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Publication Date
1990-04-01

Peer reviewed

APATÊ, *AGÔN*, AND LITERARY SELF-REFLEXIVITY
IN EURIPIDES' *HELEN*

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❈

Νείλου μὲν αἵδε καλλιπάρθενοι ῥοαί,
ὃς ἀντὶ δίας ψακάδος Αἰγύπτου πέδον
λευκῆς τακείσης χιόνος ὑγραίνει γύας.
Πρωτεὺς δ᾽ ὅτ᾽ ἔζη τῆσδε γῆς τύραννος ἦν,
Φάρον μὲν οἰκῶν νῆσον, Αἰγύπτου δ᾽ ἄναξ,
ὃς τῶν κατ᾽ οἶδμα παρθένων μίαν γαμεῖ,
Ψαμάθην, ἐπειδὴ λέκτρ᾽ ἀφῆκεν Αἰακοῦ.
τίκτει δὲ τέκνα δισσὰ τοῖσδε δώμασιν,
Θεοκλύμενον ἄρσεν᾽ [ὅτι δὴ θεοὺς σέβων
βίον διήνεγκ᾽] εὐγενῆ τε παρθένον
Εἰδώ, τὸ μητρὸς ἀγλάϊσμ᾽, ὅτ᾽ ἦν βρέφος·
ἐπεὶ δ᾽ ἐς ἥβην ἦλθεν ὡραίαν γάμων,
καλοῦσιν αὐτὴν Θεονόην· τὰ θεῖα γὰρ
τά τ᾽ ὄντα καὶ μέλλοντα πάντ᾽ ἠπίστατο,
προγόνου λαβοῦσα Νηρέως τιμὰς πάρα.
(*Helen* 1-15)

It is something of a critical commonplace that, in the Euripidean prologue, "the actor is explaining to the audience the situation at the time the action begins and the events leading up to it, and sometimes predicting for their benefit the course of the action."[1] This is also true of one of the most unusual of Euripides' tragedies, *Helen*, where the prologue conveys the play's thematic concerns not only through its words, but also by its words—in the "free play of signifiers" which is itself at issue in the play.

We see this already in the opening line, and especially in its adjective: *Neilou men haide kalliparthenoi rhoai* ("These are the beautiful-virgin streams of the Nile"). *Kalliparthenoi* ("beautiful-virgin") has often puzzled critics; Dale notes that there is no close parallel and concludes, "Perhaps Euripides did not think very closely about it."[2] It seems more likely that Euripides did think "very closely" about his first line; and the precise impact of *kalliparthenoi* emerges when we consider it in the context of the play itself, and as concerned not only with the subject of the line, *Neilou rhoai* ("streams of the Nile"), but also with the speaker of the line and subject of the play, Helen herself. Once

we do consider it in this light, we also see that its resistance to easy recuperation is an integral aspect of its dramatic function.

[2]Each element, *kallos* ("beauty") and *parthenos* ("virgin"), plays a significant part in the drama, and each in respect to a significant and opposite aspect of Helen's character. *Kallos* is the engine to the traditional story about Helen (cf. 304). It functions as both the prize and price of victory in the Judgment of Paris (23-29), as the reason for both her abduction and pursuit (cf. 236-37), and as both the cause and justification of the Trojan War (260-61). It is, as it were, a visual form of *apatê* ("deception") that can deceive, bewitch, and seduce the soul of its viewer. As such, it brings with it many of the disquieting effects of essentially aesthetic concerns (and ontologies) in the ethical sphere.

In Euripides' play, Helen's *kallos* and its effects become divided, or doubled, between her and the *eidôlon* ("image"): e.g., the *eidôlon* is the *kallos* that Paris takes away, 236-37; cf. also 260-61. The *eidôlon* both isolates and accentuates many of the aesthetic issues which adhere to *kallos*. It is, as it were, pure *apatê* (cf. 704), and as such also engenders in purer form all the ethical ambivalences surrounding *kallos*.

Parthenos plays as pervasive a part as *kallos* in the drama. In fact, a good part of the reason *kallos* is made to adhere to the *eidôlon* is to create the site for its ethical opposite to adhere to Helen herself. While the *eidôlon* alone serves both to bring out and take away (to embody and disembody) the *kallos* associated with the traditional Helen, several figures serve to bring out and endow the *parthenia* ("virginity") associated with the "new" Helen. Perhaps most pointedly, we have the parallel figure of the *parthenos* Persephone, whose innocent abduction is made to double that of Helen to Egypt (1342; cf. 1313, also 175). To a lesser extent there is also the parallel with her own unmarried daughter, Hermione (689f.; cf. 283), as well as the association with the *diogenês parthenos* ("Zeus-born virgin"), Athena, instead of Aphrodite (228f.; 245; 1466-68). In the play itself, the most significant parallel *parthenos* is certainly Theonoe. As Segal notes, Theonoe is "Helen's purer self," and it is particularly insofar as Theonoe's *parthenia* corresponds to her moral purity and distance from Aphrodite's designs that Helen draws on her as a double.[3] That is, even as the one figure, or double, of the *eidôlon* divests Helen of her *kallos*, these other figures or doubles invest her with their *parthenia*.

And yet, of course, such an exchange and transfer of identities and attributes remains partial, because essentially incomplete. *Kallos* does not desert Helen simply because it also goes to the *eidôlon*. Rather, Helen herself retains and attracts many of the qualities of the *eidôlon*, including its beauty (and even its fiction, 262-63). The aesthetic perfection remains to confront the ethical perfection, which itself only fitfully flows into her from these other, tributary sources. The result is hybrid, an identity at once *kallos* and *parthenos*, an impossible paradox that comes together with an enallagic fluidity like that of *Neilou rhoai* itself—in the multiple singularity of Helen's identity.

The same central, dramatic concerns at work in *Neilou kalliparthenoi rhoai* determine the following two lines as well: *hos anti dias psakados Aiguptou pedon / leukês takeisês chionos hugrainei guas* ("[the Nile,] which in place of raindrops from the sky, when the white snow melts, moistens the plain of Egypt, the fertile fields"). On the one hand, the pairing of *anti dias psakados* ("in place of raindrops from the sky") and *leukês takeisês chionos* ("when the **[3]**white snow melts") at the beginning of each line extends the drama of substitution and exchange already perceptible in *kalliparthenoi* and which continues to inform both language and action throughout, in expressions such as *theoi de soi / esthlôn amoibas antidôrêsaiato* ("may the gods grant you in return due exchange for your goodness," 158-59; terms formed around *anti* ["in place of"], *allassô* ["change, exchange"] and *amoibê* ["an exchange"] pervade the play) and in events such as the exchange of one husband for another (cf. 836), one reputation for another, one set of clothes for another, and especially one Helen (the real) for another (the *eidôlon*, which is itself once designated as *diallagma*, a "substitute," 586).

On the other hand, the pairing of *pedon* ("plain") and *guas* ("fields") at the end of each line introduces what Dale identifies as "an embarrassment of objects."[4] Philologically, she is hard put to find "a defence for this inexplicable double object"; and yet dramatically it makes wonderfully appropriate sense, especially if we again foreground the speaker, Helen: the play is very much about such an embarrassment, such an "inexplicable double object" (or site). As often in Euripides, but here with particular thematic relevance, the poet repeatedly delights in the doubling of his language. Examples range from such relatively innocuous phrases as *aphanes aphanes* ("gone from sight, gone from sight," 207) to the more obviously charged *di' eme tan poluktonon, di' emon onoma poluponon* ("because of me, cause of many deaths, because of my name, cause of many pains," 198-99). In the context of the play, such word-plays are symptoms of what critics call the almost obsessive "gemination" which dominates both its structure and theme.[5] In these opening lines, *guas* and *pedon* perform as such a geminated pair, and occasion a confusion not unlike that of Menelaus when forced to consider *onoma de tauton tês emês echousa tis / damartos allê toisid' ennaiei domois*, etc ("some other woman having the same name as my wife dwells in this house," 487ff.). In their way, and especially in conjunction with the lines' other pairing, *pedon* and *guas* have much the same resistance to recuperation as *kalliparthenoi*: while the first pair extends the drama of substitution, the second maintains the problematic multiplicity that frustrates the simple exchange.

It seems entirely appropriate that Proteus, the ever-truthful old man of the sea, versed in devious, deceptive ways, should be the sovereign of this play's realm. It is just such a protean reality of elusive, changing identities and the peculiar truths this reality produces which govern the action (already in the first three lines). That it is this Proteus whom Euripides evokes is evident in the allusion of line 6, *Pharon men oikôn nêson* ("dwelling on the island Pharos"), which immediately advertises the specifically literary grounding of the play in

the fictional world of Homer.[6] Of course, and in keeping with the drama's obsessive gemination, Euripides immediately pairs the allusion to Homer's Pharian deity with one to Herodotus' Egyptian monarch (*Aiguptou d' anax*), thus invoking, so to speak, *two* Proteuses, another doubled identity (and in the process again providing an embarrassing double site, à la *pedon/guas*, in *Pharos/Aiguptos*). In juxtaposing a fictional world of deceptive appearances (Homer's) over against a "real" world of historical facts (Herodotus'), Euripides suggests some of the tension and hesitation between fiction and truth, **[4]**appearance and reality so at issue in the play, and especially in respect to the two Helens, the apparent and real one. Somewhat more indirectly, he also suggests those protean processes of literary metamorphosis and change which his "*kainê Helenê*" itself displays; even as Herodotus modifies and changes Homer's Proteus, so Euripides his Helen.

It seems even more appropriate that the Proteus who reigns over the play be introduced as dead, or rather *aphanes* ("gone from sight"), since one of the major forms of changing identities and of substitution and exchange in the play is that of the dead for the living, the absent for the present, the *aphanes* for the *emphanes* ("in clear sight"). The *mnêma* ("memorial" = "tomb") that dominates the stage, providing the pivotal site for much of the action, is the constant sign of his commanding "presence-in-absence." In a very important sense it "oversees" the exchange of the absent and apparently dead Menelaus for the present, live one and of the substituted *eidôlon* for the live, deposited Helen (i.e., as soon as the one becomes *emphanes*, the other becomes *aphanes*, 606; we might also include the apparently *aphaneis* Dioscuri [208], who reappear at the end here as well). Invocations also enforce this presence-in-absence; we learn that Theoclymenus has placed the *mnêma* "here" at the point of coming and going so that he might accost Proteus and conjure up his presence, as in fact he does when he first arrives on stage. Similarly, Menelaus invokes Proteus in the *agôn*, asking him as if present to complete the exchange/transfer of his entrusted wife, or rather to compel Theonoe to do so; Helen likewise invokes his image and asks Theonoe *mimou tropous patros* ("imitate the character of your father," 940-41); and Theonoe herself invokes Proteus to assure him that she has indeed faithfully re-presented him in effecting the required exchanges (1028-29).[7] In all three respects—in the *mnêma*, the invocations, and the mimetic re-presentation of Theonoe—the conjured presence of Proteus has significant affinities with the conjured presence of the *eidôlon*. It plays a similar role of *brabeus* ("judge, umpire") in Egypt as the *eidôlon* does in Troy (cf. 703; 996), maintaining the same kind of controlling, bewitching presence in absence (but with this difference: whereas the latter served as a destructive force, the former serves as a restorative one).

Finally, the initial information imparted about the children of Proteus incorporates many of the same dramatic concerns as what precedes, and as such again has special relevance in respect to Helen. Not only are they likewise geminated (*tekna dissa* ["twofold children"]; also *theo-/theo-*), but one of them, the sister, has two identities, two names, and in the exchange of signifiers

enacts a drama of substitution similar to that about Helen. The parallel to Helen's double identity is particularly striking in her first name, Eido, which in the context of the play almost immediately evokes the *eidôlon*. As Kannicht points out, Eido hovers significantly between the twin possibilities of meaning either "knowledge" (*eiduia*) or "appearance" (*eidos*); however, the epexegetic *to mêtros aglaisma* ("the object of her mother's delight," her "splendid ornament") decisively stresses the latter, and in the close association in the play of *aglaisma* with *agalma* ("object of delight" as well as "statue, image") further suggests the *eidôlon*.[8]

[5]While the first name Eido and the mere fact of double identity both predict Helen, the second name also predicts aspects of the play, which also is concerned with anagnorisis, with the knowledge of *ta theia* ("divine things," cf. 653). In the play, this knowledge will likewise come with the loss of the first identity, i.e., with the disappearance of the *eidôlon*. The Chorus, Menelaus, but especially the old Servant all articulate this metamorphosis/substitution of deceptive appearances into/for divine knowledge—which is, significantly, precisely knowledge of the protean, polytropic nature of the god and reality itself (e.g., 711ff., 1137-38).

* * * * *

ἡμῖν δὲ γῆ μὲν πατρὶς οὐκ ἀνώνυμος
Σπάρτη, πατὴρ δὲ Τυνδάρεως· ἔστιν δὲ δὴ
λόγος τις ὡς Ζεὺς μητέρ' ἔπτατ' εἰς ἐμὴν
Λήδαν κύκνου μορφώματ' ὄρνιθος λαβών,
ὃς δόλιον εὐνὴν ἐξέπραξ' ὑπ' αἰετοῦ
δίωγμα φεύγων, εἰ σαφὴς οὗτος λόγος.
Ἑλένη δ' ἐκλήθην. ἃ δὲ πεπόνθαμεν κακὰ
λέγοιμ' ἄν. ἦλθον τρεῖς θεαὶ κάλλους πέρι
Ἰδαῖον ἐς κευθμῶν' Ἀλέξανδρον πάρα,
Ἥρα Κύπρις τε διογενής τε παρθένος,
μορφῆς θέλουσαι διαπεράνασθαι κρίσιν.
τοὐμὸν δὲ κάλλος, εἰ καλὸν τὸ δυστυχές,
Κύπρις προτείνασ' ὡς Ἀλέξανδρος γαμεῖ,
νικᾶι. λιπὼν δὲ βούσταθμ' Ἰδαῖος Πάρις
Σπάρτην ἀφίκεθ' ὡς ἐμὸν σχήσων λέχος.

(*Helen* 16-30)

When Helen comes to speak of herself, we find much the same concern with a protean, polytropic reality of doubling, changing and substituting shapes, fiction and appearance. But now a new dimension is added that is at first far darker than anything suggested by the Egyptian background of the first fifteen lines. Three main events dominate: the rape of Leda, the Judgment of Paris, and the Trojan War. Euripides shapes his account so that all three are intimately related, both with each other and with the events of the drama itself. In the first case, the play's concern with doubles continues in the presence of two fathers for Helen, Tyndareus and Zeus, who answer to two different *logoi*, two different worlds, two different origins for Helen. The *logos* involving Zeus

also involves a protean change of form (*morphômata labôn*, "taking on the shape"), as he takes on the appearance of a swan, which is itself pleonastically doubled in *kuknou ornithos* ("swan bird"), and then as it were doubled again in the surprising presence of two "birds of Zeus," both the swan and the eagle in pursuit—again in a way, an embarrassment of objects. (Kannicht *ad loc*. suggests that both the metamorphosis and the two birds are Euripides' invention for this play.)

Like *kallos*, the concept of *morphê* ("shape, form") is a key one to the drama, and it acquires many of the same disquieting connotations. Like *kallos*, it is associated with both the Judgment of Paris (26; 677) and with Helen **[6]**herself (1368). In something of a comic counterpoint, it is also associated with Menelaus, who arrives on stage conspicuously *amorphos* (544f., 554: literally "without form," so here "unseemly, disreputable"). In the context of Leda's rape, the issue of *morphê* is associated with that of meta-morphosis; and insofar as a god is the producer of the *morphôma* ("shape") as a fiction, an *apatê*, it also seems associated with the *eidôlon* and to anticipate its violent, violating effects (cf. the somewhat puzzling birdlike attributes of both the *eidôlon* and Helen, which perhaps link them to this initial, engendering meta-morphosis).

That the *morphôma* is here produced for the sake of a *dolos* ("deceit, deception") brings out a dimension of fiction-making, of *apatê*, central to much of Greek epic and tragedy, but especially to Euripides: fiction as trap, trick, stratagem.[9] In this play, where the truly tragic possibilities of such traps are generally avoided, the family of terms about *dolos*—which includes *mêchanê* ("device"), *technai* ("artful devices"), *bouleumata* ("plans, plots"), etc.—is primarily applied, as here, to matters of seduction and rape. The *dolios eunê* ("deceptive bedding") of Leda and Zeus finds an echo in the *harpagai dolioi* ("deceptive seizure") of Persephone by Hades, itself a parallel to the equally underhanded *harpagai* of Helen by Hermes and of the *eidôlon* by Paris, and to the threatened rape of Helen by Theoclymenus (cf. 541f.). Not surprisingly, *dolios* ("deceptive") adheres to Aphrodite: *ha te dolios ha poluktonos Kupris* ("deceptive Aphrodite, cause of many deaths") leads death to Troy by instigating Helen's abduction (238-39); later on, Helen reviles her for *erôtas apatas dolia t'exeurêmata* ("loves, deceptions, and tricky contrivances," 1103), underscoring the almost magical, bewitching and destructive aspects of both *dolos* and *apatê*. Somewhat less centrally, we hear also of the *dolios astêr* ("deceptive star-beacon") of Nauplius (1130f.; cf. 766-67), which as the false brightness that lures the Achaeans to death shares certain features with the *eidôlon* at Troy, and certainly registers some of the darkest aspects of seduction and fiction at work in the *doloi* of the play's world.

It is primarily the common issue of *morphê* that first links the rape of Leda with the contest *peri kallous* ("over beauty") on Ida, which is described as a *morphês krisis* ("judgment of form": cf. 677f.). While we can consider the entire play as essentially a crisis of form—the crisis concerning Helen's identity—we can also consider more specifically the fundamental agonistic

context within which this *krisis* sets the aesthetic issues of *kallos* and *morphê*. In particular, the concept of *kallos* acquires the meaning of "*praemium formositatis*" (cf. 886; 1097), a distinction or prize hotly contested for at Ida. At Troy, Helen herself, or rather her *kallos*, her *eidôlon*, becomes precisely the same sort of *praemium* (cf. 42f.; 1134). Issues of competition after victory—of *eris* ("strife"), *hamilla* ("contest" or "rivalry"), and *agôn* ("competition")— inform much of the play, and prove every bit as disquieting as those about the other engines, *kallos*/*morphê* and *dolos*/*apatê*. These effects can most obviously be seen in this contest and its direct consequence, the contest at Troy, about which the Chorus bitterly generalizes, *ei gar hamilla krinei [tas aretas]/ haimatos, oupot' eris leipsei kat' anthrôpôn poleis* ("for if rivalry in bloodshed will judge [superiority], strife will never be lacking in the cities of men," 1155-57). But that is not the end of it. Menelaus' opening lines invoke the (dark?) **[7]**image of Pelops *hamillas examillêtheis* ("who contested in a contest"), and as suits a character fashioned by the Trojan contest, he continues to confront (mostly ineffectually) almost every event in equally agonistic terms (e.g., *agôna megan agônioumetha / lektrôn huper sôn*, "we shall compete in a great competition over marriage with you," 843-44; cf. 740). Perhaps somewhat less expectedly, Helen, who is herself sometimes referred to as an *eris* (1134; 1160), also has a pronounced tendency to think in agonistic terms (e.g. *agôn* 332f., 1090; *hamilla* 165, 356; cf. 546), so pervasive is the effect.

Another aspect of the *morphês krisis* on Ida that becomes significant for the play as a whole is the fact that it is won by a trick, stratagem, deceit. In fact, Aphrodite displays here her *dolia exeurêmata* as clearly as Zeus does in seducing Leda. She offers the *kallos* of Helen as a bribe, as bait (*dolos*) for the *kallos* as prize; thus her success in winning the prize and contest for aesthetic superiority becomes even more ethically problematic, combining as it does the ambivalences of *hamilla* with those of seduction, *dolos*, and more generally, of *apatê*. A similar pattern holds for the Trojan War, another *eris* in which *kallos* (here of Helen) is set up as prize. In this case it is Hera whose trick (*technê*, *mêchanê*) combines issues of *apatê*/*dolos* with those of *agôn*. She fashions the *dolos* of the *eidôlon* and gives that to Paris, thus giving concrete expression to the initial deceit of Aphrodite's bribe. In so doing, she brings suffering not only to Helen, but to both parties in the contest as well.

(Less centrally, it is also much the same pattern that lies behind the story of Teucer, who figures in the prologue's second, dialogic half. Teucer continues the drama's gemination; as Burnett notes, "Teucer's arrival doubles that of Menelaus, but his true double is Helen herself."[10] Burnett stresses the parallels in the rejection by Telamon at the point of return and the anticipated happy ending; but the central event of his "tragedy" also closely parallels hers. He, too, is an indirect victim of an *agôn* over an essential absence: in his case, the *hoplôn eris* ["strife over the arms," sc. of Achilles], in hers, the *eidôlou eris*. Thus, his example, too, stresses the same destructive force of contests, both for excellence and for vacuous figures.)

Much the same pattern also holds for the events in the play itself, especially in its second half; and yet with a radically different, almost antithetical evaluation of each of its elements. That is, in this case, too, the play poses a radical doubleness, a hesitation between, and substitution of, two separate identities. Most notably, the *eris* of the goddesses, the judgment of Paris that began the *agôn* of the Trojan War, is answered by/exchanged for the *eris* of the goddesses announced by Theonoe (who now plays Paris), which now motivates the *agôn* of the happy escape. The destructive metamorphosis of Zeus (cf. also 375ff.) is answered by the "comic" metamorphosis of Menelaus and Helen in the change (*antallassô*) of clothes (for both very much a morphic change), even as the *eidôlon* of Helen which caused the war is answered by the cenotaph of Menelaus—itself pure fiction, pure *apatê*—which underwrites their escape. Most importantly, the *apatê* and *dolos* of Hera, and her *technai* and *mêchanai* which are responsible for the tragedy of the Trojan War (930; 610), are answered by the *technai* and *mêchanai* of Helen (1091, 1621; 813, 1034), which are responsible for the "comedy" of their escape, or rather for the *dolos* **[8]**by which they win their *agôn* (1589; cf. 1542; there are of course other parallels and other possible configurations as well).

This double identity, or substitution and exchange, in the representation of the same elements is perhaps the most important, puzzling and problematic double identity in the play. It bespeaks the play's own generic metamorphosis, its own "crisis" of form, in its hesitation between tragedy and comedy, between two worlds, two identities which resist a stabilizing singularity and easy recuperation.[11] In fact, in the eyes of many critics, the positive assessment and role of *dolos*, *apatê*, etc. in the play's second half remove it from the "serious" realm of tragedy altogether, and strand it somewhere as "romance" or parody without sufficient moral weight. Some critics like Burnett have tried to rescue the play from such charges by reading it philosophically, as concerned with typical fifth century epistemological issues of *onoma*/*pragma* ("word"/ "thing"), etc.; others like Segal by reading it structurally, as concerned with more timeless ritual issues of death and rebirth; and still others like Kannicht (and Burnett) by concentrating excessively on the figure of Theonoe. But it seems more appropriate to confront the matter of the play's "tragic," serious identity precisely here where it seems to hesitate: in its double assessment of the central issues of *apatê*, *dolos*, and *agôn*.

* * * * *

Let us begin with a central insight offered by Rosenmeyer in an article which takes as its point of departure the *Defense of Helen*.[12] Rosenmeyer argues for an understanding of all tragedy as essentially *apatê*, as what we might call first-order *apatê*; as a consciously produced fiction deliberately divorced from concrete reality. Moreover, he notes how particular attention was devoted to the poet's skill in producing his *apatê*, as opposed to "what is vulgarly called content or subject matter." This is true both of the professional reception—"what we know of 5th and 4th century criticism largely deals with the *technai* of the writers"—and of the popular reception—e.g., when

Aristophanes discusses poetry, "all members of the audience were expected to know what [*dexiotês*] meant, [namely, the poet's] technical ability, his expertise in utilizing the tricks and stratagems of his craft."

If we bring this insight to our reading of the play, several things immediately become clear. Burnett describes how Helen, in her first song, "steps forward, like some noted epinician singer, to begin with a stylized prooimion in which she calls upon the sirens and upon Persephone for help in composing her melody." On the basis of this and several similar examples, she concludes that the spectators "are to be aware of every level of this performance … and they are to think about the poet and the process of composition that lies behind the danced and costumed play." This flaunting of the condition and operation of artifice does not, however, serve only to hold "the audience at a distance by insisting that it regard the drama always as a work of art, never as an experience for themselves."[13] Rather, if we follow Rosenmeyer's lead, we can see that by calling attention to the "process of composition," the poet is calling attention to his own *apatê* and *technai*, to "the tricks and stratagems of his craft"; and in so doing, he is calling attention to the essential identity between his own activity and the subject matter, the experience, of his play. That is, in **[9]**making matters of reality vs. appearance, and of deceit, seduction, etc., into the subject of his play, Euripides is acting neither as comic poet nor as "*Erkenntnistheoretiker*." Rather, he is reflecting upon his own craft of fiction-making in an instance of what Robert Alter has defined as "self-conscious" fiction, and Charles Segal more specifically as "metatragedy," the "self-conscious reflection by the dramatist on the theatricality and illusion-inducing power of his own work, on the range and the limits of the truth that the dramatic fiction can convey."[14]

While a Derridean analysis could quickly show how the issues of "presence-in-absence," and of substitution, doubling, etc. in the play reflexively enact many of the operant conditions of the poet's own verbal artifice, a less arcane approach can lead us to essentially the same insight.[15] As Rosenmeyer notes, one of the earliest instances of *apatê* in the sense developed by Gorgias comes when Athena creates for herself an *eidôlon* of Deiphobus to deceive Hector, a precursor for the *eidôlon* in Euripides' play. Thus, the *eidôlon* itself provides the clearest opportunity for the self-reflexive representation of the dramatist's own *apatê* within the play itself.[16] Moreover, as Gorgias' *Defense* indirectly argues, the beauty of physical form, whether that of a person or an *agalma*, is as it were the visual equivalent of the *apatê* of poetry, in its bewitching, seductive power over the viewer. Thus, not only the *eidôlon*, but also the *kallos* and *morphê* of Helen herself can provide the vehicle for the poet to probe "the illusion-inducing power of his own work."

Euripides seems to exploit these opportunities quite consequently. Not only does he repeatedly refer to the *eidôlon* as an *agalma*, but also as a *mimêma* ("product of artistic representation," 875); the additional emphasis upon its plastic manufacture by the *technai* of Hera (33-34, 583) always keeps in the foreground the status of the *eidôlon* as a mimetic work of art functionally

equivalent to the poet's own, similarly foregrounded mimesis. Moreover, in keeping with the confusion of Helen and the *eidôlon*, she herself appears to Menelaus as *apatê*, as a *phasma* ("ghostly image," 569) and to Teucer as an "imitation," a *mimêma* (74). More interestingly, Helen herself seems conscious of her own status as fictional artwork, and thus her functional identity with the *eidôlon*, when she says *eith' exaleiphtheis' hôs agalm' authis palin / aischion eidos elabon anti tou kalou* ("Would that I could be wiped clean like an image and get a more homely form in place of my beautiful one," 262-63; Helen's awareness of the fantastic nature of the *logos* about her origin achieves a similar effect, 17ff., 257ff.).

Such a self-consciousness of her own literary dimension, of her own status as an artwork, a fiction, has certain significant similarities with that literary self-awareness with which Goethe, in *Faust II*, endows his Helen. But whereas Goethe concentrates on the unsettling effects that such a consciousness has on Helen's sense of self-identity—"Ich schwinde hin und werde selbst mir ein Idol"—Euripides concentrates on the equally unsettling effects that such a literary self-consciousness has on the spectators, who must fit this literary self-reflexivity into their reception of the work as a whole.[17] The immediate effect is one of dramatic tension as a result of the sudden doubling. The audience is confronted with its own double standard. The *apatê* of the poet and his technical **[10]**excellence in producing that fiction, which prove such a potent source of almost unalloyed delight in the aesthetic sphere, are held up in their identity with the *apatê* of the gods and their *technai* and *mêchanai* in producing the *eidôlon*, which prove such a potent source of destruction and censure in the ethical sphere. That is, the audience discovers in itself the same double, positive and negative assessment of these terms as it discovers in the play (a tension not unlike that in the aesthetic-ethical paradox of *kalli-parthenoi* and Helen herself).

More than any other classical tragedian, Euripides takes special advantage of our divided allegiances to the separate orders of *apatê* to achieve his tragic effect. And he does this by tending to make his second-order *apatê* (that in the play itself) resemble that of the first order. We see this, for instance, in Medea, who is given all the attributes of an accomplished artist, adept in her *technai* and *mêchanai* (and for the functional identity of poet and "witch," or *guês*, see Gorgias), by virtue of which she stages her own "play," her own *apatê*; and the similarity between her and the poet's enterprise makes hers all the more deeply disturbing. As Segal has shown, we see this similarity in its most developed, consequent form in the *Bacchae*, where Euripides' coordination of the separate orders of *apatê* "suggests a view of his play as an infinite regress of illusions," but also "draws the distinction between the illusion of Dionysiac art and the delusion of Dionysiac madness."[18] As in *Helen*, one of the motifs through which this collusion and conflation is achieved is that of *morphê*; in fact, both plays end with the same choral tag, *pollai morphai tôn daimoniôn* ("many are the shapes of things divine"), and with equal appropriateness. In the *Bacchae*, Dionysus poses right away as an actor; one of his very first gestures is to put on

"human form" (*eidos*, *morphê*) as a mask, in assuming the role of the Stranger. He thus calls our attention to his conscious participation in a play: the substitution or exchange (*allassein*, *metaballein*) of one identity for another reflexively doubles that of the actor in the play itself. Once the action of the drama begins, Dionysus adds to his role of conscious actor that of conscious stage-director: he forces Pentheus to "dress up," and through a costume change to assume "the form of a woman," "in woman-miming dress." He also forces Pentheus to exist isolated in his own deception, his own *apatê*, with the *eidôlon*, or *phasma*, he sees just before the earthquake, the twin suns he sees over Thebes, etc.—an *apatê* which persists and eventually leads to Pentheus' destruction.

At the beginning of the *Bacchae*, I think we are to enjoy Dionysus' *apatê*, to relish his cleverness (*sophia*), his eloquence (*deinotês*), his playing with words and with Pentheus. That is, we respond to his *technai* and *mêchanai* as we always respond to first-order *apatê*; and to assure that we do respond to them as such, Euripides makes Dionysus' activity resemble in many of its particulars just that first-order *apatê* of dramatic fiction. But then once he has already seduced us into an aesthetic enjoyment of Dionysus' activity as if it were identical with first-order *apatê*, Euripides slowly shifts the force of these terms so as to correspond with those normally associated with second-order *apatê*, as the *mêchanai* of Dionysus again become a potent source of destruction. In this way, we eventually reach the point where we experience consciously in the progression of the plot the paradox we normally experience naively in the **[11]**simultaneous presence of the first and second orders of *apatê*. We are led to condemn morally the family of technical, fiction-making and "clever" practices which we enjoyed at the beginning of the play and continue to enjoy as the play; and Euripides exploits our recognition of the essential kinship of the practices, of our questionable double standard of evaluation, of our complicity in the pleasures of *apatê*, to achieve his tragic effect. (In some sense Pentheus' role as "spectator" further compounds and involves our complicity.)

This brings us back to *Helen*, which simply runs the same problem, or structure, in reverse. It progresses from a negative evaluation of *apatê*, *technê*, *dolos*, *mêchanê*, etc. at the beginning of the play with strong dissonance between the two orders of *apatê*, to a positive evaluation of these same terms and a closer allegiance between the two orders. In the second order of the play, the *apatê* and fiction of the *eidôlon* are shown to have caused countless sufferings and to warrant moral censure, even as have and do the *doloi* perpetrated in the series of parallel rapes; the emphasis upon the fictional/mimetic character of the *eidôlon*, the self-consciously literary dimension of Helen herself, etc., keeps the audience aware enough of the first-order activity, which accounts for its pleasure and warrants aesthetic approval, to establish the required, dramatic tension. In the middle of the play—when the *eidôlon* disappears and the anagnorisis, the knowledge of *ta theia* takes over— the significance of *apatê* in the play shifts, and at least partially through a

shift/exchange/substitution in the foregrounded order. Suddenly, instead of Hera, Helen attracts to herself the terms of *sophos*, *technê*, *mêchanê*; and just as with Dionysus, Euripides deliberately makes her activity resemble that of first-order *apatê*, so that it lends her its sanction.

Most pointedly, when Helen first proposes her *mêchanê*, that Menelaus be reported dead and she go into mourning, he objects: *palaiotês gar tôi logôi g'enesti tis* ("there's something shopworn about your suggestion," 1056). The implicit comparison of Helen's device with that of other poet-dramatists facilitates the conflation of the separate orders of imitation, and this confirms us in our positive assessment of her enterprise. Other features function similarly, such as the conspicuous theatricality of the costume-change both she and Menelaus undergo; the obliging of the chorus to preserve their silence, not to interfere with the course of the action nor to call attention to its fiction—i.e, their agreement to the same conditions to which the audience itself tacitly agrees in witnessing a play; but most importantly the manufacture of the cenotaph on which hinges her *apatê*. The cenotaph becomes the exact counterpart to the *eidôlon* that dominates the first half of the play; but whereas the first image of pure fictionality (of presence-in-absence) was negatively (because ethically) assessed, this one is positively (because aesthetically) assessed. (The costuming of the fiction further secures the affinity with and sanction of the dramatist's fiction, cf. 1243.)

Even as the terms about *apatê*, etc. which adhered to Hera go through a metamorphosis when associated with Helen, so do the terms about *dolos* which adhered to Zeus (and the other, parallel rapes) when associated with Menelaus. Again, the metamorphosis to a positive value goes hand in hand with a conflation of the two operant orders of *dolia exeurêmata*. In a comic and **[12]**theatrical version of the metamorphosis motif, Menelaus casts off his *dusmorphos* ("ill-shaped, disreputable") appearance and assumes a costume of bright armor for his "rape" of Helen. The actual seduction/rape is referred to as a *dolos* (e.g., *dolios hê nauklêria*, "the voyage is a deceit," 1589), thus repeating the negatively charged language associated with Zeus, Hades, etc. But this time the stratagem—e.g., Menelaus' *dolios oiktos* ("deceptive lamentation," 1542)—is positively charged because conceived *poiêtôi tropôi* ("in a fictitious manner," 1547), in its identity with first-order craft.

It is, however, still important to note that Euripides retains enough of the negative force of these key terms in the play's second half to maintain the tension which gives his "metatragedy" both its problem and its weight. We see this particularly in the lyric passages. Even as the action becomes brighter, the choral odes maintain the darker mood of the play's first half. This is especially true of the first and second stasima (1107ff., 1301ff.). Both contribute to the play's self-consciousness; as Burnett notes, the chorus' unique invocation of the nightingale as Muse repeats the "graceful formality" with which Helen began her first song, and the Mountain Mother ode yields an aetiology for choral celebration (cf. also the self-reflexive references to choral dancing at 1312f., 1345, 1454, 1468).[19] But the first dwells on the destruction caused by the *apatê*

of the *eidôlon* at Troy (1134), by the *dolos* of Nauplius (1130), and on the darker side of the god's protean, shifting reality (1137ff.), while the second dwells on the pain caused by the *dolioi harpagai* (of Persephone) and censures Helen for her *morphê* and, apparently, its unreal, counterfeit quality. In this way, the play perpetuates our moral along with our aesthetic awareness of these key terms; it keeps their hybrid, paradoxical double identity, the embarrassment of multiple referents that frustrates easy exchange and keeps their character essentially plural, divided, geminated.

<center>* * * * *</center>

Such, then, are some of the central ways in which *Helen* incorporates what Rosenmeyer calls the poet's own *apatê* into the thematic fabric of the play itself, in an instance of what Alter calls self-conscious fiction and Segal metatragedy. There is, however, still another dimension to the drama's self-reflexivity that neither Alter's nor Segal's model accounts for. Again, Rosenmeyer provides us with a starting line, this time in his discussion of the *Oresteia* in *The Art of Aeschylus*. Rosenmeyer stresses "that drama is the agonal poetry of classical Greece. Everything in its arrangements points to contest and trial." He notes how in the trilogy's first two plays, "the *agôn* through which the principal characters have to pass is one of the vital images of the drama," and how in the third, the import of the staged *agôn* is extended to include the play itself: "The trial is not only a legal dispute, it is also part of a dramatic contest. It is an *agôn* in both senses."[20] That is, even as we can identify a first order of *apatê* that the poet can self-consciously reflect in the second-order *apatê* of his play, so we can identify a first order of *agôn* that he can reflect as well.

Again, if we bring this insight to our reading of the play, several things immediately become clear. Earlier we noted how the *krisis* of the three goddesses establishes the fundamental agonistic context within which the [13]aesthetic issues of *kallos*, *morphê*, and *dolos*/*apatê* are set; and similarly, how Helen herself, or rather her *kallos*, her *eidôlon*, is conceived of as an *eris* and a *praemium*. We also noted how the effects of competition in the first half of the play prove every bit as determinative and destructive as those of *apatê*— in the contest about beauty at Ida, in the one about the *eidôlon* at Troy, and in the one about the empty armor of Achilles; and how in the second half of the play, these effects undergo the same evaluative metamorphosis/exchange as those of *apatê*—i.e., in the substitution of the new *eris* of the goddesses which motivates the *agôn* of happy escape for the original *eris* of the goddesses that began the *agôn* of the Trojan War. I think we can now see that this double standard also reflects a condition operant in all classical drama, insofar as the play itself finds its own aesthetic (and apatetic) qualities participating in a *krisis*, an *eris*, an *agôn* after the prize, a competition that in its positive assessment would stand in antithetical and dramatic contrast with the often ethically upsetting *agônes* so frequently represented in the subject matter of the drama.[21] I think we can also see that Euripides has chosen and shaped the conditions of the ruling second-order *agônes* of *Helen* so as to provide vital

opportunities for the self-reflexive re-presentation of his own agonal activity, but (at least at first) in negative form.   This allows for a dramatic re-presentation of the double nature of *eris* described by Hesiod, of the two-faced virtues required for success and victory in an *agôn* (cf. the almost identical qualities of the Worse Argument and the Chorus Leader qua Playwright in Aristophanes' *Clouds*).   More particularly, it allows for a sustained, multi-faceted exploration of *apatê* (and *technê*, etc.) in the context of *agôn*; a combination seriously suspect in the ethical, second order of the play, and energetically encouraged in the first.

Again, Euripides seems to exploit this double standard fairly consequently in achieving his dramatic effect; and again, his strategy calls for a negative evaluation of *agôn*, etc., at the outset with strong dissonance between the competing orders and a more positive assessment at the end through a shift/exchange in the foregrounded order.   Helen gives early expression to her conscious participation in the play as a contest.   In the opening lines of her first song, when she steps forward "like some noted epinician singer," she immediately asks, "*poion hamillathô goon*?" ("with what song of grief shall I compete?" 165).   Menelaus' opening lines, about Pelops *hamillas examillêtheis*, as well as his first line to Helen, *se tên oregma deinon hêmillêmenên* ("you who have hastened in a fearful racing contest," 546), have a similar effect, insofar as they, too, aggressively reflect the (playful?) agonistic activity in which he and she, as dramatis personae, are intricately involved.   In the play's first half, this *agôn* of the play is in stark contrast to the *agônes* in the play and their employment of *apatê* and competition after the "*praemium formositatis*"; Helen's, and Menelaus', agonal self-consciousness provides the audience with adequate awareness of the parallels to provide the required tension.

Like the issues of *apatê*, those about *agôn* undergo a shift in the middle of the play.   Theonoe announces the new *eris* of the goddesses that doubles the original *eris* on Ida; this time the *agôn* also doubles with the formal *agôn* scene of the play itself, and so prepares the way for the reconciliation of the two orders (both will have the same result), for the association of the two spheres of **[14]**activity.   Burnett argues that in the *agôn* Menelaus displays a literary self-consciousness in his choice of a winning style and flaunting of persuasive conventions, an awareness that would alert the audience that this is an *agôn* "in both senses"—not only a legal dispute, but also part of a dramatic contest.[22] While she might well be underestimating the sincere pathos to Menelaus' plea, her overall point is still supported by the Chorus' words to Theonoe: *en soi brabeuein, o neani, tous logous; houtô de krinon, hôs hapasin handanêis* ("it lies with you, young lady, to judge the arguments; and judge them so that you please all," 996-97).   The rare use of the verb *brabeuein* ("act as umpire") casts her (ethical) *krisis* as the awarding of prizes in a contest; the appeal to pleasure rather than right as the operant criterion has a similar effect.[23] Both assimilate the *agôn* in the play to the *agôn* of the play, an assimilation coincident with the new, positive evaluation of agonistic activity in the play.   Theonoe as *brabeus*—or perhaps better, as the mimetic re-presentative of Proteus as

brabeus, whose positively evaluated presence-in-absence likewise comes into prominence at this point—replaces Helen, or rather the *eidôlon*, as *brabeus* (703), which dominated the dark background of the first half; and prepares the way for Menelaus as *brabeu*s (1073) in the *agôn* of their escape, which dominates the more "comic," theatrical background of the second half. Helen in particular foregrounds the agonistic context to the consciously dramatic enterprise of the escape (1090); and both her success in staging the *apatê* and his in winning the *agôn* aboard ship share in the sanction of the poet's *apatê* and *agôn*, and contribute to their sense of success.

It is of course important to stress that in this case, too, Euripides retains enough of the negative force of the terms about *agôn*, etc., in the play's second half to maintain the tension that gives his metatragedy its weight and problem. We see this again in the lyrics. Even as Helen is exploiting her agonistic virtues so delightfully in creating drama, the Chorus steps forward to consider the agonistic virtues exercised so destructively in creating war (1151ff.); even as Menelaus is exercising in his armor, prepared to claim a thousand trophies (1379-81), the Chorus recall Phoebus *examillêsamenos* ("in competitive rivalry") killing his beloved, Hyacinthus (1471). We see it also in the action. In respect to the *agôn* and *dolos* of the escape, we need not go so far as Verrall in describing the bloody defeat of the Egyptians as "cold-blooded cruelty, … a hideous thing, a thing intolerable"; but neither should we go so far as Burnett and claim, "it is only the blood of a good messenger speech."[24] Rather the *agôn* and its *apatê* are staged with sufficient theatricality to keep us alert to their functional identity with the *agôn* and *apatê* of the drama itself; but they are also staged with sufficient violence to keep us alert to their functional identity with the more deeply troubling *agônes* and *apatai* of the play's first half. Throughout his play, Euripides makes just this double identity of fiction his subject, in its deceptions and competitions, in its aesthetic and moral dimensions, in its simultaneous pleasure and pain.

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NOTES

1. P. T. Stevens, ed., *Euripides: Andromache* (Oxford 1971) 84.

2. A. M. Dale, ed., *Euripides: Helen* (Oxford 1967) 69.

3. C. P. Segal, "The Two Worlds of Euripides' *Helen*," *TAPA* 102 (1971) 590; also 569-72 on Helen's *kallos*; and 587-88 on Theonoe's *parthenia*.

4. Dale (supra n. 2) *ad loc*. R. Kannicht, ed., *Euripides: Helena* (Heidelberg 1969) II.15-16, explains *pedon*/*guas* as "*accusativi paralleli*," where the second clarifies and specifies the sense of the first. The explanation has the virtue, but also the drawback, of palliating the embarrassment; but even if Kannicht is right, the construction is so unusual that my point about doubling retains its force.

5. E.g., Hans Strohm, *Euripides. Interpretationen zur dramatischen Form* (*Zetemata* 15, Munich 1957) 85-86.

6. Kannicht (supra n. 4) would delete line 5; Hartmut Erbse, *Studien zum Prolog der Euripideischen Tragödie* (Berlin 1984) 210, argues against him. Although Erbse's argument is not fully persuasive—he explains away the line's intentional enigma—his position still seems correct. For more on the self-conscious evocation of Homer's *Odyssey* in the play, see Hugo Steiger, "Wie entstand die *Helena* des Euripides?" *Philologus* 67 (1908) 202-37; and Bernd Seidensticker, *Palintonos Harmonia* (*Hypomnemata* 72, Göttingen 1982) 155ff.

7. We should note that, as a rule, women are entrusted with the actual implementation of the required exchanges in the play. We have an indication of this already in the added datum here in lines 6-7, about Proteus' wife Psamathe. Not only does her case underscore one of the most important forms of (Protean) transformation in the drama, i.e. the transference of the wife from one husband to another; the use of the verb *aphêken* also underscores how the power to effect these changes lies in female hands (see Kannicht *ad loc*.). For more on the importance of the feminine in Euripidean drama, see Froma Zeitlin, "Playing the Other: Theater, Theatricality, and the Feminine in Greek Drama," *Representations* 11 (1985) 63-94.

8. Kannicht (supra n. 4) 20; for the association of *aglaisma* and *agalma*, see p. 76.

9. See F. Solmsen, "Zur Gestaltung des Intrigenmotivs in den Tragödien des Sophokles und Euripides," in E. R. Schwinge, ed., *Euripides* (*Wege der Forschung* 89, Darmstadt 1968) 326-44. See also Zeitlin (supra n. 7) 75-76.

10. A. P. Burnett, *Catastrophe Survived: Euripides' Plays of Mixed Reversal* (Oxford 1971) 76.

11. See Seidensticker (supra n. 6) 154ff.

12. T. G. Rosenmeyer, "Gorgias, Aeschylus, and *Apatê*," *AJP* 76 (1954) 225-60.

13. Burnett (supra n. 10) 77, 78, 92.

14. R. Alter, *Partial Magic: The Novel as a Self-Conscious Genre* (Berkeley 1975); C. P. Segal, *Dionysiac Poetics and Euripides' Bacchae* (Princeton 1982) 216.

15. E.g., D. McDonald, "Forms of Absence: Derrida and the Trace of Tragedy," *Helios* 7:2 (1979-80) 75-95.

16. Cf. George Walsh, *The Varieties of Enchantment* (Chapel Hill 1984) 99: "The *eidôlon* ... is the word's visible counterpart, at least in its effects, and closer examination of its nature suggests that it may serve as a model for language in other respects as well."

17. See K. Weisinger, "Discourse Wars: Literary Seduction and Retrieval in *Faust II*" in this volume. Euripides' Helen knows no such threatened confusion concerning her sense of self-identity as Goethe's Helen does when confronted by Phorkyas with the

different versions of her past. In fact, Euripides' Helen shows an extraordinary capacity to absorb as part of herself those literary variants in which the *eidôlon* has entangled her.

[16]18. Segal (supra n. 14) 233; for his discussion of *morphê*, see 256-59.

19. Burnett (supra n. 10) 77, 92.

20. T. G. Rosenmeyer, *The Art of Aeschylus* (Berkeley 1982) 334, 357, 359.

21.   Of course, the discovery of an agonistic dimension to the poet's literary enterprise, and even the self-reflexive inclusion of that dimension in his subject-matter are by no means unique to classical drama. Again we can take Goethe's *Faust II* as an example. Goethe uses the history of Helen's successive rapes, culminating in that by Faust, to represent allegorically the violence and appropriation to the movement of European literary history, especially in the essentially agonistic relationship in which the modern stands to classical art. As Weisinger puts it, "The history of her rape is the history of Western literature as it attempts to recapture its past" (supra n. 17). Such a competition with and appropriation of the *materia* of one's literary predecessors also inform Greek literary practice (see Rosenmeyer, "Ancient Literary Genres: A Mirage?" *Yearbook of Comparative and General Literature* 34 [1985] 74-85), but it is not this that primarily finds its self-reflexive expression in the literature in general, nor in Euripides' play in particular. Rather, the conditions of literary competition tend to be conceived far more as between equals, between closely matched, contemporary opponents (see M. Griffith, "Contest and Contradiction in Early Greek Poetry" in this volume); and as a result, in contrast to Goethe, Euripides focuses not on the rapes but on the contests of the three goddesses, of the Trojans and Achaeans, and of Ajax and Odysseus as the key events in Helen's story that can function as vehicles for the play's agonistic self-reflexivity. See below.

22. Burnett (supra n. 10) 91-92.

23. The appeal to pleasure might seem somewhat surprising given the emphasis many critics place on the criterion of *dikê* ("justice, right") in Theonoe's decision, a decision which these critics construe as constituting the central tragedy of the play. But the appeal to pleasure is still very characteristically Greek, and is a key aspect to the agonistic dimension to poetic composition. See Griffith (supra n. 21).

24.   A. W. Verrall, "Euripides' Apology (*Helen*)" in *Essays on Four Plays of Euripides* (Cambridge 1905) 85-86; Burnett (supra n. 10) 97.