S K E N È

Journal of Theatre and Drama Studies

4:1 2018

Transitions

Edited by Silvia Bigliazzi

Contents

Special Section

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Collaborating with Euripides:
Actors and Scholars Improve the Drama Text [1]

Abstract

This article examines a passage from Euripides' *Electra* which has been suspected of being textually interpolated. It is a fairly long passage, covering twenty-six lines out of overall fourty-four, between 357 and 400. Through an analysis of the co-textual and contextual consistency of the suspect portions, the article wishes to demonstrate that the scene under scrutiny, which shows no trace of incongruous additions, is coherent with the overall play text *Electra* as it has been passed down to us under Euripides' name.

Keywords: actors' interpolations; Euripides; Euripides' *Electra*.

> Whoever teaches that hermeneutics and
> scholarship are to be kept distinct seriously errs.
> Heinrich Hirzel
>
> In my opinion, Euripides needs interpretation rather than correction.
> Gilbert Murray
>
> When an editor labels something an actor's interpolation he is doing no
> more than declaring that he does not like it. Such declarations
> naturally tell us more about the editor than the text.
>
> Gary Taylor [2]

On 27 February 1998, in the Hall of the 'Archivio Antico' of Padua University, only a few months after the publication of the two *Hamlet* edited by

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[1] I owe many precious suggestions to Silvia Bigliazzi, who has discussed with me some of the distinctive proxemic and gestural traits of Euripides' *Electra*.

[2] The quotations are from Hirzel (1862: 97; "Egregie errant qui hermeneuticam et criticam separatim tractandas esse praecipiunt"), Murray (1902: xi; "Plus interpretationis eget, me iudice, Euripides quam emendationis"), and Taylor (2009: 407). Although this last statement may sound dogmatic, as we will see with regard to the few examples discussed in the following pages, subjectivity is sovereign in this field. All translations from Latin, Italian, French and German are mine.

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Alessandro Serpieri for Marsilio (Serpieri 1997a, Serpieri 1997b), Paolo Carrara,[3] Paul Mertens[4] and Serpieri himself contributed to a seminar on the 'instability of the play text', chaired by Oddone Longo. Mertens and Carrara offered first-hand papyrological documents of drama texts testifying to their circulation in Hellenized Egypt, and discussed traces of theatrical practice in Euripides' papyri. Serpieri talked about authorship and the performative impact of plural editions of the same drama text in early modern English theatrical life, which, for its richness, has often been compared with that of fifth-century BCE Athens. That occasion brought together classical scholarship and Shakespearean studies to focus on the relation between text and performance, eluding aprioristic stances, often dictated by subjective tastes, on distinctions between authenticity and falsity. On the basis of updated documentary evidence and in a fertile interdisciplinary dialogue, those classical scholars and the audience of philologists present at the seminar showed the same curiosity for Elizabethan theatre that had characterized Raffaele Cantarella's opening pages of his seminal study on the influence of actors on the tradition of Athenian tragic texts.[5]

In this article, I wish to revive the memory of that day, but from a different angle. Against the backdrop of that day's discussion on the instability of play texts, I would like to confirm its assumptions by paradoxically defending the Euripidean text against suspicion of both erudite and actorial interpolations with regard to *Electra* 357-400. I will argue that it is not necessary to imagine that the assumed original needs restoration by subtraction of a certain number of lines. Hamilton (1974), Goldhill (1986) and Basta Donzelli (1991) have already adopted this stance by working on the tragedy's syntactic and argumentative structures, especially. Here, I will try to achieve the same result by resorting to interpretative criteria based on the co-textual and contextual coherence of the textual portions suspected of interpolation within the play text *Electra* as we have it.

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[3] University of Siena at Arezzo; more recently author of the exhaustive *Il testo di Euripide nell'antichità* (Carrara 2009).

[4] (†2011) University of Liège; founder and, until 1990, Director of the Centre de Documentation de Papyrologie Littéraire (*CEDOPAL*); we owe to him the Mertens-Pack[3] repertory of the Greek and Latin literary papyri (MP[3]).

[5] I prefer to talk generically, in this case, of curiosity rather than of a comparative approach, since Cantarella (1970: 137n4) only alluded to the "huge amount of the Shakespearian philology" and surprisingly referred the reader, "for concise information", exclusively to Croce 1920 (78-80), which dealt with the Bard's biography only. Nevertheless, it should not be forgotten that Cantarella's study predates by four years Denys L. Page's *Actors' Interpolations*, which ignored it. For an appropriate evaluation of Cantarella's contribution see Hamilton (1974: 390-1).

1. *Litteratores* and *histriones*

Also because of the suggestions related to the finding of new theatrical papyri, starting with Page (1934) the hypothesis of the actorial origin of interpolations, with particular reference to Euripides, has prevailed upon that of scholarly and/or scribal origins. It is reasonable to imagine that the 'canonisation' of the three greatest tragic playwrights rendered actors' interpolations especially likely wherever ancient dramas were mounted, and, because of Theodotos' decree (387/6 BCE), also in the Athenian 'Great Dionysia' – in this case with more substantial and lasting effects upon the drama texts.[6] The number of Euripides' Hellenistic manuscripts witnesses the broader circulation of his plays than those of Aeschylus and Sophocles.[7] However, this indisputable fact does not authorize us to assume that Euripides' plays were more liable to manipulation due to their being more read and, as normally assumed, more frequently performed.[8]

It is well known that the Euripidean 'papyri' from Graeco-Roman Egypt (actually papyrus rolls and *codices*, parchment *codices* and other stuff, as *ostraca*) present plus- and minus lines in respect to the Byzantine manuscripts. Suspicions of interpolation, however, were put forward much earlier than when the literary papyri began to be massively published from the end of the nineteenth century onwards, gradually increasing our knowledge of their circulation in Hellenized Egypt. The claim that Euripides' plays are more affected by *interpolationes* than those of the other two great tragedians was already made in 1755 by Lodewijk Caspar Valckenaer: "[my critics will have to remember] that I have branded as spurious more lines in this Euripides' play only [i.e. *The Phoenician Women*] than those I could brand in all of Sophocles' seven tragedies".[9] Valckenaer attributed these interpolations to some ignorant grammarians or school-masters ("lit[t]eratores"; 1755: 14). Therefore, they were to be considered as bookish manipulations akin to those that for Valckenaer corrupted Euripidean sayings on ethical subjects contained in various Hellenistic anthologies.[10] This is not

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[6] This is not the place for a thorough re-examination of the vast literature on the wide-ranging discussion of both the decree of 387/6 (on which see, for example, Nervegna 2007: 15), and the vigilance upon tragic play texts inaugurated in Athens by Lycurgos around the mid-fourth century BCE.

[7] Approximately, 169 'numbers' in MP³, against 33 for Aeschylus and 37 for Sophocles.

[8] On the reperformances of plays in the classical and Hellenistic periods see Nervegna (2007: 15-21).

[9] "[D]einde meminerint . . . plures in hoc uno dramate versus me notasse spurios, quam e septem Sophoclis tragoediis vellem proscriptos" (1755: 14).

[10] Valckenaer 1767: 1-2. On his *Diatribe* see Lupi (2018).

the place to draw a history of the notion of interpolation, or an exhaustive phenomenology of the hypothesized interpolations; yet it should be noticed that suspicion normally invests the spoken parts rather than the sung or chanted ones, and the assertive rather than the narrative sections. Gottfried Hermann's second thoughts about the interpolations he had not questioned in his own edition of Euripides' *Iphigenia Aulidensis* are especially interesting: "[i]ndeed, mistakes of this kind are quite easy, considering that neither Euripides loved brevity, nor the interpolator shows himself so unaware of language and metre that his additions, where he often imitated Euripides, may be easily distinguished from a genuine text".[11] Hermann's allusion to Euripides' lack of *brevitas* clarifies that he was considering mainly, and perhaps exclusively, interpolations in the spoken parts. As shown by Hermann in his edition of Aeschylus (1814), where – as Medda points out – he "[had concentrated] on the presumed interpolations of bookish origin", "the dimension of the interpolations . . . linked to the theatrical life of the texts remains outside his horizon, as was almost inevitable at the time".[12] Hermann had not taken into account the possibility that "whole dramatic declamations" by one or more authors "were put together" owing to their content.[13] This anthological practice, which was criticized by Plato, ultimately ended out in 'demonstrative' performances (ἐπιδείξεις) similar to those practiced by sophists and orators, and therefore, because of their performative and actorial component, they were also subject to this kind of manipulation.[14]

The idea of bookish interpolations was to be upheld for long, well beyond the moment when the "inexperienced hands"[15] responsible for the interpolations began to be suspected as being those of *histriones*. As regards Euripides, I found this thesis first mentioned by Heinrich Steinberg: "Then, after a tragic poetry devoid of both the divine spirit and the sublime style admitted the common and easy speech, *Euripides especially flaunted in his tragedies just that excited rhetoric that every actor arbitrarily was to adopt on*

[11] "Et sane proclive est errare in hoc genere, quum neque Euripides brevitatis valde studiosus fuerit, neque interpolator se ita aut linguae aut metri ignarum praebuerit, ut ubique additamenta eius, quorum in multis ille ipsum imitatus Euripidem est, facile possint a genuinis distingui". Hermann (1847: 218), with regard to Hermann (1831).

[12] Medda (2006: 49). Medda's extensive study considers the methodological perspectives gradually elaborated by Hermann, and how he applied them to Aeschylus' text.

[13] *Laws* 7.811a (τινας ὅλας ῥήσεις εἰς ταὐτὸν συν[άγειν]). See Gentili (1979: 18).

[14] Also with reference to this "culture . . . fundamentally 'anthological' even with regard to . . . playwrights like Euripides", Gentili talks about "anthological selections for teaching" and "specific performances (*epideixeis* or *akroaseis*), such as those in use in 'salvation' festivals (*Soteria*) at Delphi", (1979: 21-2). On the rhetorical "*epideixeis* before large audiences (εἰς τοὺς ὄχλους)", see Alcidamas *On Sophists* 29-31.

[15] The formula "ungeschickte Hände" is Nauck's (1859: 1).

the stage. For this reason nowadays Euripides suffers from many more corruptions and interpolations than Aeschylus and Sophocles" (my emphasis).[16] In other words: the easy, uncontrolled rhetoric of an "expeditus sermo", typical of Euripides' poetics, would have been the primary factor of the subsequent unbridled tampering with his play texts on the part of actors who felt very comfortable with his unrestrained diction. The ultimate aim of such massive interventions remains obscure: if not due to the need of clarifying implicit passages risking misunderstanding in new social contexts, these interpolations were assumedly aimed at prompting the emotional response of the unlearned, that is, of that part of the audience stigmatised in Plato's *Laws* as "base theatrocracy" (3.701a: θεατροκρατία τις πονηρά). But if that was their purpose, one wonders how the slowing down of the pace of the action due to extra sententiousness 'added' to the original could please an audience "composed of hand-workers", who, as Aristotle writes, expected the playwrights to compete in offering "relaxation".[17] It also remains to be explained in what way selected *pièces de résistance*, possibly performed with a musical accompaniment emphasising their pathos, could eventually achieve a lasting effect on the manuscripts of the Euripidean *corpora*. Quite different is the case of changes affecting the spectacle, which may have been necessary for scenic reasons, as in the case of Euripides' *Orestes* 1366-8, where the *scholium* posits an actorial interpolation.[18] But it should be noticed that Page himself, followed more recently by other scholars, has questioned the validity of the scholiast's view, an issue that deserves a more detailed study than space would allow here.

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[16] "Denique postquam tragica poesis divini spiritus sublimisque dicendi generis expers vulgarem et expeditum sermonem ascivit, inprimis Euripides concitatam illam rhetoricam in tragoediis obtulit quam histriones suo quisque arbitratu in scenicam artem licenter invexerunt. Inde factum est ut hodie Euripides maiorem quam Aeschylus et Sophocles labem et interpolationem expertus sit" (1864: 1-2).

[17] *Politics* 8, 1342a18-22. "Since the audience is of two classes, one freemen and educated people, and the other the vulgar class composed of mechanics and laborers and other such persons, the latter sort also must be assigned competitions and shows for relaxation." (ἐπεὶ δ' ὁ θεατὴς διττός, ὁ μὲν ἐλεύθερος καὶ πεπαιδευμένος, ὁ δὲ φορτικὸς ἐκ βαναύσων καὶ θητῶν καὶ ἄλλων τοιούτων συγκείμενος, ἀποδοτέον ἀγῶνας καὶ θεωρίας καὶ τοῖς τοιούτοις πρὸς ἀνάπαυσιν) (text and trans. follow Rackham 1944).

[18] Schwartz 1887: 217 (τούτους δὲ τοὺς τρεῖς στίχους οὐκ ἄν τις ἐξ ἑτοίμου συγχωρήσειεν Εὐριπίδου εἶναι, ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον τῶν ὑποκριτῶν κτλ.: "no one could concede that these three lines were written by Euripides, but rather by actors, etc."). On these lines see Cantarella 1970: 165-6; Page 1934: 42.

2. Euripides' *Electra* 357-400: How Did 18 Lines Become 44?

One may receive the impression that both ancient actors and modern scholars wish to improve on Euripides' text, each in their own way, the former by adding, omitting or replacing lines, the latter by trying to restore its assumed textual *facies* before the postulated alteration. As regards the former, the interventions appear to have been made "in order to adjust [the play text] to the needs and tastes of audiences after the author's lifetime" (Dover 1977: 137). As regards the latter, it must be remarked that in the great deal of work carried out by classical scholars this "aspir[ation] to the holy grail of textual 'authenticity'" (Hall 2006: 51) is perhaps the most exemplary violation of the healthy principle that the philologist may at best succeed in reconstructing the earliest phase of the textual tradition, and that the original remains unattainable. With regard to fifth-century BCE play texts we should rather stick to Kenneth Dover's position, as he does not talk about 'the original', while conclusively proposing that the philologist's duty should be to "make implicit predictions . . . [about texts and books circulating] at the beginning of the Hellenistic age".[19] To put it differently: to contest a play text which has been passed down to us by the Byzantine Middle Ages because hypothetically tampered with by actors who may have performed it from the fifth century BCE onwards, is no more reasonable than to say that it is 'authentic' only because it has been handed down to us. Awaiting further evidence, what remains for us to do is presumably to verify the coherence of the suspected sequences with their immediate co-text and with the rest of the play, with no intention of certifying their authenticity beyond all reasonable doubt, but for the only purpose of arguing the compatibility of the different parts of that play text.

Electra is one of Euripides' dramas more affected by suspicion of interpolation: Steinberg (1864), who did not consider the sequence we are going to deal with, listed more than two hundred lines. Between 357 and 400 suspicion falls on a line of the Peasant (360) and on twenty-five out of the thirty-four pronounced by Orestes from 367 to 400. Proposals of excision also inevitably invest the dynamic of the scene. The peculiarity of this scene, presenting three characters (Electra, Orestes, and the Peasant), the Chorus leader, and the silent presence of at least three extras (Pylades and two servants), consists in the difficult balance between Orestes' verbal expansiveness and his silence about his own identity: in spite of his confidence

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[19] "Like other historical approaches, textual criticism too makes implicit predictions. If someone says 'I believe that here the author wrote *xyz*' he implies 'if we ever regain an exemplar of this text written at the beginning of the Hellenistic age, then *xyz* will be in it'" (Dover 1997: 57).

in the trustworthiness of Electra, the Chorus and the Peasant, he continues to present himself as the nameless one "who is here" (391: ὅ . . . παρὼν), as well as the interpreter of "him who is not here, / Agamemnon's son, in whose name we've come" (391-2: ὅ . . . οὐ παρὼν / Ἀγαμέμνονος παῖς, οὗπερ οὕνεχ᾽ ἥκομεν).[20] This is a feature that must be considered as structural, as it has already characterized his reticence on his own identity from 220 onwards, although, being onstage from 108, he has witnessed his sister's mourning; it will then characterize his own resistance to being recognised by the Old Man (558-61).[21] Furthermore, by decreasing Orestes' wordiness, this scene is deprived of the substantial clash between his enthusiastic judgement on the Peasant and Electra's subsequent reproach to her "thoughtless" husband for "getting wrong" in receiving in their poor house "guests who are greater men than [him]" (405-6 and 408: ὦ τλῆμον . . . / τί τούσδ᾽ ἐδέξω μείζονας σαυτοῦ ξένους; / . . . / . . . ἐξήμαρτες . . .). Lacking this clash, the scene is reduced to a hurried trick in order to summon the Old Man, as it appears in the summary contained in *Pap. Oxyrhynchus* 420 (on which see below, p. 000).

The moment has come to have a closer look at the suspected lines. To facilitate their identification, I have underlined them in both Greek and English:[22]

Αυτουργος	οὔκουν πάλαι χρῆν τοῖσδ᾽ ἀνεπτύχθαι πύλας;	
	χωρεῖτ᾽ ἐς οἴκους· ἀντὶ γὰρ χρηστῶν λόγων	
	ξενίων κυρήσεθ᾽, οἷ᾽ ἐμὸς κεύθει δόμος.	
	<u>αἴρεσθ᾽, ὀπαδοί, τῶνδ᾽ ἔσω τεύχη δόμων.</u>	360
	καὶ μηδὲν ἀντείπητε, παρὰ φίλου φίλοι	
	μολόντες ἀνδρός· καὶ γὰρ εἰ πένης ἔφυν,	
	οὔτοι τό γ᾽ ἦθος δυσγενὲς παρέξομαι.	
Ορεστης	πρὸς θεῶν, ὅδ᾽ ἀνὴρ ὃς συνεκκλέπτει γάμους	
	τοὺς σούς, Ὀρέστην οὐ καταισχύνειν θέλων;	365
Ηλεκτρα	οὗτος κέκληται πόσις ἐμὸς τῆς ἀθλίας.	
Ορεστης	φεῦ·	

[20] For the text and the translation of *Electra* I follow Cropp (2013). If not otherwise indicated, all other translations from the Greek are mine.

[21] Ορ. ἔα· τί μ᾽ ἐσδέδορκεν ὥσπερ ἀργύρου σκοπῶν / λαμπρὸν χαρακτῆρ᾽; ἢ προσεικάζει μέ τῳ; / Ηλ. ἴσως Ὀρέστου σ᾽ ἧλιχ᾽ ἥδεται βλέπων. / Ορ. φίλου γε φωτός. τί δὲ κυκλεῖ πέριξ πόδα; (Or. Hold on: why is he staring at me, as if inspecting a silver / coin's shiny marking? Is he comparing me with someone? El. Perhaps he's glad to see you, as a comrade of Orestes. / Or. Well, Orestes is certainly dear to me. But why circle round me?).

[22] From 351 to 358 the manuscripts tag the change of speaker with a paragraphos (–); therefore they ascribe 358-63 to Electra, but this is not acceptable, at least as regards 362-3, which can only be pronounced by the Peasant.

οὐκ ἔστ’ ἀκριβὲς οὐδὲν εἰς εὐανδρίαν·
ἔχουσι γὰρ ταραγμὸν αἱ φύσεις βροτῶν.
ἤδη γὰρ εἶδον ἄνδρα γενναίου πατρὸς
τὸ μηδὲν ὄντα, χρηστὰ δ’ ἐκ κακῶν τέκνα,   370
λιμόν τ’ ἐν ἀνδρὸς πλουσίου φρονήματι,
γνώμην δὲ μεγάλην ἐν πένητι σώματι.
πῶς οὖν τις αὐτὰ διαλαβὼν ὀρθῶς κρινεῖ;
πλούτῳ; πονηρῷ τἄρα χρήσεται κριτῇ.
ἢ τοῖς ἔχουσι μηδέν; ἀλλ’ ἔχει νόσον   375
πενία, διδάσκει δ’ ἄνδρα τῇ χρείᾳ κακόν.
ἀλλ’ εἰς ὅπλ’ ἔλθω; τίς δὲ πρὸς λόγχην βλέπων
μάρτυς γένοιτ’ ἂν ὅστις ἐστὶν ἀγαθός;
κράτιστον εἰκῇ ταῦτ’ ἐᾶν ἀφειμένα.
οὗτος γὰρ ἀνὴρ οὔτ’ ἐν Ἀργείοις μέγας   380
οὔτ’ αὖ δοκήσει δωμάτων ὠγκωμένος,
ἐν τοῖς δὲ πολλοῖς ὤν, ἄριστος ηὑρέθη.
οὐ μὴ ἀφρονήσεθ’, οἳ κενῶν δοξασμάτων
πλήρεις πλανᾶσθε, τῇ δ’ ὁμιλίᾳ βροτῶν
κρινεῖτε καὶ τοῖς ἤθεσιν τοὺς εὐγενεῖς;   385
οἱ γὰρ τοιοῦτοι τὰς πόλεις οἰκοῦσιν εὖ
καὶ δώμαθ’· αἱ δὲ σάρκες αἱ κεναὶ φρενῶν
ἀγάλματ’ ἀγορᾶς εἰσιν. οὐδὲ γὰρ δόρυ
μᾶλλον βραχίων σθεναρὸς ἀσθενοῦς μένει·
ἐν τῇ φύσει δὲ τοῦτο κἀν εὐψυχίᾳ.   390
ἀλλ’ ἄξιος γὰρ ὅ τε παρὼν ὅ τ’ οὐ παρὼν
Ἀγαμέμνονος παῖς, οὗπερ οὕνεχ’ ἥκομεν,
δεξώμεθ’ οἴκων καταλύσεις. χωρεῖν χρεών,
δμῶες, δόμων τῶνδ’ ἐντός. ὡς ἐμοὶ πένης
εἴη πρόθυμος πλουσίου μᾶλλον ξένος.   395
αἰνῶ μὲν οὖν τοῦδ’ ἀνδρὸς ἐσδοχὰς δόμων,
ἐβουλόμην δ’ ἂν εἰ κασίγνητός με σὸς
ἐς εὐτυχοῦντας ἦγεν εὐτυχῶν δόμους.
ἴσως δ’ ἂν ἔλθοι· Λοξίου γὰρ ἔμπεδοι
χρησμοί, βροτῶν δὲ μαντικὴν χαίρειν ἐῶ.   400

Peasant Then shouldn't our doors have been opened to them long ago? (*To Orestes and Pylades*) Go into the house; in return for your valuable words you shall get such guest-fare as is stored in my house. Lift the baggage, servants, into the house. And don't say a word against it; you're friends coming from a friend. I may be poor, but I'll certainly not show my conduct to be ill-bred.

Orestes (*To Electra*) By the gods, is this the man who shares with you the pretence of marriage, refusing to shame Orestes?

Electra Yes, this man is called husband to me in my misery.

Orestes Well, nothing is precise when it comes to virtue! For there's con-

fusion in the natures of men. Before now I've seen a worthless man sprung from a noble father, and estimable children from low-born parents; emptiness I've seen in a rich man's thinking, and a great mind in a poor man's body. How then shall a man distinguish and rate them correctly? By wealth? A faulty guide he'll then be using! Or by lack of possessions? Yet poverty's unhealthy, and trains a man in badness because of his need. Turning, then, to arms? Yet who when facing an enemy's spear can testify which man is the virtuous one? It's best to let these things go and leave them in disorder. For this man, who is not eminent amongst the Argives, not yet puffed up by family reputation, but belongs amongst the many, has been found excellent. Will you not cease your foolishness, you who stray about full of empty opinions, and use men's company and their conduct to distinguish the noble amongst them? It's men of this kind who order cities properly, and homes as well, while fleshbags devoid of brains are nothing but ornaments of the town square. Even in battle a strong arm abides the spear no more than a weak one; that depends on a man's nature and his courage. Well, then, since both of us merit it – he who is here and he who is not here, Agamemnon's son, in whose name we've come – let us accept the lodging of this house. You servants may proceed into the house. (*They obey.*) I'd rather have a poor but willing host than a wealthy one. So I commend this man's receiving us in his house; and yet I could wish your brother, prospering, was taking me into a prospering house. Perhaps he'll come, though; Loxias' decrees are firm, though mortals' seercraft I happily dismiss**.**

Deletions. 360: all editors after Barrett (in Reeve 1973: 153n20); 368-79: Reeve (1973); 369-72: Vitelli (1880); 371-2: Schenkl (1874); 373-9: Wilamowitz (1875), Page (1934), Friis Johansen (1959), Diggle (1981), Kovacs (1998), Distilo (2012); 383-5: suspected by Murray (1902) and Reeve (1973), excised by Distilo (2012); 386-90: Wilamowitz (1875), Vitelli (1880), Page (1934), Friis Johansen (1959), Reeve (1973), Diggle (1981), Kovacs (1998); 396-400: Reeve (1973).

These spoken iambics do not present peculiar linguistic or textual problems. As regards 373-9 and 386-90, Wilamowitz observed that "if we consider [both these passages] *per se*, they are quite worthy of Euripides" (1875: 192). It is therefore no surprise that when suspicion of interpolation has been put forward it has been accounted for on the basis of an assumed incongruence on the level of either proxemics (360) or, more often, argumentation. I will deal with 360, 379 e 386-8, in particular, but the interpretation of these lines inevitably implies that of the entire sequence. They have been explained as either reflecting some posthumous mises en scenes, or as being *loci paralleli*, not otherwise recorded, originally written in the margin because showing some affinity with this scene of *Electra*, and eventually moved into the text. They would have been drawn from other Euripidean

plays, of which we only know small portions reliably.[23] Going by the latter hypothesis, the editorial fortune of Euripides in the Hellenistic age would have ultimately proved fatal to the genuine text, whose integrity would have been compromised by the copious *loci paralleli*. However, the more extensive the assumed intrusions, the less probable this hypothesis is.[24]

After their radical pruning by Reeve (1973), the interventions on these lines have been made conservatively almost in all cases, by Hamilton (1974), Goldhill (1986) and Basta Donzelli (1991). However, it is worth adding a few considerations in defence of the received text.

Orestes' long speech is entirely preserved in the L (*Laurentianus plut.* 32.2) and P (*Laurentianus* C. S. 172)[25] Byzantine manuscripts, and because of its ethical content it also enjoys a conspicuous indirect tradition. 367-79 and 388-9 are attributed to Euripides in third-century BCE witnesses.[26] 369-70, 376, 383-90 are comprised in the anthology compiled by Joannes from Stobi ('Stobaeus', fifth century CE), and 367-70 also in that of the almost coeval grammarian Orion from Thebes (Egypt); all of these excerpts are accompanied by the title of the tragedy and/or the author's name.[27] 379 is attributed to Euripides in Diogenes Laertius' *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* (end of the third century CE), and makes a partial appearance, with no indication of the author's name or of the title, in the treatise *On the Sublime* 44.12. These attestations only demonstrate that already before the end of third century BCE 367-79 were attributed to Euripides, and that 367-90 were part of *Electra* in some manuscripts used by the source or sources of Joannes Stobaeus and Orion. The presence of 367-79 in a third-century papyrus rules out the possibility of "marginal adscripts . . . intrude[d] into in the text" (van Emde Boas 2017: 177n25), yet not that of an actors' interpolation (Page 1934: 75).

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[23] Wilamowitz, who does not consider the possibility of anthologies of dramatic rheseis (see above, p. 000) suggests that "two passages belonging to other plays [scil. 373-9 and 386-90], written in the margins because of some similarity, entered Orestes' lines" (1875: 191).

[24] Nonetheless, according to Friis Johansen (1959: 95-6n140), "Wilamowitz' solution [is] the only possible".

[25] The relation between L and P is a *vexata quaestio*, but in this case it is irrelevant.

[26] 367-79: *Pap. Hibeh* 7, a gnomic anthology, c. 250-210 BCE; only the author ("from Euripides"), without title. No. 1569 MP³; Carrara 2009, no. 20: 121-2. 388-9 appear next to Euripides' *Hecuba* 254-6, but with no indication, in the *Ostracon Berolinense* 12319, a poetic anthology of the third century BCE; no. 1567 MP³; Carrara 2009: ibid.

[27] 367-70: Orion's *Anthology* 8.7 ("from *Electra*"; Schneidewin 1839: 53); 369-70: Joannes Sto. 4.29.37 ("from the same", with ref. to the previous quotation from *Electra* 550-1; Hense 1912: 717); 376: Jo. Sto. 4.32.31 ("from Euripides' *Electra*"; idem: 791); 383-90: Jo. Sto. 2.15.13 ("from Euripides"; Wachsmuth 1884: 187) and 4.29.4 ("from Euripides' *Electra*"; Hense 1912: 703-4).

Furthermore, this scene of *Electra* is summarised in the so-called *hypothesis* in *Pap. Oxyrhynchus* 420 (third century CE). The first seventeen lines of this papyrus fragment offer a summary of 357-670 (or, more likely, 693), obviously omitting the first *stasimon* (432-86; Luppe 1981; Meccariello 2014: 192-6). Here I will not cope with the critical-textual problems of this summary and refer to Massimo Magnani's edition about to be published in the *Commentaria et Lexica Graeca in Papyris reperta* (CLGP). It should be noted that at line 3 the summary jumps from the Peasant's last line addressed to Orestes and Pylades (~ *Electra* 363) to his exit when he goes to the Old Man (~ 421) seeking food. Therefore, this synopsis is concerned neither with *Electra's* 364-420 and 422-31, nor with the controversy between Electra and the Old Man upon the alleged witnesses about Orestes' arrival (518-44), and only reports his recognition: *hyp.* 9-13 ~ *Electra* 558-79. Yet this lack of reference of what happens in those lines does not authorize us to suspect either 368-400 or 518-44 as interpolated: this Hellenistic summary privileges the propulsive nuclei of the story, and the motif of the Peasant's offered hospitality acquires special relevance not only as it complements the most substantial Euripidean innovation (Electra's marriage), but also, and especially, because it indirectly causes the arrival of the Old Man, the only one who can recognize Orestes, thus compelling him to reveal himself. "[H]aste" is a difficult word here (*hyp.* 4-5: τῇ σπουδῇ . . . ἀπῆλθεν) as it is attributed to the Peasant's exit. Therefore we should either assume that in his memorial reconstruction the compiler wrongly assigned to the Peasant the haste the Peasant himself had recommended to his wife (421),[28] or instead that he remembered a particular mise en scene characterized by the Peasant's own hasty exit at 423, with the directorial omission of 424-31.

3. "Verrete a cena?": *Electra* 358-61 ~ 787-9

Let us begin with 360. Its excision was proposed by William S. Barrett *apud* Reeve (1973: 153n20) who accepted it, and was followed by Bain (1981: 36-7) and all recent editors.[29] The deletion has been justified on the basis of (1) the detail of the Peasant giving orders to the guests' servants, and (2) of his order being preceded and followed by two imperatives addressed to the guests (358-9: "Go into the house etc." – χωρεῖτ' ἐς οἴκους; 361: "And don't say a word against it" – καὶ μηδὲν ἀντείπητε). With regard to the first argument, if giving an order to the servants of distinguished guests – and perceived as such (see 405-6, and above p. 000) – violated a behavioural code,

[28] "But you, go into the house right away" (χώρει δ' ἐς δόμους ὅσον τάχος).
[29] Diggle (1981), Basta Donzelli (1995), Kovacs (1998), Cropp (2013). In his review of Bain (1981), Donald Mastronarde eventually found it "an attractive solution" (1983: 85).

that violation is more likely to reflect Euripides' own intention than that of an epigone, who we might reasonably expect to see intent on smoothing away difficulties. With regard to the second argument, it is essential to clarify preliminarily how the action unfolds, as it is not entirely obvious. Mastronarde suggests that here there is "more stage-action not described in the text (do the attendants, for instance, turn to Orestes for a sign of approval of the order?)" (1979: 106). First of all, in the Peasant's regret voiced to Electra at 357 ("Then shouldn't our doors have been opened to them long ago?"), where "[he] asserts his husbandly authority, but only indirectly" (van Emde Boas 2017: 76), we may already perceive an implicit order. This might have been gleaned by the compiler of the *hypothesis*, where the integrations "[the Peasant] ordered Electra to lead the men into" the house ([ὁ αὐτουργὸς . . . τὴν μὲν Ἠ]λέκ[τρ]αν τοὺς ἄνδρας εἰσάγειν ἐκέλ[ευ]σεν) are quite plausible. Even disregarding the authenticity of 360, his invitation at 358-9 remains unanswered, and his urging them "[not to] say a word against it" at 361-3 at least suggests his interlocutors' hesitation. Then, neither Electra nor her brother, who *exits* at 400, address the Peasant until Electra's apostrophe to her husband followed by their dialogue (404-22). At 364 Orestes pointing at the Peasant by "this man" (ὅδ' ἀνὴρ) confirms that the Peasant has just finished speaking, thus somehow implying his presence. At 380, a line free from suspicion of interpolation, Orestes will again point at him by οὗτος . . . ἀνὴρ, i.e. "this", yet not as if he were near him as at 364, where he had used ὅδε. This is why it has been thought that the Peasant walks away at 363 (Murray 1906: 25-6), perhaps to open the gate of the house (Reeve 1973: 153n20), and returns only at 390 (Murray) or soon afterwards (Reeve; and see Goldhill 1986: 161n16); Murray imagines that 391-5 are addressed precisely to him. However, at 401-3 the Chorus leader does not signal his return, and with the somewhat ironical "the good fate, which has marched forward with pain" (403: μόλις προβαίνουσα . . . τύχη), she gestures to the laboriousness of the scene, which closes with the entrance of the guests in the house only at 400. Therefore, as suggested by Goldhill (1986), from 364 to 400 it is plausible to imagine a focalization upon the two brothers. The fact that only at 391 does Orestes reply to the Peasant's invitation, and at 393-4, with his order to the servants ("You servants may proceed into the house"), he follows up the Peasant's own order at 360 ("Lift the baggage, servants, into the house"), complicates for no apparent motive the sequence left suspended after the Peasant has invited the foreigners not to refuse to step into the house (361-3). In conclusion, there is a hyatus in the communication between the Peasant and his guests very likely accompanied by a gesture foregrounding physical discontinuity rather than contact: perhaps their stepping back or turning away, which rearticulates the actors' position on the stage and, therefore, the overall

proxemics of the scene.

It should be pointed out that this scene anticipates dialogically the Messenger's narrative of Aegisthus' own luncheon invitation to Orestes and his companions, a highly detailed report owing to the combination of narration and dialogue (784-90):

Αυτουργος	χωρεῖτ' ἐς οἴκους· . . .	
	. . .	
	αἴρεσθ', ὀπαδοί, τῶνδ' ἔσω τεύχη δόμων.	360
	καὶ μηδὲν ἀντείπητε . . .	
Peasant	Go into the house . . . / Lift the baggage, servants, into the house. / And don't say a word against it . . .	
	∼	
Αγγελος	" . . . ἀλλ' ἴωμεν ἐς δόμους" –	787
	καὶ ταῦθ' ἅμ' ἠγόρευε καὶ χερὸς λαβὼν	
	παρῆγεν ἡμᾶς – "οὐδ' ἀπαρνεῖσθαι χρεών".	
Messenger	(*Aegisthus is speaking*) ". . . But come, let's go into the house, – / and as he said this, he took us by the arm / and started to lead us in – you must not refuse".

In this play, repetition is frequent and invests different modes and formal registers, leading to the duplication of portions of the action through performative variation, such as enactment *vs* narration, and song *vs* speech. The opposition between mimesis and diegesis characterizes the recognition of Orestes by the Old Man first (576, enacted), and then, after Aegisthus' murder, by yet another old man (852-3, narrated by the Messenger), as well as the transformation of the sacrificer into the victim: first Aegisthus (785-843, narrated), then Clytemnestra (1142-6, enacted). The polarity between distinct formal registers features in the duplication of Electra's refusal to adorn herself and take part in the celebrations, as the Chorus invite her to: first in the festivities in honour of Hera (175-89, a lyric dialogue), then in the dance in honour of the victorious brother over Aegisthus (866-72). In this case, she does not let herself be involved in the singing and the dance, and proposes instead a formally elaborate spoken sequence of about the same length as the two choral stanzas by which it is framed.[30] The poetical reason for such repetitions deserves to be considered within the overall context of Euripides' dramaturgy and, more precisely, of his *Electra*. At all events, it comes as no surprise that, by embedding dialogical mimesis within his own narration, the Messenger (who is one of Orestes' servants) makes a pause between Aegisthus' long and detailed invitation (784-7) and his urge not to refuse (361 ∼ 789) analogous to that of the Peasant's

[30] On this third epirrhematic *stasimon*, see the exemplary Cerbo (2012).

at 360 ("Lift the baggage, servants, into the house"). In the Messenger's tale the pause will coincide with Aegisthus' gesture of welcome in accompanying his guests (788-9), while at 358-61 the absence of physical contact, impeded to the Peasant by their different social status, is replaced by his order addressed at Orestes' attendants. The analogy between the two scenes, in my view, somehow justifies the choice of retaining 360 as a sort of implicit didascalia.

4. A Pivotal Line: 379

379 requires a specific discussion. Orestes' argumentation is built on the opposition between his search for a "precise" (368: ἀκριβές) criterion by which to define the virtue of a man (εὐανδρία), and the, so to say, empirical verification that that criterion does not exist, and, therefore, it is necessary to renounce all search for an order in the unpredictable variety of human characters: 368 and 379 open and close his search for that criterion on the two opposed terms ἀκριβές and εἰκῇ, respectively. This opposition, which was typical of the language of the 'intellectual professions' of the fifth and fourth centuries, such as orators',[31] is not referable to the one between "exact" and "at random",[32] nor to that between "careful" and "careless".[33] Collard and Cropp translate εἰκῇ as "in confusion" (2008: 262) and Cropp (2013) as "in disorder". The contrast between *akribes* and *eike* here seems more appropriately to correspond to the difference between, on the one hand, a "certain" and "invariable" criterion (Kurz 1970: 34-5, 156-7), and, on the other, the variety of the situations one may find oneself in, irreducible to a preliminary definition.[34] With reference to εἰκῇ, in particular, it is part of a contrasting pair comparable to the one proposed by Isocrates 5.155 between καιροί ("[appropriateness to the] opportunities") and ἀκρίβειαι ("[a prescriptive idea of stylistic] subtleties"), as well as to the one in Demosthenes 28.5 between "knowing" (εἰδέναι), whose object is τὸ ἀκριβές ("what can be ascertained"), and "being persuaded" (πιστεύεσθαι) by vague words (εἰκῇ). Orestes does not attain a general criterion, but achieves an

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[31] Cf. Alcidamas *On Sophists* 25: ἀκριβῶς vs εἰκῇ λέγειν ("speaking 'accurately' *vs* 'without plan'"; and see 13, 16, 33, 34).

[32] As in Lysias 7.12 (εἰκῇ καὶ ἀλογίστως: "casually and without reflection"); see Carey (1989: 127).

[33] As in Aeschines 3.187 (ἀκριβῶς σκέψαι, "carefully examining", *vs* εἰκῇ πρᾶξαι "carelessly doing").

[34] The "things said at random (εἰκῇ λεγόμενα)" which Socrates means to propose to his judges (Plato, *Apology* 17c) are in fact the words he will chance upon (ἐπιτυχόντα ὀνόματα) without premeditation.

awareness that men cannot be classified aprioristically, as they must be evaluated individually, and weighed against the backdrop of the events that befall each one of them: wealth (374), poverty (375-6), war (377). As already explained by Goldhill (1986), 379 ("It's best to let these things go and leave them as they happen/reveal themselves")[35] closely follows the overall argumentation and does not do away with the issue of virtue with a cliché – sometimes hastily translated.[36] However, the problem is also textual: 379 was assigned to Euripides' *Auge* by Henri Estienne in his edition of Diogenes Laertius (Stephanus 1570), and this has guided the attribution of 373-8 too to that lost play (Wilamowitz 1875: 190-3). The quoted line is cited in the *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 2.33, which, in a second-hand report, tells about Socrates' annoyed reaction to a Euripidean character's renunciation to inquire on a man's virtue (*euandria*). If genuine, the reading ἐν τῇ αὐτῇ ("in the same"), present in Diogenes' most reliable manuscripts, alludes to a feminine name, that is, the title of the tragedy to which this line was said to belong. The anaphoric marker suggests that, in Diogenes' source, this quotation was preceded by another one, either omitted by Diogenes or missed in his manuscripts, from the same play, and that the former was explicitly introduced by the title.[37] Therefore we should understand that 379 was drawn from a play whose title was a female name. It should be recalled, though, that when gnomic anthologies, such as Stobaeus', consecutively quoted two or more portions of the same play, they often resorted to the neuter demonstrative ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ (*scil.* δράματι: "in the same play"). If this were the only way they quoted them, the correction of ἐν τῇ αὐτῇ to ἐν τῇ Αὔγῃ ("in the *Auge*") would be legitimate. However, this was not the case. Thus, we cannot rule out the genuineness of the feminine demonstrative, suggesting a reference to an anthology where the quotation of 379 immediately followed another one from Euripides' *Electra*. Estienne's correction is probably arbitrary.[38] Therefore, it is not necessary to imagine either that our line belonged to Euripides' *Auge*, or that in both *Electra* and *Auge*

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[35] Here I have slightly modified Cropp's translation ("and leave them in disorder").

[36] For instance, by Vermeule (1958): "we can toss our judgements random on the winds".

[37] Marcovich (1999) and Dorandi (2013) adopt Εὐριπίδου ἐν τῇ Αὔγῃ ("in Euripides' *Auge*), following Stephanus (1570); here is the distribution of the readings: τῇ αὐτῇ BP τῇ αὐγῇ Z³ Frobenius 1533 τῇ αὐτοῦ F Long 1964 (def. Distilo 2012: ibidem): ἐν τοῖς Φ. The exchange between the Greek uncial forms of Τ and Γ is very frequent, and ἐν τῇ αὐτῇ could be at the origin of the reading ἐν τῇ αὐγῇ (that is, Αὔγῃ, "in the *Auge*"), while ἐν τῇ αὐτοῦ ("in his [what?]), is attracted into the genitive by the proximity of Εὐριπίδου or, more likely, is an attempt to adapt anaphoric demonstrative αὐτῇ because of the lack of a feminine noun.

[38] On this see also Distilo (2012: 645-8; but her arguments about the whole sequence 357-400 are neither clear nor consistent: 160-76).

the playwright used the same line,[39] which has sometimes been read as endowed with a proverbial connotation.

Neither Estienne's emendation, nor the attribution of 373-9 to *Auge* are currently shared by recent editors of Euripidean fragments: Collard and Cropp warn that "the case for denying these lines to *Electra* is much debated" (2008: 262); even more concise is the information provided by Kannicht (2004: 335); neither 379, nor the other suspected lines of *Electra* have been assigned to *Auge* by Jouan and van Looy (1998), Kannicht (2004), and Collard and Cropp (2008). Therefore, it is advisable to keep reading 379 in *Electra*, and to do so in light of Orestes' *rhesis*. If we consider the whole episode, we learn that, "on hearing [*Electra* 379]", Socrates "stood up and left the theatre; for he claimed it was ridiculous thinking fit to search after a slave who cannot be found, and letting virtue to perish in this way".[40] The Socratic scenario drawn by Diogenes raises substantial doubts: since neither in *Auge* nor in any other Euripidean play we can find the dramatic situation of a slave being searched for and not being found anywhere, what we have here seems to be the same paradoxical instantiation of the empty intellectualism Euripides was often blamed for, interested in irrelevant questions and indifferent towards more substantial ones, that we can find in his micrologic "investigation" (ζητεῖν) of domestic objects for which he is made fun of by Dionysos in Aristophanes' *Frogs* 980-91.[41]

5. The Middle Class Does Not Go the Gym: 386-8

With regard to 367-400, in line of principle it cannot be excluded that a more or less long portion of Orestes' *rhesis* was added on the occasion of some mise en scene of the tragedy between the end of the fifth century

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[39] As is eventually also suggested by Lefkowitz (2007: 104n19).

[40] Trans. Hicks (1925) (ἀναστὰς ἐξῆλθε, φήσας γελοῖον εἶναι ἀνδράποδον μὲν μὴ εὑρισκόμενον ἀξιοῦν ζητεῖν, ἀρετὴν δ᾽ οὕτως ἐᾶν ἀπολωλέναι).

[41] Νὴ τοὺς θεούς, νῦν γοῦν Ἀθη-/ναίων ἅπας τις εἰσιὼν / κέκραγε πρὸς τοὺς οἰκέτας / ζητεῖ τε· "ποῦ 'στιν ἡ χύτρα; / τίς τὴν κεφαλὴν ἀπεδήδοκεν / τῆς μαινίδος; τὸ τρύβλιον / τὸ περυσινὸν τέθνηκέ μοι· / ποῦ τὸ σκόροδον τὸ χθιζινόν; / τίς τῆς ἐλάας παρέτραγεν;" ("I swear by the gods we've reached the point / Where every Athenian enters his house / And shouts at the top of his voice to the slaves / With urgent demands: 'Now where's that pot? / Who's eaten up the head of that fish, / The sprat I mean? That bowl of mine / I bought last year is finished for good. / And where's that garlic from yesterday? / Who's nibbled away at the olives as well?'"). For the text I follow Dover (1993), for the translation, Halliwell (2015).

BCE and the first century CE,[42] and especially in the fourth century. That was an age when other variations on the canonical *Oresteia* (such as Theodectes' *Orestes*)[43] could suggest an 'updating' of Euripides' Orestes. But even at first sight the reflections contained in those lines are undeniably Euripidean. If they were additions, they could have only been made to increase their Euripidean quality – in order, as it were, to 'make Euripides (more) Euripidean'. The statement that "it's men of this kind who order cities properly, and homes as well" (386) clearly echoes the Peasant's description given only a few lines before, at 380-2, which have not been suspected of interpolation. It also finds some parallels with the thesis of the 'middle class' as the authentic backbone of the *polis* expressed by Euripides in *The Suppliant Women* (Michelini 1994: esp. 225). Therefore, they are both mutually coherent and consistent with the author's own system of values. It is impossible to agree with Wilamowitz (1875: 192) that by "men of this kind" (οἱ . . . τοιοῦτοι) Euripides alludes to "men *devoted to a more refined manner of life* . . . , with whose rich wisdom, *which the common people label as feeble and luxurious*, brute force stands in contrast" (my emphasis).[44] It is neither easy, nor perhaps recommendable, to identify the deep reasons of this 'interpolative' hermeneutics stratifying modern and ancient views. And yet, it is clear that "brute force" ("vis consilii expers") is meant to render σάρκες . . . κεναὶ φρενῶν (388: "fleshbags devoid of brains"). The opposition between the bodies as "ornaments of the town square" (we could call them 'statuesque')[45] and the social and political role of a non-aristocratic subject is hard to accept for other scholars too: Denniston was the first to grasp the anti-athletic polemic but only to dismiss it here ("certainly very irrelevant. . . . The outburst against athletes, who are no doubt intended, is quite out of place here"; 1939: 96-7); Reeve is final on this: "386-90, a reflection on the superiority of moral to physical strength, are irrelevant, and no more words need to be wasted on them" (1973: 152). Euripides criticism of athleticism is well known, for example from his *Autolycos* (Kannicht 2004: fr. 282). As regards this satyr-drama, Pritchard rightly noted that

> it is doubtful that any considerable number of theatre-goers would have agreed with this fragment's criticisms. Many were no doubt angered by

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[42] Evidence for "revived drama" is now collected by Nervegna (2007: 15-31); the author concludes that "tragedies and Menander's comedies were staged at least until the time of Plutarch" (41).

[43] Mentioned in Aristoteles' *Rhetorica* 2, 1401a35.

[44] "Homines elegantiori vitae cultui dediti . . . quorum lautae sapientiae, quam plebs mollem et luxuriosam vocat, vis consilii expers opponitur".

[45] Denniston rightly comments that in ἀγάλματ[α] ("ornaments") "there may well be a reference to the secondary sense 'statue' (cf. ἀνδρίαντα)" (1939: 97).

them, while some others may have laughed at their apparently calculated offensiveness. . . . Thus [this] fragment probably served the same purpose as the criticisms of athletes in Euripides' *Electra*: instead of giving voice to popular sentiments it helped to characterize a protagonist." (2012: 12; see also 14)

The implicit "offensiveness" against the "fleshbags devoid of brains" is yet another piece of evidence against the intervention of an actor or a director inclined to alienate their audiences. However, this is not the only locus in *Electra* where we find an opposition between "idle" (ἀχρεῖα) – however prestigious – physical contests and the only *agon* that deserves approval, that is, the one inspired by ethical and political reasons. This same opposition will also occur at a later stage, soon after the announcement of Orestes' victory over Aegisthus, in the first stanza of the third *stasimon* (862-5). Van Emde Boas rightly observes that "hunting, sacrifice and athletics are the dominant metaphorical motifs in the play" (2017: 56). But his following observation that "[i]t is significant that the athletic imagery, with its triumphant overtones, disappears entirely after Orestes comes on stage with Aegisthus' corpse" (2017: 57) does not take into consideration that these "triumphant overtones" coincide, both in the Chorus' song and in Electra's apostrophe to her brother, with a substantial depreciation of athletic values. Indeed, the many points of contact with the epinician imagery, richly discussed by Swift (2010: 156-69), especially emphasise the main feature of the third *stasimon* (860-79) and of Electra's apostrophe, that is, the refusal of an "idle" athleticism. Here the Chorus themselves depict it as a "glorious victory-song" (καλλίνικο[ς] ᾠδ[ά]) in the style of the celebrations for the Olympian athletes, and Electra welcomes her brother along the same lines (880-5):[46]

Χορος	νικᾷ στεφαναφορίαν	862
	οὐ τὰν παρ' Ἀλφειοῦ ῥεέθροις τελέσας	
	κασίγνητος σέθεν.	
Chorus	Your brother has completed and won a crown-contest	
	– [not that by Alpheus' streams.]	
	. . .	
Ηλεκτρα	ὦ καλλίνικε, πατρὸς ἐκ νικηφόρου	880
	γεγώς, Ὀρέστα, τῆς ὑπ' Ἰλίῳ μάχης,	
	δέξαι κόμης σῆς βοστρύχων ἀνδήματα.	
	ἥκεις γὰρ οὐκ ἀχρεῖον ἔκπλεθρον δραμών	

[46] Here I adopt στεφαναφορίαν (MSS) and οὐ τὰν (Murray 1902; see Denniston 1939: 155), while Diggle (1981) and Cropp (2013) print στεφαναφόρα κρείσσω τῶν (-φορίαν †κρείσσω τῶν† Donzelli 1995 and Kovacs 1998); I have slightly revised Cropp's translation accordingly.

ἀγῶν’ ἐς οἴκους ἀλλὰ πολέμιον κτανὼν
Αἴγισθον, ὃς σὸν πατέρα κἀμὸν ὤλεσεν.   885

ELECTRA   O glorious in victory, Orestes, sprung from a father
victorious in the battle under Troy, accept these bind-
ings for the locks of your hair. You come home after
racing no idle furlong, but having killed your foe, Aeg-
isthus, who slew your father and mine.

The anti-athletic polemic is glaring, and it assumes centre stage precisely
when both the Chorus and Electra focus on Orestes' victory: here we have
στεφαναφορία (862; "crown-contest"), καλλίνικος (865 and 880; "glorious
in victory"), νικήφορος ("victorious") at 875 and also at 880 (where Orestes
shares this epithet with his 'victorious father'), and finally ἀνδήματα ("bind-
ings", 882). The aim is overtly to contrast his victory with those at the Olym-
pian games. Further evidence that this motif is integrated in the play is Eu-
ripides' invention that Orestes and Pylades are going "to the Alpheus", that
is, to Olympia – as Orestes deceptively says to Aegisthus.[47] It would not be
worth lingering on this conceptual isotopy at 387-8 and 862-85 but for a de-
tail: by polemicizing against the similarity, claimed by the Old Man, be-
tween the lock laid on Agamemnon's tomb and her own hair (528), Elec-
tra argues that Orestes is "a nobleman" (ἀνὴρ εὐγενής) frequenter of "wres-
tling-grounds",[48] and his hair is therefore not comparable to the one "combed
and soft" (κτενισμοῖς θῆλυς, lit.: "softened by combing") of a woman. As
pointed out by Denniston, this argument sounds inconsistent on the lips
of a tragic heroine whose hair is described by Orestes as "close-cropped"
(κεκαρμένῳ κάρᾳ) at 108, and who says that her own "head and hair are ra-
zor-shorn" (κρᾶτα πλόκαμόν τ' ἐσκυθισμένον ξυρῷ) at 241 (1939: 116). But it
is inconsistent also because Electra has mourned the destiny of her brother
who, far from frequenting, as a nobleman, the wrestling-grounds, is "roaming
in misery to a hireling hearth" (205: μέλεος ἀλαίνων ποτὶ θῆσσαν ἑστίαν).
Her prejudice aligns itself with the stereotyped heroic concept often inspir-
ing her stances, producing an embarrassing contradiction between how we
know her from the myth and how Euripides created her.[49] The just quoted di-

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[47] 781-2: it is once again the Messenger who refers the dialogue between the two:
"we are going to the Alpheus, to offer sacrifices to Olympian Zeus" (πρὸς δ' Ἀλφεὸν /
θύσοντες ἐρχόμεσθ' Ὀλυμπίῳ Διί).

[48] ὁ μὲν (*scil.* χαίτης πλόκος) παλαίστραις ἀνδρὸς εὐγενοῦς τραφείς: "one (lock of
hair) is tended in a nobleman's wrestling-grounds".

[49] With regard to the "obsessional views" of Euripides' Electra, see Pucci (2012), es-
pecially with reference to "her confidence of being in control of herself and of the rea-
sons she invokes, while in fact she is a captive of the aristocratic prejudices which are
ridiculed by the dramatic situation itself" (309).

alogue between Electra and the Old Man strengthens the contrast between the conventional paradigm of a buff aristocrat and the Peasant, the model of the average citizen "who order[s] cities properly, and homes as well" (386-7), as we have just heard in the dialogue between Electra and Orestes. This semantic isotopy constitutive of what I have roughly called 'anti-athleticism' is destined to undergo yet another development, following Orestes' victory over Aegisthus and the changed situation. As we have just seen, an 'anti-athleticist' stance will also be taken by the Chorus and Electra. However, for the time being Orestes' and Electra's opinions continue to sound subtly dissonant. Therefore, also in this case the play text, as we may read it, is coherent both in its parts and as a whole. Electra stereotypically depicts the aristocratic man as an athlete (an absolute value in classical Greek culture), and then, supported by the Chorus, she favours the ethical-political agon over the athletic one. The positions which will be taken by the Chorus and Electra from 862 to 885 are coherent with those of Orestes, and contribute to suggesting a critique of athleticism consistent with 383-90. If these lines are excised, the strong polemics of the Chorus and Electra against athleticism would come entirely unexpected and would sound groundless after Orestes' victory over Aegisthus; above all, it would appear to be in blatant contradiction with Electra's own stance in her dialogue with the Old Man. The expression of the two different viewpoints in the three central episodes of the play marks an evolution of the female protagonist grounded in Orestes' appreciation of the 'average citizen' which Electra has silently heard. Thus, excising those early lines implies changing her character too. Its evolution in the course of the play is so clear as to make all tampering with it unjustifiable.

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