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Aeschylus' Seven Against Thebes vs. Euripides' Phoenissae: Male vs. Female Power*

Summary – In respect of story, Aeschylus' Seven Against Thebes and Euripides' Phoenissae follow parallel plotlines, since they both treat the same mythical material, i. e. the expedition of Polyneices against his brother Eteocles. However, a detailed intertextual comparison of the martial descriptions and character presentations of both plays shows that whereas the Aeschylean play enhances male authority, its Euripidean counterpart engages in promoting the manifestation of female dynamism. This gender-oriented opposition is so inbuilt in both plays that it virtually amounts to an intertextual rivalry between the Aeschylean and the Euripidean approach to myth.

Aeschylus' Seven Against Thebes and Euripides' Phoenissae are structured upon the same mythical event and thus share a series of thematic similarities providing a fertile field for intertextual analysis. The famous expedition of Polyneices and the six Argives against Eteocles and the Thebans acts as the mythical substratum allowing both Aeschylus and Euripides to express their personal outlook at war, a topic running high in 5th century political agenda. A clear-cut Aeschylean martial interpretation of war as a demonstration of excessive 'maleness', is thus put against the question concerning the inevitable involvement of humans in a suffocating circle of events, in which women – as Euripides seems to suggest – play a major role. The aim of this paper is to examine the manifestation of power in both plays through a detailed intertextual comparison of all relevant – explicit and implicit – attestations. In the first part of the paper I will examine the manifestations of power firstly as martial descriptions and secondly as parts of character-presentation in Seven Against Thebes, while in the second part, I will consider the same features in the Phoenissae.

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I. Seven Against Thebes

a. Martial Descriptions:

In Aeschylus' Seven, the emphasis on martial descriptions was observed as early as the classical period, when Gorgias called the play μεστὸν Ἄρεως, i. e. 'full of Ares', and Aristophanes added that all its viewers would have longed to go to war.[1] The play begins with a monologue by Eteocles calling the citizens to fight in defense of their homeland, reassuring them that he will take command of the situation (1–38). A messenger in panic appears right away, recounting that the attackers have encircled the city (42–53):

ἄνδρες γὰρ ἑπτά, θούριοι λοχαγέται,
ταυροσφαγοῦντες εἰς μελάνδετον σάκος
καὶ θιγγάνοντες χερσὶ ταυρείου φόνου
45 Ἄρη τ' Ἐνυὼ καὶ φιλαίματον Φόβον
ὡρκωμότησαν, ἢ πόλῃ κατασκαφάς
θέντες λαπάξειν ἄστυ Καδμείων βίᾳ
ἢ γῆν θανόντες τήνδε φυράσειν φόνῳ·
μνημεῖά θ' αὑτῶν τοῖς τεκοῦσιν εἰς δόμους
50 πρὸς ἅρμ' Ἀδράστου χερσὶν ἔστεφον, δάκρυ
λείβοντες, οἶκτος δ' οὔτις ἦν διὰ στόμα·
σιδηρόφρων γὰρ θυμὸς ἀνδρείᾳ φλέγων
ἔπνει λεόντων ὣς ἄρη δεδορκότων.[2]

"There were seven men, fierce regiment commanders,
who cut bulls' throats into an iron-rimmed shield,
and with hands touched the bulls' blood,
taking their oaths by Ares and Enyo, by the bloodthirsty God of Battle Rout,
either to lay your city level with the ground, sacked,
or by their death to make a bloody paste of this same soil of yours.
Remembrances of themselves for parents at home
their hands have hung upon Adrastus' chariot: their tears ran down, but never
a word of pity was in their mouths.
Their spirits were hard as iron and ablaze breathed courage: war looked through
their lion eyes."[3]

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1 Plutarch, Moralia 715 D/E, ὥσπερ καὶ τὸν Αἰσχύλον ἱστοροῦσι τὰς τραγῳδίας ἐμπίνοντα ποιεῖν, καὶ οὐχ, ὡς Γοργίας εἶπεν, ἓν τῶν δραμάτων αὐτοῦ «μεστὸν Ἄρεως» εἶναι, τοὺς Ἕπτ' ἐπὶ Θήβας, ἀλλὰ πάντα Διονύσου. In Aristophanes, Ra. 1021–1024, Aeschylus is being mocked by Dionysus, because he presented the Thebans being braver than the Argives: (Αἰ.) Δρᾶμα ποήσας Ἄρεως μεστόν / (Δι.) Ποῖον; / (Αἰ.) Τοὺς Ἕπτ' ἐπὶ Θήβας. / ὃ θεασάμενος πᾶς ἄν τις ἀνὴρ ἠράσθη δάϊος εἶναι. / (Δι.) Τουτὶ μέν σοι κακὸν εἴργασται· Θηβαίους γὰρ πεπόηκας / ἀνδρειοτέρους εἰς τὸν πόλεμον· καὶ τούτου γ' οὕνεκα τύπτου.

2 The text is that of M. L. West, Aeschyli Tragoediae, Stuttgart 1990.

3 The translation is that of D. Grene, Aeschylus, vol. II, Chicago 1956.

This first martial report creates gruesome imagery leaving no warlike details undeclared: the seven commanders are awesome and while having their hands dipped in sacrificial blood they are swearing by the bloodthirsty god of War that they will demolish the city to the ground. They are as brave as to never loose their courage, while their ironed spirits never allow them to express words of pity. Instead, they are resolved to have their blood poured over Theban soil, in case they die fighting. The parodos which follows (78 – 181) amplifies the terrifying description, by delivering the horrifying sound of the Argive army waiting for battle. The Theban women can hear the cling of battle, horse hoofs trampling (πεδί' ὁπλόκτυπ' ὠτὶ χρίμπτει βοάν, 84), shields rattling (ἀκούετ' ἢ οὐκ ἀκούετ' ἀσπίδων κτύπον, 100), spears whirring (κτύπον δέδορκα· πάταγος οὐχ ἑνὸς δορός, 103), chariots clattering (ἐἒ· ἐἒ· / ὄτοβον ἁρμάτων ἀμφὶ πόλιν κλύω, 150/151), and stones crashing on the city's walls (ἀκροβόλος δ' ἐπάλξεων λιθὰς ἔρχεται, 159). They describe the Argive hostile masses as a sea-wave of warriors that surrounds the city plashing by the blasts of Ares (κῦμα περὶ πτόλιν δοχμολόφων ἀνδρῶν / καχλάζει πνοαῖς Ἄρεος ὀρόμενον, 111 – 115).

And while they sing the first stasimon providing a concealing 'curtain' that allows offstage action to evolve, the messenger visits the battlefield and comes back on stage with news about the Argive army.[4] Narrative insistence on warlike matters is easily noticed in the so called 'catalogue of the seven', through the description of both the looks and shields of each of the seven leaders. From this point onwards, the play will focus on the warriors and their shields, exalting their – either frenzied or sound and controlled – fighting abilities.[5] Tydeus is thirsty for death and with arrogance depicted even on his petrifying shield,[6] he reproaches seer Amphiaraus, ignoring the sacrificial signs (380 – 394). Capaneus, the second Argive to be mentioned, is a man of giant structure and inhuman arrogance (423 – 434). He threatens the Thebans in fury, and even his shield bears a representation which signals the destruction of the city (ἔχει δὲ σῆμα γυμνὸν ἄνδρα πυρφόρον, / φλέγει δὲ λαμπὰς διὰ χερῶν ὡπλισμένη· / χρυσοῖς δὲ φωνεῖ γράμμασιν 'πρήσω πόλιν', 432 – 434). As for Polyphontes, the Theban to confront him, he is also a man of fiery spirit, a 'trustworthy guard' (φερέγγυον

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4 For the dramatic use of the choral songs as 'curtains', see D. Iakov, Η Ενότητα του Χρόνου στην Αρχαία Ελληνική Τραγωδία. Συμβολή στη Διερεύνηση της Τραγικής Τεχνικής, PhD, University of Thessaloniki 1982, 155/156.

5 For the treatment of the shields in Seven Against Thebes, see W. Schadewaldt, Die Wappnung des Eteokles: Zu Aischylos' ‚Sieben gegen Theben', in: J. Kroymann (ed.), Eranion. Festschrift für Hildebrecht Hommel, Tübingen 1961, 105 – 116; H. Bacon, The Shield of Eteocles, Arion 3, 3 (1964), 27 – 38; W. G. Thalmann, Dramatic Art in Aeschylus' Seven Against Thebes, New Haven and London 1978, 105 – 135; F. Zeitlin, Under the Sign of the Shield: Semiotics and Aeschylus' Seven Against Thebes, Rome 1982.

6 ἔχει δ' ὑπέρφρον σῆμ' ἐπ' ἀσπίδος, 387.

φρούρημα), fighting under the protection of goddess Artemis (447–451).[7] Similarly terrifying is the description of the Argive Eteoclus, whose horses are snorting with rage (461–464) and whose shield – resembling that of Capaneus – also contains written intimidations (465–469). Hippomedon, the fourth Argive, is of giant form and makes the messenger shudder (ἔφριξα … οὐκ ἄλλως ἐρῶ, 490). He cries out his war-cry reveling like a Bacchanal 'with murder in his glance' (αὐτὸς δ' ἐπηλάλαξεν, ἔνθεος δ' Ἄρει / βακχᾷ πρὸς ἀλκὴν θυιὰς ὥς, φόβον βλέπων, 497/498). Equally terrifying, his shield bears the representation of the mythical monster Typho breathing fire (Τυφῶν ἱέντα πυρπνόον διὰ στόμα / λιγνὺν μέλαιναν, αἰόλην πυρὸς κάσιν, 493/494), while the shield of Hyperbius, the equivalent Theban warrior who matches him, depicts Zeus holding the lightning bolt (504–520). Right at the fifth Gate stands Parthenopaeus. He swears by his lance that he will sack the city of Thebes in spite of the will of Zeus (ὄμνυσι δ' αἰχμὴν ἣν ἔχει, μᾶλλον θεοῦ / σέβειν πεποιθὼς ὀμμάτων θ' ὑπέρτερον, / ἦ μὴν λαπάξειν ἄστυ Καδμείων βίᾳ, 529–531). His shield bears the Sphinx dreadfully savoring a Theban (539–544), and thus brutally forcing the Theban soldiers to address their arrows to a compatriot. At the sixth Gate, the seer Amphiaraus[8] will fight against strong Lasthenes (568–625), an inhospitable guard (ἐχθρόξενον πυλωρόν, 621), "in mind an old man, but a young one in his body's vigor" (γέροντα τὸν νοῦν, σάρκα δ' ἡβῶσαν φύει· / … χεῖρα δ' οὐ βραδύνεται / … ἁρπάσαι δορί, 622–624). The last gate is left for Polyneices, who is presented as an arrogant and fearless fighter. He yells in frenzy and proclaims the fall of the city, aspiring either to kill or to banish Eteocles into exile (631–641).[9] The messenger admits the violent nature of Polyneices and describes his shield, depicting Justice (Dike)[10] yelling that she will bring Oedipus' son back to Thebes (642–648).

There is no doubt that the martial prowess of the Argive champions makes them frightful to see and to hear. The Argive warriors and their shields – an

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7 For discussion of Eteocles' insistence on justifying his 'matching the Argive' choices, see H. D. Cameron, The Power of Words in the Seven Against Thebes, TAPhA 101 (1970), 95–118 (100/101).

8 The seer Amphiaraus is the only Argive who does not fit the pattern of the frenzied warrior, but is presented as a determined, sound leader taking part in the expedition although he knows that he will be killed.

9 According to B. Goward, Telling Tragedy. Narrative Techniques in Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides, London 1999, 84, if the shield scene in the Seven is approached as a kind of 'verbal battle', then Eteocles is narratively superior and thus the winner. However, Polyneices appearing last brings back to light the irresistible power of the old curse of Oedipus, which having the great authority of an ancient narrative, makes Eteocles' supremacy collapse.

10 On Dike in Aeschylus, see G. O. Hutchinson (ed.), Aeschylus. Septem Contra Thebas, edited with Introduction and Commentary, Oxford 1985, 146/147.

intertextual sign of military authority – are described in such detail, that the play risks becoming a thorough catalogue of armed leaders. What is also beyond question is the military ability of the Theban champions: at the beginning of the play Eteocles assures the chorus that their able men will protect the city (lines 279 – 286), a fact confirmed later on. As for the Theban defenders, their qualities are also depicted in depth, following the full descriptions of the Argives.

b. Characterization:

At another level, the Seven promotes male authority through characterization.[11] Eteocles is the only fully developed male character of the play, since the messenger shows little characterization,[12] while female presence is felt only through the Theban women of the chorus[13] the more so since according to later scholarship, the final and much disputed appearance of Ismene and Antigone seems not to have belonged to Aeschylus' original play.[14] In this part of the pa-

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[11] As defined by I. J. F. de Jong, A Narratological Commentary on the Odyssey, Cambridge 2001, xii, characterization is "the presentation of a character, which includes his physical appearance, biography, and personality traits. Characterization may be *explicit* (a chunk of information is given – not necessarily at the first mention of a character – which is tailored to the direct context), or *implicit* (information, often pertaining to personality traits, is left to be inferred and assembled into a whole by the narratees)."

[12] It is now well established by the research of I. J. F. de Jong, Narrative in Drama. The Act of the Euripidean Messenger-Speech, Leiden 1991, that the messenger speeches do bear signs of focalization. Still, they cannot be treated as m a j o r characters, i. e. displaying complete personalities. For the difference between m a j o r and m i n o r characters, see C. P. Gardiner, The Sophoclean Chorus: a Study of the Character and Function, Iowa 1987, 186.

[13] For the common physical and psychological characteristics of the members of the chorus that allow one to consider them a single character, see M. Kaimio, The Chorus of Greek Drama within the Light of the Person and Number used, Helsinki 1970. On character in drama, see P. E. Easterling, Presentation of Character in Aeschylus, Greece and Rome 20 (1973), 3 – 19; Character in Sophocles, Greece and Rome 24 (1977), 121 – 129; J. P. A. Gould, Dramatic Character and "Human Intelligibility" in Greek Tragedy, Proceedings of Cambridge Philological Society 24 (1978), 43 – 67; D. Rosenmeyer, The Art of Aeschylus, Berkeley and Los Angeles 1982, 211 – 255; S. Goldhill, Character and Action, Representation and Reading: Greek Tragedy and its Critics, in: C. Pelling (ed.), Characterization and Individuality in Greek Literature, Oxford 1990, 100 – 127; Ch. Gill, Greek Thought, in: Greece and Rome, New Surveys in the Classics series (no. 25), Oxford 1995, 5 – 19; Personality in Greek Epic, Tragedy and Philosophy. The Self in Dialogue, Oxford 1996, 154 – 174, 204 – 239; F. Budelmann, The Language of Sophocles. Communality, Communication and Involvement, Cambridge 2000, 61 – 91; A. Markantonatos, Tragic Narrative. A Narratological Study of Sophocles' Oedipus at Colonus, Berlin 2002, 14 – 19. For character in connection to fate, see W. Schadewaldt, Hellas und Hesperien. Gesammelte Schriften zur Antike und zur Neueren Literatur, Zürich 1960, 589/590.

[14] The last two editors of Seven Against Thebes (Hutchinson [above n. 10] and West [above n. 2]) believe that two major passages of the play – lines 861 – 873 and lines 1005 – 1077 –

per, a close reading of the corresponding passages will help us zoom in the characters of both Eteocles and the chorus and discover how those enhance male while downplaying female power.

The misogyny of Eteocles towards the female chorus has been met both with strong consent and stark denial. His behavior towards the Theban women is seen either as a misogynistic demonstration or as a display of non gender-oriented authority, deriving simply from his ruling position and directed to his subordinates.[15] Received either as a sign of heterosexual hatred or just as a result of authoritative temperament, Eteocles' rebuking manners towards the chorus, demonstrated from the very beginning of the play, constitute an undeniable fact. It is from the parodos onwards that the petrified chorus feels that the threat is approaching and acts in panic, not knowing what god to turn to, moving back and forth in the orchestra, bringing into the dramatic present the offstage havoc of war.[16] Female prayers alternate with lamentation as if the battle had been already lost, despite the fact that the scout informs us that the battle had not even started.[17]

Right after their first song, Eteocles harshly rebukes the chorus and condemns their hysterical reaction, connecting it to the flaws of their sex.[18] His

are spurious, while the lines in between them (874 – 1004) cannot be attributed to neither Ismene or Antigone. Before them, E. Fraenkel, Zum Schluß der Sieben gegen Theben, Museum Helveticum 21 (1964), 58 – 64 and O. Taplin, The Stagecraft of Aeschylus. The Dramatic Use of Exits and Entrances in Greek Tragedy, Oxford 1977, 176 – 180, were also suspicious about the last bit of the play (lines 1005 – 1077) and the presence of Ismene and Antigone respectively. For an interesting account of lines 1005 – 1077 of the Seven as a specimen of post-classical tragedy, see Hutchinson 210/211.

15 Cf. R. S. Caldwell, The Misogyny of Eteocles, Arethusa 6, 2 (1973), 197 – 231; Eteocles' behavior seems justified for A. Podlecki, The Political Background of Aeschylean Tragedy, Ann Arbor 1966, L. Golden, The Character of Eteocles and the Meaning of the Septem, Classical Philology 59, 2 (1964), 79 – 89, and Cameron (above n. 7).

16 Hutchinson (above n. 10), 74, proposes that the chorus perform a ritual of supplication at the onstage statues of the gods. The Theban chorus' cry (ὀλολυγμόν, 268) is believed to express premature terror, thus justifying Eteocles' anger. On fear in Aeschylus, see J. de Romilly, La Crainte et l'Angoisse dans le Théâtre d' Eschyle, Paris 1958.

17 Such a behavior was certainly considered a bad premonition. As argued by M. Alexiou, The Ritual Lament in Greek Tradition, Oxford 2002 (2nd ed. rev. by D. Yatromanolakis - P. Roilos), 4, "to weep for someone who was still alive, however the probability of his death, was a bad omen."

18 A. L. Brown, Eteocles and the Chorus in Seven Against Thebes, Phoenix 31 (1977), 300 – 318 (306), understands the reactions of the women of the chorus and that of Eteocles as a difference between two religious parties. According to M. Giordano-Zecharya, Ritual Appropriateness in Seven Against Thebes. Civic Religion in a Time of War, Mnemosyne 59 (2006), 53 – 74 (53), Eteocles is "more concerned about the religious behaviour of the Chorus … than with their religious views; in other words he castigates them for their heteropraxy, not their heterodoxy".

main argument is that their startled behavior disheartens the Theban soldiers, adding to an already serious problem (182 – 190):

ὑμᾶς ἐρωτῶ, θρέμματ᾽ οὐκ ἀνασχετά,
ἦ ταῦτ᾽ ἄριστα καὶ πόλῃ σωτήρια
στρατῷ τε θάρσος τῷδε πυργηρουμένῳ,
185 βρέτη πεσούσας πρὸς πολισσούχων θεῶν
αὔειν, λακάζειν, σωφρόνων μισήματα;
μήτ᾽ ἐν κακοῖσι μήτ᾽ ἐν εὐεστοῖ φίλῃ
ξύνοικος εἴην τῷ γυναικείῳ γένει·
κρατοῦσα μὲν γὰρ οὐχ ὁμιλητὸν θράσος,
190 δείσασα δ᾽ οἴκῳ καὶ πόλῃ πλέον κακόν.

"You insupportable creatures, I ask you,
is this the best, is this for the city's safety,
is this enheartening for our beleaguered army,
to have you falling at the images of the city's gods
crying and howling, an object of hatred for all temperate souls?
Neither in evils nor in fair good luck
may I share a dwelling with the tribe of women.
When she's triumphant, hers a confidence past converse with another,
when afraid, an evil greater both for home and city."

It is quite obvious that the chorus transfer offstage chaos into the city,[19] making Eteocles even claim that the city is being besieged from the inside,[20] while he clearly wants to keep warlike problems offstage.[21] Besides, he considers 'outside' scenery as a male-reserved area of action.[22] He yells at the chorus that

[19] For H. P. Foley, The Concept of Women in Athenian Drama, in: H. P. Foley (ed.), Reflections of Women in Antiquity, New York, London and Paris 1981, 127 – 168 (160), by bringing war chaos into the city, the chorus "implicitly remind the audience of the curse of Oedipus and internal, familial tensions of the royal house of Thebes, of all that Eteocles regards as sub-political and unworthy of attention".

[20] αὐτοὶ δ᾽ ὑπ᾽ αὐτῶν ἔνδοθεν πορθούμεθα, 194.

[21] Eteocles seems to be trying to keep the enemy 'outside', by hushing the danger 'inside', although Caldwell (above n. 15), 204, argues that the Theban women form a danger as serious as the 'outside' one, making us wonder "whether the real danger to Eteocles is from outside or inside his self and his city." The ambiguity of the enemy and the blurred boundaries between external and internal threat are noticed by Thalmann (above n. 5, 39), H. D. Cameron, Studies in the Seven Against Thebes of Aeschylus, Hague 1971, 29, Bacon (above n. 5, 29/30), and mostly Zeitlin (above n. 5, esp. 40), who thinks of the play, as the most generous in bringing up the "fundamental dichotomies which regulate Greek thought".

[22] This is a common feature in Aeschylean drama, which, according to F. Zeitlin, Patterns of Gender in Aeschylean Drama: Seven Against Thebes and the Danaid Trilogy, in: M. Griffith - D. J. Mastronarde (edd.), Cabinet of the Muses. Essays on Classical and Comparative Literature in Honor of Thomas G. Rosenmeyer, Atlanta 1990, 103 – 115 (109),

"what is outside is a man's province … [and] no woman [should] debate it" and advises them to stay "within doors [and] do no mischief!" (μέλει γὰρ ἀνδρί, μὴ γυνὴ βουλευέτω, / τἄξωθεν· ἔνδον δ' οὖσα μὴ βλάβην τίθει, 200/201).[23]

Such a reception of an offstage happening is rather surprising, especially for a reader acquainted with the plot of the Phoenissae. Aeschylus presents offstage action as man-reserved, while Euripides presents both his heroines (Jocasta and Antigone) surpassing their gender limitations and allows them to undertake an active offstage role, beyond the restrictions traditionally imposed upon them by a male-controlled society. The Aeschylean Eteocles orders the chorus to stop overreacting (μηδ' ἄγαν ὑπερφοβοῦ, 238) and he is being so decisive as to threaten to kill anyone who disobeys his orders (196 – 199). His main expectation from women is silence. By asking them to refrain from speaking no less than six times in the first episode, Eteocles redefines silence as an essential female quality.[24] Thus, the female chorus risks losing even their most well-established customary right: that of wailing. By preventing the expression of female feeling, Eteocles reflects the play's marginalization of women's power,[25] the more so since lamenting the dead is a 'protected' domain, a marked social activity, and a female-exclusive religious practice.[26]

However, oppressing female wailing was no novelty in the fifth century BC. Even though women's lamentation was a widely accepted ritual that doubtlessly eased the painful procedure of bidding farewell to the deceased, it also involved a violently expressed emotional outburst through breast beating and wailing. That is why, as Plutarch recounts, Solon launched a law controlling excessive lamentation, which was completely banned from funerals. By the end of the fifth

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situates the man outside the oikos, while it "reserves the interior domestic space for the women". Cf. also Giordano-Zecharya (above n. 18, 72), who notes that from Eteocles' viewpoint, the public domain is male reserved even for religious matters, unless the female element is controllably formulated.

23 This misogynistic outburst of Eteocles has been interpreted by Zeitlin (above n. 5, 32/33) as a result of his incestuous past that makes him want to downplay the "speaking signs" that grant genealogical diversity, while exalting "homogeneous commonality". His words also recall what Hector said to Andromache in Il. 6, 441. 490 – 493.

24 Lines 232, 238, 250, 252, 262, 280/281.

25 On power in Aeschylus, see V. di Benedetto, L'Ideologia del Potere e la Tragedia Greca. Ricerche su Eschilo, Torino 1978.

26 For the female lamentation as a socially recognized collective performance see Alexiou (above n. 17, 14 – 23); L. McClure, Spoken Like a Woman. Speech and Gender in Athenian Drama, Princeton 1999, 40 – 47. For L. Bruit-Zaidman, La Voix des Femmes: Les Femmes et la Guerre dans Les Sept Contre Thèbes, in: N. Fick - J. C. Carrière (edd.), Mélanges Étienne Bernand, Paris 1991, 43 – 55 (43), lamentation was so well known a female exclusivity, that was used in drama in order to recall the spectators' everyday experience and thus enhance the dramatic illusion.

century, lamentation was totally controlled,[27] as it formed part of a publicly sponsored funeral oration. Right after practicing the aforementioned 'Solonean' measures, Eteocles indulges himself in a famous simile where the turmoil of the demos is presented through vivid sea imagery (208 – 210):

τί οὖν; ὁ ναύτης ἆρα μὴ ᾽ς πρῷραν φυγὼν
πρύμνηθεν ηὗρε μηχανὴν σωτηρίας
210 νεὼς καμούσης ποντίῳ πρὸς κύματι;

"What, shall the sailor, then, leave the stern
and run to the prow and find device for safety
when his vessel is foundering in the sea waves?"

The symbolism of the simile is obvious; its basic terms, the ship and the sailor, stand for the endangered city and its commander, i. e. besieged Thebes and king Eteocles respectively. Apart from introducing the popular imagery of the state as a ship,[28] Eteocles mainly insists on the obligation of the captain (here stated as ναύτης) to remain at his post, regardless the risk. As explained by Dumortier, the captain, holding the wheel, used to stay at the stern, while another member of the crew, the πρῳράτης – second in the on board hierarchy –, was placed at the prow and showed the route by signaling to the captain.[29] As Petrounias points out, Eteocles rejects a captain who goes to the prow not because he would there be more secure, but because he walks out on his post, being mindless of his obligations.[30] Eteocles wants to show to the chorus that a good leader (ναύτης)

27 Ch. Segal, The Female Voice and Its Contradictions: From Homer to Tragedy, in: J. Dalfen - G. Petersmann - F. F. Schwarz (edd.), Religio Graeco-Romana. Festschrift für Walter Pötscher, Graz - Horn 1993, 57 – 75 (64). Cf. also Thucydides 2, 45, 2; Plutarch, Solon, 21, 5. In his Consolatio ad Apollonium (102c/d), Plutarch is of the opinion that excessive lamentation is παρὰ φύσιν ('unnatural') and shall be abandoned as βλαβερόν ('harmful'), φαῦλον ('depraved'), and ἀνδράσιν ἥκιστα πρέπον ('least manly'). He also refers to a series of people that hierarchically tend to overreact in that respect, placing women on the highest level (γυναῖκες γὰρ ἀνδρῶν εἰσι φιλοπενθέστεραι); his devaluating climax subsequently enumerates the χείρους ἄνδρες ('inferior men'), and then the βάρβαροι ('barbarians'; 113a). Generally on the excess of female lamentation, see N. Loraux, Les mères en deuil, Paris 1990. For women's lament in tragedy, see Ch. Segal, Euripides' Alcestis: Female Death and Male Tears, Classical Antiquity 11 (1992), 142 – 158 (148ff.). For the legislation on funeral rites and lamentation, see Alexiou (above n. 17, 14 – 23); G. Holst-Warhaft, Dangerous Voices. Women's Laments and Greek Literature, New York 1992, 114 – 119; H. Foley, Female Acts in Greek Tragedy, Princeton 2001, 19 – 55; and most recently C. Dué, The Captive Woman's Lament in Greek Tragedy, Austin 2006, 46 – 49.

28 For a full account of the nautical imagery in Seven, see J. Dumortier, Les Images dans la Poésie d'Eschyle, Paris 1975, 27 – 55; E. Petrounias, Funktion und Thematik der Bilder bei Aischylos, Göttingen 1976, 34 – 51; Thalmann (above n. 5, 32 – 38).

29 Dumortier (above n. 28, 37/38).

30 Petrounias (above n. 28, 41).

should be in complete control of a situation of emergency, undertaking his responsibilities without looking for comfort or consultation from anyone, let alone a subordinate (πρῳράτης).[31] These features are perfectly displayed in Aeschylean Eteocles, since not only does he remain at his post, but he also very successfully organises the defence of the city all by himself. Aeschylus is thus insisting on the importance of self-confidence and determination, endowing Eteocles with ruling authority and resolution, qualities Euripidean Eteocles surely lacks, since he cannot take any important decision without the consultation of Creon.

The metaphor of the 'ship of state' is a popular literary motif,[32] turned here by Eteocles into one of the unifying images of the play.[33] What is mostly interesting is Aeschylus' insistence on the nautical simile right after the implicit reference to Solon's political measures on lamentation, the more so since Solon's nautical imagery used to have a political meaning as well.[34] Apparently, Aeschylus uses this second reference to the well admired Athenian statesman, as another way of highlighting the ruling qualities of Eteocles, granting him political authority and recognition.[35]

II. Phoenissae

a. Martial Descriptions:

Turning to the Phoenissae, I shall begin with the teichoskopia scene (88-201) and the focalization of the Old Servant and Antigone offering the first image of

31 Dumortier (above n. 28, 38).

32 Cf. Il. 15,381–384, Alcaeus, fr. 16 B = 46a D. For the political meaning of this fragment, see D. Page, Sappho and Alcaeus. An Introduction to the Study of Ancient Lesbian Poetry, Oxford 1955, 185–189. A similar use of sea imagery is also found in Hdt. 7,16,1, Polyb. 11,29,9, as well as in an iambic fragment of unknown origin (fr. iamb. adesp. 29 D). According to B.H. Fowler, The Imagery of the Seven Against Thebes, Symbolae Osloenses 45 (1970), 24–37 (31), the heroic (coming from the Iliad) and political (coming from archaic poetry) tradition of the given imagery emphasizes the two motives of the play: "its Homeric associations emphasize the idea of the citadel besieged. Its political connotations emphasize faction, first in the γένος (…) and then in the πόλις."

33 Thalmann (above n. 5, 32).

34 Solon, fr. 12 G-P = 9 W and fr. 13 G-P =12 W. For the metaphor of the city as ship and internal turmoil as turbulent sea detected in these two Solonean fragments, see H. Maehler-M. Fantuzzi-M. Noussia, Solone. Frammenti dell'opera poetica, Milano 2001, 284; L. Lomento, Il "mare giustissimo" di Solone (fr. 13 Gent.-Pr.) e la "burrasca popolare" di Libanio (Or. 25,44,3), Quaderni Urbinati di Cultura Classica 26 (1987), 119–120.

35 It is within this framework of positive characterization of the Aeschylean Eteocles that lays the so-called Opfertod theory, according to which, Eteocles accepted his doomed fate and heroically pursued his death, sacrificing himself to save the city. For a full discussion see Zeitlin (above n. 5, 161–168).

the offstage, war-suffering world. The two characters stand on a high level of the palace and deliver a teichoskopia which resembles its Iliadic model, although its basic structure is reversed, since in the Phoenissae the young female interlocutor (Antigone) is the unknowledgeable one, while the old male (Servant) is the knowledgeable one.[36] The Servant justifies his knowledge twice, assuring Antigone that he shall tell her all he saw or heard while being a negotiator in the Argive camp, while Antigone reveals her first impressions at the sight of the warriors (95 – 98, 142 – 144). As it will become clear, the choice of the poet to give the first outward images through the spontaneous insight of a young girl is not haphazard.

The first warrior that captures Antigone's attention is king Hippomedon. His helmet has a white crest and he carries a bronze shield (119 – 121). Antigone describes him as 'haughty' and 'dreadful to look at'[37] (ὡς γαῦρος, ὡς φοβερὸς εἰσιδεῖν,[38] 127), 'dazzling' (ἀστερωπός, 129), not resembling the generation of mortals (οὐχὶ πρόσφορος ἁμερίῳ γέννᾳ, 130). The next one to be discussed is the Aetolian Tydeus. Her comment on his looks is absolutely girlish, since it just refers to the fashion of his armor (132 and 138):

> … ἄλλος ἄλλος ὅδε τευχέων τρόπος. …
> ὡς ἀλλόχρως ὅπλοισι, μειξοβάρβαρος.
>
> "… Different, different the fashion of his armor. …
> How strange in his weapons, half-barbarian."

Parthenopaeus is seen by the young girl as a rather attractive young man,[39] when she eagerly asks the Servant: τίς δ᾽ οὗτος ἀμφὶ μνῆμα τὸ Ζήθου περᾷ / καταβόστρυχος, ὄμμασι γοργὸς / εἰσιδεῖν νεανίας …; (145 – 147). When it comes to Parthenopaeus, Antigone even takes up her individual, gender-based role, admitting Parthenopaeus' beautiful looks, and surely hinting at a female dynamism waiting to be unfolded.[40] Quite interestingly, her curiosity is stimulated by everyone but Polyneices. Her initial difficulty in spotting him results in intensifying his later

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[36] In Iliad 3, 161 – 244, Helen (knowledgeable) shares with Priam (unknowledgeable) all the information that her prior life in Greece allows her to know.

[37] The translation is of E. Craik, Euripides' Phoenician Women, Wiltshire 1988.

[38] The text is of J. Diggle, Euripidis Fabulae, III, Oxford 1994.

[39] The handsomeness and eroticism of Parthenopaeus is discussed by K. J. Dover, Greek Homosexuality, Cambridge MA ^{2}1989, 78/79.

[40] R. Hawley, The male body as spectacle in Attic drama, in: L. Foxhall - J. Salmon (edd.), Thinking Men. Masculinity and its Self-Representation in the Classical Tradition, London and New York 1998, 83 – 99 (97), further comments that "in Phoenician Women Euripides avoids making his audience feel embarrassed at their erotically charged gaze (to Parthenopaeus) by giving (him) his own spectator within the play, who is reassuringly a heterosexual young girl."

depicted glowing appearance.[41] Polyneices will look dazzlingly radiant, gaining Antigone's admiration (167–169):

> … ὡς
> ὅπλοισι χρυσέοισιν ἐκπρεπής, …
> ἑῴοις ὅμοια φλεγέθων βολαῖς.
>
> "… How
> he stands out in his golden armor, …
> flashing like the dawn rays …"

The comments of Barlow on this scene are enlightening. She notices the intertextual parallel of the scene with lines 375–676 of Seven Against Thebes, but makes the distinction between the Aeschylean and the Euripidean version by remarking that Aeschylus puts more weight on the character of the seven warriors, while Euripides mostly focuses on the point of view of the narrator, namely Antigone.[42] Taken as a way of marking a difference from Aeschylus, Barlow believes that Euripides' choice of producing a dazzling vision of the battlefield glittering in the morning mist through the focalization of Antigone, evokes contemporary highlighting and painting techniques that prove that the young heroine not only conceived of war in a purely romantic way, but also knew it only through art.[43] Staying within the same framework, Craik detects metaphors from sculpture, consciously used by Euripides in order to implicitly refer to the artistic representations of the teichoskopia.[44]

Building on the interpretations of both Barlow and Craik, one comes to realize that Euripides after first showing his audience that he will be paralleling a scene from Seven Against Thebes,[45] he then marks the difference by shaping it into a totally different piece in terms of both dramatic presentation and use.[46] He is presenting the teichoskopia scene through the focalization of a young and

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41 S. Barlow, The Imagery of Euripides. A Study in the Dramatic Use of Pictorial Language, London 1971, 59.

42 According to Craik (above n. 37, 175), the emphasis on Antigone as a focalizer can be inferred even from a purely narrative level, through the frequent repetition of the verbs of seeing.

43 Barlow (above n. 41, 57–60).

44 Craik (above n. 37, 165). She even refers to the ancient tradition of the Life of Euripides, according to which "he trained as an artist and pictures by him were on display at Megara".

45 The parallelism refers both to the 'teichoskopia' of the Seven and to its first stasimon, which also gives the first (though just aural) description of the Argives.

46 About the tendency of Euripides to make diverse, often contradictory allusions to earlier poetic compositions, see in general A. P. Burnett, Catastrophe Survived. Euripides' Plays of Mixed Reversal, Oxford 1971; H. P. Foley, Ritual Irony. Poetry and Sacrifice in Euripides, Ithaca and London 1985, 112–132; F. Zeitlin, The Closet of Masks: Role Playing and Myth Making in the Orestes of Euripides, Ramus 9 (1980), 62–77.

enthusiastic female figure, easily contrasted to the description of the hardened messenger of the Seven, limiting all references to Phoenissae's male heroes to the framework of their reception as objects of spectacle.[47] Thus Euripides uses the artistically presented battlefield not as a male-reserved locus, but proleptically, as a field of diverse female action, since it will soon host the dynamic activity of both Jocasta and Antigone. In other words, the female approach of the traditionally male-dominated battlefield, is not only used dramatically in order to heighten the 'pathos' of war,[48] but also narratively as an advance mention since, at the end of the fourth episode, Antigone will join Jocasta in the battlefield, being prepared not only to gaze at dazzling warriors, but this time to take real action, i. e. reconcile her brothers.[49]

The next indication of Euripides' female-oriented or at least downplayed martial descriptions is found in the fourth episode, when the messenger offers a catalogue of the seven warriors (1104 – 1140).[50] Whether or not a genuine part of the play, it appears that its main dramatic purpose is not to describe the shield and position of each of the seven generals, but as shown by Mastronarde, to mark its difference from the relevant part of the Seven, by conversely underscoring "mainly the one point on which his [Euripides'] version differs more strikingly, the failure of the brothers to meet at the Neistid gate" and confront each other despite their mutual declarations (621/622).[51] Having thus accomplished a structural differentiation, Euripides goes on further to propose a different way of describing war. A parallel reading of the catalogue of the warriors in the Seven and in the Phoenissae shows that Euripides' almost unfailingly briefer description of the warriors than that of Aeschylus must be interpreted as a clear sign of his effort to minimize the warlike color in his play. The following table, de-

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47 For the reception of the male body as spectacle in Attic drama and the Phoenissae in particular, see Hawley (above n. 40).

48 I owe this idea to Professor J. Allison.

49 Lines 1274 – 1283.

50 Those lines have frequently been considered non-Euripidean. For a detailed account of the debate, see D. J. Mastronarde, Euripides' Phoinissae, edited with Introduction and Commentary, Cambridge 1994, 456ff.

51 Mastronarde (above n. 50, 446). According to B. E. Goff, The Shields of *Phoenissae*, Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies 29 (1988), 135 – 152 (136), the basic structural difference between the Aeschylean and Euripidean shield-presentation is that in the latter, apart from the chronological dislocation, there is no reader for the shields' "emblems, a semiotician who might, on the model of Eteocles, recognize and deactivate their threatening images". She further notices that such an absence manifests the "inability of the men of the city – particularly Eteocles – to provide a central source of stable authority from which she (the city) might meet her foes".

scribing the number of lines dedicated to the description of the shields in each play is enlightening:

SHIELDS	Seven Against Thebes	Phoenissae
Tydeus	4 lines (387–390)	1 ½ line (1120–1121)
Capaneus	3 lines (432–434)	4 lines (1130–1133)
Hippomedon	9 lines (491–498)	5 lines (1114–1118)
Parthenopaeus	6 lines (539–544)	2 ½ lines (1107–1109)
Amphiaraus	2 lines (590–591)	2 lines (1111–1112)
Polyneices	7 lines (642–648)	4 lines (1124–1127)
Eteoclus	5 lines (465–469)	–
Adrastus	–	4 lines (1135–1138)
TOTAL	36 lines	23 lines

The above table, given that the Aeschylean play is much shorter than the Euripidean one, highlights the different narrative choices of the two playwrights, namely the different perspective of Aeschylus and Euripides who apparently aimed at producing a more or less war-focused representation of the myth respectively. Hence, the description of the shields, a clear intertextual sign of male military power, is exceptionally highlighted in the Seven, while least underscored in the Phoenissae.

b. Characterization:

As far as character-presentation is concerned, one easily comes to notice that in the Phoenissae male authority is also downplayed, since all men are not imposing, finally falling short of representing all-powerful male figures. Oedipus is absent for most of the play, being reduced to a living ghost. All the relevant descriptions insist on his loneliness, isolation and detachment from the rest of the family and city. Jocasta portrays him as “deranged from ill-fortune”, being locked in the palace by his two sons (64–66). He finally appears only in the exodus, as a ghostly creature, coming from the darkness of the abyss. He even refers to himself as being worn to a shadow (1539–1545):

τί μ’, ὦ παρθένε, βακτρεύμασι τυφλοῦ
1540 ποδὸς ἐξάγαγες ἐς φῶς
λεχήρη σκοτίων ἐκ θαλάμων οἰκ-
τροτάτοισιν δακρύοισιν,
πολιὸν αἰθεροφαὲς εἴδωλον ἢ
νέκυν ἔνερθεν ἢ
1545 πτανὸν ὄνειρον;

“Why, daughter, with staff for blind
tread, have you brought me into daylight,

an invalid, from my dark bedroom,
with most piteous weeping,
a gray shade of mere air,[52]
a corpse from below
or a fleeting dream?”

Not only is he lacking any power or authority, he is also in need of help, which he will finally get from Antigone. Within the same framework lies the figure of Teiresias, also blind and helpless, and also accompanied by his daughter.[53] Even Teiresias’ divine-driven orders would not have been imposed if it was not for the young and least-male Menoiceus. As for Polyneices, he evolves through a similar lack of dynamism. Although he could have been portrayed as a blood-thirsty hero aiming at reclaiming his own fatherland, he is seen through the romantic eyes of Antigone as a handsome and radiant youth.

The male power of Creon, temporary ruler of the city, is not effective either. His strategic authority, as displayed in the second episode where he instructs Eteocles on the defense of the city (710 – 747), will be soon downplayed when he will not manage to convince Menoiceus to go on shameful self-exile (962 – 1018). Shockingly, Creon is lacking even that type of ‘passive heroism’, which would allow Menoiceus to die for the common good,[54] and although implicitly, deprives Creon from heroic behavior that Euripides usually qualifies his female figures with. A typical example is Praxithea, the wife of Erechtheus, who, in the synonymous play, tolerates the sacrifice of her oldest daughter in order to save Athens.[55] Actually, seer Teiresias cleverly refers to that event, though using it implicitly, as an excuse for his delayed arrival at Thebes.[56]

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52 I am slightly altering the translation of Craik in this verse, following the text of Diggle (above n. 38) that I am using.

53 For the conflict between Teiresias and Creon in the Phoenissae 834 – 1018, see G. Ugolini, Untersuchungen zur Figur des Sehers Teiresias, Tübingen 1995, 199 – 201.

54 As argued by Burnett (above n. 46, 25), in all dramatic instances of human sacrifice, “there is always a dissuader, for otherwise the decision of the principal cannot be depicted in action”.

55 For female, often ‘passive’ heroism in Euripides, see M. R. Lefkowitz, Heroines and Hysterics, London 1981, 5ff. For the figure of Praxithea, see TrGF, 5, 1, Erechtheus fr. 360 and 360a (Kannicht); R. E. Harder, Die Frauenrollen bei Euripides. Untersuchungen zu ‘Alkestis’, ‘Medeia’, ‘Hekabe’, ‘Erechtheus’, ‘Elektra’, ‘Troades’ und ‘Iphigeneia in Aulis’, Stuttgart 1993, 336 – 342. For introductory notes, translation and commentary of fr. 360 and 360a, see M. J. Cropp, ‘Erechtheus’, in: Ch. Collard - M. J. Cropp - K. H. Lee (edd.), Euripides. Selected Fragmentary Plays, vol. I, Warminster 1995, 148 – 194 (148 – 155, 158 – 163, 178 – 181).

56 Lines 852 – 857: κόπῳ παρεῖμαι γοῦν Ἐρεχθειδῶν ἄπο / δεῦρ’ ἐκκομισθεὶς τῆς πάροιθεν ἡμέρας· / κἀκεῖ γὰρ ἦν τις πόλεμος Εὐμόλπου δορός, / οὗ καλλινίκους Κεκροπίδας ἔθηκ’ ἐγώ· / καὶ τόνδε χρυσοῦν στέφανον, ὡς ὁρᾷς, ἔχω / λαβὼν ἀπαρχὰς πολεμίων σκυλευμάτων.

In contrast to his character in the Aeschylean version, Eteocles in the Phoenissae is presented rather disappointingly, not only on a moral, but also on an administrative level. Euripides has transformed the well-respected Aeschylean ruler into an indecisive, immature, and inept decision-maker who ironically cannot decide for himself. It is at the beginning of the second episode where Eteocles inquires about the strategic counseling of his uncle Creon, and thus sends an attendant to fetch him (690 – 694). Euripidean Eteocles is thus put in stark contrast to his predecessor, since he does exactly what Aeschylean Eteocles denied; bringing in mind the Seven, and the way Eteocles used nautical imagery in order to show to the chorus that a captain should never ask help from a subordinate (namely the man in charge of the prow), one comes to realize that Euripides develops his Eteocles, building on those characteristics Aeschylus previously rejected. What Aeschylean Eteocles discarded appallingly, is now followed by Euripidean Eteocles, who clearly denies all the strategic authority he displayed in the Seven, leaving the laurels for the sole Opfertod action to Menoiceus, a least masculine figure.[57]

Interestingly enough, the masculinity of Menoiceus is very little stressed. If not an a-sexual figure, he is chosen to be sacrificed because he is the only unmarried and thus sexually pure descendant of the Spartoi, the mythical Sown Men that sprang from the teeth of the Dragon of Ares (942 – 948). He is presented more as a child than as a man, although ironically he proves to be a perfect male who dies for the salvation of his homeland.[58] In a male oriented oikos, such a role would definitely have been taken by Eteocles. On the contrary, neither Eteocles nor Polyneices act altruistically in order to save Thebes or their armies. Although their personal duel is supposed to take place in order to fulfill the curse and spare innocent soldiers from death, it is decided quite late, when a first bloody battle had already happened (1219 – 1237). Therefore, their supposedly unselfish decision is taken in vain. It thus becomes clear that the play not only

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57 For the Opfertod theory, see above n. 35.

58 As argued by E. A. M. E. O'Connor-Visser, Aspects of Human Sacrifice in the Tragedies of Euripides, Amsterdam 1987, 2, what makes Menoiceus' death a 'human sacrifice', are "the divine request and the communal purpose". She also notices (83) that Menoiceus' sacrifice scene came as a result from changing Aeschylean Eteocles: Euripidean egoistic and unsympathetic Eteocles had to be balanced by the sacrificial offer of a selfless figure like Menoiceus. N. Sorkin Rabinowitz, Anxiety Veiled. Euripides and the Traffic in Women, Ithaca and London 1993 (65/66), notices that the male sacrifice of Menoiceus stands for life as king, just as female sacrifice traditionally stands for marriage. On female death in drama, see N. Loraux, Façons Tragiques de Tuer une Femme, Paris 1985. On sacrifice in Euripides, see also Burnett (above n. 46, 22 – 27); C. Nancy, Φάρμακον σωτηρίας: Le mécanisme du sacrifice humain chez Euripide, Théâtre et spectacles dans l'antiquité (1981), 17 – 30; Foley (above n. 46, 17 – 64 and 106 – 146 [for the Phoenissae]).

indulges in reserving altruistic behaviour either for a woman (Antigone) or for a rather effeminised figure (Menoiceus),[59] but also casts doubt on the use of mutual fratricide as a means for the city's salvation.[60]

On the contrary, through the characters of both Antigone and Jocasta, the audience can sense a rather 'mother-centred' oikos, imbued with power and dynamism deriving from the figures of daughter and mother respectively. The behaviour of Antigone and the Servant at the beginning of the play and the teichoskopia scene are reminiscent of the treatment of the female chorus in Seven Against Thebes. Antigone takes considerable pains at not being seen and the Pedagogue makes clear that her exit from the women's apartments has first been approved by her mother. However, when a loud group of strange women approaches, Antigone needs to return to the palace and protect her reputation since, as the Pedagogue believes, women find pleasure in gossiping one another (198–201):

φιλόψογον δὲ χρῆμα θηλειῶν ἔφυ,
σμικράς τ᾽ ἀφορμὰς ἢν λάβωσι τῶν λόγων,
200 πλείους ἐπεσφέρουσιν· ἡδονὴ δέ τις
γυναιξὶ μηδὲν ὑγιὲς ἀλλήλας λέγειν.

"Women's character is carping
and if they get slight grounds for gossip
they invent more; there is a kind of pleasure
for women in speaking no good of one another."

What seems to bother the Pedagogue the most is female exaggeration in chatting. His condemnation parallels Eteocles' disappointment in the hysterical overreaction of the female chorus. Both the Pedagogue and Eteocles seem to prefer enfeebled female activities, such as silence, which they, through their male-oriented viewpoint, consider to be a female quality. We thus come to realize that the Phoenissae reproduces at its early start the concealment of female dynamism, staying closer to its Aeschylean predecessor. However, the incipient suppression of female dynamism gives its place to Antigone's coming of age, as she is transformed from a restrained girl to an emancipated woman, powerful

59 As argued by Sorkin Rabinowitz (above n. 58, 64 n. 77), the co-existence of Antigone and Menoiceus in the Phoenissae highlights the two different types of sacrifice: one performed for the family (private) and the other for the city (public).

60 Cf. also Goff (above n. 51, 136), who describes the situation in Thebes as a "bankruptcy" of the city's authorities, since "the only characters who act with civic responsibility are those who are excluded from citizenship, namely women and children", while for M. B. Arthur, Euripides' Phoenissae and the Politics of Justice, diss. Yale 1975, 124/125, the sacrifice of Menoiceus is a telling paradigm of the impossibility of accordance between justice and self-interest, an idea also treated in Plato's Republic (354c, 588b).

enough to be able to struggle with a male king (Creon), threaten to kill his son (Haemon),[61] and jeopardise her life for a higher cause (i. e. the burial of Polyneices). Antigone's lamentation cannot be banned like that of the Theban chorus of Aeschylus. Conversely, she wails in a traditional manner, mourning over the dead bodies of her siblings (1485–1538),[62] even threatening to go beyond lamentation and actually bury Polyneices. As for Euripidean intensions, they undergo a somewhat analogous evolution, since the playwright first makes sure that his audience recognize the parallel with the Seven, only to reverse it later on. Thus, he reproduces the motif of the frightened frail girls who are supposed to accept male insults, only to overturn it later on by putting forth a completely opposing pattern, which dramatically highlights female vigour.

Jocasta acts as Antigone's dynamism-booster, since she is herself first taking the initiative to invite Polyneices inside the city[63] and when admitted by Eteocles, she is also responsible for convincing him to negotiate.[64] Jocasta is doubtlessly the one character that never tires to struggle against the fulfillment of Oedipus' curse, namely the fratricide, being more decisive than any other male figure of the play. She is the one that sets the debate (633–637),[65] and the one who finally drags Antigone to the battlefield (1275–1283).[66] Instead of endors-

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61 Note the revolutionary dynamism of Antigone; not only is she not willing to become a sexual victim in an unwanted marriage, but she even threatens to kill her raper to be. For sexual violence in classical Athens, see N. Fisher, Violence, masculinity and the law in classical Athens, in: L. Foxhall - J. Salmon (edd.), When Men were Men. Masculinity, Power and Identity in Classical Antiquity, London and New York 1998, 68–97 (78ff.).

62 Antigone's lamentation is not only delivered without any obstacle of any kind, but it is also developped fully upon the traditional lamenting motifs: unveiling, cutting of hair, aporia, call of a bird to accompany her sad song.

63 Lines 272/273, (ΠΟΛ.) πέποιθα μέντοι μητρὶ κοὐ πέποιθ' ἅμα, / ἥτις μ' ἔπεισε δεῦρ' ὑπόσπονδον μολεῖν.

64 Lines 450/451, (ET.) κοινὰς βραβείας, αἷς ὑπόσπονδον μολεῖν / τόνδ' εἰσεδέξω τειχέων πείσασά με.

65 As argued by Ch. Collard, Formal Debates in Euripides' Drama, in: J. Mossman (ed.), Oxford Readings in Classical Studies. Euripides, Oxford 2003, 64–80 (75), in the debate, Jocasta goes through a transformation from the initial position of the promoter of the debate and judge, into that of witness and finally, victim. However, "Euripides uses her as an independently strong voice … in the way an audience might (even) react."

66 The dynamic 'female' entrance of Jocasta and Antigone in the absolutely 'male' area of the battlefield, inevitably brings to mind J. P. Vernant's parallelism between marriage and war. In his Myth and Society in Ancient Greece, trans. by J. Lloyd, Bristol 1980, 23, he argues that "marriage is for the girl what war is for the boy: for each of them these mark the fulfillment of their respective natures as they emerge from a state in which each still shared in the nature of the other". Strikingly, Antigone marks the 'fulfillment of her nature' and her change of state (from girl to woman), through an outmost penetration into men's world, resembling significantly the relevant male means of change of state.

ing the Aeschylean restriction of female interference in offstage action, Jocasta dynamically enters the world of men performing her action of heroism: in a traditionally male-oriented domain, the battlefield, she chooses to use a male weapon in order to kill her own self. Under this scope, Jocasta's killing herself is a suicidal act only if seen from a male perspective. Given Euripides' viewpoint, it is an act of female heroism. It is how a mother can figuratively escape from a male-created warlike impasse. Whereas, the male world in the Seven only allows limited, controlled and low-keyed female lamentation, in the Phoenissae it encourages female participation, welcoming even an ironic comment upon it.[67]

Having mapped out the way male and female power feature preeminently in the Seven and the Phoenissae respectively, let me dwell for a while on the reasons explaining their different presentations. Bearing in mind the importance of the myth concerning the expedition of the Seven against the city of Thebes, I would like to suggest that aspects of male and female power must be seen as the playwrights' personal outlook at a traditional story. This personal outlook may have been motivated by the following factors:

1. Aeschylus' play, presented less than a score of years after the end of the Persian wars (467: 480/479), reflects the playwright's 'reading' of the myth of the Seven under the scope of a heavy loaded experience of war, in which not only did he fight, but he also lost his brother Cynaigeirus. Catalogue-lists, detailed description of the shields, one-sided characterization of the Seven only as warriors and not as human beings, the 'coupling' of each besieger with a defender, all this and much more constitute a clear-cut martial interpretation of the entire mythical substratum. Apart from these overt martial denotations, Aeschylus makes ample use of covert ones, as it is the case with Eteocles' misogyny, the symbolic scaffolding upon which the playwright supports his male-oriented viewpoint. Notwithstanding his Iliadic debts, Aeschylus goes one step further by depriving women of their only approved role in a male-controlled world, that of lamentation.

2. Euripides' play, presented during the last phase of the Peloponnesian war (411 – 409: 411 – 404), stands in stark contrast to the Aeschylean perspective.

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[67] For the notion of voluntary female sacrifice as an implicit ironic comment on male wrongdoings, see Ph. Vellacott, Ironic Drama. A Study of Euripides' Method and Meaning, Cambridge 1975. Cf. also Goff (above n. 51, 141), who views female self-sacrifice as an act of cynicism about the 'bankruptcy' of male politics. For the feminine element as reflected on theatrical representation, see F. Zeitlin, Playing the Other: Theater, Theatricality, and the Feminine in Greek Drama, in: L.K. McClure (ed.), Sexuality and Gender in the Classical World. Readings and Sources, Oxford and Malden 2002, 103 – 143.

For Euripides, the expedition of the Seven is just a pretext, an excuse for problematizing the theme of war and the involvement of humans in a circle of events from which there is no way out. In this doomed Euripidean universe women are significantly involved. The marching of the Seven, despite its martial camouflage, gives the playwright the excuse to present Jocasta, Antigone, and Menoiceus to his audience. Notwithstanding Aeschylus' interpretive outlook, Euripides allows 'his' women to act both traditionally, through lamentation, and innovatively, through their dynamic invasion in the world of men.

To this extent, an analogy drawn from the Homeric poems may seem relevant. Mutatis mutandis the Seven and the Phoenissae seem to be sharing the same kind of symbiotic relationship we are aware of in the case of the Iliad and the Odyssey. As in the Odyssean world, Iliadic κλέος has lost its importance, so in the Euripidean cosmos, Aeschylean martial prowess is nullified and male authority gives way to female pathos.

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