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The Concept of Autochthony in Euripides' *Phoenissae*

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The Concept of Autochthony in Euripides' *Phoenissae*

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Report

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Master of Arts

The University of Texas at Austin

May 2014

The Concept of Autochthony in Euripides' *Phoenissae*

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The University of Texas at Austin, 2014

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Euripides' *Phoenissae* is a challenging work that is often overlooked by scholars of Greek drama. This study analyzes how the concept of autochthony occupies a central thematic concern of the play. On the one hand, autochthony unites humans to soil, political claims to myths, and present to past. On the other hand, autochthony was often invoked to exclude foreigners, women and exiles from political life at Athens. We observe a similar dichotomy in the *Phoenissae*. Autochthony unites the episode action–the story of the fraternal conflict—with the very different subject matter of the choral odes, which treat the founding myths of Thebes. By focalizing the lyric material through the perspective of marginalized female voices (Antigone and the chorus), Euripides is able to problematize the myths and rhetoric associated with autochthony. At the same time, Antigone's departure with her father at the play's close offers a transformation of autochthonous power into a positive religious entity. I suggest that a careful examination of the many facets of autochthony can inform our understanding of the *Phoenissae* with respect to dramatic structure, apparent Euripidean innovations, character motivation, stage direction and audience reception.

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Introduction

In his classic study of Euripidean drama, Desmond Conacher once remarked, "The *Phoenissae* is in some ways the most original, in other ways the most traditional, and in all ways the most perplexing of Euripides' plays."[1] While such an assessment may not seem overtly negative, it does perhaps encapsulate what critics have always viewed as the play's major flaw: its over-stuffed, patchwork nature.[2] And it cannot be denied that in comparison with the majority of extant Athenian drama, the *Phoenissae* contains more named characters (eight), deaths (four), choral sections (five), pseudo-epic passages (two), and lines (seventeen-hundred or so, depending on the editor). Interpreters of the play are thus confronted with a smorgasbord of dramatic actions, speeches and choral passages from which they must then derive significance. But for all their well-intentioned efforts, even more recent critics have struggled mightily, and with only limited success, in my opinion, at describing a cohesive reading of the play's many images, themes and innovations.[3]

The present study attempts a new approach by organizing several strands of analysis under one broad interpretive framework: Euripides' critical engagement with

[1] Conacher (1967) 227.
[2] For a more comprehensive account of these criticisms, see the discussions of Mastronarde (1994) "Introduction" and Rawson (1970) 109–110.
[3] E.g., Podlecki (1962), who describes four sets of images that appear frequently throughout the play. While on their own, these analyses are well-conceived, a discussion of the interaction between or some larger interpretative schema was not a concern of his. Though I discuss each in more detail below, it is worth that mentioning Rawson (1970) more recently Saïd (1998) and Burian (2009) attempt unified political readings of the play, while Swift (2009) focuses on the theme of sexual transgressions. In my judgment, each of these can be improved or nuanced by a discussion of autochthony, since the concept wields power over the discourses of politics and sexuality.

the Athenian concept of autochthony, which I understand to be the central dramatic and ideological concern of the play. But before I define and discuss "autochthony" further, I want to state plainly at the outset the discursive nature of this study. Rather than chase after a vaguely defined *dramatische Einheit*, which might draw connections of plot between episodes and character actions (where no such connections are to be found), the discussion will instead respond to specific instances where the discourse of autochthony appears or is strongly evoked by the play. In doing so, I hope to elaborate not so much a "unified" reading as a harmonious one. By "harmonious," I mean to show that both the chorus and the characters evoke specific parts of the concept of autochthony, but that these are different parts of the concept delivered in different registers with vastly different dramatic intentions and effects! It is the purpose of this introduction, then, to lay out how several distinct threads are working toward a larger theme. First, I define the components of autochthony, then I sketch the relevance of the play to these components and lastly, I close with some thoughts about the significance of Euripides' critical engagement with the concept of autochthony.

What is meant by the concept of autochthony? I begin with a discussion of the relevant terms and then examine how the concept was used by Athenians to define their civic identity. In what follows I refer frequently to an earlier study of Vincent Rosivach, which carefully presents the historical development of vocabulary and ideas surrounding the concept of autochthony. By the basic rules of Greek word formation, the adjective *autochthōn* ought not to describe what it eventually did: that is, individuals "sprung from

the land (*chthōn*) itself (*auto-*)."[4] Instead, according to Rosivach's exhaustive analysis, we can tentatively conclude that *autochthōn* originally designated a person or a people as having always remained on "the same (*auto-*) land (*chthōn*)."[5] Because of this discrepancy between sense-units and their derived meaning, we can reasonably posit that the term *autochthōn* underwent a lexical expansion, and the literary record suggests that this expansion occurred around the middle of the fifth century or, roughly speaking, the generation before Euripides.[6] The reason for this expansion, Rosivach argues reasonably, is that incorporating a myth of descent from the soil into the sense of *autochthōn* strengthened the Athenian claim of "always having remained in the same place," i.e., a belief in indigenism. In other words, not only have the Athenians always remained on the same land, but they have done so because one day, long ago they sprang from it. The significance of this expansion for my reading of the play is that both meanings of the term—indigenism and the myth of descent from the soil—are present, as I describe below. But in order to draw useful comparisons to the *Phoenissae*, I must describe the tradition of what autochthony came to mean at Athens, that is, both the details of the myth and their significance for Athens' civic identity.

In the summary of the Athenian autochthony myth that follows, I have placed special emphasis on the structuralist binary of male/female because, as discussed below,

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[4] Rosivach (1987) 298–301 enumerates the many uses of the *auto-* prefix and concludes that "sprung from the land itself" cannot be justified as an original meaning on the basis of comparative evidence.

[5] Rosivach (1987) 297 calls attention to the non-earthborn peoples described as *autochthones* by Herodotus, e.g. the Carians at 1.71–72. The sense here is clearly "indigenous" and is contrasted with peoples described as *epēludes*, "immigrants," e.g. the Phoenicians.

[6] Rosivach (1987) 298.

scholars have used the myth as evidence for the Athenian discourse of gender and have consistently (and usefully, I think) framed this discourse in structuralist terms. Moreover, the binary of male/female power will be central to my reading of the play, and so it is important at the outset to show how the Athenian autochthony myth imagines gender. The story goes that the first *Athenaios* (male Athenian) is brought into existence by Hephaestus, when the lame god unsuccessfully attempts to rape Athena, and his sperm falls into the Attic *chthôn*. Erectheus, also, somewhat confusingly, called Ericthonius, then springs from the earth itself, which, as the vessel for Hephaestus' seed has usurped the role of biological mother. In some versions, Athena then adopts the child as her own and raises him on the acropolis. Athena's parental role collapses her masculine and feminine attributes: As a *parthenos* who successfully denied the lust of a male deity, she embodies female chastity, but at the same time she wields the spear and aegis of Zeus, symbols of masculine martial valor, and watches over Erectheus, the forefather of the Athenian polis. In this way, Athena is associated with ideals for both genders (chastity and guardianship, respectively), although the myth suggests that her ultimate purpose is to raise/protect the male autochthon and so the overarching narrative is one where female power is subjugated to masculine power. Another way to view this binary of gender is through the lens of miraculous births. That is to say, the Athenian autochthony myth shows the patrilinear offspring of the prototypical father (Athena from Zeus) winning out over the matrilinear offspring of the prototypical mother (Hephaestus from Hera) from the raising of the first Athenian and gaining her (Athena's) place on the acropolis (whereas Hephaestus remains below). Much more than express Attic indigenism, the

myth of the autochthony thus enacts the male citizenry's desire for the exclusion of women from procreation, even if that desire is pure fantasy.

Discourses of exclusion (autochthony, exile, gender) are central to the Athenian "civic imaginary," as Loraux describes in her seminal book, *The Children of Athena*. In the concept of a "civic imaginary," Loraux constructed a useful way to discuss the conjunction of myth and civic ideology inherent to the stories surrounding the founding of Athens. Essentially, Louraux's concept of "a civic imaginary" describes a collective set of values and social norms, showing how Athenians negotiated their own identity through origin myths and civic discourse. Loraux's conclusions are numerous and far-reaching, but perhaps most controversial is her denial of the existence of an Athenian citizen woman. The argument is grounded in linguistic evidence. Women residents of Athens are only ever called *astai* "citizen women" for comedic effect, as in the *Thesmophoriazousae* (541). The word *Athenaia*, that is, the feminine counterpart to the masculine *Athenaios*, "Athenian citizen," does not occur in the literary record. Instead, the designation for women residing in Athens is most commonly *Attikai gynaikes* "Attic women" or "women belonging to Athenians."[7]

In recent years, building off or reacting against the work of Loraux, scholars have

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[7] See Loraux (1993) 116ff. Loraux's interpretive framework has received criticism, most prominently from Cohen (2000), whose approach is to emphasize Athenian "reality" over myth or fantasy. In my judgment, Cohen's call for caution is well taken, but I think he goes too far in building such a strict dichotomy between myth and reality. For a recent synthesis of Loraux and Cohen's approaches to autochthony, see Rader (2009) 4–9, who uses the interpretive framework of Slavov Žižek, specifically, the claim that "fantasy structures reality" to bridge the gap between reality and myth in an analysis of Aeschylus' *Septem*. Rader's reading of the play, like my own with the *Phoenissae* emphasizes the negative aspects of autochthony.

asked what the plays of Euripides, which are well known for their prominent female characters, say about the relationship between the concept of autochthony and Athenian women. For example, a common question is whether Euripidean tragedy is more critical or affirming of the relationship between claims to autochthony and contemporary misogynistic values. Detienne (2001) seems to describe a positive, female kind of autochthonous power valorized in Praxithea, the sacrificial heroine of the fragmentary *Erectheus*. In many ways, her action is parallel to that of Antigone in the *Phoenissae*, which also offers a sacrificial, revered role for women in relation to autochthonous power. Saxonhouse (1986) has shown how Euripides disrupts and even criticizes the notion of male-centric Athenian autochthony in the *Ion*. Like that play, the *Phoenissae* too contains bumbling male characters who are outclassed in moral fortitude by their female counterparts. More recently, Rader (2009) interprets Aeschylus' *Septem*—a play closely related in mythological subject matter to the *Phoenissae*—to emphasize the negative, at times misogynistic aspects of masculine autochthonous identity. Finally, and most reasonably, I think, Nimis (2007) calls for moderation on how the myth portrays women by arguing that there is room in the concept of autochthony for both the inclusion and exclusion of women, or as he describes, "harmony and misogyny."[8] A method common to all these treatments is, first, to establish the misogynistic elements of the concept of autochthony in a work and then to analyze how these elements are cast by the author in a negative or critical light. To use a Foucauldian term, these treatments offer an account of the "problematization" of autochthony. Likewise, it is my hope that the

[8] Nimis (2007) 413–415.

present study will demonstrates how Euripides presents and problematizes the concept of autochthony through his female characters (Jocasta, Antigone, the chorus).

To that end, I now turn from the Athenian autochthony to a discussion of our play. This study will analyze how both elements of the concept of autochthony—political claims of indigenism and the myth of being "earthborn"—lie at the heart of Euripides' innovative treatment of the Theban myth in the *Phoenissae*. But how can we talk about Athenian autochthony in a play whose setting is Thebes? The work of Froma Zeitlin offers particular insights into the relationship between the two *poleis* as portrayed at the City Dionysia stage. Zeitlin's thesis is that Athenian playwrights used Thebes as a setting "to make problematic every inclusion and exclusion, every conjunction and disjunction, every stranger and kin."[9] Autochthony, as Zeitlin goes on to discuss (and as I hope the previous discussion has made clear) represents a whole slew of these exclusions (women, foreigners, exiles), conjunctions (misogyny, patriotism) and strange familial bonds (earth to *spartoi*, mother to son).[10]

But more than just demonstrate how certain characters or speeches evoke the concept of autochthony, another theme of my discussion will be Euripides' innovations with respect to earlier versions of the Theban myth and how these innovations suggest a conscious engagement with the concept of autochthony. The myth of Thebes' origins and the many troubles of Cadmus' descendants are traditional.[11] Yet in contrast with the Sophoclean and Aeschylean versions of the first assault on Thebes (*Antigone* and *Septem*,

[9] Zeitlin (1986) 105.
[10] For her discussion of the play, see Zeitlin (1986) 104–106, 113–116.
[11] For still the most comprehensive treatment of the myths surrounding Thebes' origins, see Vian (1963).

respectively), Euripides chose in the *Phoenissae* to juxtapose an earth mother (the Theban *chthôn*) and a biological mother (Jocasta).[12] Polyneices and Eteocles must answer to two mothers who embody competing sets of values. Reverence for the *chthôn* has stratified Theban society, engendering a politics of exclusion, that is, a society where one's relationship to the earth is extremely powerful and therefore a source of conflict. This conflict divides households; most prominently that of Polyneices and Eteocles, but also that of Creon and his son Menoeceus. Finally, this conflict relegates non-autochthonous persons, i.e., women to the margins. Young women have no place or voice in the autochthonous masculine collective and thus are cloistered in their maiden chambers, as happens to Antigone at the end of the *prologos*.[13] In contrast with the exclusionary tendency of autochthony, Jocasta aims for a politics of inclusion or mediation between the brothers. Only "aims for" because, as I argue in Chapter One, Jocasta's attempts at mediation fail to disastrous effect. Moreover, this failure coincides with Jocasta's unintentional use of terms strongly evoking the concept of autochthony, which both erodes any possibility of fraternal reconciliation and undermines Jocasta's role as a successful female mediator (cf. e.g. Athena in the *Eumenides*.)

[12] Mastronarde (1994) 25–26 summarizes the evidence that Jocasta's survival after the discovery of her incest was most likely a Euripidean innovation (cf. *OT*, *Septem*, and *Odyssey* 11.277-9). At the same time, there is very good evidence to suggest that Jocasta survives to mediate the dispute between her sons in one of Stesichorus' works, as Mueller-Goldingen (1985) and Burnett (1988) discuss. For the argument that the mother figure featured in the fragment must be a different wife of Oedipus' see March (1987) 129ff. I discuss the relevance of the Lille Stesichorus' mother figure to Euripides' Jocasta below.

[13] See 192–193.

Following closely after the fraternal conflict, the play's middle section represents another household in crisis: Menoeceus and Creon's. As I demonstrate in Chapter Two, Menoeceus' sacrificial action must be understood as a response to the highest expectations of his autochthonous collective. In this way, his suicide and the final speech he gives to justify it assert his masculine identity. Menoeceus becomes an "autochthonous paragon," a foil for his cousins' abuse of autochthonous ideals for selfish ends. In the middle section as well, Euripides' innovations are evident. The progression of the action from first episode (mediation scene) to second (Eteocles' battle strategy) to third (Menoeceus' decision) is stitched together by the choral odes, which tell what might seem the very tangentially related tale of the ancient sins of Cadmus and the sown men. Indeed, even talking about a "progression" of actions runs the risk of imposing a strict causal chain of events where there is none to be found. But while the play's action is discursive and marked by Euripidean contrivances of plot (youthful sacrifice, lengthy stichomytheia, and, unique to the play, pseudo-epic digressions) the *Phoenissae* nevertheless does not want for the unity that Aristotle prescribes as a necessary component of good tragedy.[14] In the second chapter, I also discuss how the choral odes

[14] Aristotle's preference for unity is suggested by his discussion of the arrangement of actions—each action should be the "natural or necessary" consequent of the previous action (1450b 23–30), and his statement that each action should contribute to the unity of the whole (1451a 30–35). For a post-Aristotelian discussion of our play's form, see esp. the comments of Mastronarde (1994) 3f, which proposes the structure as "open" rather than closed: "[In an open form] event (what happens because of outside forces) becomes as prominent as, or more prominent than, action (what occurs because of the deliberate choice of a character); the number of figures involved in the action is increased and their separate influence on the course of events reduced… the interconnection of the acts or scenes is to be understood by an inductive movement that notes juxtaposition and implicit

and the sacrificial action of Menoeceus harmonize present events with past ones and how the chorus' reaction to Menoeceus' death prepares the audience for Antigone's new role at the play's conclusion. All of these connections depend less on cause and effect than they do on the concept of autochthony, which connects past to present and female power to male power.

Antigone's rejection of motherhood at the play's close offers a resolution to the woes of the Theban polis: she will remove the final stain of pollution—her father's—from the high walls of Thebes. In this sense (negative example of maternal power/disavowal of motherhood), the play, like fifth century contemporary myths of autochthony, casts maternal authority in an unfavorable light. And yet by responding with a positive, "civilizing" action, the foundation of her father's cult, to the negative, destructive history of Theban autochthonous power, Antigone succeeds in cleansing the polis of its pollution and also in claiming her own sexual identity as a *parthenos*. Her choice of maidenhood in exile recasts her family's autochthonous power as a cult whose existence enhances a geographic region much closer to Athens than Thebes: Colonus. Finally, this physical move toward Athens is mirrored by an ideological one. I suggest that Antigone's newfound role as "parthenic guardian" (my own term, explained in Chapter Two) of her father's autochthonous power closely mirrors Athens' own autochthony myth. Whereas traditionally Athena the *parthenos* protects autochthonous power as it emerges from the earth (i.e. Erechtheus, the first Athenian), Antigone the *pathenos* watches over autochthonous power (her father's cult) as it returns to the soil.

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parallels and contrasts rather than by a deductive movement that recognizes a causal connection in terms of 'necessity or probability.'"

I offer the following reading of the *Phoenissae* as an engagement with the ideology of autochthony as first of all a political reading of an Athenian tragedy. By "political" I do not mean that the play responds directly to contemporary persons or crises of c. 409 B.C.E, e.g., the exile and return of Alcibiades (as has been argued by earlier commentators).[15] But neither do I mean to imply that Euripides has no interest in contemporary politics, Athenian civic ideology or the rhetoric used to reinforce that ideology. Quite to the contrary, I hope to show that in the *Phoenissae* Euripides confronts the destructive potential inherent to autochthonous ideology while affirming at the same time the positive, ritual elements of autochthonous power tying a people to their land by socio-religious institutions such as local cults. This duality of autochthony is borne out, as described above, by the Theban myth itself. Monsters and pollution may spring from the earth (dragon, *spartoi*, Sphinx) but they also eventually return there, and on occasion can even assume a positive religious identity, as with the story of Oedipus at Colonos.

[15] See e.g. Delebecque (1951).

Chapter One: The Danger of Autochthonous Ideology at Thebes

The first part of this chapter examines the blurring of *polis* and *oikos* categories that characterizes Thebes' autochthonous ideology, as evidenced by a passage from the *parodos* and another from the beginning of the first episode. The latter part of the chapter shows how Euripides innovatively inserts autochthonous ideology into the mediation speech of Jocasta. In assessing what influence autochthonous ideology exerts on the speech, I conclude that Jocasta unwittingly affirms the destructive, cyclical elements of Theban history and even invites the continued visitation of these evils on the city.

Previous commentators have remarked upon the separation of interests between Jocasta and her sons, specifically, the separation between *polis*- (theirs) and *oikos*- (hers) interests that divides the characters not just in the first episode, but throughout the rest of the play. Most recently, Burian (2009) and Saïd (1998) construct similar divisions of interest in order to discuss how the play reflects Athenian civic ideology and contemporary political rhetoric. Under this kind of strict, categorical thinking, Creon proves himself an enemy of the *polis* when he advises his son to flee Thebes and forego its salvation. Menoeceus chooses in his final act to honor *polis* over *oikos*. By contrast, Antigone chooses *oikos* over *polis* when she accompanies her father into exile. As with Sophocles' much more famous *Antigone*, they argue, the *Phoenissae* employs the divergence of state and private interests at Thebes to drive the dramatic conflict.

Yet such divisions between *polis* and *oikos* run the risk of imposing over-simplified categories on the play. This is because at Thebes, perhaps more than anywhere else, those categories significantly overlap, or, to borrow a slogan of second-wave

feminism, "the personal is the political,"[16] Problems of the *oikos*—the royal house—are shared by or even pre-determined by the city itself. Euripides' Jocasta survives to lend the voice of experience to these category-spanning problems in her *prologos*, a feature (her survival) unique to the *Phoenissae*, as far as we can tell. Jocasta speaks of how in saving the *polis* from the Sphinx, Oedipus commits incest, maims himself and curses his family (50–54). Conversely, then, *oikos* problems can prove deadly to the *polis*. The fraternal feud begins in the *oikos* but eventually engulfs the armies of Thebes and Argos. The ruling Spartoid family and the city itself share the same origins in Cadmus' transgressions; both suffer anew with every disaster or monster that springs from the earth. The Theban *polis* is effectively the *oikos* that Cadmus built, and because of the kinship between soil and human, every descendant of the *spartoi* owes allegiance to two mothers: a biological one and the Theban earth from which the *spartoi* issued. In this way, the concept of autochthony becomes a way for the Athenians—and for us—to organize, and even synthesize, the spheres of *family* and *polis*.

The juxtaposition of two mothers persists throughout the play as the prime example of the blurring of *oikos* and *polis*-spheres that characterizes autochthonous ideology. Although only one mother has a voice and is represented on stage, Euripides stresses the presence and authority of the earth mother by incorporating the myths surrounding Thebes' founding into the choral odes. As Arthur explains in her seminal

[16]See most famously, Hanisch, C. "The Personal is Political." *Notes from the Second Year: Women's Liberation Major Writings of the Radical Feminists*. 1970. The idea itself is much older.

treatment of the play's choral odes, the *parodos* brings onstage Thebes' history.[17] As with Cadmus, the arrival of Phoenicians signals a mixing of fraternal blood with the *chthôn*. The same wretched sun that Jocasta describes as having shone on Cadmus' voyage (4-5) is now dawning once more on Thebes. The following six lines addressing family ties are sung to Joocasta in view of the Polyneices-led Argive host amassing on the Theban plain and demonstrate the blurring of *oikos* and *polis* categories:

> κοινὰ γὰρ φίλων ἄχη,
> κοινὰ δ', εἴ τι πείσεται
> ἑπτάπυργος ἅδε γᾶ,
> Φοινίσσᾳ χώρᾳ. φεῦ φεῦ.
> κοινὸν αἷμα, κοινὰ τέκεα
> τᾶς κερασφόρου πέφυκεν Ἰοῦς:
> ὧν μέτεστί μοι πόνων. (243–249)
>
> For troubles are shared between loved ones
> And if this seven-towered land
> suffers something,
> it is shared with the territory of Phoenicia. Alas!
> Shared blood, shared children—
> Born of horn-bearing Io,
> We share in these trials.[18]

These six lines are illustrative of the sympathetic, familial tone adopted by the chorus in the *parodos* toward the entire city (ἑπτάπυργος ἅδε γᾶ 245).[19] The quadruple repetition of a word (κοιν-) here is almost unparalleled in extant tragedy and emphasizes how easily

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[17]Arthur (1977) 166.
[18] Translations are mine.
[19] In view of these lines Rawson (1970) is wrong to contrast the chorus of Phoenician women with the "more involved" (112) chorus of Theban women in Aesch, *Septem*; Likewise Burian (2009), who—without any discussions of these lines, though he seems to be quoting them—asserts that the chorus "have no share in the Theban polis or its tribulations" (23). More accurate is Mueller-Goldingen (1985) who remarks that the mythological connection allows for the Chorus to develop "eine gewisse Zuneigung" (66) toward Thebes.

political concerns can also be *oikos*-concerns.[20] In this passage, the sister *poleis* of Thebes and Tyre are quite literally subsumed into their ancestral *oikos*. The cities share a common parentage in Io through Agenor (248), and the chorus' own exile and arrival in Thebes recapitulates Cadmus' own journey, as they describe at 216–218 (Καδμείων ἔμολον γᾶν, κλεινῶν Ἀγηνοριδᾶν ὁμογενεῖς). Their song of "common blood, common children" (247) offers a counterpoint to the current familial strife plaguing the city (brother vs. brother, father vs. sons). With every mention the chorus makes of common interests, we are vividly reminded of the blindness to things held in common—familial ties—that characterizes all three sons of Jocasta. After all, that which is held in common among the sons of Jocasta inevitably drives them apart: children made common by incest, blood made common by a fated duel. And so it is that in the *parodos* the chorus provide a model of kinship noticeably lacking from the play: one where troubles among relatives are divided (κοινὰ ἄχη/ μέτεστί μοι πόνων), but not divisive. Moreover, it is a model of kinship where *polis* and *oikos* categories overlap, but in a positive sense that antedates the dangerous overlapping categories of autochthonous ideology. In sum, these lines are significant for introducing kinship and ancestry as something positive, themes that serve as a sort of counterpoint to the *topoi* of the following episode, as I discuss below.

After Jocasta's summary of autochthonous (*polis*/*oikos*) history in the *prologos* and the chorus' positive *polis/oikos* kinship model in the *parodos*, Euripides in the first episode presents Theban autochthonous ideology's dangerousness. This discussion is comprised of two parts, specifically two competing loves for the two mothers of Theban

[20] Mastronarde (1994) *ad* 243 gives *Ba.* 412ff as the only other occurrence of quadruple anaphora.

autochthons. In its own way, each love is presented as something dangerous or threatening. The first of these is the love between a biological mother and her child, which, after Jocasta's outburst over Polyneices' marriage to a foreign bride, the chorus describes as something *deinon*:

> δεινὸν γυναιξὶν αἱ δι᾽ ὠδίνων γοναί,
> καὶ φιλότεκνόν πως πᾶν γυναικεῖον γένος. (355–356)
>
> A terrible thing for women are children through childbirth,
> And the entire race of women is in some way child-loving.

At first glance, this gnomic couplet perhaps seems insignificant, coming as it does after Jocasta's reaction to her son's Argive alliance and immediately before an episode featuring a mother and her two sons. It states Jocasta's already obvious motives for mediating their dispute, namely, the preservation of her beloved children. The sentiment of love for one's child is common in other tragedies for female characters to express (see e.g. *Her.* 634–636).[21]

The lines also, however, posit a generalization about the "female race" that affirms misogynistic attitudes prevailing in fifth century Athens. A common trope of Athenian misogyny is on display here by the chorus, that is, to designate women as a subspecies of human or else as an altogether separate and (almost always) inferior race.[22] Even from the perspective of the female chorus the adjective *deinon* describes the

[21] For a good discussion of the closed, familial atmosphere of the mediation, as well as Jocasta's powerlessness see Foley (2001) 282f.
[22] For this attitude toward women in the literary record, see esp. Loraux (1993) Ch. 2, "On the Race of Women and Some of Its Tribes: Hesiod and Semonides." For the material record on women's origins see e.g., Hurwit's (1995) reading of the birth of Pandora on the base of Athena *parthenos'* cult statue.

Athenian male gaze, which diminishes female agency and humanity because of the "terrible power" that childbirth exerts over them. At the same time, the characterization can threaten the Athenian male audience. For example, the word *deinon*, when applied to motherhood, twice in extant tragedy describes the achetypical monster-mother Clytaemnestra, hinting darkly at the terrible lengths she will go to avenge her daughter (*I.A.* 917) or describing her desperate mental state resulting from her subsequent estrangement from Orestes (S. *E.* 770). Our play is perhaps notable for its lack of female monsters. At the same time, as we will see in discussion of subsequent choral passages, the female monsters like the Sphinx are the product of the Theban earth. Most relevant for the present discussion is the fact that Jocasta's maternal love for her son the exile threatens the stability of the state, as is evident from her mediation speech, discussed below.

There is a paradox in describing motherhood as something *deinon*. Women are a weak, sub-human race because they are ruled by a love for their children and yet are simultaneously terrifying to men on account of the same. It is a paradox that myths of autochthony attempt to solve by simply displacing biological maternity onto a male-mediated descent from the soil. By downplaying the bonds between mother and son in favor of those between earth and autochthonous progeny (i.e. "autochthons"), the concept of autochthony conveniently removes the *deinon* power from biological maternity. And that is exactly what happens in Jocasta's subsequent discussion with Polyneices. Far from merely supplying the motive for Jocasta's mediation or standing alone as a gnomic comment on the emotional quality of her monody, these lines already cast the bond

between biological mother and son in a questionable, vaguely threatening light that prepares the audience for her displacement by another mother, the Theban *chthôn*.

In fact, this displacement is explained by Polyneices immediately after the chorus' casual misogyny (357–360). The first words he speaks, though addressed to his mother, respond directly to the chorus and are meant, ostensibly, to contrast with the female interests of the previous couplet, since they generalize about what "all men" love. Thus a stereotype of one gender follows directly on the heels of another. A close reading of this passage reveals crucially, however, that the two loves are far more similar—and similarly dangerous—than they might otherwise appear:

> "μῆτερ, φρονῶν εὖ κοὐ φρονῶν ἀφικόμην
> ἐχθροὺς ἐς ἄνδρας: ἀλλ᾽ ἀναγκαίως ἔχει
> πατρίδος ἐρᾶν ἅπαντας: ὃς δ᾽ ἄλλως λέγει,
> λόγοισι χαίρει τὸν δὲ νοῦν ἐκεῖσ᾽ ἔχει. (357–360)
>
> Mother, with my mind in the right place but not in my right mind I went over
> to the enemy. But necessity holds that all men love
> their country. And whoever disagrees.
> takes pleasure in arguments, but thinks otherwise.[23]

Although the objects of their loves might differ, the force of the language used here to describe masculine love of country is no less dangerous or paradoxical than female love of children above. "Dangerous," because of the imprudent state of mind (φρονῶν εὖ κοὐ φρονῶν 357) that accompanies his love for country.[24] The idiomatic phrase is difficult to render into succinct English, but φρονῶν εὖ is something like "thinking long and hard,"

[23] Notes to translation. I have translated the final half of 360 τὸν δὲ νοῦν ἐκεῖσ᾽ ἔχει as "but thinks otherwise." This is an idiomatic approximation, but parallel examples are offered by the discussion of Mastronarde (1994) *ad* 360.
[24] For the prevalence of this negation device in Eur. and *comparanda*, see Mastronarde (1994) *ad* 272.

while κοὐ φρονῶν implies at least in this context acting without considering the consequences of one's action. The sentiment is also paradoxical because a love for Polyneices' native land Thebes exists alongside his flight into the arms of Thebes' enemy (ἐχθροὺς ἐς ἄνδρας 358), just as, for example, a love for her children existed alongside Medea's decision to do them harm.[25] Moreover, Polyneices' rejoinder (359–360) to his critics supports this "rash" label, reeking as it does of the heedlessness so characteristic of the male descendants of Laius. Anyone who disagrees with his questionable patriotism he brands a sophist, someone who delights in λόγοισι (358): arguments, speeches, reason.

When performed in quick succession, as these two passages were, they communicate a dangerous kind of symmetry between how women love their children and how men love their country. Of course, independent of this juxtaposition, neither sentiment is particularly threatening or problematic. Each represents widely held, even anodyne views, and they need not compete directly with one another. But within the context of a play so conscious of the Theban autochthony myth and the ideology it engenders, simple patriotism —loving one's country—necessarily blurs the categories of the personal and the political in a dangerous way. On the one hand, loving one's country as if it were one's mother shifts the political (patriotism) toward the personal (maternal/filial bonds). The shift is a dangerous one because, as the first generalization held, the bond between mother and child is something *deinon*—a truism borne out across Thebes' history of dangerous unions between mother and offspring. On the other hand, loving one's country in place of one's mother shifts the personal (maternal/filial bonds)

[25] Though Medea's most obvious motive is revenge, she also describes at the end of the play (1396) how her love for her children exists alongside her hatred for Jason.

toward the political (patriotism). And that shift is also a dangerous one, because, as the second generalization describes, love of one's country can be used, according to Polyneices, to justify its destruction. Therefore, autochthonous ideology, which entails both shifts of perspective, represents a synthesis, not only of the *polis* and *oikos* categories, but most importantly, of each category's most dangerous elements.

With the potential danger of autochthonous ideology established, the subsequent conversation of Jocasta and Polyneices about the hardships of exile forces mother and son to talk past one another in a conversation ostensibly about the evils of exile. Yet the underlying concerns of both characters can be understood as instances of dangerous autochthonous ideology. First, Polyneices betrays the fact that his autochthonous love of country can be more accurately labeled an obsession with legitimizing his own power over the *polis*. Meanwhile, Jocasta's line of questioning betrays her own blindness to the familial ties that bind country and autochthonous society, unwittingly fueling Polyneices' discontent:

> Ἰοκάστη:, …τί τὸ στέρεσθαι πατρίδος; ἦ κακὸν μέγα;
> Πολυνείκης: μέγιστον: ἔργῳ δ᾽ ἐστὶ μεῖζον ἢ λόγῳ.
> Ἰοκάστη: τίς ὁ τρόπος αὐτοῦ; τί φυγάσιν τὸ δυσχερές;
> Πολυνείκης: ἓν μὲν μέγιστον, οὐκ ἔχει παρρησίαν.
> Ἰοκάστη: δούλου τόδ᾽ εἶπας, μὴ λέγειν ἅ τις φρονεῖ. (387–391)
>
> Jocasta: What is it to lose one's country? Is it really a great evil?
> Polyneices: The greatest. Greater in experiencing than in describing.
> Jocasta: In what way? What is hard to handle for exiles?
> Polyneices: One thing most of all, he does not have the right to free speech.
> Jocasta: You have described a slave's lot, not to say what one thinks.

The language of deprivation used here (στέρεσθαι πατρίδος 387) is a strange way for Jocasta to describe exile, since Euripides normally uses the verb *steromai* to describe loss

on a familial level.[26] The verb is used by Jocasta to describe the potential loss of Polyneices' Argive allies (583). Additionally, forms of the nearly indistinguishable contract *stereomai* appear three times in the play to describe Menoeceus' status as an orphan (988), Creon's bereavement (1206) and finally Jocasta's double loss (1263). Jocasta's interests lie with the well-being of her children, as the chorus has already declared (354–356) and as she has vividly expressed in her monody. And yet by choosing the verb *steromai* to describe Polyneices' loss of country, Jocasta here alludes to the familial bonds that exist between the Theban earth and its autochthonous progeny, the bonds that might supplant her own role as archetypical maternal mediator. In sum, describing her son's exile as a familial loss prepares for the great lengths he will go to restore this relationship, which ultimately renders her a "step-mother" and so unable to mediate effectively the conflict (all the while foreshadowing her own familial loss).

The privileging of the autochthonous relationship to the earth over biological family continues both in what Polyneices does and does not say in response to Jocasta's query. As we learn in the following lines (390–391), the worst part of exile for him is not a change in geography or personal loneliness, but rather a change in his political status.

[26] There are nine occurrences of *steromai* in Euripides. Of these, seven denote a familial loss and one denotes a loss of familial "affection" (*tôn philtrôn* Orestes to Electra, *E* 1309). The exception is the chorus of *Med.* at 653, which does mourn for a loss of *gês patrias*. There are 31 occurrences of the verb *stereomai* in (non-fragmentary) Euripides. In 35 out of 40 aggregate instances (31 + 9), the verb indicates the loss of a spouse, parent, sibling or child. I should note that non-familial uses of *steromai* and *stereomai* are more common outside of tragedy: see e.g., Pl. *Lg*. 948a: which describes the penalty set for elected officials convicted of corruption: στερέσθω τῆς ἀρχῆς καὶ τοῦ τάφου.

Polyneices is most upset about his perceived lack of *parrêsia* (391).[27] The term, a catchword of fifth and fourth century Athenian rhetoric, denotes a "right to free speech," i.e., the right to speak before the assembly that all male Athenian citizens enjoyed. *Parrêsia* engendered in principle a baseline equality of political speech for all male citizens, formed an essential part of the democratic machinery, and was celebrated as a distinguishing mark of pride for Athenians.[28] As an instrument of ensuring equality, *parrêsia* falls under a larger umbrella of equal rights before the law afforded to Athenian citizens. By at least one account, these equal rights are guaranteed directly by claims to autochthony, that is, the "equal birth" (*isogonia*) of all Athenians from one mother, as it is implied the earth itself:

> μιᾶς μητρὸς πάντες ἀδελφοὶ φύντες, οὐκ ἀξιοῦμεν δοῦλοι οὐδὲ δεσπόται ἀλλήλων εἶναι, ἀλλ ἡ ἰσογονία ἡμᾶς ἡ κατὰ φύσιν ἰσονομίαν ἀναγκάζει ζητεῖν κατὰ νόμον. (Pl. *Menex*. 239a)
>
> Being all brothers born of one mother, we do not think it right to be slaves or masters of one another. Rather, equal birth in accordance with nature compels us to seek equality before the law.

In this passage, Socrates quotes a speech of Aspasia's, delivered very much in the style of a funeral oration, in which she praises Athenian democracy as a uniquely superior form

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[27] Plutarch comments in his own treatise on exile (*D. Ex*. 16) that Eur.'s portrayal of Polyneices in these lines is neither "correct nor accurate." This criticism indicates the strangeness of Polyneices' complaint even to ancient commentators and perhaps lends support to my view that Euripides wrote this passage with a specific purpose in mind: the incorporation of the concept of autochthony. Still, it must be noted that by Plutarch's time, treatments of exile, namely, *consolationes*, had become a standard vehicle for Stoic doctrine.

[28] See e.g., Phaedra's dying wish (Eur. *Hipp*. 422) that her children will "thrive with *parrêsia*" in Athens or Herodotus' claim (5.78) that a term synonymous with *parrêsia, isêgoria* ("equal public speech"), distinguished Athens from neighboring cities as "the best by far." For the idea that *parrêsia* is a democratic right owed equally to all citizens, see Aristot. *Nic. Eth.* 1165a.29–32.

of government. Equality of birth not only allows for, but actually compels (*anangkazei*) the equal treatment of citizens before the law. Since equality of free speech (*parrêsia*) ought to belong to this larger democratic equality (*isonomia*) we might begin to see how there lurks under Polyneices' complaint about *parrêsia* an ideology of autochthony guaranteeing that very right to free speech.[29] Granted, the correlation of *parrêsia* with autochthony at this point relies upon only a logical tracing of a right back to an ideology rather than direct textual evidence from the play. Yet a closer examination of the exchange reveals that it is Jocasta who, as previously with the language of bereavement, unknowingly but definitively alludes to autochthonous ideology.

Jocasta describes her son's lack of *parrêsia* as "a slave's lot" (391). Though she may only have in mind her son's suffering, by associating his lack of *parrêsia* with slavery, Jocasta evokes her son's loss of autochthonous authority by employing a similar discourse of freedom/slavery. Passages meant to evoke autochthony, like the one preserved in Aspasia's speech, often draw an explicit division between those autochthonous citizens who enjoy freedoms (like *parrêsia* and *isonomia*) and those non-autochthonous peoples elsewhere who subjugate one another as "slaves and masters."[30] There exist, then, in the stichomythic exchange at least two markers of the concept of autochthony and the democratic ideology it supports: the right to *parrêsia* and the

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[29] The discussion of Foucault (1983) 5–6 places *parrēsia* in its democratic context. For specific examples of the term being invoked as an institution of democracy akin to *isonomia*, see. e.g., Isoc. *de Pace* 14.

[30] Another example can be found at the beginning of Pericles' Funeral Oration (Thuc. II.36.i), where Athenian freedom is said to be a natural result of a claim to autochthony – according to Pericles, Athenians have "always inhabited the land," and therefore their ancestors "passed the land down as free."

contrast between free people and slaves. These markers of autochthony are inherently incongruent with the context of the Theban myth. That is to say, Euripides problematizes the concept of autochthony, which is usually a mark of distinction, by the praise of an exile who attacks his homeland and a mother who is all too eager to aid and abet him. Rather than invoking the concept in the traditional Athenian way, that is, so as to valorize the state or unify collective interest against a common enemy, the rhetoric of autochthony here is something dangerous that justifies a political dissident whose cause, while perhaps not entirely un-sympathetic, nevertheless is backed by a foreign army set on the destruction of the status quo. Like the concept of motherhood above, autochthony is presented by Euripides in a way that stresses its dangerous potential.

I have now attempted to describe certain elements of autochthony present in the speech of one character, Polyneices, But I want to suggest more broadly that an engagement with the concept of autochthony is a central thematic concern of Euripides. The *Phoenissae* uses other characters to discuss the concept of autochthony, and Euripides places ideas strongly associated with autochthony in unexpected places. In order to demonstrate the prevalence of the concept I now turn to another passage from the first episode that I suggest incorporates autochthonous ideology: Jocasta's mediation speech (528–585). This speech not only employs autochthonous rhetoric to disastrous effect, it also highlights the creative choices that Euripides made against received tradition, decisions that signal his commitment, yet again, to engage with the ideology of autochthony. Therefore the scope of this section moves outward from ideas or rhetoric

associated with autochthony to the structure of the play itself and Euripidean innovation against received tradition.

The final scene of the first episode, a confrontation between the incestuous wife of Oedipus and her two sons, is unparalleled in the surviving tragedies that treat the Theban myth. No play that we know of allows Jocasta to survive so late in the myth after the discovery of incest. I suggest the dramatic confrontation was designed by Euripides specifically to set the stage, as it were, for the brothers to assert political authority in a way that invokes the concept of autochthony. But a brief discussion of the surviving treatments of the myth is in order if we are to understand just what Euripides may have been innovating against. A plea for caution is appropriate, since in discussing Euripides' predecessors, we are dealing largely with fragmentary material and obviously will never know the extent of Euripides' sources. For example, the early tragedian Phrynichus—renowned for his historical dramas—produced a play of the same name around seventy years prior to our play.[31] Fortunately, in the case of the Theban myth, we possess both one mostly complete play by Aeschylus and one lengthy fragment by thought to be by Stesichorus, which are in some respects very similar to Euripides' play.

If Euripides is following any precedent in staging such a final, deadly ensemble of the house of Oedipus, it is perhaps that of Stesichorus. The fragmentary Lille Papyrus now securely attributed to him contains a mediation scene spoken by a mother to her two

[31] For the very little we know about the play, see the discussion and bibliography of O'Neill (1942).

sons quarrelling over the kingship.[32] In that poem, the arbitration scene takes place at the onset of Polyneices' exile, which is negotiated by his mother. Burnett's careful unpacking of the arbitration speech describes a mother figure acting very similarly to Jocasta in the *Phoenissae* with respect to her appropriation of male-controlled political institutions, specifically, the casting of lots to determine the division of property and kingship between heirs.[33] By ordering her sons to cast lots for distinctly unequal shares—the kingship and royal wealth—the maternal arbitrator in Stesichorus perverts the masculine institution of distributing equal *klēroi* and in doing so supplies the exile with the resources he needs to enlist foreign aid and launch his invasion of Thebes.

Besides the Stesichorus fragment, the casting of lots features prominently in another version of the myth: Aeschylus' *Septem.* In that play, the device of allotment seals Eteocles' subsequent confrontation with his brother. Appearing at the end of the conflict rather than the beginning, allotment takes on a new significance in the *Septem* in comparison to Stesichorus. As Thalmann remarks, "Allotment for [Aeschylus] became a means not of postponing fate but of describing it."[34] This is not to say that tragic characters are absolved by fate of responsibility for their own downfalls, but rather that

[32] For the argument establishing Stesichorus' authorship of the Lille Papyrus, see West (1978). Polyneices and Eteocles are named in the poem, but the identity of the mother is never stated explicitly. Burnett (1988) 120–125 argues somewhat convincingly that this woman is Jocasta, but Mastronarde (1994) 25 reserves judgment. Cf. also March (1986) 127ff, who argues that the female arbitrator is the non-incestuous second wife of Oedipus, Euryganeia. My own view is that since very little of the original work survives, and since there is a tradition with a mother other than Jocasta, we cannot name for certain the female voice in this scene. Nevertheless, her similarities (survival up to son's feud, expert use of political rhetoric, female arbitrator) with the *Phoenissae*'s Jocasta do suggest that Euripides was familiar with Stesichorus' version.
[33] See Burnett (1988) 115–119.
[34] Thalmann (1982) 390.

the idea of an allotted fate as an organizing principle gives structure to a myth. In the hands of a skilled dramatist such as Aeschylus, fate gives not only structure but also suspense to the plot of the play. As each gate assignment is allotted, the prospect of the brothers' meeting gradually is brought into an ever more grim focus with each shake of the lots. And yet in the *Phoenissae*, allotment remains conspicuously absent from the account of the initial exile agreement, nor does it force the eventual fratricide. Instead, the brothers willfully participate in both their meetings, that is, Polyneices' return to Thebes and their final duel at the city's gates. Rather than cast lots for the kingship and property, as in Stesichorus, the brothers have sworn an oath (ὁρκίους, 481) to alternate on a yearly basis (ἐνιαυτοῦ κύκλον, 477) control of both the kingship (τυραννίδ᾽, 483) and royal wealth (δόμων ἐμῶν μέρος, 483). When this agreement breaks down (Eteocles refuses to abandon his rule), it is their hatred of one another, and not allotment, as in the *Septem*, that compels the final duel.[35] Euripides has left nothing to chance, as it were.

Like the juxtaposition of Jocasta and an earth mother (discussed above), this dramatic choice, the removal of allotment as a narrative device, suggests Euripides' conscious engagement with autochthony for the following reasons. In designing an agreement between the brothers that requires the return of the exile, Euripides plainly manufactured (or adopted from elsewhere, though we have no evidence of such a rule-alternation scheme in any other version of the myth) a scenario that recapitulates the string of "bad arrivals/returns" endemic to the history of the Theban *chthōn*. Cadmus, the

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[35] I should note here that I see Euripides' apparent innovation of removing fate as the significant innovation, rather than the brother's personal animosity, which is plainly evident in *Septem*.

spartoi and Oedipus all arrived at Thebes heroically and yet brought disaster to the city (respectively: Ares' wrath, fratricide, and city-wide pollution). The ingenuity of Euripides' rule-alternation scheme is that it necessitates Polyneices' return to Thebes, independent of any fraternal feud or Argive alliance. Of course, both those complicating factors are present in the *Phoenissae*, but neither is strictly responsible for the exile's presence in Thebes. Instead, it is the agreement between the brothers, which, having stripped Polyneices of the rule and wealth, forces him to return home. Thus Euripides invents a scenario where the exile must assert his right to the kingship, to his autochthonous status and to the *parrēsia*—"free speech"—this status affords him. And in this way, the rule-alternation scheme both recapitulates the disastrous arrivals that characterize Theban autochthonous history and, by forcing a confrontation between two descendants of the *xthon*, invites the claims to political legitimacy that underlie contemporary fifth century claims to autochthony.

We have already seen this rhetoric employed by Polyneices in his conversation Jocasta, where he portrays his exile as a violation of his autochthonous status (391). Also in that scene, Polyneices' autochthonous love for country is portrayed as symmetrical to the dangerous bond shared between mother and son. Commentators and scholiasts have reacted with surprise that in the mediation scene Jocasta abandons her previous appeals to filial bonds and instead, like her Stesichorean predecessor, frames her speech in political terms.[36] Yet this shift of focus from the personal to the political should come as no surprise, since a close reading of the passage reveals that the autochthonous rhetoric

[36] E.g., Mastronarde (1994) *ad loc.*

Jocasta employs here continues the blurring of *polis* and *oikos* categories that began earlier in the episode. Once again the presence of autochthony in a speech signals Euripides' interest in structuring the collapse of a political system around claims to autochthony.

Jocasta's mediation speech fails because it draws on a kind of autochthonous rhetoric which is woefully ignorant of the mythic precedent set by earlier Theban disasters. Rather than propose the division of property or directly call on Eteocles to honor the oath he swore to alternate the rule, Jocasta contrasts the benefits of equality (ἰσότης) with the destructive power of rivalry (φιλοτιμίας):

> τί τῆς κακίστης δαιμόνων ἐφίεσαι
> Φιλοτιμίας, παῖ; μὴ σύ γ': ἄδικος ἡ θεός:
> πολλοὺς δ' ἐς οἴκους καὶ πόλεις εὐδαίμονας
> ἐσῆλθε κἀξῆλθ' ἐπ' ὀλέθρῳ τῶν χρωμένων:
> ἐφ' ᾗ σὺ μαίνῃ. κεῖνο κάλλιον, τέκνον,
> Ἰσότητα τιμᾶν, ἣ φίλους ἀεὶ φίλοις
> πόλεις τε πόλεσι συμμάχους τε συμμάχοις
> συνδεῖ: τὸ γὰρ ἴσον μόνιμον ἀνθρώποις ἔφυ (531–538)
>
> Why, child, are you set on Rivalry,
> the worst of divinities? Stop! She is an unjust god,
> and into many happy homes and cities
> she has entered and exited, to the destruction of the ones employing her.
> For her do you rage. That is more noble, child—
> to honor Equality, which always unites loved ones with loved ones
> and cities with cities, and allies with allies,
> since by nature the Equal is fixed for humans.

On the one hand, it makes contextual sense for Jocasta to encourage equality between two sons of drastically unequal positions. Eteocles holds both the kingship and the royal wealth, leaving Polyneices without any legitimate source of political authority. On the other hand, the equality she praises as a natural law (*monimon ephu* 538) does not always

unite humans in the more positive (*kallion* 535) sense she has in mind. For it has been a project of Euripides already to demonstrate that there is currently and has always been another kind of equality present at Thebes. Both shared blood and shared bloodshed makes equal all descendants of the Theban *chthōn*, or, just as the chorus sang of Thebes in the *parodos*: "common blood, common children." Theban autochthonous history—from the *spartoi* to the present fraternal feud—is patterned not only on the polluted sharing of "equal" blood (incest) but also on its mutual shedding (fratricide). With the more negative sense of equality in mind, it becomes possible to read each positive example of equality mentioned by Jocasta here as signifying something more negative that has been fixed by nature.

For example, describing the equality of "loved ones with loved ones" (536) as "naturally fixed" for humanity can signify not only Jocasta's aims as a mediator, but also the mutual slaughter of the brothers, the mutual bereavement of Jocasta and her brother Creon, and the equality of name—"son of Jocasta"—shared by Oedipus and the children born of his incest. Next, equality of "cities with cities" (537) could signify the mutually assured destruction of Thebes and Argos. (According to tradition, though Argos loses an army to the initial invasion, the Argive *epigonoi* will eventually return to sack Thebes.) Last, equality of "allies to allies" (537) could suggest the sharing of sorrows between Tyre and Thebes, represented by the sentiment of the *parodos* discussed above, where "Tyre suffers with Thebes" (241). The point of this negative reading of the natural ideal of equality is to suggest that Jocasta unwittingly affirms the worst parts of Theban history and the concept of autochthony. Not only does radical equality feature prominently in

claims made about being autochthonous, but an equality set by nature (the *chthōn*, the dragon) plagues the original autochthony myth and the present conflict threatening to repeat the ancient fraternal bloodshed.

In conclusion, problems raised by the concept of autochthony form the centerpiece of the first episode. Euripides' innovations of plot and his characters' rhetorical flourishes work together suggest these problems. Moreover, Jocasta's principle of equality has already earlier in the play featured centrally to autochthonous ideology. Polyneices mourns his loss of *parrēsia* because it afforded him an equality of speech with his autochthonous peers that distinguished him from slave. A similar ideal of radical equality appears in the literary record as strongly associated with fifth century claims to autochthony. Most notably, in Plato's *Menexenus* (even if it is a parody of the funeral oration genre), Aspasia celebrates the radical equality of birth (*isogonia*) as a right granted to all Athenian males by the city's autochthonous origins that distinguishes slaves from their masters.[37] By invoking the autochthonous principle of radical equality, Jocasta certainly plays to the hand of the disadvantaged exile and would certainly have resonated on the stage of a democratic city of autochthonous origins that prided itself on honoring exiles. But if the speech seems somewhat calculated to please democratic Athens, the converse is also true. That is, the speech's persuasive effect is predictably lost on Eteocles, the "unequal" brother (he holds the kingship and wealth) who happens to be an unabashed lover of Tyranny. Like Polyneices' previous anti-sophist sentiment against

[37] See 238e5–239e4. Though the tone of this strange dialogue, whether parodic or earnest, obviously does hold significance for how we read its praise of and claims to autochthony.

those who "take pleasure in arguments" (360), Eteocles dismisses outright the democratic sentiments in his mother's speech as mere *logoi*: they cannot compete with his stronger love for power derived from his control over the land and, ultimately, his ancestral connection to the soil. By virtue of the speech's audience, the mediation of Jocasta can never succeed.

By extolling equality as the principle that ought to govern human affairs Jocasta unknowingly validates the worst parts of Theban autochthonous history that unite past transgressions with the present crisis. She even goes on to countenance the principle of equality as something as natural as the cycle of day and night (543), even though she has used the same *chiasroscuro* imagery previously in the prologos to describe the cycle of violence that organizes autochthonous history![38] For in that earlier speech, light shone its "wretched beam" on Cadmus' arrival (4–5); the "sightless eye of night" (543) recalls the earlier mention of the blindness (62–64) that darkens Oedipus' gaze as he wastes away, a prisoner in his own home. But perhaps Jocasta is just as blind as her sightless husband. A radiant principle of equality has blinded her to what has really always united the *oikos* and *polis* of Thebes, proving just how dangerous autochthonous ideology can be.

[38] For a comprehensive discussion of the imagery of light and dark in the play, see Podlecki (1962).

Chapter Two: The Refrain of the *chthōn*

In Chapter One, I described how an autochthonous ideology shaped the conflict between Polyneices and Eteocles in the play's first episode. Polyneices' lust for autochthonous power, that is, political authority derived from a claim to direct descent from an earth mother, dangerously supplants his love of Jocasta as mother, thus undermining her effectiveness as a mediator. Moreover, Jocasta's own autochthonous rhetoric fuels Polyneices' discontent and threatens yet another dangerous succession of arrival or triumph followed by disaster that is historic to Thebes. In contrast with the extant Sophoclean and Aeschylean Theban plays, Euripides chooses in the *Phoenissae* to keep Jocasta alive to mediate the dispute and chooses as well to implement a rule-alternation scheme so that the concept of autochthonous power will undermine the fraternal negotiations and will thus move the action of the play ever closer to disaster. These innovations suggest already in the play's opening act a move toward the problematization of autochthony, that is, a deliberate effort by Euripides to demonstrate the dangerous potential of autochthonous ideology.

If the play's first episode merely speaks the language of the *chthōn*, autochthonous ideology (claims to authority based on a continuity of habitation), we might say that the subsequent episodes and choral odes engage the *chthōn* in direct conversation. Recall from the introduction that autochthony is a hybrid concept. Having addressed in the previous chapter continuity of habitation—autochthony's perfect aspect, if you will ("My people *have always lived* here)—I now turn to the myth of direct descent from the soil, autochthony's aorist aspect ("My people *were once born* from the soil.").

By designating a human "conversation" with the *chthōn* I do not mean to imply that the Theban soil has ever gained the *parrēsia* that eludes Polyneices, nor do I mean to impose arbitrarily my own *Fachbegriff* ("conceptual term") onto the play. Instead, I see the idea of a conversation as a useful metaphor for organizing the interaction between characters onstage and the violent history of autochthonous power. For although the Theban *chthōn* lacks a voice, its history entails a series of monstrous or violent "responses" to human actions. By highlighting these historical conflicts in the choral material, Euripides' *Phoenissae* does not, like Sophocles' Theban cycle, represent merely *a* political crisis of the present (i.e., the woes of the Labdacid house) but encompasses instead *the* political crisis that has always been endemic to Thebes (i.e., the house that Cadmus built). The play's latter episodes and choral odes should be read as developments of this historical crisis; the play's ending, likewise, as an attempt at the resolution of difficulties both present and past.

By offering themselves up as what I term, respectively, "autochthonous paragon" (Menoeceus) and "parthenic guardian" (Antigone), the two young Thebans forever fix their sexual identities in relation to the Theban *chthōn*. Their respective actions should be read as a continuation of the historical conversation with the *chthōn*. Menoeceus as autochthonous hero entombs himself within the *chthōn* in order to elicit a favorable response (salvation) for his *polis*; Antigone, having sworn to remain forever a *parthenos*, separates herself permanently from the Theban *chthōn* by means of voluntary exile. In doing so, she too elicits a favorable response from the *chthōn*, that is, the removal of her

father's pollution and the establishment of a positive religious cult around the site of his return to the soil.

In drawing attention to each character's self-presentation of his or her own sexual identity, I follow a recent (2009) treatment of the play by Laura Swift. Swift's well-executed close reading offers both a thoroughgoing account of the play's sexual undertones and, by organizing the action according to the *topos* of sexual transgression, imbues the play with the kind of thematic unity that evades prior treatments of the play.[39] But since my analysis' starting point is the relation of the concept of autochthony to the characters and action rather than the characters' sexual transgressions *per se*, I reach vastly different conclusions about Euripides' characterization of Menoeceus and Antigone. To summarize these conclusions briefly, I contend that both characters' sexuality must be read against the overwhelmingly negative portrayal of Theban autochthonous history. I hope to show that Menoeceus' choice of self-sacrifice is not symptomatic of a transgressive or markedly un-male sexuality, but rather is given in service to masculine autochthonous ideals. Moreover, since Antigone transgresses against a destructive system, her character must be assessed not as a "virgin monster," but rather as a positive "virgin-cult guardian." Finally, I suggest that such a character's similarities with another "virgin-cult guardian," Athena, would have resonated positively within Athens' own autochthonous ideology.

Menoeceus as Autochthonous Paragon

Most commentators agree that in Menoeceus, the last of the *spartoi*, Euripides invented an idealized savior for his Theban play. That is to say, there is no record of any

[39] See e.g., Podlecki (1962) and Conacher (1968).

such character in the earlier Theban plays (*Septem, OT*, *Ant*.).[40] In our play, Eteocles pointedly remarks—as if to introduce someone unknown to the audience—that Menoeceus "bears the name of his grandfather" (769).[41] Moreover, his role in the play seems at least vaguely to etymologize this name; he becomes quite literally the "strength (*menos*) of the house (*oikos*)," since he alone, according to Teiresias' prophecy, can act to save the city. More controversial is the meaning of Menoeceus' death. Unlike other extant examples of human sacrifice in drama, the death of Menoeceus has little or no apparent effect on the narrative.[42] Indeed, it remains uncertain whether any character other than his father Creon is even aware of his heroic self-sacrifice. Why then does Euripides bother inserting an invented character into a well-known narrative?

One answer, I suggest, entails Euripides' development of autochthonous ideology as a major *topos* of the play. This development moves outwards from the confines of the Theban first family in the initial episode to the larger citizen body in the third episode.[43] In the first episode, Jocasta used autochthonous ideology in her mediation speech to reinforce an ideal of equality between her sons. In the third episode, Menoeceus invokes

[40] For the most compelling case regarding Euripides' outright invention of the character against received tradition see Mastronarde (1994) 28–29. In S. *Ant*. and Aesch. *Septem* Creon does have a son called Megareus, who some take to be identical to Menoeceus. Yet, as Mastronarde argues, in Sophocles' play, there is no indication that Teiresias requests Megareus' death or that Creon is aware of any such sacrifice.
[41] For the repetition of an ancestor's name to invent a new character, see e.g. Lycus in the *Her*.
[42] Foley (1985) 132.
[43] The second episode, though I do not discuss it here, could be understood as a transition between private and public concerns, since it involves the communication of battle strategy between Eteocles and Creon. See e.g., 692, where Eteocles announces his intention to discuss matters "private and public to the *chthōn*."

his autochthonous status to make a bold statement about the citizen responsibilities of Theban autochthonous males.

At Athens and within most radically democratic societies, an autochthonous ideal of equal rights is accompanied by an expectation of shared responsibilities.[44] Individual, civic responsibility is the flip side of collective claims to autochthonous status. The invention of Menoeceus, who understands his death as the ultimate service owed to his country, allows Euripides a vehicle for the exploration of an idealized masculine identity that is shaped by autochthonous ideology. This exploration could perhaps be rationalized historically as a response to well-known contemporary concerns. By this late stage in Euripides' career, Athens has already called on multiple generations of young men to give their lives in defense of the radical equality enshrined in its own autochthonous ideology. But when we limit our analysis to the text itself, a more nuanced argument can be made about the reasoning behind Menoeceus' invention, or if not "reasoning behind," which perhaps presumes to know the mind of the poet, at least a mapping of the possibilities available to the poet for exploration. As I described in the introduction, for Athenians, autochthony is a hybrid concept that comprises both political claims to indigenism and a myth of direct descent from the soil. The previous chapter treated the problematization of the former, namely, the dangerous political claims of Polyneices and the exacerbating autochthonous rhetoric of Jocasta. But as mentioned previously, Euripides' engagement with the discourse of autochthony spans both uses of the concept. The current two sections on Menoeceus and Antigone thus consider the problematization

[44] For a similar discussion of autochthonous responsibilities in Aesch. *Septem*, see Rader (2009) 15–18.

of the myth itself by considering each youth's confrontation of Thebes' autochthonous past. The point of this analysis is to show that Euripides' engagement with the concept of autochthony gives meaning to components of the play that have posed interpretative problems to readers of the play. By "problems," I am referring here specifically to the death of Menoeceus, the significance of the chorus, and the choice of Antigone to go into exile with her father.

In classifying Menoeceus as a paragon of masculine virtue, I depart significantly from Swift's reading of sexual transgression in the play. It is Swift's view that Menoeceus severely undermines his masculine identity by his strong association with the archetypically female action of virgin self-sacrifice.[45] And while it is true that Teiresias does refer to Menoeceus as a *pōlos* ("foal" 947), a term most often used to describe a female character, as she notes, the same word is used elsewhere in tragedy to describe men facing dangerous situations.[46] Thus, on the one hand, there can be no escaping the fact that the sacrifice of a male victim is exceptional among extant tragedies. But the exceptionality of the plot point does not *per se* prove sexual transgression or an overarching characterization. In fact, as I argue below, Menoeceus speaks and acts in perfect obedience to the masculine responsibility prescribed by his relationship to the *chthôn*.

In a final, intention-revealing speech given to justify his suicide against the wishes of his father, Menoeceus uses the rhetoric of autochthony both to assert his

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[45] See Swift (2009) 70–72.
[46] See e.g., Eur. *Rh*. (Rhesus before he is killed) 386 and Eur. *Or*. 45. (Orestes plagued by the furies).

masculine identity and to contextualize his individual action within the expectations placed on other autochthonous citizens. First, Menoeceus establishes himself as a thoroughgoing autochthon by claiming relation to the Theban *chthôn* in both birth and death. He declares his aversion to betraying "the country that bore me" (996) and reveals his intention to "die for the sake of this *chthôn*" (998). He then acknowledges his decidedly unequal position among his peers as the individual singled out by Apollo's prophecy as the last of his autochthonous line.[47] Both of these statements connect Menoeceus to his ancestral relationship with the Theban soil and demonstrate his affinity with the democratic ideology of equality that has already been associated with autochthonous ideals in the first episode.

At the same time, Menoeceus must confront a tension between his collective and individual identities. Teiresias' prophecy presents a problem for an autochthon who takes seriously his equality relative to other males, the same ἰσότης that Jocasta praised so highly in her mediation. The words of the seer reveal that the salvation of the city rests on a single individual rather than on an army, and in this way Menoeceus' action will single him out from his autochthonous collective.[48] As if to assuage any doubt about his commitment to autochthonous equality, Menoeceus heaps praise on his compatriots who fight in the hoplite phalanx, where each man "stands behind a shield" (1001). By the conventions of hoplite warfare, which demands cooperation and coordination of tactics, Menoeceus is describing here both each man's own shield and that of his neighbor. The

[47] See 999–1000, where Menoeceus calls his Theban brethren "those free from prophecies and who have not come under the divine necessity."
[48] See 885, where Teiresias claims that Thebes is doomed, "unless one man is persuaded by my account."

hoplite phalanx thus becomes a potent symbol of the radical equality of an autochthonous collective. To respond to his unique position as "chosen one" in any way that would deviate from the principle of autochthonous equality would be, in Menoeceus' own words, a source of shame (*aischron* 999) and a dereliction of duty, as the hoplite imagery suggests. Therefore, although Menoeceus' gender marks him as unique among extant tragic victims, his words unambiguously establish his strong association with autochthonous selflessness, a masculine ideal. By contrast, to describe, as Swift does, Menoeceus' sexual maturity as truncated, fails to account for the prominence of this association.[49]

Among the many ways Menoeceus could fail the *chthôn*, the election of voluntary exile stands out as particularly shameful for the paragon of autochthonous equality. When a careworn Creon suggests to his son that he flee the city and save himself, Menoeceus' rebuttal lays claim to autochthonous selflessness. That going into exile represents a selfish, cowardly abandonment of his autochthonous peers is emphasized by the first person singular verbs in Menoeceus' final speech. The verbs threaten to distance the individual from his autochthonous collective:

> ἐγὼ δέ, πατέρα καὶ κασίγνητον προδοὺς
> πόλιν τ᾽ ἐμαυτοῦ δειλὸς ὣς ἔξω χθονὸς
> **ἄπειμ᾽**: ὅπου δ᾽ ἂν **ζῶ**, κακὸς **φανήσομαι** (1003–1005, emphasis mine).
>
> But in betraying my father, brother and city
> **I leave** the land as a coward—

[49] Swift (2009) does note (47 n71) that masculine sexual maturity entailed for Athenians the assumption of *polis*-level responsibilities but fails to incorporate the idea into her argument. These responsibilities she never defines, but we could reasonably assume she means military service and, more broadly participation in the democratic machinery (voting, juries, religious festivals, euergetism).

and wherever **I live**, **I will seem** craven.

Menoeceus here invokes a strong binary of individual and collective identities. The first two lines stressing his relationship to his male relatives and peers are capped emphatically by the end of line phrase *exō chthonos*, "outside the *chthōn*." The third line then begins with the strong enjambment of the finite verb *apeimi*, which is followed by two more parallel verb forms crammed into the same line. These lines communicate the suffocating expectations placed upon a youth like Menoeceus, for whom even a physical separation (exile) from his collective will be experienced as if he were still subject to their gaze. Menoeceus will *appear* cowardly, even when no one can possibly be watching (in exile).

The relationship between individual and collective identities in an autochthonous society could therefore be better phrased as the subjugation of the individual to the collective. But if we shift the focal point of our reading from Menoeceus to the autochthonous society, these lines reveal another, related binary—the opposition of exile to autochthony. This pairing is more nuanced than the individual versus the collective, since it can operate on both levels. To recap: exile—essentially, a discontinuity of habitation—presents a threat to any autochthonous society, since such a society wears as a badge of honor the claims it makes about the continuity of its habitation (i.e., indigenism). On the individual level, exile represents a kind of singling out. We have already heard from Polyneices in the first episode about the hardships and humiliations of exile, specifically, how his lack of familial resources forced him to seek shelter and food at Argos. In the first episode, a scheme of alternating exile and rule threaten the

possibility of another ill-starred Theban arrival. That rule-alternation scheme also set the decidedly unequal conditions for Jocasta's praise of autochthonous equality. Exile, which should work against claims to autochthony in the case of Thebes is an integral part of perpetuating the foundational bloodshed associated with the Theban autochthony myth.

In Menoeceus' speech as well, the topic of exile occasions an outpouring of autochthonous ideology. Voluntary exile, the disavowal of one's autochthonous status, entails for Menoeceus a public compromise of his masculine identity, as is evident from the adjectives *deilos* ("cowardly") and *kakos* ("craven") as opposed to *esthlos*, ("noble") he uses here to describe how he will appear (φανήσομαι) as an exile.[50] The form of *phainō*, the previous *aischron* (999) to describe exile, and Meneoceus' subsequent characterization of suicide as a *dōron ouk aischron* (1013) all connote strongly in this passage the Greek shame culture, that is, the social stigma surrounding both *deilia* (cowardice) and exile. Menoeceus' preoccupation with the opinion of those around him shows then that while autochthonous power may be enshrined in a mythos of "bloody Ares" (1006), the sown men (1008), and the dragon (1011), it can be conferred or denied only by one's peers. And therefore it is in order to uphold a collectively enforced masculine identity that we see Menoeceus offering himself as a savior, in fact, as the singular savior (according to Teiresias) who can act to save his beloved city (1012: ἐλευθερώσω γαῖαν; likewise earlier at 997: σῴσω πόλιν).

[50] The verb φαίνω can denote a predicative sense, i.e., "I seem to be x" or just "I am x." But I chose to translate φανήσομαι intransitively as "I will seem," because the context of the previous lines considers the relationship of Menoeceus' choice to his father, brother and city, and, moreover, his speech consciously seeks the approval of his autochthonous peers, who will judge Menoeceus on how his action *appears* to them.

Complicating this sociological reading of Menoeceus' final intentions are persistent textual problems in several lines of the speech. Therefore, I now briefly turn to an argument for the inclusion of lines 1012–1014 on the grounds that they relate directly to Menoeceus' self-presentation as an individual savior of an autochthonous collective. Moreover, I hope to show that by including these lines, we are able to see Euripides offering an intermediate step between the dangerous characterization of autochthonous ideology in the first episode (namely, its capability for manipulation toward selfish ends) and Antigone's transformation of autochthonous power in the final episode as a positive, non-selfish cult entity. The lines in question, spoken by Menoeceus right before his final exit, read as follows:

> ἐλευθερώσω γαῖαν: εἴρηται λόγος.
> στείχω δέ, θανάτου δῶρον οὐκ αἰσχρὸν πόλει
> δώσων, νόσου δὲ τήνδ᾽ ἀπαλλάξω χθόνα. (1013–1014)
>
> I will liberate the land. The reason has been stated:
> I depart to offer to my city a not shameful gift of death,
> And I will rid this soil of disease.

Mastronarde follows earlier commentators and brackets the lines, citing their "clumsy" and "repetitious" relationship to what precedes.[51] In his view, Menoeceus' dual claims that he "will liberate the *gaia*" (1012) and "rid this *chthôn* of disease" (1014) are

[51] Mastronarde (1994) *ad*.1013-1018, in concurrence with earlier commentators brackets all six lines. Mastronarde does however speculate that "the only way that the passage might be made palatable on stage would be for Men. to begin to move off, then pause after several steps to draw a wider lesson from his action." Such a stage direction would work well I think, to emphasize and indeed finalize Menoeceus' relationship with the Theban *chthôn*. The subsequent gnomic statement (1015-1018) on the value of patriotism is perhaps more difficult to defend, but could be reasonably read as an affirmation of autochthonous equality.

redundant. I suggest, however, we should read them as distinct claims, since two separate, if related, problems are afflicting Thebes.

First and most pressing, the Theban territory is under attack by a foreign army. Menoeceus will thus "liberate" (ἐλευθερώσω 1012) Thebes from the threat of Argive rule, as the same word appears commonly in the fifth century literary record to denote the liberation of a country, *polis* or region under the yoke of tyranny (e.g., the common propagandistic slogan "freedom of the Greeks," given in opposition to Persian/Athenian empire). But the political problems of the present (i.e., invasion) are predicted and even precipitated by those of the past (Cadmus/Oedipus), as Euripides has already emphasized with the infusion of the autochthony myth into the choral odes. For this reason, that is, the fulfillment of the autochthonous masculine identity demanded by his *polis* and his ancestors, Menoeceus reiterates in line 1014 the significance of his action for the resolution of not just the present, wartime threat from without but also the historical threat, plague (1014), from within. In other words, these lines show Menoeceus responding both to the present dangers of the episode action and ancient Theban *nosos* as related in the choral odes. We might even imagine him turning toward the chorus to deliver his final lines as a transition to the third stasimon, a mournful song of youth slain in service to country, which I discuss below.

Although the role of the chorus is explored more thoroughly in the following section, a few words are needed here to describe the significance of their reaction to Menoeceus' death, if only because their song gives context to an event otherwise isolated from both audience (by dramatic conventions) and characters (by its absence in what

follows). As mentioned previously, Euripides refrains from any extended comment on Menoeceus' death in the episodes, comment which we might expect based on the treatment comparable suicides receive in his other plays.[52] Nor does Menoeceus' death mitigate in any obvious way the destruction visited upon the royal Theban family in the latter half of the play. But just because his death wants for dramatic impact does not mean we should automatically read Menoeceus as a failed agent or, by extension, Euripides as a straightforward satirist of youthful patriotism. A more nuanced reading takes into account the sharp division in tone and subject matter between episode action and choral song in order to demonstrate how the chorus becomes an idealized internal audience for Menoeceus' suicide.

The third stasimon in particular beats a hasty iambo-trochaic retreat from the ramparts of Thebes to the murky, violent stories that litter the city's past. The tone shifts rather abruptly as a triumphant, defiant Menoeceus walks offstage to the grim music of the earth-spawned horrors that emerge from the soil to confound every heroic victory (Cadmus' slaying of the dragon, Oedipus solving of the riddle). In the final colon, the chorus turn to the praise of the departed youth:

> …ἀγάμεθ' ἀγάμεθ', 1055
> ὃς ἐπὶ θάνατον οἴχεται
> γᾶς ὑπὲρ πατρῴας,

---

[52] Several characters do react positively to Menoeceus' death, namely, the messenger relaying news of the battle (1090–1093) and Creon (1310–1321). Yet in every case his death is dwarfed by (and has no effect on) the ongoing battle and imminent fraternal duel. In Creon's case, his son's death seems actually to have distracted him from intervening in the duel (1327–1328). Jocasta's comment at 1206–1207 is perhaps most representative of the treatment Menoeceus receives "For the city, a blessing; for his family, a terrible loss – but back to me!" For *comparanda* see e.g., Praxithea, Makaria and the comprehensive investigation of the meaning of these by sacrifices Foley (1985).

Κρέοντι μὲν λιπὼν γόους,
τὰ δ᾽ ἑπτάπυργα κλῇθρα γᾶς
καλλίνικα θήσων. 1060
γενοίμεθ᾽ ὧδε ματέρες
γενοίμεθ᾽ εὔτεκνοι, φίλα
Παλλάς, ἃ δράκοντος αἷμα (1062 *bis*)
λιθόβολον κατειργάσω,
Καδμείαν μέριμναν
ὁρμήσασ᾽ ἐπ᾽ ἔργον, 1065
ὅθεν ἐπέσυτο τάνδε γαῖαν
ἁρπαγαῖσι δαιμόνων τις ἄτα. (1054–1066)

We stand in awe, in awe!
of him who leaves for death
over land ancestral,
who trailed woe for Creon
and is soon to grant the stuff of victory
to the land's seven-towered gates.
May we be mothers likewise.
May we be so blessed with children, dear
Pallas who wrought the dragonsblood,
slinging stones,
having coaxed to action
Cadmean obsession
whence some blight of gods
set upon this land to ravage it.[53]

The larger project of these lines concerns the contextualization of Menoeceus' death. This lyric "epitaph" can be profitably read, I suggest, as a response to the remoteness of the act itself (from both the audience and the characters). Chanting into the sudden void of youthful death perhaps lends a heightened pathos to the words of the chorus. The maidens first contextualize Menoeceus as an athlete who brings victory to his city (1058–1059), and not just the abstract idea of victory but *ta kallinika*, "the trappings of glorious

[53] I have translated ὑπὲρ (1056) as "over," when it is normally rendered as "on behalf of," because I hope to convey the physical location of Menoeceus standing atop the battlements. In less formal English, the latter sense is carried as well.

victory," which likely suggests the actual crown or spoils won in contest.[54] (We will hear of another crown in the fourth stasimon.) In the eyes of the chorus, if nowhere else so explicitly, Menoeceus thus becomes the patriotic hero he claims to be in his final speech. News of his selfless act of salvation does not play second fiddle, as it were, to the ongoing strife between his selfish, city-destroying cousins, as it will throughout the rest of the drama. Instead, Menoeceus assumes in death the ancient mantle of the Theban hero, taking his place in a long line of warriors like Cadmus and Amphion whose deeds were memorialized in song.

None of this is to claim that the victory-bringer label ought to be read as entirely unproblematic, however. The chorus uses the same word *kallinikos* (1048) in relatively close proximity to Menoeceus' *ta kallinika* (1060) to describe the character of Oedipus, who enjoyed miraculous success before suffering ignoble disaster. The same ambiguity could be found in the "Cadmean obsession," (1063) which as Mastronarde points out colors darkly a term of athletic prowess.[55] But even if the stasimon concludes with an image of divinities plotting against Thebes (1065–1066), the overall effect is one of unqualified praise and reverence for the deed of Menoeceus. The chorus stands in awe of his action (1054–1056) and naturally, use the idiom of religious invocation ("Athena, may we be mothers…") to express their approval. They describe how he has acted

[54] The encomiastic language on display here echoes the discourse of athletic victory immortalized by Pindar's epinicians. See Mueller-Goldingen (1985) 167-169 for a discussion of Euripides' "enkomiastischen Technik" both in this passage and his other plays.
[55] Mastronarde (1994) *ad* 1063.

selflessly on behalf of his “ancestral land” (1057) and in abandoning father’s womanish laments (*goous* 1058) has achieved the masculine ideal of his autochthonous line.

Particularly encomiastic and striking in these lines is the presentation of Menoeceus as the “perfect child.” To deliver their wish for children like Menoeceus, the chorus shifts from third to first person (1054, 1060–1061), a move that perhaps signals the intimate association felt between the motherless Menoeceus and the childless maidens. The wish for children of their own (1060–1061) might seem strange, since after all the maidens have pledged their chastity in service of Apollo. But we do not have to resort to obscure arguments about fifth century temple-service contracts to understand that the theme of motherhood is being invoked in contrast to the “dangerous” motherhood of Jocasta in the first episode and the decidedly un-exemplary character of her brood. By directing their praise toward Menoeceus’ familial ties, the chorus are choosing once more to contextualize him, that is, to imbue the isolated fact of his offstage death with collective meaning and pathos. Menoeceus must be remembered as a son, and not just his unnamed mother’s child, but rather the product of his collective “ancestral land” (1057). The rhetorical contrast separating Menoeceus’ weak, selfish father (*Kreonti men*…1058) from the victorious Theban earth (*ta d’heptapurga…kallinika* 1059–1060) suggests that the chorus are praising Menoeceus more as the autochthonous descendant of his ancestral soil than as a biological son of Creon. The idea is reinforced by the final lines of the stasimon, which invoke Athena, not as a goddess of childbirth but in connection with her role in creating the autochthonous Theban line (1061–1066). In sum, the third stasimon memorializes Menoeceus precisely according to the self-presentation

of his final speech, emphasizing his relationship to his home and society over his biological relationships when social isolation (exile/death) is threatened. By creating Menoeceus as the paragon of autochthonous virtues, the chorus gives meaning to an otherwise isolated event.

Euripides invented Menoeceus as a character who selflessly engages the *chthôn* in conversation on his own idealized masculine terms, rather than those of his selfish father.[56] In doing so, Menoeceus caps one end of the destructive cycle of Theban autochthony and guarantees Thebes' salvation from Ares' ancient wrath. As we might already have come to expect from the examination of autochthonous ideology in the previous chapter, Menoeceus' action does not constitute a narrow choice of *polis* interests (the city's salvation) over *oikos* interests (the wish of his father), as some commentators suggest.[57] His male relatives are part of the autochthonous collective he sees himself acting on behalf of, and he specifically mentions at 1013 his aversion to betraying his father or brother, however compromised they might be. Instead of glorifying the state over family, his choice of suicide over voluntary exile falls into the larger Aristotelian category of *prohaeresis*, a difficult or un-obvious choice that reveals internal character (*ēthos*).[58] In this case, Menoeceus' choice projects the masculine autochthonous virtue of

[56] A similar observation is made by Rawson (1970) 112, who argues that family and country are not in conflict with one another for Menoeceus, since he acts in the interests of *oikos* and *polis* in securing the city's salvation according to the prophecy. The overlap of *polis* and *oikos* categories, which in Ch. 1 described the fraternal conflict and marked a dangerous aspect of autochthonous ideology, here becomes something selflessly noble.
[57] E.g., Burian (2009) 25.
[58] At *Poetics* 1450.b8-10 Aristotle defines *prohaeresis* as the choice revealed by internal character (*ēthos*), by which he seems to mean that internal character ought to determine choice or course of action. The idea famously belongs to Heraclitus (fr. 121) Ἦθος

selfless courage, the opposite of *deilia*, cowardice, which he disparages twice as something shameful (at 1005 and 994). By comparing Menoeceus' selfless patriotism positively to Polyneices' dangerous, self-serving love of country, we can perhaps begin to see that Euripides has revealed not only Menoeceus' internal character, but also a more positive, idealized brand of autochthonous ideology.

Role of Chorus in Criticizing Theban Autochthonous History

As we have seen from the preceding discussion of the second stasimon, as well as the kinship ties established in the *parodos*, the songs of the Phoenician women hymn Thebes' mythological past, supplying Menoeceus with an historical narrative that frames and, according to Teiresias, necessitates his final action. Thus I suggested we can imagine the gaze of Menoeceus in his final monologue lingering over the chorus, as he directly addresses them (991) before his death. The second stasimon responds to his final exit with a song of recognition, to use a familiar Aristotelian term in a non-standard way. Tragic recognition (*anagnōrisis*) normally entails the interpretation of physical signs by an internal audience during the episode action to establish a character's identity.[59] Here, however, the chorus performs a different kind of recognition, one where identity is not revealed for the purposes of developing the plot so much as celebrated for its selflessness. And celebrated because Menoeceus will bring about a glorious reversal of fortune for his city.

ἀνθρώπῳ δαίμων: "Man's character is his destiny." Logically, the opposite also ought to hold true: One's chosen path—once chosen—reveals one's internal character.

[59] Arist. *Poetics* 1452a.

From the perspective of the external audience, the choral odes constitute the connective tissue of the play, bridging the causal gaps between the unusually large number of episodes, characters, entrances and exits.[60] I have proposed how the actions of Menoeceus and the brothers must be understood as respectively, positive and negative assertions of autochthonous power. But outside the episodic action of the play, the chorus too demonstrate an interest in delivering and even criticizing autochthonous ideology. By repeatedly underscoring the cyclical violence and perverse sexual behavior endemic to Theban society, the chorus of exiles even conditions the audience, I will suggest, in favor of Antigone's radical disavowal of the Theban *chthôn* in her final *kommos*.

As with Menoeceus, the chorus contextualize Antigone's final action. For whereas Antigone—anyone's Antigone—is easily assigned a transgressive label, the question of exactly what she is transgressing against in the *Phoenissae* is all too often passed over.[61] The previous section discussed Menoeceus in relation to the two components of autochthony: a collective identity of the present and a mythology of the past. In the next section I will show how Antigone too acts in consideration of her collective present and mythological past. But in order to set up that discussion of Antigone's position relative to autochthonous power, I now examine the chorus' role in relation to the larger themes of the drama. It is in the chorus' identity as religious-minded *parthenoi*-in-exile that Antigone finds a model for her own transformation at the play's end. From the perspective of the audience, the chorus prepares the way for a non-

[60] For a good discussion of the frenetic atmosphere engendered by Euripidean idiosyncrasies of plot, the play's many entrances and exits, see Luschnig (1994) *passim*.
[61] Most recently, by Swift (2009), whom I discuss below.

transgressive female power to speak truth to authority by emphasizing in their songs positive examples of female power.

An account of the chorus' evolving attitudes toward the components of autochthony will now situate Antigone in this larger thematic treatment of the concept, allowing us to understand her action as less transgressive and more in accordance with the position of the chorus. After the first episode's failed mediation scene, which devolved on all three onstage characters' dangerous use of autochthonous rhetoric, the chorus take the stage in the first stasimon to sing the story of Cadmus, the dragon, and the sown men.[62] In this way they unite the autochthonous concerns of the present (claims to political authority) and the past (descent of from Theban soil). The sickness of the *chthôn* is a major theme of the first stasimon, especially in the antistrophe (657–675), which is replete with violent adjectives attached to the mythological elements of the autochthony myth (657 "bloody dragon", 658 Ares, "cruel-minded sentinel", 664 the dragon's "bloody head", 672–673 "iron-minded slaughter") and unambiguous hints at the incestuous union of the sown men and their mother, the earth (673–674).[63] Yet even with these grim descriptors of the city's history, the broadly sympathetic tone of chorus toward

[62] On the myth of Cadmus slaying the dragon and the archetype of dragon-slayer more generally, see most recently Ogden (2013). The standard treatment of dragons in myth belongs to Fontenrose (1958).

[63] On the incestuous subtext, see Mastronarde (1994) *ad* 673, who notes that Euripides uses forms of the verb συνάπτω (673) at 49 and 1049 to refer to Oedipus and Jocasta's marriage, and that, furthermore, the rare use of the genitive (674 αἵματος) with δεύω suggests a filling action. It should be noted that δεύω is most often used in Homeric epic to describe death on the battlefield. Still, I think Mastronarde is right on the grounds of the rare genitive use here, and would add as a *comparandum* for a sexual "genitive of filling" a choral passage from the *Medea* 835-6 where Aphrodite is said to be "drawing water from the River Cephisus." See also Nimis (2007) 409–410, with notes, for a discussion of the *Medea* passage and of masculine penetration in tragedy.

Thebes is preserved from the *parodos*, as is obvious from the epode, which assumes the form of a prayer to Demeter, Io and Epaphus for the deliverance of the Thebes. These lines convey a view of Theban mythological history very different from the violent, cursed world of the ode. Instead the epode cries out to the civilizing divinities who give Thebes order:

> καὶ σέ, τὸν προμάτορος
> Ἰοῦς ποτ᾽ ἔκγονον
> Ἔπαφον, ὦ Διὸς γένεθλον,
> ἐκάλεσ᾽ ἐκάλεσα βαρβάρῳ βοᾷ,
> ἰώ, βαρβάροις λιταῖς:
> βᾶθι βᾶθι τάνδε γᾶν:
> — σοί νιν ἔκγονοι κτίσαν
> καὶ διώνυμοι θεαί,
> Περσέφασσα καὶ φίλα
> Δαμάτηρ θεά,
> πάντων ἄνασσα, πάντων δὲ Γᾶ τροφός,
> κτήσαντο — πέμπε πυρφόρους
> θεάς, ἄμυνε τᾷδε γᾷ:
> πάντα δ᾽ εὐπετῆ θεοῖς. (676–689)

> And you, the offspring of
> fore-mother Io,
> Epaphus, you progeny of Zeus,
> I summoned, summoned with foreign cry
> O with foreign prayers!
> come, O come to this land
> —your offspring founded it.
> And the goddesses named together
> Persephone and dear
> goddess Demeter
> queen of all and Earth nurse of all,
> they ruled—send torch-bearing
> goddesses, protect this land!
> All things are easy for gods.[64]

[64]Following Mastronarde (1994) *ad* 683, I have translated διώνυμοι as "named together," since this is more straightforward than "having two names."

The omission of any reference here to Demeter's bereavement, the earth's sickness or Io's madness should be understood as a careful rhetorical strategy to color the mythological past positively (an appropriate strategy in a prayer invoking these deities' aid). As Arthur insightfully explains, by describing the goddesses associated with Thebes and the earth in their non-threatening, fertility-bestowing capacities the chorus aim to induce a "homeopathic remedy" to the ills plaguing the respective purviews of Demeter (the soil) and Io (Thebes).[65]

A further contrast with the previous ode is expressed by the invocation of maternal bonds. Whereas Athena was the "motherless" (666) co-conspirator of Cadmus in generating the disastrous sown men, in the epode Io is honored by the title *promator* "first mother," and Demeter is etymologized as "earth mother" (685 *da matēr*), "the nurse of all things." Perhaps the naming of a maternal role may seem insignificant, but by now we have already seen the chorus condemn motherhood as dangerous in the first episode (Jocasta and Polyneices) and praise it in the third stasimon (wishing for children like Menoeceus). Thus we ought to be able to speak about motherhood as a thematic concern of the chorus. It is also, as I tried to show in the first chapter, a concern of autochthony. The Theban myth tells of two mothers, but privileges the mythological over the biological. Likewise for claims to indigenism, which are built upon a supposed continuity of habitation, where motherhood is a link in the chain of continuity that ties one generation to the next, as it does Polyneices and Eteocles to the Spartoid line. (This legitimizing effect of motherhood is perhaps echoed in the fifth century by Athenian

[65] Arthur (1977) 175-176.

citizenship laws requiring citizenship on both sides.) Finally, motherhood will appear prominently once more in the character of Antigone, whose own rejection thereof plays off these other treatments. So while the treatment here of motherhood as a life-giving force might seem positive, we must always remember the rhetorical coloring at work. Earth-spawned violence is the flip side of the same coin, "Earth as mother," a fact demonstrated vividly in the next set of songs (784–832), which attempt to synthesize the positive and negative aspects of the autochthony myth. And yet, I argue, the synthesis is unsuccessful because it leans heavily in direction of these darker aspects of the myth.

In the second stasimon, the attitude of the chorus toward Theban autochthonous history undergoes a fundamental shift, from a careful propitiation of earthly power to a recognition of the mother earth as the source of Thebes' problems. For whereas the *parodos* and first stasimon express sympathy toward Thebes and draw positive connections to the past, in the second stasimon the chorus take up a polemical stance against the disastrous past and precarious present brought about by figures with connection to the earth and savage beasts. The Sphinx emerges from the earth (807); Oedipus, himself nurtured on the slopes of Mt. Cithaeron, "full of beasts,"(801) solves the riddle but casts his house into turmoil; with the fraternal strife of his sons, Thebes' problems are said to "bloom anew" (*eris alla thallei* 811–812), like a persistent weed. Even more interesting for the treatment of the autochthony myth is the hostile tone the chorus adopts toward not just the divine actors but toward the *story itself*, the *akoē barbaros* (819), as I discuss below. This shift of tone suggests that Euripides is developing further from the first episode his problematization the concept of Theban

autochthony. To specify, whereas the first episode showed or performed the negative aspects of autochthony, the choral material now states these elements to the audience outright.

Though much of my argument so far has depended on the careful textual and critical insights of Mastronarde's commentary, here I diverge significantly from his "optimistic" reading of the second stasimon's epode.[66] Instead, I suggest we read the epode as a bitter response to the bivalent concerns of the first stasimon. (The earth is cursed, but once was blessed .) And rather than begin with the strophe or antistrophe, I first discuss the epode, since this new perspective of the chorus is stated plainly in its first four lines:

> ἔτεκες, ὦ Γαῖ᾽, ἔτεκές ποτε,
> βάρβαρον ὡς ἀκοὰν ἐδάην ἐδάην ποτ᾽ ἐν οἴκοις,
> τὰν ἀπὸ θηροτρόφου φοινικολόφοιο δράκοντος
> γένναν ὀδοντοφυῆ, Θήβαις κάλλιστον ὄνειδος: (818–821)
>
> You spawned, Earth, you once spawned
> —according to the strange tale I learned, learned once at home—
> from the beast-fed red-crested dragon
> the teeth-sown race, a very fine shame for Thebes.

Here Theban autochthony is no longer woven into the living fabric of myth (that is, something belonging to past time and recounted as developing presently by the characters). Instead it is a mere *akoē* (819), a strange tale bandied about a faraway land. The chorus, who have self-identified as "foreign women" in the previous stasimon (679), now apply that same label of "foreign" to the myth of the *spartoi*. As Luschnig writes, "The story is Greek—one of the most defining of Greek legends—and yet even to

[66] For his discussion see Mastronarde (1994) *ad* 821.

foreigners its brutality makes it barbarous."[67] We must use our imaginations for what were surely the chorus' elaborate orientalizing costumes, but we might be able to hear in these heavily dactyllic lines the incantatory rhythms of the *barbarai*. Moreover, the finely wrought metrical scheme (especially the versification of the *hapax* compounds in 820) is complemented by a careful rhetorical strategy. The chiastic structure of lines 819–821 frames the autochthony myth on both sides with evaluative language: *akoē barbaros* in 819 and *kalliston oneidos* in 821. Whose evaluations are these and how are they meant to resonate with an audience? Any myth demands its interpreters, but by surrounding the mythological details ("dragon," "teeth sown race") with assessments about the city as a whole ("for Thebes" 821), the autochthony myth, a most interior or embedded part of Thebes, is here focalized and critiqued through the eyes of outsiders. In doing so, the chorus transforms the autochthony myth into a source of revulsion and shame for outsiders, even if it has been a mark of pride (something *kalliston*) for Thebes.

The paradoxical phrase *kalliston oneidos* requires further explanation, for two reasons: first, it bears heavily on my argument that the chorus here is criticizing the autochthony myth, and, second, it has been a source of scholarly controversy. In fact, the phrase has engendered lively and widely divergent interpretation since antiquity, when a scholiast argued (without any justification in particular) that *oneidos* should mean only "reputation."[68] More recent "optimistic" readings of the epode simply weight the *kalliston* heavier than the *oneidos* and therefore argue that the stasimon's list of mythical acheivements (which follows directly after the phrase) takes the form of a "summary

[67] Luschnig (1995) 221.
[68] See the discussion of Mastronarde (1994) *ad* 821.

priamel," with each item better than the previous.[69] According to this view, with which I disagree, the list of Theban achievements culminates in the description of a Thebes standing on "the high crowns of Ares" (832). Here I have translated the final lines of the stasimon in order to suggest a tone very different than the optimistic priamel read by most commentators.

ἔτεκες, ὦ Γαῖ', ἔτεκές ποτε,
βάρβαρον ὡς ἀκοὰν ἐδάην ἐδάην ποτ' ἐν οἴκοις,
820 τὰν ἀπὸ θηροτρόφου φοινικολόφοιο δράκοντος
γένναν ὀδοντοφυῆ, Θήβαις κάλλιστον ὄνειδος:
Ἁρμονίας δέ ποτ' εἰς ὑμεναίους
ἤλυθον οὐρανίδαι, φόρμιγγί τε τείχεα Θήβας
τᾶς Ἀμφιονίας τε λύρας ὕπο πύργος ἀνέστα
825 διδύμων ποταμῶν πόρον ἀμφὶ μέσον,
Δίρκα χλοεροτρόφον ᾇ πεδίον
πρόπαρ Ἰσμηνοῦ καταδεύει:
Ἰώ θ', ἁ κερόεσσα προμάτωρ,
Καδμείων βασιλῆας ἐγείνατο,
830 μυριάδας δ' ἀγαθῶν ἑτέροις ἑτέ-
ρας μεταμειβομένα πόλις ἅδ' ἐπ' ἄκροις ἕστακ'
Ἀρηΐοις στεφάνοισιν. (818–832)

You spawned, Earth, you once spawned
—according to the strange tale I once learned, learned at home—
from the beast-fed red-crested dragon
the teeth-sown race, a very fine shame for Thebes.
And once to the bridal songs of Harmonia
the heavenly ones did come, and by Amphion's lyre's tune
the walls and tower of Thebes did arise
in the middle of twin rivers
where Dirce floods the verdant plain alongside Ismene,
and Io, the horned fore-mother,
bore the lords of the Cadmeans.
But this city, even having exchanged some hosts of blessings
for still others, has been standing atop the high
crowns of Ares.[70]

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[69] E.g. Mastronarde (1994) *ad loc.*, Bremer (1980), Mueller-Goldingen (1985) 137–140.
[70] I have translated ὑμεναίους (822) as "bridal songs," because I wish to emphasize music as a theme of these lines, as discussed below. The particle δέ (831) is made adversative and the participle μεταμειβομένα (831) concessive in order to emphasize the contrast

In my view, these lines pivot very abruptly from a list of achievements to a general, negative statement about the mythological foundations of Thebes. Even while enjoying prosperity and good fortune, all along the city "has been standing atop the high crowns of Ares" (831–832). The structure of the stanza recapitulates the city's history in a manner that suggests the pervasiveness and inexorable qualities of these foundational myths. After the foundational action of the earth in creating the sown men had occurred, the walls of the city arose (823–824) and Cadmus' descendents multiplied across the fertile floodplain of two rivers, Dirce and Ismene (825–827). More than just inform of Boeotian geography, the specific descriptions of the landscape continue the presence of the earth Gaia from the beginning of the stanza. Divinities came down to the Theban earth (822–823) and Amphion's walls rose up on the floodplain (823–824), but before all of these the earth had already set its own violent creation, the sown men, into the soil. The song closes with a recognition of these violent, earth-born foundations (832, see n. 68 above), a sort of refrain that mirrors the renewal of fraternal violence plaguing Thebes at present. The mood of such a song, therefore, ought not to be optimistic, but rather somber, dark and fully cognizant of the perils facing the city, perils predicted and embodied by the foundational myth of autochthony.

Outside the passage itself, justifications for this negative reading of the stasimon are briefly stated as follows. First, the chorus have never expressed optimism about the

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between the positive aspects of the past and the negative. Finally, I have translated the perfect verb ἕστακα as the continuous/progressive (a form that exists in English but not in Greek) "has been standing," in order to emphasize the link between Thebes' past and present.

outcome of the present battle; it does not make sense for them to begin doing so here. For example, in the first stasimon, which I discussed in the first chapter, the chorus mentions the "destructive bloodshed" Ares is preparing for Thebes in a harshly negative light (241). Moreover, the chorus' treatment of Ares at the beginning of this stasimon (and later in Antigone's, discussed below) is altogether negative: They express dismay over the terrible cost of war on peacetime activities like Dionysian religious festivals (784–785). Finally there are the mythological considerations of Ares and the violent force he represents. Both of these have always been opposed to Theban success, whether in Cadmus' initial slaying of Ares' dragon or in the violence which characterized the self-slaughter of the *spartoi*. Mastronarde notes the lack of satisfactory renderings of "Ares' crowns." And here I must also differentiate my reading from the more negative view of the stasimon entertained by commentators such as Parry, who read these lines as a negative "encirclement of war."[71] Such an interpretation focuses on the present political crisis enveloping the city. But given the chorus' preoccupation with the past, we ought to treat the crowns of Ares as signifying past time. The crowns of Ares have always been buried beneath the walls of the city. They form the city's foundations and bore witness to the grim past involvement of Ares with the city's early history.

The negative characterization of Theban autochthony contained in the phrase *kalliston oneidos* and carried through to the "crowns of Ares" tells us what the play's action—whether the rule-alternation scheme or the slogans of Jocasta—has already shown. A discourse of autochthony lingers around the edges of every disastrous triumph

[71] Parry (1967) 26.

(Cadmus, Oedipus, Polyneices) and every fraternal bloodshed (*spartoi*, Polyneices/Eteokles). The *oneidos*, "shame" can thus be read as originating both from within and without. In other words, the Theban myth of autochthony can be shaped into a narrative directed towards outsiders as a means of exclusion, but can also be used by those same outsiders to denigrate the city. In the next section, I examine how Antigone, herself an outsider, challenges the negative aspects of autochthony and calls for the transformation of autochthonous power into a positive religious entity.

Antigone as "Parthenic Guardian"

Like Jocasta, Polyneices and Menoeceus before her, Antigone often falls victim to readings of the play that attempt to shoehorn characters into neat categories of *polis* and *oikos*. Because she chooses to accompany her father into exile rather than marry Creon's son, she is branded a champion of *oikos* interests. Like her Sophoclean counterpart, the argument goes, Antigone here runs afoul of the state.[72] But such a reading obscures the public, transgressive nature of Antigone's negotiations with Creon and her very public role in both her father's and Thebes' salvation. The *Phoenissae* offers Antigone as the rare female figure who succeeds in her intentions, survives through the end of the drama, and, unlike barbaric female "monsters" such as Medea, resonates positively within the Athenian civic ideological framework, as I argue below.

[72] See e.g. Rawson (1970) and Burian (2009).

Before I discuss these resonances, I first aim to define the public, transgressive nature of Antigone's action. By doing so, I hope to suggest a new framework for interpreting the Antigone of the *Phoenissae* that does not rely on overbroad categories such as "family" and "state." Specifically, I argue Antigone is cast as a "parthenic guardian," to use my own term, which attempts to capture the resonance of her action with the role of Athena *parthenos*. Moreover, I hope by using the rather awkward "parthenic" descriptor (not an English word) and not what is perhaps the more expected term "virgin" that we may begin to see Antigone's rejection of motherhood as something fundamentally *other* than what "virgin" connotes in English, namely, a rejection of sexuality or of power. By contrast, I mean to show that Antigone's action, like Menoeceus', responds to historical concerns of the Thebes autochthonous past and empowers her as a protector or guardian of masculine power.

That we should view Antigone's action as a kind of sacrificial guardian parallel to Menoeceus was proposed most succinctly by Foley.[73] And yet "sacrifice" is a difficult term to apply in Antigone's case. After all, what does she actually lose, if not her life, as other sacrificial virgins do, e.g. Praxithea in the *Erectheus*? Most obviously, she loses the possibility of marriage to Haemon, the son of Creon, and therefore the possibility of continuing the Theban autochthonous line. So much is canonical to the traditional portrait of Angtione. But in the *Phoenissae* specifically, Antigone's separation from the Theban *chthōn* etymologizes her sexual identity, "against (*anti*) children (*gonē*)," (just as Menoeceus' union with the Theban *chthōn* etymologizes his, above) by ensuring that she

[73] Foley (1985) 142.

will forever remain a *parthenos* and so not bear the children of the last of the *spartoi.* (As opposed to Sophocles' Antigone, where death, not exile, prevents Antigone from fulfilling her promised marriage to Haemon.) There is a further parallel to be drawn between the *Phoenissae'*s two young "sacrificial guardians." Namely, Antigone's resolution about her permanent separation from the Theban *chthôn*, as before with Menoeceus, forever fixes her sexual identity. In the case of Menoeceus, whose virginity qualified him uniquely to pay Ares' debt, his eternal embrace of the Theban *chthôn* identifies him negatively as one who will never produce children, but positively as one who acted in accordance with the masculine, "autochthonous" (in the sense that it is demanded by an autochthonous collective) virtue of courage.

Yet for Antigone, even if her sacrifice does fix her sexual identity, it does not *per se* represent a separation from any autochthonous status, since, as a female, Antigone possesses no claim to the political power granted by a relation to the Theban soil. The final lines of the *agōn* between Antigone and Creon illustrates particularly well how Antigone understands the history of her city and the political power afforded those with autochthonous status. Moreover, Creon's response is typical of the masculine values of an autochthonous elite as demonstrated by the Menoeceus episode. In this passage, Creon has refused burial to Polyneices. He is carrying out the final wishes of Eteocles to separate forever Polyneices from the Theban soil, from which he claims descent. Antigone, upset with Creon's reasoning for refusing burial, takes it upon herself to prove her brother's strong connection to the Theban earth. Here she describes how Polyneices' autochthonous status justified the invasion of his homeland:

> Ἀντιγόνη : τί πλημμελήσας, τὸ μέρος εἰ μετῆλθε γῆς;
> Κρέων: ἄταφος ὅδ᾽ ἀνήρ, ὡς μάθῃς, γενήσεται. (1655–1656)
>
> Antigone: What is out of tune, if he came for his share of the land?
> Creon: Know that this man here will remain unburied!

According to Antigone's argument here, Polyneices' action, to claim what was rightfully his, should be understood as exercise of the privileged status afforded by his ancestral connection to the land. His invasion of homeland, she asserts, was not anything "out of tune," an expression which resonates with the musical themes of the chorus (Ares out of tune with the songs of Dionysus). First, the passage shows Antigone's public behavior in a positive light. In speaking her truth to a political authority (and contravening the negative portrayal of Polyneices that seems to have been traditional to the myth, see Chapter One above) Antigone forcefully asserts here the very same *parrēsia* that her brother had yearned for in the first episode. Creon subsequently chooses not to or is actually unable to formulate a response to Antigone's argument; instead he merely asserts his authority.[74] A Euripidean character unwilling to engage in sophistic rhetoric to defend his position is rare to say the least. This break in the stichomytheia underscores the essential irrefutability of Antigone's speech, which, as one word in particular indicates, uses the world of the past to explain the present disaster.

The participle *plēmmelēsas,* "out of tune," appears only here in drama, although Euripides uses the adjectival form elsewhere, and various other noun forms are common

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[74] 1656. See Mastronarde *ad loc.* for a discussion of the tone of this exchange and relevant comparanda.

among fourth century orators.[75] The word connotes most obviously a moral failing, "to offend" or "to sin," but here I suggest the literal compound "out of tune" (*plēn meleos*) carries a musical sense that fits well within the *Phoenissae*'s dichotomy of song-history and episode-action. The musical (i.e. lyrical) content of the play hymns the mythic history of Thebes and the story of autochthony leading up to Menoeceus' sacrifice. As noted many times now, the fraternal slaughter of the *spartoi* is reenacted by the more recent feud between Oedipus' sons. Thus the song remains the same between generations, while Creon fails to notice the similarity.

Antigone's rebuke reads not, then, "what did Polyneices do wrong when he claimed his share of the land?" but rather "what did he do out of harmony with the chorus' telling of Theban autochthony?" By this reading of Antigone's words, I want to suggest that Euripides casts her as a kind of internal audience for the chorus' myth-telling. Out of all the characters in the play, she has learned the lessons of the past and will apply them to the present situation to determine her role as her father's guide in exile. At the play's end, in assuming responsibility for the delivery of the final lyric material, Antigone also assumes the chorus' role as religious-minded *parthenoi*-in-exile.

Antigone's interactions with Creon intimate her deep familiarity with the history of her family and her city. Her rebuke to Creon that her brother has done nothing "out of tune" should sting all the more given the reasons for his own son's death. Menoeceus' union with the Theban mother soil belongs to the same song as Polyneices' yearning for political authority. Ordained by prophecy and sung by the chorus, the deaths of

[75] For Euripidean usages of *plemmelēs* see e.g., *Hel*. 1085, *Med.* 306, both listed under LSJ 2 "wrongful."

Polyneices, Eteocles, and Menoeceus all respond to the ancient bloodlust of Ares. Creon thus proves his religious ignorance and hypocrisy by the language he uses to chastise Antigone:

ἔκριν' ὁ δαίμων, παρθέν', οὐχ ἃ σοὶ δοκεῖ (1662)

A god decrees it, girl, not what seems right to you.

The reprimand proves Creon a hypocrite, since he had only just instructed his son to ignore the decrees of a god (Apollo via Teiresias) in order to do what seemed right to himself.[76] Creon, as the newly-minted ruler of Thebes, patronizes Antigone here by putting her in her place as a non-member of his autochthonous patriarchy. Surely, he seems to say, a mere *parthenos* has no role in making decisions about what is right and wrong for the *polis*. And indeed, when viewed through the lens of Theban autochthonous power, Creon is correct. That is to say, although Antigone knows by heart the many historical refrains of Theban autochthony, her gender bars her from ever assuming the responsibilities of an autochthonous male citizenry, e.g., those Menoeceus praises in his farewell speech.[77]

That is because, as discussed in the previous chapter, the concept of autochthony privileges a narrow elite of native-born male citizens over all outsiders and actively

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[76] See 971, where Creon orders his son not to heed the sayings of seers.
[77] An idea most notably formulated by Loraux (1993) 78–79: "[T]he Greeks never recognize an autochthonous woman, since the very idea is a contradiction in terms." cf. Introduction above and most recently Nimis (2007) 409–412, who argues that Praxithea, herself the "autochthonous" offspring of the river god Cephisus and Aphrodite, assumes citizen responsibilities in the lost *Erectheus*. He nevertheless concludes (409 n32) that Praxithea is the exception that proves the rule of female exclusion from autochthnonous power. See my Introduction for a fuller discussion of women and their relation to the concept of autochthony.

perpetuates misogyny by imagining a fantasy world of patrilineal reproduction. Creon's casual dismissal of Antigone the *parthenos* thus plays into a literary *topos* of misogyny already well established by the late fifth century BCE. All the same, Greek myths about autochthony are not universally misogynistic (hostile or demeaning to women). In fact, as Loraux demonstrates, the story of Athenian autochthony venerates the city's eponymous goddess, namely, that of Athena *parthenos*.[78] Athena, the target of an attempted rape by Hephaestus, protects as her own child the progeny of the earth and the god's seed, Erechtheus, who is worshipped alongside her on the acropolis. Athena *parthenos* becomes herself a guardian of Erechtheus' religious site.

And now I would like to extend the Athenian idea of female autochthonous power to my reading of Antigone. Creon fails to notice how the characters and action work together to empower Antigone's unique civic role as *parthenos* outside the geographical and ideological boundaries of the Theban *chthōn*. Like Menoeceus, Antigone acts in the interest of the *polis*. We have already discussed how Antigone and Menoeceus share the characteristics of other virgin sacrifices. Commentators have consistently, and wrongly, I think, characterized Antigone's sacrifice as a choice of family over country, in contrast to Menoeceus' rejection of the interests of family in favor of those of country.[79] Such a simplified dichotomy between family and state downplays the civic-religious elements of Antigone's transformation. Antigone emerges a changed character in the wake of the

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[78] Loraux (1993) 66–67.

[79] Rawson (1970) 122f comes closest to casting Antigone as acting not just in the interests of her family, but also in the public interest by removing the last of the Labdacids from Thebes in accordance with the prophecy.

deaths of her mother and brothers and describes this transformation at length after their corpses have been dragged on stage at the beginning of her lyric *kommos*:

> οὐ προκαλυπτομένα βοτρυχώδεος
> ἁβρὰ παρηίδος οὐδ᾽ ὑπὸ παρθενί-
> ας τὸν ὑπὸ βλεφάροις φοίνικ᾽, ἐρύθημα προσώπου,
> αἰδομένα φέρομαι βάκχα νεκύ-
> ων, κράδεμνα δικοῦσα κόμας ἀπ᾽ ἐ-
> μᾶς, στολίδος κροκόεσσαν ἀνεῖσα τρυφάν,
> ἁγεμόνευμα νεκροῖσι πολύστονον. αἰαῖ, ἰώ μοι. (1486–1492)
>
> not draped with curls, my delicate cheeks,
> nor feeling shame by maidenhood at the red beneath my eyes, my face's blush:
> I carry on the Bacchic rites of the dead—
> throwing the veil from my hair
> letting fall the yellow refinement of my robe—
> a processional for corpses, full of groaning. Alas! Woe unto me![80]

First, this passage shows that Antigone understands her position as having changed from that of a passive, cloistered *parthenos* whose actions are mediated by masculine authority figures. Several of the actions mentioned here in fact imply the transgression of Antigone's expected societal role, namely, the unveiling of her curls (1486), the red rings under her eyes (1488), and the unfastening of her maidenly saffron robe (1490), presumably in preparation to strike in a gesture of lamentation her exposed chest.[81] All of these markers of public grief announce that Antigone has undergone a transformation of

[80] For a full discussion of the textual problems and unusual syntactical forms in this passage see Mastronarde (1994) *ad* 1480–1581. As much as possible, I have attempted to preserve the order of words and especially of clauses, since I feel the parataxis between clauses reflects the heightened emotional tone of the aria (rather than a more "rhetorical" hypotaxis.) I have translated ἁγεμόνευμα as "processional," (denoting a processional hymn) because of the obvious wedding imagery and religious language, discussed below.
[81] Mastronarde (1994) *ad loc.* discusses the parallel between Antigone's actions and other displays of grief, conjecturing that the imagery of unveiling plays on language and imagery typically associated with bridal unveiling.

identity, a departure from the *parthenos* role that society (her mother, Creon, the tutor) demands of her. She explicitly declares that she acts here without *parthenia* "maidenly shame" (1487–1488)—the very same societal expectation which had held so much sway over her behavior in the *prologos*, when she is quickly ushered offstage by the *paidagogos* to the maiden's chambers (194) or conversely, when her mother calls her to leave behind *partheneumata* "maidenly pursuits" (1265).

If not as a cloistered maiden, how does Antigone characterize herself? One answer lies in her mention of Dionysian rituals in this passage. By claiming to perform "Bacchic rites of the dead" (1489–1490), Antigone designates herself as a female expressing public lament. Among tragic women in general and Euripidean protagonists in particular, female characters expressing lament often associate themselves with Dionysian cult practice or imagery.[82] For example, in the play bearing her name, Hecuba mourns her son in what she terms a "Bacchic mode" (*baccheion nomon*).[83] In addition to being another marker of public grief, the reference to Dionysus in our play furthers a theme already established by the chorus in the second stasimon, that is, the contrast between the music of Ares and that of Dionysus (784–791). The chorus describes Ares as "out of tune" (*paramousos* 785) with the festivals of Dionysus and despairs that the music of Ares is not fit for "the fine dances of maidenhood." Antigone then in this aria is

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[82] For the most thorough discussion of this connection, see Foley (2001) 43 n. 78, who cites as a precedent to this passage Aesch. *Septem* 836, in which the chorus leader terms herself *thuias,* "bacchante" as she prepares to lament the death that will result from the brothers' duel. In other cases meter rather than vocabulary can connote a strong Dionysian connection. For an example of a "Bacchic" (i.e. Ionic) meter used for a choral lament song, see e.g. the choral odes of Aeschylus' *Persians.*
[83] Eur. *Hec*. 686-7.

performing the music described in the second stasimon: a song of Dionysus that has been tainted by acts of violence more suited to the bloody beat of Ares. In this way, as with *plemmeles* above, her words criticize Creon for being tone-deaf and blindly ignorant of the detrimental "music" (refrains of fraternal violence) of autochthony. In addition to her dramatic responsibility of delivering the final lyric content of the play, Antigone has symbolically taken up the mantle of the chorus as keeper of song and vigorous opponent to the cyclical patterns of violence expressed in the autochthony myth.

The Dionysian imagery in Antigone's lyric section continues in the abstract noun *agemoneuma* (1492), which I have chosen to translate as "processional," for the word's ceremonial/religious connotations (see n. 80). The word connotes here a civic religious procession, with Antigone leading unspecified corpses (presumably those onstage, but perhaps also by implication the Theban war dead who might receive public burial) in a public expression of lament. That such public displays of female lament engendered tremendous anxieties in patriarchal society as represented on the tragic stage and as actually existed in fifth century Athens hardly needs to be reiterated here.[84] Antigone's newfound role as lamenter and defender of Creon's deceased political opponent places her in direct opposition to masculine power. Euripides' Antigone is more extreme in this opposition than Sophocles' heroine, even terrorizing Creon with threats of enacting a Danaid wedding night against his son, the last of the autochthonous line, Haemon.[85] This mythological reference escalates the tension between Antigone and Creon, to say the

[84] See e.g., Foley (2001) 19–55 on "The Politics of Tragic Lamentation."
[85] See 1673–1675.

least. What had previously been a kind of speaking out or truth-telling by Antigone becomes now an outright slur against her expected societal role as wife and mother.

The reference to the Danaids brings us to the topic of marriage and how this passage defines Antigone's sexuality in opposition to the societal expectation of marriage. Richard Seaford has written that tragic representations of weddings tend overwhelmingly to be subverted, and this passage (1486–1492) provides an excellent example for his thesis.[86] For example, Antigone's discarding of her maidenly vestments represents a parody of a typical wedding scene. Specifically, saffron is usually the color of wedding garments, and her unveiled appearance, which she herself remarks upon, represents a kind of *anakaluptērion* (a common motif of pottery referring to the "unveiling" of the bride).[87] Taken in context with these references to imagery typically associated with wedding ceremony, the Danaid reference should be understood as part of Antigone's rejection of the masculine controlled institution of marriage.

It is this final barbed mythological utterance of Antigone that convinces Creon to grant her wish of accompanying Oedipus into exile.[88] By issuing bold threats against her *kurios* (legal male guardian) and, by extension, against the Theban autochthonous power invested in him, Antigone transgresses her carefully curated role as chaste, powerless maiden. Yet it is precisely because she commits such extreme transgressions against her role as a *parthenos* that Antigone is able to guarantee her continued survival as a female

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[86] See Seaford (1987) 106 for this thesis. The passage from the *Phoenissae* is only addressed by him in a footnote (124 n185), since the main focus of his argument is S. *Ant*.
[87] Seaford (1987) 124. See also Mastronarde (1994) *ad* 1486.
[88] 1682 ἴθ', οὐ φονεύσεις παῖδ' ἐμόν, λίπε χθόνα. "Go. You will not murder my child. Leave the country"

who will never marry. She will always remain, in one sense, a *parthenos*. But whereas *parthenos* normally defines a set of male enforced expectations, Antigone the *parthenos* chooses to live in opposition to institutions of masculine power like marriage, legal guardianship, and the music of Ares or war. It is in this sense that I hope "parthenic" captures the "*parthenos*-like" component of Antigone's identity. By leaving Thebes, she swaps one separation from public life (maidenhood) for another (exile). In the final calculus of the play, then, maidenhood and exile become analogous to one another, since they both represent a kind of exclusion from society and masculine controlled institutions of power. Adding to the affinity between the two is the fact that, as Seaford describes, the Greek bride is traditionally unveiled immediately before her journey to the groom's home, just as Antigone unveils herself in our passage (1485–1492).[89]

But even if maidenhood and exile are similar forms of societal exclusion, I want to suggest that Euripides intends Antigone's new role in exile to be more than just a separation from masculine society and the Theban autochthonous line. This is because her role also incorporates the "positive" autochthonous elements of her guardianship over Oedipus' cult power as told in the myths surrounding his death. I make this suggestion on the basis of Oedipus' description of the pair's departure. Here he tells Antigone about the oracle predicting the location of his death:

Οἰδίπους	ἐν ταῖς Ἀθήναις κατθανεῖν μ' ἀλώμενον.
Ἀντιγόνη	ποῦ; τίς σε πύργος Ἀτθίδος προσδέξεται;
Οἰδίπους	ἱερὸς Κολωνός, δώμαθ' ἱππίου θεοῦ. ἀλλ' εἶα, τυφλῷ τῷδ' ὑπηρέτει πατρί,

[89] Seaford (1987) 124.

ἐπεὶ προθυμῇ τῆσδε κοινοῦσθαι φυγῆς.

Oedipus	[The oracle tells] that I die in Athens after having wandered
Antigone	Where? What tower of Attica will receive you?
Oedipus	Sacred Colonus, home of the equine god
	but come, attend your blind father,
	since you are eager to share in this exile (1705–1709)

The passage shows Euripides calling to mind the myths traditionally associated with the death of Oedipus, myths that Sophocles will use several years later for the basis of *Oedipus at Colonus*. The story of Oedipus' death, his descent into the *chthōn* and the foundation of his hero cult transforms the outcast, shameful figure of Oedipus into a powerful source of local heroic pride. And in this sense, the figure of Oedipus shares with the concept of autochthony a dualistic identity of *kalliston* and *oneidos* elements (See above for how autochthony is described this way by the chorus in the second stasimon.) But while the *OC* will enact this final transformation of Oedipus, our play is more interested in setting the stage for what is to come, which is why, as I argued above, autochthony is emphasized by the chorus as a source of shame (*oneidos*) rather than a source of pride (*kalliston*). Moreover, the passing mention of Oedipus' future at the end of the play is not the only reference to autochthonous power returning to the earth in a way that is positive and heroic. Besides the obvious example of Menoeceus fulfilling the debt owed to the *spartoi*, there is also an oblique reference to the Athenian autochthony myth. Teiresias is described as having just returned from Athens and the battle of the Erechthedai against the invader Eumolpus, an episode which probably included the noble

sacrifice of Praxithea to the earth.[90] Oedipus strongly implies that he has knowledge of his future cult site, a kind of narrative prolepsis not uncommon to the endings of Euripides' plays, as Mastronarde notes.

But more than just reference what is to come, this passage defines Antigone's role in a way that evokes previous "familial" concerns of the play, as well as the concept of autochthony. Oedipus uses the verb *koinousthai (*1709) to describe what Antigone's role will be in exile, that of a partner. This language recalls the *parodos*, where the chorus spoke of the intimate ties held in common (*koina*) between family members and the necessity of sharing troubles amongst friends/relatives (249—see Chapter One for a discussion of the *parodos*). Not only has Antigone adopted the role of the chorus as a *parthenos* in exile, she has also (in the eyes of her father) put into action the earlier wisdom of the *parodos*, that is, to take seriously familial ties and to divide sorrows between family members. In a play so replete with familial strife (Polyneices vs. Eteocles, *spartoi*, Oedipus vs. sons) this cannot be emphasized enough.

On the familial and state levels, Antigone succeeds in the mediation of conflict where her mother had failed. Jocasta could not lead her sons or her city from peril—could not lead them out of the long shadow cast by their ancestors the *spartoi* and by every disastrous arrival to Thebes. But as her father's eyes and support, Antigone leads the symbolic processional away from the destructive music of Ares, the legacy of the dragon, *spartoi,* and Sphinx. By so leading, she will successfully mediate her father's transformation from an embittered old man into a source of heroic cult power. By staging

[90] See 852–855 and the discussion of Mastronarde (1994) *ad loc.*

a departure rather than another arrival, she breaks the cycle of disastrous triumphs and breaks as well the continuity of the autochthonous Spartoid line. (There is no mention of Ismene in the play.) In mediating both her father's safe departure and the city's salvation, Antigone finds a new identity for herself as a parthenic guardian.

Since I have now discussed how Antigone acts in the interest of her family and her *polis* by taking up the role of *parthenos* in exile at the play's end, I conclude this section with brief remarks on the question of Antigone's reception. In what light would a male Athenian audience evaluate the character of Antigone? Is she a threat to a patriarchal society, as her frightening of Creon might suggest? According to Swift's recent (2009) reading of the play, Euripides deliberately portrays Antigone as sexually abnormal in her "journey from an innocent *parthenos* to a willful and threatening figure."[91] Swift takes Antigone's sexual abnormality as symptomatic of the larger disease ailing the Labdacid house. Oedipus, Jocasta, and the half-maiden half-monster Sphinx all fit the pattern of sexual transgression threatening the collapse of Theban society. Moreover, argues Swift, these transgressions are projected upon the sexually innocent Menoeceus and then hymned by the sexually idealized chorus of chaste, non-threatening Phoenician maidens.

In my own reading of the final episode, however, I have attempted to demonstrate how Antigone assumes the mantle of the chorus, as she becomes by the play's end a religious minded *parthenos* in exile. She demonstrates her familiarity with these lyric lessons of the past regarding the destructive power of war and bears witness to the

[91] Swift (2009) 83.

religious hypocrisy of male authority figures like Creon. As another example of her ability to speak truth to authority, her rejection of societal institutions such as marriage and childbirth therefore should not be understood as a simple transgression of Greek values. Instead, we should understand Antigone's action as a response to a deeply problematized society, one founded on acts of reciprocal violence and the maternity of the earth itself. Antigone's dance—her position as a parthenic guardian at the head of a train of corpses—answers the refrain of the Theban soil with positive meaning of her own choosing. Like Athena's protection of Erechtheus' religious site, Antigone's action guarantees the survival of autochthonous cult power. In this way, a male Athenian audience could understand Antigone's sacrifice as enacting a benefit for a fundamentally patriarchal society by offering a purifying final stanza to an historically polluted song.

Conclusion

This study has attempted to demonstrate the various ways that the concept of autochthony is communicated and criticized in the *Phoenissae*. My discussion of the first episode showed how autochthony was prominent in the speeches of the exile Polyneices and his mother, and how it could be characterized as something dangerous, in the same way the that the chorus stereotypes all maternal feelings as *deinon*. Moreover, a discussion of the other versions of the Theban myth attempted to shed light on how the plot innovations of the *Phoenissae* set in motion the fraternal dispute even without the brothers' plainly stated hostile intentions toward one another. I then concluded the first chapter by discussing how the fraternal dispute is a vehicle for rhetoric evoking the concept of autochthony at its worst: as a justification for selfish assertions of power that prove destructive to the very country that autochthonous individuals claims to love like a mother.

The second chapter also focused on Euripidean innovations. I discussed first how the character of Menoeceus was created in order to bring the concerns of the autochthony myth into the present crisis. Menoeceus represents an idealized form of masculinity that places high value on selflessness of the individual with respect to one's autochthonous collective. The fact that his heroism goes largely unnoticed except by the chorus strongly connects Menoeceus with the mythological material communicated in the choral odes. I showed as well how the insertion of a foreign chorus to criticize the autochthony myth from the perspective of outsiders was another innovation of Euripides. Finally, I described how the chorus serve as a model for the transformation that Antigone

undergoes in the final episode as a “parthenic guardian” who accompanies her father into exile to protect his autochthonous power.

The *Phoenissae* is no doubt a very complicated play, full of entrances, exits and a whole host of different themes, and would be today as in antiquity very difficult to produce, let alone make complete sense of. But by organizing the analysis around the play’s engagement with the concept of autochthony on several different levels, I have tried to show how the many dramatic idiosyncracies might have worked together to communicate a larger theme: the problematization of the Theban autochthony myth and the social order reinforced by such a myth. The particular strength of this play and of Euripides in general, in my judgment, is the masterful synchronization of episode action with choral passages, a synthesis of dissimilar voices that I hope can finally be called harmonious.

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