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To those who shine light on my life

my parents, Andrew Reinhard and Chia Samson

and

Rémy

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Chapter One
Introduction

In her groundbreaking and influential study, *The Invention of Athens*, Nicole Loraux explores Athens' self-conception as expressed in that most Athenian of civic institutions, the ἐπιτάφιος λόγος, the funeral oration. The genre of the funeral oration is doubly unique; it is uniquely Athenian and, while its purported purpose is to praise the recently dead, it actually speaks more of the city's glory than of those who died in its defense.[1] As Loraux demonstrates, in the genre of the funeral oration, "the dead themselves...are overshadowed by the city, the ultimate authority of all Memory."[2] Despite the later birth of a national history of Athens by the Attidographers of the 4th century BC, Athens had already been telling its own story – singing its own song, as it were – for more than one hundred years.[3] The dead gave Athens an opportunity to praise itself and recall or retell its own history in its own terms and thereby to create its own civic mythology.

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[1] Demosthenes, *Against Leptinus*, 141: πρῶτον μὲν μόνοι τῶν πάντων ἀνθρώπων ἐπὶ τοῖς τελευτήσασι δημοσίᾳ [καὶ ταῖς ταφαῖς δημοσίαις] ποιεῖτε λόγους ἐπιταφίους, ἐν οἷς κοσμεῖτε τὰ τῶν ἀγαθῶν ἀνδρῶν ἔργα, "first of all, you alone of all people, in addition to bringing about at public expense (even public burials), you make speeches over the graves in which you honor the deeds of gentlemen." Cf. N. Loraux, *L'Invention d'Athènes: Histoire de l'oraison funèbre dans la "cite classique"*, Paris: Éditions Payot & Rivages (1993, new, abridged edition; original published (1981) Paris: École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales), translated into English by A. Sheridan under the title, *The Invention of Athens*, Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press (1986). Μόνοι τῶν ἀνθρώπων is itself a formula used in the funeral oration to mark Athens' distinction from other poleis: cf. Thucydides II.40.2 and 5; II.41.3; Lysias 18.20.24; Plato, *Menexenus* 245c5; Demosthenes 4.10.

[2] Loraux (1993) 2: "in each oration the codified praise of the dead spilled over into generalized praise of Athens." This characteristic of the funeral oration, perhaps most famously witnessed in that of Pericles as written by Thucydides, has led several scholars since Hegel to see in the funeral oration the most profound description of Athenian democracy. Hegel understood Athenian democracy to be the *telos* of "the city." One must, certainly, beware of an historian's own time and place in history which will, no doubt, color his reading of one text or another; cf. Loraux's excursus on the three Athens: the French, the German, and the English (1993) 6.

[3] Loraux (1993) 24.

Talk about the dead, or rather, talk around the dead, provided the city with a way of defining itself. While unique in the institution of the ἐπιτάφιος λόγος, in talking around or about the dead, Athens continued a tradition set down in the earliest Greek poets. Death is a subject of song as early as, and most likely earlier than, Homer. As the funeral oration takes the occasion of death to sing the praises of the city to its citizens (and resident foreigners), the epic poet sings the κλέος, the glory or simply, "thing heard," of the dead, recounting his deeds and ensuring the survival of his memory.[4] And as the ἐπιτάφιος λόγος creates and maintains a certain vision of the city, Homeric epos, in its own way, describes and proscribes the so-called humanness of the human: it defines being human as being neither god nor beast.[5] Homeric epos, and in its wake Sophoclean tragedy, does so by making death the subject of poetry, while in the ἐπιτάφιος λόγος there is "scarcely any mention of death as the universal telos of the human condition."[6]

This is not to say that Greek poetry of the 5th century is separate or even separable from the city and its civic mythology or ideology. As several scholars have clearly

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[4] Cf. G. Nagy, *The Best of the Achaeans*, Baltimore & London: Johns Hopkins University Press (1994, revised edition) and *Pindar's Homer: The Lyric Possession of an Epic Past*, Baltimore & London: Johns Hopkins University Press (1990). To be unsung is to be invisible, as Telemachus tells a disguised Athena in *Odyssey* 1.234-244. cf. Sappho, fragment 55 (E. Lobel & D. L. Page, *Poetarum Lesbiorum Fragmenta.* Oxford: Oxford University Press (1955)).

[5] The funeral oration remains in the Homeric tradition and perhaps can be said to follow Homeric epos in giving a definition of man, but its purpose remains to give a definition of the city and of a very particular city to boot. Homeric epos defines the human qua human and not as citizen of Athens. Athens may hope to be an example to all others, but by putting it as Pericles does (Thucydides, II.37), Athens reveals herself to be different from all other cities. Cf. J. Redfield, *Nature and Culture in the Iliad: The Tragedy of Hector.* Durham: Duke University Press (1994, second edition) xv: "There is in Homer an implicit but systematic understanding of the relations of man with nature, man with man, man with god: a psychology, an ethics, a theology."

[6] Loraux (1993) 2. The funeral oration, thus, cannot be said to provide a definition of man, but rather be said to give a definition of a particular city, Athens, and man's (and woman's) role within that city.

shown, that other uniquely Athenian civic institution, tragedy, is heavily implicated in civic ideology.[7] Not only implicated in the creation of a civic ideology, Athenian tragic poetry generally, and that of Sophocles specifically, defines the limits of the civic, or rather, the limits of the city. It does this by revealing what lies outside the city, but by doing so in such a manner that the incompleteness of the city is revealed to itself from itself. By "outside the city" I do not mean simply that tragedy reveals the apolitical. I mean, rather, that in addition to defining man and his role – with its problems and ambiguities – in the newly formed polis, tragic poetry offers a vivid representation and definition of humankind and thereby delimits the human in relation to that which is below and that which is above; tragedy defines the human in relation to the sub-human beasts and the super-human gods.

Tragedy effects this definition by unveiling or exposing the sacred – i.e. limits and boundaries – and man's necessary, yet problematic, relation to the sacred. Tragedy shows us that although man is shown to be in need of the city, and the city, in turn, to be in need of sacred restraints or divine laws (i.e. how one ought to treat a corpse), man is no less shown to be bound to transgress those laws – both those sacred and the city's.[8] The Homeric poems and Sophoclean tragedy, in their concern with corpses, with what to do

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[7] Cf. *Greek Tragedy and Political Theory*, J. Peter Euben, ed. Berkeley, Los Angeles, & London: University of California Press (1986); *Nothing to do with Dionysus?: Athenian Drama in its Social Context*, J. J. Winkler and F. Zeitlin, eds. Princeton: Princeton University Press (1990); J.-P. Vernant and P. Vidal-Naquet, *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece*. New York: Zone Books (1990); C. P. Segal, *Tragedy and Civilization: An Interpretation of Sophocles*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press (1981).

[8] On the problem of being apolis on the tragic stage, cf. S. Goldhill, *Reading Greek Tragedy*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press (1986) 96ff. Philoctetes' situation is an extreme example (Sophocles, *Philoctetes* 227-229, 265, 280). Oedipus in *Oedipus at Colonus* 208 expresses his situation bluntly as ἀπόπτολις. On the city in need of sacred restraints, cf. *Antigone* 519, 19015ff, 1070ff. and *Oedipus at Colonus*. *Antigone, Ajax,* and *Oedipus Tyrannus* bear witnesss to man's tendency to transgress sacred restraint and laws.

with the dead, are perhaps more like what we would expect of an ἐπιτάφιος λόγος, a literal "speech over the tomb" or a "speech about burial."[9] Homeric epic does so by inventing Hades, by giving us the first written poetic representation of death and the otherwise invisible afterlife.

Tragedy does so by playing with Hades, that invisible realm outside the city where men go when they die, and making of that mortal limit the limit of the city. The concept under exploration in this project is the meaning of Hades and his realm in the Greek poetic imagination in general and in Sophoclean tragedy in particular. Meaning is a rather large idea and Hades equally so as a concept. I am not as interested in defining the god-head or his realm (inconsistencies abound in the poetic and prose representations after Homer) as I am in exploring the relationship of the invisible god of the invisible realm – Hades – with the unseen and the unknown in poetry.[10] How does Sophocles use what and how Homer represented of Hades to make invisibles on his stage clear to his audience's eyes. Particularly interesting to me is Hades as an underlying thread that

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[9] Cf. *Iliad*: Nestor's call for a pause in the fighting so that the Achaeans and Trojans can gather their dead and properly care for their corpses (VII.327-335); the gods' concern with Sarpedon's corpse and especially with that of Hector (XVI.453-57; XXIV.18-21, 139-140, etc.). The poem begins with talk of corpses and ends with the burial of Hector. The *Odyssey*, to a lesser extent, is also concerned with what one does to corpses, as we learn from Odysseus' visit to Hades' edge and the speeches among the shades of the dead in the final book of the poem. We find, too, framing Odysseus' tale, a Telemachus searching for someone whose death or life is uncertain; any further action in Ithaca depends on gaining sure knowledge of Odysseus' life or death. This uncertainty – perhaps even the fear that his father's corpse lies uncared for somewhere – leads Telemachus to say that it would have been better had his father died at Troy, been buried there and thereby had won honor, glory, and a memory (i.234-240). Moreover, the poems tell us of the dead. They have survived while Achilles, Agamemnoon, Odysseus, and Homer survive only in their telling. The Homeric poems are thereby perhaps the greatest exempla of ἐπιτάφιοι λόγοι.

[10] On Hades' realm and the afterlife, cf. E. Rohde, *Psyche: The cult of the souls and Belief in Immortality Among the Greeks*, W. B. Hills, trans. New York: Harper Row (1966). On the journey to Hades, cf. R. Edmonds, III, *Myths of the Underworld Journey: Plato, Aristophanes and the 'Orphic' Gold Tablets*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press (2004).

binds several key issues in Sophoclean tragedy: mortality and memory, poetry and mimesis, and genre and its relation to the city.[11]

But why Hades? And how? Well, Homer recounts that when the world was divided up among the generation of Olympians, Zeus' lot was Olympus and earth, Poseidon's the seas, and Hades' the mouldy dark places below. Greek religious practice of the archaic period is a complicated mix of cult and image, and it's impossible to say exactly how particular gods and tropes came to be; but we can say that the Olympians were given authoritative figurations by Homer and succeeding poets. This is true above all, the next chapter will show, of Hades. Hades' realm stands apart from those over which his brothers reign. One can see where man lives and where he sails, but one cannot see where man goes when he dies. Mortals need the poets to give Hades' realm dimension, to make it manifest and visible. Claiming the Muses' authority, poets have access to something ordinary mortals cannot see or know: invisible and un-representable Hades.[12]

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[11] When speaking of Hades in Greek tragedy, the trend among critics has been to focus on Hades' relation to virgin deaths. Tragic virgins who are led to their deaths are brides for Hades, as Antigone, Iphigeneia, and Polyxena. Critics have read these evocations of Hades on the tragic stage as inversions or perversions of marriage rituals and have found these "brides of Hades" expressed in visual art as well; cf. R. Rehm, *Marriage to Death: The Conflation of Wedding and Funeral Rites in Greek Tragedy.* Princeton: Princeton University Press (1994) chapter 2. See too now G. Ferrari's critique of the "bride of death" in her *Figures of Speech: Men and Maidens in Ancient Greece*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press (2002) chapter 8; cf. Sophocles, *Antigone* 653-654, 810-815, 1204-05; Euripides, *Iphigeneia in Tauris* 369, *Hecuba* 368, where Polyxena offers her body to Hades. See also Euripides, *Trojan Women* 445. On the resemblance of the rites pertaining to sacrificing virgins and marriage, cf. J. Redfield, "Notes on the Greek Wedding," Arethusa 15 (1982) 181-201; N. Loraux, *Tragic Ways of Killing a Woman.* Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press (1987) 36ff.; H. Foley, "Marriage and Sacrifice in Euripides' *Iphigeneia in Aulis*" Arethusa 15 (1982) 159-180. This project aims to fill a lacuna in the scholarship by shifting the focus from Hades as bridegroom to seeing Hades as the way tragedy visualizes the un-representable.

[12] But beware the Muses; as they tell Hesiod, they can tell true tales and lies that look like truth, *Theogony* 26-28.

Moreover, Hades is singled out among the Olympians because his realm, or the poetic images offered of his realm, is a specifically mortal or human place. There, dead mortals exist as souls, mere images of the men they once were; their dogs and horses are not beside them as when they were alive. Nor, in epic or tragedy, do these souls receive visitations in Hades' realm by Olympians. Hades' house is inhabited by the images of mortal men. Mortals lose their body, but retain the shape, form, or the eidos, of their original selves. Furthermore, the gods demand that the bodies of the dead must be buried. They must be put out of sight in order to enter a hidden and invisible realm where they will exist only as image. The paradoxes of sight and vision of and in Hades are first witnessed in Homer's *Odyssey* and *Iliad.* Sophocles, in putting the care of the corpse at the center of nearly all his extant tragedies, explores these paradoxes further on the Athenian stage.

Hades exists for us only by way of poiesis and is perhaps thereby the most poetic of creations; it is an invisible place made visible by way of poetic speech.[13] The poetic representations Homer and Sophocles give us of Hades, its inhabitants, and their concerns show us that there is something other than just a dead corpse at the end of one's life; there is soul, ψυχή, and soul is intrinsically connected to human shape, form, or εἶδος. The ψυχαί of the dead, Homer tells us, are little shapes or forms: εἴδωλα. By giving such representations of Hades and its inhabitants, Homer and Sophocles teach their audience

[13] We cannot know for certain about the folklore told about Hades, the ghost stories, old wives tales, etc. that were not recorded, but are perhaps reflected later in Aristophanes' *Frogs*. Hence for us, Homer's poetic representations are the earliest. The Locrian pinakes from the second half of the 5th-century, depict Persephone with Hades and Dionsysus as well as different scenes in Persephone's abduction.

by way of poiesis, about the human capacity for image-making. This project explores the relation between Hades as a poetic place that speaks of human image-making, the unseen made visible in poetry, and the poetics of playing Hades in poetry. Below I give a brief précis of the general premises of this inquiry.

I. The Poetics of Hades: a brief introduction

We are given, in the Homeric poems, a poetic representation of what happens to humans when they die: they are souls, ψυχαί, in Hades. As is natural to poetry and the poet, comparisons and contrasts are made when speaking of these ψυχαί, in Hades. The poet seeks, by way of words, to bring to light something obscure and unexplainable, something unlike anything visible in the physical world. Unlike the philosopher or scientist who may seek by way of dianoia and logistike, proof and logic, to describe the *what* of something – whether phenomena or concept – the poet describes and explains, bringing the indescribable to light by showing its similarities to and differences from other things more easily apprehended by our senses.

In the case of the souls of the dead in Hades, Homer's descriptive choices are suggestive of the poet's craft itself and they anticipate Sophocles' tragic stage. Homer describes Hades as a place filled with images apprehended by sight. Yet as these images are representations of once living men, Hades may be said to be an allegory of mimesis itself. By allegory I mean speech – public speech – by way of metaphor or explaining by way of metaphor.[14] The term is a compound of the adjective ἄλλος, "other," and the

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[14] By "metaphor" I mean literally μετα- φορή or μεταφορέω, the transference, as it were, shift,

verb ἀγορεύειν, "to speak in public" or "to speak to another," thereby implying an audience. ~~When we speak allegor~~ically we seek to explain something to another by saying one thing for another. To call Hades an allegory of mimesis itself is to call attention to the place of likenesses, images, metaphor, and audience in poetry and in Hades. As an allegory of mimesis, Hades finds its perfect medium on Sophocles' tragic stage where poetic evocations of an invisible Hades are visually and verbally offered to an audience of Athenian citizens.

The visual aspect of tragedy has not been ignored, either by the ancients or the moderns. Aristotle called the visual aspect – ὄψις – something outside of the work of the poet (and rather something to do with staging). Yet among rhetorical techniques listed in his *Rhetoric*, Aristotle speaks of "bringing before the eyes," πρὸ ὀμμάτων ποιεῖν, a concept he alludes to also in his *Poetics* when telling how to best put together plots. In the *Poetics*, Aristotle says that the good poet ought to "keep the scene before his eyes" so that he can render it full of *energeia.*[15] In the *Rhetoric*, bringing something before the eyes is bound to Aristotle's discussion of metaphor. It is one way of making speech urbane or witty. Homer is praised for his skill at this kind of visualization, of endowing phrases with *energeia*, of giving life to the lifeless.[16] When dealing with Hades, poets should heed Aristotle's advice, for having never seen Hades and the dead shades that dwell in his realm, we need the poets' work to bring it before our eyes.

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or translation from one word to another. Cf. Aristotle, *Poetics* 1457b6; *Rhetoric* 1410b36.

[15] *Poetics* 1455a.

[16] *Rhetoric*, 1410b-1413b.

Poets' likenesses, the preserve of metaphor broadly defined in antiquity, point to the similarity between disparate things. The neither/nor of metaphor is not the neither/nor of dianoia. Dianoia can say A is shorter than B and longer than C, while metaphor says of A's image that it is and is not the same as A. The likeness and unlikeness of an image is not the otherness and sameness of a magnitude. Hence an image's relation to what is imaged necessarily eludes the methods meant to deal with magnitudes and numbers. A poetic likeness shows one thing in another; the other can serve as an image because it is what the imaged may be revealed to have a tendency to be.[17] For example, early in the *Iliad* Homer likens King Agamenmon both to the gods Zeus, Ares, and Poseidon *and* to an ox, a bull conspicuous among the cattle.[18] Agamemon is as grand as the gods in stature. He has a tendency to be magisterial and strong in battle, yet within the king lies something akin to a beast. Poiesis says something other than the mere materiality of its signs and sounds, speech and writing. Ἄλλο ἀγορεύει: it makes public something other than itself, manifesting something other. Hades, as an imagined place filled only with images, is the preserve of poetry. The peculiarity of this relation is underscored by Hades' invisibilily. His unseen realm can be experienced only via the images or εἴδωλα given by the poets and painters.

The tradition of Western poetics from Homer to today, whatever else it is, might be said to be a combination of eidolatry and rhetoric, where the εἴδωλον, the image, is

[17] Perhaps this is what makes poetry the natural home of eros, cf. Aristophanes speech in Plato's *Symposium* and A. Carson, *Eros the Bittersweet.* Princeton: Princeton University Press (1986).

[18] *Iliad* II.477-481.

the essence of poetry and mimesis, representation in words, its inner workings. This idea is thought through profoundly from the beginning of literary criticism in Plato's *Republic*, books II, III, and X, where poetics, theology and politics are all exposed.[19] More recently, poets writing about their craft, such as Susan Stewart and Allen Grossman, find *the* task of poetry to be keeping the human image alive and present for others, work done through (sensual) language. This contemporary idea of presence-ing the human image, combined with Aristotle's discussions of the how and what of poetry among the Greeks will help guide this study.[20]

How then is Hades an allegory of <u>poiesis</u>? Homer's Hades is a place filled with images. The souls of the dead there are εἴδωλα, a word that speaks of their εἶδος, shape

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[19] At issue in books II and III of the *Republic* is the danger of poetry, but not of all poetry. The danger of poetry lies in its <u>mimesis</u>, both in the subject of its <u>mimesis</u> and in the fact that it is mimetic. <u>Mimesis</u>, or imitation, is central to the discussion of poetry in books II and III because virtue or human excellence is at issue. Socrates critiques the poetry Adeimantus and Glaucon grew up on because of the images (particularly of Hades) with which it teaches. Poetry, with its moving images, works on the souls of citizens and therefore has a political impact. Citizens will do one thing or another because of what poetry teaches them, for it is in poetry that Adeimantus and Glaucon both find their arguments for injustice. Furthermore, poetry's mimetic nature calls into question the truthfulness of its images. At the end of book III, Socrates will admit poets into the city, but only those poets whose poetry is simple and whose use of <u>mimesis</u> is limited to imitations only of good men in good moments. A reformed poetry would not have the constant meaningless change of Ocean as its symbol nor Achilles its hero (Cf. The Shield of Achilles in *Iliad* XVIII around whose outermost rim runs the great strength of Ocean (607-608). The constant change of Ocean limits the world of the shield and of the *Iliad.* Cosmologically speaking, all is in flux; there is no cosmos or order. Humanly speaking, this implies that all is war, as even the scene of the city at peace exemplifies in its representation of a quarrel (ἔνθα δὲ νεῖκος ὠρώρει, *Iliad* XVIII.497-98)). Poetry's images, particularly of the gods, the soul and the afterlife (and the rewards and punishments one finds there) must be changed. And so, in *Republic* X Socrates exchanges the old poetry for a new one, ending the discussion with a new μῦθος that presents something other than the tragic or comic way of life found in the poets. Socratic poetry and its myth of Er presents a poetry that supports a philosophic life, balances the promiscuity of fortune in this life and gives a grounding for the rewards of justice and punishment for injustice, groundings impossible to find on Sophocles' stage with its portrayal of complex moral dilemmas. One way to think about this project here is a defense of poetry in the age-old battle between poetry and philosophy.

[20] Cf. S. Stewart, *Poetry and the Fate of the Senses.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press (2002); A. Grossman, *The Long Schoolroom: Lessons in the Bitter Logic of the Poetic Principle.* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press (1997) and Grossman with M. Halliday, *The Sighted Singer: Two Works on Poetry for Readers and Writers.* Baltimore & London: Johns Hopkins University Press (1992).

or form, which is that of the men and women they once were. They are not the living person but point to the living person in their likeness to him or her (εἰκυῖα αὐτῷ).[21] Fittingly, Odysseus experiences Hades through his eyes, yet peculiarly so in that all other mortals need the poet's voice to play eyes. Like the blind Oedipus, the audiences of Homeric epic, "see in speech."[22]

As likenesses of living men the souls of the dead are not unlike characters on a stage. They are ἀμενηνὰ κάρηνα, "strengthless heads," or even masks that cannot speak before a mortal Odysseus gives them life, so to speak, with mortal blood. Moreover, the emotions they effect in Odysseus remind us – if only on a descriptive level – of those Aristotle later claims tragic poetry ought to produce: pity and fear.[23] Odysseus' entire sojourn at the edge of Hades is framed by fear and everything he sees therein evokes pity in him.[24] The poetic "invention of Hades" in the Homeric poems sets the stage, so to speak, for the metaphorical evocation of Hades on the tragic stage, or his unveiling there.

Sophocles is as concerned with still living corpses as with dead ones. While *Antigone* and *Ajax* deal with what to do with the already dead, *Electra*, *Philoctetes*, and *Oedipus at Colonus* present a twist of this usual concern: what to do with corpses that are

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[21] For a discussion of the development of the language of image and representation in Greek literature, cf. J.-P. Vernant, "The Birth of Images" in *Mortals and Immortals: Collected Essays*, F. Zeitlin, ed. Princeton: Princeton University Press (1991) 164-185.

[22] Thanks to the poets' "bringing before the eyes." Odysseus "sees" the soul of Tiresias, "sees" his mother's, the heroines', *Odyssey* xi.87, 235, 260, 267, 271, 281 etc. Oedipus' "seeing in speech," *Oedipus at Colonus*, 138.

[23] Aristotle, *Poetics* 1453a, 1453b. Aristotle's discussion of pity and fear is ethical and not merely descriptive.

[24] Fear: *Odyssey* xi.43 = 643 (δέος); Pity: xi.55, 87, 395.

still alive, living an inverted life above ground. The sections on Sophocles address this issue in *Electra* and *Oedipus at Colonus.*

II. Rethinking Anthropology: Hades' humanity

Classicists in a way, are anthropologists: we study the literature, history and ways of a people united by geography, time, or politics. While what I am looking at in this project can be said to be an anthropology of sorts – looking at the "people" in Hades – such is not my meaning of anthropology here. What I mean by the anthropology of Hades is that Hades is a completely human place. Anthropology is literally the logos of mankind, so the anthropology of Hades would say something about its giving meaning to humanity.

Saying that Hades has an anthropological meaning connotes the fundamental role that Hades plays in defining man. Earlier we mentioned the representation of Hades on the tragic stage as a way of defining the limits of the city, of showing the city its εἶδος, by showing εἴδωλα of what stands outside those limits. Hades is beyond and before the the limits of city, but is the ultimate mortal limit of mankind.

Hades' realm is where the souls of the dead go once their bodies have been taken care of by the community of the living. That corpses are not just left to the birds and dogs – despite the constant poetic threat to the contrary – implies an answer to the question, "what do you do with human beings when they die?"[25] The concern over the

[25] It may have been the case that historically, in Athens, the corpses of condemned and punished men were left on the side of the road precisely to be beheld by Athenian citizens, as in the tale Socrates tells of Leontius at the end of *Republic* IV. For a symbolic reading of this practice, see D. S. Allen's "Envisaging the Body of the Condemned" in CP 95 (2000a) 133-150. Even Electra would send Aegisthus

corpse is implicit in the definition of man and the human difference from animals and gods.[26] Tending to dead bodies is not uniquely Greek; all humans must take care of their dead; rotting bodies are a universal problem. Creating a place outside the mortal realm of the here and now in and by poetry for what remains once the body is put out of sight (either burning or burying or both) that remains apprehended by sight *is* uniquely Greek. As Vermeule puts it "what is perhaps peculiar to the Greeks is the quality of their writing about death; it is the poetry, not the thinking, which has so powerfully affected readers of Greek literature, in versions of many languages."[27] The Greek poetic Hades is a uniquely human place in two ways: it is created by humans (poets) and for humans (dead souls). It is also the site for performing the human.[28]

What is the meaning of a corpse? This question has infinite implications. It is one with the question, τί ἄνθρωπός ἐστιν? What is man? What is the human difference? What is the relation of the body and the soul, the body and the self, the soul

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to buriers worthy of him, a remark that can imply the threat of dogs and birds, line1487-88. Yet her addition that she wants him "out of sight" implies burial (Sophocles, *Electra* 1489).

[26] On the difference between humans and animals tending to their dead, see E. Vermeule, *Aspects of Death in Early Greek Art and Poetry.* Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press (1979) 5-6: "Elephants may put branches on a dead friend, or sprinkle him with dust; bears will bury another animal to ripen it for eating; dolphins hold formal mourning rites, as even cows do. Still, human speculation about death has been historically self-centered and self-flattering, rejoicing in unique anguish and burden. What other animals may do has seemed unimportant, because to us they have neither history nor myth, which our dead have given us."

[27] E. Vermeule (1979) 6-7.

[28] There are no animals in Homer's Hades. Heracles' talk of "the dog" in *Odyssey* xi.623, 625 (κυνα, τόν) refers not to the soul of a dead dog, but rather the hound of Hades, its guard dog. Hades is a place for the souls of dead mortals, for ψυχαί; only humans have ψυχή. Indeed, as J. Redfield points out in a footnote, "At xiv.426 the *psuche* leaves a sacrificed animal; I find this unique ascription of *psuche* to an animal completely baffling. 'Einige Anomalien wird man Homer wohl lassen müssen' says Herter (1957, p. 210, n.29), and I can do no better. Equally anomalous is VII.131, where the *thumos* goes to Hades." (*Nature and Culture in the Iliad: The Tragedy of Hector*, Chicago (1994) 77, fn. 43). Herodotus lists the burial of animals in Egypt as one of the marvels found in that land (of cows: II.41; of cats and dogs: II.67; of crocodiles: II.69; of snakes: II.74).

and the self, and the no less deep question of the skin and the body, the meaning of nakedness, the seen and the unseen? What makes for membership in the class of ἄνθρωπος?

In his *Politics*, Aristotle tells us:

> By nature there is in all men the impulse toward political association, and he who first established it is responsible for the greatest good; for, just as man, when perfected, is the best of all animals, so when divorced from law and right he is the worst of all; for injustice is harshest if it has weapons. But man is born having the possession of weapons such as phronesis and virtue, which he can use to the highest degree for opposite ends. Therefore man is most impious and most savage without virtue and worst with regard to sexual things and food.[29]

Man's savage nature regarding "sexual things" points to incest and "food" to cannibalism. This natural latitude needs limitation, nomos, or law. Tragedy, by means of its images of sacred trasngressions such as incest, cannibalism, matricide, and partricide, communicates the pre-legal primal terror in the midst of the legally constituted order. In the service of the legally constituted order, tragedy mimetically enacts the state of exception. In the broadest sense, it reveals not this or that law or norm, but the form of law to the legal order, or political association. The city, via tragedy, shows itself from out of itself via poiesis and εἴδωλα of what lies on the other side or before the law and by communicating the terror of that exceptional beyond.

Tragic poetry's poiesis of man's original disordered bestial state of cannibalism, incest, matricide, and patricide signify in representations such as those of Oedipus and Electra an anthropology: the articulation of those laws that intrinsically define humanity

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[29] Aristotle, *Politics*, 1253a39.

and that answer the question, τί ἄνθρωπός ἐστιν? By anthropology here I mean the study of those laws that proclaim what man is or is not by means of the regular performance or failure to perform some human rite or other.[30] The Greek poets, philosophers, and historians as well as modern anthropology find the paradeigmata of all such laws to be sacrifice and burial.[31] And as all such laws offer paradeigmata of the human, anthropology, in the sense used here, is the study of the paradigmatic place where the paradigm of the human shows itself: Hades.[32]

Sacrifice is always sacrifice to some being; sacrificing points to man's mortality, his not being a god.[33] Restricted to human beings and performed only on human beings in ancient Greece, burial delimits the human and gives meaning to the human, ensuring that he or she remains in the human realm, saving the body from falling prey to, and becoming part of, the realm of beasts. Laws that circumscribe rites pertaining the

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[30] This focus on anthropology is to be distinguished from the interesting recent discussions about the social function of tragedy in the ideology of Athens, either reproducing it or as a site of critique, by taking a stance vis-à-vis this or that norm, i.e. women on the tragic stage, etc. cf. F. Zeitlin, "The Dynamics of Misogyny: Myth and Mythmaking in Aeschylus' *Oresteia*" Arethusa 11 (1978) 149-84, reprinted in *Playing the Other*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press (1996); N. Loraux, "Kreousa the Autochthon" in *Nothing to Do with Dionysos?*, F. Zeitlin and J. Winkler, eds. Princeton: Princeton University Press (1990) 168-206, originally published as "Créuse autochtone" in N. Loraux, *Les Enfants d'Athéna*, Paris (1981) 197-253; S. Goldhill "The Drama of Logos" in *Reading Greek Tragedy*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press (1986) 1-32; see also the collection edited by H. Foley, *Reflections on Women in Antiquity*, London, Paris, New York: Gordon and Breach (1982).

[31] Cf. J.-P.Vernant, *Myth and Society in Ancient Greece*, New York: Zone Books (1980), chapter VII: Between the Beasts and the Gods (143-182). See also M. Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concept of Pollution and Taboo*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul (1966).

[32] cf. M. Mauss and H. Hubert, "Essai sur la nature et la function du sacrifice," in M. Mauss, *Oeuvres*, vol. 1. Paris: Éditions de Minuit (1968); C. Lévi-Strauss, "Introduction a l'oeuvre de Marcel Mauss," in M. Mauss, *Sociologie et Anthropologie*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France (1950); J.-P. Vernant, *Mythe et pensée chez les Grecs*, Paris: Maspero (1965); R. Callois, *L'homme et le sacré*, Paris: Gallimard (1950, 2nd edition).

[33] Hesiod's account of the Prometheus tale poetically reveals sacrifice as something particularly human and something that distinguishes man from god. Likewise, the decision, as the poet Aristophanes in Plato's Symposium tells us, to punish humans other than by complete destruction; without humans there would be no sacrifice to the gods.

sacrifice and the corpse say, in essence, that man is not just body. To borrow Plato's formulation, these laws tell us that man is both body and soul and that there are gods.[34] Herodotus powerfully presents the issue in three ways: announcing that no one would exchange his funeral rites or customs for money, showing us a Cambyses who marries his own sisters, but then adding that even Cambyses cannot permit cannibalism.[35] There are limits beyond which the human cannot go and remain human. There always remains *some* taboo. The laws of incest, cannibalism and burial – the laws that pertain to sex and hunger in life and the corpse in death – the sites of anthropology, reveal the look and shape of the human and with it, by negation, as it were, those of the gods and beasts.

The double origin of Greekness in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* reveals the decisive theme in the Homeric poems and their descendents, tragedy, comedy and epinician, to be mortality, or humanness.[36] In the broadest terms, the *Iliad* is about a man who comes to see the need for gods if he is to be who he is, for his human form. Only the gods can ground the distinction between body and soul, for they are the ones who demand the return of Hector's body for burial.[37] Moreover, Achilles comes to realize that after all the soul *is* something in the house of Hades only after he has seen the form of his dead friend

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[34] Cf. Plato, *Minos* 315b6-d5, where Socrates' friend refers to the differences in sacrifice and burial as evidence that Socrates' definition of law cannot be true.

[35] Herodotus, III.25.7. Recall, too, Herodotus' claim that nomos is basileus, or king.

[36] In this way the founding texts of the Greek world stand in marked contrast to those of revealed religion whose themes are specific to a tribe or a people, i.e. the way of a Jew, Christian, or Muslim. With the holy god of the biblical traditions, mere so-called humanness, we might say, is demoted. The theme of the Torah can be said to be righteousness and holiness, that of the New Testament grace and salvation, and that of the Koran submission to the will of Allah. In all three the theme concerns righteousness and holiness. With the coming of one holy god (revelation), so-called humanness is demoted to something more specific: being a member of one group or another that lives the right – because divinely sanctioned – way.

[37] And Achilles acquiesces at once, *Iliad* XXIV.139-140.

Patroclus.[38] The *Odyssey* is about a man who travels far, sees the cities of many men and knows their minds; it is thus the story of the way and obstacles to wisdom.[39] The images of Achilles' justice and Odysseus' wisdom stand at the beginning of Greece. And at the beginning of this beginning is the poetry of Homer, who with Hesiod, beautifies the cosmos with the Olympians and Hades.[40]

Following Homer, Sophocles transfers Hades as the site of anthropology to the tragic stage. The absence in Sophocles' *Antigone*, for any reason, aside from divine law, as to why a corpse must be buried strongly suggests that divine law is the only way to explain burial.[41] No one in *Antigone* says, as it is said in *Electra*, that there are living souls in Hades whose admittance there depends on burial here.[42] In the *Antigone*, no one

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[38] *Iliad* XXIII.103-4.

[39] For an interesting reading of the *Odyssey* that stresses the way the human form is revealed in the way and obstacles to wisdom, cf. S. Benardete, *The Bow and the Lyre: A Platonic Reading of the Odyssey*, Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield (1997).

[40] Herodotus II.53.2; cf. Aristophanes, *Peace* 406-411.

[41] Antigone holds the unwritten, steadfast laws of the gods as more powerful than any mortal decree (Sophocles, *Antigone* 450-57) and claims that Hades desires these laws: ὅμως ὅ γ' ῞Αιδης τοὺς νόμους ἴσους ποθεῖ (519). Both Creon and Antigone bandy honor about as a reason for burial. But when speaking of the τίμη due a corpse, Creon and Antigone seem to hold the word's meaning differently, not unlike other crucial terms in the play such as φίλος and ἔχθρος (cf. B. Knox, *The Heroic Temper*, Berkeley (1964), C. P. Segal, "The *Electra* of Sophocles" TAPA 97 (1966) 474-545, S. Goldhill, *Reading Greek Tragedy*, Cambridge, UK (1986) 79-106). For Antigone, the τίμη she sees Polyneices deprived of (22) is the τίμη due to all dead, as is clearly shown in her first juxtaposition of the fate of her two dead brothers: Creon has dishonored Poyneices, ἀτιμάσασα, but Eteocles is τοῖς ἔνερθεν ἔντιμον νεκροῖς (25). Creon, however, extends the city to the world of the dead. To him, Hades is just an extension of Thebes and honor belongs to any who are well-minded toward the city, both alive and dead: ἀλλ' ὅστις εὔνους τῇδε τῇ πόλει, θανὼν / καὶ ζῶν ὁμοίως ἐξ ἐμοῦ τιμήσεται (209-10). Only to Antigone and Ismene does burial constitute going "below the earth" and therefore a removal from Thebes and all its concerns (65). Cf. S. Benardete, "A Reading of Sophocles' *Antigone* I" in Interpretation, 4.23; S. Goldhill (1986) chapter 4.

[42] Sophocles, *Electra*, 841, 1418-19.

speaks of the separation of the body and the soul as we hear of in the *Electra*.[43] A blind Oedipus leaves no remains when he buries himself.

The tending to a corpse – whether by burning or burying or both – consists in its concealment, in hiding from sight not only the flesh and bones, but even the skin.[44] Burial, we might say, is literally the most superficial ceremony.[45] Non-burial, on the other hand, leaves exposed the whole body, leaving all the boneless parts at the mercy of dogs and birds. Yet burial does not avoid the threat of being eaten; worms may still come.[46] But with burning and burial the threat of being seen naked, or of just plain being seen, and torn apart is averted. Burning and burial conceal the looks and shape of mankind that can remain visible only in Hades.[47]

Rites concerning corpses, like money, seem entirely conventional yet universal. Another name for Hades, after all, is Ploutos.[48] But Ploutos, the god of wealth, and Ploutos the god of death differ in one decisive respect: the conventionality of the treatment of the corpse, unlike money, forbids equivalence and exchange.[49] While we

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[43] Sophocles, *Electra* 245-50.

[44] This is most evident in the mere dust that covers Polyneices' corpse in *Antigone*, 245-247, 256. It is interesting to note that even the historically exposed corpses of the condemned and punished were things one tried to turn away from, as Socrates tells us in *Republic* IV; cf. D. S. Allen (2000a).

[45] cf. Herodotus II.86.3-7; and S. Benardete, "A Reading of Sophocles' *Antigone* I" in Interpretation, 4.23; J. Redfield (1994) 171.

[46] Herodotus III.16.4; *Iliad* XIX.24-27.

[47] *Antigone*, 255; Concealing the look and shape of a man is the hinge of the Paedagogus' lie in Sophocles' *Electra* and will be discussed further in Chapter four.

[48] *Antigone*, 1200; Aristophanes, *Ploutos*; Plato, *Cratylus*.

[49] Herodotus III.38.3-4; cf. Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* 437-38, where Ares is the "gold changer of bodies/corpses," ὁ χρυσαμοιβὸς δ' Ἄρης σωμάτων. As Leslie Kurke tells us, the earliest references to coin "are hostile to it, representing it as "mere convention," changeable, arbitrary…" (*Coins, Bodies,*

easily change our dollars for Euros or Pounds when crossing borders, we don't so easily change the way we deal, and have forever dealt, with the dead. Another difference grounds this distinction between two sides of Ploutos: any set of rites over the corpse receives its character from what is held about the soul. No other practice implies so much so soon.[50]

III. The Ethical and Juridical Aspect/Question of Hades

To say that Hades exists, as rites over the corpse imply, insists that there are things that one cannot do to human beings.[51] There are sacred restraints, limits below which one becomes a beast, above which a god. Limitation on what man can do to man, sacred restraint and burial as a divine command, implies that Hades is at the arche or origin – and end - of the ethical-juridical order of the city.[52] The limits of the law and the paradoxes of anger and punishment point to the need for something like Hades to satisfy the angry demand for justice. Law must catch a criminal to be effective. What about those who get away? Punishment, one imagines, awaits. Law deals primarily with actions, hence it deals with the body, man's outside. Law cannot see man's insides,

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Games, and Gold: The Politics of Meaning in Archaic Greece. Princeton: Princeton University Press (1999) 333).

[50] cf. S. Benardete, "A Reading of Sophocles' *Antigone* I" in Interpretation, 4.23: 148-96; & "A Reading of Sophocles' *Antigone* II" in Interpretation 5.1:1-55; & A Reading of Sophocles' *Antigone* III" in Interpretation 5.2:148-84; and J. Redfield (1994) 171.

[51] Cf. C. P. Segal, "The Theme of the Mutilation of the Corpse in the *Iliad*" Mnemosyne Supplementum XVII. Brill (1971); J. Redfield (1994) especially chapter 5, on the "anti-funeral."

[52] The ethical-juridical order covers a man's lifetime; from his birth to his death man is subject to a city's law. At the beginning and the end of a city's laws – at birth and at death – are the laws that proscribe sexual generation (incest taboo) and the laws that pertain to burial. Hades and shame stand at and behind both the beginning and the end of law and the life of man.

intentions, soul or mind, hence the paradoxes of punishment.[53] All these limitations and paradoxes dissolve if there is Hades, a place where soul is manifest and transparent, hence readable and subject to avenging punishment and therapeutic cure.

Or do they? Throughout his extant work, Sophocles leaves his audience questioning justice: is matricide just if it is committed to avenge a father's murder? Does Oedipus' punishment fit his unwittingly committed crime, albeit the most profane crime? Is the corpse of a philos justly denied burial if the man was once an enemy? Readers, viewers and critics of Sophocles' work have argued for both sides.

Moreover, a two-mindedness about justice is evident on the tragic stage. Injustice arouses anger, and anger is a complicated emotion. While angry men usually insist that injustice is bad, their desire to punish implies that if the unjust man escapes punishment he will be sitting pretty, enjoying himself.[54] Anger is the passion of a man who relies on the goodness of justice, yet suddenly sees that very goodness thrown into doubt. It is the passion of someone whose trust in justice is dogged by the recurring suspicion that injustice is a gain. It is the passion of one confused or of two minds about justice.[55] Such two-mindedness shows itself on the tragic stage when characters such as Sophocles' Electra or Deianeira and Euripides' Phaedra express their shame at their own behavior or that their actions go against their characters. Considering the nearly universal experience

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[53] The paradoxes of punishment and the infinite pressure they place on the ethical-juridical order were brutally explored in the last centuries by Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morals* and M. Foucault, *Discipline and Punishment.* For a study of the working out of these contradictions in the politics and laws of 5th-century Athens, cf. D. S. Allen, *The World of Prometheus: The Politics of Punishing in Democratic Athens.* Princeton: Princeton University Press (2000b).

[54] As Electra expresses in 266ff and 1153, or even worse, that injustice dissolves all things sacred between mortals and the divine and among mortals, 245-50.

[55] On anger in democratic Athens, cf. D. S. Allen (2000b).

of how common anger and the desire to punish are, perhaps all mortals, to begin with, are confused in this way. The poets think through this confusion and highlight it in such works as *Antigone*, *Electra*, and *Oedipus at Colonus*. Perhaps all mortals are in need of the poets' beautifications to assuage this anger?

IV. Tragedy in Athens, or the Social Function of Tragedy

Through tragic characters' transgressions of sacred laws – incest, cannibalism, matricide, patricide – tragedy reveals that there is Hades and that there is something beyond the city, or that humans are not *simply* political animals. The tragic festival is a mimetic memorialization reminding the city of its limits, that there are experiences on the other side of the law.[56]

Greek tragedy occurred in a unique place at a unique time. It is, like the funeral oration, a particularly Athenian institution. And it is an institution whose growth coincided with that of Athens as a city, a polis. Much has been said recently about the social and political character of Greek tragedy.[57] While mindful of recent readings of tragedy that look to its function in civic ideology,[58] with Hades as a guide I will suggest

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[56] Cf. J.-P. Vernant, "Tensions and Ambiguities in Greek Tragedy" in Vernant and Vidal-Naquet (1990) 29-48.

[57] The important role that tragic drama and the festivals in which it was performed played in the education of Athenian citizens is developed in detail in several collections: *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece*, Vernant and Vidal-Naquet. New York: Zone Books (1990), *Nothing to do with Dionysos*, J. Winkler and F. Zeitlin eds., Princeton: Princeton Unviersity Press (1990), and *Greek Tragedy and Political Theory*, J. P. Euben, ed., Berkeley & London: University of California Press (1986). In "The Great Dionysia and Civic Ideology" in *Nothing to do with Dionysos*, S. Goldhill shows that the City Dionysia opened with ceremonies that confirmed an "official" idea of the relation of the individual to the city, an idea that was then called into question by the plays that followed.

[58] See the insightful and influential work of F. Zeitlin, *Under the Sign of the Shield: Semiotics and Aeschylus' Seven against Thebes*, Rome (1981); S. Goldhill, *Reading Greek Tragedy*, Cambridge, UK:

how eidolatry, or the regard for and of images, Hades, the laws that define the human, or anthropology, play a constitutive role in defining and describing humanity in Sophoclean tragedy.

With the display of the terror and law that is Hades, tragic poetry related not only the primary terror or bestiality in the midst of Greekness or civilization, but more fundamentally perhaps, that there is more to being human than the political. That which is beyond the political and its laws – either physis, nature or the divine understood as the holy and the sacred – is always present and produces an incredible pressure on politics, morality and law. Historically, the fates of Nicias, Alcibiades and Socrates each in its own way attest to this.[59] Poetically, Antigone and Oedipus reveal and think the problem through to its zero-point. The need for sacred restraint, prohibitions and laws limiting desire, incest, cannibalism and burial rites, calls for divine law or an order beyond the merely political law. The city needs Hades and the Olympians. And yet there is

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Cambridge University Press (1986), and "The Great Dionysia and Civic Ideology" in *Nothing to Do with Dionysos?*; H. Foley, *Ritual Irony: Poetry and Sacrifice in Euripides*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press (1985). See also, O. Longo, "The Theater of the Polis" in *Nothing to do with Dionysos?*: "The dramatic spectacle was one of the rituals that deliberately aimed at maintaining social identity and reinforcing the cohesion of the group." (p.16).

[59] The fates of Nicias and Alcibiades attest to the all-important significance of human beliefs about the gods for the fate of individuals and cities. The Sicilian expedition would have succeeded and the city would not have been ruined, Thucydides tells us, if the Athenian demos had trusted Alcibiades (IV.15). Instead they selected Nicias, the pious gentleman warrior concerned with his military renown and omens, to share in the expedition's leadership. We recall that while the Athenians were deliberating about the expedition a gross act of impiety was perpetrated in Athens and appears to be a bad omen for the expedition in the eyes of the Athenians. The popular belief in and fear of the gods is used against Alcibiades by those who compete with him for popular favor. After Alcibiades' recall, the man at the head of the expedition is the least hubristic and most pious of his Athenian contemporaries. Nicias, like the Spartans, believed that the fate of men or cities corresponds to their justice and piety (VII.18) and it brings him the most undeserved fate (VII.86). Alcibiades' proved or presumed impiety made it necessary for the Athenian demos to entrust the expedition to a man with Melian beliefs whom they trusted because he surpassed them all in piety.

something uncanny about human longing, desire or aspiration that compels us to transgress such sacred divine law.[60]

In the following chapters I will investigate this very question: what is the meaning of Hades in the Greek poetic imagination? My aim, however, is not to discover the nature of the godhead as such, but rather to uncover what Hades means in and to Greek poetry.[61] What is this hidden god's role in the Greek poetic imagination? To this end, not the philosophers but the poets shall be my guide and not comedy so much as tragedy.[62] I am interested in uncovering the use the poets made of Hades to visualize the un-representable in their poetic creations. The poems of Homer and Sophocles are the subject of this study and the meaning and role of Hades its focus. I aim to shed some light on the world beneath Greek epic and tragedy: I hope to show *that*, *how*, and *why* the under-appreciated underworld, Hades, is essential and not merely a detail, supplement or ornament to the terrifying beauty of Greek tragic poetry.

To take Hades as one's focus and the poems of Homer and Sophocles as one's subject runs the risk of finding oneself endlessly in a realm as dark and seductive as Hades, to say nothing of the exposure to angry rebuke and easy derision similar

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[60] The Sophoclean hero manifests this human desire. Cf. B. Knox, *The Heroic Temper: Studies in Sophoclean Tragedy*. Berkeley: University of California Press (1964) 23; J.P. Vernant, "Tensions and Ambiguities in Greek Tragedy," in *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece*, New York (1990) 32 & "Oedipus without the Complex" in *Myth and Tragedy*, 91.

[61] To be distinguished from C. Sourvinou-Inwood's concern in *Reading Greek Death to the End of the Classical Period* (Oxford: Oxford University Press (1995)), which she claims to be uncovering the "parameters determining the Homeric articulations of the afterlife."

[62] Interesting to note here, though, is that Hades is never a setting for tragedy while it is for comedy (Aristophanes, *Frogs*). Tragedy, with its representations of what lies on the other side of the law, would perhaps be unbearable with an explicitly present Hades?

investigation brought to Plato's Socrates.[63] These two poets continue to inspire seemingly limitless scholarly discussion and debate. In an attempt to remain in the light of the day and not tarry among the dead, I don't here dare take all of Homer and all of Sophocles as my object of study. Rather, from the poems of Homer I have chosen to limit discussion to books xi and xxiv of the *Odyssey* where the poet and Odysseus give us their views of Hades, and selections from the latter books of the *Iliad* where Achilles learns what it is to be human.

Even around such a selection, the discussion will be brief. The first section, chapter two, explores Pindar's imagery when speaking of man and finds its inspiration in Homer. Via Pindar and Homer among the poets, and Plato and Pausanias among prose writers, chapter two develops the argument for the birth, role and meaning of Hades in the Greek poetic imagination. The following chapters take up Hades and his relation to the invisible or un-representable in Sophocles' work. One would have to argue forcefully, to say nothing of the necessary inventiveness, to find among Sophocles' oeuvre any extant complete piece that did not have something to do with death, the corpse, or Hades. Yet in the limited space and time of this project, two plays form the focus of chapters three and four, the *Oedipus at Colonus* and the *Electra*, while Sophocles' other extant works – as well as the rest of the tragic corpus – are addressed to mark points of comparison and contrast. *Oedipus at Colonus* and *Electra* exhibit most clearly the poetics of Hades on Sophocles' stage because they are two plays wherein the corpse concerned is as yet unburied and where the action of the play consists of preparing

[63] Cf. Plato, *Apology of Socrates* 19b: ζητῶν τά τε ὑπὸ γῆς καὶ οὐράνια ... ταῦτα γὰρ ἑωρᾶτε καὶ αὐτοὺ ἐν τῆ 'Αριστοφάνους κωμῳδία (cf. 18b).

for burial that at once covers a dead body to keep the person's image alive. Indeed, we'll find in *Electra* a turning around of the poetics of Hades in Sophocles when the dead come to life right at the play's start and end to effect the aims of the play. Both these plays also exhibit the anthropology of Hades through their poetics of bringing to sight/mind what is often un-representable. Furthermore, they both tie the problem of burial and memory to one of justice. *Oedipus at Colonus* asks how a man who committed the ultimate human crimes can find a place among men. *Electra* presents a plot that turns on a lie about death and burial in order to commit vengeful murder.

Critics have grappled with the vexed question of justice in Sophoclean tragedy.[64] Questions of right and wrong action riddle this poet's work. Injustice has been done and someone must pay. Yet *where* justice lies is never completely resolved in Sophocles' work. *Antigone* is perhaps the locus classicus among scholarly debate over the question of justice. Scholars tend to read the play as one about moralities in competition: which is more important, the claims of the family and the gods or those of the city. Others have sought to find the problem not between Creon and Antigone but on one side alone and the problems *within* the argument of each.[65] None have closed the book on the issue. In the

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[64] For example, on the side of a "just" matricide in *Electra*, cf. Sir R.C. Jebb, *Sophocles: The Play and Fragments. Part VI. The Electra*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press (1924) xlff; C.M. Bowra, *Sophoclean Tragedy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press (1944); P.T. Stevens, "Sophocles' Electra: Doom or Triumph?" Greece and Rome Series 2, v. 25 (1978) 111-120. For a darker reading of the play, cf. C.P. Segal, "The 'Electra' of Sophocles," TAPA 97 (1966)474-545; C.P. Segal, *Tragedy and Civilization: An Interpretation of Sophocles*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press (1981), especially Chapter 8: 'Electra'; C.S. Smith, "The Meanings of καιρός in Sophocles' *Electra*," CJ (1990) 341-343 and R.P. Winnington-Ingram, *Sophocles: An Interpretation*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press (1980). J. H. Kells puts forth an ironic and dark reading of the play in his critical edition, *Sophocles: Electra*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press (1973); J.T. Sheppard likewise puts forth a dark reading of the play in his series of articles "The Tragedy of Electra, According to Sophocles," CQ 12 (1918) 80-88, "Electra: A Defense of Sophocles," CR 41 (1927)2-9; "Electra Again," CR 41 (1927) 163-165.

[65] Hester, et al.

case of *Electra*, Electra and her claims fail as much as her mother's to elicit an audience's sympathy and critics have found the play both dark and triumphant. Scholars writing on *Oedipus at Colonus* move away from the question of justice by reading the play as a transformation of Oedipus, without ever adequately explaining *why* Oedipus deserves such and *how* such a transformation is poetically effected. Some critics on Sophocles evade the question of justice altogether, focusing instead on the poetry of Sophocles talk about poetry, its metatpoetics.[66] Hades, this project will show, relieves the tension between these critical strains by revealing their interdependence in the text. The discussion of Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus* and *Electra* can be read as case studies of the argument developed from the Homeric corpus in chapter two, depeenings and exposures of the poetics of Hades, as it were.

Why should such a study begin with Homer? If one is to find the meaning and significance of Hades and the poetics of Hades in the Greek poetic imagination, one must begin where that poetic imagination began and from which it took its inspiration. The 5th century Greeks themselves tells us that Homer, and Hesiod with him, were the teachers of the Greeks. These poets gave the Greeks their gods.[67] While the Homeric poems may not have been thought to be religious texts in the way Christians, Muslims and Jews

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[66] For a metatheatrical reading of *Electra*, cf. M. Ringer, *Electra and the Empty Urn* , Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press (1998). On Sophocles' *Electra* as an agon between poets (Orestes, Paedagogus, Electra) and Orestes' eventual triumph as poet and inheritor of the palace, cf. A. Batchelder, *The Seal of Orestes: Self Reference and Authority in Sophocles' Electra*, Lanham: Rowman& Littlefield (1995).

[67] Ἡσίοδον γὰρ καὶ Ὅμηρον ἡλικίην τετρακοσίοισι ἔτεσι δοκέω μευ πρεσβυτέρους γενέσθαι καὶ οὐ πλέοσι. οὗτοι δέ εἰσι οἱ ποιήσαντες θεογονίην Ἕλλησι καὶ τοῖσι θεοῖσι τὰς ἐπωνυμίας δόντες καὶ τιμάς τε καὶ τέχνας διελόντες καὶ εἴδεα αὐτῶν σημήναντες (Herodotus II.53). See also Plato, *Theatetus* 152e4-5; Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1000a10ff. That the gods are myths, cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1074bff.

consider their respective scriptures, they are nonetheless undeniably the cornerstone of the Greek tradition, the backbone of the poetic and social imagination, and were required learning for any educated Greek. This fact is well known and virtually a cliché of the scholarship, both ancient and modern.[68]

Indeed, the growth in popularity of Mystery Cults, such as those at Eleusis, promising a blessed afterlife are a direct response to the images of Hades we find in Homer. So too, perhaps, are the Orphic lamellae that seek to guide the recently departed along the correct path in the afterlife. Plato, at the start of his *Republic*, has his Socrates declare that poetry needs reformation precisely because of the tales of Hades therein: knowledge of that kind of Hades is thought, in that dialogue, to be harmful to the education of a citizen. The images of Hades' realm which Homer first made public have effected not only the tragic stage of Sophocles, but all of Greek civilization.

The poets of the tragic stage in 5th-century Athens followed in the poetic tradition out of which the Homeric poems were born and upon which those poems further elaborated and established as canon.[69] According to Plato's Socrates, καὶ τῶν ποιητῶν

[68] cf. W. Burkert, *Greek Religion*, trans. John Raffan, Cambridge, Mass. (1985) 120: "To be a Greek was to be educated, and the foundation of all education was Homer"; and 125: "Until the time of Pheidias, poetry is the leading force in all public life; it is the medium which expresses and shapes general opinions and ideas; until the middle of the sixth century it enjoyed a monopoly in this. Most particularly, speaking about gods is a matter for poets – a highly unusual manner of speaking, in a highly stylized artificial language never spoken at any other time, generally associated with music and dancing and declaimed on special festal occasions. The poetic language does not transmit factual information; it creates a world of its own, a world in which the gods lead their lives. With the loss of this monopoly of poetry, with the rise of prose writing, the problem of *theologia* suddenly appears in the realm of rational, accountable speaking about gods. That the conflict which arose in this way found no generally accepted solution was due precisely to the ineradicable force of Homer's influence." See also J. Redfield (1994) 41: "By 'poetry' the Greeks meant always, before anything else, the *Iliad*". See also, R.C. Jebb, *Classical Greek Poetry*, New York: Gordian Press (1970, reprint of 1893 original) 226ff. The ready references to Homer and Hesiod throughout the works of Plato and Aristotle attest to the cliché among ancient critics.

[69] cf. P. Easterling, "The Tragic Homer" BICS 31 (1984): 1-8; S. Goldhill, (1986), chapter 6 "Text and Tradition"; B. Knox (1964), chapter 2 "The Sophoclean Hero 2", especially 50ff.

οἱ ἄκροι τῆς ποιήσεως ἑκατέρας. κωμῳδίας μὲν Ἐπίχαρμος, τραγῳδίας δὲ Ὅμηρος, "of the poets who are the pinnacle of each of the two poieseis, Epicharmos is comedy's while Homer's is tragedy's."[70] The famous discussion of poetry in *Republic* X is framed by the same thought. At the start of the discussion Socrates says, (Ὅμηρος) ἔοικε μὲν γὰρ τῶν καλῶν ἁπάντων τούτων τῶν τραγικῶν πρῶτος διδάσκαλός τε καὶ ἡγεμὼν γενέσθαι, "Homer seems to be the foremost teacher and leader of all these fine tragedians,"[71] and at its end, καὶ συγχωρεῖν Ὅμηρον ποιητικώτατον εἶναι καὶ πρῶτον τῶν τραγῳδοποιῶν, "Homer is the most poetic and the first of tragic poets."[72] In between this frame Homer is mentioned no less than ten times. Poetry in Plato means first and foremost the epics of Homer. Aristotle too seems to agree with Plato on this point: ὥσπερ δὲ καὶ τὰ σπουδαῖα μάλιστα ποιητὴς Ὅμηρος ἦν (μόνος γὰρ οὐχ ὅτι εὖ ἀλλὰ καὶ μιμήσεις δραματικὰς ἐποίησεν), "just as Homer was a poet in the highest degree with respect to serious matters (for he alone made his mimeseis not only good but also dramatic)."[73] Homer is the source from which the tragic poets took their meaning.

Tragedy's debt to epic and its transformations of epic themes and characters are hardly new subjects in the realm of literary criticism. At the very start of his *Poetics*,

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[70] Plato, *Theatetus*, 152e4-5.

[71] Plato, *Republic*, 595b10-c2.

[72] Plato, *Republic*, 607a1.

[73] Aristotle, *Poetics* 1448b34ff. Aritstotle continues to say that as Homer also wrote the comic epic *Margites*, he also delineated the forms of comedy. The *Margites* stands in the same relation to comedy as the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* do to tragedy. The potential of tragedy was evident in the Homeric epics (παραφανείσης δὲ τῆς τραγῳδίας, 1449a2).

elaborating on the differences between mimetic arts – their media, object and mode – Aristotle argues that in one sense we could call Sophocles the same kind of mimetic artist as Homer on account of their common subject: serious men (σπουδαίοι, 1448a27). But they differ in meter and narrative mode and also in length: the action of tragedy is limited to a day whereas epic's is limitless. Nevertheless, Aristotle tells us that whoever knows about tragedy necessarily knows about epic because whatever there is in epic exists in tragedy, but not all that tragedy comprises is to be found in epic.[74] The authorities of Plato and Aristotle are invoked not to settle the matter but to frame the question. This project makes the case that the poetic invention of Hades is a subterranean thread at work in the soul, so to speak, of Homeric epic and Sophoclean tragedy.

The next chapter turns to Homer and his invention of Hades. Hades, the chapter shows, is not only an invention of poetry but fully at home in poetry. This second chapter forms the groundwork for the poetics of Hades which the following chapters take up in readings of individual plays – *Oedipus at Colonus* and *Electra* – that show these poetics at work on Sophocles' stage. In the final chapter we'll address comedy's ability to put Hades on stage explicitly and make some suggestions about Hades' place in and among the various genres under discussion here. We will, moreover, find in the conclusion the influence of Hades in ancient literary criticism by way of Aristotle's "Hades talk" when discussing poetry. Is tragedy, or poetry, all about Hades?

[74] Aristotle, *Poetics* 1449b16-20: μέρη δ' ἐστὶ τὰ μὲν ταὐτά, τὰ δὲ ἴδια τῆς τραγῳδίας· διόπερ ὅστις περὶ τραγῳδίας οἶδε σπουδαίας καὶ φαύλης, οἶδε καὶ περὶ ἐπῶν· ἅ μὲν γὰρ ἐποποιία ἔχει, ὑπαρχει τῇ τραγῳδία, ἅ δὲ αὐτῃ, οὐ πάντα ἐν τῇ ἐποποιία. Modern critics who attest to tragedy's debt to Homer include P. Easterling and S. Goldhill.

Chapter Two

The Poetic Invention of Hades

ἐπάμεροι· τί δέ τις; τί δ' οὔ τις; σκιᾶς ὄναρ
ἄνθρωπος. ἀλλ' ὅταν αἴγλα διόσδοτος ἔλθῃ,
λαμρὸν φέγγος ἔπεστιν ἀνδρῶν καὶ μείλιχος αἰών.

Day Creatures. What is someone? What is no-one? A shadow's dream
is man. But whenever Zeus-given radiance comes
glowing light and a sweet age are upon men.

Pindar, *Pythian* VIII.95-97

I. εἴδωλα ἐν Ἅιδου

Pindar's, like the singer of epic's, is a poetry of beautification. Both sing the praises of man – a hero or a victor – and thereby confer glory on him.[1] While Pindar's epinicians, sung either at the games or at the victor's home town, conferred an immediate glow on the victor, in self-consciously alluding to the immortality of song they, like Homeric epos, confer an immortal glory on man.[2] The purpose of Homeric epos and the epinicians of Pindar meet in their endowing mankind with glory through

[1] On the encomiastic nature of Pindar's poems, see E. L. Bundy, *Studia Pindarica.* Berkeley: University of California Press (1986) 3; D. Steiner, *The Crown of Song: Metaphor in Pindar.* Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press (1986) 18ff.; N. Felson Rubin, "Pindar's Creation of Epinician Symbols," CW 74 (1980) 67-87, especially 68, 81, 82; L. Kurke, *The Traffic in Praise: Pindar and the Poetics of Social Economy.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press (1991). On epinician as the compressed origin of epic, see G. Nagy, "'Dream of a Shade': Refractions of Epic Vision in Pindar's Pythian 8 and Aeschylus' 'Seven Against Thebes,'" HSCP vol. 100 (2000) 97-118.

[2] The radiant gleam that comes from Zeus (ll. 96-97) is indeed Pindar's poem in praise of the victor. A μείλιχος αἰών is won by way of the song. Cf. *Pythian* X.55ff. where the poet hopes that "this music for his own crowns will make Hippocles even more admired by elders and peers..." (ἔλπομαι δ' Ἐφυραίων ὄπ' ἀμφὶ Πηνειὸν γλυκεῖαν προχεόντων ἐμὰν τὸν Ἱπποκλέαν ἔτι καὶ μᾶλλον σὺν ἀοιδαῖς ἕκατι στεφάνων θαητὸν ἐν ἅλιξι θησέμεν ἐν καὶ παλαιτέρος); likewise in *Olympian* X.98, Pindar says that his song *bathes* the heroic town with honey: μέλιτι εὐάνορα πόλιν καταβρέχων. *Isthmian* VI is, in its entirety, a libation; it pours grace over the victor's island (21: ῥαινέμεν εὐλογιαίς; 64: Χαρίτων ἄρδοντι καλλίστᾳ δρόσῳ). In *Olympian* I the words of Pindar promise Hieron the immortality of eternal song (100ff).

song.[3] When man competes on the battlefield or in the games he does so in pursuit of κλέος, the report of his successes.[4] The poet/singer, in turn, has control over the fate of man, for the diffusion of man's glory, his κλέος and indeed his memory is the poet/singer's task.[5]

When man competes, whether on the battlefield or in the games, he shows himself at his most human. Competition pushes the upper limits of the human where we show our excellence and virtue. In competition, man strives to be the best and on the battlefield being the best means besting your enemy. It is no surprise, then, that on the occasion of competition Pindar would ask the question, "what is someone/anyone?" Or, "what is man?" Pindar's question marks his epinicians in the Homeric mold, for his choice of words reminds us of the sequence of Odysseus' adventures that presents the same question. Pindar asks, τί δέ τις; τί δ' οὔ τις; an echo of Odysseus' word-play on the Cyclops' island. Calling himself "no-one," Odysseus gives himself room to play on the dual possibilities for creating a negative in his language. He is at once οὔ τις and μή τις. The play of words underlines man's (or at least Odysseus') wily craftiness

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[3] Cf. G. Nagy, *The Best of the Achaeans*, revised edition. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press (1999), especially chapters 1 and 12; G. Nagy, "Early Greeks Views of Poets and Poetry" in *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, G. A. Kennedy, ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press (1989) 1-77.

[4] Funeral games, like those for Patroclus in *Iliad* XXIII, confer a double κλέος on the participants and also on the dead who will be remembered when the prizes taken home have stories told about them, or sung. On prizes specific to funeral games, cf. J. Redfield (1994) 204ff.

[5] Thus the invocation to the Muses whose function, as daughter of Memory, is to remind the poet of a hero's exploits; cf. M. Detienne, *Les Maitres de verité dans la Grèce archaïque*. Paris: Agora Pocket (1994, paperback edition; originally published by Maspero (1967)), especially pp. 49-70; translated into English by Janet Lloyd as *The Masters of Truth in Archaic Greece*. New York: Zone Books (1996).

while hinting at what may attend such human cunning: self-cancellation.[6]

Pindar's answer to his question, σκιᾶς ὄναρ ἄνθρωπος, echoes yet another of Odysseus' adventures, this time the voyager's visit to the edges of the underworld where the dead who come up to meet him are likened to both a shadow and a dream. Predicating man himself, ἄνθρωπος, not just a shadow *or* a dream separately, but calling him the dream of a shadow, and rather than likening his ψυχή to one or the other, Pindar here goes one step further than Homer in describing mortal man. If a shadow is merely a faint reflection of a thing itself, a dream of that shadow is thus twice removed from the thing itself. Moreover, a shadow is in need of light in order to exist; the shadow cannot be on its own; it is in need of the αἴγλα διόσδοτος and λαμρὸν φὲγγος that the gods grant through victory and the poet's song. A dream, too, is something in need of light; it is something that comes out of darkness.[7] Dreams, in conjuring up things unseen, unseeable, perhaps even unthinkable, provide a link between the rational and irrational in man.[8] Dreams link man to the beyond, the divine. Pindar seems to suggest that not only the sweetness of man's life but also his very

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[6] Cf. *Iliad* XXIII, where Nestor encourages his son Antilochus before the race, telling him to use the advantage of his μῆτις to make up for the inferiority of his horses. Nestor here equates μῆτις with κέρδη (here, tricks), to win the day; cf. M. Detienne and J.-P. Vernant, *Cunning Intelligence in Greek Culture and Society*, trans. Janet Lloyd. Chicago: University of Chicago Press (1991), especially chapter 1, "Antilochus' Race." It is not certain that tragic poets such as Sophocles make the same equation since the κέρδη gained through μῆτις in his plays are tinged with dark underpinnings; cf. Odysseus' and Neoptolemus' in *Philoctetes*, 111-112 and Orestes' in *Electra*, 61.

[7] It is interesting to note that the Greeks never "had" dreams, the way we do. In Greek one always "sees" a dream: ὄναρ ἰδεῖν, ἐνύπνιον ἰδεῖν, cf. E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational.* Berkeley: University of California Press (1951) 105. See chapters 3 & 4 on sight and blindness in Sophoclean tragedy.

[8] Cf. Dodds (1951): The dream world is, for mortal men, "the sole experience in which they escape the offensive and incomprehensible bondage of time and space" (102). Recall other dreams in Greek poetry: Oedipus' and Clytemnestra's in tragedy; Penelope's and Achilles' in epic, etc.

existence is dependent upon the gods, via the poets. Pindar's epinician offers us a condensed group of images meant to describe man, and does so while both pointing to epic and tragic language and alluding to the poet's own power in making images of man. Later in this chapter, we will see that dreams and shadows that are the souls of men in Homeric epic also point to man's own imagination and creative powers.[9]

Before he even asks the question "what is someone," Pindar offers an answer with the very first word of this final epode: ἐπάμεροι, creatures of a day. Pindar's opening word tells us exactly what man is. Man is subject to the cosmic forces that define night and day.[10] Men are not gods. This dayness of man is already clear in Homer where ἦμαρ, 'day,' is more often than not 'the fated day' when a man is shown for what he is, a mortal and finally a dead one.[11] Man's life may be sweetened by the gods, but even with god-given radiance man is still mortal and constrained to the limits

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[9] Sophocles shares Pindar's and Homer's language describing man in fragment 13 (Pearson): "Man is but a breath and shadow," πνεῦμα καὶ σκία. Cf. Sophocles, *Philoctetes*, 945-46 where Philoctetes uses the same language to describe himself. He says that Neoptolemus and Odyssseus, thinking they have captured a strong living man, don't know that their catch is a corpse, a shadow of smoke, or rather an image: κοὐκ οἶδ' ἐναίρων νεκρόν, ἢ καπνοῦ σκιάν / εἴδωλον ἄλλως; cf. *Oedipus at Colonus*, 109-110: οἰκτίρατ' ἀνδρὸς Οἰδίπου τόδ' ἄθλιον / εἴδωλον; see chapter 3.

[10] Cf. Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound*, 82-83 where Kratos says to Prometheus: ἐνταῦθα νῦν ὕβριζε καὶ θεῶν γέρα / συλῶν ἐφημέροισι προστίθει. See also S. Benardete, "On the Crimes and Arts of Prometheus," *Rheinisches Museum fürPhilologie* 107, no. 2 (1964) 126-39. In his first line in Aristophanes' *Clouds*, Socrates asks Strepseides, τί με καλεῖς ὦ 'φήμερε; "why do you call me, creature of a day?" (223). In *Iliad* XXI.461ff Apollo, answering Poseidon's urge to join the battle, declines to fight and suggests instead to stop the fight among the gods altogether; why should gods fight on behalf of men who are as short lived as leaves, flourishing, growing warm with life and then fading away in death? At *Odyssey* xxviii.130ff. Odysseus calls man the most helpless of all creatures that creep on earth since he goes about his life thinking he'll never suffer while he is strong. But what the gods bring upon him against his wishes he must endure. The mind of earth-dwelling men is ἐπ' ἦμαρ, of the day, wheresoever the father of gods and men should lead it.

[11] ἦμαρ as 'fated day' in Homer's *Iliad*: VI.455, 463; VIII.72; IX.251, 593; XI.484, 587; XIII.514; XV.375, 613; XVI.831, 836; XVII.511, 615; XIX.294, 409; XXI.57, 100, 374; XXII.212, "the fate experienced by the individual, not the daylight universally shared," R. B. Onians, *The Origins of European Thought*. Cambridge, UK & New York: Cambridge University Press (1951) 414.

of his lifetime, his αἰών.[12] The shadow of death hovers over human life and the ephemeral beauty of victory. The only immortality a human can know is that of song.[13]

Pindar's definition of man pointing back to Homer's *Odyssey* alludes to the sequence of Odysseus' adventures that investigate the look and the shape or εἶδος of man: his travels from the Cyclops' island, to Circe's, and then to Hades' gates. Alluding first to Odysseus' encounter with Polyphemus and then to his journey to the edges of the known world, Pindar collapses the Homeric sequence that includes Circe's palace into two alternatives. We recall that on the Cyclops' island Odyssseus calls himself no-one (οὔτις) when asked his name by Polyphemus.[14] But the Cylcops' own friends reveal Odysseus' true nature in the formulation of their questions – ἦ **μή τις** σευ μῆλα βροτῶν ἀέκοντος ἐλαύνει / ἦ **μή τις** σ' αὐτὸν κτείνει δόλῳ ἠὲ βίηφιν, "surely no-one of mortals is driving your sheep away against your will? Surely no-one is killing you by trickery or by force?"[15] – and their conditional, εἰ μὲν δὴ **μή τις** σε βιάζεται οἶον ἐόντα, "if no-one uses violence against you since you are alone..."[16] As the man (or name, as here) in question himself explains shortly thereafter, his name

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[12] Cf. Chantraine (1968) on αἰών, - ῶνος, αἰει: first sense is that of "vital force" akin to ψυχή in Homer. See also Onians (1951) 200ff. on αἰών as something immortal and, like the ψυχή, something that leaves man when he dies.

[13] Each of the elements in Pindar's question – τί δέ τις; τί δ' οὔ τις; – leans forward or back for its accent. Humanness is ever in need of something else for its definition.

[14] *Odyssey* ix.366.

[15] *Odyssey* ix.405-406.

[16] *Odyssey* ix.410. This is the only case in Homer where a protasis in the indicative with μή precedes the apodosis, cf. P. Chantraine, *Grammaire homérique*. Paris: Klincksieck (1953) 2, 333-34.

reveals his crafty mind: ὡς ὄνομ' ἐξαπάτησεν ἐμον καὶ **μῆτις** ἀμύμων, "since my name and my blameless cunning tricked him."[17] On the Cyclops' island man is no-one but all crafty intelligence or mind.[18] In Odysseus' Hades, the souls of the dead are mindless but have shape or form: only Tiresias has νοῦς[19] and the souls themselves are called ἀφραδέες, senseless,[20] while their shape is perceivable; they are recognizable images, like shadows or dreams. The souls of the dead in Odysseus' Hades, as images of named persons, are all that the hero denied himself on the Cyclops' island when he cleverly called himself οὔ τις using his μῆτις.[21]

On Circe's island Odysseus' companions undergo the contra-positive of the shades in Hades: they lose their shape but retain their mind: οἱ δὲ συῶν μὲν ἔχον κεφαλὰς φωνήν τε τρίχας τε / καὶ δέμας, αὐτὰρ νοῦς ἦν ἔμπεδος ὡς τὸ πάρος περ, "And they had the head, voice, hair and body of pigs, but the mind was steadfast just as it had been before."[22] Only Hermes' antidote of the moly keeps Odysseus complete with mind and shape on Circe's island. The moly is hard for men to

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[17] *Odyssey* ix.414.

[18] Odysseus is the unnamed man from the very first word of the poem, ἄνδρα, until line 21 when he is finally named, first only obliquely in the dative, 'Οδυσῆι, then finally in the nominative at line 57. On μῆτις, cf. M. Detienne and J.-P. Vernant (1991). It is interesting to note that Odysseus' cleverness, his μῆτις or mind, is only revealed here in *Odyssey* xi through a question or hypothesis; it is revealed only through indirection and irregularity; cf. S. Benardete (1999) 78.

[19] *Odyssey* x.494.

[20] *Odyssey* xi.476.

[21] Making the Cylcops' island Odysseus' self-made Hades?

[22] *Odyssey* x.239-240.

dig up, but Hermes, a god, does so easily and reveals its physis to Odysseus, who gains the knowledge that the root and flower of the moly belong together, regardless of their differences in colors (their outsides). This knowledge saves Odysseus from the separation of his mind from his body, as Circe tells him, σοὶ δέ τις ἐνστήθεσσιν ἀκήλητος νόος ἐστίν, "there is in your breast a mind that does not admit of enchantment."[23] With the moly Odysseus learns that his having both mind and shape together make him a living, mortal human.[24] Schematically put, we witness in the *Odyssey* the cycle:

Cyclops' Island: no-one / mind only → **Moly**: body and mind ← → **Circe's Island**: non-human shape / human mind → **Hades**: human shape or form only / no mind.

The cycle leading up to Hades in Homer's *Odyssey* reveals different parts of human mortality. Our man Odysseus, faced with the giant Cyclops, is a name-less, yet crafty trickster of words. He creates his own existence by way of words (recall, Odysseus is telling his own story, singing his own tale, as it were, in this part of the poem). At the edge of Hades' halls, Odysseus does the same for others: he sees images, mere forms of mindless dead mortals. They exist only by way of Odysseus' crafty words. In between Hades and the Cyclops' island, Odysseus witnesses an alternative, yet still incomplete,

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[23] *Odyssey* x.329. The moly here reminds us of the Promethean fire in Hesiod, hidden as it is in the narthex. But the fire is hidden from the gods for men, whereas the moly is hidden from men by the gods for one man.

[24] Circe must also know this as, unlike Calyspo, while she wants Odysseus for her husband she does not offer him immortality.

vision of human mortality and is given by the gods an antidote that will keep him completely human, outside and inside, form and mind, while his comrades suffer a metamorphosis from their human εἶδος. Pindar's allusions collapse this Homeric sequence. Pindar's ἐπάμεροι lead him to the question τί δέ τις; τί δ' οὔ τις; and to his answer, σκιᾶς ὄναρ ἄνθρωπος. In alluding to Odysseus' adventures on the Cyclops' island and at Hades' gates, Pindar makes Circe disappear, or hides her like the god-given moly that saves Odysseus from losing his form on her island and perhaps suggests that the poet plays the role of the moly: with the gods' help, the poet grants man his human form, his εἶδος, in the images, or εἴδωλα, he makes of man in singing his name or κλέος.

Like the fleeting moment of victory Pindar showers on an Aeginetan victor at the Delphic games, his lines grant us a brief glimpse at the question that is at the heart of Homer's and Sophocles' poetry: what is the εἶδος of man?[25] Pindar's lyrics reveal poetry's inclination to define the human by revealing his εἶδος, an inclination rooted in Homeric epic that continues to this day in the work of Susan Stewart and Allen Grossman. Homer and Pindar both ground their definitions of the human in image, form, something seeable, even when no longer physically there, recognizable even in dreams, the dark, and Hades.

Asking after the εἶδος of man is to ask after a difference, a lower and an upper limit: what is man in relation to animal? And what is he in relation to the gods? What

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[25] Cf. The Ode on Man in *Antigone*; the riddle of the sphinx in *Oedipus Tyrannus*; Oedipus' question to Ismene in *Oedipus at Colonus*.

is particular about poetry's response to this query, as opposed to that of science or philosophy? Do Oedipus' words ring true when he poses the possibility of his being a man only when dead?[26] And what does all this have to do with Hades? How does a descent to Homer's and Odysseus' Hades clarify this question? This chapter begins to answer these questions. Homer's Hades, to which nearly all subsequent talk of the afterlife in Greece reacts, is *the* distinguishing mark of the human εἶδος. But before arriving in Homer's Hades, I take a detour via Plato's *Cratylus* where the nature of this invisible god is questioned through a discussion of names. We will find in Plato's dialogue one attempt to rehabilitate Homer's tales of the invisible Hades.

The second half of this chapter investigates the poetic invention of Hades in Homer. Homer invents Hades to better color the images, or εἴδωλα, he makes of the human, whether that human be an Achilles, an Agamemnon, Odysseus or Anticleia. Philosophy and history are unable to give a picture, a form or image, of Hades. Only through poetry's beautification and the poets' images, I will show, does Hades come into man's vision and the human into focus. But first the detour.

II. Naming the gods

Investigating the meaning behind a name, or rather, whether there *is* meaning in a name, the Socrates of Plato's *Cratylus* hesitatingly brings the names of the gods to bear on the argument Hermogenes has invited him to settle. Cratylus has claimed that names are natural. That is to say, a name reflects the nature of the thing named and is

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[26] *Oedipus at Colonus* 393: ὅτ' οὐκέτ' εἰμί, τηνικαῦτ' ἄρ' εἴμ' ἀνήρ;

not merely whatever someone happens to call something. Moreover, the rightness of a name is the same, by nature, for everyone, both Greeks and foreigners. Hermogenes says to Socrates:

> Κρατύλος φησὶν ὅδε, ὦ Σώκρατες, ὀνόματος ὀρθότητα εἶναι ἑκάστῳ τῶν ὄντων φύσει πεφυκυῖαν, καὶ οὐ τοῦτο εἶναι ὄνομα ὃ ἄν τινες συνθέμενοι καλεῖν καλῶσι, τῆς αὐτῶν φωνῆς μόριον ἐπιφθεγγόμενοι, ἀλλὰ ὀρθότητά τινα τῶν ὀνομάτων πεφυκέναι καὶ Ἕλλησι καὶ βαρβάροις τὴν αὐτὴν ἅπασιν.
>
> Well Socrates, Cratylus says that each character of the things which are has a correctness of name that is naturally born of it; and that whatever some men decide to call something is not a name, voicing a part of their sound; but that a certain correctness of names is naturally born and is the same for both Greeks and foreigners.
>
> Plato, *Cratylus* 383a4-b2

Hermogenes is puzzled by Cratylus' claim; or rather, he is stung by it, for while Cratylus says that both he himself and Socrates are truly named (εἰ αὐτῷ Κρατύλος τῇ ἀληθεῖα ὄνομα), he claims, at the same time, that Hermogenes is not truly named: "Hermogenes" does not accurately represent the man Hermogenes. Hermogenes thereby invites Socrates to join in their conversation, hoping Socrates will prove or disprove Cratylus' argument. The *Cratylus*, then, turns out to be a dialogue with the purpose of explaining a mean joke about names and naming.

In the midst of the explanation, and after already having brought the name of the father of men and gods, Zeus, to bear on the argument, Socrates introduces that god's co-regents of the known world into the discussion: "Let's talk about Zeus' brothers now, Poseidon and Pluto, whether we call him Pluto or his other name" (τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς δὴ αὐτοῦ λέγωμεν, τόν Ποσειδῶ καὶ τὸν Πλούτωνα καὶ τὸ ἕτερον

ὄνομα ὃ ὀνομάζουσιν αὐτόν).[27] Among the gods' names that Socrates considers, Pluto's is the first whose meaning seems clearly visible.[28] 'Pluto' means 'wealth.' Yet another name for Pluto remains in the dark. Pluto, Socrates tells us, is called 'Pluto' for two reasons: fear and relief from fear. Why do the many fear his other name, the name representing what stays below the earth? They fear Hades because they take his name to mean "the unseen," "the invisible," τὸ ἀιδές.[29] Fearing what they cannot see, the many name the god for what they can see: the earth's yield. Pluto is the source of the wealth (τὴν τοῦ πλοῦτος δόσιν) that comes to us out of the earth from below, that dark, hidden, invisible beyond. Wealth seems to offer a consolation and protection over and against what cannot be seen, what is unknown, and what ultimately awaits, thus what is most feared.

If the Socratic dialogues are a relatively accurate representation of what was on the minds and tongues of citizens in fifth-century Athens (Agathon's theatrical triumph, for example, the obsession with etymology and larger questions such as "what is justice?", "what is the good?"),[30] then it seems that popular wisdom of the time took the name of the god of the dead as an object of fear (φοβούμενοι). But, Socrates continues, they are mistaken in their fear. They mistake the meaning, or the power, of "Hades" and

[27] Plato, *Cratylus* 402d7-9.

[28] Other gods have names that cover over some frightening aspect of their divinity, like Apollo and Persephone; *Cratylus* 404c4-e.

[29] Plato, *Cratylus* 403a6.

[30] Cf. Glaucon's remark in *Republic* II about the omnipresence of arguments *against* justice, 358c; Aristophanes' putting on stage an agon between the just and the unjust argument in his *Clouds*; the discussion in book X of Plato's *Laws*, of the Presocratic cosmological teaching having been picked up by the Sophists and applied to the human and political things.

so their fear is unwarranted: πολλαχῃ ἔμοιγε δοκοῦσιν ἄνθρωποί διημαρτηκέναι περὶ τούτου τοῦ θεοῦ τῆς δυνάμεως καὶ φοβεῖσθαι αὐτὸν οὐκ ἄξιον.[31] The δύναμις of Hades is Hades' δύναμις. The meaning of Hades is the power of Hades.[32] The many fear Hades for two reasons: being and time. They fear Hades because once we die we are there, ἐκεῖ, forever, ἀεὶ, and because the soul, stripped of body, goes there to him, παρ' ἐκεῖνον.[33] The unmasked soul dwells in eternity in Hades. Being without a body is as terrifying as not being. In an attempt to tame the fear inspired by the invisible god, Socrates proposes an argument that will bring Hades to light and make the real power of the god manifest.

How will Socrates convince his interlocutor, Hermogenes, to put aside his fear of the invisible? Hermogenes is an uncomplicated interlocutor, and Socrates easily gets him to agree that desire (ἐπιθυμία) is certainly stronger than force (ἀνάγκη). Therefore, if despite their desire to do so men are unable to escape Hades, Hades must be holding men by appealing to their desire rather than by force or necessity. If the greatest ἐπιθυμία or desire is to be near someone through whom one thinks he will

[31] Plato, *Cratylus* 403b2-4.

[32] In Homer and early poets δύναμις means "strength," "power" or "might," particularly "bodily strength." In prose authors, the term has a more general sense of "power" or "ability" to do something, "capacity." Δύναμις can also mean the "force" or "meaning" of a word, as Socrates used it earlier in the dialogue at 394b.

[33] Cf. S. Benardete, "On Plato's *Cratylus*" in *The Argument of the Action.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press (2000) for the distinct meanings of ἐκεῖ and παρ' ἐκεῖνον in this passage: "Hades is both a place and a god. As a place, Hades is where we go as ourselves; as a god (ἐκεῖνον), Hades is he to whom soul alone goes off. Not to be here is as terrifying as to be without body. Our attachment to our place in this world and our own bodies is so strong that not even Hades, who seems preferable to annihilation, can console; what consoles is wealth. Wealth gives meaning to death." (159) I think the use of pronouns in this passage speaks loudly of the impossibility of naming the place and the god and marks a belief in the power of words, their real efficacy. If one were to pronounce the word "Hades" one would bring him too close. Who wants the god of a frightening underworld nearby?

become a better man, then Hades must be a perfect sophist and a great benefactor to those below. Yet on the other hand, he must be a philosopher because he doesn't wish to be with embodied men, but rather only with souls that are clean and clear of the body's ills and desires (καὶ τὸ αὖ μὴ ἐθέλειν συνεῖναι τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἔχουσι τὰ σώματα, ἀλλὰ τοτε συγγίγνεσθαι, ἐπειδὰν ἡ ψυχὴ καθαρὰ ᾖ πάντων τῶν περὶ τὸ σῶμα κακῶν καὶ ἐπιθυμιῶν).[34] After Hermogenes agrees to Socrtates' new description of Hades, Socrates then concludes that the name "Hades" more likely derives not from "the unseen," τοῦ ἀιδοῦς, but from "knowing all beautiful things," τοῦ πάντα τὰ καλὰ εἰδέναι.[35]

Turning the god's name inside out, Socrates exchanges one etymological explanation for another. We fear what we cannot see because we cannot know it. Man's tragic position is that he is not divine, that he does not have foresight or foreknowledge.[36] If we re-read Hades "the unseen," we would sooner read "the

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[34] Ibid 403e7-404a2.

[35] Ibid 404b1-4.

[36] Oedipus is perhaps the classic example. He blindly pursues the search for his identity and finally finding it, he blinds himself. He is "Oedipus who knows nothing" (ὁ μηδὲν εἰδὼς Οἰδίπους, Sophocles, *Oedipus Tyrannus*, 397); cf. J.-J. Goux, *Oedipous Philosophe.* Paris: Aubier (1990), translated into English by C. Porter under the title *Oedipous Philosopher.* Stanford: Stanford University Press (1993). On tragic blindness, cf. B. Knox, *The Heroic Temper: Studies in Sophoclean Tragedy.* Berkeley: University of California Press (1964), especially chapters 1 & 2; R. P. Winnington-Ingram, *Sophocles: An Interpretation.* Cambridge, UK & New York: Cambridge University Press (1980), especially chapter 13; J.-P. Vernant "Tensions and Ambiguities in Greek Tragedy" in *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece.* J.-P. Vernant and P. Vidal-Naquet (translated by Janet Lloyd). New York: Zone Books (1990) 29-48; S. Goldhill, *Reading Greek Tragedy.* Cambridge, UK and New York: Cambridge University Press (1986) especially chapter 8; R. E. Doyle, *Até, its Use and Meaning: A Study in the Greek Poetic Tradition from Homer to Euripides.* New York: Fordham University Press (1984). See also C. Whitman, *Sophocles: A Study of Heroic Humanism.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press (1966) and C. M. Bowra, *Sophoclean Tragedy.* Oxford: Oxford University Press (1944).

unknown" than "the one who knows all beautiful things." Socrates must produce a rather long-winded argument to tear us from the linguistic connection of ὁράω and οἶδα.[37]

Athena is the only other god who is said, in this discussion, to have two names. But unlike Hades she is known as and called by both "Pallas" and "Athena" while the name "Hades" remains unspoken and hidden behind the mask of Pluto. Likewise, modifications have been made to the original names of Apollo and Persephone to hide the terror of their significance. People these days, says Socrates, put more stock in euphony than in truth. The beautiful sounding name hides the reality of the terror. Beauty and terror go together more readily than beauty and truth. The beautiful Olympians inspire fear and so Socrates introduces the discussion of their names with a disclaimer that he knows nothing of them – placing their truthfulness under a question mark – and hastens to exit the topic: "Let's leave the subject of the gods because it frightens me to talk about them."[38] While we may talk or make arguments to try and assuage our fear of the gods, the terror and awe they inspire remains vivid and all too real.

Hades is the invisible god, the hidden god. He is hidden and he hides men when

[37] These two verbs borrow from each other to complete the verbal set (ὁράω, ὄψομαι, εἶδον, ἑόρακα, ἑώραμαι, ὤφθην) which consists of forms built on the stems (perhaps) ὀρ- and -ιδ-. The (assumed) verb εἴδω shows no present active and rather takes its presents forms from ὁράω, " I see." But in the perfect it has the form οἶδα, whose meaning is present in tense: "I know." "To have seen" in Greek means "to know." Knowledge seems to derive from visual perception. Hades' name contains the stem -ιδ- "to see" (or more properly, ϝιδ, whence we get Latin vid- and later our English video, vision etc.) with the addition of α-privative, the negative prefix (cf. Chantraine, *Dictionnaire Etymologique de la Langue Grecque*, ad loc). Thus his name can mean "the unseen" or "the unknown," two meanings very closely aligned when we think of real life experience.

[38] Plato, *Cratylus* 407d6-7.

they die, making them invisible to living men.[39] Socrates attempts to turn the commonly held fear of the hidden or unseen into knowledge. But by the end of the dialogue we learn that knowledge is not to be found merely in a name. Things must be investigated courageously in order to be understood. "No one with understanding will commit himself and the cultivation of his soul to names," (οὐδὲ πάνυ νοῦν ἔχοντας ἀνθρώπου ἐπιτρέψαντα ὀνόμασιν αὐτὸν καὶ τὴν αὐτοῦ ψυχὴν θεραπεύειν), Socrates tells Cratylus before sending him on his way into the country, guided by Hermogenes.[40] After discussing the possibility of the hidden meaning behind a name, Socrates sends Cratylus off to an unnamed place, εἰς ἀγρόν, with a son of Hermes as guide.[41] Thus Socrates at once proves Cratylus' original claim that names are by nature and disproves his joke. Names are transparent and Hermogenes is indeed rightly named.[42]

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[39] In Hesiod's *Works and Days* when the bronze age of men go to the broad house of Hades they are νώνυμοι (the consensus of the codices) or νώνυμνοι (Solmsen's reading). They are nameless or unsung. In either case they no longer exist in the memory of the living if they are nameless or songless; to be unsung when dead is to be nameless, forgotten.

[40] Plato, *Cratylus* 440c3-5

[41] ἀγρός is, properly speaking, uncultivated land, the wild, untamed space outside the limits of the city. Cf. Chantraine on ἀγρός and C. P. Segal's Introduction to *Tragedy and Civilization: An Interpretation of Sophocles.* Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press (1981) 1.

[42] Athena persuades the Furies to acknowledge that there is a difference between who they are and what they are called in Aeschylus' *Eumenides*, 416-417, the first step in her instruction to them of the difference between their appearance and their reality. See A. L. Sommerstein's note on ἐπωνύμους (line 418) in his commentary on the play and also his Introduction, section 2, "Erinyes, Eumenides and Semnai" (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press (1989)). On Athena's persuasion see Winnington-Ingram (1988), Chapter 9. On the Erinyes and their connection to Ate in Homer see Dodds (1951) 7-18 and 40 ff. For the role of Athena's transformation of the Erinyes in Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, see F. Zeitlin's "The Dynamics of Misogyny: Myth and Mythmaking in Aeschylus's Oresteia," Arethusa 11 (1978) 149-84, reprinted in F. Zeitlin, *Playing the Other: Gender and Society in Classical Greek Literature.* Chicago: The University Chicago Press (1996) 87-119. On Athena's welcoming of the Erinyes into her city marking the goddess' ability to distinguish between facts and rights, see N. Loraux,

III. Hades

If we are not to trust in a name and if meaning is to be investigated beyond the name, then Hades is the paradigmatic name. The transparency of his name hides the opacity of its meaning. So, what or who is Hades? And what has he to do with Greek poetry? To state the obvious, Hades is a god. He shares the rule of the world with his brothers Zeus and Poseidon who, like Hades himself, are sons of Kronos. As Poseidon reminds Iris in the *Iliad*, three sons were born to Rhea from Kronos and between them they divided everything, each getting his allotted portion: Poseidon holds the gray sea, Hades the dark obscure regions and Zeus the broad heaven in the aether and clouds. Earth (γαῖα) and great Olympus are still held by all.[43]

Hades is a god who presides over a dark realm, a realm so obscure that in Homer it is nameless. Unlike his brothers who rule the salty sea and the vault of the sky, Hades' lot is murky darkness called either ζόφον ἠερόεντα or just merely "the house of Hades."[44] When men die they don't go to Hades, but rather to his home: εἰς Ἄιδου

The Children of Athena: Athenian Ideas about Citizenship and Division between the Sexes, C. Levine translator. Princeton: Princeton University Press (1933) 135, originally published as *Les enfants d'Athéna: Idées athéniennes sur la citoyenneté et la division des sexes.* Paris: Maspero (1981); see also S. Benardete, "The Furies of Aeschylus" in Bernadete (2000) 62-70.

[43] *Iliad* XV.187-193:
τρεῖς γάρ τ' ἐκ Κρόνου εἰμὲν ἀδελφεοί, οὓς τέκετο Ῥέα
Ζεὺς καὶ ἐγώ, τρίτατος δ' Ἀΐδης, ἐνέροισιν ἀνάσσων.
τριχθὰ δὲ πάντα δέδασται, ἕκαστος δ' ἔμμορε τιμῆς·
ἤτοι ἐγὼν ἔλαχον πολιὴν ἅλα ναιέμεν αἰεί
παλλομένων, Ἀΐδης δ' ἔλαχε ζόφον ἠερόεντα,
Ζεὺς δ' ἔλαχ' οὐρανὸν εὐρὺν ἐν αἰθέρι καὶ νεφέλῃσι·
γαῖα δ' ἔτι ξυνὴ πάντων καὶ μακρὸς Ὄλυμπος.

[44] "House of Hades": *Iliad* III.322; VII.131; XI.263; XIV.457; XVI.251; XXII.52, 482; XXIII.19, 179, 103; XXIV.246; *Odyssey* iv.834; ix.524; x.175, 491, 512, 564; xi.69, 150, 627; xii.21; xiv.208; xv.350; xx.208; xxiv.204, 264. "Gates of Hades": *Iliad* V.646; VIII.367; IX.312; XXIII.71, 74; *Odyssey*

or ἐν Ἄιδου δομοῖσιν but never εἰς Ἄιδην.[45] In the Homeric poems, Hades is thus exclusively the god. He is alternatively known as Aidoneus, but never as that other name which Socrates plays on. Wealth is no consolation to Homeric man facing death on the battlefield.[46]

Unlike other gods in Homer, Hades never receives sacrifice from men; that is to say, according to Homer, Hades has no cult, he is not worshipped. Man does not expect favors from Hades the way he may ask Apollo to remember his sacrifices when found face to face with an adversary on the battlefield. No one stands at the edge of Ocean to speak to the god whose realm is just beyond, the way Achilles stands at the water's edge to ask his goddess-mother's help. What would one ask of Hades? What does one ask a power that presides over the dead and the dark? Dare mortal man, knowing what awaits him, utter the god's name in rite?

Hades' realm is frightful not only to mortals but even to the gods. When Zeus calls a divine assembly in *Iliad* XX, asking the gods to enter the battlefield lest Achilles destroy everything, the gods arrive and raise such a clamor on the battlefield that the dark regions are at risk of exposure. Hades is afraid his realm may be revealed, his house which both mortals and the immortal gods hate:

ἔδεισεν δ' ὑπένερθεν ἄναξ ἐνέρων Ἀιδωνεύς
δείσας δ' ἐκ θρόνου ἆλτο καὶ ἴαχε, μή οἱ ὕπερθε

xi.277, 571; xiv.156. ζόφον ἠερόεντα: *Iliad* XII.240; XV.191; XXIII.51; *Odyssey* xi.57, 155; xiii.241. σμερδαλέα εὐώρεντα: *Iliad* XX.65.

45 For example: Homer, *Odyssey*: x.491, 502; xi.164, 211, 277, etc.

46 Nor to Sophoclean man or woman. See also the example of Cephalus in book one of Plato's *Republic* who sees wealth comforting the old age only of the decent and orderly man. The rest still fear all the tales of Hades they've heard.

γαῖαν ἀναρρήξειε Ποσειδάων ἐνοσίχθων
οἰκία δὲ θνητοῖσι καὶ ἀθανάτοισι φανείη
σμερδαλέα εὐρώεντα, τά τε στυγέουσι θεοί περ.

And he was afraid in the netherworld, Aidoneus lord of those below,
Afraid, he leapt from his seat and shouted lest the Earthshaker
Poseidon break open the earth above and his broad fearful house
appear to mortals and immortals, his house, which the gods especially
hate.

Iliad XX.61-65[47]

Despite the absence of his worship in the poetic tradition, one group of men was historically said to worship Hades. Describing Elis in his *Description of Greece*, Pausanias lists a precinct and temple to Hades in the region.[48] Just after describing the shrines of the two Aphrodites (Heavenly Aphrodite, Οὐρανία, has her shrine in the open air – ἐν ὑπαίθρῳ – while that of Common Aphrodite, Πάνδημος, is surrounded by a wall – ἐν θριγκῷ) with their statutes by Pheidias and Scopas, Pausanias changes to a new subject: ὁ δὲ ἱερὸς τοῦ Ἅιδου περίβολός τε καὶ ναός. The language is somewhat odd given Pausanias' habit of beginning descriptions with a predicate such as ἔστι δὲ or ἔχεται δὲ. Immediately breaking the sentence's syntax and inserting an explanatory clause directly following his subject, Pausanias further underscores the oddity of his subject. He explains, "for *indeed* the Eleans have an enclosure and shrine to Hades," replacing his habitual ἔστι δὲ with ἔστι γὰρ: ἔστι γὰρ δὴ Ἠλείοις καὶ

[47] When Odysseus' men have slaughtered the cattle of Helios, the sun god threatens to give his light to those in Hades if just recompense isn't paid (εἰ δέ μοι οὐ τίσουσι βοῶν ἐπιεικέ' ἀμοιβήν / δύσομαι εἰς 'Αίδαο καὶ ἐν νεκύεσσι φαείνω, xii.382-83) and Zeus swiftly assures him that he can continue to shine among mortals, for Zeus will see to justice (xii.385-88). Cf. XX.131: realizing that Apollo has stirred Aeneas to face Achilles (Aeneas born of Zeus' daughter, Achilles of the daughter of an older god (χερείονος)), Hera urges Athena and Poseidon to let Achilles know the gods are with him, lest his courage fail when he sees one of the gods but doesn't recognize him *as* a god: χαλεποὶ δὲ θεοὶ φαίνεσθαι ἐναργεῖς (Hard are the gods when they appear in motion).

[48] Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, 6.25.2.

῞Αιδου περίβολός τε καὶ ναός. The Eleans are the only men we know, says Pausanias, who worship Hades. His shrine is opened only once each year because, Pausanias presumes, men too only go down to Hades once (ὅτι οἶμαι καὶ ἀνθρώποις ἅπαξ ἡ κάθοδος ἡ ἐς τοῦ ῞Αιδου γίνεται). And even when it is opened, no one but the priest is allowed to enter.

Pausanias cites the *Iliad* when accounting for the reason behind the Elean worship of Hades; Hades came to their aid when Heracles and Athena attacked the Elean city of Pylus.[49] Such an alliance is likely, says Pausanias, if Poseidon was an ally of the Greeks in their attack on Troy. Following his explanation of Hades' honor at Elis, Pausanias says, "the Eleans also have a shrine to Chance" (τοῖς δὲ Ἠλείοις καὶ Τύχης ἐστὶν ἱερὸν).[50] Of the gods, the Eleans worship Dionysus with the greatest reverence (ἐν τοῖς μάλιστα Διόνυσον σέβουσιν Ἠλεῖοι) Pausanias tells us.[51] A foundation for Hades' cult is thus laid in Homeric poetry and this one group of mortals who worship the invisible god of an invisible realm reveres the god of the mask, wine, theater and mysteries above all. Do we have a hint here of a connection between the god of the theater and that of the underworld?

Hades exists, but just barely, in cult. We are not surprised, then, that when glancing through major works on Greek religion we rarely find a sustained discussion of Hades the way we do of his fellow Olympians; can we call Hades Olympian if he dwells

[49] *Iliad* V.395.

[50] Pausanias 6.25.4.

[51] 6.26.1.

below instead of on Olympus? Is Hades, properly speaking, even one of the Pantheon?[52] Other so-called lesser gods or powers of the dead and the lower world, the Chthonic gods, are given fuller discussion in modern scholarship than the god who presides over that realm. Hades seems to slip and disappear somewhere between the Olympian and Chthonic gods in the secondary literature, finding a clearer place in the poems of Homer. Let's turn our attention more closely now to those poems where Hades is first revealed to us, Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey.*

Hades is unveiled to us by the poets whose work consists of both poiesis and mimesis. Poets give us imitations and representations of things we already know, but they also sense what is not directly before the eyes and are, in a way, in touch with the beyond or the invisible. As an invisible realm outside the reach of ordinary senses (save exceptional beings like Odysseus or Heracles who are said to have died twice), Hades is most at home in poetry and is the natural realm of the poet. Why is that? Poetry, especially Homeric epic, is song in remembrance of the deeds of great men. Epic poetry, so long as it is sung (or read) is the living memory of the hero.[53] The gods

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[52] J. E. Harrison, *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press (1903); W. Burkert, *Greek Religion.* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press (1985). In the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, a poem whose narrative time lies in the ambiguous period after the beginning of Zeus' reign, when the order of the world (and the gods) is still changeable and Zeus' reign still shaky, the upper and lower realms are already distinct; only Hermes can cross to Hades. A ruse is needed for the breach that allows Hades to come and snatch Persephone, yet once closed the barrier is unbreachable. Demeter has no way of going to Hades to retrieve Persephone; cf. J. Strauss Clay, *The Politics of Olympus: Form and Meaning in the Major Homeric Hymns.* Princeton: Princeton University Press (1989) 212. When Zeus has called all the Olympians together, allowing them to join in the fray and fight at will, Hades is absent (*Iliad* XX); he is still "below" (ἐνέρων) and from there he springs up in fear of disclosure (XX.61-65). Nor is Hades said to be present (though Poseidon is the only one singled out as absent) at the council of the gods at the start of the *Odyssey* (i.22ff).

[53] Cf. G. Nagy (1999) especially Chapter 1 and note §3n2 therein.

contrive the lots of man such that the trials of heroes should be a subject of song: οἷσιν ἐπὶ Ζεὺς θῆκε κακὸν μορον, ὡς καὶ ὀπίσσω / ἀνθρώποισι πελώμεθ' ἀοίδιμοι ἐσσομένοισι.[54] And as Jasper Griffin tells us, "the hero dies, not so much for his own glory, not even so much for his friends, as for the glory of song, which explains to a spellbound audience the greatness and fragility of the life of man."[55] Homeric poetry, then, is about its hearers/readers as much as it is about the men it sings. Griffin's remark holds close to Grossman's formulation of the function of poetry: to make human images present to one another. Homeric epic does so by revealing Hades, a place where the dead can go when they are no longer adventuring. Hades keeps humans present in their absence.

IV. Hades in Homer

That death comprises most of the narrative of the *Iliad* is neither a new nor forgotten observation.[56] In *Homer on Life and Death*, Griffin aims to turn readers of Homer from the borrowed languages of sociology and anthropology to the text itself. Reading the poetry freed from imported critical models, Griffin reformulates Marg's thesis of the *Iliad* and finds that "the great theme of the *Iliad* is heroic life and death."[57]

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[54] *Iliad* VI.357-58.

[55] J. Griffin, *Homer on Life and Death.* Oxford: Clarendon Press (1980) 102. See also J. Redfield (1994) 223.

[56] Cf. Susan Sontag's recent reference to death in the *Iliad*, particularly to death in war, in her discussion of the transformative power of narrative in comparison to that of photography in "Looking at War" in The New Yorker (December 9, 2002) 82-98.

[57] Marg had said that the *Iliad* is a poem about death rather than about fighting, "Zur Eigenart der Odyssee" in Antike und Abendland 18 (1973) 1-14 (cited in Griffin (1980) 138).

If the poem's main theme is life and death, the significance of death and thus the definition of man, "it is in keeping that whole books of the epic are dominated by death in its most tangible and least metaphorical form: the vital importance of the corpse and its treatment," continues Griffin.[58]

While Griffin criticizes the formulaic or thematic approach to the Homeric poems for having shed little light on the poems themselves – despite its impressive findings in the technical aspects of epic composition – his proposition of the poem's subject being life and death is hardly controversial. In fact, taking his cue from Millman Parry's groundbreaking work on the formulaic and thematic composition of the Homeric poems, Charles Segal illustrates the creative and inventive side of artful composition within the confines of epos, demonstrating how "through a single theme, Homer manipulates formulas for special effects and through contrast and parallels between analogous scenes enlarges the range and significance of the action."[59] And lo and behold, Segal's choice theme is the mutilation of the corpse, as it's "deeply embedded in the epic tradition."[60] Moreover, Segal adds, as the central axis of the narrative from Patroclus' death to Achilles' revenge, the theme of the mutilation of the corpse has "a wider range of possible variation and a more integral relation to the fundamental

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[58] Griffin (1980) 138.

[59] C. P. Segal, "The Theme of the Mutilation of the Corpse in the *Iliad*," Mnemosyne Supplementum XVII. Brill (1971). Cf. A. Parry, ed., *The Making of Homeric Verse: The Collected Papers of Millman Parry*. Oxford: Oxford University Press (1971). M. Parry on the formula (272): "a group of words which is regularly employed under the same metrical conditions to express a given essential idea." See also Nagy's Introduction to *Best of the Achaeans* (1979), especially 2-4 where the author argues for the thematic regulation of diction as opposed to the metrical.

[60] Segal (1971) 3.

meaning of the poem than subsidiary formulaic themes like arming or eating."[61] Segal's premise coincides with that of Griffin: the treatment of the corpse is *the* important theme giving meaning to Homer's *Iliad.*

James Redfield too finds the motif of the treatment of the corpse central to understanding the *Iliad.* Discussing the funeral and the anti-funeral – Redfield's term for the mutilation of the corpse – in *Nature and Culture in the Iliad*, Redfield shows how the former reveals the nature of man while the latter reveals man's place in nature. The funeral shows man to be a social being among other men while the mutilation of the corpse reveals the precarious place of the human amid natural forces (water, storm) and beasts. Funerals in Homer, Redfield explains, are exclusively ceremonial rather than ritual: they are performed more for the living than for the dead.[62] As ceremonies, Homeric funerals are social because of Homeric culture's view of mortality. Funeral as ritual – or performed for the dead – presupposes the dead man is something and the funeral a guarantee for his happy afterlife and protection from beyond the grave for his survivors. A funeral performed for the living, on the other hand, reforms relations among the survivors, serving more purpose to the society that remains than for the departed. We might conclude that the Homeric soul, the ψυχή, is "a self that exists for

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[61] Ibid. On readings of other themes in the *Iliad*, see also B. Fenik, *Typical Battle Scenes in the Iliad: Studies in the Narrative Techniques of Homeric Battle Descriptions*, Hermes Einzelschriften 21, Weisbaden: F. Steiner (1968); D. S. Robertson, "The Food of Achilles," CR 54 (1940) 177-180; R. S. Shannon, *The Arms of Achilles and Homeric Compositional Technique*. Leiden: Brill (1975); J. I. Armstrong, "The Arming motif in the *Iliad*," AJP 79 (1958) 337-54.

[62] Redfield distinguishes between ritual, whose aim is to communicate with the beyond, and ceremony, which is performed for the living group and finds Homeric funerals ceremonies rather than rituals; see especially chapter 5: "Purification."

others, one aspect of the social soul."[63]

But as Redfield himself admits, a problem lurks behind this thesis: it "flouts an obvious fact of Homeric belief: that the psuche of the man continues to exist after his death."[64] An understanding of the psuche in Homer, Redfield argues, ought to be shaped by a careful interpretation of the Homeric funeral,[65] since psuchai don't wear their meaning on their faces. Redfield's chapter clearly describes the funeral in Homer's *Iliad* as an acculturation of the psuche, a way of keeping the man, though dead, from falling into the formlessness of nature, again in keeping with the idea that poetry's work (for Redfield's is a study of the funeral as presented in poetry) consists of making and keeping human images present to one another.

The souls of the dead in Homer exist only for others as we see in the funerals held for the living (more than for the dead), but also in the representations of the souls of the dead in *Odyssey* xi. There the shades of men exist and have form only in that they are seen both by their internal audience – Odysseus – and their external audience – we the readers and all who have ever read the epics or heard them performed. So, how does

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[63] Redfield (1994) 177.

[64] Ibid, 169.

[65] Redfield observes that the funeral releases the ψυχή by giving it a definite social status, that of 'departed.' This is the release the ψυχαὶ ask for in that interim between death and the funeral, as Patroclus to Achilles in *Iliad* XXIII and Elpenor to Odysseus in *Odyssey* xi. The ψυχή thus survives death "as a consequence of the fact that man dies not only organically but also socially, dies not only to nature but to culture." It has often been noted that the ψυχή is not spoken of in reference to living, acting men, but rather is mentioned only when a man dies or loses consciousness. At these moments his ψυχή leaves him. Redfield concludes that the ψυχή exists for the living survivors rather than for the dead hero from whom it escapes. When a hero dies, his ψυχή goes to Hades; when he faints it just leaves him and is never said to return. Redfield suggests that this is so "because unconsciousness, like death, is not an experience. When a man revives he 'comes to himself;' as long as he is unconscious he exists only for others," and thus concludes that "the psuche is a self that exists for others, one aspect of the social soul." (1994) 175-177.

the poet make these human images present to one another? What are these psuchai like and *how* are they in Homer's Hades?

V. The Homeric Invention of Hades

Homer creates Hades as a place for man to *be* when he is invisible to the living eye; by inventing Hades, Homer in effect keeps mortal man visible when he is invisible. Not surprisingly then, Homer describes the souls of the dead in Hades by way of likenesses, comparisons, and likenings to other things, since they are no longer the men who act and fight and win or lose. The poet's natural means are images, figures, similes and metaphor to describe and make more vivid mere fact or report.[66] A poet's likenesses point to the similarity between disparate things or the disparity between similar things, showing one thing in another. Homer's Hades is a place of images or representations of once living beings, likenesses to them, but not the being his or herself; we find there no men or objects capable of being grasped otherwise than by the eye, no αὐτός.[67] Moreover, Hades finds its image, or representation, only in poetry (art).[68]

As moderns reading Homer we, of course, stand at a different vantage point than the ancients. We read the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* with the tragic stage and its critics, both

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[66] On the simile in Homer, cf. P. J. N. Lee, *The Similes of the Iliad and the Odyssey Compared.* Melbourne: Melbourne University Press (1964); C. Moulton, "Similes in the Iliad," Hermes 102 (1974) 381-397; S. Nimis, *Narrative Semiotics in the Epic Tradition: The Simile.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press (1987).

[67] Save Heracles, see below.

[68] As a place of image, Hades may perhaps be equally suited to figural representation such as we find on Southern Italian pottery of the 4th century BC. These paintings, however, show us a place that we would be hard pressed to designate "Hades" if not for the names scrawled in the paint at the side of the figures. On these pots, Hades and Persephone sit in a temple-like structure while figures around them bring offerings or enact scenes of their adventures. Hades on these pots is not Homer's Hades of shadowy existence, actionless figures and awesome sights.

ancient and modern, already in view and thus perhaps read more than ancient audiences of Homeric epic did, seeing connections where they may not have yet existed. Indeed, our very *reading* and not seeing and hearing Greek poetry turns our experience of Greek poetry into something markedly different from Greeks of the 5th century.[69] Nevertheless, it is undisputed that tragedy follows in the tradition set forth in epos – picking up its themes and struggling with them in a new context, or simply overturning them – and that certain thoughts, concerns and beliefs were held diachronically in ancient Greece.[70]

How is Hades like the tragic stage? The figures Odysseus sees in Hades, the souls of dead men, are described in language that is both illustrative of and allusive to notions of theatricality and representation. Ancient critics put Homer and Sophocles in a common category, that of poetry, and in particular of mimetic poetry. That is to say, a common denominator between all poetry is that it is a representation or imitation, mimesis.[71] How does a poet go about representing or imitating, or more specifically,

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[69] On poetry as something seen and heard in ancient Greece, or more succinctly, on the importance of the performance of poetry and the performative aspects of Greek poetry, cf. B. Gentili, *Poetry and Its Public in Ancient Greece: From Homer to the fifth century.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press (1988), originally published as *Poesia e pubblico nella Grecia antica: da Omero al V secolo.* Rome: Laterza (1984); C. Calame, *Choruses of young women in ancient Greece: their morphology, religious role, and social functions.* Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield (1997), originally published as *Les chœurs des jeunes filles en Grèce archaïque.* Rome: Edizioni dell' Ateneo & Bizzarri (1997).

[70] On tragedy's debt to epic, cf. C. P. Segal, "Song, Ritual, and Commemoration in Early Greek Poetry and Tragedy," Oral Tradition 4/3 (1989) 330-359; S. Goldhill, *Reading Greek Tragedy.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press (1986); Vernant and Vidal-Naquet, *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece.* New York: Zone Books (1990).

[71] Aristotle, *Poetics* 1447a: ἐπιποιία δὴ καὶ ἡ τῆς τραγῳδίας ποίησις ἔτι δὲ κωμῳδία ... πᾶσαι τυγχάνουσαν οὖσαι μιμήσεις τό σύνολον, "Epic poetry and tragic poetry and comedy…all may be said to be imitations, generally speaking.

how does Homer make representations? He does so by describing, by bringing to light something otherwise dark or inexplicable; Hades, the invisible god of an invisible realm, unknowable but to those who die twice, is the poet's perfect subject, for he allows the poet to indulge in both mimesis, likening the invisible to things visible, and poiesis, the creation of something new. The poet describes by making likenesses and drawing comparisons and contrasts between similar and dissimilar things using various syntactic categories: the adverb ὡς, "as;" the adjective εἴκελον "similar," "like;" verbs such as ἔοικα "to be like;" or nouns such as εἴδωλον or εἴκων "image," "likeness."[72] He can also do so by way of poetic figures such as metaphor or simile.

One metaphor for the souls of the dead in Homer is ὄνειρος, or dream (xi.222), the same metaphor Pindar used in the epode at this chapter's start. In their intangibility, souls of the dead are as flitting as dreams, a connection we'll draw on later in chapter four. Dreams are an odd category of vision; we see them when our eyes are closed and our mind elsewhere. We can remember dreams but we cannot touch dreams; they remain in the realm of the imaginary. Εἴδωλον, also used to describe the psuchai of the dead, likewise highlights the visual aspect of dead souls, their very possession of shape, εἶδος, even if intangible.[73] Εἴδωλον comes from the noun εἶδος, "form," a noun

[72] As Vernant points out, in the archaic period – to which Homeric epos belongs – εἴδωλον and εἴκων do not have the distinct meanings they take on in classical and later Greek thought, cf. "Psuche: Simulacrum of the Body or Image of the Divine" in *Mortals and Immortals: Essays*, F. Zeitlin, translator. Princeton: Princeton University Press (1991) 186-192.

[73] Souls are εἴδωλα at xi.83, 213, 476, 602; xxiv.14; XXIII.72. The εἴδωλα I speak of here are the εἴδωλα of the dead and thus differ from (while they yet resemble) other εἴδωλα in Homer, such as the εἴδωλον Athena makes in the shape (δέμας) of a woman and sends to Penelope while she sleeps (*Odyssey* iv.796) or that of Aeneas that Apollo makes at *Iliad* V.449 to save the real Aeneas from Diomedes. Later on in the *Iliad* Apollo defends another Trojan with a similar trick, but this time *he* takes

derived from the verb εἴδομαι, which in turn is a member of that verbal family whose forms mean both "to see" and "to know."[74] It is thus fitting that while Odysseus always "sees" (ἴδον or εἶδον and their compounds) or recognizes (εἰσενόησα) those he meets at Hades', the shades there all "know," ἔγνω, him.[75] Throughout his travels, Odysseus meets new, unknown people who do not know him or recognize him, even if they were expecting him. In all these travels Odysseus is the storyteller, at times telling true tales, at others false.[76] At Hades' the inverse is true; Odysseus listens to stories; no one is expecting him, yet everyone knows him. Odysseus is most at home at Hades' gates; it is the one place where he hides neither in speech nor in dress.[77]

Heracles in Hades is a perfect example of the representational aspect of the realm. We could call Heracles the direct opposite of Tiresias in Hades. Tiresias' soul is said to have mind, νοῦς, and φρένες and thus is called nothing other than ψυχὴ or prophet. He is what he is. Heracles, on the other hand, is nothing like he appears to be

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on the appearance of Agenor instead of making a double: αὐτῷ γὰρ ἑκάεργος Ἀγήνορι πάντα ἐοικὼς / ἔστη πρόσθε ποδῶν...(*Iliad* XXI.599-600). This last "doubling" for protection is not called an εἴδωλον and thus may be classified among the thirty-four other cases in the Homeric poems when a god takes a mortal's identity. I owe these points to a talk by Maurizio Bettini, "Construire l'invisible ou le double dans la culture ancienne: les fantômes de la Grèce" presented to François Lissarague's seminar at the Centre Louis Gernet, Paris, 12 March 2003, and to Françoise Frontisi-Ducroux's interventions on that occasion.

[74] LSJ: ὁράω, ὄψομαι, εἶδον, ἑόρακα, ἑώραμαι, cf. note 37.

[75] Odysseus "sees" the souls of the dead: xi.55, 87, 235, 260, 266, 271, 281, 298, 306, 320, 326, 395, 568, 572, 576, 582, 593, 601. They "know" or "recognize" him: xi.91, 153, 390, 471, 615.

[76] Cf. Hesiod's Muses who know how to tell lies like truths, but also know how to tell the truth, when they so choose, *Theogony* 27-28: ἴδμεν ψεύδεα πολλὰ λέγειν ἐτύμοισιν ὁμοῖα· / ἴδμεν δ' εὖτ' ἐθέλωμεν, ἀληθέα γηρύσασθαι.

[77] Recall that Odysseus here is playing the poet as he sings his own tale before his hosts the Phaeacians.

and the poet tells us so in his grammar, syntax and word choice. Odysseus does not name the one he sees as "Heracles" as he says he saw Antiope or Chloris, nor does he say that he saw the soul of the person, as he says he saw the soul of Elpenor, of Tiresias, or of his mother.[78] Instead, Odysseus sees an abstract idea – might, βίη – and describes that abstract idea as 'Heraclean.' And not only did Odysseus perceive an abstract idea, he perceived something one step further removed, for he adds, in enjambment, that it was only the image, εἴδωλον, of this might that he saw and that the man himself sits among the gods. Odysseus says:

> τὸν δὲ μέτ' εἴσενόησα βίην Ἡρακλείην,
> εἴδωλον· αὐτὸς δὲ μετ' ἀθανάτοισι θεοῖσι
> τέρπεται ἐν θαλίῃς καὶ ἔχει καλλίσφυρον Ἥβην
> παῖδα Διὸς μεγάλοιο καὶ Ἥρης χρυσοπεδίλου.
>
> Next I perceived the Heraclean might
> the image; but the man himself among the immortal gods
> takes pleasure in the festivity and has beautiful-ankled Hebe
> child of great Zeus and golden-sandaled Hera.
> *Odyssey* xi.601-604

The other εἴδωλα in Hades are only image. Unlike Heracles, they aren't spoken of as αὐτός.[79] They exist only as ψυχὴ or εἴδωλα; they have no αὐτὸς elsewhere. Their presence is one only in absence, conjured by poetry or marked by their tombstone.[80]

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[78] Odysseus sees Chloris, Antiope and the other heroines: xi.235, 260, 266, 271, 281, 298, 305, 320, 326. The soul of Elpenor comes: xi.51; of Tiresias: xi.90; of Achilles: xi.84, 141.

[79] There is one other ψυχὴ in Homer that is spoken of in comparison to – or distinction from – 'himself', αὐτός: the soul of Patroclus in *Iliad* XXIII.66. Perhaps Plato has something like this in mind by beginning his dialogue on the immortality of the soul and the afterlife with αὐτός, cf. *Phaedo*, 57a1: αὐτός, ὦ Φαίδων, παρεγένου Σωκράτει ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ᾗ τὸ φάρμακον ἔπιεν ἐν τῷ δεσμωτηρίῳ, ἢ ἄλλου του ἤκουσας; "Were you yourself present, Phaedo, on the day Socrates drank the poison in prison, or did you hear it from someone else?"

[80] For a discussion of the psychological category of this "presence in absence" or the double, of

Heracles stands for the imaginary of Hades, of Hades as a place for images only, where the unreal is made to look real. The εἴδωλον of Heraclean might is further described in language we see throughout Hades; it is a "likeness." Heracles' image is "like" dark night, ὁ δ' ἐρεμνῇ νυκτὶ ἐοικώς,[81] and "like" forever shooting his arrows, αἰεὶ βαλέοντι ἐοικώς.[82] Other souls flee in terror before this image of Heraclean might, not realizing that what they see is not real, and thereby highlighting the emotional effect of likenesses.[83] So too Odysseus fears the images or likenesses of wild beasts and "struggles, battles, and human slaughter" depicted on Heracles' sword-belt. The image of the Heraclean might and the images on its baldric cannot be distinguished one from the other: the wondrous works, θέσκελα ἔργα, on Heracles' baldric cause Odysseus to wish that no such thing had ever been or would ever again be made. Images are made using craft, τέχνη, triply mentioned by crafty Odysseus here: μὴ **τεχνη**σάμενος μηδ' ἄλλο τι **τεχνή**σαιτο / ὃς κεῖνον τελαμῶνα ἑῇ ἐγκάτθετο **τέχνῃ**.[84] The sublimity

which the soul can be said to be a member, cf. J.-P. Vernant (1991). See also Redfield (1994) on the absence of a person made present by way of his σῆμα or burial mound, 180. A similar presence in absence is evident in the 'doubles' of living men. Never does a double meet with his or her original; when one is present the other is of necessity absent (M. Bettini, presentation at Centre Louis Gernet). See also A. Carson, *Economy of the Unlost.* Princeton: Princeton University Press (1999), chapter II "Visible Invisibles."

[81] *Odyssey* xi.606. This is a striking comparison. What does it mean to be like dark night? To a modern ear it seems to mean "to be invisible" or to be hidden, for a night that is dark covers everything in its darkness.

[82] *Odyssey* xi.608.

[83] *Odyssey* xi.605-606: ἀμφὶ δέ μιν κλαγγὴ νεκύων ἦν οἰωνῶν ὥς / πάντοσ' ἀτυζομένων; cf. xxiv.5-9 where the souls of the dead suitors are compared to bats on account of the sounds they make as Hermes leads them to Hades; and xi.43 where the θεσπεσίῃ ἰαχῇ of all the souls coming at once frighten Odysseus.

[84] *Odyssey* xi.613-614: "if only he hadn't crafted (it), or would that he never craft another one,

of crafted or made images is too much to bear.[85]

If Heracles is the paradigm of the unreality of a Hades full of images powerful enough to affect a viewer's emotions, the other shades Odysseus sees there further testify to Hades' preparation for the tragic stage, where living images – moving souls, as it were – are put before the eyes of the Athenian public. Again, a metaphor is employed: ἀμεηνηὰ κάρηνα νεκύων, the menos-less heads of corpses. As heads without menos, strength or the life force, the dead are not unlike the mask that a tragic actor would don for the stage.[86] A mask is just a dead shell that hangs lifeless on a wall or held by the actor before he brings a character to inhabit it just as the ἀμεηνηὰ κάρηνα of the dead cannot speak to their audience before a living man animates them, so to speak, with blood. Blood animates the menos-less heads, giving them force to speak and tell true things, νημερτέα.[87] They are given menos by a particularly human fluid: αἷμα.[88] The description of the war-loving dead warriors earlier in book eleven as

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whoever crafted the belt with his art."

[85] Especially when the images are of one's own recent suffering, cf. the example Herodotus gives of the audience's reaction to Phrynicus' *Sack of Miletus* and the poet's punishment for representing such images (vi.21).

[86] On μένος as the force of life, see N. Loraux, "Le corps vulnerable d'Arès" in Corps des dieux, C. Malamoud & J.-P. Vernant, eds., Paris: Gallimard (1986) 335-354. ἀμενηνός is used only once in the *Iliad*, when Ares complains to Zeus that the gods are subject to the blows of humans; Ares imagines himself beneath the blows of Diomedes, V.885-887 (Loraux (1986) 345). See also Redfield (1994) 171ff.

[87] *Odyssey* xi.96, 148. Tiresias and Anticlea are the only ones said to speak νημερτέα. The others tell of their origins (the women), or of their ends (Agamemnon) which, as something all mortals can speak of, may also be said to be true things.

[88] *Odyssey* xi.96, 98, 153, 228, 233, 390. The blood of the gods is ἄμβροτον αἷμα, *Iliad* V.339, 870.

βεβροτωμένα, gory, reminds us of the fluids specific to mortals.[89] As in the *Iliad*, here too βρότος is blood specific to the warrior and thus we hear it most often with the adjective αἱματόεντα.[90] It is the blood that pours from his wounds on the battlefield, the very wounds that distinguish him from the gods, from whose wounds pours ichor, the "immortal blood" of the gods.[91] Mortal fluids endow the empty heads, the images, with life, albeit a limited one.[92] The strengthless-ness of the heads of the dead in Hades supports an objective view of death as an experience of the living.[93] The living experience the dead as the absent ones whose face "haunts the memory of those who must live without him."[94] These heads or masks are in need of actors and audience.[95]

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[89] *Odyssey* xi.41.

[90] Finding a direct relation between θυμός (the mortal stuff of man, that which death destroys) and βρότος, the mortal stuff of man that pours from his wounds and dries on his flesh, Onians ((1951) 506) concludes that βρότος gore and βροτός, man, are in origin one and the same. Βροτός understood as 'mortal' or 'dead' naturally explains Homer's definition of βρότος as αἱματόεις. The gods do not have mortal αἷμα; they have only something that is called ἄμβροτον αἷμα, the ichor that pours from their wounds as from Aphrodite in *Iliad* V.339-40. The gods are only described by way of a negation of something mortal (i.e. with the α-privative of ἀθάνατοι or ἄμβροτον, etc.), cf. N. Loraux (1986) 354. Βρότος αἱματόεντα: *Iliad* VII.425, etc. Might this suggest that the definition of man and god are mutually dependent?

[91] In *Iliad* V we are given the classic definition between what flows from mortals as opposed to immortals. When Aphrodite is wounded by Diomedes 'immortal blood' or 'ichor' flows from the goddess' wounds: ῥέε δ' ἄμβροτον αἷμα θεοῖο / ἰχώρ οἷός πέρ τε ῥέει μακάρεσσι θεοῖσιν. V.339-340. See Loraux (1986) 350-51 on "le sang immortel."

[92] The strengthless heads, the souls in Hades, these ἀμενηνά κάρηνα, remind too of the masks in scenes painted on pots of actors holding their empty, bodiless masks at their sides or holding them up as objects of contemplation, as for example Basel Antikenmuseum BS1415; Boston Museum of Fine Arts, 98.883; Martin von Wagner Museum, H46000. On the head (κεφαλή or καρά) as the seat of the ψυχή and as "in some sense the person," cf. Onians (1951) 96ff. An anomaly: for Homer, animals have ψυχαί (*Odyssey* xiv.426) and are referred to as 'heads' (*Iliad* IX.407; XXIII.260).

[93] Redfield (1994) 179.

[94] Ibid.

[95] In Aristotle (*Poetics* 1449a35 & 1449b3) the mask is a πρόσωπον, literally "what is before

Another mask in Hades is explicitly full of strength, although like the ἀμενηνὰ κάρηνα νεκύων, it too is the face of a dead one: the mask of the Gorgon. The Gorgon mask effects a strong emotional response in Odysseus and taken with the tears stirred at the sight of all the other εἴδωλα, is suggestive of tragedy. At the sight of the others, Odysseus cried;[96] now, fearing the possibility of seeing the Gorgon's head, green fear takes hold of Odysseus: ἐμὲ δὲ χλωρὸν δέος ᾕρει / μή μοι Γοργείην κεφαλὴν δεινοῖο / ἐξ Ἄϊδος πέμψειν ἀγαυὴ Περσεφόνεια.[97] Fear returns Odysseus to his ship and deprives him of seeing other images.

Like Heracles, the paradigm of image, the Gorgon's head is the paradigm of the mask. Hers is a disembodied head, but far from being strengthless, it has an awesome power (δεινοῖο) as her head's appearance elsewhere in the Homeric corpus bears witness. In *Iliad* V.741, Athena changes from her peplos into her awesome aegis that inspires fear on account of what is depicted on it: Eris, Might, Rout, and the Gorgon's head (V.741≈xi.644). Hector wears the "eyes of the Gorgon" when the gods stir up the Trojans' menos.[98] The Gorgon's is a disembodied head full of force. The most common device depicted on heroic shields on vases, she inspires fear in one's opponent, fear of becoming just like her, a disembodied, strengthless head that resides in the dark depths of Hades. Her gaze alone has the power to turn another into a mask, to kill him. It is

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the eyes", cf. Chantraine (1968) ad loc. Cf. the masks donned by the characters in Sophocles' *Electra*: Orestes' mask of death, 48; Chrysothemis' sailing at half mast, 335-36; Clytemnestra's hidden speech, 638.

[96] xi.55, 87, 395 (and just before, Agamemnon cries too, 39; so too Achilles weeps, 472).

[97] *Odyssey* xi.643-635; cf. Sappho 31.

[98] *Iliad* VIII.349.

exactly this effect of the Gorgon's mask that causes Odysseus to run.[99] He's not ready to be only an empty head or mask.[100] Fear of ending up like the strengthless heads, the mere images of the dead, keeps mortals from entering Hades.[101] While we experience pity for the undeserving, we experience fear for ones like us.[102]

We feel pity for the undeserving because they make us aware of our own shortcomings. The tragic poets, Homer among them, force us to see the hard truths about the world and about ourselves.[103] Through them we learn that goodness is not always rewarded and that vice is not always punished. Even in Hades Minos presides over suits and sets down law, though he seems to do so as he did in life; he continues as he was without affecting anything that happens in the Underworld, since nothing does seem to happen.[104] Minos presides over the last group of souls, two of whom – Tantalus and Sisyphus – show the frustration of Hades and the last of whom calls into question

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[99] On the mask, cf. F. Frontisi-Ducroux & J.-P. Vernant, "Features of the Mask in Ancient Greece" in Vernant & Vidal-Naquet (1990) 189-206, originally published as F. Frontisi-Ducroux, "Figures du masque en Grèce ancienne" in Journal de Psychologie 1/2 (1983) 53-69. See also F. Frontisi-Ducroux, *Prosopon: Valeurs grecques du masque et du visage.* Thèse du Doctorat d'Etat, Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, Paris (1988). On the Gorgon's affinity to the dead in their both expressing a radical "otherness, the alterity" of a world which no living person may approach, cf. Vernant (1991) "Death in the Eyes" 122.

[100] Yet the Gorgon mask is also symbolic of the other and is thus akin to Hades, cf. Vernant (1991).

[101] Hades as a place that possesses power, cf. Griffin (1980) 162. Hades evokes hatred in the other gods, XX.61.

[102] Aristotle, *Poetics* 1453a5. Odysseus' tears (fn. 96) are accompanied by pity: τὸν μὲν ἐγὼ δάκρυσα ἰδὼν ἐλέησά τε θυμῷ, "seeing him I cried and felt pity in my thumos," he says of the soul of Elpenor, his mother, and Agamemnon (xi.55 = 395 ≈ 87; the pronoun shifts according to the gender of the person whose soul he sees): the images of dead men evoke the emotions Aristotle claims are *the* emotions of tragedy: pity and fear.

[103] Comedy rarely evokes pity because it denies the existence of worthy men, cf. Redfield (1994) 85ff.

[104] *Odyssey* xi.569-570: θεμιστεύοντα...οἱ δέ μιν ἀμφὶ δίκας εἴροντο ἄνακτα.

the justice of Hades. Heracles, as we have seen, has a blessed existence elsewhere. Odysseus would have stayed by Hades' gates to see Perithoos and Theseus, the former killed by Heracles.[105] Would Odyssseus have seen these men suffering a frustration like Sisyphus and Tantalus? Or would they have been rewarded as Heracles? We don't learn why Heracles is so blessed while the others suffer. A hint of the problems of justice lingers as Odysseus returns to his ship, just as Sophocles always leaves his audience still questioning (even today) where justice lies in the tale.

The *Iliad* too offers images of the souls of the dead; the likeness of these souls to their former selves surprises those who perceive them. The viewer, seeing a soul and recognizing it to be merely soul, image and not the man himself, recognizes Hades at the same time. Only after Achilles sees Patroclus' ghost does he agree to return Hector's corpse. Seeing the souls of dead men, one learns that there are certain things that one can and cannot do to man if one is to remain human; one learns what the human is in its difference from beast and god.

Patroclus' soul appears to be the man himself. It is like the man "in every way."

> ἦλθε δ' ἐπὶ ψυχὴ Πατροκλῆος δειλοῖο
> πάντ' αὐτῷ μέγεθός τε καὶ ὄμματα κάλ' ἐικυῖα
> καὶ φωνήν, καὶ τοῖα περὶ χροὶ εἵματα ἕστο.
>
> And the soul of wretched Patroclus came, in every way like the man himself in stature, beautiful eyes and voice, and he clothed his skin in such clothes.
>
> *Iliad* XXIII.65-67

Not simply ending the comparison between Patroclus and his soul where one might

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[105] These two also visited Hades and their descent is marked in the Grove of Colonus; see chapter three.

expect, at the line ending in ἐικυῖα – an adjective that describes the ψυχὴ mentioned in the first half of the sentence – Homer reinforces the similitude between the soul and the man. Τε καὶ has already connected two features, his stature and face (literally 'eyes', but 'face' by synechdoche), which could easily be taken as the specifics of πάντα. But the poet continues, adding to the way in which the soul and the man were alike; he begins the next line καὶ φωνήν, καὶ loading on the similarities between Patroclus' soul and Patroclus. The soul of Patroclus is like the man in four ways; in addition to stature and face, the soul's voice or speech is like the man's, and it's wearing the same sort of clothes the man wore. Τοῖα just before caesura maintains the idea of similarity through this second line. His soul is like the mask a tragic "Patroclus" might wear: it looks like the man in his eyes, is inhabited by the voice of the man, and wears the costume of "Patroclus." Patroclus' psuche plays "Patroclus" in Achilles' dream.

Achilles' reaction to his nighttime vision brings together three ideas we have been discussing and introduces a fourth about dead souls. Achilles says:

> ὢ πόποι, ἦ ῥά τίς ἐστι καὶ εἰν 'Αίδαο δόμοισι
> ψυχὴ καὶ εἴδωλον, ἀτὰρ φρένες οὐκ ἔνι πάμπαν.
> παννυχίη γάρ μοι Πατροκλῆος δειλοῖο
> ψυχὴ ἐφεστήκει γοόωσά τε μυρομένη τε,
> καί μοι ἔκαστ' ἐπέτελλεν, ἔικτο δὲ θεσκελον αὐτῷ.[106]
>
> Oh wonder, it is something after all, even in Hades,
> soul and image, but there is absolutely no real heart of life in

[106] ὢ πόποι, ἦ ῥά τίς: ἦ ῥά is a combination that is used both affirmatively and interrogatively in Homer (cf. Denniston, *The Greek Particles*, second edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press (1950) 284). Achilles' remark contains elements of both affirmation and interrogation. In Homer ἦ is affirmative after exclamations or oaths, such as ὢ πόποι here, but can also be interrogative after vocatives (Denniston, 281 & 283, respectively). Furthermore, the interrogative use of ἦ ῥά is often followed by an interrogative pronoun in Homer (cf. V.421; XIII.446; xx.166, all three of which have vocative before and interrogative following ἦ ῥά). ἀτὰρ is adversative here, cf. Denniston (1950) 51.

it.[107]
For all night long wretched Patroclus'
soul stood over me lamenting and melting into tears,
and it commanded me with individual tasks, and was
wondrously like the man himself.
Iliad XXIII.103-107

Achilles expresses: 1) the similitude of the soul to the man, ἔικτο δὲ θεσκελον αὐτῷ, the soul's being just an image of the man and, 2) like a strengthless head, the soul has no φρένες, 3) the soul laments its fate, and 4) the soul makes demands on the living, reminds the living what must be done to a corpse: one must bury fellow man.[108] These last two cause Achilles to recognize that the soul, despite its mere appearance and his inability to grasp it, *is* something in Hades.[109] It is almost as if he is saying, "all the tales I've heard about Hades are actually true!"

Souls are something in Hades; appear to be someone, yet they are not that someone. Their similarity to the person marks that person's absence. The soul is not only like the man himself, but as in Pindar, so too in Homer, the soul is metaphorically a shadow, a dream, a wisp of smoke, ever compared to the very things one cannot ever grab hold of.[110] A simile from *Iliad* XXII draws a telling comparison:

ὡς δ' ἐν ὀνείρῳ οὐ δύναται φεύγοντα διώκειν·
οὔτ' ἄρ' ὁ τὸν δύναται ὑποφεύγειν οὔθ' ὁ διώκειν·
ὣς ὁ τὸν οὐ δύναιτο μάρψαι ποσίν, οὐδ' ὃς ἀλύξαι.

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[107] "no real heart of life" is Lattimore's rendering of φρένες here; *The Iliad of Homer*, translated by Richmond Lattimore. Chicago: University of Chicago Press (1951).

[108] The gods also remind each other and mortals what must be done to a corpse.

[109] There is no embrace in Hades, as Odysseus learns from his mother's and Agamemnon, in turn, learns from Odysseus, *Odyssey* xi.207-211 and 392-93.

[110] Σκιαί (*Odyssey* x.495; xi.211; κάπνος (*Iliad* XXIII.100); ὀνείρος (*Odyssey* xi.211, 222).

> As in a dream man cannot pursue the one who is fleeing him,
> nor can the latter escape, nor the former pursue him;
> So he (Achilles) wasn't able to take hold of him (Hector) by foot,
> nor could the other escape.
>
> *Iliad* XXII.199-201

Achilles' endless pursuit of Hector, which ends only by divine intervention from Apollo, is compared to a dream in its beginning's inability to catch up with its end, the inability to grasp it fully. Dreams are untouchable, unreachable, unfulfillable, and thus ultimately a cause of frustration.[111] Their outcome is ever uncertain.

Hades is an adventure-less place and reserved rather for storytelling.[112] Odysseus hears the stories of the shades and in recounting his stay at Hades' doors he retells the speeches he gave and heard, whereas in recounting other adventures he speaks of actions such as blinding Polyphemus, the Cyclops' tending his sheep, etc.[113] So too in *Odyssey* xxiv, the shades of Achilles and Agamemnon tell each other the stories of their burial. One has a sense, from the manner in which the souls of the recently slain suitors come onto the scene, that what they find there is not unusual. The souls of the dead, when they have no Odysseus in their audience, recount to each other their deaths and burials and so the souls of the recently dead find Agamemnon and Achilles in such a

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[111] The intangibility of the shades is a mark of the frustration of Hades.

[112] The Circe episode is framed by "there is no possibility of accomplishment (πρῆξις) for those who weep and mourn" (x.202, 568). In Hades, Agamemnon weeps (xi.466), Achilles mourns (xi.472), and everyone else grieves (xi.542).

[113] The only group in Odysseus' Hades from whom Odysseus deprives voice is the second, the heroines. They are the only group whose tales Odysseus reports entirely in his own voice. In Aristotle's terms, the heroines are represented in diegesis rather than mimesis. There is one direct speech in the second group, but they contain the words of the god Poseidon.

pose. As a place of stories and of images Hades' is a place of memory and therefore a place of poetry, for the purpose of poetry, and of epic poetry above all, is to sing the praises of the dead and thereby keep his memory alive.[114]

Hades is not tragic merely by dint of being filled with masks and likenesses that evoke pity and fear in Odysseus and reveal the εἶδος of the human. Not all art that evokes pity and fear can qualify as tragedy. The emotions will remain empty unless accompanied by some sort of learning. "It is not the misfortune of a character but the failure of action which, when interpreted to us by the poet, evokes tragic learning."[115] Odysseus learns something in Hades, as did the listeners of his adventures in ancient Greece and we too, as readers of epic poetry, learn of Hades: that in poetry there is a place where once living mortals exist as image with no adventures or action, but tell stories to one another about death, dying, funerals, and their memory. In learning of the existence of Hades through poetry, one sees the need for laws in general and certain laws, those concerning the corpse, in particular: if the corpse is not covered up and made invisible, the psuche will not become visible as εἴδωλον and present to those still living. Burial gives the psuche a place to go and the living something to sing about. How do the laws and rites of burial reveal the form and the shape of the human? The

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[114] For Hades' as a world of memory, cf. Redfield (1994) 180. Subject of poetry are the toils and pains of man. The souls in Hades tell their pains: εἴροντο δὲ κήδε' ἑκάστη (xi.542). The funeral games provide heroes an opportunity to win fame; in recounting their feats they make the occasion famous and so the funeral enters the oral tradition of events told and retold as we see in *Odyssey* xxiv in the conversations between the souls of Agamemnon and Achilles.

[115] Redfield (1994) 88; cf. Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* 177, where by their talk of πάθει μάθος the chorus articulates the universal condition for human understanding; poetry presents an image, an artificial experience from which we are to learn something real: that we musn't kill our fathers, sleep with our mothers, and such.

laws and rites of burial and the poetic invention of Hades reveal the inside of the human by showing us the outside, the form, the image.

Elpenor's oar is perhaps a helpful image with which to end this chapter, for it is a metaphor for the symbolic nature of burial. Elpenor's soul, like Patroclus', asks his companion for burial.[116] But he asks for a specific type of burial. He wants to be remembered (71) and thus asks for a σῆμα, or burial mound to be piled up with earth. A σῆμα is a marker of one who was, for it is his grave.[117] But Elpenor goes one step further: he wants his oar to be placed atop that mound so that all who pass his σῆμα will know him. The oar will become a σῆμα and speak beyond what it is. Like the souls in Hades it will represent the once living man. As metaphor, the oar as burial σῆμα returns us to the poetic in burial and Hades, for Tiresias too employs the oar as something that will mean something other than it is: when men, seeing Odysseus carrying his oar, will ask after his "winnowing fan" Odysseus will become a poet using the oar as metaphor. He will teach a landlocked people of a god called Poseidon they know nothing of just as Homer teaches his audience about invisible Hades.

In the next chapter we turn to Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus* to begin our inquiry into how tragedy makes the invisible Hades visible. Unlike in epic or comedy, Hades is not a scene setting in tragedy; we never explicitly *see* Hades on Sophocles' stage. Yet through metaphor, language and allusion Sophocles seems to be saying that

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[116] Elpenor insists on the divine command of burial; if not buried, he will be a cause of the gods' wrath, xi.73.

[117] cf. *Antigone* 1209 where the Messenger describes the sound around Creon as he comes from the cave/tomb where Antigone and Haemon have found their ends as ἀθλίας ἄσημα βοῆς.

tragedy is all about Hades and bringing the dead back to life through song, presence-ing the dead through speech to another. Sophocles makes us *see* Hades in other ways than clear vision.

Chapter Three
Visible Invisibles in *Oedipus at Colonus*

ὅτ' οὐκέτ' εἰμί, τηνικαῦτ' ἄρ' εἴμ' ἀνήρ;
When I am no longer, then am I a man?

Sophocles, *Oedipus at Colonus*, 393

I. Introduction

i. Endings

An old man, well-known to those watching him enter the theater – despite his own inability to see them – arrives with his daughter in the country just outside of town to rest his weary body from long wanderings. But he is uncertain about where exactly, he has come to before a stranger arrives immediately cutting off the old man's inquisitive salutation and ordering him to move, to leave the seat he has rested on; the old man holds land that ought not be trodden. Inquiring further, the blind old man discovers in the stranger's words the token/sign/watchword of his pollution/guilt/destiny/misfortune. And once the stranger has left, the old man asks the goddesses whom he now knows hold the land not to be senseless/mindless (ἀγνώμονες, 86) to Apollo and himself, for the god had told the old man that where the reverend goddesses (θεῶν σεμνῶν, 89-90) held their seat he would come at last to the end place, the χώραν τερμίαν (89), find rest and peace and make the last turn of his life.[1] He would be a gain to those who welcome him as one dwelling with them, but a bane to those who would send him away.

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[1] ἀγνώμονες, without γνώμη, i.e. judgement, mind, discretion. Other instances of ἀγνώμονες in poetry: Pindar, *Olympian* 8.60 (in a gnomic statement; "it is senseless not to have forethought"); Sophocles, *Trachiniae* 472 (Lichas, soliciting Deianeira's good will in face of bad news). Τερμίαν here, Chantraine tells us, means that which is at the end, a word whose root signifies limits and borders, cf.

The events just described form the movement of the first scene of Sophocles' last work, posthumously performed at the City Dionysia around 402 BC. This brief opening – both that of the play and of this chapter – announces the trajectory of *Oedipus at Colonus* as a movement to an end for the days of an old man who has suffered and wandered, but an end tinged with mystery, for Oedipus' end that begins with questions – where? who? – will not be without suggestions to a meanginful answer. The *Oedipus at Colonus*, then, could be said to be a play about endings: the end of one's life, the place of that end, and the meaning of that end.[2] Yet while an imminent end seems clear from the play's opening scene, Oedipus takes a long time getting there. The beginning of the play to its, and Oedipus', end are enacted and recounted in 1779 lines making the *Oedipus at Colonus* Sophocles' longest work left to posterity. Adding to the uniqueness of *Oedipus at Colonus*, moreover, is its deviance from other poetic versions of Oedipus' end. The epic tradition has Oedipus ending his days in his homeland of Thebes as does Sophocles'

Chantraine (1984) 1107. χώρα, the same source tells us, is a defined space, set out for use or activity (contrast to κένον, empty, and τόπος, whose sense of "space" is more restricted.) Χῶρος, on the other hand, means "place" but without the specialized use denoted by χώρα.

[2] Perhaps this is what had led several critics in the middle of the last century to focus primarily on the play's second half and ending, such as C. M. Bowra in his *Sophoclean Tragedy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press (1944)) and A. J. A. Waldock in his *Sophocles the Dramatist* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press (1951)) and K. Reinhardt in his *Sophokles* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell (1979)). Turning from that trend, L. Slatkin argues that a close reading of the play's *opening* reveals that in addition to the importance of the religious solution of the play's end (the reading given by those earlier critics of the play), Sophocles was "equally interested in political concerns and their bearing on religious thought" ("Oedipus at Colonus: Exile and Integration" in *Greek Tragedy and Political Theory*, J. Peter Euben, ed. (Berkeley, Los Angeles & London: University of California Press (1986) 210-221)). Indeed, from the brief summary on the previous page, one clearly sees at this play's start the major themes that will be at play in *Oedipus at Colonus*: ambiguity of/arrival at place, blindness and sight, momentous yet ambiguous words pointing to one's destiny, a mixture of blessings and curses, the numinous-ness of certain places, limits, ends, thresholds, of cities, groves, life.

own *Antigone*.[3] With his *Oedipus at Colonus*, then, Sophocles is consciously rewriting Oedipus' end in a play about endings and endings in a specific, yet simultaneously rather ambiguous, place, at least at this beginning.[4] The play thus asks the reader to consider ends from its very beginning, and so we shall.

To be sure, the myriad questions critics have grappled with in the play – the allusion to mysteries and a cult of Oedipus, the meaning of Oedipus' "gift," his status in Theseus' Athens, the place of his tomb or σῆμα, curses falling from the lips of a man called "noble" at the play's start and end[5] – have marked the *Oedipus at Colonus* as of a piece with the rest of Sophocles' oeuvre, wherein the poet constantly offers his audience a complex expression of extreme situations. What to do with the body of an enemy of the state who is nevertheless a brother? Or with that of a once comrade turned enemy? What are the implications of avenging one's father's murder when the murderer is one's mother? How to remain true to one's noble birth when one needs to deceive? How to

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[3] *Odyssey* xi.271-280, *Iliad* XXIII.677-680, *Antigone* 899-902; cf. Euripides *Phoenissae* 1549ff. At 1706-08 in *Phoenissae* Oedipus tells Antigone that Colonus will shelter him.

[4] Euripides' *Phoenissae*, which suggests Colonus as a home to an elder Oedipus, was produced 410-409 BC, thereby testifying to the existence of the (contemporary?/ rewritten?) link between Oedipus and Colonus, at least by that time (a link perhaps made by the poet himself between his home deme and his tortured poetic subject). Scholars have read the *Oedipus at Colonus* as an aetiological play giving the logos or mythos of how the cult of Oedipus came to be at Colonus (C. Calame, "Mort héroique et cult à mystère dans l'*Oedipe à Colone* de Sophocle" in *Ansichten griechischer Rituale. Gerburtsags Symposium fur Walter Burkert*, F. Graf, ed. Stuttgart & Leipzig: Teubner (1998) 326-356). Edmunds presents a strong argument for the cult of Oedipus existing independent of poetry (i.e. *Oedipus at Colonus* does not give an aetiology, but perhaps suggests one for a later founding), cf. L. Edmunds, "The Cults and Legends of Oedipus" HSCP 85 (1981) 221-238. In the mythos of our play, Colonus is as yet unknown (as the questions at the play's start attest, 1-3,11, 38, 41, 52) and unsung (as the Stranger will soon tell us, 62-63).

[5] On allusions to the Mysteries in *Oedipus at Colonus*, cf. P. E. Easterling, *Sophocles and the Mysteries*. Δημοτικό Μέγαρο Ελευσίνας, Κυριακή 20 April 2003; C. Calame in Fitz Graf, ed. (1998); On Oedipus' gift to Athens, cf. L. Slatkin in P. Euben, ed. (1986). On Oedipus' curse and blessing, cf. P. E. Easterling, "Oedipus and Polyneices," in Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society, n.s. vol. 13 (1967) 1-13. Oedipus is γενναῖος in *Oedipus at Colonus* at 8, 76, and 1636.

rekindle the lost love of one's hero-husband? Or face the truth of your identity when you are a polluted parricide, an incestuous creature? The *Oedipus at Colonus* presents yet another baffling situation: an old man is at once polluted for all he has done/suffered, yet somehow at the same time blessed since strangely saved by the gods and in possession of both a positive and negative power.[6] Oedipus enters the stage a blind old man relying on his daughter to guide him and leaves it leading others to the place of his death that must remain unspoken of to any other man save Theseus. In addition to human ends and limits, the *Oedipus at Colonus* at the same time speaks, or attempts a speech, of what ought not be spoken, to show what ought not be shown or cannot easily be shown: Oedipus' end and afterlife, so to speak. Oedipus' own gained vision, so to speak, at the play's end suggests such a reading.[7] This chapter investigates the relation between the concern with ends and unseens in a play about unseen and/or un-representable ends.

In the last chapter, we saw Homer's as the first poetic rendering of what happens to mortals when they die in the poet's presentation of images showing/revealing the unseen dead. As Achilles learns from Patroclus in the *Iliad* and Odysseus from his mother in the *Odyssey*, when men die their bodies lose their strength to the pyre's fire, but their souls, their ψυχαί, go to Hades and exist there as image or representation, as εἴδωλα, without mind or tangible substance. Homer creates this poetic mortal soul and invents a place – the house of Hades – where it continues to be, not as a living physical being, but as shade, shadow or empty head that continues to be seen by the living, either

[6] *Oedipus Tyrannus* 1455-57; *Oedipus at Colonus* 92-93, 399-405.

[7] The play's speaking what ought not be spoken and showing what ought not be seen, also lends to its mysterious nature; the final stage of initiation into the Mysteries at Eleusis consisted of the epopteia and the initiate was the epoptes, or the "one who sees."

in dreams (as Patroclus' to Achilles) or at the edges of Hades' halls (as Elpenor's, Tiresias' and the rest to Odysseus).

As creatures of poetry, these shadows, we saw in the last chapter, need a living human audience/viewer for their very visibility. Indeed, they are faces or masks to those living beings who can still see them. Hades is a place particularly suited to poiesis, both as a creation of poiesis and for poetic making whose "cultural, form giving work," Susan Stewart tells us, "is to counter the oblivion of darkness."[8] The poets – the poets in mind here being Homer and Sophocles but the same may be said for modern and contemporary poets like Yeats, Heaney, Stewart or Grossman – offer form to the dead in words not only by describing them, giving words and language to something that is no more and cannot be seen, but also in keeping the memory of the dead alive in continuous song to another; the poets keep the dead living and social through speech.[9] Allen Grossman articulates this filling the void of the one gone as poetry's work at conserving the human image.[10]

All humans, we saw in the last two chapters, are entitled to burial; not all are entitled to memory. We don't remember those who haven't left their name for having done something exceptional or extraordinary. We remember Achilles and Hector, Diomedes and Odysseus for their actions in war, but not the many foot soldiers who came

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[8] Susan Stewart, *Poetry and the Fate of the Senses.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press (2002) 3 & 62. Allen Grossman expresses a similar sentiment when he speaks of forgetfulness and obliteration in conversations with Mark Halliday (*The Sighted Singer: Two Works on Poetry for Readers and Writers.* Baltimore & London: Johns Hopkins University Press (1992)). The subject of speech in Hades – death, burial and memory – further attest to poetry's place in Hades, cf. *Odyssey* xxiv where Agamemnon and Achilles in Hades talk only about their death, burial and memory.

[9] Cf. A. Carson, *Economy of the Unlost.* Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press (1999).

[10] A. Grossman (1992) 12. At the cornerstone of Grossman's poetic theory is the idea of poetry's putting people into conversation, the social-work, as it were, of poetry.

with them to Troy. If poetry's work is to preserve the human image – the image of remarkable men and women – then the work of the *Oedipus at Colonus* could be said to be to preserve the image of Oedipus. But what sort of image is being saved here? Has what Oedipus done entitled him to a memory as momentous as this play promises (and delivers)? How does the *Oedipus at Colonus* preserve Oedipus' image, and for what purpose or to what effect? How does the preserving and presencing of something invisible come about?

The *Oedipus at Colonus* is a song for and of both Oedipus and Colonus/Athens. From the very beginning, the mystery of the *Oedipus at Colonus* is Oedipus' ending. Oedipus will disappear and be remembered by his curses and blessings and by the name and song he leaves in *Oedipus at Colonus*. Yet unlike the shades of Homer's Hades, the εἴδωλον of Oedipus (110) completely disappears from sight at the play's end and remains only in song and memory, without any physical marker pointing to the man that was, without a σῆμα. While throughout the play we *hear* of Oedipus' burial and tomb (402, 411, 582), at the end Ismene tells her sister that Oedipus is ἄταφος, graveless, or not honored with burial rites.[11] No one, not even Theseus, is allowed to go where Oedipus lies, nor is Theseus to speak of it to anyone (1422). Oedipus, invisible to the chorus when he enters the grove at the play's start, becomes invisible once again as he re-enters the grove at its end. Burial, we saw earlier, usually leaves a visual marker, the sema; Oedipus, however, leaves no physical sema of a mound or remains of any sort but

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[11] ἄταφος, without having had the action of θάπτειν, to honor with burial rite, performed, cf. LSJ.

memory. He and his end turn, like the nightingale of the grove, into mere speech and song.

At the same time, the unsung, unknown and therefore invisible place of Colonus becomes clear and visible as it is assimilated to the invisible realm of Hades through song.[12] Oedipus and Colonus, as the play's title suggests, form a unique relationship – man and place. As one disappears, the other comes to light through the dark realm of Hades. Yet both, in the end, remain present through Hades.

Recall from the last chapter that epic was able to give a clear, if sometimes inconsistent, image of the Greek realm of the dead and the souls dwelling there. Turning to Sophoclean tragedy we notice a shift – the dead usually remain among the living as a problem, such as Polyneices or Ajax, and even Philoctetes. Oedipus is not as unlike these figures as first seems. His play too prepares for the afterlife, if you will, of the man. In Sophoclean tragedy, unlike Homeric epic, the dead do not speak; they disappear and what they are like where they go, and especially where they go, is left a mystery. Or is it? We'll address this at the end of the chapter where we'll ask after the meaning of Oedipus' turning into song, his disappearance from sight, and its relation to the imaging of the dead in Homer's epics and Pindar's epinicians of chapter two.

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[12] Oedipus' opening questions and every wayfarer's pointing to Athens instead of Colonus marks Colonus' obscurity, (2-3, 12, 24-25). In his first speech introducing Colonus, the Xenos claims Colonus' insularity and lack of fame in speech: οὐ λόγοις / τιμώμεν', ἀλλὰ τῇ ξυνουσίᾳ πλέον (62-63). Never in his extant work does Sophocles set a play in Athens, allowing his audience to imagine the other or outside that is not before their eyes every day. In contrast, cf. Aeschylus' *Eumenides*, set just the next hill over from the theater where its spectators watch the trial of Orestes unfold.

How does the *Oedipus at Colonus* preserve Oedipus' image? As the play is about endings and this project about the relation between the place of mortal ends – Hades – and imaging the un-representable, beginning at the end of the *Oedipus at Colonus*, where a now invisible Oedipus remains fully before the eyes of the audience, will shed light on the the rest of the play's poetic preparation for the this re-presencing of the invisible.

II. *Oedipus at Colonus*: a man in search of his end

i. Singing to Hades

The endgame of *Oedipus at Colonus* begins when Oedipus finishes his final speech, at line 1555, closing it with a blessing on the land and its attendants: may you be blessed, εὐδαίμονες, and in good action – remembering the dead Oedipus (μέμνησθέ μου θανόντος) – you will be fortunate, εὐτυχεῖς, always, ἀεί. Blessedness or happiness and fortune will be, according to Oedipus, vouchsafed in his living memory. Oedipus then exits, but the play does not end.[13] Two-hundred and twenty three lines follow consisting of the final choral standing song praying for Oedipus' peaceful arrival in the world of the dead, the Messenger's speech describing Oedipus' end, the lament of Oedipus' daughters and Theseus' attempt to hinder the dirge, and the chorus' final, closing lines. Each of these ending elements plays a role in presencing the now invisible Oedipus. Let's see how.

The chorus begin their final ode (1556) with a propitiatory address, for they are about to sing in prayer to the invisible gods who reign over a realm filled with pain and

[13] Or perhaps Oedipus exits *as* the chorus sing their song; staging of Greek tragedy is ever uncertain as the poets left us only text, no stage directions.

suffering. Or so we may believe, since their prayer asks that the stranger Oedipus will arrive in that realm without toil or pain (μήτ' ἐπίπονα μήτ' ἐπὶ βαρυαχεῖ, 1560-61). Indeed, the very wording of their propitiatory address marks this prayer from those one might make to Aphrodite, say, or even Apollo.[14] Generally, when praying to gods one would remind the divinity of his/her prior worship, re-establishing their prior personal connection, and recalling memories the worshipper hopes will bring the return of the god to his/her favor this time too. In our ode here, the chorus fear direct address to the gods. "If it is right/lawful for me to worship/honor with prayer the invisible goddess and lord of those who dwell in the night with prayers," they sing, for these gods are notoriously feared and even hated by mortals and immortals alike.[15] Hence the lack of hymns to divinities such as the "invisible goddess," Cerberus, the Eumenides/Furies, and even Hades, all present in this ode.[16] Our hymn to Hades, then, is unique. Calling further

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[14] Cf. Sappho 1; On songs to Apollo and their (re-formed) use in tragedy, cf. I. Rutherford, "Apollo in Ivy: The Tragic Paean" Arion third series, 3.1 (1994/95) 112-135.

[15] 1556-58: εἰ θέμις ἐστί μοι τὰν ἀφανῆ θεὸν / καὶ σε λιταῖς σεβίζειν, / ἐννυχίων ἄναξ. The chorus here honor with prayers (λιταῖς), where Sappho prays directly (λίσσομαί σε, I.2). On the human and divine fear of Hades, cf. *Iliad* IX.158-159 and XX.65. Witness too, the reaction of the chorus in *Oedipus at Colonus* when they first enter the stage before the grove of the Eumenides. Indeed, in a fragment from Aeschylus' *Niobe*, we hear of the uselessness of singing to Death, for Persuasion stands far from this, alone of gods (Fragment 161). A. H. Sommerstein in his commentary on Aeschylus' *Eumenides* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (1989)) notes, "to all intents and purposes the Erinyes had no cult as such. It is a waste of effort and resources to offer prayer and sacrifice to beings who are by their nature implacable. Clytemnestra's sacrifices to the Erinyes (*Eu.* 106-109) were presumably intended not to placate them but to stir them up" (10).

[16] cf. M. Depew, "I Can't Get no Respect: How to Hymn a Chthonic God," presented at the APA Annual Meeting 2006, Montreal, Canada. Depew notes that chthonic gods, unlike Apollo and Aphrodite, often end up hymning themselves since no one grants them their τίμη, one aim of a hymn, as witnessed in the Homeric Hymns. So, we find the Eumenides/Erinyes singing their binding hymn in Aeschylus' *Eumenides* (ὕμνον δέσμιον, 306) to declare their power and the force of their music. On the "invisible goddess" in our ode, cf. Jebb: "an unusual title, perhaps suggested by the literal sense of "Αιδης" (*The Oedipus Coloneus of Sophocles: with a commentary*, abridged from the Large edition of Sir Richard C.

attention to its oddity here, the chorus had in their song just prior to this one, contradicted their current action. There they called Hades "hymnless," "lyreless," and "chorus-less."[17] With their hymn to Hades here, the chorus seem to rehabilitate the god of the netherworld, granting him and his realm a previously unknown honor.

In addition to honoring the god, hymns aim to bring about an epiphany, to make the god present at that very moment.[18] Cautious words are called for when addressing the gods of the netherworld, for fear of bringing them too close.[19] And naturally, one praying would have difficulty finding a past occasion of worship to recall to these nether gods, for Hades, we saw, has no cult.[20] This choral prayer seems to stand on the line between prayer and hymn. It remains to be seen whether it effects an epiphany.

As in any of several hymns, the chorus here directly address the god in the vocative, doubly calling him by his poetic name, Aidoneus.[21] The chorus call on the invisible god and goddess seeking to ensure an easy passage for Oedipus from this world to the next, for he has suffered so in his life. The passage from one realm to the next must not have been easy, as the remainder of the ode suggests with its images of the body of an unconquerable beast yelping at the entry gates and the plain of corpses (mentioned

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Jebb, E. S. Shuckburgh, ed. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press (1903)).

[17] 1221-22: ἀνυμέναοις ἄλυρος ἄχορος.

[18] Sappho's hymn to Aphrodite (#1) is perhaps the locus classicus for the genre.

[19] W. D. Furley and J. M. Bremer, *Greek Hymns: Selected Cult Songs from the Archaic to the Hellenistic Period.* Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck (2001) I.51. While Furley and Bremer list this ode among the "hymns in Sophocles," they note the ode's tone is more of a prayer, requesting safe passage to the underworld much as the instructions found on the Orphic gold lamellae.

[20] And therefore has no song, until, like Colonus, now.

[21] LSJ on Αιδωνεύς: lengthened poetic form of Ἄιδης.

twice).[22] The ghost of Darius in Aeschylus' *Persians* attests to the difficult journey from one realm to the next, but he tells of the way back from, and not to, Hades' halls.[23]

Darius is summoned from the underworld for counsel in the aftermath of his kingdom's utter defeat at the hands of the Greeks and under his son's leadership. Upon arriving back in the light (630, 643, 693), he tells of the gods' below ease at taking and difficulty at letting go (688-90). And he urges swiftness to the living in their wishes, so as not to be blamed for the time (away from Hades', 692). Darius is called back from the dead in the midst of Aeschylus' play for a specific reason and by specific rites. The chorus and Atossa have sung to Hermes, Earth, and the king of those below (629) to send Darius' shade ἐς φῶς since he alone of mortals could say what the remedy for their misfortunes is.[24] The dead are remembered by the living for their use and recalled to light for political counsel.[25] And the dead are brought back to light *as dead ghosts*.

Darius isn't alone among the dead sought to be brought back to light in Greek tragedy.[26] We find the chorus of Aeschylus' *Choephore* calling on the Moirai while

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[22] Plain of corpses, 1564 & 1577. Yelping of Cerberus, 1571. Even mention of the "Stygian home," Στύγιον δόμον, rings with the hated halls of Hades, στύγνον δόμον, we saw in the Homeric poems.

[23] 688-690: ἐστὶ δ' οὐκ εὐέξοδον / ἄλλως τε πάντως, χοἰ κατὰ χθονὸς θεοὶ / λαβεῖν ἀμείνους εἰσὶν ἢ μεθιέναι. The Orphic lamella, with their instructions to the dead, suggests the idea of the difficult path to Hades, as does Odysseus' own wonder of how he'll get there in *Odyssey* x. Circe assures him the boat needs no steering and will find its way. Several in Hades wonder at Odysseus' arrival there, further suggesting the impossibility of finding Hades, made more difficult if you're not yet a shade.

[24] The chorus' repetition of certain phrases and their exclamation at its end, such as βάσκε πάτερ ἄκακε Δαριάν, οἴ (663, 671), suggest ritual.

[25] Perhaps inspiring Aristophanes' later necromantic play where dead poets are sought in Hades' halls to help save a failing city, cf. *Frogs*.

[26] Nor in comedy, cf. Aristophanes' *Frogs* where Dionysus goes to Hades' seeking advice from

Electra and Orestes call on their dead father for justice (306ff) in their kommos that leads to murder, an attempt that, like that in the *Persians*, seeks to restore balance among the living from the dead.[27] Directing attention more directly to vengeance in the *Choephore*, Orestes calls on the "tyrants of the nether world" (405) and wishes his father be sent up to witness his trial (ὦ γαῖ', ἄνες μοι πατέρ' ἐποπτεῦσαι μάχην, 489). In Sophocles' version of this tale, Electra too calls on the powers below to exact vengeance and send her brother (already cast as dead) to her for help (110-120).[28] And they succeed; the songs bring the dead back to life in *Persians* and the dead below ground aid the action in the remainder of the *Choephore.*[29]

What about the Coloneans' song to Hades and Persephone? Does it aim at the same effect as these other songs to the nether gods? And does it achieve its goal in the same way? Is it a successful hymn/prayer? Yes and no. While all the songs mentioned thus far address the nether gods, the other songs seek to bring the dead back among the

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the poets on how to save the city, much as Darius is summoned in *Persians*. Several allusions to *Persians* in *Frogs* suggest Aristophanes' playing on the play, cf. E. Hall's commentary on the play: *Aeschylus: Persians*. Warminster: Aris & Phillips (1996) 151-52. On communication with the dead, cf. S. Iles-Johnston, *The Restless Dead: Encounters between the Living and the Dead in Ancient Greece*. Berkeley: University of California Press (1999).

[27] The Moirai, or fates, are sisters to the Furies, cf. Aeschylus, *Eumenides* 961-62; cf. Hesiod, *Theogony* 211ff. where the Moirai, as daughters of night, are given the same function as the furies, avengers of evil.

[28] The chorus of the *Persians* sing hymns asking the powers below, Earth, Hermes, and the king of those below to send the soul beneath the earth to light: ἡμεῖς θ' ὕμνοις αἰτησόμεθα / φθιμένων πομποὺς εὔφρονας εἶναι κατὰ γαίας. / ἀλλά χθόνιοι δαίμονες ἁγνοί / Γῆ τε καὶ Ἑρμῆ βασιλεῦ τ' ἐνέρων / πέμψατῷ ἔνερθεν ψυχὴν ἐς φῶς (625-630). Likewise Electra too performs a necromancy of sorts when she asks Hades and Persephone, Hermes and Ara to "send" her brother: καί μοι τὸν ἐμὸν πέμψατ' ἀδελφόν (117). On the dead returning to life in Sophocles' *Electra*, see chapter four.

[29] Indeed, in addition to the kommos' presencing Agamemnon's spirit, Clytemnestra's dream, reported by the chorus at its end, offers a glimpse of the beyond (see chapter two), and convinces Orestes that he is the boy in the dream, meant to mix his mother's milk with blood (530ff).

living, but not necessarily to life. They seek to make what is in the dark come to the light. The Ode to Hades of the *Oedipus at Colonus*, however, seeks bring the living to an easy arrival at the plain of corpses (νεκύων πλάκα, 1564; νεκρῶν πλάκας, 1577). Instead of invoking the nether-gods to aid in vengeance and make something/someone visible, our song seeks to make the visible Oedipus invisible. Or so it first seems.

Before the chorus sing, Oedipus describes his imminent death, telling Theseus and his daughters that his body is already clinging to its last light, creeping along its last way, to hide himself at Hades'.[30] The chorus' song, then, is a response to Oedipus' speech, preparing for that last creep to the hidden Hades. Yet prayers and hymns elicit responses in turn, hence the Paedagogus' arrival following Clytemnestra's prayer to Apollo in *Electra* (634ff.) and the news of Heracles' accompanied return in response to the choral song in *Trachiniae* (205ff.). If action following a prayer hymn can be considered the wish fulfilled, even if the fulfillment may be misread, as in the two other Sophoclean situations just mentioned, then the Messenger's speech of *Oedipus at Colonus* is the response granted the chorus' prayer. His is a speech recounting action, a particular kind of action.

Like the Paedagogus' speech in *Electra*, the Messenger's speech immediately following the hymn to Hades is a brilliant example of what Aristotle called "putting

[30] Oedipus calls on light, ὦ φῶς ἀφεγγές (1549), saying that earlier it was always his – odd for a blind man to say so – and that now, νῦν δ' ἔσχατον σου τοὐμὸν ἅπτεται δέμας. To be alive in Greek was to be "in the light." So we find a dying Heracles lamenting his condition, ὄλωλ' ὄλωλα, φέγγος οὐκέτ' ἔστι μοι (*Trachiniae*, 1144). Heracles' end would be a fruitful point of comparison to Oedipus', for another project. To note, both enter the scene asking, "where have I come to?" suggesting the unfamiliarity of dying to the living.

before the eyes."[31] Our imagination is brought into play as the Messenger recounts all that passed, introducing it all as something to wonder at, ἀποθαυμάσαι (1586). This is no summary account of what's happened. Like the Paedagogus' in *Electra* recounting Orestes feigned end, the Messenger's speech here details – using verbs of action, direct speech of another, strong images – Oedipus' exit from the scene and his arrival elsewhere.

Where Oedipus arrives is now completely detailed, whereas his arrival at the play's start found him asking, *where*? No longer an unknown *where*, this place of Oedipus' end, his χώραν τερμίαν from line 89, has markers pointing directly back to the grove as its described earlier in the play and thus to Hades: the sharp threshold (τὸν καταρράκτην ὁδὸν, 1590) and the bronze steps leading earthward remind us of the bounds Oedipus had earlier trespassed (36-37,155-56) and the bronze threshold of Athens that is Colonus/the grove (57); the hollowed stone bowl where Theseus and Perithoos' swore their oaths, ξυνθήματα, prior to their descent to Hades recalls Oedipus' early words of discovering his own ξυνθήμα there (46); the hollow pear tree alongside the stone tomb remind of the duality of the grove, its flourishing foliage alongside the dreaded song of the nightingale (668ff. see below). The Thorician rock we hear of now recalls the rock at the play's start that was then just merely ἀξέστος πέτρος (19) and αὐτοπέτρος βῆμα (192-93). Things described vaguely earlier in the play, here in the

[31] Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1410b. "Bringing before the eyes," πρὸ ὀμμάτων ποιεῖν/τίθεσθαι, remains a rather vague concept in Aristotle, cf. *Poetics* 1455a. It is one way, Aristotle tells us, to bring about urbanities in speech, or ἀστεῖα. One way of "bringing before the eyes" is to recount things engaged in activity (*energeia*, cf. *Poetics*, 1455a), or as Aristotle compliments Homer's skill, making the lifeless full of life, a fit description of the work the Messenger's speech accomplishes here.

Messenger's speech gain a name, a proper name, and are thereby made more vivid for the audience.[32]

Moreover, in his description of the action – the loosening (ἔλυσε, 1597) of Oedipus' robes, the girls' fetching of water by going over to Demeter's stream (ἠνώγει, ἐνεγκεῖν, μολοῦσα, 1598, 99, 1601), their carrying everything needed (ἐπόρευσαν, 1602), and arranging it all (ἐξήσκησαν, 1603), Oedipus' own actions, arriving (ἀφῖκτο, 1590), stopping (ἔστη, 1592), sitting (καθέζετ', 1597), and all this just at the start of his speech – all this exhibits Aristotle's ἐνεργεῖα achieved by "bringing before the eyes" the action. The Messenger visualizes with active verbs what Oedipus and his daughters did in preparation for his end.[33] And he further underscores the "bringing before the eyes" by actually speaking the words of Oedipus in direct speech (1611-1619), a speech wherein Oedipus' words recall his earlier tone of one no longer alive or one who questions his being.[34] The Messenger's speech with its visualization in speech fits the tale about the end of one professing the visualizing power of words: ὅσ' ἂν λέγωμεν πάνθ' ὁρῶντα λέξομεν (74).

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[32] Instead of, perhaps, their earlier wondering with Oedipus where near their famous city the play was situated, now they can identify particulars, saying "I know the Thorician rock" or "yes, the stone bowl of Theseus' and Perithoos' oaths," playing at Aristotle's οὗτος ἐκεῖνος, *Poetics* 1448b.

[33] Smyth, on the Imperfect, tells us that it can be used in place of the present in descriptions of places and scenery and in other statements of existing fact – assimilation to the time of the narrative (set forth in main verb, 1901), a sort of "historical present" use of the imperfect. The imperfect of description (1898) offers dramatic or panoramic force and enables the reader to follow the course of events as they occurred, as if he were a spectator of the scene depicted. All this action was done according to the established way, ᾗ νομίζεται (1603), thus in line with customary procedures among the Greeks of washing and preparing the body. But here it all takes place while Oedipus is alive, or is he? He seems to be in an in-between state, since already since the beginning of the play just an "eidolon."

[34] 109, 111, 393. Cf. K. Kretler's work on "becoming the character," as yet unpublished.

In telling the tale of Oedipus' end, the Messenger enacts the purpose of a hymn/prayer to a god: he brings about an epiphany. Not of the god nor of the dead Oedipus as we've seen him throughout the play, but rather of an Oedipus transformed, an Oedipus who leads instead of being led, whom the gods call to join them, whom they address rather familiarly (ὦ οὗτος οὗτος, Οἰδίπους, 1627). An Oedipus visibly and physically present earlier, leaning on his daughters, trespassing holy ground is now "in no place present" (τὸν ἄνδρα τὸν μὲν οὐδαμοῦ παρόντ' ἔτι, 1649). Yet by speaking of him so, the Messenger keeps Oedipus present as he speaks of his disappearance. In the story the Messenger tells Oedipus changes; *by* the story he tells, Oedipus changes.

The hymn to Hades, unlike tales of Hades in Homer that elicit tears and fears,[35] is here answered without lament. Oedipus' exit is οὐ στενακτὸς οὐδὲ σὺν νόσοις / ἀλγεινὸς (1663-64). The hymn's wish has been answered, Hades and the nether gods must have heard it. Oedipus' end is θαυμαστὸς if ever a mortal's was. Perhaps this is Oedipus' feat that so deserves memory? Why doesn't Oedipus' exit, or even the hymn to Hades, elicit tears? The Messenger frames his speech in θαῦμα, wonder or amazement, giving the impression that Oedipus' end was not that of any ordinary mortal.

The lines that open this chapter reflect Oedipus' own questioning of his mortality, his humanity, or the value of his being (Ismene just had just told him of the value he would be to Thebes). Oedipus asks: "When I am no more, then am I a man?": ὅτ'

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[35] See chapter 2.

οὔκετ' εἰμί, τηνικαῦτ' ἄρ' εἴμ' ἀνήρ. With each word falling into the next, the line's clippings and leanings remind us of Oedipus' physical being in this play: his blindness and need to lean on his daughters for support (33-35; 866-67). In his rather profound question on the inner meaning of his being here, Oedipus' prosody hints at the truth of own physical being early in the play, his reliance on others to hold him up early in the play, his use of his daughters limbs for his own, as Creon later taunts Oedipus, depriving him of his two σκήπτροιν (848), and as Oedipus himself cries in delight when his daughters are returned to him, calling Antigone his σκῆπτρα.[36] This early leaning in the play, neatly "seen" by readers in the text, turns in the Messenger's speech to independence. When the god calls him, Oedipus will then lead the others, as he tells Theseus (1520-21) and his daughters (1542-43), with whom he has changed places, and as the Messenger will pronounce in amazement. Oedipus has changed.

Oedipus suggests an answer within the prosody of his question; he leaves two words complete amidst the clippings of elision, the first of two εἰμί, and the last word: εἰμί ἀνήρ. "I am a man" cries out as statement amid the question, highlighting the very problem of Oedipus in this last of Sophocles' plays: to what extent is Oedipus a man?

Moreover, the two halves of this conditional question cannot stand alone. The fully articulated "I am a man" is hidden among the clippings of Oedipus' question between its two clauses. The hidden code in Oedipus' early question is finally enacted at the play's end when Oedipus is a man guiding instead of a blind beggar being guided, leading instead of being led, going finally where all mortals go. Indeed, Oedipus'

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[36] 1109; though have we here a hint of his power in his use of these σκήπτροιν?

humanity – the fact that he will die, finally – is enacted in this very line, with the clipping of the second εἰμί just before ἀνήρ.[37]

Oedipus becomes a man who dies, yet disappears amidst wonder, θαῦμα. He is a man so transformed that King Theseus is said to have covered his eyes for fear of the sight, a description that brings us back to the chorus' first reactions to both Oedipus and the Eumenides (130, 141). Oedipus at the end seems to have been assimilated to the goddesses of the grove in which he had earlier sought refuge. Like them he offers both blessings and curses; his presence and power will be felt, even while he remains invisible to the eye. Oedipus' presence, after his departure from stage, is felt in both the Messenger's speech and in the lament of his daughters.[38] And despite Theseus' keeping the girls from their lament (παύετε θρῆνον, 1751), his following words nevertheless assimilate the dead man to the powers and forces of those dwelling beneath the earth: "it is not necessary to grieve those in whom dark night is laid up as a grace/benefit/kindness."[39]

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[37] I thank Patricia Rosenmeyer for this last addition to my reading of Oedipus' early line, in her comments on my short paper, "Enclitics, Proclitics and Elision in Poetic Questions on Man" presented at the APA Annual Meeting 2006.

[38] Indeed, such is the goal of θρῆνος, cf. S. Iles-Johnston (1999).

[39] Theseus' lines here are rather ambiguous as the χάρις he speaks of could be that offered Oedipus: a peaceful death or that he offers to Athens. Yet the use of χάρις throughout the play to describe that between people (636, 232, 249, 586, 767, 779, 855, 1106, 1183, 1484, 1489, 1497, 1776) perhaps alludes to the mysterious gift and benefit Oedipus leaves to Athens (yet it is never among the terms used throughout the play to describe this gift or benefit). Earlier Oedipus had said that the end of life, i.e. death and burial comprises one's life (585), and indeed it seems to have in the case of his life as recounted in this play.

A more fitting comparandum to our hymn to Hades is perhaps the final song of Aeschylus' *Eumenides*, when the rehabilitated Furies become a benefit, κέρδος, for the city (991). Athena has worked her Persuasion hard to convince the Furies to accept a new place and role in and for the city of Athens (885ff), and they have finally agreed (916ff). The song the Propompoi sing escorts the new "kindly ones," the Semnai, to their new abode whence their presence will nonetheless be felt (1030-31). While both the Furies and Oedipus disappear at the end of their respective plays, their presence will still be felt by the city.[40] Their respective plays rehabilitate Oedipus and the Furies so that they will each have a role and meaning for the city.

With *Oedipus at Colonus*, then, Sophocles offers his audience a human image that is preserved (and preserves the city) while it disappears: Oedipus forbids his daughters from seeing and hearing his end while Theseus seems to have covered his eyes at the critical moment (1641-42; 1650-51). No one can know where Oedipus finds his end (1526-31). The unknown and invisible place of Oedipus' disappearance will grant

[40] Indeed Oedipus' wish earlier in the play to be welcomed by the kind-hearted Eumenides already suggests an incorporation or assimilation of equals suggested in his early line "I would take the seat of the reverend goddesses," θεῶν / σεμνῶν ἕδραν λάβοιμι. (89-90). As Edmunds puts it, "In general, one could say, that in *Oedipus at Colonus*, Sophocles' characterization of Oedipus is proleptic: he is already the chthonic hero he will become." (1981) 228-29. Likenesses between the two are evident in the language used to describe each (δεινὸς: the chorus say of Oedipus at 141, δεινὸς μὲν ὁρᾶν, δεινὸς δὲ κλύειν, and he of the Eumenides earlier at 84, δεινῶπες), the effect of their names, and finally in the power and function of each (εὐμένεια, goodwill or favor, or more literally, kind with respect to μένος. μένος, might, force, temper or disposition, here hides behind a kind prefix. Theseus recognizes Oedipus' possession of εὐμένειαν (631), as the Eumenides are εὐμενῶν (486, in addition to their being called "Eumenides" 42, 486). But something terrible lurks behind a kind μένος since both are either untouchable or inhabit untouchable places (the grove at 37 and 39, Oedipus at 1131). And feared untouchables are relegated to a place (or out of a place). Just as the goddesses are kept within the grove, the chorus would put Oedipus out of the land. As if renaming or describing couldn't ward off potential harm enough.

Athens protection yet at the same time keep Oedipus as a remembered presence in and *for* the city (1764-65). The human image Sophocles presents in this play is a body unlike any other in Sophoclean tragedy. Oedipus' is a body nearly bereft of life (110) while simultaneously filled with the promise of power after death by a mysterious burial. Oedipus' end will bring about the same effect as *Oedipus at Colonus*: the preservation of a human image or images: Oedipus will save the εἶδος of Athens and her citizens while *Oedipus at Colonus* saves that of Oedipus.

ii. Poetry and Burial: preserving the εἶδος

The human image, or the εἶδος of man, is a central concern throughout Sophoclean drama. Of course, we could say as well for any poetry. I say the obvious since what is so visible is often forgotten: tragedy is poetry. Tragedy is poetry that represents the human image in action, entering into a complex web of poetic concerns.[41] The Oedipus, Ajax, and Philoctetes of Sophocles each seem to bind the human image, as eidolon (εἴδωλον), to the living body.[42] They do so by using both εἴδωλον and δέμας when speaking of themselves. Derived from εἶδος – meaning form or aspect and signifying the "look" of someone or something – εἴδωλον, with its nuance of something unreal, hints at the precarious nature of these images of bodies on Sophocles' stage, both as images and especially as images of those nearly dead.[43]

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[41] Aristotle, *Poetics* 1449b24-1450b, especially 1450a16-20; *Rhetoric* 1412aff.

[42] *Philoctetes* 946-47, cf. 1018,1030, 1257; *Oedipus at Colonus* 110, 501, 576; cf. Orestes in *Electra* asks "is this the famous εἶδος of Electra?" 1177; Heracles in *Trachiniae* speaks as a man already dead (indeed, he is dead by the hand of one already dead) 1159-61.

[43] Thus θυμοειδής and εὐειδής in Homer. Cf. Vernant, "The Birth of Images" and "From the 'Presentification of the Invisible to the Imitation of Appearance," (both in *Mortals and Immortals*, F.

Sophocles' characters, whether an Antigone, Deianeira, or a king Oedipus, all seem to be concerned with covering images – covering an already dead body (as Antigone with Polyneices') or a body that will die by the covering (as Deianeira with Heracles'). But they cover the body/image at the very moment that the image of the body is uncovered or revealed before the eyes of an Athenian audience, the moment the εἶδος is made visible: Deianeira's gift of a cloak brings Heracles on stage, Antigone's sprinkling of dust over Polyneices makes his body *the* subject of speech, Oedipus exhibits his blinded self.[44] Paradoxically, it seems, an identity or a person is revealed in full only when it is covered and hidden, when its εἶδος loses its eidetic essence. These uncoverings are not merely discoveries of a hidden identity, the move from ignorance or blindness to knowledge and sight, enactments of Aristotle's famous anagnoreseis, but also discoveries of "the real conditions of one's own existence and identity."[45]

Blind old Oedipus seems at once to conform to and yet defy this revelation in covering: his true being, his identity or εἶδος in and for Athens will be a power or gift that yet remains as invisible and hidden as his body at the end. He will leave no mark

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Zeitlin, ed. Princeton: Princeton University Press (1991) 151-185) on the evolution of the meanings of εἶδοςand εἴδωλον in Ancient Greece. Note that there are no cast εἴδωλα on Sophocles' stage of the sort we find in Aeschylus (cf. *Persians*, *Eumenides*) and Euripides (*Alcestis).*

[44] Likewise, Ajax' lifeless body becomes *the* subject of talk after his suicide: whether it will be buried or not.

[45] What P. Markell calls the "ontological" discovery in *Bound by Recognition* (Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press (2003) 88); see also his analysis of tragic recognition as "the acknowledgement of finitude under the weight of a (failed) effort to become sovereign through the recognition of identity," an elaboration of what B. Knox describes as the heroic temperament in *The Heroic Temper: Studies in Sophoclean Tragedy* (Berkeley: University of California Press (1964)). Vernant similarly argues that the warrior of the *Iliad* is most himself at the moment of his death; cf. "A 'Beautiful Death' and the Disfigured Corpse in Homeric Epic" in *Mortals and Immortals.* Princeton: Princeton University Press (1991) 50-74

where one can claim "here lies Oedipus." This invisible power will have some meaning to the society that welcomes him. In humanizing Oedipus with a burial and heroizing him by the collective civic memory of Athens, *Oedipus at Colonus* makes the parricide, incestuous Oedipus a social being of value to society.

Like burial, *Oedipus at Colonus* or poetry generally is social; it creates and maintains human social ties as it preserves the human image. Allen Grossman sees poetry as "a principle of access: a portal, a gate, a way *into* the relationship between the speaker and the means he has for making himself visible to others."[46] Poetry is also social, claims Grossman, in its making persons present to one another "in that special sense in which they are *acknowledgeable* and therefore capable of love and interest in one another's safety."[47] The triadic state of the affair of poetry makes it "a principle of the interaction of persons, which has inside it the very conditions for the continuity of the social order; not merely a speaker and a hearer, but a speaker who is in love, and a hearer who has a capacity for being in love which is enhanced by the spectacle of speaking."[48] Grossman is speaking here of Shakespeare's sonnets and Keats' poetry (in particular Keats' "when I have fears that I may cease to be..."), but his theory of poetry's role and work in the world is founded on the ancients.

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[46] Allen Grossman with Mark Halliday (1992) 17.

[47] Ibid. 9. A function of poetry to which Horace, Grossman tells us, refers in *Carmina* IV.9.25-28. Cf. Oedipus' lines, as told by the Messenger, to his daughters: ἀλλ' ἓν γὰρ μόνον / τὰ πάντα λύει ταῦτ' ἔπος μοχθήματα. / τὸ γὰρ φιλεῖν οὐκ ἔστιν ἐξ ὅτου πλέον / ἢ τοῦδε τἀνδρὸς ἔσχεθ', οὗ τητώμεναι τὸν λοιπὸν ἤδη τοῦ βίου διάξετον (1615-19).

[48] Ibid. 13.

Grossman begins this conversation with Mark Halliday by quoting Horace where that Latin poet says that there are many heroes who are unweepable, *illacrimabiles*, because they had no sacred bard to save them from a long night of oblivion.[49] Poetry's task is to keep the human image alive and it does this by speaking of another to yet a third. A form of poetry written in verse and song and (re)presenting the human image, drama in ancient Greece was always *for* an audience and in the case of Sopholcean tragedy, for an audience of Athenian citizens.[50] Poetry's task is to save the human image from oblivion and to keep that human image in civilization. By keeping the human image in civilization, poetry civilizes or maintains civilization, which is the very task that burial, with its mound and song, serve in Greek tragedy and Homeric poetry: to create a place where the human image continues to be seen and heard despite (while also perhaps because of) the bounds of human mortality.[51] Burial recounted in song offers poetic recognition or life to what is invisible while that very poetry offers civilization or humanity to the society that keeps it alive.[52] Grossman's poetic theory nicely fits a reading of *Oedipus at Colonus* that looks for the social – and when speaking of Greek

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[49] Horace, *Carmina* IV.9.26.

[50] Sophocles' work was produced at the Athenian civic festival in honor of the god Dionysus, the City Dionysia. Grossman says: "I think wherever we turn there is a political, legislative, and therefore a sociological implication about the structures of poetry, and this implication is a mirroring of its fundamental content, its deepest and most efficacious content altogether" ((1992) 11). Grossman elaborates on the political implications of poetry in his readings of Bede, Milton, Whitman and Abraham Lincoln (*The Long Schoolroom: Lessons in the Bitter Logic of the Poetic Principle.* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press (1997)).

[51] Grossman: "The poet has a role – because from the time of Homer, it has been *his* or *her* business to make images meaningful," (1992) 21.

[52] The *Oedipus at Colonus* thus enacts what structures it: the preservation of a disappearing or invisible image.

tragedy social necessarily means religious and political – implications of the play's poetics, a poetics of image-preserving and image-making.

iii. Burial and its Problems

The *Oedipus at Colonus* preserves by burying, or so it may seem. But as we saw above, no memorial or σῆμα or any physical remains of Oedipus are left at the play's end, only the image reported by the messenger. Nevertheless, the *Oedipus at Colonus* shares *Ajax'* and *Antigone*'s concern with the sacredness of burial; the god Hades himself, as Zeus Chthonios or "of the earth," calls Oedipus to his end, just as Odysseus claims burial a divine law in *Ajax* and as both Antigone and Tiresias do in *Antigone*.[53] *Antigone* and *Ajax* both ask what one does with the corpse of an enemy who is at once a φίλος and an ἔχθρος, but moreover still an ἄνθρωπος. *Oedipus at Colonus* too asks what happens to a problematic body, but changes the terms of the problem: what happens to a *polluted* body than nevertheless promises blessing?[54] *Antigone* and *Ajax* testify to the gods' demand for burial of all humans and to death as the limit of the city's laws.[55] The laws of the gods, those unwritten but uncannily known and abided, preside over what lies

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[53] *Oedipus at Colonus* 1606; *Ajax* 1343-45; *Antigone* 450-55, 519, 1066-1076. The god that calls Oedipus to death is called simply θεὸς by the Messenger (1626). Zeus is mentioned as Oedipus' summoner in vague sound and light: ἢ σεισμόν, ἢ βροντήν τιν', ἢ Διὸς σέλας, "either the shaking, the lightening or the flame of Zeus" (95). Yet it seems to me that the god the Messenger refers to can be no other than the king of the dead, that invisible one known by other names, finally given voice – reported speech – by the Messenger.

[54] It has always been Oedipus' body that causes trouble but that brings blessing; recall his solution to the Sphinx' riddle and his dissolution of her hold on Thebes upon arriving at the city. Yet his arrival in Thebes inevitably leads to his committing the bodily transgression of incest. Oedipus continually transgresses the bounds of body.

[55] As does the gods'preserving the bodies of the dead of Sarpedon and Hector in Homer.

at the edges of the city and her laws: everything before and after death.[56] As polluted yet powerful, Oedipus' body poses a problem because no one can touch it, yet it is desired for its promised aid. Both its pollution and its power mark Oedipus' body as a divine care. Endowed by the gods with a gift, Oedipus' body and where it will lie puts the sacred, with poetics, at the center of the play. We've already seen how the play's end in song and speech (poetry) endows Oedipus' end with mystery and wonder and assimilates Oedipus the human with the powers of the Eumenides below the earth.

Moreover, Oedipus' mortality, his dead body or image/εἶδος, as a gift to the city intertwines the sacred and poetic with the political. Oedipus will die and in death will find, finally, a fit home *in* and *for a city*. But at stake in *Oedipus at Colonus* is *where* that home will be: back in his native land of Thebes, just outside it, in Theseus' reverent Athens, or an unnamed place just outside it? *Oedipus at Colonus* will preserve the rehabilitated image not only of the disappearing Oedipus, but of the place where Oedipus' image will find rest and continue, in a sense, to live. The poetics of Hades that preserves Oedipus, preserves at the same time the place of Oedipus' end.

Talk about image-preserving and burial could lead to a discussion of the visual in *Oedipus at Colonus*. But the imagery of sight and blindness in the play has already been elegantly and rather exhaustively discussed.[57] Therefore, as befits a blind Oedipus who

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[56] Cf. M. Davis "Politics and Madness" in *Greek Tragedy and Political Theory.* Euben (1986) 142-161.

[57] On sight and blindness in the *Oedipus at Colonus* see M. G. Shields, "Sight and Blindness Imagery in the *Oedipus Coloneus*" in Phoenix 15 (1961) 63-73; E. A. Bernidaki-Aldous, *Blindness in a Culture of Light: Especially the Case of Oedipus at Colonus of Sophocles.* New York, Bern, Frankfurt am Main, Paris: Peter Lang (1990); D. Seale, *Vision and Stagecraft in Sophocles.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press (1982).

claims that much will be seen in what he says – ὅς ἂν λέγωμεν πάνθ' ὁρῶντα λέξομεν (74) – and in keeping with the stuff and aims of poetry as elaborated by Stewart, Grossman and the play's end – the discussion here will focus on voice, speech, and sounds, the very uttering of words or keeping them silent. In Athens, the *Oedipus at Colonus* would not only have been seen by its audience but also experienced in sound. Focusing on voice and pronouncements fits this play whose images are at risk of falling to oblivion if not for certain pronouncements, particularly those having to do with naming names, as we saw in the Messenger's turning the unhewn rock into the Thorician.[58] Before the Messenger's speech, all the particulars of *where*, despite the knowledge of Colonus once the stranger reveals it, retain ambiguous and shifty identities that seem to speak proleptically of Oedipus' end with Chthonian Zeus. In the Colonus of *Oedipus at Colonus* and its grove of the Eumenides, much hangs on a name, whether one has one, what it is, what it signifies, and the response it evokes in its hearer when pronounced out loud.

Naming something gives it substance, much as putting an article in front of an adjective or noun turns it from a descriptive (man, bold) into a subject or object (the man, the bold). Hades, we saw in the last chapter, is famously called anything other than by his voiced name, "Hades." He hides behind others like "Ploutos," the wealth that comes from his dark realm, or Chthonian Zeus, and is sometimes known without a name at all,

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[58] We take our cue also from the stranger when he says to Oedipus early in the play, "however much I know you will know *hearing* all": ὅσ' οἶδα κἀγὼ πάντ' ἐπιστήσῃ κλύων (53).

his realm expressed simply by the adverb, ἐκεῖ, "there."[59] Which brings us back to the question Oedipus asks at the start of *Oedipus at Colonus*, the guiding questions of the play: *where*? And *who?*[60] Pronouncing names of places and people or leaving them unspoken and threatened with oblivion, is the crafty poetic work of *Oedipus at Colonus*, a poetics that suggests a tie to that ultimate hidden, invisible, and unutterable name that points to a place: Hades.

iv. Naming: People and Places

Oedipus himself serves a perfect example of the problematics of naming. Not the interpretation of his name, "Oedipus," but his naming himself, his calling card, so to speak, in this play.[61] The Oedipus we meet in the *Oedipus at Colonus* is far from the king who *is* the city of Thebes in the *Tyrannus*.[62] Oedipus the young king sits at the helm of a city, while the old man of the *Colonus* has spent many years wandering, is literally nowhere, finds himself somewhere and learns that he is there, where he will end his days. A city's distant towers are visible, Athens'. Such is the extent of geographic clarity at the start of the *Colonus*. The divide between being somewhere and nowhere, between the

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[59] The Messenger says κτύπησε μὲν Ζεὺς χθόνιος (1606).

[60] A neat example of reference to Hades and his realm by pronoun and adverb occurs in Plato's *Cratylus* when Socrates explains to Hermogenes why people fear Hades: because once dead they will always be there, ἐκεῖ, and because the soul goes to him, παρ' ἐκεῖνον, naked of the body; Plato, *Cratylus* 403b.

[61] See B. Knox, *Oedipus at Thebes: Sophocles' Tragic Hero and his Time.* New York: W.W. Norton and Company (1957) 182-184 for remarks on the pun of Oedipus' name in the *Tyrannus.*

[62] cf. *Oedipus Tyrannus* 63-64, where Oedipus equates himself with the city. Oedipus addresses the citizens of Thebes as children in lines 1 and 58; Oedipus equates the grieving of his soul with that of the city, 63-64. Here in *Oedipus at Colonus*, Oedipus names himself right away, in line 3. But no one who doesn't know him will benefit from this identification. Moreover, Oedipus' saying "who will welcome the wandering Oedipus," distances somewhat Oedipus the wanderer, the object of the sentence, from the Oedipus who is talking.

king and the old man, is echoed in the manner by which each proclaims his identity. The young king boldly claims his name before the city in a perfect iambic pentameter in his and the play's eighth line – ὁ πᾶσι κλεινὸς Οἰδίπους καλούμενος – while the blind old man of the *Colonus* keeps his name in the family and shares it with others only after two hundred lines and much questioning (and even then, in the accusative, or objective case, rather than his younger incarnation's bold nominative).[63] In addition to asking *where* at the very start of *Colonus*, the play forces us to ask also *who*; who is this old man? Does his name reflect his identity? Does Oedipus' name reflect in the *Colonus* what it has come to signify on the tragic stage: a polluted parricide, an incestuous creature?[64] Indeed, these early questions ask the audience to reconsider what they already know of this character, for this play, as we have seen, will transform Oedipus the parricide into "Oedipus" the living power in the city. How and when the names of people and places are revealed will guide us in considering the poetic work of preserving Oedipus' name, along with that of Colonus.

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[63] Parallels to King Oedipus' full heroic line in Sophoclean tragedy: Deianeira's naming of her husband (ὁ κλεινὸς ἦλθε Ζηνὸς 'Αλκμήνης τε παῖς; *Trachiniae* 19); the Paedagogus' opening address to Orestes (ὦ τοῦ στρατηγήσαντος ἐν Τροίᾳ ποτὲ / Αγαμέμνονος παῖ; *Electra*, 1-2) and Odysseus' first address to Neoptolemos (ὦ κρατίστου πατρὸς 'Ελλήνων τραφεὶς / 'Αχιλλέως παῖ Νεοπτόλεμε; *Philoctetes* 3-4). King Oedipus' line differs strikingly and tellingly from these, however, in its lack of a patronymic or any allusion to descent. King Oedipus claims to "be called" and to "be known" or "famous" in his name alone (κλεινός, καλούμενος), an early hint of that play's problem: generation. Compare also the end of the first line of the *Iliad*, Πηληϊάδεω 'Αχιλῆος, and the beginning of its seventh, 'Ατρείδης.

[64] The question could be extended to other characters in the play known from earlier works of Sophocles: who is the Creon who is about to come, or Polyneices? Are these the same Creon and Polyneices we know from elsewhere on Sophocles' stage? In focusing much of the play on obscuring names and identities, the play seems to be consciously asking its audience to re-consider a character's identity (this fits nicely with critical readings that see the play as Oedipus' transformation).

To counter darkness and make beings present to one another poetry can easily name a person and sing his/her fame. But what if poetry holds back the name, keeping it hidden, like that of Hades? Holding back a name casts a religious shade over it since in mysteries (and when talking about the gods) pointing or alluding was called for more than direct naming.[65] Poetry, then, has a connection to the sacred since poetry is associative; it points to something, σημαίνειν, and thus serves a similar function to the tomb, τύμβος or as it was better known in epic, the σῆμα that marks where one's remains lie and that offers a subject for song and poetry.[66] We've already seen the similar work burial and poetry do in preserving the human image. Let's extend that here to the work of preserving the name, for poetry preserves image through speech and language.[67] The renown of a Hector remains because we sing "Hector." What about "Oedipus"? And "Colonus"?

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[65] Hence the chorus' cautious words at the start of their Hymn to Hades, noted above. Naming, in the Mysteries, would bring on pollution, and pollution is something this Oedipus has certainly had his share of. Perhaps holding back his name is an attempt to keep his pollution from the sacred space of the grove/Colonus? Or an early hint at Oedipus' rehabilitation in this play?

[66] σῆμα is a grave mound 21 times in epic: *Iliad*: II.814; VI.419; VII.86, 89; X.415; XI.166; XXI.323; XXIII.45, 255, 331; XXIV.16, 51, 349, 417, 755, 799, 801. *Odyssey*: i.291; ii.222; xi.75. Cf. C. Sourvinou-Inwood, *Reading Greek Death to the end of the Classical Period.* Oxford: Oxford University Press (1995) 109ff. Likewise, Homer never speaks of someone's grave, only of someone's grave monument (except in the singular case of Hector's bones, *Iliad* XXIV.797). What is left of the dead to the living becomes the living memory and marker of the one gone and points to him, both in life and in death. One could also say that the pointing out of, yet back to, of Greek epic poetry and tragedy is witnessed in its being sung by one who is not Hector or Achilles or Oedipus, but rather by one standing in for the man, the way a τύμβος is a σῆμα for something and not just a rock or plaque.

[67] On poetry and burial serving a similar purpose vis-à-vis song: R. Garland notes that the importance of the ritual lament – a poetic form incorporated in tragedy (for example the threnos Electra sings a the start of Sophocles' *Electra*, or the kommos between Electra, Orestes, and the chorus in Aeschylus' *Choephore*; or as the shade of Agamemnon describes occurred at Achilles' funeral in *Odyssey* xxiv) – rivaled or even equaled that of burial itself, citing as evidence frequent passages in literature where the two activities are combined (R. Garland, *The Greek Way of Death*, second edition. Ithaca: Cornell University Press (2001) 30).

A blind Oedipus is led by his daughter Antigone to an unknown area at a distance from a city everyone they've met on the road has told them is Athens. Oedipus' first question, then, "where are we?" is both odd and unique on Sophocles' stage. The setting of any given play is conventionally known to and described by at least one of the characters entering the skene: Odysseus describes Lemnos to the young Neoptolemus in *Philoctetes*, the Paedagogus of *Electra* Argos to Orestes. Similarly, an Antigone will say "I have come outside the outer gates," or an Athena to Odysseus "I see you at the tents of Ajax," to pronounce early on *where* the poet's imagination has brought the audience that day.[68] Yet instead of the demonstratives and verbs of sight so often found in Sophocles' opening speeches, his *Oedipus at Colonus* begins with a blind man and a series of interrogative and indefinite pronouns.[69] Keeping the place of *Oedipus at Colonus* unnamed at the very beginning of the play keeps the Athenian audience wondering, like Oedipus, "where are we?" Description leads the mind to wonder more and to make inferences by association.[70]

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[68] *Philoctetes* 1-3, 16-20; *Electra* 4-10; *Antigone*, 18-19; *Ajax*, 3-4; cf. *Trachiniae* 39.

[69] Athena in *Ajax*, 1: δέδορκα σε...ἐπὶ σκηναῖς ... ὁρῶ; Paedagogus in *Electra*, 2-9: νῦν ἐκεῖν' ἔξεστί σοι...λεύσσειν...τόδε...ὅδε...ὁρᾶν...τόδε; Oedipus in *Oedipus Tyrannus*, 2: τάσδε; and the Hierux in the same play, 15-22: ὁρᾷς...εἰσορᾷς. Antigone's litotes, *Antigone*, 6: οὐδὲν ...οὐκ ὄπωπ' ἐγὼ and her τοῦδ'. Deineira's ἐν Τραχῖνι τῇδ' and the The Nurse's κατεῖδον in *Trachiniae* (39, 50); Odysseus in *Philoctetes*, 1-2: ἀκτὴ μὲν ἥδε τῆς ...Λήμνου; and Neoptolemus' δοκῶ γὰρ οἷον εἶπας ἄντρον εἰσορᾶν in the same play (27). *Oedipus at Colonus*, in contrast, gives us τίνας, τίνων, τίς in the first three lines, τινα and then ὅπου ποτ' ἐσμέν (ὅποι in 23 and 170) all in the first 35 lines.

[70] Could the audience already be guessing they are watching the arrival of Oedipus in Hades? Surely an Athenian audience was already sensitized to not being certain about fictional space. This wouldn't have bothered them, perhaps, but rather more intrigued them to wonder.

And the first descriptions at once introduce the sacred into *Oedipus at Colonus.* Sweet sounds of birds and the sight of certain vegetation (the laurel, olive, and vine) lead to Antigone's announcement that the place is sacred. She infers from what she sees and hears: χῶρος δ' ὅδ' ἱερός, ὡς σάφ' εἰκάσαι.[71] She and her father have been wandering for a long time and at the first possible moment, they stop; Oedipus sits down to rest and a local inhabitant arrives, at once trying to move Oedipus from his seat. The Colonean stranger affirms Antigone's inference when he says to Oedipus, "you are on land that is not holy to tread," ἔχεις γὰρ χῶρον οὐχ ἁγνὸν πατεῖν.[72] Stepping on this ground is as impious as naming it since Oedipus' insistent, "but what is the place," (τίς δ' ἔσθ' ὁ χῶρος;) remains unanswered. The stranger does not name names, but offers further description: untouched, uninhabited.[73] To the second part of Oedipus' question, "whom of the gods is it considered to be?", the stranger again first offers description: "the dread goddesses, Earth and Darkness' daughters."[74] We may wonder at the number of their daughters since Oedipus' curiosity doesn't seem sated. He asks again, now specifically, for a name.[75] And one is finally granted, but not without qualifications: "The all-seeing Eumenides, as the people here would say; but elsewhere

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[71] 16.

[72] 37. Note again the use of χῶρος, the unnamed and indeterminate "place."

[73] ἄθικτος οὐδ' οἰκητός, 39. Intangibilty of Hades and of the images there, cf. chapter one.

[74] 39-40: αἱ γὰρ ἔμφοβοι / θεαί σφ' ἔχουσι, Γῆς τε καὶ Σκότου κόραι.

[75] Oedipus asks for a reverend name since belonging to the gods: τίνων **τὸ σεμνὸν ὄνομ'** ἂν εὐξαίμην κλυών Σεμνὸν : verbal adjective derived from σέβομαι > σεβνός: something that inspires a religious respect, mixed with fear. Said of numerous divinities, most notably Demeter, the Erinyes; cf. Chantraine (1984) 993.

they are called otherwise."[76] Names don't simply say once and for all who or what one is; they don't always fully denote.[77] Others coming here from abroad might not recognize the native name "Eumenides"; elsewhere the goddesses are known under another name. Yet coming from elsewhere, Oedipus does recognize them, for in the stranger's response he has heard the watchword of his destiny, ξυμφορᾶς ξύνθημ' ἐμῆς, and does not want to be sent from this place ever.[78] He's arrived at his χώραν τερμίαν, Hades.

We have, finally, one local name for the goddesses, but no name for the locale. We now know that the place (χῶρος) with Athens in view is holy and held by goddesses who instill fear, descend from dark nether places, and are known under many names but here by one encouraging kindness.[79] And so, when Oedipus repeats his question, τίς ἔσθ' ὁ χῶρος, "what is the place?" the stranger again describes the place, giving the names of divinities associated with it: revered Poseidon holds it, the fire-bearing Titan

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[76] 42-43: τὰς πάνθ' ὁρώσας Εὐμενίδας ὅ γ' ἐνθάδ' ἂν / εἴποι λεὼς νιν· ἄλλα δ' ἀλλαχοῦ καλά. As Ellendt explains on this line, καλά is "de *more* et *usu* dictum significant *quod decet.*" (*Lexicon Sophocleum*, second edition. Hildesheim, Zürick & New York: Georg Olms Verlag (1986) 366).

[77] As "Oedipus" in this play bears witness.

[78] Ξύνθημα derives from the preposition "with" and a noun derived from the verb "to put" or "place", τίθημι. Θῆμα, Chantraine tells, is equivalent to θήκη and τάφος; we have then an allusion to the end of the play, with its mysterious burial of meaning for the or to the city here at the start. Ξύνθημα is also the word the Messenger used in his description of the place Oedipus came to in the end, the place where the ξυνθήματα of Theseus and Perithoos lie, further marking the place *where* and *here* as an entry to Hades.

[79] It is curious that the Eumenides here are rather different from their counterpart in Aeschylus' *Oresteia* and even other works of Sophocles, most notably *Electra* (113). In those plays, the Eumenides are first the Erinyes, the furies, who, like those here, see all, but see most significantly murder in the house (and transgressed family law in *Electra*). Furies pursue transgressors, most famously Orestes; yet Oedipus, the most famous transgressor in Greek myth, has here been seeking *them* out.

Prometheus is in it.[80] The place is "the bulwark of Athens" and her bronzefooted threshold, again suggesting that this is the end place, the entry to Hades.[81] And finally, Colonus appears towards the end of the Xenos' speech. Apparently the descriptions, he assumes, do better service than the name since the place isn't known in speeches.[82]

The chorus and Oedipus share the stranger's apprehension to name names. The chorus of elder citizens of Colonus enter the stage looking, scouting, seeking out the stranger Oedipus whom they call merely "old man," πρέσβυς.[83] They tremble as they near the area where Oedipus hides and they keep themselves blind – they don't dare cast a glance – and mute as they pass the holy grove: παραμειβόμεσθ' ἀδέρκτως / **ἀφώνως, ἀλόγως** τὸ τᾶς / εὐφήμου στομα φροντίδος / ἱέντες.[84] Their action here hints at the grove's later metamorphosis to grave as it was advisable to pass graves in silence for fear of stirring up the wrath of the dead, a hint reinforced by the grove's association to chthonic powers.[85] The stranger had given the name "Eumenides" for the goddesses of the place, but clearly they have another side than "kindly ones." The locals

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[80] Oedipus' question is a near duplicate of his first, suggesting that the first was not answered.

[81] 57-58: χθονὸς καλεῖται τῆσδε χαλκόπους ὀδός / ἔρεισμ' Ἀθηνῶν. cf. 1591 where the Messenger describes the place Oedipus comes to using similar language, see above.

[82] 62-63.

[83] 124; they do not yet know who the old man is.

[84] 130-133. It is odd, though, that the chorus do indeed scout and search while singing that they do neither. The enunciation of the action, or in this case inaction (not looking, not speaking) betrays their very action and words. They are not just speechless, ἀφώνως, but without reasoned speech, ἀλόγως. Does the place effect their minds?

[85] R. Garland (2001) 4.

call them so for the same reason the Socrates of Plato's *Cratylus* says people call Pherephatta Persephone and Hades Ploutos: fear of the name. We witness here the same fear felt by the chorus' propitiatory address to Hades and the invisible goddess at the end of the play. Words, and names in particular, have an occult power. One would rather have the visible wealth that comes from the earth than become invisible below it, a kindly welcome than a vengeful pursuer.[86]

Oedipus is not so lucky to have a sobriquet like the dread goddesses', hence his reluctance to reveal his identity. "Do not ask me who I am," he answers the chorus' "who of mortals are you? Who was your father?" With a significant reversal from the Oedipus of the *Tyrannus* who so proudly stated his name famous to all, our blind old Oedipus knows the power of a name – the power of *his* name – and therefore keeps his hidden.[87]

Finally succumbing to the Coloneans' inquiries, Oedipus prevaricates. Again in contrast to his younger incarnation's full declarative tetrameter, our old man speaks in

[86] On Hades-Ploutos connection: Hades himself is associated with agriculture in cult; in Hesiod he is called "Chthonian Zeus" and is prayed to with holy Demeter for a good crop (*Erga kai Hemerai* 465ff.). This occult power of names is part of the presence-ing which Stewart and Grossman find to be *the* work of poetry.

[87] The entire structure of the play inverts the structure of traditional guest-welcoming scenes in poetry (and also, for that matter, suppliant plays and suppliant scenes in epic. Usually, the suppliant has a city targeted and arrives stating who they are and what they want, as in Aeschylus' *Suppliants*, Euripides' *Heraclidae* and *Suppliants*; cf. Wilson (1997)). The traditional structure of a guest-welcoming scene, like those Odysseus experiences in *Odyssey*, finds the guest offered food and drink and then "after he put away his desire for food", the host asking the stranger/guest, ξένος, who he is and where he is from. In *Oedipus at Colonus*, Oedipus arrives somewhere, asks where he is, stays put, and then is visited, first by a ξένος, then by a series of other characters. Oedipus is clearly already at home once the ξένος pronounces his watchword. Perhaps naming the ξένος character such, when Oedipus appears to be the stranger, hints at Oedipus' at-home-ness in this new place. And his home is a grove/grave, fitting for one who calls himself early on the "wretched shade of the man Oedipus whose body is not what it was": ἀνδρὸς Οἰδίπου τόδ' ἄθλιον / εἴδωλον· οὐ γὰρ δὴ τό γ' ἀρχαῖον δέμας (109-110).

half-line questions: "Do you know a certain (τινα, an indefinite, again) descendant of Laius? The tribe of the Labdacids? Wretched Oedipus?" Each half line elicits its completion in mere sound from the chorus, first ἰοὺ, then ὦ Ζεῦ. The utterance of the name "Oedipus" finally finds the chorus enacting Aristotle's famous οὗτος ἐκεῖνος. "You are that one?" σὺ γὰρ ὅδ' εἶ; ask the chorus, using a demonstrative to point to the two, the name and the person before them, before they fall into speechlessness, mere sound, the ἀλογῶς of which they spoke earlier before the grove, the sound of inarticulation in the face and name of something so frightful: ἰὼ ὢ ὤ ... ὢ ὤ.[88] Recognition of this man returns the chorus to the stance in which they claim to recognize the inhabitants of the grove: speechlessness and fear.

Articulated names lead to inarticulateness, stirring fear and eliciting an alternative voicing of the power they possess: "Eumenides" instead of "Erinyes," "Ploutos" instead of "Hades," ἰὼ ὢ ὤ ... ὢ ὤ instead of the full name, "Οἰδίπους." The chorus are well aware of the occult power of words and names. Hence their causal reasoning in their instructions for Oedipus' cleansing ritual to the gods (θοῦ νῦν καθαρμὸν τῶνδε δαιμόνων): "*since* we call them Eumenides, ask them to welcome you, suppliant, as saviors with kind hearts," ὥς σφας καλοῦμεν Εὐμενίδας, ἐξ εὐμενῶν / στέρνων δέχεσθαι τὸν ἱκέτην σωτηρίους / αἰτοῦ σύ.[89] Naming them kind-hearted will bring goddesses that are kind-hearted instead of furious. Or so one hopes. What's in a name?

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[88] 224. The chorus' οὗτος ἐκεῖνος here doesn't produces the delight at learning Aristotle promises, but rather a regression to a state of inarticulate sounds (Aristotle, *Poetics* 1448b17).

[89] 486-88.

Oedipus asks this very question just after he has divulged his own and the scene that ensues brings up the question of reputation, name, and action. Hearing "Oedipus," the chorus command Oedipus to leave (βαίνετε, 226, ἴσθι, 254), for they fear the gods (τὰ δ'ἐκ θεῶν τρέμοντες, 256). Oedipus counters: "What price fame? The glory of one's name?"[90] Called most reverent (εἰ τάς γ' 'Αθήνας φασὶ θεοσεβεστάτας[91]), Athens threatens her reputation (κληδὼν and δόξη)[92] with her attempt to banish Oedipus.[93] In her fear of another's name Athens risks losing her own. ὄνομα μόνον δείσαντες, accuses Oedipus, and by acting on that fear Athens would as well as bury her own name and reputation, becoming as unknown and invisible as Colonus is at the play's start. Μὴ κάλυπτε, he says, using a verb often associated with burial;[94] Athens would bury her blessed self, εὐδαίμονας 'Αθήνας, with unholy or profane acts, ἔργοις ἀνοσίοις.[95] In covering herself and clouding her fame, Athens would simultaneously dim the gods' splendour, for they depend on her reverence. Oedipus says μὴ θεοὺς τιμῶντες εἶτα τοὺς θεοὺς / ποιεῖσθ' ἀμαυροὺς μηδαμῶς,[96] prompting the

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[90] 258-59, translation by Nick Rudall in his *Oedipus at Colonus*. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee (2001).

[91] 260.

[92] 258.

[93] 279-280, 287, 1006-1007, 1125-27; cf. 204-206, 216.

[94] 282; καλύπτω is the verb used in *Iliad* when death covers someone over: V.553, IV.461, 503. And also when dark night covers one over: XIII.580, XIV.439, XVII.591. When one is covered with earth or by a grave: Aeschylus, *Persians* 582; Sophocles, *Antigone* 28.

[95] 283

[96] 277-78. This is Fraenkel's reading, after Nauck.

translation, "don't pay lip service to the gods," or its complete elision.[97] But the line is crucial here as it bears witness to Oedipus' knowledge of the problem of names. Athens would lose her name and become invisible if she were to dim the gods.

While Athens and Oedipus are known by name and reputation and while they each must prove or rehabilitate the meaning of their name, the land in which the action of play occurs is at first unnamed – it is merely χῶρος – and gradually gets revealed in song. The song of *Oedipus at Colonus* establishes the contours and borders of the place Colonus, much as the poetry of Homer did for Hades, bringing it into presence.[98]

And the song that draws the contours of Colonus, the first choral song, forms a ring with the last, the hymn to Hades we looked at above. There, the chorus addressed the god himself and gave an image of Hades by describing the journey there as painful, the guard dog as menacing, and the whole place a plain of corpses.[99] Here the chorus address their song to Oedipus as stranger, ξένε, and their very first syllable signifies the good in the place: εὐίππου.[100] But darkness lurks at the edges of Colonus in her sounds, particularly those of the nightingale.

Antigone had noticed the nightingale's sweet song upon her arrival at the place (18). Now, while chirping birds may at first sound sweet, one must be wary of the

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[97] F. Storr's translation in the Loeb edition.

[98] Yet the place will continue to be called by this vague, because unnamed, yet definite name: χῶρος. Cf. 2, 16, 24, 37, 38, 52, 650, 1058, 1520, 1540; related χώρα: 89, 145, 226, 296, 404, 637, 669, 700 727, 788, 909, 934,1024, 1476,1553, 1765; used in *Oedipus at Colonus* more than in any other of Sophocles' extant work, hence hinting once again at the importance of place, but also, and more important to this paper, the unnamed-ness of the place.

[99] Cf. 1556ff. and section II.i above.

[100] 668.

nightingale, especially on Sophocles' stage. McDevitt reminds us that "mention of the nightingale alludes to death."[101] Indeed Sophocles' Electra identifies with the nightingale as a fellow mourner who, like her, will mourn forever for the death of a loved one.[102] Marking the nightingale as one in a series of several allusions to death in the Ode on Colonus, McDevitt convincingly argues that the movement of the imagery is at odds with its content: the imagery moves from light to dark while the content of the ode seems one of praise. The nightingale image is "the first link in a chain which runs throughout the ode, a chain of imagery in which light and darkness, joy and gloom, life and death, are inextricably entwined."[103] The intertwining of life and death and life after death in song is further underscored by the ode with which this one forms a ring: the hymn to Hades we looked at earlier. The ode to Colonus is the first in the play, welcoming Oedipus to his haven; that to Hades, wishing an easy welcome to Oedipus in the dark realm, is the play's last.

The nightingale's presence in the grove of the Eumenides evokes not only the mournful tone of Hades heard in the final ode, but the perpetual song in Hades witnessed in the *Odyssey*. Recall the flip side of mournful song: deathless song. With the

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[101] McDevitt "The Nighingale and the Olive: Remarks on the First Stasimon of Oedipus at Colonus" *Antidosis: Festscchrift für Walter Kraus*, R. Hansik et al, eds. Vienna (1972) 227-237, especially 230-234.

[102] Sophocles, *Electra* 107, 148; cf. 1076.

[103] ibid. The ode, Mc Devitt argues, imagistically expresses the paradox of Oedipus – that only after he dies will he really be alive – and thereby "foreshadows the central action of the play, by characterizing Athens as a place where new life arises in the midst of death. At Athens, Oedipus will find a safe refuge, but at the same time we are made to see that he has come to the right place to discover his immortality" (237); cf. also C. P. Segal (1999).

nightingale as resident, the grove becomes a place symbolic of immortality via song and poetry, but a poetry of mourning. The ode thus refers not only to the inner drama of the play, but also to the drama of tragedy itself.

III. Conclusion

Through its choral songs, the *Oedipus at Colonus* links Colonus to Hades, shading this ambiguous place just outside Athens in the colors of that dark realm. Welcoming Oedipus to one is as welcoming him to the other. Singing the praises of the place in the Ode to Colonus prepares for the hymn to Hades, hiding the dark realm in the bright foliage of the town at the edge of Athens. At the start of our discussion on naming, we mentioned the religious or ritualistic nature of naming and not naming. It is time, as we conclude, to return to this question of the relation between religion or ritual and poetics in the *Oedipus at Colonus.*

Homeric epic gave a clear picture of Hades and the dead who dwell there. *Oedipus at Colonus* presents us with an old man seemingly already dead, preparing for his burial and end, an unknown place with hints of Hades, and the only hymn to Hades in Greek poetry. The hymn, we saw, is sung with slight hesitation, for fear of bringing about an epiphany of Hades, making him and his realm manifest. At the same time, the *Oedipus at Colonus* exhibits a concern with naming names as Oedipus' hesitation to name his own and the stranger's delay in naming the place show. One aim of poetry is to keep the human image alive. One aspect of mystery religions is to keep the images

hidden and the names unspoken, at least to the uninitiated. Poetry and mystery religions, then, seem to work at odds.[104]

The play therefore actually speaks of poetry's powerful force: in remembering the special dead, it will save the city. And in sharing that remembrance in the song of tragedy, Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus* helps Athens help itself. At least this seems to be the belief Sophocles puts forth at the end of the *Oedipus at Colonus.* The afterlife of Athens and of Oedipus at Colonus speaks of its truth. What then is the benefit Athens will get in remembering the poetic persona re-presenced for them in *Oedipus at Colonus*? She will remember that Hades is not just where Odysseus went to hear how to get home, but a place just outside the city's limits that marks the limits of the human beyond the limits of the city.

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[104] At least for the uninitiated. Perhaps with his *Oedipus at Colonus* Sophocles is initiating his Athenian spectators into a new religion? A religion of the poetry of theater and drama's ability in subtle turns to speak the spoken things and show the shown things to an audience of those in the know? The shift from direct to indirect visualizing of the un-visualizable between Homeric epic and Sophoclean tragedy is perhaps linked to the difference between poetry and poetry, for while the Homeric epics were probably recited throughout towns and villages on numerous occasions, tragedy was part of a religious, city festival. Sophocles seems with this final play to associate poetry's concern with a name to the city's need for religion or ritual.

Chapter Four

Playing Dead: Electra in Hades / Hades in *Electra*

"In our life here above ground we have,
properly speaking, to enact Hell."

Goethe

I. Introduction

In *Antigone* Oedipus' daughter makes the invisible τύμβος and τάφος she eagerly sought in *Oedipus at Colonus* clear and visible for all to see. Defying Creon's edict forbidding Polyneices burial, Antigone adheres to what she calls "the unwritten steadfast laws of the gods" and buries her brother.[1] To be sure, the poets never offer any reason *why* the dead must be buried other than the unelaborated explanation that such is the privilege or gift (γέρας) of mortals and that the gods wish it to be so.[2] Yet in Sophocles' time, non-burial on the city's soil was not out of the question for traitors such as Polyneices, and recent critics have explained the play's problematics by encouraging a reading that moves away from the strict polarity inspired by Hegel, Holderlin and structuralist readings that view *Antigone* as a dramatic conflict or agon between such polarities as the city/family, male/female, inside/outside, and rational piety/irrational piety.[3] Contextualizing *Antigone* in the time and place of its production, these critics argue that given the presence of non-burial in 5th-century Athens, audiences would not have been as shocked by Creon's edict as Antigone. Yet these critics nevertheless remain fixed on justifying either Antigone and her claims or Creon and his, keeping the argument of

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[1] Cf. Antigone's speech beginning at 450, especially line 454-55: ἄγραπτα κἀσφαλῆ θεῶν / νόμιμα.

[2] Cf. *Ajax* 1343-44, 1129-1131, 1364-65; *OC* (see chapter three); *Iliad* XVI.457, XXII; *Odyssey* xi.534, etc. For an anthropological explanation of burial as a means of alleviating pollution see M. Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An analysis of concept of pollution and taboo* (London & New York: Routledge Classics (2002)) and J. Redfield (1994) 160ff. Tiresias' speech at *Antigone*1064ff makes it clear that the gods are not pleased with Creon's decision to leave one destined for Hades above ground while putting under ground a living being.

[3] D.S. Allen (2000b) suggests that the work of punishment consisting in exposure or expulsion (such as that of Polyneices in *Antigone*) was to remove a problem from the city (206ff).

Antigone grounded in the dichotomies represented by the two.[4] Hence such comments as, "on the one hand Creon is an epic character, but on the other hand he is also a character in a fifth-century play, and the course of the play will show that his refusal was wrong,"[5] or "despite all this, the play is saying that cause was right, and the polis was in the wrong. Understanding the will of the gods is not easy."[6] Sophocles is not one to leave his audience with a simple answer; indeed, by problematizing an act that may have been unquestioned in actual Athenian practice of the day, Sophocles calls into question the city's laws and way of being and thus plays on what Vernant and Vidal-Naquet have termed the "tensions and ambiguities" in the newly developed polis.[7] Questioning the relation between the gods and the city in *Antigone*, we would be wise to keep Hester's remarks in mind: "Sophocles is interested in drama, not theology; he is prepared to put up with the theological difficulties and to present the story as a story for its own value."[8] Which begs the question: what is the value of the story? Or, what is the story?

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[4] cf. V. J. Rosivach, "On Creon, *Antigone* and Not Burying the Dead" in RhM 1983 CXXVI (193-211); Rosivach notes that Plato's outlawing of the blocking of *anairesis* (picking up the dead bodies) from his ideal city "suggests that the practice of preventing burial was more prevalent in the real world of the fifth and fourth centuries than our historical sources would lead us to believe" (203, fn 36). D. A. Hester, in "Sophocles the Unphilosophical: A Study in the *Antigone*" (Mnemosyne, series iv, volume xxiv (1971) 11-59) argues that the philosophy and religion found in *Antigone* (and the rest of Sophocles' work) are conventional and don't ask to be questioned. Similar is the argument Sourvinou-Inwood puts forth in "Assumptions and the Creation of Meaning: Reading Sophocles' *Antigone*" (JHS Vol. 109 (1989) 134-148); there, Sourvinou-Inwood too argues that *Antigone* should not be read as a subversive text since Sophocles was considered a solid citizen in 5th-century Athens and was believed to have been elected general in the wake of *Antigone*'s stage success. Reading not *Antigone* but Plato, oratory and legal documents , D. S. Allen in "Envisaging the Body of the Condemned: The Power of Platonic Symbols" (CP 95 (2000a) 133-150) shows how viewing or seeing the body of a condemned criminal was "the crucial concluding moment of a punishment." In Allen's longer treatment of punishment in democratic Athens, she notes that viewing the condemned or punished "conveyed the threat of execution" to citizens, *The World of Prometheus: The Politics of Punishing in Democratic Athens.* Princeton: Princeton University Press (2000b) 237.

[5] Rosivach (1983) 209.

[6] Sourvinou-Inwood (1989) 148.

[7] J.-P. Vernant and P. Vidal Naquet (1990) 29-48.

[8] D. A. Hester (1971) 46.

I bring up *Antigone* only as a backdrop to reading another play with a similar story, Sophocles' *Electra.* Like Antigone, Electra laments her unwedded state, her alone-ness and even for a moment envisions herself successfully achieving that for which she most yearns.[9] *Electra* takes up the themes and problematics of *Antigone* – burying a returned and dead brother – but as the *story* of *Electra* is not that of *Antigone* so Electra finds a different end from her tragic counterpart: Antigone embraces a life in death, while Electra a death in life.

Sophocles' *Electra* is a play of vengeance. Orestes and Electra scheme to execute a brutal revenge against their mother, Clytemnestra, for the murder of their father, Agamemnon. The mode of revenge, feigning death and demanding burial, turns *Electra* into a play about playing and in particular about playing dead.[10] *Electra* takes the sacred laws of burial present in *Antigone* and *Oedipus at Colonus* (as well as in *Ajax* and the poems of Homer) and turns them on their head, using them as a ruse to commit murder.[11] A death is

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[9] 119-120, 164-65, 954ff.

[10] By "play" and "playing" I simply mean here mimicry by acting; but as the play in *Electra* is one of life and death, *Electra* fits Caillois' description of play that combines mimicry and agon ; cf. Roger Caillois, *Man, Play, Games.* New York: Schocken Books (1961), originally published under the title *Les jeux et les homes* (Paris: Gallimard (1958)).

[11] The law of burial is sacred since grounded in the will of the gods. Yet while founded on divine will, Sophoclean characters give various reasons for burying or not burying. Antigone in her play views burial as honor (see her early use of προτίσας and ἀτιμάσας when speaking of the τάφος, 21-22: Eteocles is given honor but Polyneices deprived thereof). Tiresias in the same play connects burial and non-burial to pollution: what is to be buried must be put under ground and what is meant for the living must be left above, or else the signs of the gods will be barbarized and sacrifices unaccepted: 999ff . According to the seer, burial is an issue of putting things where they are meant to be and Creon suffers from confusing the realms (this is not unlike Douglas' or Redfield's arguments for purity and pollution, see fn. 2). On the altars' illness, cf. 1015ff. On the confusion of realms, cf. 1068-1073 and especially the retribution from both realms to which Tiresias alludes in 1074-75. In the *Ajax*, we are offered three reasons for burial: to honor man, to honor the gods, to look out for oneself. The Atreidae view burial as man-ruled, hence their view of burial as honoring the dead man. Menelaus suffers the same folly as Creon; he believes political control extends to the dead (1067-69) and that as ruler of the army he decides who will get burial (1087-1090; 1132). Ajax' brother Teucer sees burial as an offering to the gods and denial of burial a dishonor to them and their laws (1129-1131). Odysseus convinces Agamemnon to bury Ajax' corpse arguing doubly for a divine and human need vis-à-vis burial: not burying dishonors the gods' laws rather than the man (1342-44); it is unjust to harm a noble man who is dead, even if you hated him (1344-45); men need each other for burial (1365), and men who bury are χρηστός (1369). In Homer one deprives his adversary of burial (or at least tries to) in order to dishonor him and commit him to oblivion instead of

faked and its deceiving report elicits both a lament over an empty urn and funeral rites prepared by an ambiguous mother for a son assumed dead who, in fact, has returned in disguise to kill her. By presenting a play at death, Sophocles, this chapter argues, stages Hades as a play of deception. In the last chapter, Oedipus was unveiled as a shade about to enter a grove metaphorically standing-in for Hades. The same poet whose audience/reader witnesses the sacredness of burial and Hades in the *Oedipus at Colonus* and the political/juridical questions raised by the very existence of Hades in *Antigone*, in his earlier *Electra* uses those sacred laws for a murderous plot that turns on a lie.[12] *Antigone* turns on hiding and covering or exposing a corpse; yet knowledge of whether that corpse is covered or uncovered is clear throughout the play, beginning with Creon's very proclamation of exposure.[13] Hades' veiled presence and the deceptively covered corpses in *Electra*, however, complicate what can be seen and thus known among the characters in *Electra*, a fitting role for Hades in a play of deception.

Building on the sacred aspect of Hades discussed in chapter three's reading of *Oedipus at Colonus*, this chapter exposes the poetic aspect of Hades and asks after the

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making of him a subject of song (indeed Hector seems to commit his enemy to oblivion without defiling and even with burial by claiming that *he himself*, the slayer, will be remembered at the tomb of the one slain). On the privilege of burial, see above, fn. 2. While several different reasons are given for burial in Homer and Sophocles, all seem grounded in the idea of the sacred and the social: the human body is something that needs special care and cannot be left to the non-human realm of the beast. Burial marks the limits of the human (see chapter two).

[12] The *Oedipus at Colonus* is famously numinous throughout; Oedipus arrives at a holy, untrodden place filled with divinities and destined to be his resting place and he actually disappears into this divine-filled place at the play's end (see chapter three). One of the major problems in *Antigone* is a misunderstanding of city's bounds: Creon believes them to extend underground to Hades and thus honors Eteocles there but deprives Polyneices of any place there. Tiresias must explain to Creon the proper place for things, or the bounds between the upper and lower worlds. "Hades desires these laws,"(519: ὅμως ὅ γ' ῞Αιδης τοὺς νόμους τούτους ποθεῖ) Antigone tells Creon. "No one escapes Hades," (361-362: ῞Αιδα μόνον φεῦξιν οὐκ ἐπάξεται) sings the chorus; the avenging spirits of Hades and the gods (above) lie in wait for a Creon who has muddled the realms and remains obstinate in his view, Tiresias tells Creon (1074-76).

[13] That some are covered and others not is the very problem of the second half of *Antigone*, as Tiresias makes clear at 1069ff.

relation of the poetic to the sacred. Hades has a double role in *Electra*, a representational one – Sophocles seems to set his *Electra* and Electra in Hades – and a metaphorical one – Hades in *Electra* points to other visibles and invisibles: people, memory and poetry. While an invisible and silent player on the stage of *Electra*, Hades, this chapter will show, is rather active at covering over or revealing ideas, notions and characters throughout the play, at times obstructing sight at others offering it. I keep Antigone in mind since Hades is so apparent in her play.[14] In *Electra* he is revealed more subtly. Seeing more clearly both the representational and metaphorical role of Hades in *Electra* will give us a deeper understanding of the poetics of this play and also of Sophoclean poetry more generally.

What is poetics? Greek says it simply: ἡ ποιήτικη, things having to do with poetry. Poetry, ποιήσις, comes from the Greek verb ποιέω meaning "to make" or "to craft." Poetry is thus something made or crafted, by man. Aristotle introduces his treatise on the subject of poetics (or the art of poetry) saying that he proposes to speak,

> περὶ ποιητικῆς αὐτῆς τε καὶ τῶν εἰδῶν αὐτῆς, ἥν τινα δύναμιν ἕσκατον ἔχει, καὶ πῶς δεῖ συνίστασθαι τοὺς μύθους εἰ μέλλει καλῶς ἕξειν ἡ ποίησις ... ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ περὶ τῶν ἄλλων ὅσα τῆς αὐτῆς ἐστι μεθόδου ...
>
> ... about poetics itself and also its shapes/forms and their respective capabilities, and how to correctly fit together plots/stories if the work is to turn out well, and similarly anything else that is relevant to a study of this kind.[15]

Poetics according to Aristotle is thus a study of the nature, function and form of poetry.[16] Aristotle's concern is with the making of poetry and the making of which he speaks

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[14] "Hades" appears more often in *Antigone* than in any other extant tragic text (fifteen times: 361, 519, 542, 575, 581, 654, 777, 780, 810, 822, 905, 1075, 1205, 1284, 1241).

[15] Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1447a.

[16] Contemporary critics, such as Leslie Kurke (*The Traffic in Praise: Pindar and the Poetics of Social Economy* (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press (1991)), conceptualize poetics in terms of social function.

comes from the poet; the poet is the one who will fit together stories and make the shape or εἶδος of his creation successful. Aristotle's use of τῶν εἰδῶν here to note the forms of poetry (lyric, epic, dramatic) is telling, since he turns quickly to images themselves, εἴδη, as a way of describing poetic effects, thereby making a claim about cognition and human experience. We "see" more easily what a complex idea means when given an image that illustrates it. Indeed, it is through images on stage that poets bring about effects on their viewers and bring them understanding or even knowledge.

Later on in his *Poetics* Aristotle speaks more specifically about media, objects, and the manner of poetic imitation. When speaking of tragedy Aristotle claims that the plot is its soul or lifeblood: ἀρχὴ μὲν οὖν καὶ οἷον ψυχὴ ὁ μῦθος τῆς τραγῳδίας.[17] Two necessary elements of a good plot are "reversals" and "recognitions," Aristotle's famous περιπέτεια and ἀναγνώρεσις.[18] In this section Aristotle claims that spectacle has little to do with the poet's craft or with the art of poetry, "for the power of tragedy is independent both of performance and of actors."[19] The power of tragedy lies in the poet's work, his words, Aristotle tells us; the effect produced should be as strong in the listener of the tale as in the spectator of its en-action on stage. Yet inasmuch as he puts action before our eyes in words, spectacle lies within the poet's purview.[20] The poet's work in words grants vision or sight and obstructs it, for the anagnoreseis and peripeteiai

[17] Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1450a.

[18] Ibid, 1452a22-1452b9. The feelings peripeteiai and anagnoreseis effect are that other famous couple of Aristotle's poetic theory, pity and fear, ἐλέος καὶ φόβος (1452a38-1452b1).

[19] Ibid 1450b16ff: ἡ δὲ ὄψις ψυχαγωγικὸν μέν, ἀτεχνότατον δὲ καὶ ἥκιστα οἰκεῖον τῆς ποιητικῆς· ἡ γὰρ τῆς τραγῳδίας δύναμις καὶ ἄνευ ἀγῶνος καὶ ὑποκριτῶν ἔστιν.

[20] In *Rhetoric* 1411aff., Aristotle uses "bringing before the eyes" as a way of describing the effective use of metaphor. Aristotle defines "bringing before the eyes" as "signifying things engaged in activity," (1411b) which seems to imply, in the *Rhetoric*, using verbs that mark action, in the present. Dramatists, then, could be said to put action before our eyes because their very words are meant to be enacted or report action and hence are full of *enargeia*; cf. *Poetics* 1455a17.

he makes necessarily have to do with seeing and knowing, or not seeing, covering, hiding, and not knowing, especially in *Electra.*[21]

It has been widely noted that classical Greece privileged sight over the other senses, and perhaps this is why Aristotle chooses images to explain concepts.[22] Hence the essentializing of vision in Greek language, the Greek idealization of the nude body, the birth of the theater and of being a spectator in the city.[23] The reversals that finally lead to recognitions in *Electra* necessarily connect sight to knowledge. And this relation is further complicated by two other notions in the play, namely death (a certain kind of reversal) and memory (a certain kind of recognition), for it is through reversals of death – of death from life and life from death – that recognitions and reversals are brought about in *Electra.* While in *Antigone* speech and action are clear for all to see, from Antigone's act of burial (86-87, 443) to Creon's speech forbidding it (8, 27, 32, 34, 192), such is not the case in *Electra.* Sight, knowledge and death are hardly straightforward in Sophocles' *Electra.*

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[21] This is also evident in *Oedipus Tyrannus*, where what is at stake is Oedipus' finding out, seeing, who he is; cf. Segal (1993).

[22] Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes: the Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought.* Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press (1993) 22; J.-P. Vernant, ed. *The Greeks*, trans. C. Lambert and T. L. Fagan. Chicago: University of Chicago Press (1995); B. Snell, *The Discovery of the Mind: Greek Origins of European Thought*, translated by T. G. Rosenmeyer. New York: Harper and Row (1960). C. P. Segal in "Spectator and Listener" (in J.-P. Vernant ed. (1995) 191) says: "Important as the aural experience is for memory and the transmission of culture, Greek thought tends to privilege vision as the primary area of knowledge and even emotion." For a modern interpretation of, or play at, antiquity's favoring sight and vision over hearing, witness the character of Bill Norton in Ismail Kadare's *Le Dossier H.* Paris: Fayard (1989).

[23] On Greek as a visual language, cf. Segal (1993); Snell (1960) 1-4. On the citizen as spectator, see S. Goldhill, "Greek Drama and Political Theory" in *The Cambridge History of Greek and Roman Political Thought*, Christopher Rowe and Malcolm Schofield, in association with Simon Harrison and Melissa Lane, eds. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (2000) 62-63; S. Monoson, *Plato's Democratic Entanglements: Athenian Politics and The Practice of Philosophy.* Princeton: Princeton University Press (2000) chapter 4: "Citizen as *Theates* (Theater-Goer)." D. S. Allen shows how images or symbols are manipulated by the Socrates of Plato's *Republic* to enlarge his interlocutors' imaginations from the limited symbolic world of Athens (2000b).

II. Unseen on Stage: the paradox of "theater"

While its plot of vengeance may seem clear and direct, much is in fact unseen, unclear, or hidden in Sophocles' *Electra* and therefore unknown. How can one state such a claim when talking about theater, drama intended for the stage and seen by an audience of Athenian citizens? More curiously, while tragedy, or drama more generally speaking, is said to be so-called because its characters act (δράω), its characters, in fact, speak as much as they may "do" and their actions, especially those murderous and bloody, more often are reported than acted out on stage.[24] And yet the theater bears a name that speaks of the spectacular, of sight and vision. Θέατρον comes from the verb "to gaze at" or "to behold," often with a sense of wonder or contemplation, θεάομαι.[25] The ancient Greek theater, then, is a place specifically meant for watching and seeing. Poets writing for the theater in 5th-century Athens, and if one takes Aristotle's word, Sophocles especially, used

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[24] Aristotle on drama so-called because of acting: *Poetics*, 1448a28-29: ὅθεν καὶ δράματα καλεῖσθαί τινες αὐτά φασιν, ὅτι μιμοῦνται δρῶντας. Examples of reported, rather than acted action in Sophocles: Oedipus' self-burial, Deianeira's self-stabbing, Antigone's self-hanging, and Haemon's self-stabbing are all reported. Ajax is the only tragic Sopholcean character who may have committed suicide on stage. Surprising in *Ajax* is the Messenger's arrival from the side of the stage other than expected and then Ajax' own return to the stage after his so-called "deception speech." For discussion of the staging of Ajax' suicide, cf. S. Scullion *Three Studies in Athenian Dramaturgy* (Stuttgart 1994) 89-128 and G. Ley "A scenic plot of Sophocles' *Ajax* and *Philoctetes*" Eranos 86 (1988) 85-115. More often, dead bodies are revealed to the audience on the ἐκκύκλημα, the wheeling-out device, for a revelation of death and the dead as a Messenger reports the action already committed off-stage (as Clytemnesra in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*,1372ff., and Orestes in his *Choephore*, 972ff.). Agave plays the ἐκκύκλημα and unwitting messenger when she enters carrying Pentheus' head at the end of Euripides' *Bacchae*, 1169ff. *Oedipus at Colonus* is unique in that the revelation of the dead there coincides with the disappearance of the dead (see chapter three).

[25] As at *Iliad* VII.444, θηεῦντο, of the gods watching the Achaeans build fortifications over the grand pyre on which they have just buried the war dead; or again at XXIII.728, θηεῦντο of the people watching Odysseus and Ajax wrestle. At *Odyssey* ix.218, Odysseus tells how he and his companions looked in wonder at everything in Polylphemus' cave when they entered it: ἐθηεύμεσθα; and at ii.13 all the people look at Telemachus in wonder as he comes forward in the assembly with the χάρις of Athena poured over him: θηεῦντο. The verb θεωρεῖν was originally derived from the noun θεωρός, "to be a spectator," and stresses the fact that the eye apprehends an object. This is the word from which comes our "theory" and philosophic *theoria* (Snell (1960) 4; Jay (1993) 24-25). Cf. S. Monoson (2000), especially chapter 4.

this viewing place to spectacular effect.[26] Why, then, talk of things that are left unseen or hidden in a work specifically intended to be seen in a space built especially for viewing? I think that Sophocles asks us to look for the hidden in this play about hiding and disguise, particularly as the disguise is a dead man who properly belongs in the hidden realm of Hades and not on the tragic stage of viewing. While Aeschylus literally put ghosts on his stage (Darius, Clytemnestra), Sophocles indirectly offers his audience a glimpse at the hidden realm of the dead. Is this blurring of an unseen realm with one made for seeing intentional? If so, to what end?

Critics have discussed the myriad ways Sophocles uses sight and blindness both in his texts and on his stage as a metaphor for man's tragic position.[27] Indeed, Oedipus' lack of self-knowledge and search for self-identity is underscored in Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus* by the heavy use of verbal forms for knowing and seeing in that play and by Oedipus' self blinding after gaining self knowledge.[28] I would suggest that Sophocles plays with sight and blindness in his work to point up not only the tragic position of man, but the human attempt to make meaning out of being in that place.[29] In *Electra* the play at

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[26] Aristotle credits Sophocles with the addition of scene-painting, σκηνογραφία, on the tragic stage, thus highlighting the poet's attention to the visual; cf. Aristotle, *Poetics* 1449a18. Cf. 1449b31ff: ἐπεὶ δὲ πράττοντες ποιοῦνται τὴν μίμησιν, πρῶτον μὲν ἐξ ἀνάγκης ἂν εἴη τι μόριον τραγῳδίας ὁ τῆς ὄψεως κόσμος.

[27] Most notable among these are D. Seale (1982); M. G. Shields (1961); E. A. Bernidaki-Aldous, (1990). On sight, vision, blindness and poetics in Euripides' work, see C. P. Segal, *Dionysiac Poetics and Euripides' Bacchae*. Princeton: Princeton University Press (1982). See also R. Padel's essay on the space of the theater and the development of scene painting, most notably of the skene door and the boundaries between inside and outside, the place through which the unseen can be revealed, as the fit space for Greek tragic drama and its concerns with unseen insides – the house, the mind, the underworld, "Making Space Speak" in J. J. Winkler and F. Zeitlin, eds. (1990) 336-365.

[28] Similarly, the tension between secrecy and revelation is witnessed in Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* 615-616 and 1372-76, Sophocles, *Philoctetes* 55, 908-15 and throughout Euripides' *Hippolytus*, and that between the seen and the unseen in Euripides' *Ion*, 778-81, 190-229, 233, 249-250, 272, 1321-22. See also F. Zeitlin's "Playing the Other: Theater, Theatricality, and the Feminine in Greek Drama" in J. J. Winkler and F. Zeitlin (1990) 63- 96.

[29] Cf. Allen Grossman's "bitter logic of the poetic principle" in *The Long Schoolroom: Lessons in the Bitter Logic of the Poetic Principle*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press (1997).

sight and blindness is brought about by human manipulation of Hades. The unseens in this play of a play at death advance the plot while speaking beyond the plot to larger issues at stake in the play: sight, knowledge, death, memory, and the poetic effects of the interrelation of these concepts.

Six sections follow, all bound by Hades from below, as I shall show him to be both metaphorically and representationally at work through the poetics of *Electra.* I begin with Electra and the Paedagogus: while both seem to employ epic poetics – both seek to immortalize the dead by offering signs of the dead – I will show how Electra's and the Paedagogus' poetics seem to work at odds: one hides while the other reveals; we might say one is a poetics of truth while the other is a poetics of deceit or fiction.[30] Following the discussion on the particular poetics of Electra and the Paedagogus, I move to read the effects of these poetics on the play's action: how signs of death are misread when heard through a poetics of deceit. Signs of the dead bring the discussion to Clytemnestra's dream and finally to the play's revelation of who's really dead and alive at the play's end. Through these readings we can better see the poetics of visibles and invisibles – or Hades – at work in this play of deceit and death.

III. Hiding Hades, Hades Hiding

In Sophocles' version of the events following the murder of Agamemnon, Electra has been living in the palace at Argos with her murderous mother, her mother's partner in crime and bedmate Aegisthus, and her sister Chrysothemis since the day of her father's murder. Time, for Electra, seems to have stopped there. Since that day, Electra has been spending her time in repetitive, endless lament for her father's murder and wishing for her

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[30] To borrow Finkelberg's terminology (1998).

brother's promised but unfulfilled return to Argos to effect vengeance.[31] The play opens with Orestes returning to Argos after a long absence led by his Paedagogus and accompanied by his friend Pylades.[32] A plot is hatched: Orestes will be announced dead to the palace so that he can enter alive unrecognized. How is this announcement effected? Or rather, how is the living Orestes recast as dead in order to bring about death? Orestes will die like any other mortal; he will be made invisible. But instead of being covered by earth or dust as Polyneices is in *Antigone*, Orestes will be hidden by words and props that are particularly meant to commemorate the dead and to keep their memory alive in time to come. And he will be hidden in order to put another out of sight, to kill. As a play at disguise and deception, *Electra* turns on hiding and revealing the dead, seeing and blindness.

How does the unseen, hidden or unknown come to light in *Electra*? As a play whose plot turns on hidden identity, *Electra* may at first seem a detective story. But *Electra*'s is not a detective plot along the lines of *Oedipus Tyrannus* where the unbearable shame of finally finding out and knowing one's identity leads the hero to deprive himself of sight and light.[33] Far from the masks that leave Oedipus guessing at an identity until he

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[31] Electra's endless lament and repetitive behavior in general: 87-95, 328, 330, 516 1445-46, 1456. Her repetitive action is underscored by the constant use of αὖ and ἀεί to describe her actions in the lines cited here and elsewhere. Time stops for Electra, like it does for the dead in Homer's Hades, the day her father was killed. Orestes' talk, but no action, of return, 319.

[32] That a long time has past is clear from the Paedagogus' language; he says to Orestes, "now you can, since you are here, behold all you *always* yearned for," νῦν ἐκεῖν' ἔξεστί σοι / παρόντι λεύσσειν, ὧν πρόθυμος ἦσθ' ἀεί (2-3); and Orestes says that the Paedagogus can enter the palace unrecognized by his old age and the long time that has passed, οὐ γάρ σε μὴ γήρᾳ τε καὶ χρόνῳ μακρῷ / γνῶσ', οὐδ' ὑποπτεύσουσιν ὧδ' ἠνθισμένον (42-43).

[33] Sophocles, *Oedipus Tyrranus*, 1371ff. Oedipus blinds himself because he cannot bear the thought of looking on his parents when he gets to Hades: ἐγὼ γὰρ οὐκ οἶδ' ὄμμασιν ποίοις βλέπων / πατέρα ποτ' ἂν προσεῖδον εἰς Ἅιδου μολών / οὐδ' αὖ τάλαιναν μητέρ', οἷν ἐμοὶ δυοῖν / ἔργ' ἐστὶ κρείσσον' ἀγχόνης εἰργασμένα. On the hermeneutics of detective stories, cf. F. Kermode, "The Novel and Narrative" in *The Theory of the Novel: New Essays*, J. Halperin, ed. New York: Oxford University Press (1974) 155-174 and Kermode's *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction.* Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press (1968). On the *Oedipus Tyrannus* as a detective story, cf. C. Segal, Oedipus Tyrannus: *Tragic Heroism and the Limits of Knowledge*, second edition. Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press (2001).

finds the truth, the characters of Sophocles' *Electra* know all too well who they are and, in fact, are hyper-conscious that they mask their on-stage actions. *Electra* is a play of conscious plotting and hiding rather than chance occurrences. Hence a Chrysothemis sailing at half mast, a Clytemnestra who hides her prayer to Apollo, a Paedagogus disguised by age, and Orestes' existence in hiding since his father's murder, the lie of his death and his urn.[34] Aegisthus, too, is hidden or unseen – because absent in person while present in name – for most of the play. Yet he is not outside the game of hiding or unveiling in which the other characters take part.[35] What you see is not what you get in *Electra*, or rather, what you don't see is what you will get!

Electra stands apart from these others who hide themselves in the palace of Mycenae, for she admits that her actions don't fit her character and feels ashamed at her behavior. Οἶδα τε καὶ ξυνίημι τάδε οὔ τι με φυγγάνει, she answers the chorus' mild rebuke at her behavior.[36] "I know and I understand these things, they do not escape me." She repeats her claim when they sharpen their tone – ἔξοιδ', οὐ λάθει μ'ὀργά – and begins her first proper speech saying αἰσχύνομαι, I am ashamed.[37] But Electra does not change her face or hide her character before others the way her mother, sister, and brother do to fit the situation at hand. Her mask or face, in contrast to theirs, marks real emotional

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[34] Chrysothemis, 335; Clytemnestra, 638; Paedagogus, 42-43; Orestes and his urn, 54ff., 680ff., 1110ff., 159.

[35] The play's end finds Aegisthus an unwitting participant in an unexpected, for him, unveiling: that of Clytemnestra's corpse.

[36] 131.

[37] Repeated claim, 222. First speech, 254. It would be interesting to investigate the workings of shame in this play. The posture of shame is of lowering your gaze, of not looking at another, or not showing your own, face. Cf. G. Ferrari on the visual representation of αἰδώς as the enveloping mantle. The complete metaphor, as Ferrari explains, is "*aidos* is a mantle", (2002) especially 73ff. I can hardly imagine our "ashamed" Electra not meeting the eyes of her mother with whom she brazenly engages in feisty antagonism. Moreover, the dynamics of the gaze is complicated within this pose of shame by the masks the characters of *Electra* don, above and beyond those called for by the conventions of Ancient Greek theater.

changes that are nevertheless due to one thing Electra does have in common with the others: she too cannot see, and therefore does not know, all that is afoot.

This role playing in Sophocles' *Electra* – hiding one's scripted character, so to speak, to take on another – has elicited insightful studies on the meta-theatrical element of Sophocles' theater. Mark Ringer argues that all of Sophocles' work tends toward meta-theater and that the *Electra* is Sophocles' most self-conscious attempt at this sort of play.[38] Arguing that Sophocles' meta-theater grew out of contemporary political surroundings – a Greece ravaged by war where nothing can be simply said or trusted – Ringer reads Orestes' hollow urn as a symbol for the theater in the era in which *Electra* was staged: a place where boundaries were violated or made unclear, where meanings varied from one person's vocabulary to another's.[39] Post-war Athens was a place where noble words and deeds existed only in the theater and their representation could be "nothing more than a shell, a false shape standing in for an equally false original – a prime illustration of Plato's view of poetic mimesis."[40] Ringer argues, thus, for an external political cause of Sophocles' internal poetics.[41]

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[38] Mark Ringer (1998).

[39] Cf. Thucydides on the domino effect of revolution in Corcyra on other cities, III.82: "words had to change their ordinary meanings and to take those which were now given to them," καὶ τὴν εἰωθυῖαν ἀξίωσιν τῶν ὀνομάτων ἐς τά ἔργα ἀντήλλαξαν τῇ δικαιώσει, κτλ.

[40] Ringer (1998) 128. Ringer finds a "dramatic macabre rhyme between the urn and Clytemnestra's grave offerings early in the play: "Both objects are 'props' inside the fictive world of the tragedy. Within the play, the queen's offerings have a real form and tangible content. But for all their solid and costly materiality, they are spiritually empty. Conversely, Orestes' urn is empty, but the deadly mimesis it helps to illustrate brings death to the king and queen. The urn is empty of ashes, yet full of destructive power. Clytemnestra's hypocritical grave offerings will only find spiritual meaning if they are saved to adorn her own grave" (155).

[41] Ringer's argument thus bears some resemblance to Vernant's in his "Tensions and Ambiguities in Greek Tragedy" in *Myth and Greek Tragedy.* In that essay, Vernant finds in tragedy a distillation of the tensions and ambiguities, incoherences and contradictions, which arise with the new social structures of the polis. Likewise, Ringer's bears a resemblance to the causal argument made by those critics who find the tragedians using language in a particularly novel way, exploiting its inherent ambiguities in a world finding its place in a new democracy. For example, Knox's discussion of *Antigone* (1964), Goldhill on δίκη in the *Oresteia* (in his *Reading Greek Tragedy.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press (1986) 33-56) and Segal on φίλος and ἔχθρος in Sophocles' *Electra* , (C. P. Segal "The *Electra* of Sophocles," TAPA 97

Ringer's thesis finds its inspiration, in part, from much of Segal's work and in particular Segal's inquiry into the symbolic dimension of visual symbols on Sophocles' stage.[42] In a discussion of props including Orestes' urn, Ajax's sword and Philoctetes' bow, Segal likens the urn to Pentheus' mask in Euripides' *Bacchae*. As symbols "of tragedy calling attention to its own medium as a literary fiction and as a set of conventions of language, action, music, and dance," both the sword and the bow are meta-tragic.[43] Likewise Orestes' urn, according to Ringer the central prop of Sophocles' *Electra*, calls attention to the fiction of drama. But the peculiar nature of tragedy reveals that dramatic fictions can bring truth to their spectators. If we surrender to the fiction and lose ourselves (as Electra will over the urn) "to the power of imagination, we can in some measure find ourselves, discover or recover some hidden, unfamiliar part of our identity."[44] If we broaden Segal's conclusion, in surrendering to the fictions of *Electra*, we (or its original audience) may perhaps find a hidden unfamiliar (and feared) part of (but apart from) the city – Hades – and thereby complete the city's identity, or speak of its origin.[45]

Anne Batchelder, too, bases her argument in *The Seal of Orestes* on Sophocles' metatheater, or rather, metapoetry.[46] She reads *Electra* as a play about poets in competition.

(1966)). The ambiguity inherent in tragic language speaks of an aspect particular to Greek tragedy: to reveal disagreements within a new and evolving legal system replete with contradictions to religious and moral thought. Ringer shows this ambivalence to be expressed in theater's self-consciousness.

[42] C. P. Segal, "Visual Symbolism and Visual Effects in Sophocles" in *Interpreting Greek Tragedy: Myth, Poetry, Text.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press (1986) 113-136. See also Segal (1982), especially chapters 7 and 8.

[43] Segal (1986) 127.

[44] Segal (1982) 217; in the same chapter, Segal argues that the discrepancy between what is said and what is seen at *Bacchae* 633 "makes manifest the invisible, inner workings of Dionysus but enacts the realm of symbol itself as the only means of representing that hidden but nonetheless very evident power of the god" (220).

[45] Fiction brings truth; there is need of imagination to give a picture of the unseen, hence our use of images to elaborate concepts (examples, metaphors, etc, for the non-philosopher).

[46] A. Batchelder (1995).

Bathchelder finds Orestes' seal, his σφράγις (1223), as the driving prop in the play, seeing it both as the poet's means to differentiate the innovative turns in his own play from his predecessors' telling of the tale and to mark *Electra* as his own, very much like the σφράγις of elegaic poets.[47] The ring in *Electra* is a token of recognition unlike the lock of hair and footprints that bind the siblings physically in Aeschylus' *Choephore*. In Sophocles' *Electra*, the seal is paternal and belongs to the father (τήνδε...σφραγῖδα πατρὸς) and thus binds Orestes to Agamemnon and his reign – rather than to his sister – and makes him the rightful heir to the throne and the poet who directs the play's trajectory.[48] Batchelder's argument, thus, can be read as politics internal to the play working in or through its internal poetics.

Like Ringer's, Batchelder's argument rests on the notion of self-reference in Sophocles' *Electra* and focuses on performance. The "self" in her argument refers not merely to Sophocles' poetry but the theater itself, "the medium that makes the poet's composition come to life in performance. More than that, the theater that serves as historical context for the self-references of Sophocles' *Electra* is none other than the state theater of Athens."[49] Unlike Ringer, Batchelder does not see politics external to the play affecting its poetics. Rather, she sees internal poetics influencing internal politics; he who controls the play controls the rule of the land in the play. This has one implication within the poetics of the play and broader implications if transferred to the world external to the play.

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[47] Theognis I.19 especially comes to mind here.

[48] Sophocles, Electra 1222-23: τήνδε προσβλέψασά μου / σφραγῖδα πατρὸς ἔκμαθ' εἰ σαφῆ λέγω, "Looking at this paternal σφράγις of mine learn if I speak true." The father's seal on the son's hand also maintains the political sense of Clytemnestra's doubly told dream of the young shoot blooming from Agamemnon's scepter and covering the land of Mycenae. Cf. K. Ormand, *Exchange and the Maiden: Marriage in Sophoclean Tragedy*. Austin: University of Texas Press (1999) 72 on the double telling of the dream; the second telling is abstract and deprives Clytemnestra of reproductive power in her very own οἶκος; reproductive power is transferred to the male.

[49] G. Nagy in the Foreward to Batchelder (1995) viii.

Batchelder's study of the inner poetic workings of Sophocles' *Electra* is of a part with her claim that Sophocles' main concern is of the poet and the poet's voice on stage and in the city. Orestes' and Aegisthus' contest for poetic and political control – of both *Electra* and Mycenae – can be transferred onto a larger frame: that of the poet who holds authority in a community and has the persuasive voice to convince or constrain his audience – in this case, the citizens of Athens – to believe his words.

Metatheater, the self-consciousness and self-referencing within the dramatic text, is more obvious in comedy – we need only think of Aristophanic parabaseis – than in tragedy, hence studies like Ringer's to find the hidden clues in Sophocles that tell his audience that he's actually speaking about theater. Sophocles' poetry, in this kind of reading, becomes a critique of poetry. Do these metatheatrical or metapoetic readings help our understanding of the representational and metaphoric role of Hades in *Electra* and the poetic effects thereby brought about in this play at death? Perhaps we should keep them mind as we read the play and return to them at the end when we can more fruitfully judge their useful parts. One useful reminder from Batchelder's work is of the poet's place in society.

In ancient Greece the poets were thinkers and educators; some were even law-givers, as Solon, or held important civic offices, like Sophocles. Being a poet was not a solitary work as it may often seem to be in our modern age, but one shared with an audience, a community, through performance and was thereby "closely linked to the realities of social and political life."[50] As public poetry, ancient Greek poetry was meant not only to please

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[50] B. Gentili, *Poetry and Its Public in Ancient Greece: From Homer to the Fifth Century.* A. Thomas Cole, translator. Baltimore & London: The Johns Hopkins University Press (1988) 3. Allen Grossman shows how poetry in the modern age (by this I mean after the birth of Christianity) is exactly not the solitary work it seems, but rather continues in the ancient model of making persons present to one another; cf. Grossman (1992) and (1997). In a chapter on Milton in *The Long Schoolroom*, Grossman shows how poetry works to effect politics and religion (the two in Milton's time can hardly be distinguished); in another on Lincoln and Whitman he finds the poet citizen and the citizen president effecting the same "perceptibility" of their world (the one through making the difference between the living and dead in his elegy, the other in establishing the difference between persons and things in his

(whether aesthetically or emotionally), but to

> inform and instruct, most explicitly so when composed with the needs of specific groups and occasions in mind: symposium, community festival (*komos*), and male club (*hetairia*), for instance (Alcaeus and Theognis); or female *thiasos* and the premarital initiatory rites celebrated there (Alcman and Sappho); and this continued to be true when it took to the stage and adopted the modes and forms of dramatic representation.[51]

Drama educated both its spectators and its participants, since its chorus members were citizens of Athens and not professional actors and dancers.[52] And its poets were actually teachers or didaskaloi. Sara Monoson tells us that "when the herald proclaimed, 'Bring on your chorus,' to mark the start of the performances, we can presume that utterance meant more than, 'Let the performance begin.' It meant something like, 'Show us (citizens) your (poet) skill at teaching.'" [53] Dramatic poetry continued the work of earlier poetry by composing for an audience. But the manner, mode and object of its imitation differed from earlier poetry. The mode of dramatic representation was imitation, or mimesis, but unlike the imitations of lyric poets, tragedy, as Aristotle famously put it, is "the imitation of an

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emancipation of the slaves). In a footnote at the end of that chapter Grossman says that his discussion of Whitman intends to show "that a serious political poetry (like a serious policy of any kind) is not merely an advocacy, but an addition to the given repertory of conjunctive relationships, such that "literary" judgment about the poetry's success or failure constitutes an assessment (or "problematic") of the coming-to-pass, as an actual state of affairs, of the life that is its "subject." In this sense, a poetic structure is a political policy. Whitman identified for modernism, and for our time as well as I believe, the heuristic primacy of the structural features of poetry." (Grossman (1997) 84, fn 32).

[51] Gentili (1988) 3. See also Redfield (1994), 41ff; Aristophanes, *Frogs* 1008-1012, and the prevalent use of the verb διδάσκειν, to teach, in Greek tragedy generally, especially its closing note in Sophocles' *Antigone*.

[52] Non-professional citizens always formed the members of the chorus; being a chorus member one fulfilled one's civic duty and civic education.

[53] S. Monoson (2000). Chapter 4 of Monoson's book is a wonderfully concise and well written exposition of the City Dionysia and its education of the citizens of Athens in their role as spectators or theates. See further her bibliography on drama as part of the citizen's education in 5th-century Athens. Cf. R. Rehm, *Greek Tragic Theater*. London & New York: Routledge (1994).

action" and an "imitation (mimesis) not of men but of action."[54] This imitation of images *in movement* and *acting* is what brings about the desired effects of tragedy, the reversals and recognitions. Aristotle believed the purpose of tragedy was emotional; it allows for the katharsis or purgation of the very emotions it generates in its audience.[55] He does not speak explicitly of the educative value of tragedy or even of poetry; but he does claim that we learn through imitation and that imitation is the stuff of art and poetry; therefore poetry is by its mimetic nature educative.[56] I mention Aristotle here to remind of the very basic nature of this poetry that was deemed educative; it is mimetic or imitative. What education, then, do we get from the mimeseis of *Electra*?

Let's begin with the play's setting, the ancient house of Pelops (10), in Mycenean Argos (4-9). Or, to be more precise, the play is set just in front of the palace, for Electra tells us that she sings πρὸ θυρῶν, before the doors (109, cf. 818). She sits at the edge of the dark interior of the palace (1494), an interior filled with memories of murder and adultery (92ff., cf. 780ff.) soon to be filled again with death and dead ones (1404-5; 1493-98). Electra's world, surrounded by death and memories of the dead, seems not too far from the Hades we witnessed in Homer in chapter two. To be sure, *Electra* and Electra do not dwell in Hades nor visit there as Dionysus and Xanthias do in Aristophanes' *Frogs*.[57]

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[54] Aristotle, *Poetics* 1449b24 and 1450a16. Aristotle explains further that in tragedy the action is acted and not reported: δρώντων καὶ οὐ δι' ἀπαγγελίας. "Reported" here is what Homer would be doing when he does not "become the character " and speak in that character's voice but rather says "and so Odysseus said..."

[55] Aristotle in his *Poetics* is working hard to counteract Plato's critique of poetry by showing the psychological (and thereby perhaps political) and ethical benefits of tragic poetry.

[56] On learning through imitations, 1448b. Mimesis, claims Aristotle, is innate in human beings; it is what distinguishes us from other animals. Images help us understand or see more easily concepts that seem to be the domain only of philosophers. cf. D. S. Allen's argument for imagined images changing our world of realia, (2000a).

[57] It is curious that Hades can only be a setting in comedy and that gods, albeit an imported one, can only *be* in Hades in comedy, and even then only in disguise!

Rather, she sits at its edge, not unlike Odysseus, but perhaps more like the aged Oedipus at the grove of the Eumenides before his death.[58]

Following Goethe's remark about Homer that opens this chapter, Segal tracks the reversals and transformations of life and death, life in death, death in life and life from death throughout Sophocles' *Electra*: "In no other Sophoclean play does the negation of life by death so permeate the language of *every* character as it does the language of those in *Electra*."[59] Yet while making a strong case for the ambience of death in the play – that everything around speaks of death – Segal neglects to say much about the invisible god whose realm lies just below the surface of *Electra*. Goethe's line (from his letters) points to the representational role of Hades we've begun tracking in Sophocles' *Electra*: the enacting of Hell, or in our case, of Hades.

Electra's world, claims Segal, is a negative state of life.[60] It is productive of little and is marked by repetitive, endless talk. In chapter two, we saw how the dead shades in Homer's Hades did nothing but talk. Odysseus speaks with them in *Odyssey* xi and the recently slain suitors find the shades recounting their glorious (and inglorious) deaths in xxiv. Like Homer's Hades, Electra's is a world of speech, of talk, of song rather than of action.[61] Her brother Orestes uses words too, but differently and to a different end. While

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[58] See chapter three. Sophocles' descriptions of Electra's world are evocative of Hades, and indeed C. P. Segal has argued convincingly for the overwhelming ambience of death in Sophocles' *Electra* (1966).

[59] C. P. Segal (1966) 486. Electra is threatened with Hades early in the play: Chrysothemis, employing the poetic topos for dying maidens, says that Aegisthus plans to send Electra, ἔνθα μή ποθ' ἡλίου / φέγγος προσόψῃ, "where you will never again look at or behold the light of the sun," but where she will sing or hymn her own evils: ὑμνήσεις κακά (380-382). Electra's inaction and singing as action throughout the *Electra* mark her affinity to the shades in Homer's Hades, who spend their time lamenting their ends and recounting to one another their deaths, as Agamemnon in *Odyssey* xi and xxiv.

[60] Segal (1966) 541.

[61] As her cries of joyful recognition bear witness, 1253-55: ὁ πᾶς ἐμοὶ / ὁ πᾶς ἂν πρέποι παρὼν ἐννέπειν / τάδε δίκᾳ χρόνος. For Electra's focus on word and Orestes' on deed, cf. T.M. Woodard's articles: "*Electra* by Sophocles: The Dialectical Design" HSCP 68 (1964) 163-205, "*Electra* by Sophocles: The Dialectical Design (Part II)" HSCP 70 (1965) 195-233, and "The Electra of Sophocles" in *Sophocles: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall (1966) 125-145. Electra's

Electra's words seek to make the absent present by conjuring the dead, Orestes' seek to cover over, hide and set out compelling falsehoods.[62] To Orestes, speech and talking are, like his urn, a death mask. But before turning to Orestes and his death masks, let us stay a while with Electra, for as a singer Electra plays a unique role in the poetics of death and memory, sight and knowledge in *Electra.*

IV. Death and Memory: the epic Electra

Do not be misled by this section's title. It is not Electra in Homer's poems that I turn to here, but rather our same Electra of Sophocles and to her speech, the way she has with words, their use, their subject, for our Electra is a singer and though she is a character in the tragedy of Sophocles, her song has much to do with epic poetry. While Electra inhabits a world similar to Homer's Hades, her poetics remind of the Homeric bard's. Sophocles' *Electra* seems to play off of Homer's invention of Hades.

From her first offstage sounds Electra marks her role in *Electra.* Her song begins as a tragic one; ἰώ μοί μοι δύστηνος, "what a wreck of a life I have," she says breaking the measured, rational, plotting tones of the Paedagogus and Orestes. 'Ιώ μοί μοι is not an exclamation particular to Electra; her tragic counterparts sing the same.[63] Electra, however, is first known or recognized to be who she is because of these sounds.[64] Electra will continue

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world of endless, repetitive action throughout the play is reinforced by the Paedagogus' remarks even after the recognition between the siblings and before the matricide (1364-66). The only action Electra may be said to perform is singing.

[62] Thus Electra's preoccupation with eternity and the consistent use of ἀεί in the play to describe her action. Time is boundless as her speech is boundless. And her boundless speech seeks to immortalize, make "always" the one who is gone. To Electra, poetry is symbol, eternity in time, the infinite expressed in the finite. Hence her laments, her songs, her poetry and even the speeches she gives others who will speak of her own valorous action in the future. Orestes' λόγος is a μῦθος as he tells us right at the start, 44-50.

[63] cf. *Ajax* 333 and again 339, and then the entire kommos beginning at 347 where Ajax begins nearly every one of his parts with ἰώ. So too Philoctetes first line, cf. *Philoctetes* 220.

[64] 180; hence O'Neill's *Mourning Becomes Electra.*

to sing in lyric tones, here and throughout the *Electra*, more than any other character in Sophocles' extant work.[65] Electra is *Electra*'s singer and more than that, the play's poet, for hers is the task of poetry: making the absent present, the invisible visible.[66] We'll see later that her poetics partake too of the new discovery through Hades of poetry's ability to effect the opposite: making the present absent or the deceit witnessed in the poetics of Orestes and the Paedagogus.

Electra seeks to bring two conspicuously absent figures to stage by poetic means: her father and her brother. The former she seeks to conjure from death (or at least the chorus sees this as her goal, 137ff. and 453-54; and she seems to have done so at 1361 when she calls the Paedagogus "father"); the latter from his existence in hiding abroad (117). Electra conjures her father by not forgetting him, by continuing her incessant song and speech *about* her father. Yet Electra, in contrast to the bards she resembles, sings the opposite of Homeric κλέος; she sings of αἰκῶς and things suffered shamefully not gloriously.[67] She calls her song a lament, a θρῆνος and a γόος (87, 94, 103-104),

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[65] When speaking of "characters" in a play I mean those individuals such as Electra, Antigone, Chrysothemis or Clytemnestra, not the group character of the chorus.

[66] Cf. J. Redfield (1994) 180: with mourning "the living person is dismissed and a new social figure, the absent one, is created." On visible invisibles, cf. A. Carson, *Economy of the Unlost*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press (1999). While Electra does not "become the character" as the Homeric bard is said to, her poetics aim at the same end: to make the absent or invisible present and visible.

[67] Instead of a hero's death, Agamemnon died piteously, οἰκτρῶς, and with disgrace αἰκῶς. 'Αεικής is an adjective denoting the contrary of the warrior's beautiful death in battle. See also the various forms of the root, αἰκε-, around the treatment of Hector's corpse, *Iliad* XXIV. Had Agamemnon died in battle Electra would be singing a different song. Electra of her father's death: θανάτους αἰκεῖς, 206; αἰκῶς οἰκτρῶς τε θανόντος, 102. The chorus use the adverb when warning Electra not to act as she does: οὐ γνώμαν ἴσχεις ἐξ οἴων τὰ παρόντ' οἰκείας εἰς ἄτας ἐμπίπτεις οὕτως αἰκῶς, 214-216. Electra describes her dress as unseemly or shameful at 191: ἀεικεῖ σὺν στολᾷ. Of the double bladed axe that slew Agamemnon the chorus says it did so in shameful maltreatment: ἅ νιν κατέπεφνεν αἰσχίσταις ἐν αἰκείαις, 486-87; they use the noun twice again in the same song, describing the shameful or unseemly misfortunes of the house of Pelops: 508-515, εὖτε γὰρ ὁ ποντισθεὶς Μυρτίλος ἐκοιμάσθη, παγχρύσων δίφρων δυστάναις **αἰκείαις** πρόρριζος ἐκριφθείς, οὔ τί πω ἔλιπεν ἐκ τοῦδ' οἴκου πολύπονος **αἰκεία**. Cf. Vernant, "Pánta Kalá D'Homère à Simonide" and "La belle mort et le cadavre outragé" in *L'individu, Le mort, L'amour: Soi-même et l'autre en Grèce ancienne*. Paris: Gallimard (1989) 91-101 and 41-79, both of which have been elegantly translated by Froma Zeitlin in *Mortals and Immortals* (Princeton: Princeton University Press (1991)) under the titles, "*Panta Kala* from

suggesting that grief is the only form of natural language that requires mimesis. Historically, Sarah Iles Johnston explains, these two songs were not the same and would not be used to name the same song as Electra does here.[68] Θρῆνος, threnos, Iles Johnston explains, was traditionally associated with men and aimed to soothe the pain of the dead, assuring them that their lives had been worthy. Γόος, goos, on the other hand, was traditionally a women's song and reproached the dead for leaving the living uncared for (as Andromache even before Hector's death in *Iliad* VI) while it aimed, at the same time, to arouse its listeners to revenge (as the kommos between the chorus, Electra and Orestes in Aeschylus' *Choephore*). Electra's song aims at both; she seeks to remember her father (146) and honor him (355-56), since no one else in the palace does so – her mother "remembers" his day of death with monthly festivals, a perversion of proper memorial[69] – yet at the same time her song of death seeks to effect death, to bring avengers (115, 454) and to pain her listeners (355-56).[70] Electra sings of death triply: she seeks to remember

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Homer to Simonides" (84-91) and "A 'Beautiful Death' and the Disfigured Corpse in Homeric Epic" (50-74). The mistreatment or mutilation of the corpse would leave it to nature and the natural realm as it decomposed in the bellies of dogs and birds, and thus deprive them of a place in mortal Hades (see chapter two); hence the gods' preserving the bodies of Hector and Patroclus until burial.

[68] S. I. Johnston, *The Resteless Dead: Encounters between the Living and the Dead in Ancient Greece.* Berkeley: University of California Press (1999). For a discussion of the distinction between and sometime overlapping of the two kinds of songs, see p. 110ff. In the first half of her book, Johnston discusses the evolution in Greek ideas about the relationship between the living and the dead due to the changing social and cultural conditions during the archaic and classical ages – changes such as the growth of the polis, changes in funerary legislation, and innovations borrowed from cultures with which the Greeks were in contact, such as Egypt and Mesopotamia. In the latter part of her book, Johnston shows how stories of unhappy restless dead and rituals designed to control them reiterated Greek social values and simultaneously expressed the danger that the dead posed to individuals and cities alike. Drawing on evidence from historical sources, Johnston studies the development of beliefs in the active dead by way of a study of ritual surrounding the dead. See also J. Redfield (1994) on γόοι: "the formal laments do not speak of the dead man as he was in life; rather they speak of how things are now that he is gone, the difference made by his absence. Mourning is not so much memory of the past as a definition of the new situation...The living person is thus dismissed, and a new social figure, the absent one, is created," (180). See also M. Alexiou, *The Ritual Lament in Greek Tradition.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press (1974) 280-81.

[69] On perversion of ritual in *Electra* see R. Seaford, "The Destruction of Limits in Sophokles' *Electra*," CQ 35 (ii) (1985) 315-323.

[70] Cf. M. Alexiou (1974) 22, for a discussion of the use of lament to incite vengeance. Alexiou

the dead, she seeks to conjure the dead, and she seeks to effect death.

She seeks to do all this with the aid of Hades himself and those deities associated with the underworld. Indeed, she ends her very first song (which she calls a threnos and a goos) with a bold call to those powers, inviting them to enter the drama and even the stage, to bring about the action that is to come.[71] Unlike epic characters who never dare call on the invisible god of the invisible realm, Electra courageously conjures those most feared, invisible gods:

> ὦ δῶμ' Ἀίδου καὶ Περσεφόνης
> ὦ χθόνι' Ἑρμῆ καὶ πότνι' Ἀρά,
> σεμναί τε θεῶν παῖδες Ἐρινύες,
> αἳ τοὺς ἀδίκως θνῄσκοντας ὁρᾶθ'
> αἳ τοὺς εὐνὰς ὑποκλεπτομένους,
> ἔλθετ', ἀρήξατε, τείσασθε πατρὸς
> φόνον ἡμετέρου,
> καί μοι τὸν ἐμὸν πέμψατ' ἀδελφόν.

> O House of Hades and Persephone,
> O earthly Hermes and Mistress Curse
> And reverend children of the gods, the Erinyes,
> Who look upon those done to death unjustly and
> Upon those who have their marriage beds beguiled,
> Come, give aid, avenge my father's
> Murder,
> And send me my brother.
> (110-117).

Invoking the powers below, Electra calls on the gods of the netherworld to enter the action on stage, using vocative and imperative forms to call the house of Hades and Persephone, earthly Hermes and Mistress Curse, and the holy children of the gods, the Erinyes to come,

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argues for the survival of lament as dependent on the ritual, collective ritual, of which it was, and still is, a part. My argument about Electra's role as lamenter finds its origins in Alexiou's work and also that of Iles Johnston as both see lament for the dead as essentially functional.

[71] Electra's first song thematizes what she sings of: θρηνῶ (94); οὐ μὲν δὴ λήξω θρήνων στυγερῶν τε γόων (103-104).

ἔλθετ', help, ἀρήξατε, and avenge, τείσασθε, (115 – one after the other) and send, πέμψατ', her brother to her. Her later repetition of this request, but directly to her dead father, using her sister Chrysothemis as an intermediary, brings more of the underworld onto the stage. For Electra tells Chrysothemis to ask their father to "come *from the earth* as an avenger to their enemies," αἰτοῦ δὲ προσπίτνουσα **γῆθεν** εὐμενῆ / ἡμῖν ἀρωγὸν αὐτὸν εἰς ἐχθροὺς μολεῖν (453-55).[72] Asking specifically *these* gods of the netherworld to send her brother, Electra marks Orestes as an avenger for misdeeds – murder and adultery (113-114). But at the same time she unwittingly casts her brother as one already dead who must be sent by and from Hades, just as her father should come from the earth, a role another poet of *Electra* will cast him in too.[73]

Electra seeks to make the absent present, the aim not only of threnos and goos, but of other poetic genres, especially the epitaph and epic.[74] Beyond her threnos and goos, Electra's are epic poetics: she sings of the dead and her vision of her own death speaks of the heroic. Her talk of how people will regard her if she commits the murder alone and speaks of εὔκλεια, the fair report she will earn in the eyes of all citizens and guests (973), reminding us of the Homeric warrior's quest for κλέος.[75] When the absent one is finally made present – Orestes is hidden from the very start, κρυπτᾷ τ' ἀχέων ἐν ἥβᾳ ὄλβιος

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[72] To note, in Homeric epic and the Homeric Hymns there is no sense that the boundary that marks Hades can be crossed by anyone other than the dead and buried. Iles Johnston discusses the evolution of belief in the active or "restless" dead and the birth of a new figure in society, the professional (male) goes or magician in 5th-century Athens who was a sort of medium between the living and the dead. In this first song, Electra seems to be casting herself into the role of goes. As goes and poet, Electra here seems to enact the very point of tragedy – bringing back the dead – as witnessed even in Aristophanes' *Frogs*, cf. chapter five.

[73] The Paedagogus, whose poetics we will discuss shortly. Clytemnestra's dream similarly casts Orestes, see below. Where Antigone's concern is the reception she'll have from her dead family in Hades, Electra's eyes are on the living and on making those in Hades come to life, making them present (*Antigone*, 72-76, 559-560, 891ff).

[74] Cf. A. Carson (1999); S. Stewart (2002), and chapter one.

[75] On the epicisms of Electra's speech here, cf. D. Juffras, "Sophocles' *Electra* 973-85 and Tyrannicide," TAPA 121 (1991) 99-108.

(159) – when her poetics have had their effect, Electra speaks pointedly in the epic mode, both in her diction and content: ὁ πᾶς ἐμοὶ / ὁ πᾶς ἂν πρέποι παρὼν ἐννέπειν τάδε δίκᾳ χρόνος (1253-55): "All time, all time would fit justly for me to tell these things." Doubling πᾶς, "*all* time" around herself, Electra cancels out the present, παρὼν, and marks her action, her singing, as fit for all time. With this bold statement, Electra attempts a self-immortalization by bounding herself (ἐμοὶ) by all time (ὁ πᾶς ἐμοὶ / ὁ πᾶς... χρόνος) and effecting in her own speech what epic poets effect for warrior-heroes: an immortalization of the present moment.[76] Electra's choice of verb here, ἐννέπειν further marks her epic mode, for it is the verb of the epic poet and his muse.[77] Electra sees all time fit to recall past deeds (recall Agamemnon and Achilles in *Odyssey* xxiv), is preoccupied with eternity, and views language as a means of commemoration, of remembering.[78]

Electra is not alone in her epic poetics. The grand messenger speech told by the Paedagogus has been called epic.[79] The Paedagogus paints in words a grand picture of chariot games – several critics have found its inspiration to come from the Funeral Games for Patroclus in *Iliad* XXIII[80] – replete with "spectacular" language that brings the games

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[76] And her action is speaking, but not just any kind of speaking; Electra is singing about the deeds Orestes has just told her to remember, μεμνῆσθαι, later (1253), deeds worthy of remembering in speech, and to Electra speech means song.

[77]As the first line of the *Odyssey*: ἄνδρα μοι ἔννεπε... This is also the verb the Paedagogus uses to describe his action in announcing Orestes' death and introducing his epic-inspired μῦθος (676).

[78] Cf. M. Alexiou (1974); A. Grossman and M. Halliday (1992); S. Stewart (2002); Horace, *Carmina* IV.9.25-28.

[79] As J. H. Kells, *Sophocles: Electra.* Cambridge, UK: Cambrdige University Press (1973) ad loc. We might even see the speech as an example of Aristotle's claim that the mere telling of a good tale brings about the same effect as seeing it enacted, as Kells alludes when he says "we see, as it were before our eyes, the glitter and pageantry of a meeting for the Games at Delphi." J. F. Davidson discusses Sophocles' debt to Homer among the tragedians in his "Homer and Sophocles' *Electra*," BICS 35 (1988) 45-72.

[80] As Kells (1973) 138: "Sophocles' description has a fore-runner in Homer's description of the chariot-race in the Funeral Games for Patroclus (*Il.* 23.271ff), from which Sophocles has borrowed freely for this composition." Some borrowings: the random lot drawing for chariot placement on the track, Orestes' doing just what Nestor advised Antilochus (take advantage of innermost lane). Davidson catalogues these borrowings in the fifth section of his article (1988).

to the very eyes of his listeners.[81] Yet the Paedagogus' language achieves the opposite of Electra's, what Anne Carson calls the profoundest of poetic experiences: that of *not* seeing what *is* there, or of making the visible invisible.[82] But it is more complicated than that: the Paedagogus seeks to do away with Orestes so that Orestes can re-appear. He kills Orestes in speech so that Orestes can kill in deed.

V. The Lie: epic tales of death

The Paedagogus is Orestes' teacher, literally his "leader" (παῖς, παίδος, "child", ἄγειν, to lead), a role he plays from the very start. He teaches by showing Orestes the young man's homeland, pointing out to the returned heir all that he can now see (3, 9), all that he has so long desired to see. But Orestes recasts his Paedagogus into a messenger when he plots the plan of death. The Paedagogus becomes an ἄγγελος when Orestes says, "go inside the palace so that knowing (having seen) you can announce to us clear things, ... ὅπως ἂν εἰδὼς ἡμὶν **ἀγγείλῃς** σαφῆ (40-41). And again, "announce, swearing on it, that Orestes is dead, **ἄγγελλε** δ' ὅρκον προστιθεὶς ὁθούνεκα / τέθνηκ' 'Ορέστης (47-48). And then once again at the play's end: "you have announced that I am dead, **ἤγγειλας**, ὡς ἔοικεν, ὡς τεθνηκότα" (1341). In this role as a messenger, an ἄγγελος, the Paedagogus comes into his own, for his is the longest messenger speech in Sophocles. To be sure, as Paedagogus the old man already shares with the messenger the role of revealing and educating. A messenger speech in tragedy usually exposes and offers information from offstage that bears on the action enacted before us on stage, as do the classic messenger speeches of *Trachiniae, Ajax* and the Theban plays. Unlike those plays,

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[81] The Paedagogus' speech is full of what Aristotle calls "enargeia" and "putting before the eyes" in his *Rhetoric*.

[82]A. Carson (1999) 73. Does this imply that the most poetic of works actually kills? At 74 Carson says: "A poet is someone who saves and is saved by the dead."

there is no messenger, no ἄγγελος, in the cast of characters of *Electra*, a similarity our play has to that other Sophoclean play where roles are played and a death is faked, the *Philoctetes*. Perhaps this lack of cast ἄγγελοι hints at the closed world on *Electra*'s stage when speaking of what can be seen, what is known, what is reported. Without a messenger we are left with an absence of information, of knowledge, of light and are therefore susceptible to deceit.

But this is not to say that the Paedagogus' functions differently from any other messenger speech. Indeed, he reports information as a conventionally cast messenger would, information that very much bears on the action at hand and the action to come. But his report is a fiction, a lie making what *is* there invisible or unseen. How does the Paedagogus do this? The Paedagogus makes Orestes a subject of poetry, covering him in words of death and athletic prowess.

The Paedagogus tells a long tale of a chariot race in which Orestes begins as a shining light (685) but ends up destroyed by a lit fire (757).[83] As the Paedagogus tells it, Orestes was an admirable victor in several races in the early days of the games at Delphi. But on the day of the chariot races the gods were against him. A mishap in the race leaves all the contestants save Orestes and an Athenian in a wreck in the middle of the Crisan plain (730). The two remaining drivers make their way around the mess on either side. In the innermost lane, Orestes hugs the turning post on a late turn, breaks the nave of his wheel, is thrown from his chariot and gets caught in his reins. The runaway horses continue to drag him along while all the spectators let out an olololuge for the youth, for his great deeds and great evil end.[84] Orestes, says the Paedagogus, had been so dragged by the horses that he

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[83] In the prologue, the outlines of the lie are called a λόγος (44) and a μῦθος (50). The illumination, so to speak, of Orestes in the lie recalls the description of Achilles when he puts on his new armor (*Iliad* XIV. 365-66; 374-380; 398).

[84] The ololuge was a cry, usually feminine, that could be one of prayer, mourning or thanksgiving. The one the chorus of *Trachiniae* sings at 205ff begins as the latter, but in light of what follows, retrospectively becomes one of the former. In *Electra* the Paedagogus says: στρατὸς ...

was all covered in blood and "no one of his friends, looking at the wretched body, knew him": ὥστε μηδένα / γνῶναι φίλων ἰδόντ' ἂν ἄθλιον δέμας (755-56). Not only was Orestes' body unrecognizable, the Paedagogus puts beyond the realm of possibility any recognition of Orestes by his exterior form, explaining that the youth's friends burned his body straightaway (757); Phocian men will soon arrive with Orestes' mighty body reduced to poor ashes in a small bronze.[85]

The Paedagogus' narrative works in two directions. The fictive Orestes of the lie is not recognizable to those closest to him – "no one of those of his philoi *knew* (γνῶναι[86]) him" – while at the same time that fictive Orestes, thanks to the heroic tone of the lie, *is* recognized by Clytemnestra and Electra. The Paedagogus creates a son of whom Clytemnestra could be proud.[87] But now cast as dead and burned, Orestes will be unrecognizable to those closest to him. The Paedagogus' tale speaks a truth while it covers and hides the truth. Or, it speaks a lie that is/becomes truth.

Games (and battles) are fought to be won. One fights and competes to win glory and be remembered, to have one's κλέος sung so that one's name and that of one's family resounds in future days after one's death. Hence Pindar's epinicia.[88] Games were also held to honor one already dead, as those for Patrolcus in *Iliad* XXIII. The Paedagogus conflates these two functions of games while simultaneously subverting the traditional relation between games, death, and poetry/memory, by telling about death in games instead

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ἀνωλόλυξε τὸν νεανίαν, 750.

[85] Perhaps we have an allusion here to the theme of the mutilation of the corpse, so prevealent throughout the *Iliad* but especially so in the last third of the poem? The threat of not being seen and known, and therefore recognized by one's philoi?

[86] This is the verb Homer uses when the souls of the dead see Odysseus. They "know" him, while Odysseus just "sees" them. Odysseus' seeing: xi.235, 260, 266, 271, 281, 298, 305, 320, 326; Tiresias "knows" Odysseus, ἐμὲ δ' ἔγνω, xi.91, cf. xi.153, 390, 471. Cf. chapter two.

[87] Kells (1973) ad loc.

[88] Cf. L. Kurke (1991).

of games in honor of the dead. And while poetry of death and games is meant to bring the dead to mind, to invoke the memory of the dead, spread his κλέος, and thereby make the absent one present, the Paedagogus instead makes the present one absent. His grand epic tale puts Orestes out of sight and writes (or tells, as the case may be) him *out* of the story/plot. Sophocles seems to have discovered a new poetic trick. Poetics cannot just make the invisible visible and the absent present, as we saw with the ending of *Oedipus at Colonus*, it can, in reverse, make the present one absent and the visible invisible. Poetics seems to have a magic about it.

The Paedagogus' poetics of death and memory, making the present one absent, is underscored by the several words he uses related to sight, vision and spectacle in the eighty-three lines of his speech and the lines introducing it. The Paedagogus lends his tale credence by calling it an eyewitness account (762-63). And it is no mere eyewitness account. The Paedagogus claims he tells in words something painful, but to those who *saw* what he *saw* they were the greatest evils ever *seen.*[89] Within two lines the Paedagogus uses two different stems of the verb meaning "to see" in three different forms to express sight or vision: τοῖς ἰδοῦσιν, εἴδομεν, ὄπωπα, moving from the outside – others seeing – to a general "we," and then to a more specific "I," "I saw." His choice of form to express his own seeing is most telling, for it is a form that speaks of the eye or the face, ὄψ, the seeing organ, rather than the mind that sees in the forms he uses to speak of others, εἶδον. It is also cognate with the word Electra uses to describe her mother's dream: ὄψιν (413). The Paedagogus and Clytemnestra both saw something not perceptible to the open eye, something telling of death, of an unseen hiding, of shading and becoming a shade.

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[89] Cf. Aristotle, *Poetics* 1448b: we enjoy looking at the most exact imitations of things we do not like to see in real life, the lowest animals, for instance, or corpses. D. S. Allen uses Socrates' description, in Plato's *Republic* IV, of one Leontius who fights with his desire to view corpses, as a way in to explicate the ways Socrates introduces a "revision of the symbolic order that functioned in the context of Athenian punishment" (2000a) 137.

Furthermore, the Paedagogus' entire re-entrance is framed by words pertaining to sight and knowledge. At stake in this scene is "knowing clearly" because of having "seen clearly." The Paedagogus re-enters asking how he would "know clearly," **εἰδείην** σαφῶς (660), whether he's arrived at king Aegisthus' house. Seeing Clytemnestra, he remarks that she "must be the queen, for she looks like one," πρέπει γὰρ ὡς τύραννος **εἰσορᾶν**, (664). Clytemnestra receives his words because she "knows clearly," σάφ' οἶδα, that he comes from a friend. The Paedagogus highlights sight and spectacle in pointing to the queen's appearance, while his words are granted credence because of his speech of friendship.

While Electra's poetics conjure the dead and unwittingly cast Orestes as a dead man, the Paedagogus' poetics consciously bring about their desired end: making the present one absent, putting out of sight someone visible. Between these two poetics of memory, we witness a conflict between sight and words, or sight and poetry, both of which aim to memorialize: Electra's to remember her father and keep the promise of Orestes' return vivid, the Paedagogus' to prepare for the arrival of Orestes' remains, what Electra will call a reminder or memorial of him, μνημεῖον (1126). Both poetics, in fact, aim at bringing Orestes home to take vengeance, and thereby work on the premiss of the existence of Hades' and of souls of the dead there.[90]

VI. False Signs

The effectiveness of speech, or of spectacular speech in the Paedagogus' long tale, suspends belief in sight or vision. Witness the following scene. Chrysothemis, after having been at her father's grave, runs full of delight back on stage where her sister sits despondent

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[90] We could see the different epic poetics of Electra and the Paedagogus as a play, perhaps, at the truth/lie criteria for judging poetry that Finkelberg says was in conflict with a plausibility/pleasure criteria (1998: 18). Electra's poetics, in presence-ing someone absent seeks to reinstate a truth: the one who was, is again. The Paedagogus' seeks to instate a lie: one who is, is not. Perhaps Sophocles is asking his audience to consider which poetics is more effective in revealing invisibles?

at the loss she has just experienced in words (ὑφ' ἡδονῆς...φέρω γὰρ ἡδονάς, 871-873). Orestes' presence has put Chrysothemis in this state, while his absence has put Electra in hers. Chrysothemis says: "he is present, know this hearing it from me, clearly, as if you are looking upon me: πάρεστ' 'Ορέστης ἡμίν, ἴσθι τοῦτ' ἐμοῦ / κλύουσ', ἐναργῶς, ὥσπερ εἰσορᾷς ἐμέ. Chrysothemis speaks as though Orestes is *there*, but Electra has just heard not that he *is not there*, but that he *is no more*. The one sister has *seen* proof of his presence while the other has *heard* tales of his death. The great lie, the speech of the death at games, curtails Electra's belief in, let alone knowledge of, her brother's presence. More than that, ever the champion of the power of words, of poetry's efficacy, Electra belittles her sister's own spectacular true speech of sightings of Orestes.

Unlike her earlier report of a sight (the ὄψις of her mother's dream), Chrysothemis this time says that she and she alone – no second-hand reporting here – saw clear signs that lead her to trust her story: ἐγὼ μὲν ἐξ ἐμοῦ τε κοὐκ ἄλλης σαφῆ / σημεῖ' ἰδοῦσα τῷδε πιστεύω λόγῳ.[91] But Electra pities her sister's clear vision (920) and says, in short, "you are wrong": οὐκ οἶσθ' ὅποι γῆς οὐδ' ὅποι γνώμης φέρῃ (922). He's dead (924); she's had it from one who was there when he died (927). The sure signs (885-86) Chrysothemis *saw* (878, 886, 892, 894, 897, 900, 902, 904, 923) must be a memorial of Orestes – μνημεῖ' 'Ορέστου – that someone else has left at their father's tomb. Electra believes in the tokens as "memories" rather than "sure signs" because of her belief in a speech about death and the dead.

A σῆμα is a sign, and it is most often, in Homer, a sign of the dead – as Elpenor's oar in the *Odyssey* (cf. chapter 2) and the words of the stranger early on in *Oedipus at*

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[91] Lines 885-86. In telling what she saw, Chrysothemis employs a verb of seeing seven times in thirteen lines: κατειδόμην (892), ὁρῶ (894 and 900 and ὁρᾶν at 904), ἰδοῦσα (897), περισκοπῶ (897), ἐδερκόμην (899). She speaks twice of the eye, ὄμμα, first her brother's (903) as if her eyes met his, then her own (906) as they fill with tears of joy at the sight. Other "clear signs" in *Electra*: 23-24 – Orestes says the Paedagogus has shown σαφῆ σημεῖα that he is noble, ἐσθλός.

Colonus (cf. chapter 3).[92] Electra renames Chrysothemis' signs to suit the situation as she believes it to be after the Paedagogus' speech. Signs have two categories of reference: the indexical and the symbolic. As an indexical reference, a sign indicates the presence of something. The classic example for indexical referencing is smoke's reference to fire; when we see smoke we know or assume correctly that there is fire, that there is a connection between the thing perceived and that which it signifies. As a symbolic reference, a sign stands for something else and the connection between the signifier (the σῆμα) and the signified (the dead) can be metonymically or metaphorically based.[93]

Chrysothemis reads the σῆμα she's seen as signifying the living, giving them an indexical reference (presence of σῆμα means presence of living Orestes), while Electra reads them as marking the dead (presence of σῆμα is metaphor of the dead, it signals what is not there: Orestes). Electra reads the σημεῖα as μνημεῖα.[94] What she's heard forces this certain reading. Everything after the Paedagogus' lie becomes just a memory of Orestes, a mark, like the lie itself, of his absence. Electra's lament over the urn expresses this clearly: ὦ φιλτάτου μνημεῖον ἀνθρώπων ἐμοὶ, "O, memory/memorial of the dearest of men to me" (1126). For Electra, props and objects – the "signs" Chrysothemis sees on their father's tomb, the urn itself – are mere proofs of speech: φήμης ... ἐμφανῆ τεκμήρια (1109), much like the σφράγις Orestes will show her (1222-23).

The urn, as Segal has said, "is one of Sophocles' richest visual symbols."[95] Visual

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[92] As Sourvinou-Inwood explains, σῆμα in Homer is closely linked to τύμβος. The latter denotes a grave's physical type while the former denotes its function; cf. *Reading Greek Death.* Oxford: Oxford University Press (1995) 109ff.

[93] Ibid. Cf. *Antigone* 998ff. where Tiresias' explanation of the signs, σημεῖα, which are the mixed up tombs of Antigone and Polynieces, enlightens Creon as to his wrongdoing. The prophet's speech is filled with σημεῖα (998, 1004, 1013). We might rephrase these two categories of reference for signs to better fit this inquiry as representational for indexical and metaphorical for symbolic.

[94] Similar is her inference from the dream: she believes in the force of the dead because of it; the dream metonymically or metaphorically points to and from something else.

[95] C. P. Segal (1986) 125.

symbols, Segal tells us, are specific, yet elusive. Their physicality and concrete nature focuses an audience's attention on their specific, precise meaning. Yet their "sensuous qualities and shifting relations to other details and acts as different facets emerge in the unfolding of the work render that meaning manifold and suggesting rather than simple and denotative."[96] An urn is usually a container for and of the dead, something that covers and hides over the dead, contains them, while at the same time making the dead present; it is both indexical and symbolic of the dead or representational and metaphoric. But the polysemy of *this* urn does not end here.

This urn is empty and hollow. Like a tragic mask awaiting a character's voice, the urn is given meaning by Orestes, the Paedagogus, Electra and even Clytemnestra, but various meanings by each, for each sees the urn differently and dependent upon how it's first presented to them. Sophocles seems to be using death itself to explore the basic hermeneutic problems generated by poetry. The urn first appears in speech, but not in sight. It is from the start something hidden away, κεκρυμμένον, (55) and thus resembles what it will stand for since we have already seen how Orestes is early on cast as one from below. And the chorus' description of Orestes as κρυπτᾷ τ' ἀχέων ἐν ἥβᾳ ὄλβιος, "the grieving one in hidden youth, blessed" (159-60), draws the parallel more sharply. Both κεκρυμμένον and κρυπτᾷ come from the verb κρύπτω, meaning "to hide." But both Orestes' and the chorus' use ring with irony, for κρύπτω is often used to denote a specific kind of hiding: burying under the earth.[97]

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[96] Ibid 114.

[97] Cf. Hesiod *Erga* 138; Pindar *Pythian* 9.81; Sophocles *OC* 621, 1546, *Antigone* 196, 774, 25, 946. See also Electra's use of a verb with the same sounds, κέκευθεν (1120), to describe the work of the urn on her brother: εἴπερ τόδε / κέκευθεν αὐτὸν τεῦχος. Electra is said to have stolen Orestes (κλέψασ', 297) reminding us of that play between stealing and hiding Prometheus plays with Zeus in Hesiod's poems, cf. *Theogony* 535-616, *Erga* 45-105. Orestes' later use of the same verb when asking Electra whether they shall put a stop to their enemies openly or as hidden, κεκρυμμένοι, before he actually enter the house and commits murder tellingly keeps him "buried" through to the end (1294).

The urn is hidden like Orestes, but it also hides Orestes, in like manner as the Paedagogus' lie. Indeed, when Orestes first speaks of the urn, he calls attention to its made-ness. It is something that, as the Paedagogus' speech, has been crafted. Orestes describes it as a τύπωμα (54), something formed or even molded. Man has given shape to this thing, but an unspecified one.[98] Words will shape its meaning: ὅπως λόγῳ κλέπτοντες ἡδεῖαν φάτιν, (56) says Orestes to the Paedagogus, as Orestes himself will be fitted out, or formed by art – ἀσκεῖν – in speech (1217).

VII. Shading Shades

Lying words shape the meaning of the urn that Orestes carries when he returns to the stage. The Paedagogus has dressed the urn, has cast it as something recognizable (a container for the dead), with his tale of an unrecognizable body or form. His epic poetics have painted a convincing picture, a powerful spectacle of death. This spectacular tale more than convinces its two listeners.[99] Both are ready to see the urn as the Paedagogus has dressed it – a sure or clear sign of death. Hidden by the urn and words of death, Orestes re-enters. And Electra welcomes the stranger asking only if he has come bearing clear signs, ἐμφανῆ τεκμήρια, of the report, φήμη, she has heard (1108-09).[100] Clytemnestra had taken the words themselves as trusted signs, πίστ' τεκμηρία (774). The Paedagogus' poetics of fiction elicit a most human reaction from Clytemnestra and a grand peripeteia of emotion.[101]

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[98] In this it bears a slight resemblance to the shape that δόλος and ἔρος (or Aegisthus and Clytemnestra) have produced, the δεινὰν μορφάν (the murder of Agamemnon or avenging children) the chorus sings of at 198-99.

[99] The Paedagogus' poetics are thereby a poetics of fiction whose evaluatory criteria are no longer truth and fiction, but plausibility and pleasure. His words are believable and cause strong emotional reactions in his listeners; cf. M. Finkelberg (1998).

[100] Cf. Aristotle, *Rhetoric*.

[101] Kells (1973) ad loc.

Earlier we saw how Electra prefers words to vision. In her first meeting with Chrysothemis she learns, by report, of a vision in sleep, ὄψιν, ὄναρ, ὀνείρατα (413, 425, 460), that her mother has had. For Clytemnestra the vision was a fright in the night, ἐκ δείματός του νυκτέρου (410, cf. 636, 645, 783-86), that leads her to send offerings to Agamemnon's tomb and prayers to the god Apollo. What was this fright in the night? Clytemnestra had a dream about Agamemnon, the future of Mycenenae, and that of her palace. As Chrysomthemis tells it, Clytemnestra "looked upon," εἰσιδεῖν, a second coming of Agamemnon, "coming to the light."[102] The former king and husband re-takes his scepter and plants it at the hearth, wherefrom sprouts a flourishing young shoot that shades over all the Mycenean land. All this Chrysothemis tells second hand, for she heard from one who "was there when she [Clytemnestra] showed it to the sun."[103]

Brief as this description of the dream may be, it is charged as something visual, a sight, and it has caused a fright. The dream alternates between darkness or shading and seeing or light. It plays with the one seeing it, both with eyes closed (Clytemnestra) and eyes open (Electra, audience/reader). It comes in the dark (410, 642) when nothing is visible, yet one sees it (417); it is an appearance and vision in the dark (φάσματα, 644; ὄψιν, 413). Usually when we close our eyes, we shut out sight and vision. Paradoxically, we see dreams. Fittingly then, Agamemnon is said to come into the light, ἐλθόντος ἐς φῶς (419), as if conjured from the dark regions of Hades.[104] He comes into the light and

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[102] In "coming to the light" Agamemnon is brought back to life, since in Greek to be alive was to see the light or be in the light. A conception of life of in these terms begs the question, in what sense is a blind man alive? Blind men in poetry are compensated with the gift of inner sight: Tiresias, Oedipus, Demodocus, Homer. We never hear of mere blind people. On the Greeks' "seeing" dreams, see chapter two, fn. 7.

[103] The dream tells one story two times, first abstractly and personally – a second ὁμιλία with Agamemnon – then in more detail and politically – Agamemnon takes his scepter and plants it at the center of the house and palace and the entire land is covered with what grows from it. On this doubling see K. Ormand (1999). In showing her dream to the sun, Clytemnestra brings its vision to life.

[104] cf. Sophocles, *Trachiniae* 1145 where Herakles says φέγγος οὐκέτ' ἔστι μοι. See also E. A. Bernidaki-Aldous (1990) and J. Redfield (1994) 176 and 278 fn. 31.

is seen, or recognized for who he is: wielder of Mycenae's scepter.

A vision in the dark, the return to the light and sight of the dead Agamemnon – his second ὁμιλίαν, as Chrysothemis describes it – leads to a shading of Mycenae. From Agamenon's planted scepter grows a young shoot that overshadows all the Mycenean land: ἔκ τε τοῦδ' ἄνω / βλαστεῖν βρύοντα θαλλόν, ᾧ κατάσκιον / πᾶσαν γενέσθαι τὴν Μυκηναίων χθόνα (421-23). The adjective here used to describe the land, κατάσκιον, Electra will transfer and use to describe her supposed-dead brother in her lament over the empty urn: dust and useless shadow rather than beloved form/shape, ἀντὶ φιλτάτης / μορφῆς σποδόν τε καὶ σκιὰν ἀνωφελῆ (1159). The dream, like the urn, makes of Orestes a shadowy idea, something untouchable in the dark and not far from the σκιαὶ, the shades, in Homer's Hades.[105] Clytemnestra's dream figures Orestes as her daughter's first song did: an avenging fury sprung from dark depths.

The dream and the urn put shades, σκιαὶ, on the stage, σκηνή, bringing the darkness of Hades onto the scene. The dream elicits fear, whereas the urn elicits pity in Electra and a sort of odd relief in Clytemnestra. Clytemnestra's fright in the night brings her to pray to Apollo, a prayer swiftly answered by the arrival of the Paedagogus as Messenger. The messenger speech leads to the major anagnoreseis, the revelations and recognitions in the play, the return of the dead to the living. These two representations of Hades on stage – the urn covering, the dream uncovering the dead – work in the way Aristotle claims tragedy to work: they elicit pity and fear in their audience. On the metaphoric level, these two visibles point to invisibles: the dead and the assumed dead.

Electra gains hope, particularly hope in the gods, when she hears of her mother's dream, and especially in the gods of her father and her father's own power, despite or

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[105] Calling Orestes a μορφή recalls the δείναν μορφὰν engendered by deceit and lust the chorus sings of at 197-99 and casts Orestes as something ineffable, something not far from the visions Clytemnestra sees in her dream.

because of his being dead. ὦ θεοὶ πατρῷοι, she exclaims (411), now invoking the gods specific to Mycenae and Agamemnon's palace as she invoked those below it earlier.[106] After hearing the *content* of the dream Electra draws the connection between dreams, Hades, the beyond, the dead and justice. She is so sure her father sent the dream from below that she repeats the verb with which she expresses her belief in that fact. **Οἶμαι** μὲν οὖν, **οἶμαί** τι κἀκείνῳ μέλον πέμψαι τάδε αὐτῇ δυσπρόσοπτ' ὀνείρατα, "Rather, I believe, I believe, that since it is somewhat a care to him too that he sent her these dreams that are horrifying to see," Electra exclaims near the end of her speech.[107] And this causal claim comes directly after Electra reveals her hope that her father will cross Hades' bounds. She tells Chrysothemis to ask their father at his grave that he come (αὐτὸν...μολεῖν, 454) from the earth (γῆθεν, 453) as an avenger (ἀρωγὸν) to their enemies (εἰς ἐχθρούς, 454). A vision from the beyond of the beyond gives Electra strength and belief in the beyond, of a place where the dead are and are not nothing.[108]

Verbs of knowing and believing are not foreign to our Electra. Earlier Electra expressed self-knowledge regarding her acting out of bounds and out of character; she seems full of self-knowledge.[109] Others, she doubts: the gods, her sister, her brother, until she receives news of the dream. The dream elicits Electra's first expression of confidence; instead of questioning her brother's absence, the measures of evil, or her sorry state and her inability to go on (169ff., 225ff., 236ff, 2356ff., 119ff, 165ff, 185ff), Electra now gives orders and directions to her sister; "don't fix any of those offerings you hold in your

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[106] As Orestes at 67: ὦ πατρῴα γῆ θεοί τ' ἐγχώριοι.

[107] 459-50. Cf. *Oedipus at Colonus* 286 where Oedipus uses the same adjective, δυσπρόσοπτον, "difficult to look at" when describing his head, μου κάρα (285).

[108] Recall Achilles' remark after awaking from his dream of Patroclus in *Iliad* XXIII.103-104; cf. Chapter two.

[109] 131: οἶδα...συνίημι.

hands on the tomb; it is neither lawful (θέμις) nor hallowed (ὅσιον); hide them (κρύψον)."[110] She now believes in something other than the state in which she finds herself, even if hers is a modest expression of perception: "I believe, I believe, it being a care to him too…"[111] In her final command to her sister, Electra voices Hades' third appearance in the play.[112] She tells her sister to let these things be an aid for both of them and for the most beloved of mortals, their father who lies in Hades: σοί θ' ὑπούργησον τάδε / ἐμοί τ' ἀρωγά, τῷ τε φιλτάτῳ βροτῶν / πάντων, ἐν Ἅιδου κειμένῳ κοινῷ πατρί (463). The dead are no longer the earth and nothing Electra feared with no news of her brother's plans for a vengeful return to Mycenae earlier in the play.[113] The dream has proved the power of visible invisibles. Clytemnestra shares Electra's belief that the dream comes from the dead Agamemnon, as her grave offerings bear witness.[114] Electra sees the dream as proof for her hope in invisibles and in those invisibles being made visible.[115]

Dreams come from and in the dark – δεῖμα τοῦ νυκτέρου (410), δεῖμα (663), δειμάτων (635-36) – and leave us in the dark, fearing that darkness, that lack of clarity, the

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[110] Commands at 432: προσάψῃς μηδέν; 436: κρύψον; 448: μέθες; 451: δὸς; 453: αἰτου; 461: ὑπούργησον.

[111] οἴομαι has the original meaning of "to forebode" or "to presage" and "to expect" or "to suspect" thus marking a slight doubt in the hopes for a future event, so at *Odyssey* ix.339 or x.380, xix.390, xiv.298. "To think," "to believe," "to suppose," are modest – or hopeful – ways of expressing knowledge.

[112] The first was Electra's brazen rallying of Hades and the powers below early in the play and discussed above. The chorus voice the second of seven explicit appearances of "Hades" in *Electra* when they remind Electra of common Hades' bounds that are not to be crossed (137).

[113] 245-248: εἰ γὰρ ὁ μὲν θανὼν γᾶ τε καὶ οὐδὲν ὢν / κείσεται τάλας.

[114] Cf. S. I. Johnston's (1999) discussion, in her third chapter, of the role of the goes as one who communicates with the dead.

[115] At the same time, Electra wants to put her mother's grave offerings out of sight (to hide them with dust or throw them to the winds, or store them underground for when Clytemnestra arrives there below, 435-38) just as she wants to put Aegisthus out of sight, to make him ἄποπτον, in her final speech (1489).

unseen and the unknown, for they come while one sleeps with eyes closed, minds elsewhere, and in this Clytemnestra's is like any other dream.[116] Nor is its enigmatic nature unique, its being δισσῶν ὀνείρων (645). See-ers of dreams often awake looking for clarity, as Penelope in *Odyssey* xix. Moreover, it isn't odd that the guilty should dream fearful visions of revenge. The dream element in the story of the house of Atreus speaks of the humanity that remains in inhuman, or lawless, action; only a cold-blooded murderer could sleep soundly. Clytemnestra's humanity is revealed precisely at moments when Hades is: in her reaction to the dream, her later response to the lie of Orestes' death – δεινὸν τὸ τίκτειν ἐστίν (770) – and in her treatment of the urn – ἡ μὲν ἐς τάφον / λέβητα κοσμεῖ (1400-01).[117] The dream comes from the dark and speaks of one in Hades returning to take vengeance, to settle a debt. It terrifies Clytemnestra because it shows her Hades and one who dwells there and forces her to recognize death, its causes, and the repercussions of those causes.

The vision of the dream and Chrysothemis' recounting of it shifts the course of events in the play. It sets into action a series of events or rather of mis-events. Had it not frightened Clytemnestra, Chrysomethis would not have arrived carrying libations. Without these surprising libations (recall Clytemnestra's monthly celebrations of choruses and

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[116] cf. E.R. Dodds, (1951) chapter IV. See also *Iliad* XXIII. 65 where the soul of wretched Patroclus "comes" to Achilles in his sleep, or Penelope's asking a disguised Odysseus to listen and discern, or interpret (ὑπόκριναι) her dream, *Odyssey* xix. 535.

[117] In Aeschylus' version, Clytemnestra's dream is revealed in the kommos between Electra, Orestes and the chorus. The kommos builds in emotion and serves as a γοός, moving the children of Agamemnon to commit revenge. Furthermore, it is immediately interpreted; "the dream is not without meaning; the vision means a man," Orestes says as he continues to explicate the dream in each of its referents, concluding that "turned into a snake" he shall kill his mother "as the dream says it," (Aeschylus, *Choephore*, 534 ff.). As in Sophocles, Aeschylus' Clytemnestra sends libations because of her dream (523-5). In the earlier version, Clytemnestra dreams she gave birth to a snake; she said it (527) and the chorus was there to hear it (523). The chorus thus speak with first-hand knowledge in *Choephore*, while Chrysothemis in *Electra* says what she knows from one who was there when Clytemnestra woke up and showed her dream to the sun (424). In Aeschylus, Clytemnestra puts her baby snake to rest in swaddling cloths and then gives it her breast to feed, in the dream (531). The snake draws blood with milk. In Aeschylus's version we witness no hermeneutic problems a poetry of death unveils such as those witnessed in Sophocles'.

sacrifices, perhaps also with libations, to commemorate the day she and Aegisthus killed Agamemnon), Electra would not ask "what are these" and hold up her sister's arrival at their father's tomb.[118] Chrysothemis might have found her brother instead of just signs of his arrival, Orestes instead of just σημεῖα, or memories, μνημεῖα, of him. Sophocles gives Clytemnestra a dream from Hades that allows the weight of the Paedagogus' spectacular messenger speech to wield its full force on both Electra and Clytemnestra. Both prepare to receive the dead hidden in the urn.

VIII. Revelation, or uncovering the dead

Death, memory, sight and knowledge all meet in the play's endgame. Vision is cleared, sight offered and death committed while memory of things past are kept fully in sight. This tale ends following the plot set out by Orestes at the play's start, but the plot, like the man himself, remains unseen to all onstage until the final moments. Thus, Clytemnestra and Aegisthus are equally surprised when sight and recognition occur in the final scene. Recognition, or knowledge of who's who, in *Electra* is all about uncovering the dead, preparing the dead and preparing for death.[119] As knowledge/recognition brings death while one readies the dead for burial, death/murder remains hidden and out of sight like a supposed-dead Orestes; it is reported by words (as the Paedagogus' speech) or hidden in darkness (as the urn).

Clytemnestra, who no longer saw, οὐκέτ' εἶδεν (778), her son once he left the land, ἐπεὶ τῆσδε χθονὸς / ἐξῆλθεν (777-78), a son who became a xenos to her, ἀπεξεοῦντο (777), this mother who wonders whether her son's death is fortunate for her or grievous

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[118] Cf. ln. 278ff. for the monthly celebrations commemorating the murder and 270 for libations.

[119] This is in contrast to *Antigone* where covering the dead is the action or praxis of the plot and recognition the meaning of that covering – putting the uncovered bodies in covered places and uncovering the bodies in covered places.

(766-67), nonetheless prepares her son's urn, orders it, or decks it out. Λέβητα κοσμεῖ, "she's dressing the urn," Electra tells the chorus (1401) about her mother who since the Paedagogus' lie has disappeared inside the house. Clytemnestra still treats this philos turned xenos as a philos. Perhaps *this* is the deinos of motherhood (770). An absent son bent on revenge is xenos but returned dead – a glorious death that wins a report of the Paedagogus – in the urn deserves all the respect of a dead philos?[120] In all her villainy, the Clytemnestra of *Electra* retains a stronger sense of humanity than her Aeschylean counterpart. She prepares *for burial* her son's funeral urn (ἐς τάφον / λέβητα κοσμεῖ, 1400-01).

But we don't see her doing so; her actions are reported to us from one who was inside, but is now outside again. The entire scene of matricide is a murder in words rather than in sight.[121] While all that spoke of Hades came to sight before, now what will go to Hades is put out of sight. σὺ δ' ἐκτὸς ᾖξας πρὸς τί; "why have you come outside?" the chorus ask Electra in surprise.[122] Outside the palace doors, Electra commits the crime in words that her brother acts out in the dark interior of the house. Clytemnestra is, in effect, killed by words; the second blow comes as Electra speaks of it (1415-16), as if Electra conjures the daggers, just after Agamemnon's murder is verbally remembered (1411). The darkness of the house hides action, and since the action is murder, the dark house hides the dead and thus becomes a tomb for the dead queen. Mother and son switch roles – one hidden by an urn as a dead man kills one preparing the urn and hides her indoors and under

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[120] The Paedagogus' speech in the dead man's home mimics the epinician poet's song in the victor's home. The latter returns with a song to carry on the memory of the family and the name, whereas the former returns with the urn that wins a song – Electra's lament and Aegisthus' threnos (1469).

[121] Cf. Chapter 3, especially part III.iii on Sophoclean poetry's tendency to allude and infer rather than speak directly.

[122] Earlier, Chrysothemis and Clytemnestra both posed the same question to Electra, knowing full well that such was her normal behavior . Hence their employing αὖ in their very first lines to Electra, 328 & 516.

wraps (1468). Chrysothemis' ealier question of surprised disbelief, "What?! Shall I raise the dead to life again?" ἤ τοὺς θανόντας ἐξαναστήσω ποτέ· (940) is now answered by the chorus. "Those that lie beneath the earth live," they chant, "the curses are fulfilled": τελοῦσ' ἀραί· ζῶσιν οἱ γᾶς ὑπαὶ κείμενοι (1418-19). Electra's early song has had its effect. Hades, the divinities of his realm and the dead have come to the stage and played the role asked of them at the start. The dead – both Clytemnestra and Orestes – are covered and hidden to allow another, final, play at death in *Electra.* Poetry has won; no longer achieving mere mimesis, poetry here *actually* brings people it has killed back from Hades.

In the final scene, Sophocles offers a play at sight withheld and offered as the final death is prepared. Aegisthus enters asking for sure signs of the report he's heard that Orestes has died in a mess of chariots: "who knows where the Phocian strangers are who announced, ἀγγεῖλει, that Orestes is dead?" "Is he truly dead, as they announced," ἤ καὶ θανόντα ἤγγειλαν ὡς ἐτητύμως, (1452), says an Aegisthus who uses vision to reinforce speech, words, and threats. Electra assures him that he can see the proof, for they not only spoke in words. The sight is most unenviable, an ἄζηλος θέα (1455).

Seeing, uncovering to see what is *really* at play is not as easy as just lifting a veil. Seeing the corpse, Aegisthus hopes, will silence the Mycenean Argives.[123] He orders the doors and the palace to be opened; the corpse, thought to be Orestes', is brought out, still covered! Yet words for sight, seeing, and showing abound here: ἀπέδειξαν (1453), ἀναδεικνύναι (1458), ὁρᾶν (1459,1471), ὁρῶν (1461), δέδορκα (1466), χαλᾶτε...ἀπ' ὀφθαλμῶν (1468), σκόπει (1474) λεύσσω (1475). Aegisthus looks upon the covered corpse – the hidden dead – and calls it a φάσμα, as Clytemnstra called her dream (644)

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[123] A telling note: Aegisthus has heard nothing of the grand pivot of the play, the lie. He has heard only its outlines, perhaps similar to what Orestes said at the play's start – "Orestes is dead" – and thus he expects a corpse to arrive for burial, rather than a sign, an urn.

when praying to Apollo. He orders the veils to be taken from the eyes, χαλᾶτε πᾶν κάλυμμ' ἀπ' ὀφθαλμῶν, (of all Mycenae? of the corpse? his own?) and finally beholds the truth. As Aegisthus sees the unbelievable (τί λεύσσω, "what am I looking at?" he asks), Clytemnestra's corpse instead of Orestes', Orestes questions the recognition τιν' ἀγνοεῖ; "whom/what don't you recognize?" I think, with Kells, that this refers to Orestes himself as Aegisthus, having seen the corpse, now looks up at the man before him, scanning his face for recognition.[124] Yet following closely on Aegishtus' own τί λεύσσω, it speaks largely of the lack of recognition when things are covered, whether by veils or by words and of the sustained blindness even when those veils are lifted. Sight and knowledge come only when the coverings are pulled off and Hades and the dead are visible. The poetic crisis is resolved with the real and concrete.

The play at death is over. Orestes, dead throughout the middle drama, is alive and on stage in the flesh, but the covering and hiding continues – or perhaps flips – as he orders Aegisthus to enter the house. "Why darkness? Must the house of the Pelopidae *see* all its present and future ills?" asks Aegisthus.[125] But the murder, death will not be completely covered this time. While the audience will not see it, Orestes will keep watch, will be a guard of Aegisthus: φυλάξαι. For one must be ever watchful of those who step beyond the law; the law needs eyes and sight to know whom to kill as swiftly as possible.

So the soon-to-be-dead and the once-dead enter the darkness of the house, a house that contains only dead – Clytemnestra, Orestes when assumed dead, Aegisthus. The house becomes a tomb for our characters, an underworld of sorts where they will dwell now that the action has come to an end. The play at hiding, covering, and revealing remains alive at this end; Aegisthus speaks of darkness, "why darkness if the act is good," while Orestes

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[124] Orestes' remark notes a disjunct on Aegsithus' face in his recognition of the dead, his οὗτος ἐκεῖνος moment.

[125] 1494, 1497-98.

speaks of keeping watch *for justice*, in order to be sure it is carried out and no one steps beyond the law. Yet all Electra wants is for Aegisthus to be put out of sight as swiftly as possible (1489).

Orestes' justice must be fulfilled in order for souls in Hades to exist, according to Electra's logic and poetics. Early on she had said, "if the dead are earth and nothing and the doers don't pay the penalty, then all aidos and sebas is gone from mortals" (245-50). There can be no respect among men (we need each other for burial and vengeance) nor respect of men for gods (gods demand burial) if justice is not upheld. The dead are nothing, robbed of a name and memory, when vengeance is not possible, as Electra says over the urn – nothing to nothing. With Orestes dead there may be no justice, only fantasies of justice and its afterglow expressed in words when people see or look at the avengers.[126] Hades must exist for souls of the dead to continue to exist in order for there to be some order in the mortal world. There must be a common Hades of the sort our chorus and that of the *Ajax* speak.[127] The dead cannot remain earth and nothing. There must be a poetry that serves to bring back the dead or those cast as dead for vengeance, for setting things straight, as Aristophanes seems to be saying in his *Frogs*.

The end of *Electra* is notoriously cryptic, hiding its meaning much as it hid Orestes throughout. Critics have read it variously as a triumph or defeat and have questioned the method and means of justice.[128] I side with those who read the play darkly and see the end as fitting the whole. We are left in darkness, with images of the hidden invisible dead and

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[126] As at 973ff.

[127] *Ajax* 1194, *Electra* 137-38.

[128] Triumphant readers include C. M. Bowra, *Sophoclean Tragedy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press (1944); P. T. Stevens, "Sophocles' Electra: Doom or Triumph?" G&R series 2, v. 25 (1978) 111-120. C. Whitman, "Trial by Time: Electra" in *Sophocles: A Study of Heroic Humanism*. Cambridge, Mass. (1966) 149-171; R.M. Torrance, "Sophocles: Some Bearings" HSCP 69 (1965) 269-327. Darker readers include J. T. Sheppard, "The Tragedy of Electra, According to Sophocles," CQ 12 (1918) 80-88, "Electra: A Defense of Sophocles," CR 41 (1927) 2-9, "Electra Again," CR 41 (1927) 163-165; C. S. Smith, "The Meanings of καιρός in Sophocles' *Electra*," CJ (1990) 341-343; C. P. Segal (1966).

Hades now in our minds for consideration. Both Electra's poetics of remembered dead and the Paedagogus' of invisible lives cloud our clear vision. We are left in Hades. But instead of visible ghosts such as a Darius, Clytemnestra, or Achilles of Aeschylus, Sophocles evokes a world of shades and covered sounds; the revelation of Hades is indirect on Sophocles' stage.

Staging Hades, Sophocles gives us a play where the hidden dead come to life on stage, where the living dress in death and where seeing death, seeing Hades and recognizing Hades reveals the justice between men and that justice involves complications or leaves one in compromising positions, like having to commit matricide. When one sees the invisible Hades by way of dreams, corpses, and plays at death, one recognizes, finally, what the limits of mortality are and thus the bounds of the polis. Both lie at death, but mortality continues as image in Hades and in images of Hades. The poetics of Hades in *Electra* leave us asking why stage Hades on the Athenian stage? At the City Dionysia on the slopes of the Acropolis? These questions shall guide the discussion in the next chapter.

Chapter Five

Hades in the Theater of Dionysus

ὡυτὸς δὲ 'Αίδης καὶ Διόνυσος,
ὁτέῳ μαίνονται καὶ ληναΐζουσιν

But Hades and Dionysus, for whom they rave and
celebrate Lenaean rites, are the same.

Heraclitus of Ephesus, fr. 15[1]

So, why does Sophocles put Hades on the stage of Athens during the festival to Dionysus as we've seen in the last two chapters? Why play with shades instead of casting them as Aeschylus does a Clytemnestra or Darius? Why hide Hades and unveil him in plays at death instead of setting a play in Hades as Aristophanes did?

The invisible realm of the invisible god Hades was a mystery to the Greeks inspiring various representations of the unknown afterlife. Homer's epic, Pindar's epinicians, and much unrecorded folk sayings attempt to make familiar or at least to explain in recognizable terms via metaphor and allegory the unknown and unexplainable beyond of life after death. Not just inspiration for poets working in words, Hades inspired pictorial artists and the birth of mystery religions too. Hence the Locrian pinakes (mid to late 5th-century BC), Polygnotus' painting in the Knidian Lesche at Delphi (458-477 BC), and various South Italian pots (late 5th-early 4th-century BC). The unknown offers artists a place to explore the imaginary.

Because invisible and hence unknown, Hades' realm is represented multiply and inconsistently, even within the poems of Homer. Tales of Hades from Homer and ghost

[1] Quoted in Clement's *Protrepticus*, 34. The text and translation here is that of G.S. Kirk, J.E. Raven, and M. Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers*. Cambridge, UK & New York: Cambridge University Press (1983, second edition) 209.

stories passed by word of mouth are among the reasons Plato's Socrates supports a poetic revolution that omits, among other things, representations of Hades, for Homer's Hades would keep warriors from being courageous on the battlefield.[2] Socrates' proposed revolution may also have been a response to the shades of Hades witnessed on the stage of the Theater of Dionysus in Athens.

Sophocles takes the dead shades of Homer and makes them a problem. Instead if putting them underground they are left onstage, dead, alive or alive yet clothed in death. No longer the γέρας θανωντων, burial becomes a question on the stage of Athens and in the polis of Athens. Sophocles' unburied corpses – both the Polyneices and Ajax type and the Oedipus and Orestes type – provide the poet with a way of exploring the relationship between the invisible, unknown god and realm of Hades and seen and unseen things more generally. Hades is a way that Sophocles can visualize and make present something un-representable and usually unvisualizable: the dead and the afterlife. And in doing so, Sophocles offers a counter afterlife to that proposed in Homer's Hades: life on the stage before the citizens of Athens.

Moreover, by problematizing death on stage, by putting Hades on stage in the theater of Dionysus, Sophocles makes the limits of the civic visible before an audience of Athenian citizens. While the festival to Dionysus was a civic festival replete with ceremonies that marked the relationship between the city and its citizens and proclaiming civic ideology, the images enacted before the audience questioned those very definitions of the civic and its ideology. Sophocles' oeuvre, by putting the corpse center stage

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[2] Cf. *Republic* X, *Phaedo*. See R. Edmonds (2004).

makes of the theater a place outside the limits of the civic. The subject on stage – who gets buried – is not determined by the city; the rules on stage are dictated by something beyond the city: poetry, Hades, humanity. Hence Tiresias' proclamations at the end of *Antigone* and Odysseus' at the end of *Ajax*. Burial is revealed as a mark of being part of that group called ἄνθρωπος, which exists within the city during life, but at death passes to another realm, witness the *report* of Oedipus' disappearance at the end of *Oedipus at Colonus*.

While Sophocles is not the only playwright of Athens to put the dead on stage, the manner in which he plays at death on his stage both teaches the city and its citizens about its limits while it civilizes or humanizes its audience. An aged Oedipus who has been beaten and wandered all his life is welcomed by Theseus' Athens and at the same time by the audience of Sophocles' play as something of value in and to the city. Indeed, Aeschylus' ghost of Darius is of value to his city for the advice he offers. So too the shades Aristophanes' Dionysus seeks to bring back to the city. Yet the image of Oedipus, both as the tortured εἴδωλον who first arrives at Colonus and the hero who disappears from it, offers the citizen audience of Athens a glimpse at what Allen Grossman calls the work of poetry: making human images present to one another. Playing with putting images out of sight while keeping those images present and active, both *Electra* and *Oedipus at Colonus* speak of the human capacity for image making and of keeping humans civilized or humanized via those re-presenced images. Keeping human images present to one another in the theater of Athens at a festival to Dionysus partakes of civic ritual and proclaims the city's need for ritual, for the city to see what lies outside of, yet is still a part of, itself.

In the last two chapters, we've looked at two of Sophocles' works where the corpses in need of care, unlike those left on Homer's battlefield, the camps of soldiers, or the tattered city of Thebes, are still alive. *Oedipus at Colonus* is a play about a blind old Oedipus' search for his final resting place. The entire play prepares for that end which turns the already corpse-like Oedipus into words and songs that keep him eternal in a specific, yet unknown and unseen place. Electra, in the play that bears her name, finds herself living a life amid death awaiting a life hidden in death: her brother Orestes. Sophocles puts the poetics of Hades – that relationship between the unseen god/realm and unseens in the play – to work in both these plays. With the *Oedipus at Colonus*, the poetics of Hades accomplish a traditional act of poetics: making the invisible visible, but visible as re-presenced in words to others – both the Athenians watching the play and all who have seen it performed or read it since. In *Electra*, the poetics of Hades turns on itself, not making the invisible visible but its opposite: putting out of sight or hiding, via Hades (the lie, the urn), the visible Orestes. With this trick accomplished, the poetics of Hades in *Electra* then achieves a neater feat: bringing the dead back to life, not as Aeschylus' shady Darius or Clytemnestra, but in the flesh and for a particular end, putting another out of sight in death.

Sophocles takes Homer's clear representations of the shady dead and uses them – their language, both what they say and what is said of them – to play at hiding and covering the dead on his stage. One major concern of Sophoclean tragedy seems to spring from Homeric epic: keeping the dead alive, or re-presencing the dead. In Homer and Pindar, the dead were kept alive by the poets singing their κλέος or renown, so as to

keep their names in perpetuity. Less concerned with individual names, Sophocles' plays of death concern themselves with keeping certain poetic figures present in and for the city. Sophoclean tragedy, then, sits somewhere between epic and its concern for personal κλέος, and the ἐπιτάφιος λόγος's concern for civic κλέος. The poetics of Hades in the two plays investigated articulates the political and ethical value of Hades for and in the city.

Both *Oedipus at Colonus* and *Electra* attempt to set things in order. In the former, a place and meaning or value of a polluted parricide is found in a particular city: Athens. Oedipus in Colonus will keep Athens safe. A character whose actions/sufferings have destroyed his family becomes valuable for the greater political family of Athens. The continued memory of the dead Oedipus *by* the Athenians will keep them safe from foes. Athens will remember not a tortured tragic character but one endowed with the powers of the Eumenides to curse and to bless, to protect and to avenge. The poetics of Hades in *Oedipus at Colonus*, Sophocles last play, then speaks of justice, for the Eumenides protected justice in the city. In *Electra*, written and performed earlier than *Oedipus at Colonus*, vengeance is fulfilled for a father's murder, but with a ruse and guise, leaving us (and many before us) with questions as to the ethical or moral value of such an act: has order been re-established, or will the cycle continue?

Perhaps we are left with the wrong question, for the very presence and action of Hades and the poetics of Hades on *Electra*'s stage speaks itself of a leveling, of a settling of debts. We recall Electra's early fear that "if the dead is earth and lies wretched as a nothing, and justice is not paid with murder in return, then aidos and eusebeia has gone

from men."[3] With the presence of Hades on stage and the tricks of the poetics of Hades, Electra turns confident in the power of Hades and its poetics, in the dead being brought back to life through her brother to set the house straight.[4] Justice comes from beyond and seems to need the beyond, the poetics of Hades, for its efficacy both in *Electra* and *Oedipus at Colonus.*[5]

Tragedy, or at least Sophoclean tragedy, seems to be all about Hades or rather, the poetics of Hades, bringing back of the dead or re-presencing the dead. But not in the same way Homer's keeps the memory of heroes alive. Sophocles' heroes don't die for valiant acts, but rather questionable ones. Yet they'll be remembered. Perhaps Sophocles means to tell the city something about the power of poetry for the city. The plot of Aristophanes' *Frogs* suggest that tragedy, or theater more generally, was all about bringing back the dead. In that play, the city of Athens is in serious trouble and, like in Aeschylus' *Persians*, aid is sought in Hades' halls. Dionysus, the god of tragedy, the mask, wine and mysteries, goes to Hades dressed up as Heracles in order to bring back a poet, for there are no good poets left in the city.[6] He must choose between Euripides (his

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[3] 245 –250.

[4] But Orestes still has his doubts: "all's well in the house, if Apollo prophesied well" (1424-25).

[5] The same could be said for *Antigone*, as the prophet Tiresias – one in touch with the beyond – settles the matter. So too *Ajax*, whose Odysseus (in narrative time he's not yet been to Hades, yet is one known to have gone) too settles the matter of burying the corpse of Ajax. Likewise for *Philoctetes*, whose Heracles convinces the hero to return to life.

[6] Sophocles may have been alive at the time Aristophanes began writing *Frogs*, but died before he finished. This is how Dover explains the obvious question, "what about Sophocles?", cf. K. Dover, *Aristophanes: Frogs.* Oxford: Clarendon Press (1993). Dover adds that the contrast between Euripides and Aeschylus provides more humor, Dionysus as enthusiast of Euripides thereby becoming a target of humor whereas "an enthusiasm for Sophocles would not have had that effect" (9). With Euripides and Aeschylus in the agon we are treated to the familiar Aristophanic "contrast between imagined virtues of a generation which had few survivors in 405 and the alleged depravity of its successors" (9).

favorite at the start) and Aeschylus (his choice at the end). When Heracles asks Dionysus why he doesn't just bring Sophocles back, the god of tragic theater answers that it would be impracticable to try to extract from the underworld a man likely to be content with his fate (80-82).[7] If we can take Aristophanes' work as expressing a popular view, then Sophocles was considered content in life and in death. Perhaps having explored the poetics of Hades on his stage, Sophocles creator of human images would find content in Hades, the realm of image. While his poetics play at returning the dead to life and the life to death and back, this poet adheres to the limits of mankind, the limits of Hades.

The language of Hades – and perhaps the poetics too – seems to have influenced not only the tragic and comedic stage of 5th century Athens, but even talk *about* the tragic stage. Aristotle's discussions of poetry are replete with images of Hades taken straight from Homer and Sophocles, his favorite poets. For example, when telling the subject of his work, Aristotle says he will speak

> περὶ ποιητικῆς αὐτῆς τε καὶ τῶν εἰδῶν αὐτῆς, ἥν τινα δύναμιν ἕσκατον ἔχει, καὶ πῶς δεῖ συνίστασθαι τοὺς μύθους εἰ μέλλει καλῶς ἕξειν ἡ ποίησις ... ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ περὶ τῶν ἄλλων ὅσα τῆς αὐτῆς ἐστι μεθόδου ...
>
> ... about poetics itself and also its shapes/forms and their respective capabilities, and how to correctly fit together plots/stories if the work is to turn out well, and similarly anything else that is relevant to a study of this kind.[8]

But why choose τῶν εἰδῶν to mark the types of poetry here? Is Aristotle hinting at poetry's work at imaging the εἴδωλα of the dead? Or just reacting to Plato's use of

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[7] Translation is Dover's.

[8] Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1447a.

εἴδη for his theory of the forms?[9] Indeed, shortly thereafter, while describing the "birth of poetry," if you will, from the human desire to learn and have pleasure through imitations (mimeseis), Aristotle proves his point by saying that "we enjoy looking at the most accurate representations of things which in themselves we find painful to see, such as the forms (here εἰκόνας) of the lowest animals and of corpses."[10] Aristotle presents his proof for the birth of mimesis as a σημεῖον, yet another word that in Homer and Sophocles points to the dead, Hades, and the poetics of Hades and has taken on a life of its own in contemporary talk about poetry and poetics.

Sophocles' poetics of Hades on Aristotle's literary criticism shows itself more clearly in Aristotle's later use of εἴδη when specifically defining the types of tragedy.[11] There are four εἴδη of tragedy, says Aristotle: complex, pathetike (suffering) and ethike (character). Aristotle doesn't grant the fourth type a name as he does the other three, but instead offers examples of this type: the *Phorkides* and the *Prometheus*. And then Aristotle gives a general characteristic of the type: as many as are (set) in Hades, ὅσα ἐν ᾅδου. The plays we've looked at in the last chapters could perhaps belong to this class of tragedy Aristotle finds hard to name? Or is Sophocles playing on an established topos with his poetics of Hades?

Aristotle's poetic theory is replete with Hades talk, for again we find, ἀρχὴ μὲν

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[9] Plato too, then, has been influenced by poetry's keeping human images present for one another, for his new philosophy attempts to replace poetry, yet he uses language borrowed from that poetry.

[10] ibid. 1448b.

[11] ibid 1456a1-3.

οὖν καὶ οἷον ψυχὴ ὁ μῦθος τῆς τραγῳδίας.[12] The plot is the "soul" of tragedy. Why speak of its "soul"? Why choose soul as a metaphor for plot? Earlier we saw metaphor as poet's way of describing the indescribable, representing the un-representable. Yet by choosing to liken a plot to a soul Aristotle leaves us in the shady realm of Hades. To be sure, he seems, in what follows, to mean that the soul is the essence or most important part of a human, since the plot, without its en-action, ought nevertheless effect its listeners. If the plot is the soul then the en-action is the body of a tragedy. With all his time among tragedy, and particularly among his favorites, Aristotle seems to have been infused with the poetics of Hades, hence his Hades talk when speaking of poetry.

Hades, we saw earlier, gets passed over in secondary discussions of Olympian gods and is relegated to a dark, murky, shady place. He finds his place among discussions of the nether gods, the furies and Eumenides, tales of Persephone, mysteries that promise a blessed afterlife, and on the stage of Dionysus in Athens. The riddling philosopher Heraclitus whose words introduce this chapter may have been equating opposites when he made his cryptic remark about Hades and Dionysus being the same. Perhaps he was hitting on a truth Sophocles later elaborated upon when producing his tragedies for the Athenians. The festival of Dionysus is really a festival of Hades, presence-ing not only the god of the theater, wine, mask and mystery, but simultaneously the god of the dead, the mask and mystery.

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[12] Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1450a.

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