Klooster 2014.
[11] Klooster 2014, 256. Compare the previous chapter (Section 1.2), where I considered how multiplicity and versioning could be described as characteristic of the Aulis episode and Iphigenia's story in archaic poetry.
[12] Lardinois 2019, 40.
[13] Lardinois 2019, 49. Klooster 2014, 258-60, also discusses monodic lyric and acknowledges the distinction emphasised by Lardinois: "But there *may* have been, again, differently from Homer, originally, *a single authoritative written text*. This is a fundamentally different point of departure.", 259, (emphasis is Klooster's).
[14] Lardinois 2019, 48-49.

combined or side-by-side, within our transmitted text. Asking this and related questions in detail, Patrick Finglass recently stated what we have to reckon with throughout this genre: "There would have been more than one version of each play in circulation, especially of the most popular ones; fourth century texts of tragedy are likely to have offered quite diverse texts of individual plays."[15]

From this work on the pluriformity of text we may draw an important lesson, which substantiates and expands on what Nichols said in his introductory chapter to New Philology, quoted above. Despite the long history of critical and often self-critical reflection in the field, editorial technique in the *Altertumswissenschaften* continued to prioritise the quest for *the* text as the product of *an* author. Now, the discipline stands to gain by asking seriously how the often undeniable reality of a pluriform text may be better accounted for. In this respect, Gurd's work on the *IA* is an example of how to reorient our attention according to new paradigms in textual criticism and has much to offer to the debate around pluriformity in Classics. Though my work in this chapter is not poised as a contribution to or reignition of the debate around New Philology today, my discussion of the *IA*'s text is aided, I think, by the simple categorical shift away from a single and ideal 'original' and towards the multiplicity of versions which are contained within one and the same play as it survives.[16]

An illustrative example of pluriformity in a dramatic text is Aristophanes' *Frogs*, the prologue of which I have already discussed in the previous chapter. As Richard Hunter has convincingly shown, *Frogs* and particularly its final *agon* ought to be read as part of a critical tradition, crucially involving Plato, Aristotle and later writers, concerning tragedy, its history, style, morality and proper function.[17] Hunter's conclusion that "the history of tragedy adumbrated in the *Frogs* was to become the received wisdom about Greek literary history more generally", also gives an idea of how crucial the issues and perceived disagreements in that contest between Aeschylus and Euripides were for audiences and readers of the texts ever since.[18] Here, I want to shed some light on the intersection between these critical prob-

[15] Finglass 2015, esp. 270-74, here 273, also discussed by Lardinois 2019, 47.
[16] The distinction between 'real' and 'ideal' is articulated by Andrews 2013, 64, quoted also by Lardinois 2019, 46.
[17] Hunter 2009.
[18] Hunter 2009, 36.

lems within the *agon* (or rather some of them) and the nature of the surviving text itself. For Throughout and particularly in that final scene, the text has led scholars to raise questions about multiple versions of the play, questions which, if only in certain places, resonate with a momentum of indecision in the contest staged and chaired by Dionysus.

The first set of questions about different versions of *Frogs* is raised by the hypothesis that Sophocles may have died during the composition of the play and the concomitant question of how Aristophanes may have changed his design of the play to account for the fact that Sophocles does not feature in the poetic contest which is set in the underworld at the end of the play.[19] The second set of questions emerges from three places, constituting only a single line or a short section, in which the text appears to be a combination of two separate versions, one originally composed for the Lenaea of 405 and for the reperformance of the play at the Lenaea of 404.[20] Crucially, all three passages, in which the doubling of two versions has been an issue for scholars, fall within the poetic contest at the end of the play. This fact draws attention to textual indecision precisely at that moment in the plot where the indecision of Dionysus between the two poets is at stake.

Consider Dionysus' statements about the poets throughout the contest. Setting out to judge between them (871-4), he actually emphasises his reluctance and inability to decide, for instance after the word-weighing competition:

> ἄνδρες φίλοι, κἀγὼ μὲν αὐτοὺς οὐ κρινῶ.
> οὐ γὰρ δι' ἔχθρας οὐδετέρῳ γενήσομαι.
> τὸν μὲν γὰρ ἡγοῦμαι σοφόν, τῷ δ' ἥδομαι.
> (1411-13)

As an appointed arbiter between two sides, Dionysus is playing with indecision and confusion in this statement, which has led commentators to speculate and disagree whether Diony-

[19] Sommerstein 1996, 20-21.

[20] On the reperformance, see Dover 1993, 75, and Sommerstein 1996, 21-23, discussing the evidence for a laudatory conferred on Aristophanes in which the reperformance was ordered. The three passages in question are 1251-60 and 1431a-b (which both contain two different expressions of the same content), as well as 1437-53 (in which Dionysus asks each of the two poets to give one answer, but the text contains three answers in total). The last of these passages has attracted the most conjectures, which are summarised by Sommerstein 1996, ad 1435-66.

sus identifies Aeschylus as wise and Euripides as pleasurable, or the other way around.[21] The same confusion persists in the following lines, where Dionysus goes on to ask both poets to give some advice to the city, only to find that ἠ τὸν Δία τὸν cωτῆρα, δυcκρίτωc γ' ἔχω· |ὁ μὲν cοφῶc γὰρ εἶπεν, ὁ δ' ἕτεροc caφῶc (1433-34), which has prompted a debate about the ascription of the lines to the two poets in the lines immediately before, asking which poet is meant by which description, who of them has spoken cοφῶc and who caφῶc.[22]

That a certain indecision between the two in Dionysus' aporetic statement is in fact dramatically expedient at this moment in the plot has been recognised by Dover's argument that Dionysus may "spread his hands in a helpless gesture".[23] Making the point yet again and just before he casts his eventual judgement in favour of Aeschylus, Dionysus first offers a kind of mock-decision, which is in fact another refusal to decide, when he says αὕτη σφῷν κρίσις γενήσεται·|αἱρήσομαι γὰρ ὅνπερ ἡ φυχὴ θέλει.(1467-8). In any case, Dionysus' struggle to decide between Aeschylus and Euripides is therefore intertwined with the struggle of scholars to decide on the referents of the pronouns and, at least for some scholars, the ascription of lines to specific characters.

For all the mockery of each other's style, it is notable that, as far as Dionysus' specific tests and questions are concerned, Aeschylus and Euripides are more similar than they are different. As Mark Griffith has pointed out with respect to this particular scene, "the two poets do not differ radically in their recommendations [...]. Both Euripides and Aeschylus have advocated a change of leadership and a renewal of trust in those who are currently out of favour".[24] Throughout this contest, therefore, the scholarly supposition is that of two texts and the challenge is to identify them clearly and to choose between them. Thus, at 1252-60, we find evidence of an improved version for the reperformance of 404 in the

[21] Sommerstein 1996, ad 1413, favours the view that Aeschylus is the first, Euripides the second. According to the Scholia, Aristarchus took the opposite view. Both views are attested throughout as shown by Hurst 1971, 227-8.

[22] Marr 1970, on the ascription of 1424 to Aeschylus rather than Euripides and the order of speakers in the subsequent lines, also Sommerstein 1996, ad 1424 and ad 1427-32. Hurst 1971, 228, also shows the discrepancy between the ancient view and that of modern scholars regarding 1434, an issue which is connected to the ascription of lines in the dialogue immediately before. The view now generally held is that Euripides is the first, Aeschylus the second to respond.

[23] Dover 1993, 19. Indecision was also suggested by Stanford 1958, ad 1434.

[24] Griffith 2013, 207. Hunter 2009, esp. 36-8, takes the contrasting and plausible view that Dionysus decision in favour of Aeschylus reflects a clear distinction between tragic styles, of which Aeschylus' is "the more genuine tragic mode".

double expression of the same thing, just when the chorus incidentally sing about Euripides *criticising* Aeschylus' verses. And as we saw at 1437-53, the difficulty of deciding which lines belong to which performance coincides with Dionysus' struggle to decide between the poets.

The pluriform text of Aristophanes *Frogs*, as New Philology might approach it, would be one in which both versions exist simultaneously and productively side-by-side. An important benefit of opting for interest in the 'real' rather than the 'ideal' text is that we can ask why the multiplicity occurs more in certain moments of a play, or indeed more in certain texts than others of the same genre. In the case of *Frogs*, there is prevalence of indecision between two variants precisely in those moments where indecision is key for the plot. Its example was here meant to illustrate the possible advance of asking about such congruences in a dramatic text by considering a few lines or passages in isolation. In greater depth and with a broader scope of considering an entire play, I want to turn now to the *IA*. And to begin with, I take the editorial pencil to each of the play's motifs and moments where the motor of multiplicity is at work, beginning with the prologue, moving on to Menelaos' involvement in the plot, then the role of Achilles and the motif of secrecy, and finally to the play's controversial ending.

2.1.1 The (Double-)Prologue

All other extant Euripidean plays have an iambic prologue of a similar style, but not the *IA*. Instead, the play opens with a passage of dialogue in anapaests (1-48), followed by an iambic monologue (49-114), which in turn gives way to more dialogue in anapaests (115-162). The point of contention is therefore whether the metrical singularity of this opening means that it has to be rejected as not Euripidean. This has led to significant disagreement between scholars over which prologue should be considered as the basis for interpretation and to a great many detailed treatments of all the arguments. Already in 1977, one scholar thus began his discussion with an acknowledgement that anyone contributing to this debate must feel "apologetic". Most if not all views considered, I propose that there are three substantially different suggestions for what to make of the double-prologue and the question

of its authenticity.[25] These suggestions also reflect the broad scope of the debate in its current state.

First, some editors have preferred the iambics over the opening set of anapaests, making arguments which are largely *ope ingenii* such as when Denys Page refers to "vague grammatical discomfort" in the anapaests, but not in the iambics.[26] Against the authenticity of the anapaests one may note that no parallel for this way of opening a play can really be found in the extant Euripidean corpus.[27] David Kovacs, another clear proponent of this view, has argued that Euripides Minor (EM) wrote the iambic prologue to complete an unfinished manuscript by the older Euripides which was then performed in 405.[28] He rejects the anapaests, because "it would have been eccentric for EM to have chosen to open Euripides' play in a way unparalleled not only in the poet's work but in the genre as a whole."[29] In addition, Kovacs adduces so-called "workmanship" as an argument in favour of the iambics and against the anapaests, arguing that "we could imagine [the iambic prologue] passing muster", while the anapaests "can only be described as desperately incompetent."[30] These are essentially arguments from convention and comparison, whereby the very oddity of the prologue becomes the feature which prevents us from interpreting that oddity itself.

Second, one might agree that the prologue is unacceptable in the transmitted form, but take the opposite view and argue against the authenticity of the iambics (77-9). On similar criteria to those brought forward by Kovacs, namely language, style and metrics, Walter Stöckert for instance regards the iambics as an interpolation, not least because it seems likely that a later director may have added a conventional iambic prologue, but would be unlikely to add anapaests if there had only been an iambic prologue.[31]

Third, there are ways of defending the double-prologue. Some scholars have interrogated the order in which the current double-prologue is preserved and argued that the

[25] Bain 1977, 10.
[26] Page 1934, 138.
[27] There remains a debate over whether the Andromeda counts as a sufficient parallel. For an overview, see Collard and Morwood 2017.
[28] The view of two separate authors goes back to August Matthiae and will be discussed further below.
[29] Kovacs 2003b, 80-81 with n.20.
[30] Kovacs 2003b, 81.
[31] Stockert 1992 gives credit for this last argument to W. G. Arnott.

iambics should precede the anapaests.[32] Others in turn have favoured the preserved order, with the iambs coming between two sets of anapaests. Most importantly, this is rooted in the view that the play's break with a purely iambic, single-speaker prologue presents a development in keeping with Euripidean poetic style and that it has to be taken seriously as a possible opening to the play. The case for this has been made comprehensively by Bernard Knox among others, who discusses and refutes no less than eleven individual points brought forward against the authenticity of the double-prologue.[33] Knox sees the transmitted text as evidence for "the dramatist's adaptation of existing tragic convention", arguing that the iambics can functionally operate *as a prologue* even though not at the very start of the play, a design which for Knox displays the work "of a conscious artist who took great pains to reinforce and normalize the unprecedented form which he invented to answer his dramatic needs."[34]

It is worth noting that, just like Kovacs and Page, Knox too invokes his ultimately subjective qualitative judgement to deduce the competency and therefore approximate the identity of the prologue's author. Further depth to this argument is provided by Helene Foley, who agrees that this unique prologue has "artistic merit" precisely for its unparalleled form.[35] For her, the changing of iambics and anapaests effectively mark "a formal and clear transition to Agamemnon's antimythical plot."[36] As such, Foley turns the argument from convention on its head, pointing out that such a "striking manipulation of dramatic form in this passage" chimes very well with the play's larger artistic agenda.[37]

Opting against any firm view on the matter, some editors choose to print the double prologue largely as it has been preserved, acknowledging the difficulties but not committing to any substantial editorial intervention.[38] On purely internal criteria and strictly with a view of whether or not Euripides himself is the likely author, Diggle marks the entire double prologue as *vix Euripidei*, casting doubts over whether 1-163 can be a reliable basis for

[32] So England 1891, followed by Murray 1913b.
[33] B. M. W. Knox 1972.
[34] B. M. W. Knox 1972, 259 and 245 respectively.
[35] Foley 1985, 102.
[36] Foley 1985, 105.
[37] Foley 1985, 105.
[38] So Günther 1988, Collard and Morwood 2017, Diggle 1981.

interpretation of the play at all.[39] If, however, we are to treat the play as a play — and not as a body of verses constructed around a few fragments that are only *fortasse Euripidei* themselves — Diggle is not casting a vote at all on what the prologue of that play ought to be. Given the vexed state of the debate, I want to concentrate on the issues that are of actual import to my reading of the play. On the one hand, there are the two competing letters, one containing the marriage-plan, the other its reversal. On the other, there is the way in which the play's opening reflects on its own construction of multiple stories, on writing and on myth.

It turns out that the two letters are a basic necessity for the plot to the extent that no editorial intervention would actually excise this motif from the beginning of the play. A re-ordering of the anapaests and iambics, moving the latter to the front of the play, still leaves Agamemnon composing his second letter.[40] If an editor favoured the anapaests alone as the original prologue, then the motif of the second letter would even gain prominence, as it provides occasion for the exchange between the old man and Agamemnon. Nevertheless, there must have been a first letter, not least because in the anapaests Agamemnon speaks of sending it to Clytemnestra (115-6). What poses the most serious problem to the two-letter motif would be the rejection and excision of the anapaests, leaving only Agamemnon's iambic prologue behind. In particular, it is Kovacs' editorial pencil which attributes the entire opening scene (106-62) to his 4th-century reviser and thereby also rejects the final lines of Agamemnon's prologue in which he mentions the second letter for the first time and thus leads back into the anapaestic dialogue. If Kovacs' assessment is correct, then we would in fact be left without the explicit two-letter motif in the opening of the play. That said, even Kovacs' version cannot but deny the centrality of the second letter to the plot arc as a whole. He accepts as part of the first performance in 405 the scene in which Menelaos and the old man fight over the second letter and in which Agamemnon reprimands his brother for opening the seal without permission (303-334). A full reconstruction of the opening of the play following Kovacs would thus need some other means of introducing the second letter, which will appear physically on stage after the parodos.

[39] Thus Bain 1977 thinks that, at his death, Euripides left the play without a prologue altogether.
[40] So Murray 1913b.

Less clear-cut is the question of whether and to what extent the play's original prologue really featured the kind of reflected engagement with writing and myth. The obvious benefit of this reading, in which I follow Knox and Foley, is that it explains rather than further problematises the actual form of the prologue: the iambic part stands in for the 'conventional' style and is associated with the traditional version of the story. It is countered by an unconventional anapaestic prologue, in which we witness the re-writing of the tradition *in medias res*. The complete excision, therefore, of either the iambics or the anapaests on other grounds would invalidate respective parts of this argument. However, the two-letter motif is a necessity for the prologue in any of the conjectured versions. The motor of mythical multiplicity depends on this motif and so we can conclude that it is part of the play's premise irrespective of individual editorial changes.

2.1.2 Menelaos and his Change of Mind

My reading of the *IA*'s mythical multiplicity relies, for the first half of the plot, heavily on the figure of Menelaos, both on his anti-prologue and on his change of heart which charts a way for Iphigenia's survival. Textually, this depends largely on the integrity of the first epeisodion and on our assessment of the textual challenges in it. Between the considerable number of emendations and deletions, there is no clear consensus among editors as to what can be considered a stable textual basis. Broadly speaking, Menelaos' anapaests (335-77), his argument with Agamemnon (378-414 and 440-72), and Menelaos' change of mind (473-503) are somewhat less contested than the messenger speech (414-39).[41] One controversial point at stake here is whether the appearance of Orestes as a baby requires deletion of the relevant lines throughout the play.[42] While the jury is still out on the question of athetization or emendation, the question in fact bears only tangentially on the way in which the epeisodion sets two possible plots — sacrifice vs. marriage — in a framework of mythical multiplicity. On his criterion of probability, Diggle marks the messenger speech as *non Euripidei*, but considers both the majority of Menelaos' anti-prologue as well as his change of heart to

[41] Page 1934, *ad loc.*, calls the messenger speech a 'wholesale import', Diggle considers it *non Euripidei*.
[42] Collard and Morwood 2017, 352-54, give a good summary and print the epeisodion as it is, Kovacs 2003b would delete all references to this.

be *fortasse Euripidei*. As for the scene more widely, the range of existing views keep the epeisodion's architecture largely intact, notwithstanding smaller changes within the scene.[43] Most prominently among them, Günther deletes a number of individual sentences or phrases that contain allusions to political circumstances.[44] Page considers 404-52 "a much interpolated passage", a judgement which he extends to 506-42, but accepts Menelaos' anapaests and his change of heart and reconciliation with Agamemnon, albeit with some reservations on individual lines.[45]

It is only a relatively recent editorial pencil which poses a substantial challenge to my interpretation of Menelaos, and again it comes from Kovacs. After the exchange between the old man and Menelaos, he would delete such significant parts of the first epeisodion between 335 and 542 that we are left with mere fragments and virtually nothing to say about Menelaos' role in the play.[46] Tellingly, Kovacs' chief reason for deleting the latter's anapaestic speech, which I have interpreted as an alternative prologue, is that it contradicts the opening iambics. Complaining of a "lack of fit with the iambic prologue", his editorial pencil claims that either of the two must be deleted and that "the choice is easy" — in favour of the iambics.[47] Most significantly, however, Kovacs deletes Menalaos' change of mind itself. His grounds for doing so are not considerations of language and style, as he only finds one lexical problem in the unusual meaning of ἐπίτηδές.[48] Instead, he focuses on a point of plot and coherence, for by contrast to Agamemnon and Iphigenia's changes of heart, he claims that "nothing of any moment" is accomplished by Menelaos changing his mind.[49]

On balance, therefore, Kovacs' basis for truncating Menelaos' involvement in the plot and for excising his change of heart is an interpretative contention about the character of Menelaos himself. My interpretation, however, has shown that there is in fact more nuance

[43] A full summary is again given by Collard and Morwood 2017.
[44] Günther 1988 deletes 368-69, 373-75, presumably on these grounds, as well as a reference to prophecy at 520-21.
[45] Thus, for instances, he remarks on some "confusion" in Menelaos speech (ad 373-5) and has only a small number of lexical points for the passage 470-527.
[46] He wholesale deletes Menelaos' anapaestic speech as well as the messenger scene 335-439, significant bits of Agamemnon's reply, as well as Menalaos' speech in which he changes his mind, 440-537.
[47] Kovacs 2003b, 85.
[48] Kovacs 2003b, 87.
[49] Kovacs 2003b, 87.

than Kovacs' analysis allows for. The parallel between Menelaos' speech and Agamemnon's prologue (which Kovacs leaves intact) foregrounds the notion of reconsideration to such a degree that Menelaos' own change of heart follows suit. Rather than accomplishing nothing, it manifests the contingency at this moment in the narrative — Iphigenia may or may not be sacrificed. What is more, if we accept Kovacs' wide excisions here, the attribution of the rest of the scene to a 4th-century reviser gives rise to another question: what does it say about the ancient reception of the *IA*, i.e. among ancient audiences and directors, if we think that an early reviser inserted such a radical challenge to the sacrifice-plot through the character of Menelaos, in particular through his change of heart? If Kovacs' view of the text as an editor relies on the supposition of an invasive reviser in the first place, then he must also take into account that such changes are made to an already existing play with certain plot dynamics. To believe that the version first performed, or even Euripides' own designs for the *IA*, were characterised by the motor of mythical multiplicity which drove a reviser to make the changes that Kovacs would excise, requires no less credulity than to accept the existence of this reviser in the first place.

2.1.3 Achilles and the Secret (?) Prophecy

Another key feature of my interpretation is the role of Achilles, who, upon recognising Agamemnon's fictional marriage plan, makes a commitment to Iphigenia, thus keeping the fictional anti-Aulis very much alive as a possible plot outcome. The relevant scenes are from the third epeisodion and, as we will see, pose no major challenges to my interpretation from a text-critical point of view. However, associated with the question of Achilles finding out about the marriage-plot is another much more controversial and difficult issue, namely of who in the play knew Calchas' oracle and who knew of the various plans. This involves the identification of a potentially much more serious challenge to the integrity of the preserved text, even if not to my interpretation of the play. The issue deserves closer attention though, for as it turns out the use of secrecy throughout the plot is a key part of the motor of multiplicity.

The secret prophecy motif brings us back to the double-prologue. In the iambics,

Agamemnon reports how Calchas made a prophecy to the assembled army that Artemis demands the sacrifice of Iphigenia (87-93). Therefore the entire army, including Achilles, know of Calchas' demand. They are under the impression though that they will sail home and not sacrifice Iphigenia, which is what Talthybius has announced publicly. Agamemnon then says that, on Menelaos' insistence, he concocted the fake marriage and sent the first letter to Clytemnestra. Of this plan, Agamemnon says:

> μόνοι δ' Ἀχαιῶν ἴcμεν ὡc ἔχει τάδε
> Κάλχαc Ὀδυccεὺc Μενέλεώc θ'
> (106-07)

The τάδε here refers to the plan of the first letter, the real reason why the army is still at Aulis, which is known only to Kalchas, Menelaos, and Odysseus (and now to the old man and the audience): to bring Iphigenia on a pretence of a wedding to Achilles, of which the latter knows nothing.

Quite separately from this, Agamemnon has now written yet another letter to Clytemnestra, which is shared only with the old man — and now the audience (107-10). What has caused scholars to be irritated here is the old man's question when, shortly after, he finds out the contents of that second letter:

> καὶ πῶc Ἀχιλεὺc λέκτρων ἀπλακὼν
> οὐ μέγα φυcῶν θυμὸν ἐπαρεῖ
> coὶ cῆι τ' ἀλόχωι;
> (124-26)

At 106-7, Agamemnon suggested that Achilles never knew about the wedding-plan. The old man's question here implies the opposite, since the expectation that Achilles be upset when the wedding is undone by the second letter implies that he knew the first. An apparent inconsistency in this has troubled scholars, but it is also possible and perhaps more natural to read these early lines in light of what will actually happen later on.

Achilles will after all be very upset when he finds out that there has been a scheme behind his back and that he will not marry Iphigenia. His entrance in the third epeisodion leaves little doubt at all that he *does not know* about the first (or for that matter the second) letter to Clytemnestra. The relevant scene, which plays a central role in my interpretation,

falls into two parts: the dialogue in which Clytemnestra and Achilles learn that they have been duped (819-898), and Achilles' monologue in which he commits to Iphigenia and to turning the pretend-marriage into a real promise of protecting her from sacrifice (variously in 919-1035).

The first part is accepted nearly without qualms. Diggle has it as *fortasse Euripidei*, Kovacs accepts it as part of the first performance, and there are no substantial objections from earlier editors either. More contested are Achilles' speeches here. Page's motivation for deleting the entire passage 919-1035 interestingly lies in that Achilles must not seem too much as if he's going to save Iphigenia.[50] Diggle's decision, on internal criteria, to mark the entire scene as *fortasse non Euripidei* leaves us with a problem of plot. For later on, at 1338-68, Achilles reports to Clytemnestra the failure of his attempt to rescue Iphigenia, in a scene that is marked by Diggle as *fortasse Euripidei* and otherwise accepted by editors too. This means that at some point he must have made the commitment to rescuing Iphigenia, which is now found in the suspected 919-1035. One possible view then, taken for instance by Kovacs, is that the scene is textually corrupt, but that it should nevertheless be taken to include a speech of Achilles in which he commits to saving Iphigenia. Kovacs argues for largely retaining Achilles' first speech 919-31, but rejects most of the remainder of the scene on stylistic grounds.[51] At any rate, the textual problems in this third epeisodion leave one fact untouched: until his meeting with Clytemnestra, Achilles does not know about the wedding plot. In fact, this means that in the beginning of the play, Achilles must not know about the first letter, though nothing suggest that he would not have been aware of Kalchas' oracle.

The controversy then comes down to whether or not the play included the idea of secrecy in any capacity at all. The argument for removing the secrecy motif entirely, which amounts to removing both of the relevant passages, is that the idea of a private oracle is the product of a later revision. This is the idea of Kovacs, who believes his 4th-century reviser to have changed Calchas' oracle so that it was known only to Agamemnon and his inner circle, and

[50] Page 1934, *ad loc.*
[51] Kovacs 2003b, 91-21.

thereby to have caused inconsistency throughout the plot.[52] Thus, he deletes the ending of Agamemnon's iambics in order to excise the secrecy entirely. This, however, is questionable on closer inspection of the lines. As I have noted, the language of secrecy in 106-10 follows directly after the first letter is explained, and so the τάδε in ὡς ἔχει τάδε must be taken to refer immediately back to the wedding plan, not the oracle as a whole. As far as the plot is generally agreed upon, we ought to assume that Achilles and all the Greek army knew about the oracle and Agamemnon's situation, but that only the inner circle of generals knows about the idea of luring Clytemnestra and Iphigenia to Aulis on the pretence of a wedding to Achilles.

Achilles and Clytemnestra's joint discovery of this plan later necessitates this initial secrecy and ignorance and the old man's purportedly superfluous question at 124-6 is thus a dramatic means of clarifying and even anticipating a tension of secrecy which will play a crucial part in the play later on. Yet another argument is that the re-iterating question of the old man is not only fitting in the context of the play's opening, but also reflects the advanced age and concomitant forgetfulness of Agamemnon's interlocutor here.[53] In combination with the somewhat intractable state of affairs at Aulis, one could see in this a plausible explanation for a repeated, even if strictly speaking superfluous, question. The old servant's desire for clarity about who knows what about the unfolding events is plausible not least because he himself will consciously reveal the information to Achilles and Clytemnestra later on, citing his superior loyalty to the latter over Agamemnon. There are some sound possibilities for interpreting these purportedly contradictory verses as they are transmitted and what follows later in the play should make it preferable for preferring one of these interpretations over the option of deleting the lines altogether.

In this form, the secrecy motif does not detract from my earlier assessment of the double-prologue, in that its essential inclusion in the play cannot be doubted. The textual controversy as a whole, however, effects a useful clarification of an important aspect of the plot, namely that Achilles is left in the dark about Agamemnon's schemes for resolving the situa-

[52] Kovacs 2003b, 78, Appendix A, and *passim*.

[53] This argument was made long ago in the context of defending the play's double prologue, *i.a.* by Kieffer 1837, I, 5 and II, 10, and quoted by Firnhaber 1841, xxx.

tion at Aulis. The old man's questioning therefore has a tautological rather than an incoherent force, flagging early on to the audience an element of suspense and a source of plot friction which will come to dominate the play from the third epeisodion onwards. There, the motor of multiplicity produces the clash of plans and versions which I have discussed at length and which looks back to the Iliadic Achilles and his clash with Agamemnon.

2.1.4 The Ending

So far, this survey of the most important textual controversies has shown that mythical multiplicity, both as a theme and as the narrative structure of the *IA* withstands the challenges of the most critical of editorial pencils. When it comes to the ending, however, the difficulties are greater. It is generally acknowledged that the play has suffered the most severe corruption in the final part (1510-1629) with the result that a more nuanced view of the possibilities and impossibilities of interpreting the ending must be sought.[54] It is important to note from the outset that the ending seen by ancient audiences may well have been physically lost, as 1578-1629 are widely agreed to be a forgery from the Byzantine period.[55] At the same time, evidence of later hands is not necessarily evidence for a consistent programme of re-writing and so the text on which my interpretation is based may nevertheless bear witness to how the plot and ending was conceived in principle by Euripides or for the first performance of 405, not coincidentally so but because even a supplemented ending is more likely to reflect the way in which the plot was originally structured than not.

In my interpretation of the surviving text, I have shown that the audience can, if they so choose, see Iphigenia being saved from sacrifice by Achilles when all of the Greeks are looking away. However, the overwhelming distrust of critics against the ending of the play means that we cannot straightforwardly accept this interpretation as reflecting Euripides' design. Therefore, I will not merely extrapolate from the presence of mythical multiplicity which we have seen throughout the plot to the conclusion that the final scenes must have

[54] That there are severe problems here was already accepted early on in the 19th century, on which more below. In editions from then onwards, e.g. Kirchhoff 1855, 1510-1629 are generally marked as spurious. Editors who now print the ending normally still qualify this, such as Collard and Morwood 2017, who call the entirety of 1510-1629 'inauthentic'.

[55] For concise and recent overviews see Matthiessen 2002, 234-6.

sustained this multiplicity in the way I have suggested. There is, however, evidence to suggest that the ending of the play, in any of its lost or surviving versions, carried and carries a residual uncertainty about what actually happened at the moment of the supposed sacrifice and about whether or not Iphigenia really dies.

For this, I take my cue from an observation which can speak to any number of readings of the play and which was formulated already in 1891 by Edward England. As an example of what to do with the confounding ending in dramatic terms, he refers to the decision of Friedrich Schiller in his 1788 translation of the play to end with 1509 and says:

> It must be confessed that the Exodos of this play succeeds partially in avoiding the peculiar difficulties of the situation. It does not definitely state, either that Iphigeneia was slaughtered or was not. [...] There is nothing here to preclude the future discovery that she has been taken away by Artemis to be her priestess among the Tauri.[56]

It is curious that the preserved ending in many ways amounts to the same as the exclusion of an ending altogether (which Schiller favoured). The mode of ambiguity to the last is an important feature of what England calls "Euripidean dramatic construction" and a dynamic for which there are a number of possible *comparanda* in the work of Euripides and the other tragedians.[57] One might think of such varied examples as the ending of Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus*, where Antigone and Ismene are not allowed to see the tomb of their deceased father (1756-7), or that of Aeschylus' *Eumenides*, where the Furies do not relent from their demands but have to be threatened by Athena into an uncomfortable silence (826-831). For Euripides in particular, one may point to the *Ion*, to which I will return below, where the titular protagonist is ultimately denied access to the oracle to find out the truth about his parentage (1546-8). In assessing the *IA*, we have good reason therefore to bear the possibility of such an ambiguity in mind when considering the available evidence for a possible reconstruction of the play's original ending.

The first piece of evidence is the scene with Achilles, Iphigenia and Clytemnestra in the immediate run-up to the play's finale. I have already emphasised Achilles' insistence

[56] England 1891, xxvii.
[57] England 1891, xxvi.

that, in spite of Iphigenia's decision to be sacrificed, he will be ready at arms if she changes her mind at the last moment (1412-15, 1424). The relevant verses are deleted by Page and Kovacs on the grounds of implausibility, the latter justifying his rejection of 1407-30 with an *ad hominem* attack against the reviser and without providing separate internal or external evidence.[58] Page finds the crucial verses 1426-9 to be "not quite good enough for Euripides" and says that "they describe a remarkable fluctuation of sentiment and purpose."[59] Weakening Page's argument further is that for him two thirds of the lines are explicitly said to be brought down by the evidence against only the last third. On internal criteria of probability, however, Diggle considers the same verses 1426-9 to be *fortasse Euripidei*, asking us at least to consider the implications of this pronouncement for the play's ending. After all, the multiplicity of the myth hinges on the figure of Achilles, his Iliadic self that unwittingly plays an instrumental role in Agamemnon's scheme and later comes to take his vengeance by taking control of the situation himself. His unflinching loyalty to Iphigenia, even and in particular beyond his approval of her decision to be sacrificed (1404-15 passim and 1421-3), does not *necessitate* that he save and marry her, but it does ask us to keep in mind that this play has seen several conflicting plot-arcs be sustained alongside each other.

What is more, there is the brief exchange between Iphigenia and Clytemnestra, in which Iphigenia appears clearly to think that she will not in fact die and which I have read as evidence for anticipation of an alternative ending (1433-66). These lines are, quite apart from their interpretation, taken by Kovacs as part of FP and most of them are considered *fortasse Euripidei* by Diggle on internal criteria. I have said above that no textual argument will conclusively compel readers to accept my reading as the only valid reconstruction of the *IA*'s ending. It seems, however, that immediately before the more severe corruption of the text begins at 1510, there is much to make us expect an ending that will not straightforwardly give any one version of events.

Secondly, there is the fragment given by Aelian, which has played an important part in the *IA*'s history as a text. In the context of speculations about the play's likely ending, this fragment offers a small but powerful piece of evidence for a text which gives us exactly the

[58] Kovacs 2003b, 97.
[59] Page 1934, ad 1426-29.

type of complicated and complicating conclusion so appropriate to Euripides' treatment of a myth with instability and potential multiplicity at its core. The fragment in question is from Aelian's *De Natura Animalium* 7.39 and runs as follows:[60]

> ἔλαφον δ' Ἀχαιῶν χερσὶν ἐνθήσω φίλαις
> κεροῦσσαν, ἣν σφάζοντες αὐχήσουσι σὴν
> σφάζειν θυγατέρα.
> (69-73)

From the outset, there is no conclusive evidence from Aelian's presentation of these lines or from the lines themselves that they go back to the same play which the manuscripts have preserved as our *IA*.[61] These lines are not in the extant manuscripts of the latter, but the circumstances of the myth and the direct address in them (σὴν θυγατέρα) suggest that they are spoken by Artemis to either Clytemnestra or Agamemnon. Taking them as part of a divine address to either of them makes it probable that the fragment belongs to a lost prologue or ending of the play. The case for both of these rests chiefly on comparative evidence, because other Euripidean plays either contain a divine speech predicting or rather revealing the outcome of events at the start (e.g. the *Ion* or *the Alcestis*) or feature a *deus/dea ex machina* appearing at the end and resolving an intractable situation at the last moment. Neither view commands overwhelming assent among scholars now, leaving a great deal of uncertainty and provisionality, though one implication for the play's ending emerges as certain so long as we accept the fragment to reflect a lost part of this play.

After the fragment's discovery and its publication by Samuel Musgrave in 1762, a discussion ensued in response to his initial suggestion that these lines are from a lost prologue.[62] The chief difficulty with this view lies in the direct address σὴν θυγατέρα, since the comparative evidence does not suggest that Agamemnon or Clytemnestra would be on stage during such a prologue. These and other objections about the purported parallels for such a prologue in other Euripidean plays led scholars in the 19th century already to reject Musgrave's original suggestion.[63] Such as it is, however, the fragment also contains evidence

[60] The fragment is printed as such in Diggle 1981.
[61] More on this in the next section apropos Musgrave's publication. The fragment's authenticity has prominently been doubted by Page 1934, 200 and Kovacs 2003b, 98.
[62] Musgrave 1762. This debate is discussed in the next section of this chapter.
[63] Firnhaber 1841, xv-xix, does so at length and relates the views of those who argued similarly before.

that speaks in favour of its being part of a lost prologue, most importantly in its main verb ἐνθήσω. In support of it, one could adduce a comparative argument based on the prologue of the *Ion*. In that play, the prologue is delivered by Hermes, who lets the audience in on a secret that Apollo in fact had a child with Creusa many years ago and is now planning to give it to a new father:

> δώσει γὰρ εἰσελθόντι μαντεῖον τόδε
> Ξούθωι τὸν αὑτοῦ παῖδα καὶ πεφυκέναι
> κείνου σφε φήσει, μητρὸς ὡς ἐλθὼν δόμους
> γνωσθῆι Κρεούσηι καὶ γάμοι τε Λοξίου
> κρυπτοὶ γένωνται παῖς τ' ἔχηι τὰ πρόσφορα.
> (69-73)

Though Hermes is not addressing anyone directly here, the parallel between his δώσει and φήσει to Artemis' ἐνθήσω is matched with the structural parallel that in both cases a god is saying what will actually happen by contrast to what popular opinion will think has happened. In the case of the *Ion*, people will come to believe in Ion's traditional lineage whereas the truth remains hidden (γάμοι κρυπτοὶ); in the case of the *IA*, the Greeks will boast of sacrificing Iphigenia, not knowing that they have been given a substitute victim.

The opposite view to this is that the fragment comes from a lost *exodos* and reflects words spoken by Artemis to console Clytemnestra that Iphigenia will in the end be saved. Stöckert for instance, observes that the concluding messenger speech would be out of keeping with Euripidean dramatic practice and thus follows a view already expressed in the 19th century that Artemis could have appeared a *dea ex machina* before the sacrifice to appease Clytemnestra.[64] What is more, the spuriousness regarding the whole final scene after 1510 which has been established on metrical grounds has indirect implications, too. For, as Matthiessen has shown, one of the chief problems with integrating the fragment into the ending of the play is the issue that it makes the messenger speech, such as it is, redundant.[65] If, however, the metrical problems are considered along with the fragment as evidence for an altogether different ending, we arrive at the view first formulated by Porson, namely that

[64] Stockert 1992, 82-83. Firnhaber 1841, xix-xx, in particular also makes a plausible case for why Artemis is then speaking in the future tense.
[65] Matthiessen 2002, 236 and Stockert 1992, 81.

in the original version Artemis appeared as *dea ex machina* and the surviving text gives an ending that was composed after Aelian's time. [66]

Both this argument in favour of placing the fragment in a lost ending and that in favour of seeing it as part of a lost prologue are primarily based on comparative evidence with other Euripidean plays and their prologues and endings. In this lies both the strength and the weakness of each argument: the possibilities for each modern editor and interpreter of the *IA* to enlist the fragment from Aelian for any specific reconstruction or interpretation of the play therefore depends on how confident they will be about the force of parallels and conventions in other Euripidean plays. The resulting inability to reach any conclusive view was already apparent to Nauck, who in 1876 noted that "hos versus alii e genuina fabula depromptos esse coniecerunt, alii ab Euripide alienos existimarunt."[67] In his own way Diggle too affirms this sober assessment by not categorising these lines within his system of probability that spans the rest of the text.

Notwithstanding the insurmountable difficulty of placing it securely within a number of versions and their history, the fragment elucidates a significant point about the motor of multiplicity in the play. For if the fragment is to be integrated as part of a lost version of the *IA*, it proves that the most significant trope of multiplicity associated with the Iphigenia myth was invoked and staged in this play too. By this, I mean the doubling of her story at the moment of sacrifice, when she becomes both dead (for the Greek army as a prerequisite for the Trojan War) and alive (for the purposes of the myth's subsequent episode at Tauris). In the extant version, this doubling appears only in the spurious messenger speech as an allusion to Iphigenia's disappearing and being replaced with a stag (1582-3). Whether the fragment stems from an original ending that was seen instead or from a prologue which looked ahead to such an ending, its inclusion in our speculations about an earlier version means that it contained the double myth of Iphigenia. If, on the other hand, one took the view that the fragment does not belong to this play at all, then we would lack an important piece of evidence for the kind of multiplicity which I have argued for. At the same time,

[66] Porson 1824, xxiii-xxiv, Collard and Morwood 2017 give the summary and call this the "majority opinion". Following Porson, Kirchhoff 1855, 466, and Günther 1988, 61, have adopted this view.

[67] Nauck 1876, ix.

however, we would also lack the most important piece of evidence (and the only external evidence) that speaks against interpreting the play in the form as it came down to us. It was this fragment from Aelian after all, understood as attesting to a lost version of the *IA*, which gave rise to this debate in the first place. In that case, one would need to re-evaluate the entire history of textual criticism on the play.

When judging the reading of the ending proposed in the preceding chapter against the text-critical evidence, there are reasons to be cautious about any interpretation of the play's conclusion. Yet, that same evidence does point to a general structure and conception of the ending in which an audience would have seen more than one version of events maintained to the last moment. Whether through a *dea ex machina*, or through Achilles' intervention, or through both in different versions and performances of the play, Iphigenia was both dead and alive, as indeed she was in the myth overall.[68] To offer a first conclusion then, the preceding sections of this chapter have shown that the interpretation of mythical multiplicity offered in the previous chapter stands largely corroborated by philological rigour. More still, it has become clear that the various versions of the text which would make a plausible basis for performance converge on the point of mythical multiplicity. I therefore submit that, whatever alterations the text may have suffered, the conception of this work as a piece for the theatre is still evident and recognisable: its driving force, its motor, is the multiplicity of the myth itself.

2.2 Textual Criticism and the *IA*

An important question about my reading of the *IA* was whether the multiplicity of stories within the extant play, the instability of the narrative so to speak, is not in fact a consequence of the great textual instability of the manuscript which we have. The preceding analysis of the play has answered this in the negative by showing that the multiplicity of the myth ought to be considered as prior to and independent of the play's versioning history. I now turn to consideration of the opposite question, which is to ask whether the multiplicity of textual

[68] Euripides' use of both myths and the implications of this for the reading of each of the two Iphigenia plays has been discussed by Hulton 1962

versions and the great amount of scholarly reflection on these versions goes back to the play's mythical multiplicity. To affirm this connection, as I do in the following, is to argue that the *IA*'s plot had and still has a key role in its scholarly reception. In order to make this case, I will look both at the *IA*'s scholarly history and at its place in the history of editorial technique and textual criticism more broadly.

The deeper and more rigorously one tries to map, let alone to understand, the history of the text-critical debates around the *IA*, the more this debate forces one to grapple with two related observations. First, the play's modern scholarship has uniformly revolved around questions of text criticism to a degree otherwise reserved for fragmentary or entirely spurious texts. Second, the text has recurrently provided scholars with a key repository of material and problems to be grappled with and used in the development of modern editorial technique for Euripides and perhaps for tragedy more broadly. My aim here is to substantiate these two observations and to develop them into a new approach for reading the scholarly literature in conjunction with elements of plot. Doing so, I proceed by way of a small but significant selection of texts from the history of the *IA* in germano- and anglophone scholarship since 1762.

My discussion will centre around three pivotal steps in the progression of editorial technique. The first is the initial interrogation of authenticity and authorship, from which emerged a concern with the play's versioning history, in the early decades of the 19th century. The second is the rise of an explanatory model for multiplicity which is based on the idea of (re-)performance and which has established itself in around the middle of the 20th century. The third is a very specific way of historicising and theorising editorial technique which emerged around the turn of the 21st century. Of course self-reflection and an interest in its own methodologies and their histories has always been part and parcel of the discipline of textual criticism. To mention only one prominent example, consider Karl Lachmann's model of stemma as a key advancement in theorising textual criticism, developed first in his edition of Lucretius, which has been analysed by Sebastiano Timpanaro and further by Glenn Most.[69] However, the specific idea about critical approaches to the problem of mul-

[69] Lachmann 1850, Timpanaro 2005, Most 2019. For general methodological introductions to textual criticism see e.g.West 1973 and Tarrant 2016.

tiplicity, in which I am interested for the purposes of the present chapter, took shape only very recently and in a way which also looks ahead to the future of philology.

In each of these three steps, the *IA* plays a prominent part, which the remainder of this chapter will interrogate. Naturally, as was the case in the first half of the chapter, the aim cannot be exhaustive coverage of these scholarly histories. Rather, I work with a selection of writings that allows me to press further the observations made above and to ask: what are we to make of the obvious contiguity in the *IA* between its plot structure and the most prolific topic within its scholarly reception?

2.2.1 Musgrave and the 19th Century: Challenging Authenticity

I said above that the *IA* was not always thought of as unstable but that the current state of multiplicity is the result of a modern development. The first significant step in this process was the establishment of a supposition about history of the *IA*, namely that the play underwent a process of re-composition in antiquity already and that its current state goes back to the multiplicity of these versions. The formation and establishment of this supposition can be observed in how scholars in the early 19th century incorporated the fragment that was found in Aelian into their reading of the play. In this section, I will discuss how the authenticity of the play first came to be doubted, principally in the wake of the new-found fragment from Aelian. Around the same time, we see how theories of the play's compositional path in the 5th century became a matter of contention when a *scholion* on Aristophanes suggested that the play was performed after Euripides' death.

In his *Exercitationum in Euripidem libri duo* of 1762, Samuel Musgrave considers the Aelian fragment and argues that it is evidence against the authenticity of the prologue.[70] He proceeds from noting that the verses found in Aelian are not found in the play and instead asserts that they are "*manifeste*" from the *IA*, not from the *IT* (or another Iphigenia play entirely lost to us). The quotation comes as part of Aelian's argument that hinds have horns too, for which he adduces as evidence a number of literary passages. Within this, Aelian includes two quotations from Euripides as follows:

[70] Musgrave 1762, Chapter VIII.

> ὁ δὲ Εὐριπίδης ἐν τῇ Ἰφιγενείᾳ [here follow the lines usually ascribed to Artemis] ἐν δὲ τοῖς Τημενίδαις τὸν Ἡράκλειον ἆθλον κέρατα ἔχειν ὁ αὐτὸς Εὐριπίδης φησί [here follows a quotation from a *Temenidae* play.][71]

This framing evidently led Musgrave to conclude, not unreasonably, that Aelian was quoting from a play by Euripides with an *Iphigenia* as the titular figure. What is less immediately clear are his reasons for thinking that this *is* the extant *Iphigenia at Aulis*. Rather than attesting to a third and lost play surrounding this myth, Aelian's Ἰφιγενείᾳ has, with no further evidence, become Musgrave's "*priorem Iphigeniam*", i.e. the sequentially earlier one of the two extant Iphigenia plays.

On these grounds, Musgrave makes a remarkable and far from self-evident inference about the play:[72]

> Jam vero Dianae persona, cum Prologo in praesertim Tragoedia convenientissima sit, versenturque hi versus, ut & multi apud Euripidem Prologi, in praedictione rerum futurarum, magna exinde oritur suspicio, fragmentum hoc ex vero Prologo, quem proinde nunc desideramus, desumptum esse.

His response to the discovery of this piece of external evidence is to question the integrity of the existing text, specifically of the prologue. Rather than simply concluding that there was yet another Euripidean play around the Iphigenia myth, Musgrave arrives at the much more complicated and further complicating view that one of the existing versions (and that one specifically, rather than the *IT*) is itself the product of a multiplicity of versions. Thus he posits that the "true prologue" was lost and "must be sought from this point on". Not to put too fine a point on it, confronted on the one hand with a single and complete manuscript L (including other plays of Euripides) and on the other with a stray fragment found in treatise on animals by a 2nd-century AD antiquarian quoted under a similar but different title, the integration of the latter into a revised view of the former is by no means a self-evident conclusion.

Neither was it the only possible conclusion one could draw from the fragment as evidence. In the same year 1762, Benjamin Heath published some notes and readings on the

[71] Aelian *On the Nature of Animals*, 7.39.
[72] Musgrave 1762, 25-26.

extant plays of Greek tragedy. He too knew of the fragment in Aelian and included it in his discussion of the *IA*. However, he opted against considering the fragment as pertinent to this play and instead made another suggestion:

> Sed eos [the verses] ad hanc tragoediam pertinere non posse nemo non videt. Forsan, cum tres fuerint Euripidis nomine insigniti qui Poesi Tragica inclaruerint, alter nostro antiquior, alter recentior fuit, ad horum alterutrius tragoediam haec referri debent.[73]

Starting from the same observation of incongruity between the fragment and the surviving play, Heath arrives at the opposite conclusion to Musgrave, arguing for attribution of the lines to another tragedy altogether. His claim that there were two other tragedians by the same name, to one of whom the fragment is to be attributed, is unsubstantiated and it is not clear what grounds or source Heath may have had for this advance. If we accept that our Euripides wrote a *Temendiae*, then Aelian's framing of the evidence does in fact make the ascription clear and would mean that the Iphigenia he mean was by our Euripides as well.[74] The crucial point, however, is a different one: Musgrave's choice to view the fragment as evidence against the extant text was at the time contingent and not without plausible alternative.

Not only, however, was this idea largely ignored, but Heath's basic suggestion to say that the lines may go back to a now altogether lost text was misunderstood by Boeckh in 1808, who claims that Heath wanted to attribute the lines to Euripides Minor, who appears neither in Musgrave nor Heath's 1762 treatise before the relevant Aristophanic fragment (see below) came to make him a factor in this discussion.[75] Rather than making a conclusive claim on the fragment or the play, Heath simply did not take the incoherence between the two as evidence for anything other than our lack of a complete picture of ancient drama. Scholarship, however, evidently pursued a different path, chartered by Musgrave's sugges-

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[73] Heath 1762, III. 83.

[74] fr. 740 in Collard and Cropp 2008. For a discussion of the evidence for Euripides *Temenidae* see Collard and Cropp 2008, 225-7 with test. i-vi and fragments 727e-740 there. Harder 1991, esp. 118 n.5&4, illustrates how little we can actually know. The reference in Aelian is in fact crucial for the supposition that the play was by Euripides.

[75] Thus Boeckh 1808, 227: "Iam huic minori Euripidi recentiores critici multas fabulas tribuerunt, ut Haethius in Eurip. p. 83 quae Aelianus ex Iphigenia profert, sumpta putat ex cognomine huius tragoedia, sive etiam Euripids illius antiqui ante celebrem scribentis."

tion that the play's true prologue was lost, of destabilising and amending the existing text into a multiplicity of versions.

Musgrave's idea met with great interest if not mostly with favour among scholars. By 1841, Carl Firnhaber said that "über keine der Tragödien des griechischen Alterthums ist in neuerer Zeit mehr geschrieben und gestritten worden, als über die Iphigenie in Aulis" and gives a list of 24 contributions specifically to the debate over authenticity between 1796 and his own publication.[76] The most significant contributors to this debate, above all Musgrave, Boeckh, Hermann and Hartung, feature prominently in Sean Gurd's monograph on the IA, particularly in his chapter about "Allegories of Instability."[77] For the present purposes, I want to re-frame this early and highly prolific phase in the *IA*'s modern scholarly history as a set of competing reconstructions of the play's ancient versions. It stands to reason that much as scholars were strongly opposed over their assessments of the Aelian fragment and over the play's earliest history, they essentially agreed that what we have as the *IA* today is to be understood as the product of an ancient process of rewriting even before the play's attested production date of 405.

A first and rather bold reconstruction of the play's origins was made by August Boeckh in his *Graecae Tragoediae Principes* of 1808. Gurd characterises this book as an attempt "to reconstruct a picture of textual flux, of change as an essential aspect of ancient literature."[78] By this he means that Boeckh takes the fragment from Aelian as evidence for a different version of the play which preceded the version we have extant in L. Specifically, Boeckh draws on the comparison with other Euripidean prologue speeches in which a god reveals the events to come.[79] Noting that the Aelian fragment gives us a piece of precisely such a prologue, and arguing also that part of Agamemnon's iambics starting at 49 could have been from this speech, he bases his argument in the claim that "Euripidis hanc fabulam sane prologum habuisse apparet ex Aeliano."[80] In a preliminary conclusion, he makes the step from this prologue to the play as a whole:

[76] Firnhaber 1841, xi.
[77] Gurd 2005, 73-127.
[78] Gurd 2005, 81-2.
[79] Boeckh 1808, 217.
[80] Boeckh 1808, 218.

> Duae fuerunt editiones fabulae, quarum altera habuit prologum, alterum prologi loco Agamemnonis verba, quae nunc leguntur, posita.[81]

By "duae editiones", Boeckh means two separate productions of the play, a point which he repeats several times and for which he goes on to offer a kind of chronology around two fixed points.[82] The first is given by Euripides' *Iphigenia among the Taurians* and the *Andromache*. Boeckh thinks that the former, which tells a sequentially later part in the myth, must therefore have been preceded by Euripides' own *IA* in the sequence of productions in his career.[83] The latter, he concludes from internal evidence, looked back to Euripides' *Iphigenia at Aulis*, giving him a production date before 420.

The second piece of evidence for his reconstruction of the versioning chronology is a *scholion* to Aristophanes' *Frogs*. There, we have the following excerpt from the *didascalia*, the ancient record of dramatic productions, which tells us that another Euripides, his son or nephew (known as Euripides Minor), staged the play "under the same name":

> τελευτήσαντος Εὐριπίδου, τὸν υἱον αὐτοῦ δεδιδαχέναι ὁμωνύμως ἐν ἄστει Ἰφιγένειαν τὴν ἐν Αὐλίδι, Ἀλκμαίωνα, Βάκχας.[84]

He believes that this production was substantially different from the original and that it was changed on account of the *Frogs*, i.e. the criticism and fun poked at Euripides in that play, and so concludes that since Euripides did not live to see the *Frogs*, he cannot have been the author of these changes.[85] Boeckh's conclusion is that we have is the second of two *IA*s: "ergo nostra est posterior editio post Ranas producta cum Alcmaeone et Bacchis, Euripide nuper defuncto."[86]

The emerging chronology therefore has Euripides' *own*, i.e. the original, *IA* performed at some point before 420, then the *Andromache*, then his *IT*. After his death, Aristophanes' *Frogs* prompted a rewriting of the *IA* by Euripides Minor, giving us the text we have today

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[81] Boeckh 1808, 218.
[82] Later, 221, he again says: "duplex fuit Iphigeniae Aulidensis recensio ... immo non probabile tantum, sed certum dixerim"
[83] Boeckh 1808, 223.
[84] Σ in Ranas 67d, Chantry and Regtuit 1999, III Ia, 14.
[85] Gurd 2005, 86, shares this assessment. Boeckh 1808, 224: "in ipsa hac Comici fabula causa sita est, cur quaedam mutata sint in editione secunda."
[86] Boeckh 1808, 224.

with the new prologue. In speaking of a "duplex recensio" and "duae editiones", Boeckh therefore imagines two separate texts, which have been confused on account of the later being produced ὁμωνύμως. It is important to remember that Boeckh developed this theory on the back of his thesis about Aelian's fragment and the assumption that Euripides originally wrote a "regular" prologue for his play, which was then mocked by Aristophanes.

Notably, the idea of two versions and such a chronology connecting them appealed even to scholars who rejected the fragment as part of any prologue of the *IA*. So, Johann Bremi in 1819 developed the argument to offer his own slightly different reconstruction of the *IA*'s early versions, holding on to the "duplex recensio" idea, but rejecting everything else about Boeckh's reconstruction of the play's origins. His treatment of the question is also testimony to how inextricably and unquestionably the fragment from Aelian was thought to be a witness to the real *IA*, because he actually misquotes Aelian as giving a piece "of the Iphigenia in Aulis" (whereas Aelian, as we saw above, merely has Ἰφιγενείᾳ).[87] Following Boeckh, he repeatedly insists that there were two versions of the play, "die *in ihren Anfängen wenigstens* bedeutend und wesentlich voneinander verschieden waren".[88] Unlike Boeckh, however, Bremi believes that the fragment belongs to the ending of the play and comes from a speech by Artemis after 1532 offering consolation to Clytemnestra.[89]

In his analysis of the scholarly developments in this period, Gurd focuses on Boeckh and his thesis that both ancient authors like Euripides Minor and modern critics are "agents of textual flux".[90] Gurd's theorisation aside, a more crucial and simpler observation here is that after Musgrave's initial conjectures, both Boeckh and Bremi enter the competition of reconstructing the lost versioning history for the *IA*.[91] That this competition went on and comprised much of what was written on the play in these decades is not fully captured by Gurd's way of glossing the work of August Matthiae. He says that Matthiae "refined a connection initially made by Boeckh" and thus produced the view still held today that

[87] Bremi 1819, 143.
[88] Bremi 1819, 148. He also, 146, knowledges Boeckh's idea explicitly: "Hingegen hat er ganz Recht, wenn er findet, dass es *zwei verschiedene Ausgaben* unserer Iphigenia gab." (Italics in both quotes are Bremi's.)
[89] Bremi 1819, 145.
[90] Gurd 2005, 89.
[91] I will come back to this in the section on Gurd and Diggle.

the play was left unfinished by Euripides and was completed for its first performance by Euripides Minor. [92] In this conjecture, Matthiae confines his own reconstruction of the *IA*'s origins to a single performance only and thus actually contradicts, rather than refines, the views of Boeckh and Bremi.

In the notes to his 1813 edition of the play, Matthiae also took a view of the extant prologue arguing that it was not by Euripides but denying this to be evidence for two editions or performances of the play.[93] Finding a number of other passages in addition to the prologue to be less than satisfactory. he conjectures that these were "a diversis autoribus profecta" and arrives at the following conclusion:

> Haec omnia reputanti non absurda esse coniectura videbitur suspicantis, hanc fabulam, quae non vivo Euripide, sed post eius mortem demum acta sit, ab auctore imperfectam et incohatam relictam esse, ita ut nonnulla quidem cum cura elaborata essent, alia vero secundis curis relicta, nonnulla etiam fortasse bis diverso modo scripta, quae deinde auctor retractans ea eligeret, quae maxime probaret; quae reperiri poterant, ea deinde ab Euripide minore ita coagmentata esse, ut iusta fabula agi posset; quum vero vestigia inessent operae non absolutae, quae deesse viderentur, aliter ab aliis expleta esse.[94]

This view, which Matthiae himself rather carefully calls a "non absurda coniectura", marks a crucial shift away from two distinct texts — by Euripides and Euripides Minor respectively — to one text, one "story" with a basic conception which was from the very beginning "imperfectam" and "incohatam relictam". In the final sentence, Matthiae already expresses the idea of a self-perpetuating instability, which results from this. Traces of an unfinished work, he argues, led to the continuation of efforts to complete or amend the work where it seemed deficient.

Multiple people acting upon the same text *because it was unfinished in the first place*, not someone producing a new text to supersede an existing one: this is the basis for Matthiae's view of the *IA*, which further solidifies the scholarly language of versioning around the *IA*. Matthiae's view that there was only one production with these uniquely complex origins

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[92] Gurd 2005, 71.

[93] Matthiae 1813, VII, 323: "Quae praeterea afferuntur ad duplicem fabulae recensionem demonstrandum pertinentia, non magnam vim habent."

[94] Matthiae 1813,VII, 326-7.

was indeed widely adopted and continues to be credited today.[95] The modern history of scholarship on the *IA* unfolds, I would argue, in the sometimes explicit and sometimes tacit reception of Matthiae's important reconstructive suggestion that we are dealing with one aggregate text by multiple authors. Though self-advertised as mere conjecture, this suggestion transformed what was after Musgrave a highly contingent discourse, a competition over the best way of coping with the destabilising effect of Aelian's fragment on a previously stable text, into no less than a small-scale paradigm: that the *IA*'s textual history was one of multiple versions and that the task of philology with respect to this play lay in the reconstruction of these versions.

Before turning to the developments of the 20th and 21st century in this respect, there remains another question of this early and prolific period of modern scholarship on the *IA* to be considered. Extraordinarily prolific though it may have been, the emerging debate around the *IA* and its text-critical questions is to be viewed in the context of a burgeoning discipline of textual criticism. Accordingly, many of the underlying principles which were applied to the *IA*, above all the coherent author as the point of reference in judging the authenticity of a text, were not unique to the discourse around this play. Responding to this wider issue in the notes to his edition, Matthiae also discusses this question of a "duplex recensio" for instance with respect to the *Medea*, quoting and rejecting the points of several scholars and arguing that, despite the two extant prose summaries there was only one edition of the play.[96] In fact, Boeckh's theory of early revisions by the tragedians and their family members was a broader one. In the work, he also discusses plays by Aeschylus and Sophocles, with respect to what was interpolated or revised posthumously.[97] He also concluded from the available evidence that aside from the *IA*, the *Bacchae* too was substantially the work of the younger Euripides.[98] This shows that scholarly conjecture about the early textual history and its impact on our source texts was not limited to the *IA*.

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[95] N.b.Kovacs 2003b, as discussed above, bases his analysis in that first performance, which he regards as an aggregate of what Euripides left and what Euripides Minor finished for him. Gurd 2005, 92-107 and 117-127, discusses the development of the argument by Gottfried Hermann and Johann Hartung respectively.

[96] Matthiae 1813, VI, 523-30.

[97] The emphasis of the discussion though lies on Euripides: Ch. 13 on the *Medea*, Ch. 14 on *Hippolytus*, Ch. 21 on *Phoenissae*,and Ch. 23 on *Bacchae*.

[98] Boeckh 1809, cited from Hackel 2023, 211.

Yet, its position in this discourse was (and was to remain) somehow special, not only because we still speak of the *IA*, rather than the *Medea* or the *Hippolytus* in the terms of early ancient revisions. Neither has the Aristophanic *scholion* really inflected scholarly views of the *Bacchae*, which is now tacitly assumed to have been completed for performance by Euripides himself at the time of his death.[99] As Gurd's study also demonstrates, Boeckh's interest in the *IA* clearly coincides with a wider interest in the practice of philology and textual criticism.[100] We have noted already that his reconstruction of the two versions of the *IA* comes as part of a wider discussion about how the work of the ancient tragedians was received and in some sense continued by their immediate successors. What is more though, the *IA* is found again in prominent position in another of Boeckh's works, his *Encyclopädie und Methodologie der philologischen Wissenschaften*, a set of methodological and introductory lectures he gave repeatedly between 1809 and 1865. As such, this work gives insight precisely into the wider disciplinary concerns of philology in this period, including textual criticism.

As is to be expected, the figure of the consistent author and the ability to know him and base one's textual judgements on this knowledge is a key element of Boeckh's methodological reflections.[101] However, in this general treatise which employs examples ranging from Homer to Cicero but with a curious preponderance towards the Latin corpus, when Boeckh comes to discuss the underlying principle of critical judgement about any text, his example of choice is that of Euripides' *IA* and the issue of its prologue:[102]

> hat man nur vollständige Induction, und ist möglichst versichert, dass ein Schriftsteller nicht wohl anders konnte, so giebt dies ein Moment, welches mit andern zusammengenommen schon was macht. Euripides z.B. hat allen seinen Stücken Prologe vorgesetzt: das aus anderen Gründen für unächt zu haltende Stück Rhesus sogar hat einen, wiewohl er gewöhnlich fehlt. Nur Iphigenia

[99] Allan and Swift 2024, 4 (with n.14), and 11 (with n.40), do not reflect on the play's posthumous performance at all.

[100] Gurd 2005, 88-92.

[101] I am grateful to all participants of a collaborative reading group, convened by Constanze Güthenke and Colin Guthrie King in Berlin and Oxford, for the fruitful discussion which provided invaluable help for my understanding of Boeckh and his place in the philology of his time.

[102] The *Encyklopädie* was perhaps developed out of and at least in tandem with Boeckh's lectures on the history of *Latin* literature, an important point to be noted against the general proclivity towards German Philhellenism in the scholarship on this period.

> Aulidensis hat keinen und kann vermöge der Anlage keinen haben: dies erregt Verdacht.[103]

Boeckh here exemplifies the principle of knowing an author and the scope of his creativity to identify when a work is inauthentic. The idea that Euripides "could not have done otherwise" is an underlying assumption of his philological method here as much as it was in the work of many of his contemporaries. Of all the possible examples, Boeckh uses the *IA* to illustrate this. Whether or not we want to conclude that at this point already the *IA* has become a *locus classicus* for the philological debate around coherent authorship, it stands to reason that Boeckh was thinking of both general disciplinary practice and this specific text in one and the same argument.

After 1762, scholars could have followed Heath's cautionary and minimally invasive proposal that the fragment quoted by Aelian was simply not from our *IA*. This would have saved — and would continue presently to save — both ink and time. Instead, Musgrave's bolder and infinitely more far-reaching supposition that this fragment is evidence of an inauthentic text L found favour among scholars competing for the correct reconstruction in answer to this problem. This early history of the *IA*'s scholarly reception illustrates two points, both of them programmatic for the play's subsequent fate. First, the paradigm that a text could and should be considered based on a model of multiple versions became part and parcel of critical thinking about the *IA*. Second, the *IA* was of special interest to a burgeoning discipline of textual criticism: in fact, we will see this play reappear time and again when the assumptions and practices of the discipline are at stake.

2.2.2 Page and Kovacs: The (Re-)performance Model

To think of textual criticism according to a model of various authors impacting one aggregate text is already close to the model of histrionic (and by extension directorial) interpolation, to which I turn in this subsection. The general framework for thinking about histrionic interpolation, still largely intact and accepted today, is that which Denys Page developed and formulated in his 1934 *Actors' Interpolations in Greek Tragedy*.[104] The subtitle of Page's

[103] Boeckh 1809, 179, quoted from the new critical edition by Hackel 2023.
[104] Page 1934.

book, "studied with special reference to Euripides' *Iphigenia in Aulis*" alerts our attention right away to the argumentative structure of his monograph. From the outset, the *IA* takes pride of place in a study designed to aid and improve the text-critical work of scholars of tragedy. The precise force of the term "special reference" though raises the question whether the *IA* serves as evidence within a broader historical question or whether the opposite is the case and a general study is applied to the special case of the *IA*.

The book's preface, entitled "the scope of the inquiry", together with the actual structure of the study suggests the following three-step logic: Initially, Page notes the great amount of interpolation in the *IA*, but criticises editors for vaguely attributing this to adaptations of the play for different audiences and for "nearly always [judging] the play by the ordinary standards of textual criticism."[105] He proposes, as a remedial shift of perspective, to assess the play's performance history in antiquity. In a second step, Page moves to a general level, claiming that he will "determine certain characteristics of histrionic interpolation."[106] In the third step, Page purports to study the *Iphigenia at Aulis* specifically and based on the findings from the first half of his study. The structure of the book reflects this progression because the first half of the book discusses the role of actors and directors in the formation and transmission of the texts in the genre of tragedy as a whole. With a quantitative focus on Euripides, Page here also takes Sophocles and Aeschylus into account for his overall argument. The second half of the book presents a detailed commentary on the entire text, following and putting into action Page's findings about histrionic interpolation.

It is clear that Page finds the *IA* to be particularly provocative in this respect, but the relationship between the example of the *IA* and the general interest in the tragic tradition remains ambivalent. For while purportedly making his assessment of the play based on general findings about histrionic interpolations, the preface also suggests the very opposite:

> It is probable that those interpolations [i.e. those in the *IA*] will teach [the scholar] something of the history of such old tragedies as were popular in the fourth century and later, and dissipate at least a part of the darkness which encompasses all tragic texts for nearly two hundred years.[107]

[105] Page 1934, ix.
[106] Page 1934, x.
[107] Page 1934, x.

This ambivalence is felt throughout. Page begins his book with a chapter on the history of the text of the *Iphigenia in Aulis*, "in case" as he says in the preface, "that inquiry should assist us to fix date-limits for histrionic interpolation", by which he clearly means histrionic interpolation generally.[108] The methodological shortcoming incurred by a study that seeks to explain a particular text through criteria which in large parts are derived from that particular text is only one side of the coin. The other is how the peculiarity of the *IA* and the depth of text-critical scholarship to which it gave rise seems to have prompted and undeniably influenced the conclusions of a broader study of histrionic interpolations in Greek tragedy *tout court*. Thus, the opening chapter blurs, arguably even denies, any distinction between the history of Greek tragedy generally and the history of the *IA*'s text. Speaking initially of the "texts of the tragedians" and basing his study on Wilamowitz' *Einleitung in die griechische Tragödie* of 1889, Page seamlessly transitions to speaking of "the text from Euripides (sic!) to the Alexandrians", and then to "the history of the text of the *Iphigeneia in Aulis* in the light of these discoveries."[109]

Page's work recognisably builds upon the hypothesis of posthumous revision, familiar from the 19th-century response to the Aristophanic *scholion* considered above. In an important respect, however, his heuristic goes even further when his *modus operandi* becomes one of default suspicion, normally trying to identify a given passage as interpolated in some form. Even where he admits to finding "no evidence for interpolation", for instance regarding 801-918, and cautions against a firm conclusion, he quickly adds, in the manner of *praeteritio*, a qualifying statement that suggests otherwise:

> There is something comic in 819-54, which may have been written thus by Euripides: but I feel that the interpolator is not far away, even if his presence cannot be proved.[110]

This speaks strongly to Page's *a priori* supposition of an invasive and omnipresent interpolator (or multiple interpolators, directors, or actors). Like Euripides himself, who Boeckh had suggested could and should be known by the scholar from his other works, such a figure

[108] Page 1934, xi.
[109] Page 1934, 1, 2, and 9. Wilamowitz' *Einleitung* was published as part of his introduction to the seminal commentary on Euripides' *Heracles*, Wilamowitz-Möllendorf 1889.
[110] Page 1934, 174-5.

can be "felt" somewhere in the text even where there is admittedly no actual evidence.

Page operates and argues similarly in many places, such as when he freely asserts that 607-30 "are interpolated 'spectaculi causa'" and notes that here "it is interesting to observe deliberate imitations of tragic diction".[111] Nothing indicates how Page has concluded that these are "deliberate imitations" rather than original and the specific comments on the lines in question offer no further insight either:[112] in two out of three instances (609 and 614), Page's evidence for "imitation" is a close parallel in other Euripidean works, which is the type of evidence normally used to bolster the authenticity of a line as Euripidean. This begs the question whether "deliberate imitations" is perhaps a euphemism describing those lines which pose the greatest problem to Page's view that the passage as a whole is interpolated. The view of multiple influences to be traced in one text, and this being the central task of the critical reader, manifests, in other words, as the unwitting perversion of the usual criteria for attesting authenticity.

Central to Page's influential thesis is the idea that the texts of Greek tragedy were subject to many smaller and sometimes very substantial revisions by directors and actors in antiquity. As Page both develops his theory from and applies it to the *IA*, the ambivalent relationship between this text and the discipline is brought into focus for us. A particularly illustrative example for the impact of Page's model is Kovacs' 2003 contribution to the debate, which is arguably also the most incisive text-critical argument since Musgrave's successors first proposed the hypothesis of multiple authors.[113] Kovacs' argument is that an individual figure, whom he calls the Reviser, made changes to the plot which can be separated, on the basis of certain traces, from the parts of the text which were actually performed in 405 BC. Just as Boeckh sought intimate familiarity with Euripides and Euripides Minor and their respective agenda, and just as Page claimed to feel the presence of the actors and directors changing the text, so Kovacs too bases his textual judgements on a kind of intimacy with this Reviser and his agenda for a later re-performance of the play. Thinking that he wanted a more emotional drama by way of including a secret prophecy motif and the ap-

[111] Page 1934, 166-7.
[112] Page 1934 *ad loc.*
[113] Kovacs 2003b.

pearance of the baby Orestes, Kovacs re-evaluates the entire play according to 'good' parts that were in the first performance and 'bad' parts that were added by that Reviser later on.

Laying out his methodology, Kovacs begins with an argument about the incoherence of the text "to establish the existence of the Reviser and to give him his profile" and then proceeds through the text, becoming more familiar with and by the same measure more disparaging towards this fictional but quite clearly defined persona. We observe this, for instance, in Kovacs' discussion of the third epeisodion, where he speaks of one section as "a distinct improvement" and says of another that "thereafter things get worse again", concluding accordingly that the former is Euripidean and the latter the Reviser's work.[114] Particularly remarkable in this respect are moments where Kovacs' text-critical conclusions are based on, or at the very least involve, *ad hominem* attacks against the reviser, whom, we should not forget, Kovacs has invented himself. He rejects a line on the basis that "pointless claims of truthfulness are one of the Reviser's traits", bemoans him as "the man who had the unhappy thought of secret prophecies", calling his work an "embarrassment", "a terrible disappointment", "clumsy in expression and irrelevant in thought", "spectacularly bad", and extends this with the language of criminology when identifying the "Reviser's fingerprints".[115] Perhaps most interestingly, Kovacs reflects on the possibility that more than one hand could have been at work in producing the prologue as it is in L and concludes, without further argument or theoretical basis:

> rather than postulate one fool who wrote the anapaests and another who combined them with iambics, we should reduce the population of *inepti anonymi* by one and recognize that the mess we have in 1-163 is the work of the man who wrote the anapaests, unmasked as the Reviser.[116]

The underlying principle of textual criticism quoted by Kovacs as "Occam's razor [...] in the form *inepti non sunt multiplicandi praeter necessitatem*" disguises and translates into a text-critical principle the idea and desire for intimate and reliable knowledge which the 19th-century had first developed in respect of Euripides the author and which Page extended to ancient interpolators and revisers.

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[114] Kovacs 2003b. 92.
[115] Kovacs 2003b, 85-92.
[116] Kovacs 2003b, 82.

In drawing together these observations about the theoretical presuppositions and the text-critical practice of Page and Kovacs, the aim is not to evaluate or refute their arguments further. Rather, I want to point out the continuity between these arguments and the way in which the characters themselves (represented by the actors) work within the plot to change the path and outcome of individual scenes and the play as a whole. As we have seen, the *IA* is a play filled with moments where characters either change their mind or learn something new which leads to their re-writing the story according to their own desires and plans. I have repeatedly drawn attention to the two-letter motif and the meta-literary reading of conflicting stories throughout, showing that the idea of histrionic intervention is very much germane to and actually included in the very dynamic at the heart of the *IA*. In addition, I now want to point to another motif in the play which invites no less of a parallel to the direction which the text-critical work has taken. Whatever version of the text he may have had for a basis, Aristotle's criticism of the inconsistency in the character of Iphigenia (*Poetics* 1454a) began a long tradition of scrutinising and grappling with the many changes of mind. After Agamemnon's initial change of heart which starts the play's proper action, there is also Menelaos' sudden and pivotal decision to abandon the mission, Achilles' vengeful and committed plan to save Iphigenia, and finally the latter's (purported) change of heart to sacrifice herself. The plot thus includes multiple places where a turn of events is by its very nature abrupt and by necessity surprising. Accordingly, we have a play that actively problematises and questions the idea of consistent behaviour.

Yet it is such moments of abruptness which, for their dramatic effect, are particularly in the spotlight when scholars try to identify the hand of actors or directors in the making of the text. Consider Page's comments on the first epeisodion, where he thinks that two Euripidean parts (the quarrel between Menelaos and Agamemnon and their reconciliation) were later connected: "It was no part of an actor's trade to make a smooth transition from quarrel to reconciliation: rapid inconsistency was his ideal, with melodrama to follow."[117] Similarly, on the occasion of Achilles' speeches in response to Clytemnestra's appeal, Page speaks of "an excellent occasion for a long inconsistent speech of many moods", imply-

[117] Page 1934. 158.

ing that this served the interests of a later director who wanted to increase pathos for the audience.[118] Kovacs likewise assesses individual passages in the play on the question of coherence and consistency of character, such as when he criticises Agamemnon's insistence that the sacrifice must go on when Menelaos has his change of mind. The inconsistencies in the passage are here explained as consequences of the Reviser's dramatic agenda to work the secret prophecy into the play. Inconsistency and unpredictability of plot, however, is also part and parcel of the play's design, as the previous chapter has shown.

The competition of reconstructing the *IA*'s versioning history, started by Musgrave and swiftly established as the key task for scholars of the play in the 19th-century, was therefore broadened in scope by Page and Kovacs, who extended their inquiry to other quasi-authorial figures, the actors, directors, and revisers of later centuries. They have drawn up a model whereby individual, self-interested, and momentary decisions irrevocably impact the state of the text and narrative. In proposing and pursuing this model, they have continued and mirrored the central momentum as well as language of the plot itself, which revolves around characters repeatedly changing the course of the action. The inherent multiplicity of the myth, which I have argued is central to the play, thus translates to the multiplicity of the dramatic text as we have it. The different textual reconstructions from Musgrave to Kovacs mirror and continue the characters' constructions of various possible plots within the myth.

2.2.3 Gurd and Diggle: Theorising Editorial Practice

If nothing else, the preceding subsections have suggested that the scholarly history of the *IA* rewards deeper analysis. In his 2005 monograph *Iphigenias at Aulis — Textual Multiplicity, Radical Philology*, Sean Alexander Gurd follows this, offering at once a taxonomy and a kind of history of the *IA*'s modern editions.[119] What is more, however, he also adds further to the *IA*'s unique involvement in the history of textual criticism, because in his book the play's special editorial history becomes the material for some much broader theoretical reflections on modern editorial technique in Classics generally. In his analysis, Gurd makes an innovative and somewhat provocative advance in the propaedeutics of textual criticism as it

[118] Page 1934. 179.
[119] Gurd 2005.

is practised today by questioning the value in and even the possibility of seeking a singular text.

In all of this, the *IA* provides Gurd with the occasion and core material for his arguments about the history, present, and future of philology. As such, his monograph pursues a descriptive agenda with respect to this play's unique history. Gurd orders his study by means of a distinction between two different types of evidence which result in different text-critical methods. He thus analyses the play's editions since Musgrave along the criteria of internal and external evidence respectively, the chief example for the latter being the Aelian fragment. Among examples of the former, he counts the quantitative analysis of the resolved portion of feet in Euripidean verse, but also other criteria of style and plot from within the play itself.[120] For his discussion of the various editions (he discusses Musgrave, Boeckh, Hermann, Porson, Hartung, Page, Matthiae, England and Kovacs) the weighting of these two types of evidence provides an organising principle and is one analytical criterion which allows Gurd to show the epistemological changes which occurred over nearly 250 years of editorial practice.

Beyond this descriptive and simultaneously deconstructive interest, Gurd's book also contains an openly prescriptive agenda as he argues that "we should speak not of a single, unique text, but of a differential set, a multiplicity or plurality of texts" when it comes to the *IA*.[121] Crucially, the introductory chapter clarifies Gurd's aspirations beyond just this one play, as he speaks of scholars' failure so far "to theorize the long history of textual criticism in classics" and proposes his own model of "radical philology" where a "textual reading will not be contingent on any single critical text."[122] Paired with this prescriptive aspect of Gurd's work is a kind of teleology within the editions towards a particular and relatively recent edition, namely that of James Diggle, which I have used in my own interpretation.[123] As we have seen in the first half of the chapter, this edition offers a system of annotations that categorises each line of the play as belonging to one of the four categories and thus to a different degree of probability that it was (or rather that it wasn't) actually the work

[120] This approach goes back to Hermann 1816.
[121] Gurd 2005, 9.
[122] Gurd 2005, 10, 21-21
[123] Diggle 1981.

of Euripides: *fortasse*, *fortasse non*, *vix*, and *non Euripidei*.[124] This particular editorial technique defers ultimate critical autonomy to the scholars and interpreters approaching the play, while maintaining transparency about the basic criterion underlying Diggle's work on the text.

For Diggle, the question is narrow and precise: what of the play as it came down to us was, with any amount of certainty, written by Euripides himself? Describing this edition as the "entropic text", Gurd sees in it the all-important shift towards the possibility of representing the problem of textual multiplicity and away from the desire to resolve it :

> [The edition] does this by quantifying and concretizing the epistemological basis of textual criticism, what might be termed its logical organon: probability. So doing, James Diggle presents *Iphigenia at Aulis* as an image of multiple possible texts and in the process generates the most explicitly singular plural edition in the critical dossier.[125]

"Singular plural", an important term throughout Gurd's analysis refers to the fact that each edition contains a multiplicity of other possible editions, precisely because of the contingent and inevitably provisional nature of editorial decisions. Through Gurd's comments and theoretical lens, Diggle emerges as a powerful if unlikely representative of a self-reflective vantage point from which classical philologists can now, and arguably should, view the enterprise of textual criticism as such, not just when it comes to the *IA*. What Diggle does to this particular play is for Gurd tantamount to "the kind of revolution in method and perspective that Kant argued must happen in any field for it to become a firmly grounded science".[126] In addition, the marrying of the specific (the *IA*) with the general (textual criticism and its challenges more broadly) is apparent also from the structure of Gurd's monograph. Like Page, so Gurd also designs his study in two parts, the first dealing with the general and the second with the IA in particular. More explicitly than in Page's case, however, Gurd first expounds the central thesis of a "radical philology" and finds the true illustration of this theory in Diggle's *IA* at the end of the second part.

In addition yet to the descriptive and prescriptive undertaking of his book, Gurd also of-

[124] More has been done recently in the way of utilising these categories anew by Haselswerdt 2022.
[125] Gurd 2005, 128-164 in particular.
[126] Gurd 2005, 158.

fers a third layer of analysis, on which I want to focus finally before concluding this chapter. For throughout his discussion of the changing text-critical opinions, Gurd also reflects on the connections between editorial choice and interpretation. In doing so, he makes an important step towards seeing text-critical interventions in relation to, and at most as a reflection of, the specific plot which they are reading. "Each version [of the play]", Gurd notes, "produces a story emblematic of the theory that facilitates it."[127] Two examples may illustrate what exactly Gurd means by this.

First is the way in which Gurd maps Boeckh's interest in "the genetic movement between two versions" onto the opening third of the play itself, in which there is wavering between two versions until with Agamemnon's resolution to sacrifice Iphigenia his 'text' is established.[128] He goes on to suggest that the Boeckhian scholarly history reflects the terms of the story and vice versa:

> Once the 'text' of Agamemnon's policy is established, Clytemnestra and Iphigenia spend the rest of the play trying to deduce its genuine meaning and then, once that is ascertained, trying to reverse it, to return him to an earlier stage in his thoughts when he was unwilling to perform the sacrifice.[129]

What Gurd suggests here, in other words, is that a given way of historically reconstructing the text — in this case Boeckh's model of two distinct editions — ought to be viewed in light of the story itself, which appears to be providing the structure and idea for that very reconstruction. The second example comes in the context of Gottfried Hermann's views on the authenticity of the choral ode about the judgement of Paris. Gurd here takes his cue from the chorus' regret over that judgement as the first in a series of irrevocable and fateful decisions. He goes on to suggest that Hermann, over a series of successive editorial interventions which incrementally strengthened the chorus' regret, "wanted to emphasize the undesirability of Paris's act of criticism, as though by altering the text of the play he could produce a clearer critical commentary on the provisional nature of all of *his* judgements."[130] Put differently, this argument says that editorial decisions are inflected by and in turn inflect

[127] Gurd 2005, 70.
[128] Gurd 2005, 91-2.
[129] Gurd 2005, 92.
[130] Gurd 2005, 100, emphasis is Gurd's.

the narrative or literary content of the scenes and lines which are being edited. As far as these examples are theoretical reflections on the practice of textual criticism, they amount to a conspicuous, though never explicitly formulated, idea: how scholars edit is a reflection of what they edit, both in broad conceptions and in individual lines.

2.3 Conclusion

The first half of this chapter has, by way of playing the text-critical devil's advocate, shown that whatever version of it one happens to choose, the *IA* is in its very conception a play about the multiplicity of the myth it tells. This motor of multiplicity, I have argued, remains untouched by even the gravest text-critical interventions. The second half of the chapter has revisited the history of modern scholarship on the play as a response to this mythical multiplicity and has shown that the structure and language of multiplicity from the plot was mirrored by scholars developing text-critical views on the play. In their competing reconstructions of the play's origins story, scholars in the wake of Musgrave's publication vied for the most plausible way of integrating the fragment from Aelian into the early compositional history of the text. Taking this model of textual flux further, the work of actors, directors and revisers came under scrutiny, adding further layers yet to the multiplicity of versions. Finally, this history of scholarship itself has come to be reflected and theorised recently, viewing the text as for ever an aggregate of multiple version, a theory of philology which has found a concrete expression of itself in Diggle's new sigla to his edition of the play.

Of course, the formation and development of modern textual criticism is not the same as the history of scholarship on the *IA*. And yet, Sean Gurd expresses a significant idea when he calls the play a "singular case in the annals of textual criticism."[131] From providing, in its prologue, a *locus classicus* for illustration of the principle of authorial coherence in Boeckh's *Encyklopädie*, to being the occasion for and prime example in the consolidation of the modern theory of histrionic interpolation, and finally to providing the occasion for a new set of textual sigla and the theorising of the modern discipline of textual criticism as a whole, the *IA* is conspicuously present when scholars of tragedy (and Classicists generally) reflect

[131] Gurd 2005, 72.

on the state of their texts. To this day, the history of the *IA*'s text is invoked as emblematic of the potential for multiple authorship. Consider, for instance, Marco Fantuzzi who invokes this multiplicity as one possible model for explaining the text of the *Rhesus*, a play now generally not ascribed to Euripides:

> ...our *Rhesus* may be a text composed by one or more actors or producers from the fourth century [...] a reworking that was just more extensive than the many interpolations and alterations of the authorial text that are usually ascribed to actors or producers, mainly but not only in *Iphigenia at Aulis*.[132]

What this comparison raises, finally, is a difficult question: at what point is the reworking and versioning so extensive as for the text to be completely disjointed from its single author. Given that only the smallest portion of the *IA* as it has come down to us in the manuscript L has never been doubted at all, the model of an aggregate composition, which Fantuzzi proposes as a possibility for the hairy question of the *Rhesus*' authorship, may be an appealing alternative model in the case of the *IA* as well. At any rate, it is remarkable that the latter is already the point of reference for Fantuzzi when thinking about such an aggregate text.

We therefore stand before the observation of a parallelism between a story that is driven by a motor of *mythical* multiplicity at its core and a history of scholarly reception which revolves around *textual* multiplicity and the challenges it poses. Scholarship continued and mirrored the structures and language of multiplicity, producing a play *cum* criticism pairing that has projected the issue at the heart of the myth onto the discipline of textual criticism: this is that another version always has to be reckoned with. Iphigenia, so the myth requires it, is both dead and alive. The text, so the discipline requires it, has to be considered in different versions construed by scholars and once perhaps staged by directors. Where the various reconstructions of modern scholars are actually a testimony to the fact that ancient dramatists found this play to be either particularly worthy or even in need of change above the many others of Euripides, there they illustrate that in its original conception the *IA* admitted of multiple versions precisely in the way it proposed to treat the myth and in what part of the myth it was treating. Where in turn the reconstructions are testimony more to the facility of modern scholarship in imagining textual histories, led by the idea of authorial intention

[132] Fantuzzi 2020, 23.

and coherence, there it is all the more telling that such a rich and complicated versioning history has been projected on this of all possible plays. In either case, the critical discourse and principles that modern scholars have drawn from and developed in response to this play have been shaped incessantly by the kind of story that Euripides wanted to tell in it.

Prologue II

1834

In 1834, Wilhelm Dindorf published an excerpt from Manuscript Vat. gr. 909, giving us what appears to be part of an entry in the *didascalia*, the performance records of classical Athenian drama. In it, we learn that in 438 BC, Sophocles took the first prize and Euripides took the second with a performance of *Cretan Women*, *Alcmaeon in Psophis*, *Telephus*, and *Alcestis*. Assuming from this evidence that the *Alcestis* was performed as the fourth play in a tetralogy, which we think was ordinarily a satyr play, we now generally consider it the only extant 'pro-satyr play'. The problem, and it has certainly been acknowledged as such, is that there is no independent evidence for such 'pro-satyric' drama as a genre in classical Athens.

At first glance, a solution does not seem hard to come by. One can at once acknowledge that 'pro-satyr plays' did not exist as such in antiquity, and nonetheless maintain that the modern coinage is an apt way of describing what we have before us, a tragedy performed in the place of a satyr play. For this reason, the *Alcestis* does not straightforwardly belong with other extant plays of either genre, though our knowledge of both genres can help our understanding of this unique play. Going yet further, one might argue that this invented genre is actually quite an accurate reflection of a Euripidean (and possibly broader) theatrical practice. While 'pro-satyr play' may not currently have its own dedicated shelf in the library of classical antiquity, on this view it arguably should.

As 'pro-satyric', the generic identity of the *Alcestis* is considered that of a substitute, one type of play (a tragedy) taking the place of another type (a satyr play). This concept has been

and continues to be central to the overwhelming majority of accepted scholarly readings of the play. And yet, it is far from self-evident why the notion of substitution should be so universally accepted as it has been and why, beyond some superficial criticisms, no-one has seriously investigated the origins of this idea or the implications for our present notions of genre in classical Athens. Therefore, I contend that this initially appealing solution is not really satisfactory.

Instead, I argue that a crucial piece of evidence has fallen unfairly out of consideration: the plot itself. After all, the play tells the story of a substitution, as the eponymous Alcestis dies in the place of her husband Admetus. In addition, the theme of substitution recurs in various ways throughout the language and events of the play. For instance, Admetus proposes to replace Alcestis with a statue, and he pretends to Heracles that another woman in the royal palace, not Alcestis herself, has died. The *Alcestis*, to put it simply, is a play *about* substitution and a play which is itself considered a substitute.

Part II of this thesis pursues this parallelism by offering a reappraisal of the plot itself, repositioning it as a necessary element for our understanding of the play's scholarly history. I contend that the plot, with its central motif of substitution, was a key building block in forming the idea of 'pro-satyric' drama, because it contained the language to describe this newly invented genre. In order to make room for this reappraisal of the plot though, I begin by considering in depth the origins of the concept of 'pro-satyr play'. Chapter 3 therefore revisits and unpacks the *Alcestis*' scholarly history, considering especially the fallout of Dindorf's 1834 publication. The stakes in doing so are high: if the decision to conceptualise the *Alcestis* in generic terms as a substitute was not without alternatives, then it deserves more of an explanation than has hitherto been offered. What is more, in revisiting the very texts which shaped the discourse after 1834 and eventually coined the term 'pro-satyric', we stand to learn more about conventions of the tragic tetralogy and about our understanding of them.

Considering how the alternative prose hypothesis became a stable part of the *Alcestis*' paratext, the chapter begins with two sections, firstly tracing the editorial and philological steps which led to its inclusion in the form which is common today. Secondly, I consider

whether and how questions of genre were debated during the period where most of the alternative prose hypothesis was already available and Dindorf's fragment had not yet been discovered, i.e. before 1834. I then turn, in the central longer section, to the latter discovery as a watershed moment of the *Alcestis*' scholarly history. Considering the didascalic evidence itself along with the initial conclusions Dindorf drew from it in 1834, we see that the growing obsession among scholars with the idea of substitution over the following decades was not without alternatives. Yet, something about the *didascalion* led to a debate about the play's genre as one defined by substitution. We will see that the debate about the *Alcestis* not only paved the way for considering the play as the only surviving specimen of an altogether new genre, but also impacted views about satyr play as such, fuelling the view that satyr play fulfilled a specific psychological function, a view which still holds currency today. In addition to unpacking these ideas, I will also highlight where there has been invention, distortion and misrepresentation of the debate and its history.

The chapter's final part follows these metaphorical tracks, on which scholars set the debate after 1834, through to the end of the 19th century and to the eventual establishment of the term 'pro-satyric' itself. This in turn leaves two paths forward for the inquiry to continue. The first path is to rewind the scholarly history to some degree and ask anew what the *Alcestis* and its paratext really mean for the criticism of Euripidean drama and tragedy broadly. While the evidence on this issue is ultimately inconclusive, I propose that a sober re-assessment of all we know offers very little to substantiate the view that the *Alcestis* was a unique experiment of substitution. Instead, it gives cause to re-assess our understanding of Euripides' compositional practice and of the ´three plus one' model, which still guides our understanding of the tetralogies entered into the tragic *agon* of the classical period. If nothing else, revisiting the *Alcestis*'s scholarly history suggests that we may need to also revisit the question whether other plays of Euripides may have been performed in fourth position, which is to question the conventional understanding of the tetralogy.

The second path opened up by the *Alcestis*' scholarly history will be pursued in the final chapter of the dissertation. There, I will focus on the missing piece in our reconstruction of the debate: Why did the idea of substitution command such consensus among scholars that

they reignited a debate about genre which was already settled and why did they cause further incoherence instead of simply noting the need to revise their understanding of the tetralogy? Before we can answer this question, however, we have to begin where, in a physical and conceptual sense, our thinking about genre takes shape: on the outside of the play, on the margins and in the paratext.

Unpacking the *Alcestis*' scholarly history shows that substitution was immeasurably influential in forming what we still hold as the general consensus about the play. Chapter 4 therefore offers a fresh reading of the *Alcestis* as a play which is not only about substitution as a central motif of its mythical material, but especially about its link with trickery and deception. Throughout the play, this manifests in a pervasive worry about the replaceability of individuals and of Alcestis in particular.

Of course, this reading is my own and in making the case for it I do not claim that it is the exact interpretation of those scholars who developed or still hold the view that the *Alcestis* represents a substitute genre within Greek drama. But one need not subscribe to my reading in full in order to recognise that it illustrates beyond doubt that substitution is deliberately and linked with deception and the combination of the two constitutes a driving force of the plot. Scholars will probably continue to disagree on whether to read the play and its ending as serious, displaying the characteristics of tragedy, or as ironic, displaying those of satyr play or even comedy. However, that the play and its ending revolve around and illustrate the dynamics of substitution is ultimately a much clearer and plainly defensible assessment.

Chapter 3

Genre and Substitution: What is 'Pro-Satyric' Drama?

3.1 An Untold Story - The Formation of a Second Prose Hypothesis

This chapter tells the story of how the *Alcestis*' genre became a matter of unavoidable controversy for the modern study of Euripides by interrogating the roots of this controversy in 19th-century classical scholarship. This story is worth telling for a contextualised understanding and re-framing of a question which continues to play a central role today. Whereas the issue of textual instability was the big unavoidable question when it comes to the *IA*, the *Alcestis* inevitably still confronts scholars today with the question of generic identification. As we saw in the prologue and will see again and again, the crucial point here is the idea of 'pro-satyric' drama, a term which in spite of its obvious shortcoming as a strictly modern invention is still generally considered to be of explanatory value for the play, if only because it supposedly captures the evidence from the *didascalia* which lists the *Alcestis* as fourth in Euripides' tetralogy of 438 BC.

Secondly, the story is worth telling because it is a crucial element in the historic tradition of Euripidean scholarship which has questioned the genre of many of Euripides' plays. For a long time, the vocabulary of 'melodrama', 'tragicomedy' and 'romance' populated

scholarly treatments of Euripides and it is only recently, certainly by the standards of classical scholarship, that the inability of these genre-descriptors to advance our understanding of Euripides has become *communis opinio*.[1] If indeed, as Ann Michelini says in her study of Euripides and of critical thought about him, the *Alcestis* is a "touchstone of Euripidean criticism", a better understanding of our own scholarly language in describing this play will also shed light on the status of other 'problem plays' that are still and certainly have been grouped together with the *Alcestis* for one reason or another.[2] The seminal study of these plays with some type of reversal is Burnett 1965, in which *Alcestis* is the subject of the first chapter. A different approach on the question of genre is that proposed by Wright 2005 apropos the 'Escape Tragedies' *Helen* and *Iphigenia among the Taurians*. Wright considers them tragedies not by virtue of the events in them or their style, but strictly on account of their performance context at the City Dionysia (cf. the Introduction to this thesis). Considering that the *Alcestis* is recorded as being performed fourth, we stand to gain more nuance to this picture as well.

In order to understand the origins of 'pro-satyric' drama as a concept in genre-criticism, it is necessary to unpack the precise context in which scholars developed this idea, which means looking both at the available evidence and at the conclusions they drew from it. The first step in this work of unpacking is a closer look at the so-called hypotheses to the play, at the history of their discovery and their value to scholars in the early 19th century. These hypotheses are short summaries of the plot, written in prose and sometimes giving further information about the production of the play. Since the didascalic information first came to light as part of such a prose hypothesis to the play, and more specifically of an alternative or second hypothesis which appeared in addition to an already established one, the first section of this chapter revisits the process of how the *Alcestis* came to have a stable paratext of two prose hypotheses. We see that in the 1820s already, the second prose hypothesis offered more than simply a plot summary of the play, giving ancient critical testimony on the question of tone and genre, which did not, however, lead to a scholarly debate.

As mentioned in the prologue, the pivotal point of the *Alcestis*' scholarly history is Wil-

[1] That *communis opinio* is reflected by Mastronarde 2010, 44-62.
[2] Michelini 1987, 324.

helm Dindorf's 1834 discovery of the didascalic information. But while scholars past and present have happily put this information to use in their arguments, they have not fully considered the context of its discovery, both in material terms and in terms of historic philological practices. In this, I argue, they fall short of seeing the full picture. Therefore, instead of jumping into the genre debate as we have it today, I begin with considering this context, namely the prose hypotheses to the *Alcestis* as a form of paratext which was very much in flux before the early 1830s. While I will not offer a general discussion of Euripidean prose hypotheses, it is possible and worthwhile to look more closely at the historic formation of what is presented as a stable paratext in modern editions of the *Alcestis*, consisting of two prose hypotheses which contain quite different kinds of information.[3] To begin the inquiry into the *Alcestis*' genre with the history of a paratext is all the more pertinent because paratext and genre are immediately connected in modern scholarly and literary practice, the former providing the space and medium for statements about the latter.

It is important to recall and clarify the backdrop to all developments in the *Alcestis*' paratext: before a certain point, the play's prose hypothesis was stable, uniform and had nothing whatsoever to do with genre or even literary criticism more broadly. In the first modern edition of the play by Lascaris in 1492 and in Aldus Manutius' 1503 full edition of Euripides, the play had only the following accompanying summary of the plot:[4]

> Ἀπόλλων ἠιτήcατο παρὰ τῶν Μοιρῶν ὅπωc Ἄδμητοc τελευτᾶν μέλλων παράcχηι τὸν ὑπὲρ ἑαυτοῦ ἑκόντα τεθνηξόμενον, ἵνα ἴcον τῶι προτέρωι χρόνον ζήcηι. καὶ δὴ Ἄλκηcτιc, ἡ γυνὴ τοῦ Ἀδμήτου, ἐπέδωκεν ἑαυτήν, οὐδετέρου τῶν γονέων ἐθελήcαντοc ὑπὲρ τοῦ παιδὸc ἀποθανεῖν. μετ᾽ οὐ πολὺ δὲ ταύτηc τῆc cυμφορᾶc γενομένηc Ἡρακλῆc παραγενόμενοc καὶ μαθὼν παρά τινοc θεράποντοc τὰ περὶ τὴν Ἄλκηcτιν ἐπορεύθη ἐπὶ τὸν τάφον καὶ Θάνατον ἀποcτῆναι ποιήcαc ἐcθῆτι καλύπτει τὴν γυναῖκα, τὸν δὲ Ἄδμητον ἠξίου λαβόντα τηρεῖν. εἰληφέναι γὰρ αὐτὴν πάληc ἆθλον ἔλεγεν. μὴ βουλομένου δὲ ἐκείνου ἀποκαλύψαc ἔδειξεν ἣν ἐπένθει.[5]

Found in almost all the manuscripts, this plot summary is generally attributed to Aristotle's

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[3] See the recent and in depth study by Meccariello 2014, who discusses the textual history of the hypotheses as a paraliterary genre.

[4] Since textual details do not change the picture, I give here what is printed in Diggle's 1984 Oxford text. Unless otherwise cited, this is the edition quoted throughout.

[5] On a different version of this first hypothesis found in the papyrus evidence, see Meccariello 2014, 125-7.

student Dikaiarchos.[6] This ascription would date the hypothesis to the 4th century BC and situate its origins in the context of the very earliest reception and editorial work on Greek tragedy generally. In any case, this text's relationship to the play itself is that of a summary, providing a good way of introducing the play to readers by giving them an *ex-ante* glance at the whole plot.

The 1820s, however, saw two important developments: the piece-meal discovery of a second prose hypothesis and the gradual inclusion of this hypothesis in the still ongoing formation of what was becoming the play's paratext. What has to be acknowledged from the outset of presenting these developments, is that the processes of discovery and publication are extremely hard to reconstruct and even harder to represent in a simplified and understandable manner. Diggle's *apparatus criticus*, along with Parker's notes on the hypotheses, provide information on the sources for both hypotheses and how they are transmitted.[7] But the summative view, which one can gain from these accounts, does not illustrate the piecemeal process in which this hypothesis was formed from different sources and different types of information coming together to produce what we have before us now. Since this piecemeal process is what matters to the story in this chapter, I reproduce below Diggle's text of this hypothesis but in a way that visually represents the key points which I will make in the following analysis (Figure 1).

Two scholars were particularly significant in the process of the second prose hypothesis becoming a paratext in its own right. The first is Augustus Matthiae, whose full edition of Euripides' works we have already encountered in the previous chapter on the *IA*. The *Alcestis* was included in the first volume of that edition, which appeared in 1813.[8] Just as in every other edition up to that point, the text is preceded only by what we now know as the first hypothesis. In the 7th volume of this edition, however, which appeared in 1823, Matthiae produces notes to accompany the text.

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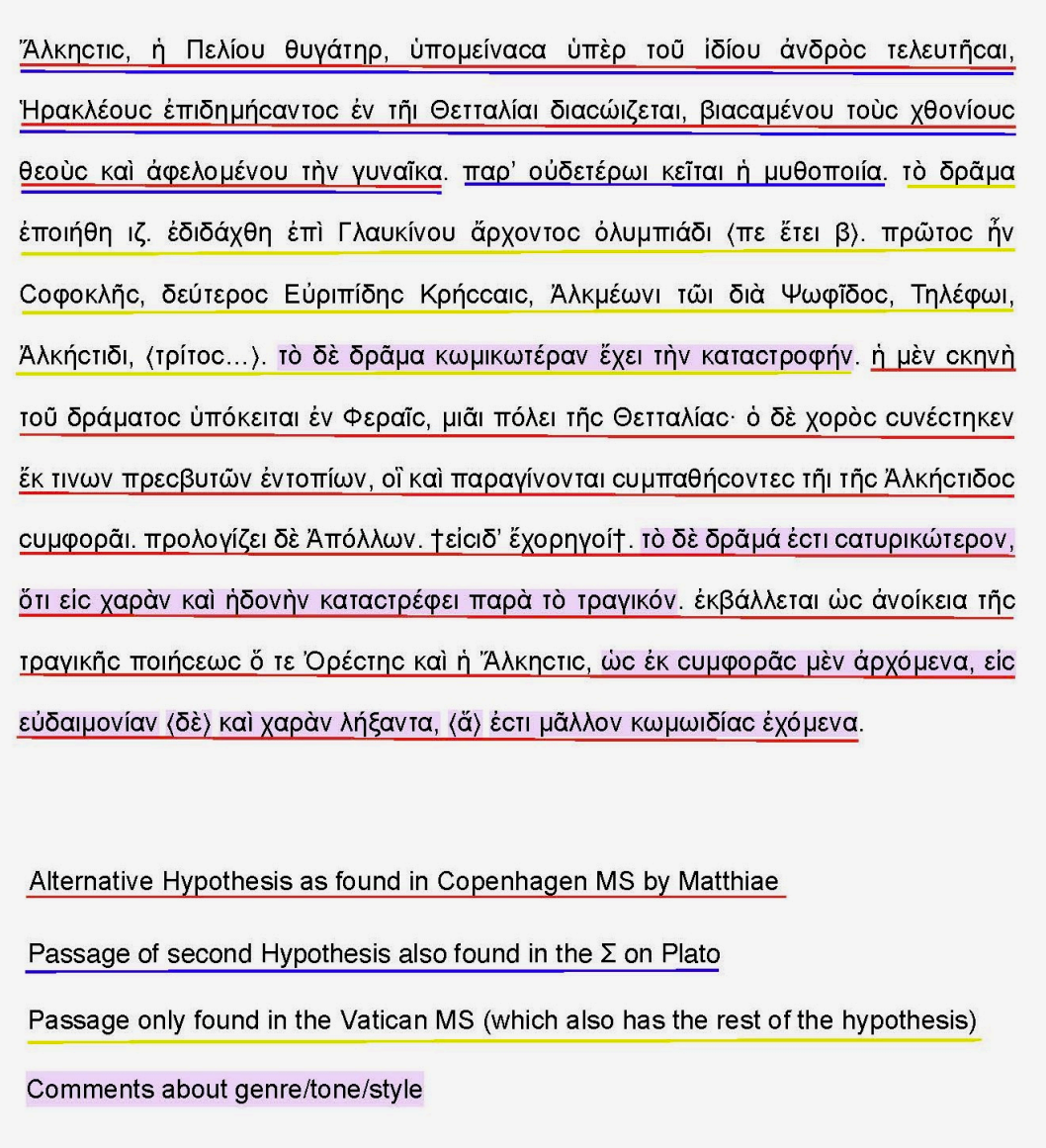
[6] E.g. Diggle gives this ascription to Dikaiarchos. On the question of authorship, see Rusten 1982, who argues against it and Riemer 1989, esp. 167, who also doubts that Dikaiarchos was the author of the summary. Meccariello 2014, 67-82, discusses the question of authorship and the evidence in more detail, argues against Rusten and reconsiders an old view (going back to Wilamowitz) that the hypotheses were party the work of a Spartan Dikaiarchos, student of Aristarchus, and were ascribed to the grammarian of the same name.

[7] Diggle 1981, Parker 2007, 47-49, with further bibliography.

[8] Matthiae 1813.


Ἄλκηστις, ἡ Πελίου θυγάτηρ, ὑπομείναςα ὑπὲρ τοῦ ἰδίου ἀνδρὸς τελευτῆσαι, Ἡρακλέους ἐπιδημήσαντος ἐν τῆι Θετταλίαι διασώιζεται, βιασαμένου τοὺς χθονίους θεοὺς καὶ ἀφελομένου τὴν γυναῖκα. παρ' οὐδετέρωι κεῖται ἡ μυθοποιία. τὸ δρᾶμα ἐποιήθη ιζ. ἐδιδάχθη ἐπὶ Γλαυκίνου ἄρχοντος ὀλυμπιάδι ⟨πε ἔτει β⟩. πρῶτος ἦν Σοφοκλῆς, δεύτερος Εὐριπίδης Κρήσσαις, Ἀλκμέωνι τῶι διὰ Ψωφῖδος, Τηλέφωι, Ἀλκήστιδι, ⟨τρίτος...⟩. τὸ δὲ δρᾶμα κωμικωτέραν ἔχει τὴν καταστροφήν. ἡ μὲν σκηνὴ τοῦ δράματος ὑπόκειται ἐν Φεραῖς, μιᾶι πόλει τῆς Θετταλίας· ὁ δὲ χορὸς συνέστηκεν ἔκ τινων πρεσβυτῶν ἐντοπίων, οἳ καὶ παραγίνονται συμπαθήσοντες τῆι τῆς Ἀλκήστιδος συμφορᾶι. προλογίζει δὲ Ἀπόλλων. †εἰσιδ' ἔχορηγοί†. τὸ δὲ δρᾶμά ἐστι σατυρικώτερον, ὅτι εἰς χαρὰν καὶ ἡδονὴν καταστρέφει παρὰ τὸ τραγικόν. ἐκβάλλεται ὡς ἀνοίκεια τῆς τραγικῆς ποιήσεως ὅ τε Ὀρέστης καὶ ἡ Ἄλκηστις, ὡς ἐκ συμφορᾶς μὲν ἀρχόμενα, εἰς εὐδαιμονίαν ⟨δὲ⟩ καὶ χαρὰν λήξαντα, ⟨ἅ⟩ ἐστι μᾶλλον κωμωιδίας ἐχόμενα.

Alternative Hypothesis as found in Copenhagen MS by Matthiae

Passage of second Hypothesis also found in the Σ on Plato

Passage only found in the Vatican MS (which also has the rest of the hypothesis)

Comments about genre/tone/style

Figure 1: The Second Prose Hypothesis

Here, we find a long note on the hypothesis, in which Matthiae quotes much more than what was contained in the original hypothesis. His source for these additional lines are a manuscript from Copenhagen (Hauniensis 417) and a Platonic Scholion (Σ Plat. symp. 179B) Rather than referring to a second or alternative hypothesis, his notes describe the relationship between the first hypothesis and these lines in terms of a continuation: "his [i.e. the words of the first hypothesis] ista subiicit ed. Iunt. Haun. partim etiam Schol. Plat.

Eud."[9]

Complete with his own critical notes and emendations, Matthiae here publishes most of what we now have as the second hypothesis, all of which is underlined in red and blue above. Notably, he thus publishes — for the first time — a piece of paratext, which is more than a simple plot summary. For, while an alternative summary of the plot is offered at the beginning, these lines present a different kind of interest in the play, an interest which might well be called literary critical. It states that the myth was staged by neither of the other two tragedians and gives factual information about setting, the constitution of the chorus, and the first speaker. Most importantly though, we have in these lines the first comments in an evaluative mode about the play's nature and generic identification. Highlighted in the graphic above, the passage in question might be translated as follows:

> the play is rather like a satyr play, because it ends in reconciliation and joy which is against the rules for tragedy (παρὰ τὸ τραγικόν). The *Orestes* and the *Alcestis* have a fallout untypical of tragic poetry, because from misfortune at the beginning they turn to happiness and reconciliation, which is more the manner of comedy.

It seems almost inevitable that the publication of such a statement in the paratext to the *Alcestis* would spark a debate about genre. As we will see, the surprising upshot of looking at the prehistory to the 1834 publication is that this was not the case.

First though, the second hypothesis underwent a process of becoming a paratext in and of itself. For this, I want to look at the work of Ernst Wüstemann, who in light of a number of new findings produced an edition of the *Alcestis* in the same year 1823. Wustemann is the earliest editor who makes a documented editorial choice with regard to an alternative hypotheses for the *Alcestis*. Before listing the *dramatis personae*, Wüstemann produces a page entitled ΗΥΠΟΘΕΣΙΣ, on which the first prose hypothesis is given as the main body of text. Below that, he gives an alternative hypothesis, consisting of the prose summary given in the Platonic *scholion* as well as the subsequent information about setting and chorus, but not the final paragraph starting τὸ δὲ δρᾶμά ἐστι σατυρικώτερον.

This omission is one point which suggest that Wüstemann obtained his text of the second

[9] Matthiae 1813, vii, 113-4.

hypothesis from the Florentine codex (which did not contain this sentence) and did not have access to the Copenhagen manuscript, nor to Matthiae's most recent volume appearing in the same year.[10] Wüstemann's edition builds explicitly on the 1816 edition of Monk, which had only the first prose hypothesis to the play.[11] In his preface, Wüstemann actually explains that he has benefited from readings in the Florentine codex, made available to him in Johannes Lenting's 1819 edition of the *Medea*.[12] This gives a clearer idea of how new editions in this period benefited from discoveries made by other scholars, often through providing second-hand insight into manuscripts otherwise shut off by geographical and physical restrictions. A likely example of this kind of dissemination is that through this transmission Wüstemann may have obtained the second hypothesis as it was in the Florentine codex even though he had no access to Matthiae's publication from the same year.

Since in publishing this as paratext preceding the play itself Wüstemann was innovating from Monk's and Matthiae's previous standard editions, it is worth noting that he marked the new bit of text as secondary by means of three clearly visible editorial choices: first, through the word ἄλλως, which he himself inserts at the start of the paragraph; second, by means of square brackets which set the second hypothesis off from the main body of the page; thirdly, by choosing a smaller font, which gives the impression of a lower priority, a clear sense of being 'second' not just sequentially but in terms of value and importance to the text too. In a long footnote to the page as a whole, Wüstemann said that, although Monk only included the first hypothesis, "alterum quoque hic exhibere commodum visum est", because both appear in a *scholion* to Plato's *Symposium*. We see that this was new editorial territory when it comes the *Alcestis*, the beginning of a process of formation by which the same material which Matthiae gave in the notes of his same year was already being incorporated into a new edition. For the first time, an alternative hypothesis appeared in an edition of the play. However, this hypothesis is — apart from the comment that neither

[10] Another point suggesting the same conclusion is that the Florentine and Paris manuscripts also miss the sentence παρ' οὐδετέρωι κεῖται ἡ μυθοποιία, for which Wüstemann explicitly quotes the Platonic *scholion* as his source. By contrast, Wüstemann's omission of προλογίζει δὲ Ἀπόλλων, which appears in the Florentine manuscripts, casts some doubt on the precise editorial decisions made in producing his printed version.

[11] Monk 1816.

[12] Lenting 1819, vi-vii, with notes, which show that Lenting draws on a collection of readings, compiled by Johann Heinrich Voss, from said Florentine codex.

Aeschylus nor Sophocles wrote a play about this myth — nothing other than an alternative introductory summary of the play. Wüstemann's edition had none of the remarks about the play's genre and ending, which Matthiae found in the Copenhagen manuscript and which have been highlighted in the above graphic.

But Wüstemann's presentation of the second hypothesis, both graphically distinct and conceptually qualified as ἀλλως, set an important model for editions of the play thereafter. Once again, this model has to be considered in a broader context though, because the new editorial territory of a growing and changing paratext included not just the *Alcestis*.[13] In fact, Wüstemann specifically aligned his presentation of the second prose hypothesis with another example. In his notes on the bottom of the page, he explained and justified his editorial decision to offer this text as an alternative hypothesis and to present it as the work of Aristophanes of Byzantium:[14]

> alterum argumentum mihi ab Aristophane Grammatico profectum videtur; quod facile concedes, si cum eo, quod sub ejusdem Grammatici nomine Medeae praefixum est, comparare velis.

This ascription to Aristophanes on the basis of a comparison with the *Medea* draws on Lenting's edition of that text, mentioned above. However, the form of presentation here differed very strongly, because Lenting boldly assembled the two hypotheses to make one.[15] Thus, an already much longer primary hypothesis, attributed as in the case of *Alcestis* to Dikaiarchos, is interrupted by a second summary of the plot given as ΑΛΛΩΣ ΑΡΙΣΤΟΦΑΝΟΥΣ ΤΟΥ ΓΡΑΜΜΑΤΙΚΟΥ and printed in the same size and font, after which the primary hypothesis resumes with a final paragraph. Lenting gives no explanation for this attribution to Aristophanes of Byzantium and yet this authorial ascription is taken over by Wüstemann when it comes to the *Alcestis*' second hypothesis. Given the perceptible similarity between the two texts — one sentence of concise plot summary followed by the exact same note that

[13] For the alternative hypotheses which we have for a number of Euripidean plays, see Parker 2007.

[14] Meccariello 2014, 7-11, discusses the evidence for his authorship and notes, fn.15, that the *Alcestis* is not among those plays for which the medieval manuscripts ascribe the hypothesis to Aristophanes of Byzantium. At the same time, Meccariello notes, 8-9, that while the different types of information in this second prose hypothesis are generally attributed to Aristophanes of Byzantium, they should properly be considered an "intersezione di elementi ricavati da *hypotheseis* diverse",9, rather than work of a singular critic.

[15] Lenting 1819. The second hypothesis of the *Medea* is ascribed to Aristophanes of Byzantium in medieval manuscripts, Meccariello 2014, 7, fn.15.

the myth was not staged by either of the other two (i.e. Aeschylus, Sophocles) — it seems clear why Wüstemann felt so confident in making this ascription.

Looking at these two publications from 1823 already illustrates two points about the scholarly playing field when it comes to the *Alcestis*. Firstly, paratextual material on the play, which was partly contiguous with and partly very different from the standard plot summary known before, continued to be discovered in the variegated and piecemeal way in which classical scholarship of this period often worked. Secondly and contemporaneously, the play's printed paratext changed with the editorial innovation of printing a second prose hypothesis as an alternative to the first. By 1825, these two developments intersected and give us the first examples of an increasingly homogeneous editorial practice in which the *Alcestis* is preceded by two prose hypotheses (just as other plays were). A quick overview of three editions from that year illustrates this point and shows that the final paragraph of the second hypothesis, which explicitly speaks about genre and the happy ending, was widely known and considered part of the standard paratext soon after 1823.

In his edition of 1825, François Boissonade printed both hypotheses in a way that illustrates the uncertainty and fluctuation in scholars' treatment of this second hypothesis. Without notes to explain the material and its presentation, he gave his readers a conspicuously divided text for the second hypothesis in which parts taken from different sources were put into separate paragraphs. For instance, the sentence παρ' οὐδετέρωι κεῖται ἡ μυθοποιία, which appeared only in the Platonic *scholion* was separated from the preceding summary and from the subsequent section. Another such break came between what the Parisian and Florentine manuscripts gave and the final paragraph, published only by Matthiae and including the comment that the play is σατυρικώτερον. A combination of Wüstemann's new editorial practice and Matthiae's discoveries, this edition gave a second prose hypothesis which includes both an alternative summary of the plot *and* the ancient critical opinions about the play. While the dissection of this hypothesis according to different sources betrays an understanding of the complexities of transmission, the contents of the hypothesis are not questioned, analysed, or qualified.

This fluidity and heterogeneity in how the prose hypothesis was treated is evident in

the 1825 edition by Ludwig Dindorf (not to be confused with his brother Wilhelm).[16] Dindorf took great liberty in representing the known material, giving all of it as one continuous hypothesis with no ascription to any author. These observations about editorial practice illustrate the freedom of scholars to freely manipulate paratext according to individual preferences, which is not surprising or all that significant in and of itself. What is significant though is what it tells us about the status of this paratext in the eyes of scholars. The inclusion of ancient literary criticism with quite remarkable implications for the reading of the play stood next to the prose summaries of the plots without sparking immediate questions about where these assessments came from and whose authority they reflected. This is true even of a third edition of the play by Friedrich Bothe, published in 1825 as well, which was designed explicitly "in usum scholarum".[17] Bothe includes notes on the sources for both hypotheses but no information about authorship or comments about the nature of the second hypothesis. In terms of paratextual presentation, he almost exactly replicated Wüstemann in printing the second hypothesis separated by a line and an ἀλλως at its start.

3.2 Genre Questions?

In what follows, I will turn to examine the kind of evidence contained in the newly found and newly established alternative hypothesis about the question of the play's genre and to how this is reflected, or rather not reflected, in the contemporary scholarly reception. To preempt confusion about the historic nature of the genre-debate over the play, a clarification on chronology is in order before I consider the specific texts themselves. The broad suggestion that the play has elements of satyr-play was already raised once in an earlier period, namely in the 17th and 18th centuries, and led to a scholarly consensus that the Alcestis was *not* to be considered a specimen of the genre of satyr play. This consensus was still in force in the years during which the alternative prose hypothesis first came to light. When, below, I speak of the scholarly consensus in defining satyr play and to explicitly exclude the *Alcestis* from this genre, I mean a consensus which emerged long before 1834. When the question

[16] L. A. Dindorf 1825.
[17] Bothe 1825.

of the *Alcestis*'s genre was raised again after this date, we will see that an already settled question was re-opened.

After the changing presentation and gradual formation of the paratext during the 1820s, the editions of the *Alcestis* in the early 1830s reflect relative stability when it comes to content and presentation of the hypotheses. To take but two further examples, Wilhelm Dindorf's 1832 edition, published two years before his seminal 1834 publication, and that by August Pflugk of the same year 1834, gave the two hypotheses without any further comments about their content, authorship or interest in the genre-questioning comments included in them.[18] As such, the ancient testimony about the satyric nature of the play was already part of a stable paratext by the time Dindorf published Vat. gr. 909 and the didascalic information in it. This review of how the *Alcestis* came to have a second prose hypothesis as part of its paratext yields two points.

The first point concerns the context in which the 1834 discovery of the didascalic information has to be viewed. The play's paratext was an object of ongoing change in terms of both content and presentation, but it began to include critical statements and information beyond a summary of the plot. The sources, authenticity and value of these statements, however, were not objects of scholarly scrutiny or concern, meaning that their inclusion in the paratext is perhaps best understood as a practice of collecting material, rather than producing a critical and focused complement to how the play is to be read. Take, for instance, the question of who authored these hypotheses: while most editors ignored this question entirely, Boissonade for instance printed the first under the name of Dikaiarchos and the second simply under a new title ἀλλως. Inasmuch as the final paragraph gave someone's explicit scholarly or critical judgement, it is striking that Wüstemann's suggestion that this someone is Aristophanes of Byzantium was not discussed in any notes. Instead, it seems rather that from this early stage of the modern editions, the paratext was serving the primary purpose of introducing the play's story to its readers, not guiding its reception or interpretation. Not to put too fine a point on it, the immense importance of the didascalic information which came to light as part of this second hypothesis sits somewhat uneasily alongside the

[18] While Pflugk's note on the bottom of the page (vol. II. sect ii. p. 15-16) quotes Matthiae's 1823 explanations on the separate sources for the two hypotheses, Dindorf does not even have these notes.

fact that when this second hypothesis became a stable paratext, no-one really cared about it.

The second and more significant point, however, is that this collection of paratextual material included direct ancient commentary on the play's genre, its "somewhat satyr-like" overall nature, as early as 1823. As early as 1825 and across three separate editions, these comments were part of the introductory material to the play. In 1834, Dindorf discovered the last new piece of material for the second hypothesis, but in the decade or so before, the comments that specifically refer to the play's genre, its ending and the connection to satyr play were already part of that paratext. As the graphic above illustrates, Dindorf did publish the comment about the play's "rather comic" ending along with the didscalic information, but the most obviously genre-related parts of it were found in the Copenhagen manuscript already.

And yet, there is a distinct lack of any scholarly debate on the play's genre in this period, which is to say after the discovery and dissemination of the second hypothesis' comments on genre and until 1834, leading us to the preliminary conclusion that at this point, the ancient evidence about such a debate on its own did not arise considerable interest. However the genre-debate on the *Alcestis* eventually came about, it was not a direct response to the discovery of ancient evidence discussing this very question. To take the other side of the debate into consideration as well, it is crucial to note that in his general short treatise *Über das Satyrspiel* written in 1826, Friedrich Welcker does not mention the *Alcestis* or the idea of its satyr-like quality at all.[19] As such, I want to pause and ask: if not in its genre, what aspect of the *Alcestis* were readers interested in during this earlier period of the play's modern scholarly reception?

Turning away from the new hypothesis and its specific context and towards the broader landscape of scholarship on the *Alcestis* from the late 18th and early 19th century, we see that the play was treated as a tragedy. An illustrative example of this is Gilbert Wakefield's 1794 publication of the play along with Euripides' *Heracles* and Sophocles' *Trachiniae*.[20] The preface to his edition explains the reasoning behind publishing the *Alcestis* in this way and

[19] Welcker 1826. This work is considered foundational for the modern study of satyr play by Seidensticker 1989, 8.
[20] Wakefield 1794.

also shows how Wakefield situates the *Alcestis* among these tragedies. The three plays, he explains, are grouped together because they illustrate the life of the hero Heracles, "quatenus heroa celebrant Graecae tragoediae scriptores."[21] His brief discussion of each of the three tragedies shows the literary criteria on which Wakefield valued the *Alcestis* very highly. While he criticises the poetic quality of Euripides' *Heracles*, he says that the Alcestis displays "densitatem oratoriam, facilitatem, suavitatem, simplicitatem denique sententiarum" and is meanwhile so "sermonis illaborati vestitu decorata" that it leaves nothing to be desired.[22]

Wakefield's high esteem for the play's style along other tragedies supports the view that scholars did not see the genre as problematic or controversial. Yet more significant in this respect is that Wakefield included the *Alcestis* in a collection dedicated to the hero Heracles. For, as we will see, the role of Heracles would later become a cornerstone of arguments that problematise the *Alcestis qua* tragedy and move it somewhat closer to satyr play.[23] This view continues to command influence to this day, for instance in Burnett's study of the play, where she says that "the brute effect of Heracles' introduction is that something of the satyr-drama invades the tragedy of Alcestis' death and salvation."[24] In this, Burnett draws on an argument that Heracles' drunkenness and boisterous behaviour on stage chime well with the conventions of satyr play and that his fight with death too links the *Alcestis* with an element believed to be typical of that genre.

Not so in the late 18th century: for Wakefield, Heracles' appearance in the *Alcestis* makes this a tragedy about part of this hero's mythical biography and united the play with tragedies that treated other parts of that same myth. This historic comparison points out the significant contingency in claiming that a connection between the *Alcestis* and satyr play lies in the figure of Heracles. To read his role in the play as forming such a connection was — as we can see in 1794 — not without alternative and is therefore in need of some explanation when it becomes a commonplace after 1834. We see here that, before a certain discursive development took its course in the 19th century, the *Alcestis* and the Heracles

[21] Wakefield 1794, iii.
[22] Wakefield 1794, iv.
[23] So particularly in Hartung, 1834, on which see below.
[24] Burnett 1965, 146. Cf. the section on Heracles in the next chapter.

figure in could be considered from a scholarly viewpoint that did not have to engage with the genre of satyr-play.

Other writings from the 1820s further underpin the view that at an earlier time scholarly interest in the play did not revolve around genre at all, but was focused on other aspects which are no less important in charting out the *Alcestis*' scholarly history. Two very different publications, both of which come from 1824 and have a close relationship with Monk's seminal edition of the play from 1816, may serve to illustrate this. The first is a translation of the play into English by T. W. C. Edwards with a preface and notes, which illustrate how the play was viewed and presented to an educated but non-specialist audience.[25] In the "Summary of facts and circumstances connected with the play", Edwards offers nothing on the questions around the play's character or genre, but rather presents a fuller account of the mythical background starting with Asclepius and Apollo. Following a translation with detailed commentary, Edwards concludes the volume with a list of 13 "moral inferences" from the play, which illustrates his priorities well. In some sense, his comments here anticipate a long and exhaustive moral debate about the character of Admetus, that would go on for much longer. This debate, however, took place without any doubt that the *Alcestis* was one of Euripides' tragedies.

Also in 1824, Gottfried Hermann published his *Dissertatio de Euripidis Alcestide* as a preface to a new and improved edition of Monk's text, a volume which also included the second hypothesis in the minimal version of Wüstemann, i.e. without the comment about the satyresque or comic aspects.[26] He proposes to judge the play by the standards of the poet's own intentions, namely as a deliberate combination into one play of what are really two separate stories, Alcestis' death and her resurrection, the second of which is, in his opinion, ill-suited to tragedy *per se*.[27] He specifically contends that Alcestis alone of all the characters presents "quales tragoedia requirat"[28] and gives a contrasting view of Heracles

[25] Edwards 1824.
[26] Hermann 1824.
[27] Hermann 1824, v-vi.
[28] Hermann 1824, viii.

as unsuited to the tragic "gravitas".[29] In these comments, Hermann already offers some of the views which would be rehearsed frequently throughout the subsequent decades.

Most significant, however, in light of the subsequent course of the debate is a small paragraph in which Hermann refers back to a previous study of his about the composition of tragic tetralogies and concludes that the *Alcestis*' peculiarities can easily be explained as follows:[30]

> Omnia enim eo conspirant, ut vel secundum in tetralogia locum vel tertium tenuisse videatur. Utrique apta est: secundo, propter eximiam numerorum modorumque suavitatem et mollitiem; tertio, propter terrificam speciem Orci, pallentemque imaginem feminae ab inferis reducis, quae muta adstans nec vivae mulieri neque umbrae similis est.[31]

Here, on account of Hermann's own but separately formulated views on the structure of the tetralogy, he concludes that the play may well have occupied second or third position. This ascription to a certain place in the tetralogy will become interesting once again as the debate around the *Alcestis*' genre fully takes shape after 1834.

By way of concluding this first section of my analysis, I submit that the emergence of a second prose hypothesis to the *Alcestis* in the 1820s and the formation of the play's paratext provides the proper context in which the debate over its genre has to be understood. Before 1834, therefore, we see the emergence of what might be called, by contrast to the pure summaries of plot, a 'critical' paratext in a stable version which spoke to the play's genre but did not attract the overwhelming interest of scholars. Especially so, the point bears repetition that while there was already an ancient witness calling the *Alcestis* a satyr-like play with a comic ending, there is no scholarly discussion of how this paratext changes the reading of the play. This was to change after 1834 though. In what follows, I consider how this change came about and what views emerged in response to the didascalic information.

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[29] Hermann 1824, xi: "qualem quidem illum hac in fabula finxit Euripidis, tamen non satis convenire videtur cum gravitate tragoediae."
[30] Hermann 1819.
[31] Hermann 1824, xii-xiii.

3.3 Wilhelm Dindorf, 1834 — The Watershed Moment?

After 1834, the *Alcestis* and its genre suddenly became a puzzle of extraordinary interest to scholars. Taking a closer look at the emergence of this puzzle and at the solutions proposed in the middle decades of the 19th century, I begin with an exposition and reappraisal of what Dindorf himself made of the evidence he found. Given just how prolific scholarship on this question quickly became, understanding what really happened is not served best by a chronological review. Instead, I organise my analysis around four phenomena, which I argue help us understand the overall scholarly responses to Dindorf's fragment and the formation of the genre discourse which started in these decades and continues, in some form, even today. The first two of these are the proliferation of what I call the functionalist view of satyr play, a term explained below, and the appearance of 'substitution' as a new concept for describing the play's genre. These phenomena are directly connected and elucidate the link between the *Alcestis* and the scholarly understanding of satyr play, both historic and present. The third and fourth phenomena in turn concern the self-perception of scholarship in this debate. By conflating it with an actual disagreement over the characters of the play, scholars, so to speak, observed a genre-discourse into existence. Finally, through biased re-reading of earlier scholars' comments on the play, 19th-century scholarship created a history of this debate and validated the perceived disagreement over the *Alcestis*' genre. In doing so, they re-opened a question that had already been settled. Discussing these phenomena together leads to my central contention that the developments in scholarship on the *Alcestis* could have taken a different direction. This reframing of the debate and of its history makes room, in the final section of the chapter, for a new evaluation of the didascalic evidence and its implications and presents two possible paths forward.

In 1832, the *Alcestis* appeared, complete with the two hypotheses as they were known at this point, in the first volume of Wilhelm Dindorf's complete edition of Euripides' plays and fragments.[32] Only two years later, he produced another edition of the *Alcestis* with further improvements from a new textual witness: Vat. gr. 909.[33] Easily the most significant news

[32] W. Dindorf 1832.
[33] W. Dindorf 1834.

which this codex brought was that the manuscript included the second prose hypothesis to the play in a version that had three sentences that were not found in any of the other codices before. The graphic shown earlier in this chapter illustrates where these sentences stand within the second hypothesis. They read:

> τὸ δρᾶμα ἐποιήθη ιζ. ἐδιδάχθη ἐπὶ Γλαυκίνου ἄρχοντος ὀλυμπιάδι. πρῶτος ἦν Cοφοκλῆc, δεύτεροc Εὐριπίδηc Κρήccαιc, Ἀλκμέωνι τῶι διὰ Ψωφῖδοc, Τηλέφωι, Ἀλκήcτιδι, ⟨τρίτοc...⟩. τὸ δὲ δρᾶμα κωμικωτέραν ἔχει τὴν καταcτροφήν.

These lines expand on the literary criticism and paratextual information that go beyond a simple plot summary.[34] Scholars have tacitly accepted that they are an excerpt from the *didascalia*, since they give information about the competition of the particular year, 438 BC, in which the *Alcestis* was performed.[35] Here, we learn that Euripides won second prize that year after Sophocles and we see the *Alcestis* listed as fourth after *Cretan Women*, *Alkmeon in Psophis*, and *Telephus*.[36] We have noted above that the different types of information in the second hypothesis were, when discovered, printed by scholars as part of the paratext but that the sources, authenticity or transmission history were not a topic of concern. The same goes for these lines first published by Dindorf and when referring in what follows to the didascalic information as a source, this always has to be remembered.

The many publications written about the fragment in the decades after its initial publication somewhat overshadows its original reception and first presentation to a scholarly audience. But Dindorf's preface to his 1834 edition of the play, in which he discussed the didascalic fragment himself, repays closer attention on its own terms. For the precise argument he makes, though seldom acknowledged since, was crucially different from the many later claims under which it has been subsumed later on. He began by marking the scope of the debate and the context in which the didascalic evidence was to be evaluated, namely the common view that the tetralogies of the tragedians always comprised three tragedies and one

[34] The information now collated corresponds to what Meccariello 2014, 8, identifies the didascalic information as one type of information usually found in this type of prose hypothesis.

[35] The Archonship of Glaucinus was the year 439-8 BC. Pickard-Cambridge 1988, 72-3, gives an overview of the *didascalia* as evidence for dramatic practice, but warns that they are "very incomplete", 73.

[36] General consensus, that the didascalic records give the order in which the plays were performed, has been challenged by Sansone 2015. The most complete discussion of all the evidence about the performances at the City Dionysia and the surviving evidence about them is Pickard-Cambridge 1988, 57-101.

satyr play.[37] For this, he referred to what is still the *locus classicus* for ancient testimony for this view, Diogenes Laertius' description of how Plato composed his dialogues in groups of four, following the manner of the tragedians' composition.[38]

The newly discovered didascalic fragment, however, led Dindorf to question whether the regularity and stringency of this compositional rule actually reflects the tragedians' practice. He drew attention to incongruities, such as that in two instances the surviving records for Euripidean productions give only a trilogy without an accompanying satyr play. He noted that scholars have hitherto chosen to believe that the titles of these satyr plays must have been "omitted or ignored" by the grammarians, rather than that the poet competed with only a trilogy.[39] Informed by the new evidence about the *Alcestis*, he suggest nothing less than a disavowal of this:

> Neque tamen haec argumenta [*sc.* those brought forward by scholars in favour of the 3+1 rule] tantam vim habent ut stabilem illam fuisse atque legibus praescriptam tetralogiae compositionem sequatur. Nam si Sophocli licuit praeter morem aetatis suae singulis decertare tragoediis, quemadmodum comici poetae singulas in scenam produxerunt comoedias, **nihil impedit quominus alia alios novasse credamus**.[40]

Dindorf thus prioritised room for innovation over the constraints of a predictable performance pattern. For him, it did not follow from the arguments in Diogenes Laertius and the other evidence that there were strict rules for the composition of tetralogies. Before discussing the *Alcestis* itself and the new evidence, Dindorf made the case that our understanding of tragic poetry is in fact ill-served by assuming the tragedians' strict adherence to the conventional rule of three tragedies followed by satyr play.

It is only at this critical juncture of his introduction that Dindorf addressed the *Alcestis* specifically:

> Ejusmodi est quod nunc de Euripidis tetralogia quadam ex quattuor composita tragoediis expromere mihi licet veteris grammatici testimonium. In qua re hoc

[37] W. Dindorf 1834, 3-4. The 3+1 rule is discussed in more detail below.
[38] Diogenes Laertius II. 56. Cf. Lämmle 2013, 85-92. An overview of the evidence for the four-play rule is given by Pickard-Cambridge 1988, 79-80.
[39] W. Dindorf 1834, 4-5.
[40] W. Dindorf 1834, 5 (emphasis my own).

> quoque feliciter accidit ut ipsa quarta tetralogiae hujus tragoedia, Alcestis, ad nostra usque tempora sit servata.[41]

For Dindorf, it was clear from the new didascalic evidence that there were tetralogies by Euripides composed of four tragedies. As such, the *Alcestis* is not only a tragedy, but it is also provocation for us to shift our understanding of the tetralogy as such. Dindorf and his publication were soon omnipresent in the scholarship on the *Alcestis*, and so I will have occasion to return to his arguments again below. But it is important to have spelled out here clearly the conclusion at which he arrived in his preface to the 1834 edition. As far-reaching and complex the debate turned out to be, as a conclusion it is also remarkably simple: we must reconsider our understanding of the tetralogy.

From here, the scholarly debate could have followed Dindorf's suggestion to discuss what implication this evidence has for any number of plays and for our understanding of dramatic practice in Classical Athens more broadly. Instead, scholars focused on the *Alcestis* alone and turned the play and its genre into a seemingly unsolvable puzzle. In what follows, I show how this development took place and argue that it was ultimately contingent and deserves further explanation. Cutting through the great many scholarly publications of this period, I focus on four phenomena, that is to say emerging arguments or views, which comprise the debate and had a lasting impact on how we continue to view the play today.

Before starting the analysis, a note on the sources is in order. The majority of the scholars whose work I discuss, especially in the earlier decades here considered, are German classicists publishing in a range of formats which includes monographs as well as *Jahresberichte* or *Programmschriften* in the German *Gymnasium*, the secondary school system. The prominence of germanophone scholars in my analysis does not reflect a deliberate choice, but rather the fact that their work was the initial gravitational centre of critical interest in the *Alcestis* and its genre. This is not to say, of course, that the debate was limited or took place in a separate sphere of classical scholarship. For we see not only that the works of secondary school teachers like Gustav Bissinger were widely received and considered alongside major monographs by university scholars of the likes of Gottfried Hermann, but also that the dis-

[41] W. Dindorf 1834, 5.

course about the *Alcestis*' genre linked back to and was in turn eventually received by French and Anglophone scholarship, too. Aside from the direct evidence of English scholars reading these texts around the turn of the centuries, the example of Herman Hayley's school edition of the *Alcestis* with its detailed preface on the debate about its genre, illustrates that most of these German texts were later on read and considered by a broader audience of scholars and students in the anglophone world as well.[42] I therefore focus my analysis on whatever scholarly texts are most relevant to each moment in the history of the debate. My aim is that, by the end of this chapter, the legacy of these texts, even of those that may now seem marginal and have been largely forgotten, will be as abundantly clear as the importance of revisiting them in order to understand better how our own views of the *Alcestis* and of Euripidean genre were formed.

3.3.1 What Makes a Satyr Play? Redefining the Tetralogy's Ending

The relationship between the *Alcestis* and the genre of satyr play is vexed but repays closer attention. In the most thorough reappraisal of the genre to date, the 2013 *Poetik des Satyrspiels*, Rebecca Lämmle characterises satyr play by invoking tragedy as its *genus proximum* on the one hand, and the chorus of satyrs together with Silenus as its *differentia specifica* on the other.[43] While Lämmle acknowledges that this definition of satyr play goes back a long way and is widely subscribed to both historically and now, it is crucial for our understanding of the *Alcestis* that the roots of this definition have a connection to scholars' grappling with this very play in an even earlier period.[44]

Isaac Casaubon's early work on satyric poetry already drew the definition of the genre

[42] Hayley 1898.

[43] Lämmle 2013, 23 and 54: "Der evidente Wesensunterschied der beiden Gattungen ist dem essentiellen Merkmal des Satyrspiels geschuldet: der permanenten Anwesenheit des immergleichen Chors der Satyrn sowie des Silen." Similarly Voelke 2001, 15, who calls the satyr chorus the "personage constant du genre" and Krumeich, Pechstein, and Seidensticker 1999, 17-18, who give assurance that the choir is "als konstituierendes Element der Gattung mit Sicherheit anzunehmen". Shaw 2014, 3 and 95, emphasises the chorus as the primary indicator to the audience about what genre of play they were seeing. The idea that satyr play closely belongs to tragedy was already known to Casaubon 1605, 118, who recalls the ancient opinion that satyr play was "quasi species quaedam tragoediae". In modern scholarship this idea still finds favour, e.g. Rossi 1989, 229 (reprint of Rossi 1972). Apart from Lämmle, Krumeich, Pechstein, and Seidensticker 1999, 1-40, offer a thorough introduction to all the questions and evidence pertaining to this genre and their volume presents and discusses all the surviving evidence. Griffith 2015, 1-10, usefully reviews recent trends in the study of Greek satyr play after a period of relative neglect among scholars.

[44] Lämmle 2013, 54, fn.4, where the definition is cited as that of th 19th century already.

from its etymology when he claimed that satyr play was "a satyris ita nominatae, quod satyros in scenam inducerent."[45] Still in the 17th century, this definition was refined and reaffirmed in specific engagement with the *Alcestis* and we see this in the work of the Swiss-born scholar and diplomat Ezechiel Spanheim. He produced an edition and translation of the emperor Julian's prose satire *The Caesars*, or *Les Césars de l'empereur Julien* in Spanheim's original title, which appeared in 1683 and marks an important if unlikely source for the earliest modern scholarly views on the *Alcestis*.[46] In the preface to this edition, Spanheim discussed the nature of Greek and Roman satyric poetry and also addressed the question of whether the *Alcestis* can be counted as a satyr play:

> Ajoutes encore, qu'il n'y paroit aucun Silène, ni Choeur de Satyres; ce qu'il faloit pourtant, pour en faire une pièce satyrique, **selon que** l'un et l'autre se voit dans le Cyclope du même Euripide. Aussi est-ce le seul Ouvrage des Anciens, qui nous reste en ce genre, non seulement selon le témoignage des Savans, mais encore selon celui d'Eustathius sur Homère, qui n'allegue la-deffus que cette Pièce, laquelle se trouveroit encore, comme il dit, et serviroit de modéle de la poësie Satyrique. [47]

The precise argument here rests on the meaning of "selon que", translated best with "inasmuch as", meaning that Spanheim derived his definition of satyr play from what he considered, based on ancient testimony, to be the only extant specimen of the genre. This then is the defining move, making a satyr play out of a play "selon que" (in as much as) it includes a satyr-chorus like the *Cyclops* does. This passage illustrates just how instrumental the *Alcestis* was in the formation of a genre definition for satyr play even at that time. The play provides occasion for a clear definition of satyr play, but it does so crucially by offering an *ex negativo* example, by being itself excluded from that genre.[48]

Below, I will revisit this argumentative move of excluding the *Alcestis* explicitly from satyr play and thereby consolidating the genre's definition, when I discuss a text written in

[45] Casaubon 1605, 25.
[46] Spanheim 1683.
[47] Spanheim 1683, 9 (emphasis my own).
[48] Even very recently, Shaw 2014, 96, whose study, esp. ch. 4, considers the *Alcestis* and its performance in the context of a evolving genre-practices in comedy and satyr play, expresses just this idea when he states that "the lack of satyrs makes the Alcestis stand out as satyr drama's inverse, as "un-satyr" drama."

1787, some 100 years after Spanheim, by Johann Buhle.[49] In both cases, we see the shared and intersecting histories of the *Alcestis* and of satyr play as a genre and that this relationship consists in something of a paradox whereby the *Alcestis* somehow belonged to satyr play precisely because it was and continues to be excluded from it. As such, this paradox still describes one half of the relationship between the *Alcestis* and the genre of satyr play and so the view, at which Spanheim arrived in 1683 already, is still widely held among scholars who discuss the *Alcestis* and its relationship to satyr play.[50]

But there is a second half to this vexed relationship. Over the middle decades of the 19th century, we see a crucial shift in scholarly thinking about the *Alcestis* and about satyr play that impacts the definition of the latter. Cutting right to the heart of this, Lämmle makes another poignant remark about satyr play and its scholarship, which I want to take as my cue here: "Kaum eine andere antike literarische Gattung wird mit solcher Insistenz auf ihre Funktion hin befragt wie das Satyrspiel."[51] In fact, this observation situates Lämmle's own study as a response to just this question about the genre's function. The poetics of satyr play, which she develops in her study, suggest that this genre provided an opportunity for the tragedians to reflect, at once critically and humorously, on their literary craft in writing tragedy.

But the observation also prompts a second-order question about the history of scholarship, namely *why* this particular genre is enveloped in a discourse about its function more so than tragedy or comedy. Lämmle suggests explicitly that the reason for this preoccupation is that satyr play was an addition to the tragic *agon*:

> Aus der Tatsache, dass mit dem Satyrspiel der Tragödie etwas hinzugefügt wird [...] ist die Idee abgeleitet, dass der Tragödie etwas fehle, was das Hinzugefügte zu komplettieren habe.[52]

As interesting as the idea of an assumed shortcoming of tragedy which was somehow com-

[49] Buhle 1787.

[50] So Lämmle 2013, 22, fn.12: "Das vierte Drama dieser Tetralogie ist die (vollständig erhaltene) *Alkestis*, die keinen Satyrchor hat und daher nicht als Satyrspiel gelten kann." Seaford 1984, 2, speaks of "the 'prosatyric' *Alcestis*, which was performed fourth in Euripides' tetralogy of 438 BC: having no chorus of satyrs, it cannot be called a satyr-play."

[51] Lämmle 2013, 93.

[52] Lämmle 2013, 93.

pensated by satyr play might be, I argue that there is more to be unpacked here. Lämmle's own review of the various functions which scholars have suggested for satyr play shows not only that the majority of contributions to this question comes from the 20th century, but also that there is no real evidence for this debate before the modern study of tragedy took off properly in the 19th century.[53] The only exception to this is in fact the important functionalist argument that has been made about satyr play, namely that the genre served the purpose of relaxing an audience after the emotional strain of three tragedies.

This view, said to go back to Horace, was taken up by ancient grammarians such as Diomedes and Victorinus, which is why the earliest surviving reflections about the genre are thought to have also talked about its psychological function of providing a kind of relief.[54] When it comes to modern classical scholarship and its intellectual roots in German idealism, this idea can also be found in prominent place. For in A. W. Schlegel's *Vorlesungen über dramatische Literatur und Kunst*, we find a pertinent and influential comment:

> "Das Bedürfniß einer Erholung des Geistes nach dem ergreifenden Ernst der Tragödie scheint ihr, so wie überhaupt dem Nachspiel, den Ursprung gegeben zu haben."[55]

On first glance, these testimonies seem to suggest that there is a clear view about the function of satyr play that goes back to antiquity. On closer examination, however, more caution is in order.

Most importantly, as Lämmle also reminds us, there is no ancient evidence for the perceived effect of satyr play on the audience which would suggest anything about the poet's intentions for composing a play of this type.[56] The idea of some kind of relief, Richard

[53] Lämmle 2013, 93-98, collates and organises the view into 10 different "Funktionserklärungen". Krumeich, Pechstein, and Seidensticker 1999, 34-9, gives a list of various possible and suggested functions of satyr play, to which they add that the genre provides occasion for "Diskussion und Selbstvergewisserung der Polis über ihre moralischen und kulturellen Grundlagen", 38. A recent and particularly strong formulation of satyr play's psychological function is that of Hall 2006, 142-169, who sees the genre as a needed reaffirmation of masculinity after the emasculating effects of tragedies. By contrast, Seaford 1984, 26-33, critically assesses the evidence for satyr play's function.

[54] *Ars Poetica*, 220-4: Carmine qui tragico vilem certavit ob hircum, | mox etiam agrestis Satyros nudavit et asper | incolumi gravitate iocum temptavit, eo quod | illecebris erat et grat a novitate morandus | spectator, functusque sacris et potus et exlex. (edition quoted is that of Fairclough 1926). For full references, see Lämmle 2013, 93-94, esp. fns.4-6.

[55] Schlegel 1809, 263-4.

[56] Lämmle 2013, 94.

Seaford explains, "is a plausible inference from the nature of the plays. But it cannot constitute a satisfactory answer to the question why tragedians wrote satyr-plays."[57] What is more, Seaford helpfully dissects the language in the above testimonies, drawing attention to a subtle but very important shift between what Horace said and what has come to be considered the functionalist view today. Whereas Horace's *Ars Poetica* speak of Greek satyr play as drama that needs to maintain the attention of a drunk audience by providing a gripping novelty, Schlegel talked about "Erholung", a kind of respite or relaxation which is rather different and posits a substantial contrast between the serious tragedies and the subsequent satyr play beyond the audience's increased intoxication.[58] Strictly speaking then, the functionalist view is no more than what Seaford describes as "a plausible inference", first made by Schlegel and, even if drawing on later ancient sources, still unsubstantiated by any evidence from or pertaining directly to the City Dionysia of Classical Athens.

Schlegel's lecture in question concludes with a series of short overviews of the extant plays of Euripides.[59] Here, he praises the *Alcestis* on account of its "Sittlichkeit", but comments in no way on the play's genre or its function. His treatment of the question shows that the *Alcestis* was unproblematically considered a tragedy because it does not meet what Lämmle calls the *differentia specifica* of satyr play. The comments about the relaxation of the soul in satyr play came in his remarks on the *Cyclops*, which Schlegel identified as the only extant satyr play on account of its chorus and the identity of its leader Silenus. As such, Schlegel's assessment falls squarely in line with and further supports my analysis so far: the Alcestis was a tragedy and *qua* tragedy allowed a firmer definition of that other, satyric genre, to which it did not belong. But this was to change after 1834, when the functionalist view came into a kind of renaissance and acquired the overwhelming consensus which, despite Seaford's refutation, it still commands today.

One answer, or at the very least a crucial piece in the puzzle, I argue lies in scholarship of the *Alcestis* after 1834. For what we see in this emerging debate is that the functionalist idea

[57] Seaford 1984, 26. We still see the apparent plausibility and persuasiveness of this idea in e.g. Hose 2008, 233, who contends that "Zu einer tragischen Tetralogie gehört ein Satyrspiel als heiterer Abschluss."

[58] This shift appears to have already occurred in Victorinus' rendition of the Horatian principle. Seaford 1984, 26, Lämmle 2013, 94, fn.6.

[59] Schlegel 1809, 245-66.

about why tragedians wrote satyr plays was elevated and turned into an additional *definition* of the genre itself. This happened through a reassessment of the *Alcestis*, which of course was no stranger to scholarly thinking about the generic definition of satyr play. Now once again, the *Alcestis* came to inflect this developing view of the genre. But this time, rather than helping to define the genre by way of explicit *exclusion* from it, the *Alcestis* was almost accommodated *into* satyr play by a second alternative definition of the genre, one that was not centred on the play itself but rather on its position within the performance context of the tetralogy.

While Dindorf's preface of 1834 already alluded to this idea, explicit formulations of the psychological function of satyr play are found in a number of publications in the subsequent decades. In 1837, Heinrich Düntzer discussed the *Alcestis* and what was quickly becoming a fixed topic of scholarly concern about it, particularly among German classicists at this point.[60] He remarked that a tetralogy of four tragedies has not otherwise been transmitted, and derived from this that Euripides broke with an unaltered rule of having three tragedies followed by a satyr play. What interested him in particular, though, is the reason for this rule:

> Drama satyricum eo inventum erat, ut animi spectatorum tragoediis graviter commoti delenirentur et relaxarentur [...].[61]

Though without direct reference to any ancient source or to Schlegel, Düntzer clearly recast a version of what had independently been posited as the psychological function of satyr play in the context of the *Alcestis*. More specifically and importantly, Düntzer recalls the effect of satyr play as a claim about why the genre was invented and thereby gives his statement the force of a definition. Here, we see how the new evidence about the *Alcestis*' position within the tetralogy led scholars to focus on the psychological function as the *raison d'être* of satyr play and to articulate and refine this idea as an additional definition of the genre.

We see the same view developed yet more clearly by Rudolf Rauchenstein in his 1847

[60] W. Dindorf 1834, 4: "Nam quum ludorum scenicorum sollemnitas inde ab antiquissimis temporibus cum publicis conjuncta esset Dionysi honoribus, plenis illis hilaritate et lascivia, severioris poesis suae hoc quasi temperamento usi sunt poetae tragici ut adjuncta ad tres tragoedias fabula satyrica jocis et lusibus satyrorum, qui sunt perpetui comites Dionysi, populum oblectarent."Düntzer 1837.

[61] Düntzer 1837, 195.

discussion of the *Alcestis*.[62] His analysis of the play was based on what he considered to be "Zweck und [...] Wirkung des Satyrdramas", namely its psychological effect "nach drei spannenden Tragödien die Gemüther allmählich und sanft abzuspannen, also ohne Schroffheit".[63] Here, Rauchenstein produced and applied a yet more specific conception of the psychological impact of the satyr play — namely that it offered *gradual* and *soft* alleviation from the tragic tension — still without any evidence or argument. As with Düntzer's analysis, the evident appeal of this second definition of satyr play clearly lay in its ability to accommodate the *Alcestis* as performed fourth in the tetralogy. But what these scholars said also reflected and impacted an evolving view about satyr play proper and so it is remarkable that on its own terms, the psychological explanation proliferates with no detractors whatsoever. Instead, we see wholesale approval and reiteration of this view, specifically as an explanation for the dramatic composition of the *Alcestis*, for instance in Karl Müller's *Geschichte der griechischen Literatur*, where the play was categorised as distinctly separate from Euripides' other tragedies on account of its position:

> Dagegen erfüllt es, so wie es ist, die Bestimmung, einer Reihe von wirklichen Tragödien einen erheiternden Schluss zu geben, bei dem das Gemüt herabgestimmt werden soll, in vollkommenem Maße.[64]

Remarkably, Müller not only invoked the relaxing psychological function of satyr play, but actually insisted that the *Alcestis* fulfills this purpose to the fullest degree, implying that what constitutes the identity of satyr play is its effect, and not its dramatic personnel of satyrs and Silenus.

All this is to argue that what Lämmle observes as a persisting preoccupation with the function of satyr play proliferated in scholarship on the *Alcestis* after 1834. It was the didascalic information about the *Alcestis* which led to this proliferation, because the emerging alternative definition of satyr play served to plausibly accommodate the *Alcestis* into the picture of dramatic performance. The important by-product of this accommodation was that the satyr plays' imagined effect on the audience was elevated to the level of a definition: the

[62] Rauchenstein 1847.
[63] Rauchenstein 1847, 17.
[64] Müller 1841, vol. II, 157.

genre's position in performance thus became its essence. I therefore suggest a reassessment of the vexed relationship between the *Alcestis* and satyr play on the whole. At one point, the *Alcestis* was excluded from satyr play and thereby helped to clarify the definition of the genre. At a later point though, the same play led to the proliferation of an alternative definition, which now accommodated it to satyr play as a genre. This history of deciding what makes a satyr play always involved and in some sense has turned on the scholarly history of the *Alcestis* to an hitherto unrecognised degree.

3.3.2 Substitution as Genre? Inventing a Play *sui generis*

In tandem with the new way of conceptualising satyr play by means of its psychological effect, a second idea quickly took a strong foothold in the discussions of the play, namely that the *Alcestis* was a play *sui generis*. Specifically, scholars came to conceptualise it as a "substitute" play and used this figure to describe *Alcestis*' identity. The now complete second hypothesis clashed in its information with the established understanding of ancient dramatic practice, which is that a satyr play, i.e. a play *with a chorus of satyrs* came in fourth position. Since neither the chorus-based definition of satyr play and the rule of three tragedies plus a satyr play have actually been substantially revised, a solution to this paradox remains as elusive today as it was then. Yet, scholars appear to have been perfectly able to cope with it by inventing the idea of generic substitution, whereby one type of play was made to occupy the place of another. This allowed a unique solution to the problem which at once stabilised 19th-century genre-conceptions and allowed for enough flexibility to accommodate the *Alcestis* as a play that heavily deviated from them. Consequently, the *Alcestis* was deemed to be the only surviving specimen of an altogether new genre, a tragedy written to take the place of satyr play: a substitute.

The arguments underpinning this idea were already contained, if not yet developed, in the introduction with which Dindorf first introduced his fragment to a scholarly audience. From the fact that Euripides was able to stage four tragedies together, Dindorf concluded that his primary concern must have been to assimilate the 4th tragedy to a regular satyr play:

> Quo fit ut quodammodo conjicere possimus quid consilii Euripides aliique poetae tragici secuti esse videantur, si qui forte tetralogias similiter compositas

> ediderint. Probabile est enim poetas hoc inprimis curasse ut quarta tragoedia argumentum haberet quod non ad agitandos vehemetiori motu spectatorum animos esset comparatum, sed propius accederet ad levitatem dramatis satyrici.[65]

The essence of the functionalist view, discussed just now, can be seen again here: focus lay on the poet's agency in "consilii ... secuti" and "curasse ut" and the fourth play in the tetralogy was presented primarily in terms of its aesthetic effect on the audience. Thus, Euripides was thought not to agitate, but to lighten their minds. All the same, Dindorf's "probabile" here appropriately colours this hypothesis in the language of speculation and alludes to the ultimate lack of evidence for this view. But while offering this speculative claim about Euripides' intentions and those of other poets who may have done a similar thing, Dindorf did not draw any direct conclusions in terms of the *Alcestis* itself.

Over the subsequent decades then, scholars developed this further into the dominant view that Euripides actually designed the Alcestis as a play to be a substitute and that it was therefore *sui generis*. But they also went further than simply making this claim on the basis of the second hypothesis. One recurring argument made to underpin this idea of substitution was that the play reflects its substitute identity on the level of characters and plot. For these scholars, substitutions made by Euripides to change the structure and the *dramatis personae* of a regular satyr play make the *Alcestis* a unique substitute for such a satyr play. This pattern of replication is best understood and examined by considering a number of examples of scholarly treatises which differently made the same case that the *Alcestis* is a substitute play.

Perhaps the most elaborated and clear-cut expression of the substitution idea was that of Hermann Köchly, who wrote a treatise of the play in 1847.[66] Explicitly building upon the observations of Glum from a decade earlier, who argued for paying closer attention to the satyric aspects of the play, Köchly submitted that the *Alcestis* amounts to Euripides' invention of a new purpose-built genre.[67] He also based this argument in the didascalic evidence, but in doing so twisted and even misrepresented what exactly can be learned from

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[65] W. Dindorf 1834, 5.
[66] Köchly 1847.
[67] Glum 1836 will be discussed further below.

the fragment published by Dindorf. For Köchly not only noted the production date of 438 BC and the names of the other plays, but also appears to have learned something which is strictly speaking not at all in the fragment, namely

> daß es [the play], weil die Stelle eines Sathyrspieles vertretend, auch seiner Anlage, seinem Gange nach mehr den Charakter eben eines solchen oder gar einer Komödie tragen musste.[68]

Consider how freely Köchly here confused the actual information from the *didascalion* with his own interpretation of it. For he misleadingly suggested firstly that the idea of substitution is actually in the fragment itself and secondly that the evidence itself intimated that the play "had to" have the character of satyr play or comedy. As we saw above, the second hypothesis had long contained the observation that the play "was", not that it "had to" be, somewhat satyric and this observation was — independently of the evidence about position — rejected by clearly defining the *Alcestis* as a tragedy and not as a satyr play, because it lacked a chorus of satyrs. Yet, Köchly invented a causality ("weil") between the play's position and its supposedly satyric nature. The force of this causality, I suggest, lies in substitution: the Alcestis' nature is explained, because it served as a substitute.

But Köchly put some considerably clearer terms on this idea still: Euripides, he said, "[hat] mit Bewusstsein und Schöpferkraft eine wirklich neue Kunstgattung des Drama ins Leben gerufen".[69] To substantiate this view, Köchly carried the idea of substitution — the defining characteristic of this "neue Kunstgattung" — into his reading of the play. Thus, he offered a reading of the play that centres on the contention that its characters are by and large better suited to comedy than to tragedy. Specifically, he wanted to show "das Charakterliche dieser neuen von Euripides erfundenen Gattung" and to do so he produces the kind of argument by replication which I have alluded to above.[70] He started from claiming that the conflict between the tragic characters and the satyrs is the defining quality of satyr play. In this he also saw the inherent limitation of satyr play in that it always needs a satyr-chorus and Silenus. From this, he derived as a supposedly natural consequence that later

[68] Köchly 1847, 366.
[69] Köchly 1847, 366.
[70] Köchly 1847, 387.

tragedians must have struggled with producing new satyr plays, and concludes as follows:

> Da that Euripides [...] einen neuen Griff: an die Stelle der Sathyrn und Silene setzte er aus dem eigenen Kreise des gewöhnlichen Alltagslebens die fadesten Personen.[71]

Put simply, the key marker of Köchly's new substitute genre was a substitution *within* the play itself. This argument is a curious sleight of hand though: the language of replacement — "an die Stelle setzte er" — allows Köchly to strip the new genre, the *substitute*, entirely of what was considered to be the only defining characteristic of the original, the *substituted*. Within one and the same argument, Köchly thus drew attention again to the satyrs as the *differentia specifica* of the genre and defines the new genre by their substitution.

A similar way of reading the play was already proposed by Johann Hartung in his discussion of the *Alcestis* in *Euripides restitutus* of 1843.[72] Focusing not least on the character of Heracles as more fitting to the genre satyr play than to tragedy (an argument which contrasts strongly with views of the play itself before 1834), Hartung approximated the play to the satyric genre, but also remarks on the obvious and problematic absence of the satyrs as the defining quality of this genre.[73] As a solution to this problem, Hartung too favoured the idea of substitution and thus found a substitute for the satyr chorus elsewhere in the dramatic personnel: "absunt satyri, quorum loco servus ad comissandum invitatur."[74] Whereas Köchly had seen the profane and comic characters of everyday Athens to be taking the satyrs' place, Hartung suggested that the household slave fulfils that function when Heracles calls him to enjoy the pleasures of wine and food. What is more, Hartung also presented this interpretation in favour of the view that the *Alcestis* was designed as a substitute — "docemur enim satyrici dramatis locum Alcestidis fabulae ab Euripide assignatum fuisse" — and thus replicates the substitution *within* the plot in how he characterises the play itself within its preformance context.[75]

From these examples, we can also see more concretely how the idea of substitution and

[71] Köchly 1847, 388, the quotation marks are Köchly's, but no source is given for them.
[72] Hartung 1843.
[73] Wakefield 1794 had read Heracles as connecting the play with other tragedies to produce a heroic biography.
[74] Hartung 1843, 231.
[75] Hartung 1843, 229.

the functionalist argument about the essence of satyr play are connected. Neither Köchly's nor Hartung's readings of the play as a substitute was entirely congruous in itself, because instead of explaining how the chorus of the *Alcestis* substitutes for a chorus of satyrs, they proffer a particular character or set of characters with whom they say Euripides replaced the satyrs. Whereas the accepted definition of the satyric genre presented the satyrs as essential in virtue of their sheer *presence*, scholars now made a more abstract argument about their *function*. This shift is what makes the idea of substitution so appealing and efficacious in describing the play. For if a genre is no longer defined by internal criteria such as its chorus, but rather by its position and purported effect, substitution becomes possible. Finally, and before moving on to the debate that still evolved about the play and its genre, there are two further considerations to be made about the connecting argument of psychological function and substitution.

Both of these pertain to the language used to describe the play; the first concerns the vocabulary of service or duty which is evoked by scholars. In his treatise on the play which I considered above, Rauchenstein claimed that the *Alcestis* was supposed to have done "den Dienst eines Satyrspiels".[76] The word "Dienst" here reintroduces the vocabulary used within the play itself about Apollo's serving Admetus (ll.6-7) into a scholarly description of the play. What is more, the language of service turns the central dynamic within the plot — one person choosing to stand in for another — into a description of the play's position in its own theatrical context. Just as Alcestis, the character, serves Admetus by taking his place even though she was not meant to die yet, the play *Alcestis*, even though it is not a satyr play itself, serves the imagined purpose of this drama. A very similar argumentative force underlies Müller's use of the "Bestimmung" in the passage quoted above, which incorporates the idea of a poet following an obligation or necessity into the picture.[77] I will consider this language and these motifs in more detail when I interpret the play in the next chapter. But we have already seen that the metaphor of place-taking, in connection with the plausible but ultimately constructed view of the psychological function of satyr play, is pervasive and

[76] Rauchenstein 1847, 4.
[77] Müller 1841, 157.

evident in scholarly treatments of the play after 1834.[78]

The second consideration is that this same scholarly language of service and duty contains a gendered dimension, particularly combined with how the psychological effect of the softening and relaxing satyr play contrasts with the seriousness and agitation used to describe the preceding tragedies. From the discussion so far, we may recall Dindorf's use of "levitas" or Rauchenstein's use of "sanft" and "ohne Schroffheit" to give but two examples of the gendered vocabulary that scholars take up when describing the effect of satyr play.[79] Most prominently, however, we see how a gendered reading of the play's female protagonist inflects the overall assessment of the play in Hartung's discussion.[80] Within the wholesale reappraisal of all the plays of Euripides which he undertakes in his *Euripides Restitutus*, Hartung takes the opportunity to situate the *Alcestis* and its tetralogy as a thematically connected set of plays about morals and domestic life.[81] Notwithstanding the obvious shortcomings of the reconstructed plots of fragmentary plays on which Hartung has to rely in arguing this thematic coherence within the tetralogy, he arrives at a strong conclusion: in composing this tetralogy, Euripides proceeded "ab atrocioribus ad mitiora, a gravioribus ad leviora, a tristioribus ad laetiora", a progression which he bases on a sequence of increasingly admirable women and wifes at the pinnacle of which stands Alcestis.[82]

Now that the scholarly opinion about the *Alcestis* as it came to change after 1834 has been mapped out and the broader lines have become clear, it is all the more remarkable that the debate did not stop here. Rather, the play continued to elicit a great number of scholarly treatises, with the result of establishing what is still nowadays considered the central difficulty posed by the text. In what follows, I take a closer look at the origins of this debate and identify two ideas which have wrongly, as I argue, shaped our perception of what is the

[78] Further examples of this place-holding metaphor are Düntzer 1837, 195: "talis Euripidis Alcestis mihi videtur, tragoedia dramatis satyrici locum tenens" and Fix and Wagner 1843, v, who speaks of a tetralogy of four tetragies, "in qua satyrici dramatis locum tragoedia occupabat paulo hilarioris exitus."

[79] W. Dindorf 1834, 5, Rauchenstein 1847, 17.

[80] Hartung 1843.

[81] Hartung 1843, 164-234, comprises discussions of the lost *Cretan Women*, *Alcmaeon in Psophis*, *Telephus*, and of *Alcestis* under the subheading "de philosophia morali ac de vita domestica Euripidis". This tetralogy alone, Hartung treats under the rubric "domestic life", whereas the previous tetralogy was already described under "philosophia morali".

[82] Hartung 1843, 234.

important question about this play.

3.3.3 What Genre? Observing and Creating Controversy

By now, it has become clear that the publication of Dindorf's fragment elicited an extraordinary number of scholarly discussions about the play. By a certain point in the 19th century, though, these discussions spiral into a debate over the play's genre. The surprising upshot of analysing this debate more closely is that the debate is strictly about genre only inasmuch as it is observed as such a debate by scholars themselves. Therefore, in speaking about a genre-focused controversy when it comes to the *Alcestis*, the first and most important thing to note is that there was only a *perceived*, not a *real* controversy. In what follows, I will demonstrate why this is true and what the reasons were for the lengthy debate that ensued anyway. The present section of this chapter will unpack how scholarship deliberately divided a fairly homogeneous field of opinions into strongly contrasting camps. Moreover, I argue that the perceived disagreement over the play's genre actually derives from and reflects a genuine difference of opinion about the character of Admetus in the play. These two issues were conflated to produce the perception of a genre-debate. Both in this and in the following section, which will explore how the genre-controversy was further validated and entrenched by means of rewriting its history before 1834, I will anchor my analysis in two publications from the 1860s, which give us a usefully teichoscopic and contemporary account of the debate.

By the 1860s, scholars felt able to outline the debate by dividing the body of scholarly writing into camps, to each of which a respective clear position in the matter of the play's genres was assigned. In this way, Gustav Bissinger began his own discussion *Über die Dichtungsgattung und den Grundgedanken der Alcestis des Euripides* of 1869 with a thorough review for which he in turn relied partly on Eduard Buchholz's *Commentatio de Alcestide Euripidea* of 1864.[83] Bissinger's doxography is organised into five camps: 1) those who consider the play "mehr oder weniger eine reine Tragödie", 2) those who consider it "eher eine Comödie", 3) those who find in it "die wesentlichen Züge und die wesentlichen Wirkun-

[83] Buchholz 1864 and Bissinger 1869. The latter is divided into two parts, the first of which appeared in 1860 and the second in 1871.

gen des Satyrspiels", 4) those who see it as a "gemischte Dichtungsgattung, halb Tragödie, halb Comödie", and 5) those who consider the Alcestis "ein Schauspiel im Sinne der neueren Zeit".[84] While the latter two ideas map less clearly on existing genre conceptions, the first three camps are all the more interesting. In all three cases, Bissinger used strong qualifiers in describing these scholarly opinions: "mehr oder weniger", "eher", and "die wesentlichen Züge". Notwithstanding his evident aim to present and order the existing scholarship in a way that maps on a concrete question about the play, Bissinger's actual language here betrays a certain unease with drawing up clear-cut lines of disagreement.

At one and the same time, Bissinger organised the scholarship into mutually exclusive camps *and* relativised the positions taken by the scholars belonging to each of these camps.[85] Turning to these texts themselves, we find that, rather than taking a clear position on the play's genre, what scholars showed more strongly is a general sense of discomfort and that opinions about it were expressed rather equivocally, particularly so when its performance in fourth place was considered. As a case in point, I will consider Friedrich Glum's 1836 *De Euripidis Alcestide Commentatio* together with Carl Firnhaber's 1837 review of this essay.[86] Where Bissinger observed a fundamental disagreement between these scholars on the question of the *Alcestis*' genre, in fact we find essential agreement on this question, though there is another matter of controversy — namely the character of Admetus — which has been conflated with it. This conflation, I contend, is representative of the debate during the middle decades of the 19th century.

In his doxography, Bissinger included Glum (though admitting to not having read the piece himself), among those scholars who consider the *Alcestis* essentially a satyr play. Conversely, he noted that Firnhaber's opposite position, that the play was a "reine Tragödie", was developed on the occasion of reviewing Glum's treatise.[87] Glum dealt with the matter of genre in the fourth chapter of his *Commentatio*, following sections on the second hypothesis and the didascalic fragment as well as on the myth and plot of the play. Writing only

[84] Bissinger 1869, 11-17.
[85] A more recent example of scholars trying to draw clear lines is Riemer 1989, 5, who claims to show that the *Alcestis* is "eine Tragödie klassischen Musters".
[86] Glum 1836, Firnhaber 1837.
[87] Bissinger 1869, 14.

two years after Dindorf published the fragment of the *didascalia*, Glum thought that this evidence posed a new question "de dramatis indole et natura".[88] He recounts that the idea that Alcestis is a satyr play has been "rectissimo iudicio" refuted by Spanheim, who, as we saw above, insisted that a satyr play requires the chorus of satyrs and the presence of Silenus, both whom the Alcestis lacks.[89]

Yet, Dindorf's fragment changed the picture for Glum in that the drama's "quartum tetralogiae locum" has to be accounted for in judging its "ingenium".[90] The accumulation of an overlapping set of terms in *indoles*, *natura*, and *ingenium* shows both how Glum took the evidence from the *didascalia* to relate to something like the genre of the play and how imprecise the terminology for this was, since the fragment posed a genuinely new problem. We see this all the more clearly at the critical point of Glum's discussion:

> iam uero hoc quaesierit fortasse aliquis, si quartum Alcestis tetralogiae locum tenuit satyrico dramati proprium illum quidem et quasi ligitimum, nonne et ipsa fuit satyrica, quamuis grammaticus nos omissa istius generis nota non aperte commonefaciat? Minime vero, si quidem verum est non fuisse drama satyricum nisi in quo vel Silenus vel Satyrorum chorus partis ageret. Quid igitur hinc consequitur?[91]

Thus, Glum affirms straightaway that the *Alcestis* is not a satyr play but that Euripides consciously composed a tetralogy of four tragedies.

And yet, when reviewing this work some 30 years later, Bissinger actually perceived or at the very least presented to his readers a strong disagreement on this point between Glum and someone like Firnhaber. In the relevant text, which is actually a review of Glum's *Commentatio*, Firnhaber quickly glosses over the latter's affirmation that the Alcestis is not a satyr play. He acknowledges but rejects Glum's view that a tragedy (!) performed fourth must have been somehow lighthearted, but relegates this line of argument as being "nur ein relatives", before he turns to something else that is "weit wichtiger".[92] As such, Firnhaber's contending with Glum's analysis explicitly falls not under the rubric of the play's generic

[88] Glum 1836, 47.
[89] Glum 1836, 48-49.
[90] Glum 1836, 50.
[91] Glum 1836, 50-1.
[92] Firnhaber 1837, 415.

description, but of something quite different. And in this, I argue, lies the reason why later scholars such as Bissinger were not altogether wrong to speak of controversy, but rather mistook the purported object of that controversy for something else.

What we see is a conflation between the identification of the play's genre and the evaluation of the play's characters, particularly of Admetus. As we saw above, Glum's commitment that the *Alcestis* is indeed a tragedy leads him to reckon with a break in dramatic convention.[93] He posits that Euripides would have failed in the dramatic competition if he had produced a "tragoediam gravem ac tristem", because the Athenian people were used to the lightness and relief of the satyr play following three tragedies.[94] Again, we see here the idea of a satyr play's psychological function being enlisted in an argument to explain the nature of the *Alcestis* as a unique play that is "ista sive comica sive satyrica dramatis indoles".[95]

To underpin this, Glum homes in on the characters themselves of which he says that, with the exception of Alcestis herself, "nullam profecto omnium reperiemus personam quae vere tragica dici possit".[96] As such, the most significant part of his analysis is dedicated to an invective against Admetus, whom he views as a character proper to comedy rather than tragedy. He invokes Schlegel's view that comic characters are defined by egotism — as opposed to the heroism and self-sacrifice of tragic characters — and brings to bear Admetus' apparent selfishness and "vitae desiderium" in letting Alcestis die for him.[97] Throughout the subsequent argument, Glum repeatedly makes the case that Admetus' character had a certain effect on the audience, saying for instance:

> tam humili tamque depresso eum finxit ingenio, ut non modo non, ut in tragoedia, miserationi aut timori spectatorum animis movendo aptam praebeat occasionem, set potius risum prope, indignationem certe, concitet propter ignaviam suique studium.[98]

In this, Glum is strictly making an assessment of the character of Admetus, but we can see

[93] Glum 1836, 51.
[94] Glum 1836, 52.
[95] Glum 1836, 53.
[96] Glum 1836, 54.
[97] Glum 1836, 55. Schlegel 1809, 349.
[98] Glum 1836, 55.

how easily this could be conflated with or even read as a straightforward judgements about the play's genre.

Notably though, this does nothing to make Glum revert or qualify his earlier statement that the play is in fact a tragedy. Instead, he underpins his argument about Admetus as a character through further developing the *ad hominem* attack on him. To cite but a few invectives, he speaks of his "inpietatem et inhumanitatem", says that Euripides created him "abiectum et pravum" to please the Athenian people by his demise.[99] The audience, he says, is made to hate his "inportunam [...] inpudentiam" and to laugh at "stultitiam inanemque sui amorem" when Admetus reprimands his father Pheres for the same cowardice of which he is also guilty.[100]

The direction and force of Glum's criticism in discussing the play puts Firnhaber's disparaging review, published a year later in 1837, into perspective.[101] Particularly in the "Beschluss" to his review, Firnhaber identifies as the most important issue the need to vindicate Admetus against what he sees as wrongful condemnation by Glum and others before. Offering his own interpretation of the myth and the plot derived from it, he argues that Admetus did not know about Alcestis' self-sacrifice and so reassigns to him the audience's "Mitleid".[102] It is clear that these scholars differ fundamentally over how the character of Admetus in the Euripidean presentation is to be evaluated. This brings into sharper focus the real and imaginary parts of the debate about the *Alcestis*. In reality, scholars disagreed over the characters and the appropriate response. In the imagination of those noticing this disagreement, it becomes conflated with a purported controversy over the play's genre.

We see this clearly in the conclusions by both Glum and Firnhaber. When Glum contends that the *Alcestis* "ad dramatis satyrici et leuitatem et hilaritatem fere accederet" and has "non paruam cognationem", both these phrases suggest approximation far more than clarity or identification.[103] In this respect, Firnhaber's conclusion is very similar:

> dass wir der Euripideischen Dichtung den Charakter einer ernsten Tragödie

[99] Glum 1836, 55.
[100] Glum. 55-56.
[101] Firnhaber 1837.
[102] Firnhaber 1837, 418.
[103] Glum 1836, 61 and 57.

> vindicieren [...], dass das Stück als das letzte in einer Tetralogie aufgeführt sein mag, aber deshalb noch nicht braucht einen komischen Anstrich gehabt zu haben.[104]

Speaking of an "Euripideische Dichtung" and "das Stück", Firnhaber uses terms which are qualitatively different from the usual generic identifiers. In a version of *qui s'excuse s'accuse*, Firnhaber speaks of the character of a serious tragedy and at once marks that he is not speaking simply of a tragedy. Similarly, when referring to its performance in fourth place, he uses the "Stück", which implies nothing about a specific genre, and says that it need not have had a "komischen Anstrich", yet another phrase of marked imprecision.

The analysis of this example leaves us in a position to reframe the debate over the *Alcestis*' genre in two important respects. First, when we see Bissinger in 1869 observing and stating a disagreement over genre between scholars such as Glum and Firnhaber, it stands to reason that he is in fact not just drawing these dividing lines, but in a way helping to establish a discourse which he then wants to resolve in a "Feststellung der Dichtungsgattung".[105] After all, the perception and substantiation of genuine controversy in need of a resolution was in the interest of scholars who continued to publish on the play and the question of its genre. Second, the intellectual and scholarly problem which the *Alcestis* came to pose after 1834 was such that the existing terminology and concepts of genre were not equipped to comprehend it, let alone solve it satisfactorily. We see this not least because discussions of the play were remoulded by those who observed them, almost contemporaneously or somewhat *ex post facto*, along concepts and definitions that were familiar to them but could only be applied in an imprecise fashion. Moreover though, scholars also believed that this debate had a long history. In this, I now turn to the fourth and last big phenomenon which shaped the scholarly history around the *Alcestis*, even affecting our present view of it.

3.3.4 An Old Problem? Constructing a History of Debate

By the 1860s, scholars discussing the *Alcestis*' genre write as if they are contributing to, or even intervening in, an established debate that dates back to before 1834. This impression

[104] Firnhaber 1837, 421.
[105] Bissinger 1869, 10-11.

has to be corrected. For when scholars constructed the history of the debate by describing how Dindorf's publication impacted or even resolved it, they suggested that the genre of the *Alcestis* was a matter of uncertainty *a priori*. This, however, gravely misrepresents the real status of Dindorf's publication, since, as we have just seen, it was in fact the *didascalion* which confounded scholars and thus initiated an ongoing discourse. Yet, the history of this discourse was freely re-writen in the decades after 1834 and so we see scholars reinserting the new evidence into an alternative chronology of this debate. Scholars thus backdated their own uncertainty over the play's genre to an earlier period and in doing so quenched the real history of the debate in which the *Alcestis* helped to bolster the definition of satyr play precisely by being unanimously excluded from that genre. Instead, scholars drew up a long and famous lineage for the idea that the *Alcestis* was in fact a satyr play, a lineage which I will re-examine here. To do so, I draw again on Bissinger's review of the debate, but take into account also Gustav Buchholz' 1864 *Commentatio de Alcestide Euripidis*.[106] The latter's introduction and first chapter, the "historia critica", illustrate how the history of the question was constructed to make Dindorf's 1834 discovery and the work of scholars after him speak to an established debate.

Buchholz began his analysis with the idea that the play has had a singularly controversial reception among scholars, which in turns directly justified his own renewed treatment of the matter. Mapping out the history of this reception, Buchholz called the play "plura per saecula crassis tenebris quasi circumfusa".[107] The key issue, Buchholz claims, during this long period of deep obfuscation was the question "ad quod potissimum dramatum genus eam [i.e. the *Alcestis*] referrent", with answers supposedly ranging from tragicomedy to *spectaculum* and covering the whole range of generic terms known in the 1860s.[108] However, beyond a brief nod to the second hypothesis' ancient comments about the play's somewhat satyric nature and comic ending (which we know were ignored by scholars once they came to light), Buchholz did not elaborate on or substantiate this claim about the *Alcestis*' supposedly long scholarly history. In fact, it seems that establishing this history as a given was important for

[106] Buchholz 1864. This work is said by Bissinger (above) to have inspired his own inquiry, showing how the various studies of this problem were in conversation one with another.
[107] Buchholz 1864, 2.
[108] Buchholz 1864, 2 (subject of referrent are the critics).

Buchholz' presentation of the fragment published by Dindorf:

> In mediis his rerum difficultatibus nescio quo caeco casu derepente factum est, ut pusillulum scholion novam atque vixdum exspectatam lucem obscurae et fere conclamatae causae afferret. [...] En solutionem aenigmatis, quod per tot saecula Oedipum suum desideraverat! En totius rei explanationem, quae omnes difficultates statim tollit, deque fabulae indole omnem scrupulum nobis evellit![109]

This account actively situates Dindorf as falling upon an existing difficulty and controversy, presenting the didascalic fragment as new and unexpected evidence which shines light on a cause that was as good as lost already.

The disparaging description of its publication as "nescio quo caeco casu" and of the fragment itself as "pusillulum" appears to be deliberately belittling and inserts the fragment as one small piece within a much longer history spanning from antiquity to Buchholz' own day; nothing here suggests that this fragment might in fact be the originator of a new debate. In the sentences omitted above, Buchholz briefly summarised the evidence in clarifying that the *Alcestis* was performed in fourth place and phrases this as an answer to Hermann's speculation that it was performed second or third.[110] This suggests that the "genus" of the play as connected to its position within the tetralogy had been established as a line of inquiry long before 1834. As we have seen above though, Hermann did not connect interpretation of the play with the question of genre at all, but rather presented arguments in favour of playing the *Alcestis* as the second or third *tragedy* in the tetralogy.

Whatever the importance of Hermann's speculations in terms of shaping the subsequent debate, his reading of the play is certainly not one that calls the genre into question. But there is more. In casting the debate over the *Alcestis* as one with significant historical depth, Buchholz now explicitly presents Dindorf's discovery of the fragment as a sort of end-point to that debate. In this respect, the precise language employed by Buchholz repays closer attention. Through the image of the Sphinx' riddle which has long waited for an Oedipus to resolve it, the problem is given a highly canonical charge with the air of a supernatural and age-old challenge for humans. This gives the debate a kind of mythological teleology

[109] Buchholz 1864, 2.
[110] Hermann 1824.

which entrenches the fragment as the end-point and solution to the controversy rather than as its origin. By direct contrast to what I have just shown to be the case in the scholarship of these decades, Buchholz claims that knowledge of the play's performance position as fourth relieves scholars of all difficulties regarding the play's character.

Seeing Dindorf's discovery as the pivotal moment of resolution, however, was not the only way in which the fragment was displaced and its role in the debate about the *Alcestis'* genre misrepresented. Bissinger, whose work we already discussed, relegates the discovery of Dindorf's fragment entirely to the following footnote and thereby quite literally marginalises the actual origins of the modern question:

> Das Licht, das durch die glückliche Entdeckung W. Dindorfs (Oxford 1834) in dem Fragment der Scholien aus der vaticanischen Handschrift aufzugehen schien, war nicht ergiebig genug, alle Dunkelheiten zu beseitigen; so schätzenswerth der Gewinn war, nun bestimmt zu wissen, dass die Alcestis mit andern Stücken im Verband einer Tetralogie aufgeführt wurde, ferner mit welchen Stücken ungefähr und an welcher Stelle, so gab doch der Ausdruck τὸ δὲ δρᾶμα κωμικωτέραν ἔχει τὴν καταστροφήν und τὸ δὲ δρᾶμά ἐστι σατυρικώτερον zu mancherlei Vermuthung und in Folge dessen zu mancherlei Deutung des Dramas im Ganzen und im Einzelnen Anlass.[111]

In this important footnote, Bissinger echoes Buchholz' langauge of Dindorf's fragment throwing light into the darkness of a pre-existing problem. But contrary to Buchholz' emphasis on the resolution of the problem, Bissinger emphasises that this was not enough to scatter "alle Dunkelheiten", thus justifying continued work on the question, including not least his own. Finally, he too claims here that the second hypothesis' explicit comments have caused a number of interpretations of the play, whereas we have seen above that in fact these statements did not draw scholarly attention until the publication of Dindorf's fragment confounded the previous definitions and concepts of genre.

Most importantly though, both Bissinger and Buchholz construct their review of scholarship by actively incorporating contributions from before 1834. Thus, they sought to demonstrates the question's long history and to lend strength to their own presentation of the positions within this debate, which I have already analysed in the case of Bissinger above. The

[111] Bissinger 1869, 10, fn.9.

latter, introducing as his third group those who believe the play to be essentially a satyr play, quoted a number of much earlier scholars, claiming that "diese Auffassung existirte schon vor der Auffindung des bekannten vaticanischen Scholion durch W. Dindorf".[112] But how did Bissinger, Buchholz and other contemporaries construct a coherent debate about genre from sources both prior and after 1834 when we have seen above that the question had once already been settled to the point where the discovery of ancient comments about the satyric nature of the play did not ruffle any feathers?

In answer to this, I suggest that after 1834, scholars revisited the much older conjectures about the satyric nature of the *Alcestis*, but in doing so (over-)simplified and then accommodated them into a new discourse and its own terms. All this further underpinned scholarly anxieties about how to identify and label this play by forming a view that this anxiety long predated their own debate. In order to see this, I turn to those earlier places where Bissinger and Buchholz claim to have found the view that the *Alcestis* was a satyr play and which they viewed as contiguous with or even part of their own debate. Key names enlisted as having thought that the *Alcestis* was a satyr play are Pierre Brumoy, François Hédelin (also known as Abbé D'Aubignac), Carlo Denina, but also the poet Gotthold Ephraim Lessing. Turning to these earlier sources, we see how readily scholars like Buchholz and others retrojected their own *aporia* and thereby constructed a history of the debate in which they found themselves.

Pierre Brumoy, in *Le Theâtre des Grecs* of 1730, produced a French translation of the *Alcestis* along with a treatise entitled *Réflexions sur Alceste*.[113] This work, it is important to note, played a key role in making Euripidean drama available to an audience that did not have ready access to the original text or the Latin translations.[114] For Buchholz, Brumoy was a key source for the idea that the *Alcestis* was satyric, because certain scenes appear to have more familiarity with comic lightness than tragic dignity.[115] While Brumoy does in fact say this, he is quick to note that this is not worth insisting on and, having specified a few such scenes, commits himself as follows:

[112] Bissinger 1869, 14.
[113] Brumoy 1730.
[114] Franke 1929, 10.
[115] Buchholz 1864, 3.

> tout cela a fait penser à quelques critique modernes, que cette pièce étoit une tragi-comédie; chimère inconnue aux anciens, comme d'autres l'ont tres-bien observé. Cette pièce est du goût des autres tragédies antiques & de la même manière de pinceau.[116]

Notwithstanding his observation about comic tendencies in individual scenes, Brumoy's conviction that the *Alcestis* is a tragedy is unmistakable. In fact, he went further than this to assert that modern scholars have been led to an a-historical "chimère" by employing a term like tragicomedy, which was after all unknown to the ancients. To be noted moreover is that in the separate discussion of satyr play elsewhere in *Le Theâtre des Grecs*, which follows Brumoy's translation of the *Cyclops*, the *Alcestis* is not mentioned at all, confirming once again the notion that its generic identity was not really contested.[117] Therefore, when enlisting Brumoy as a proponent of the idea that the *Alcestis* was a satyr play, Buchholz was inflating the separate observations about individual comic elements to no small degree.

Two other works, in which Buchholz and others thought to have found the view that the *Alcestis* was a satyr play, are François Hédelin's *Pratique du théatre* of 1657 and Carlo Denina's *Staats- und Gelehrtengeschichte Griechenlands* of 1785, both of which remark on the *Alcestis* in the context of a discussion about poetic genres more broadly.[118] At the same time though, both of these texts are based on premises and genre-ideas that are fundamentally different to those of the 19th century, meaning that the 1860s had to misrepresent this much earlier scholarship when integrating it into their own debates. In Hédelin's work, the *Alcestis* is mentioned in an essay entitled *de la Tragi-Comédie* within the *Pratique du théatre*.[119] There, we see that his understanding of satyr play and poetic genre generally make him an example of *dis*continuity rather than continuity in this discourse between the 17th and 19th centuries. The structuring principle in Hédelin's discussion of genre is that the three

[116] Brumoy 1730, Vol.6, 383.
[117] Brumoy 1730, vol. 8.
[118] Hédelin 1657 and Denina 1785. The latter is the second of two parts, the first of which was published in 1783.
[119] Hédelin 1657, Vol.2 Chapitre 10. N.b. Hédelin appears in Buchholz' discussion under two different names, his clerical title "abbé d'Aubignac" and his last name, in each instance as author of the *Pratique du théatre* (of 1657). One and the same essay is quoted once by pagination (as it was published in the 1715 edition) and once by "livre" and "chapitre", casting doubt over Buchholz' own research path. It is unclear both whether he was aware that this was one and the same person and whether he used these editions himself or quoted them from another source, which may also have suggested that Hédelin believed the *Alcestis* was a satyr play.

different types of dramatic poetry — "la *Tragédie*, la *Comédie*, & la *Satyre* ou *Pastorale*" — correspond to the division of life into three spheres: tragedy presenting "la vie des Princes", comedy presenting "les actions du peuple", and satyric or pastoral poetry presenting "un mélange des choses serieuses & de bouffones".[120] This last category, Hédelin divides into two sub-categories, the first of which is the genre of Idyll or Eclogue, as composed by Theocritus or Vergil. The second type of satyric poetry is that for the stage, which Hédelin describes as including a mixture of satyric and heroic characters depicting a mixture of funny and serious actions, before he concludes with his own terminological clarification: "et pour cette raison ce Poëme se nommoit *Tragédie Satyrique*".[121] The close proximity of satyr play to tragedy, already formulated by Casaubon in 1605 as the idea that the former is really a sub-type of the latter, thus finds another expression here in Hédelin's categorisation and naming of satyr play.[122]

Finally, in his reflections on the genre, he speaks of the *Cyclops* as the only confirmed satyr play which survives:

> nous en voyons mèmes des fragments des plusieurs, mais nulle Pièce entière que le *Poliphéme* du Euripide. **J'ay souvent estimé que l'*Alceste* du mème Autheur en estoit une**, a cause d'Hercule y fait avec un Esclave des discours bouffons & des actions touts Comiques; **mai j'attends le sentiment des Doctes pour me determiner.**[123]

Here, we gain considerable insight into the state of research on the question of genre and the *Alcestis* in the mid to late 17th century, showing the genuine indecision and doubt with which someone like Hédelin spoke of this matter. While the idea of a largely lost dramatic genre was already conceived and Euripides' *Cyclops* identified as the only full extant example of it, all else was largely a matter of *recognised* speculation. Thus, in a work that was actually concerned with theatrical work of 17th-century France, Hédelin gives what he believes to be possible reasons for considering the *Alcestis* a satyric drama, but explicitly refers judgements on the matter to the experts.

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[120] Hédelin 1657, 182-6.
[121] Hédelin 1657, 186.
[122] Casaubon 1605, 92.
[123] Hédelin 1657, 186-7, emphasis my own.

Carlo Denina, who is grouped with Brumoy and Hédelin in his opinions about the *Alcestis*, is in fact similarly uncertain. In the second part of his *Staats- und Gelehrtengeschichte Griechenlands* of 1785, the *Alcestis* is mentioned in a chapter entiteld "Erste Form der Komödie; von der satirischen Dichtkunst".[124] Again, the precise context of the argument underlines the fundamentally different conception of genre at work here. Thus, Denina describes how comedy and tragedy originally evolved together out of origins in which the comic and serious were mixed. As evidence for this view, he says, "findet man noch in einigen Dramen des Euripides, der Alceste und dem Cyclopen, etwas von dem angenehmen und dem satirischen oder lächerlichen".[125] Here, Denina places the *Alcestis* and the *Cyclops* together as remnants of an earlier style, which is presumably why later scholars took him to have believed that the *Alcestis* was a satyr play.

However, another point emerging from Denina's chapter shows that this is not the case. Subsequently in his discussion, Denina talks about "dramatische Satiren" as a separate group of plays, which he says were common at the same time as tragedy and comedy and so presumably refer to what we now know as satyr play.[126] Much like Hédelin though, Denina withholds judgement about these, saying "es dürfte mir aber schwer werden, einen richtigen Begriff von ihnen zu geben" and instead disparages the style of these plays which, once again invoking the definition of satyr play, were characterised by "fabelhafte Geschöpfe [...], halb Mensch, halb Ziegenbock", a definition clearly not pertaining to the *Alcestis*.[127] Therefore, Denina, as well as Hédelin and Brumoy, certainly mentioned the *Alcestis* when speculating about the nature of satyr play, but they did not take a clear and considered view about its generic identity as Buchholz would have us believe.

Arguably though, the most prominent and influential source which Buchholz gives as precedent for the idea that the *Alcestis* was a "merum drama satyricum" is Gotthold Ephraim Lessing. The notoriety of this figure in literary circles of the 19th century chimes with the importance which Buchholz and Bissinger assign to him as an early proponent of this view. The opportunity to be part of a literary discussion that includes the famous and respected

[124] Denina 1785, 71-4.
[125] Denina 1785, 71-2.
[126] Denina 1785, 74.
[127] Denina 1785, 74.

Lessing, as well as Wieland and Goethe, may also contribute to the rather peculiar path by which these ideas travelled and were consolidated over time. Wieland's own *Alceste* of 1773 is crucial not least because of the accompanying *Briefe an einen Freund*, in which his aesthetic decisions to change Euripides' play are discussed at length.[128] Here, I want to focus on Lessing, however, since he is the more frequently evoked scholar for his opinions about the play and since his case contains the following important peculiarity: while scholars in the 19th-century and beyond are generally able to refer to the discussions by Brumoy, Denina and Hédelin by chapter and verse (even if they may not have had first-hand access to them), they almost exclusively quote Lessing's opinion about the play without a precise reference. It would seem that this opinion was either so widely known or a tradition of it so firmly established that a precise reference was felt to be superfluous. What is more, Lessing remained an early fixed point in the scholarly presentation of the controversy long after its heyday in the middle of the 19th century. For instance, in Albin Lesky's seminal discussion of the play of 1925, the idea "in der Alkestis ein heiteres Spiel zu sehen" is explicitly said to go back to Lessing.[129]

But why was and is Lessing so essential to the modern scholarly history of the *Alcestis*? This seems all the more important a question when considering that scholars in the 19th century failed to give a specific reference to any work of Lessing's as the source for this idea because such a work never existed. Our only evidence for Lessing writing about the Alcestis is an *ex negativo* inference. It is the initial draft of a letter by Lessing to Wieland, which is distinct from the actual letter and was not published until it appeared in an archive during the editorial process for Lessing's collected works, that contains a passing reference to the *Alcestis*.[130] Here too, context is essential because Lessing is in fact making a *recusatio* in this letter to turn down a request to contribute to Wieland's *Merkur*, saying: "was für Beiträge erwarten Sie von mir? [...] Literarische Beiträge? Wer wird sie lesen wollen?"[131] It is the later-discovered manuscript to the letter which tells us that Lessing additionally says that he is glad not to have sent Wieland "meine eigenen Grillen [...] über die Alceste

[128] Wieland 1773a, Wieland 1773b, 1. Stück, 34-72, 3. Stück, 223-243.
[129] Lesky 1925, 84-85.
[130] Letter by Lessing to Wieland, Leipzig, 8th February 1775 in Lessing 1886, Vol. 18, 129.
[131] The same letter of 1775 in Lessing 1886, vol. 18, 129.

des Euripides".[132] These "Grillen", so a conjecture made by Olga Franke in 1929, may have been a written draft of the opinion that the *Alcestis* is a satyr play, a conjecture that is not strengthened by the lack of any other evidence to this effect in Lessing's work.[133] His treatise *Wie die Alten den Tod gebildet* of 1769 includes references to the portrayal of death in the *Alcestis* but says nothing about the play's genre.[134] More probable in any case, given what Lessing himself says about these "Grillen", is that the text or draft Lessing referred to here stood in the context of Goethe's recent invective "Götter, Helden und Wieland", written against the addressee of Lessing's own letter.[135] That such a work provided occasion for, let alone necessitated, a reflection on the play's genre, is far from self-evident.

How then did Lessing come to be the prime witness for the supposedly historic view that the *Alcestis* was a satyr play? Tracing this reported opinion shows that, if indeed it was Lessing's actual view, the 19th century appears to have known about it only because it was directly and powerfully rejected by classical scholars. A miscellaneous piece in Lessing's collected and edited works includes some remarks about satyr play, in which the *Alcestis* does not in fact appear.[136] But in the notes to this text, the editors Karl Lachmann and Franz Muncker give an explanatory quotation by a classical scholar named Johann Eschenburg, which in turn refers to a text by Johann Buhle.[137] When discussing the history of defining satyr play earlier on, I already alluded to this text; now, we are able to consider its unexpectedly significant role in the *Alcestis*' scholarly history. When considering Buhle's *De Fabula Satyrica Graecorum*, which is the script of a speech delivered in 1787 and later published as a pamphlet, we can understand how scholars came to think necessarily of Lessing in the context of the *Alcestis*'s genre.

For we learn here that the aforementioned Eschenburg relayed Lessing's speculations regarding the *Alcestis* to Buhle:

> Nuntiavit mihi nuper literis datis Ill. Eschenburg [...], Lessingium aliquando secum familiari sermone confabulantem retulisse Alcestin Euripidis, quae tra-

[132] Lessing 1886, vol. 22.1, 303.
[133] Franke 1929, 104, fn.4.
[134] Lessing 1886, vol. 11, 3-55.
[135] Originally published in 1774. Now in Goethe 1981, vol. 4.
[136] Lessing 1886, Vol 15, 363, fn.6.
[137] This connection is also observed by Franke 1929, p.98, especially fn.5.

goedia circumferri solet, ad fabularum satyricarum genus.[138]

As an addendum to his speech of 1787, Buhle took this as a prompt and a case in point for the arguments he just expounded about the nature of satyr play proper. Immediately before in the same speech, Buhle drew up clear criteria for defining the Greek satyr play which fall in line with those proposed by Spanheim in 1683 and still largely accepted today as Lämmle's *differentia specifica*: essential for satyr play is its chorus and the figure of Silenus.[139] He then discusses the evidence for such plays by Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides in turn and concludes that his definition of satyr play permits only one fully extant play, the latter's *Cyclops*.[140] While he also admits that "hilarotragoedia" or "tragicomoedia" may be thought to be "affines quidem fabulae satyrici", this is the case only "si chori diversitatem excipias".[141] Lessing's remark — relayed to Buhle indirectly — is therefore first and foremost another example for how the *Alcestis* prompted and stabilised a clear definition of satyr play which explicitly excluded this play from the genre. As Buhle concludes, "desunt huic dramati multa, quibus, ut fabula satyrica esset, carere illud non debet."[142]

What is more, we can now say that Lessing's supposedly incisive and influential view about the *Alcestis* was uttered in a kind of "intimate chat" with Eschenburg.[143] Needless to say, this leaves open a considerable number of possibilities, of which Lessing making a firm case out of conviction is certainly not the most probable. While we will never know Lessing's exact position and what the arguments were he may have made in support of it, I would argue that the key point to be made is a different one: the reason that Lessing's view was cemented as a cornerstone within the scholarly history of the *Alcestis* was that, despite its rejection by Buhle, it was subsequently rediscovered and strengthened by scholars in the 19th century. Therefore, Lessing became an important proponent of the view that the *Alcestis* was a satyr play when he was posthumously inserted into the history of a debate which only took

[138] Buhle 1787, 14.
[139] Buhle 1787, 6: "habemus hic causam constituti *chori Satyrorum*, a quo omnis fabula satyrica processit, et qui idem mansit, etsi fabula satyrica ipsa partim aucto interlocutorum numero, partim adhibita majori argumentatorum varietate et copia, plures mutationes subiit."
[140] Buhle 1787, 14.
[141] Buhle 1787, 14.
[142] Buhle 1787, 15.
[143] Buhle 1787, 14: "familiari sermone confabulantem".

off after 1834. His letter to Wieland suggests that, whatever he may have said to Eschenburg once, Lessing purposefully and consciously refrained from taking a public view on the play.

It stands to reason that his authority within literary and educated circles made him a welcome and appreciated interlocutor in the debate after 1834 but that, since he was long dead, the nature of the evidence meant that scholars refined and in some way created Lessing's position in this debate on his behalf. At the same time, Lessing is but the most prominent example of how scholarship after 1834 created a history of their own debate by re-casting the work of their intellectual predecessors in the mould of their new-found problem. In doing so, they substantiated the controversy over genre which they conflated with the issue of characterisation and thereby validated their own continued pursuit of a solution.

3.4 Towards 'Pro-Satyr Play' and Beyond

What we have learnt then about the scholarship on the *Alcestis* after 1834 is that the play came to pose a new type of problem for which the existing terminology and concepts of genre did not readily provide a solution. The four phenomena just discussed give us a set of metaphorical tracks on which the debate was thereafter bound to run its course. To summarise them briefly, we have seen that the didascalic evidence led to the reappraisal of satyr play's imagined psychological function and established this as an additional definition of the genre which was based on its position in fourth place. This made it appealing to think of the *Alcestis* as a drama *sui generis* defined as a substitution, where a certain type of tragedy takes over the function of satyr play. At the same time, the emergence of these ideas was not the end, but rather the beginning of the debate. Thus, scholars observed and contributed to what they described as a genuine controversy over which genre the *Alcestis* should really be ascribed to. What is more, scholars retrojected their own uncertainty in this issue, which was a product of the discourse after 1834, into the past and thereby blurred the specific circumstances and premises of their own debate.

These were the tracks laid out by the end of the 19th century. Eventually, they were bound towards the introduction of the word 'pro-satyric', a term which encapsulates the conceptual difficulty as it has remained largely unchanged since the 1830s. To put it frankly,

the term 'pro-satyric' still only identifies the problem which scholars have. It does not suggest a solution. At the end of this chapter, and in the next, I will suggest that a fresh look at the didascalic evidence suggests at least a way of relaying the tracks on which the debate has run and to move beyond the idea of the *Alcestis* as a play *sui generis*. But first, it is necessary to follow the tracks a little further and even to the introduction of pro-satyr play as a term. If Buchholz had illustratively called Dindorf's fragment the Oedipus to the riddle of the *Alcestis*, then the scholarship of the century and a half following him proved that the plague of Thebes was still to come. To show how similarly this debate continued, I want to briefly consider three examples of scholarly treatments of the question from three different national contexts at the end of the 19th century.[144]

We see the ongoing struggle of placing the *Alcestis* within the genre terms of the late 19th century in American scholarship, for instance in Milton Humphreys' 1880 discussion of the play.[145] Humphreys proposed to intervene in the ongoing debate over whether Euripides wrote "dramas [...], based upon occurrences of private life, to take the place of satyr-drama" by taking a closer look at "the nature and the metrical structure" of fourth place plays, specifically the *Cyclops* and the *Alcestis*. Already in choosing to centre his investigation on this particular pair of plays, Humphreys' approach to the *Alcestis* was anchored in a supposed connection to satyr drama. Moreover, Humphreys made the remarkable claim that the play "not only according to ancient testimony, but also as is shown by internal evidence, occupied the fourth place in a tetralogy."[146] While it is obvious enough that the ancient testimony here alluded to is the didascalic fragment in the second hypothesis, we have to assume that by "internal" criteria Humphrey means quantitative or metrical considerations, especially given the purported aims of his discussion. Confronted with his own finding that the play is composed in the pure tragic metre, he nevertheless concluded in emphatic italics: "*But this*

[144] Another one to consider would be the influential treatment of Verrall 1895, who will feature more prominently in the next chapter and who considered the play to have been "designed to replace the ordinary 'satyric drama', which accounts for the prevalence of elements unsuitable to tragedy", 10. For an example of the strong continuity in how the play was discussed, see also Schöne 1895, 4, who essentially repeats many of the arguments made since 1834 when he calls the *Alestis* a "heiteres das eigentliche Satyrdrama vertretendes Nachspiel".

[145] Humphreys 1880. Consider also Hayley 1898, an American school text dealing with the same problem and showing knowlege of the full debate as it unfolded since 1834.

[146] Humphreys 1880, 191.

does not make it a tragedy."[147] Noting moreover the "air of refinement" in the play and that its representation of death is "too tragic for a romance drama", he nevertheless insisted that the play is definitely not a tragedy.[148]

Other scholars, though relying on the same evidence and building on the same debate, come to a very different conclusion. Thus in 1897, Swedish scholar Claes Lindskog spoke about the genre of the *Alcestis* in his *Studien zum Antiken Drama* as an "unendliche umstrittene Frage" and produced an updated doxography similar to those of Buchholz and Bissinger considered above.[149] While he acknowledged the importance of the didascalic fragment found in the second prose hypothesis since 1834, Lindskog insisted that there are no grounds for concluding from this paratextual evidence that the play was anything other than a tragedy and makes a remarkable claim:

> Der vierte Platz beweist nichts mit Sicherheit, denn auch wirkliche Tragödien wurden gerade als die vierten aufgeführt. Und wir dürfen darum keineswegs in unserm Glauben erschüttert werden, dass Euripides die Alkestis wirklich als eine Tragödie betrachtet hat; wenn es auch seines glücklichen Endes wegen sehr gut geeignet wäre den vierten Platz auszufüllen.[150]

Notably, the claim that "real tragedies" were performed in fourth position is left conspicuously unsubstantiated, particularly given how drastically it contradicts *communis opinio* about the performance structure in the classical tragic *agon* of three tragedies followed by a satyr play. But this is not the only respect in which Lindskog's assessment was somewhat cryptic and at worst self-contradictory. For much depends on the force of the subjunctive "wäre" here, suggesting that Lindksog agreed that the happy end *would* — but presumably does not in fact — make the *Alcestis* a good fit as fourth in a tetralogy. He therefore at once disavowed the argument from substitution, claiming that place does not prove anything securely, but also acknowledged the functionalist view of satyr play which is clearly the basis for this substitution argument.

Formulating the problem in somewhat stronger terms, French classicist Paul Decharme

[147] Humphreys 1880, 191.
[148] Humphreys 1880, 192.
[149] Lindskog 1897, 37 (quotation), and 36-53 on the *Alcestis* generally.
[150] Lindskog, 1897. 45.

in 1899 brought the debate over the *Alcestis* down to a simple question: do we believe that a chorus of satyrs was absolutely essential for a satyr play or could it be "remplacé par un chœur composé de personnages humains"?[151] Thus, Decharme took a broader view instead of trying to establish a specific generic descriptor of the *Alcestis*. But his conclusion still illustrates just how difficult the question became after 1834. For him, the *Alcestis* supported what the disproportionately low number of satyr plays among the transmitted titles of Euripides suggested anyway: there must have been a larger number of tragedies rather than satyr plays in fourth place.[152] At the same time, he separates this question from a number of potential candidates of satyr plays without satyrs, including Sophocles' *Heracles at Taenarum* and *The Shepherds*. From these, he concludes that there are no real grounds for thinking that these plays had no satyrs in them. Thus, he makes the clear distinction between tragedies performed in fourth position (for which he considers the *Alcestis* an actual example) and satyr plays which always and necessarily have a chorus of satyrs.[153]

We see that the intellectual challenge posed by the *Alcestis* and the information in its second hypothesis persisted and continued to occupy scholars right until the turn of the 20th century. I have said above that the concept of pro-satyr play is a way of naming and identifying this challenge, but that it does not really resolve or move past it. And yet its wide usage is testimony to the appeal it had for scholars as a helpful term. In 1980 for instance, when the term was already well established in the discourse around the play, Dana Sutton appears to be unwittingly summarising much of the scholarly history in suggesting that "modern scholarship has been obliged to coin the term 'prosatyric play' as a generic term, though perhaps the genre consists of only this one play."[154] Yet, as clear as the origins of this new generic term may seem now that we have observed and considered its emergence in the 19th-century discourse about the play, no-one has asked how and where exactly the term itself was first introduced.

This brings us to Gilbert Murray's work on Euripides. In 1913, the term pro-satyric first

[151] Decharme 1899, 91.
[152] Decharme 1899, 291: the preserved corpus gave him 78 dramas of which only eight were satyr plays.
[153] In his conclusion, 299, Decharme 1899 specifically draws on the aforementioned Ezechiel Spanheim to reaffirm his canonical definition of satyr play which excludes the *Alcestis*.
[154] Sutton 1980, 181.

appeared as if referring to a known genre. Crucially, however, it was used not of the *Alcestis*, nor does it initially refer back to the long history of the idea which the term, according to Sutton, seems to express. Rather, Murray used the term twice in reference to the *Rhesus*, first in the preface to his 1913 translation of this play. Speaking of the characters in this play, he says:

> They belong to tragedy, but they are near the outside limit of the tragic convention, and would perhaps be most at home in a pro-satyric tragedy like the *Alcestis*.[155]

Murray's sleight of hand is considerable: in being described as pro-satyric for the first time here, the *Alcestis* was already serving as a *comparandum* for another play to be defined by the same term. This distortion, whereby the term which clearly arose to describe the *Alcestis* is used as a term to describe another play, reappeared in Murray's *Euripides and his Age* of the same year. Here, the *Cyclops* is called "a satyr-play pure and simple", whereas the *Rhesus* is described as "probably a very early pro-satyric play".[156] Of the *Alcestis*, Murray says only that it was "produced [...] in place of a satyr-play", but does not discuss the question of its generic ascription at all.[157] His brief discussion of Admetus' character and Euripides' treatment of the myth ends with the claim that the play is "profound instead of superficial" which, without any other qualifying statements about its genre, suggests that he may not even find a reason to view the play as anything other than a tragedy.

This appears to be different in the preface to his translation of the *Alcestis*, which appeared two years later.[158] Here at last, Murray offers a brief discussion of the genre question and introduces the term 'pro-satyric' as an already established solution to the problems which scholars had with the play:

> it has long been known [...] that the *Alcestis* was produced as the fourth play of a series; that is, it took the place of a Satyr-play. It is what we may call Pro-satyric. (See the present writer's introduction to the Rhesus.)[159]

[155] Murray 1913c, x.
[156] Murray 1913a, 69, and Murray 1913a, 70.
[157] Murray 1913a, 70.
[158] Murray 1915.
[159] Murray 1915, vii, including the parentheses.

This is direct acknowledgement of the term's origins in the very debate which has been the subject of this chapter. But there is also a curious circularity at work if Murray's various statements on the matter are connected. In referring his readers to his discussion of the *Rhesus*, Murray gives the momentary impression that the term pro-satyr play arose in connection with and properly belongs to a discourse about that play, rather than about the *Alcestis*. At the same time, we remember that the *Alcestis* had been used as the point of reference in that very discussion of the *Rhesus*. All this leaves a certain amount of doubt and imprecision about which play(s) fall, in Murray's view, under his new generic label of the pro-satyric.

From this coining of the term, however, we have to draw a two-fold conclusion which also chimes with all we have seen in the scholarly history of the *Alcestis*.[160] Firstly, the discourse about the *Alcestis* is a discourse about the play's position in a "series", which becomes the *differentia specifica* of this new genre: not quite a satyr play, not quite a tragedy, but precisely a tragedy substituting for a satyr play. Whether or not he considered it the *only* specimen, Murray called the *Alcestis* "a very clear instance of this Pro-satyric class of play."[161] Secondly, the continued discourse over the play in the late 19th century and Murray's ultimate introduction of the term 'pro-satyr play' highlights that the scholarly history of the *Alcestis* is really about more than just this one play. A key part of the initial reckoning with the didascalic information was that the *Alcestis* is a play *sui generis*. Though *communis opinio* about the play has found a short-hand in the widely accepted term of "pro-satyric drama", other questions can be asked, which go far beyond this one play.

The scholarly history of the *Alcestis*, starting with its unique paratext and culminating in the encapsulation of the problem in a recognisably problematic new genre term of "pro-satyr play", has now been told. But where does this leave us going forward? Two paths suggest themselves, the first of which promises rather little but will nevertheless be sketched out in concluding this chapter. I will then pursue the second and more promising path fully in the fourth and final chapter.

The first path starts with the recognition that a sober reassessment of the *Alcestis* and

[160] Whether or not under Murray's explicit term, we find most of these ideas similarly synthesised in 20th century discussions of the play, e.g. Weber 1930, 28, Dale 1954, xviii-xxii, Arrowsmith 1974, 28, Conacher 1988, 35-7, Mastronarde 2010, 55-7, Shaw 2014, 94-102, esp. 95.

[161] Murray 1915, ix.

its paratextual evidence prompts further debate beyond just this one play. In truth, there are a number of other plays by Euripides, certainly the *Helen*, *Iphigenia among the Taurians* (*IT*), *Ion*, and *Orestes*, which also have a scholarly history of controversy over their generic identification. While labels such as 'tragicomedy', 'romantic tragedy', and 'melodrama' are now recognised as problematically and unhelpfully anachronistic, they have proven quite tenacious and have inflected interpretations of Euripidean tragedies to this day. As such, Donald Mastronarde may well speak for a wider sentiment among scholars when he says:

> In describing the work of Euripides, the terminology of genres is useful as a heuristic device, for the help it gives us in differentiating various tones and emotional effects, the mixture and juxtaposition of which is a key to much of his dramaturgy.[162]

By contrast, I contend that the re-assessment of the *Alcestis* and its scholarly history has at least some potential to change this.

From the outset, we do well to remember the conclusion at which Dindorf himself arrived when he originally published the didascalic fragment in 1834. His introduction correctly identified the significant potential of the new evidence, because he took the fragment as casting doubt over the supposed rule that tragedians always composed a set of three tragedies followed by a satyr play and concluded that we have to amend our understanding of the tetralogy to incorporate groups of four tragedies as well.[163] Not long after, scholars rightly began to recognise that bigger questions could arise from this and I want to consider three of these, each more specific and with greater potential for disruption than the last. Hartung, whose discussion of the play in *Euripides Restitutus* of 1843 we have considered above, began his discussion of the didascalic fragment as follows:

> Summi momenti ad aestimandum non huius tantum fabulae naturam, sed aliarum quoque, quae eiusdem sunt generis, et omnium Euripidis operum conditionem cognoscendam fragmentum est didascaliarum, quod in codice Vaticano inventum G. Dindorfius nuper divulgavit.[164]

Hartung here speaks of the fragment's consequences for re-evaluating both the genre

[162] Mastronarde 2010. 62.
[163] W. Dindorf 1834, 5.
[164] Hartung 1843, 229.

(*natura*) of this one play, and of other plays of this genre (meaning presumably the substitute genre to which he counts the Alcestis), but also for understanding the "conditio" of the whole Euripidean corpus. Even if Hartung offers nothing to substantiate this claim or to suggest a specific conclusion, he clearly acknowledges that the new evidence may have implications beyond the *Alcestis* alone.

In his 1860 discussion of the play, Bissinger also alluded to possible implications for others of Euripides' plays, when he recalled that a number of scholars have viewed the Alcestis as a mixture of tragedy and comedy and makes the following interjection:

> Sucht man unter dieser Voraussetzung nach verwandten Stücken bei Euripides, so dürften sich wohl noch einige finden, die man zu Schicksalsgenossen und Leidensgefährten der Alcestis machen könnte.[165]

Particularly noticeable here is the language of shared suffering "Schicksalsgenossen und Leidensgefährten", which turn the *Alcestis* and other Euripidean plays into quasi-tragic characters themselves. Though he did not follow this suggestion through by specifying any other "verwandte", Bissinger clearly thought that the *Alcestis* is one of several plays which should properly be considered as a group.

The most specific and far-reaching discussion of the evidence and its implications for other Euripidean plays is found in Düntzer's treatise of 1837. He discussed the full paratextual evidence from the second hypothesis in which an explicit connection is made between the *Alcestis* and the *Orestes*. Recognising that they both have happy endings, he insists that this cannot detract from their generic identification as tragedies:

> nam multae Graecorum tragoedieae in gaudium revera desinunt, ut Aeschyli Eumenides, Euripidis Helena, Ion, Iphigenia Taurica, idque tragoediae haud repugnare certum est.[166]

Here, we have a scholar clearly drawing in those plays which he considers most clearly affected by what we learn about the *Alcestis*. Düntzer recognises that if the *Alcestis* was performed in fourth place, so might the *Helen* also, but he nevertheless concludes that "hanc

[165] Bissinger 1869, 15.
[166] Düntzer 1837, 193.

fabulam [the *Helen*] unquam tragoediae loco actam esse omnino nego".[167] Properly and argumentatively following through with the new paratextual information, Düntzer would have to conclude that the *Alcestis* is evidence of a hitherto unrecognised genre — a happily ending tragedy substituting for a satyr play — and at the realisation that we do in fact have other plays which fit that bill. To cite but one more scholar who recognised this very implication of the *Alcestis* for our assessment of other Euripidean plays, Lindskog's later study includes a very similar comment, which is not however pursued any further:

> Euripides hat, meiner Ansicht gemäss, die Alkestis als eine Tragödie betrachtet, ganz und gar wie den Ion, die Helena und den Orestes. Und wie diese komischer Momente nicht entbehren, finden wir zwar auch solche in der Alkestis.[168]

What these passages illustrate is that there always was and still is a different way of interpreting the evidence which came to light in 1834. What is more, I think that the question needs to be asked anew: do we consider the *Alcestis* as an isolated case, which can adequately be contained inside the terminology of pro-satyr play, or do we take the evidence as grounds for revising the accepted model of the tragic tetralogy? Both positions have been argued. At one end of the debate, C. Marshall has made the case that the *Alcestis* "represents a unique variation" written for the specific circumstances of 438 BC, the reason for which he sees in Athenian dramatic practice and a decree of the the previous year by which comic satires were forbidden.[169] Following Marshall (as well as Edith Hall's concept of Athenian masculinity restored through satyr play), Niall Slater proposed a reading of the play which privileges the shock and surprise of the audience at seeing a fourth place play without satyr's and speaks of a probable "ripple effect".[170] Whether or not one follows this view, the other significant reason to not draw conclusions about other similar plays on the basis of the *Alcestis*' performance position is that we have no similar paratextual information for those plays. Thus, Bernd Seidensticker speaks for a widespread view when he condemns any and all attempts to explore this idea by saying that "alle Versuche, weitere Tragödien des

[167] Düntzer 1837, 203.
[168] Lindskog 1897, 44.
[169] Marshall 2000, quote at 1. Shaw 2014 also follows Marshall's explanation
[170] Hall 1998, Slater 2005, 84, analysis on the premise of a shocked or at least very surprised audience who were expecting a satyr play in fourth position.

Euripides oder Sophokles zu bestimmen, die an Stelle eines Satyrspiels aufgeführt worden sein könnten, sind reine Spekulation."[171]

At the other end of the debate, scholars have shown precisely why such speculation is justified. The fullest account of what the *Alcestis* might mean for other Euripidean plays is that of Dana Sutton in his 1980 *The Greek Satyr Play*.[172] Noting that "we are never told that the *Alcestis* was the only play of its kind, and there is no reason for not seeking more prosatyric plays", Sutton turns the lack of didascalic evidence about other plays on its head.[173] Though perhaps without knowledge and certainly without direct acknowledgement of him, he takes up Düntzer's question about the *IT* and *Helen*, arguing that these too ought to be considered as pro-satyr plays.[174] Furthermore, we should remember not only that the *Orestes* has been explicitly considered in the same terms as the *Alcestis* in the play's ancient paratext already, but also that the *IT*, *Helen* and *Ion* have a history of being compared and grouped with the *Alcestis*.[175]

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[171] Seidensticker 1989, 3, fn.11. Similarly so Mastronarde 2010, 57: "we simply do not know how often, if ever, the audience had seen a fourth play without a satyr-chorus." Lämmle 2013, 22, also agrees. Similarly Shaw 2014, 97 fn.68.

[172] Sutton 1980.

[173] Sutton 1980, 184.

[174] Sutton 1980, 184-9.

[175] Consider the 19th-century examples discussed above of building such a group of plays. A few examples of the many statements to this effect in 20th-century scholarship: Somewhat disparagingly, Grube 1941 gave the *Ion*, *IT*, and *Helen* as comparanda for the *Alcestis* oddity as a mixture of tragedy and comedy to conclude that in the *Alcestis* the "mixture seems less skilful" and and that it "cannot be regarded as one of its author's dramatic masterpieces" (131). Burnett 1971 notably devised her programme of reading "Euripidean examples of an unorthodox tragic form" (1), in which the group of plays is further extended by adding the *Andromache*, and the *Madness of Heracles*, but in which the five plays here discussed take up a prominent position. The group of five is referenced in commentaries to this day, e.g. by Kearns 2023, 30-33, in her discussion of the genre of the *IT*, while Gibert 2019, 59-63 (quote at 59), assigns the *Ion* "to a dramatic universe radically different from that of, say, *Medea*" and shows similarities to the *Helen* and *IT*. Conacher 1967, 14, divided the plays of Euripides into properly tragic ones and "the other kind of Euripidean play which we may conveniently call 'romantic tragedy'", drawing up an implicit hierarchy in which the *Alcestis* took last place (just after the other 4 with the exception of the *Orestes*). The debate over these plays has also been considered in much broader terms of the history of drama, e.g. by Arrowsmith 1974, 28: "What we do know is that the *Alcestis* is the first Western drama that can truly be called 'tragicomic'; the first work in a genre that runs from this play to the Euripidean *Ion*, *Iphigenia at Tauris*, and *Helen*, to Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* and the late 'comedies'". Discussing the *IT* and *Helen* in particular, Wright 2005, 1-43, has made the compelling case of defining tragedy purely in terms of the performance context, an argument which transcends the limitations of anachronistic generic labels and on which I draw in the introduction to this thesis. A recent and critical overview of the different generic terms which have been suggested is offered by Mastronarde 2010, 58-62, and by Allan 2008, 66-72, where the group is extended to include the *Electra*, *Phoenissae*, and *IA* as well. For ancient evidence that common features of these plays, e.g. the escape at the end, were perceived as tragic by the original audiences, consider the paratragic technique of Aristophanes in *Thesm.* with details and literature in Allan 2008, 67, fn.291.

In conclusion, this first path forward shows the possibility of reconsidering the prevalent model of 'three tragedies plus one satyr-play' on which we continue to base our picture of how the classical tragedians worked. Redrawing this picture would have to be the subject of a separate study, taking into account both fully extant and fragmentary works of all three tragedians. The *Alcestis*' scholarly history has only shown some of the depth of this question, but the point bears repetition that we can no longer assume that tragedians composed, as a rule, three plays with a chorus not of satyrs, followed by one play in which the chorus was made up of satyrs in which Silenus appeared as their leader. This point, first made by Dindorf on the basis of the didascalic evidence alone, is still largely unanswered and still has to be incorporated into the wider study of tragedy. This raises a new difficulty wherever one wishes to decide, on internal evidence alone, whether a play is to be considered typical or atypical for tragedy, let alone to assign it to a position within the tetralogy.

To be sure, viewing the chance survival of didascalic evidence about the *Alcestis* as a complete outlier without relevance to the wider genre is no more compelling than is the oversimplified inference that, as Victor Steffen puts it, "Euripides made similar changes on other occasions replacing a satyr-drama with a tragi-comic play."[176] Given the problematic history of the idea of satyr play's psychological function, Sutton may be hard pressed to justify his further hypothesis that the *IT* and *Helen* are evidence of a development within the pro-satyric genre, because they present a "sophisticated dramatic form which fully performs the satyr play's function in a way that *Alcestis* evidently does not".[177] But one would be even harder pressed to supply a reason why the *Alcestis* is qualitatively so different from these other plays, that it alone and none other could have been performed in 4th position.[178] After all, the only ancient definition of satyr play which survives, Demetrius' τραγῳδία παίζουσαν, is in many ways just as apt for any of the "problem plays" as it is for a play with a chorus of satyrs.[179]

In light of the inconclusive evidence, I will not here pursue this first path further. Instead,

[176] Steffen 1989, 191.
[177] Sutton 1980, 188-9.
[178] Shaw 2014, 3, fn.16, for instance calls Sutton's approach "imprudent" in a footnote, but does not offer any substantive arguments against it.
[179] Demetrius *On Style*, 169.

I want to propose a second path, which becomes apparent only now that we have considered the scholarly history of the *Alcestis*' in such great depth. It asks why the discourse overwhelmingly considered the play in isolation as *sui generis*, to grapple with its nature as a functional substitute and to labour over the genre-debate which this idea brought in its wake. This question points to a missing piece in the writing and analysis of the scholarly history so far, a piece which I contend can and needs to be recovered still, because it is right in front of our eyes: the plot itself. The *Alcestis* is a play all about substitution and about the replaceability of one life and person for another. Prompted by the play's paratext, we have seen that scholars built a discourse around the play which strikingly mirrors and continues the plot's own language and the motif of substitution at its heart. The second path forward is therefore to turn once again to the play itself. I have thus laid the groundwork for the next and final chapter of the thesis, which is to offer an interpretation of the *Alcestis* as a play revolving around the idea of substitution.

Chapter 4

In Place of Another? Anxieties of substitution and the *Alcestis*

4.1 πρό and 'pro'

In Chapter 3, the particular scholarly history of the *Alcestis* and its paratext has shown how the play came to be thought of as a drama *sui generis*. Drawing for the most part on the idea of satyr play's imagined psychological function of providing relief after three tragedies, scholars of the play settled on the concept and terminology of 'pro-satyric' drama, a genre defined as a tragedy substituting for a satyr play. But when coining this genre descriptor, Gilbert Murray was not explicit on the force of the praefix 'pro'.[1] One possibility is that Murray is using it in the sense of the Latin preposition 'pro', which has the primary meaning of 'before' in a spatial or temporal sense, but can also mean 'instead of'. This of course chimes nicely with the concept of a genre defined as a substitute, one thing standing in the place of another. In that case, it is all the more striking that the Greek preposition πρό, which has the same primarily spatial meaning, appears as part of the compound προθνήσκω no fewer than eleven times in the *Alcestis*, which is particularly remarkable in light of the fact it appears only three times (in different meanings) in the rest of the extant Euripidean

[1] There are no comments explaining this term in Murray 1913a, Murray 1913c, or Murray 1915.

corpus.[2] In the *Alcestis*, it is used always of someone dying instead of Admetus. And while the temporal force of πρό is also resonant in many of these instances, seeing as Admetus is never granted immortality but only a delay of his death, in the play's present moment and certainly from the perspective of Alcestis, the προθανεῖν is also a dying "instead of".

The very same nuance of vocabulary defines the play's paratextual discourse, its modern generic descriptor as pro-satyric drama, *and* the momentum of the narrative itself, the προθανεῖν of others for Admetus as a substitute. Even on this most basic level of language, the expressions of substitution in the *Alcestis* are transferred to and continued in the scholarly discourse about the play. Nothing if not an attentive reader of the Greek, we may wonder whether Murray notices this continuation when he uses the preposition *pro* to capture the essence of the play's drama and thereby mirrors the play's use of πρό. This is only one particular, albeit particularly interesting, example of the way in which the scholarship on the *Alcestis*' genre, which we have seen over the course of the previous chapter, continued the play's own concern with substitution.

We have already noted a few other instances, such as when scholars like Köchly or Hartung inferred from the replacement of the satyrs with another character that the play was able to substitute for satyr play as such, or when the language of Alcestis' duty and service in dying for her husband was used of the play itself. In this chapter though, I propose to go further and to consider the play more fully as a sustained engagement with the question of replaceability and the dynamics of substitution, particularly because this theme was of interest to Euripides' original audience. Given how obviously important the notion of substitution has been for so long to scholars of this play, it is remarkable that no-one has yet looked at this motif in any closer detail. Doing so, I argue, gives us the rich repository of ways in which the plot itself formulates and offers the language and structures in which scholars came to think about the *Alcestis*.

My reading of Euripides' *Alcestis* is anchored in the observation that the play connects

[2] A form of προθνήσκω appears at 37, 383, 471, 620, 684, 698, 710, 1002, and in tmesis at 18, 644-5, 690, and (not counted as an occurence here) at 649 with the additional prefix κατ- to the main verb. The other occurrences of the compound in Euripides are at *Heracld.*. 590 (in the relevant sense of "dying for the family" προύθανον γένους), *Suppl.* 910 (in the spatial meaning "before the towers" (πρὸ πύργων), and *Troad.* 1168 (in the sense of dying "in defence of the city" πρὸ πόλεως).

questions about substitution with the problems of deception, a deception which occurs when one person is replaced with another unnoticed. But my aim is not, desirable as this may be, to incorporate or further develop the existing body of research about deception in Athenian classical literature generally.[3] My concern is more concrete and my argument is that Euripides takes the substitution motif at the core of the myth and complements it with an epistemological issue of whether substitutions are always noticed as such or whether they can happen without one's knowledge, that is to say as a form of deception. Attending in detail and across various registers to the theme of substitution, including the play's language, plot structure, and deployment of the mythical material, offers and sustains a new way of reading the *Alcestis*. As I argue, this reading commits to neither a satyric and non-serious, nor to a tragic and serious judgement of the play, but rather argues that the play's presentation of substitutions chimes with, and therefore arguably anticipates, a sense of contingency and residual doubt over what actually happens at its end. In this, my reading of the *Alcestis* resonates with what we have seen in the *IA*, but it arguably also connects the *Alcestis* with the *Helen* or *IT*, plays which I showed in Chapter 3 could reasonably be considered the same kind of drama as the *Alcestis*. Since the analysis will very gradually progress to the ending of the play, it is important to state at the outset how I read the play: at the end, there is serious reason for doubt whether the woman Admetus takes into his house is really Alcestis or whether he and we are in fact given a substitute.

On the way to this conclusion, I proceed by way of five argumentative steps, starting with Heracles. A preliminary analysis of his experience introduces the exchange-theme as a key part of the play and shows straightaway that it is intricately linked with the theme of deception. Before continuing in my reading of the play, I then pause to take a look at exchange and exchangeability in other roughly contemporary sources. I argue that, in homing in on this theme, the *Alcestis* ought to be considered as part of a broader contemporary dialogue to which Herodotus and Sophocles also contributed. Third, I consider how the prologue and central scenes of the play conjure and develop a substantial discourse about exchange that emphasises not least the anxiety about Admetus' ongoing fidelity and the possibility

[3] In Hesk 2000, specifically interested in deception as a cause of anxiety in Athenian democracy, the *Alcestis* is not considered any more than in the more wide-ranging Grethlein 2021.

of replacing Alcestis. Before concluding my reading, I turn fourthly to a review of recent readings along with some older interpretations of the *Alcestis* which reveals that critics are largely divided on whether to read the ending as serious or ironic - a division which, as we remember, maps onto the sense of controversy over the play that scholars observed into existence in the 19th century. Against this dichotomy, I present in the final step of my argument a reading that reveals the purported reunion between husband and resurrected wife as a (self-)deception of Admetus and the audience.

Before beginning with my interpretation, I want to briefly review the plot as a whole, showing the ubiquity of the substitution theme and flagging a number of critical moments on which I will focus in particular. The god Apollo introduces the premise in his prologue: Admetus can escape death if someone else dies in his place and his wife Alcestis has offered to do this. After an antagonistic exchange between Apollo and Death over whether Alcestis might also be saved, attention shifts to the royal house itself, where the servant explains how things stand as everyone is awaiting Alcestis' death. In a long exchange between husband and wife, Alcestis makes a plea that Admetus should not replace her with a new wife. Admetus not only assents, but furthermore pledges to have a statue made in Alcestis' likeness. Before the first stasimon, the dying Alcestis leaves the stage. Immediately after the stasimon, Heracles arrives, finds the house of Admetus in mourning, and inquires about the reasons for this. When Admetus leads him to believe that it is not Alcestis, but instead a foreign girl, who is the cause for this mourning, Heracles stays and enjoys the hospitality that is offered to him. After a brief change of focus, when Admetus confronts and rebuts the accusations of his father Pheres for letting Alcestis die in his place, Heracles returns to find out that it was Alcestis who died and sets off to make amends. Just as Admetus and the chorus come to the end of their mourning, he returns with a new wife for Admetus. Initially struggling to persuade Admetus to take this woman into his home, Heracles ultimately succeeds and Admetus turns to seeing a resurrected Alcestis in her.

4.2 Substitution as Deception: Heracles' Perspective

As much as the *Alcestis* is a play about substitution, it is also about substitution as a form of deception. To illustrate this point, which I argue is key for understanding the play as a whole, I begin my interpretation with the figure of Heracles and with his experience in the play up to (but for now excluding) the final scene. For the most part, Heracles has been of interest to readers of the *Alcestis* for two related reasons. First, critics have focused on the supposedly satyric qualities of his character and behaviour, his proclivity to drinking and gluttony. Heracles' link to the supposedly satyric element in the play is an idea familiar from the previous chapter, where it afforded him a pivotal role within the debate over the *Alcestis*' genre.[4] Separately or in connection with this, Heracles has been considered in terms of *philia* and *xenia* as key themes of the play, because his relationship to Admetus underpins these values by showing the rewards of Admetus' behaviour towards his guest-friend.[5] Both of these themes have repaid the interest of scholars and shown Heracles to be much more than simply a plot-device by which the myth comes to be fulfilled.[6] And yet, his particular perspective on the events of the plot has something else to offer still. When focusing initially on his experience and involvement in what happens at the house of Admetus, we can cut through the many obvious and less obvious dynamics of substitution to the important point that an exchange of one person for another bears an inherent potential for deception, whether ill-intentioned or not. This point is central, I contend, to the *Alcestis*' interest in the substitution theme.

When Heracles first comes on stage after the second stasimon, Admetus and Alcestis have already had their farewells in a tense domestic scene. His appearance is thus an intrusion into the previously sealed domestic space between the protagonists and their servants. In this way, Heracles assumes the position of a newcomer, who is preoccupied with his own

[4] E.g. Burnett 1965, 246: "The brute effect of Herakles' introduction is that something of the satyr drama invades the tragedy of Admetus' death". By contrast, Gregory 1991, 39-44, rejects the connection betwen Heracles and the play's genre, but nevertheless emphasises his importance as a balancing and life-affirming counterweight.

[5] Overarching discussions of Heracles and the hospitality theme, see Buxton 2013, 210-6, and on *philia* and *xenia* theme, see Goldfarb 2005, esp. 117-8. In the view of Burnett 1965, Heracles ultimately brings Admetus the reward for his unfailing hospitality.

[6] Noteworthy in particular is the case for Heracles' involvement made by Fitzgerald 1991, discussed below.

problems and travels. In his initial stichomythic dialogue with Admetus, Heracles learns that the latter is about to conduct a funeral, asks about it and quickly learns that it is neither for one of Admetus' children, nor for one of his parents. Finally, Heracles thinks to ask about Alcestis:

> ΗΡ. οὐ μὴν γυνή γ' ὄλωλεν Ἄλκηστις σέθεν;
> ΑΔ. διπλοῦς ἐπ' αὐτῇ μῦθος ἔστι μοι λέγειν.
> ΗΡ. πότερα θανούσης εἶπας ἢ ζώσης ἔτι;
> ΑΔ. ἔστιν τε κοὐκέτ' ἔστιν, ἀλγύνει δέ με.
> ΗΡ. οὐδέν τι μᾶλλον οἶδ'· ἄσημα γὰρ λέγεις.
> (518-22)

The philosophising tendency of these lines, as Admetus blurs the distinctions between life and death, contrasts strongly with Heracles' clear and factual questioning.[7] At the same time, however, these lines already pave the way for deception by substitution, since the breaking down of binary categories into a twofold story emphasises Heracles' vulnerability as an ignorant outsider, to whom the story can be presented as such.

What is more, though Heracles is here only introduced part-way through the play, these lines also emphasise that he does not come to the scene without any prior knowledge of the story at all. As the dialogue moves on, we see that Heracles is familiar with the general state of affairs, which is to say that he knows about Admetus' specific background and the premise of his life with Alcestis:

> ΑΔ. οὐκ οἶσθα μοίρας ἧς τυχεῖν αὐτὴν χρεών;
> ΗΡ. οἶδ', ἀντὶ σοῦ γε κατθανεῖν ὑφειμένην.
> (523-24)

The interplay of οὐκ οἶσθα and οἶδ' gives Heracles the chance to show off that he is far from ignorant about the circumstances. But it also alerts the audience to the centrality of knowledge in this scene. The fact that Heracles will leave here thinking that Alcestis is still alive is all the more surprising then and alerts us to the possibility of deception more broadly. For this opening dialogue underscores that knowledge of the myth and of what is to be expected is not a safeguard against being deceived, not for Heracles and, as we will

[7] For Gregory 1991 this eradication of difference is the key dynamic of the plot. Note also that the paradox of "dead and not dead" is here already a repetition from 141, cf. Parker 2007, *ad loc.*

see, not for us as readers.

What Heracles experiences in the subsequent dialogue is that the breakdown of distinctions and Admetus' evasive answers lead Heracles to greater uncertainty despite his understanding of Alcestis' basic disposition. He continues to question Admetus:

> ΗΡ. τί δῆτα κλαίεις; τίς φίλων ὁ κατθανών;
> ΑΔ. γυνή· γυναικὸς ἀρτίως μεμνήμεθα.
> ΗΡ. ὀθνεῖος ἢ σοὶ συγγενὴς γεγῶσά τις;
> ΑΔ. ὀθνεῖος, ἄλλως δ' ἦν ἀναγκαία δόμοις.
> ΗΡ. πῶς οὖν ἐν οἴκοις σοῖσιν ὤλεσεν βίον;
> ΑΔ. πατρὸς θανόντος ἐνθάδ' ὠρφανεύετο.
> ΗΡ. φεῦ. εἴθ' ηὕρομέν σ', Ἄδμητε, μὴ λυπούμενον.
> (530-36)

Admetus' first answer is already ambiguous in that γυνή can mean both 'wife' and 'a woman'. The use of μεμνήμεθα, usually translated as 'speaking of' or 'talking about' deserves closer attention here, specifically in dialogue with the verb's primary meaning 'to remember'. It seems that there are two readings of these lines, between which an interpretation on stage must decide. One is that at 531, Admetus actually admits freely that Alcestis has died, meaning: "My wife: it is the wife we have just spoken about". In actual fact, the two of them have just been speaking about, even quite precisely remembering and reminding each other of Alcestis' fate (μεμνήμεθα). Admetus' earlier evasive mode of answering, calling Alcestis dead and alive at once, is then finally abandoned as he freely admits that Heracles' own expectations about Alcestis have come true. On this reading, Heracles misunderstands Admetus at this moment, leading him to ask whether she is a foreigner or a relative of the royal house (532). Admetus then, accepting this misunderstanding, finds it easy enough to introduce this fictional foreign woman and turns Heracles' misunderstanding into a well-meaning deception.

The other reading of these lines would have it that Heracles does not misunderstand Admetus and the latter begins with his deception and substitution much earlier. For this, we have to take μεμνήμεθα as plural for singular, referring back to the beginning of the scene where Admetus spoke of conducting a funeral for someone (513). Whether one or the other is preferable on the grounds of dramatic effect, the double resonance of γυνή would never

be lost fully. Against Parker's claim that "the word is hardly ambiguous here" I therefore contend that the natural double meaning of 'wife' and 'woman' is very much resonant in this play, not least because the distinction between Alcestis and a new woman is at stake in the final scenes.[8] Here, the upshot of either reading of these dialogue lines is the same: Admetus ultimately deceives Heracles by making a substitution that goes unnoticed: whether motivated by embarrassment that Alcestis died for him or a genuine desire to host his guest-friend (as he professes later on, 1037-40), the fact is that, unbeknownst to Heracles, a foreign girl takes the place of Alcestis. This sets out the epistemological dimension to substitution in the play, which is epitomised by Heracles' experience as soon as he comes on stage. Though familiar with the premises of the story, just as the audience is, he succumbs to the deceit of substitution and is lead to a false enjoyment of Admetus' hospitality.

Paradoxically, this hospitality is what ultimately brings the deception to light. It lets Heracles remain blissfully unaware while he is enjoying food and drink, until that enjoyment finally pivots to bring Heracles to recognise that he has been tricked by a substitution. In dialogue with the servant, who complains of Heracles' excessive and inappropriate indulgence in food and drink, Heracles first defends his behaviour by citing what Admetus led him to believe, that the woman who died was a γυνὴ θυραῖος (805). This encounter then repeats some key elements of the previous dialogue between Admetus and Heracles:

> ΗΡ. γυνὴ θυραῖος ἡ θανοῦσα· μὴ λίαν
> πένθει· δόμων γὰρ ζῶσι τῶνδε δεσπόται.
> ΘΕ. τί ζῶσιν; οὐ κάτοισθα τἀν δόμοις κακά;
> ΗΡ. εἰ μή τι σός με δεσπότης ἐψεύσατο.
> (805-11)

Echoing Admetus' question to Heracles earlier on, the servant now asks him whether he is unaware of the events in the house (806). Indeed, Heracles' answer bridges back to exactly that earlier dialogue with Admetus, but it is now first tainted by the ironic assurance of Heracles that he knows what he knows because Admetus would not have lied to him (εἰ μή ... ἐψεύσατο, 808). Heracles' deception is then finally revealed by a sequence of questions and answers that also mimic the earlier dialogue (514-17), because the servant first tries to avoid

[8] Parker 2007, *ad loc.*, see also on l.392 below.

revealing the identity of the dead woman (813) and Heracles then asks about the children and father first (820), until the servant finally answers γυνὴ μὲν οὖν ὄλωλεν Ἀδμήτου, ξένε (821), in which the genitive Ἀδμήτου is delayed until it undoes the previous ambiguity of the simple γυνὴ.

This is the moment when the deception becomes apparent to Heracles, and his response is important for the wider understanding of the play. His attention turns from disbelief that he was entertained anyway (822), to a brief expression of sympathy (824), and then immediately to the deception itself:

> ἀλλ' ἠσθόμην μὲν ὄμμ' ἰδὼν δακρυρροοῦν
> κουράν τε καὶ πρόσωπον· ἀλλ' ἔπειθέ με
> λέγων θυραῖον κῆδος ἐς τάφον φέρειν.
> (826-828)

Heracles recalls how, despite his clear perception of Admetus' distress, the latter persuaded him (ἔπειθε) that it was a θυραῖον κῆδος, whom he buried. The crying eyes and the lock of hair, which Heracles now realises should have been clear signs that something more seriously troubling was afflicting Admetus, did not stop him from noticing that a substitute was put in place of the person that really died. At the same time, however, the recalling of evidence here reminds the audience of how easily and strongly Heracles came to believe what he wanted to. Furthermore, I suggest that Heracles' reflection on what happened to him instils in the audience a new sense of acuity and suspicion against such a deception by way of substitution.

Now that the deception is revealed, Heracles also reproaches himself for indulging in wine and garlanded celebration (829-831), focusing on the unwitting nature of his misdemeanour. Immediately, he does what custom requires to make amends and asks the servant where Admetus is burying Alcestis, so that he can attend the funeral (834). After instructing Heracles exactly where the latter will be held, the servant in all likelihood leaves him alone on stage to deliver his monologue before Admetus and the chorus deliver the third stasimon. In as much as Heracles communicates with the other actors on stage, he is merely doing what is necessary to do and what the chorus had already suggested much earlier, to share in Admetus' grief as any friend would (561-2).

The subsequent monologue, though, suggests that Heracles plans to do more than just this, and I will have further occasion below to discuss Heracles' formulation of the rescue plan in this speech. For now, I want to emphasise but one point, which is that Heracles revisits what Admetus has done to him, re-framing the deceitful substitution as an act of goodwill and hospitality. Heracles wants to show Admetus gratitude (ὑπουργῆσαι χάριν, 842), recognising that while he did deceive him (ἔκρυπτε), he did so out of αἰδώς and nobility of character (857). Rather than being punished, Admetus' trick is actually rewarded and the idea of a substitution is thus re-framed as a benign act and the inherent deception as harmless: substitution as a kind of white lie. In sum, Heracles' perspective then gives a first important clue for reading the play. It prompts the audience to be alert to the possibilities for deception as part of substitution. What is more, it strongly suggests that such a deception is always possible, even if it is not done with bad intentions.

4.3 Replacing Family — an Ethical Question in Classical Athenian Thought

Heracles' perspective illustrates that substitution is an important theme which repays closer attention, thus underpinning a reading of this play that is particularly sensitive to the dynamics of substitution as connected with deception. Moreover, there is important evidence beyond the play itself, from the literary and intellectual context of its production in 438 BC, which suggests that substitution and exchange form an important topic and motif for a playwright at this time in Athens. This is because the theme of substitution, and more precisely yet the substitution of one life for another, lies at the heart of an episode which has been used to illustrate the intellectual climate of classical Athens in its heyday. What I refer to of course is the correspondence between a moment in Sophocles' *Antigone* and a story told in the third book of Herodotus.

The relevant passage in Sophocles is found at a moment of confrontation with Creon, when Antigone is facing death and addressing her already deceased family, including the brother she just buried in contravention of Creon's edict. She insists that she would not have committed this violation of civic law if it had not been for his sake specifically. Her reasoning

for this is, crucially, an argument about the possibility and impossibility of substitution:[9]

> πόcιc μὲν ἄν μοι κατθανόντοc ἄλλοc ἦν,
> καὶ παῖc ἀπ᾽ ἄλλου φωτός, εἰ τοῦδ᾽ ἤμπλακον,
> μητρὸc δ᾽ ἐν Ἅιδου καὶ πατρὸc κεκευθότοιν
> οὐκ ἔcτ᾽ ἀδελφὸc ὅcτιc ἂν βλάcτοι ποτέ.
> τοιῷδε μέντοι c᾽ ἐκπροτιμήcαc᾽ ἐγὼ
> νόμῳ, Κρέοντι ταῦτ᾽ ἔδοξ᾽ ἁμαρτάνειν
> καὶ δεινὰ τολμᾶν, ὦ κακίγνητον κάρα.
> (Sophocles *Ant.* 909-15)

Some editors have deleted these lines for reasons of style and the logic of Antigone's argument.[10] However, the case for deletion is weak and has been refuted successfully since.[11]

What is more, Simon Goldhill has shown that the lines repay attention precisely for their difficulty, because this passage "provokes a question to the audience's comprehension: what kinship ties do count and under what circumstances?"[12] In other words, Antigone's argument here cuts right to one of the key themes of the play, the question of hierarchies within familial relations, which we see are curiously weighed and presented in terms of substitutability. The easy possibility of replacing a dead husband with a new one and of having new children leads Antigone to a contrast and to an explicitly hierarchical model in which the brother, who cannot be replaced, takes first place (ἐκπροτιμήcαcα). Antigone's final address to the dead Polyneices as κακίγνητον κάρα is already an exact repetition of a phrase earlier in the same speech (899), but also hearkens back to the opening of the play, where Antigone addressed Ismene with Ὦ κοινὸν αὐτάδελφον Ἰcμήνηc κάρα (1). Through echo and repetition, therefore, the centrality of the sibling relationship to this entire play is called to mind when, at a crucial moment, we finally hear why the brother of all people is so especially important and unique in Antigone's eyes: he is valued because he cannot be replaced.

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[9] Text quoted from Wilson and Lloyd-Jones 1990

[10] The suggestion supposedly goes back to the idea that Goethe, in 1829, expressed the wish that Sophocles had not written these lines. This seems to have prompted scholars to look for (and unsurprisingly find) reasons to excise them as interpolated. The individual objections against the lines are recalled and answered by Griffith 1999 ad 904-15.

[11] Griffith 1999 and Wilson and Lloyd-Jones 1990 both keep the lines and this still appears to be the consensus. A crucial witness for authenticity is the fact that Aristotle treats the passage in his *Rhetoric* (1417a).

[12] Goldhill 2011, 245.

In Herodotus, we find a variation of the very same argument invoked by another woman to justify giving priority to her brother over her husband and her son. In book three of the *Histories* (III.118-9), Herodotus tells the story of how the Persian general Intaphrenes, once a trusted ally of Darios, was imprisoned together with his sons and the rest of his household and that the king planned to have him killed on the suspicion of inciting rebellion. At the incessant lamenting of Intaphrenes' wife, the king makes her an offer to choose one of the incarcerated members of her family whose life she can thereby save. She, choosing to save her brother and being confronted with the king's bafflement over why she doesn't choose her husband or son, makes the same argument as Antigone that while some family members can be replaced, others can't:[13]

> Ὦ βασιλεῦ, ἀνὴρ μὲν ἄν μοι ἄλλος γένοιτο, εἰ δαίμων ἐθέλοι, καὶ τέκνα ἄλλα, εἰ ταῦτα ἀποβάλοιμι· πατρὸς δὲ καὶ μητρὸς οὐκέτι μευ ζωόντων ἀδελφεὸς ἂν ἄλλος οὐδενὶ τρόπῳ γένοιτο. ταύτῃ τῇ γνώμῃ χρεωμένη ἔλεξα ταῦτα.
> (Herodotus III.119)

The idea of a correspondence between this passage and the moment in Sophocles' *Antigone* which I considered just now has received some attention by scholars.[14] *Communis opinio*, which remains unchallenged, is that Herodotus provided the material and that Sophocles gave it a new expression in his play at a thematically fitting moment.[15] Curiously, it is not so much the philosophical import of this motif, or its particular deployment in each of the respective narratives which has attracted and sustained the attention of scholars, but rather the question of how this correspondence speaks to the personal relationship between the two authors.

An influential treatment of these two passages is Felix Jacoby's article on Herodotus which was written for a supplement volume to Pauly's *Realencyklopädie* of 1913. Here, Jacoby discussed the relationship of Herodotus and Sophocles in terms of a shared circle in

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[13] Text quoted from Wilson 2015.

[14] Honig 2013, 132-40, reviews a number of discussions of how the Sophoclean passage interacts with Herodotus, but criticises that there has been too little sustained engagement. She reads the Herodotean passage as showing the move "away from lamentation [...] into logos", 135, and argues that Antigone explains and contrasts her own position facing Creon by citing Intaphrenes' wife and her interaction with Darius.

[15] How and Wells 1928 say the piece "seems more natural in the historian than in the dramatist" and Griffith 1999 agrees that Sophocles borrowed from Herodotus, more on which below. To my knowledge, no-one has effectively argued the opposite case.

Athens during the years before the *Antigone* was staged and makes a remarkable deduction:

> Daß [Herodot] vor — sagen wir zunächst ganz vorsichtig 441/0 in Athen war, daß er hier Vorlesungen gehalten hat, die Sophokles mitanhörte (oder noch vorsichtiger, daß [Herodot] in einem Kreise, dem auch Sophokles angehörte, allerlei von seinen Reisen erzählte und dem Dichter auch Einblick in seine Manuskripte verstattet haben mag) — das alles geht mit zwingender Notwendigkeit aus der Kongruenz zwischen Sophokl. Antig. 904ff. und H. III. 118-119 hervor.[16]

Speaking in the mode of a reference work, Jacoby here wants to give clear statements without misrepresenting the evidence. We see his attempt at navigating this difficulty in the uncomfortable contrast between the highly qualifying language (ganz vorsichtig... noch vorsichtiger... verstattet haben *mag*) and the statement that his conclusions — Herodotus showed Sophocles his manuscripts or gave a lecture at which Sophocles was present — have the power of absolute necessity because of the congruence between the two scenes. While we have to note that there are no direct verbal echoes between the two quoted passages except the words for father, mother, and brother, the correspondence may still be close enough to merit our believing that Sophocles knew the Herodotean passage. Yet, the conclusion that the two were friends and/or part of the same circle seems the more important issue for Jacoby.[17] And yet, what Herodotus and Sophocles display is essentially an ethical and philosophical point of interest, evidence for Greek thought about a difficult question: can there be a hierarchy of kinship connections? What is more, we have evidence here of quite a provocative answer which pivots on whether someone is replaceable or not.

In posing an ethical and philosophical problem, these texts also speak to the context of classical Athenian thought more broadly and not only as a nugget of personal acquaintance between two authors. I therefore propose to expand consideration of the substitution theme in the manner recently proposed by Joshua Billings in *The Philosophical Stage*

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[16] Jacoby 1913, 234.

[17] There is other evidence in Plutarch, quoted by Jacoby in the same article, suggesting a connection as well, which I do not discuss here. My point is not to contest the idea of an acquaintance between the two, but to question whether this is really the most pressing issue arising from the evidence. To take but one representative example of the fascination commanded by the idea of a friendship between these two celebrities of Periclean Athens, we might consider Egermann 1962, 249, who sees between them "eine enge geistige Gemeinschaft [...] die auf einer Übereinstimmung des Denkens beruhte", for which argument the present passages give him only one, albeit a crucial, example.

(2021).[18] Billing's contention "that dramatic texts are themselves developments in philosophical thought" allows us to view the work of the tragedians as not only conscious of but as crucially contributing to the philosophical discourses of their time.[19] This contribution happens, as Billings says, in an "atmosphere of thought, exchange, and debate sometimes described as an 'Attic Enlightenment'", in which Athens as a cultural centre after the Persian Wars is significantly defined by influx of ideas from outside, not least from the East.[20] This is particularly pertinent to the story of Intaphrenes' wife, thought to be the product of an Eastern influence in Herodotus, which then is turned into Antigone's argument by Sophocles.[21] Whether we take the widely held argument for Herodotus' primacy or the opposite view, it stands to reason that the ethics of choosing one life over another as part of a hierarchy of kinship connections had as much currency and interest in the broader intellectual climate of Classical Athens as it did within a (real or imaginary) personal connection between the two authors.

Without a doubt, the *Alcestis* belongs in and contributes to this philosophical debate.[22] We see this most clearly when Alcestis addresses Admetus to explain her reasons for choosing to die in his place. As part of her speech, Alcestis blames Admetus' parents for their decision not to die for him:

> καίτοι c᾽ ὁ φύcαc χἠ τεκοῦcα προύδοcαν,
> καλῶc μὲν αὐτοῖc κατθανεῖν ἦκον βίου,
> καλῶc δὲ cῶcαι παῖδα κεὐκλεῶc θανεῖν.
> μόνοc γὰρ αὐτοῖc ἦcθα, κοὔτιc ἐλπὶc ἦν
> coῦ κατθανόντοc ἄλλα φιτύcειν τέκνα.
> (290-4)

The argument here is offered through the language of ethics and decorum, as the accusing προύδοcαν contrasts with the anaphoric καλῶc and the adverb εὐκλεῶc makes clear. But the point she makes also chimes directly with that of Intaphrenes' wife and Antigone, namely

[18] Billings 2021.
[19] Billings 2021, 2.
[20] Billings 2021, 4.
[21] Jacoby 1913, 234.
[22] The extent to which the *Alcestis* is read as philosophical has varied. The play does not feature in the list of philosophical passages in Greek drama compiled by Laks and Most 2016, in the Appendix to Vol. IX.2, nor is the passage here discussed treated by Egli 2003 in her study of Euripides in light of contemporary philosophy. But the dialogue between Admetus and Pheres has been analysed in philosophical terms by Thury 1988.

that the right thing to do should be determined by the question of possibility or impossibility of substitution: as a son to his parents, Admetus is irreplaceable (because his parents are too old to have more children).

The patent resemblance of this passage to Antigone's speech, in both similarity and difference, has been noted by commentators on the play. Thus Dale notes that Alcestis' reasoning "recalls Antigone's [...] but it is quite logical here, where the point of the argument is survival."[23] The implication of Dale's comment is a criticism often levelled against the Sophoclean passage, namely that the argument is *not* entirely logical there since Sophocles' borrowing from Herodotus distorts the argument by applying it to the situation of burial rather than to the actual saving of a life.[24] Likewise, Parker gives the speech from the *Antigone* as a *comparandum* for Alcestis' argument here. In noting that "it is startling to modern sensibilities that Alcestis seems to assume that one son is as good as another", Parker cuts right to the point of the argument, namely that the facts of replaceability clearly featured in the ethics of life and death decisions for an audience in Classical Athens.[25] What is more, both speeches in Sophocles and Euripides are viewed against the backdrop of the Herodotean model, as Parker too must have Intaphrenes' wife in mind when saying (about the Sophoclean passage) that "it is not the argument from replaceability that is strange, but its application to burial."[26]

In fact, the connection between the *Alcestis* and Sophocles' *Antigone* can be substantiated further. Thus, Henry Blumenthal found that "the point in [*Alcestis*], as in *Ant*., is the uniqueness and irreplaceability of the relation for whose benefit one is, or is not, acting" and argued that Alcestis makes the argument *because* Antigone made it.[27] Citing further echos of Alcestis' speech later on in the play when Admetus incriminates Pheres, Blumenthal invokes the *Alcestis* ultimately as evidence for the authenticity of the *Antigone* passage.[28]

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[23] Dale 1954, *ad loc.*

[24] This is expressed also by Griffith 1999, ad 904-15, to argue for Herodotus' primacy: "Here Ant.'s *hypothetical* choice as to which dead family member she might *bury* (when no others in fact exist), is obviously more far-fetched than the *real* choice in Hdt. of which one to *save* from death: so there can be little doubt that Hdt. is the original."

[25] Parker 2007, *ad loc.*

[26] Parker 2007, *ad loc.*

[27] Blumenthal 1974, 175.

[28] Blumenthal 1974, 175. The lines in question are 655-7 and 662.

More recently, Justina Gregory has extended this argument to show that the *Antigone* is an important intertext to the *Alcestis* beyond this specific passage.[29] She assumes that Euripides was among the spectators of the *Antigone*, probably in 441, and draws up a number of connections between the plays, including a discussion of the Herodotean, Sophoclean and Euripidean treatments of the substitution motif, speculating about possible effects on an audience who was familiar with the two earlier passages when viewing the *Alcestis*.[30] She thus agrees with Blumenthal that "Euripides did indeed have *Antigone* 'in mind' [...] when he was composing *Alcestis*."[31]

These comments and arguments amount to a two-fold acknowledgement that is worth spelling out explicitly again: first, responding to Sophocles' *Antigone* in a number of ways, the *Alcestis* specifically refers to an argument made there about valuing irreplaceable family relations, for which our earliest known source, if the *communis opinio* stands, is Herodotus' story of Intaphrenes' wife. Second, the citation and variation of this argument, which may well have gone beyond these three surviving texts, is testimony to the currency of ethical questions about the possibility of replacing family members by blood or by marriage. This clarifies the important upshot of revisiting the substitution motif in Herodotus and Sophocles. It shows that the *Alcestis*' engagement with the ethics of exchanging one life for another, far from being an isolated oddity, speaks very much to an issue of interest to Athenians at this time, not least because writing tragedy, as Billings argued, was a form of doing philosophy. But I would go still further to contend that the *Alcestis* is unique among these treatments, because it connects the ethical problem about substitution with that of deception.

4.4 One Substitution Following Another

In what follows, I turn to how substitution comes to the fore in the play, in language and in the myth itself, focusing in particular on those scenes where substitution is explicitly discussed by the characters. What emerges from these scenes, I argue, is firstly a sense that

[29] Gregory 2006.
[30] Gregory 2006, 121-3.
[31] Gregory 2006, 127.

one substitution brings another in its wake and secondly a question over whether Admetus will go on to replace Alcestis after her death. The many opportunities for dwelling on these questions and issues arises not least from the fact that, for most of the action, Alcestis herself is a dying rather than a dead woman. Explaining this, Fiona Macintosh has discussed the "transitional stage" which dying people occupy in Greek tragedy and shown how the *Alcestis* is therefore a typical example of how death is conceptualised in these plays as a process rather than a state.[32] This naturally also makes room for reflecting, anticipating and mourning the death of Alcestis, its reasons and consequences. As a result, talking about Alcestis' death means also talking about substitution, in which the possibility of replacing Alcestis is posed as a genuine challenge to Admetus' fidelity.

As I argued earlier in this chapter, the *Alcestis* links the motif of substitution, always central to the myth of Admetus and Alcestis, with the specific motif of deception, challenging the audience to ask whether substitution is in fact a form of deception. In fact, the two ideas are brought into explicit connection at the very start of the play, where Apollo, first alone and then in dialogue with Death, lays down the premise of the plot and claims to predict the events to come.[33] Apollo begins his speech by lamenting a wrongful exchange, as he is sitting at the table like a serf, *although* he is in fact a god (1-2). Some form of social or divine/human order being out of kilter is of course far from unique to this tragedy, but here it gives a particular resonance and context to a whole series of substitutions throughout the plot. In fact, the dynamics of substitution here actually go further back still: Unable to avenge his son Asclepius' death on the killer Zeus himself, Apollo killed the Cyclopes instead. In other words, his service as Admetus' slave is the result of an action in which the Cyclopes died instead of Zeus himself.

The play itself will now be concerned with another such substitution of life for life and so Apollo immediately goes on to introduce the premise of the plot, the basis of the myth with which the audience would have been familiar to some extent already:

> ὁςίου γὰρ ἀνδρὸς ὅςιος ὢν ἐτύγχανον
> παιδὸς Φέρητος, ὃν θανεῖν ἐρρυςάμην,

[32] Macintosh 1995, quote at 70-71.
[33] The character 'Death' in the play is here capitalised, whereas the normal noun 'death' is not.

> Μοίρας δολώσας· ἤνεσαν δέ μοι θεαὶ
> Ἄδμητον Ἅιδην τὸν παραυτίκ' ἐκφυγεῖν,
> ἄλλον διαλλάξαντα τοῖς κάτω νεκρόν.
> (10-14)

Here, Apollo's favour to Admetus is recalled by the god and described as an act of deception, a trick of the fates: Μοίρας δολώσας. Apollo says that the fates agreed to Admetus' escape from imminent death if he gives another corpse in exchange, but it does not follow how exactly this constitutes a tricking of the goddesses of fate. We are therefore left to ask why and how Euripides wants to draw up a connection between the substitution motif at the core of the myth and the idea of deception.

What may help is a reference to this same story in the *Eumenides* (723-8). There, the chorus first speak only of Apollo "persuading" (ἔπεισας) the fates to make mortals immortal, but then go on to accuse him of deceiving (παρηπάτησας) them with the help of wine. While this detail is not mentioned in the prologue to the Alcestis, the Scholia already connect the reference to Μοίρας δολώσας with this detail from the Aeschylean account. It stands to reason, therefore, that the idea of deception was either left to stand, somewhat disconnected to the rest of Apollo's story here, or that the audience would be reminded of a familiar detail, the act of intoxicating the fates.[34]

The choice of διαλλάξαντα, which here denotes the idea of one life being exchanged for another, deserves closer attention. In this usage, it also occurs in Plato (Republic 620b) where Agamemnon's soul is said to choose the life of an eagle over that of a human. But in tragic usage, διαλλάσσω is used to describe the cessation of hostilities. Before the Alcestis, it appears in Aeschylus' *Septem* (883) to describe a "reconciliation by the sword" between Eteocles and Polyneices, and it is twice taken up in this meaning by Euripides in the *Phoenissae*, where Iocasta is called upon to mediate between her sons (436, 445). While the idea of an exchange of like for like is more than fitting in this myth of double fratricide, διαλλάσσω here does not refer to a successful reconciliation or a truce. What is more, the word is otherwise used twice by Euripides later on, both times in the context of a deception.

[34] Parker 2007, *ad loc.*, notes the explicit suppression of this detail in the Euripidean version here and explains it as a matter of "taste".

In the *Medea*, the eponymous heroine uses the word to mean putting down her former hatred towards Jason (894-7) when she is really tricking him into a false sense of security. In the *Helen*, the word appears in a very similar context when Helen fools Theoclymenos into believing that she wants to be reconciled with him (1235), which is part of her and Menelaos' plan to escape. While both occurrences are to be dated later than the Alcestis, meaning that an intertextual relationship is not at work, the point stands that within the extant tragic corpus, the word occurs nowhere else in the meaning of a genuine and well-meaning exchange, but is instead associated with trickery and false reconciliation.

Thus, the problems of substitution begin with the "tricking of the fates" in the prologue already. But most crucial for the thematic and narrative development of the substitution theme are undoubtedly the scenes between Admetus and Alcestis and the agonistic scene between Pheres and Admetus. Throughout these, we see that marital fidelity, conceptualised as a question of the possibility or impossibility of substitution is a sensitive issue. The possibility of a new marriage for Admetus and the question of whether and how he will replace Alcestis after her death forms a central concern in the long dialogue which the couple have in the first epeisodion, especially at 280-392. Alcestis clarifies that her decision to die for Admetus is a free and conscious choice and makes clear what the alternative to it would be:

> θνῄσκω, παρόν μοι μὴ θανεῖν, ὑπὲρ σέθεν,
> ἀλλ' ἄνδρα τε σχεῖν Θεσσαλῶν ὃν ἤθελον
> καὶ δῶμα ναίειν ὄλβιον τυραννίδι.
> οὐκ ἠθέλησα ζῆν ἀποσπασθεῖσα σοῦ
> σὺν παισὶν ὀρφανοῖσιν, οὐδ' ἐφεισάμην
> ἥβης, ἔχουσ' ἐν οἷς ἐτερπόμην ἐγώ.
> (284-9)

As much as Alcestis here professes her commitment not to live without Admetus, she prefaces her expression of this commitment with a reminder that Admetus would nevertheless be replaceable for her, if she married another Thessalian husband. This reminds Admetus and the audience of a basic principle, namely that a spouse is by nature replaceable and that not to make this replacement requires a genuine decision to live alone and opt against a replacement. Alcestis' sober realism, the belief that even though she may choose

not to, she *could* nevertheless marry again if she was the one to survive, goes some way in explaining her heavy anxiety over Admetus' fidelity below, an anxiety which the audience will soon come to share.

The tension between singularity and substitutability is carried over into the next part of Alcestis' argument, where she blames Admetus' parents for not dying in his place. Further to my discussion of this passage in the previous section, we should note that the impossibility of Admetus' parents having more children (κοὔτις ἐλπὶς ἦν | σοῦ κατθανόντος ἄλλα φιτύσειν τέκνα, 293-4) now contrasts strongly with her ability to replace Admetus with a new husband, a replaceability which she has just drawn again to his attention. Thus, the combination of arguments here does yet more in that it confounds the economy of exchange: by contrast to Sophocles' *Antigone* and to Herodotus' third book, the characters in this play do not value singularity above all, but opt for dynamics of replaceability instead. It is Alcestis, not one of the parents, who ends up dying instead of Admetus.

The main purpose of Alcestis' speech though is to make a request to Admetus for his faithfulness after her death. This reveals a considerable anxiety about the implications of exchangeability for Admetus' fidelity after Alcestis' death. Her appeal to Admetus is not to remarry on account of her children (τούτους here are the children):

> τούτους ἀνάσχου δεσπότας ἐμῶν δόμων
> καὶ μὴ 'πιγήμηις τοῖσδε μητρυιὰν τέκνοις,
> ἥτις κακίων οὖσ' ἐμοῦ γυνὴ φθόνωι
> τοῖς σοῖσι κἀμοῖς παισὶ χεῖρα προσβαλεῖ.
> μὴ δῆτα δράσηις ταῦτά γ', αἰτοῦμαί σ' ἐγώ·
> ἐχθρὰ γὰρ ἡ 'πιοῦσα μητρυιὰ τέκνοις
> τοῖς πρόσθ', ἐχίδνης οὐδὲν ἠπιωτέρα.
> (304-10)

To be clear, Alcestis' focus lies on the children as she gives her appeal the impetus and conviction of motherly concern. Thus the figure of the step-mother, whose identity is defined by — and somewhat confined to — being a negative substitute, plays a key role in the formulation of *Alcestis*' request for fidelity.[35] At the same time, the idea of a μητρυιά produces an interesting shift of the substitution dynamic, as the focus turns from Alcestis'

[35] We might further compare the importance of the step-mother in Euripides' *Medea* and *Phaedra.*

death for Admetus *as a substitute* to her *being substituted* in her role as mother and wife. Thus, Alcestis' own appal not to be replaced actually causes Admetus and us to look beyond her death and to see the momentum of exchange in which one substitution carries another in its wake.[36]

But Admetus does more than just grant Alcestis this request. His promise not to remarry comes in a very specific expression that no *Thessalian* bride will ever *speak* to him instead of her (κοὔτις ἀντὶ σοῦ ποτε τόνδ' ἄνδρα νύμφη Θεσσαλὶς προσφθέγξεται, 330-1). This echoes Alcestis' own decision not to marry another Thessalian husband, but it also neatly anticipates that his new bride at the end is said to be a foreign girl, who notably does not speak to him. Admetus further promises not to desire more children and to forever hate his parents for their failure to save Alcestis by dying instead of him and therefore instead of her (328-41).

But while he vows to keep mourning, his mourning explicitly takes the form of seeking a substitute for her, namely in the form of an inanimate object, a statue in her likeness. This idea, immediately conjured by Admetus, scarcely hides and actually emphasises his desire to replace her as soon as she is gone:

> σοφῇ δὲ χειρὶ τεκτόνων δέμας τὸ σὸν
> εἰκασθὲν ἐν λέκτροισιν ἐκταθήσεται,
> ᾧ προσπεσοῦμαι καὶ περιπτύσσων χέρας
> ὄνομα καλῶν σὸν τὴν φίλην ἐν ἀγκάλαις
> δόξω γυναῖκα καίπερ οὐκ ἔχων ἔχειν·
> (348-52)

This very dense and crucial passage has received a great deal of attention by readers of the play. Nancy Rabinowitz, for instance, read the statue through a Freudian lens, as a "fetish object that replaces the missing woman entirely".[37] Charles Segal, alternatively, has focused on the statue's artistic value as "a crucial element in the play's representation of its own mimetic power".[38] For the purposes of my own interpretation, I want to emphasise two points within Admetus' description, which arise from the use of εἰκασθὲν and δέμας

[36] Rabinowitz 1993, 83, also notes this dynamic as central to the play.
[37] Rabinowitz 1993, 81-84, here 82.
[38] Segal 1993, 37-50, here 45. For further discussion and bibliography on this passage, also on the possible resonance of the story of Protesilaos and Laodameia in this scene, see Parker 2007, *ad loc.*

respectively. In the extant plays of Euripides, εἰκάζω is used nine times, either meaning "to suppose" or "to compare / be like".[39] Here, it is used in the latter meaning, but in fact the former is not all that far off, if we consider how Admetus goes on in his description. In a passage that will be directly echoed at the end of the play (1066-7), Admetus here speaks of calling the statue by Alcestis' name and believing to be holding her in his arms (ὄνομα **καλῶν** σὸν τὴν φίλην ἐν ἀγκάλαις | **δόξω** γυναῖκα καίπερ οὐκ ἔχων ἔχειν). The emphasis on likeness in the statue is such that Admetus is carried, in his own imaginary, to *suppose* that the statue is actually Alcestis. Thus, the use of εἰκάζω here, although it clearly means "is like", also draws on its other meaning of "supposing".

Admetus speaks of the δέμας of Alcestis, her body, which will be placed in his bed. We are left to infer from the fact that this body is the work of σοφῇ δὲ χειρὶ τεκτόνων that he is not speaking about Alcestis' actual body, but about an object of craft. This point, not previously commented on by critics, bears closer consideration, especially if we adduce the comparable description of such a statue in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* (410-28). In that latter passage, the chorus relay Menelaos' mourning over the loss of Helen, causing him to revile at the sight of beautiful statues (εὐμόρφων δὲ κολοσσῶν |ἔχθεται χάρις ἀνδρί, 416-7). Mary Stieber has plausibly argued for a strong connection between the two passages, as both refer to a realistic, beautiful and arousing image of a lost wife, to which points he adds that both passages involve dream images provoked by the respective statues.[40] While Stieber notes that in the Aeschylean description, the word χάρις is given preference over the more usual and neutral ἄγαλμα, the more striking point illustrated by the parallel is that the Euripidean description has no word for the statue at all.

In this way, the idea of replacement is carried even into the syntax of the sentence, as a specific word for the statue is displaced by the word for body. The usage of these words that both δέμας and ἄγαλμα are very common terms in Euripides, but there is no suggestion

[39] Apart from this occurence in the *Alcestis*, it means "to suppose" at *Heracld.* 677, *Heracl*. 712, *IA* 844, 845, *Rh.* 284, and "to compare" / "be like" at *Hel.* 421, *Phoen.* 420, *Bacch*. 942, 1253.

[40] Stieber 1999, along with Stieber 1994 on the realism of the statue, and Stieber 1998, against Fraenkel 1962, II, 219, who denies a direct connection between the two passages.

(to my knowledge) that they are used interchangeably or to mean the same thing.[41] What is more, in the one occurrence of the two words together, they actually denote a pair of opposites. When appearing as *dea ex machina* at the end of the *IT* (1439-41), Athena speaks of Orestes sending the δέμας of his sister to Argos while bringing the ἄγαλμα (of Artemis) to Athens. The disjunction between the actual body and the statue here, as a pair of two distinct things with two distinct destinations, emphasises for us the peculiarity of Admetus talking about the statue by using only the word δέμας, possibly looking ahead to the end of the play where he will indeed take a living body into his bed again, believing it to be that of Alcestis. But the peculiarity also puts the finger on the important difference between the Euripidean and Aeschylean passages: Menelaos is reminded of Helen, away and alive, by the statue that appears as her *double*, whereas for Admetus the statue and Alcestis are mutually exclusive, the former a replacement for the latter. The issue of singularity and replaceability thus manifests even on the level of language and syntax.

After Admetus' speech, Alcestis makes him repeat his promise not to remarry with the children as his witness (371-74), before she finally hands them over to him:

> Αλ. ἐπὶ τοῖσδε παῖδας χειρὸς ἐξ ἐμῆς δέχου.
> Αδ. δέχομαι, φίλον γε δῶρον ἐκ φίλης χερός.
> Αλ. σύ νυν γενοῦ τοῖσδ' ἀντ' ἐμοῦ μήτηρ τέκνοις.
> Αδ. πολλή μ' ἀνάγκη, σοῦ γ' ἀπεστερημένοις.
> (374-8)

The flowing composition of these lines — from δέχου to δέχομαι, with the repetition of χειρὸς and χερός — underscores the idea of exchange again. More importantly, Alcestis' handing over the children amounts to nothing less than another moment in which Alcestis is being replaced by a substitute. Her decision to make Admetus live instead of her brings with it the fact that he is now ἀντ' ἐμοῦ μήτηρ τέκνοις, and thus Alcestis acknowledges her own substitutability as mother of her children.

Finally, before Alcestis dies or at least leaves the stage, there are a couple of further hints that put her departure in a spirit of anxiety about Admetus' fidelity. First, when Admetus

[41] δέμας is used 98 times in the extant plays of Euripides (excluding fragments), always meaning either a living body or a corpse. Across the same texts, ἄγαλμα appears 51 times, including. at *Alc.* 613, meaning statue or ornament.

professes again that he will be inconsolable, Alcestis herself assuages him and seems to predict the mediating effect of time on his grief: χρόνος μαλάξει σ'· οὐδέν ἐσθ' ὁ κατθανών (381). Her thought that the dead will not be a concern for him in the future can be read as an expression of comfort or cheer, but on a certain intonation by the actor it conveys just as much anxiety or worry, a kind of prescient concern on her own part, that Admetus' grief will not last forever. Especially noteworthy in this respect is that Alcestis speaks of Admetus' softening over the course of time (μαλάξει), implying a weakening of his resolve and fidelity.

Second, their farewells take the form of an *antilabe* exchange full of pathos, until Alcestis probably faints on stage. Tellingly, in her last two exclamations — οὐδέν εἰμ' ἔτι and χαῖρ' (390-1) — Alcestis is saying more than simply that she is dying, but that she is now no longer worth anything, of any concern or substance: οὐδέν. The chorus, in a final remark before Alcestis disappears from the play, send her off by saying βέβηκεν, οὐκέτ' ἔστιν Ἀδμήτου γυνή (392) and thus emphasise the finality of her departure: Alcestis is no longer. But further, as in the later dialogue between Heracles and Admetus (531, discussed above), the two possible meanings of γυνή - as wife and woman - pose a question here. The placement directly with the genitive Ἀδμήτου suggest that the chorus explicitly means Admetus' wife. But, given that γυνή stands at the end of the line and before a new character (the child) starts to speak, the word is exposed and left to resonate. If the audience hears its double meaning again here, then it recalls and sustains the worry about the replaceability of Alcestis, because if Admetus' wife is no longer, could there not be another woman to take her place?

After the second stasimon comes Heracles' entry, which I have already interpreted above, as well as the debate between Admetus and his father Pheres. When the latter wants to attend Alcestis' funeral and the former accuses him of not offering to die instead, they embark on an extended ideological debate, which has been central for some interpreters of the play.[42] Indeed, it stands to reason that Admetus' promise to Alcestis to hate his parents for their cowardice is very much on the audience's mind when they watch this scene.

[42] So to Thury 1988, who writes, esp. 199-202, on the *oikos* and the issues in this dialogue. Martin 2021 reviews and criticises the tendency to analyse the *agon* in ethical terms, esp. 539-540 with notes, and reads it instead as communication with a specific purpose and rhetoric design.

Nevertheless, it also purposefully develops the deception by substitution theme and repeatedly directs the audience's attention to it as well. First, Admetus rejects Pheres' offer of sympathies and in doing so accuses him of what is essentially a deception by exchange:

> 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.
> (636-39)

Whether or not Admetus actually suggests that he is a slave's child or whether these lines are to be taken with Parker as "furious irony", Admetus here inserts another story of substitution, of one child being surreptitiously put in the place of another, into his own life *and* that he claims that this substitution happened in secret, as the term λάθρᾳ comes as the culmination of his indictment.[43] A trick with identity through exchange is once again brought before the audience's minds, irrespective of whether it is wielded as an ironic fiction or as an actual revelation.

Perhaps in response to Admetus' accusations, Pheres himself takes the premise of the story of Admetus and Alcestis to a further extreme and conjures the image of Admetus now having to find a new wife to continue evading death. He does so in mockingly praising Admetus:

> σοφῶς δ' ἐφηῦρες ὥστε μὴ θανεῖν ποτε,
> εἰ τὴν παροῦσαν κατθανεῖν πείσεις ἀεὶ
> γυναῖχ' ὑπὲρ σοῦ·
> (699-701)

The efficacy of this insult lies in how accurately it describes Admetus' real behaviour and decisions. Pheres further follows this up in the ensuing stichomythia with a cutting imperative μνήστευε πολλάς, ὡς θάνωσι πλείονες (720) putting the finger precisely on an existing anxiety here. For if Admetus with Apollo's help played a trick against the Fates to avoid death once, why should he not resort to further such tricks in the future. Pheres goes yet further, ironically commending Admetus on having found in Alcestis a woman stupid enough to comply. His words here — τήνδ' ἐφηῦρες ἄφρονα (723) — directly echoe the σοφῶς δ'

[43] Parker 2007, *ad loc.*

ἐφηῦρες of earlier (699) and thus puts σοφῶς and ἄφρονα into contrast as describing the benefactor *versus* the naive victim of a trick.

This scene is immediately followed up by Heracles' second appearance, also analysed above, in which the hero discovers that he has been made to believe the dying woman was someone else. It is only then, at this high point of tension, that the action stops momentarily to mark the funeral of Alcestis with a lyric exchange between Admetus and the chorus (861-932), an iambic speech in which Admetus blames and pities himself for his fate (935-61), and by the third stasimon (962-1005). This respite in the series of quick and dense dialogues gives space for Admetus and the chorus to come to terms with Alcestis' death. Admetus and the household go through the process that ordinarily follows the death of a loved one, a topic which has been explored prominently by Charles Segal through the lens of "male tears".[44]

There is exclamatory, formulaic, and ritualised grief, which is met by consolation such as in the first strophe of the song of Admetus and the Chorus : ΧΟ. πρόβα πρόβα, βᾶθι κεῦθος οἴκων. || ΑΔ. αἰαῖ....etc. (873-77) There is then remorse and regret, as Admetus struggles with his own actions and with what others will say about him (954-59). His speech ends on a note of desperation, which epitomises the grief of the surviving spouse:

> τί μοι ζῆν δῆτα κέρδιον, φίλοι,
> κακῶς κλύοντι καὶ κακῶς πεπραγότι;
> (960-61)

Admetus' grief is answered by the third stasimon, which embeds his individual fate in the context of poetic and traditional wisdom and which thus offers meaning and reconciliation as the final stage of the grieving process. The appeal to Ἀνάγκη (962-72) as the ultimate force with no remedy, neither human nor divine, sets the events into a frame that affords consolation and commonality for Admetus' suffering. As the chorus had previously reminded Admetus that he is not the first to lose his wife (892-94), their words bring a certain realism to the situation:

> καί σ' ἐν ἀφύκτοισι χερῶν εἶλε θεὰ δεσμοῖς.
> τόλμα δ'· οὐ γὰρ ἀνάξεις ποτ' ἔνερθεν

[44] Segal 1992, esp. 147-151. His analysis of the various stages of mourning shows, which the play goes through in a condensed and quickened manner is important for my own reading of this moment in the play.

κλαίων τοὺς φθιμένους ἄνω.
(985-87)

But in watching Admetus grieve, the audience will also remember Alcestis' words to him from earlier in the play that time will bring consolation: at the end of mourning stands a softening (μαλάξει, 381). And after the formalised mourning on stage — from excessive grief to remorse to a reconciliation with the facts of necessity — comes to an end, Heracles enters again for the conclusion of the play. But before reading this final scene itself, I want to pause on what I consider to be a useful controversy which dominates how scholarship has discussed this play in the past decades.

4.5 Alcestis Resurrected or Resuscitated?

Many of the existing interpretations of the *Alcestis* have resonated with readers because they all discuss the question whether the ending with Alcestis's restitution to life — and to life with Admetus — is to be understood as a sincere happy ending or whether it ridicules the myth as naive and casts an ironic light on it. This, to put it frankly, is the dividing issue. Moreover, while not all of the recent literature is exclusively concerned with this matter, the majority of recent scholarly publications only address this very issue, but also make a point about the importance of that issue itself.[45]

Among those who argue for a sincere and non-ironic reading, Anne Burnett has made an influential case that the happy ending presents a just reward for the king's virtuous behaviour, his selfless commitment to guest-friendship towards Heracles and his sincere wish to remain faithful to the memory of Alcestis.[46] This case goes back to some 19th-century scholars and their defence of Admetus against accusations of cowardice.[47] Others have de-

[45] One notable exception is Gurd 2022, who probes the implications for how the characters in the play are allocated to the actors on stage. Feminist readings of the play add further nuance. Thus Rabinowitz 1993, 88, notes that Alcestis "is made to serve in a masculine joke" as a mere object of fetishization. Wohl 1998 further argues that "a new economy and a new aristocratic male identity are forged, literally over Alcestis's dead body", 131, a move which undercuts the superficially happy ending of the play (on which esp. 173-5). Gounaridou 1992, 5-30, gives a complete bibliography and summary of opinions about the *Alcestis* since 1869 (i.e. starting at a point when scholarly interest in the play had formed and stabilised already), claiming that that "synthesis of Euripidean scholarship on the Alcestis amounts to great indeterminacy", 27.

[46] Burnett 1965. Slater 2005, 96, also reads the ending as "really happy" and invokes the authority of the second prose hypothesis' author for this too.

[47] Consider e.g. the debate between Glum and Firnhaber discussed in the preceding chapter.

veloped this line of argument further, have variously found such a view to be underpinned by considerations of political and social context of the play, by the intertextual resonances from the *Antigone* (considered above), and other aspects and motifs.[48] Far from denying that the play has some rather comic scenes, the point of contention is the final moment in which Admetus can be seen to act against his promise and take a new woman into his home. Critics who follow what Burnett herself calls the "naive reading", insist that Admetus' agreement to take a new woman into his home does not constitute an act of betrayal because, as Lloyd puts it, he "expresses the utmost reluctance [...] and clearly does not take her as a second wife".[49]

Other critics have vehemently disagree, both specifically with this last point, but also with the naive reading of the play more broadly. Much like the naive reading and the defence of Admetus' behaviour, the accusations against him of cowardice and selfishness also have precedent in the 19th-century discourse, which we saw in the preceding chapter.[50] Since then, an influential piece by Kurt von Fritz argued against what he perceived as the majority opinion, that Admetus redeems himself in the final scene, and made the case the *Alcestis* ends, like the *Orestes*, with deep irony that undercuts and denies any superficial appearance of a happy end.[51] The idea of an ironic reading was further developed and nuanced by Wesley Smith, who argued for a double structure of melodrama combined with irony throughout the play.[52] For him, the final scene presents a testing of Admetus in which "the irony is a sour sauce for the happy conclusion."[53] To those who follow this ironic reading, the ending's superficial reunion of the happy couple is forever marred by what they see as an irredeemable act of betrayal which Admetus commits when he takes a different woman into his home.

However, for all the stark disagreement over how Euripides meant the audience to feel

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[48] Burnett's arguments were expanded by Lloyd 1985 and Buxton 2003. Gregory 2006, 127, finds this confirmed also by "the play's engagement with its antecedent" (Sophocles' *Antigone*) as "serious, intricate, and sustained".
[49] Burnett 1965, 240. Lloyd 1985, 129.
[50] Perhaps most famous is Wieland's invective against Admetus, together with Fritz 1962.
[51] Fritz 1962, 63-7.
[52] Smith 1960.
[53] Smith 1960, 145.

when viewing the scene, scholars have essentially agreed over what the audience is seeing in the final scene.[54] Both those who take it that Admetus and Alcestis are happily and deservedly united at the end and those who think that this reunion is tainted by the stain of irony and implausibility agree that Alcestis was actually dead, revived by Heracles and then, initially in the disguise of being a foreign girl, returned to Admetus. Moreover, this is also suggested by the myth as it seems to have been conventionally known and by the play itself, since the prologue, the dialogue between Apollo and Heracles, and Heracles' speech all foreshadow and anticipate this outcome.

The only real exception to this homogeneity of readings dates back to the late 19th century and to Arthur Verrall's *Euripides the Rationalist*, which provides what I would consider one of the most generative and thought-provoking reading of the play to this day.[55] Verrall postulates that Alcestis never actually dies but is overwhelmed by the arrival of the supposedly fated day, prepares herself emotionally and psychologically for death and then faints.[56] Important for Verrall here is the supposition that Euripides intends to expose the myth "as fundamentally untrue and immoral" to an audience who was in fact expecting such a revelation from Euripides.[57] Moreover though, he shows that Heracles does not actually have to fight death and overcome an absolute necessity. According to Verrall, Alcestis' reappearance is explained by the fact she was resuscitated, not resurrected. On balance, this interpretation is certainly to be counted among those who read the play as an ironic treatment of the myth, and perhaps his sober rationalising approach constitutes the most ironic reading of all when it comes to the play's ending. After all, Verrall explicitly turns against the praise of Admetus' hospitality and argues that his behaviour is ultimately "inconsiderate, indelicate, and unkind".[58] His contribution to the debate has been too easily subsumed into the larger patterns of the *Alcestis*' scholarly history, but his actual interpretation of the play merits closer attention here, because it speaks to the motifs and structures which I have

[54] Smith 1960, 144, speaks of an "alternative ending", because Admetus need not break his promise *expressis verbis* by taking the new veiled woman in. This is really to say that the audience can decide between an ironic and a melodramatic ending to the plot though.
[55] Verrall 1895, Ch.1.
[56] Verrall 1895. This argument comes at the end of his interpretation, 73-7.
[57] Verrall 1895, 78.
[58] Verrall 1895, 31.

identified in the play so far.[59]

I want to take Verrall's suspecting, if not subversive inclination in reading the play yet further, but also leave behind for good the dichotomy of the serious and ironic which has dictated and continues to dictate the interpretative frame of the play. Instead, I propose to follow the directives which the play itself gives us for how the ending can be read. Two such clues stand out from my reading so far and in preparing us for the ending, they are worth reiterating and clarifying here: First, where there is substitution, there is also (at least the potential for) deception and being truly alert to this connection is not always easy. Even if, like Heracles, one feels sure about one's knowledge of the story that is unfolding, if one asks all the questions and sees all the evidence, one is not secure from being tricked by a substitution. Such a trick, furthermore, need not be the result of ill-will. Second, for the characters of this particular myth and for their story in this play, the omnipresence of substitutions elicits great anxiety about the issue of fidelity. The myth's very premise, that one person may take the place of another, is drawn out into a strong emphasis on the question of replacing Alcestis after her death. To replace or not to replace her — this is what the play's ending must be expected to answer above all.

Bearing all this mind, I will argue in the remainder of this chapter for a reading of the play's ending on which Alcestis is neither miraculously resurrected (as most readers would have it), nor cleverly resuscitated (as Verrall would have it), but rather and much more fittingly: replaced. At the end, she is simply replaced by a new wife, the foreign girl that Heracles gives to Admetus, and the setup and fallout of this replacement is what has eluded readers of the play for so long because they have not learned the lesson of Heracles' experience, that the substitution is most effective when it happens in plain sight.

Sure enough, a critical reader might object from the outset that in this reading, very far from following the play's own directives as I claim, I actually contradict what the play itself says explicitly at various points, namely that Heracles *will* bring Alcestis back from the dead. Indeed, these moments in the play have not been treated in my interpretation so far and therefore I turn to them now as a last step before considering the ending, in order

[59] It was heavily criticised by Myres 1917 and the two emerging extreme views were discussed by Sheppard 1919.

to address the very objection which they may be thought to raise. In fact, the two moments of explicit anticipation of the play's outcome also express doubt and so caution a careful reading of the events to come.

The first anticipation of the story's outcome emerges in the dialogue between Apollo and Death, which is part of the play's prologue. Such prophetic or predictive statements occur in many of Euripides' plays, most often spoken by a god or goddess and then normally paired with the appearance of another divinity *ex machina* at the play's end. That being said, their function is not always to reliably predict the outcome, because in many cases the divine utterance at the start is not fulfilled. A good example for this is the *Ion*, where Hermes predicts that Apollo will give his own son, the titular Ion, to Xuthus as his own, a prediction which does not come true.[60] For Francis Dunn, who emphasises the usual correspondence between prologues and endings, the *Alcestis* is a minor exception from this rule, because Apollo and Death appear together at the beginning and Heracles appears to resolve the action, but not in the dramatic mode of a *deus ex machina*.[61] The decisive point, of interest for my reading and also noted by Dunn, is that Apollo's prediction at the start of the *Alcestis* does not stand on its own, but is coupled with Death's direct contradiction.[62]

The back and forth between Apollo and Death reaches its first climax soon, when Apollo is trying to build on his previous deal for the life of Admetus and to bargain with Death for the life of Alcestis too: τοῖc μέλλουcι θάνατον ἀμβαλεῖν (50). Eventually, Apollo realises that he will not succeeed in this:

> ΑΠ. οὔκουν δοκεῖ coι τήνδε μοι δοῦναι χάριν;
> ΘΑ. οὐ δῆτ'· ἐπίcταcαι δὲ τοὺc ἐμοὺc τρόπουc.
> (60-61)

The response of Death is crucial here and I will come back below to the observation that it is not in Death's nature to grant such requests. In the face of this failure, Apollo makes what is generally read as a prediction for the plot to follow, that Heracles (though not specifically named will come to rescue Alcestis anyway:

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[60] See discussion of the full prologue prophecy and the plot in Hamilton 1978, 279-83.

[61] Dunn 1996, 105-08 on divine epiphanies at the beginning and end, where *Ion*, *Hecuba*, and *Hippolytus* are examples of a recurring Euripidean model, *Alcestis* and *Troades* some exceptions/variations.

[62] Dunn 1996, 90.

> τοῖος Φέρητος εἶϲι πρὸϲ δόμουϲ ἀνὴρ
> Εὐρυϲθέωϲ πέμψαντος ἵππειον μετὰ
> ὄχημα Θρήικηϲ ἐκ τόπων δυϲχειμέρων,
> ὃϲ δὴ ξενωθεὶϲ τοῖϲδ' ἐν Ἀδμήτου δόμοιϲ
> βίαι γυναῖκα τήνδε ϲ' ἐξαιρήϲεται.
> κοὔθ' ἡ παρ' ἡμῶν ϲοι γενήϲεται χάριϲ
> δράϲειϲ θ' ὁμοίωϲ ταῦτ' ἀπεχθήϲηι τ' ἐμοί.
> (65-71)

What this prediction elicits from Death is neither assent, nor silent acceptance, but outright contradiction:

> πόλλ' ἂν ϲὺ λέξαϲ οὐδὲν ἂν πλέον λάβοιϲ·
> ἡ δ' οὖν γυνὴ κάτειϲιν εἰϲ Ἅιδου δόμουϲ.
> ϲτείχω δ' ἐπ' αὐτήν, ὡϲ κατάρξωμαι ξίφει·
> ἱερὸϲ γὰρ οὗτοϲ τῶν κατὰ χθονὸϲ θεῶν
> ὅτου τόδ' ἔγχοϲ κρατὸϲ ἁγνίϲηι τρίχα.
> (72-73)

Apollo and Death take radically different stands on how the plot will turn out. In disagreement with those scholars who have simply ignored the opposition of the latter in favour of treating the former's prediction as an assurance to the audience that Alcestis will be saved, I want to argue that we should take their disagreement seriously.[63] The case to do so is based in large parts on a set of arguments made by Richard Hamilton, namely "that Thanatos does not believe Apollo and that Euripides has so constructed the scene as to give both gods equal weight. Thanatos' belief, then, casts doubt on Apollo's prophecy."[64] For Hamilton, the audience is led to expect that Heracles must come to save Alcestis before Death carries her off and that, when they see this operation fail in the first half of the play, they also see Death's prediction win against that of Apollo. It is only in the second half of the play that Apollo's predictions slowly comes true after all, and therefore against the expectation which it originally incited. Hamilton's reading of the *Alcestis* thus forms part of a wider analysis of Euripidean prologue predictions, in which he finds that in a number of plays, "the audience, having been faced with an equally persuasive alternative ending, must feel some uncertainty about the final outcome."[65]

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[63] Hamilton 1978, 293, fn. 40, lists those who "refuse to take Thanatos' opposition seriously".
[64] Hamilton 1978, 293.
[65] Hamilton 1978, 278.

Building on Hamilton's argument, I also contend that the prologue presents not a reliable prediction on what is to come, but that the contradiction between Apollo and Death constitutes a challenge about whose word is to be trusted here. The question thus raised is whether Death can ever really be thwarted, even at the end of the play. Here, the nature of Death as the interlocutor of Apollo plays an important part. I noted above that Death himself reminds Admetus why he would not give up Alcestis: ἐπίσταται δὲ τοὺς ἐμοὺς τρόπους (61). Discussing a series of Euripidean prologues in his 1841 analysis of the *IA*, Carl Firnhaber already suggested that the nature of Death, an ineluctable force, has to be taken into account when judging the prologue's prophecies.[66] Notwithstanding the significant concession he makes in taking Alcestis as a substitution for Admetus, the eventual ineluctability of death stands untouched. When Apollo procured the great favour for Admetus, he struck a *deal* with Death; he did not force anything on him and so Admetus' death is only delayed, not altogether prevented. This is what Death means by his τρόπους - there is no way around this, Death says, not even for Apollo's anticipated hero. The contest between Apollo and Death is not quite an ordinary one between two equally plausible versions: at stake is the fundamental question whether Death can in fact be conquered. In this context, I would recall that the *Alcestis* contains more statements of the inevitability of death than any other tragedy.[67]

As such, the prophetic quality of Apollo's prediction, though on its own a common feature throughout the later plays of Euripides, is here met with direct and quite forceful contradiction from Death himself. This is why the opening dialogue between Death and Apollo does not, I argue, anticipate or predict the plot as much as it formulates a challenge. To speak with Hamilton, Euripides "has chosen to have [Apollo and Death] face-off and to leave the issue unresolved. The stichomythia, then, is not simply symbolic or humorous; it establishes the essential dramatic question of the play".[68] But Hamilton also sees Apollo's prediction come true *eventually* at the end of the play. Furthermore, those who defend the predictive weight of Apollo's words in the prologue, agreeing with Kitto that Deaths' op-

[66] Firnhaber 1841, xviii.
[67] Lloyd 1985, 124.
[68] Hamilton 1978, 301.

position is "fictive and unreal", would also point to the monologue which Heracles delivers after he learns of Alcestis' death.[69]

In this speech, Heracles speaks of his intentions for rescuing Alcestis in a way that echoes and reflects the dialogue between Apollo and Death precisely in their disagreement. Rather than following suit only with Apollo's prophecy, Heracles' language actually draws up two possible outcomes of his undertaking to rescue Alcestis. This was noted by Hamilton, too, who says that "Heracles [...] makes it clear that wrestling with Thanatos and going to Hades are mutually exclusive". [70] These two options are expressed by means of two conditional clauses (846-49 and 850-57). In the first, Heracles says that if he finds Death at the site of the grave, he will wrestle with him (846-7). But he also makes the following prediction:

> οὐκ ἔστιν ὅστις αὐτὸν ἐξαιρήσεται
> μογοῦντα πλευρά, πρὶν γυναῖκ' ἐμοὶ μεθῆι.
> (848-9)

There is a direct verbal echo here of Apollo's earlier prediction (βίαι γυναῖκα τήνδε c' ἐξ-αιρήσεται, 69), but with an exchange of characters: whereas in the prologue Alcestis was to be wrested from Death's hands, it is now Death who is to be caught in such a wrestling hold by Heracles. Apollo's prediction thus manifests in Heracles' plan for what he will do if he finds Death at the grave site. But there is another possibility, namely that Alcestis is already in Hades.

Heracles therefore draws up the second option, denoted by the second conditional clause, which echoes not Apollo's prophecy, but Death's contradiction of it:

> ἢν δ' οὖν ἁμάρτω τῆcδ' ἄγραc καὶ μὴ μόληι
> πρὸc αἱματηρὸν πελανόν, εἶμι τῶν κάτω
> Κόρηc ἄνακτόc τ' εἰc ἀνηλίουc δόμουc,
> αἰτήcομαί τε καὶ πέποιθ' ἄξειν ἄνω
> Ἄλκηcτιν, ὥcτε χερcὶν ἐνθεῖναι ξένου,
> (850-4)

By continuing his speech here, Heracles acknowledges a possibility of failure in his original mission, which is to say that he has to think beyond the hopeful predictions of Apollo from

[69] Kitto 1961, 315, as quoted and refuted by Hamilton 1978, 299.
[70] Hamilton 1978, 297.

the start of the play. To my knowledge, critics have not paid much attention to the force of ἢν δ' οὖν ἁμάρτω (850) here, though Parker clarifies that δ' οὖν in a condition "means that the speaker admits the theoretical possibility, but only grudgingly".[71] It is, however, significant because in contemplating this alternative course of events, Heracles directly echoes the words of Death from the beginning (ἡ δ' οὖν γυνὴ κάτειcιν εἰc Ἅιδου δόμουc, 73), here saying *he* will go down to Hades (εἶμι ... εἰc ἀνηλίουc δόμουc, 851-4).

If Heracles has to go down to Hades, he says he will ask or demand Alcestis back: αἰτήcομαί, 853. The change in vocabulary, from a wrestling hold to a question or demand, is crucial here. Death himself was clear in the prologue that he is not in the habit of granting such demands or requests. Knowing his τρόπουc (61), which were reasserted in the course of the prologue, there is no indication that Heracles would fare any differently than Apollo were he to make a request for Alcestis' life. In fact, it was precisely the point of Apollo's prophecy that, with Heracles' appearance, getting Alcestis back would become a matter of physical force βίαι γυναῖκα τήνδε c' ἐξαιρήcεται (69). Strangling Death, however daunting that seems, was a promising avenue for the hero Heracles and certainly more promising than getting Alcestis back by persuasion. Therefore, with the foregoing of this wrestling bout at the grave, the opportunity and hope afforded by Apollo's prophecy is gone. Heracles' speech at this later moment, before he goes off stage and to the grave, should be considered in this light and, I argue, does not constitute a credible turn towards the straightforward fulfilment of Apollo's prophecy. Rather, it must be understood as a reminder of the essential challenge — can death really be thwarted —which was already posed at the end of the prologue and continues to drive the plot in its second half. Whatever the myth may lead the audience to expect, the ineluctability of death stands in the way of what Apollo had hoped and Heracles may now plan to do, however convinced (πέποιθα, 853) he may be.

4.6 Alcestis Replaced

The dramatic structure of the finale pivots on the play's most important and significant substitution, one which I argue has been hiding in plain sight. Heracles begins the scene by

[71] Parker 2007, ad 850.

recalling how Admetus deceived him and complains of the mistakes he made as a result of a stranger being substituted for Alcestis as the woman who died in the house. His blaming Admetus (καὶ μέμφομαι μέν, μέμφομαι, παθὼν τάδε, 1017) frames the exchange about to unfold as somehow corresponding to that earlier scene. More concretely, Smith has noted that Heracles' treatment of Admetus at the end in some sense reverses that earlier scene, while G. Fitzgerald's reading of the final scene has helpfully shown that the final scene constitutes a "battle of wits", in which Heracles takes vengeance for the defeat he suffered at the hands of Admetus early on in the play.[72]

I contend that everything depends on where and how exactly we take Heracles to be lying. On the conventional understanding, he is bringing the revived (or at least resuscitated) Alcestis on stage, though he hides her identity by means of a veil and makes Admetus accept her as such before revealing her identity to him and leaving the couple happily reunited. However, on closer examination of the text itself, the pivotal force of substitution in this scene can equally, and perhaps more convincingly, swing another way. Knowing that the question of where and how exactly substitution is at work in this play repays closer attention, I will consider the critical passages in the finale of *Alcestis* to show how the anxiety and uncertainty about identity, which characterise so much of the play, leave the ending with a sense of residual doubt over what actually happened.

After reminding Admetus and the audience of his previous misconception and the resulting misbehaviour with regard to the death in the royal household, Heracles changes the subject (1019). He now presents a woman whom he won as the prize in a contest (1020-33) and asks Admetus to take her in while he continues with his labours (1020-22 and again 1034-36). Admetus, having responded first to the accusation of deceiving Heracles, immediately rejects the idea of taking this woman into his house. As is to be expected, his response unmistakably brings up the issue of fidelity and of a threat to the promise he made to Alcestis. He deliberates where in his house this young woman could live:

> ἢ τῆς θανούσης θάλαμον ἐσβήσας τρέφω;
> καὶ πῶς ἐπεσφρῶ τήνδε τῷ κείνης λέχει;
> (1055-56)

[72] Smith 1960, 142-3, Fitzgerald 1991, 89, see also Hamilton 1978, 297.

And with this, Admetus himself conjures up, even though initially only to reject it, the idea of the veiled woman replacing Alcestis as his wife. His concern, as he makes clear to Heracles, is not that he does not want to take a new wife, but rather that he will be blamed by his citizens (1056-59) as well as by Alcestis if he does so (1059-60). The anxiety is clearly about this foreign girl taking the place, the θάλαμος and λέχος, of Alcestis.

After this rejection, Admetus addresses the woman directly and it is here that his words most strongly resonate with the possibility of the girl replacing Alcestis.

> σὺ δ', ὦ γύναι,
> ἥτις ποτ' εἶ σύ, ταὔτ' ἔχουσ' Ἀλκήστιδι
> μορφῆς μέτρ' ἴσθι· καὶ προσήϊξαι δέμας.
> οἴμοι. κόμιζε πρὸς θεῶν ἐξ ὀμμάτων
> γυναῖκα τήνδε, μή μ' ἔλαις ἡιρημένον.
> δοκῶ γὰρ αὐτὴν εἰσορῶν γυναῖχ' ὁρᾶν
> ἐμήν·
> (1061-67)

Admetus' words here hearken back directly to the problematic promise of fidelity he made to Alcestis and specifically to his readiness to replace her in his bed with a statue made in her likeness.[73] Earlier, the object of his affection was the δέμας (348), which is now one of the ways in which he likens this girl, whom he sees for the first time now, to Alcestis (1063). I call attention again to the fact that, in Admetus' original description of the statue, the word δέμας stood in for the statue. Being confronted with an actual likeness of Alcestis, a resemblance of the kind he wanted to make in the statue, Admetus is overwhelmed. While he wanted to kneel and embrace the former (350), he now asks for the latter to be taken away (1064-65). Yet, his idea in having a statue made was a desire to achieve just such an impossible substitution: δόξω γυναῖκα καίπερ οὐκ ἔχων ἔχειν (352), a line which he now echoes almost *verbatim* in δοκῶ γὰρ αὐτὴν εἰσορῶν γυναῖχ' ὁρᾶν ἐμήν. As the woman elicits a pain in Admetus because of her similarity to Alcestis, so it also provokes renewed reflection on the part of the audience about Admetus' evident willingness to replace Alcestis in some way.

Heracles follows this lead about replacing Alcestis appropriately by stating the facts of

[73] Rabinowitz 1993, 87, also considers Admetus' accepting the new woman as the "sequel" to the scene in which he imagined a statue as her replacement.

necessity and of life and death, which Admetus in turn immediately acknowledges:

> ΗΡ. εἰ γὰρ τοσαύτην δύναμιν εἶχον ὥστε σὴν
> ἐς φῶς πορεῦσαι νερτέρων ἐκ δωμάτων
> γυναῖκα καί σοι τήνδε πορσῦναι χάριν.
> ΑΔ. σάφ᾽ οἶδα βούλεσθαί σ᾽ ἄν. ἀλλὰ ποῦ τόδε;
> οὐκ ἔστι τοὺς θανόντας ἐς φάος μολεῖν.
> (1072-76)

The premise of the remaining scene is therefore quite clear: Heracles cannot do the impossible and bring back Alcestis from the dead. No more debate is necessary on this topic. The question for the remainder of the scene is whether Admetus can and should remarry, an idea of which Heracles tries to convince him from now on and with ultimate success (1077-1116). We observe that in this dialogue, Heracles not only recalls directly Alcestis' idea that χρόνος μαλάξει σ᾽· οὐδέν ἐσθ᾽ ὁ κατθανών (380), which now resonates in his χρόνος μαλάξει, νῦν δ᾽ ἔθ᾽ ἡβᾷ σοι κακόν (1085). Heracles also pushes back against Admetus' professions of fidelity to the dead Alcestis, as he urges him to remarry in order to ease his pain (1087). In this, he both commends, but also criticises Admetus' resolve, saying αἰνῶ μὲν αἰνῶ· μωρίαν δ᾽ ὀφλισκάνεις (1093). Pointing out Admetus' "foolishness" despite his commendable attitude, the good-will of Heracles in this scene comes to the fore: as he said at the outset, he has come as a friend, because he does not want Admetus to suffer in his misery (οὐ μήν σε λυπεῖν ἐν κακοῖσι βούλομαι, 1018) and so encourages him to move on and to take a new wife. Moreover, he has brought a woman who looks like Alcestis and clearly resembles her in a way that touches Admetus' sensitivity.

Heracles' subsequent insistence that Admetus should take the woman in himself, rather than letting her be taken in by the servants, follows directly from his wish that Admetus should not shun the possibility of a new wife (1110-14). The dialogue culminates in the moment when Admetus finally accepts Alcestis and when the symbolism of his reaching out his right hand (δεξιά) stands in for a reluctant but ultimately free decision to accept this woman into his hands:

> ΗΡ. τῇ σῇ πέποιθα χειρὶ δεξιᾷ μόνῃ.
> ΑΔ. ἄναξ, βιάζῃ μ᾽ οὐ θέλοντα δρᾶν τάδε.
> ΗΡ. τόλμα προτεῖναι χεῖρα καὶ θιγεῖν ξένης.
> ΑΔ. καὶ δὴ προτείνω, Γοργόν᾽ ὡς καρατομῶν.

(1114-17)

And yet, the use of τολμάω... θιγεῖν and the description of the woman as a ξένη here, again combined with the marital image of reaching out the right hand make Heracles' meaning clear: he understands this to be a new wedding to a new woman. However, as Admetus insists that he is doing this unwillingly, his vow to Alcestis appears to be still on his mind, which tells Heracles that he has not yet succeeded in his aim of turning Admetus to look positively on the opportunity of a new marriage. His strong rejection of this idea, encapsulated not least by the image of the Gorgon, shows that the similarity between this new girl and Alcestis is not enough for Admetus and that Heracles will have to resort to another means to bring his friend to accept a new wife, so that he can be happy. The substitution which Heracles wants to achieve has to be substantiated in some other way.

One might object that the veil, which conceals the identity of the girl, makes it the point of the scene that Admetus has to accept the woman *before* that veil is lifted at 1121 for Heracles to say βλέψον πρὸς αὐτήν and to reveal her.[74] However, as Nancy Rabinowitz has noted, the evidence that Alcestis is actually veiled is oblique and not textual.[75] The one place in the text, which might suggest a veil, is Admetus' description of the woman: νέα γάρ, ὡς ἐσθῆτι καὶ κόσμῳ πρέπει (1050). However, why Admetus' comment on her clothing and jewellery as befitting a young woman must mean that the woman is veiled is not at all clear. Similarly, the fact that Admetus bases his comparison of the girl to Alcestis on her general appearance (1063) and not specifically on her face is only logical since a stranger may resemble Alcestis in all but her face. There is no reason to mention her face at this point, nor is it actually mentioned throughout the scene at all. Rather, the inclusion of the veil in the, largely imagined, staging of this scene mainly bolsters the modern interpretative assumption on which the play fits the conventional myth of Alcestis in which Heracles rescues her from the dead and which requires that Admetus does not actually see her face until this late point in the scene. Admittedly, the strongest argument in favour of the veil would indeed be the

[74] Parker 2007, ad 1006-1158, rather unconvincingly explains the presence of the veil by the fact that "Athenian audiences evidently loved recognition scenes".

[75] Rabinowitz 1993, 87. On inference, not least from the first hypothesis, she does accept that Alcestis must have been disguised in some way.

parallel which it would draw between this scene and the rituals of a wedding, in which the bride is received by the hand while veiled. If, however, we choose take it that the woman was indeed veiled, the image speaks just as strongly to Heracles actually bringing a new bride to Admetus, no less than the already married and familiar Alcestis.

Whether or not there is a veil involved, it is at this point that Heracles makes a final attempt to convince Admetus to accept his new wife and thus pieces together a number of strands of the play. Operating like a *deus ex machina*, he brings the play to a close by executing one last substitution and deception. We remember that Admetus had already said that the woman looks just like Alcestis and that this similarity caused him pain (1063-69). Just as he hands Admetus his new wife, Heracles' takes up this idea in words which deserve careful consideration with respect to their tone and meaning:

> βλέψον πρὸς αὐτήν, εἴ τι σῇ δοκεῖ πρέπειν
> γυναικί· λύπης δ' εὐτυχῶν μεθίστασο.
> (1121-22)

After his repeated attempts to make a new wife appeal to Admetus and the latter's repeated insistence that he only wants Alcestis, Heracles uses their similarity and says: "Look at her, is she not at least *like your wife*? (πρέπειν | γυναικί· is exposed running over the line break.) Now cheer up!". This paves the way for the final substitution, as Admetus now is ready to take a woman who looks *like* Alcestis *as* Alcestis. Puzzled by the phenomenon of extraordinary likeness, with a new wife on his mind, Admetus deliberates:

> ὦ θεοί, τί λέξω; θαῦμ' ἀνέλπιστον τόδε·
> γυναῖκα λεύσσω τήν ἐμὴν ἐτητύμως,
> ἢ κέρτομός μ' ἐκ θεοῦ τις ἐκπλήσσει χαρά;
> (1123-25)

Disbelief in the face of an θαῦμ' ἀνέλπιστον makes Admetus question whether he is being tricked by a god. Especially in a play which has repeatedly used substitutions and trickery in close association, Admetus' question cannot be straightforwardly denied. Is Admetus really seeing his wife or is a god playing a trick? Heracles' answer to this question, οὐκ ἔστιν, ἀλλὰ τήνδ' ὀρᾶις δάμαρτα σήν (1126) marks a crucial moment in the plot, because the idea that this new girl actually *is* Alcestis takes shape for the first time in the eyes of the

characters.

At the beginning of this section, I noted that scholars have already argued for the play's finale to be understood as the mirror image and reversal of the earlier encounter between Heracles and Admetus, in which the former was deceived by the latter. In keeping with the observation of a reversal, I want to go further and suggest that Heracles' deception of Admetus actually lies in the moment he suggests that this new woman is in fact Alcestis. To Heracles, Admetus' question turns this finale into the mirror image of their first encounter in which he was deceived by a substitution. In that earlier scene, Heracles had first and quite tenatively floated the idea that the woman who died was an ὀθνεῖος and Admetus had latched onto that to deceive Heracles (533-4). Now, Admetus tentatively floats the idea that, based on the likeness between this the new girl and his lost wife, she could actually *be* Alcestis. All Heracles needs to do is immediately stifle Admetus' own suspicions of trickery and tell him that the woman is really his wife. This, then, is the force of his reply (1126), which constitutes the moment of deception, and it neatly completes the deception dimension of the earlier scene: whereas Admetus made Heracles believe that the woman in question *was not* Alcestis, Heracles now makes him believe that the woman in question *is* Alcestis. Both deceptions, moreover, are benevolent.

In answer to Admetus' subsequent moment of doubt and restlessness, Heracles tells him a story about a battle with Death (1127-34). Admetus' final question, why his wife does not speak to him (1143), gives us exactly the type of moment in which a Euripidean *deus ex machina* intervenes to stop the bustling actions of humans by the imposition of a divine plan. In this, the finale of the *Alcestis* has close parallels in Euripides' *IT*, *Helen* and *Ion*, in all of which a god interrupts the plot just when a dangerous question is asked or the plot is about to take an irreversible turn.[76] Instead of a divine appearance, *Alcestis*' silence is explained by Heracles as a result of the purification which she underwent in the process of dying. Crucially, there is no evidence that such a rite historically involved anything about

[76] In the *IT*, Athena intervenes when Thoas is about to chase after Iphigenia and Orestes (1435). In the *Helen*, the Dioskuri intervene similarly to stop Theoclymenos (1643). The most direct parallel is in the *Ion*, where the eponymous hero is trying to find out the identity of his parents, when Athena intervenes just when he threatens to question the conventional mythical account (1553).

silence.[77] That Euripides has no third actor available can be — and indeed has been — rejected on historical grounds.[78]

Rather, what Oliver Taplin has rightly observed with respect to Aeschylean drama I think also holds true here: "when a silence means something, the attention of the audience is directed to it, they are invited to consider its significance."[79] There is, however, a suggestion alluded to throughout the plot, which can explain the woman's silence on stage and which may come to the audience's mind here as well. When Alcestis (285) and Admetus (330-01) were talking about their vows of continued fidelity, they both spoke about not marrying another Thessalian. Admetus' precise words there even specified that no Thessalian νύμφη will speak to him (προσφθέγξεται 330-1). Heracles did not mention the origin of the woman he won in the story of his contest; but we heard that he won her when he came upon an ἀγῶνα ... πάνδημον (1125-29, here 1126). If she is in fact a foreigner, suddenly made to be a substitute for Alcestis, then her inability to speak Greek and her lack of familiarity with the whole situation emerge plausibly as the real explanation for her silence, which Heracles subsumes into the ritual purity.

After Heracles has rejected Admetus' renewed offer to stay, the chorus find that things have turned out ἀέλπτως (1160). I am about to take the chorus' lines in full as a springboard for concluding this thesis. They offer reflection on expectations and the unexpected is a very fitting way of summarising a play about substitutions that operate as tricks.[80]

In conclusion, this final chapter has made the case that, in the *Alcestis*, the audience witness a series of substitutions, all of which involve deception on some level. First, Apollo lured the fates into taking a different life in the place of Admetus'. This happened before the start of the action but is omnipresent as the very basis for the plot of our play. Second, Admetus benevolently deceived Heracles by substituting an unknown woman for his dead

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[77] On the evidence for this rite, see Parker 2007, ad 114-6, who also sees the inclusion of silence as a Euripidean invention.

[78] Scodel 1999, 101, calls Alcestis' silence "the result of technical limits". The constraining number of actors available was proposed as an explanation by Peter Elmsely and rejected by Verrall 1895, 69-70, as the silence is too obviously marked. Betts 1965 gives an anthropological explanation based on evidence from Plutarch, but the simple fact is we have no reason to think Euripides did not have enough actors to let Alcestis talk had he wanted to.

[79] Taplin 1972, 57. At Taplin 1989, 284, he mentions Alcestis' silence here as one that is "clearly indicated and explained in the text".

[80] Verrall 1895, 67, also notes how appropriate these lines are for his reading of the play.

wife. On the level of plot, the consequences of this deception are Heracles' indulgence in hospitality and his eventual regret which leads him to set off on a rescue mission for Alcestis. Thirdly, the dialogues Admetus has with Alcestis before her death and with his father Pheres show considerable anxiety over Admetus' fidelity to his wife once she is really dead. Furthermore, his idea of substituting her with a statue resonates throughout. Wherever his intended fidelity is emphasised, the anxiety over whether this will stand fast resonates also. Fourthly, the final scene takes on this anxiety over Admetus' fidelity and offers what I argue is the last and most significant substitution, another result of deception. This substitution is hiding in plain sight, namely at the core of the Alcestis myth.

But if the myth and its basis in folklore suggest no such version of the story, why should the ancient audience or modern readers like us favour the provocative and contrarian reading I have argued for?[81] The chief reason is that Euripides' *Alcestis* does something substantively different than simply relay the story of Heracles' rescuing Alcestis from Death, a story which itself may go back only to Phrynicus' adaptation of the play.[82] The novel element in Euripides is that he showed that Heracles was successfully deceived by a substitution trick and lost track of Alcestis' identity. As such, the play links the traditional story of Alcestis, in which the substitution motif was already present, with the new idea of deception. This link between substitution and deception raises an epistemological question about the myth of Alcestis' resurrection: even if everything in the traditional myth insists that the woman at the end is really Alcestis, can we actually be sure? I argue that we can not, because the play raises a justified doubt over Admetus' continued fidelity. It gives good reasons for Admetus to replace Alcestis and even showcases his desire to have an exact copy of her as a substitute. This dynamic meets with the deceptive potential of substitutions to give us a new reading of the play's finale. It offers a new interpretation of the myth of Alcestis as one in which the inherent problem of substitution is is dealt with through a fiction of resurrection.

[81] Parker 2007, xi-xv.
[82] Parker 2007, xvi.

Conclusion

I stay for a moment longer with the chorus' closing lines from the *Alcestis* as they read in full:

> πολλαὶ μορφαὶ τῶν δαιμονίων,
> πολλὰ δ' ἀέλπτως κραίνουσι θεοί·
> καὶ τὰ δοκηθέντ' οὐκ ἐτελέσθη,
> τῶν δ' ἀδοκήτων πόρον ηὗρε θεός.
> τοιόνδ' ἀπέβη τόδε πρᾶγμα.
> (1159-63)

Considering this passage together with the critical response it has received brings out the central themes of this dissertation, versioning and substitution, as concerns of Euripidean scholarship that fall under the rubric of contingency. Readers will likely recognise these lines as the concluding remark of the chorus which stands, exactly or almost exactly, at the end of no fewer than five Euripidean plays: the *Alcestis*, *Andromache*, *Medea*, *Helen*, and *Bacchae*. As such, they point beyond each individual play and to the question of our perception of Euripidean tragedy, which I discussed in the Introduction to this thesis. They do so by raising the simple question whether the same lines should really conclude plays which are as ostensibly different as, for example, the *Helen* and the *Medea*. After all, the former tells the story of a couple happily and miraculously reunited after the perils of war, while the latter shows a cheated wife kill her own children out of desperation and spite.

The possible answers to this question fall precisely within the scholarly debates about textual coherence and generic identification which this thesis has considered. The case that Euripides did not write these closing lines, or at least that he did not write them in all five instances, has been made by W.S. Barrett in his commentary on the *Hippolytus*:

> it would be extraordinary that [Euripides] should content himself in almost one play in three with a repetition of the same undistinguished platitude; [...] I should judge that in four plays at least the lines were added later to cater for a public addicted to sententious commonplaces; [...] the most likely culprits are the actors.[83]

Barrett's view is that the lines, which were found in later sources as a common phrase, fit only at the end of the *Alcestis* and that when they appear elsewhere they are the product of such histrionic changes as Page, apropos the *IA*, discussed at length.

Alternatively, the lines have been brought into connection with the supposed emotional effect of tragedy, noting their gnomic force as a catch-all phrase that belongs more to the common genre of all plays than to the specifics of each play. Thus Victorial Wohl calls them a a "generic closing tag" and William Allan argues as follows in his commentary on the *Helen*:[84]

> [the] very conventionality [..] may well be an essential part of Euripides' purpose. For by hearing the chorus deliver such a trite explanation of the terrible events they have witnessed, the audience is prompted to reflect on the gods' role in (the) human suffering (of the drama).[85]

We may note especially the role played by the brackets in Allan's argument as they turn away from the specific play, in which some "terrible events" may or — as actually happens to be the case in the *Helen* — may not have happened, and towards the ascription of a genre defined by ideas and conventions.

Combining both of these explanations, Donald Mastronarde comments on these very lines at the end of the *Medea*:

> It is probable that the formulaic passages have been added in most or all of these places by actors or book-editors[...]; or if it is genuine, it is so generic that no great significance should be ascribed to it.[86]

While the two explanations together may seem like a tidy conclusion, they also amount to a disparagement of the questions which the lines originally raised. For Mastronarde's com-

[83] Barrett 1964, ad 1426-6.
[84] Wohl 2015, 132, Allan 2008, ad 1688-92.
[85] Allan 2008, ad 1688-92.
[86] Mastronarde 2002 ad 1415-19.

ment implies that further puzzlement is unwarranted and further critical interest unnecessary because our explanations for inconsistencies in the Euripidean text and for the problem of generic ascription are in fact sufficient.[87]

To counter such disparagement, this thesis has shown the rich dividend of thinking more about the origins of these explanations and it has argued that careful re-reading of the plays themselves has an important place in doing this work. It has shown, in Chapters 2 and 3, that key opinions in Euripidean scholarship emerged, at least in part, as a continuation of the plots, that is the language and themes, of the very plays which scholars were writing and thinking about. But the genealogical review of the discourses concerning these specific plays has also shed light on how text- and genre-critical debates emerged in and around the 19th century and influenced Euripidean scholarship to this day. The interpretations, developed in Chapters 1 and 4 respectively, have shown that the *IA* conjures and sustains multiple versions of its own narrative, and that the *Alcestis* confronts the problem of substitution with its deceptive potential. Together, these readings have also contributed to our understanding of a Euripidean poetics of contingency.

Bridging the readings and analyses of scholarship is the idea that the content of a literary text matters to its scholarly history, because stories provide a repository of language and themes on which the critical study of a text draws when formulating problems and shaping debates. The general argument in this about the inflection of literary scholarship through the stories it studies may be taken further, tested, refined, or contradicted by others who are inclined to do so. Here, at the end of this study of Euripides, I only want to mention two plays and suggest why it would be worthwhile to think further about them.

One is the *Bacchae*, which, as we saw in Chapter 2, was once considered alongside the *IA* to be, in significant part, the work of Euripides Minor, given that the two were performed in the same trilogy of 405 after Euripides' death. Additionally, the case for the *Bacchae* as "the most 'satyric' of all Euripides' surviving plays" has been made by David Sansone on the grounds of what Burnett previously found to be satyr-like features across the tragedies

[87] See further Roberts 1987, with full bibliography on similar closing lines, who has rightly criticised such a dismissal and argued that such a coda could be considered a technique of closure deliberately used across different plays.

she studied.[88] We saw that the *Alcestis* is generally still considered a play *sui generis* among the surviving works of Euripides and that the implications of posthumous performance were explored at length for the *IA*, but never for the *Bacchae*. But it may prove fruitful to probe the history of scholarship on the *Bacchae* further, not least to ask how this play — which is in some respects very like the *IA* and *Alcestis* — came to be considered so typically tragic and so typically Euripidean that Eric Dodds, in his seminal commentary on the play, speaks of it as one "of his best plays".[89]

The other play is the *Rhesus*. In Chapter 3, we saw that its scholarly history intersected significantly with that of the *Alcestis* in Murray's coinage of the 'pro-satyric'. But the more pervasive topic of scholarship on the *Rhesus* is the question of authorship. At the end of Chapter 2, we saw Marco Fantuzzi using the *IA* and its history of versioning — at the hands of actors and directors in antiquity — as a reference point for articulating his judgement on the authenticity of the *Rhesus*.[90] This suggest that we stand to gain much more from a thorough investigation of the *Rhesus*' scholarly history, which traces the debate about this play from the earliest modern studies of it to the emergence of the consensus that it is in fact apocryphal.[91]

It stands to reason that scholarship on both the *Bacchae* and the *Rhesus* could be productively read through questions of status and canonicity, of being an outsider or an insider. In the case of the *Bacchae*, this obviously and immediately resonates with a plot in which a newcomer is powerfully established against all detractors and doubters. In the case of the *Rhesus*, questions of belonging and intruding are similarly at stake, since the plot revolves around Achaeans and Trojans invading each other's camps by stealth and prominently features Athena, the most loyal supporter of the Achaean cause, pretending to be the Trojan-affiliated Aphrodite. The recurring theme of mistrust and the centrality of the σύνθημα for the development of the plot, the password by which the Trojans try unsuccessfully to prevent infiltration of their ranks, seem to be worth a closer look in this context as well.

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[88] Sansone 1978, 40.

[89] Dodds 1979, xivi.

[90] Fantuzzi 2020, 23, and generally on the question of authenticity, with further bibliography including the important

[91] Next to Fantuzzi 2020, another recent commentary has been produced by Fries 2014, both with further scholarship. Historically, Murray 1913c could be considered along with the important Ritchie 1964.

Finally, I come back to those lines which close five of Euripides' tragedies. Whether a "generic closing tag" or not, the chorus asks the audience to reflect for a moment on how events have turned out.[92] In doing so, they choose language which contrasts the probable with the actual. Their speech is characterised by a sense of puzzlement in the face of what the gods have brought about ἀέλπτως, in a manner that was neither feared nor hoped, but simply not expected. They draw on their own judgements of what was likely and plausible, noting that a god often finds a way for the ἀδοκήτα, while the δοκηθέντ' remain unfulfilled. As an articulation of the intellectual response to arbitrariness, a response provoked by watching a story unfold on stage, these words by the chorus exemplify what it means to think with and through Euripidean tragedy. But the same words also expresses the experience which scholars of Euripides have made time and again in studying these plays. Coping with the challenges of the arbitrary and unexpected in his plays, dealing with versions and substitutions, has been the pervasive task of modern textual and genre-criticism in Euripides. The chorus' closing lines therefore encapsulate, once again, why the topic of this thesis was two plays of Euripides *together* with their scholarly histories.

[92] Wohl 2015, 132.

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