ΣΥΣΤΑΣΙΣ ΠΡΑΓΜΑΤΩΝ:

THE PLAYWRIGHT’S USE OF THE ACTION IN
ATHENIAN TRAGEDY

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ABSTRACT

This thesis contributes to the understanding of the stagecraft and composition of Athenian tragedy through a re-evaluation of its component elements within the structure. I undertake a re-interpretation of the Aristotelian terms for ‘plot’, which allows for a more nuanced examination of events occurring within a tragedy. As Aristotle notes, the systasis of pragmata is the structure of events that forms a tragedy. The muthos is the way in which these events are presented and includes the actions and words of the dramatis personae. Pragmata are constituent elements of both the systasis and muthos. This thesis identifies and evaluates the pragma’s effects upon the movement of the systasis, its contribution to the enrichment of the muthos and its influence on audience engagement with a performance through both enacted and non-enacted forms.

My approach involves a rigorous examination of the elements common to an enacted pragma, before identifying the variations therein. While a pragma involves all actions which serve the same general function, every instance of a pragma is unique. Each chapter in turn focuses on a particular pragma, before examining the role of that pragma within an entire tragedy. Enactments of each pragma in extant tragedy are tabled in appendices. The pragma of return home is examined within Andromache; recognition in Sophocles’ Elektra; supplication in Hekabe; and reporting in Women of Trachis.

This analysis demonstrates the dynamic role and versatility of different types of pragma within a tragedy, and the playwright’s ingenuity as demonstrated by his deployment of this element. No single approach or methodology can by itself fully interpret an Athenian tragedy, but a focus on a particular pragma illuminates different themes and emphases and ultimately provides us with a better understanding of a tragedy.
CONTENTS

ABSTRACT .............................................................................................................................. 2
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ......................................................................................................... 5
ABBREVIATIONS .................................................................................................................. 6
INTRODUCTION ....................................................................................................................... 7

1. TERMINOLOGY ..................................................................................................................... 9
2. SYSTASIS ............................................................................................................................. 13
3. MUTHOS .............................................................................................................................. 14
4. PRAGMATA .......................................................................................................................... 17
5. ROLE OF PRAGMATA IN A TRAGEDY ........................................................................... 23
   5.1. ENACTED PRAGMATA ................................................................................................. 24
   5.2. NON-ENACTED PRAGMATA ..................................................................................... 27
6. AIMS OF THE RESEARCH ................................................................................................. 29

CHAPTER ONE: RETURN HOME .......................................................................................... 35
1. THE MANIFESTATIONS OF RETURN IN TRAGEDY ..................................................... 38
   1.1. THE ENACTED RETURN .............................................................................................. 39
      1.1.1. ELEMENTS OF THE ENACTED RETURN ......................................................... 42
      1.1.2. ROLE OF THE ENACTED RETURN IN TRAGEDY ......................................... 50
   1.2. THE NON-ENACTED PRAGMA OF RETURN ......................................................... 57
2. ANDROMACHE: THE ΑΝΟΣΤΟΣ ΝΟΣΤΟΣ PLAY .............................................................. 63
3. CONCLUSION .......................................................................................................................... 77

CHAPTER TWO: RECOGNITION .............................................................................................. 78
1. THE MANIFESTATIONS OF RECOGNITION IN TRAGEDY ........................................... 79
   1.1. THE ENACTED RECOGNITION .................................................................................... 81
      1.1.1. ELEMENTS OF THE ENACTED RECOGNITION ............................................. 82
      1.1.2. LANGUAGE ............................................................................................................. 96
      1.1.3. RECOGNITION OF A CORPSE ......................................................................... 100
      1.1.4. ROLE OF THE ENACTED RECOGNITION IN TRAGEDY ................................ 101
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ABBREVIATIONS

A. Aeschylus
E. Euripides


S. Sophocles

INTRODUCTION

Drama is a powerful medium, exerting a strong influence over its audience and immersing them in its spell. Unlike theatre today where the audience is often unaware of the outcome, Athenians frequently knew the story that framed a tragedy. They were familiar with the basic elements of the story and knew what would happen to the characters at the end. There was, therefore, a different emphasis in the playwright’s art – not on what would happen, but how it would happen. Aristotle says in the Poetics that the most important element of tragedy is ἡ τῶν πραγμάτων σύστασις, the structure of events – that is, the *what*.\(^1\) If, however, the audience knew what was going to happen, how do we marry these two points of view? Aristotle believes that it is the *systasis* that is important, the structure of the *pragmata*. It is how the *pragmata* are combined and used within a tragedy that is crucial. In this research I argue for the previously unacknowledged dynamic role of the *pragma* within a tragedy. The *pragma* is an element not only of the *systasis*, but also of the *muthos* and it plays an important role in influencing the audience’s engagement with a tragedy. The playwright’s use of the *pragma* within a tragedy affects the *systasis*, the *muthos* and the audience in a multiplicity of ways which will be closely examined.

As a form of drama, tragedy is made up of the performance of a series of ‘acts’ – the term ‘drama’ deriving from *dran* (‘to do’) – which transmit information to the audience through the acoustic and visual channels. Acoustically, information is conveyed

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\(^1\) *Poetics* 1450a15. Aristotle also uses the phrase ἡ σύνθεσις τῶν πραγμάτων (1450a5).
predominantly through the words and speeches of the characters, while visually it is conveyed through their non-verbal gestures, interactions and movements. While occasionally this information is conveyed within the speech of an individual alone on stage, more commonly it is by means of interactions between multiple characters. The characters’ language, behaviour and gestures propel the story presented on stage, the muthos, through the transferral of information to someone or, alternately, through a physical act, which may cause someone to do something, order someone to do something or tell someone something. It is the concatenation of these events that constructs the systasis of a tragedy. These events can then be categorised into types of action, or pragmata. It is therefore useful to conceive of a pragma as ‘an act of a character [or characters], defined from the point of view of its significance for the course of the action’.

Examples of pragmata include such events as reunion, recognition of another character, persuasion, escape, return home and death. Just as imagery, motifs, verbal elements, characters and rituals feature in Athenian tragedy as conventional components, so does the pragma.

The same type of action, or pragma, can be identified in different tragedies and indeed sometimes several times in the same tragedy. Thus, the nostos (‘return’) of Herakles occurs in Women of Trachis and in Herakles, while in Persians three nostoi are enacted: those of the herald, Dareios and Xerxes. The purpose of the enactment of that pragma within an individual tragedy, however, is very different. It is on the pragma and its effect on the systasis, on the muthos and on the audience of a tragedy that I wish to focus. A pragma, for example, can operate as a motivator of further action or the climax of a tragedy; provide necessary information or further detail for the audience (including the intensification of themes and the development of character); create anticipation within the audience of subsequent events within the play; and engage the audience more closely within the events on stage. Duplication of the same pragma also creates mirror scenes, which compel the audience to consider the similarities and differences between the characters participating in, and the context of, the separate pragmata.

The enacted form of the pragma is not, however, the only form in which an action occurs within a tragedy, and it is this variety of usage which sustains the important role

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2 On drama as a multimedial form of presentation, see further Pfister (1988) at 6-11.
3 To borrow Propp’s definition of a function in his analysis of Russian folktales (Propp (1968) at 21). Propp’s theory is discussed further below at pp. 20-1.
of the *pragma*. Alongside the enacted form, the playwrights use references and allusions to a particular *pragma* to create audience anticipation of future enactments, to more closely engage the audience with the action of the drama and to compel the audience to contrast different characters and situations within a play. It can also be used to intensify themes, increase the pathos on stage and develop the characters of the *dramatis personae*. The *pragma* is therefore the most dynamic element of a drama as it produces a multiplicity of effects on the *systasis*, the *muthos* and the audience of each tragedy.

In this introduction, I will first discuss the terms *pragma*, *systasis* and *muthos* to clarify the terminology used within this research. I will then examine the differences between what constitutes the *systasis* and the *muthos* of a tragedy before discussing the possible functions of the *pragma* within a tragedy and laying out the methodology of this research. Finally, I will briefly discuss the possible benefits of this approach as a means of further understanding how the playwrights structured their tragedies and situate this research within current scholarship.

1. TERMINOLOGY

A *systasis*, or *synthesis*, is a ‘putting-together’, ‘combination’ or ‘structure’ (coming from the verb συνιστάναι). It seems clear, therefore, that ἡ τῶν πραγμάτων σύστασις can be understood as the structure of events that forms a tragedy. It is the ‘plot-structure’. Aristotle does not mention a difference between the *systasis* and the *muthos*, and indeed at one point he explicitly equates them: λέγω γάρ μόθον τούτον τήν σύνθεσιν τῶν πραγμάτων (*Poetics* 1450a4-5). But, while the *systasis* forms the *muthos*, I would argue that it is not the only element within it. It is essential to differentiate between ‘plot’ as the simple structure of events and ‘plot’ as the portrayal of those events – what I designate as the *muthos*.

*Muthos* is never defined by Aristotle and the term is not used consistently throughout the *Poetics*. Indeed, μῦθος had a wide range of meanings even in the ancient world. It is therefore essential to clarify the meaning of *muthos* in this research. Downing

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4 *Muthos* was originally anything that was spoken, but it came to be used in different contexts, often in contrast to *ergon* and to *logos* (see further Johansen (1999), Vernant (1980) at 186-7). Halliwell discusses the difference between Plato and Aristotle’s uses of the term (Halliwell (1986) at 22-4).
identifies five different nuances of meaning for *muthos* at various points in the *Poetics*, but ultimately concludes that there is an ‘unavoidable interplay and interdependence of the various elements of *muthos* in any one of its aspects’ and that they cannot be separated definitively. He defines *muthos* as ‘the totality of related events as reconstructed by the reader out of the poem and, more or less strictly, projected on a chronological line’ – what is sometimes termed as the ‘story’. It is the represented events, not the representation of the events. His second category also concerns the events represented in a tragedy: *muthos* is ‘the totality of related events reconstructed by and familiar to the reader from all sources relevant to his or her cultural history and, more or less strictly, organized and aligned around a central character, family, or event and projected on a chronological line’. *Muthos* encompasses everything a spectator or reader knows about different, but related, mythological versions and is therefore unique for each spectator or reader. *Muthos* is ‘a description of the story according to the functions of its *dramatis personae*, wherein the question of what a tale's *dramatis personae* do is important, but the question of who does it and how it is done are not (and belong to a separate definition of *muthos*)’. This category is based on the research undertaken by Propp on the Russian folktale and focuses on the *muthos* as a series of functions. *Muthos* contains the ‘same totality of related events [as *muthos*], but in the ordered succession in which they are presented in the work, and in the connection in which their presentation is given’. This category therefore represents *τῶν πραγμάτων σύστασις*. His final category, *muthos*, is ‘an intentionally chosen, not externally determined transition from one situation into another, which the play undertakes to represent as its “action”’. It is *μίμησις τῆς πράξεως* and it is as if the events on stage were real events involving real people. All five categories present a different way of interpreting or summarising the events within a tragedy, but ultimately they cannot be separated since they merely represent a different perspective on those same events.

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5 Downing (1984) at 177.
6 Downing (1984) at 165.
9 Propp (1968). Propp’s theory is discussed further below at pp. 20-1.
11 Downing (1984) at 175.
While these categories of meaning for μυθος in the Poetics are not exclusive of each other, they are useful in considering the different ways in which the μυθος of a tragedy can be conceived, particularly in contrast to the συστασις. The συστασις is the collected and connected set of πραγματα; the actions that make up the story. It is the ‘plot-structure’, as it were. The μυθος, however, for the purposes of this research, is the set of events within a tragedy as well as the organisation and portrayal of these events on stage. It comprises everything that happens in a tragedy – not just the events, but the development of character, the imagery, the development of themes. It is the way in which the story is presented and it includes the actions and words of the δραματικοι personae and the visual aspects of production. This final point is important as Aristotle appears to contradict this interpretation in his designation of the six fundamental elements of tragedy: ἔθη – ‘character’, λέξῐς – ‘diction’, διανοία – ‘reasoning’, ὀπσις – ‘visual spectacle’, μελοποιία – ‘lyric poetry’ and μυθος. Aristotle clearly separates the concept of μυθος from ὀπσις. I would argue, however, that his categories are not exclusive and that μυθος must include ὀπσις by virtue of tragedy being performed before an audience – or rather, before spectators who watch (and listen) to everything in front of them.

The stage action (as an integral part of the plot) added, complemented and sometimes even contradicted the words of the poet, but it combined with those words to create meaning within the drama and the performance of the story. Pragmata (and μυθος)

12 Silk argues that Aristotle’s ordering of these parts reflects what should be the ‘chronological sequence of concern to the composer’ (Silk (1994) at 111).

13 Poetics 1449b-1450a.

14 I would argue that when Aristotle uses the term ὀπσις, he is referring to the use of props and to the stage design, rather than the visual presentation on stage per se. He notes that the execution of the spectacle (ἡ ἀπεργασία τῶν ὀψεων) is more the province of the stage-designer (ὁ σκευοποιός) than the poet and, later, that it is essential for the poet when constructing his plots and composing the words to, as much as is possible, keep the scene before his eyes (Poetics 1450b19-20 and 1455a22-7). It is likely that his seemingly paradoxical view of ὀπσις occurred because, while Aristotle acknowledged the importance of the visual dimension in the production of tragedy, he was also aware of how it could be distorted by a desire for grandiose special effects. He therefore ranks it as the least important element, because a tragedy could still be powerful without visual effects. Halliwell thinks ὀπσις means ‘primarily ... the various visual aspects of the actors, rather than the stage setting as a whole’ (Halliwell (1986) at 337-43. See also Taplin (1977b) at 477-9).
therefore, by virtue of being performed before the eyes of an audience, must include a visual element.

Aristotle uses the term *pragma* nineteen times in the *Poetics* and there seems to be a clear differentiation between his use of the singular and plural forms of the noun. In the singular, the noun refers to a generic ‘thing’ or ‘object’,\(^{15}\) while in the plural, it is usually used as part of ἰσύστασις or ἰσύνθεσις, as at 1450a15-39, where it is equated with the *muthos*.\(^{16}\) The plural term seems to be used in a different sense from ‘things’ or ‘objects’ and critics often translate *pragmata* as ‘events’.\(^{17}\) While Aristotle uses the singular to denote a generic thing in the *Poetics*, in this research I will use the term *pragma* as the singular form of *pragmata* to define a type of action.

The cognate term *praxis* in the singular is used in the *Poetics* to denote the overarching structure of the events portrayed in a tragedy and could therefore be seen as similar to my definition of the *systasis*.\(^{18}\) Aristotle, however, clearly states that the *muthos* (*systasis* by my definition) is the *mimēsis* (‘imitation’ or ‘representation’) of a *praxis* (1450a3-4).\(^{19}\) The distinction can be explained by understanding the difference between a story and the presentation of that story in a tragedy. This fundamental distinction is a key element of narratology and various terms have been used for the two levels including *fabula-sjužet, histoire-récit, histoire-discours, fabula-story*.\(^{20}\) While the *praxis* is the structure of the events within the basic story, the *systasis* is the structure of the events (*pragmata*) as presented within the tragedy.\(^{21}\)

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\(^{15}\) For example, ἐπί δ' ἐπεί τὸ καλὸν καὶ ἔπαν πράγμα δισυνέστηκεν ἐκ τινὸν οὐ μόνον τάση τεταγμένα δεῖ ἔχαν ἄλλα καὶ μέγεθος ὑπάρχειν μὴ τὸ τυχὸν (*Poetics* 1450b34-6).

\(^{16}\) Singular: *Poetics* 1450b35, 1451a10. Plural: *Poetics* 1450a5, 1450a15, 1450a22, 1450a32-3, 1450a37, 1450b22, 1451a33, 1451b22, 1453b2-3, 1453b5, 1453b14, 1454a14, 1454a34, 1454b7, 1455a17, 1456a20 and 1456b2.

\(^{17}\) For example, Belfiore (1992b) at 83, Else (1957) at 251, Halliwell (1986) at 140-1.

\(^{18}\) For example at *Poetics* 1459a17-21: Περὶ δὲ τῆς διηγηματικῆς καὶ ἐν μέτρῳ μιμητικῆς, ὅτι δεῖ τοὺς μύθους καθάπερ ἐν ταῖς τραγῳδίαις συνιστάναι δραματικοὺς καὶ περὶ μίαν πράξιν ὀλην καὶ τελείαιν ἔχουσαν ἄρχην καὶ μέσα καὶ τέλος, ἵν' ἄσπερ ζῴον ἐν ὀλνον ποιή τὴν οἰκείαν ἥρονην, δήλον. See further discussion on *praxis* at Belfiore (1992b) at 83-4n.2.

\(^{19}\) See further Woodruff on Aristotle’s use of the term *mimēsis* primarily to explain the effects of poetry upon its audience (Woodruff (1992)).


\(^{21}\) On the interpretation of drama as the *mimēsis* of *praxis*, see Kosman (1992).
2. *Systasis*

The *systasis* of a tragedy has often been translated as ‘plot-structure’ and, as noted above, it comprises a series of *pragmata*. These *pragmata* are constructed (συνιστήναι) to form the *systasis*, which suggests the important element of connectedness between the various *pragmata*. Aristotle identifies that the *praxis* underlying the *systasis* should be complete and have a certain magnitude. There must be a beginning, middle and end. Each *pragma* must therefore lead on to the subsequent *pragma* – according to probability or necessity (κατ’ τὸ εἰκός ἢ τὸ ἀναγκαῖον, 1451a12-13). There must therefore be a link of causality between *pragmata* and it must not be possible to remove one without changing the entire play: ὁ γὰρ προσὸν ἢ μὴ προσὸν μηδὲν ποιεῖ ἐπιδήλων, οὐδὲν μόριον τοῦ ὀλού ἐστίν (1451a34-5). Modern interpretations of the function of ‘plot’ accord with this view. As Brooks notes, ‘plot is the principle of interconnectedness and intention which we cannot do without in moving through the discrete elements – incidents, episodes, actions – of a narrative’.

Aristotle notes also that there must be a move from good to bad fortune or from bad to good fortune.

Aristotle adds a number of other criteria for plots in tragedy, including the need for the best plots – complex ones (πεπλεγµένοι, 1452a12) – to include *peripeteia* and *anagnōrisis*. *Peripeteia*, commonly translated as ‘reversal’, means, according to Aristotle, ‘a change to the opposite of the πράττοµένοι’ (‘actions performed’). Belfiore concludes that this is ‘neither a “reversal of intention” nor a “reversal of fortune” but a turning back (ἀνάκαµψις) of the action from its straight course.’ Thus in *Oedipus the King*, the messenger arrives to free Oedipus of the fear that he will sleep with his mother, but his message leads to the revelation of Oedipus’ true identity. Thus, an event which seemed likely to produce good fortune for Oedipus ended up changing Oedipus’ life for the worse. *Anagnōrisis*, ‘recognition’, is the change from ignorance to

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22 *Poetics* 1450b21-1451b32.
23 On Aristotle’s requirement for necessity and probability in the plot, see further Belfiore (1992b) at 111-19.
25 *Poetics* 1451a13-14.
26 For an analysis of *Iphigeneia among the Taurians*, which Aristotle deems to have the best kind of plot, see Belfiore (1992a) at 370-5.
27 *Poetics* 1452a22-3.
knowledge with regard to people, things or actions. Aristotle’s theory of recognition in tragedy will be further discussed in Chapter 2: Recognition.\(^\text{29}\)

The systasis of a tragedy therefore comprises pragmata that are linked to one another, and forms the foundation of the muthos.

3. **MUTHOS**

Most playwrights plundered the pre-existing plethora of mythological stories to create the muthos of their tragedies. They used traditional stories as the foundation of their plays, but chose how to shape the muthos for their own particular interpretation of the myth. According to the ancient scholia, it is therefore one of the key factors in evaluating the quality of the poet.\(^\text{30}\) It was up to the playwright to construct the systasis and choose the pragmata that would reflect his interpretation of the particular section of the myth on which he wished to focus. Thus began the creation of the muthos. He chose the particular characters that would appear, the identity of the chorus, the location of the action, the medium of verbal exchanges, the imagery, the linguistic elements, the themes and the particular interactions between specific characters. The muthos is therefore an enhanced form of the systasis. It is this choice and invention that makes tragedy such an interesting genre. There were conventions of production, but ultimately the possibilities were limited only by the playwright’s imagination.\(^\text{31}\)

Lowe applies the concept of game theory in a largely successful, though at times opaque, attempt to understand the power of ‘plot’ (conflating the senses of systasis and muthos) and, in so doing, confirms Aristotle’s designation of muthos as the most important of the elements of tragedy.\(^\text{32}\) Lowe applies cognitive theory to fictional texts to conceive of plot as ‘something texts do inside our heads in the action of reading’.\(^\text{33}\) Plot is not a static thing that exists purely on a page or in dramatic actions, but rather is something that has a particular effect on our minds as we read or watch a narrative.

\(^{29}\) See Chapter 2: Recognition at pp. 80-1 and 85-8.

\(^{30}\) See further Nünlist (2009) at 68.

\(^{31}\) Burian notes that the playwrights most obviously innovated the myths in terms of characters’ motivation and characterisation (Burian (1997) at 185).

\(^{32}\) Lowe (2000).

\(^{33}\) Lowe (2000) at 33.
As the audience watches events unfolding on stage, it is – consciously or unconsciously – semantically decoding the actions and words it sees and hears. These actions and words are presented in a sequence determined by the playwright and are therefore interpreted by the audience in a particular order. But this interpretation has two separate subsidiaries; two versions of the story are being created simultaneously. The first version is the story which encompasses all the actions and words that have been performed on stage so far (Lowe’s ‘story-in-time’). The second version includes, as well as the events of the story so far, what the audience thinks will happen in the rest of the play based on clues given in the characters’ words, prior knowledge of the myth and understanding of dramatic conventions, including story-patterns (all of which constitute what Lowe terms the ‘system of gamelike narrative rules’). Thus, as it watches the story-in-time unfold, the audience creates a ‘mental model of the story as a whole’; an atemporal model, the details of which are slowly filled in as the play progresses. These two models of the story are consciously or unconsciously compared against each other and it is this tension that encourages audience anticipation and engagement and ultimately constitutes the power of plot. As Lowe notes, ‘What we, as readers, want is for our temporal and atemporal models of the story to coincide; and all the while we read, we are actively on the lookout for ways in which they will ultimately coincide.’

Since the playwright controls the revelation of information on stage, he is also controlling the way we construct the ‘story-as-a-whole’. As the audience attempts to construct a complete version of the story, the playwright creates expectations of subsequent events, which can then be frustrated or satisfied in the remainder of the play. One way in which the playwright can manipulate our expectations is through the use of conventional pragmata, as well as their frustration or perversion.

A large portion of the audience of a tragedy was well-versed in the conventions of the genre through extensive exposure to dramatic performances. Since at least nine tragedies were performed annually at the Greater Dionysia festival, it is probable that the average Athenian audience member had seen many tragic productions. In addition, it is probable that he would have been involved in the actual performance of a drama as

34 See further Lowe (2000) at 22-34.
either an actor or, more often, as a member of a chorus. A substantial part of the audience in the Theatre of Dionysos would therefore have been very familiar with dramatic conventions, which would in turn create expectations in the audience about subsequent events occurring within a play. This is not to say, however, that every member of an audience of an Athenian tragedy possessed the same knowledge and understanding about Greek conventions or that the tragedy was interpreted in the same way by everybody. The audience was a diverse body, probably made up of Athenian citizens, metics, other Greeks and foreigners, and so there would have been a range of audience competence and understanding. The reaction of the audience to a particular tragedy and to particular pragmata within a tragedy would, therefore, have been varied, although certain common reactions may be conjectured.

While the audience was usually familiar with the basic mythological story, the array of possible story-lines, perspectives and dramatic techniques resulted in the spectators not necessarily knowing exactly what the dramatis personae were going to do in the next scene, or indeed who would appear. In addition, a playwright could and did exploit the audience’s knowledge of dramatic conventions and manipulate their expectations by means of a variety of dramatic techniques, including alteration, postponement, proliferation and elimination of pragmata. The playwrights actively relied on audience experience and understanding of drama to exploit that knowledge in their reiteration of, and innovation within, conventional elements.

36 Revermann estimates that between two and four percent of the Athenian male adult citizen body was involved in dithyrambic and dramatic performance at the Greater Dionysia every year (Revermann (2006a) at 108-12).
37 See further Lada (1996) at 107-10.
38 For the ancient evidence on the audience of Athenian tragedy, see Csapo and Slater (1994) at 290-305. The issue of whether women attended the Greater Dionysia continues to be debated. Scholars who think that women were present during the dramatic contests include Henderson (1991), Podlecki (1990). Those who are sceptical about their presence include Goldhill (1997). I firmly believe that women’s presence was permitted during the dramatic contests, although we cannot know in what numbers. They participated in the grand procession that opened the Dionysia and I see no reason why they would be excluded from events on the subsequent days of the festival.
4. **PRAGMATA**

*Pragmata* are therefore constituent elements of the *systasis* and the *muthos* of a tragedy. As Aristotle notes, tragedy is a *mimesis* of a *praxis*, which is performed by certain agents (πράττοντες, 1449b31). Tragedy is therefore constituted by the actions of the people on stage and *pragmata* must consist of the actions of people, as distinct, for example, from earthquakes or other natural phenomena.

There are five possible channels to activate the audience’s senses when performing drama – visual, olfactory, haptic, gustatory and acoustic \(^{40}\) – and as far as we know, only two of these were regularly used in Athenian tragedy: the acoustic and the visual. The modern reader’s heavy reliance on the surviving texts as the basis for any reconstruction of the tragic performance necessarily leads to an emphasis on the former, which encompasses verbal and non-verbal sounds. \(^{41}\) However, the on-stage acts that comprise a *pragma* involve both the verbal and the physical; what the audience sees is just as important as what it hears. Therefore, the investigation of *pragmata* requires the consideration of the visual aspect as well as the verbal.

Since the *pragma* is a component of the *systasis* of a tragedy, it must have an effect on the subsequent events presented on stage or be affected by the previous events. The content of a *pragma* is therefore more important than its form. Aristotle identifies several quantitative parts (*merē*) of a tragedy: the prologue, episode, *exodos* and choral sections (*parodos* and *stasimon*, or ‘ode’). \(^{42}\) Each part is identifiable by shared formal characteristics, such as the prologue involving a monologue or dialogue between actors occurring before the entrance of the chorus, or the *parodos* being the song sung by the chorus as it enters. I would classify as similar to these *merē* other dramatic elements of tragedy which possess a strict form such as stichomythia and *rhēsis*. These elements can be clearly identified by their formal characteristics, but the nature of the action that can occur in a specific example of an element is varied. For example, a passage of stichomythia may encompass an attempt at persuasion, a greeting or the elicitation of information: Eteokles attempts to quieten the chorus (*Seven against Thebes* 245-63),

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\(^{40}\) Pfister (1988) at 8.

\(^{41}\) Our understanding of the music that was part of a tragic production is unfortunately limited. See for example West (1992), Wilson (2002).

\(^{42}\) *Poetics* 1452b15-18.
while Oedipus greets Ismene (\textit{Oedipus at Kolonos} 324-36) and Atossa questions the chorus about Athens (\textit{Persians} 232-45).\textsuperscript{43}

In contrast to these \textit{merē}, a particular \textit{pragma} comprises only one type of human activity. There are, therefore, many different \textit{pragmata} and an individual \textit{pragma} encompasses all actions which serve the same general function – for instance reunion, rescue, escape, persuasion, deliberation, the revelation of a person’s identity, the return home, the supplication of a person or a god, or death. Even though there is a relatively finite set of \textit{pragmata} within Athenian tragedy, however, it is inevitable that the establishment of specific categories will always be subjective.

While the same \textit{pragma} can be identified in different tragedies, not every event is of a conventional form. The extant plays record exceptional scenes, which stand out for their individuality and distinctiveness. Consider, for example, the scenes depicting Dionysos’ overpowering of Pentheus’ resolve (\textit{Bacchae} 778-846) or the binding of Prometheus (\textit{Prometheus Bound} 1-81). These \textit{hapax} scenes possess a unique power over the audience precisely \textit{because} they are unusual and do not conform to the usual types of action used in tragedy. They are able to surprise and shock the audience.

\textit{Pragmata} can appear in a tragedy in an enacted form or as a verbal reference or visual allusion. A \textit{pragma} is enacted when characters actually perform the amalgam of acts that make up the \textit{pragma} on stage in front of the audience, but it is important to note that not every enactment lasts for the same amount of time. An enacted \textit{pragma} can occupy a brief part of a tragedy or can fill an entire drama. Thus Kreon’s supplication of Haimon lasts only one line: "Εξέλθε, τέκνο, ἱκέσιός σε λίσσομαι" (\textit{Antigone} 1230). In

\textsuperscript{43} On stichomythia generally see Seidensticker (1971). He identifies eleven different types of stichomythia in the extant tragedies: \textit{Information-}, \textit{Streit-}, \textit{Überredungs-}, \textit{Gebets-}, \textit{Anagnorisis-}, \textit{Mord-}, \textit{Begrüßungs-}, \textit{Abschieds-} or \textit{Trennungs-}, \textit{Klage-}, \textit{Beratungs-} and \textit{Überlistungs-stichomythien}. For a general survey of bibliography on stichomythia, see Collard (1980). All line references are based on the Oxford Classical Texts editions of Diggle (ed.), (1981-94), Lloyd-Jones and Wilson (eds.), (1990) and Page (ed.), (1972). Following convention, I have grouped \textit{Prometheus Bound} with the plays of Aeschylus and \textit{Rhesos} with the plays of Euripides. On the authenticity of \textit{Prometheus Bound}, see Griffith (1977), Taplin (1977b) at 460-9. The question of the authorship of \textit{Rhesos} was raised in the first hypothesis to be attached to the text. It has been the subject of much modern debate and the most comprehensive survey of the evidence for Euripidean authorship is Ritchie (1964). For arguments against Euripidean authorship, see Bryce (1990-91), Kitto (1977).
contrast, the supplication process fills the entirety of Aeschylus’ *Suppliant Women*. Within the *systasis* of that tragedy, however, there are other *pragma*, such as Danaos’ reporting of the Argives’ decision to grant the Danaides refuge. An enacted *pragma* can therefore, encompass other enacted *pragma*, as there are not always clearly defined boundaries between them. One *pragma* can also change into a different type of action.

The Phrygian servant’s report to the chorus of the events within the palace instantly changes to a supplication *pragma* upon Orestes’ entry in pursuit (*Orestes* 1506). Non-enacted *pragma* can take a variety of forms, but are primarily verbal references and visual allusions to the *pragma*; basically any means by which a *pragma* is evoked in the mind of the audience.

It is not possible to know exactly what the acts and interactions that occurred on stage during the original production of a tragedy looked like, or indeed what they actually were. The evidence that exists for the staging of tragedies in fifth-century BC Athens is scant. The archaeological remains of the (possibly) fifth-century Theatre of Dionysus continue to be the subject of debate;\(^44\) the extant texts do not contain explicit stage directions like those found in modern scripts;\(^45\) and no pictorial representations of actual performances remain, although some vase paintings may have been inspired by performances of tragedy.\(^46\) In addition, there are no critical reviews by the contemporary audience. It is therefore essential to begin with the text since that is the primary surviving evidence of a tragedy. While the words of the text allow the identification of the majority of *pragma* – in particular the enacted forms – identifying the occurrence of non-enacted forms, and visual allusions in particular, is more difficult for the modern reader. It is therefore necessary to attempt to imagine the stage action that accompanies the words of the characters. The identification of a *pragma*, particularly in a non-enacted form, is unavoidably subjective, but this reflects the fact that not every member of the audience at a dramatic production will interpret the same events in the same way.


\(^{45}\) A few stage directions have been identified, but mainly in the form of off-stage noises. On stage-directions in tragedy, see further Chancellor (1979), Poe (2003), Taplin (1977a).

\(^{46}\) For the latest discussion of the relationship between drama and vase-paintings, see Taplin (2007).
Taplin argues that the tragic text conveyed all the significant actions occurring on stage. If an action was significant, then there was a reference to it in the text. But this defies the fundamental fact that drama is a performed text. As Pfister notes, ‘Drama, in contrast to purely literary texts, makes use not only of verbal, but also of acoustic and visual codes.’ One listens to the words of the characters, but one also watches what happens. Everything that exists or happens in the theatrical space is important and the audience will draw meaning from everything they sense. In addition, these plays were composed to be performed rather than simply read and, when they were first performed, the playwrights were able to advise, or even be, the actors. We therefore cannot know for certain what the actors actually did on stage before the audience, but we can make some reasonable conjectures. In his study of comic stage-action, Revermann makes three sensible methodological assumptions about imagining performance from working with texts. First, he states that the texts can be used as ‘the prime means of falsifiability’. Therefore, every suggested stage action must be compared to the text and, if the text contradicts the performance of that stage action, then that hypothesised action must be discarded. Second, the suggested stage action must be considered against the performance conventions of fifth-century tragedy, including, for example, the three-actor rule. Finally, he argues that critics must clearly discuss other options for performance and state the reasons for their particular solution. This provides a practical framework within which to consider the possible staging of pragnmata in tragedy. If it is possible that a particular gesture accompanied a character’s words and it is not opposed by the text, then it may be considered.

Some pragmata were linked with others as part of an underlying story-pattern, several of which have been identified in tragedy, including return-recognition and return-and-rescue. But while in tragedy a certain pragma could, on occasion, be linked with another, this did not always happen. This is in contrast to the more rigid type of story-pattern identified in other forms of narrative, for example in Russian folktales. Vladimir Propp identified thirty-one separate components, or functions, of the Russian folktale.
beginning with the departure of a member of the hero’s family from home through to the hero’s departure, receipt of a magical agent and return home, and ending with the hero’s marriage and ascent to the throne.\textsuperscript{52} All these functions can be seen to form the story of ‘the quest’. Propp recognises that, while the names and attributes of the main characters may change, the actions within folktales remain constant and identical actions are often attributed to various characters. He posits that one could compare the folktales ‘\textit{according to the functions of its dramatis personae.}’\textsuperscript{53} Propp identifies that the functions occur in the same order in each tale; while not all functions might be present in every tale, the sequence of functions is always identical.\textsuperscript{54}

While folktales encompass the entirety of the so-called ‘quest’ story-pattern, a particular tragedy tends to focus on a small part of a larger mythological story and there is, therefore, not the same strict patterning of functions – or \textit{pragmata}. A \textit{pragma} in tragedy does not always have the same type of subsequent act, can occur at different points within a tragedy (beginning, middle or end) and can be used several times within a tragedy.

The recurrence of the same \textit{pragma} in different Athenian tragedies suggests the possibility of norms within their use, and indeed there are identifiable normative elements within certain \textit{pragmata}. There may be, for example, a basic structural pattern underlying most examples of a \textit{pragma} in terms of the actions of the relevant participants. For example, in the \textit{pragma} of supplicating for protection at an altar, the tragedy often begins with the suppliants sitting in a place sacred to the gods before their enemy arrives to confront them. This confrontation is then usually followed by the arrival of the person who will save them, as, for example, in \textit{Herakles} where the hero’s father, wife and children sit at Zeus’ altar seeking protection from Lykos when Herakles arrives. Tragic \textit{pragma}, however, rarely feature exactly the same elements in the same order, unlike, for example, the Homeric type-scene.

Arend’s analysis of the Homeric type-scene focuses on the actions of the characters in the same way as my research into \textit{pragma} in tragedy.\textsuperscript{55} Arend identifies that, in

\textsuperscript{52} See further Propp (1968) at 25-64.
\textsuperscript{53} Propp (1968) at 19.
\textsuperscript{54} Propp (1968) at 22.
\textsuperscript{55} Arend (1933). For further discussion of Homeric type-scenes, see Edwards (1992), Fenik (1968), Pedrick (1982).
recurring scenes involving the same action in the Homeric poems, there is a similar sequence of actions, usually occurring in the same order. These type-scenes include arrival, sacrifice and meals, sea and land journeys, arming and clothing, retiring to sleep, deliberation, assembly, oaths and bathing, some of which could be considered as *pragma* in tragic representations. Each instance of a type-scene involves similar constitutive elements. For example, after categorizing the arrival scene into four types – the simple arrival, the visit, the embassy and the dream – he identifies that each simple arrival comprises five distinct parts: the hero sets off, arrives at his destination (these first two steps are often conflated), finds the person he is seeking (sitting, standing or occupied with something), stands before them and speaks to them. However, while both types of analysis use the same process of identifying normative elements of a particular ‘action’, each tragic *pragma*, unlike the Homeric type-scene, does not necessarily contain the same elements in the same order. Therefore, in recognition of the difference in structural content between Arend’s type-scene and its close equivalent in tragedy, I will use the term *pragma* rather than type-scene.

While some *pragma* do not have the same underlying structural pattern, they may contain similar features. Thus, while the *nostos pragma* does not hold to a standard pattern, there are often greetings to the house or land, a prayer upon someone’s return, a triumphant return, or the *nostos* of a corpse. And some *pragma* often contain the same physical movements, such as the embrace between characters who have newly recognised each other or the touching of the knee in the *pragma* of supplication. There may also be conventional linguistic elements, such as the *rhēsis* in the reporting *pragma*, the greeting to the house upon a character’s return home, or the duet between characters newly reunited through a recognition. But, while normative elements can be identified, the playwrights were not restricted in their use of these elements within a *pragma*; rather, they varied these elements through omission or addition for particular effect in any particular tragedy. No two scenes involving the same *pragma* are the same. The characters are different, the emphasis of the scene is different and the effect of the *pragma* within the tragedy is different.

Some *pragma* were associated with certain mythological stories and could therefore be expected in any telling of such a story. Playwrights were able to exploit this expectation in the audience through delaying or even omitting such a *pragma*. For

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56 Arend (1933) at 28-63. For example, *Iliad* 2.166-81, 10.150-62, 11.769-80.
example, the recognition of Orestes and Elektra was a crucial part of the story of the revenge murders of Klytaiestra and Aigisthos from at least Stesichoros in the sixth century BC and it is a significant part of Aeschylus’ *Libation-Bearers*. Both the Sophoclean and Euripidean versions of this story feature this recognition, but the recognition occurs in different ways and at different points within each play. Sophocles continually hints at the recognition between the siblings and yet delays it until four-fifths of the way through *Elektra*.

*Pragmata* are therefore components of the *systasis* of a tragedy and consist of one type of human activity. They can occur as an enactment or indirectly through a verbal or visual allusion or reference. While some *pragmata* contain the same underlying structural pattern, others merely possess similar features. The variety in the form of a *pragma* is one reason for their dynamic effects upon the *systasis*, the *muthos* and the audience of a tragedy.

5. **ROLE OF PRAGMATA IN A TRAGEDY**

*Pragmata* are therefore a key component within a tragedy and possess a variety of forms. A *pragma* can affect the *systasis*, the *muthos* and the audience of a tragedy in a variety of ways, depending on whether it is enacted or indirectly referenced. One form of a *pragma* can strengthen another within the same tragedy or they can occur independently.

As discussed above, the audience of a drama, as a reader of a text, is actively interpreting everything that occurs on stage to determine its meaning, so there is a clear process of audience interaction with the dramatic events. The audience observes the progressive disclosure of the *systasis* and the construction of the *muthos* and each *pragma* adds to the audience’s understanding of both of these elements of a tragedy. While it is not possible to determine exactly how the original audience in fifth-century Athens responded to a tragedy, there are indications within Athenian drama itself about the ways in which the audience was *conceived* as responding in old comedy scenes of role-playing before an internal audience. These scenes of internal audience response provide us with a suggestion of how the external audience might have responded to a theatrical production. Thus, the parodic scene in *Acharnians* of Euripides’ *Telephos*
demonstrates quite clearly the power which drama had to captivate the audience’s psychē and engage them in the dramatic action.\textsuperscript{57}

5.1. **ENACTED PRAGMATA**

The most straightforward function of an enacted \textit{pragma} within a tragedy is as a motivator of subsequent action within the \textit{systasis}. Thus the return of Herakles directly leads to his rescue of his father, wife and children and his revenge on Lykos in \textit{Herakles}. And since the \textit{systasis} is a concatenation of \textit{pragma}, all actions develop from and lead to other actions. A particular enacted \textit{pragma} shapes the \textit{systasis} by requiring characters to perform – or to order others to perform – subsequent actions. In addition, it can constitute the climax of a tragedy, as for example the \textit{pragma} of \textit{nostos} in \textit{Persians}. In this instance, the entire play is structured around the anticipated arrival of Xerxes which does not occur until more than four-fifths of the way through the drama.

As we have seen above, a \textit{pragma} can be associated with certain other \textit{pragma} within plot patterns and therefore the enactment of a \textit{pragma} may cause the audience to anticipate future action within the \textit{systasis}. This anticipation can create suspense for the audience, which can then be manipulated by the playwright through delay or frustration. For example, Orestes’ return to his parents’ palace signals the likely \textit{pragma} of vengeance as well as that of recognition with Elektra. In \textit{Libation-Bearers} Orestes’ return leads very quickly to his recognition of Elektra. Sophocles, however, presents the story quite differently. While Orestes returns in the opening scene, his recognition of his sister is deferred for the majority of the drama. Sophocles purposely draws out the suspense in regard to the anticipated recognition. As this example shows, the enactment of a particular \textit{pragma} can also serve to draw the audience’s attention to its contrasting presentations in different tragedies or in myth. The most well-known example of this is Euripides’ depiction of Elektra’s response to the old man’s testimony as to the tokens left at Agamemnon’s tomb in \textit{Elektra}. It is clear that Euripides’ presentation of the

\textsuperscript{57} Acharnians 393-489. Other scenes of role-playing in old comedy include Thesmophoriazusai 846-928 and 1008-135. On the bewitching power of drama and \textit{logos} generally, see further Lada (1993) at 103-5.
recognition scene is designed to make the audience reflect upon Aeschylus’ use of recognition tokens in the scene with Orestes and Elektra in *Libation-Bearers*.\(^{58}\)

Just as playwrights repeat the same imagery within a tragedy, so they often include several enactments of a *pragma* within the same drama. This can create ‘mirror scenes’ or ‘echo scenes’, which invite the audience upon viewing the second *pragma* to consider the similarities or differences between the two enactments in terms of both circumstances and participants.\(^{59}\) A *pragma* can thus have an effect at the moment it occurs in the *systasis as well as* at a later point through audience recollection of the earlier *pragma*. In *Hekabe* Euripides presents two supplication *pragmata* by the former Trojan queen before different Greek commanders. The differences in the circumstances that led to each of her supplications, as well as the subject of her pleas, reflect how her character has developed during the course of the play. In addition, Odysseus’ rejection of Hekabe’s appeal is cast into strong relief when Agamemnon accepts her later supplication. As Mastronarde notes, ‘the use of parallel or mirroring engagements of comparable actions was a common device for engaging an audience’s interpretive attention while binding the action together’.\(^{60}\) Repeated *pragmata* can therefore also serve to strengthen the thematic coherence of the *muthos*. The repeated supplication *pragmata* in *Hekabe*, for example, strengthen the play’s emphasis on man’s inability to control his own fate amid the uncertainties of life.

An enacted *pragma* may have little effect on the ongoing events within the *systasis*, but may instead serve to inform the audience of important information and to suggest how they might interpret actions within the tragedy. This is particularly the case with reporting *pragmata* that occur in the presence of the chorus alone. These *pragmata* usually provide detail about actions, particularly murders, that have occurred off-stage, but which have sometimes been prepared for in the earlier on-stage action. Thus, when Deianeira’s nurse rushes out of the palace to tell the chorus of Deianeira’s suicide and Hyllos’ discovery of her body (*Women of Trachis* 871-946), the reporting of this information does not lead any *dramatis persona* to do anything, but it does provide the audience with relevant information before Herakles’ subsequent entrance. The audience is equipped with the knowledge of Deianeira’s suicide and also of her guilt over the

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59 On mirror scenes, see further Taplin (1978) at 122-39.
60 Mastronarde (2010) at 65.
unintended consequences of her actions, as well as Hyllos’ belated understanding of his motivating role in her death. And this information affects how the audience perceives the words and actions of Herakles and Hyllos in the next scene, the words of the former assigning undeserved blame to his wife and those of the latter attempting to deal with the grief of losing both parents. The knowledge of the off-stage events serves to deepen the audience’s sympathy towards Hyllos and, to a lesser extent, to Deianeira.

Aristotle identifies the key role of the *pragma* within the *systasis* as the evocation of pity and fear in the audience – ἐλεος and φόβος61 – and this fits in with his view that tragedy must effect *katharsis* of the audience’s pity and fear through stimulating these emotions (*Poetics* 1449b27-8). To best arouse pity and fear, he says, the plot must contain a depiction of a *pathos* (‘destructive and painful action’), such as deaths ἐν τῷ φανερῷ, excessive pain or injuries,63 and he also identifies the anticipation of an imminent *pathos* between *philoi* as an agent for the arousal of pity and fear in the audience (1453b17-22). The inclusion of *peripeteia* and *anagnōrisis*, discussed above, within a *systasis* is even more likely to arouse these emotions as they will result in a change to good or bad fortune from its opposite. Pity and fear are not, however, the only emotions that can be awakened in the audience of an Athenian tragedy. Scholars have also identified the likely stimulation of *to philanthropon* (‘sympathy’), empathy, triumph and exultation in the audience.64

An enacted *pragma* can therefore affect not only the *systasis*, but also the audience’s engagement with subsequent events within the tragedy. It can provide essential information to the audience to strengthen the development of character and the thematic coherence of the *muthos*, as well as to suggest how events should be interpreted.

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61 *Poetics* 1452a2-3. On the arousal of tragic emotions in the audience generally, see further Belfiore (1992b).
62 For a discussion of the meaning and process of *katharsis*, see Rorty (1992) at 12-5.
63 *Poetics* 1452b11-13. For a discussion on the meaning of ἐν τῷ φανερῷ, see Belfiore (1992b) at 135-7.
64 See further Konstan (1999), Konstan (2005), Lada (1993) at 105-9.
5.2. **NON-ENACTED PRAGMATA**

Non-enacted forms of a *pragma* possess more variety in their influence on the performance of a tragedy than enacted forms, as they are more able to affect the *systasis*, develop the *muthos* and influence the audience’s engagement and response. The incidence of non-enacted *pragma* can be harder for the modern reader to detect, since we lack the full knowledge and cultural background of the original Athenian audience. As Burian notes, ‘allusions call on a cultural competence that the author counts on spectators to share ... a form of audience complicity in the making of meaning’.  These references and allusions are often suggesting possible directions for future action within the *systasis* to the audience, although they do not allow it to predict exactly what will happen: some of these hints and suggestions will be fulfilled and others will be frustrated; some will result in an enactment of a *pragma*, which will be significant within the *muthos*, while others will remain minor *pragma*.

The most common manifestations of non-enacted *pragma* are references to a potential enactment of the same *pragma*. These can refer to definite actions that will take place within the tragedy, or can simply prepare for such a possible event through suggestion or intimation. The ancient scholia refer to these types of foreshadowing references as *prooikonomia* and *prolepsis*, and they can arouse different reactions within the audience, including hope, pity or, alternatively, foreboding. Regardless of the feelings that accompany it, the anticipation provokes the audience’s active engagement with the *muthos* and makes them emotionally invested in the outcome of the events. The playwright can then frustrate or satisfy their expectations. These references to future *pragma* can occur within the announcement of a prophecy, a character’s deliberation, the announcement of the intention to enact a *pragma*, or the declaration of a character’s desire for such a *pragma*. As well as inducing audience anticipation about subsequent events within the *systasis*, such references can also structure the *muthos* through the repeated foreshadowing and delay of the enactments.

References to past enactments of a *pragma* can help develop the character of the *dramatis personae* for the audience by providing motivation or an explanation for their

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66 See further Nünlist (2009) at 27-42.
actions. For example, in *Agamemnon* reference is made by Aigisthos to his father’s *pragma* of supplication at the family hearth, to provide the background for his involvement in the death of Agamemnon (*Agamemnon* 1587-90). Thus it is clear to the audience that Aigisthos’ actions are based on a desire to revenge himself on Agamemnon for Agamemnon’s father’s crimes against his own father and brothers.

A reference to a *pragma* can remind the audience of an earlier enactment of that *pragma* within the same drama and subsequently allow them to compare and contrast the relative circumstances and results of the particular actions, as well as the situation of the individual participants. A verbal reference can therefore have the same effect as a repeated enactment of a *pragma*. Hekabe’s deliberation as to whether she should supplicate Agamemnon invites comparisons of her current situation with that surrounding her previous supplication to Odysseus (*Hekabe* 737-8). The murder of her son combines with the sacrifice of her daughter to demonstrate strongly the wretchedness of her circumstances and her inability, as a slave, to act on her own behalf.

A reference to a *pragma* can be used to strengthen the impact of a different type of action or to intensify the emotion therein by evoking the emotions associated with that *pragma*. Thus, Elektra describes herself and Orestes as ἵκεται to intensify her prayer to Agamemnon (*Libation-Bearers* 332-7). Supplication *pragmata* always occur within scenes of high emotion since they reflect the desperation of the one making the appeal. An allusion to supplication therefore typically brings with it the emotions attendant to such an action. In addition, the audience is encouraged to feel the pity that is usually aroused by viewing such an action.

Verbal references to a particular *pragma* can strengthen the thematic coherence of a play, helping to create an integrated whole. This can occur in a number of ways. First, a particular *pragma* may not be directly represented on-stage, but the tragedy may instead depict a portion of a mythological story that involves a *pragma*. For example, many tragedies portray events occurring during the Greek army’s *nostos* from Troy. While the soldiers’ return to Greece may not be realized on-stage, several plays enact events

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67 The concept of ‘character’ in Athenian tragedy is the subject of much debate. See, for example, Easterling (1973), Garton (1957), Gill (1986). While this research examines the actions of characters within a tragedy, it is not directly concerned with the concept of ‘character’.
occurring within that return. There are therefore many references to the soldiers’ desire to return home, which help to construct the theme of nostos as significant to the play. In addition, there are several plays that end with the promise of an imminent return. By not enacting the pragma, the playwright leaves open to the audience’s imagination the manner and circumstances of that return. While this may be circumscribed by the pre-existing mythological story, the freedom to imagine the particular situation allows the audience to conclude the story as they see fit.

A further type of non-enacted pragmata is the visual allusion. Even more than verbal references, the visual allusion to a particular pragma can be difficult to identify within the words of the text. Such visual allusions are more likely to occur for those pragmata that involve recognisable physical gestures, such as kneeling in supplication or the embrace following recognition. One possible example of this occurs when Peleus collapses to the ground in grief following the news of his grandson’s death (Andromache 1076). His posture echoes that of Andromache earlier in the play when she was supplicating him and thus it calls to mind the pragma of supplication. The reminiscence of the earlier scene is very effective at increasing the pathos on stage; the visual echoes incite the audience to undertake the same process of comparison and contrast of the two situations as verbal references and repeated enacted pragmata.

Pragmata can therefore occur in many different forms within the corpus of tragedy with varying effects on the muthos, the audience and the characters. A pragma can directly shape the systasis, can influence and manipulate the audience’s emotions leading to a fuller engagement in the performance, can develop the character of the figures on-stage and can strengthen the thematic coherence of the tragedy. The diverse functions of the pragma reveal its importance to the composition of a tragedy and substantiate its dynamism as a component of tragedy.

6. AIMS OF THE RESEARCH

This research aims to recognise the importance of the function of the pragma within a tragedy by examining its multifaceted role within the corpus of extant tragedy. This will redefine our understanding of the way in which tragedies are constructed. The

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68 See further the discussion above on identifying attendant stage action and, in particular, Taplin’s significant actions theory at pp. 19-20.
investigation of the use of a particular *pragma* within a tragedy or trilogy will allow us to better comprehend the ways in which the playwright could influence the audience’s enjoyment of, and engagement with, a tragedy. The Athenian tragedy contains visual, thematic and verbal resonances and repetitions – as well as those of actions – which integrate the disparate elements of the plays to create a complex viewing experience for the audience.

While previous scholarship has examined particular elements of Athenian tragedy, considered tragedy as a performance and investigated tragedy *in performance*, it has failed to acknowledge the dynamic role of the *pragma* within the *systasis* and *muthos* of a tragedy and on the audience. In the last century, extensive research was undertaken into various elements of tragedy – both the formal *merē* (*parts*) of a tragedy, such as stichomythia, *amoibaion*, *agōn* and the *rhēsis*, and *pragmata*, such as supplication and reporting. 69 This work comprised very detailed analysis of the basic structure of these elements, but with little or no consideration of the effect upon the audience or how they were integrated into the *muthos* of a tragedy.

Taplin’s early work on stage action in tragedy was crucial in promoting the study by classicists of Athenian tragedy as performance and his approach is central to developing a better understanding of what was a performative genre. In his seminal work, *The Stagecraft of Aeschylus: The Dramatic Use of Entrances and Exits in Greek Tragedy*, Taplin rightly assigns importance to actors’ entrances and exits in determining the structure of a tragedy. 70 It is what happens *between* the entrances and exits, however, that is more important for the *systasis* and *muthos* of a tragedy. It is the interactions between the *dramatis personae* that affect the *systasis*. The analysis of *pragmata* which involve the interactions of characters is, therefore, a valuable means by which to examine the construction of a tragedy. Entrances and exits do not typically motivate a tragedy’s further momentum, but rather initiate a new set of interactions which can then affect the *systasis*, provide necessary information to the audience and contribute to the *muthos* of a tragedy. This analysis of *pragmata* is similarly based on


70 Taplin identifies that the structure of a tragedy is reliant on the entrances and exits of an actor(s) at either side of a choral strophic song. Taplin himself, however, notes that ‘the basic pattern is seldom so near the surface: there are a multitude of variations on it, and most plays provide several greater or smaller departures’ (Taplin (1977b) at 53).
the concept of tragedy as performance, especially in the consideration of the non-verbal aspects of a pragma.

Further analysis of stagecraft in Athenian tragedy has focussed on the particulars of tragedy-in-performance. Within this field of study, for example, is research into the semiotics of space and movement, costume and dance.71 This type of research does not, however, consider the effect of these elements upon and within the muthos of a tragedy as a whole, but rather examines particular scenes within a tragedy. While providing valuable insight into the performance of a tragedy, it focuses on only one element of production.

My research therefore combines a focus on particular elements of tragedy – the pragmata – with a concern for tragedy-as-performance to consider the effects and influence of that particular element on the performance as a whole and on the audience’s experience of that performance. The effects of pragmata are considered from three viewpoints: the systasis, the muthos and the audience’s engagement with, and response to, the performance.

In this thesis, I will examine four different pragmata in terms of their manifestations mainly in extant tragedy, but with reference to some fragmentary tragedies to further demonstrate their use. This will involve a detailed investigation of congruent elements of the enacted pragma and an examination of variations therein. Some comparison of tragic pragmata will be made with pragmata in Aristophanes’ comedies. The use of elements of distinctly tragic pragmata is one means by which the comic playwrights create parody and paratragedy generally within their comedies.72 Paratragedy involves the inclusion of words or actions particularly associated with tragedy to, in Dover’s words, ‘exploit the humorous potentialities of incongruity by combining high-flown tragic diction and allusions to well-known tragic situations with vulgarity or trivial domestic predicaments’.73 This is clearly demonstrated in Acharnians when Dikaiopolis addresses an eel as Ὁ ψιλτάτη σύ at 885 using a term which frequently occurs in the tragic recognition pragma.74 The inclusion in comedy of the vocabulary and gestures associated with a tragic pragma points to its identifiability as such.

72 On paratragedy in Aristophanes, see further Rau (1967), Silk (1993).
73 Dover (1972).
74 See further Chapter 2: Recognition at p. 99.
I will examine the individual *pragma* of return home, recognition, supplication and reporting. There are many other *pragma* within extant tragedy, but each of the chosen actions has been the subject of extensive research from different perspectives. *Nostos*, or ‘return’, is a *topos* of Greek literature from the earliest epic poems onwards and scholars have examined the consequences of the return and a hero’s reintegration into the household, the spatial dimensions of return in tragedy, its thematic relevance and occurrence in particular plays and *nostos* as a plot-pattern. Recognition has been deemed an important action within tragedy since Aristotle and it has been critically examined in psychoanalytical and political theory, and as a device within Western poetics generally. However, while scholars have examined its use within individual tragedies and compared its various representations in the plays based on Orestes’ vengeance, detailed analysis of its use throughout the corpus of tragedy has been limited. The action of supplication has been examined in anthropological terms, categorised into different types, separated into respective elements and examined from a staging perspective. Finally, the action of reporting has been subjected to close narratological analysis, in particular in regard to messenger-speeches. In contrast, the examination of the individual *pragma*’s effect upon the *systasis*, the *muthos* and the audience of a tragedy will highlight its dynamic role within a tragedy as a whole and the flexibility it offers to the playwright.

Enactments of these *pragma* have been identified through a close reading of the texts. While many *pragma* can be easily identified through clear signals in the text, such as particular vocabulary, exchanges or gestures, there are inevitably some actions which contain elements of a particular *pragma*, but which have ultimately been excluded. For example, the reporting *pragma* does not include prophecy by divine figures, although some may consider this a form of reporting. I consider prophecy to be a separate

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75 The aims of Stuart’s analysis of recognition scenes in tragedy are similar to part of this research in its focus on audience response (Stuart (1918)). He sets out to examine how tragic recognition scenes arouse sympathy, suspense and surprise. His conclusions are, however, quite superficial (‘The recognition scene in Greek tragedy performs various functions in regard to the plot, such as exposition and preparation (Choephoroe), exciting incident (Helen), a step in the development of the plot or action (Electra), climax (Oedipus Rex), denouement (Ion’) at p.290) and he omits a number of scenes involving recognition (for example, Aigisthos’ recognition of Orestes (S. Elektra), Elektra’s of the paidagogos (S. Elektra), Hekabe’s of Polydoros’ corpse (Hekabe) and Menelaos’ of Orestes (Orestes)).
pragma from the reporting of events that have occurred offstage and of messages. The identification of pragmata therefore involves an element of subjectivity. Enactments of the four pragmata relevant to this research are tabled in the appendices, as are the non-enacted pragmata of return and supplication. It is not possible to definitively identify all the non-enacted pragmata of recognition and reporting since the identification of non-enacted recognition pragma is reliant on the possession and application of superior knowledge and therefore different audiences will identify different non-enacted recognition pragma, while any reference to speech has the potential to be a non-enacted reporting pragma. For these reasons, the non-enacted pragmata of recognition and reporting have not been listed in an appendix, but are instead discussed within the individual chapters.

The role of the enacted pragma within the systasis and muthos of a tragedy and its effects upon the audience will then be considered. Next I will examine how the non-enacted forms of the pragma support the enacted forms and contribute to the tragedy as a whole. The identification of non-enacted pragmata can be even more subjective than enactments, particularly where audience knowledge of the characters’ mythological background is required to identify a reference or allusion to a pragma. In each chapter I will undertake a detailed case-study, closely examining how a particular pragma – in both enacted and non-enacted form – contributes to an entire tragedy.

Chapter One will focus on the pragma of the return home or nostos, using as case-study Euripides’ Andromache, in which the promise of a future nostos structures the entire play. Chapter Two will examine the pragma of recognition (or anagnōrisis) before observing how recognition shapes the structure of Sophocles’ Elektra. In particular, the case-study will consider how Sophocles reacts against the previous dramatic interpretations of the same mythological story and their presentation of the recognition between Elektra and Orestes. Chapter Three will focus on the pragma of supplication and how it reinforces the helplessness of mortals in the face of the uncertainties of life in Euripides’ Hekabe. Chapter Four will examine the pragma of reporting. In the case-study I will examine how in Women of Trachis Sophocles uses it to convey clearly the important difference between the reporting of information and the acquisition of knowledge and understanding.

This research contributes to the greater understanding of Athenian tragedy through its examination of the previously unacknowledged complexity and variety of the pragma’s
role within a tragedy. The effects of a single pragma, not only on the systasis and on the audience, but on the whole muthos of a tragedy, have not been sufficiently recognised. This research aims to consider systematically the elements and features of a pragma, before considering its dynamic effects within the performance of a tragedy. Not only does each pragma affect subsequent events within the plot, it can influence the audience’s emotional response and engagement with the tragedy and strengthen the thematic coherence and integrity of the drama.
CHAPTER ONE: RETURN HOME

The arrival of a character and their integration into the stage action is unsurprisingly one of the most common events in Athenian tragedy, together with the converse action of the departure.\(^1\) The mere requirement of the entry of characters into the established stage action ensures the frequency of this *pragma*. It is the archetypal action to control the movement of the *systasis*. In this chapter, I wish to focus on a particular type of arrival, the *pragma* of the return home of a character. This event is often a high point within the *systasis*, anticipated and well prepared for in advance, as well as on occasion unexpected and surprising to the audience both in occurrence and manner. It is, however, usually associated with death. The playwrights use enactments of return to structure the *systasis* of a tragedy and to highlight similarities and differences between returns. Verbal references operate to compel the audience to anticipate future returns (both in a particular tragedy itself and within the larger mythological story), to create suspense about such a return, to create dramatic irony for the audience and to provide information about events in characters’ lives and thus create more complex characters.

The *pragma* of the return home in Athenian tragedy is the arrival of a character back to their *oikos* or their *chthōn* from a place beyond the immediate location of the action of the tragedy after an absence.\(^2\) This definition contains several required elements: an implied loop of travel from the stage location, a close bond with the stage location and a length of absence. Firstly, the character must have undergone a departure from the stage

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1 The arrival is similarly a common scene-type in Homeric epic. Arend distinguishes four types of arrival in Homer: *Einfache Ankunft, Besuch, Botschaft and Traum* (Arend (1933) at 28-63). While references to *nostos* in epic are common, the act of *nostos* occurs infrequently (see further n.5.) The arrival to deliver a message is treated as part of the reporting *pragma* in Chapter 4: Reporting.

2 For a discussion of the various meanings of *oikos*, see Ferrari (2002) at 195.
location at an earlier moment in time (not necessarily, and in fact not usually, depicted in the earlier scenes of a tragedy) and there must be a distance between the stage location and their recent point of departure. Using Rehm’s definition of the spatial categories relevant to the Theatre of Dionysus, this pragma comprises characters’ returns from ‘distanced space’, as opposed to ‘scenic’ or ‘extrascenic’ spaces. Scenic space is the location of the specific tragedy and therefore encompasses what the audience can see on stage. Extrascenic space incorporates those areas adjacent to the stage: inside the skēnē and immediately offstage. Distanced space is those locations connected to the tragedy through the words of the characters, but not directly visible to the audience. To be considered a ‘return home’ for the purposes of this chapter, there must be a separation in the locations from which and to which the character has come. The character does not, however, have to be returning directly from that location and indeed the journey often does not follow a simple loop pattern. Secondly, the scenic space must represent a location closely connected with the returning character. The most common connection is the identification of the skēnē with the character’s place of residence, but it can also be a more general relationship with the land as their homeland. Finally, the returning character must have been away for a considerable period of time. This varies from play to play, but can equate to several days, months or even years – depending on the circumstances of the particular drama.

The pragma of a person returning home in tragedy is the dramatic enactment of the ancient Greek literary topos of the nostos, the return home of the hero. The concept of nostos is evoked in the earliest epic poems. The Iliad contains many references to the heroes’ hoped-for return home from the battle at Troy. One of the most prominent is the articulation of Achilleus’ dilemma as to whether he should stay and fight at Troy for a brief but glorious life, or return home for a quiet long life (Iliad 9.412-16).

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2 As Rehm notes, ‘a formative idea for the ancient Greeks, nostos structured both their lived and imagined worlds’ (Rehm (2002) at 76). On the theme of nostos in epic, tragedy and Hellenistic poetry, see Alexopoulou (2009).
3 There are 28 references to νόστος and νοστε/νικ and more to compounds in the Iliad. As Maronitis notes, these usually refer to ‘the short-term rescue of a hero from the deadly fighting, as a wish and as a hope for the future’ (Maronitis (2004) at 74).
4 εἰ μὲν κ’ αὐθή μένον Τρώων πόλιν ἀμφιμάχωμαι,
   ὀλέτο μὲν μοι νόστος, ἀτὰρ κλέος ἄρθητον ἔσται·
   εἰ δὲ κεν οἶκας ἰκωμὶ φίλην ἐς πατρίδα γαῖαν,

- 36 -
Odyssey tells the story of not only Odysseus’ nostos after the Trojan War to Ithaka, but also Telemachos’. Odysseus’ protracted journey, the moment of his return and the process of his reintegration into the household are all depicted. Mention is also made of other heroes’ returns from Troy, including Nestor, Agamemnon and Menelaos and within the action of the poem itself the bard Phemios sings of the Ἀχιλλέων νόστος λυγρός (Odyssey 1.326). As well as the Homeric epics, there were a number of epic poems entitled simply Nostoi which related the returns home of the Greek heroes from Troy. These mainly focus on the journey rather than the actual return home and describe a variety of nostoi, which result in both happy and disastrous endings for the hero. The prevalence of these mentions of nostoi indicates their importance in the narrative world of ancient Greece.

While scholars have examined the consequences of the return and a hero’s reintegration into the household, the spatial dimensions of return in tragedy and its thematic relevance and occurrence in particular plays, little attention has been paid to the specific effects of the pragma of the return both in a direct enacted form and through indirect contextual and thematic references on the systasis, the muthos and the audience of a tragedy. In this chapter I will examine the role that the return pragma plays within a tragedy, that is, how the action of return affects the plot development of a tragedy. The pragma of return appears both through enactments and within verbal references. While characters regularly appear returning home on stage before the audience, they can also evoke this particular action through recollections of past instances and prophecies of

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διέλετό μοι κλέος ἔσθλόν, ἐπὶ δηρὸν δὲ μοι αἰῶν
— ἢσσεται, οὐδὲ κε μ’ ὀσκά τέλος θανάτου κιχεὶ. (Iliad 9.412-16)

Pignani notes that the verb ἀλλύναι in conjunction with nostos is also used of Odysseus at Odyssey 23.67-8 (Pignani (1995) at 450).

7 Proklos records the existence of a five-book Nostoi ascribed to Agias of Troezen which narrated the returns from Troy of (at least) Agamemnon, Menelaos, Diomedes, Nestor, Neoptolemos, Lokrian Aias and Phoinix (Nosti T 2 EGF). Of Stesichoros’ Nostoi only one fragment remains (fr. 209 PMGF), describing Telemachos’ departure from Helen and Menelaos’ palace, which is portrayed in Odyssey 15.113-19 (see further Peek (1958), Reece (1988)).

future occurrences of return. I will begin by investigating the different manifestations of the return in tragedy and the identifiable elements therein before exploring its effect upon the systasis, the muthos and the audience. Finally, I will examine the role of the return pragma within Andromache, a play considered as a ‘nostos-tragedy’, but which I argue is actually an anostos nostos tragedy.

1. THE MANIFESTATIONS OF RETURN IN TRAGEDY

Nostos is a common theme and element of Athenian tragedies, but the playwrights present it in a variety of ways in the extant tragedies, including both enactments and verbal references. While some tragedies depict the actual moment of a character’s return, the action of other tragedies may take place within an overarching nostos, but the nostos itself is not achieved on stage. Further, the concluding scenes of some tragedies suggest that a nostos will follow after the end of the play. Finally, other tragedies include verbal references to nostos, which can vary from a brief passing mention of a previous occasion of nostos to the repeated reference to the action as a key theme of the muthos of a tragedy. Enactments and references to nostos can occur within the same tragedy to reinforce each other and to create strong thematic resonances throughout a tragedy or they can occur separately for different purposes.

It may be argued that the use of a static stage setting focussed on the skênê almost necessitates the actions of arrival and departure, thereby opening up the tragedies to portrayals of and references to nostos, but there are other factors accounting for its frequent depiction. As well as the popularity of nostos in Greek literature, its

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9 Nostos is also a common theme and element in fragmentary tragedies, including Aeschylus’ Karians, Sophocles’ Hermione, Polynxene and Phaidra, Euripides’ Aigeus, Alexandros, Alkmeon in Psophis, Antiope, Bellerophonetes, Diktys, Hippolytos Kalyptomenos, Hypsipyle, Kresphontes, Melanippe Desmotis, Oineus and Philoktetes.

10 There are surprisingly few occurrences of νόστος and νοστε/νοστε in extant tragedy, with a total of only fifty-four. Euripides unsurprisingly has the highest incidence with thirty-nine uses in twelve plays (averaging just over two mentions per extant play). Sophocles uses the fewest cognates in his plays, with only five in four plays (with less than one per extant play), a frequency which Aeschylus doubles in only two plays (averaging over one reference per extant play). Some uses of nostos cognates do not refer to a ‘return home’, but instead in the context appear to equate with ‘arrival’ (Alkestis 1023, Children of Herakles 645, Helen 428, 474, 891, Iphigeneia among the Taurians 1112, Iphigeneia at Aulis 966, 1261 and Rhesos 427).
pervasiveness in tragedy may reflect the prevalence of war in the fifth century BC – against the Persians and later against Sparta – which necessitated the regular absence of the men from their homes. The absence and reintegration into the household of husbands and sons are useful processes through which to explore family dynamics, which are often the central focus of tragedy. Reintegration into the household has an impact on both the returning and waiting parties and this process of re-establishing norms is full of dramatic potential. Consequently, nostos in tragedy is always problematic and often associated with death. Hall notes the prevalence of tragedy plots involving transgressive women that require the absence of the male head of the household and therefore also his return home and she links the frequency of these plots with ‘the Athenian citizen’s anxiety about the crises which might afflict his household during his absence.’

While women in tragedy tend to become transgressive in the absence of their kurios – whether husband, father or other –, a nostos in tragedy does not inevitably involve a man’s return to a transgressive woman. While many plays engaging with nostos involve transgressive women, a nostos may induce death and disaster with no blameworthy behaviour on the part of a waiting woman. In some plays, it is the very absence of the hero that leads to the problematic nostos while in others, it is the act of returning. The extant tragedies record great diversity in the enacted return.

1.1. The Enacted Return

Allan argues that Euripides in Andromache plays ‘with the standard form of the nostos pattern, misdirecting his audience, and encouraging them to foresee a development (the return of Neoptolemus and his reinstatement of social and domestic order) which he then frustrates.’ I would question, however, Allan’s identification of a ‘standard form of the nostos pattern’. There is no standard pattern of nostos in epic poetry which depicts both happy and disastrous homecomings of the various heroes, nor, I would argue, is there such a pattern in tragedy. While the basic action of a return pragma

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12 Allan (2000) at 47.
13 Jouanna identifies two types of return in tragedy: ‘le retour du roi victorieux après une longue absence qui se termine tragiquement, le retour du jeune prince venu venger son père mort et reconquérir le pouvoir’ (Jouanna (2007) at 329). This categorisation, however, is too simplistic and does not encompass all the surviving nostoi. Consider, for example, the return of Xerxes in Persians.
may be the same – the advent of a character into the stage action – there are few other common elements to this *pragma*. Rather, there is an assortment of functions, timings and consequences of *nostoi*, as well as a diversity of returning and waiting figures. Returns can be anticipated, having been announced by the arrival of other characters, or unexpected. Returning characters can be extravagantly welcomed or enter with almost no acknowledgement from others. Within the *systasis* of a tragedy, the *pragma* of *nostos* is very versatile and can appear in many different forms. It can occur as a brief, almost unacknowledged element of the *systasis*, as a key scene motivating subsequent *pragma* or even as the conclusion or climax of the tragedy.

While a *nostos* is enacted in at least fifteen extant tragedies, the two plays most frequently identified as *nostos*-tragedies are Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon* and Euripides’ *Herakles*. In both tragedies a great hero returns in triumph from an arduous trial, *Agamemnon* from the Trojan War and Herakles from the theft of Kerberos from the Underworld respectively, to his waiting wife and family at home. In Aeschylus’ play, it is Agamemnon’s absence that causes the problematic *nostos*, since Klytaimestra has plotted his death with her lover Aigisthos while the king has been away in Troy. In Euripides’ play, on the other hand, the very act of Herakles’ return leads to the deaths of his family. The *nostoi* of both these heroes fit within the pattern of the ‘loop of *nostos*’ that Kurke identifies in Pindar’s poetry, whereby a warrior or athlete achieves *kleos* away from the house and then brings the glory and prizes back to the house. Tragedy’s depictions of *nostos* place less emphasis on the winning of *kleos*, since tragedy is interested in the return itself and its consequences, rather than the events that occurred.

14 For a list of enacted returns in extant tragedy, see Appendix 1: Enacted return *pragma*. Hall suggests that a *nostos* occurs in *Medeia* when Jason returns from the palace, but as he stated that he had given this house to Medea to live in (*Medeia* 448), I do not think it can be seen as a return home (Hall (1997) at 107). Hausdoerffer argues that Peleus can be seen as completing a *nostos* in *Andromache*, but while I accept that there are resonances with the action of *nostos*, I do not think that it is a true *nostos* since he too lives elsewhere (Hausdoerffer (2005) at 124-61). This is discussed further below at p. 71. Rehm argues for two *nostoi* of Herakles in Euripides’ *Herakles*, the second being his journey to Athens at the end of the play (Rehm (2002) at 100). I do not consider this journey to be a return, since at this point in his life Herakles is not closely connected with Athens. It could be argued that Dionysos’ arrival in Thebes is a *nostos*, however Dionysos was born elsewhere (from Zeus’ thigh) and he declares explicitly that he has come from the east to this Greek city (*Bacchae* 13-20).

15 Kurke (1991) at 15-34.
before the return. Instead of the simple welcome home of the victorious warrior or athlete in Pindar, nostoi enacted in tragedy are usually problematic and associated with death. In Homeric epic too, in particular the Odyssey, the concept of nostos is often connected with death.16 Odysseus’ (and Telemachos’) returns lead to the deaths of the suitors, while Agamemnon’s death after his homecoming is regularly referenced throughout the Odyssey.17 There are, however, other nostoi mentioned in the Odyssey which are not associated with death, including those of Menelaos (and Helen) and Nestor.18 The epic Odyssey ends with Odysseus’ return and happy reunion with Penelope – even if he is not fated to remain at home for long, as Teiresias foretells (Odyssey 11.119-37) – but tragedy does not allow such an ending (with the possible exception of Alkestis which will be discussed further below).19 Herakles’ nostos in the nick of time to save his family from death appears to parallel the return of Odysseus, but in Euripides’ play following the return Herakles is deluded by Lyssa at the command of Hera into killing his wife and children.20 His triumphant return and the completion of his labours incite Hera to take revenge on him and destroy his happy return. Euripides’ variations to the myth of Herakles’ life (particularly his disastrous nostos at the end of his labours, rather than as their origin) would have created surprise and suspense in the audience as to the events in the remainder of the tragedy. While Homer’s epic may allow the successful reintegration into the oikos in that Odysseus and Penelope avoid the fatal consequences of the nostos, tragedy does not. Greek tragedy avoids the happy ending for the reunited couple and concentrates instead on the problematic nature of returning home, or, as Alexopoulou terms it, ‘the impossibility of a return to the same’.

16 Iliadic references to nostoi are usually to future nostoi, not to ones achieved. See further n.5 in this chapter.
17 Including Odyssey 3.193-8, 4.90-2 and 11.405-34.
18 Nestor: Odyssey 3.157-200; Menelaos: 3.311-12, 4.81-9; Myrmidons, Philoktetes and Idomeneus: 3.188-92.
19 See pp. 48-9 and 54-5.
20 Cropp discusses the similarities – and the contrasts – between the lead-up to, and the realisation of, the nostoi of Odysseus and Herakles in Euripides’ Herakles (Cropp (1986) at 191-2).
21 Alexopoulou discusses the phenomenon in tragedy whereby there can never be ‘a return to the same’: the hero changes during his journey as a result of his experiences, as does the waiting figure in his absence (Alexopoulou (2006)).
death (or attempted death) of someone in the *oikos* (this can be the returning figure or the waiting figures) and those that appear to end the cycle of violence and death in the *oikos* and to offer potential happiness to the survivors or for the community.

1.1.1. **ELEMENTS OF THE ENACTED RETURN**

A return *per se* only requires a returning figure and a place to which to return. In tragedy, however, it characteristically also requires a waiting figure, who is usually female. In tandem with this, most of the characters depicted as enacting a return home in tragedy are male. The predominance of male *nostoi* as opposed to female *nostoi* is likely related to the higher incidence of males leaving the *oikos* in tragedy and travelling around the world, rather than any inherent gendering of space in tragedy whereby women are linked with the *oikos* and men with the *polis*.\(^{22}\) The two females who achieve a *nostos* in tragedy both left their house under the influence of a god. Alkestis is taken away to the underworld by Thanatos, while Agave leaves Thebes for Mount Kithairon under the control of Dionysos. The unusual circumstances of their departures – as well as their returns – are stressed in *Alkestis* and *Bacchae*.\(^{23}\)

There is no set template for the manner of return in tragedy: a character can return on foot, in a chariot or be carried in. Agamemnon in the first play of the *Oresteia* achieves his triumphant return in a carriage accompanied by his captured concubine Kassandra (*Agamemnon* 782).\(^{24}\) While no mention is made of their mode of entry at that point, Klytaiamnestra later directs her husband to step down from his *apēnē*, a four-wheeled vehicle of some sort (905-7). I would argue that the king is accompanied not only by Kassandra, but also by plunder from Troy and by his soldiers.\(^{25}\) Thus, his success on the

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\(^{22}\) The strict structural opposition of male:*polis* and female:*oikos* in tragedy has been convincingly negated by Foley (Foley (1982). See also Easterling (1987).

\(^{23}\) Alkestis’ *nostos* is discussed further below at pp. 48-9 and 54-5.

\(^{24}\) See Taplin for a discussion of chariot-borne entries in tragedy (Taplin (1977b) at 75-9). Ley discusses the practical aspects of the use of a carriage in the tragic playing space (Ley (2007) at 69-83).

\(^{25}\) The hypothesis to the play states that Agamemnon enters on an *apēnē* and that he is followed by another in which are spoils and Kassandra. There is, however, no evidence of spoils in the text and it is possible that the hypothesis author was writing with a particular later performance in mind; cf. Σ *Orestes* 57 for an example of a particular staging which directly contradicts the text (see further Page (1934) at 41-2). Fraenkel believes that there was only one wagon bearing
far-off battlefield is visually represented for the internal and external audiences at the precise moment of his impressive entrance into the scenic space. His elevation above those waiting on stage for his return emphasises his grandeur and his victory, as he towers over them both in height and in visible success. This is a king who does not need to walk on the ground as others do. In addition, the presence of the veiled woman in the carriage with him, whose presence is not initially acknowledged by any of the characters on stage, bears similarities with the traditional wedding procession from the bride’s home to the groom’s house.\footnote{The complete lack of acknowledgement of her presence by any of the on-stage characters serves to highlight her as a person of interest for the audience. While there are many mute characters in Athenian tragedies, her presence in the carriage alongside the king – and above all others on stage – suggests her importance. The returning man can be seen as coming home with a new spouse, but, as it turns out, to his wife who emerges from the palace at 855 to greet him. This awkward situation suggests a confrontation of some sort and yet even Klytai mestra makes no immediate reference to this silent unidentified woman and the audience must wait nearly another hundred lines before Agamemnon finally acknowledges Kassandra’s existence.\footnote{Even then Agamemnon calls her η ξένη (950). She is not named until 1035 by Klytai mestra.} These allusions to the bridal procession add to the grandeur of Agamemnon’s triumphant return.\footnote{Goward notes the visually striking contrast between Agamemnon’s spectacular entrance with attendants (although she thinks that Kassandra enters in a separate chariot) and his silent barefoot exit into the palace (Goward (2005) at 33).}

In contrast to Agamemnon’s triumphant return in a carriage surrounded by spoils, in his earliest extant tragedy Aeschylus presents the return home of a king on foot in disgrace after the failure of a military campaign. The image of Xerxes’ return at the end of Persians doubly portrays his defeat clearly to the audience: not only does the king return on foot, but he is also dressed in rags (Persians 908). His return is contrasted with the earlier depiction in the play of the kind of entrance more commonly associated with royalty, that of his mother (150). No mention is made in the text at this point of the play as to the mode of her entry, but when she returns a second time, she explicitly

\begin{footnotesize}

\footnote{A wedding procession could occur on foot or in a wheeled vehicle (Sutton (1981) at 152). For a discussion of wedding imagery associated with Kassandra in this play, including her arrival in a chariot with a man at his home, see Seaford (1987) at 127-8.}

\footnote{Agamemnon and Kassandra, there were no spoils and the king was not accompanied by a retinue (Fraenkel (ed.), (1955) at 370-1).}
\end{footnotesize}
contrasts that entry with her earlier one. She is ἄνευ τοῦ ὀρθημάτων χλιδῆς τε τῆς πάροιθεν (607-8). Her first entry, therefore, occurs in a carriage, she is dressed in fine clothing and she is also likely to have had with her attendants in keeping with her high social status. In addition, the councillors prostrate themselves before her (152), which they do not do when Xerxes enters – as they foretold at 588-90. Xerxes’ return at the end of the play is also contrasted with the chorus’ extensive description in the parodos of the departure of the Persian army (16-64). Xerxes’ entry is a clear visual indication of the desperate fall in circumstances of the Persian king.

In Herakles, the hero achieves his nostos in triumph like Agamemnon, having successfully escaped from the underworld (Herakles 514). No mention is made in the text as to his mode of return, but, since his children are urged by Megara to approach him and clasp his cloak, which would be difficult if he were standing on a carriage, it is likely that he is on foot like Xerxes. The mode of return is therefore not linked with the returning character’s achievements while away.

In a number of tragedies heroes effect their nostos only as corpses. In most cases the arrival has been anticipated for a portion of the tragedy, allowing the audience to expect and await their entry. The action of the corpse’s arrival usually occurs towards the end of a tragedy and it is a strong visible indicator of the conclusion of a plot action prepared for earlier on stage. It is often the climax in the systasis, but can also motivate further actions, such as the delivery of eulogies or prophesies and the enactment of funeral rituals. In the case of Neoptolemos’ return home in Andromache, the audience and the on-stage characters await his arrival for almost the entire play from the moment Andromache first mentions his absence in the prologue (Andromache 49-55) until his body is carried in at 1166-7. As with other types of action, however, the playwrights could adapt elements of this action to create a particular effect, including surprise, upon the audience. A shocking variation on the arrival of a dead hero occurs in Bacchae, when Pentheus’ body is carried on stage not only in pieces, but also by several people. Agave enters proudly displaying aloft the head of her son, describing it as a

29 As Taplin rightly notes (Taplin (1977b) at 79-80).
30 Nostoi of corpses at the end of tragedies include Polynikes and Eteokles in Seven against Thebes (848), Haimon in Antigone (1261), Neoptolemos in Andromache (1166), Polynikes, Eteokles and Iokaste in Phoenician Women (1480) and Pentheus in Bacchae (1165).
31 As discussed comprehensively by Mossman (1996). The role of the nostos pragma in Andromache will be analysed in detail below at pp. 63-78.
'blessed beast' (μακαρίαν θήραν, Bacchae 1171), before Kadmos enters accompanied by servants bearing pieces of his grandson’s corpse. The manner of this entrance of Pentheus stands in stark contrast to his earlier arrival from out of town (215) and manifestly signals how utterly the proud and confident ruler has been brought low. Like Euripides, Sophocles varies the nostos of a corpse for effect: by having Herakles carried in at the end of Women of Trachis motionless and on a litter. The great hero, however, is not dead, only in intense suffering, as is revealed shortly after his entrance. The manner of Herakles’ long-awaited return home strongly contrasts with the typical depiction of the physically powerful hero and, although the audience has been prepared for his physical state through Hyllos’ report (Women of Trachis 749-812), the visual demonstration of the hero’s weakness would have been arresting for the audience. The playwrights clearly appreciated the impressive power of the visual image of the introduction of a character as a corpse or appearing to be a corpse towards the end of a tragedy.

Aeschylus staged an extraordinary nostos in Persians which features not a living figure or a corpse, but the ghost of the dead king Dareios (Persians 681). He is called forth from Hades by the Persian councillors and the queen in a necromantic ritual (640-80).32 Other characters call on the dead to return, particularly the slain Agamemnon, but this is the only occasion in extant tragedy where the dead figure actually returns.33 Dareios returns despite his admittedly arduous journey from the underworld (688-90) and he utters no prayers of thanks to the gods or to his house or Persia, as many returning characters do.

The first words uttered by a returning figure (particularly if after a lengthy absence) are often a greeting to the house or to the land or a prayer.34 Such greetings and prayers

32 Taplin discusses the possible options for the location of Dareios’ arrival (Taplin (1977b) at 116-19). I favour the argument that the ghost of the king appears (like a god) on the skēnē roof (see for example Rehm (2002) at 239).
33 Libation-Bearers 456-60. Elektra tasks Chrysothemis to do this in S. Elektra 453-4.
occur in nostoi portrayed in the plays of Aeschylus and Euripides, but not in those of Sophocles.\textsuperscript{35} The use of an exclamatory ὅ or ἵο does convey the returning character’s gratitude for having returned safely. One of the most extravagant examples of this type of speech is that spoken by Agamemnon’s herald, who initially greets the Argive land which he did not think to ever see again and then greets the land, the light of the sun, Zeus, Apollo, all the gods, Hermes and finally the king’s palace (\textit{Agamemnon} 503-21).\textsuperscript{36} His salutation lasts for nearly twenty lines. Fraenkel believes that the herald supplemented his words by throwing himself to the earth, a gesture which would strongly depict the depth of his feelings at having returned home.\textsuperscript{37} The excessiveness of his greeting contrasts strongly with that of the king, who returns three hundred lines later and states very briefly that it is just to address Argos and the local gods who aided him in his victory (\textit{Agamemnon} 810-13). Fraenkel suggests that it is allowed for the herald to indulge in the expression of his deep feelings since he is from a lower social class, while the king was required to restrain his speech.\textsuperscript{38} The messenger in \textit{Persians} spends only two lines greeting the land upon his return before reporting the defeat of the Persian forces (\textit{Persians} 249-50) and most other extant examples of returning greetings and prayers are spoken by members of the higher social classes, so Fraenkel’s argument is difficult to verify. Regardless of any social differences, however, the portrayal of two return \textit{pragmata} within the one play would prompt the audience to compare the

\textit{Hippolytos}, but whether this is simply a prayer for assistance in his revenge or a prayer upon return is impossible to say due to the state of the extant text], \textit{Hippolytos} 61-71.\textsuperscript{35} The closest parallel in Sophocles occurs when the paidagogos points out all the landmarks for Orestes when they arrive in \textit{Elektra}, thus setting the scene for the audience (S. \textit{Elektra} 1-10). Neither Hyllos nor Herakles in \textit{Women of Trachis} make any greeting or prayer upon their return, but it could be argued that the circumstances surrounding their returns negate any desire to celebrate their return. Rather than a greeting, Lichas’ first words are ἄλλα ἐνέμεθ’ (\textit{Women of Trachis} 229), which Davies sees as the ‘messenger’s insistence on opening his news with a word of good omen’ in the same way as Kreon’s Ἐσθλήν at \textit{Oedipus the King} 87 (Davies (ed.), (1991a) at 106).\textsuperscript{36} Fraenkel notes that ἵο is rarely used by Aeschylus in trimeters (only here and later in \textit{Agamemnon} at 518 and 1305) and that therefore the herald’s use is to be regarded as showing ‘strong excitement’ (Fraenkel (ed.), (1955) at 256).\textsuperscript{37} Fraenkel identifies similar gestures at \textit{Odyssey} 4.521-3 (Agamemnon upon his return to Argos), 5.462-3 (Odysseus upon reaching the land of the Phaiakians), 13.353-5 (Odysseus upon his return to Ithaka) and Aristophanes \textit{Wealth} 771-3 (Fraenkel (ed.), (1955) at 256).\textsuperscript{38}
differences between the elements of the scenes, including the degree of salutation, and thus to compare the returning characters.

These greetings and prayers are often neglected by the returning figure when the circumstances do not warrant such an address, as for example when the ghost of Dareios returns briefly from the underworld (Persians 681), or if there is something overtly amiss at the scenic location, as for example when Theseus returns home in Hippolytos. \footnote{Other returning figures that make no greeting or prayer include Xerxes (who laments his wretched fate, Persians 908), the dying Hippolytos (Hippolytos 1347), Polyneikes (who fears trickery on the part of Eteokles, Phoenician Women 261), Pentheus (concerned over events that have occurred in Thebes during his absence, Bacchae 215) and Agave and Kadmos (with Pentheus’ body, Bacchae 1168 and 1216).}

Theseus arrives having visited an oracle and is wearing a garland indicating a favourable response (Hippolytos 806-7). Before he can greet the house, he hears a βοή (790) from the house, which presumably were the cries of lamentation at Phaidra’s death. His concern over the situation within the house stops him from undertaking the usual customary address. In addition, Theseus explicitly notes that this noise is not an appropriate greeting for one returning from an oracle (792-3), which in turn implies that some sort of welcome is normally fitting (see below). The expected pleasantries have been done away with because of the abnormal circumstances.

Alkestis utters no prayer to the gods or greeting to her house upon her return with Herakles at the end of Alkestis. In fact, she is completely silent and she is the only living character to achieve a nostos on stage without saying a word. When Admetos draws attention to her silence, Herakles explains it as being linked with funerary ritual. \footnote{Betts raises the possibility that Alkestis is here treated as a deuteropotmos, someone who was falsely thought to be dead. Such a person was not fully recognised among the living until the proper rituals had been undertaken (Betts (1965)).}

\begin{quote}
οὔπω θέμις σοι τήσυς προσφωνημάτων κλύειν, πρὸν ἄν θεοίς τοῖς νερτέροις ἀφαγνίσηται καὶ τρίτον μόλη φῶς. \\
(Alkestis 1144-6)
\end{quote}

While it has been noted that silence in ancient Greek literature is more closely linked with women than with men, there is still something disquieting about Alkestis’ speechless return. \footnote{See for example Griffith (2001) at 123-4, McClure (1999) at 19-24.} Some scholars have linked her silence with the fact that she died,
but a more convincing argument can be made based on the manner of her nostos.\(^{42}\) Alkestis does not actually effect her own return; instead, Herakles is the one who rescues her from death, brings her back home and hands her over to Admetos. While Alkestis actively chose to die for Admetos, giving her life for his, in the final scene she is reduced to a passive object to be exchanged between men, thus reconstituting the norm she temporarily displaced whereby men control the social order. As Wohl notes, ‘Alkestis’ silence, her reduction to a deathlike state, reminds us of the violence behind this economics and injects a profound sense of discomfort into this ostensible happy reunion.’\(^{43}\) Alkestis has indeed returned from the dead to be reunited with her husband, but, while Admetos embraces her, there is no indication from her of any joy at their reunion or gratitude to Herakles for his actions. As Segal notes, ‘we cannot even be sure that Alcestis wants to be brought back.’\(^{44}\) While the couple are ultimately reunited, the means and reality of Alkestis’ return create disquieting notes in the final scene of the play.

As is appropriate, returning characters are often welcomed home by those awaiting them. This welcome varies in length and content, but usually reveals the waiting figures’ pleasure at the returning figures’ return. In Agamemnon, for example, the chorus greets the herald’s return in a single line (Agamemnon 538), but later enthusiastically welcomes the returning king (782-809). Klytaimestra too utters a lengthy speech once Agamemnon has returned, but strikingly she does not address her words to him initially, instead talking to the chorus until she finally turns to him over twenty lines later (Agamemnon 855-913). Megara and Amphitryon clearly express their delight at Herakles’ return which signifies their salvation (Herakles 531). While Megara greets the ‘most beloved of men’, Amphitryon greets him as ὁ φάος μολὼν πατρί. Phaos or phōs is often used in the context of salvation and clearly shows Amphitryon’s certainty that Herakles will save them from the threat posed by Lykos.\(^{45}\) Conspicuously, the returning Xerxes is welcomed with what the chorus of Persian councillors describes

\(^{42}\) For example, Buxton does not think that she is fully alive at this point, while Parker thinks her silence convinces the audience that she did actually die (Buxton (2003) at 173-9, Parker (ed.), (2007) at 252). Her silence has also been explained by the fact that the entire tragedy can be performed by only two actors if she does not speak in this scene.

\(^{43}\) Wohl (1998) at xvi-xvii.

\(^{44}\) Segal (1993) at 82.

\(^{45}\) For a discussion of the connection between light and salvation, see Chapter 2: Recognition at pp. 98-9.
as ‘ill-omened shouts’ (*Persians* 935-40). Rather than a triumphant welcome, they clearly signal the lamentation they feel at the recent disastrous events. In response to the *nostos* of a corpse, the welcome is appropriately indicative of the on-stage characters’ sorrow. In *Seven against Thebes*, for example, the chorus sing a lament as the bodies of Polyneikes and Eteokles are carried in (848-60).

The return of a king or hero is often announced in advance by the arrival of a messenger, which often also equates to their own return. Thus, in both *Agamemnon* and *Persians* a messenger is sent on ahead to warn of the king’s return (*Agamemnon* 503, *Persians* 249). This announcement implies future events within the play’s plot for the audience, namely, the character’s return. This creation of audience anticipation can then be satisfied or manipulated by the playwright later in the play according to his desire. Thus, Xerxes does indeed return at the end of the *Persians* in rags, as the messenger has foretold in his detailed report of the king’s experiences in the disastrous battle (*Persians* 456-71). There is no announcement of Herakles’ *nostos* in Euripides’ play of the same name to heighten the impact of his return at the last possible moment to save his family from death. In contrast, Herakles’ return in *Women of Trachis* is foreshadowed to the waiting Deianeira three times, with each successive report suggesting a deterioration in the state of the hero’s return.

There is therefore great variety in the portrayals of *nostos* in Athenian tragedy. Men and women return, some in a carriage, some on foot and some carried in on a litter. Returns can be announced in advance and therefore anticipated by the internal and external audiences or occur with no warning. The returning figure can greet their house or land and pray to the gods in gratitude for their return and can be welcomed by those at home. Returns can occur in triumph and in ignominy. In each instance of return, the playwright can emphasise or vary a particular element to create a greater impact upon

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46 In Sophocles’ *Elektra* the chorus tells of how Agamemnon’s return from Troy was greeted by ‘mournful voices’ (S. *Elektra* 193).

47 Other songs of lament accompanying the *nostos* of a corpse occur in *Andromache* (1166-1225) and E. *Suppliant Women* (794-836). The entry of Pentheus’ body is greeted with joyous revelry by the chorus, an appropriate response from the followers of Dionysos (*Bacchae* 1168-99).

48 Menelaos’ imminent return is announced not by a herald, but by Elektra (*Orestes* 241-2).

49 See further Chapter 4: Reporting at pp. 245-6.
the audience’s engagement with and enjoyment of the *nostos of pragma* and the tragedy as a whole.

1.1.2. **Role of the Enacted Return in Tragedy**

The *pragma of nostos* has a variety of functions, timings and consequences within a tragedy. It can occur at any stage of a tragedy – beginning, middle and end. There are no extant tragedies where a *nostos* occurs prior to the action of the play, which reinforces the idea that *nostoi* allowed the playwrights great freedom to experiment dramatically with the possibilities inherent in the return of an absent character and their reintegration into the household. A *nostos* can act as a motivator of further action within the *systasis* or it can represent the climax of a tragedy. The action can also occur multiple times within the same tragedy. This can create mirror scenes which compel the audience to consider the similarities and differences between multiple returns of the same character, as well as returns of different characters and this increases the complexity of the *muthos*. An enacted return *pragma* can also create anticipation in the audience of a future enacted *pragma*.

Three tragedies open with a *nostos pragma* that sets off a chain of events resulting in death that occurs during the running time of the play. In two of these, it is the returning figure himself who directly brings about the consequent deaths. In *Libation-Bearers* and Sophocles’ *Elektra* Orestes returns (as does the paidagogos) with the intention of murdering Klytaimestra and Aigisthos and this is fulfilled. In the latter play he is accompanied by the paidagogos who achieves his *nostos* at the same time.50 In *Hippolytus*, the eponymous youth’s return is a link in the concatenation of events that lead to Phaidra’s suicide and his own death. In the prologue Aphrodite has already set in motion the events, but Hippolytus’ return is essential for her plan. These initial *nostoi* act as plot motivators, directly bringing about the subsequent actions of the characters in the *systasis* of the tragedy.

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50 Jouanna argues that Sophocles’ doubling of the return *pragma* of Orestes and the paidagogos at the beginning of the play deliberately highlights the playwright’s originality in contrast to *Libation-Bearers* where Orestes returns with an almost completely mute Pylades. This doubling continues in the play when Elektra’s reaction to Orestes’ death is duplicated in the scene with the paidagogos and later with the urn (Jouanna (2007) at 332). Elektra’s recognitions of Orestes and of the paidagogos are also explicitly connected through her use of the same greeting to them both (S. *Elektra* 1224 and 1354).
An opening *pragma* of return can also suggest the enactment of other *pragmata* because of underlying plot patterns. Thus, Orestes’ return to his parents’ palace signals the likely *pragma* of vengeance as well as that of recognition with Elektra in *Libation-Bearers* and both the *Elektras*.

More commonly, *nostoi* are depicted in the middle of plays, which allows the representation of the character’s absence in the *oikos*, the expectation of their arrival and the aftermath of their return. The audience is thus made to anticipate the moment and manner of the return *pragma* and the return itself often motivates subsequent *pragmata* within the *systasis*. The families and households of Agamemnon (in *Agamemnon*), Theseus (*Hippolytos*), Herakles (in *Herakles*) and Pentheus (*Bacchae*) are depicted before and after their return. The consequences of their absence are directly presented to the audience, which then actively awaits their return to see how these men will deal with the events that have occurred in, and as a result of, their absence.

The returns of Hyllos in *Women of Trachis*, Theoklymenos in *Helen* and Menelaos in *Orestes* are also somewhat anticipated since references have been made to their absence or to their imminent return. While Hyllos’ return and his reporting of events motivates Deianeira’s suicide, Theoklymenos’ and Menelaos’ *nostoi* constitute fairly minor elements within the *systasis*. The returns of Polyneikes in *Phoenician Women* and Dareios in *Persians* are unanticipated and therefore elicit surprise in the audience, but do not have a strong effect upon subsequent events in the *systasis*. In the case of heralds, there is usually no reference to their absence or expected return; they simply appear to give their report (*Persians* and *Agamemnon*). The old man’s announcement of Lichas’ imminent return in *Women of Trachis* is the exception here. Like those *nostoi* depicted at the beginning of a tragedy, returns in the middle of a tragedy act as plot motivators, directly affecting to varying degree the subsequent actions within the *systasis*. Not all *nostoi* in the middle of a play directly result in death within the *oikos*, some instead provide information about a forthcoming *nostos*, which may itself be associated with death.

Ten extant tragedies conclude with an enacted *nostos*.51 Three of these are structured so that the entire tragedy anticipates the character’s return and their *nostos* forms the climax of the play: Xerxes in *Persians*, Herakles in *Women of Trachis* and Neoptolemos

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51 *Persians*, *Seven against Thebes*, *Antigone*, *Women of Trachis*, S. *Elektra*, *Alkestis*, *Hippolytos*, *Andromache*, *Phoenician Women* and *Bacchae*. 

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in Andromache. And yet the manner in which these returns take place is in some way unexpected: Xerxes returns, not as the great king of Persia, but very much as a defeated man in rags, Herakles, the archetypal hero, returns carried in on his death bed, while Neoptolemos returns as a corpse. Their returns in the final scenes of the tragedy are their first appearance on stage, but throughout the plays other characters have talked about them and their future return. I would add to this group a return that has been overlooked as a climactic nostos around which the entire tragedy is structured, that of Aigisthos in Sophocles’ Elektra. References are regularly made to Aigisthos’ absence and his predicted return and the play concludes after he finally appears on stage and is led inside the skēnē to his death. 

The majority of other characters who achieve their nostos in the final part of a tragedy are characters who have previously appeared on stage, with the exception of Agave in Bacchae and Polyneikes in Seven against Thebes. These successive appearances allow the playwright to contrast the character’s entrances and compel the audience to consider the similarities and differences between the two. The final nostos is usually the conveyance on-stage of the corpse, clearly signalling to the audience the power of fate or the gods. With the exception of Kadmos in Bacchae and Alkestis in Alkestis, these characters appear dead or dying: Eteokles in Seven against Thebes, Haimon in Antigone, Hippolytos in Hippolytos, Polyneikes, Eteokles and Iokaste in Phoenician Women and Pentheus in Bacchae.

While most nostoi in tragedy are associated with death in some way, there is a discernible pattern between those tragedies which enact a nostos during the early and middle parts of the systasis and those which portray it in the final scenes. Nearly all those nostoi which occur in the early or central sections result in the death of someone within the oikos – whether the returning hero himself or one of his philoi, either a family member or spouse – even if the nostos initially appears to be happy for the returning and waiting figures. Orestes’ return results in death for his mother and her lover in Libation-Bearers and Sophocles’ Elektra. Herakles kills his wife and family when he returns in Herakles. Hippolytos’ return leads to his step-mother’s suicide, as Theseus’ leads to the death of his son in Hippolytos, as Hyllos’ leads to that of his mother in Women of Trachis. Agamemnon’s and Pentheus’ returns lead to their own

52 S. Elektra 310-15, 386, 517, 627, 1308, 1402-3 and 1428.
53 Exceptions: the heralds in Agamemnon and Persians, Dareios in Persians, Menelaos in Orestes, Theoklymenos in Helen and the first return of Pentheus in Bacchae.
deaths during *Agamemnon* and *Bacchae*. Lichas’ return leads to the death of his master Herakles, who can thus be counted among his *philoi*, in *Women of Trachis*.

In the *nostoi* enacted at the end of the *systasis*, however, the return appears to end the cycle of death and destruction for the *oikos* and often to promise new beginnings for the survivors or for the community.\(^{54}\) The cycle of death is often ended because the concluding *nostos* is that of a dead or dying figure. Of the fifteen characters that achieve a *nostos* in the final scenes, eight are already dead, two are dying and one is led off to his death at the end of the play. The end of this period of violence often initiates ostensible happiness and prosperity for the surviving members of the *oikos* or the larger community. Thus in *Persians* Xerxes’ return signals the end of warfare and death for the Persians since his attempted invasion has failed and his defeat promises a period without further warfare. In *Andromache* Neoptolemos’ grandmother Thetis, in the role of *dea ex machina*, prophesises Peleus’ impending immortality, Andromache’s marriage to Helenos and the ascension of her descendants to the throne of Molossia. Herakles, with his dying words, commands his son Hyllos to marry Iole and thus to continue his *oikos* in *Women of Trachis*.\(^{55}\)

While the ending of these tragedies seems to bring to an end the catastrophic events enveloping the *oikos*, there are often disquieting intimations that the future will not be entirely happy and prosperous for the survivors and the audience is often left to ponder the kind of fortune the survivors will actually experience. The end of a tragedy is never the end of the story of the surviving characters for either the characters themselves or for the audience, which generally knows the rest of the story from the mythological tradition. As Dunn notes, the end of a tragedy is merely ‘a pause in a continuous and endless story’.\(^{56}\) In *Hippolytos* Artemis, as *dea ex machina*, explains the truth about what has happened and the role that Aphrodite played in the preceding events and establishes a ritual in memory of Hippolytos. On stage, however, is one figure whose life has been destroyed and for whom there appears to be no happiness in his future. By

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\(^{54}\) This links in with Seaford’s argument that the destruction of the royal household that occurs in many tragedies leads to a benefit for the *polis* (see further Seaford (1993), Seaford (1994b) at 344–62).

\(^{55}\) Rehm proposes three different reasons for why Herakles requires this of Hyllos, but he agrees that the continuation of the *oikos* is a necessity: ‘The *oikos* is fragile, and the *kurios* is on his death bed. A funeral and a wedding are in order’ (Rehm (1994) at 80-1).

\(^{56}\) Dunn (1996) at 6.
the end of the day on which he returned happy from an oracle, Theseus is left bereft of both wife and son. Herakles’ oikos may continue through the marriage of Hyllus and Iole, but Hyllus must marry the object of his father’s lust in Women of Trachis.

Unlike the majority of nostoi that either lead to the death of someone within the oikos or end the cycle of violence, Alkestis’ return to Admetos may be deemed fortunate for both the returning and the waiting figures in that this is the only nostos where a returning character’s reunion with their spouse does not result in either of their deaths. One possible explanation for this unusual portrayal of nostos is its production as the fourth of Euripides’ plays at the Greater Dionysia festival in 438 BC. While it was performed in the slot traditionally reserved for the satyr-play, it is very definitely not a satyr-play, not least owing to the absence of the traditional chorus of satyrs. It cannot be denied however that Euripides includes in the Alkestis several features that are unusual for a tragedy, perhaps deliberately playing with the generic categories inherent in drama of the time. While Alkestis’ nostos appears superficially to be successful, there are hints of complications with the return. In the final scene, as well as the issues concerning her silence and her position as an object of exchange between Herakles and Admetos discussed above, Alkestis witnesses Admetos’ complete disavowal of the promise he swore to her in exchange for her self-sacrifice: that he would never bring another woman into his house (Alkestis 304-8, 328-35). Not only has he broken his oath so easily and so quickly, but he takes this unknown woman into his home as a ‘wife’. The marriage ritual is directly and visually alluded to with references to the key elements of cheir epi karpō and anakaluptēria. Herakles acts as her kurios, mentioning specifically that he gives her to Admetos to serve (προσπολείν, 1024) in his

57 Seaforth argues that by this time the satyr-play had become dispensable as the fourth play, but evidence for this is slight as this appears to be the only extant example of this occurrence (Seaforth (ed.), (1984) at 24-5). Marshall argues that Alkestis is the unique example of the genre of ‘prosatric drama’, which Euripides created in protest at a law forbidding kōmōidein, which Marshall interprets as possibly meaning ‘all types of mockery, play, and revelry’. Since satyr plays could be seen as tragedies with the addition of kōmos (‘revel’), he argues that Euripides chose to stage a satyr-less satyr play in protest at the constraint on comedy (Marshall (2000).

58 For a discussion of the genre of Alkestis, see Parker (ed.), (2007) at xx-xxiii. Parker argues that the scene of the gluttonous Herakles (a stock figure of both comedy and satyr-play) is part of Euripides’ ‘continuing dialogue with comedy’ (at xxii).

house, directly indicating his authority over her. Admetos is the first to broach the introduction of this unknown woman into his house as a wife, albeit hypothetically (1049-56). Herakles then brings up the possibility of Admetos marrying for a second time (1087-96) and calls on Admetos to receive the woman into his house (1097). His request is met by initial reluctance, but eventually at Herakles’ insistence Admetos accepts the woman and takes her hand. Three times Herakles calls attention to Admetos’ hands and thus the _cheir epi karpō_ ritual (1113, 1115 and 1116). Herakles then unveils her, his action resembling the _anakaluptēria_ of the wedding ceremony (1120). Finally, the two enter the house at 1158, echoing the _agōgē_ when the bride enters the groom’s house for the first time as bride. The visual and verbal aspects of this scene therefore evoke the imagery of a wedding. This second marriage ritual in some ways erases the marriage between Admetos and Alkestis, in that he begins the ritual without knowing the identity of his wife-to-be. He willingly breaks his promise to his first wife and quickly replaces her with another woman. While he is rewarded for not keeping his promise to his first wife with her return and a renewed marriage, she is rewarded for her self-sacrifice with the direct evidence of the faithlessness of her husband. Kaimio posits the possibility that Admetos and Alkestis clasp hands, rather than that he clasps her wrist. This gesture might then serve as a visual allusion of their hand clasping at 375-6 when she entrusted the children to him. This direct reminder of the oath he swore, which Euripides has already called to the audience’s mind when Herakles suggested that Admetos marry a second time, would strengthen the impression of Admetos’ betrayal of Alkestis. Regardless of the type of hand gesture, the simple physical touch highlights the friction in the scene. Alkestis’ _nostos_ is a further indication that there can never be an entirely uncomplicated and happy _nostos_ in tragedy.

_Nostoi_ in the early and middle parts of a tragedy – all completed by living figures – lead to death within the _oikos_, while those at the end of the tragedy – usually involving the

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60 The exact moment of the unveiling is unclear. It must be before 1121-2 when Herakles tells Admetos to look on her and see if she resembles his wife. Admetos has turned away from the woman at 1118 when he describes himself reaching out to touch her as if he were beheading a Gorgon.

61 MacLachlan discusses the role of _charis_ within the _Alkestis_, noting that ‘when Admetus accepts the woman and recognizes her identity, she becomes the ultimate _charis_, the final link in the chain. But this final _charis_ is unreciprocal and ironic: Admetus is the one who has consistently denied _charis_ to his wife’ (MacLachlan (1993) at 153-4).

corpses of oikos members – represent the end of the phase of violence for that family, even if the future parts of the wider mythological story involve further violence.

Some tragedies contain multiple nostoi to highlight for the audience the similarities and differences between the separate pragmata. Thus, Euripides portrays Pentheus returning home twice in Bacchae to strongly signal the change in his fate through his contrasting physical condition at the moment of each return. At 212 he returns to deal with the new evils (νεοχµ/uni1F70 κακά, Bacchae 213) that have occurred in Thebes in his absence, and at 1165 the return of his corpse in pieces clearly demonstrates his failure to resolve the situation. The same contrast is effected in Hippolytos. Aphrodite concludes her prologue with the announcement of Hippolytos’ return with his attendants from a day’s hunting (Hippolytos 51-7). The gaiety of their arrival is indicated by λέλακεν (55) and their singing of a prayer to Artemis (61-71). In contrast, later in the play Hippolytos returns home – again accompanied by attendants (1358) –, but this time they are helping him to walk. The chorus describes him as ὁ τάλας ... / σάρκας νεαρὰς ἕξεν τε κάρα / διαλυµανθείς (1342-4). The verb διαλυµαινέσθαι (‘to maltreat shamefully’, ‘to undo utterly’) is repeated by Hippolytos himself only five lines later to emphasise his physical condition. Just as in Bacchae, the change in his fate is strikingly signalled for the audience by the very manner of his return. Equally, contrasts between separate nostos pragmata are emphasised through a similarity in greetings of waiting figures in Sophocles’ Elektra and returning figures in Agamemnon. Elektra greets both Orestes and the paidagogos after they have returned with ὅ φιλτατον φ/uniFF6ς (S. Elektra 1224 and 1354). Her use of the same greeting to both her brother and a household servant is slightly troubling. Both the herald and Agamemnon utter greetings to the land upon their return and pray to the gods for their safe return (Agamemnon 503-21 and 810-13).

As well as the many portrayals of enacted nostoi on stage, the tragedians also used the pragma of return in a non-enacted form. The pragma of nostos can be highlighted as part of the overarching mythological story and the verbal references to nostos help to strengthen and evoke particular themes and emotions within the muthos, as well as to provide information about past and future events.

63 Barrett notes the effectiveness of the timing of their entry: ‘this carefree open-air rejoicing on the very heels of φάος δὲ λοίσθιον βλέπων τόδε’ (Barrett (ed.), (1964) at 167).
1.2. THE NON-ENACTED PRAGMA OF RETURN

While a tragedy may present the actual moment of a hero’s nostos, the pragma of return can also be used as an element of a play without direct representation on stage. A character’s arrival may be portrayed as a nostos, but to a location other than their oikos, to evoke the intense emotions that are associated with the pragma of the return home of a character for the audience. A tragedy may portray events that occur during or just before a return with references to nostos intensifying the muthos. Characters may express a desire to return home, recollect previous occasions of return or prophesy future returns. The suggestion of a future nostos pragma is often made to create anticipation and suspense in the audience. This can occur within a simple reference to someone’s absence.

The arrival of the dead champion warriors who attacked Thebes in Euripides’ Suppliant Women is not technically a nostos in that the corpses are returned to their mothers rather than to their homes, but the notion of return is implied by the reunion with their grieving family members (E. Suppliant Women 794). The cortège of seven funerary litters would have been an impressive moment within the play, a visible sign of the success of the supplication which opened the drama. While their entry concludes the supplication story, it is not the end of the play as it leads on to Adrastos’ eulogy for the warriors and their cremation. Similarly, the earlier arrival of the messenger reporting on Theseus’ success is also treated as a nostos (634). The chorus says to him upon his arrival: φίλτατ’, ε’ µν’ νόστον ἀγγέλλεις σέθεν / τήν τ’ ἄµφι Θησέως βάξιν (641-2). The allusion to the pragma of nostos intensifies the emotion of the scene. Peleus’ arrival in Andromache at Neoptolemos’ house to rescue Andromache and her son is similarly reminiscent of a nostos.

There are four tragedies which depict events occurring within the course of a return, but without enacting the moment of return itself. The extant tragedies within this category all revolve around the stereotypical nostos, that of the Greek heroes returning from the Trojan War. The events of the tragedy may centre on the returning Greek heroes themselves, as in Aias or Helen, or on the prisoners who accompany them, as in Hekabe and Trojan Women. While the latter two plays concentrate on the disasters befalling the

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64 For a list of non-enacted return pragmata in extant tragedy, see Appendix 2: Non-enacted return pragmata.
65 See further below at p. 71.
captive Trojans, both end with the entire camp departing for Greece. While it is a departure from their homes for the Trojan women, it is the beginning of the journey home for the Greeks. In Trojan Women the whole focus in the final scene is on the despair of the women at the fall of Troy and their movement ἐκ πάτρας (Trojan Women 1311). In Hekabe, however, the emotions of the Greeks and the Trojans are contrasted in the final words of the play. While Agamemnon’s final words announce the coming of the winds which will take the Greeks home and he prays that they will find things at home in good order (Hekabe 1289-92), the chorus’ words end the play with the knowledge of the hardships of being a slave that await them (1293-5). In a fine example of dramatic irony, Agamemnon’s words evoke for the audience the knowledge of the exact type of homecoming that awaits Agamemnon at the hands of Klytaimestra and Aigisthos, especially in light of Polymestor’s prophecy uttered just a few lines earlier. The play closes with the promise of his nostos, but it is not to be the return he hopes for.

Several tragedies end with the promise of an imminent return, including Ion, Hekabe, Helen and Iphigeneia among the Taurians. The lack of portrayal of the moment and aftermath of the return can leave open for the audience the question of what sort of nostos these characters will actually have. Ion is to return to a city from which he has been absent since he was a baby and will be burdened by responsibility the like of which he has never known in his life as a temple-slave. Euripides has Ion extensively voice his worries to Xouthos (Ion 585-647) and he plaintively demands of his supposedly newly-revealed father: ἡ α δέ µ’ α/το/ζήν (646). Although Ion’s final words in the play show his acceptance of his new-found role as heir to the Athenian throne (1618), his earlier concerns are never fully alleviated. Although he is reunited with his mother and cognisant that Apollo is his real father, Ion’s many concerns about becoming the Athenian king are still valid at the end of the play. Similarly, Helen expresses concern about her welcome home in Sparta because of the unjustified tale that she went to Troy with Paris (Helen 287-9). When she leaves with Menelaos for Sparta

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66 Thalmann notes the close similarity of words between Agamemnon’s final words in Hekabe (ἀδοµέν τόνδε ἀφειµένοι πόνον) and the first line of the Agamemnon (θεο/ς µὲν αίτω τόνδ’ ἀπαλλαξήγη πόνον) (Thalmann (1993) at 154-5). Marshall argues that the details in Polymestor’s prophecy about Agamemnon’s death are a deliberate reference to the Aeschylean version of the story so that the audience will believe that every part of the prophecy will come true (Marshall (2001) at 61).
at the end of the play, this may have been in the minds of the audience. During the more than ten years that she has been absent, many Spartans (and other Greeks) have died in the futile attempt to seize her from Troy. With her reputation undeservedly slandered, she will be the focus of hatred and suspicion from her compatriots, who lost husbands and sons in the effort to retrieve her, men, whose deaths turned out to be for nothing. Like Helen, Iphigeneia is in a barbarian land having previously been rescued from Greece. As Wright notes, the barbarian land they inhabit is a place of refuge for them and hence their return to Greece cannot be seen purely as an escape from a horrific situation to a better place. At the end of *Iphigeneia among the Taurians*, after Orestes and Elektra have attempted to begin their nostos, Athene appears as dea ex machina. Her prophecy for their future does not actually include a return home for Iphigeneia, who must live in Brauron and guard the keys at Artemis’ temple (*Iphigeneia among the Taurians* 1462-7). Iphigeneia will not obtain her desired homecoming. Orestes’ homecoming is left open by the goddess who merely pronounces that he must build a temple of Artemis Tauropolos in Attica. Athene does ensure that the chorus of Greek girls is promised a return (1467-9), although due to a textual lacuna it is not known whether they will return to their former homes. Earlier in the play the chorus sang of the destruction of their city (1106-22), but despite this it repeatedly sings of the desire to return home. The song at 1089-1152 is heart-breaking as it reveals in detail the chorus’ agony at being away from home. After singing of their nostalgia for the festivals of Greece, they recall the destruction of their city and their enslavement, before celebrating Iphigeneia’s return and at the same time lamenting their own abandonment in this foreign land. Finally, in the fourth stanza they reiterate their desire to return home to Greece. Their situation throughout most of the play mirrors that of Iphigeneia: exiled in a foreign land, away from all that is familiar and unable to return home. Yet at this moment in the play as the audience celebrates Iphigeneia and Orestes’ escape, it

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67 While Diggle brackets *Helen* 287-92 as interpolated, the metrical problems are not insurmountable and the lines are apt contextually (see further Allan (ed.), (2008) at 182).
68 Wright (2005b) at 213-25.
69 Kyriakou argues that Iphigeneia cannot return to a normal life because she is ‘too closely associated with Artemis’ and has been since Agamemnon inadvertently consecrated her to the goddess (Kyriakou (2006) at 460).
70 Cropp speculates that the chorus was to go with Iphigeneia to Brauron in the service of Artemis (Cropp (ed.), (2000) at 60).
cannot fail to notice that there is no avenue of return for the chorus. *Iphigeneia among the Taurians* focuses on the characters’ desires to return home to Greece, but rather than satisfy these desires in a straightforward manner, Euripides complicates the storyline and situation, which better reflects the uncertain nature of life, and creates contrasting emotions within the audience. One of the consequences of inventing or distorting the myths, as Euripides has done for example in *Iphigeneia among the Taurians*, is that characters have no real mythical afterlife; their stories, in effect, come to an end with the end of the play. The audience is left to wonder about their future.

Three-quarters of the way through *Eumenides*, Orestes departs not only to complete the *nostos* he unsuccessfully attempted in *Libation-Bearers*, but also to replace his father’s disastrous *nostos*. Here too the question arises as to what kind of home he is returning to, when the palace itself bore witness to the murders of his father and Kassandra, as well as his mother and Aigisthos.

These promises of a future *nostos* are not as straightforward as they superficially appear at the close of these tragedies. The *nostoi* are not without complication for the characters and, for perceptive members of the audience, these endings will have raised disquieting questions. Even in such seemingly joyful circumstances, can there be an unproblematic *nostos* in tragedy?

The girls in the chorus of *Iphigeneia among the Taurians* are not the only characters to express their desire for a *nostos*. The central premise of *Philoktetes* is the desire for a return home, as is articulated by every character that appears on stage. Philoktetes is stranded on a deserted island and dreams of returning home to Oita. Odysseus and Neoptolemos, accompanied by sailors, arrive on Lemnos to obtain Herakles’ bow which will allow Troy to be captured and the Greek army itself to return home. Every character in the play wants to go home. Sophocles uses the theme of *nostos* to structure his play and to intensify its emotional effect upon the audience. From the opening scene, *nostos* is thrust into the audience’s consciousness when Odysseus advises Neoptolemos to pretend to Philoktetes that he is on his way home (*Philoktetes* 58-65). From then on, the desire to return home is regularly mentioned until in the final lines of the play the chorus asks that the nymphs of the sea grant them all a *nostos* (1469-71).\(^\text{72}\)

The entire play focuses on *nostos* and yet no *nostos* actually occurs on stage and the end

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of the play only promises a *nostos* at some indefinite point in the future. Sophocles displays in this play the versatility with which a *pragma* can be used as an integral element of a play without direct representation.

A frequent category of the non-enacted return *pragma* is the mention of a future return. This remark is typically in the form of a prophecy, but it can also be used (unintentionally by the character) to create dramatic irony for the audience. In addition, any reference to the absence of a character can act as an indicator of a possible future enacted *nostos*. Kassandra foretells to the chorus the *nostos* of the avenging Orestes (*Agamemnon* 1280-5), even if they are unable to understand her words. Polymestor warns Agamemnon of his death at Klytaimestra’s hands when he returns home and, while Agamemnon’s response is to ask him if he is mad (*Hekabe* 1279-80), the audience knows that the prophecy is a true one. Agamemnon may be the victorious Greek commander at this point, but the audience knows the fate that awaits him. Agamemnon’s future *nostos* is also evoked for the audience in a dramatic portrayal of an earlier point in the mythological story. In *Iphigeneia at Aulis* Klytaimestra asks Agamemnon what kind of blessing he will ask of the gods when he sacrifices Iphigeneia and she suggests a νόστον πονηρόν (*Iphigeneia at Aulis* 1187). While the line appears slightly incongruous in the context, it aptly reminds the audience of the outcome that awaits him when he returns at the end of the Trojan War. The audience’s superior knowledge as to the characters’ fate adds complexity to the *muthos* of the particular tragedy and increases their enjoyment of the performance.

The *pragma* of return could also be evoked through visual similarities with an enacted *pragma*, sometimes even from other dramatic depictions. The scene of Agamemnon’s return in the first play of the *Oresteia* was obviously a memorable one for the Athenian audience, as Euripides visually alludes to it in one of his latest tragedies, *Iphigeneia at Aulis*, performed over fifty years later. In this later play members of Agamemnon’s family arrive on stage in a wheeled vehicle (ὄχυρα, *Iphigeneia at Aulis* 610), but Euripides reverses several key elements to deliberately contrast the two scenes.

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73 The scholia at *Frogs* 67 state that the Didascalia record the production of *Iphigeneia at Aulis*, *Alkmeon at Korinth* and *Bacchae* after Euripides’ death in 407/406 BC. Aélion conducts an extensive examination of Aeschylus’ influence on Euripides’ drama in terms of, among other things, the myths, plots, themes and characters (Aélion (1983a), Aélion (1983b)).

74 Scholars have cast doubt on the authenticity of this scene. Page thinks that 607-30 are interpolated ‘*spectaculi causa*’ and that the model was Klytaimestra’s arrival in Euripides’
Whereas Aeschylus portrayed Agamemnon being conveyed to the area before the palace in which his wife Klytaimestra awaits him, Euripides inverts this arrangement and portrays Klytaimestra approaching the tent within which Agamemnon is staying. While Agamemnon is welcomed home by a joyful chorus of old Argive men, Klytaimestra is welcomed by the group of women from Chalkis. Agamemnon is accompanied by his Trojan slave Cassandra and Klytaimestra travels with her daughter Iphigeneia and her son Orestes. The corresponding presence of a young woman in each vehicle compels the audience to consider the similarities between the two, particularly in relation to their fate.\(^{75}\) While Klytaimestra’s appearance in Aulis is in no way a homecoming, the action of nostos is evoked by a visually similar staging of Agamemnon’s return in Aeschylus’ play to call to mind for the audience Agamemnon’s future ill-fated homecoming after the conclusion of the campaign. Euripides had earlier used this effective allusion to Agamemnon’s nostos in his Elektra (998-9) with the appearance again of Klytaimestra in a carriage as a visitor to someone else’s dwelling. This time she arrives at the rural home of her daughter Elektra and her peasant husband. The evocation of Agamemnon’s nostos in this play suggests that Klytaimestra will suffer a parallel fate, as indeed she does once she has set foot inside the house having been persuaded by her daughter, just as she earlier persuaded her husband.\(^{76}\)

Thus the *pragma* of nostos can be used in both enacted and verbal forms within a tragedy to create various effects within and upon the *systasis*, the *muthos* and the audience. Let us look now at how these are used within an entire tragedy.

\(^{75}\) As Ley notes, ‘Iphigeneia [is] destined for death in Euripides much as Cassandra is in *Agamemnon*’ (Ley (2007) at 77).

\(^{76}\) In the same way that Agamemnon’s success and glory are contrasted with those awaiting his return by his physical elevation in the carriage, in Euripides’ *Elektra* Klytaimestra’s means of conveyance, as well as the focus on her finery and attendants, is intended by Euripides to highlight her wealth in strong contrast to the obvious poverty exhibited by Elektra. References to Klytaimestra’s wealth, finery, attendants and Trojan slaves: E. *Elektra* 314-18, 966, 994-5, 1001-3 and 1135-40.
Euripides’ *Andromache* is now widely recognised as a ‘nostos play’, centring on the closely anticipated, and ultimately enacted, return of Andromache’s master, Neoptolemos.\(^{77}\) I would argue that, while the absence, anticipation of and concluding return of Neoptolemos play a strong structural role within the tragedy, *Andromache* is an ἄνοστος νόστος play.\(^{78}\) While Neoptolemos’ corpse is carried on stage at the end of the play, his nostos is only temporary, like that of Herakles in *Women of Trachis*. His body is immediately to be taken away again and buried in Delphi. He is not returning home for long. *Andromache* is a non-nostos nostos-play that continually tantalises the audience with the promise of a nostos through references to Neoptolemos’ anticipated return and through the repeated replacement of his anticipated nostos with the entry of another character, which frustrates the audience’s expectations of his return. In addition, the play can be read as a tripartite comment on the pragma of nostos. The entire play is structured around the action of nostos, which, once enacted, is not allowed to endure.

This section of the chapter will comprise a close reading of *Andromache*, analysing the representations of and allusions to the pragma of nostos. Nostos is evoked throughout the play not only in the numerous verbal utterances anticipating Neoptolemos’ arrival and his enacted return itself, but also by characters’ arrivals that frustrate his anticipated return and which themselves have resonances with, but do not constitute, the pragma of nostos.

*Andromache* is not the only tragedy to include a nostos of Neoptolemos. The extant fragments of Sophocles’ *Hermione* or *Women of Phthia* indicate at least one nostos by Neoptolemos.\(^{79}\) Fragment 202 *TrGF* preserves a greeting to the land, as would be

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\(^{79}\) Neoptolemos and Hermione live in Phthia in other versions of the myth (*Odyssey* 4.8-9) and therefore the action of any tragedy involving Hermione probably took place in or near Phthia. Since the fragments attributed to *Women of Phthia* accord with the testimonia for the systasis of *Hermione* and a chorus of Phthian girls would be suitable for *Hermione*, it seems very likely that the two titles belong to the same play (see further Sommerstein (2006) at 14-6).
appropriate for someone returning home: ἄλλα ὁ πατρώας γῆς ἁγιαίου πέδων.\textsuperscript{80}

Sommerstein argues persuasively on the basis of Eustathius’ commentary to Odyssey 4.3 that this greeting was spoken by Neoptolemos on his return home from Sparta with his new bride Hermione.\textsuperscript{81} Neoptolemos therefore is not depicted making his more well-known nostos following the fall of Troy; rather Sophocles has chosen to focus on the later different period in his life, as Euripides does in Andromache. Sommerstein’s reconstruction of the remainder of Sophocles’ play theorises a second nostos in which Peleus and Phoinix return from Delphi with Neoptolemos’ corpse, which may then have formed the model for Euripides’ closing nostos in Andromache.\textsuperscript{82} Euripides’ decision not to put Neoptolemos on stage until his repeatedly anticipated and delayed nostos in the final scene of Andromache may be a further indication of his play’s posteriority.\textsuperscript{83} If Sophocles did portray two nostoi of Neoptolemos in his play – which seems likely to me – it would suggest that the playwright was interested in the depiction of contrasting returns in the same way as Euripides was in Hippolytos, Phoenician Women and Bacchae.

Euripides’ play can be divided into three separate movements or episodes, which has led to much debate over the ‘unity’ of the Andromache.\textsuperscript{84} Various theories have been

\textsuperscript{80} On greetings upon a return, see above at pp. 45-9.

\textsuperscript{81} Sommerstein (2006) at 32.

\textsuperscript{82} Sophocles Hermione fr. 695 TrGF may indicate the departure of Peleus and Phoinix for Delphi. For a reconstruction of the play, see Sommerstein (2006) at 18-20.

\textsuperscript{83} There are several points at which knowledge of Sophocles’ play makes clearer the events in Andromache including Neoptolemos’ two visits to Delphi, the reason why Neoptolemos’ corpse was thrown out of the temple and left unburied (Andromache 1156-7) and Orestes’ suggestion of Hermione’s messages to him (see further Sommerstein (2006) at 20-1). It seems likely therefore that Sophocles’ play was the earlier production.

\textsuperscript{84} See in particular Lee (1975). See also Burnett (1971) at 131-2, Stevens (ed.), (1971) at 5-9). The concept of unity in tragedy has attracted comment from scholars since Aristotle (Poetics 1451a16-35). Heath examines unity in Greek poetics from Homer to Heliodoros, including an in-depth discussion of Aristotle’s concept of unity in tragedy (Heath (1989) at 38-55). According to his interpretation of unity in Aristotle’s Poetics, there is no question of the Andromache lacking in unity since the play’s praxis is a ‘self-contained series of causally interdependent events’ (Heath (1989) at 47). I do not think that the Andromache lacks ‘unity’ in its structure.
proposed as to what links the three movements. Papadimitropoulos argues that the three parts of the play are connected by a ‘marriage which has destroyed a royal house.’ Thus the first part depicts the disharmony in the oikos following the marriage, the second the ending of the marriage and the third the consequences of the dissolution. While this is certainly a possible way to interpret the play, Mossman more compellingly argues that the unity in Andromache is created by a single character, namely Neoptolemos. It is his slave who is initially threatened by his wife and her father in his absence, it is his wife who then fears for her safety upon his anticipated return, which occurs in the third section. Mossman focuses on Neoptolemos’ absence as generating suspense in the audience. As she notes, ‘his absence becomes a tool to manipulate the audience’s emotions, enabling and increasing the pathos of the suppliant action, creating tension in Hermione’s remorse-scene, and then increasing that tension when Orestes reverses the situation, rescuing Hermione and threatening Neoptolemos.’ While I agree that the play continually looks forward to the return of Neoptolemos, I would like to propose a different reading of the tripartite structure as providing a multifaceted presentation of the diversity of the pragma of nostos. In the first part, the audience is encouraged to anticipate the typical rescue-nostos plot-pattern whereby the hero returns in the nick of time to rescue his family (as in the Odyssey, Herakles and Euripides’ Hypsipyle). Euripides does indeed provide the last-minute rescue, albeit with an unexpected rescuer, frustrating the anticipated return of Neoptolemos. In the second section of the play, the nostos of Neoptolemos has become something to be feared rather than to be hoped-for. The same action is shown from two conflicting viewpoints. While the slave hoped for the return, the wife dreads it. The final section of the play produces the enacted return for the audience, but not the return that was hoped for or dreaded by the various dramatis personae, rather a return of the dead hero and one that is only temporary.

85 Allan discusses in detail the various arguments raised about the unity of Andromache (Allan (2000) at 40-85).
87 Mossman (1996).
88 Mossman (1996) at 153.
89 Euripides Hypsipyle fr. 757.853 TrGF.
Andromache opens with a scene of supplication taking place outside Neoptolemos’ palace in Phthia: Andromache sits at the shrine of Thetis. Hektor’s widow tells the audience the pitiable story of her life and provides the background to her current circumstances. After Hektor had been killed, Troy had fallen and her son Astyanax had been murdered, Andromache came as a slave to Greece with Achilleus’ son Neoptolemos. This is the first mention of nostos in the play and it is this return of Neoptolemos which featured in the mythological tales about Neoptolemos. The presence of Neoptolemos’ slave Andromache at an altar outside his home at the beginning of Euripides’ play would not necessarily have suggested to the audience the prospect of a nostos by him, since he had already returned from Troy. The use, however, of two nostoi in Sophocles’ earlier version of the story may have been in the minds of some of the audience. Andromache soon mentions Neoptolemos’ absence and the threat from his new wife Hermione and her father Menelaos that faces her in his absence. Andromache has borne Neoptolemos a son, while Hermione, the legitimate wife, is barren. Andromache states explicitly that Neoptolemos is away and unable to help their son:

\[
\text{ο} \ γάρ \ φιλεύσας \ αὐτὸν \ οὔτε \ ἐμοὶ \ πάρα προσώφελησαι \ παιδί \ τ’ \ οὐδέν \ ἔστ’, \ ἀπὸν Δελφών κατ’ αἰαν, \ ἔνθα \ Λοξίαι \ δίκην δίδωσι \ μανίας, \ ἕ τι \ ποτ’ \ ἐξ \ Πυθώ \ μολὼν ἠτίσε \ Φοίβον \ πατρός \ οὐ \ κτείνει \ δίκην, \ εὐ \ ποις \ τὰ \ πρόσθε \ σφάλματ’ \ ἔξαιτομένος \ θεὸν \ παράσχοιτ’ \ ἐς \ τὸ \ λοιπὸν \ εὐμενή. \ (Andromache 49-55)
\]

Her choice of words highlights his absence and distance from her, which heightens the audience’s understanding of her vulnerability. Mossman finds remarkable the length of Andromache’s description of Neoptolemos’ reasons for going to Delphi. Such background detail, however, is not unusual in Euripidean prologues and it is likely that Euripides provides so much detail to explain how his version of the myth differs from

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90 On supplication in tragedy, see further Chapter 3: Supplication. Opening supplication tableaux occur in Oedipus the King, Children of Herakles, Andromache, E. Suppliant Women, Herakles and Helen.

91 As was indeed recounted in the epic Nostoi (T 2.20-4 EGF).

92 Hermione is a clear example of the convention in tragedy of the transgressive woman in the absence of her husband (see further Hall (1997) at 106-9).

93 Mossman (1996) at 149.
the previous tradition whereby Neoptolemos died on his first visit to Delphi. There are two significant points to be made about Andromache’s description. Firstly, as Allan notes, Neoptolemos’ mission to apologise to Apollo for his earlier mad behaviour serves to ‘rehabilitate Neoptolemos’. Euripides seems to be presenting a Neoptolemos far removed from the villainous character of earlier myth that cold-bloodedly murdered Priam at Zeus’ altar, threw the infant Astyanax from the walls of Troy and sacrificed Polyxene on his father’s tomb. But there may be further significance in Andromache’s description that has not previously been considered. It is possible that, since Neoptolemos’ death at Delphi was well-known in the previous mythological tradition, Euripides could almost guarantee that the audience would assume that Neoptolemos would therefore not return to Phthia – at least, not alive. Could awareness of the audience’s pre-existing knowledge of Neoptolemos’ death in Delphi have caused Euripides to provide him with the second visit? By allowing Neoptolemos to survive the visit to Delphi that in all other versions resulted in his death by Apollo, could Euripides be tantalising his audience with the possibility that he will allow Neoptolemos to survive this second trip as well? Could this explain the second visit, an innovation which scholars have criticised as clumsy and unnecessary?

Andromache’s prologue ends when a fellow-slave, one of her maids from Troy, enters to tell her of Menelaos’ plan to seize her son. In fear for his life, Andromache refers again to Neoptolemos’ absence: ὁ δὲ κεκλημένος / πατέρ / νὸν ∆ελφὸς τυγχάνει μένων (75-6). She laments his continued absence, highlighting the fact that he is remaining (μένειν) in Delphi. This reiteration of his absence emphasizes her helplessness, as does the non-appearance of Peleus, to whom she says that she has sent repeated requests for assistance. There is no one to rescue her and she remains the isolated and individual focus of the drama. This is corroborated in the subsequent parodos when the chorus of Phthian women sing of Andromache’s hopelessness as a Trojan woman alone against her Spartan mistress. They specify that they are not her friends (ἔνθ’ οὗ φίλων τιν’ εἰσορᾷς / σών, οὗ δυστυχεστάτα, / <ὁ> παντάλαιαν νόμφα, 138-40) as they acknowledge her most wretched situation. She is threatened and alone with no one to save her, for she is not even Neoptolemos’ wife, but only his slave.

94 Pindar Paean 6.105-20, Nemean 7.50-70 and Pherekydes FGrH 3 F 63-4.
95 Allan (2000) at 17. See also Friedrich (1953) at 56.
96 Sommerstein deems it a ‘complicated and illogical scenario’ (Sommerstein (2006) at 20). Euripides returns to the traditional version of Neoptolemos’ death in his later Orestes at 1657.
Hermione, Neoptolemos’ wife, then enters and the two women debate their respective positions within Neoptolemos’ house and their behaviour as women.

Like two other tragedies involving a character’s nostos to their nuptial home, Andromache engages with the issue of the introduction of a female outsider into an established oikos. This situation invariably results in disaster when it is enacted in tragedy. The introduction of an external female into the household causes the destruction of the household – usually by a member of the household. In Agamemnon and Women of Trachis the female outsider is a captive slave, but in Andromache, Euripides introduces a wife, Hermione: it is the legitimate wife who destroys the balance of the house. In Agamemnon it is Klytaimestra who murders her husband and in Women of Trachis Deianeira unwittingly causes her husband’s death and then kills herself from guilt. In Andromache, however, it is Neoptolemos himself who by marrying Hermione incurs the hatred of Orestes, an outsider, who then plots his murder. Orestes himself specifies his hatred of his cousin and the source of it: δείξω γαμεν σφε μηδέν’ ὅπως ἔχον ἐμή (Andromache 1001, 1006). In all three cases the oikos is destroyed from within because of a change in the traditional gender balance. Seaford describes it as ‘the husband’s new attachment creates a situation in which the mutual subversion of the two incompatible unions issues in the death of one or more of the three parties.’ The key common element between these three tragedies is the presence of two women connected to the same man within the same household. The simple explanation for the concomitant destruction of the household is that a man cannot have two marriages; he cannot possess two women within his oikos at the same time. This links in with the ancient Athenians’ concerns with the legitimacy of children and the unequivocality of succession to the household. While extra-marital sexual activity was ‘allowable’, one could not bring it into the


98 Interestingly, Allan notes how the positions of Andromache and Hermione in the household are presented by Euripides as reversed after Hermione enters at Andromache 825 and exposes her breasts: ‘Andromache being associated with the wifely duty of child-bearing, and Hermione with the eroticism of the concubine’ (Allan (2000) at 187).

99 Seaford (1987) at 127. Seaford is referring to the situation in Agamemnon, Women of Trachis and Medeia, but it is also applicable to Andromache.

100 See further Seaford (1990) at 168-70.
household. Each of these plays that depict a nostos combined with the introduction of an additional female into the oikos features extensive use of wedding ritual imagery around Kassandra, Iole and Andromache. I would argue that this suggests that there should be only one marriage ritual in an oikos and when a subsequent marriage ritual is enacted on top of the first, the result is the destruction of the household. The unnatural combination of rituals that are meant to be separate causes the rupture in the oikos.

The presence of Andromache and Hermione within the same household has therefore led to the conflict within the oikos in Neoptolemos’ absence. The first explicit reference to his possible return occurs at 255 when Hermione reiterates her intention to force Andromache to leave Thetis’ shrine without waiting for her husband’s return: κο/uni1F50 µεν/uni1FF6 πόσιν µολε/uni1FD6ν. Here finally is the first acknowledgement that Neoptolemos might indeed return at some point. Euripides cleverly plays with the multiple meanings of the verb μενε/uni1FD6ν, which occurs in both women’s speeches. While Andromache used it at 76 to emphasise his continued absence, Hermione uses it in the sense of ‘to wait’. But she does not use it in a positive context, rather she will not wait for him to return before she acts. An indication is finally made of his expected return. After this brief acknowledgement of her husband, Hermione continues her threats and Andromache stubbornly refuses to leave her place of refuge. As Hermione exits, she reiterates her intention to move Andromache πρ/uni1F76ν ι πέποιθας πα/uni1FD6δ’ χιλλέως µολε/uni1FD6ν (268), repeating the verb µολε/uni1FD6ν and, in so doing, emphasising the physical action of movement that Neoptolemos must make. And Andromache’s response highlights her faith in his return: πέποιθα (269). Neoptolemos will come back.

The chorus sings of the judgement of Paris before the entry of a new participant in the drama. But rather than the anticipated Neoptolemos, it is instead Menelaos, whose presence doubles the threat facing Andromache and her son, increasing the tension for the audience. Dramas that open with a pragma of supplication often follow a pattern whereby the enemy of the suppliants arrives before the person who will save them does so. Following the arrival of Hermione who is threatening Andromache, a likely candidate for arrival would therefore be Neoptolemos to save the lives of his slave and

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101 See for example, [Dem] Against Boeotos II 40.9, Against Neaira 59.21-2.
103 This would also work for Iason’s new marriage to Kreon’s daughter in Medeia.
104 As in Herakles, for example. See further discussion in Chapter 3: Supplication at pp. 165-6.
son. Euripides, however, frustrates the audience’s expectation of their rescue and at the same time increases the threat that is ranged against them.

Menelaos enters with Andromache’s son held captive and threatens to kill the boy unless Andromache leaves the shrine. Andromache promises Menelaos that if he kills her son, Neoptolemos will avenge the act, by throwing Hermione out of the house (342-4). Again, Andromache draws attention to future actions that will result when Neoptolemos returns. It is Menelaos who makes explicit reference to his absence: μένων δὲ τούς ἀπόντας, 378. Again, the emphasis is on ‘waiting’ for the absent Neoptolemos, but here it is used in a hypothetical context, rather than as a positive action.

When Andromache decides to leave the altar, her words acutely point to Neoptolemos’ future nostos as she instructs her son:

μέμνησο μητρός, οἰα τλάστρ᾽ ἀπωλόμην,  
καὶ πατρὶ τοῖς σῶι διὰ φιλημάτων ἴδιν  
δάκρυα τε λείβων καὶ περιπτύσσων χέρας  
λέγ᾽ οὐ ἔπραξα.  

(Andromache 415-18)

This command to her son vividly evokes in the audience the visualization of Neoptolemos’ return and hence the anticipation of future action within the play, which Euripides will later frustrate. When Andromache abandons the altar, she is seized by Menelaos and threatened with death. After a choral song, mother and child lament their fate in lyrics and the son cries: ὦ πάτερ, / μόλε φίλοις ἐπίκουρος (508-9). His direct address to his father explicitly stresses Neoptolemos’ required role as saviour to his family. He must return and save them. Menelaos fails to be moved by their pleas and the scene is now set for Neoptolemos to appear in time to save his family from death, perhaps in a manner similar to Herakles who returns in the nick of time to save his father, wife and children from death (Herakles 523). And indeed a saviour is sighted by the chorus (Andromache 545) and it is a male member of the oikos. But rather than the longed-for and anticipated Neoptolemos, it is his aged grandfather Peleus who returns to save his grandson’s slave and great-grandson from the dastardly schemes of his grandson’s wife and her father.105 When Andromache’s son had called out in vain for his father to save them, Andromache in contrast had invoked her dead husband Hektor:

105 In its announcement of his entry, the chorus draws attention to his γηραιόν πόδα (546) and Andromache addresses him as ὦ γέρον (572).
Her wish is for a completely impossible return: Hektor cannot come back from the dead. Her reference to the dead Trojan warrior also highlights the incongruity of the identity of their saviour: the father of the man who killed her husband. Again the expected return of Neoptolemos is frustrated by the arrival of another character. Sophocles uses the same technique in *Women of Trachis* where Herakles’ return, regularly anticipated by the on-stage characters, is constantly frustrated by the returns and arrivals of others, including an old man, Herakles’ herald Lichas and his son Hyllos.¹⁰⁶

Hausdoerffer argues that the arrival of Peleus can be interpreted as a *nostos* because he is linked to the house to which he comes by history and family.¹⁰⁷ Before he enters, there are regular references to Peleus and his connection with the Thetideion, the site of Andromache’s supplication, and indeed Andromache explicitly calls attention to this link upon his entry.¹⁰⁸ His previous connection to the *oikos* is clearly highlighted. And at 581-2 Peleus retorts to Menelaos: ἦ τὸν ὀμίλον ὡκόν ὡκήσεις μολὺν / δεδυρ’. He specifically refers to the palace as *his* house, not just Neoptolemos’. His return acts as a surrogate for the true kurios of the *oikos*, Neoptolemos. Despite the verbal connections made between Peleus and the palace at Phthia, the fact remains that Peleus no longer lives there and therefore his entry cannot constitute a true *nostos*. It does however resemble the action of *nostos* and I think Euripides deliberately structured the play so that there are resonances between the old man’s entry and a *nostos* to close off the opening suppliant drama, just as Herakles’ return ends the suppliant drama which opened Euripides’ *Herakles*. In addition, these resonances remind the audience that the anticipated action of *nostos* has not yet occurred. While a *nostos* has not actually occurred here, the action is brought to mind.

Peleus and Menelaos proceed to argue the fate of Andromache and her son. The dispute ends when Menelaos gives in to Peleus by suddenly departing to settle a dispute with a city near Sparta. He promises to return and settle matters with Neoptolemos (737-9).

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¹⁰⁶ *Women of Trachis* 180, 229 and 734.
¹⁰⁷ Hausdoerffer (2005) at 144-8.
¹⁰⁸ *Andromache* 18, 22 and 45 (twice), 79-90, 149, 342.
Their rescue by Peleus therefore is only temporary. The threat has not been completely removed and cannot be resolved until Neoptolemos comes home. He must return for their future to be resolved. Menelaos’ promise to return is a further suggestion that Neoptolemos will return (even if he and Menelaos never do in fact meet again). Nevertheless, Andromache proclaims her gratitude to Peleus and the stage is left to the chorus to sing of the nobility of men and of the deeds of Peleus (768-801). The saviour is celebrated in a choral song which is reminiscent of epinician poetry in its triadic form, its metre, its praise content and its use of myth.  

In the three-way scene between Andromache, Peleus and Menelaos, the absent Neoptolemos is mentioned several times, reminding the audience again of his failed return. Andromache highlights Neoptolemos’ absence when she mentions how Menelaos and Hermione did not wait for his return (οὐτε τοὺς ἀπόντας ἐκ δόμων / μεῖναντες, 568-9). This is the third time that he is described as ‘the one who is absent’ – here though it is further specified that he is away ‘from the house’ – and for the third time those in Phthia are described as ‘waiting’ (or in this case, not waiting) for him. Peleus too refers to him as absent (ἀπόντων, 633) before describing the retribution he will inflict on Menelaos and Hermione (634-5 and 709-10). As at 342-4, Neoptolemos is depicted as the future avenger, suggesting the return which must precede his actions. The accumulation of these references to the absent head of the oikos and his possible return maintains the prominence of the nostos action in the minds of the audience. While the action of the initial supplication drama can superficially be viewed as complete, the repeated allusions to Neoptolemos’ absence and to his future actions of reprisal suggest that this is indeed to be a nostos play - although the audience do not know what actions the next scene will encompass or indeed how the remainder of the tragedy will play out.

After the chorus sing of Peleus’ feats, the nurse enters to tell of Hermione’s attempted suicide since she fears that her husband might banish her from the house on account of

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109 Against this, Hausdoerffer argues that ‘so dramatically effective is Peleus’s intervention that a return by Neoptolemus at this point would be superfluous’ (Hausdoerffer (2005) at 144).

110 See further Allan (2000) at 217-21, Stevens (ed.), (1971) at 187-91. While acknowledging that the chorus is praising Peleus in this ode, Swift suggests that the ‘epinician language and metre set up a humorous contrast between the youthful vigour associated with the genre and the elderly and frail Peleus, who wins by words rather than by deeds’ (Swift (2010) at 120).

what she has done (808-9) and the audience are presented with a new character in need of rescue.\(^{112}\) Neoptolemos and the threat of his return are immediately stated, continuing the emphasis on the potential action of \textit{nostos}. In this episode, Neoptolemos’ \textit{nostos} is presented as a different prospect. No longer is it the positively anticipated action that it embodied for his slave Andromache; now it represents a threat to his wife Hermione. A future \textit{nostos} becomes an object of fear, just as in \textit{Hippolytos} where Phaidra chooses suicide over standing before Theseus in shame (\textit{Hippolytos} 720-1). These two \textit{nostoi} stand out from the conventional hoped-for \textit{nostoi} in their representation as events that pose misfortune and trouble for those waiting at home. Part of the effect of the consequences of the dramatic \textit{nostos} is that the waiting figures do \textit{not} see the misfortune that usually follows the return. Here Euripides cleverly reverses the norm and at the same time presents significantly differing perspectives on the same \textit{pragma}.

Hermione herself then enters, lamenting her actions and her current situation. She is sure that Neoptolemos will kill her when he returns (856-8), whereas the nurse tries to assure her that he would not do so. Emotions are running high, when the chorus suddenly announces the approach of a man:

\[
\text{kai mēn dō ἄλλοχρος tis ekdhmos xénoς}
\text{spoudēi próς ἡμᾶς βημάτων poreúetai.} \quad (Andromache 879-80)
\]

It is a man, but rather than the anticipated Neoptolemos or even a returning Menelaos,\(^{113}\) the chorus emphasizes that he is \textit{ἄλλοχρος}, \textit{ἐκδήμος} and \textit{ξένος}. He is foreign, away from home and a stranger and the newcomer soon announces that he is Orestes. His entry is unexpected both for the on-stage characters and for the external audience. Again Neoptolemos’ expected arrival is frustrated by the arrival of another man. Orestes has come to take Hermione away to be his wife. She had been promised to him by Menelaos before he went to Troy, but there her father promised her to Neoptolemos if he should sack Priam’s city. And it is within this speech that the one and only use of a Greek cognate of \textit{nostos} is made in this play and it refers to Neoptolemos’ conventional \textit{nostos}, that is, the one when he came home after the Trojan War: \textit{ἐπὲ δ’ Αχιλλέως δεῦρ’ ἐνόστησεν γόνος} (971).

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\(^{112}\) As Burnett notes, Hermione is transformed from the villain in the previous movement to the one requiring rescue in this second movement (Burnett (1971) at 131).

\(^{113}\) Menelaos announced to Peleus at 737-8 that he would be back once he had settled affairs in Sparta.
Hermione confesses to Orestes her deeds and her fears: that Neoptolemos will either kill her when he returns or she will become Andromache’s slave (920 and 925-8). She supplicates him to take her away with him, which had been his intention.\footnote{See further discussion on this scene in Chapter 3: Supplication at p. 170.} Hermione agrees to go with Orestes:

\begin{quote}
\textit{\`alle`\`as t\`aksi\`sta t\`on\`de\`u `ekte\`mpison\`odo\`v, 
m\`h\`e ph\`h\`i se proseb\`aq\`a\`d\`o ma\`i\`u `el\`on p\`osis
\`h pr\`e\`be\`u o\`ikou\`u `u `exer\`emou\`san ma\`ad\`o\`n
Patle\`o\`z mete\`l\`\nu\`i pol\`iko\`i\`a di\`o\`gma\`cina.} (Andromache 989-92)
\end{quote}

Hermione’s words stress her panic and fear of the imminent arrival of Neoptolemos as she urges their immediate departure \`o\`s t\`aksi\`sta. Before they leave Orestes suddenly announces that he has set a trap for Neoptolemos of ‘immovable snares of death’ (995-7). He further states that he will show Neoptolemos not to marry the woman intended for him and that he will be destroyed by Apollo and his own accusations (1001 and 1005-6). The use of the future tense carries a note of prophecy, to some extent making real the threats to Neoptolemos. For the first time in the play the \textit{nostos} of Neoptolemos appears to be jeopardized. The perspective presented of the \textit{nostos} is now negative rather than predictive as the couple leave Phthia.

After the chorus sings of the woes that were associated with the Trojan War, Peleus enters and asks whether Hermione has truly left the \textit{oikos} (1048-50).\footnote{It is possible that Andromache and her child enter with Peleus, despite the fact that she is allocated no further lines in the drama. Allan argues that their presence is dramatically effective in the concluding scenes (Allan (2000) at 74-6. \textit{Contra} Kovacs (1980) at 49, Mastronarde (1979) at 100).} The chorus confirms this and enunciates Hermione’s fear that Neoptolemos would have thrown her out of the palace (1057). Again, the emphasis is on his future return, although the audience must now be less confident of its realization. The chorus tells Peleus of her departure with Orestes and then shockingly states: κα`\`i `soi ge pai\`od`e\`s pai\`od`i\`o por\`e\`ton\`o\`n mu\`ro\`n (1063). Upon hearing that Neoptolemos will be attacked, Peleus quickly orders an attendant to go to Delphi and try to stop this plot (1066-9), but the attendant is forestalled by the unannounced arrival of one of Neoptolemos’ men, who without delay announces the death of Peleus’ grandson. His first words are `o\`moe `moei (1070), which unmistakably signals the new misfortune for Peleus. The ever-impending arrival of Neoptolemos, prepared for throughout the tragedy, can never be. Neoptolemos cannot
return to his home alive. Peleus collapses to the ground, which visually echoes Andromache’s prone status earlier in the play. The chorus says to him: ἢ ὅ, τί δράσεις, ὡ γεραιέ; μή πέσης / ἐπάρε σαυτόν (1076-7). Their command echoes Peleus’ ἐπάρε σαυτήν (717) to Andromache after he accepted her supplication. The similarity in the contrasting physical positions and language reminds the audience of an earlier moment in the wait for Neoptolemos when there was still hope for his return.

Just as the ‘return’ of Peleus was celebrated in song, so the messenger emphasises the heroic nature of Neoptolemos in his rhēsis, drawing parallels with the great heroes from the Trojan War. His words echo details from the scene of Hektor’s death in the Iliad. At 1140-1 the Delphians are described as doves scattering at the sight of a hawk (Neoptolemos), a simile that Homer used of Hektor’s flight from Achilleus.116 Neoptolemos is thus indirectly being compared to his father, the great Achilleus at the moment of his heroic pursuit (and subsequent killing) of Hektor. In contrast, the multiple wounds inflicted by the Delphians on Neoptolemos are reminiscent of those meted out on Hektor after his death by the Greeks.117 As Garner notes, ‘Andromache’s present husband is treated in death exactly as her former one.’118 Neoptolemos’ celebration as a Homeric hero in the detailed description of his final battle reinforces his presentation in this tragedy as a good and decent man.119 In dying, Neoptolemos has garnered a heroic reputation appropriate to the son of Achilleus.

The messenger finishes his speech by describing how the Delphians threw his body outside and how Neoptolemos’ companions picked it up and are bringing it back home. Neoptolemos will in fact return home – even if only in death. At 1166-7 the chorus announces the arrival of the accompanied corpse and poignantly notes that Neoptolemos’ return home is not the one Peleus wanted (οὐχ ὦς σὺ θέλεις, 1170). The spectacle of the long-awaited hero returning as a body lying on a bier silently

116 Iliad 22.139-44 (also used at 21.493-6). Garner also notes that the simile of the snow storm of missiles aimed at Neoptolemos is used twice in the Iliad (12.154-61 and 12.278-89) (Garner (1990) at 134).
117 Andromache 1149-54 and Iliad 22.371-5.
118 Garner (1990) at 134.
119 Contra Burnett, who argues that Neoptolemos commits an act of desecration when he takes weapons from Apollo’s sanctuary to defend himself (Burnett (1971) at 152). This interpretation introduces a discordant note in an otherwise positive representation of Neoptolemos by the messenger.
accompanied by a procession of his friends and attendants contrasts strongly with the more traditional triumphant returns of other heroes, such as Aeschylus’ Agamemnon or Euripides’ Herakles.

Peleus laments his childlessness and his loneliness and joins with the chorus in lamenting the dead man (1173-1225). While Neoptolemos has achieved his nostos, no one is happy with the manner of his return. As Peleus throws away his sceptre, bereft of everything, the chorus announces the arrival of some divinity:

δἀίμων ἕδε τις λευκήν αἰθέρα
πορθμεώμενος τῶν ἱπποβώτων
Φθίας πεδίων ἐπιβαίνει.   

(Andromache 1228-30)

The new arrival appearing (probably) on the mēchanē at the close of the play announces that she is Thetis, Peleus’ wife, and has come from the halls of her father Nereus. The entrance of Neoptolemos’ grandmother and deity of the Thetideion, at which Andromache supplicated at the opening of the play, almost immediately alters the nature of the on-stage action from mourning past actions to hope and expectation towards the future. She performs the typical role of a Euripidean dea ex machina in prophesying the events of the future.\(^\text{120}\) She announces that Neoptolemos’ body must be taken back to Delphi and buried there as a reproach to the Delphians and as an affirmation of his murder by Orestes (1239-42).\(^\text{121}\) After preparing for the nostos of Neoptolemos throughout the entire play, not only does Euripides surprise the audience by having Neoptolemos return as a corpse, but also by ensuring that it is only to be temporary. Thetis relates what will happen to Andromache and her son and that Peleus will join her in her father’s palace as a god. But before this can happen, she reiterates that he must bury Neoptolemos in Delphi (1263-4). Neoptolemos cannot stay at home in Phthia. Peleus promises to do as she has bidden him and the action of the play ends after a brief gnomic reflection from the chorus.\(^\text{122}\)

\(^{120}\) See further Dunn (1996) at 64-79.

\(^{121}\) Within the scope of this play, the prophesized burial of Neoptolemos in Delphi does not make much sense, but, as Stevens notes, it is to ‘adjust the outcome of the play to established legend.’ (Stevens (ed.), (1971) at 242). In the fifth century BC there was a temenos of Neoptolemos in Delphi (Pindar Nemean 7.44-7, Pherekydes FGrH 3 F 64a).

\(^{122}\) The same statement by the chorus brings to a close Hippolytos, Alkestis, Medeia, Helen and Bacchae.
Euripides structures *Andromache* around the *pragma* of *nostos*. He continually tantalises the audience with the promise of a *nostos* through references to an anticipated return and through the repeated replacement of Neoptolemos’ *nostos* with the entry of another character, thus frustrating the audience’s expectations of his return. Each arrival of a new character disrupts the audience’s expectation of the development of the *systasis*, creating suspense and thus a deeper engagement of the audience with the play. But it is a non-*nostos* *nostos*-play in that the *nostos*, once enacted, is not allowed to continue. While Neoptolemos’ corpse is carried on stage at the play’s end, his *nostos* is only transitory. *Andromache* invites the audience to consider the *pragma* of *nostos* from many different perspectives and as a varied element of the *muthos*. By forcing the audience to observe how a single event can be viewed by different characters with varied results, the audience is simultaneously challenged to consider the way different characters can be represented in very different ways, thus reflecting the innovative nature of tragedy. Neoptolemos the villain in myth thus becomes Neoptolemos the hero in *Andromache*. Euripides effectively displays his virtuosity in the representation of traditional mythological characters and stories through his focus in *Andromache* on a single *pragma*.

3. Conclusion

The *pragma* of *nostos* appears as an enacted event, a theme, a desire, a memory and a possibility in many Athenian tragedies. In its enacted form, *nostos* in tragedy is typically fraught and associated with death and destruction within the *oikos*, whether that involves the death of the one returning, of the one waiting or of others. Just as in epic poetry, there is no typical pattern of *nostos*; rather, it comprises a broad range of elements as well as a diversity of returning and waiting figures. But the *nostos* in tragedy is always problematic. Within the *systasis* of a tragedy, the *pragma* of *nostos* is very versatile and can appear in many different forms. It can occur as a brief action within the *systasis*, as a key scene or even as the conclusion or final climax of the tragedy. The single *pragma* of *nostos* is multifaceted in its forms and effects in Athenian tragedy. It allows the playwrights to exhibit their resourcefulness in their dramatic retellings of traditional myth.
CHAPTER TWO: RECOGNITION

The action whereby a character recognises another character in their presence as someone previously known to them occurs in several extant Athenian tragedies. Parents recognise children, children their parents, brothers and sisters their siblings, husbands their wives. The recognition pragma involves the revelation of someone’s hidden identity – whether the revelation is deliberate or accidental and whether or not the identity has been concealed deliberately. While it is common in extant tragedy, the role that the recognition pragma plays in an individual tragedy varies widely. While in its enacted form it is most commonly a motivator of further action within the systasis, it can also form the climax of the play. The actual moment of the revelation of a person’s identity usually follows a period of ignorance for the characters on stage, during which the audience possesses superior knowledge relating to the characters’ identities. Throughout this interval, there are often non-enacted forms of the pragma, including references and allusions to a future enactment of recognition, which keep the audience actively engaged in the outcome of the events. The audience is therefore anticipating the recognition, but does not know exactly when or how it will occur. The combination of enacted and non-enacted recognition pragma effectively creates suspense for the audience, who watch invested in the outcome of the dramatic action. The non-enacted forms of the pragma combine with the enactments to structure the systasis, enhance the muthos and promote the audience’s engagement with the tragedy.

Recognition is a popular dramatic feature of not only Athenian tragedy, but also other genres – both ancient and modern – such as epic poetry, opera, comedy and cinema.¹ The role of recognition, or anagnōrisis, within the plot of a tragedy was critiqued by Aristotle in the fourth century BC in the Poetics. He identifies the importance of recognition, together with peripeteia, within the tragic muthos as a means of evoking

¹ See, for example, Cave (1988), Munteanu (2002), Waldoff (2006).
pity and fear in the audience through the representation of events occurring contrary to expectation.\textsuperscript{2} Aristotle argues that the quality of a tragedy’s \textit{muthos} is to be judged on the basis of its emotional impact and that the best kind of \textit{muthos} is one which encompasses recognition and a \textit{peripeteia}.\textsuperscript{3} His evaluation of the \textit{pragma} of recognition is therefore mainly based on its ability to evoke pity and fear. Since then it has been examined from a variety of perspectives, including psychoanalytical and political theory, as a feature of Western poetics and within specific tragedies.\textsuperscript{4} This chapter will focus on recognition within the stage action of a tragedy. After identifying the component elements of the enacted recognition \textit{pragma} and the variations therein, this chapter will discuss how it contributes to the \textit{systasis} and \textit{muthos} of a particular tragedy and how it affects the audience. This chapter will then examine the non-enacted \textit{pragma} of recognition and how they complement and, in particular, prepare for the enacted \textit{pragma}. Finally, we will closely examine how the \textit{pragma} of recognition is used in the \textit{Elektra} of Sophocles, which not only portrays a recognition scene that is depicted in two other tragedies, but also includes four other enacted recognition \textit{pragma}. The role of recognition in the play’s \textit{systasis} and \textit{muthos} and its effect on the audience will be closely examined.

1. THE MANIFESTATIONS OF RECOGNITION IN TRAGEDY

Recognition features in more than a third of the extant tragedies and in many fragmentary tragedies in both enacted and non-enacted forms.\textsuperscript{5} Although appearing in Aeschylus’ \textit{Libation-Bearers} and Sophocles’ \textit{Elektra} and \textit{Oedipus the King}, recognition is a special characteristic of Euripides’ plays and is enacted in ten of his tragedies. His recognition \textit{pragma} were imitated by Aristophanes and it has been acknowledged

\textsuperscript{2} \textit{Poetics} 1452a1-1452b8.
\textsuperscript{3} See further Introduction at p. 13-14.
\textsuperscript{5} For a list of enacted recognition \textit{pragma} in extant tragedy, see Appendix 3: Enacted recognition \textit{pragma}. Recognition in fragmentary tragedies: Sophocles’ \textit{Tyro}, Euripides’ \textit{Cresphontes, Alexandros, Antiope, Melanippe in Chains, Oedipus, Aigeus, Alkmeon in Corinth, Alope, Auge and Hypsipyle}. 

- 79 -
since ancient times that they strongly influenced the structure of Menander’s comedies.\(^6\) For an enacted recognition to occur there must be at least two people present on stage who were previously known to each other, but one of them may not be alive.\(^7\) At least one of them must be ignorant of the other’s true identity, but it is often a mutual ignorance of the other’s identity. As Greimas and Courtès point out, however, it is not ignorance \textit{per se}, but rather the possession of erroneous knowledge.\(^8\) This false comprehension may have arisen because of deliberate disguise, by means of an assumption (which is often the case in regard to the identity of corpses) or owing to the possession of erroneous knowledge as to events, such as the death of a character. The audience, however, is \textit{always} aware of the true identity of each character – whether from information provided earlier in the play or from the traditional mythological stories. This superior knowledge can activate non-enacted forms of the \textit{pragma}, whereby references and allusions are made to a future enactment of recognition usually through ironic comments concerning the identities of those on stage.

Aristotle defines recognition as the acquisition of knowledge regarding the identity of a person who is connected to another character through either friendship or enmity: \(άναγνώρισις δὲ, άσπερ καὶ τούτων σημαίνει, εξ άγνοιας εἰς γνώσιν μεταβολή, ἢ εἰς φιλίαν ἢ εἰς ἐχθρίαν, τῶν πρὸς ἐντυχίαν ἢ δυστυχίαν ὃρισμένων (Poetics 1452a29-32).\) The act of recognition involves a change from ignorance of a person’s identity to knowledge of it. While it is true that the persons may be \textit{philoi} or \textit{echthroi}, recognition in tragedy invariably involves characters who are related or connected through the \textit{oikos}. This reflects tragedy’s focus on the dynamics of the family. Those characters who achieve recognition of an enemy, such as Aigisthos of Orestes in Sophocles’ \textit{Elektra} or Klytaiæstra of Orestes in \textit{Libation-Bearers} are still closely related. The only examples of recognitions between characters who are not related involve former slaves within the \textit{oikos}, such as the paidagogos in Sophocles’ \textit{Elektra} and the old man in Euripides’ \textit{Elektra}, or spouses, such as Admetos in \textit{Alkestis} and Helen and Menelaos in \textit{Helen}.


\(^7\) While there are no three-way recognition \textit{pragmata} in extant tragedy, it seems likely that Euripides’ \textit{Alkmene in Corinith} included one between Alkmene and his two children Amphilochochos and Tisiphone. See further Collard and Cropp (eds.), (2008) at 87-93.

\(^8\) Greimas and Courtès (1989) at 571.
Aristotle notes that there can also be recognition of inanimate things or whether something happened or not, but he identifies recognition of a person as the type that most affects the *muthos* and the *praxis* of a tragedy. This chapter will focus on the recognition of another person.

There are two recognitions in extant tragedy which can be viewed as self-recognitions, that is, the recognition of one’s own true identity, but even these are portrayed as recognitions of a person by their relatives. Ion is not portrayed as realising that he is heir to the Athenian throne, but rather that he is the son whom Kreousa abandoned. This fact leads to the knowledge that he will be king. Similarly Oedipus is recognised by Jokaste as her and Laius’ son and he realizes that he is their son. Both their identities are defined in relation to their parents. Identity is therefore dependent on one’s relationships with others. All tragic recognition *pragma* occur in relation to a person’s relationship within a family or an *oikos*.

1.1. THE ENACTED RECOGNITION

In its enacted form, the *pragma* of recognition can remove the ignorance of one person as to another’s identity or it can eliminate reciprocated ignorance. No two recognition *pragma* occur in the same manner – even when they involve the same mythological characters. There are, however, many similarities between different *pragma* including the use of disguise, particular stages within the recognition process, proof of identity, physical gestures and language. There is a distinct group of recognition *pragma* that involve corpses of *philoi*.

The lack of knowledge about someone’s true identity may come from its deliberate concealment and the appropriation of another’s identity or, especially in cases of mutual ignorance, from the changes in appearance that have occurred while the characters have been separated. In addition, there are several instances where the understanding of someone's identity is hindered by an erroneous assumption or erroneous knowledge as to another’s existence. The *pragma* of recognition is therefore often enacted as a

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9 *Poetics* 1452a34-8.
cognitive process, whereby false assumptions and knowledge are removed to generate the truth. Reasoning must be applied to identify the ‘facts’ as to someone’s identity.\textsuperscript{10}

There are four instances in extant tragedy where recognition occurs after a deliberately donned disguise is removed and all of these are in plays centring on the house of Atreus. Klytaimestra recognises her son Orestes just before he kills her in \textit{Libation-Bearers} and in Sophocles’ \textit{Elektra}. In the latter play there are two further examples, the first when Elektra is made to recognise the paidagogos who had previously claimed to be a messenger of Phanoteus the Phokian and the second when Aigisthos realises that the man whom he thought brought news of Orestes’ death is actually Orestes himself. Each of these recognitions leads on to murder: three occur prior to the slaying of the one recognising the alleged stranger, while Elektra’s recognition of the paidagogos leads on to Klytaimestra’s murder.

It is often the case in tragedy that the previous acquaintance occurred while one of the characters was a baby or a young child and the changes wrought by time therefore hinder immediate recognition of the other’s identity. Thus, Elektra cannot recognise Orestes who stands before her in Euripides’ \textit{Elektra}, just as he cannot recognise her. One noteworthy exception to this pattern is the recognition between Menelaos and Helen who were separated as adults. There is no deliberate concealment of identity; rather, the lack of recognition here results from a character’s (Menelaos’) overwhelming belief in alternate events, that is, that Helen was in Troy, from where he rescued her and brought her with him to Egypt.

1.1.1. \textbf{Elements of the Enacted Recognition}

Mutual recognitions are common in extant tragedy and possess several identifiable elements (some of which also feature in one-sided recognition \textit{pragma}a): an extensive exchange between the unknowing acquaintances during which occur non-enacted

\textsuperscript{10} In conjunction with recognition of a person, it has been noted that characters in New Comedy ‘often discuss the intellectual processes that result in mistakes’ (see further Traill (2008) at 262-3). Cinaglia examines how the recognition \textit{pragma} in Menander’s \textit{Epitrepontes} depicts recognition as a process of understanding which requires evidence (such as tokens) together with correct reasoning (Cinaglia, ‘Token + Token = σωφρός ειδέναι? Aristotle and Menander - Recognition and Understanding’, \textit{Classical Association Annual Conference} (Glasgow, 2009)). Recognition cannot occur without correct reasoning.
recognition *pragma* (in particular, ironic comments about the fortunate relative of the unknown character who in reality corresponds to the speaker), a moment when one character possesses superior knowledge of the other’s identity, disbelief in response to a character’s revelation of identity, a token confirming someone’s identity, an embrace and a recognition duet. These mutual recognitions usually result in a reunion between two people ostensibly happy to be together again (although there may be disquieting undertones). While these elements do not occur in every recognition *pragma*, they are conventionally associated with this *pragma* owing to their repeated use in the late tragedies of Euripides.

The recognition *pragma* requires the presence on stage of two characters who were previously known to each other. Recognitions rarely occur as soon as the characters share the stage; instead, there is usually a lengthy verbal exchange between the characters (often involving stichomythic questions and answers) before an identification is made by one of the parties. In this respect, the tragic recognition is very similar to Penelope’s recognition of Odysseus in Homer’s *Odyssey*, where the recognition process occupies nearly six books of the twenty-four-book poem, starting at 17.508 and ending with her realization of his identity at 23.205. The scene involving recognition between Orestes and Iphigeneia in *Iphigeneia among the Taurians* is one of the most drawn-out in Athenian tragedy, occupying over six hundred lines of the 1499-line play and, while the characters share the stage from line 456, the first recognition is not effected for over three hundred lines.

One striking tragic exception to the lengthy prelude to a recognition, and I would argue that it is a *deliberate* frustration of the convention, occurs when Orestes and Hermione meet in *Andromache*. At 879-80 the chorus announces the approach of a stranger, who soon declares that he is Orestes, the son of Agamemnon and Klytaimestra (*Andromache* 884-5). Hermione’s recognition of him is therefore effected within four lines of Orestes’ first words. I would argue that Euripides is here choosing to underplay the *pragma* of recognition to place more emphasis within the *muthos* of the *Andromache* on the *pragma* of return and supplication, the latter of which immediately follows between Hermione and Orestes (891-5).

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11 The *Odyssey* is the quintessential ancient text for recognitions, just as it is for *nostoi*. It features fifteen scenes of recognition, all centreing on the revelation of Odysseus’ identity or the description of that revelation. See further Gainsford (2003).

12 Orestes and Pylades are brought on stage at 456 and at 1088 Orestes, Pylades and Elektra exit into the temple.
In the exchange between the characters there is always a moment when one character possesses superior knowledge about the other character’s identity (and the audience is always aware of this). For those scenes where only one character is ignorant, this superior knowledge exists throughout the scene until their identity is revealed. In those scenes of mutual ignorance, the audience is privileged to watch two separate moments of recognition. These recognitions can occur within a few lines of each other, as when Hermione and Orestes recognise each other within twenty lines of his entry (*Andromache* 881-99). More often however, the superior knowledge of one character lasts for an extended period of time because the second recognition is delayed by one character’s disbelief, by an interruption or by the other character’s refusal to reveal their identity. This postpones the second recognition and heightens the audience’s enjoyment of the lead-up to the reunion.

This pattern is ingeniously developed in *Helen* in line with the play’s thematic interest in reality and appearance. Helen’s recognition of Menelaos is effected within forty lines of the two sharing the stage, but his recognition of her is delayed for a further sixty lines. After Helen emerges from the palace, the audience can see that the long-separated couple are finally in the same location. But when Menelaos shortly thereafter emerges from his hiding place to approach Helen, she runs away in fear from this savage-looking man dressed in rags. As soon as he sees her face, he is struck by its resemblance to his wife’s and he says: ός δέµας δείξασα σόν / ἕκπληξεν ἡμίν ἀφασίαν τε προστίθης (*Helen* 548-9). His involuntary response is to recognise the face before him as that of his wife, but, contrary to the audience’s expectation, his recognition of her is not effected since he cannot accept the truth of the situation. He cannot trust his eyes. At 557 he again exclaims in amazement at her appearance and asks her identity, before commenting that she looks like Helen: Ἐλένη σ’ όµοίαν δὴ µάλιστ’ εἴδον, γύναι (563). To which she responds that he looks like Menelaos. In the minds of the audience surely this means that they must be about to identify one another. And indeed Menelaos admits his identity at 565 and Helen’s recognition of him is effected. She naturally attempts to embrace him (566), but mutual recognition has not occurred and he backs away. He cannot accept that she is his wife. He refuses to accept the reality of who stands before

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13 On this theme in *Helen* and *Iphigeneia among the Taurians*, see further Wright (2005b) at 285-337.

14 Rejection of an embrace also occurs in E. *Elektra* 223, *Iphigeneia among the Taurians* 798-9 and *Ion* 519 and 1401.
him since he knows that he left the woman he rescued from Troy in the cave with his companions. Throughout *Helen* there are many resonances with the Homeric return of Odysseus to Penelope, not least of which are Helen’s long wait for her husband as she attempts to remain faithful while pursued by a suitor and Menelaos’ shipwreck in the course of his return to his wife.\(^\text{15}\) In the rejection of Helen’s declared identity and her attempted embrace (567), however, the links with the Odyssean scenario are inverted, as Menelaos is likened to Penelope who rebuffs Odysseus’ declared identity.\(^\text{16}\) For the next thirty lines Helen attempts to prove her identity to her doubting husband, who remains convinced that the woman he rescued from Troy is his wife. The situation seems insoluble when one of Menelaos’ servants enters at 597 with a strange tale: the Helen who was in the cave has suddenly vanished into the air. He then notices Helen and greets her, assuming that she is the woman from the cave. His report, however, causes Menelaos to perceive the truth and he finally understands that the woman in front of him is his real wife. He moves to embrace her at 622-4 and both recognitions are visually achieved. Menelaos’ acceptance of Helen’s identity, however, calls into question the ability of anyone to verify another’s identity. He does not accept her verbal claims that she is Helen, despite her appearance, but when a servant identifies her on the basis of her appearance, he accepts that she is who she says she is. Recognition occurs, but the manner of its accomplishment is imprecise, and, as Wright notes, ‘their extravagant joy is undercut by a darker mood of uncertainty and doubt.’\(^\text{17}\)

There is one notable exception to the display of disbelief from a participant in a recognition *pragma* and that is in Sophocles’ *Elektra*, where the second recognition, that of Orestes by Elektra, is achieved as soon as he identifies himself. Elektra does not disbelieve him. Throughout the *Elektra*, however, Sophocles deliberately toys with the conventional representation of the *pragma* of recognition to manipulate the audience’s expectations, as will be argued below.\(^\text{18}\)

The extant tragedies evidence several ways of effecting a recognition and critics have attempted to categorise these, but with little success in establishing clear and useful classifications. Aristotle prescribes five categories of recognition in the *Poetics*, by

\(^{15}\) For further parallels, see Burian (ed.), (2007) at 9-11. Helen and Menelaos’ journey to Egypt on the return from Troy is recounted in *Odyssey* 4.220-569.

\(^{16}\) *Odyssey* 23.97-110.

\(^{17}\) Wright (2005b) at 300.

\(^{18}\) See below in this chapter at pp. 120-37.
which he attempts to identify which types are more effective in evoking pity and fear in the audience.19 His first type involves recognition by means of signs (διὰ τῶν σημείων), which he labels as the kind with the least skill or art (ἡ ἀτεχνοτάτη – ἀτεχνος literally meaning something that is without τέχνη, ‘skill’, ‘art’, ‘craft in work’). Even within this category he distinguishes that some recognitions of this kind are worse than others if they are used only as direct proof. Thus, for example, the unintended identification of Odysseus by means of his scar by Eurycleia in the process of washing his feet is better than the deliberate display of the scar to Eumaios and the swineherd to prove his identity.20 Again, this determination relates back to Aristotle’s view of recognition’s function to arouse pity and fear in the audience, and the unexpected revelation within the course of other events is more able to do this than the artificial presentation of proof.

Aristotle’s second category is also atechnos: recognition achieved through the contrivance of the poet (αἱ πεποιημέναι υπὸ τοῦ ποιητοῦ). What this precisely means is unclear. Aristotle identifies Orestes’ declaration of his identity to Iphigeneia in Iphigeneia among the Taurians as an example of this kind of recognition because Orestes ‘says what the poet requires, not the plot’ (αὐτός λέγει ἃ βούλεται ὁ ποιητής ἄλλῳ οὖχ ὁ μύθος, Poetics 1454b34-5). Yet the plot clearly requires the revelation of Orestes’ identity so that Iphigeneia, Orestes and Pylades can escape the land of the Taurians. Perhaps Aristotle is objecting to the particular pieces of information which Orestes adduces as proof of his identity, which will be discussed further below.21 Scholars have attempted to make sense of this category, but have added little clarity to the issue. Cave unhelpfully suggests that these recognitions are ‘adventitious or unmotivated demonstrations not arising from the requirements of the plot’, while Philippart simplifies it as ‘reconnaissance par déclaration’ and Stuart as ‘anagnorisis by self-disclosure’.22 Aristotle confuses the issue further when he suggests that Orestes

19 Poetics 1454b19-1455a21.
21 On the tokens in Iphigeneia among the Taurians, see further at pp. 89-91. Downing theorises that Aristotle’s objection to Orestes’ declaration lies in the nature of the proofs, in that the pieces of information used by Orestes relate to elements of the wider mythological story of the house of Atreus and not to the muthos of the Iphigeneia among the Taurians (his muthos1 category as opposed to muthos2) (Downing (1984) at 171). On Downing’s discussion on the meanings of muthos, see further Introduction at pp. 9-10.
22 Cave (1988) at 38, Philippart (1925) at 185, Stuart (1918) at 275.
could have brought tokens with him, yet he considers recognition by tokens as his least skilful method of recognition.

The third type of recognition occurs by means of a memory, such as the recognition that results from Odysseus’ weeping at Demodokos’ song in *Odyssey* Book 8. Aristotle’s fourth category concerns recognition which arises from inference (whether correct or false) and he labels this the second-best type of recognition. Elektra’s deduction of Orestes’ identity from the lock of hair and footprint in *Libation-Bearers* is one of the examples Aristotle gives of this type of recognition, although even with this evidence Elektra does not immediately accept Orestes’ identity when she is confronted by him.

The final, and according to Aristotle the best, type concerns recognitions which arise naturally from the course of events in the play. The examples he gives of this type include Iokaste’s recognition of Oedipus in *Oedipus the King* and Orestes’ recognition of Iphigeneia in *Iphigeneia among the Taurians*. But surely Iokaste’s recognition of Oedipus comes from her reasoning of how the messenger’s information fits together with her knowledge of the pinning of her infant son’s ankles and his abandonment on Mount Kithairon? It seems likely, therefore, that Aristotle’s categories are not exclusive of each other.

While Aristotle’s taxonomy establishes some methods by which recognition occurs, the parameters of each of his categories are ambiguous. The categories are not exclusive as one recognition can involve several different types of recognition. Elektra’s recognition of Orestes in *Libation-Bearers* involves reasoning, the second-best way of achieving recognition, but it also uses a token, the cloth she wove as a child, and use of tokens is designated by him as the least skilful type of recognition. How then does he evaluate overall that particular recognition *pragma*? The primary problem with his categorisation is his attempt to evaluate each particular means of recognition purely by its type and independent of the particular *muthos*. To call all recognitions brought about by tokens *atechnoi* is to ignore how the *pragma* fits within the *muthos* as a whole. For example, it is clear that the tokens used in *Ion* are crucial to the emphasis Euripides has

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23 This category is divided by some scholars into two categories: correct reasoning and false inference.

24 Perrin notes that reasoning is also required within the category of memory (Perrin (1909) at 387 and 5-404).
laid on the issue of autochthony and the history of Athens throughout the entire tragedy.\textsuperscript{25}

Perrin sets out to ‘determine how far the classification and relative estimate of [recognition scenes] by Aristotle is satisfactory and of permanent value’ and establishes a different taxonomy.\textsuperscript{26} He broadly divides all recognitions into those which are spontaneous and do not require proof and those which are induced by proof. An example of a spontaneous recognition is Helen’s recognition of Menelaos in Helen. The second category of proof-based recognitions is more complicated in that it is further divided into two types: direct and formal recognition by means of signs and indirect recognition. He classifies Elektra’s recognition of Orestes in Libation-Bearers as a direct and formal proof-induced recognition by means of the ‘signs’ of his hair, footprint and the cloth. The second type encompasses indirect, informal and artistic proof-induced recognitions, which are identified by him as ‘recognitions of the highest art’.\textsuperscript{27} This type is then further divided into two subsections: those effected by means of signs and those without. Kreousa’s recognition of Ion through the Pythia’s possession of his birth-tokens is an example of the former. Orestes’ confirmation of Elektra’s identity in Libation-Bearers through overhearing her prayer at Agamemnon’s tomb is an example of an indirect, informal and artistic proof-induced recognition without signs. This multi-layered classification of recognitions is confusing and ultimately not helpful.

The underlying limitation of both Aristotle’s and Perrin’s taxonomies is that one cannot judge the value of a particular means by which recognition is effected without considering the effect of a particular recognition pragma within the muthos of an individual tragedy. Each example of a type of recognition does not have the same effect on the systasis, the muthos and the audience in every tragedy. It is therefore more prudent to categorise the means by which recognition is effected in tragedy without attempting to classify the artistic value of each category.

I propose that there are four main ways in which recognition is effected in tragedy, although a single recognition pragma may involve a combination of these.\textsuperscript{28} Firstly,

\textsuperscript{25} See below in this chapter at pp. 91-2.
\textsuperscript{26} Perrin (1909) at 373 and 385-404.
\textsuperscript{27} Perrin (1909) at 403.
\textsuperscript{28} See Appendix 3: Enacted recognition pragmata for the categorisation of the means by which the extant enacted recognition pragmata are effected.
there is the simple declaration of one’s own or someone else’s identity. This declaration can be for the purpose of directly verifying one’s identity or can be made in the course of a speech-act for a different purpose, such as a prayer. Thus, Hermione’s recognition of Orestes is effected when he announces his name and that he is the son of Agamemnon and Klytaiemestra (Andromache 884-5), while Orestes’ recognition of Elektra in Euripides’ Elektra is achieved when he overhears her song lamenting her circumstances (E. Elektra 115-19). Second, recognition can occur by means of tokens. Again, these can be offered as proof of one’s identity or, alternatively, their possession may verify one’s identity. Orestes shows Elektra the cloth she wove for him as a child (Libation-Bearers 231-2), while Kreousa recognises Ion as her son when the Pythia produces the tokens found with him when he was a child (Ion 1395). Third, someone’s identity can be established by means of reasoning from events. Thus Klytaiemestra recognises Orestes after he has slain Aigisthos and is about to kill her in Libation-Bearers. Lastly, comprehension of someone’s identity can be established simply through the viewing of their face. This method of recognition usually follows a period of erroneous assumption as to the other’s identity or divine-induced delusion. Hekabe realises that the body brought on stage is that of her son Polydoros after she uncovers it, having assumed previously that it was Polyxene’s and then possibly Kassandra’s (Hekabe 681-2), while Agave realises that the head she holds is actually her son’s after her Dionysiac mania dissipates (Bacchae 1280).

The recognitions that are achieved through the use of a token usually pertain to the identity of the male participant in the recognition pragma. The token may be physical (an actual object or a sign of previous activity) or verbal (a piece of information known only to the particular characters) and the nature of the connection of the tokens to the characters varies. Some tokens used for recognition relate purely to a character’s body, such as the scar in Euripides’ Elektra which the old man recognises as identifying Orestes for Elektra (E. Elektra 573-4) and Oedipus’ swollen ankles (Oedipus the King 1032-6).

The ‘tokens’ used to effect recognition and verify identity in Iphigeneia among the Taurians and Helen are pieces of information disclosed by one of the participants or a third party. Menelaos’ servant reports that Helen has disappeared into the air from the cave and thereby confirms the real Helen’s story, while Orestes attempts to convince his sister of who he is by mentioning things only they would know. In both these plays, the means by which identity is confirmed reflects the plays’ concern with the connection
between appearance and reality. After Pylades identifies Orestes to Iphigeneia, Orestes then attempts to prove his identity to his sister through the revelation of a series of pieces of information. The first three pieces of information relate to crimes committed by one member of their family against another. As Torrance notes, ‘it is the only time in the house of Atreus plays in which the crimes form the focus of the recognition scene and function as recognition tokens. Their use to effect the joyous recognition adds a further incongruous and unsettling dimension to family history in IT which is not present in other versions.’ The first is Iphigeneia’s weaving of the story of Atreus and Thyestes’ quarrel over the golden lamb and of the reversal of the sun’s course across the sky which resulted from Atreus feeding Thyestes his own children (Iphigeneia among the Taurians 812-17). The second is the lustral water which Klytaimestra gave Iphigeneia to prepare for her wedding at Aulis and reminds the audience of Agamemnon’s sacrifice of his own daughter (818). Connected with Agamemnon’s crime too is the lock of hair Iphigeneia donated to serve as a memorial on her tomb (820). These vignettes offered by Orestes revolve around events in Iphigeneia’s childhood, but he actually only knows of them because Elektra has told him about them (811). Orestes then provides a fourth piece of information about something he himself has seen: Pelops’ spear in the palace of Agamemnon. He adds that this was in the maiden’s quarters (ἐν παρθενῶσι τοίσι σοίς κεκρυµµένην, 826), which serves to confirm his identity, as no man from outside the family could have seen the spear if it was stored in such a location. The location of a weapon in a part of the house designated for female members of the family is a further disquieting element in this recognition.

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29 On this theme in Helen and Iphigeneia among the Taurians, see further Wright (2005b) at 285-337.
30 As Torrance notes, this is the only recognition involving members of the house of Atreus which does not involve a physical proof of identity of some sort (Torrance (2004) at 70). She notes further that the recognition tokens in Iphigeneia among the Taurians ‘are superseded in terms of dramatic importance by the presence of the written text, since without the letter there would be no recognition’ (Torrance (unpublished)).
31 Cropp rightly notes that all four of the tokens connect to the three dreadful events in the family’s history mentioned in the prologue and parodos: Pelops’ race, Atreus and Thyestes’ dispute and Iphigeneia’s sacrifice (Cropp (ed.), (2000) at 222).
33 For a discussion of the Pelops myth in this play, see O’Brien (1988).
34 Kyriakou discusses the possible reasons put forward for the location of the spear in Iphigeneia’s bedroom (Kyriakou (2006) at 274-5).
pragma. It is this token, however, that finally convinces Iphigeneia of his identity. None of these tokens belongs exclusively to Orestes, but they relate to their shared family history and are sufficient to prove his identity to Iphigeneia.

Yet, the chorus’ statement at the end of the recognition duet between Orestes and Iphigeneia suggests ‘the inadequacy of Orestes’ proofs’: ἐν τοισί θαυμαστοῖς καὶ μύθων πέρα / τάδ’ εἰδὼν αὐτή κοί κλόουσ’ ἀπ’ ἀγγέλουν (Iphigeneia among the Taurians 900-1). The chorus argues that seeing is more accurate than hearing things from others and yet that is exactly how Orestes identified himself: by words and, for three of the four ‘tokens’, by words he had heard from someone else. The chorus’ words thereby allude to the unreliability of Orestes’ means of verifying his identity.

In the earliest extant recognition pragma, physical tokens are fairly simple and are relevant only to Orestes and Elektra (Libation-Bearers 168-234). The items are intrinsically personal to the siblings. The lock of hair and footprint are unique to Orestes (although in the play it is argued that they are also characteristic of Elektra [172, 176]), while the piece of weaving was made by Elektra and given to Orestes. In the later play of Ion, however, the tokens are intricately connected not only to the participants of the recognition pragma, but also to the history and rule of Athens. The play is infused with the theme of autochthony and the recognition tokens strengthen this prominence as they are integrally connected with Ion and Kreousa’s supernatural ancestors and the early kings of Athens. First there is the cradle itself which is bound with sacred stemmata. The cover of the cradle shows no sign of decay despite its age and the wickerwork has no mould, indications of its links with the divine or the supernatural (Ion 1389-94). Taplin suggests that it might be ‘like that in which Athene gave Erichthonios to the daughters of Kekrops’, which Ion and Kreousa discuss earlier in the play at 271-3. While the same term is not used for both containers, Hermes describes Kreousa’s exposure of Ion in a basket as ‘preserving the custom of her ancestors and of earth-born Erichthonios’ (20-1), which links the two baskets. Kreousa recognises the cradle as soon as she sees it and therefore also Ion (ὁ τέκνον μου, 1399). She leaves her refuge at the altar to embrace her long-lost son, risking her life on the knowledge of what the cradle contains (τὸν τ’ ἔσω κεκρυμμένων, 1405), which she then displays. First, she

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35 Wright (2005b) at 307.
36 ‘Taplin (1978) at 97.
37 Kreousa describes Erichthonios’ basket as a τεῦχος (273), but Hermes and Ion call Ion’s an ἄντίπηξ (19 and 1391). Kreousa describes it as an ἀγγος (1398).
names the cloth that she wove as a child (ὦφασμα, 1417), which features a gorgon in the centre of the *peplos* (1421). The gorgon is linked closely with Kreousa’s family. Athene, who now wears the gorgon’s *deros* on her breast, gave as a gift to the infant Erichthonios two drops of the gorgon’s blood, one deadly, the other healing. She hung these with gold chains around Erichthonios’ neck and they now hang around his descendant Kreousa’s wrist (1001-9). Kreousa’s cloth is also bordered with serpents like an *aigis* (1422), reinforcing her connection to Athene and, through the goddess’ patronage, to the city of Athens. The serpents refer back to the two snakes which Athene set to guard the infant Erichthonios (21-3). This connection also refers to the second object in the cradle to be identified by Kreousa – the golden necklace with two gleaming snakes (1427-31). This necklace, a gift from Athene, is the sign of the descendants of Erichthonios and symbol of Athenian kingship (24-6). The third and final object is a crown of olive (1433-6). The crown came from the very tree which Athene produced for the city to be named its patron over Poseidon. As a consequence of its divine origin, both the tree and the crown are untainted by age, ever-flourishing and green. The tokens relate not only to Ion and Kreousa, but also to their ancestor Erichthonios, former king of Athens, and to the goddess Athene. Likewise they connect the present dramatic time with the time of Ion’s birth, the time of Erichthonios’ birth and the time when the gods were competing for the right to name the city. And for many in the audience, all these time periods are connected with their own time and their own existence as citizens of Athens watching a tragedy below the Acropolis. Ion is recognised through these tokens not just as the son of Kreousa, but as the rightful king of Athens. It is noteworthy, however, that his identity is not confirmed as such by the tokens, but by Kreousa’s attestation of a connection between her and the tokens. His identity – and his role as heir to the throne of Athens – is established on Kreousa’s word. As Loraux comments, this scene is ‘like an investiture and ... Kreousa, the sole bearer of legitimacy, recognises Ion as a father might identify his son.’ The audience’s response to the happy recognition between mother and son is intensified by the emotions connected with patriotic pride in the history of one’s city.

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38 The same word is used for Elektra’s cloth in *Libation-Bearers* 231 and a derivative in Euripides’ *Elektra* (ἐξῴφασμα, 539).
39 Loraux (1992) at 171.
In those *pragma* where reunion between the two characters is an occasion for happiness, once recognition is achieved, there is often an embrace. The tableau of the couple’s embrace underlines strongly for the audience the joy and the actuality of their reunion, particularly when there has been a delay in the mutual recognition and one character’s attempted embrace has been rebuffed by the other. The initial failed embrace accords more emphasis to the physical contact when it is finally achieved. The embrace is the visual sign of the reunion. An embrace can be described in the characters’ words or a particular formula can be used whereby one character says ἐχω σε χερσίν and the other responds κατῳ σε. In *Helen* Euripides strongly emphasises the embrace of Helen and Menelaus by not only making it a long embrace, but by having both husband and wife repeatedly comment on the fact that they hold each other (*Helen* 628-30, 634-7, 650-2 and 657-8). Aristophanes replicates this element of this particular recognition *pragma* when Mnesilochos and Euripides embrace in the roles of Helen and Menelaos in *Thesmophoriazusai* (912-15).

A final conventional element of the recognition *pragma* is a duet between the reunited couple which usually follows the embrace. This epirrhetic composition was particularly a feature of Euripides’ later plays, but it can also be found in Sophocles’ *Elektra*. One character sings and the other character speaks in iambic trimeters or

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41 See further Kannicht (ed.), (1969) at 183.

42 A further tragedy-influenced recognition *pragma* featuring an embrace occurs in *Frogs* at 1322. Aeschylus ends his song with περιβάλλ’ τέκνον λένας, which the scholiast identifies as coming from Euripides’ *Hysipyle* (fr. 765a *TrGF*) and which presumably marked the moment of recognition between Hypsipyle and one of her sons. Borthwick connects Aeschylus’ apparently random words immediately before this line as encapsulating the means by which recognition between Hypsipyle and her sons was achieved in the myth and potentially in Euripides’ version of it (Borthwick (1994) at 32-3).

43 On actors’ song in tragedy generally, see Hall (2006). On different types of *amoibaia*, see Popp (1971).

44 S. *Elektra* 1233-87, *Iphigeneia among the Taurians* 827-99, *Hysipyle* fr. 759a.1579-83 and 1591-1633 *TrGF*, *Ion* 1437-1509 and *Helen* 625-99. Wright suggests the possibility that Sophocles was the first to enact a recognition duet, which Euripides then adapted, since the
sections of antilabic lyric, in what Willink terms a ‘punctuated monody’. The singing part is usually astrophic (with the exception of Sophocles’ *Elektra*), predominantly dochmiac and typically taken by the female. The male speaker tends to be calmer, less effusive and less extravagant in expressing his joy at the reunion than the female. As well as the expected expression of joy at being reunited, these exchanges can also include remembrance of past sufferings, which adds more pathos to the scene, and often feature apostrophe, exclamations, questions and anaphora.

There are both typical and atypical elements of the recognition duet in *Helen*. In the first part, which Willink aptly terms the ‘Embrace’ since the two are locked together (*Helen* 625-59), both Menelaos and Helen sing. This is the only such example in which both male and female participants sing, but, as Popp notes, while Menelaos does sing the occasional line, Helen is the ‘eigentlich’ singer. This is also the only example of a recognition duet involving a reunited husband and wife, which may account for the exuberance of their joy at being together again. Alternatively, the extreme display in song of Menelaos’ joy at being reunited with Helen may link in with the play’s concern with appearance and reality. The excessive response to being reunited in terms of both the couple’s lengthy embrace and the singing husband may be a further signal that all is not right in this recognition *pragma*. The second section of the duet (660-97) conforms to the typical epirrhematic structure as Helen recounts her abduction by Paris and the

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45 Willink (1989) at 46.
46 Chong-Gossard argues in his analysis of gender and communication in Euripides’ plays that the woman’s singing part of the recognition duet has three purposes. First, it allows the woman to sing of the experiences (usually connected to her body) she has suffered in the past; second, lyric has a ‘truth-telling power’; and third, it ‘confirms a power differential between the two that requires the woman to be persuasive and inspire pity through her song’ (Chong-Gossard (2008) at 32-58).
47 See further Kyriakou (2006) at 279.
49 For the latest metrical analysis of this song, see Allan (ed.), (2008) at 217-21.
50 Willink (1989) at 46.
51 See further Popp (1971) at 264.
52 See further Wright (2005b) at 299-307.
terrible events that consequently befell her family in response to Menelaos’ spoken questions. Her lyrics convey her emotional distress in telling of these things.

One notable example in which there is not a duet where the audience might expect one is after the recognition and reunion of Orestes and Elektra in Euripides’ *Elektra*. After the siblings are reunited, there is singing, but it is the chorus which expresses its joy at Orestes’ return and entreats Elektra to pray to the gods that Orestes might enter the city with fortune (E. *Elektra* 885-95). Their song contains multiple examples of anaphora (585, 590, 592 and 594) and apostrophe (585, 591), as well as words evoking day, light and fire (585-7).

This denial of song to Elektra lessens the expression of her joy at reunion with her brother and instead places the emphasis on the next stage of the play: the plotting of the deaths of Klytaiamnestra and Aigisthos.

There is another recognition *pragma* which notably lacks a response to a recognition, but here it is the entire response from one of the participants. In *Alkestis* the recognised party does not participate in or respond to the recognition, despite being alive. The lack of participation and response in the recognition *pragma* creates an unsettling atmosphere on stage as Alkestis does not verify her own identity or extol her joy in being reunited with her husband. After Herakles enters with a veiled woman Admetos is under the erroneous assumption that the woman is a stranger (since he saw his wife die), while the audience would have known immediately upon entry who the woman was since they were forewarned by Apollo in the prologue as to Herakles’ future actions (68-9). This superior knowledge allows the audience to appreciate the suspense leading up to the moment of recognition, but the lack of reaction from Alkestis reduces the audience’s enjoyment in observing what should be a joyful reunion. While there are examples of third parties verifying the identity of one of the participants as Herakles does, for example the old man in Euripides’ *Elektra* who identifies Orestes by his scar for Elektra, in no other extant recognition *pragma* is there no reaction from a living participant. This results in the joy of reunion appearing to be one-sided, which leaves one to question the reaction of the silent partner. No sign of Alkestis’ expected

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53 The extant recognition duets, however, appear in tragedies which probably postdate Euripides’ *Elektra*.
54 See below on typical language of recognition *pragmata* at pp. 96-100.
55 Hübner closely analyses this scene and concludes that *Alkestis* 1119-20 are interpolated since they pre-empt the climax of the recognition (Hübner (1981)).
56 On this scene, see further discussion in Chapter 1: Return Home at pp. 47-8 and 54-5.
happiness is apparent in the text, although Admetos greets her with an effusive address (Alkestis 1133) and talks of his joy (χαρά, 1125). There is an emphasis on the senses, particularly his physical contact with and sight of her. His εἰχώ in 1134 suggests that he embraces her, but there is no indication that it is mutual and Alkestis remains silent.\(^{57}\) Her silence is explained away as a ritual requirement (1144-6), but the effect is still disconcerting in the absence of the conventional effusive positive reaction.\(^{58}\) There may be a dramaturgical reason in that the play can be performed with only two actors as long as Alkestis is silent in this scene, but there was (as far as we know) no prohibition on Euripides using a third actor in this play. It is therefore the case that Euripides has deliberately chosen to dramatise a one-sided recognition. Rather than cause the audience to focus on Admetos’ reaction to his wife’s return, however, her silence invites the audience to consider the implications of her lack of a response.

1.1.2. LANGUAGE

Together with conventional elements of action within the recognition pragma, there is also an identifiable set of vocabulary. The use of the address ξένος is prolific in scenes leading up to recognition from Libation-Bearers to Ion.\(^{59}\) One notable exception is Helen, where the two characters recognise each other’s face, but cannot at first accept the evidence of their eyes. The figure in front of them is therefore not a stranger to them, but cannot actually be the person they think it is. Similarly, the term is not used in Oedipus the King for the obvious reason that the characters are acquainted, even if they do not know the bond of blood that exists between them. Repetitions of this address in a single scene continually emphasise to the audience their superior knowledge pertaining to the characters’ identities and therefore increases anticipation of the eventual revelation of identity. In Iphigeneia among the Taurians the address is used six times before recognition occurs, four times by Iphigeneia and twice by Orestes.\(^{60}\)

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\(^{57}\) Touching: 1131, 1132, 1134, 1135. Seeing: 1123, 1124, 1126, 1127, 1129, 1133, 1134.

\(^{58}\) For the reasons proposed for her silence, see Betts (1965).

\(^{59}\) Libation-Bearers 222, 668; S. Elektra 1112, 1119, 1180, 1184; Andromache 881; E. Hypsipyle fr. 752e.7 TrGF; E. Elektra 265, 283, 302, 330, 555; Ion 520; Iphigeneia among the Taurians 509, 579, 597, 665, 725, 798.

\(^{60}\) Iphigeneia among the Taurians 479, 509, 579, 597, 728 and 798.
Recognition *pragmata* contain many words of sensory perception, particularly sight and touch, but also hearing. There is often an emphasis on the actuality of contact with a newly recognised *philos*, but there appears to be an even more powerful connection between the act of seeing and that of recognition. The concept of sight is evoked in several different contexts within a recognition *pragma*. It can be used to try and confirm for one character the identity of the other, as when Orestes announces to Elektra εἰς ὅψιν ἦκεις ὄνπερ ἐξηύχον πάλαι (*Libation-Bearers* 215). And when she asks if he is really Orestes, her brother replies αὐτὸν μὲν οὖν ὅρῶσα δοσμαθεῖς ἐμέ (225) and uses a further five verbs of seeing in the same speech (ἴδουσα 226, ὅραν 228, σκέψαι 229, ἰδοῦ 231 and οἶδα 234). When Elektra finally understands who stands before her, she greets him as the most-beloved saviour of Agamemnon’s household and then directly addresses ὃ τερπνὸν ὄμμα (238), which can mean the face, but also the eyes, the organ of sight.\(^61\) Similarly, in Euripides’ *Elektra* the old man tries to convince Elektra that Orestes is her brother using three ‘seeing’ words: βλέψον 567, βλέπων 569 and ὅραν 571.

After the recognition occurs, it is common for characters to exclaim that they ‘see’ the other person, particularly when the other person is dead. In *Hekabe*, the former Trojan queen recognises Polydoros’ corpse and says οἶμοι, βλέπω δὴ παῖδι ἐμὸν τεθνηκότα (*Hekabe* 681). Similarly Herakles recognises the corpses of his children (οἶμοι· τίν’ ὅψιν τήνδε δέρκομαι τάλας; *Herakles* 1132) and Agave the body of her son (ἐα, τί λεύσσω; *Bacchae* 1280, ὥρῳ μέγιστον ἄλγος ἢ τάλαιν ἔγο, 1282).

Interestingly, in the false recognition scene in *Ion* Xouthos does not ‘see’ Ion, which is correct, since they have never seen each other before. He does, however, evoke the concept when he says to Ion νὸν ὅρᾶς ἄ χρή σ’ ὅραν (*Ion* 558) when Ion accepts Apollo’s oracle. Once Ion believes that Xouthos is his father, he exclaims: ὃ φιλὴ μήτερ, πότ’ ἄρα καὶ σὸν ὄψομαι δέμας; / νὸν ποθῶ σε μᾶλλον ἢ πρίν, ἦτες εἶ ποτ’, εἰσιδεῖν (563-4). Rather than saying that he sees his father, he instead wonders as to when he will see his *mother*. Euripides has deliberately placed the emphasis on the absent mother, as opposed to the purported father at hand. Yet, later in the recognition *pragma* between mother and son, both characters exclaim that they ‘see’ the other.\(^62\)

\(^61\) In a similar way, Menelaos greets his wife when he recognises her as ὃ φιλτάτα πρόσωπις (*Helen* 636).

\(^62\) *I triggered and 1437.*
There may also be a connection between recognition, words connected with ‘seeing’ and the mysteries. In Sophocles’ *Elektra* after the mutual recognition is effected, Elektra comments on the ‘most dear appearance’ of Orestes (S. *Elektra* 1285-7) and then vows not to stop crying for joy now that she has seen him (1312-15). Seaford comments that ‘in both passages it is the sight of Orestes that has brought permanent happiness, just as it is a sight that brings permanent happiness to mystic initiates.’\(^{63}\)

The argument that the concept of seeing was a fundamental part of the recognition *pragma* may be strengthened by an example from *Frogs*. During the contest between Aeschylus and Euripides, Aeschylus uses a line from the recognition scene between Hypsipyle and her sons in Euripides’ *Hypsipyle* and in the next two lines Aristophanes inserts four uses of the verb ὄρᾳν (1323-4).\(^{64}\) While this two-line exchange can be interpreted as evoking Aeschylus’ use of the footprint in *Libation-Bearers* as a recognition token,\(^{65}\) I would argue that it also evokes the conventional language of the tragic recognition *pragma*.

Unsurprisingly, after recognition is achieved, characters often declare their joy.\(^{66}\) Orestes tells Elektra to control her *chara* after he has convinced her of his identity (*Libation-Bearers* 233) and the same word is used by Admetos (*Alkestis* 1125) and by Iphigeneia (*Iphigeneia among the Taurians* 832). In the same scene both Iphigeneia and Orestes talk of their ἐδονή (794 and 842 respectively), while Ion declares that he is *asmenos* to see his mother (*Ion* 1437). Helen talks of the *terpsis* which she and Menelaos can now enjoy (*Helen* 626) and states that she rejoices (γέγηθα, 632). Characters can also express their joy at being reunited by using exclamatory expressions, just as Kreousa announces ἵ ν ἵ ν λάμπρας ἄθερας ἀμπυχανί, / τίν’ αἴδαν ἄσσω βοάς; (*Ion* 1445-6). These can include apostrophe connected with light, as well as light metaphors.\(^{67}\) After Ion has accepted that Kreousa is his mother, she greets him

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63 Seaford (1994a) at 277.
64 Euripides *Hypsipyle* fr. 765a TrGF. For a discussion of the links between *Hypsipyle* and Aeschylus’ lines in *Frogs*, see Borthwick (1994) at 32-3.
65 As suggested by Borthwick (Borthwick (1994) at 35-6).
66 On the various means of expressing joy in tragedy, see Shisler (1942).
as her child and ὀ ϕῶς μητρὶ κρείσσον ἥλιου (Ion 1439). In ancient Greek literature light is often associated with the idea of salvation. This correlation dates back to Homer, where, for example, the image of the appearance of bright air is used in a simile to denote the relief of the Greeks when they had put out the fire in the ships. Characters greeting the light may therefore be associating the arrival of their recognised philos with release from their current disastrous circumstances. Thus, Elektra uses apostrophe of light twice when she recognises Orestes and the paidagogos (S. Elektra 1224 and 1354-5). Their arrivals herald liberation from her miserable life and the execution of vengeance on Aigisthos and Klytaimnestra.

The other main category of words used after recognition is effusive terms of affection, particularly the adjective φίλος and its superlative form. This address is usually directed at the person recognised, but occasionally it is used in relation to light or a body part of the other. Both men and women use these fulsome terms. Thus Helen addresses Menelaos as ὀ φιλτατ’ ἄνδρόν Μενέλαως (Helen 625), while Menelaos addresses her as ὀ φιλτάτα πρόσοψις (636). All three tragedians use this address in their recognition pragmata and Aristophanes has Dikaiopolis address the eel as Ὠ φιλτάτη σύ (Acharnians 885) in his parody of the tragic recognition and reunion. Gregor makes the interesting observation that the term is used in the recognition pragmata of Orestes and Elektra in Aeschylus and Sophocles, but not in that of Euripides. Elektra omits to address her brother as φιλτατος, despite the old man’s urging: ἐπείτα μέλλεις προσπίτνειν το/υς φιλτάτοις; (E. Elektra 576). She does, however, address three other people in the play as φιλτατος – the stranger (the disguised Orestes) who brings news of Orestes, her husband and the servant who brings news of Aigisthos’ murder. Elektra does express her joy at being reunited with Orestes, but it is muted in comparison with

68 Janko (1992) at 355, Lossau (1994). Other tragic examples not from recognition pragmata include Libation-Bearers 131, Oedipus the King 1183, Herakles 531 and 562-4, and Orestes 243. A negative example occurs in Iphigeneia among the Taurians when the chorus sing that the light has gone since Iphigeneia’s dream appears to indicate that her family is destroyed (87).


70 Libation-Bearers 235, S. Elektra 1223, 1224, 1354, 1357, Alkestis 1133, Iphigeneia among the Taurians 795, 816, 842 and Ion 1437, 1443.

71 Gregor (1957) at 15.

72 E. Elektra 229, 345 and 767.
the language used in other pragmata: ὁ χρόνοι φανείς, ἐκεί σὲ ἀσέλπτως (578-9). This is in line with the darker representation of Elektra in Euripides’ play.73

1.1.3. RECOGNITION OF A CORPSE

There are four plays that feature recognition in a completely different context to those already discussed and that is recognition of a dead loved one. This type of recognition was used to great effect in the plays, increasing the pathos of the scene as the audience, aware both of the identity of the dead person and of the ignorance of the living character, waited for the inevitable revelation and sorrow. And it was always sorrow, rather than relief or happiness at the death of another, in contrast to recognition of a living person, which could lead to either positive or negative feelings for the recognising party. These recognition pragmata invariably follow an erroneous assumption of the corpse’s identity.

Aigisthos in Sophocles’ Elektra enters the stage and happily approaches a shrouded dead body, which he assumes to be that of his enemy Orestes. Upon drawing back the cloth, however, he suffers the first of two recognitions in quick succession: the first, that the corpse is his lover Klytaimestra, and the second, that the man in front of him is his enemy Orestes (S. Elektra 1475-9). In fact, his recognition of Klytaimestra leads immediately into his recognition of Orestes. Hekabe too approaches a corpse, thinking it to be someone other than it really is. She assumes it is the body of her daughter Polyxene, recently sacrificed on Achilleus’ tomb (Hekabe 671-3). When disabused of this notion, she questions whether it might be Kassandra, but the servant rapidly clarifies that the body is that of her son Polydoros, the one for whom Hekabe did not fear, having sent him away for safety into the care of a friend. The audience has been forewarned that the body is that of Polydoros by his ghost in the prologue (45-8), but Hekabe’s duplicated misunderstanding of the corpse’s identity emphasises the many calamities that she must endure and thereby intensifies for the audience her sorrow and grievous situation.

Both Agave and Herakles too suffer from a misunderstanding over the identity of the corpses beside them, but in Bacchae and Herakles Euripides increases the tension in the scene, since not only does the audience know the identity of the dead, but it is also

73 On the representation of Elektra, see further Cropp (ed.), (1988) at xxxiv-xxxvii.
aware that the person responsible for their deaths is the one now ignorant of their identity. Both Agave and Herakles are victims of a divine-induced delusion, rather than simply an erroneous assumption. Agave carries the head of what she thinks is a lion cub (*Bacchae* 1278), when in fact it is her own son Pentheus. Under the influence of Dionysos, she killed and pulled to pieces her own child. Herakles, under the power of Lyssa on Hera’s orders, has killed his own wife and sons, thinking them to be the children of his enemy Eurystheus (*Herakles* 970-1). The deaths occur offstage, but are narrated to the audience in reporting *pragma* before the instrument of their destruction enters on stage in a state of ignorance of their deeds. The audience then watches as the killer is brought out of their delusional state by their *philoi* to a full understanding of their actions.

There are therefore conventional steps within a recognition *pragma* and an identifiable corpus of vocabulary. Recognition could be effected of living or dead on-stage characters. There is usually a lengthy initial exchange between the characters, at least one of whom is ignorant of the other’s identity, while the audience is aware of the identities of all characters as well as of any misunderstanding of identity that might exist. There is always a moment when one character possesses superior knowledge as to the other’s identity. The revelation of their identity may, however, be rejected through an explicit denial of an embrace. The establishment of a character’s identity may occur through declaration, a token (physical or verbal), reasoning or the sight of their face. Following those recognitions which do not result in violence, there is usually an embrace and a duet. Typical vocabulary within a recognition *pragma* includes addresses of someone as ξένος, words of sensory perception and expressions of joy. Playwrights could vary a particular component of a recognition *pragma* to influence the audience’s response to a scene, a character and to the performance as a whole.

1.1.4. **Role of the Enacted Recognition in Tragedy**

Aristotle identifies that recognition within a tragedy can assist in the stimulation of pity and fear in the audience, but the effects of the enacted recognition *pragma* are much more extensive than that. To begin with, a recognition can also provoke feelings of shared joy within the audience. The enacted recognition *pragma* has, however, a variety of other effects upon the *systasis*, the *muthos* and the audience of a tragedy. It can occur at any stage within the *systasis*, acting as a motivator of further action when it happens
in the beginning or middle of a tragedy or as the climax at the end. Together with non-enacted recognition *pragma*, it can structure the *muthos* and create anticipation in the audience as to future enactments. The correspondence between two enactments can compel the audience to compare and contrast the circumstances of, and the people involved in, the two events. Recognition *pragma* can also develop the *muthos* of a tragedy through the intensification of particular themes and motifs.\(^\text{74}\)

The enacted *pragma* of recognition most commonly motivates or leads to subsequent action. The recognition is a step in the development of the *systasis*. The three representations of the recognition between Elektra and Orestes directly lead on to the murder of Klytaimestra and Aigisthos in *Libation-Bearers* and the two *Elektras*. In *Oedipus the King* Iokaste’s understanding of Oedipus’ identity leads to her suicide off-stage, while Hekabe’s recognition of Polydoros’ body leads to her revenge on Polymestor in *Hekabe*. Enacted recognitions can also lead to intrigue and escape, particularly in the later plays of Euripides: the recognitions in *Helen* and *Iphigeneia among the Taurians* lead to the main characters’ escape from their places of captivity and in *Andromache* Hermione runs away with Orestes.\(^\text{75}\) Aélion notes that the recognition *pragma* in these plays often begin quite badly with, for example, Iphigeneia declaring that she will sacrifice Orestes and Kreousa trying to kill Ion.\(^\text{76}\) This creates suspense for the audience as to whether the violence will eventuate and the threat of *philos* killing *philos* engages the audience emotionally in the *muthos* before the reunion turns pity and fear into feelings of joy.

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\(^{74}\) Stuart identifies several purposes for the *pragma* of recognition in the plot of tragedy, but his terms are not particularly useful. He gives the following examples: ‘exposition and preparation (Choephoroe), exciting incident (Helen), a step in the development of the plot or action (Electra), climax (Oedipus Rex), denouement (Ion)’ (Stuart (1918) at 290). I question whether the recognition in *Helen* can be sidelined simply as an ‘exciting incident’ when the following actions within the play could not have taken place without it. Is this not an example of a ‘step in the development of the plot or action’?

\(^{75}\) Wright notes that these scenes ‘are structurally climactic ... the direction of the plot completely changes after the recognition has taken place: from ignorance and confusion to deliberate concealment, deception and escape-stratagem’ (Wright (2005b) at 298-9).

\(^{76}\) Aélion (1983a) at 98.
Four plays contain an enacted recognition within the last scene: Sophocles’ *Elektra* and Euripides’ *Ion, Alkestis* and *Bacchae*.\(^{77}\) Even in such a small sample, it is clear that the emotions aroused for the characters and the audience by the same type of action are very different. The happy reunion of Kreousa and Ion contrasts strongly with Agave’s recognition of her son Pentheus – dead by her own hand. Aigisthos’ recognition of Orestes, just before he is led out to his death, concludes Sophocles’ *Elektra* on a foreboding note, while Admetos’ reunion with his wife is superficially a happy event for the couple, but Euripides’ presentation of the recognition and return leaves unsettling signs for the couple’s future happiness.\(^{78}\) The recognition *pragma* in *Alkestis* occurs only forty lines before the end of the play and thus contributes to the play’s closure.\(^{79}\) The reunion of Alkestis and Admetos closes the play’s *systasis* – it is literally the last *pragma* of the tragedy, which is unique in extant tragedy. Aigisthos’ recognition of Orestes leads into his (expected) death inside the palace, while after Ion and Kreousa’s mutual recognition Athene appears with explanations and instructions and *Bacchae* concludes after Agave and Kadmos have made their farewells and depart Thebes following Dionysos’ prophecy for the future. *Alkestis* is the only play to close with a recognition and the audience is left to imagine what happens next.

Several tragedies feature multiple enacted recognition *pragmata*, which allow the audience to compare and contrast the circumstances surrounding the recognitions. Thus, Elektra’s recognitions of Orestes and the paidagogos in Sophocles’ *Elektra* are explicitly contrasted through her use of the same greeting to both (S. *Elektra* 1224, 1354). Elektra’s exclamation to Orestes of ὁ φίλτατον φίλος is enthusiastic and demonstrates her joy at her brother’s return and her release from her current misery. But the use of the same intense expression to a former servant seems to exaggerate the nature of her emotional response, which is somewhat disquieting. This contrast can also be achieved with pseudo-recognition *pragma*, which superficially resemble the enacted *pragma*, but which ultimately cannot be viewed as a recognition. Thus, at the beginning of *Helen* Euripides presents what seems to be a recognition of Helen by Teukros, but one which ultimately fails.\(^{80}\) This failed *pragma* is then followed by a true

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\(^{77}\) Also Euripides’ *Alexandros*. For a possible reconstruction of this play, see Collard, Cropp, and Gibert (eds.), (2004) at 36-42.

\(^{78}\) See further Chapter 1: Return Home at pp. 47-8.

\(^{79}\) On closure generally in Euripidean tragedy, see Dunn (1996).

\(^{80}\) See further below at p. 106.
recognition of Helen by Menelaos, which allows the audience to consider the two situations. The cognitive process involved in the same action – the recognition of Helen – is demonstrated very differently.

As we have seen, the construction of the recognition between Kreousa and Ion in Ion strengthens the play’s focus on autochthony, the history of Athens and the establishment of legitimacy and thus intensifies the muthos. Euripides’ depiction of the action of recognition in Helen and Iphigeneia among the Taurians produces a sophistic questioning of the reliability of appearance and words, one of the key themes of the muthos in these plays.

Enacted recognition pragma therefore play a dynamic role, affecting the systasis, the muthos and the audience of a tragedy. The enactments are often used in conjunction with non-enacted recognition pragma to create several further effects. A significant one is the structure of an entire tragedy around the pragma of recognition, as we shall see below in Sophocles’ Elektra.

1.2. THE NON-ENACTED PRAGMA OF RECOGNITION

Non-enacted recognition pragma in extant tragedy include a false recognition, a failed recognition, references and allusions to past and potential enacted recognition pragma and comments that, with the benefit of the audience’s superior knowledge, become suggestions of a future enactment. They complement the enacted pragma and often work in conjunction with them to structure the systasis and muthos. The most common effect of non-enacted recognition pragma is to create anticipation and suspense in the audience as to a future enactment.

Two of Euripides’ plays contain what could be viewed as recognition pragma except they lack a crucial element: in one, the understanding of a character’s real identity and in the other, the cognitive acceptance of a character’s identity.

Ion features what appear to be two enacted recognition pragma, one in the first half of the play and the other at the end. The first ‘recognition’ between father and son prepares the audience for the later pragma between mother and son (Ion 517-68). The first one is, however, not a real recognition in that it is based on a false belief about identity. It resembles a recognition in that it contains the conventional elements of the enacted pragma, but the audience knows before it begins that it is not real; the boy is not the
man’s son. Hermes has already announced in the prologue the boy’s true parentage (1-81). The falsity of the recognition between father and son strongly highlights the play’s thematic concerns with the establishment of legitimacy.\(^81\) There is no deliberate falsity as to identity on the part of the participants, rather it is a god who deceives the participants as to their relationship, which raises further complexities about the question of establishing legitimacy.

Xouthos exits Apollo’s temple after receiving an oracle that the first person who crosses his path as he comes out of the temple will be his son (\(πα/uni1FD6δ' \; ἐμὸν\) περιφέρειαν, 536). Upon sight of Ion, therefore, he exclaims: \(δ' \; τέκνον, \; χα/uni1FD6ρ'\) (517). He further tries to take Ion’s hand and, as is typical of a recognition, to embrace him (519) from which Ion naturally recoils (another traditional element of the recognition \emph{pragma}). The typical joy of one recognising a close \emph{philos} is demonstrated in Xouthos’ exuberant expressions and his lengthy clinch of Ion until Ion threatens him with his bow. The disbelief of the alleged ‘son’ in this scene is of a greater degree than in other recognition \emph{pragmata} to match Xouthos’ exuberance, creating a scene of intense emotion when the two are eventually reunited after Ion is convinced by Apollo’s oracle and Xouthos’ account of his past activities. The embrace finally occurs after Ion asks: \(ἡ \; θίγω \; δῆθ' \; ὡς \; μ'/ \; ἔφυσας;\) (560) before he greets his ‘father’: \(χα/uni1FD6ρέ \; μοι, \; πάτερ\) (561). Recognition is effected between Xouthos and Ion – except the audience knows that it is not real; despite appearances, it cannot be a recognition. And after the ‘recognition’ is effected, Ion says:

\begin{quote}
\begin{verbatim}
δ' \; φίλη \; μήτερ, \; πότ' \; ἄρα \; καὶ \; σὸν \; ὅσοις \; δέμας;

νὸν \; ποθὼ \; σὲ \; μᾶλλον \; ἥ \; πρίν, \; ἦτις \; εἰ \; ποτ', \; εἰσιδεῖν.

ἀλλ' \; ἵσσως \; τέθηκας, \; ἥμεῖς \; δ' \; οὐδ' \; ὄναρ \; δυναίμεθ' \; ἄν.
\end{verbatim}
\end{quote}

(Ion 563-5)

This comment suggests to the audience a further recognition within the play between mother and son, the two characters actually related to each other. The intermittent scenes are therefore overlaid for the audience by anticipation of the real recognition \emph{pragma}. The \emph{systasis} of \emph{Ion} is structured by the \emph{pragma} of recognition from the moment in the prologue when Hermes foretells for the audience Xouthos’ recognition of Ion and Kreousa’s (although her recognition of Ion will be accomplished in a different manner to that foretold by the god).\(^82\) Hermes’ words signify the importance of the \emph{pragma} of recognition in the play and from the moment that the unknowingly

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\(^{81}\) See further Loraux (1992).

\(^{82}\) Goward identifies that ‘recognition is set up in the prologue to be the goal of the entire action’ (Goward (1999) at 133).
related characters share the stage, the periodic ironic comments to relationships and identity maintain the audience’s anticipation of recognition being effected through Xouthos’ subsequent false recognition of Ion, Kreousa’s true recognition of Ion and his reciprocal recognition of his mother. Through the divergence between the events foretold by Hermes and the events actually occurring on stage Euripides is able to surprise the audience and thus heighten its engagement with the muthos as it cannot predict exactly what will happen or how events will unfold.

In Helen an early ostensible ‘recognition’ pragma serves the same purpose in suggesting a true recognition later in the play. The non-enacted recognition in this play is not a false one based on an untrue belief, but is rather a failed recognition (Helen 72-163). Teukros recognises Helen’s face when he sees her, but he cannot accept her identity since he ‘knows’ that Helen cannot be in Egypt because Menelaos recovered her in Troy. When he first sees her, he says:

\[
\text{ἀδὲ μὴ 'ν ξένηι} \quad 75
\]

Within six lines, Teukros uses four words for image or likeness (ὁψιν, εἰκώ, μίμημ' and εἰκούς) to describe Helen. His choice of words clearly highlights the contrast between what is before him and reality – in his mind – but which the audience knows is actually false since the real Helen stands before him. The audience’s superior knowledge – or the knowledge which they think is superior – activates the multi-layered meaning within this scene. One of the broader functions of this scene, and the play as a whole, is to problematize all knowledge. The failed recognition pragma therefore underlines strongly the play’s concern with appearance and reality discussed above.\(^8\) It also clearly highlights the epistemological nature of the recognition process, since recognition requires knowledge and acceptance of identity. It requires reasoning for recognition to be truly effected.

The removal of a deliberate disguise is required for many recognition pragmata to occur and therefore a reference to the donning of disguise may act as an indicator to the audience of a potential enacted recognition, as well as heighten their anticipation as to

\(^8\) See above in this chapter at pp. 84-5.
the future events. Thus, in *Libation-Bearers* when Orestes tells Elektra that he and Pylades will go to the palace disguised as Phokians (*Libation-Bearers* 560-4), the suggestion is that their identity will be revealed at some point, although at this time it is unknown in whose presence or how that will occur. Orestes’ instruction to the paidagogos to approach the palace in the guise of a Phokian operates in a similar fashion in the opening scene of Sophocles’ *Elektra* (44-5). His instruction immediately follows his statement that the paidagogos will not be recognised (γνώσις, 43) because of the changes in his appearance since he left Argos.

Occurrences of the verb γνωρίζειν or γιγνώσκειν can refer to a past or potential future *pragma* of recognition. Such references to a potential recognition *pragma* may serve to heighten anticipation and suspense for the audience of a recognition being enacted later in the play. In Euripides’ *Elektra*, such a reference is immediately frustrated when Orestes asks the old man whether he will be recognised by Aigisthos’ attendants and the old man rejects that possibility (E. *Elektra* 630-1). In contrast, a reference may immediately lead into an enacted recognition. After Menelaos approaches the palace in *Orestes*, he asks the chorus the location of Orestes before commenting:

> βρέφος γάρ ἴν τότ' ἐν Κλυταιμήστρας χεροῖς
> ὡσπ' ὄψιν ἄν αὐτὸν γνωρίσασμ' ἄν εἰσιδών.    (Orestes 377-9)

In the very next line, his recognition of Orestes is effected as Orestes identifies himself to Menelaos. The reference suggests to the audience the imminence of the enacted *pragma*, which is immediately borne out.

References to past *pragma* can increase the pathos on stage and cause the audience to consider the implications of earlier *pragma*. In his report of the events on Mount Kithairon, the messenger describes to the chorus how Pentheus attempted to make Agave recognise him:

> ὃ δὲ μίτραν κόμης ἄπο
> ἔρριψεν, ὃς νῦν γνωρίσασσα μὴ κτάνοι
> τήμιον Ἀγαυη, καὶ λέγει παρήιδος
> ψαύων.        (Bacchae 1115-18)

His attempt fails, but when she subsequently recognises his face, the audience is reminded of her failed recognition of him, and the contrast between the circumstances of the two *pragma* is stark. While she could not recognise the living Pentheus on Mount Kithairon, she eventually knows her son when he is dead. Following this
recognition of Pentheus, Kadmos laments his previous recognition of his grandson’s dismembered body: ὄμωγμένον γε πρόσθεν ἃ σὲ γνωρίσαι (1285). The reference to Kadmos’ earlier recognition increases the pathos on stage as the pain felt by his philoi at the moment of recognition of Pentheus’ death is doubled for the audience.

The final type of non-enacted recognition pragma differs from other non-enacted pragmata in that it requires the audience to possess knowledge superior to that of the characters on stage as to the characters’ identities in order to perceive a connection between the character’s words and the pragma of recognition. It is the audience’s superior knowledge that activates these comments to become non-enacted recognition pragmata from simple speech-acts. The audience’s higher degree of knowledge comes from two main sources. First, the audience may possess knowledge about the events and actions in a play due to their extensive exposure to mythological stories and previous dramatic performances. Second, within the tragedy itself, the audience is often provided with the necessary information about the course of the systasis in the early scenes, for example by a divine prologue-speaker. This creates a disparity of awareness about a situation or an event between the characters and the audience, which is often termed ‘dramatic irony’. A character’s words possess a significance appropriate to the situation that the internal or external audience understands, but that the character does not.

Within tragedy, there is also often ‘situational irony’, which can be defined as the disparity of intention and result - when an action’s result is contrary to the desired or expected effect. One of the best examples is in Sophocles’ Women of Trachis when Deianeira sends a cloak as a gift to Herakles to restore their love. Unbeknownst to Deianeira, the love-potion with which she has coated the cloak is actually poison and, rather than restoring or strengthening the love between her and Herakles, she causes his death.

Once the audience possesses knowledge about the characters’ identities which they themselves lack and is therefore expecting a recognition pragma to be enacted within the play, certain comments are appreciated as being ‘ironic’ in that they contain different layers of meaning that can be interpreted depending on the extent of one’s knowledge about the characters’ identities. The audience recognises that there is a reference or allusion to a future enactment of recognition within the characters’ conversation, something which (at least some of) the characters are unaware. In addition, as a result of the audience’s knowledge about conventions within a recognition pragma, the simple existence of two related characters on stage possessing erroneous
knowledge about each other’s identity can also operate as a predictor for the audience of an enacted recognition *pragma*. These allusions and references therefore occur prior to the enacted recognition *pragma* and serve to increase the audience’s expectations of it, which the playwright can then satisfy or delay (but not frustrate).

Playwrights used irony in tragedy and, in particular, in the lead up to the tragic recognition because people in the audience enjoy knowing the truth, when the characters do not, and being able to recognise the ambiguities of the situation in front of them.\(^8^4\) The use of ironic comments allows the audience the satisfaction of knowing more than the characters and allows the playwright to prove how well he can manipulate language to create different levels of understanding for different audiences (that is, internal and external).

In the lead-up to the enacted recognition *pragma*, ironic comments are often made concerning the identity of the other character, about the *philos* of the other character who in reality corresponds to the speaker, or about the situation itself. This can include questions about the other character’s identity and hints as to their own identity. Because the audience possesses superior knowledge about the characters’ identities, it is always anticipating the enacted recognition. That these types of ironic comments are satisfying to the audience, which is always in possession of the truth, can be seen from the carry-over of this device from Homer. During the lead-up to the recognition between Penelope and Odysseus in the *Odyssey*, Penelope weeps for her absent husband, who in reality sits beside her, and later calls upon Eurykleia to wash the beggar’s feet, which, she says, must be like Odysseus’.\(^8^5\)

The extensive lead-up to the enacted recognition *pragma* in *Iphigeneia among the Taurians* is filled with non-enacted recognition *pragmata* – and the creation of irony therein – which makes it a good model for analysing how they operate within a tragedy. These *pragmata* have several effects upon the *muthos* and audience of the tragedy. First, as a common feature of scenes leading up to a recognition *pragma*, the use of irony in the early scenes suggests to the audience a possible enacted recognition between Orestes and Iphigeneia within the play. The audience is then forced to consider how and when

\(^{8^4}\) Pfister suggests that this may be because the possession of superior awareness about a situation ‘can be very pleasurable’ for the audience as ‘a contrast to the existential problems of real life’ (Pfister (1988) at 51).

\(^{8^5}\) *Odyssey* 19.209 and 357-60.
the recognition might occur. Second, Euripides uses situational irony to suggest that the recognition might not occur by focussing on the real possibility that Iphigeneia will sacrifice her own brother. Third, the rapid accumulation of ironic comments suggests the imminence of the recognition and heightens the audience’s anticipation of such a scene. Finally, the use of irony and ironic comments throughout the scene adds pathos to the siblings’ encounter and gives pleasure to the audience.

The role of Iphigeneia as a priestess at Artemis’ Taurian temple may have been an innovation of Euripides. While there is evidence of earlier versions in which Iphigeneia was rescued from her sacrifice and immortalised in either Greece or the land of the Taurians, there are no extant versions in which she lived among the Taurians and then returned to Greece with Orestes. Euripides’ innovations to the traditional stories are therefore likely to have surprised the audience and it is unlikely that the audience at the start of the play knew exactly what was going to be presented to them on stage.

The play opens with a prologue speech from Iphigeneia in which she tells the story of her sacrifice at Aulis, with the amendment to the traditional story that Artemis exchanged her for a deer and brought her to this temple. She then describes a strange dream that she interprets as reporting the destruction of her oikos, including her brother Orestes (Iphigeneia among the Taurians 42-57). This early mention of her brother, with whom she is rarely connected in myth, as well as her stated intent to offer funeral libations for him (61-4), suggests for the audience his involvement in the play to come. And indeed he appears as soon as Iphigeneia enters the temple (67). At this point, some members of the audience, seeing that both siblings are characters in this play, as well as knowing that each sibling thinks the other to be dead, might have reasonably supposed that a recognition between the two was highly likely at some point in the drama.

After a brief scene between Orestes and Pylades, which confirms Orestes’ role in the drama, the two exit, which allows Iphigeneia and the chorus to offer libations for the apparently-dead Orestes – a strongly ironic visual set-up for the audience. In the space of three short scenes, Iphigeneia has told the audience that her family thinks she is dead and that she thinks her brother is dead, Orestes has appeared to prove her wrong and Iphigeneia has performed funerary offerings for her supposedly dead brother. Iphigeneia

86 On the mythological stories concerning Iphigeneia, see further Cropp (ed.), (2000) at 43-6.
87 Iphigeneia’s substitution with a deer by Artemis is recorded in Proklos’ summary of the Cypria (EGF at 19).
directly addresses her brother as she offers libations of milk, wine and honey: ὃ κατὰ γαῖας Ἀγαμεμνόνον / θάλος (170-1). She tells him that these are in place of the offerings she would give if she were at his tomb: her yellow hair and her tears (174).

The lock of hair, as well as being a traditional funerary offering, plays a prominent role in the prelude to the enacted recognition *pragma* between Orestes and his other sister, Elektra, in Aeschylus’ *Libation-Bearers*. It also features before the recognition *pragma* of Elektra and Orestes in Euripides’ *Elektra* and Sophocles’ *Elektra*. The combination of a lock of hair, Orestes and a funerary setting is strongly connected to, and hints at, an enacted recognition.

Iphigeneia finishes her lament with the image of the last time she saw her brother – as a baby at his mother’s breast (231). This emphasises the age difference between the two and suggests again to the knowing audience aub the possibility of a mutual recognition with both participants unable to recognise each other on sight and ignorant of the other’s identity.

A new arrival follows her lament, a cowherd who brings news of the capture of two Greek strangers for Iphigeneia to sacrifice to Artemis. He ends his long speech:

> ηὗχων δὲ τοιάδ', ὃ νεάνι, σοι ξένων σφάγια παρεῖναι· κάν ἀναλίσκης ξένως τοιούθε, τὸν σὸν Ἑλλάς ἀποτείσει φόνον δίκας τίνουσα τῆς ἐν Ἀὐλίδι σφαγῆς.  

(*Iphigeneia among the Taurians* 336-9)

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88 Libations of milk, honey or wine were poured on the ground as offerings to the dead. In *Odyssey* 10.518-20 Athene advises Odysseus to offer all three plus water in the underworld. Tragic examples include *Persians* 611-15, S. *Elektra* 895 and *Orestes* 115.

89 It also appears in Stesichoros’ version of the recognition (*Oresteia* fr. 217 PMGF).

90 E. *Elektra* 515 and S. *Elektra* 52 and 901. The phrase for Orestes’ hair in Euripides’ *Elektra* (ξανθής χαίτης, 515) is the same as that for Iphigeneia’s (*Iphigeneia among the Taurians* 174) and the hair that sprouts from the column in Iphigeneia’s dream is the same colour (*Iphigeneia among the Taurians* 52). Yellow hair is a typical feature of other members of the house of Atreus, for example Helen (*Helen* 1224), Klytaimestra (E. *Elektra* 1071) and Iphigeneia (*Iphigeneia at Aulis* 681).

91 The adjective σκηπτοχος at 235 is used in Homer to symbolize kingly authority (*Iliad* 1.279, 2.86 and 14.93 and *Odyssey* 2.231, 4.64, 5.9, 8.41 and 47), but, as Torrance notes, it is never elsewhere used of a child. This ‘use of a Homeric adjective in an inappropriate context’ creates a disquieting image of the authority in the house of Atreus, in particular that currently possessed by Orestes (Torrance (2004) at 59).
His suggestion that Iphigeneia had actually prayed for strangers to arrive so that she might slaughter them (whether this is likely or not) emphasises the irony of the situation that one of the strangers is her own brother. The ironic fulfilment of a prayer is a common device in tragedy, such as Iokaste’s prayer to Apollo to send a ‘holy release’ from the plague and the subsequent arrival of a messenger (Oedipus the King 911-26). Iphigeneia vows not to be merciful to these strangers to revenge herself on the Greeks for her sacrifice. She says of these strangers: ὄτινές ποθ' ἦκετε (350). The audience, however, is in no doubt as to the identity of the strangers to whom she vows to show no pity. Perhaps Iphigeneia will unknowingly sacrifice her own brother. She recalls that when she left home for her supposed marriage in Aulis she did not pick up Orestes, her brother whom she specifies is now dead (δ' νόν ὀλοκληρω, 374). She laments further and her phrasing (οὐ τλήμον, εἰ τέθνηκας ... / Ὀρέστα, 378-9) tantalises the audience who are completely aware of the falsity of her belief. This does not indicate that she thinks that he is alive, as she has already performed funeral libations, but perhaps rather a refusal to completely accept his death.

After a choral song, Orestes and Pylades are led in under guard. It is 456 lines into the play and since it began the stage has been occupied continuously by one or other of the siblings. Finally they share the stage - both ignorant of the other’s identity – and Euripides can play even more cleverly with the disparate levels of knowledge between the characters on stage and the audience observing them.

Iphigeneia orders that the men’s hands be untied and wonders about their identity:

τίς ὧρα μήτηρ ἢ τεκοῦσ' ὑμᾶς ποτε
πατήρ τ' ἀδέλφη τ', εἰ γεγόσα τυχόνει;
οὐν στερεῖσα διπτῦχον νεανίων
ἀνάδελφος ἦσσται. (Iphigeneia among the Taurians 472-5)

This type of ironic statement, whereby a speaker wonders about the identity of a person related to the unknown other, who in reality corresponds with the speaker him- or herself, is used regularly in scenes before enacted recognition pragmata. The audience, possessing the knowledge of the characters’ true identities, recognises Iphigeneia’s utterance as ironic – not only does Orestes possess a sister, but she is indeed the speaker

92 On Sophocles’ ironic use of the term lusis in Oedipus the King, see Goldhill (2009) at 21-3.
93 Schwinge discusses the disparate levels of meaning throughout this passage (Schwinge (1968) at 270-93).
herself. Similar ironic comments are made by Kreousa about Ion’s mother and by Hypsipyle about her sons’ mother in Euripides’ fragmentary *Hypsipyle*. A similar ironic comment about a person who happens to be in their presence comes from a scene involving deliberate disguise rather than mutual ignorance of identity. In Euripides’ *Elektra* the messenger reports how Aigisthos commented to (the disguised) Orestes that his greatest enemy was Agamemnon’s son just before Orestes killed him (*E. Elektra* 831-3).

The sight of these Greek men, after her recent dream-inspired thoughts about her own family and especially her brother, has naturally led Iphigeneia to think about the prisoners’ possible *philoi*, and more particularly the feelings of a hypothetical sister who will never see her brothers again. The irony contained in these comments for the audience is palpable, knowing that Iphigeneia thinks that she will never see her own brother again as he is dead (as her dream told her), while she *is* the sister of one of these young men. The depth of feelings assigned to the hypothetical sister reflects Iphigeneia’s own feelings towards her (as she thinks) recently deceased brother. Kyriakou claims that Iphigeneia’s ironic question about the sister’s identity is ‘mitigated by the inaccuracy of [her] assumption concerning the relation of Orestes and Pylades’; that is, that they are brothers. I do not think that Iphigeneia’s mistaken belief can overwhelm the irony for the audience. It is still a statement loaded with pathos for the knowing audience and the assumption of their fraternal relationship strengthens the emphasis on family ties. It is disquieting, nonetheless, for the audience that the first relative she mentions is his mother, whom he has killed.

The irony of the situation – that a sister is about to sacrifice her own brother – is compounded by her spoken thought that a sister would be bereft at the loss of her brother, when she herself will be *that* sister and will be the one to sacrifice him. The audience cannot be sure that the sacrifice will not be accomplished, since in Iphigeneia’s dream she sprinkled water on the column with the golden hair, which represented Orestes, to mark him for the sacrificial blade (53-4). Her dream can therefore be interpreted as her fulfilment of the sacrifice.

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94 *Ion* 308, 360 and 1307 and *E. Hypsipyle* fr. 752d.5 *TrGF*. Even more ironically, considering her current unhappy circumstances, Hypsipyle comments on the happiness of the boys’ mother.

95 For a discussion of the unheroic portrayal of Orestes in the messenger’s report, see Hirata (1988).

96 Kyriakou (2006) at 165.
Iphigeneia addresses the two men appropriately as ξένοι (479), which frequently occurs in the lead-up to recognition pragmata and which is used in this scene a further five times by both Iphigeneia and Orestes. To Iphigeneia’s initial question as to their homeland, Orestes refuses to answer and rejects her pity. His perception and mention of her lamentation at their situation emphasises for the audience the strength of Iphigeneia’s feelings – ostensibly for the hypothetical sister who has lost her brother, but in her mind because she herself has recently lost her brother – when she is in fact ironically lamenting her own brother who stands in front of her.

The following extensive stichomythic exchange (494-569) between Iphigeneia and Orestes is filled with ironic comments. After Pylades’ identity is established, as well as the fact that they are not brothers, Iphigeneia tries to elicit Orestes’ name, but he refuses to tell her. He eventually admits that he is from Mycenae in Argos (508-10), which prompts her to exclaim: καλὴ μὴν ποθεινός γένος ἡλθες ἐξ Ἀργοῦς μολὼν (515). Cognates of ποθεῖν (‘long for’ or ‘yearn after’) are common in the exchange leading up to enacted recognition pragmata. Characters who are unaware of the other’s identity often comment on how they (or others) long for the specific other’s arrival. Kreousa (Ion’s as yet unknown mother) comments to Ion that his mother must yearn for him (Ion 360). These cognates can also occur non-ironically in a recognition pragma, as when Menelaos uses the adjective ποθεινός to describe the day when he finally comprehends that he is reunited with his wife (Helen 623). In his parody of the tragic recognition and reunion in Acharnians, Aristophanes uses ποθεῖν and its cognates three times in six lines when Dikaiopolis is reunited with his beloved eel. In the scene in Iphigeneia among the Taurians the dramatic irony for the audience comes from knowing that the stranger is very much ‘longed-for’ by Iphigeneia – even if she is currently unaware of the fact that he is her brother. Her subsequent words make clear to the audience that the

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97 Iphigeneia among the Taurians 509, 579, 597, 728 and 798.
98 Cropp notes that the ‘stichomythic form is ideally suited to cryptic expressions contributing to the scene’s suspense and dramatic irony’ (Cropp (ed.), (2000) at 210).
99 Platnauer notes that Euripides provides a legitimate psychological justification for Orestes’ refusal (to complement the dramatic requirement). He explains that ‘the thought of an enemy’s exultation in his death would be bitterer than the thought of death itself. But no personal exultation is possible where the name of the dead is not known’ (Platnauer (ed.), (1938) at 103). Cropp thinks that Orestes’ refusal to identify himself is motivated by aidōs and the ‘desire to avoid further humiliation’ (Cropp (ed.), (2000) at 210-11).
100 Acharnians 885, 886 and 890.
reason that she thinks his arrival is longed-for is that she can send one of them with a letter back to Argos. Orestes’ rejection of his arrival being potheinos to him (516) contains similar dramatic irony in that it can be considered potheinos in the sense of ‘welcome’ because he is actually with his sister.\textsuperscript{101}

Iphigeneia asks about the fate of the men involved in her sacrifice, beginning with Kalchas, Odysseus and Achilleus. After he tells her that Achilleus is dead, Orestes brings up the events at Aulis: ἀναλόγως λέκτρ' ἔγημ' ἐν Αὐλίδι (538). To which Iphigeneia responds: δόλια γάρ, ὡς ἰσασιν οἳ πεπονθότες (539). She knows only too well the dolos that brought about her sacrifice.\textsuperscript{102} Orestes then tells her that Agamemnon is dead and adds that his death was brought about by a woman, to which Iphigeneia naively responds: ὃ πανδάκρυτος κτανόσα χὼ θανών (553). Poor Iphigeneia is not aware of the full tragedy of the situation, which is that not only is the woman who killed her father actually her mother, but Klytaiαestra is now dead at her brother’s hands. She feels sympathy for the unknown woman and goes on to ask – in her innocence of the situation – whether Klytaiαestra lives. Orestes tells her that she is dead at the hands of her son. He speaks about himself in the third person – thereby preserving his true identity. The focus on – and Iphigeneia’s misery at – the deaths of her father and mother emphasises the irony of the situation whereby she is about to kill one of her few remaining relatives, her brother.

Shortly thereafter Iphigeneia asks about herself in the third person: σφαγείσης θυγατρ' στι τις λόγος; (563). Orestes confirms that Iphigeneia is dead and Iphigeneia laments her (herself) and the father who killed her. Both siblings talk about themselves with the unknowing other. Finally, having asked about the events of Troy, Helen, Kalchas, Odysseus, Achilleus, Agamemnon, Klytaiαestra, Orestes, Elektra and herself, Iphigeneia finally asks whether Orestes lives. Finally, she can discover the truth behind her dream, with which the play began. Orestes replies: ἔστι’, ἄθλιός γε, κοὐδάμοι καὶ πανταχοῦ (568). This confirmation that he is alive relieves Iphigeneia of her fears and at long last one sibling knows that the other still lives. Surely, the audience thinks, surely it cannot be long before Orestes learns that his sister still lives?

\textsuperscript{101} As noted by Schwinge (1968) at 277.

\textsuperscript{102} The dolos used to bring Iphigeneia to Aulis, that of her wedding to Achilleus, is mentioned several times in the play: \textit{Iphigeneia among the Taurians} 24-5, 214-17, 369-71, 538-9 and 856-61. It prepares for the dolos used by Iphigeneia and Orestes later in the play to enact their escape.
But before such a thing can happen, Iphigeneia suddenly announces that she has a plan to send one of the prisoners back to Argos as a messenger. This innovative use of a material object by Euripides helps to delay the recognition as Iphigeneia must explain her plan, fetch the letter and then give it to one of the prisoners.

Iphigeneia ironically tells Orestes and Pylades that her plan will be to their advantage as well as to hers (579-80). Little does Iphigeneia know that this plan will turn out in a way that is even more advantageous for both her and the prisoners than she had imagined. And surely the audience would have interpreted the insertion of this ‘plan’ as a means for Euripides to bring about the recognition and escape of the siblings?

Iphigeneia asks Orestes if he is willing to go to Argos to take a message τούς ἐμοῖς ἐκεῖ φίλοις (583) and a few lines later she reiterates the phrase (τοὺς ἐμοῖν φίλοιν, 590), just in case the audience had missed the first ironic utterance. Orestes refuses to take the message and allow Pylades to be sacrificed, insisting instead that Pylades take the letter. His selflessness causes Iphigeneia to praise his nobility and add:

τοιούτος εἶ ὁ τῶν ἐμῶν ὀμοσπόρων
δὲπερ λέλειται. καὶ γὰρ οὐδ' ἐγὼ, ξένοι,
ἀναδελφός εἰμι, πλὴν ὅσ' οὐχ ὃρῳσά νιν.

(Iphigeneia among the Taurians 611-13)

This is Iphigeneia’s first mention to Orestes that she has a brother and the irony occurs on many levels. First, her brother is indeed of such character, as he is the one acting in this way. Second, she can see her brother, as he is standing right in front of her. The ironic comments are piling up for the audience and their anticipation of an enacted recognition pragma is mounting.

Iphigeneia agrees to send Pylades to Argos and sacrifice Orestes. When Orestes learns what the sacrifice will involve, he plaintively cries: φεῦ· ποὺς ἔν μ' ἀδελφής χερ
περιστείλειν ἄν; (627). He says this in the very presence of his adelphē, although not the one of whom he was thinking. Orestes means Elektra, but the audience is clearly aware that he is unknowingly speaking in the presence of another sister. Iphigeneia compounds this ironic comment by declaring that since his sister is in Argos, she herself will prepare his body after his death (630-5). Should he be sacrificed, his body will be prepared for burial by Iphigeneia, that is, by his actual sister – as was customary. There is a strong emphasis here on the possibility that Orestes will be unknowingly sacrificed by his own sister, with the potential recognition of the siblings in the background.
Euripides creates tension for the audience through the suggestion of two possible, but very different, outcomes.

Iphigeneia echoes the phrase Orestes had used in his second line to her: ὃστις ποτ’ εἴ (483 and 628), reminding the audience that the siblings still do not know each other and thereby suggesting the imminent recognition. Iphigeneia exits to fetch the letter, which allows Pylades and Orestes to make their farewells. But as she leaves she joyfully exclaims:

\[\text{ἔσως ἀελπτα τών ἐμῶν φίλων τινὶ πέμψω πρὸς Ἀργος, ὃν μάλλιστ' ἐγὼ φιλῶ, καὶ δέλτος αὐτοῦ ζώντας σὺς δοκεῖ θανεῖν λέγουσι' ἀπίστους ἱδονάς ἀπαγγελεί.} \]

(Iphigeneia among the Taurians 639-42)

How right she is! Orestes, the one whom she loves the most, will be surprised and joyful when he learns the news. But, how wrong she is regarding the manner and time in which the letter will be delivered.

Orestes charges Pylades to look after Elektra, whom he has married, and to set up a memorial to Orestes. He says: καὶ δάκρυ' ἀδέλφῃ καὶ κόµας δότω τάφωι (703). But one of his sisters has already made funerary offerings to him in front of the audience. Iphigeneia earlier in the play poured libations for him, since she could not offer her yellow hair and tears at his tomb (174). While these were traditional funerary offerings, Orestes’ precise articulation of the same offerings draws attention to her previous action and highlights strongly to the audience the siblings’ misunderstanding of the situation. His words also connect with his similar offering at Agamemnon’s tomb which preceded his recognition with Elektra in Libation-Bearers.

Iphigeneia returns with the letter and the audience knows that recognition is about to occur. As soon as she announces the letter’s recipient, her identity will be confirmed, as presumably will Orestes’. Iphigeneia demands an oath that the letter will be delivered, again reiterating that it is to go to ‘her loved ones’ (736). She dictates the oath to Pylades: δῶσω, λέγειν χρὴ, τήνδε τοῖς σοῖς φίλοις (744), which Pylades duly utters. The constant reiteration of τοῖς σοῖς φίλοις increases the suspense and anticipation for the audience regarding the recognition.

Pylades raises the possibility that the letter might be lost in transit and Iphigeneia suggests: λόγωι φράσω σοι πάντ’ ἀπαγγῆλαι φίλοις (761). Again, the same phrase laden
with ironic meaning. Pylades agrees and asks to whom the message is to be carried and
the long-anticipated moment arrives. Orestes’ recognition of Iphigeneia, acknowledged
by Aristotle as an example of the best kind of recognition, finally occurs.\footnote{Poetics 1455a16-19.} Iphigeneia
announces:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{διηγέλλ' Ὄρεστη, παίδι τάγαμέμνονος;}
\quad & \quad \text{Ἡ ν Αὐλίδι σφαγεία' ἐπιστέλλει τάδε}
\quad & \quad \text{ζῷσ' Ἴφιγένεια, τοῖς ἐκεῖ δ' οὗ ζώσ' ἔτι.}
\end{align*}
\]

(Iphigeneia among the Taurians 769-71)

Iphigeneia’s words are full of ambiguities. She states that she is living and not living at
the same time. Additionally, the intended recipient of her message stands before her and
is not ἐκεῖ. As Wright notes, the phrase οἱ ἐκεῖ can be used of those who are dead.\footnote{Sophocles Elektra 356, Ajax 855 and Antigone 76. See further Wright (2005b) at 293n.68. Orestes explicitly comments to Iphigeneia at 805 that he is not in Argos: ὦκ ἔστ’ ἐκεῖ σῶς, ὦ τάλαινα, σύγγονον.} At
the moment of the revelation of Iphigeneia’s identity to Orestes, questions are raised as
to the very existence of the siblings. Orestes cannot believe what he has heard and
interrupts, asking: ποῦ δ' ἔστ' ἐκεῖνη; κατθάνοσ' ἔκει πάλιν; (772). Iphigeneia
immediately confirms her identity and continues her message. The irony in this
exchange switches to situational irony, whereby Iphigeneia is ordering Pylades to take a
message to her brother, when he is in fact listening to her recite the message. As if to
reinforce that fact, Iphigeneia uses Orestes’ name in the message itself, this repetition
blatantly highlighting the ironic situation (779).

Orestes’ recognition of Iphigeneia is effected when she simply admits who she is – over
three hundred lines since they first shared the stage. Orestes, however, does not
immediately reveal his identity; indeed, it takes nearly fifty lines before she becomes
convinced that he is her brother. Pylades takes the letter from Iphigeneia, turns to
Orestes and says: ἰδοῦ, φέρο σοι δέλτον ἀποδίδωμι τε, / Ὅρεστα, τῆσδε σῆς
cασιγνήτης πάρα (791-2). The use of the demonstrative pronoun - τῆσδε – emphasises
the proximity of the siblings. Orestes accepts the letter and moves to embrace his sister,
who, as is conventional in enacted recognition \textit{pragmata}, does not believe him and
rejects the embrace. Eventually she is convinced of his identity and the two embrace.\footnote{On the tokens used to establish identity in this play, see discussion above at pp. 89-91.}
The extreme length of time for which the siblings share the stage in ignorance of each other’s identity is extremely pleasurable for the audience, eager to see them reunited, but curious as to how such an action will occur. Euripides’ frequent use of dramatic irony as to the characters’ identities and references to identity *per se* constantly draws the audience’s attention to the lack of a recognition and heightens the suspense of the scene. Cropp notes that ‘the elaboration of this extremely artificial situation is carefully designed to maximize the suspense and sentimental effect of the recognition process.’

Euripides was very successful in creating suspense for the audience through non-enacted recognition *pragma* with protracted lead-up scenes in *Helen, Ion* and *Iphigeneia among the Taurians*, but, as we shall see later, Sophocles could also play with the audience’s expectation of a recognition.

Non-enacted recognition *pragma* are used both independently and in conjunction with the enacted *pragma* to create various effects on the *systasis*, the *muthos* and the audience. While the most common result of a non-enacted *pragma* is the suggestion for the audience of a future enacted recognition, it does have other functions within a tragedy. References to a past enactment of recognition can increase the pathos of a scene. The non-enacted forms of the recognition *pragma* can compel the audience to compare different situations involving recognition and to consider how the similarities and differences affect the characters and the audience’s understanding of recognition as a cognitive process. The presence of two people – unknowingly related to each other – on stage at the same time can stimulate the audience’s anticipation of an enacted recognition *pragma* between the two and thereby create in the audience pleasure and fear, suspense and anticipation as to future enactments. In addition, the audience’s superior knowledge of the characters’ identities allows it to perceive meaning in the character’s words which the characters do not. This ability to discern a double layer of meaning in the characters’ comments as to their identity and their desire to be reunited with (absent) relatives adds an extra element of enjoyment for the audience.

The *pragma* of recognition, therefore, has a dynamic role in a tragedy, affecting the *systasis*, the *muthos* and the audience of a tragedy in a variety of ways in both its enacted and non-enacted forms. Let us look now at how the *pragma* of recognition functions within Sophocles’ *Elektra*, in which was portrayed the recognition of Orestes and Elektra, an event which was also dramatically depicted by Aeschylus and Euripides.

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Its interpretation of that particular recognition, as well as its inclusion of several others, makes it a fitting model within which to consider the effects of the recognition *pragma*.

2. **Sophocles’ Elektra: Waiting for Recognition**

Sophocles’ *Elektra* contains a multiplicity of recognitions: six occur within four hundred lines and it is therefore a good play to study the use of the action of recognition within the narrative of a play. Further to this, I argue that Sophocles has deliberately structured the play around the *pragma* of recognition. The recognition between Orestes and Elektra was a popular element in ancient literature and drama and became one of the foremost parts of the story of the matricide within the house of Atreus. While it (and indeed Elektra herself) did not feature in Homer’s and Pindar’s accounts of the story,107 Stesichoros may have effected the recognition between the siblings in his lyric *Oresteia* from the sixth century BC by means of a lock of hair.108 This recognition was given dramatic form in *Libation-Bearers* and from that point on, it appears to have formed an iconic image of the dramatic presentation of the story and of the myth itself.109

Euripides continues this emphasis on the recognition in his deliberate intertextuality with Aeschylus’ drama through a certain aspect of the recognition action – the use of tokens to confirm Orestes’ identity.110 Euripides’ depiction comments on the validity of these proofs – footprint, lock of hair and cloth – by employing common sense arguments, but the poet maintains the key elements of Aeschylus’ recognition scene – the siblings sharing the stage early in the play, Orestes’ eavesdropping on Elektra, his superior knowledge about her identity before they meet, and the use of a recognition token – in Euripides’ play a scar (like that of Odysseus in the *Odyssey*).111

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108 Stesichoros *Oresteia* fr. 217 *PMGF*.
109 See Kossatz-Deissmann (1978) at 92.
111 Mejer sees Euripides’ treatment of the recognition between Elektra and Orestes as a criticism of Aeschylus’ play, however I think that is too strong an interpretation of Euripides’ intentions (Mejer (1979)). Davies suggests that Euripides ‘did sometimes aim (*inter alia*) at criticizing Aeschylus in order to draw attention to his own novel treatment’ (Davies (1998) at 402).
Outside of these dramatic representations, there is extensive visual evidence of the popularity of the scene (judging from the surviving iconographic depictions). One of the earliest shows Elektra and Orestes at the grave of Agamemnon on a Melian relief dated to the two decades before 460 BC.\textsuperscript{112} According to Taplin, there are ‘about thirty-five’ vases corresponding to \textit{Libation-Bearers}, the large majority of which depict the siblings at the tomb of Agamemnon before and just after recognition.\textsuperscript{113} It appears to be the scene most commonly depicted, with only one of a scene from later in the tragedy.\textsuperscript{114}

In addition to the visual evidence, there is also literary evidence (albeit later than all three tragic representations) for the popularity of the scene. In Aristophanes’ \textit{Clouds}, the chorus leader comments:

\begin{quote}
νόν οὖν Ἡλέκτραν κατ’ ἐκείνην ἦδ’ ἢ κωμῳδία
ζητοῦσ’ ἦλθ’, ἦν ποι ἀπτύχθαι ὲματαῖς ὰὔτο σοφοῖς,
γνώσεται γάρ, ἣνπερ ἢνη, τάδελφου τὸν βόστρυχον.   (\textit{Clouds} 534-6)
\end{quote}

Aristophanes is alluding to the scene from \textit{Libation-Bearers} and it is clear that he expected his audience to identify the allusion despite the length of time since the original production in 458 BC.\textsuperscript{115} Aristophanes’ presentation of the scene does not accurately represent that of Aeschylus since Elektra did not search for Orestes’ hair, but the allusion is unmistakeable, which suggests the renown of Aeschylus’ scene.\textsuperscript{116}

Following the influential \textit{Oresteia}, the recognition between Elektra and Orestes had become an indispensable part of the dramatic story and it is probable that the audience of any play telling the story of the matricide would have anticipated the inclusion of this scene in some format. Sophocles’ treatment would therefore have been interpreted by at least some of the audience through and against earlier versions, particularly in relation to the recognition between the siblings.

\textsuperscript{112} Jacobsthal (1931) at 174.
\textsuperscript{113} Taplin (2007) at 49. For a list of artworks connected to the dramatic production of Aeschylus’ \textit{Libation-Bearers}, see Webster (1967) at 138-9.
\textsuperscript{114} Neck-amphora depicting Orestes about to kill Klytaimestra who is baring her breast (\textit{Libation-Bearers} 896-8). See Taplin (2007) at 56-7.
\textsuperscript{115} Clouds was originally produced in 423 BC, but the version that has survived was extensively revised by Aristophanes.
\textsuperscript{116} Sommerstein states that ‘the crucial point for [Aristophanes] is that the sight of the lock kindled hope in Electra after many years of loneliness and oppression’ (Sommerstein (ed.), (1998) at 188).
It remains a matter for debate as to which Elektra came first, that of Euripides or that of Sophocles. Wilamowitz argued that Euripides’ version was the earlier and indeed was the stimulus for Sophocles’ version (although he later changed his mind).117 While many comparative analyses have been undertaken, the question remains unresolved, although I argue for the posteriority of Sophocles’ version. I believe that Sophocles structured his version of the myth in the Elektra around the recognition between Orestes and Elektra and that intertextuality with previous dramatic versions (particularly Aeschylus’) is a key theme of the play.118 The recognition between brother and sister is regularly alluded to from the opening scene of the play onwards, before being frustrated by scenes focussing on other actions. Sophocles prolongs the suspense for over 1100 lines before effecting the recognition and, once he has satisfied the audience’s expectation for this action, he follows it with a rapid succession of further (and, some might say, unnecessary in regards to the play’s plot) recognitions between other characters. This emphasis on, and delay of, Orestes’ and Elektra’s recognition is the key reason for dating it after Euripides’ version, which itself comments on Aeschylus’ version. Euripides himself prolongs the suspense surrounding the recognition, in comparison with Libation-Bearers, since Orestes knows Elektra’s identity from line 117, yet she does not learn his until over 450 lines later and is indeed not convinced until several lines after that.119 In even further delaying the recognition pragma and thereby the suspense for the audience, Sophocles is building on this dramatic technique of Euripides.

From the opening scene of the play, Sophocles teases his audience with the expected recognition scene. As in Libation-Bearers, the play opens with the entry of Orestes: in the Oresteia he enters with Pylades while in Sophocles’ play he is also accompanied by the paidagogos. After the paidagogos’ initial description of the location, Orestes lays

117 For Euripides’ as the earlier version: Owen (1936), Perrin (1909) at 391, Wilamowitz-Moellendorff (1883) at 223. For Sophocles’ as the earlier version: Burian (1997) at 180n.6, Cropp (ed.), (1988) at l, Denniston (1939) at xxxv, Jebb (ed.), (1907b) at lvi, Wilamowitz-Moellendorff (1899) at 57-8n.2.

118 Ringer notes that ‘Electra is a tragedy that is about tragedy, a play that draws the audience's attention to its own theatricality’ (Ringer (1998) at 128). I would argue that Sophocles’ manipulation of the recognition pragma in its effects upon the systasis, the muthos and the audience is a significant means by which he does this.

119 Ludwig argues, correctly in my opinion, that Euripides’ retardation of the recognition is to create dramatic tension (Ludwig (1954) at 128).
out their plan for revenge: the paidagogos will enter the palace in disguise while Pylades and Orestes will visit Agamemnon’s tomb and, in so doing, says: οὖ γὰρ σε μὴ γῆρα τε καὶ χρόνῳ μακρῷ / γνῶσ', οὖδ' ὑποπτεύσουσιν ὠδ' ἡνθισμένον· (42-3).

This is the first mention of disguise, which plays such an important role within this play. Disguise in tragedy is invariably penetrated or revealed and therefore this mention of disguise suggests for the audience the consequent revelation of identity, or recognition, that must occur. And indeed 1300 lines later, the paidagogos is recognised by Elektra.

Orestes then sets out what he and Pylades will do:

\[
\text{ήμεῖς δὲ πατρὸς τύμβον, ὡς ἔφητο, λοίβασι πρῶτον καὶ καρατόμοις χλιδαίς στέψαντες} \quad (S. Elektra 51-3)
\]

Orestes’ sacrifice on his father’s tomb, and, in particular, the sacrifice of hair, is a key component of the other dramatic representations of the story during which it leads to the siblings’ recognition and thence to the revenge. Indeed Aristotle mentions the recognition of Orestes in *Libation-Bearers* resulting from the use of these tokens. Both Aeschylus and Euripides achieve the recognition by these sacrifices. Orestes’ mention of the ‘libations and locks of hair’ would therefore have heightened the audience’s expectation of an imminent recognition, particularly considering the early occurrence of these in *Libation-Bearers* and Euripides’ *Elektra*.

Twenty lines later, a woman’s voice is heard crying within the palace and Orestes wonders if it could be Elektra: θέλεις / μείνωμεν αὐτὸν κανάκοισωμεν γόων; (80-1). Upon hearing this question, the audience might have assumed a similar set-up to that in both the Aeschylean and Euripidean versions of the story, whereby Orestes and Pylades hide on stage so that, unseen, they might listen to Elektra and her female companions.

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120 As it is also in epic: for example Helen recounts how she penetrated Odysseus’ disguise as a beggar in Troy (*Odyssey* 4.244-50) and the dog Argos and Eurykleia see through Odysseus’ beggar disguise (*Odyssey* 17.301-2 and 19.392-4).

121 In Aeschylus’ version, Orestes makes his dedications in the prologue (*Libation-Bearers* 6-7), while in Euripides’ he states that he has already made them (E. *Elektra* 90-2).

122 *Poetics* 1455a4-6.

123 See Figure 1 at p. 128.
before the recognition is effected between the siblings.\textsuperscript{124} The paidagogos, however, immediately rejects this proposition with an emphatic ἥκιστα (82), and it is as if Sophocles is clearly signalling his deliberate frustration of the audience’s expectations of a similar narrative development.\textsuperscript{125} Sophocles is not normally regarded as a playwright who self-consciously plays with theatrical conventions in the same way as Euripides, but there are several other such metatheatrical suggestions in this play.\textsuperscript{126}

After the male characters have left the stage, Elektra enters at 77 and remains on stage until the last line of the play except for a brief absence at 1384-97. She laments her father’s death and her loneliness before the chorus enters at 121 and attempts to cheer her up.\textsuperscript{127} A new character enters at 328. It is a family member, but rather than the expected brother for the recognition scene to occur, the new arrival is Elektra’s sister, Chrysothemis. While she was mentioned in Homer’s \textit{Iliad} as one of Agamemnon’s children, Chrysothemis does not feature in earlier dramatic presentations of the matricide story (as far as we are aware, but certainly not in Aeschylus’ \textit{Libation-Bearers} or Euripides’ \textit{Elektra}).\textsuperscript{128} The arrival of this unexpected individual is likely to have aroused curiosity in the audience as to her role in Sophocles’ plot. It also raises the possibility of her participation within the traditional recognition scene, extending the traditional scene to three siblings. Sophocles had demonstrated in two of his early tragedies, \textit{Women of Trachis} and \textit{Oedipus the King}, his skill in creating complex scenes of interaction between three characters – scenes which centred on the revelation of information, which is also the endpoint of any recognition.\textsuperscript{129}

As Chrysothemis enters, the chorus describes her ‘bearing offerings in her hands, which are customary for those below’ (ἐντάφια χερον / φέρουσαν, οία τοῖς κάτω νομίζεται, S.

\textsuperscript{124} For a discussion of the dramatic device of eavesdropping in Athenian drama, see Fraenkel (1962) at 22-6.
\textsuperscript{125} As Fraenkel comments, “Es ist als wenn Sophokles sagte ‘ich habe die Choephoren nicht vergessen, aber ich mache es anders’.” (Fraenkel (1962) at 22n.1). Goward interprets the paidagogos’ word as creating a narrative loop until 1227 when the traditional story of the recognition, reunion and revenge is able to continue (Goward (1999) at 103).
\textsuperscript{126} For a detailed discussion, see Ringer (1998) at 128-212.
\textsuperscript{127} On the perversion of mourning in this play, see Seaford (1985).
\textsuperscript{128} \textit{Iliad} 9.145. Euripides names her in the prologue of \textit{Orestes} (23) produced in 408 BC after Sophocles’ production of \textit{Elektra}.
\textsuperscript{129} \textit{Women of Trachis} 180-496 and \textit{Oedipus the King} 924-1185.
Much emphasis is placed on these offerings throughout this scene; although this initially occurs by a lack of explanation for them. As Chrysothemis talks to Elektra, no mention is made of the things that she carries in her arms until she announces her departure eighty lines later; Elektra responds: ποτίδευς μπορεύεις τάδ’ ἔμπυρα; (405).\footnote{\textit{Empura} usually refer to burnt offerings, but here must mean libations (\textit{spondai}) because of χοάς in 406. See further \textit{Finglass} (ed.), (2007) at 211-12.}

Chrysothemis replies that Klytaimestra has sent her to offer them at Agamemnon’s tomb and a discussion ensues as to their mother’s reason for doing this. After learning of Klytaimestra’s dream, Elektra persuades Chrysothemis to throw her mother’s offerings away and instead to offer new ones from the two sisters (449-57). These fresh offerings are to include locks of hair, items again which featured in both the Aeschylean and Euripidean versions as offerings from Orestes. This offering of hair from the sisters at Agamemnon’s tomb may be a dramatic innovation by Sophocles: in \textit{Libation-Bearers} Elektra offers libations (χοάς, 149) and in Euripides’ \textit{Elektra} she never actually visits the tomb. The locks of hair are included by Sophocles as a means to allude to Orestes’ offerings in the previous plays which appeared in the scenes leading up to the recognition. Through the offerings, Sophocles again recalls these earlier dramatic scenes to the minds of the audience and heightens their expectation of an imminent recognition in the play in progress. As Ringer notes, ‘these potential recognition tokens serve as self-conscious dramaturgical devices, building suspense for the inevitable recognition.’\footnote{Ringer (1998) at 156.}

Elektra suggests that Chrysothemis pray to Agamemnon in similar terms to her prayer in \textit{Libation-Bearers} (138-9). In both she asks Agamemnon to ensure that Orestes comes ‘here’, but in the Sophoclean version she is more emphatic, asking Agamemnon to come to help them in their revenge.

After the ensuing choral song, it is Klytaimestra who enters to confront her daughter. It is 516 lines into the play and, while the recognition has not yet taken place, nor have Elektra and Orestes actually shared the stage yet. In the Aeschylean version the siblings are both on stage within the first ten lines, while in the Euripidean version, after a hundred lines they too are both in view of the audience.
After mother and daughter antagonistically confront each other about their behaviour, Elektra suddenly mentions Orestes by name:

{o δ' ἄλλος ἔξω, χεῖρα σὴν μόλις φυγὼν, τλήμων Ὄρεστης, δυστυχή τρίβει βίον· ὃν πολλὰ δὴ µε σοὶ τρέφειν µιάστορα ἐπητιάσων (S. Elektra 601-4)

The participant in the inevitable recognition pragma, as well as the fated avenger, is again brought to the audience’s attention, only to be dropped from the conversation just as quickly.

Klytaimestra’s subsequent prayer to Apollo is imbued with dramatic irony, as the audience is well aware from Orestes’ initial speech that it was Apollo himself who ordered Orestes to kill his mother. Klytaimestra prays in vain to the Lycian god, as her daughter stands silently in the background. As if in answer to her prayer, a stranger (the disguised paidagogos) enters with news about her son’s death, delivering an extended rhēsis (680-763) about the events at Delphi. Even though the external audience is under no allusion that Orestes is really dead, having been prepared for it in the opening scene, the presence of three internal audiences – Klytaimestra, Elektra and the chorus – allows the external audience to appreciate the different reactions to the news, which extend from joyful to mournful. From the moment Klytaimestra and the

132 Sophocles also uses the device of the ironic fulfilment of a prayer in Oedipus the King. Iokaste prays to Apollo to send a ‘holy release’ from the plague. A messenger enters as if in response to her prayer, but the information he provides leads to the revelation of Oedipus’ identity (919-49). While her prayer for the plague’s end is answered, it occurs in a way that she would never have foreseen. On lusis in Sophocles, see further Goldhill (2009) at 21-7.

133 The device of a false message about Orestes’ death was used in Libation-Bearers, where the messenger who delivers the news to Klytaimestra is Orestes himself. In the earlier play, however, the message is delivered in extreme brevity (Libation-Bearers 674-90) and lacks even the details of the death, whereas Sophocles presents a virtuoso rhēsis detailing not only the fateful chariot race itself, but the preceding days as well. Jouanna declares that the paidagogos delivers ‘une petite tragédie où le héros passe du bonheur au malheur’ (Jouanna (2007) at 322). Segal suggests that the idea for the chariot race and the horse-racing imagery (25-7, 49-50, 504-12) may have developed from imagery used in Libation-Bearers (794-8, 1022-5) (Segal (1966) at 482n.14). On the paidagogos’ rhēsis, see Chapter 4: Reporting at pp. 206 and 218-19.

134 Wright has shown how the portrayal of both positive and negative emotions, in particular joy, in this play is complicated. While the play contains an unusually high number of references
paidagogos depart until the entry of Chrysothemis, Elektra laments (804-70). All hope appears to have been extinguished and she articulates the desire to die. Among the audience there must have been those who hoped for a swift end to her visible pain and suffering and wondered how it might be achieved – perhaps by the swift arrival of Orestes and a joyful family reunion?

Yet the next arrival is not Orestes and rather than a recognition scene that would end her pain, the audience is instead forced to watch the devastation of another sister’s hopes about her brother’s return. In stark contrast to her grieving sister, Chrysothemis is buoyant as she enters with the joyful news of Orestes’ return before her erroneous (although actually accurate) deductions about the offerings on Agamemnon’s grave are corrected by Elektra. Chrysothemis’ extended description of Orestes’ offerings on Agamemnon’s grave, and in particular the hair offering (901), reiterates to the audience the lack of the traditional recognition pragma. Further, as Ringer proposes, it suggests the possibility, for however brief an interval, that a recognition pragma similar to that in Aeschylus’ play may be about to begin.135

Similarly to Euripides’ Elektra, Orestes’ offerings are discovered by another character and recounted to Elektra who refuses to accept that Orestes has returned.136 Where Euripides had his Elektra merely disbelieve the old man’s interpretation of the tokens left at Agamemnon’s grave until he pointed out the scar, Sophocles has his Elektra completely vanquish the signs that led Chrysothemis to announce Orestes’ return with forceful evidence to the contrary. But both Elektras are wrong.

With their last hope abolished, Elektra asks Chrysothemis to join her in killing Aigisthos. Her sister refuses and eventually leaves the stage at 1057, leaving Elektra to lament as the chorus sings.

(for a tragedy) to joy, these are ‘not at all positive, but can be seen in the light of tragedy’s tendency to pervert positive experiences into negative ones.’ He suggests that the disturbing presentation of emotion reflects the dysfunctional nature of the family (Wright (2005a) at 177-8).

135 Ringer (1998) at 139.

136 Finglass notes that ‘the two accounts of the discovery follow the same basic pattern, each using a sequence of events influenced by Aeschylus’ account (discovery, amazement, inference by process of elimination)’ (Finglass (ed.), (2007) at 379-80).
Over one thousand lines have elapsed in the play and neither the revenge nor the recognition *pragma* have yet occurred. And, indeed, the siblings have not yet even shared the stage. In the previous dramatic depictions, the siblings were onstage together and the events leading to recognition were already in progress within the first hundred lines. Sophocles’ play is much longer than the other playwrights’ versions, prolonging the anticipation of the audience in regards to both the revenge and the recognition *pragma*, which appears to be a dramatic cornerstone of the matricide story. Even taking into consideration the different lengths of the plays, Sophocles’ depiction of the moment the siblings begin to share the stage is still significantly later than in either of the other plays (see Figure 1).

In *Libation-Bearers*, Orestes has killed Aigisthos by line 875 (80% through the play) and Klytaimestera enters the palace to her death at 930 (86%). Admittedly Aeschylus’ play is shorter, ending at line 1076. In Euripides’ *Elektra* a messenger enters to report the death of Aigisthos at 761 (56%) and at 1172 both corpses are revealed (86%), with the play ending nearly two hundred lines later. Finally, at line 1098 of Sophocles’ *Elektra* Orestes and Pylades enter and the siblings appear together on stage. *Both* are ignorant of the other’s identity, which contrasts with the previous dramatic versions in which Orestes knows Elektra’s identity before they first speak. By making both characters ignorant, Sophocles increases the emotional possibilities in the scene as the audience must experience two separate journeys from ignorance to knowledge.

137 Marshall states that ‘[t]he prolonging of a recognition is evidently an artistically desirable technique’ (Marshall (2006) at 220). While there is no external confirmatory evidence for this, there is a definite trend for later tragedies, such as Sophocles’ *Elektra*, Euripides’ *Elektra* and *Iphigeneia among the Taurians*, to feature delayed and prolonged recognitions in comparison with earlier tragedies.

138 Jebb believes that Orestes recognised Elektra’s voice in the prologue and that he knows her identity when he meets her, but there is no evidence in the text for his recognition of her voice (Jebb (ed.), (1907b) at 151). Scholars who agree that Orestes is ignorant of her identity at that moment include Stuart, Solmsen and Finglass (Finglass (ed.), (2007) at 438, Solmsen (1982) at 55-6, Stuart (1918) at 288).

139 There are strong similarities pertaining to the treatment of recognition in Sophocles’ *Elektra* and *Iphigeneia among the Taurians*. In both plays, both siblings are ignorant of the other’s identity and the recognition is finally achieved through a stage object (in Sophocles the urn and in Euripides a letter). Both playwrights toy with the audience’s expectation of the recognition between the siblings through suggestions of an imminent recognition before frustration and
During Orestes’ brief exchange with the chorus upon entry, there is a further indication of Sophocles’ deliberate delay of the recognition between brother and sister. Orestes asks the chorus: Τίς οὖν ἄν ὑμῶν τοῖς ἐσω φράσεων ἄν / ἡμῶν ποθεινὴν κοινόπουλ παρουσιάν; (1103-4). I suggest that Sophocles may here be indulging in metatheatre by acknowledging to the audience through his use of the word ποθεινὴν that he has deliberately postponed the moment of recognition. Orestes is indeed ‘the longed-for presence’ whom the audience have been awaiting. The audience finally sees Orestes and Elektra on stage together and Sophocles has one of his characters acknowledge the audience’s wait and thereby signals to them the arrival of the long-awaited moment of recognition.

This comparison is based on the lines of the plays at which events occur. It is acknowledged that line number and duration of time do not precisely correspond, but the results of the comparison are, nonetheless, striking.
After the brief exchange with the chorus, Orestes directly addresses Elektra for the first time at 1106, while Pylades holds the urn containing the σμικρά λείψανα (1113) of Orestes.\textsuperscript{141} Elektra asks Orestes for his news about her brother, addressing him fittingly as ὁ ξέν’ (1112). He draws attention to the urn that Pylades holds and Elektra asks to hold it and weep over it (1119-22), again addressing Orestes as ὁ ξε/νε (1119). Orestes agrees to her request, wondering to Pylades about her identity (1123-5). Elektra, holding the urn in her arms, then launches into a poignant forty-five-line lament during which Orestes realizes who she is.\textsuperscript{142} During her lament, she addresses the alleged remains of Orestes in the urn as ὁ φιλτάτου µνηµε/νθρώπων ὑψητος λοιπόν (1126-7), then ὁ πα/ν (1130). She constantly uses second person pronouns and adjectives,\textsuperscript{143} which heightens the pathos of the scene as the sister clutches and visibly grieves over the urn containing the supposed remains of her brother as she unknowingly stands in front of her brother.

While the audience is confronted with this extraordinary display of grief, their emotional response is complicated by their knowledge of the identity of the stranger and their anticipation of the recognition scene and, with it, the end of Elektra’s anguish. The audience is also able to observe Orestes’ growing realization of her identity. After Elektra begins to lament at 1126 and at latest by 1130, Orestes knows who she is. His recognition of her has been effected.

Yet he stays silent and even once she has finished her lament, it is the chorus who responds. Orestes’ first remarks are questions to himself (1175-6), before he asks directly for confirmation of her identity, ἦ σὸν τὸ κλεινὸν ἐλίδος ἩΛέκτρας τόδε;

\textsuperscript{141} Easterling notes the possible connection between the urn of Sophocles’ play and the waterpot which is ‘the emblem of [the Euripidean] Electra’s humble life-style’ and ‘is prominent, too, at the beginning of what ‘ought’ to be the recognition scene (107-9)’ (Easterling (1997) at 168). Easterling refrains from suggesting which play came first. Sophocles’ enlargement of the role of a minor piece of stage equipment in the Euripidean version would be quite clever, although the alternate diminution in importance from Sophocles to Euripides is also credible.

\textsuperscript{142} Segal argues that ‘the urn embodies the paradoxical status of truth in a dramatic fiction. It is a work of art and elaborate artifice ... which gathers around itself the power of language to deceive or to establish truth’ (Segal (1986) at 127-8). It is the metatheatrical symbol par excellence. On the metatheatrical nature of the urn, see further Ringer (1998) at 185-90.

\textsuperscript{143} S. Elektra 1127, 1130, 1132, 1137, 1139, 1144, 1146, 1148, 1150, 1152, 1154, 1157, 1158, 1165 (twice), 1166, 1168 and 1169.
(1177). He uses the noun εἴσοδος, which, according to Liddell and Scott, means ‘that which is seen’, focusing attention on the concept of sight which reappears so often in scenes of recognition and appears henceforth in the dialogue between the siblings at 1184, 1185, 1187, 1188, 1189 and 1199. Elektra promptly confirms who she is (1178). Orestes is thenceforth in no doubt as to her identity and yet he does not immediately confirm his own; instead, there is further postponement of the recognition as they engage in a stichomythic dialogue for a further forty-odd lines before their exchange becomes antilabic in anticipation of her recognition of him at 1220-4. Rather than directly bring to an end her extreme suffering, he ascertains more about her hardships and asks for the urn back – thereby increasing her suffering. Their speech regularly echoes their sibling’s words, which increases the pathos of the scene. In addition, Elektra continues to address Orestes as ὁ ἄξιος at 1180 and 1184, emphasising her ignorance as to his identity and his knowledge of her identity. Sophocles provokes peaks of intense emotions in both the characters and the audience – from the depths of despair to the heights of joy, thereby increasing the audience’s enjoyment of the scene. While explanations have been offered regarding Orestes’ delay, such as acting out of ‘consideration and precaution’, the key point is not the character’s motivation in delaying, but its effect on the audience. The delay, I would argue, is to heighten the audience’s anticipation for as long as possible before satisfying their desire for the mutual recognition, in line with the play’s treatment of the crucial motif and pragma of recognition. But Orestes’ recognition of Elektra in this play does not necessarily imply that she must recognise him. Orestes’ plan, as laid out in the prologue, was for him to gain entrance to the palace with the urn and then to carry out his revenge. There was no role for Elektra to play in the vengeance (unlike in the Aeschylean and Euripidean versions). Orestes is, however, overwhelmed by the depth of her grief at the sight of the urn and decides to reveal himself.

After more than 1200 lines anticipating this scene, Elektra’s recognition of Orestes lasts only a few lines before Sophocles quickly moves on the action of the play. While

145 Grote argues that the recognition ultimately results from the paidagogos’ graphic eyewitness account of the chariot race, which is believed by Elektra and causes her to display such grief over the urn. The ῥῆσις is so detailed in order that the recognition can occur (Grote (1997)). I disagree with this interpretation; rather, the ῥῆσις is so detailed in order to delay the moment of recognition.
Orestes’ recognition of Elektra occurred during her lament and is surrounded by sadness, Elektra’s recognition of Orestes, in contrast, ‘turns sadness into joy and happiness.’

Elektra accepts who Orestes is immediately and, while he produces their father’s ring as substantiation of his identity (Τήνος προσβλέψασα μου / σφραγίδα πατρός έκμαθ’ εὶ σαφῆ λέγω, 1222-3), she does not ask for any proof. And indeed a ring is hardly an incontestable symbol of identity since it is easily transferable, as opposed to, for example, a scar, as in Euripides’ *Elektra*. There are further words of ‘seeing’ in the next few lines when Elektra calls on the chorus to see that it is Orestes (ὁρᾶτ’, 1227-9) and they confirm that they do indeed see him (ὁρῶμεν, 1230). Her first greeting to her brother is Φίλτατον φίλις (1224) and his first word in response is Φίλτατον, emphasising the bond between them. In her first three lines after truly recognising him, she lays emphasis on the fact that she sees him, she hears him and she touches him (1224-6). Her awareness of his identity is vividly stressed through the reference to the three senses.

Seaford connects Elektra’s apostrophe to light here (and later at 1354) with the mysteries where the ‘[t]he appearance of (torch)light in darkness marked the transition of the initiands from ignorance and suffering.’ Just as the initiands achieve true

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146 Solmsen (1982) at 60. While this is superficially so, on the complex portrayal of emotion in this play, see further Wright (2005a).

147 This type of common sense objection was made by Elektra to the lock of hair and a theoretical piece of weaving used as tokens for recognition by the old man in Euripides’ *Elektra*. Perrin deems Orestes’ use of the ring as proof ‘the sole imperfection in the recognition scene’ (Perrin (1909) at 394). This kind of modern biased aesthetic judgement is not very illuminating; it is more constructive to consider the significance of the ring, as Kenna, for example, does (Kenna (1961)).

148 See the discussion earlier in this chapter at p. 98 on the associations with the mysteries in this scene. See further Seaford (1994a) at 276-8.

149 As noted by Kamerbeek (ed.), (1974) at 162. Ringer interprets the reference to sight and sound very differently. According to him, ‘Vision and voice, the principal elements of the theatre, have been manipulated by Orestes’ playacting to the point of fragmentation’ (Ringer (1998) at 192).

150 Seaford (1994a) at 276. The chorus greets Dionysos as ὁ φῶς μέγιστον ἡμῶν βακχεύματος at *Bacchae* 608, strengthening the connection of light and the mysteries. On mystic light in Aeschylus’ fragmentary *Bassarai*, see Seaford (2005).
knowledge, so Elektra comes to the knowledge of Orestes’ and the paidagogos’ identities. This adds a further frame of reference for some members of the audience by which to interpret the on-stage activity.

Having satisfied his audience’s prolonged desire for the recognition, the playwright swiftly aims the action towards the matricide. He allows the siblings a recognition duet (1232-87), but it is shorter than such pieces in other extant plays, suggesting Sophocles’ desire to move the action on rather than to revel in the emotions of their reunion.151 Elektra sings of her great joy while Orestes is more pragmatic in his awareness of the current situation and speaks in iambics of the need for caution. He also attempts to silence her at least six times.152 She is enjoying the elimination of the sufferings with which the scene began, while he is keen to accomplish the revenge for which he initially came to the palace.

The siblings discuss what must be done when they are interrupted by the arrival of the paidagogos from the palace at 1327. What follows then is an unexpected – and, in regard to the plot, unnecessary – third recognition (1346-63). This happy reunion of Elektra and the paidagogos to whom she entrusted Orestes all those years ago maintains the (superficially at least) joyful atmosphere on stage and detracts from the horrific events that are about to take place. It also reflects on the earlier recognition, in that the siblings again question each other as to someone’s identity, but here it is the identity of a third person, who does not himself participate in the enquiry and already knows Elektra’s identity. Orestes vouches for the paidagogos’ identity and the recognition is achieved. Elektra joyfully and comprehensively greets him in effusive terms (1354-63, beginning with her greeting Ω φιλτάτον φ/ιλτάτον φως) until the paidagogos stops her and orders

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151 On the recognition duet in general, see pp. 93-4. This is the only lyric duet attested in Sophocles’ extant tragedies and it is triadic as opposed to Euripides’ astrophic duets. See further Kamerbeek (ed.), (1974) at 162.

152 S. Elektra 1236, 1238, 1259, 1271-2, 1288 and 1322.
Orestes and Pylades to take action. The replication of the same greeting to a former household servant as she used to her brother at 1224 is somewhat disquieting.

The chorus sings of the events occurring within the palace before Elektra joins in their song with further details of the events inside. Klytaimestra’s voice is heard from inside the skēnē and reveals what may represent a fourth recognition within this play of recognitions. Initially she cries out that the house is empty of philoi and full of attackers (1404), at which point, I argue, she is unaware of the identity of her assailants. She next calls out to the absent Aigisthos (1409) before directly addressing Orestes as her son and calling for mercy at 1410. Her final lines emphasise the identity of her assailant: ὦ τέκνον, τέκνον, οἶκτιμε τὴν τεκόσαν (1410-11). While these can be read as desperate pleas by a mother for mercy from her son by emphasising their relationship, I prefer to see it as the shocked realization of a mother at the identity of the man attacking her.

Five lines later Klytaimestra is dead. Orestes and Pylades exit the palace to briefly confirm her death before Aigisthos’ approach is observed and the youths return inside. Aigisthos enters and Elektra confirms the rumour of Orestes’ death, adding that the messengers brought proof of it. Aigisthos calls for the proof to be revealed and, as the palace doors are opened, he sees two men standing beside a veiled body. He orders the face to be uncovered so that he may mourn, but Orestes demurs, telling Aigisthos that he should do it. He does so and discovers that the corpse is Klytaimestra’s. He recognizes that his lover, rather than his enemy, lies before him – the fifth anagnōrisis of the tragedy.

He cannot fully comprehend the situation and Orestes retorts: τίνα φοβ; τίν’ ἀγνοεῖς; (1475). His use of ἀγνοεῖν evokes the pragma of recognition for the audience and indeed signals that one is imminent. Confused, Aigisthos wonders who has trapped him and Orestes asks him if he truly does not know that he is addressing the dead (1477-8).

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153 It has been suggested by Kells that Elektra shows signs of ‘mounting madness’ here as she thinks that she sees her father (Kells (ed.), (1973) at 213). I think, however that her use of the term πατέρ is more a sign of her respect for the paidagogos and recognition of all that he has done for her family (see further Finglass (ed.), (2007) at 536).

154 Wright suggests that ‘the ‘joy’ of this second, deluded recognition-scene undermines the positive effect of the earlier recognition’ (Wright (2005a) at 192).

155 On cries within the skēnē, see Hamilton (1987).

156 Klytaimestra’s supplicatory appeal to oiktos is discussed in Chapter 3: Supplication at p. 152.
Aigisthos finally realises Orestes’ identity at 1479, echoing Klytaimestra’s words as she recognised Orestes in *Libation-Bearers* at 887. With a sixth and final recognition effected, Aigisthos is soon forced to enter the palace so that the revenge can be completed.\(^{157}\) At which point the play ends.

This final recognition is unnecessary in the revenge plot, but is essential to Sophocles’ overwhelming emphasis on the dramatic possibilities inherent in the action of recognition.\(^{158}\) This final recognition of Sophocles’ play contains parallels to other recognitions, both in this play and in the other playwrights’ versions of this myth. Finglass sees a reflection of Elektra’s earlier recognition of Orestes as, in both, a disguised Orestes brings the message of his own death together with proof (in the form of physical remains) before his true identity is revealed – to very different responses, joy from Elektra and fear from Aigisthos.\(^{159}\) Aigisthos’ action of uncovering Klytaimestra’s corpse is reminiscent of Orestes and Elektra’s actions in Euripides’ *Elektra* when they *cover* their mother’s body with a πέπλος (E. *Elektra* 1230-2). Here the action is reversed, which heightens the emotive content of the scene for those audiences recognising the allusion. It is also reminiscent of Klytaimestra’s viewing of Aigisthos’ corpse in *Libation-Bearers* (893).

I would argue that in *Elektra* Sophocles places emphasis on the *pragma* of *nostos* in the same way that he does on recognition – also in response to the previous dramatic portrayals of Aigisthos’ return. This play can be interpreted as a *nostos*-tragedy in the same way as *Andromache*, since the entire tragedy looks forward to the return of Aigisthos. In *Libation-Bearers* Aigisthos enters at 838 only to go into the skēnē less than twenty lines later where Orestes is waiting to kill him. This occurs before Klytaimestra’s murder and 220 lines before the end of the play. Aigisthos’ presence on stage is brief and his exchange with the chorus cursory. In Euripides’ *Elektra* Aigisthos never appears; instead his death is narrated by a messenger.\(^{160}\) Sophocles, however,

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\(^{157}\) There has been much discussion about the ending of the play and its apparent lack of resolution of, or judgement on, the siblings’ actions. For a recent discussion of the scholarship, see Goldhill (2009) at 28-9.

\(^{158}\) In Euripides’ presentation of Aigisthos’ death in the messenger’s report, Aigisthos dies without knowing the identity of his killer (E. *Elektra* 839-43).

\(^{159}\) Finglass (ed.), (2007) at 536.

\(^{160}\) His name, however, occurs thirty times in the play: E. *Elektra* 10, 12, 17, 24, 28, 32, 42, 58, 62, 85, 124, 165, 266, 525, 621, 665, 685, 764, 783, 796, 811, 827, 838, 857, 869, 885, 894,
makes Aigisthos’ return an important part of the muthos. His absence – and hence his return – is first mentioned by Elektra at 312 after the chorus explicitly asks if he is present or away. Subsequently, his absence or the threat of his return is frequently mentioned leading the audience to anticipate his return. Throughout the Elektra, Sophocles posits the possibility that Aigisthos’ return will be a significant action within the play. As the play continues and the pragma of recognition is not enacted, the tension grows as to which pragma will be dominant and the audience’s suspense grows. Instead, when he does return, he participates in two recognitions that were not elsewhere dramatically enacted before his striking exit into the skēnē to be murdered by Orestes.

Sophocles develops the complexities inherent in this mythological story and its dramatic tradition by elaborating on a key element of the previous dramatic tradition – a single type of action, the pragma of recognition. Using postponement and proliferation of this pragma, he toys with the audience’s expectations of this conventional action. His play includes potentially six recognitions between five people in four separate scenes in less than four hundred lines. While the narrative necessity of the recognition between Orestes and Elektra is open to question, its dramatic necessity is based on pre-existing tragic and poetic tradition. Sophocles builds on these previous dramatic productions, which presented the recognition between the siblings early in the play, by deliberately prolonging the audience’s anticipation of the scene through frequent allusions to it, regular frustrations of their expectation of it and then its eventual realization after 1100 lines. His highly extended delay before allowing the siblings to achieve mutual recognition, in my opinion, points to a later date of production than Euripides’ Elektra, in which the playwright delayed the scene in comparison to Aeschylus’ version in Libation-Bearers. In his interpretation of the scene, Sophocles innovates on the previous versions by making both siblings ignorant of the other’s identity, thereby doubling the poignant action of a character realising the identity of a loved one. Having at last satisfied his audience’s desire for this scene, he quickly follows it with several unexpected recognitions and, in so doing, demonstrates the versatility of the pragma of

984, 1081 and 1276. de Jong discusses how Aigisthos’ death is able to move the audience despite the fact that he never appears on stage because it is made the subject of a messenger’s report (see further Jong (1990) at 14-21).

161 Perrin comments on ‘the happy chance of Aegisthus’ absence’ which misses the significance of his being away (Perrin (1909) at 392).

162 Elektra 386-9, 517-19, 1307-9, 1402-3, 1416 and 1428-9.
recognition within this traditional myth and within a tragedy. While adding little to the course and structure of the plot, these additional recognitions heighten the emotions experienced by the on-stage characters and therefore, by extension, by the audience observing the action.

3. Conclusion

The pragma of recognition is a highly visible and versatile feature of Athenian tragedy. Playwrights structured the systasis and encouraged the audience’s close engagement with the performance through the combination of non-enacted and enacted forms by suggesting imminent recognitions, delaying expected recognitions, frustrating actual recognitions and portraying unforeseen recognitions. Aristotle identifies recognition’s potential to rouse pity and fear in the audience when it operates in conjunction with peripeteia to alter the movement of the systasis, but it can also engender joy in the audience at its enactment between long-separated philoi. The versatility in its consequences as well as the variety in its elements provided the playwrights with great scope to include the pragma within their muthoi. Through the interplay between non-enacted and enacted forms, the playwrights were also able to underline the difficulty in establishing identity and to emphasise the complexity of this cognitive process and therefore the inherent instability of knowledge. Sophocles demonstrates in his Elektra the extent of the role which the recognition pragma can perform in a tragedy – not only in structuring the systasis, but adding to the muthos through its conscious interaction with previous dramatic tradition and actively engaging the audience in the outcome of the drama.
CHAPTER THREE: SUPPLICATION

The *pragma* of supplication involving a request for protection or for a particular result from a mortal or immortal figure is one of the most identifiable and frequent actions in Athenian drama.¹ It appears in the majority of extant tragedies, the only exceptions being *Persians*, *Women of Trachis* and *Rhesos*. Supplication was clearly an accepted practice in ancient Greek society, as is reflected in its depiction in both historical and literary accounts.² It is common in tragedy because it is a consequence of one of the key elements of this dramatic form: the ever-present threat and danger posed by both mortal and immortal figures to the *dramatis personae*. Due to the desperate nature of the suppliant, the *pragma* in both enacted and non-enacted forms is often accompanied by high emotion. In its enacted form, the *pragma* of supplication can fill an entire tragedy or form a small part of the *systasis*. Supplication, encompassing as it does a plea for a particular result, always motivates further action within the *systasis* of a tragedy, never occurring as the final *pragma* of a play. Through verbal references and visual allusions to supplication, the playwrights compel the audience to anticipate future supplications, to compare and contrast different supplications, to strengthen the impact of a different type of action or the play’s thematic coherence and to develop the character of the *dramatis personae*.

² For historical accounts, see, for example, Herodotos 5.71 and Thucydides 3.70 and 75-81. It features extensively throughout the *Iliad* and indeed it has been argued that ‘the theme of the *Iliad* is ... the wrath of Achilles and how it is counteracted by ‘supplication’’ (Thornton (1984) at 141. See further Pedrick (1982)).
While scholars have examined the status of supplication in Athenian tragedy and society (whether as ritual, quasi-legal practice or necessary element of reciprocity), identified different types of supplication and their respective elements, considered the staging of supplication and examined the motif of supplication in a particular tragedy, little attention has been paid to how the *pragma* of supplication operates within a tragedy. While characters regularly supplicate at an altar or before a person on stage before the audience, they can also evoke this particular action through recollections of past instances and prophecies of future occurrences of supplication. In this chapter I will examine the ways in which supplication appears in Athenian tragedy to explore the diverse role of this *pragma*. I will consider the normative elements of a supplication *pragma* before investigating variations and suggesting possible reasons for these. I will then examine its effects within the *systasis* and the *muthos*, and on audience engagement. Finally, I will look closely at how supplication is used in Euripides’ *Hekabe*. While it is not traditionally recognised as a ‘supplication drama’, this play contains many examples of enacted and non-enacted supplication *pragmata*, which comment upon the importance of reciprocity in the ancient world.

1. **THE MANIFESTATIONS OF SUPPLICATION IN TRAGEDY**

Supplication is presented in Athenian tragedy in two main ways: the actual supplication of a person is portrayed on stage or verbal and visual allusions and references to the act of supplication are made. Supplication is deemed to occur (or be attempted) if someone makes an entreaty to another, regardless of whether the person supplicated responds to the entreaty and regardless of whether this request is accompanied by any of the gestures traditionally associated with supplication in the ancient world. If a character identifies themselves as a ἴκέτης or προστρόπαιος, they are a suppliant. The use of cognates of ἴκέτευειν, ἰκνοῦσθαι, προσπίπτειν, προπίτειν, προστρέπειν or ἄντικεφειν

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may also be indicative of a supplication. While enactments of supplication most clearly impact on the systasis through the motivation of subsequent events, they can also contribute to the muthos through the reinforcement of themes and development of character. The supplication pragma can also actively engage the audience in the performance and arouse their emotions. Together with verbal references to, and visual resonances of, supplication, they can create anticipation and suspense within the audience.

1.1. The Enacted Supplication

Scholars have designated as ‘supplication dramas’ certain plays which open with a group of suppliants taking refuge from an enemy at an altar or other sacred place and seeking the protection of a third party. This group usually comprises Aeschylus’ Suppliant Women, Sophocles’ Oedipus at Kolonos and Euripides’ Children of Herakles and Suppliant Women, but to these has sometimes been added Eumenides. The pragma of supplication, however, is enacted in many more tragedies; it occurs in most extant tragedies with the exception of Persians, Agamemnon, Prometheus Bound, Women of Trachis, Bacchae and Rhesos. The pragma of supplication can fill the entire systasis of a tragedy, as in Aeschylus’ Suppliant Women, or can form a small part of the overarching muthos, as does Iphigeneia’s supplication of the chorus to keep silent in Iphigeneia among the Taurians (1068-77). Supplications occur in sacred places, such as at altars or tombs, and directly before a person. Those appeals made before a person can be conveyed through language only or be accompanied by certain conventional gestures. As well as having varied durations, supplications occur for different reasons, including protection, a benefit or service, or mercy, and involve different types of participants. There is, however, an identifiable process that underlies every supplication

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4 Létoublon examines the development of the vocabulary of supplication, including ἱκέτης, ἰκάνειν, λιτή and λίσσεσθαι (Létoublon (1980)).


6 For a list of enacted supplication pragmata in extant tragedy, see Appendix 4: Enacted supplication pragmata.
*pragma* and a common vocabulary. Playwrights could and did adapt elements of the supplication *pragma* to varying effect in each tragedy.

Supplication in tragedy occurs in two distinct situations: directly to an individual or at an altar or shrine. In the first scenario, the suppliant beseeches the addressee directly to fulfil their request. For example, Klytaimnestra supplicates Achilleus in the Greek army’s camp to save Iphigeneia from being sacrificed (*Iphigeneia at Aulis* 900-1007).  

In the second scenario, a suppliant may take refuge at an altar, shrine or tomb and, although they might beseech the god, goddess or protecting deity to safeguard them, they are in practice directing their supplication to the people who control that holy place or the land in which it is situated. Such suppliants include Oedipus and Antigone at the sanctuary of the Eumenides in *Oedipus at Kolonos* and the Danaides at the altar of the festival gods in Aeschylus’ *Suppliant Women*.

In Euripides’ *Suppliant Women* both of these scenarios occur. The mothers of the Seven against Thebes come to the Eleusinian temple of Demeter and Persephone to seek assistance with forcing Thebes to return their sons’ bodies.  

At the altar before the temple, they supplicate Aithra, mother of Theseus, king of Athens (E. *Suppliant Women* 8-11). The queen is unable to assist with their request, so she sends for her son Theseus, who soon arrives. The mothers leave the sacred area of the altar to supplicate him directly (271-81) and their supplication of the king is eventually successful. When one approach is unsuccessful, there is no hesitation in making the same appeal in a different manner to a different addressee.

Supplication *pragma* can involve purely verbal pleas or the appeal can be accompanied by gestures or physical contact. One key problem with establishing whether gestures or physical contact are part of an enacted *pragma* is the lack of stage directions in the extant texts. The words of the characters are all that survives. It is sometimes possible to identify from the suppliant’s, or the supplicated person’s, words that a gesture or physical movement accompanies the verbal plea. In *Medeia*, for example, Kreon says to Medeia, τί δ’ οὐ βιάζηι κο/uni1F50κ /uni1F00παλλάσσηι χερός; (339). She is clearly clinging to his hand in supplication. As discussed in the Introduction, drama is a

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7 Interestingly, however, Klytaimnestra conflates Achilleus’ knees with an altar (οὐκ ἔχω βομόν καταφυγεῖν ἄλλον ἥ το σὸν γόνον, *Iphigeneia at Aulis* 911).

8 For a discussion of the numerical composition of the chorus of the grieving mothers of the seven warriors, see Storey (2009).
multimedial genre in which the audience processes the visual signs together with the verbal. Gestures may therefore have accompanied the characters’ words without being mentioned in the text – particularly if they were socially conventional gestures. The presence of gestures is not, in my opinion, necessary within the process of supplication. A verbal plea is sufficient.

Gould, however, disagrees. Following Kopperschmidt, he categorises enacted supplications as either ‘complete’ or ‘figurative’, where a figurative supplication is any occasion when the language of supplication is used without attendant gestures and physical contact. He argues that ‘acts of purely ‘figurative’ supplication are without the full ritual significance of the completed act’ and can therefore be ignored by the person supplicated without fear of divine retribution from Zeus Hikesios. He describes the process of supplication as a ‘game’ in which, if all the right physical gestures are undertaken, the person supplicated has no choice but to grant the appeal. There are two issues to be addressed here. The first is that requests made within a supplication were not automatically granted in either Athenian tragedy or ancient Greek society. Rather, suppliants had to try to persuade the stronger party to accept their supplication and comply with their appeal. The person supplicated weighed up the suppliant’s request together with any supporting arguments and decided whether to grant it. The arguments and the corresponding decision could rely on moral, legal and political considerations, as well as personal or collective benefit. The second problem is the reconstruction of stage action discussed above. Gould uses the success of a supplication in tragedy to identify whether a supplicatory appeal was accompanied by physical contact and gestures, but his interpretation of the supplication process does not account for those tragic supplications which are clearly made with gestures and yet are still rejected. For example, in Andromache Menelaos is unmoved by the supplication of Andromache’s son, whom she has advised χρίμπτειν γούνασι δεσπότου (Andromache 529-30). Menelaos indicates that the boy has followed his mother’s orders and is supplicating him when he asks: τί µε προσπίτνεις, ἀλίαν πέτραν / ἣ κόμα λιταῖς δός

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9 See discussion in Introduction at pp. 17 and 19-20.
10 See further Gould (1973), Kopperschmidt (1967).
11 Gould (1973) at 77.
12 Gould (1973) at 81.
13 For a list of epic, dramatic, oratorical, mythographic, historiographic and fictive Greek sources mentioning the rejection of a supplication, see Naiden (2006) at 163-5.
ικετεύων; (537-8). It is unlikely that the young boy would not follow his mother’s advice exactly as to the specific physical actions to use while supplicating. Success was therefore not guaranteed in a supplication simply because particular gestures were enacted; rather, suppliants made their plea as acceptable to the person supplicated as possible, strengthening their claim with whatever means were available.

Let us now examine the process, language, participants and reasons in supplication pragmata to identify normative elements therein and to consider the variants before examining the role of the pragma of supplication in a tragedy.

1.1.1. Process

There are a number of identifiable steps in the supplication process. First, the suppliant approaches the person or the sacred area controlled by the person they wish to supplicate, and indicates their desire to do so, whether with gestures or by words.14 Second, the suppliant makes their request, before, finally, the supplicated decides whether to grant the request. The suppliant is in control of the first two steps, while the supplicated makes the decision in the third. In tragedy, the response of the person supplicated does not always occur immediately following the suppliant’s request. In the same way as with a prayer, the response may be delivered later. For example, in both plays titled Suppliant Women, the suppliants must wait to hear whether their supplication has been successful while the king consults his assembly about the request. Both playwrights utilise a choral ode to cover the delay: Aeschylus’ lasts for seventy-five lines, Euripides’ less than twenty.15

Most pragmata of supplication at a sacred location centre on an altar or sanctuary of a divinity, but the revered being may also be a hero, as when Helen takes refuge at the tomb of the former Egyptian ruler, Proteus, in Euripides’ Helen. The suppliants physically touch the altar or tomb and are thereby encompassed within and protected by the sacred space. Their position and attachment to the sacred object clearly symbolise to the audience and other dramatis personae their status as suppliant. Their action can be

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14 Naiden interprets the first step as two separate stages in the process (the ‘approach’ and the ‘gesture’), but these usually occur simultaneously in Athenian tragedy (see further Naiden (2006) at 4).
interpreted as dedicating themselves to the deity, which makes their body sacred to the
god and any violence against them an affront to that god. Krousa clearly declares this:

\[ \text{ιερόν τὸ σῶμα τῶι θεῶι δίδωµ' ἔχειν (Ion 1285).} \]

As Parker notes, ‘the suppliant now in theory enjoys absolute inviolability, because he shares the sacredness of the altar to which he clings.’\(^{16}\) All suppliants are entitled to this protection, regardless of whether they are innocent victims or criminals, as Ion acerbically notes (Ion 1312-19). This does not, however, prevent violence being threatened or indeed undertaken against suppliants. In *Herakles* Lykos actively threatens to kill Amphitryon, Megara and Herakles’ children as they sit at the altar, thus also threatening the sanctity of Zeus’ sanctuary (Herakles 240-6). While this threat is not carried out since the suppliants voluntarily leave the altar, punishment for his impiety is meted out to Lykos when he is killed by Herakles later in the play (750-4).\(^{17}\) Most violence undertaken against suppliants is by heralds, such as the Egyptian herald who sacrilegiously lays hands on the Danaides as they sit at the altar (A. *Suppliant Women* 908-10) and Eurystheus’ herald who knocks Iolaos to the ground (Children of Herakles 75-9). The profaning of a sacred space vividly conveys the impiety of these characters to the audience, whose opinion of these characters is immediately affected.

In *Aias* the place of refuge is, unusually, the body of a deceased hero. After his death, Aias’ body has become the subject of a dispute between his relatives who want to bury it and the Greek leaders who refuse it burial rites. Teukros, Aias’ half-brother, orders Aias’ son Eurysakes to supplicate his father’s corpse (Aias 1171-81). Eurysakes is to stand beside the body and touch (ἔφαψαι, 1172) it as a *hiketēs*. As a *prostropaios*, he is to sit holding in his hands locks of hair from himself, his mother and Teukros, an offering which Teukros labels as *ικτήριον θησαυρόν* (1173-5). The locks of hair Eurysakes is charged to hold are typical funerary offerings in honour of the dead with no explicit connection with the act of supplication.\(^{18}\) The supplication is intended to grant Eurysakes protection from his father’s enemies, but at the same time it serves to

\(^{16}\) Parker (1983) at 183.
\(^{17}\) ‘The suppliants’ capitulation to Lykos’ threat can be contrasted with Andromache’s refusal to leave the Thetideion in a similar situation (*Andromache* 258), although Hermione merely threatens to burn Andromache, rather than actually orders the acquisition of wood. Menander similarly uses the threat of fire to scare a suppliant from an altar in *The Perinthian Girl* 1-23.
\(^{18}\) For example, locks of hair are offered at Agamemnon’s tomb by Orestes, Chrysothemis and Elektra in *Libation-Bearers* 168, *S. Elektra* 448-52 and 901, and *E. Elektra* 515.
protect his father’s body as Teukros curses anyone who attempts to move Eurysakes (1175-9). Teukros’ final rejoinder to Aias’ son is to hold and guard his father and not let anyone remove him, but remain in supplication (1180-1). Paradoxically, the very act of Eurysakes’ supplication generates the sanctity of the body and its power to protect suppliants. It is not only the location of Eurysakes’ supplication which is unusual, but also Sophocles’ careful blending of the rituals of supplication, funerary offering and a curse.

In declaration of their status, suppliants at an altar often carry in their left hands boughs of olive or laurel wreathed with wool. Stage-props are not used extensively in Athenian tragedy and therefore the use of any such objects is significant. Both the mothers in Euripides’ Suppliant Women and the Danaides in Aeschylus’ Suppliant Women are described as carrying a supplicant branch, clearly signalling their supplicant status before any words are spoken in the plays. Boughs are so closely connected with supplication that Orestes attempts to strengthen his appeal to Menelaos by coααenting that he is /uni1F00φύλλους στόµατος /uni1F10ξάπτων λιτάς (Orestes 383). The adjective /uni1F04φύλος is used nowhere else in extant tragedy in a supplication context and its use here is striking. By specifically mentioning his lack of one of the customary components of the process of supplication, Orestes attempts to create an atmosphere more receptive to a successful

19 Garner identifies multiple allusions in this scene to the description of Aias’ defence of Patroklos’ corpse in Iliad 17.132-9 and notes that ‘the man who defended a corpse with his shield has now become a corpse and cannot even defend his own son, the shield’s namesake’ (Garner (1990) at 59-61).
20 Henrichs argues that the chorus’ words construct Aias’ tomb as a ‘place of commemoration’ before Eurysakes’ supplication begins (Henrichs (1993) at 170-6).
21 See further Burian (1972).
22 On objects and tokens in tragedy, see Taplin (1978) at 77-100.
23 A. Suppliant Women 21-2 and E. Suppliant Women 10. Danaos later counsels his daughters to hold the boughs in their left hand (A. Suppliant Women 193). Delcourt discusses the possible meaning of ἐξουσιομένοι in Oedipus the King 3 before concluding that the suppliants are bearing the typical supplicant bough, rather than being garlanded themselves (Delcourt (1937) at 63-6).
24 Negative expressions made up of an alpha-privative adjective are common in tragedy, see further Rutherford (2010) at 446.
25 The adjective occurs elsewhere at Eumenides 785 and 815, and Aeschylus Glaukos Pontios fr. 25e.10 TrGF.
response. Hermione makes a similar reference to her lack of the customary suppliant accoutrements when she clasps Orestes’ knees with her arms, which, she says, ‘are not inferior to wreaths’ (στεµµάτων δ’ ο/uni1F50χ /uni1F25σσονας, Andromache 894). By their location and their appearance, suppliants at an altar make their intention clear for all observers.

Suppliants often physically lower themselves before the person they are supplicating either through sitting or kneeling. This gesture is a sign of the suppliant’s acknowledgement of inferiority before the other person and aims to arouse pity in the supplicated.26 The difference in height clearly highlights for the audience the power relationship between the participants in the supplication process: the suppliant on the ground looking up at the person above them who has the power to help them in their desperate plight. Philoktetes’ gestures supplement the ardent words of his supplication to Neoptolemos, clearly demonstrating the power hierarchy that exists between them.

When Philoktetes first supplicates Neoptolemos to take him away and not leave him on the deserted island of Lemnos, he invokes Neoptolemos’ father and mother and all he holds dear at home (468-9), draws attention to his suppliant status (/uni1F31κέτης /uni1F31κνο/uniFE6µαι, 470) and emphasises his isolation on the island (471-2). When his appeal does not appear to meet with success, he attempts to further strengthen his plea with physical gestures of supplication (484-9). Not only does he invoke Zeus Hikesios, but he draws attention to his physical infirmity (χωλός, 486) as he falls before Neoptolemos’ knees.27 He stresses how difficult it is for him to undertake this physical movement, which emphasises the desperation that he also reveals in his words. Philoktetes’ gestures and words clearly demonstrate to the audience his wretched situation and vital need for Neoptolemos’ aid.

The gesture of kneeling or lowering oneself before another was so closely connected with the process of supplication that suppliants use the verbs προσπέσω, προσπίτνω and προσπίπτω to communicate their intention to supplicate. For example, in Andromache Hermione asks the nurse, ἢ δούλα δούλας γόνασι προσπέσω; (860). She is clearly alluding to the possibility of supplicating Andromache for mercy. That this related group of verbs did not solely indicate the physical posture can be seen from Theseus’ description of Polyneikes at Poseidon’s altar:

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26 For a discussion of the posture of sitting in ancient Greek culture, see Bremmer (1991) at 25-7.

27 I agree with Telò that προσπίτνω σε γόνασι means that Philoktetes falls at Neoptolemos’ knees (Telò (2002) at 23-6).
Theseus describes Polyneikes as sitting at the altar (καθήσαται, 1158) and προσπεσόντα (1157). Polyneikes has clearly adopted the position of a suppliant. As can be seen from this example, these verbs are not restricted to supplication before a person, but can also be used in the context of supplication at an altar. This position could also be adopted outside the process of supplication, as, for example, in the Persian chorus’ response to the queen’s arrival in Persians (152); falling prostrate or kneeling before a queen is portrayed here as a custom foreign to the Greeks.

A suppliant may grasp the supplicated person’s knees, chin or right hand, or a combination of these, as they make their request. If the supplicated is too far away, then the suppliant may simply stretch out a hand toward them, but actual contact between suppliant and supplicated appears to be more effective in evoking pity and produces a very powerful image for the audience. This type of physical movement is a highly visible symbol by which a suppliant can communicate their desire to make a request. If these gestures are impossible, they may be described, as when Andromache is bound and cannot physically supplicate Peleus, she says:

\[ \text{ἀλλ᾽ ἀντιάξω σ᾽, ὅ γέρον, τὸν σῶν πάρος πίτνουσα γονάτων – χειρὶ δ᾽ οὔκ ἔξεστί μοι} \]

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28 Easterling notes that Sophocles also emphasises Polyneikes’ status as a suppliant through the repetition of cognates of θάκηµα to contrast Oedipus’ son with Kreon and thus arouse audience sympathy for Polyneikes (Easterling (1967) at 5-7).

29 Similar examples occur in Seven against Thebes 95-6 and Alkestis 163-5.

30 The Phrygian slave in Orestes describes his adoption of that posture before Orestes as a νόµος βάρβαρος (Orestes 1507). The Phrygian uses the verb προσκυνεῖν to describe his action, which is used in a clear supplicatory context in Oedipus the King 327. On proskynēsis in the ancient Greek world, see Delatte (1951), and in Aeschylus in particular, see further Couch (1931).

31 Various explanations have been put forth concerning the choice of these parts of the body. Onians argues that these parts were considered a symbol of life in various ways (Onians (1951) at 96-7, 174-86, 232-6, 198n.1. See also Gould (1973) at 97). Boegehold notes that these gestures could also occur in non-supplication situations, for example, a hand on the chin in vase paintings can symbolise affection (Boegehold (1999) at 18-9).

32 Hypsipyle similarly supplicates Amphiareos with her hands bound (E. Hypsipyle fr. 757.856-9 TrGF).
There are therefore some stereotypical and easily recognisable gestures connected with supplication. The enactment of these would be highly effective in communicating or evoking supplication for other characters and the audience. The enactment of these gestures, however, does not guarantee that a supplication request will be accepted and the person addressed can refuse to acknowledge the gestures and the suppliant’s need. In *Hippolytos* the nurse attempts to take Hippolytos by the right hand, but he moves it away (*Hippolytos* 605). She continues to try to supplicate him, saying ‘by your knees’ (607), but it is unlikely that he would allow her to enact this gesture when he so easily avoided her hand.  

The second step of supplication involves the suppliant presenting their request to the supplicated person, and usually the suppliant makes a speech setting out the reasons why their supplication should be granted. The suppliant could appeal to *aidōs* or *philia*, promise a future benefit to the person supplicated, refer to previous services rendered or use any other means of influencing the person supplicated. The promise of a future – as well as the reminder of a previously rendered – service or benefit suggests that supplication operated as a component of reciprocity in the ancient world. Polymestor in *Hekabe* tries to use an argument based on *philia* to Agamemnon, albeit unsuccessfully, when he states that all he has suffered from Hekabe is a result of his killing an enemy of Agamemnon (*Hekabe* 1175-7). Klytaiestra appeals to Orestes with a bare breast in a desperate attempt to remind him of the maternal services she rendered to him as a child and to stop him killing her (*Libation-Bearers* 896-8).  

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33 See also Kaimio (1988) at 54n.24. *Contra* Barrett who states that ‘she falls at his knees’ (Barrett (ed.), (1964) at 273).

34 On the specific language used in appeals, see below at pp. 151-6.

35 This step was also part of the satyric representation of a supplication *pragma*. Odysseus attempts to persuade Polyphemos to accept his supplication by drawing attention to the services he rendered to Poseidon, Polyphemos’ father (*Cyclops* 290-8).

36 This is discussed further below at p. 190.

37 A bared breast is also used by Iokaste when she attempts to supplicate Polyneikes and Eteokles not to kill each other (*Phoenician Women* 1568-9). This gesture carries both maternal and erotic associations from its epic usage: Hekabe attempts to persuade Hektor in vain not to return to the battlefield to face Achilleus (*Iliad* 22.79-83), while Helen performs the same action before Menelaos to prevent him killing her (*Ilias Parva* F 19 *EGF*; *Lysistrata* 155-6). O’Neill
Danaides in Aeschylus’ *Suppliant Women* strengthen their request for protection with a threat to hang themselves within the sanctuary and thereby pollute both it and the Argives if Pelasgos does not accede to their request (A. *Suppliant Women* 463-5). The catastrophic nature of such pollution is directly acknowledged by the king (μίασµ’ ἔλεξας οὐχ ὑπερτοξεύσιµον, 473) and Danaos quotes Pelasgos’ words to the Argives which again highlight the threat of pollution (διπλο/uni1FE6ν µίασµα, 619). The Danaides’ threatened suicide is a strong factor in the Argives’ decision to protect them from the Egyptians. When Oedipus supplicates the Kolonians and Theseus for protection for the remainder of his life, he offers a direct benefit if they accept his plea, although he does not reveal the nature of the benefit until after they accept his supplication (*Oedipus at Kolonos*, for example 72, 287-8, 576-8, 624-8). He proffers a ‘soteria for soteria’, 38 which clearly shows a link between reciprocity and the process of supplication. 39 Suppliants can use any argument in the attempt to ensure the acceptance of their supplication.

The consideration of the factors before making a decision is a key element of the tragic portrayal of supplication and is clearly displayed in Euripides’ *Suppliant Women*. Theseus asks Adrastos the nature of his request before questioning him closely about his actions leading to the campaign against Thebes. The king decides that he will not assist in the recovery of the corpses as Adrastos’ campaign did not have the support of the gods (E. *Suppliant Women* 195-249). The Argive mothers’ subsequent appeal to shared ancestral blood is not able to persuade Theseus either (263-4). It is only once his mother Aithra speaks on the suppliants’ behalf that Theseus agrees to seek the Athenians’ approval for the undertaking. Aithra reminds Theseus that the gods themselves require the dead to be honoured with the appropriate funerary rites currently denied to the seven warriors and adds that Theseus’ failure to accede to the supplication will brand him a coward, when he might have won Athens a στέφανος εὐκλείας (315). Her arguments, together with the appeals of Adrastos and the mothers of the dead, finally succeed in convincing Theseus to accept the supplication. He has been won over by the arguments of avoiding divine displeasure and winning possible κλέος for Athens and himself.

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examines the linguistic and thematic similarities between Klytaimestra’s baring of her breast in *Libation-Bearers* with Hekabe’s act in *Iliad* 22.82-5 (O'Neill (1998)).


39 This is discussed further below at pp. 150-1.
Supplication may be rejected on various grounds, including political, moral or personal. Menelaos in *Orestes* refuses his nephew’s appeal to protect him from the Argives despite his acknowledgement of a bond of *philia* with Orestes (*Orestes* 484-6). In the face of Tyndareos’ threats of divine displeasure at helping a matricide, Menelaos backs down from helping Orestes directly and instead weakly offers to attempt to persuade Tyndareos and the city to spare him (704-5). Menelaos’ ostensible reason for not acceding to Orestes’ request is based on his lack of military strength. He states that he has but one spear and no allies (688-90) and cannot therefore physically defend Orestes. Menelaos chooses to ignore the bonds of *philia* in order not to place himself in danger by accepting Orestes’ supplication.

Despite the lack of an intrinsic requirement to accede to a supplicant request, the refusal of a supplication in tragedy can cast a negative light on the character of the person supplicated, which can affect how the audience perceives them. Menelaos’ refusal to help his nephew in *Orestes* is a good example of this. Aristotle deems Menelaos in this play to be an example of unnecessary badness of character (*Poetics* 1454a28-9). This opinion must be understood in light of Aristotle’s comments whereby character is assessed based on the choice (προαιρεσις, 1454a18-19) that a *dramatis persona* makes. Aristotle appears to be criticising Menelaos’ choice not to help Orestes. Whether one concludes that Menelaos is ‘motivated more by indecision or cowardice than by malice’, his refusal to help his nephew negatively affects how the audience perceives him. In a different Euripidean play, Menelaos’ character also suffers from his rejection of supplication, among other things, when he spurns the appeal of Andromache’s young son (*Andromache* 537-44) and continues with his intention to kill him. The young boy’s invocation of Menelaos as ὁ φίλος (531-2) is rebuffed by Menelaos who explicitly disparages the boy’s claim of *philia* (540).

Since the act of supplication does not automatically dictate the success of an appeal, why should the refusal of a supplicatory request negatively affect the character of one of the *dramatis personae*? Apart from the fact that the person supplicated may simply be acting unreasonably in the situation, the refusal of a supplication impacts upon the operation of reciprocity, a fundamental concept in ancient Greek society. Seaford defines reciprocity as ‘the principle and practice of voluntary requital, of benefit for

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40 Wright (2008b) at 58.

41 Blaiklock notes that in the five plays in which he appears, Menelaos ‘can be best understood in his baseness, his vanity and his selfishness’ (Blaiklock (1952) at 75).
benefit (positive reciprocity) or harm for harm (negative reciprocity)."\(^{42}\) Since the acceptance of a suppliant’s request usually brings with it a positive gain (charis) for the person or city supplicated – even if simply through the reputation of respecting suppliants – supplication can be seen as an element of the phenomenon of reciprocity, similarly to xenia.\(^{43}\) As discussed above, the acceptance of a suppliant request was not predetermined and the enunciation of both the reasons why the appeal should be accepted and the reasons why a supplication is accepted further support the view of supplication as a reciprocal act. The suppliant spells out the reasons why their plea should be accepted by the person supplicated. Tragedy portrays both successful and failed pleas of supplication and the consequences of each, which emphasises the practice of reciprocity. The portrayal of a failed supplication and its consequences – for example Hekabe’s failure to convince Odysseus to save Polyxene’s life (Hekabe 275-95) – reinforces the reliance of Greek society on the practice of reciprocity in the face of the capriciousness of life.

1.1.2. LANGUAGE

As well as the words communicating the desire to supplicate, supplications are often undertaken with highly emotive language designed to persuade the person supplicated to accept their plea. In terms of the words used to express a supplication, cognates of ἵκετης are the most common, together with descriptions of the gestures associated with supplication. The suppliants’ speeches are usually filled with rhetorical devices such as repetition, elaborate vocative address and alpha-privative adjectives, and words expressing the wretchedness of the suppliants’ situation and the justness of their plea.

Both suppliant and supplicated often use vocabulary connected with aidōs and oiktos or eleos. While the latter terms are generally associated with ‘pity’, the exact meaning of aidōs is harder to delineate. Cairns identifies that the verb form aidousthai can be used

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\(^{42}\) Seaford (1998) at 1.

in two ways: ‘to convey inhibition before a generalized group of other people in whose
eyes one feels one’s self-image to be vulnerable, or to express positive recognition of
the status of a significant other person’ and therefore can be seen to be ‘an inhibitory
emotion based on sensitivity to and protectiveness of one’s self-image’.\textsuperscript{44} It is therefore
often translated in English as ‘honour’, ‘respect’ or ‘shame’, depending on the context.
The concepts of \textit{aidōs} and \textit{oiktos} or \textit{eleos} are closely related to the heroic code of
behaviour and are used in Iliadic scenes of supplication.\textsuperscript{45} Lykaon in his unsuccessful
attempt to supplicate Achilleus cries, σῶ δὲ μ’ αἰδέοι καὶ μ’ ἐλέηουν (\textit{Iliad} 21.74-5),
while Priam uses the same verbs in his supplication of Achilleus (\textit{Iliad} 24.503-4).
Characters in tragedy usually appeal to either \textit{aidōs} or to pity, but occasionally they
appeal to both in the same supplication. The choice of the particular emotional ground
can affect the portrayal of the action. An excellent example of this can be seen in the
Aeschylean and Sophoclean depictions of Klytaimnestra’s appeal to Orestes for her life.
In \textit{Libation-Bearers} the queen cries out:

\begin{quote}
ἐπίσχες, ὦ παῖ, τόνδε δ’ αἰδέσσαι, τέκνον,
μαστόν, πρὸς ὦ σὺ πολλὰ δὴ βρίζων ἁμα
οὐλοίσιν ἐξήμελξας εὔτραφές γάλα.
\end{quote}

\textit{(Libation-Bearers} 896-8) Klytai\-mnestra here bases her appeal on \textit{aidōs}. In the Sophoclean version, however, she
exclaims ὦ τέκνον, τέκνον, ὥ ὦτιρε τὴν τεκούσαν (S. \textit{Elektra} 1410-11). As Goldhill
notes, ‘each appeal is fully implicated in the play’s thematic interests.’\textsuperscript{46} While the
\textit{Oresteia} concentrates on the maintenance and rupture of the bonds of social obligation,
Sophocles’ scene focuses on the pitilessness of Klytaimnestra’s behaviour. Elektra rejects
her appeal on the basis of her mother’s lack of \textit{oiktos} towards both Orestes and
Agamemnon (S. \textit{Elektra} 1411-12).

While in extant tragedies, the adjective \textit{aidoios} appears only in the works of Aeschylus,
the noun \textit{aidōs} and the verb \textit{aidousthai} appear quite frequently in the plays of all three
of the great tragedians.\textsuperscript{47} The concept of \textit{aidōs} is applied to many elements of the

\textsuperscript{44} Cairns (1993) at 2.
\textsuperscript{45} For the range of uses of \textit{aidōs} in epic, see the entries on \textit{αἰδός}, \textit{αἰδοῦμαι} and \textit{αἰδοῦν} in \textit{LfgrE}. Cairns
discusses suppliants’ appeals to \textit{aidōs} in Homer (Cairns (1993) at 114-18).
\textsuperscript{46} Goldhill (2003) at 174-6.
\textsuperscript{47} αἰδός: nine in Aeschylus; αἰδός: six in Aeschylus, five in Sophocles and twenty-eight in
Euripides; αἰδοῦσθαι: seventeen in Aeschylus, five in Sophocles and thirty-one in Euripides
(fragments excluded).
supplication process. For example, in Aeschylus’ *Suppliant Women*, *aidōs*, *aidōs* and *aidousthai* are used in relation to the suppliants’ words and tears, the wind that brought the Danaides to Argos, the Argive king Pelasgos and the gods.\(^{48}\) The concept of *aidōs* infuses the entire *pragma* of supplication in this play.

In terms of words evoking the concept of pity in tragedy, cognates of *oiktos* are more common than those of *eleos*, in contrast to epic supplication scenes in which the latter is more common. Of the fifteen instances of *eleos*-related words in extant tragedy, only three relate to scenes of supplication.\(^{49}\) In contrast, there are over 230 instances of words related to *oiktos* in the extant tragedies, many of them occurring within scenes of supplication.\(^{50}\) Occasionally, both types of ‘pity’ words are used in the same situation. For example, after Philoktetes imagines his impending death on the island without a weapon with which to kill animals for his food, Neoptolemos responds: ‘Εμοι μὲν οἰκτός δεινὸς ἐμπέπτωκε τις / τοῦτ' ἀνδόρος οὗ νῦν πρῶτον, ἀλλὰ καὶ πάλαι (*Philoktetes* 965-6). Philoktetes seizes on the admission of *oiktos* towards him and calls on Neoptolemos to pity him (*ἐλέησον*, 967). His request is successful and Neoptolemos is persuaded to return the bow, even though Odysseus prevents him from carrying out his intention.

In an attempt to influence the supplicated person’s decision whether to accept and grant their plea, suppliants may overtly flatter the object of their plea through an exclamatory expression comprising ὦ and an elaborate vocative address.\(^{51}\) These addresses can occur at any stage of the supplication process. They can be the first words uttered by a supplicant as are those of Adrastos to Theseus (ὦ καλλίνικε γῆς Ἀθηναίων ἄναξ, / Θησεοί, *Suppliant Women* 113-14) and Hermione to Orestes (ὦ ναυτίλοισι χείµατος λιµὸν φανείς / Ἀγαμέμνονος παί, *Andromache* 891-2). Alternately, they can occur towards the end of a speech before the supplicant reiterates their plea, as Hekabe does to Agamemnon (ὦ δέσποτ', ὦ μέγιστον Ἑλλησίων φάως, *Hekabe* 841). These obsequious phrases are designed to make the supplicated more amenable to the suppliant’s plea.

\(^{48}\) A. *Suppliant Women* 28, 192, 194, 345, 362, 455, 478, 491 and 641. At 579 the chorus refer to the *aidōs* of Io’s tears.

\(^{49}\) *Philoktetes* 501 and 967; *Orestes* 568.

\(^{50}\) These figures relate to instances of οἰκτρός, οἰκτός, οἰκτίζειν and οἰκτείρειν.

\(^{51}\) See further Perdicoyianni-Paléologue (2002) at 80-1.
Suppliants may invoke the supplicated person’s *philoi* in an attempt to further persuade the supplicated to accede to their plea. Thus, Philoktetes invokes Neoptolemos’ father and mother, as well as everything dear to him in the home (*Philoktetes* 468-9).\(^{52}\) Medeia attempts to persuade Kreon to accept her supplication by invoking his newly married daughter (*Medeia* 324), which strikes a slightly discordant note in her supplication since Kreon’s daughter has replaced her as Iason’s wife.\(^{53}\) Similarly, suppliants will often highlight the shared experience of parenthood as a means of compelling the supplicated to accept their plea.\(^{54}\) An invocation of one of the parts of the body that are touched in the supplication process may also be made. After the failure of the nurse’s attempt to supplicate Hippolytos by his right hand (*Hippolytos* 605), she invokes his knees (*ὁ πρός σε γονάτων, 607*). The most common phrase of this type is a version of *πρός σε γονάτων*, which indicates the importance of this gesture in the supplication process, as well as its recognisability as a signifier of supplication.\(^{55}\) A simple invocation of someone’s knees clearly indicates the intent to supplicate. This particular phrase is used three times in old comedy and its recognisability specifically as a *tragic* signifier of supplication can be seen when Dikaiopolis supplicates Euripides in the *Acharnians* with this phrase.\(^{56}\)

Additionally, suppliants often call on the gods to witness or to accept their supplication. This can be done directly through a vocative address or by the expression *προς θεον*.\(^{57}\) In the *parodos* of Aeschylus’ *Suppliant Women*, the Danaides call on the city, land, clear water, the highest and the chthonic gods, and Zeus *Soter* to receive their supplication before their later appeal direct to Pelasgos (*A. Suppliant Women* 23-9). The phrase *προς θεον* can accompany imperatives tinged with a hint of desperation and questions where it reflects the questioner’s strong desire for an answer. It is a condensed way of communicating the extreme nature of one’s feelings and is used four times in *Philoktetes* by the wounded Greek in strongly supplicatory contexts (770, 933, 967 and

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\(^{52}\) Parents are also invoked at *Iphigeneia at Aulis* 909 and *Iphigeneia among the Taurians* 1071.

\(^{53}\) Children are also invoked at *Oedipus at Kolonos* 251 and *Iphigeneia among the Taurians* 1071.

\(^{54}\) For example, *E. Suppliant Women* 54-6 and *Medeia* 344-5.


\(^{56}\) Old Comedy: *Acharnians* 414, *Knights* 1298 and *Peace* 1113.

1185). When Neoptolemos refuses to return his bow, in the space of five lines (929-33), Philoktetes identifies himself as both a προστρόπαιος and a ἱκέτης and twice supplicates Neoptolemos directly: ἱκνομαί and ἱκετεύω. Πρὸς θεῶν πατρόφων in line 933 further emphasises the intensity of his desperation. Invocation of the gods may also involve a reference to Zeus Hikesios, divine protector of suppliants, and in particular his wrath at the mistreatment of suppliants. In Aeschylus’ Suppliant Women, the chorus warns the Argive king of the wrath of Zeus Hiktaios if they are not respected (A. Suppliant Women 381-6). Later in the play it is made clear that Pelasgos acknowledges the concept of divine protection of suppliants when Danaos specifically mentions Pelasgos’ advice to his people that the city ought not to incur the wrath of Zeus Hikesios (616).

1.1.3. PARTICIPANTS

The enactment of a supplication requires the simultaneous on-stage presence of a suppliant and a person to be supplicated. There must be someone to receive, and respond to, the supplication. Suppliants in tragedy are always mortal, but the supplicated party can be mortal or immortal, a character or the chorus. A philia relationship often exists between the participants. While there is usually one suppliant individual or group and one supplicated person, playwrights sometimes altered this ratio.

Those enacting a supplication in tragedy are always mortal, but their supplication can be to another mortal character, to the chorus or to one of the gods. This contrasts with supplication in epic poetry which can also be enacted by immortals, but only to other immortals, as, for example, when Thetis supplicates Zeus and Aphrodite supplicates Ares (Iliad 1.500-10, 5.357-62). Tragedy, however, contains few scenes with more than one immortal which would allow such a supplicatory pragma and instead focuses on the lives of mortals. Thus, if suppliants take refuge at an altar of a god, while they assume the status of suppliants as soon as they enter the sacred area, they are generally unable

58 Philoktetes 484; Hekabe 345 (although Polyxene names Zeus Hikesios as someone on whom she will not call); E. Stheneboia fr. 661.15 TrGF. Other epithets used of Zeus in the context of supplication include Zeus Aphiktōr (A. Suppliant Women 1), Zeus Hiktēr (A. Suppliant Women 479-80) and Zeus Ephestios (Aias 492).

59 Exceptions include Prometheus Bound, Eumenides (Apollo and Athene) and Trojan Women (Athene and Poseidon).
to put forward their request until those in control of the land where the altar is situated are present. It is the humans in control of the sacred area who respond to the supplication. Aeschylus’ *Eumenides* provides a striking exception to this with its direct portrayal of divine intervention in the lives of men. Being pursued by the Furies of his mother’s murder, Orestes supplicates Apollo at his temple in Delphi for protection. Apollo responds in person to Orestes’ supplication, but is unable to stop the Furies’ persecution of Orestes and therefore sends him to Athens to sit and hold in his arms Athene’s ancient image (*Eumenides* 64-88). This appears to be an exhortation to undertake a supplication of Athene and yet, when she appears and assumes that he is a *prosiktōr* (441), Orestes explicitly states that he is *not* a suppliant (οὐκ εἰμὶ προστρόπαιος, 445). While *prostropaios* could be used as an equivalent term to *hiketēs*, it was often associated with someone in need of purification for having committed a murder.\(^\text{60}\) It therefore seems that Orestes is specifically informing Athene here (and at 237) that he has been purified of the pollution he incurred for killing his mother. When he arrives in Athens, Orestes explicitly beseeches her to come to him (ἐλθοί, 297) as an ἀφογός (289) and as a λυτήριος from his troubles (298) and she duly returns to Athens. Apollo and Athene’s personal response to a mortal’s appeal is unusual in tragedy, but it reflects the *Oresteia*’s emphasis on the gods and the supremacy of Zeus’ will.\(^\text{61}\)

While characters usually supplicate other characters (or the gods), on occasion the chorus can be the one supplicated. In *Oedipus at Kolonos* both Antigone and Oedipus supplicate the chorus of Kolonian elders not to send them away and thus protect them (*Oedipus at Kolonos* 241-86). Philoktetes begs the chorus of Greek sailors not to leave him (*Philoktetes* 1181-5), while Iphigeneia begs the chorus of captive Greek women not to reveal Orestes’ identity and the siblings’ escape-plan (*Iphigeneia among the Taurians* 1068-71). In none of these situations is the chorus required to do anything positive, but rather it is asked to refrain from doing something. This is in keeping with the view of the chorus as not actively contributing to the *systasis* of a tragedy.\(^\text{62}\) While the chorus may not directly contribute to the *systasis*, it does contribute to the *muthos* of a tragedy, which is what Aristotle is referring to when he states that the chorus should be understood (ἵπολαμβάνειν) as one of the actors and as a part of the whole (*Poetics* 1456a25-7). The chorus may not actively initiate subsequent actions in the *systasis*, but

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\(^{61}\) The very first word of the *Agamemnon* is θεοῦς.

its words, movements and interactions affect the muthos and how the audience responds
to a tragedy.

The existence of a blood relationship between suppliant and person supplicated, as well
as between suppliant and persecutor, has been identified in most of the principal
‘supplication dramas’. The suppliants in the two Suppliant Women tragedies and
Children of Herakles explicitly draw attention to their shared blood with the person they
are supplicating. The identification of a shared ancestor is a key part of their appeal.
Similarly, there is a familial relationship between the suppliants and their persecutors in
Aeschylus’ Suppliant Women, Sophocles’ Oedipus at Kolonos and Euripides’ Children
of Herakles. This relationship tends to be a closer one than that between suppliant and
person supplicated. Rather than having a shared ancestor, the parties are cousins or the
children of siblings or cousins. This family bond between the various parties in a
supplication also occurs in tragedies not considered ‘supplication dramas’, particularly
between the suppliant and the one supplicated. This contrasts strongly with the situation
in Homeric epic, where the majority of supplications occur on the battlefield between
enemy strangers. The existence of a bond of philia between the parties in a tragic
supplication is not unexpected since tragedy frequently focuses on familial conflict.

In some tragedies, the playwrights alter the balance in a particular supplication process
by increasing the number of participants. This ‘dédoublement’ of the participants allows
a doubling of the various steps of the supplication process which increases the pathos on
stage. In Euripides’ Suppliant Women, this doubling of the supplication process
involves two people being supplicated separately (Aithra and Theseus) and two
suppliant parties (the Argive mothers and Adrastos). In addition, the first supplication,
that of Aithra, is performed several times before the audience and in several forms.
Burian proposes that the supplication of Aithra was enacted before the prologue through
the silent entry of two separate groups: first, Aithra and her attendants arrive to make

64 A. Suppliant Women 274-5, Children of Herakles 207-13, E. Suppliant Women 263-4.
65 A. Suppliant Women 319-23, Oedipus at Kolonos 738, Children of Herakles 987-8.
66 As Belfiore notes, ‘An act in which harm occurs or is about to occur among philoi who are
blood kin is central to the plots of more than half of the thirty-two extant tragedies’ (Belfiore
(1998) at 139). Aristotle discusses the importance of plots that involve pathoi among philoi as a
means to evoke pity in the audience of tragedy (Poetics 1453b19-22).
67 Aélion’s term (see further Aélion (1983a) at 34-6).
their sacrifices at the altar of Kore and Demeter, before Adrastos and the Argive mothers enter and surround her in their supplication.\textsuperscript{68} The supplication is therefore enacted before the first words of the tragedy are spoken. This is an attractive proposition and would have been an effective piece of silent stagecraft, but its occurrence cannot be proved. Nevertheless, in her prologue speech, Aithra describes how she was supplicated by Adrastos and the Argive mothers (E. \textit{Suppliant Women} 8-41). As Collard notes, the choice of Aithra as prologue-speaker ensures that “the first description of the [chorus’] distress is plausibly coloured by her natural sympathy.”\textsuperscript{69} This non-enacted supplicatory \textit{pragma} is then followed by an enacted \textit{pragma} as the chorus sings in supplication to Aithra (42-86). This is despite the fact that in response to their earlier supplication she sent a herald to Theseus to make a decision about the suppliants’ plea. The chorus’ despair is made clear in its song through the repeated use of words of lamentation, supplication and sorrow. The audience has therefore potentially observed three different versions of the same supplication: in a silent portrayal, in a description and directly in a song. Theseus’ arrival prompts a further supplicatory appeal from Adrastos (113-92) before the Argive mothers join in his plea (193-4). Theseus rejects Adrastos’ request for assistance and Adrastos, accepting his decision, calls on the chorus to leave the altar. The chorus, however, does not accept this refusal and instead calls on Theseus to honour their shared ancestry and assist them. His lack of a response then induces them to abandon their position at the altar and to supplicate him directly in lyric (271-85). Adrastos’ spoken appeal to Theseus has failed, the chorus’ spoken appeal has failed and so a third appeal is made in song. Theseus remains unpersuaded by their supplicatory attempts, which leads Aithra to speak in support of the suppliants and, finally, Theseus is persuaded to accede to their request. Through repeated depictions of the same supplication request, the suppliants’ desperation is clearly conveyed to the audience, whose sympathies are thereby influenced in the suppliants’ favour. Euripides uses the technique of \textit{dédoublement} slightly differently in \textit{Andromache}, where there are two separate persecutors (Hermione and Menelaos) in successive scenes, as well as two suppliants (Andromache and her son). Menelaos’ appearance follows Hermione’s threats towards Andromache at the moment when the audience might have expected the arrival of a saviour. His unanticipated arrival intensifies the threat facing Andromache and thereby manipulates the audience’s pity for the Trojan slave.

\textsuperscript{68} See further Burian (1977) at 90.
\textsuperscript{69} Collard (ed.), (1975) at 104.
Within the confines of the underlying mythological story, the tragic playwrights were unrestricted as to the identity of the suppliant and the person supplicated in a particular *pragma*. The decision whether to stage a supplication *pragma* between two mortal characters, between the chorus and a mortal character, between *philo* or with a god was ultimately constrained only by the playwright’s design for the *muthos*.

1.1.4. **REASONS FOR SUPPLICATION**

The tragic playwrights created very different scenarios in which supplication could be enacted on stage. The most common is when characters are being pursued by an enemy and supplicate for protection from a third party, having first taken refuge at an altar or sanctuary.  

70 This is the situation, for example, in Aeschylus’ *Suppliant Women* and Euripides’ *Children of Herakles*. In addition to this, suppliants can ask for a benefit or a service, as when Hekabe supplicates Agamemnon for vengeance on Polymestor for her son’s murder (*Hekabe* 752-845).  

71 The last main category of enacted supplication in tragedy concerns the request to be spared, an appeal which is usually made directly before a person, and the person supplicated is usually the person who is threatening the suppliant. Thus, Klytaimestra in Sophocles’ *Elektra* calls upon her son Orestes not to kill her (*S. Elektra* 1410-11). What these different requests typically have in common is the suppliant’s desperation and inability to resolve the problem on their own. They require the assistance of someone with more power or authority.

In *Oedipus at Kolonos* Sophocles presents several supplicatory *pragmata*, which display the breadth of reasons on which supplication in tragedy may be based. Although the main supplication in terms of the duration of its on-stage representation is for protection by a third party against the persecution of foreigners, supplication is also enacted on

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70 Kopperschmidt identifies that this model of supplication involves three parties (*hiketēs*, *echthros* and *sōtēr*) and three *Verhältnisformen*: the flight, the plea and the *agōn* (see further Kopperschmidt (1967) at 46-9, Kopperschmidt (1971)).

71 As opposed to the most common type of supplication, this variant generally involves only two characters. Two of the three roles identified by Kopperschmidt in the supplication process (*echthros* and *sōtēr*) are undertaken by one person (Kopperschmidt (1967) at 50-3).

Supplications in Aristophanes’ comedies do not involve the three-party model of supplication, but instead are enacted for a benefit (often sex or food) or a service, for example, *Peace* 1113, *Knights* 1100-1 and *Assemblywomen* 969-71.
other grounds by various figures. The play does not begin as a supplication drama, but rather initially presents the wanderings of Oedipus and his daughter Antigone. The two are not threatened by any persecution, but are instead fated to wander in exile as they search for food and shelter. It is only once the Kolonian stranger advises them that they sit in a sanctuary sacred to the Eumenides that Oedipus suddenly declares: Ἀλλ' ἢκεὶς μὲν τὸν ἱκέτην δεξιάτο, / ὡς οὐχ ἔδρας γῆς τήσδ' ἂν ἐξέλθουμ' ἐτι (Oedipus at Kolonos 44-5). He claims suppliant status from the female divinities upon learning he has reached their sanctuary and thereby realising that an oracle received long ago from Apollo is about to be fulfilled. Oedipus supplicates the Eumenides that they might grant him a completion and end to his life (101-5). This supplication pragma to the chthonic divinities for the ending of his life involves an implicit supplementary supplication to the people and rulers of the land to allow him to remain in safety until he dies. Oedipus’ life, however, is not directly threatened by any person.

The second supplication pragma is enacted by Antigone who appeals to the chorus of Kolonians not to expel her and her father (237-54) after the suppliants have been persuaded to leave the Eumenides’ sanctuary. From her initial address to them as οὗ ξένοι αδόφρονες (237), her appeal is filled with words highlighting her and her father’s desperate situation. Oedipus later enacts his own supplication to the chorus to do him no wrong (290-1), since they had earlier accepted him as a suppliant (284). To his plea, he appends the inducement that his presence will bring a benefit to them (288). The appeals of father and daughter involve requesting the chorus not to undertake aggressive action against them and the chorus announces that it will not drive the suppliants away, but will leave the decision of their fate to Theseus (292-5).

Ismene’s appearance foretells Kreon’s imminent approach and a more traditional supplication scenario begins whereby there is an actual persecutor who threatens the suppliants. The suppliants have, however, already been accepted as suppliants, but for a different, albeit complementary, reason. Oedipus again highlights that in return for protecting him their city will gain a great benefit (457-60). The chorus desires to hear the events that occurred in Thebes and when Oedipus demurs, he is supplicated by those of whom he was so recently a suppliant (519). Just as the chorus granted his appeal not

72 For an analysis of sacred spaces and supplication in Oedipus at Kolonos, see Jouanna (1995).
73 Ἰκετεύειν (241), μέλεος (241), οἰκτείρειν (242), τλῆμων (243, 248), ἀντεσθαι (243, 244, 250) and αἰδώς (247).
to be driven off, so Oedipus yields to their desire and tells them his story, albeit reluctantly.

When Theseus appears, Oedipus does not supplicate him, but instead offers a benefit in return for his burial in Kolonos. No formal appeal is made to the king for protection from imminent danger; there is merely the offer of a reciprocal exchange – benefit for benefit. Theseus nevertheless explicitly accepts Oedipus’ status as a suppliant and offers him protection from his persecutors. On the grounds that Oedipus is a suppliant to the Eumenides and a δορύξενος, and since he offers a benefit (632-5), Theseus offers him a place to live in Athens and leaves the chorus as Oedipus’ protectors. This protection soon proves ineffective when the persecutor arrives, but Theseus’ timely return ensures the rescue of the suppliants. His defeat of Kreon and saving of the suppliants concludes the conventional dramatic supplication scenario: the suppliants are rescued by the protector, who has defeated the persecutor.

Sophocles has not, however, finished his comprehensive display of supplication in this play and a subsequent pragma occurs without any prior warning to the audience. Theseus describes a supplicatory pragma that is occurring off-stage at Poseidon’s altar. Polyneikes has travelled to the deme of Kolonos and adopted the suppliant position to gain an audience with Oedipus (1161-2). The success of this supplication is directly demonstrated to the audience by Polyneikes’ subsequent appearance. His enacted supplication before Oedipus, however, entails a different plea: for his father’s help in fighting against Eteokles (1309-45). While Oedipus succumbed to Theseus and Antigone’s arguments and accepted Polyneikes’ request for an audience, he refuses this supplication and responds instead by cursing his sons.

The final two supplication pragmata in the play are enacted by Antigone and both are refused. She supplicates Polyneikes not to go back to Argos (1414) and later begs Theseus to allow her to visit her father’s place of burial (1754-7). The wretchedness of her situation and the lack of any control over her own life are made clear through her

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74 Theseus further acknowledges Oedipus’ suppliant status when he rebukes Kreon’s attempt to seize the gods’ suppliants (Oedipus at Kolonos 922-3).

75 Easterling argues that Theseus’ emphasis of Polyneikes’ suppliant status, combined with Antigone and Theseus’ arguments in support of his claim to see Oedipus, is used by Sophocles to generate sympathy in the audience for Polyneikes, who will, once on stage, appear as a less than sympathetic character in his speech towards his father (Easterling (1967) at 5-10).
inability to have her wishes fulfilled. Sophocles clearly uses the *pragma* of supplication to structure the *muthos* in *Oedipus at Kolonos* and, in so doing, demonstrates the diversity of reasons for which a supplication can be made. While the supplication for protection lasts for the longest amount of time, enacted supplications are also made in an attempt to stop threatened action, for assistance in a fight against an enemy, to hear someone’s story and to see a relative’s grave. A non-enacted supplication is made for an audience. The language of supplication permeates and shapes the action of *Oedipus at Kolonos*.

There is a differentiation to be made between the ostensible reason for a supplication and a character’s true motivation in enacting a supplication. There are several examples of supplication in extant tragedy that are enacted with the direct intention of causing harm to others without the supplicated person’s understanding of this. The supplication process is manipulated for the suppliant’s own ends, often without the audience’s or the chorus’ knowledge. This occurs in *Medeia* and *Hekabe*, where the two barbarian females supplicate a ruler to carry out an attack on one they perceive as their enemy.\(^\text{76}\) As Mastronarde notes, ‘the revenge, as often, depends on deception of the enemy.’\(^\text{77}\) Medeia supplicates Kreon twice in one scene, changing her request when the first is refused. At 313-14 she asks Kreon to allow her to live in Corinth and, when he refuses, she turns to supplication in an attempt to strengthen her request: μή, πρός σε γονάτων τῆς τε νεογάμου κόρης (*Medeia* 324). It is likely that she makes this appeal verbally without any supplementary physical gestures so that there is a strong contrast with her second supplication.\(^\text{78}\) Kreon remains unmoved by her words and, as he threatens to have her driven out immediately, she directs a second appeal to him (ἵντοµαι, 336). This time she intensifies her plea by grasping his hand and probably kneeling before him (336-9). In this second supplication, she reminds Kreon of his status as a father and asks him to pity (οἴκτιρε, 344) her children, since she merely wishes to remain in Corinth for one day to plan for her children’s future. Her emotional blackmail works and Kreon accedes to her request, despite his own misgivings (348-51).\(^\text{79}\) Medeia’s true reason for supplicating Kreon for the extra day is to carry out her attack on Iason’s new

\(^{76}\) Hekabe’s actions will be discussed further below at pp. 183-90.


\(^{78}\) See also Mastronarde (ed.), (2002) at 225-6.

\(^{79}\) Contra Gould who believes that it is the ‘combination of ritual act and diplomatic legerdemain which forces acceptance from Kreon’ (Gould (1973) at 85-6).
wife, which results in the deaths of Kreon’s daughter and the ruler himself. After
Kreon’s exit, she makes her intentions completely clear to the chorus as she announces
that by the end of the day, she will have killed Kreon, his daughter and Iason (371-5).

Medea exploits the process of supplication to achieve her revenge a second time when
she appeals to Aigeus to offer her protection in Athens (709-18); albeit here she does
not deceive an enemy, but rather someone who can help her. She makes a lavish
supplicatory appeal to Aigeus complete with physical gestures, epizeuxis of ὀξεῖρον
and the offer of a benefit, specifically curing his childlessness. Unsurprisingly, Aigeus
agrees to her request, promising that he will never let her be taken from Athens (κοὶ ἐν
μὴ μεθὲν τινι, 728). As Mastronarde notes, the phrase κοὶ μὴ with the aorist subjunctive
‘expresses a very strong denial’. 80 Aigeus unwittingly offers refuge to a murderess and,
in his definitive promise to protect her against anyone who might come against her, he
places the safety of his city at risk. Medea’s deceitful use of the process of supplication
to achieve her vengeance contributes to the development of her character for the
audience.

In Aeschylus’ Suppliant Women the Danaides can be seen as exploiting the supplication
process when they ask the Argives for protection from the pursuing Egyptians who only
wish to marry the women. No mortal danger faces the Danaides, but they do not wish to
be wedded to Aigyptos’ sons. Their ‘absolute rejection of marriage and all that goes
with it – family, fertility, the underpinnings of the oikos and ultimately the polis’ is
hardly a noble cause in the eyes of the Athenians in the audience. 81 Their appeal for
protection will likely lead to war between the Argives and the Egyptians, a possible
outcome which Pelasgos quickly grasps at 342. He knows that acceding to their request
will lead to harm for his city. When it looks like Pelasgos will refuse their supplication,
the women threaten to kill themselves in the sacred area (457-65), which would cause
great pollution for Argos and its people. The Danaides’ threats leave Pelasgos with little
choice but to help them, even though the Argives’ assistance will be to the city’s
detriment when war begins with the Egyptians and the city falls later in the trilogy. 82
Pelasgos advises Danaos to supplicate the Argives and leaves the decision to his

81 Turner (2001) at 32.
82 For a possible reconstruction of the Danaides trilogy, see Winnington-Ingram (1961).
people. When *Suppliant Women* begins, the victims are the Danaides, the protectors the Argives and the persecutors the Egyptians. Turner argues that, by the end of the trilogy, the roles of those caught up in the supplicant drama can be seen to have changed: the Argives become the victims through the fall of their city and the death of their king, the Egyptians the protectors when the only son of Aigyptos not to be killed by the Danaides becomes king of Argos, and the Danaides the persecutors who cause Argos to fall and later murder their husbands, the sons of Aigyptos. The supplication process is exploited by the suppliants to secure an unjust protection and it ultimately brings ruin to those who accede to the supplicatory appeal.

While supplication by those who are unjustly threatened and require protection from those more powerful is rewarded with the success of their appeal, a supplication based on an unjust reason always results in violence and destruction in tragedy.

1.1.5. **Role of the Enacted Supplication in Tragedy**

Since the *pragma* of supplication involves a plea for a particular result in its enacted form, it is always a motivator of further action within the *systasis*. Indeed, a quarter of extant tragedies begin with an individual or a group of people taking refuge at an altar for protection. The supplication *pragma* is also enacted in the middle of a drama, but it never concludes a tragedy, never equates to the climax of a drama. It is open-ended as opposed to other *pragmata*, such as return, which can both motivate further action and form the climax of a play. Enacted supplication *pragma* also serve to embellish the *muthos* and to influence the audience’s reaction to characters and events. Multiple enacted supplication *pragma* in the same play can highlight contrasts between different characters and to demonstrate how a character has developed as a result of

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83 Naiden argues that the Danaides’ supplication succeeds not because of their threat to commit suicide, but because of Danaos’ appeal to the assembly (Naiden (2006) at 84-5). Danaos’ appeal, however, is strongly supported by Pelasgos who urges his people to avoid pollution. Even if he does not specifically mention the pollution that would arise from suicide within a sacred space, his emphasis on the threat of pollution is effective.

84 See further Turner (2001).

85 Aeschylus *Suppliant Women* and *Eumenides*, Sophocles *Oedipus at Kolonos*, Euripides *Children of Herakles*, Andromache, Helen, *Suppliant Women* and *Herakles*.
intervening events. A supplication can also provide information on how a character is perceived by other characters.

There are at least six tragedies which open with a tableau in which a supplicant or a group of suppliants are already seated at an altar or other sacred space. From the moment that such a tableau is established – even before any words are spoken – the audience would have been in no doubt as to the nature of the opening action of the tragedy. In other tragedies, the suppliants are the first characters to enter the performance area and later adopt the supplicant position and status, as in Aeschylus’ Suppliant Women and Oedipus at Kolonos.

In most pragramata the audience observes the suppliants arrive before the person they are to supplicate does so, which invests the audience more closely in the suppliants’ fate. The audience witnesses the suppliants’ arrival and hears their claims for pity and assistance before it is even known whom they will supplicate. Sophocles therefore creates an unusual scenario when, in Oedipus at Kolonos, the audience hears of Polynoeikes’ desire to supplicate his father after Oedipus has been on stage for the entire action of the tragedy. The audience witnesses Polynoeikes’ approach to Oedipus. He comes into the presence of the one he will supplicate, but the audience is already invested in Oedipus’ fate having witnessed his previous supplications and learned of his circumstances.

Opening depictions of the supplication pragma are usually quite lengthy and motivate the subsequent events, which often follow a similar pattern: the arrival of the enemy of the suppliants is followed by the arrival of the person who will save them (although this order may be reversed, as it is in Aeschylus’ Suppliant Women). Thus, Herakles opens with the hero’s mortal father Amphitrion, his wife and children sitting at the altar of Zeus, who is recognised as Herakles’ divine father. Lykos has usurped the throne and wishes to kill Herakles’ family to ensure that they do not take vengeance on him for killing their philos Kreon. Herakles is assumed to be dead, having travelled to the Underworld. After the opening tableau of supplication, Lykos enters and threatens to

86 Oedipus the King, Andromache, Children of Herakles, E. Suppliant Women, Herakles and Helen. For a discussion of opening tableaux in Athenian drama, see Burian (1977). Taplin labels the entry of the actors to create an opening tableau as a ‘cancelled entry’ (Taplin (1977b) at 134-6). Rehm argues that there is an opening tableau in Eumenides (Rehm (1988) at 290-9. Contra Taplin (1977b) at 362-74).
burn the suppliants as they sit at the altar. Realising that there is no one to save them and that their supplication at Zeus’ altar has been in vain, the suppliants make two attempts at direct supplication: Amphitryon begs Lykos to kill him and Megara before the children (321-5), while Megara begs Lykos to allow them to dress in funerary clothing before they are killed (327-31). While Lykos does not comment on Amphitryon’s request, he grants Megara’s appeal and the family enters the palace to change into their clothing. Just as it seems that all hope is lost for the family, Herakles arrives, saves his family and kills the evil tyrant. In this particular play, that is not the end of the drama as the rescue of the suppliants leads directly into divine-inspired madness and kin-killing; the suppliant drama is transformed into a different type of story. The opening supplication therefore leads directly into the subsequent events within the systasis.

The pragma of supplication can also be used to structure the systasis to emphasise a particular theme in the muthos. In Medea the regular supplication pragma serve to make clear the steps of her revenge against Jason. Supplication is first used as a means to provide the audience with information about Medea’s circumstances when the nurse begs the paidagogos to tell her about the latest threat to her mistress (Medea 65-6). Medea then uses supplication to Kreon to remain in Corinth for a day, which provides her with the requisite time to carry out her revenge, and to Aigeus for somewhere to live, which ensures her safety after she has committed her revenge (709-18). After informing the chorus of her intentions, the chorus begs her not to kill her children (853-5) before asking her how she will react to her children begging at her feet for their lives (862-5). The chorus’ direct plea, together with the hypothetical image of her children supplicating her, cannot persuade Medea not to kill her children. Medea then advises her children to supplicate Jason’s new wife not to exile them (969-71) and to give her Medea’s gifts – and the means of her revenge is now in place. The realization of her revenge is accomplished by means of, and punctuated by, multiple pragma of supplication. The many supplication pragma in Medea also demonstrate how a supplication pragma can be used to contrast with other such pragma. The various purposes to which supplication is put by the different suppliants in the play, in particular by Medea, demonstrate its flexibility in operation.

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87 See further Bordaux (1996) at 174-6.
Oedipus’ refusal to accept Polyneikes’ supplication is strongly contrasted with the Kolonians’ granting of Oedipus’ at the beginning of *Oedipus at Kolonos* by similarities in the language and circumstances of each supplication. Both suppliants ask their addressees not to dishonour them (*Oedipus at Kolonos* 49, 286 and 1278); ἔδρα is used in the description of their supplicant position (45 and 112 and 1163); Antigone pleads on behalf of each supplicant: to the Kolonians for Oedipus (237-53) and to Oedipus for Polyneikes (1181-1203); and the verb ἄναστάναι is used to describe the action of raising the suppliant (276 and 1286). Oedipus’ change in status from suppliant to supplicated suggests a change in Oedipus’ power. He is no longer reliant on the protection of others, but rather has the capacity to offer a benefit to others, which reflects his role as a future saviour of Athens. Burian argues that he ‘rejects the suppliant with the powers of a prophet to foretell the future, and of a daimon to determine it.’

The supplication which begins *Oedipus the King* has a specific effect on the *muthos* of the tragedy. As the play opens, suppliants sit at the altars before taking an appeal to Oedipus to find out how to eradicate the plague (*Oedipus the King* 14-57). Following his acceptance of this responsibility, the suppliants leave the stage (150) and never reappear. The suppliants’ fate is not the focus of the tragedy; rather, their supplication serves to construct Oedipus’ character for the audience, in particular the way that the Thebans view him. At 14-17 the priest of Zeus announces that the suppliants have come to Oedipus’ altars (βωµον τος σος, *Oedipus the King* 16), which likens Oedipus to a god. The priest later says that they supplicate Oedipus, not because he is ‘equated to gods’, but because he is the ‘first of men’ (31-4). Nevertheless, his words and the opening image of the suppliants standing before Oedipus and directing their supplication towards him (40-3) helps to construct Oedipus as the all-powerful and beloved ruler, a perspective which will stand in stark contrast to his position at the end of the play.

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89 See further Burian (1974) at 425.
90 As noted by the ancient scholia: ὡς γὰρ ἐπὶ θεοῦ βουηθούς πάρεισιν ἐπὶ τούς πρὸ τῶν βασιλείων ἱδρυμένους.
91 As Delcourt notes, by blending a prayer to a god with a supplication of a man, Sophocles is able ‘to show the nearly religious respect of which he is the object’ (Delcourt (1937) at 70).
1.2. THE NON-ENACTED PRAGMA OF SUPPLICATION

Verbal allusions to and visual resonances of supplication can be harder for the modern reader to detect than enactments of supplication and it can never be definitively determined as to whether the playwright intended such an allusion or resonance. This does not, however, negate the pursuit thereof, as the discovery of such an allusion can add to the emotional impact of a particular scene and help elucidate possible audience reactions to a scene. As has been discussed above, there were clear physical gestures associated with supplication, and the use of similar gestures could therefore allude to such an action even in a scene where no such pragma is apparent.

Reference to the act of supplication within a drama can produce various effects within a tragedy. First, the muthos can be embellished by a mention of supplication to strengthen the impact of a different type of action or intensify the emotion therein. In Sophocles’ Elektra, after Orestes and Pylades have entered the palace to kill Klytaimnestra, Elektra calls upon Apollo:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Νῦν δ’, Ὅ Λῦκει ΄Απολλόν, ἐξ οὐν ἔχω αἰτῶ, προπίτνω, λίσσομαι, γενοῦ πρόφρον 1380} \\
\text{ἡμῖν ἁρωγός τῶν τῶν βουλευμάτων, καὶ δεξίων ἄνθρωποις τάπιτιμα} \\
\text{τῆς δυσσεβείας οία δωροῦνται θεοί.} \\
\end{align*}
\]

(S. Elektra 1379-83)

Elektra is clearly praying to the god rather than enacting a supplication, but she attempts to strengthen her prayer by utilising several verbs which signal a different type of request: αἰτῶ, προπίτνω, λίσσομαι (1380). She asks or demands, she kneels as a suppliant, she begs or prays. Each verb implies a slightly different type of action to support her appeal to the god and the tricolon asyndeton vividly conveys her fervour.

Second, a suggestion can be made about a potential pragma of supplication in the future, which can create audience anticipation that can then be frustrated or satisfied by the playwright. For example, in Phoenician Women, while Polyneikes is awaiting the

92 For a list of non-enacted supplication pragmata in extant tragedy, see Appendix 5: Non-enacted supplication pragmata.

93 Finglass notes that Homer uses αἰτῶν and λίσσεσθαι together at Iliad 5.358 to describe Aphrodite’s appeal to Ares to lend her his horses so that she may leave the battlefield (Finglass (ed.), (2007) at 501).

94 Supplicatory verbs are also used in prayer contexts in Libation-Bearers 332-7 and Aias 823-49.
arrival of his mother and brother, he fears treachery, but notes that there is help nearby: the hearth of an altar (βώµιοι γὰρ ἐσχάραι / πέλας πάρεισι, 274-5). While no supplicatory word is used, the identification of a possible place of refuge suggests to the audience the possibility of a supplication if negotiations with Eteokles go awry. Although the negotiations are not successful, Polyneikes is ultimately not forced to seek refuge at the altar and no supplication occurs. In a more straight-forward fashion, after Orestes kills Klytaiæstæra and Aigisthos, he declares his intention to supplicate Apollo (Libation-Bearers 1034-9). While this does not occur within the Libation-Bearers, it is enacted in the opening scene of Eumenides. A variation on the anticipatory effect of a reference to supplication occurs in Oedipus at Kolonos when Theseus describes Polyneikes’ act of supplication occurring off-stage (1156-65). The acceptance of his supplication by Oedipus directly leads to a subsequently enacted pragma.

Conversely, a reference to a refusal to enact a supplication has a different effect, whereby it helps develop for the audience the characters of those who would be participating in such a theoretical supplication, both suppliant and supplicated. This is demonstrated clearly in Prometheus Bound. Prometheus says to Hermes that he will never supplicate Zeus to release him from his sufferings (Prometheus Bound 1002-6). Throughout the play Zeus is portrayed as an evil tyrant to whom Prometheus stands in opposition. Through his refusal to give in to a tyrant, Prometheus’ nobility of character, particularly in his attitude towards mankind, is clearly portrayed. Similarly, Polyxene’s refusal to supplicate Odysseus helps to portray the nobility of her character (Hekabe 342-5).

Thirdly, a description of a previous supplication pragma can convey to the audience important events in the characters’ history, which can help explain their actions in the present. In Agamemnon Aigisthos tells of his father Thyestes’ supplication after he had been exiled by his brother Atreus (Agamemnon 1587-90). After welcoming his brother home, Atreus fed Thyestes his own children (Aigisthos’ brothers), which explains Aigisthos’ hatred towards Agamemnon, the son of Atreus. In the parodos of the same play, the chorus sings of Iphigeneia’s unsuccessful supplication of her father and the Greek commanders not to sacrifice her, which indirectly provides relevant information for Klytaiæstæra’s murderous actions (228-30). Non-enacted supplication pragmata can therefore provide information relevant to the motivation behind characters’ actions and enrich the muthos.
Fourthly, a reference to supplication can be made to remind the audience of an earlier act of supplication and thence to compare and contrast the relative circumstances and results of the particular actions, as well as the situation of the individual participants. A verbal reference can therefore have the same effect as a repeated enactment of supplication. This can be seen in *Andromache*, in conjunction with the previous effect of creating anticipation about possible future supplications. After Peleus arrives to save Andromache and her son, Hermione begins to consider the consequences of her actions and to fear her husband’s anger when he returns. She debates whether she should supplicate a god (*Andromache* 859) and yet she and her father refused to honour Andromache’s supplication at Thetis’ shrine. In fact, earlier she had cruelly taunted Andromache with this: κοὐδὲν σ’ ὄνησει δόμα Νηρήμιδος τὸδε, / ο’ βοιμὸς σοῦ δ ναός, ἄλλα κατθανή (161-2). Her deliberation whether to supplicate a god in light of her rejection of another’s supplication highlights clearly the impiety of her previous actions. Whereas Andromache’s life was threatened unwarrantedly and from external sources, Hermione’s current situation is the result of her own actions. In comparison with the noble Andromache who attempts to save her son, Hermione appears cowardly and petty. Furthermore, the mistress who cruelly rejected the slave’s supplication now wonders whether she should humble herself before that same slave. Hermione in her distraught state now realises that the relative positions of the two women are reversed. Her maltreatment of her husband’s concubine and refusal to accept Andromache’s supplication has brought her into the same hopeless (in her mind) situation where she must consider supplication as a serious option. And, in fact, when Orestes enters shortly afterwards, she immediately supplicates him for his protection (891-5).

Fifthly, verbal references to supplication can strengthen the thematic coherence of the play, helping to create an integrated *muthos*. In *Herakles*, following the opening scene of supplications at the altar and before Lykos, but before Amphitryon’s enacted supplication before Herakles, mention is made of a further supplication. Amphitryon deceives Lykos with a false description of Megara supplicating to Hestia to compel him to enter the palace where Herakles is waiting to kill him (*Herakles* 715). The repetition of the enactments and references to supplication in *Herakles* gives this particular action great prominence within the drama.

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95 On the other supplication *pragmata* in *Herakles*, see above at pp. 165-6.
Similar effects can be achieved by visual allusions (sometimes in conjunction with verbal echoes) to the *pragma* of supplication. Visual allusions to supplication usually involve gestures reminiscent of the traditional supplication actions of kneeling, falling to the ground or touching the supplicated person’s chin. The highly visual nature of the *pragma* of supplication is clear in the many representations of the *pragma* that occur on vases surviving from the fifth century BC, some of which were potentially influenced by tragedies.  

The repetition of a gesture which occurred within an enacted supplication earlier in a play can compel the audience to remember the circumstances of the first gesture and thereby consider any differences therein. For example, in *Andromache* at news of Neoptolemos’ death, Peleus crumples to the ground in grief (πέσηις, *Andromache* 1076). He is reduced involuntarily to the same position as Andromache earlier in the play when she was forced to supplicate the father of her husband’s killer, Peleus himself, for protection. Now it is her saviour who is in need of rescue. Euripides strengthens this visual parallel through the reiteration of the phrase ἔπαιρε σαυτήν. At 717 Peleus had ordered Andromache to rise, but now the chorus asks Peleus to rise (ἔπαιρε σαυτόν, 1077). While earlier the supplicant slave was able to be rescued, now the grief-stricken grandfather appears to have no hope of deliverance from his misery.

A different type of allusion to the *pragma* of supplication has been noted in the messenger’s description of Neoptolemos’ death in Delphi in *Andromache*. Mastronarde argues, rightly in my view, that Neoptolemos’ death in Apollo’s temple is a graphic echo of the violence that is often threatened towards the suppliant who sits at an altar. The allusion to supplication neatly ends a play that began with the supplication at Thetis’ sanctuary of Andromache, who was threatened with violence by Hermione (*Andromache* 257-9) as her son’s life was threatened by Menelaos (314-15).

Thus the *pragma* of supplication appears in both enacted and verbal representations within a tragedy to create various effects within and upon the *systasis*, the *muthos* and the audience. It can affect the ongoing momentum of the *systasis*, influence audience engagement with the performance and enrich the *muthos* by developing the characters of the *dramatis personae* and the thematic coherence. Let us look closely now at how

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96 Taplin identifies several vases featuring kneeling suppliants and people sitting at altars as having been potentially influenced by supplication *pragmata* in tragedy, including 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 17, 37, 38, 96 and 106 (see general discussion at Taplin (2007) at 41).

97 Mastronarde (2010) at 75-6.
supplication *pragma* are used within an entire tragedy, but one that is not traditionally recognised as a ‘supplication drama’. Although *Hekabe* does not begin with a supplication tableau and does not feature a character fleeing from a persecutor to take refuge at an altar to supplicate a saviour for their life, the *pragma* of supplication is an important component of both the *systasis* and the *muthos* of this tragedy. The supplication *pragma* is enacted several times before the audience and these enactments are supported by a variety of non-enacted supplication *pragma*.

2. **HEKABE: SUPPLICATION AS A RESPONSE TO TUCHÊ**

*Hekabe* portrays the events affecting Hekabe, former queen of Troy, in the aftermath of that city’s destruction. The action is set in the Thracian Chersonese in the camp of the Greek army, which has been delayed on its *nostos* by the lack of a favourable wind. The *pragma* of supplication appears throughout the play both in an enacted form and in verbal statements. While all enacted supplications in this play occur directly before a person, references are made to supplication at an altar. Euripides presents parallel scenes of supplication to compel the audience to compare and contrast how the participants in each supplication reacted and behaved. In a single episode, the two main characters are seen in turn as both suppliant and supplicated; the power hierarchy between the two is reversed. In addition, the play contains two visually powerful scenes of enacted supplication by Hekabe herself. These parallel scenes display Hekabe’s hopeless and helpless situation, while highlighting for the audience her character development as a result of the continually accumulating disasters – and, I would argue, by the failure of her first supplication. Each successive act of supplication deftly influences the audience’s sympathies for Hekabe, both positively and negatively.

The play opens with a prologue spoken by the ghost of Polydoros, son of Priam and Hekabe, who tells of his own death and foretells his sister’s sacrifice and the discovery of his own body.98 Hekabe then enters to tell of a dream she has had that has made her

98 Polydoros’ words are reminiscent of the first words uttered by Achilles’ ghost in Sophocles’ *Polyxene* (fr. 523.1-2 *TrGF*: ὁκτάς ἀπαίωνάς τε καὶ μελαμβαθεῖς/λίμνης ἶλθον in comparison to Ἡκὼ νεκρῶν κευθµῶνα καὶ σκότου πῦλας /λιπών, *Hekabe* 1-2). Mossman believes that this fragment probably opened *Polyxene*, in which case the parallel is even more striking (Mossman (1995) at 46). For a possible reconstruction of Sophocles’ *Polyxene*, see Calder (1966).
fear the occurrence of something terrible. As she comes on stage, she is supported physically by her fellow slaves and sings a monody. She asks the chthonic gods to protect her son before elaborating on her uneasiness and calling for the spirit of Helenos or for Kassandra, both seers, to explain her dream to her.\textsuperscript{99} The chorus of captive Trojan women enters to sing to her the news that the Greek army has decided to sacrifice her daughter Polyxene on Achilleus’ tomb.\textsuperscript{100} During the song, it warns of the imminent approach of Odysseus who will take Polyxene away and it advises Hekabe:

\begin{verbatim}
\begin{verbatim}

\textsuperscript{(Hekabe 144-7)}
\end{verbatim}
\end{verbatim}

Diggle brackets line 145 because of its metrical anomaly and agrees with Barrett that it is interpolated.\textsuperscript{101} Other scholars deem it contextually inept since it pre-empts Hekabe’s hesitation later in the play about supplicating Agamemnon.\textsuperscript{102} There are, however, several arguments in favour of retaining the line. First, the line offers Hekabe one alternative in a list of three possible types of action: she can go to the temples or altars, supplicate Agamemnon or call upon the gods.\textsuperscript{103} Deleting the line reduces the options to only two types of possible action and in ancient Greece three was always the magic number. The chorus is offering Hekabe an array of possible actions that might save her from a future bereft of her daughter. Second, Mercier argues that the metrical anomaly

\textsuperscript{99} Bremer points out that the same sequence of events occurs in \textit{Persians} 159-225, \textit{Libation-Bearers} 22-41 and 524-539, S. \textit{Elektra} 417-427 and \textit{Iphigeneia among the Taurians} 42-61: a morning walk outside, mention of a dream, description of the dream and desire for a seer’s interpretation and suggestion of how to avert the dream’s consequences (Bremer (1971) at 235-6).

\textsuperscript{100} There are eight lines (92-7) before the chorus enters in which Hekabe describes her dream in detail and supplicates (ἰκετέω, 97) the \textit{daimones} to send the fate foretold in the dream away from her daughter. These lines are bracketed by Diggle and I am persuaded by Bremer’s arguments concerning the metre, style and content of the passage that the lines are not authentic (Bremer (1971)). See also Mossman (1995) at 54n.23 and 61n.46. Friedrich, Kovacs and Gregory retain at least some of them, but Friedrich deletes 90-1 and Kovacs 90-1 and 97 (Friedrich (1953) at 46, Gregory (ed.), (1999), Kovacs (1987) at 140.

\textsuperscript{101} Barrett (ed.), (1964) at 404, Diggle (1981) at 45.

\textsuperscript{102} Collard (ed.), (1991) at 38.

\textsuperscript{103} Elektra’s use of the verb ἱηρόσεσαν at Agamemnon’s tomb shows that the verb is not restricted in its application to temples and altars (\textit{Libation-Bearers} 124).
cannot be used as a decisive argument against its authenticity, since there are parallel situations in Euripides Elektra 1322-3 and Ion 226.\textsuperscript{104} He further argues that it should be retained precisely because it does anticipate Hekabe’s supplications of both Odysseus and Agamemnon later in the play and, in fact, there are several more supplication \textit{pragma} in the play than these. Finally, the \textit{pragma} of supplication that occur throughout this play have a crucial effect on the \textit{systasis}, the \textit{muthos} and on audience engagement. The chorus’ enunciation of supplication as a possible future action so early in a play, the prologue of which has already foretold multiple disasters for the former Trojan queen, suggests the important role that the \textit{pragma} will play in \textit{Hekabe}. It implies to the attentive audience-member that there will be a supplication by Hekabe and also that she will supplicate the leader of the Greeks. In its context of a song about Polyxene’s fate, line 145 insinuates that Hekabe will supplicate Agamemnon for the life of her daughter. But this is not the way that the tragedy plays out. Hekabe does supplicate a Greek general for her daughter’s life, but it is Odysseus. She does supplicate Agamemnon, but it is after her daughter has been sacrificed. This initial reference to supplication so early in the tragedy, therefore, suggests for the audience future acts of supplication, and is crucial for underlining the importance of this \textit{pragma} to the events of the tragedy. Line 145 should therefore be retained.

This initial mention of supplication therefore proposes for the audience potential scenarios that might occur, but the remainder of the play frustrates the audience’s expectations of these by only partially fulfilling them. The events previously implied come to pass only in much altered form and these changes make the drama more compelling and engaging for the spectators.

Hekabe responds to the chorus’ song with a lament of her current circumstances (154-76). She sees herself as alone, an old woman, a slave, widowed and bereft of her sons. As a woman, she does not have the ability to act on her own behalf, but instead is reliant on men. Yet she is without husband or sons and, in addition, is a Trojan captive in the camp of the Greek army. She has nothing to employ but her words, strengthening the appropriateness of supplication as a possible course of action for her.

Hekabe calls Polyxene out of the tent and mother and daughter sing together of the disaster that has befallen them.\textsuperscript{105} Polyxene reiterates the catastrophes that Hekabe has

\textsuperscript{104} Mercier (1994) at 217.

\textsuperscript{105} On this \textit{amoibaion} as a means by which Euripides locates Hekabe and Polyxene in the ‘lyric space’ of tragic adversity, see further Cyrino (1998) at 88-90.
suffered and highlights the state of loneliness in which her mother will be left once Polyxene has died. After less than forty lines together trying to cope with the news of their imminent separation, the chorus announces the arrival of Odysseus (216-17). Odysseus informs Hekabe of the Greek army’s decision to sacrifice Polyxene and advises her not to struggle physically against him:

\[
\text{μήτʼ ἀποσπασθῆς βίαι}
\]

\[
\text{μήτʼ ἐς χερὶν ἀμάλλαν ἐξέλθης ἐμοί,}
\]

\[
	ext{γίγνοικε δ’ ἀλκήν καὶ παρουσίαν κακὸν}
\]

\[
	ext{τὸν σῶν’ σοφὸν τοι κὰν κακοῖς ἄ δεῖ φρονεῖν.} \quad (\text{Hekabe 225-8})
\]

His strong emphasis on her physicality and lack of bodily strength (bia) highlights, through not being prohibited, the possibility that she can instead use words to protest the decision, just as Odysseus used words to persuade the Greek assembly to cede to Achilles’ demand for Polyxene’s sacrifice. And this is what Hekabe proceeds to do. Her immediate response is: αλαί· παρέστηχ’, ὲς οἰκ’, ἀγὸν μέγας (229).\(^{106}\) She will undertake an *agōn* instead of attempting an ineffective physical defence of her daughter.\(^{107}\) She then prepares her audience, both internal and external, for her side of the oral contest by attempting to establish a particular hierarchy between her and Odysseus based on past events. She is in no doubt as to his feelings towards the sacrifice, both because of his opening speech and because it was his words that swayed the Greeks’ decision. Hekabe must therefore use every weapon in her verbal arsenal, which includes the reminder of past services rendered.

She poses a series of questions to Odysseus concerning the time he supplicated her in her role as the Trojan queen and cleverly manoeuvres him into the subservient role of responder, gaining the upper hand temporarily in their verbal interaction. She reminds

\(^{106}\) While Lloyd does not include the following exchange as a formal *agōn*, he notes that eight of the thirteen undisputed Euripidean *agōnes*, are announced in advance in a similar way to the example here (Lloyd (1992) at 4). This occurs, for example, by the herald in *Children of Herakles* (116) and Tyndareus in *Orestes* (491).

\(^{107}\) While the subsequent exchange between Odysseus and Hekabe contains elements of a formal *agōn* (for example, the paired speeches, stichomythia and concluding doublet to each speech by the chorus), there is some debate about whether it fulfils all the criteria for such a debate (see Barker (2009) at 336-40, Collard (ed.), (1991) at 143, Lloyd (1992) at 8). Duchemin in her analysis of the *agōn* in Athenian tragedy treats the following exchange as a three-way *agōn* between Odysseus, Hekabe and Polyxene (Duchemin (1945) at 74-5). I will label it as an *agōn* since that is what Hekabe herself deems it.
him of his pitiable appearance and the danger he was in, as a Greek spy in Troy. In questioning him about his supplication of her (ἵπψο δὲ γονάτων τῶν ἐμῶν ταπεινὸς ὅν; 245), she compels him to remember and admit the disparity between their situations, both in power and in posture. She attempts to align herself with her previous regal status and thus elevate herself above her current slave status so that she might make her request of Odysseus from a more equal footing. To this image of the humbled Greek general kneeling before the Trojan queen, Odysseus adds the further detail that he held her robe until his hand became numb (ἐνθανείν, 246). Hekabe highlights Odysseus’ complete helplessness and reliance on her protection by mentioning that he had said that he was her slave (δοῦλος, 249). While overtly attempting to create a bond of reciprocity with Odysseus by which he is indebted to her, her words also unambiguously signal to the audience the complete reversal of that situation into the current state of affairs, since, only a few lines earlier, Hekabe had referred to herself as the slave (234-6). Where then Odysseus was the slave reliant on the protection of the queen, now the slave Hekabe is relying on the victorious Greek commander to save her daughter.

This story of Odysseus’ supplication of Hekabe in Troy appears to be an innovation of Euripides. In the *Odyssey* Helen tells Telemachos of how she discovered Odysseus in Troy, but did not reveal his presence to the Trojans (*Odyssey* 4.242-56). Homer makes no mention of Hekabe in Helen’s story and it is unlikely that the Trojan queen would have granted the Greek general’s plea for his life. The creation of this incident, however, gives Hekabe (and the audience) more reason to expect sympathy, and hence a positive response, from Odysseus. His refusal to accede to her request in the face of this prior event helps to construct him as a heartless character.

Hekabe forces Odysseus to confirm that she saved his life when she sent him away from Troy and Odysseus does so, poignantly admitting ὅστ’ εἶσορὰν γε φέγγος ἣλιον τόδε (248). He is only alive today because of her. With these details of their past interaction confirmed, particularly her leniency towards him and consequently his supposed indebtedness to her, Hekabe launches into her main speech in which she attempts to argue on several grounds why Polyxene should be spared. She begins by berating Odysseus for hurting her by taking away her daughter, when Hekabe, who treated him so well in the past and saved his life, counts herself among his *philoi* (251-7). She questions the justification for (and justice of) Polyxene’s sacrifice and suggests that if

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108 Collard notes that Odysseus’ supplication of Hekabe helps to create a ‘moral hold’ over Odysseus (Collard (ed.), (1991) at 144).
someone must die then Helen would be a better sacrifice for Achilleus than her blameless daughter (258-71).

Hekabe further attempts to rely on the argument of charis or ‘favour’ to invoke reciprocity between her and Odysseus.\(^\text{109}\) Charis is a very important theme in this tragedy depicting the events after the fall of Troy, just as it is in the Iliad depicting the events during the city’s siege. There are eighteen uses of χάρις and its cognates in this play, and Hekabe uses three in this one speech.\(^\text{110}\) The first two occur during her rebuke of Odysseus when she calls him a dēmēgoros (254), someone who will happily harm their philoi (among whom she counts herself as a result of her kindness to him in the past) if it allows them to gain the favour of the masses (257).\(^\text{111}\) She calls his attention to the charis he owes her as a result of her saving his life (273-8) and indeed he acknowledges later that he does owe her charis (301-2). She combines her request for her daughter’s life in exchange for the charis which Odysseus owes her with a formal supplication:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ήψω τῆς ἐμῆς, ὡς φήμες, χερός} \\
\text{καὶ τήσδε γραῖς προσπίτνων παρηίδος·} \\
\text{ἀνθάπτομαι σοι τῶν τῶν αὐτῶν ἐγὼ} \\
\text{χάριν τ’ ἀπαιτῶ τήν τόθ’ ἱκετεύω τέ σε,} \\
\text{μή μου τὸ τέκνον ἐκ χερῶν ἀποσπάσης} \\
\text{μηδὲ κτάνητε· τῶν τεθνηκότων ἄλις.} \\
\end{align*}
\]

\text{(Hekabe 273-8)}

She recalls again both to Odysseus’ and to the audience’s minds the image of Odysseus supplicating Hekabe: he touched her hand and aged cheek as he knelt before her. She then physically enacts these gestures and this posture before him. Just as the audience heard how the enemy spy humbled himself before the Trojan queen for his life, now it watches as the slave kneels before the Greek commander – and touches his cheek – for the life of her daughter. The interpretation of the stage action here is controversial. Gould argues that Hekabe’s supplication of Odysseus is only figurative, that is, purely

\(^{109}\) On the varied usage and meaning of charis in archaic and classical Greek literature, see MacLachlan (1993). See discussion above on reciprocity at pp. 150-1.

\(^{110}\) Hekabe 25, 132, 137, 254, 257, 276, 320, 346, 384, 830, 832, 855, 874, 899, 1175, 1201, 1211 and 1243.

\(^{111}\) Hekabe 254 (ἀχάριστον σπέρμ’) and 257 (πρὸς χάριν).
verbal with none of the ritual gestures.\textsuperscript{112} For him, the length of Hekabe’s plea and Odysseus’ response, together with her ‘extravagant’ apostrophe of his beard at 286 and her declaration at 334-5 of the uselessness of her words (ο/uni1F00µο/uni1F76 λόγοι ... φρο/uni1FE6δαι) combine to negate the possibility of a physical aspect to the supplication.\textsuperscript{113} However, as argued previously, I do not agree that the act of supplication was a ritual to which the supplicated had to accede, to avoid offending the gods if the correct physical gestures were enacted. Rather, it was an action in response to which the supplicated might agree to the suppliant’s request, but equally might not. The gestures which accompany a supplication are there as part of an attempt to persuade the supplicated, but do not have any ritual power. Therefore, the fact that this supplication does not succeed does not indicate that gestures were not used. If the use of supplicatory gestures would have ensured success, then surely Hekabe in her desperate fear of losing her daughter would have followed the correct procedures?

There are a number of further reasons for why it seems probable that Hekabe physically supplicates Odysseus. First, it seems unlikely that Hekabe would draw attention to Odysseus’ physical debasement before her and her subsequent acquiescence to his supplication and then not enact the same gestures to achieve the same result. Second, Hekabe’s words themselves strongly emphasise the physicality of her actions. The verb ἀνθάπτεσθαι is a strengthened form of ἀπτεῖν and she uses the demonstrative phrase τῶν τῶν αὐτῶν (275).\textsuperscript{114} Third, this play features several mirror scenes and actions, which consciously invite the audience to recall and reflect on the previous incident.\textsuperscript{115}

\textsuperscript{112} Gould (1973) at 84n.54. Kaimio agrees that the ‘explicit comparison of suppliant gestures seems to demand their outward performance, too’, but she does not think that Hekabe’s gestures include kneeling to touch Odysseus’ knees (Kaimio (1988) at 59).

\textsuperscript{113} Gould (1973) at 84n.54. Followed by Barker (2009) at 337-9, Collard (ed.), (1991) at 146.

\textsuperscript{114} There are only five uses of ἀνθάπτεσθαι in tragedy. Aside from its use in \textit{Hekabe}, it is used once to describe a physical action (\textit{Women of Trachis} 778) and three times metaphorically in relation to affecting someone’s heart (\textit{Medeia} 55 and 1360, \textit{Helen} 960). Legangneux interprets Hekabe’s use of the same prefix ἀντι- in her description of her physical contact (ἀνθάπτομαι, 275) and of the favour she rendered Odysseus in Troy (ἀντιδόονων, 272) as underlining Hekabe’s perceived reciprocity of the exchange (Legangneux (2000) at 179.)

\textsuperscript{115} As well as the supplication and \textit{agōn} scenes in the early and late parts of the play, Hekabe receives news of Polyxene’s sacrifice when she fears for Polydoros at the beginning of the play and later discovers that the corpse is that of Polydoros when she thought it was Polyxene’s (see
would argue that the subsequent undeniably physical supplication of Agamemnon strongly contrasts with the visual tableau of Hekabe physically supplicating Odysseus unsuccessfully. Finally, this play has a strong emphasis on physicality, with a great deal of physical contact between the characters, as well as much movement on stage, notably by Hekabe.\footnote{Kaimio identifies Hekabe as the one of Euripides’ plays ‘where physical contact is most prominently and effectively presented on stage’ and analyses the use of physical contact throughout the play (Kaimio (1988) at 79-83). Zeitlin remarks upon the play’s ‘somatic preoccupation’ (177) and notes that ‘no other play forces upon us so insistently the sheer physicality of the self and its component parts’ (Zeitlin (1996) at 209). Gödde discusses the interplay between body language and speech in Hekabe (Gödde (2000) at 86-94).} For these reasons, while Hekabe’s speech is filled with the traditional words of supplication, they must be reaffirmed and strengthened by her gestures.

Hekabe begs Odysseus not to seize her daughter from her arms and kill her. She reminds him of the capricious ways of Tuchē before reiterating her plea:\footnote{There are thirteen references to tuchē in Hekabe: 330, 341, 377, 425, 491, 498, 582, 619, 785, 786, 850, 865 and 989.} ἀλλ’, ὁ φίλον γένειον, ο/δέσθητί µε, / ο/κτιρον' (286-7). She calls on him to feel aidōs for her and to pity her, using verbs that are highly evocative of honour and the heroic code.

Hekabe fills her side of the agōn with arguments on many levels as she attempts to persuade Odysseus why he should not take Polyxene away from her. As Kovacs notes, Hekabe appeals to Odysseus on the grounds of ‘moral right, religious sanction, and personal obligation.’\footnote{Kovacs (1987) at 90.} The chorus, as is customary after a speech within an agōn, makes a two-line response to Hekabe that no-one could resist her laments upon hearing them.\footnote{On these ‘choral tags’, see further Heath (1987) at 127-8.} But resist them Odysseus does. He acknowledges that he owes her charis (301-2), but he will not consent to Polyxene’s rescue for the reason that, in his opinion, the Greeks fight well since they see the honour given to those who fall in battle. The Greeks owe a charis to Achilleus that outweighs the charis Odysseus owes Hekabe, which he limits anyway to the saving of her life alone.

It is likely that throughout her speech Hekabe maintained the posture of the suppliant. While there is no indication of when she ceases to kneel, it seems likely that she awaited further Mossman (1995) at 61.) On mirror scenes in tragedy generally, see further Taplin (1978) at 122-39.

\footnote{On a mirror scenes in tragedy generally, see further Taplin (1978) at 122-39.}
Odysseus’ response on her knees. His immediate denial of her request would have made her gestures redundant and it seems reasonable that she breaks off her physical contact with him as soon as he begins to respond at line 299.120

The chorus’ response to Odysseus’ speech alludes again to the contrast between word and bia, which is so important in this play: αἰαί: τὸ δούλον ὡς κακὸν πέφυκ’ ἄι / τολμᾶι θ’ ἂ μὴ γρή, τῇ βίαι νικόμενον (332-3). The chorus acknowledges that the winner of this agōn is Odysseus, since slaves must always endure what they ought not to because they are overcome by force. Hekabe’s words – even supplicatory words – cannot succeed because she is a slave. The chorus’ words here appear to contradict the operation of supplication and any form of reciprocity for those of a lower social status. Yet, in Troy, Odysseus had equated himself to a slave before Hekabe granted his request and there are other slaves in tragedy whose pleas are accepted. For example, Andromache’s plea to Peleus is accepted (Andromache 572-6), as is the plea for mercy by the Phrygian, whom Orestes explicitly calls a slave (Orestes 1522). The appeals of some slaves are not accepted by the supplicated person, such as Andromache’s son’s to Menelaos (Andromache 531-44), but the same outcome can occur in regard to the appeals of non-slaves, such as Amphitryon’s to Lykos (Herakles 321-6). There is always a discrepancy of status between participants in a supplication, but a low social status does not preclude a successful supplication.

With her supplication rejected, Hekabe urges Polyxene to supplicate Odysseus (334-41).121 Her words reverberate with a plaintive tone, intimating a type of supplication towards her own daughter. Hekabe begs Polyxene to utter every sound her voice can make to save her life. Even after the failure of her own supplication complete with gestures, Hekabe instructs her daughter to fall at Odysseus’ knees and persuade him to spare Polyxene her fate (τύχη, 341). Hekabe emphasises the perceived power of pity in such a request with the words οἰκτρός (339) and ἔποικτίραι (341). Polyxene, however, refuses Hekabe’s supplication and goes on to reject any supplication of Odysseus. She observes him trying to avoid any supplicatory gestures she might make, by hiding his right hand and turning his face away from her, and, instead of supplicating him, the Trojan slave commands the Greek leader to ‘take courage’ (θάρσει, 345), he has

120 Mossman agrees (Mossman (1995) at 56)

121 Barker notes that Hekabe does this ‘in the hope that Odysseus’ strict application of the like-for-like principle will succeed should he be supplicated by the victim herself’ (Barker (2009) at 339).
escaped her supplication and the potential wrath of her Zeus Hikesios. She explicitly declines to supplicate Odysseus and instead embraces death as a better (εὐτυχέστερος, 377) alternative to an unhappy life as a slave.\textsuperscript{122} She concludes that to live ignobly or without honour (μὴ καλῶς, 378) is a great labour. As Legangneux perceptively notes, while Odysseus is the victor of the scene in that he succeeds in taking Polyxene away to be sacrificed, it is Polyxene who has won the admiration of the chorus (380-1) and of the audience, and it is Odysseus who ‘s’est moralement dévalorisé’.\textsuperscript{123}

Hekabe acknowledges that her daughter has spoken nobly and echoes Polyxene’s use of καλῶς at 378 twice in her first words: καλῶς μὲν εἰπας, θύγατερ, ἀλλὰ τῶι καλῶι / λύπη πρόσεστιν (382-3). While Polyxene’s decision to die is a noble one, it will cause Hekabe great pain. Realising that Polyxene is resolved not to save herself, Hekabe offers her life to Odysseus in exchange. She again tries to supplicate him. She begs him to kill her in place of her daughter. But this offer too is rejected since Achilleus’ ghost asked for Polyxene’s sacrifice. In response Hekabe begs Odysseus to kill her with her daughter, but this too is rejected since it is not necessary.

Hekabe refuses to let go of her daughter until Polyxene persuades her to. The Trojan slave defiantly tells the Greek soldier: κισσῶς δρυῶς ὅπως τήσδ’ ἔξομαι and then ὃς τήσδ’ ἐκοῦσα παιδὸς οὐ μεθήσομαι (398-400). Hekabe’s continued grasp of her daughter and refusal to release her echoes the suppliant’s hold of the person they are supplicating. Polyxene asks her mother:

\begin{verbatim}

βούλη πεσεῖν πρὸς οὐδᾶς ἠλκῶσαι τε σὸν
gέροντα χρώτα πρὸς βιὰν ἀθομένη
ἀσχημονῆσαι τ’ ἐκ νέου βραχίονος
σπασθὲισ’, ἄ πειση; (Hekabe 405-8)
\end{verbatim}

The visual resonance with the \textit{pragma} of supplication is strengthened by the juxtaposition of \textit{πεσεῖν} and \textit{πρὸς} (405), echoing the conventional term for supplication \textit{προσπίπτειν}. This allusion to the archetypal action of the suppliant is clear and is only one of many visual resonances for the audience during the play to the physical contact adopted during supplication. Michelini analyses Hekabe’s movements and gestures and

\textsuperscript{122} Voluntary self-sacrifice was a recurrent element in Euripides. For a good discussion of Euripides’ six plays about voluntary self-sacrifice for the benefit of the city, see Wilkins (1990).

\textsuperscript{123} Legangneux (2000) at 182.

\textsuperscript{124} A simile involving ivy around a tree is used to describe the embrace of Kreon and his daughter in death (Medeia 1213).
notes that her ‘suppliant gestures are replicated in her attempts to cling to or be raised from a fallen position by such friendly figures as the attendants, Polyxene, and Talthybios’.  

Mother and daughter lament together and make their farewells. Their words echo each other’s, creating an exchange of great pathos and shutting out the world beyond the two of them. Mention is made of Hekabe’s only surviving children, Polydoros and Kassandra, before Polyxene goes off with Odysseus and the Greeks. Hekabe falls in grief to the ground while the chorus sings its first stasimon wondering about their future home in Greece.

After Talthybios the Greek herald reports on Polyxene’s sacrifice, Hekabe sends a servant to the seashore to fetch some water with which to bathe Polyxene’s body. The servant returns accompanied by slaves bearing a body. As Hekabe comes out from the tent, she is greeted by her servant bewailing her mistress’s sufferings:

\[\text{o panta} \text{alaina kata} \text{mal}lon \overset{\text{hi le}y} \text{w},
\text{deispo}n', \text{dolola} \text{ko}u'k\text{et' el, bl}e\overset{\text{plou}sa} \text{f}o\text{sz},
\text{apei} \text{anandros apo}l\text{ios} \text{e}x\text{efthe} \text{m}e\text{n}a. \]  

\text{(Hekabe 667-9)}

Her desperate situation is strongly emphasised: Hekabe is παντάλαινα, ‘most wretched lady’, and described, in an evocative tricolon asyndeton of alpha-privative adjectives, as childless, husbandless and cityless, ἀπαίς ἀνανδρός ἀπόλις. Her utter ruination is further emphasised through the strengthened form of φθείρειν. The servant fails to communicate the nature of this fresh disaster and Hekabe is left to wonder at her words of woe since she thinks she is already well aware of her dire situation.

Hekabe assumes at first that the body is Polyxene’s, in response to which the servant grieves over her mistake. Hekabe then concludes that it might be Kassandra’s, her only remaining daughter. Her constant erroneous conclusions emphasise the awfulness of the events surrounding her and the servant is forced to remove the cloth to reveal that the body is Hekabe’s son Polydoros. She recognises her son and collapses into a song of grief, her emotional lyrics interspersed with comments and questions from the chorus-

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126 ὁ (424-5), χαῖρ... χαίρε... χαίροισιν (426-7), ζήτ (429-30).
127 Emphatic alpha-privative tricolon asyndeton also occurs at Agamemnon 412 and 769, Libation-Bearers 55, Antigone 876-7, Oedipus at Kolonos 130-1 and 1236-7, Andromache 491 and Iphigeneia among the Taurians 220 (see further Fraenkel (ed.), (1955) at 215-18).
leader and servant. Hekabe understands all too clearly that Polymestor, to whom she sent her son for safety, instead of protecting him, has murdered him. Agamemnon enters to find out why Hekabe has not yet come to prepare Polyxene for burial and, noticing the body, wonders whose it is. And thence begins from Hekabe and Agamemnon a succession of verbal utterances which do not, however, constitute a dialogue.\textsuperscript{128} While the two characters share the stage, they do not interact. Hekabe does not respond to Agamemnon’s greeting or his initial questions and instead, turning her back on him, ponders her options.\textsuperscript{129} She has not summoned the Greek leader, but his appearance does present her with an opportunity for possible future action. She displays before the audience her (normally internal) deliberation about possible action and the graphic portrayal of her hesitation is a significant point within the drama. As Mossman notes, ‘The effect of this startling piece of stagecraft is surely to illuminate the tremendous internal struggle which Hecuba is undergoing.’\textsuperscript{130}

She asks herself whether she should fall at Agamemnon’s knees and supplicate or whether she should do nothing and bear her suffering in silence (736-8). This private deliberation prepares the audience for the possibility that she might supplicate Agamemnon, although the reason for her supplication has yet to be revealed. The audience does not know what Hekabe wants to happen. Her use of the phrase προσπέσω γόνυ (737) reminds the audience of her previous supplication to Odysseus, at whose knees she also fell, but to no avail as he refused to accede to her request. As if recalling this failure, she notes: ἀλλ' εἳ με δούλην πολεμίαν θ' ἵγούμενος / γονάτων ἀπώσαστ', ἄλγος ἄν προσθείμεθ' ἄν (741-2). She is well aware of her current status and understands that the Greek leader might simply reject her request – as Odysseus did – because as a slave and an enemy, she has no obvious bond of charis with him. She is highly cognisant of the possibility of a second rejection of supplication. Agamemnon prepares to leave since she will not tell him directly of these matters and Hekabe realises that she cannot avenge her children without him (749-50). At last the audience knows towards what end Hekabe’s thoughts have been turning. She makes up her mind

\textsuperscript{128}Mastroarde labels Hekabe’s behaviour as a ‘refusal of contact’ (see further Mastroarde (1979) at 78).
\textsuperscript{129}While he greets her by name as soon as he enters at 726, she does not respond in kind until 752. Bain notes that Hekabe’s utterances are not fully an aside. Her words are to be heard fully by the audience and partially by Agamemnon (Bain (1977) at 13-5).
\textsuperscript{130}Mossman (1995) at 62.
to supplicate Agamemnon, aware that, while she may be successful, she may also fail to persuade him (κανν τύχω κανν μη τύχω, 751).

She adopts the traditional suppliant position, grasping his knees, chin and right hand, and utters the traditional phrases (ικετεύω σε τανδε γουνάτων / κα καρ γενείου δεξιας τε ευδαιμονος, 752-3). Gould believes that Hekabe’s supplication at this point is figurative only. 131 He identifies in the scene a ‘slow-built crescendo’ which culminates at 841 with Hekabe touching Agamemnon’s hand, an act which the Greek leader acknowledges as supplicatory at 851. 132 While Gould does not explicitly state this, his interpretation of the scene appears to be influenced by Agamemnon’s unwillingness to grant Hekabe’s request, which can be construed from his attempt to extract his foot at 812, a mirror action to that of Odysseus before Polyxene (342-4). Gould identifies this as the ‘low point of the scene’ with ‘a new crescendo at 835ff.’ 133 Hekabe’s use of the verb ιπεξάγειν, however, suggests a retraction of Agamemnon’s foot from some sort of entanglement, such as a suppliant grip, which would imply that Hekabe has adopted the suppliant position by this point, if not earlier. Her use of the emphatic τονδε in her plea at 752 appears to me to clearly suggest that she is acting out the gestures as she says them. 134 In addition, at 807-8 she demands that Agamemnon view her as a painter would, thereby comparing herself to an image of a suppliant, the most recognisable symbol of which is the adoption of the traditional gestures and physical contact with the person supplicated.

She has therefore adopted a suppliant posture when she makes clear her supplicatory intention and Agamemnon reveals himself to be receptive towards her supplication, even though he does not yet know what it entails. He comments that it would be rather easy for him to free her if that is what she wants (755) and his offer suggests to Hekabe his willingness to accede to any request she might make. He expresses his pity for Hekabe (ο σχετλια, 783) and asks if any woman is so cursed in fortune as she

131 Gould (1973) at 85n.55. Kaimio agrees with Gould, stating that it is ‘improbable that Hecuba, when at last she makes her decision and suddenly turns at l.752, would be near enough to complete at once the ritual of touching Agamemnon’s knees etc, although she speaks of it’ (Kaimio (1988) at 51-2).
132 Gould (1973) at 85n.55.
133 Gould (1973) at 85n.55.
134 Telò agrees that physical contact has already been established by 752-3 (Telò (2002) at 14-9).
(δυστυχής, 785). She refuses his offer and tells him that the body is that of her son Polydoros whom she had sent away for protection, together with gold, to Thrace. She assigns the role of his murderer to the Thracian king, Polymestor.

In the same way as she did with Odysseus, once she has set out the background to her request in a stichomythic exchange and made the addressee (as well as the external audience) as sympathetic to her request as possible, she sets out in a rhēsis (786-845) her arguments for why her supplication should be accepted. Collard describes her speech as an epideixis, a ‘text-book showpiece’ of rhetorical technique.135 She begins by mentioning that Polymestor has flaunted the sacred law of xenia. When that does not appear to be successful since Agamemnon tries to turn away from her, she uses an argument that some critics have seen as a symbol of her moral degradation.136 She reminds Agamemnon of his mistress Kassandra, her daughter and sister to the dead Polydoros. More specifically, she asks him what charis Kassandra will receive for her embraces and what she, Hekabe, will receive for her daughter: ἥ τῶν ἐν εὐνήι φιλτάτων ἄσπασμάτων / χάριν τιν’ ἐξει παῖς ἐμή, κείνης δ’ ἐγώ; (829-30).

I do not agree that Hekabe’s introduction of such an argument is in any way a sign of her moral degradation. Rather, it is simply another argument that has the potential of persuading Agamemnon to accept her supplication. This argument was prepared for by the chorus back at 120-2 when they reported that Agamemnon had promoted Hekabe’s interest to the Greek army because of his affection for Kassandra. Her use of such an argument can therefore be seen not simply as using her daughter to promote her own interest, deemed ‘pandering’ by some scholars, but rather as an attempt to use every possible argument that might persuade Agamemnon.137 Hekabe is learning about the power of words.138 It is the move of a desperate mother aware of Agamemnon’s feelings

136 Kirkwood, for example, states: ‘Euripides underlines the sordidness by making Hecuba dwell graphically on the matter for several lines. The passage is meant to repel: Hecuba becomes the very personification of Peitho, entirely devoid of moral content.’ (Kirkwood (1947) at 66). Other critics of this opinion include Conacher (1967) at 162-5, Michelini (1987) at 142-57.
137 Michelini labels Hekabe as her own daughter’s ‘pimp’ (Michelini (1987) at 151).
138 The perceived power of words and rhetoric was a subject of debate in fifth-century BC Athens, as is demonstrated by, among other works, Gorgias’ Encomium of Helen and
towards her daughter, rather than an unfeeling conniving woman willing to go to any lengths to get what she wants – including by exploiting her own daughter.

She ends her speech with an extravagant appeal to Agamemnon: δὲ δέσποτ', μὲγίστον Ἕλλησιν φάος, πιθο (841-2). As discussed in Chapter 2: Recognition, φάος, particularly in apostrophe, is linked to the idea of rescue and salvation. Hekabe’s extreme flattery of the Greek general is intended to provide additional motivation for Agamemnon to be persuaded to grant her request. Her command to Agamemnon, πιθο, echoes Polyxene’s earlier command to her mother to let her die (402). Just as Hekabe attempts to strengthen her supplication of Agamemnon with a direct plea for persuasion, so Polyxene attempted to persuade her mother in a scene filled with supplicatory gestures and phrases between Hekabe, Polyxene and Odysseus. Earlier in her supplicatory speech to Agamemnon, Hekabe had lamented the fact that Πειθώ is the only ruler of men (816), but now her words reveal that she has understood the necessity of the mastery of Peithō. The emphasis on Peithō in her speech and within the play as a whole, alongside the recurrent theme of supplication, strengthens the argument that the performance of the gestures of supplication alone is not enough to ensure the grant of a supplicatory request. Rather, as Buxton notes, persuasion in Hekabe is ‘an enormously powerful means, which one has to possess in order to survive’ (my emphasis).

When does Hekabe cease the suppliant pose which she began at 752? It has been proposed that Hekabe only kneels until 814 when she realises that Agamemnon is trying to turn away from her. She is therefore kneeling for 62 lines, which is more than double the amount of time she knelt before Odysseus. I would argue, however, for her suppliant pose to be extended until a later point, either during Agamemnon’s response when she realises that he is favourable to her supplication or, more strikingly, at 875 Aristophanes’ Clouds (889-1104). In the comedy, the playwright personifies the Superior Argument and the Inferior Argument.

139 See further in Chapter 2: Recognition at p. 99.
140 There are eleven uses of πείθω and πειθω in Hekabe: 133, 294, 340, 399, 402, 408, 816, 819, 842, 873 and 1205. For a detailed discussion of the role of persuasion in Hekabe, see Buxton (1982) at 170-86.
141 Buxton (1982) at 170.
when she has Agamemnon’s acquiescence to her revenge. This means that she remains on her knees for either 100 or closer to 125 lines.\textsuperscript{143} Towards the end of her \textit{rhēsis}, she introduces her final plea with the following hypothetical scenario:

\begin{verbatim}
εἰ μοι γένοιτο φθόγγος ἐν βραχίοσιν
cαὶ χερὶ καὶ κόμαισι καὶ ποδῶν βάσει
ἡ Δαιόλου τέχναισιν ἡ θεῶν τινος,
ὄς πάνθ’ ἁμαρτὴ σὸν ἐξοιτο γονώτων
κλαίοντ’, ἐπισκήπτοντα παντοίους λόγους.    (Hekabe 836-840)
\end{verbatim}

If it were possible, every part of her would supplicate him, grasping his knees. Surely she would emphasise the sincerity of her hypothetical statement by the enactment of what is actually possible, that is, grasping his knees with her hands?\textsuperscript{144} She is therefore still on her knees at 840.\textsuperscript{145}

Her desperate desire for this supplication to succeed where the earlier one failed is strongly signalled through the uncomfortable pose the old woman adopts for this extended period. She and the audience know that there is no guarantee that a supplication will succeed, and indeed Hekabe knows that the Greek leader has little reason to grant it. She shows herself to be bold and brave in attempting the second supplication, and Agamemnon acquiesces in part to her plea. The desire for vengeance succeeds where the request for compassion did not. The lengthy tableau of supplication presented to the audience is visually powerful, particularly in the wake of her previous unsuccessful supplication. In addition, the protracted static scene contrasts with Hekabe’s frantic movements towards both Odysseus and Polyxene during the earlier supplication.

Agamemnon responds to her speech with pity and admits the dire circumstances (τύχας, 850) of her and her son before acknowledging her status as a suppliant (χείρα ἱκεσίαν, 851). He does not, however, accede to her request for him personally to avenge Polydoros’ murder. Instead, he condones her vengeance if it does not cause him to appear to the Greek army to have plotted Polymestor’s murder for Kassandra’s sake, thereby acknowledging that Hekabe’s mention of Kassandra has influenced his decision in some way. Again, the word χάρις is used (855). Agamemnon acknowledges that the

\textsuperscript{143} If she begins to supplicate physically at 841, as \textit{per} Gould, she would be on her knees for just over thirty lines, which is less visually strong than in my interpretation of her movements.

\textsuperscript{144} Contra Telò who argues that this is a purely rhetorical statement (Telò (2002) at 22-3).

\textsuperscript{145} Michelini accepts this as a possibility (Michelini (1987) at 174).
appropriate vengeance is the death of Polymestor (856), which makes Hekabe’s actual vengeance all the more shocking when it is displayed to the audience.

Hekabe then tells Agamemnon that, since he is afraid (ταρπείς, 868), she will take care of the vengeance without him, but asks him to protect her from any reprisal action from the Greeks if he can. Hekabe echoes her daughter’s earlier command to Odysseus when she says to Agamemnon, θάρσει (875). While Polyxene was alleviating Odysseus’ concerns about refusing her supplication, Hekabe assures Agamemnon that she will take care of the act of revenge, before the Greek commander departs.

Hekabe’s supplication of Agamemnon strongly parallels her supplication of Odysseus earlier in the play, with both verbal and visual echoes. These resemblances allow the audience to compare and contrast the circumstances surrounding the two situations. In particular, the analogous scenes encourage the audience to contrast the characters of Odysseus and Agamemnon by means of their response to Hekabe’s supplications, particularly since supplication is not a guaranteed ritual, but rather a request that those supplicated can choose to grant. The same woman undertakes the process of supplication before two leaders of the Greek army and receives very different responses to her pleas. The former Trojan queen adopts the traditional gestures of supplication before both Greek leaders and, as discussed above, the extended length for which she holds the humiliating posture before Agamemnon, despite the failure of her previous supplication, powerfully conveys her desperation. Strikingly, Hekabe uses the same supplicatory phrase before both Odysseus and Agamemnon, αἰδοκυττί μὲ (286 and 806). She attempts to establish a clear bond with each of the leaders to compel reciprocity, with Odysseus on the grounds of a charis established through her granting of his supplication and with Agamemnon through the charis established by his relationship with her daughter. Her plea to each man also includes an appeal to dikē before that of charis (to Odysseus: 263 and 273-8; to Agamemnon: 800-5 and 829-30).  

While Odysseus rejects her plea, Agamemnon is swayed by her appeal and partially grants her request. Is Odysseus wrong to refuse to grant her request? Segal suggests that Odysseus’ rejection of Hekabe’s supplication can be seen as a continuation of the pattern of the Greeks doing the wrong thing after the fall of Troy, that it is a sign of the

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146 As noted by Lloyd (1992) at 96.
‘moral corruption of the Greeks’.

It is possible that Hekabe is alluding to such immoral behaviour at 604-8 when she orders Talthybios to ensure the protection of Polyxene’s corpse from the Greeks. Her command appears unwarranted, since there was nothing in Talthybios’ speech to suggest that the Greeks would behave inappropriately towards her body. Indeed, his words seem to counteract any possibility of such impropriety since he notes the soldiers’ care in administering to Polyxene’s corpse, by strewing leaves, gathering logs for her pyre and bringing offerings (571-80). Segal’s view that Odysseus is wrong not to accept Hekabe’s supplication, however, is based on the belief of supplication’s automatic efficacy, which, as I have previously argued, is flawed owing to the many existing counter-examples. Supplication does not always result in the granting of a supplicant’s appeal.

Segal further states that Hekabe’s ‘world has no place for the reverence, reciprocity, and pity (aidos, charis, oiktos) that a supplicant should arouse.’ But that statement is not completely accurate when one closely examines these two enacted scenes of supplication. While Odysseus does not accede to Hekabe’s request to save Polyxene’s life, he does admit that he owes her charis and would save her life if that were required (301-2). However, in his opinion, the charis owed to Achilleus by the Greeks outweighs his personal charis to Hekabe. Agamemnon implicitly acknowledges the existence of a bond (whether of philia or charis) with Hekabe because of Kassandra (850-6) and explicitly admits to feeling oiktos for Hekabe (851). These paired pragmata of supplication permit a concentrated focus on the respective reasons for the refusal and partial acceptance of the same woman’s supplication.

In the following stasimon, Euripides reminds the audience of the uncertain nature of the supplication process by contrasting Hekabe’s successful supplication of Agamemnon with an earlier unsuccessful pragma. The Trojan slavewomen remember the night of the sack of Troy and how they sat as suppliants to Artemis but uselessly — οὐ χρῄζομεν’ (935). Supplications do not always succeed.

The following episode and exodos enact Hekabe’s vengeance on Polymestor: the killing of his two sons, but not his own death; instead, he is blinded. The violence occurs within the skēnē, but, just as in Agamemnon (1343-5), the cries of the victim inside are

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147 Segal (1993) at 192.
148 Segal (1993) at 166.
heard by the audience.\textsuperscript{149} The blinded Polymestor stumbles back on stage in pursuit of his attackers and his singing (1056-1108) attracts Agamemnon.\textsuperscript{150}

Polymestor identifies his and his children’s attackers as Hekabe and her fellow slaves and begs Agamemnon to let him attack her in retaliation: \(\pi\rho\dica\; \theta\varepsilon\omega\nu\; \sigma\varepsilon\; \lambda\ι\sigma\sigma\omicron\alpha\iota,\; /\; \mu\epsilon\theta\epsilon\zeta\; \mu\iota\; \epsilon\phi\epsilon\nu\alpha\tau\iota\mu\delta\; \mu\alpha\rho\gamma\omicron\sigma\sigma\alpha\varsigma\; \chi\epsilon\rho\alpha\) (1127-8). This is the final mention of supplication in the play. There is no evidence in the text that Polymestor enacts the gestures of supplication towards Agamemnon but he is already on all fours (1058) and is therefore in an appropriate lower position than the Greek commander. The combination of his invocation of the gods and the verb \(\lambda\i\sigma\sigma\omicron\alpha\iota\), however, serves as a method of supplication and he is rewarded with an \(a\gamma\omicron\nu\) with Hekabe before Agamemnon. But it is not a fair debate, in that Agamemnon, the judge of the debate, has already colluded in the vengeance meted out on Polymestor (even if he was unaware that Hekabe’s revenge would include the Thracian king’s children).\textsuperscript{151} Polymestor speaks first, but, unsurprisingly, Hekabe’s arguments win over Agamemnon.\textsuperscript{152} The blinded Polymestor, now endowed with the power of foresight, prophesises Hekabe’s transformation into a dog and the deaths of Kassandra and Agamemnon at the hands of Klytaimestra. Agamemnon’s response is to order Polymestor to be marooned on a desert island before Hekabe leaves to bury her son and daughter and the army prepares to sail home.

\textsuperscript{149} Thalmann notes that, as well as Polymestor’s echoing of Agamemnon’s cries from within, there are choral and metrical similarities between this scene in \textit{Hekabe} and that in \textit{Agamemnon} (Thalmann (1993) at 149). On cries from the \textit{skēnē}, see further Hamilton (1987) at 585-95, Joerden (1971) at 406n.37, Seidensticker (1971) at 194.

\textsuperscript{150} Polymestor’s blind entry is strongly reminiscent of Oedipus’ in \textit{Oedipus the King} 1297 (as noted by Friedrich (1953) at 31). The punishment of blinding recalls that of Polyphemos in the \textit{Odyssey} and \textit{Cyclops}, which similarly follows a breach of the laws of \textit{xenia} (Barker (2009) at 346-7, Seafood (1982) at 168-9, Zeitlin (1996) at 195-7). Michelini identifies a visual resemblance between Polymestor’s ‘helpless, clumsy and lame’ movements and those of Hekabe in her first scene, but Polymestor is on all fours (\(\tau\epsilon\tau\rho\alpha\pi\omicron\delta\omicron\varsigma\) ... \(\theta\ieta\rho\omicron\varsigma\), 1058), while Hekabe is merely being supported by her friends (59-67) (Michelini (1987) at 174).

\textsuperscript{151} Barker discusses this \(a\gamma\omicron\nu\) in the context of the \(a\gamma\omicron\nu\)’s capacity to institutionalize dissent, that is, to contain violence and manage dissent (Barker (2009) at 348-53).

\textsuperscript{152} Her speech is analysed by Kovacs (1987) at 107-8, Lloyd (1992) at 97-9, Mossman (1995) at 133-7.
The *pragma* of supplication occurs frequently in Euripides’ *Hekabe* in both enacted and non-enacted forms. It helps to structure the *systasis* for the audience, by not only being enacted on stage several times, but through the anticipation of future supplications, which the playwright can fulfil or frustrate at will. The enacted supplication *pragma* provide striking visual images for the audience, while the frequent visual allusions to the gestures of supplication emphasise the importance of supplication as a motif within the *muthos*. The parallel scenes of supplication encourage the audience to contrast the characters of Odysseus and Agamemnon in their response to Hekabe’s supplications, particularly since supplication is not a guaranteed ritual, but rather a request that they can choose to grant. And the two supplications by Hekabe compel the audience to consider her character development as a result of the intervening disasters.

Supplication in the play is depicted as both successful and unsuccessful, displaying for the audience the precarious position of those who are at the mercy of others. In so doing it reinforces the importance of reciprocity in ancient Greek society. In *Hekabe* the supplications attest to the phenomenon of reciprocity between people of different social statuses – and even between apparent enemies – and to its value as a means of negotiation between the powerful and the powerless. Supplication can be granted between *echthroi*, as well as be refused between *philoi*. The *pragma* of supplication performs a multiplicity of roles in Euripides’ *Hekabe*, which combine to make it a complex and enriched drama dealing with the unpredictable happenings of fate.

3. **Conclusion**

Supplication occurs frequently in tragedy as an enacted event, a memory, a future possible action and a motif. While the same process underlies each *pragma* of supplication, the participants, the reason and the focus of each varies in accordance with the themes and requirements of the play. It can extend throughout the entire *systasis* or appear briefly. The supplication *pragma* plays a dynamic role within the *systasis*, in both its enacted and non-enacted form, motivating further action and creating anticipation in the audience as to future enactments. Its non-enacted forms possess great variety in their enrichment of the *muthos* and influence on the audience’s engagement with the performance. The supplication *pragma* in Athenian tragedy is always accompanied by high emotion as it depicts the desperation of those who are unable to resolve their current crisis themselves. The interplay between suppliant and supplicated
clearly demonstrates the operation of reciprocity in the ancient world and the precarious situation of those who are forced to rely on supplication in the face of the uncertainties of life. The *pragma* of supplication highlights the role of *Tuchē* in life and man’s inability to control one’s fate. Supplication is an effective stage action because its success is never guaranteed.
CHAPTER FOUR: REPORTING

The *pragma* of the report of events that have occurred offstage, and of messages, is an important ingredient of Athenian tragedy. The identity of the messenger, the information being reported, the audience to whom they are reporting and the degree to which they interact with their audience are different in every play. Reporting *pragma* can encompass news of deaths, impending arrivals, orders, battles, escapes, captures, familial disputes, assembly votes and lawless behaviour. And these *pragma*, as well as the information disclosed therein, perform different roles within the *systasis* of a particular play. The information revealed can prepare for subsequent action and simultaneously create audience anticipation or it can act as an impetus for a decision, action or other response by the internal audience. In addition, a reporting *pragma* can describe events that have occurred as a result of previously portrayed stage events, thus bringing that element of the *systasis* of the tragedy to a close.

The reporting *pragma* involves a character coming on stage for the purpose of reporting news or bringing a message to another character or the chorus on stage. The reporting occurs, therefore, within the *systasis* of the tragedy, rather than primarily to the external audience. Information is of course conveyed to the external audience, but the *pragma* of reporting ostensibly centres on the transmission of information to a character or the chorus. The person bringing the information or message (the ‘reporting figure’) comes from another place and the information being reported concerns events that have occurred elsewhere. This other place can be, in Rehm’s terms, ‘extrascenic’ or ‘distanced’ space.¹ Prologue-speeches *per se* do not fit within the definition of a reporting *pragma* as they rarely involve the report of information to someone.² They usually provide background information to the events of the play for the external

¹ Rehm (2002) at 20-4. As discussed in Chapter 1: Return Home at p. 36.
² On prologue-speeches in tragedy, see Segal (1992), Hamilton (1978).
audience, but as they are not heard by any dramatic figure, they cannot causally contribute to the *systasis*. Reporting *pragma* also do not encompass the revelation of information relating to past events in the course of a conversation. Therefore Io’s scene in *Prometheus Bound* (561-886) is not a reporting *pragma*, as she happened upon Prometheus in her travels and is merely relating her story to him. Closely associated with, and in some cases intersecting with, the *pragma* of reporting is the revelation of prophecy to the on-stage characters. The reporting of oracles is included within reporting *pragma* since the message of the gods is brought from elsewhere, as is the reporting of divine prophecy by mortal figures, such as Kassandra, Teiresias and Polymestor. The revelation of prophecy by gods, however, is not included, since it is often unclear whether the gods are foretelling or commanding what will happen. The prophecy delivered is also not brought from beyond dramatic space.

The prevalence of the reporting *pragma* indicates its utility as a means by which information is disclosed to both the internal and external audience. It allows the playwright to ‘enact’ events on stage which would otherwise require extensive scene changes or large numbers of actors. Staging conventions, as well as financial considerations, impacted on the ability of playwrights to stage battle scenes or scenes within a bedroom, or on a mountain, or by the seashore. A character bringing news of events offstage to another character allows an easy staging solution, as well as providing another means by which information is revealed and thereby varying the dramatic presentation.

This chapter will examine the manifestations of reporting *pragma* in tragedy to understand further the means by which information is disclosed within a tragedy and what role that disclosure plays in the *systasis* and *muthos* of a tragedy. Reporting *pragma* occur predominantly in an enacted form, but there are also significant verbal references to the act of reporting. Enacted reporting *pragma* comprise a variety of participants, structures and linguistic elements, the particular combination of which affects how the revelation of information contributes to a tragedy. An examination of these elements will provide a strong base from which to analyse closely how the *pragma* of reporting contributes to *Women of Trachis*, in which there are five separate

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reporting *pragmata* and in which the revelation and understanding of knowledge is a fundamental theme.

1. **THE MANIFESTATIONS OF REPORTING IN TRAGEDY**

Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides all incorporate the *pragma* of reporting in their plays and every extant Athenian tragedy except *Eumenides* contains at least one enacted reporting *pragma*.4 There are at least eighty enacted reporting *pragmata* in extant tragedy. The means of report varies and the reporting figure can narrate the news in a single speech, participate in dialogue with those on-stage or deliver both a speech and engage in dialogue. In fewer instances, mention is made of the *pragma* of report, either as something to happen in the future or as a reason for a character’s actions. The enacted form is definitely the more popular manifestation of the reporting *pragma* in tragedy.

1.1. **THE ENACTED REPORT**

To identify an enacted reporting *pragma* in tragedy, it is necessary to determine whether information or a message is reported to someone, regardless of the form of that communication or the identity of the reporting figure. This avoids the problems inherent in the attempted categorisation of the tragic messenger based on their identity or of a ‘messenger-speech’ based on a particular form. Scholars have proposed various

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4 For a list of enacted reporting *pragmata* in extant tragedy, see Appendix 6: Enacted reporting *pragmata*. The Pythian priestess describes Orestes sitting in supplication at the *omphalos* in the temple of Apollo surrounded by Klytaimnestra’s avenging furies (*Eumenides* 34-59), but she reports this to an empty stage in a manner more reminiscent of a prologue speech than reporting to another person. Athenes gives an order to a *kērux* (566), but he does not have a spoken role. Possible reporting *pragmata* are preserved in the fragmentary plays of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides, including Aeschylus’ *Glaukos Pontios* (fr. 25e TrGF), *Glaukos Potnieus* (frs. 36b, 38, 39 TrGF), *Myrmidons* (fr. 134 TrGF), *Phorkides* (fr. 261 TrGF) and *Thracians* (fr. 83 TrGF), Sophocles’ *Tereus* (frs. 586, 589 TrGF) and *Troilos* (frs. 619, 621 TrGF) and Euripides’ *Alexandros* (frs. 54, 61a, 61d TrGF), *Oedipus* (fr. 541 TrGF), *Andromeda* (frs. 145, 146 TrGF), *Antiope* (fr. 221 TrGF). Two fragments of the fourth-century tragedian Chairemon may be from messenger-speeches: *Alphesiboia* fr. 1 TrGF and *Oineus* fr. 14 TrGF (see further Collard (1970) at 29-31).
definitions for the ‘tragic messenger’ or the ‘tragic messenger-speech’ and each relies on varying criteria with the result that no two lists encompass exactly the same tragic scenes. These lists are often exclusory and omit many pragramata of reporting. For the purposes of this research, a reporting pragma occurs if information is conveyed to someone on stage concerning events offstage or if a message is delivered from someone offstage. Reporting pragramata in tragedy include elements of direct scenic presentation and narrative performance, and this mix of performance codes makes the theatrical experience more engaging for the audience.

The fundamental basis of any reporting pragma is the presence of a reporting figure and an on-stage audience for the report. The person delivering the report can be any character: major, minor, named, unnamed, mortal or immortal. He (or she) can be an official messenger, a herald, a god, a servant, sailor, queen or farmer. The reporting figure can appear on stage briefly to give their message and then retire, interact more directly with the audience to give supplementary information, or watch as subsequent events transpire. The report can be delivered in a variety of formats, including a short summary, a lengthy rhēsis or a dialogue including extensive questions and answers. The report usually consists of breaking news of offstage events, but can also be a message sent by someone offstage.

1.1.1. Structure
The simplest possible structure of a reporting pragma comprises a reporting figure’s entrance, report and exit, without any dialogue with an on-stage character. For example, these minimal elements constitute the first reporting pragma in Seven against Thebes

5 Bremer focuses on the narrative report of events occurring offstage delivered by someone not otherwise involved in the muthos, although he also acknowledges that some named characters can deliver something akin to a messenger-speech (Bremer (1976) at 33). Taplin defines the elements of an angelia as an ‘anonymous eye-witness, set-piece narrative speech, and over-all dramatic function’ (Taplin (1977b) at 80-5). de Jong’s criteria for an angelikē rhēsis are a reporting figure who is not a protagonist, a speech with narrative content (verbs in the past tense) and introductory dialogue (Jong (1991) at 179-80). Barrett largely follows de Jong’s criteria, but includes different reporting speeches (Barrett (2002) at 223-4). Dickin focuses on the act of reporting itself, regardless of the identity of the reporting figure, which matches the methodology adopted for this research (Dickin (2009) at 155-69).

6 For a discussion of narrative versus dramatic texts, see Pfister (1988) at 2-6.
(39-68). After entering, a soldier reports to Eteokles the actions of the besieging army in a single speech before exiting only thirty lines later without any reply from Eteokles. This basic structure of a reporting *pragma* can be – and usually is – complicated through the addition of a combination of introductory dialogue with the on-stage characters or chorus, stichomythia, a lengthy *rhēsis* and concluding dialogue.

Aeschylean reporting *pragmata* tend to involve dialogue through a series of speeches, in which the messenger reports the news and then his audience reacts to that news, rather than extended *rhēseis*. This occurs, for example, in the *Persians* when the Persian soldier’s news is interspersed with the queen’s questions and her reactions to the news (249-531).\(^7\) By fragmenting the messenger’s report, Aeschylus allows the queen to immediately respond to news of particular events and her ‘grief is articulated responsively as the narration progresses.’\(^8\)

In a number of Euripidean reporting *pragmata* (particularly in those scenes identified by scholars as ‘messenger-scenes’),\(^9\) there is a recognisably typical structure of two parts: the introduction to the report and the report itself.\(^10\) The introduction often includes the announcement of the arrival of a reporting figure.\(^11\) Their entry is often followed by dialogue with the on-stage characters or chorus, during which the reporting figure may seek to address a specific character or the chorus and hint at the nature of the news. For example, the internal audience may ask brief questions of the reporting figure, who responds with a short summary of the news. The audience (both internal and external) is

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7 According to Griffith, this is a highly unusual role for a queen, even one endowed with the authority of the absent ruler (Griffith (2005) at 337-8).
8 Rosenmeyer (1982) at 200. See further discussion on this *pragma* at pp. 224-5.
9 See n.5.
10 The structure of the Euripidean messenger-scene given here is adapted from that identified by Rau, which was itself adapted from Erdmann (Erdmann (1964), Rau (1967) at 162-3).
11 Reporting figures are often described as entering at a run or wearing a garland. (The haste visually emphasises the recency of the news, while the garland may indicate that the reporting figure bears good news.) Running: *Persians* 247-8, *Seven against Thebes* 369-71, *S. Elektra* 871-2, *Medeia* 1119-20 and *Ion* 1106-10. Garland: *Agamemnon* 493-4, *Oedipus the King* 82-3, *Women of Trachis* 178-9. Fraenkel is not certain that the garland worn by the herald in *Agamemnon* 493-4 signifies triumph, because of 491-2 and 498-9 (Fraenkel (ed.), (1955) at 250-1). The hesitation in accepting that the news he brings is good may be attributed, however, to the desire to have verbal confirmation of the victory, rather than to rely on a visual sign, like the beacon (which was described as voiceless: ἄναποθος, 495).
therefore in no doubt as to the nature of the news before the *rhēsis* begins. The internal audience may respond emotionally to the brief summation, but then ask for further detail, at which point the reporting figure begins the detailed *rhēsis*. This speech comprises a continuous narrative description of events that have occurred offstage.

The *rhēsis* has attracted much scholarship, but, according to my definition, is not a necessary element of a reporting *pragma*. Nevertheless, many reporting *pragma* do feature a *rhēsis*, particularly those in the plays of Sophocles and Euripides. The use of narration to describe events occurring elsewhere compels the audience to use their imagination, which produces a more vivid picture of the events than could be reproduced visually on the fifth-century dramatic stage. Bremer identifies other

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12 The exception to this is the Phrygian servant’s report, which is confusing and structured so as to create the false impression that Helen is dead (*Orestes* 1395-1502). See further below at pp. 214-15.

13 Rijksbaron notes a differentiation in the content of messenger-speeches that begin with an ἐπεί-clause and those that begin with a simple sentence. The former type tends to include information about an event with which the report’s addressee is already acquainted, while the latter type reveals information that has not previously been referred to in the tragedy (Rijksbaron (1976)).


15 de Jong identifies twenty-two messenger-speeches in Euripidean tragedies, to which Barrett adds three in Aeschylus and eleven in Sophocles (Barrett (2002) at 223-4, Jong (1991) at 179-82). This ratio may be related to the increasing popularity of sophism and the art of rhetoric in the later fifth century BC, with Sophocles and Euripides directing their speeches more at the external audience than the internal audience.

16 Interestingly, many vases have been identified as depicting events described by tragic reporting figures, particularly in *rhēseis* (Taplin (2007) at 24). Such portrayals do not necessarily serve as an indication of the popularity of messenger-speeches to the audience (*contra* de Jong (1991) at 118 n.5) since it is difficult to know whether a vase depicts a scene described in a reporting *pragma* in a specific tragedy or simply a mythological narrative. Further, even if it is agreed that a vase is related to a particular tragedy and depicts the events narrated by a reporting figure, such a depiction does not necessarily signify the popularity of this type of speech in the theatre, but rather the creative possibilities in trying to depict that scene visually. Messenger-speeches usually describe a scene full of action, emotion or spectacle.
staging difficulties which might have influenced the use of messenger-speeches, namely the presence of crowds and the depictions of death and supernatural events, but there are instances of each of these conditions being staged in the surviving tragedies. It is possible that the inclusion of the reporting ρήσις was influenced by a desire to incorporate an epic flavour in the varied media of speech which a tragedy encompasses, through the narrative format used by Homer.

The ρήσεις, like Homeric epic, often feature direct speech, while some Euripidean messenger-speeches even include dialogues, which never occur in Sophocles or Aeschylus. One of the best examples of the use of direct and indirect speech in a single ρήσις occurs in Orestes when the old countryman reports to Elektra the events of the Argive assembly (Orestes 866-956). The countryman’s speech describes in detail the debate of various figures in favour of and against Orestes and Elektra and, since he is narrating what happened, he ‘is able to offer a running commentary on the

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17 Bremer (1976) at 34-42. Crowds are likely in scenes with the Danaides in Aeschylus’ Suppliants and the Erinyes in Eumenides, as well as scenes with mute extras. For example, in Hippolytos the stage is filled with the chorus of Trozen women, Theseus and his retinue, and Hippolytos and his fellow huntsmen from 898. The death of a character directly at the hands of another individual was never shown on stage, yet there are several scenes where death was depicted on stage: Alkestis 392 and Hippolytos 1458. Evadne throws herself into the burning pyre of her husband Kapanes (E. Suppliant Women 1071), but this is likely to have happened out of sight of the audience, perhaps behind the skênê. It is likely that Aias walked off stage to throw himself on his sword immediately after giving his suicide speech (Aias 865). For a cogent monograph discussing the merits of the various staging possibilities in Aias, see Scullion (1994). Supernatural events occur at the end of Prometheus Bound (1080-93) and Dionysos causes an earthquake in Bacchae (565-603).

18 Epic poetry was popular in fifth-century Athens, as is evidenced by the performance of Homeric poetry at the Great Panathenaia and at private symposia (Plato Hipparchos 228b-c, Xenophon Symposium 3.6; see further Davison (1958)). Bergson argues that the use of Homeric diction in tragedy is the result of metrical and content considerations, rather than a conscious choice of the playwright to add an epic colour to the messenger’s speech (Bergson (1959)).

19 Jong (1991) at 132. Direct speech in the Iliad and the Odyssey accounts for more than half the lines: ‘Of the 15,690 lines of the Iliad, 7018 are in direct speech ... Of the 12,103 lines of the Odyssey, 8225 are in direct speech’ (Griffin (1986) at 37).
personalities and motives of the participants’. After describing how he came to be in the city, he begins by repeating verbatim the question that he asked of a passing citizen and that person’s response. His direct narration of the assembly herald’s request for speakers is then followed by his indirect description of Talthybios’ speech, and, through summarising what Talthybios said, he is able to provide his own (negative) evaluation of Talthybios’ words. In the remainder of his report, he includes other direct and indirect speeches, before his description of the words of the anonymous Argive who calls for the perpetrators’ stoning affords him another negative evaluation allowing him to make clear what he thinks about this type of man (904-8). His description of the next speech, that of a farmer advocating that the Argives reward Orestes for his actions, contains a positive evaluation of the speaker: ὁνόματος (918) and

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ο} & \text{πέρ καὶ μόνοι σώζουσι ζήν,} \\
\text{ξυνετοί δὲ, χωρείν ὁμόσω τοῖς λόγοις θέλων,} \\
\text{ἀκέραιον ἀνεπίπληκτον ἡσσηκῶς βίον.} \\
\end{align*}
\]

(Orestes 920-2)

Finally he repeats Orestes’ speech in full. The previous segments of direct speech were short, usually lasting two lines, but Orestes’ speech runs for eleven lines. This precise reporting of such a long speech reveals the messenger’s great respect for the family of his former master, as well as his perception of Elektra’s preferences in terms of the news reported. His decision to report the speaker’s words exactly, along with his introductory comments and selected adjectives, also makes his bias very clear to the audience: while nearly all messengers directly or indirectly reveal their feelings about the reported events, it is rarely this comprehensive.

The rhēsis often concludes with the reporting figure’s evaluation of the events, which can be specific or a general reflection. For example, the messenger reporting the accident that befell Hippolytos finishes his rhēsis with a declaration to Theseus of the

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20 Wright (2008b) at 106.
21 There are doubts about the authenticity of much of the countryman’s speech. Lines 904-13 are deleted by Hartung and Diggle, while Kirchhoff and Page delete 907-13. I am not convinced that lines 904-6 are interpolations; in light of the other evaluative comments in the speech, it seems reasonable that he may have made such a comment about this speaker (see further Biehl (ed.), (1965) at 99, Chapouthier (ed.), (1968) at 68, Page (1934) at 54).
22 See further below on the subjective nature of the rhēsis at p. 203.
23 See further Johansen (1959) at 151-8. The majority occur in the plays of Euripides; for a list of Euripidean concluding evaluations, see Jong (1991) at 191-2.
innocence of the king’s son (*Hippolytos* 1249-54). He identifies himself as a slave in the palace, explicitly declaring his connection to both the person whose fate he is describing and his addressee, before stating in conclusion, ἐπεὶ νῦν ἔσθλον ὅντ' ἐπίσταµαι (1254).

The revelation of information through an interrogatory format is quite common in reporting *pragmata*. Questions are used in an elaborate and noteworthy manner in the reporting *pragma* at *Oedipus the King* 924-1046. After asking the chorus for the location of Oedipus’ house, the messenger greets Iokaste and states that he has good news for her husband and his house. In response to her questions about his news and its origin, he replies that it comes from Corinth and will bring happiness and grief. Perplexed, she asks what can achieve both and is told that Oedipus is to become king of Corinth. Confused, she then asks if Polybos is dead, which the messenger confirms. She asks for further confirmation and, once this is given, calls Oedipus out of the palace.

The messenger does not give Iokaste the news in a straightforward fashion, but instead requires her to work hard to get all the details. Then, when Oedipus appears and hears the news from Iokaste, he asks the messenger for confirmation (957) and the cause of Polybos’ death (960). After their mutual celebration of the news, Iokaste and Oedipus discuss the prophesied danger that still faces Oedipus as long as his mother still lives, and the messenger begins to question Oedipus regarding the source of his fear (989).

Within twenty-five lines the messenger asks eight questions of Oedipus, the most questions asked by a reporting figure of its audience,24 and as he begins to explain why Oedipus need not worry, Oedipus begins to question *him*. The messenger’s last question at 1014 is immediately followed by the first of Oedipus’ seventeen subsequent questions at 1015. This flow of questioning from Iokaste to the messenger, from Oedipus to the messenger, from the messenger to Oedipus and then again from Oedipus to the messenger maintains the momentum of the scene and emphasises one of the play’s key themes, that of knowledge and ignorance. The audience’s engagement with the revelation of information is maintained through the ever-changing progression of interrogatory dialogue until everything is revealed.

Elements of the tragic reporting *pragma* are parodied by Aristophanes and imitated by Menander, but never the entirety of the Euripidean typical structure.25 For example, in

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24 Five questions is the highest number asked by a reporting figure in any other *pragma*: *Women of Trachis* 180-496, *Helen* 597-757 and *Rhesos* 808-76.

Birds there are three reporting *pragma*ta which contain echoes of tragedy in style and rhythm, as well as the presence of Iris, the divine messenger of Zeus (1199-1261). In the first reporting *pragma* Pithetairos announces the arrival of a man running and breathing hard (1121), who then asks for Pithetairos himself. (As discussed above, these are regular opening elements of a Euripidean reporting *pragma*.) Once Pithetairos identifies himself, the messenger delivers his news: Ἐξεκομοδημαί σοι τὸ τεῖχος (1124). The messenger delivers no *rhēsis*, but instead provides detail of the wall’s construction in response to Pithetairos’ questions (1125-63), which is more reminiscent of Sophoclean reporting *pragma*. The second messenger also enters at a run (1168-9) and the third reporting *pragma* contains an extended *rhēsis* describing bird-related mania in Athens, beginning and ending with paratragic lines. Clearly then, there were elements of the structure of a reporting *pragma* which could be recognised as conventional for tragedy.

1.1.2. PARTICIPANTS

As discussed above, a reporting role can be undertaken by any character in a tragedy, and this includes the chorus, which in the *parodos* in *Hekabe* reports to the former Trojan queen on the decision of the Greeks regarding Polyxene’s sacrifice to Achilleus.

770. Rau systematically identifies the elements which Aristophanes parodies from Euripides’ reporting *pragma*ta (Rau (1967) at 164-8.) Menander’s reporting *pragma* at *Sikyonian* 169-721 appears to be influenced by the countryman’s account of the Argive assembly in *Orestes* (852-956). There are similarities in the subject-matter and the structure, as well as direct quotations. For example, the messenger’s speech begins (ἐτύγχανον μὲν ... βαίνον, 176-7) with the same words as the countryman’s in *Orestes* 866-7. The subject of both speeches is a debate at an assembly concerning the fate of a man and a woman. *Sikyonian* 182 is a direct quotation of *Orestes* 920, with the replacement of δημοτικός for α/τουργός. There may also be an echo of the countryman’s last words (ἄλλ.’ ἄπόλεσσαν, *Orestes* 956) in the messenger’s last words (ἄλλ.’ ἀπε[χο]μαι, *Sikyonian* 271). In addition, the scene begins with ὅ γεραϊ, a frequent form of address in tragic reporting *pragma*ta (see further below at pp. 226-7). See further Arnott (1986) at 4-6, Gomme and Sandbach (eds.), (1973) at 650-8.


Overall, however, characters are more likely to act as the reporting figure. There are two main types of reporting figure in tragedy: the herald and the messenger, and the majority are male and of a lower social rank – although there are examples of female, royal and divine reporting figures. And while there is an assumption of truth regarding the information delivered by both herald and messenger, there are examples of deceptive speeches in tragedy. The internal audience in a reporting *pragma* can consist of the chorus alone or the chorus with one or more characters. The playwright’s decision as regards each of these elements of a reporting *pragma* dictates how the information affects the *systasis*, the *muthos* and the audience of the tragedy.

There are two main categories of reporting figure based on the type of information reported. A message brought at the behest of a specific character is often – but not always – delivered by a herald (*κηρύξ*), who usually acts as the official representative of someone in authority.⁵²⁸ Information about events witnessed by a character, on the other hand, can be brought by any dramatic figure. For convenience, I will use the term ‘herald’ for any character that brings a message from another and ‘messenger’ for someone who reports on events they have witnessed, although the roles of heralds and of messengers are not necessarily distinct from each other in tragedy: heralds can report on events that have occurred, while non-heralds can bring a message.

While both messengers and heralds have the freedom to choose how they present the information, for heralds the scope of the information is usually limited to what they have been told and for messengers it is limited only by what they have seen themselves (or, on rare occasions, to what they have heard from another eyewitness). All messengers choose what details they wish to reveal to their audience and how to convey their information. A messenger is therefore not an objective reporter of events.⁵²⁹ They

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⁵²⁸ Named *kērukes* in extant tragedy: *Agamemnon*, *A. Suppliant Women*, *Seven against Thebes*, *Children of Herakles* and *E. Suppliant Women*.

⁵²⁹ de Jong clearly disproves the objectivity of the messenger-speech through her analysis of the Euripidean messenger’s use of concluding evaluations, interspersed criticism and engagement, epithets, comparisons and denominations (Jong (1991) at 63-116).
do, however, often explicitly draw attention to their status as eyewitness at the events that occurred as authority for the truth of their report.\textsuperscript{30}

Being able to rely on the information reported by a messenger was important both in real life and in tragedy. Lewis specifies four criteria that were used for evaluating a messenger’s news in ancient Greece: whether the identity of the messenger could be vouched for, their social status, whether they were an eyewitness, and their motive in bringing the news (for example, whether for financial gain).\textsuperscript{31} In the brief time that a messenger is on stage in a tragedy, critical evaluation of these criteria is not always possible – nor is it necessarily dramatically desirable. A messenger’s report is therefore presumed to be accurate by their internal and external audiences. On occasion, however, a tragic messenger does volunteer proof of their identity or is asked to prove their credibility.\textsuperscript{32} Thus, a messenger’s claim to knowledge may have been tested and evaluated by their audience, based on their identity and connection with the information, but the information they delivered was conventionally assumed to be accurate and truthful. Barrett argues that this convention evolved from a similar convention surrounding the traditional messenger in Homer and lyric poetry, who ‘is swift, reliable, and always tells all and further connects the authority of a Homeric messenger with the authority of the poet’.\textsuperscript{33} He does not, however, distinguish between the role of a herald and a messenger in Homer, arguing that Homer combines the roles of \textit{kērux} and \textit{angelos}. As Scodel rightly points out, the tragic messenger is not like a Homeric herald, who brings a specific message from a person in authority to another person,\textsuperscript{34} and she identifies a type of omniscience that occurs in Homeric first-person narratives as a more likely source for the authority attached to messenger’s speeches in tragedy.\textsuperscript{35} Regardless of whether it evolved from the authority attached to the herald or that exhibited in first-person narratives, however, the convention of the truth of a messenger’s report likely developed from Homer.

\textsuperscript{30} See de Jong for a list of the Euripidean examples of the messenger’s claims to eyewitness status (Jong (1991) at 183-4).
\textsuperscript{31} Lewis (1996) at 80.
\textsuperscript{32} For example, \textit{Phoenician Women} 1072-4, \textit{Trojan Women} 235-7, E. \textit{Elektra} 765-9 and \textit{Children of Herakles} 638-40.
\textsuperscript{34} Scodel (2002).
\textsuperscript{35} Scodel (1999) at 65-6.
Despite the conventional acceptance of the truth of a messenger’s report, there are three reporting \textit{pragmata} involving messengers who assume a false identity and deliver false information.\textsuperscript{36} While these figures deceive the on-stage audience as to their identity and the news they report, they do not deceive the external audience since earlier scenes in the drama have prepared them for the deceptive message.\textsuperscript{37} The external audience knows in advance that the message will be a lie, although they do not necessarily know the specific details of what the messenger is going to say. This helps to maintain the audience’s interest in the delivery of the information.

In \textit{Philoktetes} (542-625) a shipmaster approaches Neoptolemos while he is talking with Philoktetes to bring word that Phoenix and the sons of Theseus are searching for Neoptolemos. Earlier in the play, Odysseus had told Neoptolemos that if he took too long in his dealings with Philoktetes he would send a sailor disguised as a ναυκλήρος (126-131). The external audience is therefore aware from his entry that the ‘shipmaster’ is actually a Greek sailor, but it does not know what he will say since this was not discussed in the preparatory scene with Odysseus. Of the internal audience, Neoptolemos knows that the man is lying, but Philoktetes does not know that the shipmaster is not who he says he is and therefore has no reason to disbelieve his story. The external audience possesses knowledge superior to Philoktetes’ about the man’s identity, but is still interested in his speech. Similarly, in \textit{Libation-Bearers} Orestes announces to Elektra and the chorus that he and Pylades will disguise themselves to gain entry to the palace so that they can kill Aigisthos (560-4). When they arrive at the palace, Klytaimestra greets them as \textit{xenoi} (668), which confirms for the audience that their disguise is successful. Orestes declares that he is ξένος ... Δαυλιε/υς ἐκ Φωκέων (674), but then proceeds to report the death of Orestes, a story which had not been previously highlighted to the audience. While aware of the deception concerning identity, the audience could not anticipate the nature of Orestes’ deceptive story. Aeschylus thus renders the external audience more knowledgeable than the internal

\textsuperscript{36} \textit{Philoktetes} 542-625, \textit{Libation-Bearers} 668-718 and \textit{S. Elektra} 660-803. In addition, there is some deception in Lichas’ report of Herakles’ activities in \textit{Women of Trachis} (248-90), which will be discussed further below at pp. 237-44.

\textsuperscript{37} In two of these scenes (\textit{Philoktetes} and \textit{Elektra}), the false messenger avoids the reporting of direct speech, which may have been noticeable to some members of the audience well-versed in the conventions of the messenger-speech (Marshall (2006) at 210n.26).
audience (here Klytaimestra), but still surprises the external audience by what is revealed on stage.

A slightly different situation occurs in Sophocles’ *Elektra*, where the paidagogos adopts a false identity and tells a false story, both of which have been signalled to the audience in the prologue (44-50). Orestes told the paidagogos to introduce himself as a visitor from Phokis sent by Phanoteus and to invent a tale about Orestes’ death, perhaps by a chariot fall at the Pythian Games. Again, Klytaimestra’s triple address to the paidagogos as ξε/unistev (671, 675 and 678) makes clear to the audience that the deception is successful. The *pragma* is filled with the standard signifiers of a true messenger and the paidagogos finishes his account with a three-line exaggerated declaration of the truth of his story, recognised as such by the knowing audience:38

\[
\text{τοιαύτα σοι ταύτ' ἐστὶν, ὡς μὲν ἐν λόγοις ἄλγεινά, τοῖς δ' ἱδώσιν, οὔτε εἴδομεν, μέγιστα πάντων ὅν ὅποιον ἐγὼ κακὼν. (S. Elektra 761-3) 39}
\]

To hold the audience’s interest in the speech, the content of which it is already aware, Sophocles has the paidagogos tell a complicated and very descriptive narrative of a chariot race, influenced by the one held during Patroklos’ funeral games in *Iliad* 23.262-652.40 The narrative is long and rich in detail, describing not only the manner of Orestes’ death, but also his victories in the previous days. Such a vivid account would have been compelling material for the audience – despite their knowledge that it is not true. The internal audience is unaware of the deception and the contrasting reactions to this deceptive report displayed by Klytaimestra and Elektra heighten the pathos of the scene for the audience, who see the same news greeted with relief and deepest grief.41

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38 For example, the request for details at 679, his promise to tell all at 680 and his intentional statement that he was sent by a friend in order to establish the truth of his message (667, 670-1).

39 Concluding evaluations often begin with τοιο/unistos τοιόσδε or το/unistos (see further Collard (ed.), (1975) at 295, Jong (1991) at 191).

40 Davidson discusses the Homeric allusions and vocabulary in the paidagogos’ speech (Davidson (1988) at 65-7).

41 The internal audience’s contrasting reactions to the paidagogos’ deceptive report will be discussed further below at pp. 218-19. It has been noted that these reactions reflect those of ‘the ideal audience in the theatre: they are either filled with exaltation or emotionally devastated by what they see and hear’ (Ringer (1998) at 162).
In all three plays, the audience possesses superior knowledge to the internal audience of the reporting figure’s speech, but the playwright is careful to craft the content of the speech in a way that still manages to surprise and engage the audience. In addition, watching the creation and performance of a false narrative before an unknowing internal audience may remind the external audience of their own status as willing viewers of a fiction.\textsuperscript{42}

Heralds can bring several different types of message in tragedy, including an ultimatum to rulers to surrender suppliants who have fled to them for protection; the imminent arrival of a character; and orders from rulers, including Zeus. They are often portrayed negatively and treated with suspicion by their addressees. \textit{Orestes} contains a three-line generalization that is strongly critical of heralds:

\begin{verbatim}
[τὸ γὰρ γένος τοιούτον ἔπλε τὸν εὐτυχῆ
πηδόν’ ἀεὶ κήρυκες’ ὁδὸς δ’ αὐτοῖς φίλος,
ἄς ἄν δύνηται πόλεος ἐν τ’ ἄρχασιν ἦλ.] (Orestes 895-7)
\end{verbatim}

While this generalization appears to be an interpolation, it suggests a pre-existing sentiment.\textsuperscript{43} In addition, despite Talthybios’ compassionate treatment of the women in \textit{Trojan Women}, he is the target of abuse from Kassandra, which strengthens the idea of a literary trope of the disreputable herald (424-6):

\begin{verbatim}
ἡ δεινὸς ὁ λάτρις. τί ποτ’ ἔχουσι τούνομα
κήρυκες, ἐν ἀπέχθημα πάγκοιν βροτοῖς,
oi peri τυράννους καὶ πόλεις ὑπηρέται;
425
\end{verbatim}

Kassandra is ascribing a general attitude toward heralds, rather than to Talthybios in particular – as Dyson and Lee state, ‘What she attacks in Talthybius is not so much the man as his office.’\textsuperscript{44} A different type of negative claim against heralds is made by the chorus in \textit{Children of Herakles}: πᾶσι γὰρ οὕτος κήρυξι νόμος, / δῖς τόσα πυργοῦν τῶν γιγνομένων (292-3); however, the comment is made not in regard to the herald’s official message, but rather relates to his threatened report of mistreatment at Demophon’s

\begin{quote}
\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{42} See further Goward (1999) at 113.
\textsuperscript{43} These lines were originally deleted by Dindorf and this deletion has been followed by Diggle. For a persuasive summary of the arguments for interpolation, see Oakley (1992).
\textsuperscript{44} Dyson and Lee (2000) at 154. Aélion suggests that Euripides’ negative portrayal of heralds might have been partly influenced by the abuses committed, in the name of Athenian imperialism, by those who obeyed orders without discussion (Aélion (1983a) at 159).
\end{quote}
The Egyptian herald in Aeschylus’ *Suppliant Women* attempts to claim the opposite: καὶ γὰρ πρέπει κηρυκ' ἀπαγγέλλειν τὸρδις / ἔκαστα (931-2).

Heralds who arrive to issue an ultimatum concerning a group of suppliants are usually portrayed behaving badly, which strengthens their negative representation in tragedy. For example, the Egyptian herald in Aeschylus’ *Suppliant Women* sacrilegiously lays hands on the suppliants sitting at the altars (908-10), while Eurystheus’ herald in *Children of Herakles* knocks Iolaos to the ground (75-9). And there are two instances of violence against reporting figures in tragedy: *Oedipus the King* 1152 and *Children of Herakles* 270-3. In the latter example, Demophon is reminded by the chorus of the conventional inviolability of heralds, which was upheld in Greek society.45

Heralds can also report the imminent arrival of a character as, for example, in *Agamemnon* and *Women of Trachis*. Both Agamemnon’s unnamed herald and Lichas, Herakles’ herald, bring word of their lord’s triumphal return home. Two divine heralds appear in tragedy, bringing messages from the gods: Iris (*Herakles*) and Hermes (*Prometheus Bound* and *Ion*).46 Iris brings a message for Lyssa from Hera, while Hermes acts as the herald of Zeus (πατρὶ Ζηνὶ πιστὸς ἀγγέλος, *Prometheus Bound* 969).

Most heralds are not named in tragedy and do not exist beyond the duration of the reporting pragma. There are, however, two who perform a more integrated role, becoming key dramatic figures in the play: Talthybios in *Trojan Women* and *Hekabe* and Lichas in *Women of Trachis*.47 Both heralds appear in the previous literary tradition attached to a particular mythological figure, namely Agamemnon and Herakles respectively.48 Talthybios appears in two Euripidean tragedies revolving around the immediate aftermath of the Trojan War. But, while he acts as herald for the Greeks in *Hekabe* and *Trojan Women*, he does not behave in the same fashion or possess the same characteristics in each play, particularly in regards to his reporting role. In *Hekabe* he

45 For a discussion of the inviolability of heralds, see Wéry (1966) at 479-86. Violence committed against heralds and envoys is recorded in Plutarch *Pericles* 30 and Pausanias 1.36.3 (both concerning the death of Anthemocritus by the Megarians), and Thucydides 2.67.  
46 Hermes appears in *Ion* only to deliver the prologue. He has no reporting role.  
47 Lichas will be discussed later in this chapter as part of the analysis of *Women of Trachis*.  
48 Talthybios first appeared in Homer’s *Iliad* (1.320-1) as Agamemnon’s herald. Herodotos 7.134 notes that there was a sanctuary of Talthybios in Sparta and that the Talthybidai, descendants of Talthybios, accompanied embassies from Sparta. To him is attributed the divine power to punish those who mistreat heralds.
performs a reasonably straightforward messenger role, entering, recounting Polyxene’s sacrifice on Achilleus’ tomb in a *rhēsis*, then leaving the stage (484-608). In *Trojan Women*, however, he acts both as a herald reporting the orders of the Greek commanders, and as a messenger reporting events that have occurred offstage. He appears regularly throughout the play, providing information about decisions made by or commands from the Greek army. On one occasion he reports to Hekabe on Andromache’s actions before Neoptolemos’ ship sailed (1123-55). And when he is performing the role of the herald, he is not the stereotypical herald in tragedy. He shows compassion and concern for the women and for Astyanax (709-11, 1130-1 and 1150-2). He also appears, albeit indirectly in a messenger-speech, in *Orestes*, where he is treated less favourably. He is described as speaking ambiguously (διχοµ/uni1FE6θος, 890) and as flattering those in office. But, while in literary tradition Talthybios was equated with the position of herald, in *Orestes* he is not presented as such. Indeed he is invited to speak by the *kērux* in the assembly (884-7) and is therefore explicitly distanced from the position of herald.

A reporting *pragma* can be undertaken by any of the *dramatis personae* regardless of social rank or of gender. Yet the majority of reporting figures are male, which is appropriate considering that most reported events occur in distanced space and few women are described as travelling in extant tragedy. The ratio is approximately four male reporting figures to every one female reporting figure, and it is noteworthy that there is an almost complete gender divide in the location of the events reported. Female messengers usually report on events taking place within the *skēnē*, which generally represents a palace, whereas male messengers nearly always report events taking place outside the palace and usually outside the city, and this matches the generalised association of women with the *oikos* and men with the *polis* in Greek literature. While this structural contrast is not completely accurate, the dramatic location of the house is often connected more closely with women. It therefore seems natural that women

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49 Sullivan notes that Talthybios acts not just as a ‘narrator of actions’, but, unusually for Euripidean messengers, as ‘an active agent in the narrative’ (Sullivan (2007) at 472). Gilmartin identifies Talthybios as a structural device within the play (Gilmartin (1970)). Lichas will be discussed in section 2 below.

50 For differing approaches to the relationship between the *oikos* and the *polis* in Athenian drama, see Foley (1982), Goldhill (1986) at 69-74, Shaw (1975).

51 See further Scolnicov (1994) at 13, Wiles (1997) at 84.
should be the ones to report on events occurring within the oikos and men on those events outside. The nurse in Women of Trachis (871-946), the servant in Alkestis (141-212) and the nurse in Andromache (802-78) all relate events that occurred in their mistress’ bedroom: Deianeira’s suicide, Alkestis’ tears and farewells to her children and Hermione’s attempted suicide respectively. Deianeira also relates events within the palace when she tells the Trachinian women about the sun destroying the wool with which she smeared the tunic for Herakles with what she thought was a love potion (663-730). A further example of a female figure reporting events from inside the skēnē/palace is Klytaimestra’s shocking description of her killing of Agamemnon and Kassandra (Agamemnon 1372-98). This is no ordinary description of events witnessed, but rather shocking actions undertaken by the person reporting them. It is an exultant boast rather than an impartial eyewitness account, and as such it is an exceptional report.

Only three mortal women report on events that occurred outside a house and interestingly two are addressing family members: Ismene in Oedipus at Kolonos (324-509) and Chrysothemis in Sophocles’ Elektra (871-919). Ismene tells her father and sister of the events at Thebes since their departure, and in particular of the actions of her brothers Polyneikes and Eteokles. Her familial connection to both her audience and the perpetrators of the deeds she is reporting makes her message more poignant and adds an extra level of emotion to the information she reports. Chrysothemis, meanwhile, reports to Elektra the discovery of the offerings at Agamemnon’s tomb which she thinks signals Orestes’ return. And the final example of a mortal female bringing news from elsewhere occurs in Hekabe, when the former Trojan queen’s servant brings news of the discovery of Polydoros’ body on the seashore (658-701). There is a bond of friendship between the two women.

In contrast, there are only seven examples of male figures reporting on events within the skēnē. Three of these are highly unusual, which strengthens the notion of a gendered locational divide for reporting. As a servant, the Phrygian in Orestes who reports on the attack against Helen by Orestes and Pylades is expected to be within the oikos. Other examples of mortal female reporting figures are Agamemnon 264-350, 1072-1330, Persians 159-230, Aias 201-327, Andromache 56-90. In all cases they report to the chorus alone or to a female character. Iris appears as Hera’s herald in Herakles and Athene addresses Odysseus in Aias.

The other instances are Libation-Bearers 875-91, Oedipus the King 1223-96, Herakles 910-1015 and Alkestis 746-72. All four reporting figures appear to be male servants.
(1368-1502), but it is noteworthy that Orestes says to him: ὅτε γὰρ γυνὴ πέφυκας οὖτ' ἐν ἄνδρασιν σό γ' εἴ. (1528). While the Phrygian is male, his presence in the house and his reporting of events therein may be seen as mitigated by his effeminacy. The messenger in Antigone who reports Eurydice’s suicide is provided with an explicit reason for his presence in the oikos to witness her death. He had brought the message of Haimon and Antigone’s deaths to Eurydice and after her abrupt exit had followed her into the house to check on her (1278-1316). The third example is slightly different because the skēnē does not represent a house, but rather the tents of the Trojan women. It would therefore seem even more likely that the gender of the messenger of events within would be female. In Hekabe, however, Euripides presents Polymestor reporting the deaths of his children and his own blinding at the hands of Hekabe and her fellow Trojan women. The choice of Polymestor as messenger heightens the pathos of the scene, as he describes the horrific wounds he suffered and the cruel deaths of his children.

By altering the usual pattern of the gender of figures reporting events that occurred at a particular type of location, the playwrights can surprise the audience with a reporting pragma from an unexpected character.

Reporting figures can be of low status or they can be rulers and even gods. By using nameless low-status reporting figures (usually herdsmen, servants, sailors, soldiers or farmers) who are not directly affected by or involved in the systasis, the playwrights provide another perspective on the events, reinforcing the idea that tragedy is a multi-vocal medium, presenting different voices for the audience through direct portrayal. Because of this, the audience and reader must determine for themselves how to interpret the information provided by each dramatic figure. Furthermore, the use of lower class characters as speakers can sometimes act as a foil to the on-stage action, the flow of the play or other characters. These messengers are sometimes given strong individual characteristics, which momentarily capture the attention of the audience from the main characters in the play. For example, the sentry in Antigone is garrulous and fears for his own safety, while Lichas is a coward, scared to tell Deianeira the truth in Women of Trachis.

54 On polyphony in Athenian tragedy, see further Hall (1997) at 118-24.
Well-born characters can, however, also be used by the playwrights to serve as messengers within stories in which they are personally involved.\textsuperscript{55} These reporting figures are participants, rather than simply eyewitnesses, and often speak of their own actions or of the actions done to them. Since the events of the play concern them personally, their involvement adds more pathos to what might otherwise be a conventional speech concerning events offstage. Polymestor’s account of his own blinding by the Trojan slaves (\textit{Hekabe} 1056-1182) and Klytaimnestra’s triumphant description of the murder of Agamemnon and Kassandra are sensational scenes (\textit{Agamemnon} 1372-98). The use of victim and murderer as narrator of these events provides a thrilling perspective. When Hyllos reports the catastrophe that has befallen Herakles, his personal relationship with the hero and Deianeira and the fact that he is reporting to Deianeira produces a scene evoking extreme pity from the audience, not only for the hero who suffers such dreadful pain and for the woman who has caused it unintentionally, but also for the youth who had to witness and must relate these events to his own mother (\textit{Women of Trachis} 734-820).

All reporting \textit{pragmata} in tragedy occur in the presence of the chorus, even if the chorus is not the primary intended audience. The majority, however, feature the messenger reporting directly to another character in the company of the chorus. These multi-character reporting scenes involve extended interaction between the characters with occasional input from the chorus, usually in the form of a gnomic statement or an emotional response to the news. There is usually only a single character listening to the report, but sometimes there are two, and the various permutations of interacting characters allow the playwrights to create scenes of diverse complexity, tones and emotion for the audience.

Those reporting \textit{pragmata} that occur in the presence of the chorus alone (‘chorus-messenger scenes’) are generally less complex than multi-character scenes, since there are fewer parties interacting and the chorus is rarely directly affected by the events being reported.\textsuperscript{56} The report of news or events rarely compels the chorus to \textit{do}

\textsuperscript{55} For example, Klytaimnestra (\textit{Agamemnon}), Teknessa (\textit{Aias}), Hyllos and Deianeira (\textit{Women of Trachis}), Chrysothemis (\textit{S. Elektra}), Ismene (\textit{Oedipus at Kolonos}) and Polymestor (\textit{Hekabe}).

\textsuperscript{56} Some chorus-messenger scenes are immediately followed by the arrival of a character and a further reporting \textit{pragma} occurs: \textit{Agamemnon} 503-82, \textit{Libation-Bearers} 875-84, \textit{A. Suppliant Women} 873-910, \textit{Antigone} 1155-82, \textit{Aias} 719-83, \textit{Iphigeneia among the Taurians} 1284-1306,
something and these *pragma* ̄a* often serve the simple purpose of providing important information to the external audience in preparation for what is to happen subsequently. This is borne out by the content of the news reported to the chorus alone, which mainly comprises the death, attempted murder or final moments of a principal character.57 In three further cases, the report foretells death (*Agamemnon* 1072-1330, *Women of Trachis* 663-730) or possible death (*Aias* 719-83).58

The typical structure of chorus-messenger scenes is: the messenger enters, has a brief exchange with the chorus and, after delivering the *rhēsis*, he or she leaves.59 For example, in *Herakles*, a messenger rushes out of the palace at 910 and engages in a lyric exchange with the chorus. He is unable to articulate what has occurred until his third utterance when he briefly states: τεθν/uni1FB6σι πα/uni1FD6δες (*Herakles* 913). The chorus asks for further information and the messenger’s *rhēsis* begins at 922. Upon finishing delivering the details of the slaughter at 1015, he exits.

There are three chorus-messenger scenes which are structurally atypical: Aeschylus’ *Suppliant Women* 600-775, Euripides’ *Orestes* 1369-1502 and *Rhesos* 728-876. The scene in *Suppliant Women* is one of the few reporting *pragma* where the news impacts on the chorus personally (although this irregularity can be explained by the unusual status of this chorus, in that the entire drama revolves around the daughters of

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59 There is a similar pattern in *Women of Trachis* 871-946, *Alkestis* 141-212, *Ion* 1106-1228, and *Bacchae* 1024-1152. The reporting *pragma* in *Oedipus at Kolonos* (1579-1669) and *Oedipus the King* (1223-96) are similar, but contain a brief exchange between chorus and messenger after the *rhēsis* and before the messenger leaves. In *Aias* (201-330) the *rhēsis* is followed by Aias’ offstage cries before the *ekkyklēma* is revealed to display Aias sitting among the slaughtered beasts – a stark end to a reporting *pragma*. 
In this reporting *pragma* Danaos enters and gives a two-line summary of his news: that the Argives have decided to give them shelter. The chorus (his daughters) greets him and asks for further detail, which he then briefly gives (605-24). The structurally anticipated departure of the messenger (here Danaos) does not then occur; instead, the Danaides pray for the Argives before Danaos notices the Egyptian fleet sailing towards land. He reassures his children that they will be safe and then leaves to seek the assistance of the Argives at 775. The interaction in this scene is quite unlike the interaction in any other reporting *pragma*, mainly owing to the nature of the news and its impact on both the internal audience and the reporting figure, and the latter’s relationship with his audience. Danaos is reporting news to his own daughters that is very important to them all in terms of their survival. In a typical reporting *pragma*, the messenger is relating information about events that he has participated in and witnessed, but which rarely impacts directly on his future.

The second chorus-messenger scene which does not fit the standard pattern is that in *Orestes* (1369-1502) featuring a singing Phrygian servant. The messenger is in a state of terror as a result of the events he has witnessed and, rather than speak in iambics, uses a combination of sung metres, which help to convey his emotional state as well as to indicate his foreignness. Unlike a typical messenger, he does not give a summary of the events he has witnessed on entry. Instead the crux of his report is not delivered

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60 The chorus-messenger scenes in *Bacchae* (1024-1152) and *Ion* (1106-1228) also involve choruses who are affected by the news that the messenger brings, but the scene structure closely follows the standard pattern.

61 This is the only ‘chorus-messenger scene’ which does not concern past or foretold death; instead it concerns the removal of the threat of death.

62 There is at least one other barbarian ‘low’ character in tragedy who sings: the Egyptian herald in Aeschylus’ *Suppliant Women*. (See further Hall (2006) at 315-17).

63 The complexity of the Phrygian’s song highlights Euripides’ musical innovations in line with the so-called ‘new music’ movement, proponents of which included Timotheus of Miletus and Melanippides of Melos. See further West (1992) at 356-72.

64 It seems reasonable that the Phrygian enters from the *skênê* rather than leaping down from the palace roof, as his appearance and style of speech are already remarkable and such a descent poses potential hazards for the actor. For a summary of the arguments for the various means of entry, see Porter (1990) at 382-93. Wright’s proposition that the Phrygian entered on the *mêchanê* does not seem plausible. Such an entry is reserved for gods or for people assisted by supernatural means (for example in *Medea*). A slave entering the stage by the *mêchanê*
until almost the end of his song and, even then, this is not the whole truth. This messenger does not know the truth of the events he has witnessed and indeed the full truth is ostensibly revealed to the audience only at the very end of the play by Apollo, which is in keeping with the play’s recurring techniques of surprise and frustration.65 Even once the play has ended, however, the audience is left in doubt as to whether Helen is actually dead. The Phrygian’s entrance is announced by the chorus which expects to hear that Helen has been killed. And in his first line he does mention thanatos, but only in relation to his own escape from death. His extensive song is then interrupted by brief questions from the chorus (Orestes 1380, 1393-4, 1425, 1453 and 1473), which attempts to extract the news they are desperate to hear: what happened to Helen. But the first possible hint of Helen’s fate is not given to the internal or external audiences until 1491 when Hermione is described as entering ἐπί φόνῳ χαμηπετεί ματρός. Even this is quickly negated by the report of the disappearance of Helen’s body. The Phrygian’s song stands out from the previous parts of the play not only through its multitude of metres, but also the frequent epizeuxis and exclamatory cries.66 Earlier in Orestes there is a more traditional reporting scene between Elektra and the countryman telling of the events in the Argive assembly (852-956).67 So, by creating a completely different type of reporting pragma, Euripides avoids insipid repetition, and creates a memorable theatrical moment.68

The final example of a structurally atypical chorus-messenger scene is similar to the Orestes scene in that it features a panicked barbarian who sings. The Thracian charioteer has been wounded in the night-time attack that killed Rhesos and he enters

65 Wright notes several points where ‘false preparation’ occurs during the play: Orestes 67-71, 1269-70, 1366-9 (Wright (2008b) at 44-5). See further Arnott (1983).
66 Epizeuxis: φροῖδα φροῖδα, Γᾶ Γᾶ, 1373, Ἰλιὸν Ἰλιὸν, ὀμοί ὀμοί, 1381, Δυσελέναν Δυσελέναν, 1387. Exclamatory cries: αὐά 1375 and 1397, ὠτοτοῖ 1389 and Ἡ ἴ ὁ μοί μοί 1465.
67 The content of the countryman’s speech, however, is quite unusual in its complex account of the Argive assembly featuring extensive direct speech and debate (as discussed above at pp. 199-200).
68 Porter identifies echoes of traditional messenger-speeches in the Phrygian’s song, in particular the exclusive use of iambic metres in the narrative at 1407-24, the mournful cries at 1381-92 and 1395-1403 as reminiscent of the grief reference following the usual introductory summary of disaster, and finally the generalized conclusion at 1500-2 (Porter (1990) at 362-72).
lamenting in song the events that occurred \((Rhesos\ 728)\). The chorus does not immediately interact with him, instead attempting to hide before discerning that he is an ally and asking his identity \((732-7)\). The charioteer is too upset to reply immediately and continues to bemoan the events. The chorus perceives that something bad has happened and finally the charioteer announces the death of Rhesos \((747-53)\). The chorus recaps his comments before the charioteer launches into a standard messenger-speech in iambics \((756-803)\). At the end of his speech Hektor enters and the reporting \textit{pragma} ends.

Scenes featuring a messenger reporting on events occurring offstage to the chorus alone generally follow a simple structure, with little complex interaction between chorus and messenger. The main purpose is to provide information to the audience, rather than to further the plot of the tragedy. The information provided by the messenger rarely affects the chorus members personally or compels them to do something in response, but rather prepares the audience for something that will happen later in the play or provides information on events that were previously mentioned as being about to occur. The playwright did, on occasion, however, deviate from these conventions to surprise the audience through creating a remarkable scene.

The majority of reporting \textit{pragmata} in the extant tragedies of Aeschylus and Euripides involve the interaction of the messenger with only one other character in the presence of the chorus, while Sophocles’ reporting scenes are more evenly split between interactions of two and three characters. During the multi-character reporting \textit{pragma}, the chorus usually maintains a silent background presence, only occasionally interjecting in the exchange between the messenger and his addressee/s. In some \textit{pragmata}, there may be some introductory dialogue between the messenger and the chorus before the main report is delivered to a character, usually because the messenger cannot identify or see his intended addressee. Once the messenger is delivering his report, his attention is usually directed towards his addressee only – unless the chorus draws notice to itself. In many plays the messenger’s exit is immediately followed by a choral ode.\textsuperscript{69}

There are however several \textit{pragmata} where the playwrights create a more complex staging with at least one reporting figure, at least one listening figure and the chorus (as well as mute extras). Aeschylus has two ‘three-character reporting \textit{pragmata’}, although

\textsuperscript{69} In accordance with the formal structure of tragedy identified by Taplin (1977b) at 55.
in each scene one character is silent throughout.\textsuperscript{70} Sophocles is the playwright who fully develops the dramatic possibilities of three-character reporting \textit{pragmata}. In \textit{Oedipus the King}, \textit{Elektra} and \textit{Philoktetes}, the third character serves as a further recipient of the news, while in \textit{Women of Trachis} the third character is another messenger.

As mentioned above, three-character reporting \textit{pragmata} frequently include a character who does not participate verbally, instead remaining silent while the news is reported to the other character.\textsuperscript{71} This is because three-character interactions had the potential to be more confusing for the audience to follow, with the use of masks often making it difficult for the audience to identify which figure was speaking in the large acting space, particularly if there was a rapid exchange of lines.\textsuperscript{72} The silence of these figures is not generally noteworthy, however, and in many cases the audience may not have even registered that character’s lack of speaking.\textsuperscript{73} For example in \textit{Oedipus at Kolonos} Oedipus and the chorus have been discussing the possibility of refuge from Athens, when Antigone interrupts to announce the arrival of someone on horseback. After a duologue between Antigone and Oedipus ending with Antigone’s joyful identification of Ismene (310-323), Ismene enters and greets them both. From the moment of Ismene’s entrance to her exit, Antigone is silent (324-509). She does not respond verbally (although presumably there is a visual reply) to Ismene’s greeting of her (324) or to her news of the quarrel between Polyneikes and Eteokles. It is possible that she is silent out of respect for her father and allows him to question Ismene, but it is not necessary to identify a reason for her silence, since it would not have seemed unusual for a character to be silent when two others were conversing.\textsuperscript{74}

\textsuperscript{70} \textit{Libation-Bearers} 668-718, \textit{Seven against Thebes} 1005-53.

\textsuperscript{71} Scenes with silent third characters include: Klytaimestra, Orestes (disguised) and Pylades (\textit{Libation-Bearers} 668-718), the herald, Antigone and Ismene (\textit{Seven against Thebes} 1005-53), Oedipus, Ismene and Antigone (\textit{Oedipus at Kolonos} 324-509), Peleus, the messenger and Andromache (\textit{Andromache} 1069-1165), Menelaos, his servant and Helen (\textit{Helen} 597-757), Pentheus, the messenger and Dionysos (\textit{Bacchae} 660-774) and Agamemnon, the messenger and Menelaos (\textit{Iphigeneia at Aulis} 414-41).

\textsuperscript{72} See further Arnott (1989) at 104, Easterling (1997) at 153.

\textsuperscript{73} See further Taplin (1972) at 57-8.

\textsuperscript{74} There is a discrepancy in the textual tradition about line 494 later in the scene, which is spoken in response to Oedipus’ question (493). Brunck proposed that line 494 was spoken by Antigone, while two manuscripts ascribe it to Ismene and two to both sisters. It seems unlikely
Three-character reporting *pragma* allow a playwright to alter the atmosphere within a scene by creating exchanges between characters with different backgrounds and interests in the scene’s outcome. A good example of varied emotional response to news occurs in the reporting *pragma* in Sophocles’ *Elektra* (660-803). Here there is a sharp distinction between the initial reactions of Klytaimestra and Elektra to the paidagogos’ news of Orestes’ death, as well as a strong contrast between Klytaimestra’s tone towards the paidagogos and her very cruel tone towards Elektra. The chorus provides a further contrasting response by acting as the third of the internal audiences to the paidagogos’ speech. After the paidagogos reports his λόγους ἡδες (666-7) that Orestes is dead, Elektra immediately responds with οἵ γὼ τάλαιν’, διλωλα τῇδ’ ἐν ἡμέρῃ (674), expressing her total devastation, while Klytaimestra repeatedly asks the paidagogos for confirmation and tells him to ignore Elektra: τί φής, τί φής, ξένε; μὴ ταύτης κλύε (675). In response to his reiteration of his news, Elektra again responds briefly with pure grief, while Klytaimestra again tells him to ignore her and give her more details. These stichomythic lines are very effective in transmitting the feelings of Orestes’ two relatives and are an exception to the usual series of duologues in this type of scene as the three characters speak in turn: paidagogos, Elektra, Klytaimestra, paidagogos, Elektra, Klytaimestra (673-8). Elektra had been silent on stage since she stopped speaking at 633 to allow her mother to pray to the gods, but, when she finally speaks, each plaintive line is full of emotion. Klytaimestra had previously been praying to Apollo to protect her and therefore the paidagogos’ news appears to her to be a positive response to her entreaty. Her priority is to hear the news in full and she uses harsh words to silence Elektra and her grief. The duplicated speaking pattern of paidagogos, followed by Elektra and then Klytaimestra, makes clearer their respective feelings to the audience. The two relatives of the dead man should lament together and their divergent reactions therefore strongly highlight their characters. From 677, Elektra is silent in her grief for over one hundred lines. She is a quiet lamenting figure on stage, presumably

that the line was spoken by the two characters at once, since this is rare in Athenian tragedy outside choral lines. It may have been spoken by Antigone, however considering that she has been silent since 324 and indeed does not speak again until 720, such an isolated utterance would draw undue attention to her silence when there is nothing significant about it. It is more likely that the line is spoken by Ismene on behalf of the two sisters. I follow Lloyd-Jones and Wilson in ascribing the line to Ismene (Lloyd-Jones and Wilson (eds.), (1990)). Other editors ascribe it to Antigone (see Jebb (ed.), (1907a), Kamerbeek (ed.), (1984) at 85).
veiling her head and indulging in the deep grief that Klytaiemestra does not share. The paidagogos narrates in detail the events of Orestes’ death (680-763) and when he finishes, the chorus laments the loss of the last of the royal house and Klytaiemestra finally shows some small signs of grief for her dead son (766-8 and 770-1). These are soon forgotten as she begins to delight in the fact that Orestes is gone and she becomes positively nasty to Elektra:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{νόν δ’ – ἡμέρα γὰρ τῇ δ’ ἀπηλλάγην φόβου}
\text{πρὸς τήσδ’ ἐκείνου θ’· ἢδε γὰρ μείζων βλάβη}
\text{ζύνοικος ἦν μοι, τούμον ἐκπίνουσ’ ἄει}
\text{ψυχῆς ἄκρατον αίμα – νόν δ’ ἐκηλά που}
\text{τὸν τήσδ’ ἀπειλῶν οὖνε’ ἡμερεύσομεν.} \quad \text{(S. Elektra 783-7)}
\end{align*}
\]

In the following exchange, as Elektra calls to her brother and to Nemesis, Klytaiemestra mockingly echoes her phrases, hinting at Elektra’s unhappy future. Elektra finally confronts her mother directly (794, 796), at which point Klytaiemestra turns away completely from Elektra to the paidagogos. The paidagogos is ready to depart, his messenger role having been fulfilled, and his final line reveals an ‘uninvolved, matter-of-fact tone’: οὐκοῦν ἀποστείχοιμ’ ἄν, εἰ τάδ’ εὗ κορεῖ; (799). Klytaiemestra does not, however, let him leave and instead invites him into the palace, and, as Finglass notes, ‘the niceties of hospitality are juxtaposed with Clytemnestra’s savage cruelty towards her daughter.’ This reporting scene is filled with sharply differentiated exchanges between characters who reveal their contrasting responses to the same news and their strong feelings to other characters. The venom in Klytaiemestra’s tone towards Elektra is palpable in contrast to her ingratiating words towards the paidagogos.

There are two further outstanding Sophoclean examples of complex interplay between multiple characters in reporting pragmata: Women of Trachis (180-496, see case study below) and Oedipus the King (924-1185). Both centre on the revelation of information and illustrate the important link between reporting pragmata and the acquisition of

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75 Shisler describes gestures for grief in tragedy as including the rending of garments, tearing of hair or beard, slashing of cheeks, veiling of head or eyes, silence and bent or bowed head with downcast eyes (Shisler (1945) passim). Elektra’s silence is probably accompanied by her veiled bowed head.

76 Elektra’s ἐξο καλῶς (790) becomes Klytaiemestra’s ἐξει καλῶς (791) and ἄκουε (792) ἥκουσεν (793).


knowledge. There are close parallels between these scenes: Deianeira and Oedipus are both ignorant of the truth of their situation and extensively question low-status individuals to get it. At the end of the scene they obtain the information they seek and it is this information that leads to their downfall. Both scenes lead directly to ‘immediate and irreversible action’, as Deianeira sends the *chitōn* as a love-spell to Herakles, which leads to both their deaths, and Oedipus blinds himself with the golden brooches that adorned Iokaste’s clothing when she hung herself.

The extensive reporting scene in *Oedipus the King* (924-1185) is extremely complicated in that it involves four speaking characters (Iokaste, Oedipus and two reporting figures), the chorus and various mute attendants, with different combinations of people sharing the stage at various times. The scene involves eight different duologue combinations (excluding prayers to the gods and choral songs) as the dialogue-participants change throughout the scene:

A. Old man and chorus 924-8  
B. Old man and Iokaste 929-44  
C. Iokaste to attendant 945-6  
D. Iokaste and Oedipus 950-6  
E. Oedipus and old man 957-63  
D. Iokaste and Oedipus 964-88  
E. Oedipus and old man 989-1046  
F. Oedipus and chorus 1047-53  
D. Oedipus and Iokaste 1054-72  
F. Oedipus and Chorus 1073-85  
F. Oedipus and Chorus 1110-18  
E. Oedipus and old man 1119-20  
G. Oedipus and shepherd 1121-31  
H. Old man and shepherd 1132-46  
G. Oedipus and shepherd 1147-81

Although the combinations of speakers change, the physical movement of the speaker turning to their addressee would have been clear to the audience. Each exchange has a different pace, emphasis and relationship between the participants as it reveals new information about events or the particular characters.
Iokaste has joined the chorus on stage with at least one attendant, carrying incense and other supplicatory gifts for the gods. She is praying to Apollo for a solution to the city’s current woes (Oedipus the King 919-23), when an old man from Corinth enters seeking the house of Oedipus – as if in response to her prayer. After the chorus directs him to Iokaste, he greets her deferentially (930-1), establishing their hierarchical relationship, and then tells her that he has good news for Oedipus, appearing to further confirm that her prayer to Apollo has been successful. He reports that King Polybos is dead and the Corinthians wish to make Oedipus king. Iokaste asks for confirmation and then immediately orders that Oedipus be told (945-6). After the king’s entry, the old man is silent while there is a brief intimate exchange between husband and wife. She tells him that Polybos is dead, whereupon Oedipus begins to question the old man about the details (957-63). Upon confirmation of Polybos’ natural death, Oedipus mocks the certainty of oracles and prophecy, but then worries about the second half of the prophecy that he would marry his mother (964-76). Iokaste tells him not to worry about oracles and instead to embrace life, but Oedipus cannot shake his fear (977-88). The old man overhears his words and begins to question Oedipus as to the source of his fear and about the oracle. He then imparts unexpected information about Oedipus’ childhood, namely, that a shepherd gave him Oedipus and that he then gave Oedipus to Polybos and Merope (989-1046). The duologue between Oedipus and the old man is initially filled with questions from the old man, but the questioning role changes from 1015, as Oedipus sets out to determine how Polybos cannot be his father. Fifteen of Oedipus’ next sixteen lines comprise questions to the old man, until he finds out as much as possible about how he came into the old man’s hands as a baby (1015-33). Oedipus asks the chorus to identify the servant who gave the old man the baby and receives the reply that he may be the one that Iokaste has already summoned (1047-53).

At this point, Oedipus turns to his wife (γυναι, 1054) and there is a brief acrimonious exchange as Iokaste implores Oedipus not to pursue the matter further. When he refuses to abandon his quest for the truth, she exits at 1072, having called him ὁ δύσποτµ’ (1068) and δύστηνε (1071). It is clear to the audience from her words that she has identified some dire consequence from the information the old man has revealed. Earlier in the scene there may have been some visual indication of her dawning cognizance of the truth, perhaps through a gesture of horror or despair (hand covering the mouth?).
1.1.3. **Language**

The language and style of speech used in reporting *pragmata* vary significantly as the playwright tailors the dialogue and narration to suit the characters and themes of the particular play. Reporting *pragmata* therefore include a variety of audience-specific language designed to portray a particular relationship between the reporting figure and their internal audience, or between the reporting figure and the characters they are describing, or between the internal audience and those characters being reported on. These linguistic expressions include audience-specific denominations, second-person pronouns and vocative addresses, including both names and generic addresses.

Audience-specific denominations can emphasise the internal audience’s relationship with the information being reported, while second-person pronouns can engage the internal audience’s attention more closely to the report. Aeschylus and Sophocles are sparing in their use of these constructions, perhaps to create a more formal atmosphere in reporting *pragmata*. For example, in Aeschylus’ *Suppliant Women* the Egyptian herald does not use a single audience-specific designation or second person pronoun when he is addressing Pelasgos (911-53). He instead uses first person verbs and pronouns, which make his character appear arrogant and unwilling to engage directly with Pelasgos. The tone of the passage is therefore quite combative, which is fitting since they oppose each other over the return of the Danaides to Egypt. Euripides, on the other hand, uses audience-specific denominations and second-person pronouns extensively to create a more intense and personalised exchange between reporting figure and internal audience. In *Orestes* 852-956, the messenger uses audience-specific denominations supplemented extensively with the second-person pronoun to create a two-fold effect: to engage Elektra more fully in the messenger’s report and to continually draw the external audience’s attention back to the silent figure of Elektra whose fate is the subject of the *rhēsis* but over which she has no control.\(^{79}\) This is highlighted by her lack of speech during the messenger’s speech – all she can do is listen helplessly. Familial connections (‘your brother’, ‘your father’, ‘your house’) are repeatedly emphasised throughout the speech, particularly between Elektra and Orestes, whose fates are intertwined. Emphasis on familial connections is even more effectively displayed when Eteokles’ shield-bearer enters to tell Iokaste of the outcome of the battle (*Phoenician Women* 1072-1263). He quickly reassures Iokaste that her two sons are still

\(^{79}\) Audience-specific denominations at *Orestes* 857, 868, 869, 880, 888, 890, 891, 899, 931 and 946 and second person pronouns at 854, 858, 867, 899, 914, 945, 949, 951, 954 and 955.
alive (σοι ξυνωρίς τέκνων, 1085) and in his first *rhēsis* he makes clear the source of her apprehension about the battle’s result with references to Eteokles as σος παῖς (1095, 1164 and 1169) and Polyneikes as ὁ σος Πολυνείκης (1123) and σος γόνος (1144). In his second *rhēsis* his reference to her sons in the dual (τὸ παῦε τὸ σῶ, 1219) emphasises strongly that she has two reasons to fear the outcome of the duel. Her personal stake in the result of the combat, both the battle and the duel, is continually emphasised by the messenger, heightening the emotions experienced by the audience.

Vocative addresses can create a distinct, usually respectful, relationship between the reporting figure and his audience. Reporting figures more regularly address their audience than the other way round and usually greet their audience with their title or name, or a deferential ἄναξ or δέσποινα. The audience of a reporting *pragma* that uses a direct address to a reporting figure will more likely be female than male. 80 Vocative addresses are rare in reporting *pragmata* in extant Aeschylean tragedies, but more frequent in Sophocles and Euripides, with up to seven from the grovelling Lichas to Deianeira in a single scene in *Women of Trachis*. 81

Reporting figures sometimes address their audience (both male and female) by name. While rare in Aeschylus and Sophocles, such addresses are quite common in Euripides. The reporting figures that use the name of their audience can be strangers to their internal audience, as well as members of the same household, and female addressees who are so named are usually speaking with members of their own household or a family member. 82 In *Trojan Women*, when Talthybios first enters he addresses Hekabe by name to remind her of their long-standing acquaintance (235-8). The use of a name in conjunction with the internal audience’s title establishes immediately for the external audience a formal relationship between speaker and addressee: for example, the soldier greets Eteokles as Ἐτεόκλεες, φέριστε Καδµείων ἄναξ (*Seven against Thebes*, 39). The use of names also serves the function of identifying clearly for the external audience (or

80 Male audiences: *Antigone* (1289) and *Oedipus the King* (957, 990, 992, 1001, 1009, 1013) and *E. Suppliant Women* (403, 513) and *Helen* (702, 734). Female audiences: *Aias* (791), *S. Elektra* (671, 675, 678, 797), *Oedipus the King* (931) and *Women of Trachis* (184, 232, 738, 741, 744) and *Trojan Women* (267), *Children of Herakles* (788), *E. Elektra* (767), *Hekabe* (505, 507, 516), *Medeia* (1133), *Orestes* (863) and *Phoenician Women* (1072).

81 *Women of Trachis* 230, 251, 393, 429-30, 434, 472 and 481.

82 As explicitly stated at *Medeia* 1118-19 and *Orestes* 868-70 and implied by dint of the use of δέσποινα in *Iphigeneia at Aulis* (1540) and *Women of Trachis* (180).
reminding them of) the identity of the addressee. There are several occurrences of reporting figures identifying their audience by describing their relation to another person, but it is always a female audience. Such relations include parents and husbands, for example ὠ Λῆδας θύγατερ (Helen 616) and Οἰδίπου κλεινὴ δάμαρ (Phoenician Women 1070). 83

Various generic deferential addresses are used by reporting figures, including γόναι, δέσποινα and ἄνασσα to women and ἄναξ and δέσποτα to men. 84 One such generic address is used effectively to highlight a dramatic theme in the report of the defeat of the Persian army (Persians 249-531). Throughout the entire reporting pragma the queen is portrayed both as the Persian monarch and as a mother, in accordance with her entwined roles. She is not depicted, as some critics argue, as being solely focussed on her son’s safety, although she is used by the playwright as a ‘purveyor of the personal perspective’. 85 The messenger initially directs his report to the chorus, which laments in response, while the queen is silent. The councillors finish their lament by focusing on the Persian women who have been left childless and husband-less (286-9) and the audience’s attention returns to the queen, other of the absent Persian king, who has remained silent since she uttered her concern for the Persian soldiers’ parents (οἱ τεκόντες, 245) before the messenger’s arrival. She becomes the visible representative of all Persian mothers and wives and her silence during the exchange emphasises in a very personal way the grief that was expressed through the chorus’ lament. In her subsequent questioning of the messenger, Aeschylus reinforces her dual portrayal as queen and

83 See also Ἱγαμέµνωνος τε καὶ Κλυταιµήστρας τέκνον (Iphigeneia among the Taurians 238), ὦ Τυνδαρεία παῖ (Iphigeneia at Aulis 1532), Ἱγαμέµνωνος παῖ (Orestes 853) and ᾿Εκτορός δάμαρ (Trojan Women 709).

84 Dickey identifies all these terms as common addresses in Greek literature. Γόναι is a neutral term for a married and unmarried woman; δέσποινα, ἄνασσα, βασίλεια and πότνια are interchangeable terms for mistresses or rulers. Δέσποτα is most often used by subjects to their rulers and ἄναξ is an equivalent term. See further Dickey (1996) at 86-102. Finglass describes γόναι as a regular address to a queen (Finglass (ed.), (2007) at 339).

85 Schenker (1994) at 290. Garvie argues that throughout the play the queen represents Xerxes’ tragedy in contrast to the Persian tragedy represented by the chorus (Garvie (ed.), (2009) at xxxiv).
mother. Although she does later refer to Xerxes as παῖς ἐμός (352, 473 and 476), her first reference to her son is oblique (296-8):

\[
\text{τίς οὔ τέθνηκε, τίνα δὲ καὶ πενθήσουμεν}
\]
\[
\text{τόν ἄρχελάων, ὡστ’ ἐπὶ σκηπτοῦχαι}
\]
\[
\text{ταχθὲς ἄνανδρον τάξιν ἥρημου θανῶν;}
\]

(Persians 296-8)

While her question is couched in the first-person plural, as is appropriate for a queen representing the concerns of her people, the messenger alleviates her unarticulated maternal anxiety by quickly responding that Xerxes is alive. Her relief is emphasized through her first word in response, ἐμοίς (300), but her reply is succinct. Then, following this brief interlude in the maternal role, she returns to her regal responsibility as the messenger begins a roll-call of the other commanders. A mother’s private grief is thus displayed side by side with a queen’s public grief. Interestingly, in response to her later question as to whether it was her son’s fleet or that of the Greeks that first attacked, the messenger directly addresses her as ὥ δέσποινα (353). Her brief return to a maternal role is quickly countered by the messenger’s appellation of her as ‘Queen’. It is a very effective use of a single vocative address.

Vocative addresses in reporting *pragmata* can sometimes reveal the feelings and emotions of the speaker towards the addressee. These range from positive feelings of familiarity and sympathy to negative feelings of hatred. One of the more emotionally charged uses of a reporting figure’s vocative address is in *Oedipus the King* when the Corinthian messenger calls Oedipus ὦ παῖ and ὦ τέκνον (1008, 1030). Παῖς is customarily used to a speaker’s child or to a slave, while the vocative τέκνον is ‘purely and emphatically a kinship term’. The implication here, therefore, is that the

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86 As does Dareios (*Persians* 744 and 782).

87 Golden (1985). Παῖς addresses are used to reporting figures related to their audience (*Oedipus at Kolonos* 327, 328, 329, 332, 342, 353, 388, 410, 412 and 493 and *Women of Trachis* 738, 741 and 744). It is also used by Kreon when he hears of Eurydike’s death in *Antigone* (1289). While the messenger’s identity is never specified, he attended Kreon as Polyneikes’ body was buried and may be a member of the household. Golden states that the only use of παῖς to mean slave in tragedy is *Libation-Bearers* 653 (Golden (1985) at 94), but I cannot see what else Kreon would mean by his use of the term.

88 Dickey (1996) at 69.
speaker views Oedipus as his own child.\footnote{The same address is used by the ‘shipmaster’ to Neoptolemos (Philoktetes 589), which may reflect the sailor’s unintentional feeling of responsibility towards the young son of the great Greek hero, Achilleus.} The messenger was the person who gave Oedipus to King Polybos (1022) and therefore it makes sense that he has paternal feelings towards Oedipus. What is most interesting, however, is that the first use of this address is at 1008, just after Oedipus has told him the reason for his fear of going home. The messenger is trying to relieve Oedipus’ mind and his natural feelings of concern become apparent through his choice of address. More importantly, his use of such an address may act as a signifier to the audience of a deeper relationship between the two characters and cause it to wonder at how the story is going to unfold.

Women are sporadically addressed by reporting figures as ‘wretched’ in Trojan Women, Hekabe and Orestes, which is a signifier of their sympathy towards the women. In the two post-Trojan war plays, Hekabe and Trojan Women, it is Talthybios who addresses Hekabe in this way (ὁ δύστήνε, Hekabe 499 and ὁ γεραιὰ δωματεστάτη γόνιν, Trojan Women 1269) and, as previously discussed, Talthybios, particularly in the latter play, is portrayed as being sympathetic towards the captive women. The messenger in Orestes who calls Elektra ὁ τλήμον, ὁ δύστηνε\footnote{Diggle brackets 852 following Paley, and Page considers ὁ τλήμον, ὁ δώστηνε to be ‘a very weak repetition’ and therefore deletes the line as an interpolation (Page (1934) at 54).} (Orestes 852) and ὁ τάλαιν’ (858) was previously a servant to Agamemnon and therefore has a personal connection to the royal house. On one occasion a man is addressed in this way by a messenger, but in this situation the reporting figure has a prior relationship with the addressee (even though the addressee is unaware of it). The shepherd addresses Oedipus as δύστηνος, after the king orders his men to restrain the shepherd by the arms to force him to tell the truth about the identity of the baby (Oedipus the King 1155). The use of this epithet, rather than feminizing Oedipus, reveals the shepherd’s understanding of how this knowledge will affect Oedipus and his life. He knows what the consequences of his words will be and feels pity for Oedipus.

The addresses used to reporting figures are generally formulaic and suit the circumstances, for example ‘stranger’ or ‘old man’. The use of ξένε (or ξένος) has been described as ‘the regular address to one coming from outside the speaker’s own setting, whether friend or stranger’,\footnote{Gow (ed.), (1950) at 105. See further Dickey (1996) at 149.} which corresponds with the use of this address in
reporting scenes. There may be an exception to this in Sophocles’ *Elektra* where I would argue that Klytaiemestra’s use of the term (in line with her relationship with the paidagogos) changes over the course of their 130-plus lines together. She uses this address four times, thrice in the first thirteen lines of dialogue (S. *Elektra* 671, 675 and 679). The final use, however, occurs at 797, just before they exit together and here I think the meaning is closer to ‘guest-friend’ than ‘stranger’: Πολλόν ὄν ἦκος, ὁ ἲνοι, ἄξιος τυχεῖν, / εἰ τήνθ ἔξαψας τής πολυλήψσου βοής (797-8). The paidagogos at the outset identified that he was sent by Klytaiemestra’s friend Phanoteus of Phokis and she is here extending her feelings of friendship towards the bearer of such good news. She is elated at the news of Orestes’ death and indeed, when the paidagogos goes to leave (799), she stops him and invites him into the palace. This address is used for a very different reason by Neoptolemos to the ‘shipmaster’ in *Philoktetes*. Twice Neoptolemos addresses the man in this way: in his very first line to him and less than 20 lines later (*Philoktetes* 557 and 575). Neoptolemos is attempting to indicate to Philoktetes that he does not know the man and the duplication exaggerates this effect. Messengers are frequently addressed as ‘old man’ (γεραιέ / γέρον / πρέσβυ), by both male and female audiences. A similar informal mode of address is used by Tekmessa when she calls the messenger ἄνθρωπε (*Aias* 791).

There are two related forms of address used regularly to signify joy in tragic reporting scenes, but only by female audiences in the extant tragedies: ὁ φίλτατος and φίλος. Gregor notes that while the superlative version is ‘an endearment of some strength’, it can also be used in response to a messenger who has brought good news. In *Women of Trachis* (232), *Children of Herakles* (788), *Hekabe* (505) and Euripides’ *Elektra* (767), the audience is indeed responding to news that has relieved them of worry. Gregor considers that Iokaste’s use of this phrase in *Phoenician Women* (1072) does not fit in

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92 For example, *Oedipus the King* 931, 957 and 992 and E. *Suppliant Women* 403.

93 Male audiences use the term in *Oedipus the King* (990, 1001, 1009 and 1013) and *Helen* (702 and 734) and female audiences in *Hekabe* (505, 507 and 516), *Women of Trachis* (184) and *Orestes* (863). Reporting figures also use this address to their audiences: *Children of Herakles* 888, *Andromache* 1071 and *Trojan Women* 1269.

94 Dickey notes that this form of address ‘cannot be inherently derogatory, for not only is it often used in neutral statements, but on some occasions the speeches in which it is found are definitely positive’ (Dickey (1996) at 150).

95 See further Gregor (1957).

96 This phrase is also used by the chorus to the messenger in Euripides’ *Suppliant Women* 641.
this category, but I would argue that it does. After entering, the messenger calls out: ἔξελθ', ἀκούσον, Οἰδίπου κλεινὴ δάμαρ, / λήξας' ὀπαρμῶν πενθίμων τε δακρύων (1070-1). He has therefore already indicated that his news is good before Iokaste responds with ὦ φιλτατ'. While she is inside the palace when he arrives, she is called outside and likely hears his words. Her greeting is therefore appropriate, even if she then goes on to ask whether Eteokles is alive. She does not yet know the exact content of his news, but she is aware that there is some good news in there.

The less effusive version of this address, φίλος, is used in Medeia (1133) and Trojan Women (267). Medeia uses the term to the messenger who brings her the good news (from her viewpoint) of the deaths of Kreon and his daughter. It is therefore used in the same way as the superlative epithet – that is, in response to good news. In the other instance, however, Talthybios tells Hekabe that Polyxene is to be an attendant at Akhilleus’ tomb. She replies:

 usuario "medeia 1133" y Trojan Women (267). Medeia usa el término al mensajero que le trae la buena noticia (de su perspectiva) de la muerte de Kreon y su hija. Se utiliza de la misma manera que el epíteto superlativo – es decir, en respuesta a noticias buenas. En el otro caso, sin embargo, Talthybios dice a Hekabe que Polyxene será una sirvienta de Akhilleus. Ella responde:

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This is not the reaction of a woman receiving good news. I would argue that Hekabe uses the phrase ὦ φιλος to Talthybios in the hope that she will receive good news in response to her question τίς Ὑν νόμος; (266).

97 Gregor notes three other passages in which the news delivered is not good and yet elicits the use of this endearment: Andromache 64, Hekabe 1114 and Bacchae 178 (Gregor (1957) at 14-5). I would argue that the use of this epithet on these occasions has nothing to do with the delivery of news, but is rather based on the friendship between speaker and addressee. Andromache may be using it towards her maidservant, who has just reported bad news, as a reflection of their friendship. They have suffered together in their journey and post-war life away from Troy. Polymestor uses it to remind Agamemnon of their friendship, even if it does not reflect reality, since he wants Agamemnon’s help in punishing Hekabe. Kadmos’ greeting of Teiresias reflects their longstanding friendship.

98 It is unlikely that Iokaste would address him with this endearment simply because he is her son’s faithful spear-bearer (Phoenician Women 1213). There is some debate about the authenticity of lines 1070-1 because Iokaste does not later act as if she has heard that there is good news, but as Mastronarde notes, ‘this failure to hear is conventional’ (Mastronarde (ed.), (1994) at 448. See further Mastronarde (1979) at 28-30).
The strongest negative vocative address to a reporting figure occurs in Euripides’ *Suppliant Women* when Adrastos exclaims to the Theban herald, ὁ παγκάκιστε (513).\(^9\)

This address is notable not only for its brevity and vehemence, but also because it ends Adrastos’ long silence since he last spoke at 262. The Theban herald has just announced that Thebes forbids Theseus to shelter Adrastos and to recover the corpses of the Argive warriors. Adrastos’ snarling words are full of emotion and draw the attention of the audience back to him, after a period in which he had been a constant, but silent, figure on stage while events occurred around him.

In the construction of reporting *pragmata*, the playwright had to choose who would report the information required at that stage in the *systasis*; whether they would be an otherwise anonymous character or one involved in the events of the play; to whom the information would be revealed; how the information would be revealed and with what linguistic expressions. Each decision was predicated on the role that the revelation of information would have on the *systasis* and *muthos* of a tragedy.

### 1.1.4. Role of the Enacted Report in Tragedy

The *pragma* of reporting can occur at any stage of the drama – beginning, middle and end and it has a variety of functions. It can prepare for subsequent action and create anticipation in the audience, it can also motivate action within the *systasis* and it can describe the occurrence of an event foretold earlier in the play (sometimes as the climax of a tragedy).\(^10\) Reporting can and does occur multiple times within the same tragedy.

\(^9\) There are five uses of this address in extant Athenian drama (*Antigone* 742, *Women of Trachis* 1124, *Medea* 465, *Hippolytos* 682 and *Cyclops* 689) and three in fragments attributed to Euripides (*Alexandros* fr. 57, *Stheneboia* fr. 666 and unknown play fr. 939 *TrGF*).

\(^10\) de Jong, in her analysis of the Euripidean messenger-speech, identified three potential functions of a messenger’s presence on stage: preparatory, concluding or transitional (Jong (1991) at 121-30). A messenger could enter to warn of the arrival of another character or to prepare for subsequent activity (‘preparatory’); to provide information on actions that had occurred as a result of earlier events in the drama (‘concluding’); or to perform a combination of both these functions (‘transitional’). This interpretation of the reporting figure’s role on stage, however, does not recognise the importance of the disclosure of information on the momentum of the *muthos*. A reporting *pragma* can not only warn of an impending arrival or prepare for subsequent activity, but often acts as an instigator to further action.
Reporting *pragmata* can happen at any point during a tragedy. Some *pragmata* occur before the *parodos*, while others occur in the *exodos*. The vast majority, however, takes place during the intervening *epeisodia*. *Pragmata* which occur early on in a tragedy usually provide necessary information for the external audience about the background to the story, as well as prepare for the events that will unfold in the drama.\(^1\) *Aias* opens with a conversation between Odysseus and Athene during which she reports Aias’ slaughter of the beasts (and highlights her part in manipulating his specific actions). The details revealed in this *pragma* prepare the audience for the entry of Aias in his maddened state (*Aias* 91). They also provide the external audience with the first of two accounts of the same events. Athene ends her description of Aias’ actions by reporting that he is torturing the animals in his tent: καὶ νόν κατ’ οίκους συνδέτους αἰκίζεται (65). After the *parodos*, her succinct account will be expanded by Tekmessa in her conversation with the chorus (201-327).\(^2\) The chorus has only heard rumours of Aias’ actions and Tekmessa’s graphic account provides confirmation for them, even though the external audience is already aware of the events that form the basis of her report. Tekmessa’s speech also includes the only occurrence in extant tragedy of someone reporting on events which have previously been enacted before the audience. Tekmessa describes how she *heard* Aias talking to some phantom and laughing:

\[
Τέλος δ’ ἀπάξας διὰ θυρών σκιᾷ τινι
λόγους ἄνέσπα τούς μὲν Ἀτρειῶν κάτα,
tοὺς δ’ ἄμφος Ὁδύσσεϊ, συντιθείς γέλων πολλον,
ὄσην κατ’ αὐτῶν ἥβην ἐκτείσαιτ’ ἰόν·
καπεῖν ἀπάξας αὐθίς ἐς δόμους πάλιν
ἐμφρον μόλις πος ξένον χρόνον καθίσταται.  \(Aias\ 301-6\)
\]

Tekmessa provides a focalized version of events which the audience has already seen on stage from 91-117. While it is unclear from her words whether Tekmessa could see or hear Aias outside the tent, since the audience did not see her, she must have been an auditor rather than a spectator. This is a unique inversion of the more common situation in tragedy whereby the audience hears cries offstage and the details of the events within  

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\(^{1}\) Such early reporting *pragmata* include *Seven against Thebes* 39-68, *Andromache* 56-90 and *Children of Herakles* 55-287.  

\(^{2}\) And indeed a third version of the same events is briefly provided by Aias himself at *Aias* 447-53 who identifies Athene as the one who caused him to slaughter the animals the blood of which now stains his hands.
the *skênê* are later reported to them in detail. Instead the audience hears a narrated account of something it directly witnessed and is, therefore, in no doubt as to the accuracy of her report. The additional version of events already witnessed allows the playwright to emphasise Aias’ irrational behaviour through Tekmesa’s description of Aias as συντιθειν γέλων πολύν (303). Her reference to this point in an otherwise straightforward descriptive account of Aias’ actions strongly highlights this for the audience.

A subset of these preparatory reporting *pragma* comprises the notification of the imminent arrival of a main character (Taplin calls this reporting figure the ‘advance messenger’). This prepares the audience for the arrival of a new character and allows the on-stage characters to consider how they will react to the arrival. For example, the herald in *Agamemnon* (503-680) prepares the chorus (and later Klytaimestra) and the audience for the triumphant arrival of Agamemon at 782. Similarly, in *Iphigeneia among the Taurians* (238-343) the cowherd informs Iphigeneia and the chorus of the capture of Orestes and Pylades, who then enter at 456. In both these plays, the arrival follows shortly after it is prepared for. In *Persians*, however, Xerxes does not arrive on stage until nearly four hundred lines after the messenger leaves the stage (514), the suggested impending arrival having been postponed by the scene with Dareios’ ghost.

Reporting *pragma* can also cause subsequent actions within the *systasis* of the tragedy. Since the report often leads to further actions, the report must be delivered in the presence of a dramatic figure other than the chorus. There must be a character to undertake the further action and this subsequent action is most often a command delivered to the reporting figure or an attendant. For example, the messenger’s report to Pentheus of the women’s activities on Mount Kithairon compels Pentheus to send out orders to his men to prepare for battle (*Bacchae* 780-5). Similarly, the soldier’s report to Eteokles of the assignment of an Argive warrior to a particular Theban gate prompts the king to order a particular Theban champion to confront him (*Seven against Thebes* 375-

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103 For example, at *Agamemnon* 1372-98 Klytaimestra reports the death of Agamemnon, whose cries were heard by the chorus and audience at 1343-5. Similarly, the cries at *Libation-Bearers* 869 are reported at 875-91, *Hekabe* 1035 at 1056-1182, *Herakles* 886 at 910-1015 and *Orestes* 1296 at 1368-1502. On cries within the *skênê* in general, see Hamilton (1987).

104 Taplin (1977b) at 83.

105 Other delayed arrivals include Herakles in *Women of Trachis* and Klytaimestra and Iphigencia in *Iphigeneia at Aulis.*
And the sentry’s report to Kreon on the burial of Polyneikes’ corpse (Antigone 223-331) motivates Kreon to order him to find the culprit, which he does, later returning with Antigone at 384.

Some reporting *pragmata* describe the realization of events that were previously planned or alluded to on stage. These *post factum* reports occur mostly in chorus-messenger scenes with no other *dramatis personae* on stage and their purpose is usually to describe the offstage events to the external audience. These *pragmata* often occur at the end of the play and provide information about the consequences of the actions of particular characters. It is then up to the external audience to consider what happens next if they so wish and to ruminate on the actions and decisions that led to the act described. Examples of concluding reporting *pragmata* include the narrative of Poseidon’s bull attacking Hippolytos (Hippolytos 1153-1266) and Talthybios’ description of Polyxene’s sacrifice (Hekabe 484-608).

There are of course reporting *pragmata* which contain a combination of these functions. These ‘combination reporting *pragmata*’ can both prepare for subsequent events and report back on events that have occurred; they can report on events that have occurred offstage and motivate subsequent actions within the *systasis*. For example, in Euripides’ Elektra (761-859) Orestes’ servant describes Aigisthos’ murder by Orestes and Pylades. The killers left the stage at 698 to commit this crime and the messenger is reporting back to Elektra and the chorus on their success. His report, however, also causes Elektra to begin to celebrate Aigisthos’ death and rush inside the house to get garlands for Orestes and Pylades. It is not just preparatory, it is initiatory.

Enacted reporting *pragmata* therefore have a variety of functions within the *systasis* of a tragedy. They can initiate action, prepare for subsequent action, describe the realization of actions that were planned onstage or encompass a combination of these roles.

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106 Taplin terms the figure reporting on such events an ‘aftermath messenger’, while de Jong designates such a speech as a ‘concluding’ messenger-speech. (Jong (1991) at 121, Taplin (1977b) at 83). de Jong identifies a subset of Euripidean messenger-speeches which report the result of an intrigue: Medeia 1136-1230, Andromache 1085-1165, Elektra 774-858, Herakles 922-1015, Iphigeneia among the Taurians 1327-1419, Ion 1122-1228, Helen 1526-1618, Orestes 1395-1502 and Bacchae 1043-1152 (Jong (1991) at 179-81).
1.2.  **THE NON-ENACTED PRAGMA OF REPORTING**

The non-enacted *pragma* of reporting is not as conspicuous in tragedy as the non-enacted *pragma* of supplication or return, but there are many references to future and past acts of reporting, as well as to heralds and messengers.\(^{107}\) These include announcements of the arrival and presence of reporting figures, intentions to go to someone as a reporting figure and descriptions of previous actions of reporting figures.

A common reference to the *pragma* of reporting involves the enquiry into the whereabouts of an anticipated reporting figure, which usually immediately precedes their arrival. In *Oedipus the King*, after Oedipus tells the Theban priest that he has sent Kreon to consult the oracle of Apollo to discover what must be done to end the plague, he wonders why Kreon has not yet returned (*Oedipus the King* 69-75). The priest, in response, announces Kreon’s approach.\(^{108}\) Euripides uses this scenario to great effect in *Elektra*. After the choral ode that follows Orestes and Pylades’ departure to kill Aigisthos, the chorus thinks that it hears a shout and calls out ἴδο, τάδ' οὐκ ἄσημα πνεύματ' αἴρεται (E. *Elektra* 749). I would argue that the use of ἴδο might have suggested to the audience that the chorus could see the approach of the messenger, who conventionally appeared in tragedy to report on murders taking place off-stage.\(^{109}\) But no such messenger appears and the chorus calls Elektra out of the house. There follows a pessimistic exchange between chorus and Elektra wondering who uttered the cry and thus whether Orestes and Pylades have succeeded in their plan. Here, the stichomythic dialogue helps to build the tension on stage (751-60). Elektra fears that her brother has been killed and cries out: οὐκ ἔστι· νικώµεσθα· ποῦ γὰρ ἀγγέλοι; (759). Arnott highlights Elektra’s γάρ (759) as implying the tragic convention that Euripides is deliberately delaying, but I would argue that he has already hinted at it with the chorus’ ἴδο.\(^{110}\) Euripides is explicitly acknowledging the convention of the timely tragic messenger and his frustration of the audience’s expectation through delay. He is thus

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107 There are 45 uses of κήρυξ in extant tragedy with a further twelve in the fragmentary plays of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides, with 64 uses of ἀγγέλος in extant tragedy and 6 in fragmentary plays.

108 This scenario also occurs in old comedy when Pisthetairos wonders why a messenger has not yet arrived and then suddenly catches sight of his approach (*Birds* 1119-21).

109 ἴδο is used at *Alkestis* 233 and *Iphigeneia at Aulis* 1120 to announce the arrival of another character.

110 Arnott (1973) at 51.
able to manipulate the suspense leading to the eventual reporting *pragma*. And, indeed, after the chorus’ assurance that the messengers will come, in the very next line a messenger arrives, his second word καλλίνικοι immediately revealing Orestes’ success (761).

Non-enacted reporting *pragma* can be used in conjunction with enacted reporting *pragma* to structure the *systasis* of a tragedy. For example, in *Libation-Bearers* when Orestes arrives at the palace, he orders the servant at the door to take a message to the masters of the house (ἄγγελλε, 658). This brings Klytaiemestra to the door, which leads into the first enacted reporting *pragma*, that of Orestes’ report of his death. After they have entered the palace, a nurse appears at 734 to tell the chorus that she has been commanded by Klytaiemestra to bring a message to Aigisthos informing him of Orestes’ death. The nurse describes the expected reaction of Aigisthos to her news: ἣ δὴ κλόων ἐκεῖνος εὐφρανεῖ νόον (742) before describing her misery at the news as Orestes’ former nurse. While this reporting *pragma* is not shown to the audience, the result of it is displayed when Aigisthos enters and immediately declares: ἤκω μὲν οὐκ ἀκλητος, ἄλλ’ ὑπάγεσθος (838). He seeks to test the truth of the news of Orestes’ death and enters the palace to question the messengers themselves – leading to his death. Shortly thereafter a servant rushes out reporting the deadly attack on Aigisthos (875-91), which causes Klytaiemestra to appear and confront her son. Following this, she too goes into the palace to her death. This concatenation of reporting *pragma* is echoed in Aigisthos’ appearance in the Sophoclean *Elektra*. When he arrives onstage for the first time, he utters: Τίς οδεν ύμων πού ποθ’ οί Φοικής ξένοι / οὔς φασ’ Ὄρεστην ἡμῖν ἀγγέλαι βιον / λελουπόθ’ ἵππικοισιν ἐν ναυαγίοις; (1442-4). He too has received information from someone that has brought him to the palace. Elektra sends him into the palace to find the messengers in a direct echo of the Aeschylean version of the story, but rather than entering immediately and encountering Orestes offstage, he is met at the doors by Orestes and the *ekkyklēma* bearing a covered corpse. This allows Sophocles to stage the emotional confrontation of Klytaiemestra’s son and lover over her body in a neat reversal of the confrontation of Klytaiemestra and Orestes over Aigisthos’ body in Aeschylus’ play.

The non-enacted reporting *pragma* is used by playwrights in combination with its enacted form to create suspense and anticipation regarding future enacted *pragma*, to describe previous *pragma* and to maintain the narrative flow of a *muthos*. 

- 234 -
2. *Women of Trachis*: Ὑ' ἐκδίδασκειν

*Women of Trachis* is often referred to as a *nostos*-play, since the entire play looks forward to the return home of Herakles, but, as with all tragedies, it contains more than one pragma within its systasis. Sophocles’ play contains five enacted reporting pragmata, which involve a variety of reporting figures, audiences and reports and which have varying effects upon the systasis, the muthos and the external audience.\(^{111}\) It is therefore an apposite play within which to examine the role of the reporting pragma.

The opening scene of *Women of Trachis* emphasises Deianeira’s desire to have Herakles home and the stage is set for a *nostos* play of the hero’s return. But the play features an interlinking of reporting and return pragmata. The focus on Herakles’ return is maintained throughout the drama, as it is continually delayed by consecutive reporting pragmata: first, a messenger arrives to bring news of Herakles’ imminent arrival, as proclaimed by Herakles’ own herald Lichas; second, Lichas enters with news of Herakles’ forthcoming triumphant return; thirdly, Deianeira reports on the mysterious destruction of the wool in the sun; fourthly, Hyllos tells of the catastrophic result of Deianeira’s attempt to secure Herakles’ love and of Herakles’ impending return; fifthly, the nurse tells of Deianeira’s suicide. Only then does the return of the hero occur. This repeated use of reporting pragmata forces the information to be provided for the audience through the focalization of specific narrators with their particular biases and perspectives. Three of these messengers are named and provided with an identity, rather than being the stereotypical anonymous low-status messenger. Three characters have already appeared on stage before their reporting role takes place and two are intimately involved in the events that occur in the play. The focus on the reporting of information strengthens the theme of learning the truth too late, as it depicts the progressive revelation of information leading to knowledge, and this theme is emphasised through the repeated use of cognates of χαίνει, ἐκδίδασκειν and verbs of seeing.\(^{112}\)

The tragedy opens with Deianeira entering from the *skēnē* accompanied by her nurse. After telling of her wooing by the river god Acheloos and his defeat by Herakles before

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\(^{111}\) Kraus analyses the thematic and structural use of eleven narrative tales in *Women of Trachis* (Kraus (1991)).

she became Herakles’ wife, Deianeira reveals her agony at not knowing whether her
husband still lives. Her nurse attempts to comfort her and then suggests that Hyllos be
sent to seek news of Herakles. Hyllos subsequently enters and tells his mother that,
thanks to rumour, he thinks his father is in Euboia. Deianeira then reveals the existence
of an oracle concerning Herakles and Euboia which leaves them both in fear for
Herakles’ life. Hyllos leaves to find his father and help him before the chorus of
Trachinian women enters and sings of Deianeira’s pain. The chorus encourages her to
stay hopeful, since Zeus is unlikely to abandon his son, to which Deianeira reveals
further detail about the oracle Herakles received at Dodona. She despondently notes that
the moment for the fulfilment of Zeus’ oracle has arrived, to which the chorus bids her
speak only well-omened things as it announces the arrival of a garlanded man
(καταστεφ/uni1FC6ς, 178) – a sign that he bears good news. The old man’s timely arrival is
similar in effect to the arrival of a reporting figure just after a character enquires about
their whereabouts or prays for divine assistance (as at Oedipus the King 924).

The subsequent section of the play is complicated by the intersection of two reporting
pragmata, which involve multiple characters in the presence of the chorus and also
contain an embedded choral song. This scene of connecting reports is masterfully
constructed to reflect the play’s theme of knowledge (the acquisition and reliability
thereof) and time.\textsuperscript{113} It involves a complex set of entrances and exits, and separate but
linked interactions between different combinations of characters and the chorus, as
Deianeira moves from ignorance to knowledge about her husband’s return and about
Iole. While Deianeira’s goal with the arrival of the messenger/s is to obtain information
concerning her husband’s return and thus of her future happiness, when she does receive
the news of his return, she also gains unwanted information that threatens that
happiness.

The appearance of an old man bearing good news following the enunciation of
Deianeira’s fears about Herakles would likely lead the audience to expect that he brings
news of Herakles’ imminent return, a common function for a reporting figure in
tragedy. And indeed the old man who enters does immediately contradict her fears:
\dolvwv \δε \λύσω (181).\textsuperscript{114} In a tricolon crescendo he informs her that Herakles is alive,

\textsuperscript{113} Easterling also identifies the themes of passion and mutability, particularly of human
fortunes (see further Easterling (ed.), (1982) at 2-6).

\textsuperscript{114} Similarly, Iokaste’s prayer for a \textit{lusis} is answered by the arrival of the Corinthian messenger
with seemingly good news (Oedipus the King 921). Cognates of \textit{λύειν} occur throughout the play.
victorious and is returning home in triumph (181-3). But this simple statement of Herakles’ return is quickly complicated by his admission that he has obtained the information from another messenger, who has been delayed but is on his way.\textsuperscript{115} His report becomes merely an account of something announced by another person. Deianeira responds to his news with three questions (184, 187 and 192), as she cannot trust his message until she has established what the information is, how he received it and from whom.\textsuperscript{116} Only then does she accept his news as heralding the imminent arrival of Herakles and her fear turns to joy. The old man does not act as a messenger, but rather as a herald of a herald, and this doubling of the announcement of Herakles’ return prolongs for the audience the tension surrounding the timing and manner of the hero’s return. While the typical ‘advance messenger’ in tragedy appears shortly before the arrival of the main character, on which he has reported, Herakles himself does not appear on stage until 971, nearly eight hundred lines after the old man first announces the hero’s return.

Deianeira and the chorus celebrate with song before another arrival is announced and the second reporting \textit{pragma} begins. It is Lichas himself who enters, accompanied by a group of captive women.\textsuperscript{117} Herakles’ triumph, announced by the old man, is visually confirmed for Deianeira and the audience by the captives, and the anticipation increases for his imminent triumphant return. Deianeira exclaims ὧρα, φίλαι γυναῖκες, οὐδὲ µ’ ὀμματος / φρουρὰ παρῆλθε τόνδε µὴ λεύσσειν στόλον’ (225-6) and, as Easterling aptly notes, ‘the deception scene opens with the character who is to be deceived asserting the clarity of her vision’.\textsuperscript{118} The stage is now quite crowded, possibly with Deianeira and Lichas at the centre of the orchestra, with the slave women he is escorting on one side and the chorus perhaps scattered, but both groups of women in the rear part of the acting area. The original messenger is also still on stage, but he fades from the attention of the

\textsuperscript{115} Hadjistephanou’s conjecture of τὸν δὲ θροονθ’ for †τὸ γὰρ ποθοῦν† at 196 seems appropriate (Hadjistephanou (2000)).

\textsuperscript{116} Imitating the process in ancient Greek society: Lewis (1996) at 80.

\textsuperscript{117} Lichas’ name appears in early poetic fragments and it is likely that he was well known in myth to be Herakles’ herald (Hesiod fr. 25.22 (Merkelbach and West (eds.), (1967)) and A. \textit{Glaukos Pontios} fr. 25e.14 \textit{TrGF}).

\textsuperscript{118} Easterling (ed.), (1982) at 107.
audience, perhaps by retreating into the shadow of the skēnē. He is no longer a focus for the audience’s attention with the interaction between Lichas and Deianeira taking place in the foreground.

Lichas behaves as a traditional messenger by first greeting his addressee and providing a brief summary of the news, then engaging in a short exchange of further details, and finally delivering an extensive rhēsis. Deianeira briefly greets him and he accepts her greeting. Although Lichas has not yet revealed his news, Deianeira has learned the gist of his message from the previous messenger and is only waiting for Lichas’ confirmation of the welcome news of Herakles’ return. She therefore greets him gratefully as ὦ φίλτατ’ ἀνδρῶν (232). Gregor suggests that the reason that Deianeira does not greet the first messenger with this phrase ‘is a way of conveying her incredulity; for when the more convincing Lichas arrives with the same message, then, sure enough out comes ὦ φίλτατ’ ἀνδρῶν’.119

Lichas’ initial description of Herakles’ current condition is elaborate, with a further tricolon crescendo: ἐγωγέ τοί σφ’ ἔλειπον ἱσχύοντά τε / καὶ ζόντα καὶ θάλλοντα κοίνονόσ βαρύν (234-5). There are, however, two striking details in his words through which, I would argue, Euripides is inserting an element of wariness regarding the condition in which Herakles will eventually return. First, Lichas qualifies his statement about Herakles’ health with a timeframe, which leaves open the suggestion that things may have changed since then. Second, he explicitly tells Deianeira that Herakles is not oppressed by an illness. Schwinge identifies this statement as ironic, in that Herakles is in fact struck with a nosos – for Iole.120 I think, however, that Euripides is doing something different here. Rather than the fully triumphant hero returning home in the prime of his strength, Lichas’ words are intended to signal a potential problem in his return. And indeed when Herakles does return he is inflicted by a grievous nosos.121 This is the first use of νόσος in the play, but it is used a further nine times, of which five

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119 Gregor (1957) at 15.
120 Schwinge (1962) at 57-8.
121 Kamerbeek comments that the audience would have remembered Lichas’ words as the moment of Herakles’ entrance, but he does not consider the possibility that Lichas’ words might act as an indicator for the audience of a potential difficulty in Herakles’ return (Kamerbeek (ed.), (1959) at 75).
describe the effects of the poison on Herakles and two describe Herakles’ passion for women.\textsuperscript{122}

Deianira asks for further details about where Lichas last saw Herakles and Lichas finally makes reference to the women accompanying him. Deianira’s immediate response is sympathetic (242-3), but after Lichas identifies that they are Herakles’ captives from Eurytos’ city, he begins an elaborate and chronologically confusing account of Herakles’ deeds over the last fifteen months (248-90). In his \textit{rhēsis}, Lichas explains that Herakles destroyed the city of Eurytos in retaliation for the punishment he suffered (being sold into slavery for a year to Omphale, a barbarian woman, on Zeus’ command) after he killed the king’s son Iphitos in response to the king’s insulting treatment of him. Lichas is not an eyewitness to most of the events he reports, but rather he acts as a messenger for Herakles. Several times he underlines his reliance on Herakles’ own report of his slavery to Omphale: \textit{ός φησ' αὐτός} (249) and \textit{ός αὐτὸς λέγει} (253) and this early emphasis on the authority of his information can be interpreted as attempting to influence the audience’s credence in his whole story.\textsuperscript{123} He concludes his \textit{rhēsis} by stressing that his conveyance of the women to Deianira was at the behest of Herakles (283-6); he assigns responsibility for his report and his actions to his master.

Lichas’ convoluted account is accepted by Deianira as providing a reason for Herakles’ absence and for the presence of the captive women.\textsuperscript{124} Whether his account was also accepted by the external audience as valid is a point of debate, since scholars are undecided as to whether Iole’s role as the cause of the sacking of Oichalia would have been known by at least some of the audience, thus meaning that her absence from Lichas’ tale would have been surprising.\textsuperscript{125} Goward notes several unusual features of Lichas’ \textit{rhēsis} which may have raised suspicion in the audience about the truthfulness of

\textsuperscript{123} See further Kraus (1991) at 84.
\textsuperscript{124} Heiden argues that Lichas attempts to justify Herakles’ attacks on Iphitos and Oichalia in his \textit{rhēsis} and thus uses ‘suggestion rather than assertion, creating a narrative that is open to interpretation’ (Heiden (1988)).
\textsuperscript{125} For audience awareness of Iole’s role in the myth, see Davies (1984). Against, see Halleran (1986) at 244. The same scholars identify various Sophoclean innovations in Lichas’ version of the story.
his account. These include the herald’s ‘unbalanced time sequence’,¹²⁶ where his story begins with Herakles’ bondage, moves forward in time to the sacking of Oichalia, then moves back in time to Eurytost’s maltreatment of Herakles, before moving forward again to the slavery, then to Oichalia and finally to the current presence of the captive women in Trachis. Lichas’ narrated sequence of events places Eurytost’s behaviour in the middle of his report and thus seems to emphasise its causal importance, particularly through the highlighting of his irreverence for the laws of xenia.

Deianeira responds joyfully to Lichas’ message before she notices the women again and feels sympathy for them. On receiving no response when she tries to talk to one of them, she turns to Lichas and says: Λίχα, τίνος ποτ’ ἐστὶν ἡ ἔξυλη βρωτῶν; / τίς η̣ τεκοῦσα, τίς δ’ ὁ φιτῶσας πατήρ; (310-11). The address of a messenger by name is rare in tragedy, but its purpose here may be to signal to the audience her change of addressee, as well as to get the herald’s full attention.¹²⁷ Lichas does not provide Deianeira with any information about the girl, other than to admit that she is not from the lowest of houses. And indeed, in his words, he shows that he ‘has something to hide’:¹²⁸ Τί δ’ οὐδ’ ἐγὼ; τί δ’ ἓν με καὶ κρίνοις; ἵσως / γέννημα τὸν ἠκαθεν ὦκ ἐν ὑστάτοις (314-15). The herald who ought to tell the truth dissembles. Deianeira asks outright whether the girl is the child of Eurytost, to which Lichas responds: οὐκ οἶδα· καὶ γὰρ οὐδ’ ἀνιστόρουν μακράν (317). Lichas can provide Deianeira with no answers to her questions and the girl does not speak, so Deianeira suggests that they enter the house to allow Lichas to return shortly to his master (332-4). They turn to enter the palace, with Deianeira ushering Lichas and the women inside when suddenly the first messenger, who has been silent on stage since 199, stops her and suggests to her that Lichas has not been telling the whole truth:

Αὐτὸν γε πρῶτον βαίνῃ ἀμμείνας’, ὅπως μάθης ἄνευ τῶν’ οὐστινᾶς τ’ ᾑγεῖς ἔσω, ὅν τ’ οὐδὲν εἰσῆκουσας ἐκμάθης γ’ ἀ δεῖ· τούτων ἔχω γὰρ πάντ’ ἐπιστήμην ἐγὼ. (Women of Trachis 335-8)

¹²⁶ Goward (1999) at 93.
¹²⁷ See also Oedipus at Kolonos 357.
Taplin interprets the messenger’s words as forcing Deianeira to ‘turn her back on ignorance and deceit and face knowledge. The action is an embodiment of the meaning.’129

With Lichas and the women inside the skēnē, the stage is now occupied by Deianeira and the messenger, who is, perhaps near the centre of the orchestra with the chorus observing. It is conventional for a messenger to leave the stage once he has reported his news and with the first messenger’s withdrawal from the foreground at 199, the audience would have likely assumed that his role was complete, particularly as his news was greeted with jubilant prayer from Deianeira and a choral song, the usual indicator of the end of a section of a play.130 His unexpected reappearance at Deianeira’s side as Lichas and the captive women begin to leave the stage would have heightened the audience’s anticipation of what was to come. If the audience did not know of a prior literary tradition of Iole’s role in Herakles’ sack of Oichalia, then this is the first indication of a problem with Lichas’ report. While his version of the fall of Oichalia seemed to be detailed and comprehensive, it involved one omission of fact which will prove crucial to the remaining story.

The messenger chooses to tell Deianeira the truth of the situation only in the absence of Lichas and the captive women and yet he is only repeating what Lichas himself reported to the Trachinians, as he makes clear at 351-2 and 423-4. Kraus notes that his insistence on secrecy ‘contrasts ironically with the effect of his information – that of bringing the truth to light’.131 But it also is in keeping with the theme of secrecy and stealth that runs throughout the play.132

The messenger tells Deianeira that Lichas has not spoken the truth, using very strong language:

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\text{άνήρ οὐδ' οὐδὲν ὁν ἐλέξεν ἄρτίως}
\text{φονεῖ δίκης ἐς ὀρθὸν, ἄλλ' ἢ νῦν κακός,}
\text{ἡ πρόσθεν οὐ δίκαιος ἄγγελος παρὴν. (Women of Trachis 346-8)}
\]

He relates to Deianeira what Lichas announced to the crowd when he first arrived and thus the truth finally reaches Deianeira through a convoluted series of speakers and

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129 Taplin (1971) at 30-1.
130 Taplin (1977b) at 89 and 55.
131 Kraus (1991) at 85.
132 As discussed by Halleran (1986), Lawrence (1978) at 293.
addressees: Iole (and Erōs) was the reason that Herakles sacked Oichalia and sent her to Trachis, since ἐντεθέρμανται πόθος (368). Deianeira learns that Lichas, her husband’s herald, lied to her about Iole’s identity and about her role in the sacking of Oichalia. Not only was the specific information not revealed, but there was, in fact, deception.

As Deianeira is about to send for Lichas, the herald appears at the skēnē door. She attempts to elicit the truth about Iole’s identity, but Lichas again evades revealing the truth: Εἴβοις· ὅν δ’ ἐβλαστεν οὔκ ἔχω λέγειν (401). At this point the first messenger takes over and Deianeira is sidelined verbally until 436, although presumably she is still standing nearby, actively listening to the two reporting figures. Heath argues that Deianeira’s withdrawal from the argument between the two messengers is ‘contrived to add weight to her rhesis when she does break her silence’, but I think the reason has more to do with staging considerations and the audience’s ability to identify who is speaking. There is no point at which all three characters are speaking in the same section of conversation; rather the duologues change regularly, with occasional interjections by the chorus. This creates a complex scene of three-character interaction, but one that is broken up carefully into identifiable duologues where the speakers can easily be identified. In addition, it reflects the key theme of the play as information is controlled and released between only two parties at any one moment.

The dialogue between the messenger and Lichas moves rapidly, filled with stichomythia, distichomythia and antilabe, and Deianeira’s non-participation allows Sophocles to introduce a different tone in the pragma. The two reporting figures focus directly on, and address, each other in less-than-respectful tones: their sentences and questions are brief and no courtesies are exchanged. This contrasts sharply with the formal and respectful tone they both use when addressing Deianeira, a tone which Lichas re-introduces with his later plaintive address to Deianeira: πρὸς θεόν, φράσον, φίλη / δέσποινα, τόνδε τίς ποτ’ ἐστίν ὁ ξένος (429-30). The messenger asks Lichas straight out whether he had identified that the girl was Iole, daughter of Eurytos, but Lichas responds by asking who would bear witness to this. Lichas attempts to control language, but he is unsuccessful. The messenger suggests the many townspeople who had been in the Trachinian agora. Lichas tries again to obfuscate the issue by saying that they thought they heard it, but it is a different matter to report something accurately. The messenger reminds Lichas of his oath regarding her identity as the bride of

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133 Heath (1987) at 152n.72.
Herakles (Ἄμαρτα, 427-8) and Lichas appeals to Deianeira, casting aspersions on the messenger as a stranger (ξένος, 430). The messenger finally identifies that he himself heard Lichas’ words to which Lichas attempts to portray him as not being in his right mind (in contrast to the σώφρονος Lichas, 435). At this point Deianeira makes a long speech demanding the truth from Lichas (436-69) and the chorus suggests that he obey her (470-1). Finally, Lichas admits the truth of the girl’s identity and role in Herakles’ sack of her city (472-89). After being on stage for 250 lines of omissions, half-truths and lies, he promises to – and does – tell her the whole truth: πάν σοι φράσω τάληθες οὐδὲ κρύψομαι (474). He takes responsibility for his lying and specifies that Herakles did not ask him to conceal the truth. Lichas therefore goes beyond the traditional role of the herald in tragedy. Deianeira then returns to the action she was undertaking when diverted by the old man’s intervention and leads Lichas (and possibly the first messenger) into the house so that she can give Lichas messages and gifts to take with him back to Herakles.\(^{134}\)

These interlinked reporting pragmata serve the purpose of elaborating an important issue of the play: the acquisition, acceptance and reliability of knowledge. In addition they prolong the delay before Herakles’ return by adding in what appear to be extraneous links to the chain of senders and receivers of information. As Goward notes, Sophoclean tragedies often concern the intersection of the need for knowledge and the doloi which thwart such necessity, and this scene is an example of an elaborate dolos that complicates the understanding of the truth.\(^{135}\) Lichas’ lies to Deianeira about her husband’s activities and Iole’s identity are the means by which Deianeira’s acquisition of knowledge is delayed. Yet heralds by convention are inviolable and therefore can tell bad news without fear of punishment. Lichas intentionally creates a false story to present to his master’s wife, but he can have no conviction that such a pretence can be maintained for long. After all, his master is soon to return, at which point his relationship with Iole will be made clear to all.\(^{136}\) It is widely accepted that one of

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\(^{134}\) Goward identifies similar ‘narrative loops’ where ‘Sophocles makes a temporary deviation from a plot line, rejoining it again later at the point of exit. All these deviations contain deceitful or at least ambiguous narratives’ in *Aias* 646-865 and *Philoktetes* 541-627 (Goward (1999) at 87).

\(^{135}\) Goward (1999) at 44.

\(^{136}\) Reinhardt argues that it is not a false story *per se*, but rather Lichas has altered the causal connection between the events (Reinhardt (1979) at 42).
Sophocles’ purposes in inserting Lichas’ deceptive story is to allow the portrayal of Deianeira’s sympathetic reaction to Iole before she knows the truth behind Herakles’ actions. The construction of this reporting *pragma* thus allows the enrichment of the *muthos* through its depiction of Deianeira.

Following the characters’ exit, the chorus sings of the power of Aphrodite and of the contest for Deianeira’s hand between Acheloos and Herakles. Deianeira enters to tell the chorus of her distress at Iole’s presence in the house and of her plan to secure her husband’s love with a love-charm. When Lichas comes out from the house, she gives him a tunic to present to Herakles with instructions for the circumstances of its wear. Lichas promises to pass on her message to Herakles’ exactly – foretelling a future reporting *pragma* that will occur offstage (and which Hyllos will briefly allude to at 756-9, clearly reinforcing the continuity of the events within the tragedy). Lichas leaves and Deianeira re-enters the palace, while the chorus sings in prayer for Herakles’ safe return. It explicitly describes his *nostos*:

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\begin{align*}
\text{ό καλλιβόας τάχ' ύμιν} \\
\text{αύλος ούκ ἄναρσίαν} \\
\text{ἄχων καναχ' ἐπάνεισιν,} \\
\text{ἄλλα θείας ἀντίλυρον μούσας.} \\
\text{Ὁ γὰρ Διός, Ἀλκμήνας κόρος,} \\
\text{σεῦταί πάσας ὁρετάς} \\
\text{λάφυρ' ἔχων ἐπ' οἴκους.} \\
\end{align*}
\]

*(Women of Trachis 640-6)*

His triumphant return, having been announced twice by the messenger and by Lichas, is accepted as imminent by the chorus and consequently the anticipation of the audience for this *pragma* is heightened.

Deianeira appears on stage for the third time to undertake the third *pragma* of reporting in the play (663-722). While previously she was the audience, now she reveals the information. The chorus is her only audience as she describes her preparations for the anointing of the robe with the centaur’s potion and the subsequent destruction of the wool. And like many other chorus-messenger scenes, her report foretells a potential death; her foreboding is communicated to and thus transferred to the chorus and the audience. The *pragma* of Deianeira’s apprehension concerning the death of Herakles leads directly into Hyllos’ report of the consequences of her actions, the fourth reporting *pragma*, in the play’s second set of connected reporting *pragmata*.

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137 Reinhardt (1979) at 43-4, Wilamowitz-Moellendorff (1969) at 142-5.
The chorus announces the entrance of Hyllos, and the subject-matter of his report is implicitly suggested by the chorus’ identification of him as μαστήρ πατρός (733). With his very first words, he highlights the familial relationship between reporting figure and audience (‘Ω μήτερ, 734). From the start, his anger towards his mother is clear, as he wishes that she were either dead, not his mother or had better wits than she possesses. She does not understand his anger and Hyllos responds with the blunt statement: Τὸν ἄνδρα τὸν σὸν ἵσθι, τὸν δ’ ἐμὸν λέγω / πατέρα, κατακτείνασα τῇ δ’ ἐν ἡμέρα (739-40). He strongly emphasises the familial connections between the reporting figure, his audience and the figure described: son, wife and father/husband. And he claims eyewitness status (746-7) before answering his mother’s enquiry as to the location of these events with an extended rhēsis (749-812).

He describes in detail Herakles’ acceptance of her tunic, his enactment of the sacrifice, the onset of his pain and his murder of Lichas. He begins with a slightly ominous promise: Εἰ χρὴ μαθεῖν σε, πάντα δὴ φωνεῖν χρεών (749). His rhēsis is filled with audience-specific denotations and second person pronouns which constantly bring the audience’s attention back to Hyllos’ silent addressee. He highlights Deianeira’s role in the events he describes with accusatory second-person verbs. Only once in his rhēsis does he address her directly:

Τοιαύτα, μήτερ, πατρί βουλεύοντας’ ἐμῷ καὶ δρόσῳ ἐλήφθης, ὅν σε ποίνης Δίκη τείσας’ Ἐρινῶς τ’· εἰ θέμις δ’, ἐπεύχομαι’ (Women of Trachis 807-9)

The adjacency of the familial terms he uses to address Deianeira and to describe the object of her destruction poignantly highlights Hyllos’ relationship to both of them, as well as underlining that the ‘crime is all the more horrific because of Deianeira’s close ties with Herakles’.

He finishes by announcing Herakles’ imminent arrival, combining the roles of messenger and herald into one pragma. He is the third herald of Herakles’ return to

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139 Women of Trachis 759, 806, 808, 810 and 812.
Deianeira. The first was the old man, announced by the chorus as garlanded and therefore as bringing good news, who proclaimed in a tricolon crescendo that Herakles was to achieve his nostos in triumphant fashion (181-6). He was, however, only reporting second-hand news, having heard the information from Lichas, who then entered to confirm in person Herakles’ return. Lichas’ entry, accompanied by female captives, visually substantiated Herakles’ victory for Deianeira and the external audience. His verbal confirmation of the hero’s condition, however, hinted that Herakles’ return may not be flawless. He stated – again in a tripartite description – that when he left Herakles, he was strong, alive and flourishing, but his final words contained a disquieting element: κο/νόσ/ βαρύν (234-5). The physical deterioration in Herakles’ condition is undeniably communicated to Deianeira by the third character to warn of his return, his son Hyllos. After describing the horrific effects of Herakles’ donning of the robe sent by Deianeira and emphasising Herakles’ physical agony (βρυχώµενον σπασµο/σι, 805), Hyllos says: καί νιν αυτίκα / ή ζωντ’ ἐσόψεσθ’ ἦ τεθνηκότ’ ἄρτιως (805-6). Deianeira herself will see whether her husband is still alive or has just died. Hyllos casts doubt on whether his father will ever achieve his nostos, but the hero is now unlikely to achieve the triumphant nostos foretold by the old man earlier in the play. Each successive announcement of the hero’s return suggests a deterioration in his physical condition and in the nature of his return. And indeed when he does enter, motionless, carried upon a litter, both the characters onstage and the external audience might have experienced tantalising doubt about whether the hero was actually still alive. Would Sophocles dare to present a lifeless Herakles? As he is carried in, the chorus wonders whether the silent procession indicates that he is dead or sleeping (968-70). Hyllos’ words of lamentation do not verify that he lives and it is not until the old man accompanying the litter advises Hyllos to be quiet lest he waken his father that it is confirmed that Herakles still lives (974-7). Through the simple device of varying (here by repetition) the conventional announcement of a hero’s return, Sophocles is able to create a growing sense of disquiet about Herakles’ return and thereby intensify the audience’s engagement with his fate, continually building suspense towards the delayed enactment of the nostos. Three times the hero’s return is foretold and eventually he does return, but not in the manner expected after the first announcement.

While scholars have noted the doubled notification of Herakles’ return, none has considered the role of Hyllos as a third herald (Goward (1999) at 91-5, Payne (2000), Wilamowitz-Moellendorff (1969) at 143-6).
Hyllos’ speech is a superb example of a combination reporting *pragma*. Not only does Hyllos report on the events in Euboia *post factum*, but he also warns Deianeira and the chorus of the imminent return of Herakles and his report motivates her to commit suicide. Hyllos’ words of accusation and his motivation of her death occur without his understanding of the truth of the matter. He is not in possession of all the relevant information and yet again in this play, the revelation of information does not necessarily lead to complete and immediate understanding. Nevertheless, it does lead on to subsequent action.

Deianeira does not reply to her son’s speech and instead silently enters the house. Jouanna comments that Hyllos’ *rhēsis* is almost like the first part of an *agon* with Deianeira, except that she does not reply. The chorus comments on her silence as a reinforcement of Hyllos’ accusation: Τί σ/uni1FD6γ’ /uni1F00φέρπες; ο/uni1F50 κάτοισθ’ /uni1F41θούνεκα / ξυνηγορε/uni1FD6ς σιγ/uni1FF6σα τ/uni1FF7 κατηγόρ/uni1FF3; (813-14), and she answers the accusations with a tacit acceptance of responsibility. As Easterling notes, the importance of her departure in the stage action is signalled by the emphasis in the focus of the chorus and Hyllos’ words on this movement for eight lines (813-20).

The chorus’ lament over the fates of Herakles and of Deianeira is interrupted by the sound of weeping and soon the nurse enters for the fifth reporting *pragma* to tell of Deianeira’s suicide within the *skēnē*. The nurse’s appearance in the prologue with Deianeira had previously verified for the audience the close relationship between the two, and her report of her mistress’ death follows the standard format of a ‘chorus-messenger scene’. She begins by lamenting the gift of the *chitōn* to Herakles (871-2), then, for the next twenty-five lines the chorus asks questions and the nurse provides further detail in response. To the chorus’ initial enquiry about what has happened, the nurse responds obliquely: Βέβηκε ∆/uni1FC3άνειρα τ/uni1F74ν πανυστάτην / /uni1F41δ/uni1FF6ν /uni1F01πασ/uni1FF6ν /uni1F10ξ /uni1F00κινήτου ποδός (874-5). The chorus guesses her meaning and the nurse confirms it.

Further details about the means by which Deianeira killed herself emerge before the nurse begins her *rhēsis* at 899. She emphasises her eyewitness status as she describes Deianeira’s movements around the house and her preparations on Herakles’ bed to kill herself. Even Deianeira’s final words are narrated verbatim by the nurse:

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142 Lawrence sees this as a continuation of the motif of silence which Iole and Lichas earlier adopted ‘as an appropriate response to unpalatable knowledge’ (Lawrence (1978) at 299).
143 Jouanna (2007) at 326.
She describes how Deianeira bared her arm in preparation for the deadly stroke, but the actual deed itself was not witnessed. Deianeira died alone as the nurse ran to find Hyllos. As Kraus notes, ‘her position is thereby analogous to the audience’s who cannot see the suicide because of the barrier of the σκηνή’.

The nurse describes Hyllos’ reaction to the discovery of the body and his understanding that it was his words which drove her to kill herself. Her sympathy for the boy is apparent in her use of adjectives: τάλας (932) and δύστηνος (936) and she explicitly notes that he learned the truth too late: ὅψ’ ἐκδόθησαν, 934. Finally he comprehends his mother’s motives in sending the tunic. Having related the events, the nurse leaves immediately at 946 to grieve privately in the house and to leave the stage to the chorus, which undertakes a final lament before Herakles is carried in on a litter for the final scene of the play.

At long last the hero returns, but, rather than in triumph, is afflicted by a grievous nosos caused by the poison. The triumphant return foretold at 181-6, 287-9 and 640-6 has instead become like a funeral procession. Although the third announcement of the hero’s return by Hyllos described the physical effects of the poison, the sight of Herakles silent and motionless, carried in on a litter, would have been shocking for the audience. The condition of his return visually confirms Deianeira and Hyllos’ reports about the poison; the audience sees authentication of the accuracy of their words.

In Women of Trachis Sophocles cleverly intertwines the pragmata of reporting and return. The reporting pragmata anticipate the return of Herakles, but in so doing also delay it. The multiplicity of reporting pragmata illustrates the difficulties inherent in the acquisition, acceptance and reliability of knowledge. Even the simple notification of an imminent arrival is complicated through its replication and variation in detail. This repetition helps build suspense regarding the ever-anticipated nostos of Herakles. Sophocles has adapted a common tragic pragma used primarily for the communication of information to show precisely how complicated the acquisition of knowledge and identification of truth are – creating a complex network of truths, half-truths and lies. The complex interplay of information is clearly portrayed through the connected reporting pragmata. The audience observes the transmission of information that causes

145 Kraus (1991) at 94.
146 Herakles’ nostos is further discussed throughout Chapter 1: Return Home.
wrong decisions to be made, as well as the later report of the consequences of those
decisions. The play’s three main characters suffer from making premature decisions on
the basis of incomplete information and repeatedly understand too late the truth of the
situation. Through its repeated reporting pragmata, Women of Trachis portrays the
difficulties in acquiring truth and knowledge, and thus demonstrates mankind’s inability
to possess complete understanding. Man’s fate is, therefore, not within his control.

3. CONCLUSION

The reliance on the act of reporting in both Athenian tragedy and in ancient Greek
society is clearly demonstrated in the large numbers of reporting pragmata that feature
in extant tragedy. The pragma of the report of events that have occurred offstage and of
messages is used extensively in the dramatic genre, as it allows events and characters
offstage to be ‘brought’ before the audience. In both its enacted and non-enacted forms,
there are countless possible permutations of structure, participants, information and
linguistic elements within a reporting pragma and it has a variety of effects within the
systasis and the muthos and upon the audience of a tragedy. It can prepare for
subsequent action, act as an impetus for a decision or action, describe events resulting
from earlier stage events or provide further detail about characters’ actions and
motivations. The inherent variety of its forms provides the playwrights with great scope
to manipulate this pragma within a play, but reporting pragmata always reflect the
uniquitous reliance on the truthfulness of reporting figures both on stage and in real life.
The use of subjective reporting figures demonstrates the difficulties inherent in attaining
complete understanding from any information received, while the representation of
deceptive messengers – despite the convention of truth – highlights man’s vulnerability
in being reliant on others for knowledge.
CONCLUSIONS

Tragedy is a multimedia presentation of a story that requires the active engagement not only of the actors on stage, but also of the audience. One way in which the playwrights ensure this is through the specific way in which they arrange and deploy the *pragma* which constitute their plots.

*Pragmata* are the basic elements of the structure of a tragedy, linking together to form the *systasis* and the *muthos*. While a *pragma* encompasses all actions which serve the same general function, there is no homogeneity in the different examples of a *pragma*. Certain generalities can be identified, but the specifics of every example are different. The duration, participants, elements and consequences of a particular *pragma* vary depending on the individual circumstances of its enactment. While *nostos* in tragedy is always problematic and usually associated with death and destruction within the *oikos*, the manner and timing of a return vary within the individual tragedy. Recognition *pragmata* display the difficulties in establishing identity and the inherent instability of knowledge, but the manner of achieving recognition differs in each representation. The *pragma* of supplication demonstrates the reliance on reciprocity in the ancient world, but the reasons for which it is utilised and the outcome of a specific enactment cannot be predicted. Reporting *pragmata* demonstrate the reliance on the truthfulness of reporting figures, but also the difficulties of attaining understanding from information received.

The *pragmata* play a dynamic role within a tragedy, influencing the movement of the *systasis*, embellishing the *muthos* and provoking audience engagement with a performance. A particular *pragma* can have multiple effects simultaneously influencing the *systasis*, the *muthos* and the audience. It can operate as a motivator of further action or the climax of the *systasis*; it can intensify thematic coherence and further develop the
character of a dramatic figure; it can create audience anticipation of subsequent events within the play; and it can engage the audience more closely with the events on stage.

In conjunction with the enacted form of *pragmata* on stage, the playwrights use references and allusions to particular *pragmata* to compel the audience to contrast different characters and situations within a play, as well as to create audience anticipation of future enactments and to engage the audience more closely with the action. References to *pragmata* can also intensify themes, increase the pathos on stage and develop the characters. The *pragma* is the most dynamic element of a drama as, even though it consists of certain predictable or recurrent elements, nevertheless it has the potential for great variety and manipulation in different ways, and it produces a multiplicity of effects on the *systasis*, the *muthos* and the audience of each tragedy.

In each chapter we have seen how a single *pragma* operates within an entire tragedy and the effects it has on the *systasis*, the *muthos* and the audience. Furthermore, we have seen how focusing on a single *pragma* can elucidate further a particular theme within a play. Each tragedy does not, however, contain only one *pragma*; there is generally no single significant *pragma* within a tragedy (although supplication in Aeschylus’ *Suppliant Women* may be viewed as a partial exception to this general rule). Rather, the *systasis* is a concatenation of *pragmata* and evaluating a tragedy on its use of a separate *pragma* can illuminate a different emphasis of the tragedy. Each *pragma* contributes something different to a tragedy and the focus on enactments – and how they are supported by non-enacted forms – can illuminate a distinct aspect of the performance.

Thus, we considered *Andromache* from the perspective of the *nostos pragma* and identified that it is structured around the potential future return of Neoptolemos, that ultimately occurs only briefly. It is a non-*nostos nostos* play. And by presenting the same *pragma* from the perspectives of different characters, Euripides compels the audience to consider the meaning of the same *pragma* for different people and thus also the way in which different characters can be represented in very different ways. He (implicitly) comments on the inventiveness of tragedy as a genre and himself as a tragedian. But a focus on the *pragma* of supplication, which is enacted several times by various characters, reveals the desperation of the characters and their reliance on the operation of reciprocity in the face of changing circumstances. We discover an emphasis on the unexpected and rapid changes in fortune which life can bring.
In chapter two, we saw how the events within Sophocles’ *Elektra* constantly look forward to the recognition between Orestes and Elektra, which is delayed until more than four-fifths of the way through the play. Using postponement and proliferation of this *pragma*, Sophocles toys with the audience’s expectations of this conventional action, enriching the *muthos* through its conscious interaction with previous dramatic tradition and actively engaging the audience in the outcome of the drama. The play can, however, also be analysed for its interaction with the *pragma* of return. From almost the beginning of the play, the *nostos* of Aigisthos is regularly alluded to, before finally being enacted in the last scene of the play. A focus on Aigisthos’ absence emphasises the tensions inherent in the palace and the dysfunctional state of relationships within the palace, as well as how the same action can present a different prospect to various characters.

Chapter 3 included an analysis of Hekabe’s multiple *pragma* of supplication, which emphasise the uncertain role of *Tuchē* in life and man’s vulnerability to it, as well as demonstrating the importance of reciprocity in light of one’s inability to control one’s own fate. A focus on reporting *pragma* instead emphasises Hekabe’s wretched situation as each report brings news of a further loss of a *philos*.

An analysis of the *pragma* of reporting in *Women of Trachis* in Chapter 4 highlights the difficulties in attaining truth and knowledge, and thus demonstrates man’s inability to possess complete understanding. A focus on the *pragma* of *nostos*, however, instead stresses the ever-changing disposition of a potential returning figure and the circumstances of their return.

The versatility in the consequences of a single *pragma* as well as the variety in its elements provide the playwrights with great scope within their *muthoi*, but it is the combination of the enacted and non-enacted forms of the *pragma* that makes it such a powerful element at the playwright’s disposal.

No single approach or methodology can by itself fully interpret an Athenian tragedy, but a focus on a particular *pragma* within a play illuminates different themes and emphases and ultimately provides us with a better understanding of a tragedy. This approach could be adopted for the further analysis of other *pragma*, for example death, in the search for greater understanding of the meaning of Athenian tragedy. The soul of a tragic performance is truly ἐ τῶν πραγμάτων σύστασις.
Appendix 1: Enacted return *pragmata*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Playwright</th>
<th>Play</th>
<th>Moment of return</th>
<th>Returning character</th>
<th>Live/dead</th>
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<td>Herald</td>
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<td>782</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Orestes</td>
<td>Live</td>
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<td>249</td>
<td>Herald</td>
<td>Live</td>
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<td>681</td>
<td>Dareios</td>
<td>Dead (ghost)</td>
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<td><em>Persians</em></td>
<td>908</td>
<td>Xerxes</td>
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<tr>
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<td><em>Seven against Thebes</em></td>
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<td>Polyneikes &amp; Eteokles</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Andromache</em></td>
<td>1166</td>
<td>Neoptolemos</td>
<td>Dead</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Bacchae</em></td>
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<td>Pentheus</td>
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<td>Orestes &amp; Paidagogos</td>
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<td>Aigisthos</td>
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<td>Women of Trachis</td>
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<td>Hyllos</td>
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### Appendix 2: Non-enacted return *pragma*ta

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Appendix 3: Enacted recognition *pragmata*

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## Appendix 6: Enacted reporting *pragmata*

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<td>Messenger</td>
<td>Male</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Rhesos</em></td>
<td>728-876</td>
<td>Charioteer</td>
<td>Male</td>
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<td><em>Suppliant Women</em></td>
<td>399-584</td>
<td>Theban herald</td>
<td>Male</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Suppliant Women</em></td>
<td>634-777</td>
<td>Messenger</td>
<td>Male</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Trojan Women</em></td>
<td>235-461</td>
<td>Talthybios</td>
<td>Male</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Trojan Women</em></td>
<td>709-89</td>
<td>Talthybios</td>
<td>Male</td>
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<td><em>Trojan Women</em></td>
<td>1123-55</td>
<td>Talthybios</td>
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<td><em>Trojan Women</em></td>
<td>1260-86</td>
<td>Talthybios</td>
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<td><em>Sophocles</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Aias</em></td>
<td>39-65</td>
<td>Athene</td>
<td>Female</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Aias</em></td>
<td>201-327</td>
<td>Tekmessa</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>To chorus alone</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Aias</em></td>
<td>719-802</td>
<td>Messenger</td>
<td>Male</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Antigone</em></td>
<td>223-331</td>
<td>Sentry</td>
<td>Male</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Antigone</em></td>
<td>384-445</td>
<td>Sentry</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Antigone</em></td>
<td>988-1090</td>
<td>Teiresias</td>
<td>Male</td>
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<td><em>Antigone</em></td>
<td>1155-1243</td>
<td>Messenger</td>
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<td><em>Antigone</em></td>
<td>1278-1316</td>
<td>Messenger</td>
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<td><em>Elektra</em></td>
<td>660-803</td>
<td>Paidagogos</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Three-character interaction</td>
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<td><em>Elektra</em></td>
<td>871-919</td>
<td>Chrysothemis</td>
<td>Female</td>
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<td><em>Oedipus at Kolonos</em></td>
<td>324-509</td>
<td>Ismene</td>
<td>Female</td>
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<td><em>Oedipus at Kolonos</em></td>
<td>1150-1210</td>
<td>Theseus</td>
<td>Male</td>
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<td><em>Oedipus at Kolonos</em></td>
<td>1579-1669</td>
<td>Messenger</td>
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<td>To chorus alone</td>
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<td><em>Oedipus the King</em></td>
<td>87-146</td>
<td>Kreon</td>
<td>Male</td>
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<td><em>Oedipus the King</em></td>
<td>924-1185</td>
<td>Messenger</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Three-character interaction</td>
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<td><em>Oedipus the King</em></td>
<td>1223-1296</td>
<td>Messenger</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>To chorus alone</td>
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<td><em>Philoktetes</em></td>
<td>542-627</td>
<td>‘Shipmaster’</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Three-character interaction</td>
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<td>Women of Trachis</td>
<td>180-496</td>
<td>Old man &amp; Lichas</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Three-character interaction</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Women of Trachis</td>
<td>663-730</td>
<td>Deianeira</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>To chorus alone</td>
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<td>Women of Trachis</td>
<td>734-820</td>
<td>Hyllos</td>
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<td>Women of Trachis</td>
<td>871-946</td>
<td>Nurse</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>To chorus alone</td>
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