# Healing speech, wandering names, contests of words : ideas about language in Euripides

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# II ὄνομα-πρᾶγμα talk in Euripides

'Ah! that is clearly a metaphysical speculation, and like most metaphysical speculations has very little reference to all the actual facts of real life, as we know them.'
(Oscar Wilde, *The Importance of being Earnest* act 1)

## 0. Introduction

We now turn to another key idea in later-5th-cent. thought: the idea that there is an imperfect correspondence between language and reality; or in other words, that ὀνόματα can meaningfully be distinguished from the πράγματα, σώματα or ἔργα that they normally refer to. Like many other writers of the 5th cent., Euripides shows himself to be keenly interested in the relationship between names and their referents:[1] an interest that is perhaps most conspicuous in his fascination, shared by Aeschylus and Sophocles, with the etymologies of proper names.[2] On the other hand, Euripides seems markedly more apt than the other tragedians to point towards the lack of congruence between an ὄνομα and what it stands for. Thus, whereas Sophocles observes that a slave can have a 'slave's body, but a free mind' (εἰ σῶμα δοῦλος, ἀλλ' ὁ νοῦς ἐλεύθερος: *fr.* 940), Euripides typically phrases this opposition in terms of the slave's *name* – not his σῶμα – in contradistinction with his real identity:[3] he allows his noble slaves to avail themselves of the concept of nominal status, to mark the discrepancy between their deserved and their actual position in life.[4]

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[1] For a recent study of Herodotus' handling of ὀνόματα, see Munson, *Black Doves* 30-66, who relates the increased general interest in this theme to the rise of ethnography and the concurrent nuancing of the age-old 'Greek *vs* barbarian' opposition.

[2] For the etymologisation of proper names in the tragedians, see e.g. Kannicht on *Hel.* 13-5 (p. 2.21); Van Looy, 'Παρετυμολογεῖ'; Segal, 'Etymologies'; and Kraus, *Name u. Sache* 140-6.

[3] Typically: e.g. *Hel.* 728-31: ἐγὼ μὲν εἴην, κεἰ πέφυχ' ὅμως λάτρις, | ἐν τοῖσι γενναίοισιν ἠριθμημένος δούλοισι, | τοὔνομ' οὐκ ἔχων ἐλεύθερον, | τὸν νοῦν δέ ('If I am to be a servant, let me be one of the good slaves, one who, lacking a free man's name, has a free man's mind'); *Ion* 854-5: ἓν γάρ τι τοῖς δούλοισιν αἰ-σχύνην φέρει, | τοὔνομα ('One thing only brings shame upon a slave: his name'); *Hec.* 357-8 (Hecabe intimates that at an earlier stage of her captivity, her new servile status used to make her long to die 'τοὔνομα ... οὐκ εἰωθὸς ὄν); also *fr.* 831: πολλοῖσι δούλοις τοὔνομ' αἰσχρόν, | ἡ δὲ φρὴν τῶν οὐχὶ δούλων ἐστ' ἐλευθερωτέρα ('Many slaves have, in spite of their shameful name, a spirit that is more free-born than that of non-slaves'), *fr.* 511: δοῦλον γὰρ ἐσθλὸν τοὔνομ' οὐ διαφθερεῖ, | πολλοὶ δ' ἀμείνους εἰσὶ τῶν ἐλευθέρων ('An honourable slave will not be corrupted by his name; many slaves are superior to free men'); and in general terms *fr.* 377: ὃς γὰρ ἂν χρηστὸς φύηι | οὐ τοὔνομ' αὐτοῦ τὴν φύσιν διαφθερεῖ ('A man of excellent nature does not have his nature destroyed by his name').

[4] This is, of course, just one aspect of Euripides' notably "liberal" attitude towards slaves, noble and otherwise, which has been discussed by e.g. Guthrie, *Sophists* 157-9; Hall, 'Sociology' 110-8.

Commentators have often related Euripides' distinctive interest in such ὄνομα-πρᾶγμα thinking to a trend in the development of Greek thought, according to which the relationship between 'names' and their referents was increasingly subjected to critical scrutiny, so that by the time Euripides staged his surviving dramas, the primitive connection between ὄνομα and πρᾶγμα had effectively been 'lost'. Thus, in the introduction to his commentary on *Helen*, Richard Kannicht observes:

> Der schon von den Vorsokratikern entdeckte (von Xenophanes zuerst sachlich festgestellte und von Parmenides zuerst ontologisch ausgelegte) Widerspruch zwischen der konventionellen Bezeichnung und dem wahren Wesen der Dinge oder Sachverhalte war schließlich von der Sophistik in die lapidare Antithese ὄνομα : πρᾶγμα (ἔργον, σῶμα) gefaßt worden, die das Problem der Identität von Bezeichnung und Bezeichnetem, sozusagen schlagwortig auf den Begriff brachte;[5]

and in his survey of the ὄνομα-πρᾶγμα 'problem' in early Greek thought, Martin Kraus similarly sketches out a linear development from a "mythical" conception of the relationship between names and things to a rational one, "discovered" in the course of the 5th cent., of which Euripides freely partakes.[6] Viewed against this background,[7] Euripides' work reveals a tension that is mostly absent from that of his principal colleagues: on the one hand, there is the mythical conception – ὀνόματα in principle capturing some essential quality of the πράγματα they refer to – inherited from the epic tradition, evident in the ubiquitous etymologisations; while on the other hand, there is a world-view, steadily gaining ground among 5th-cent. intellectuals, accord-

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[5] Kannicht on *Hel.* p.1.51.

[6] Kraus, *Name u. Sache* passim. On Kraus' account, our first surviving records, Homeric epic, represent a transitory stage in this purported development (*op. cit*. 56: "An die Stelle der Identität von Name und Benanntem im mythischen Denken ist nun im archaischen Denken... ein eindeutige Relation zwischen Name und Sache getreten; doch wirkt in der Unauflösigkeit dieser Relation zwischen Name und Sache die mythische Einheit noch fühlbar nach"); while it was not before the 5th cent. that "die alte, im archaischen Denken verwurzelte strenge Entsprechung von Name und Sache... plötzlich nicht mehr als selbstverständlich anerkannt, [und] Zweifel an der Adäquatheit der Sprache als Abbild der Dingwirklichkeit laut [wird]; mit dem naturphilosophischen Eindringen in die inneren Strukturen dieser Dingwirklichkeit wird ein zunehmendes Ungenügen des Philosophen an der Umgangssprache als einem Korrelat der Oberflächenphänomene fühlbar; mit dem Anwachsen eigener bewußter sprachbildnerischer Tätigkeit auf dem Felde der philosophischen Terminologie wird das Bewußtsein geschärft für die Relativität und Menschengesetztheit auch der überkommenen Sprache" (*op. cit.* 147).

[7] Kannicht's and Kraus's are the discussions to which the reader is referred for background on the ὄνομα-πρᾶγμα opposition in the latest commentary on Euripides' *Helen* (Allan on *Hel.* p. 48), as well as in the most recent and comprehensive survey of the poet's intellectual allegiances (Egli, *Zeitgenössische Strömungen* 214). Other historical accounts of the ὄνομα-πρᾶγμα 'problem' include Heinimann, *Nomos u. Physis* 43-58; and Guthrie*, Sophists* 204-18.

ing to which the assignation of a particular ὄνομα to any given πρᾶγμα is purely arbitrary.[8]

If such a tension can indeed be discerned in the poet's work – principally, perhaps, in such plays as *Ion* and *Helen* – we may well pose the question what special purpose Euripides had for embracing the ὄνομα-πρᾶγμα talk that his colleagues were apparently less ready to accommodate. To what avail does Euripides have his Ion say that Apollo is his 'nominal', not his real father?[9] Why does he make the Orestes of his *Iphigenia in Tauris* claim, on the point of being killed by his as yet unrecognised sister: 'You will be sacrificing my σῶμα, not my ὄνομα'?[10] Why does he, in a play that has Helen chastely reside in Egypt all through the Trojan war, make his heroine say that 'it was [her] ὄνομα that went to Troy, not [her] self'?[11]

The author of a recent monograph on *IT* and *Helen* would have us see that Euripides is operating on the very forefront of the sophistic movement, developing ideas that he took from Gorgias' treatise *On Not-Being* and "presenting them from new angles";[12] and the latest commentary on *Helen* has it that the poet is "exploiting contemporary intellectual debate... by focusing audience attention on the gap between language and reality".[13] What unites these conclusions is the conviction that the disjunction between ὀνόματα and πράγματα is an integral feature of the dramatic universe that the poet projects in his plays. This, I will argue in this chapter, is to misrepresent the dynamics of Euripides' dramas. In the Introduction, we have seen how tempting it is to extrapolate directly, from the ideas expressed by Euripides' characters, to the purported message of the poet himself: there is no authoritative voice in the drama that would tell the spectators otherwise. However, as I have suggested, this is to make light of the principle that the (implied) author of a literary text instructs the reader, not through the words of his individual characters, but through the "design of the whole"

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[8] Cf. Kraus, *Name u. Sache* 145-6: "Das ὄνομα ist auch für Euripides nicht mehr integraler Bestandteil des Wesens seines Trägers, sondern prinzipiell von diesem ablösbar... so steht Euripides als Aufklärer am Ende der langen Traditionslinie der dichterischen Etymologie, die mit ihren Wurzeln in mythische Denkformen zurückreicht, und die noch bis Sophokles getragen war von ernsthafter theologischer Reflexion und von dem Glauben an die wesenhafte einheit von Name und Namensträger".

[9] *Ion* 138-9: τὸν δ' ὠφέλιμον ἐμοὶ πατέρος | ὄνομα λέγω, Φοῖβον τὸν κατὰ ναόν ('I call my benefactor by the name *father* – Phoebus of the temple': see below, section **1.1**).

[10] *IT* 504: τὸ σῶμα θύσεις τοὐμὸν, οὐχὶ τοὔνομα: below, **1.2**.

[11] *Hel.* 42-3: Φρυγῶν δ' ἐς ἀλκὴν προυτέθην ἐγὼ μὲν οὔ, | τὸ δ' ὄνομα τοὐμὸν, ἆθλον Ἕλλησιν δορός ('I was propelled into the Trojan war – not me, but my name, as a prize for the Greeks'): **2.2**.

[12] Wright, *Escape Tragedies* 260-78 (the quotation is from pp. 276-7: see below, section **5**); also Neumann, *Gegenwart* 136 ("Die Helena hat also das erkenntnistheoretische Programm des Gorgias umgesetzt und auf die Bühne gestellt"). For Euripides' "philosophische Intention" in *Helen*, cf. further Kannicht on *Hel.* p.1.68, and, more or less explicitly, much of the specific literature on this play cited in n.55 below. Conacher, *Sophists* 77-83 argues that in *Hel.*, Euripides is engaging in "philosophical satire" (cf. *ibid*. 110), but cf. the critique of Wright, *Escape Tragedies* 256-8.

[13] Allan on *Hel.* p. 48.

(Seymour Chatman's term: see Introduction, section **2**). What I hope to show in what follows is that the overall design of those Euripidean dramas that feature ὄνομα-πρᾶγμα talk problematises, rather than endorses, the ὄνομα-πρᾶγμα disjunction favoured by some of the poet's intellectual contemporaries. On my reading, Ion, Orestes, Helen and the others should not be taken to tell the audience, *in loco auctoris* as it were, something about the dramatic world in which they are situated: when they posit a "gap" between language and reality, it should not follow automatically that there *is* a gap between language and reality, be it in Euripides' staged world or in the audience's real world.

When Shakespeare makes his Juliet ask her famous rhetorical question, 'What's in a name?',[14] Caroline Belsey perceptively observes that

> in recognizing that the name of the rose is arbitrary, Juliet shows herself a Saussurean *avant la lettre*; but in drawing the inference that Romeo can arbitrarily cease to be a Montague, *she simply affirms what her own desire dictates*.[15]

The same can be said of Euripidean tragedy. Unlike the ὄνομα-πρᾶγμα 'problem' as it is characteristically defined by historians of philosophy, such ὄνομα-πρᾶγμα thinking as Euripides' characters engage in is part of the basic repertory of discursive strategies that any human being has at his/her disposal to make provisional sense of the world in which s/he is situated;[16] and that – viz. to make provisional sense of their world – is what Euripides' characters are doing, for better or for worse. The poet has no *direct* means of telling his audience whether these characters are right or wrong to interpret their world in the way they choose to do (he cannot say, like the narrator of Homeric epic, 'ὣς φάτο, νήπιος' *vel sim.*); but what he can do is show, through his articulation of the dramatic action, the ultimate ineffectiveness of his characters' disjunctive ὄνομα-πρᾶγμα talk, when it is measured against the inescapable facts of the drama.

That, on my reading, is what goes on, not only in *Ion, IT* and *Helen* but also in the posthumously performed *IA*. Each of these dramas features characters who at one point ask Juliet's crucial question, 'What's in a name?': Ion, as he gropes towards an understanding of his being the predestined founder of the Ionian race; *IT*'s Orestes, as he is on the point of dropping out of the myth that we associate with his name; Helen, as she tries to come to terms with the fact that her involvement in the Trojan war is

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[14] *Romeo & Juliet*, Act II sc. ii.

[15] Belsey, 'Name of the Rose' 133 (my emphasis); cf. *ibid.* 133-7 for a wide-ranging discussion of the way ideas about language shape *Romeo & Juliet*'s celebrated 'balcony scene'.

[16] This does not just hold for ὄνομα-πρᾶγμα talk, but for many other aspects of thought as well: for a description of how Greek thinking about semiotics and exegesis in general emerged from the need to interpret signs of religious and/or medical significance (diseases, dreams, omens, oracles &c.), cf. Manetti, *Teorie del segno* 27-33, 41-56 and 73-9; and Sluiter, 'Greek Tradition' 163-5 (also *ibid.* 156-7 on etymology and genealogy as "strategies to gain control over the present").

nominal, rather than actual; and *IA*'s Agamemnon, as he 'borrows' Achilles' ὄνομα to ensnare his own daughter. In each case, however, the drama reveals that in the hands of human characters, ὄνομα-πρᾶγμα talk, for all its sophisticated appeal, is an unreliable, and potentially disastrous, index to the real situation. Invariably, these characters get themselves into trouble over an all-too-facile separation of ὀνόματα from πράγματα or σώματα; so that, even if the dramatic situation actually involves a "gap between language and reality" (as Euripides' *Helen*, with its phantom 'Helen', unquestionably does), what the plays show us is that human efforts to understand such situations by means of ὄνομα-πρᾶγμα thinking are misguided. In what follows, I offer (**1**) an introductory reading of Euripides' handling of ὄνομα-πρᾶγμα talk in *Ion* and *IT*; (**2**) a detailed reading of the same theme in the poet's *Helen*, and (**3**) a reading of *IA* designed to show that in this play, ὄνομα-πρᾶγμα thinking features on a similar level as in the earlier dramas.

## 1. 'Names' and 'Things' in *Ion* and *Iphigenia in Tauris*

**1.1** In Euripides' *Ion*, commonly dated to the later 410s but not securely assignable to any known production,[17] ὄνομα-πρᾶγμα thinking is used in close conjunction with the techniques of dramatic irony and 'recognition'. The play dramatises a self-contained though not unfamiliar episode in the early mythology of Athens: the recovery of a foundling son of Apollo and the Erechtheid queen Creusa, who is destined to become the eponymous founding father of the Ionian stock. It is likely that this episode held a special significance for Euripides' Athenian audience, at a time when civic ideology prioritised the idea of 'autochthony', and located Athens at the centre of the Ionian world: for according to traditional genealogy, Ion's father was Xuthus, who had come from Phthia to marry into Athenian royalty and thus counted, in contemporary terms, as a metic. What Euripides' play sets out to do, then, is to establish his Athenian hero at one stroke as ***a.*** the *real* son of Apollo and Creusa, ***b.*** the *foster*-child of Xuthus, and ***c.*** the progenitor of the Ionians – a complicated and delicate operation, that demands considerable sympathetic effort from the audience.[18]

This audience cooperation is achieved by means of a complex use of dramatic irony. As is his wont, Euripides clears the way by having the play's programme announced explicitly in Hermes' prologue speech: Apollo's child having come of age in the safety of the Delphic sanctuary, the god feels it is time for his son to take his right-

[17] Its resolution rate would place *Ion* between *Tro.* (415) and *Hel.* (412): cf. Cropp & Fick, *Resolutions & Chronology* 61.

[18] Euripides was not the first to have dealt with this particular story: Sophocles wrote an *Ion* and a *Creusa*, but we do not know whether or how these plays addressed the fraught issue of Ion's status (cf. the brief discussion of Burnett, *Catastrophe Survived* 103n.4). On the importance of autochthony and 'Ionianism' in *Ion,* see e.g. Zeitlin, 'Mysteries of Identity' 150-5; Saxonhouse, 'Autochthony theme' 259-61; Zacharia, *Converging Truths* 44-55 with further references.

ful place in the world; and accordingly, through an oracle, the child is to be palmed off on the childless Xuthus, Creusa's husband. Not having a name yet, it is to be named 'Ion' so that it can be the κτίστωρ of Ionia.[19] The ensuing dramatic action has elicited widely varying interpretations, some scholars reading into the play's human efforts a consistent obstruction of the divine plan, while others emphasise the cooperation in which gods and men can be seen to engage unwittingly.[20] In what follows, I shall highlight three passages that play out the audience's privileged knowledge of what is at stake against the characters' limited understanding of their situation, showing that if the human characters indeed contribute to the resolution of the play's tragic problems, it is through the most circuitous of routes.

The first instance concerns Ion's identity as Apollo's son. The play's *parodos* consists in part of a song that shows Ion, as yet unaware of the impending events, wholly immersed in the humble tasks pertaining to his present job as a temple attendant:

> Φοῖβός μοι γενέτωρ πατήρ·
> τὸν βόσκοντα γὰρ εὐλογῶ,
> τὸν δ' ὠφέλιμον ἐμοὶ πατέρος
> ὄνομα λέγω, Φοῖβον τὸν κατὰ ναόν. (136-9)
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> 138 τὸν δ' cod.: τὸ δ' Musgrave 139 Φοῖβον τὸν Heath: -ου τοῦ cod.
>
> 'Phoebus is my progenitor and my father: for I praise the one who nourishes me, and I call the one who benefits me by the name of 'father' – Phoebus of the Sanctuary.'

Realising that his true father is unknown, Ion claims that he is using the ὄνομα 'father' in a metaphorical way: Apollo 'nourishes' and 'benefits' Ion in his capacity as servant to the Delphic sanctuary, and this explains (γάρ) why he feels free to call Apollo his 'father'.[21] Similarly, when he is asked by the as yet unrecognised Creusa for his name, Ion declares: 'I am called the god's slave, and that is who I am... I am

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[19] *Ion* 74-5: Ἴονα δ' αὐτόν, κτίστορ' Ἀσιάδος χθόνος, | ὄνομα κεκλῆσθαι θήσεται καθ' Ἑλλάδα ('[Apollo] shall make him be called in Greece by the name Ion, founder of the Asian cities'). For Ion's present obscurity, cf. 1372-3: ἀλλ' ἀνώνυμος | ἐν θεοῦ μὲν μελάθροις εἶχον οἰκέτην βίον ('Nameless, I led the life of a servant in the god's temple').

[20] Those who foreground the obstructive nature of the human action (and who would thus opt for a 'dark' reading of the play) include Wassermann, 'Divine Violence'; Wolff, 'Design & Myth'; and Burnett, 'Human Resistance'. The play's 'light' mood of mutual, if unwitting, cooperation is emphasised by e.g. Strohm, *Interpretationen* 68-79; Lloyd, 'Divine & Human Action'.

[21] Following Lee, Diggle and Kovacs, I give the text with Heath's emendation Φοῖβον τὸν for the transmitted Φοίβου τοῦ; with the manuscript reading Ion says: '... and thus I speak out the name that benefits me – the name of my father, Phoebus of the Sanctuary'.

*called* Apollo's ',[22] but immediately goes on to say that he knows not 'who bore and raised' him:[23] if he can think of himself as Apollo's son, it is emphatically not in a biological, but in a nominal sense. In order to make sense of his mysterious personal history, Ion assigns the basic tokens of his identity without regard for the primary criteria normally involved in the process of 'naming': he calls 'father' the one who fed him; and not having been given an ὄνομα of his own, he is content to be known as the 'son' of this 'father'.

All the while, the audience know that this elaborate, ingenious construction is mistaken; but they also know that, though all wrong on the surface, Ion's ratiocinations actually capture the real situation: Apollo *is* Ion's father, not according to the circuitous reasoning that the son uses to give himself an identity, but precisely in the sense normally presupposed by the ὄνομα 'father'. Thus, dramatic irony is employed not just to show the audience how the characters get it wrong, but also how they can get it right even while they seem to be getting it wrong. Indeed, Ion's subsequent discoveries serve only to confirm what with his limited understanding he already seemed to know: that he is 'Apollo's son'.[24]

A more straightforward instance of dramatic irony pertains to the second factor in Ion's problematic parentage: his blood relationship with Creusa. Just before the revelation of Ion's birth tokens, things have gone quite out of hand: Ion has now been adopted as Xuthus' foster son, and Creusa is plotting to murder him so as to prevent the adoption, which, if carried through, would nulllify the claims of her own future children on inheriting the Athenian kingship. Ion's discovery of this plotting against his life appears to lead him even further from discovering the truth. Rejecting Creusa's supplication on the altar of Apollo, he claims that any pity owed to her should go 'in double measure to himself and to his mother':[25]

> καὶ γὰρ εἰ τὸ σῶμά μοι
> ἄπεστιν αὐτῆς, τοὔνομ' οὐκ ἄπεστί πω. (1277-8)
>
> '...for even if my mother's body is not here, her name is not far off!'

Ion's somewhat tortuous justification of what he is about to do – viz., drag Creusa from Apollo's altar and have her killed – underscores the irony of the situation, as it is Ion's *idée fixe* of his absent mother that nearly makes him cause the death of the

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[22] *Ion* 309: τοῦ θεοῦ καλοῦμαι δοῦλος, εἰμί τ(ε), and 311: Λοξίου κεκλήμεθα.

[23] *Ion* 313: ὡς μὴ εἰδόθ' ἥτις μ' ἔτεκεν ἐξ ὅτου τ' ἔφυν (['I am to be pitied,] not knowing what woman gave birth to me nor from what man I am grown'). Cf. also *Ion* 1324: χαῖρ' ὦ φίλη μοι μῆτερ οὐ τεκοῦσά περ ([Ion addressing the priestess of Apollo:] 'I greet you, mother of mine in all but giving birth to me!').

[24] Cf. e.g. *Ion* 1530-1: οὐκ ἔστιν ὅστις σοι πατὴρ θνητῶν, τέκνον, | ἀλλ' ὅσπερ ἐξέθρεψε Λοξίας ἄναξ ([Creusa:] 'You have no mortal father, child: your father is the one who raised you – lord Loxias').

[25] Cf. *Ion* 1276-7; the textual constitution of these lines is uncertain (see Kovacs, *Euripidea tertia* 20-3), but the problems do not affect the interpretation given here.

woman who is, in truth, his mother.[26] Again, Euripides has his characters cope by means of a conceptual matrix that seems sophisticated, but fails to capture the real state of affairs – though this time, he does so, as far as I can see, without the added irony of the speaker being right in spite of being wrong.

My next instance concerns the issue of the 'naming' of Ion – that is, the third item on Euripides' programme of establishing his hero as the autochthonous progenitor of the Ionians. As we have seen, Apollo authoritatively announced the name of his son, now come of age, as Ion 'founder of Asian territories'; and Hermes, rounding off his prologue speech, proudly proclaims to be 'the first of the gods to use this name'.[27] But rather than just leave the revelation of this significant name to the play's *dénouement*,[28] Apollo – and Euripides – contrive to build it into the drama's human action. As Xuthus, Ion's foster father-to-be, enquires from the oracle about his childlessness, the Pythia's answer comprises the message that 'the first man who met him (συναντήσαντα) as he would come out (ἐξιόντι) of the temple is his son' (534-6); and this being Ion, he forthwith names the boy Ἴων – a name to fit what happened, for 'when he came out (ἐξιόντι) of the temple', Ion was the first to meet him.[29] Thus, by availing himself of his right, as any father, to think up a name for his new son, Xuthus accidentally stumbles precisely upon the ὄνομα that our hero was destined to bear in the first place. As in our first example, dramatic irony is employed to a complex effect: rather than simply showing the play's human characters going wrong by applying their limited understanding of what is at stake, Euripides actually shows them getting it right, albeit through the haphazard application of a parallel etymology.

As *Ion*'s complicated plot runs its course, obstacles against Apollo's original plan can be seen to arise and vanish. Ion's perfect contentment in being the god's nominal son is a first obstacle, making him reluctant to assume his appointed destiny;[30] his adoption by Xuthus, though part of the original design, triggers a second obstacle by setting up Creusa against him; and his discovery of the plot against his life all but results in his true mother's premature demise.[31] In the end, divine intervention is needed to harmonise all the erratic human effort into a satisfactory conclusion: along the way, hints of the truth withheld from the characters for so long emerge through their misguided attempts to deal with their situation; but their preferred way

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[26] *Idée fixe:* Lee *ad loc.* (p. 294).

[27] Apollo: *Ion* 74-5, cited in n.19 above; Hermes: *Ion* 80-1: ὄνομα δ' οὗ μέλλει τυχεῖν | Ἴων' ἐγώ νιν πρῶτος ὀνομάζω θεῶν ('I am the first of the gods to call him by the name he is destined to bear: Ion').

[28] Cf. *Ion* 1587-8: τοῦδε δ' ὀνόματος χάριν | Ἴωνες ὀνομασθέντες ἕξουσιν κλέος ('[The future inhabitants of the territories on both side of the Aegean] shall be named after this boy's name *Ionians* and thus win renown').

[29] *Ion* 661-3: Ἴωνα δ' ὀνομάζω σε τῆι τύχηι πρέπον, | ὀθούνεκ' ἀδύτων ἐξιόντι μοι θεοῦ | ἴχνος συνῆψας πρῶτος ('I name you Ion, a name to suit what happened, for when I was coming out of the god's shrine you were the first to alight upon my tracks').

[30] For Ion's "Delphic idyll" and its impact upon the action, cf. esp. Wolff, 'Design & Myth' 188-9.

[31] For the decisive role of τύχη in these developments, cf. Giannopoulou, 'Divine Agency' 268-70.

of dealing – viz., the application of the sophisticated ὄνομα-πρᾶγμα disjunction – fails to capture this situation's intractable complexities. The poet's subtle use of dramatic irony allows the audience to be constantly one step ahead of the play's human actors, and so to keep sight of the fact that, in spite of everything, Ion is set to become what he was destined to become: an autochthonous founding father of the Ionian race.

**1.2** In the preceding discussion of Euripides' *Ion*, we have looked at the place of ὄνομα-πρᾶγμα talk in the imbalance of knowledge between audience and characters that constitutes dramatic irony, concluding that such talk is primarily associated with a limited understanding of what is at stake: under the special circumstances imposed on human action by the tragedian, thinking with 'names' and 'things' will get his characters only so far. Such circumstances become especially prominent in a specific aspect of dramatic technique that looms large, not just in *Ion*, but also in *IT* – to which we shall now turn – and in *Helen*: ἀναγνώρισις or 'recognition'.

At first sight, the mechanics of 'recognition' are fairly simple: to cite Aristotle's famous discussion in his *Poetics*, ἀναγνώρισις comprises a 'change from ἄγνοια to γνῶσις',[32] and the characters involved in this transaction achieve new insight that leads them 'either to happiness or misfortune' (*Poet*. 1452a31-2); provided, Aristotle continues, that it be accompanied by a 'reversal' (περιπέτεια) in the fortunes of the characters, ἀναγνώρισις will arouse the requisite πάθη in the audience (1452a38-b1). However, on closer inspection, 'recognition' involves more than a simple, linear progression from not-knowing to knowing. In his magisterial study of the poetics of recognition in western literature, Terence Cave observes that:

> recognition scenes in literary works are by their nature 'problem' moments rather than moments of satisfaction and completion. Anagnorisis seems at first sight to be the paradigm of narrative satisfaction... yet the satisfaction is also somehow excessive, the reassurance too easy; the structure is visibly prone to collapse... The progression from negative to positive which recognition plots articulate is as radically unstable as a mirage.[33]

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[32] Arist. *Poet.* 1452a29-31: ἀναγνώρισις δέ, ὥσπερ καὶ τοὖνομα σημαίνει, ἐξ ἀγνοίας εἰς γνῶσιν μεταβολή ('recognition, as the name signifies, involves a change from ignorance to knowledge'). Note that Aristotle subsumes under this category not just the actual moment of one person recognising the other (as in the example, alluded to at *Poet*. 1452b5-8, of Iphigenia and Orestes in *IT*), but also the ἀναγνώρισις 'of the circumstantial objects... and actions' involved in the process (*Poet*. 1452a33-6: εἰσὶν μὲν οὖν καὶ ἄλλαι ἀναγνωρίσεις· καὶ γὰρ πρὸς ἄψυχα καὶ τὰ τυχόντα † ἐστὶν ὥσπερ εἴρηται συμβαίνει † καὶ εἰ πέπραγέ τις ἢ μὴ πέπραγεν ἔστιν ἀναγνωρίσαι ['There are other recognitions as well: recognitions of lifeless objects or fortuitous happenings... and whether one has or has not acted']). For a full discussion of this difficult passage, cf. esp. Belfiore, *Tragic Pleasures* 153-60.

[33] Cave, *Recognitions* 489.

This 'instability' results from the fact that, in the process of recognition, knowledge is lost as well as gained: from the characters' point of view, the final moment of ἀναγνώρισις makes redundant the ingenuity and intellectual effort that has gone into the laborious process of recognising and interpreting the various clues that have led up to the *moment suprême*. Indeed, a successful ἀναγνώρισις is achieved only at the cost of abandoning many of the presuppositions and ratiocinations involved in dealing with the situation that obtains, *before* recognition finally takes place; and this goes not only for the struggling characters on stage, but also for the audience – who, though anticipating the outcome, are invited to share vicariously in their efforts.

Thus, as Cave observes elsewhere in his study, literary ἀναγνώρισις "conjoins the recovery of knowledge with a disquieting sense, when the trap is sprung, that the commonly accepted co-ordinates of knowledge have gone awry":[34] as the audience, invested beforehand with privileged information, watch the characters grope towards an inevitable resolution, they are constantly made aware that these characters' ways of dealing with the complicated situations the playwright has devised for them are, at best, of limited usefulness. This will be seen most clearly in Euripides' *Helen*, whose first half is taken up entirely by questions of recognition and identity, and which will be the subject of section **2** below; but first, we shall look briefly at the way 'names' and 'things' figure in the ἀναγνώρισις scene of *Iphigenia in Tauris*.

Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris* is commonly dated, like *Ion*, to the mid- or late 410's; and as in some other plays from this period, what happens in this drama probably derives largely from Euripides' own invention.[35] The idea that Iphigenia did not actually die on the altar erected by her father in Aulis, but was surreptitiously removed from the scene by Artemis and transferred to the northern tribe of the Taurians was a standard element of Greek mythology;[36] in all the attested versions, however, Agamemnon's daughter survives only to be immortalised as a deity, not – as in *IT* – to have a chance encounter with her wandering brother and return with him to Greece.[37]

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[34] *Ibid.* 2.

[35] A number of scholars have been tempted, given numerous thematic and structural parallels, to assign *IT* to the 412 production that included *Helen* and *Andromeda*: cf. below, n.55, and, for the parallels, Matthiessen, *Untersuchungen* 16-62. Marshall '*Chryses*' 141-5 puts *IT* in a "probable range of 419-413", and, suggesting that the play is alluded to in S. *Chrys.*, convincingly proposes a *terminus ante quem* of 414.

[36] Cf. Hes. *fr.* 23a.17-24 (where the girl is called Iphimede) and *fr.* 23b, a prose reference claiming that Stesichorus took the idea of Iphigenia/Iphimede's survival from Hesiod; also *Cypr.* ap. Procl. p. 32 Davies. The story is compatible with the Homeric poems (see *LfgrE s*.v. Ἰφιάνασσα with references), and even Aeschylus' *Oresteia,* which invests heavily in the idea of Iphigenia's death, allows for her survival by means of a marked *aposiopesis* (A. *Ag*. 248: τὰ δ' ἔνθεν οὔτ' εἶδον οὔτ' ἐννέπω [(Chorus, relating the killing up to the death blow:) 'What happened then I did not see and cannot tell']). Cf. also Hdt. 4.103, reporting Iphigenia's survival as a story told by the Taurians (λέγουσι αὐτοὶ Ταῦροι...).

[37] It is uncertain what happened in the now fragmentary Iphigenia plays of Aeschylus *(Iphigenia*), Sophocles (*Iphigenia* and *Chryses*) and Euripides (the lost *Iphigenia* from which *fr.* 857 probably

This, then, seems to have been Euripides' invention, specifically designed for a play that also devises a wholly novel resolution to the fraught issue of Orestes' accountability for the matricide.[38]

The central event towards which the play's first half works is the meeting of Orestes (whose post-matricidal wanderings have taken him and Pylades to Tauris) and his sister Iphigenia, who is presently occupied with bringing human sacrifices to the local Artemis. This novel setting allows Euripides to revisit a well-worn and celebrated tragic theme – the recognition of the incognito Orestes by his hopeful kinsfolk – from a wholly different angle than had hitherto been possible: Orestes is recognised, not by Electra, but by Iphigenia; not on the tomb of the dead Agamemnon, but on the altar of Artemis; and not before the killing of Clytaemestra and Aegisthus, but after it. The poet's handling of the actual recognition can also be seen to innovate markedly upon previous dramatisations – Aeschylus' *Choephori*, his own *Electra* and perhaps Sophocles' play of the same name – as *IT* completely ignores the conventional bandying-forth of physical recognition tokens, and instead plays out the scene on the strength of Orestes' ὄνομα:[39] here, the vital clue is not a scrap of cloth, a tell-tale scar or a signet ring that makes all the pieces fall into place; it is the hero's name itself – its pronunciation (twice, for good measure: *IT* 769 and 779) by his sister as she reads out the letter that she wishes them to take to Greece for her.[40]

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derives): accounts in Hyginus and Apollodorus attesting to Iphigenia's survival and even her return to Greece cannot confidently be assigned to any particular dramatic treatment, and may be eclectic (see Cropp on *IT* p. 45-6n.50 for references).

[38] For *IT*'s novel take on the matricide theme, cf. e.g. Burnett, *Catastrophe Reversed* 73-5; Cropp on *IT* pp. 44-6; Wright, *Escape Tragedies* 113-5. On the originality of Euripides' plot, see also Marshall, '*Chryses*' 149-54.

[39] In A. *Cho.* the recognition involves a lock of hair resembling Electra's own (164-204), a set of footprints equally similar to those of Electra (205-11), and finally a bit of embroidered cloth remembered from long ago by his sister (212-45). E. *El.* – not firmly datable but commonly regarded as pre-dating *IT* (Cropp on *El.* p. l-li) – sports the same objects as *Cho.*, but incorporates them in an entirely different story, as Electra dismisses one by one the Aeschylean interpretations, only to be convinced in the end by the most traditional recognition-token of them all. In S. *El.*, probably the last in the surviving series, the business with the traditional tokens is briefly dealt with early on (871ff., cf. Halporn, 'Skeptical Electra' 102-3; Davies, 'Recognition Scene' 391n.13), and the real recognition takes place after Orestes hands his as yet unrecognised sister a jar supposedly containing his own ashes, and presents her with their father's ring (S. *El.* 1221).

[40] Kovacs prints Jackson's re-ordering of the lines (*Marginalia* 9-12), which makes Pylades interrupt Iphigenia (780-1) as soon as she has read out the letter's address (769), and makes her pick up again with: Ὀρέσθ', ἵν' αὖθις ὄνομα δὶς κλυὼν μάθηις ('to Orestes: I say it twice so you will remember it...': 779); in the MS text, retained by Diggle and Cropp (and defended most fully by Schwinge, *Stichomythie* 214-2), it is Orestes who first reacts to the reading out of Iphigenia's *own* name, and Pylades who does so only after Iphigenia has finished her reading. One way or the other, it is Orestes's ὄνομα that does the trick.

This remarkable resolution to the ἀναγνώρισις is carefully prepared for from early on in the drama. Upon being informed of the presence of two Greek travellers in her dominion, the first thing Iphigenia does is ask for their names; but the herdsmen who have captured them have only caught the name of Pylades, not that of his companion – and Pylades is not a name Iphigenia knows.[41] Then, once the two men are brought before her, Iphigenia once more inquires after their names:

> πότερος ἆρ' ὑμῶν ἔνθάδ' ὠνομασμένος
> Πυλάδης κέκληται; (492-3)
>
> 'Which of you is the one called by the name Pylades hereabouts?'[42]

As Orestes points to his silent companion and tells her he is not family, she presses him to give his own name (499). 'Of rights, I should be called Unfortunate (Δυστυχής)', quips Orestes,[43] and Iphigenia replies, 'That's not what I asked: those are your circumstances'.[44] Again, as Orestes says that he prefers to die ἀνώνυμος so as not to become a laughing stock (502), his sister insists, asking him, 'why do you grudge me that'?[45] Only when Orestes authoritatively states that Iphigenia will be 'sacrificing his σῶμα, not his ὄνομα' does she finally change the subject.[46]

In the course of the conversation between brother and sister, more information passes between the two, tantalising and inconclusive; but within the exchange, the controversy of Orestes' name is given special prominence, not least because it is not explicitly motivated. It may be thought natural for Iphigenia, having learned that her captives are from the country she has been exiled from, to be eager to find out whether she might have some connection with them: but all the same, the lack of sensitivity in her insistence towards the reluctant Orestes is striking; and so is the riddling phrasing preferred by Orestes. In a somewhat later play, *Orestes* of 408, Euripides has

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[41] *IT* 248-51: οὐδ' ὄνομ' ἀκούσας οἶσθα τῶν ξένων φράσαι | ... | τῶι συζύγωι δὲ τοῦ ξένου τί τοὔνομ' ἦν; ([Iphigenia:] 'Have you heard the strangers' names? Can you tell me?... And that of his companion, what was his name?').

[42] Diggle and Kovacs obelise the awkward ἐνθάδ' ὠνομασμένος in 492 (Diggle suggesting instead the somewhat tautologous ὄνομ' ἐπωνομασμένος); Cropp retains the transmitted text, suggesting that ἐνθάδε 'here' refers to "the naming of Pylades reported by the Herdsman (249)", but this requires ὠνομασμένος to be taken as a past tense.

[43] *IT* 500: τὸ μὲν δίκαιον Δυστυχὴς καλοίμεθ' ἄν.

[44] *IT* 501: οὐ τοῦτ' ἐρωτῶ· τοῦτο μὲν δὸς τῇ τύχῃ ('... give that to your fortune' *vel sim*.: as Cropp observes *ad loc.* [p.211], δὸς τῆι τύχηι puns on Δυστυχής in 500, and the pun takes precedence over the precise sense).

[45] *IT* 503: τί δὲ φθονεῖς τοῦτ(ο); – some recent commentators consider this a *non sequitur* (e.g. Cropp on *IT* 504 [p. 211]: "503 could hardly be asked after 502") and accordingly adopt Barthold's reshuffling of the verses; but Iphigenia's obsession with finding out Orestes' name, remarkable as it is, may well have prompted this brusque reply.

[46] *IT* 504: τὸ σῶμα θύσεις τοὐμὸν, οὐχὶ τοὔνομα.

Orestes go through very much the same routine once more, this time in conversation with his uncle Menelaus. Shocked by the dishevelled appearance of his ailing nephew, Menelaus enquires: 'What corpse am I looking at?', and Orestes replies: 'Well said: I am dead for my troubles, yet see the light of day'. As with the 'Δυστυχής' quip in *IT*, the sentiment that Orestes is putting across here seems apposite enough; but it is phrased in a remarkable, antithetical way that Aristophanes saw fit to ridicule already in 425.[47] Nor is that all: as in a fairy-tale, Menelaus goes on to say, 'How wildly grows your dry hair!', and Orestes replies: 'It's not my looks but my deeds that mar me,' again applying a sophisticated antithesis that, in view of the simplicity of Menelaus' observation, seems quite gratuitous.[48] Then, when Menelaus says: 'How fearful the glance from your parched eyes!', Orestes resorts to ὄνομα-πρᾶγμα talk: 'My body is ruined, my name has not left me'.[49] As C.W. Willink observes, Menelaus can here be seen to "display tolerant moderation... in the face of some patience-testing sophistry... from his nephew";[50] but after five more lines of it, this patience has evidently run out: upon being informed that Orestes' disease is 'ἡ σύνεσις' ('Intelligence'), he exclaims, 'It's better to be clear than clever!'.[51]

The same admonition could be issued to the Orestes of *IT*, whose refusal to simply disclose his name upon being asked must have had the audience sitting on the edges of the κερκίδες with anticipation: recognising Orestes is here, after all, a matter of life and death. What the audience know – and Orestes knows not – is that, given the dramatic situation, it is the disclosure of Orestes' name that would represent the surest way to his salvation, both physical (he will not be sacrificed) and as a mythical figure (he will be able to return to Hellas and conclude the story that we all know). In this light, for Orestes to request an 'anonymous' death (502), and say that Iphigenia

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[47] *Or.* 385-6: – ... τίνα δέδορκα νερτέρων; – εὖ γ' εἶπας· οὐ γὰρ ζῶ κακοῖς, φάος δ' ὁρῶ. For the antithetical phrasing, cf. e.g. *Hel.* 138 τεθνᾶσι κοὐ τεθνᾶσι ('They are dead and not dead') and 286 τοῖς πράγμασιν τέθνηκα, τοῖς δ' ἔργοισιν οὔ ('In these circumstances I am dead, even if, effectively, I'm not') as discussed below, section **2.2**. For Aristophanes' parody of such talk, cf. *Ran.* 1079-82 ('Aeschylus' about 'Euripides': οὐ προαγωγοὺς κατέδειξ' οὗτος ... καὶ φασκούσας οὐ ζῆν τὸ ζῆν; ['Does he not stage procuresses... and women who say that life's not life?']; also 1477) and *Ach.* 396-7 (– οὐκ ἔνδον ἔνδον ἐστίν, εἰ γνώμην ἔχεις. – πῶς ἔνδον, εἶτ' οὐκ ἔνδον; [Slave : 'Euripides is in and not in, if you grasp my meaning.' – Dicaeopolis : 'What do you mean, in and not in ?']) with Rau, *Paratragoedia* 29-30, Kannicht on *Hel.* 138 (p. 2.55) and Olson on *Ach.* 395-6 (p. 177).

[48] *Or.* 387-8 (Men.:) ὡς ἠγρίωσαι πλόκαμον αὐχμηρόν, τάλας. (Or.:) οὐχ ἡ πρόσοψίς μ' ἀλλὰ τἄργ' ἀικίζεται.

[49] *Or.* 389-90 (Men.:) δεινὸν δὲ λεύσσεις ὀμμάτων ξηραῖς κόραις. (Or.:) τὸ σῶμα φροῦδον, τὸ δ' ὄνομ' οὐ λέλοιπέ με.

[50] Willink on *Or.* 385-447 (p. 149: "... quibbling, rather in the manner of Hamlet..."). For the "sophistry" of the dialogue, cf. also Holzhausen, *Euripides politikos* 109-10 with references to earlier discuss-ions.

[51] *Or.* 397: πῶς φής; σοφόν τοι τὸ σαφές, οὐ τὸ μὴ σαφές ('How do you mean? The wise thing is to be clear, not unclear'): see my discussion at ch. **IV.1** below.

might 'kill his body but not his ὄνομα' (504), might seem sophisticated; but in fact – and the audience know this – it is spectacularly wrong, on a par with Ion claiming that his 'mother's body is far off, though her name is not' while being face to face with Creusa (*Ion* 1277-8, discussed above under **1.1**).

As we have seen, all will be well in the end: Iphigenia will recognise Orestes, and the hero will complete his mission, all on the strength of the ὄνομα which, in order to salvage it, he was ready to separate from his σῶμα. But if, eventually, all the pieces fall in place – if eventually, in the words of Terence Cave, cited above, "the trap is sprung" – it is in spite of, not because of, the efforts that the characters have invested in the ἀναγνώρισις process: everything *they* did, until the revealing letter was produced, is to obscure what needed to be clarified. Their perspective on the world in which they are situated – epitomised in the facility with which they, and they alone, handle the distinction between 'names' and 'things' – proves to be, at best, of limited usefulness; and the true state of affairs, though at times it may seem to practically coincide with the characters' understanding (as with Ion's innocent surmise that Apollo is his 'nominal' father), remains elusive.

## 2. Names in *Helen*

In the preceding section, I have discussed Euripides' handling of ὄνομα-πρᾶγμα talk against the background of the imbalance between the audience's knowledge and that of the drama's characters: by special dispensation, the spectators possess a more complete understanding of what is at stake in the drama, and are accordingly enabled to look with a certain detachment upon the characters' attempts to deal with whatever problems the playwright places in their way. In the plays discussed above, ὄνομα-πρᾶγμα talk is consistently associated with these attempts; and even if such talk gets near the truth, it is in spite of, rather than because of, the intentions human beings have with it.

With this provisional conclusion in mind, we now turn to a detailed reading of Euripides' 412 play *Helen*;[52] a drama in which ὄνομα-πρᾶγμα talk takes on a special prominence.[53] Incidental observations by the play's earlier commentators apart, Frie-

[52] That *Hel.* and the now fragmentary *Andromeda* were part of Euripides' 412 production is attested by Σ Ar. *Thesmo.* 1012: cf. Austin & Olson on *Thesmo.* p. xxxiii-iv. Wright, *Escape Tragedies* 44-55 makes an elaborate case for *IT* as the third tragedy in this production, detecting allusions to the play in *Thesmo.* 1160-1225 (cf. Bobrick, '*Iphigenia* Revisited'); other complements that have been proposed include *Ion* (Zacharia, *Converging Truths* 1-7 with references), *Cycl.* (Austin & Olson on *Thesmo.* lxiii-lxiv) and *IT* plus *Ion* ([!] Hose, *Drama u. Gesellschaft* 68-77). Marshall, 'Plays of 412' computes the odds against any of the extant plays being the missing constituent and suggests that *Hel.* and *Andromeda* may have constituted a Lenaea dilogy rather than part of a four-play Dionysia production (though we have no record that Euripides – unlike Sophocles – ever competed in the less prestigious venue: see Russo, 'Concorsi tragici').

[53] Although some thematical and dramatical correspondences between *Hel.* and *Andromeda* may be

drich Solmsen was the first to put this prominence on the scholarly agenda, pointing out that Euripides' application of the opposition between ὀνόματα and πράγματα – supposedly the invention of his 'sophistic' contemporaries – to the Helen myth constitutes a master stroke on the poet's part, "contemporary theories on the nature of names" enabling him "to find a new aspect for an old story".[54] In Solmsen's wake, scholars have taken this observation in various directions, most of them reading the play against the background of the sophists' preoccupation with epistemological relativism,[55] some diagnosing (as we have already seen) satire, others serious speculative philosophy.[56] The preceding discussion of two more or less closely related plays, however, should make us wary of accepting too readily ***a***. that ὄνομα-πρᾶγμα talk in Euripides necessarily has a primarily 'philosophical' purpose, and ***b***. that even within the dramatic fiction, such talk is endorsed as a valid way of looking at the world. In this light, a fresh examination of the play, unencumbered by the concerns that have traditionally dominated its interpretation, seems warranted; and accordingly, I will demonstrate that Euripides is more concerned with probing the feasibility of seeing the world in terms of ὀνόματα and πράγματα than with developing a world-view in which there is – to quote once more the play's most recent commentator – "a gap between language and reality" (Allan on *Hel.* p. 48).

As Solmsen argued, and no one would contest, ὄνομα-πρᾶγμα talk's primary dramatic function seems indeed to be that it facilitates the exposition of the most striking feature about the myth dramatised in *Helen*: the story of how Helen was conveyed at an early stage to Egypt, where she remained, innocent and chaste, for the duration of the Trojan war and Menelaus' seven additional *Wanderjahre*, while her place in the limelight was occupied by an εἴδωλον fashioned by Hera as a perfect likeness of the real article in revenge for losing the beauty contest. None of this by itself is peculiar to Euripides' version: individual elements of this myth – Helen's Egyptian sojourn, the εἴδωλον motif – already featured more or less prominently in the variegated traditions about Helen; and all through the archaic and classical periods, 'exculpating Helen' seems to have been a popular vocation for a wide variety of σοφοί, whether their skills are epic or epideictic (more about this below, section **2.1.1**). But what, as far as we can tell, is new about it in Euripides' play is the 'ὄνομα/ πρᾶγμα' interpreta-

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pointed out (see Wright, *Escape Tragedies* passim [esp. the tabulation on pp. 76-8]), there is no trace in *Andromeda*'s extant fragments of the ὄνομα-πρᾶγμα talk that is so prominent in its companion play.

[54] Solmsen, 'ὄνομα and πρᾶγμα' 120; remarkably, the great turn-of-the-century authorities on Euripides' intellectualism, Verrall and Nestle, overlooked this subject.

[55] For the ὄνομα-πρᾶγμα opposition as a central motif in *Helen*'s intellectual design, cf. e.g. Griffith, 'Some Thoughts' 36-7; Kannicht on *Hel.* 1.57-68; Burnett, 'Comedy of Ideas' 152-3; Conacher, *Euripidean Drama* 290-3; Segal, 'Two Worlds' 559-61 and 604-10; Wolff, 'On Euripides' *Helen*' 77-9; Papi, 'Victors & Sufferers' 40; Conacher, *Euripides & the Sophists* 77-83; Wright, *Escape Tragedies* 278-337; Willis, 'Language & Reality'; Allan on *Hel.* p.47-9.

[56] Above, n.12.

tion of these elements, which would imply that Helen was only 'nominally' accountable for the war.

Remember our brief opening discussion, where we observed that the poet has a penchant for framing the topical problem of the 'noble slave' in terms of 'names' *versus* 'things': Euripides' slaves are *nominal* slaves, of an equal standard with the free-born except in regard of their ὄνομα (above, under **0**). On the face of it, this line of argument would admirably fit the Helen question, too: would it not be wonderful, if it could be shown that the Trojan war was fought over Helen's ὄνομα, not her σῶμα? This would have all sorts of interesting implications, not just for the mainstream poetic tradition about Helen, but also, e.g., for contemporary issues of judicial accountability, or for the justification of warfare.

But *can* it be shown that Helen was only 'nominally' responsible? This, on my reading, is the question that, through his design of the play's dramatic structure, Euripides ultimately poses. As in *Ion* and *IT*, it turns out that for the play's human characters, in spite of its initial appeal, the ὄνομα-πρᾶγμα distinction proves a source of confusion rather than enlightenment; it is only on the divine level of Zeus's master plan that this distinction can be seen to make sense. Like the poet's *Ion*, his *Helen* would seem to make the point that ὄνομα-πρᾶγμα thinking is a perilous commodity: *if* it manages to capture the truth of the situation, it is not along the lines that human beings think it does. To show how I arrive at this conclusion, I shall first say a few things about the expectations raised by Euripides' play, and then address a number of scenes in detail: Helen's prologue speech and her subsequent encounter with Teucer, Menelaus' 'second prologue' and the ensuing recognition scene, the escape plot and the Dioscuri's *e machina* appearance.

## 2.1 Euripides' καινὴ Ἑλένη and the two names of Eidothea

**2.1.1** What did the crowd that gathered for one more day's worth of tragic drama at the 412 Dionysia expect to see? Something about Euripides' new *Helen* may have been revealed to them a few days in advance, at the presentation of the Chorus during the *proagon*; but even if this were not so, they would have realised soon enough what they were in for. In the very opening line, the prologue-speaker sets the scene in Egypt; and before her speech is over, the spectators are fully *au courant* with the protagonist's conveyance thither, the substitution of the εἴδωλον at the behest of the angry Hera, and Helen's awaiting of the arrival of Menelaus.

We shall presently go over Helen's prologue speech in all the detail it requires; but before we do that, it will be opportune to consider which expectations the set-up of Euripides' play would have raised with the audience.[57] 'Helen in Egypt' would probably not have been a particular novelty to them: although it is all but absent from the mainstream epic tradition represented for us by the Homeric poems and

[57] For a more detailed discussion of what, in the following paragraphs, is given in bare outline, cf. Wright, *Escape Tragedies* 80-133; Pallantza, *Troische Krieg* 98-123 and 152-8; Allan on *Hel.* p. 18-28.

the *Cypria*, the historiographers – possibly taking their cue from a brief mention in the *Odyssey*[58] – make much of Helen's Egyptian stay, typically (as far as we can tell) situating it on her return from Troy with Menelaus;[59] and Herodotus even claims that she was in Egypt for the duration of the Trojan war (2.112-20). Indeed, as Herodotus observes that he knew about this version of the myth *before* hearing about it from his Egyptian informants,[60] it seems that this particular part of Helen's biography, for all its non-canonicity, enjoyed a certain currency. The εἴδωλον motif, though less securely established, also seems to pre-date Euripides' *Helen*: Herodotus does not mention it at all, being primarily concerned with explaining why the Trojans did not simply hand Helen over when things got out of hand; but Plato says it featured in a work of Stesichorus – possibly his notorious *Palinode*, more about which below;[61] and Euripides himself alludes in passing to 'Helen's εἴδωλον', in conjunction with her Egyptian stay, in the conclusion of his *Electra*.[62]

Few real surprises there, then. More important, perhaps, than the matter of simple precedents for the various mythemes that go into Euripides' *Helen*, is the fact that a number of the surviving treatments of the Helen myth can be seen in one way or another to react against a simple view of the heroine as the archetypal culprit. The *Iliad* already presents its audience with a Helen who is dissatisfied with her present plight, for which she puts the blame squarely on Aphrodite;[63] and Stesichorus' early-6th-cent. lyrical version, which may have centered on the poet's 'recantation', is said to have explicitly absolved her from any culpability.[64] Sometime in the final quarter of the 5th cent., the orator Gorgias notes that 'the faith of those who listen to the poets, and the hearsay accruing to Helen's name, which has become a memorial of the disastrous events, have become univocal and unanimous';[65] and, exploiting what by

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[58] *Od*. 4.227-30 (Helen acquiring her apothecary skills in Egypt 'from the wife of Thon').

[59] Hecataeus *fr.* 307-9, Hellanicus *fr.* 153.

[60] Hdt. 2.112.2: συμβάλλομαι δὲ τοῦτο τὸ ἱρὸν εἶναι Ἑλένης τῆς Τυνδάρεω, καὶ τὸν λόγον ἀκηκοὼς ὡς διαιτήθη Ἑλένη παρὰ Πρωτέι ('I surmise that that is a sanctuary of Helen, Tyndareus' daughter, *for I know from hearsay* the story that Helen spent time with Proteus') with Allan on *Hel*. p. 23; cf. also Pallantza, *Troische Krieg* 153-4 for full references to scholarly discussion of the trustworthiness of Herodotus' *Quellenangaben* here.

[61] Pl. *Resp.* 566d, probably a reference to his own appropriation of Stesichorus' *Palinode* in *Phaedr.* 243a-b (on which cf. below).

[62] *El.* 1280-3; Denniston suggested that this passage may be a teaser for next year's production of *Hel.* (on E. *El.* p. xxxiv); but given the uncertain date of *El.*'s production, this must remain a *non liquet*.

[63] Cf. *Il.* 3.396-420; also *Il.* 3.164 ([Priam to Helen:] οὔ τί μοι αἰτίη ἔσσι, θεοί νύ μοι αἴτιοί εἰσιν).

[64] Kelly, 'Stesikhoros & Helen' argues that Stesichorus' poem comprised both a 'traditional' account of Helen's birth, marriage and adultery (*fr.* 187-91) and the παλινωιδία ascribed to the poet by Plato (*Phaedr.* 243a-b) and Isocrates (*Hel.* 64). The value of Plato's and Isocrates' testimony is challenged, however, by Wright, *Escape Tragedies* 86-110, who – observing that our testimonia seem to contradict one another – argues that Stesichorus' poem did not absolve the goddess at all.

[65] Gorg. *Hel.* §2:... περὶ ἧς ὁμόφωνος καὶ ὁμόψυχος γέγονεν ἥ τε τῶν ποιητῶν ἀκουσάντων πίστις ἥ τε

his time was no doubt already an epideictic commonplace, mounts a spectacular defence.[66] All these writers reinvent their Helens against a (strictly hypothetical) background of universal scorn, by problematising the extent of her liability for the Trojan war.

It is in this tradition that Euripides' *Helen* appears to inscribe itself from its outset, as in the play's prologue the scene is set in Egypt and the story of the εἴδωλον is unfolded; and that it was, indeed, viewed in this tradition appears from the fact that, less than a year after *Helen*'s premiere, Aristophanes has one of the characters in his *Thesmophoriazusae* come up with the plan of 'impersonating *that new Helen*' (850: τὴν καινὴν Ἑλένην μιμήσομαι), prior to subjecting a number of lines from Euripides' play to excellent comical effect. The epithet καινή may be seen not just to refer to his tragic exemplar's recent production date, but also to the 'newness' or 'novelty' that spoke from its heroine's stage identity.

In a sense, of course, every recreation of the mythical Helen is a 'new' Helen; but some, clearly, are more so than others. Four years back again from *Thesmophoriazusae*'s première, in Euripides' *Trojan Women*, Helen had appeared in splendid attire to confront a pitiable Hecabe, haughtily seeking to exculpate herself from all the misery that her elopement with Paris had brought about;[67] and two years in the future, in *Orestes*, Helen will appear again, once more in full regalia and only mildly troubled by her status as a recaptured bride, to be welcomed by a vindictive Electra with the ominous words, ἔστι δ' ἡ πάλαι γυνή ('she's the same old Helen!').[68] These two dramatic treatments perpetuate the supposedly familiar image of the superlatively beautiful Helen, who commands an unmatched power over the masculine forces that govern the tragic cosmos, and who is set apart from the hapless victims of circumstance that hold her responsible for their misfortunes. The solitary character who occupies, in suppliant position at the sanctuary-tomb of the dead Proteus, the otherwise deserted προσκήνιον of *Helen*'s prologue, revealing herself to be a victim like Hecabe and Electra,[69] seems a very different person – a καινὴ Ἑλένη for sure.

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τοῦ ὀνόματος φήμη, ὃ τῶν συμφορῶν μνήμη γέγονεν – for a different interpretation of the ambiguous phrase τῶν ποιητῶν ἀκουσάντων πίστις, see Buchheim *ad loc.* (p.161n.6: "der Glaube der nach dem Hören <urteilenden> Dichter").

[66] Epideictic commonplace: cf. Isoc. 10.14 τὸν γράψαντα περὶ τῆς Ἑλένης ἐπαινῶ μάλιστα τῶν εὖ λέγειν τι βουληθέντων... ('Of all those who endeavoured to speak well, I praise the one who wrote about Helen...'). I discuss Gorg. *Hel.* above, in ch. **I.1**.

[67] For a brief discussion of the *agon* between Hecabe and Helen in *Tro.*, see below ch. **III.1.1**.

[68] E. *Or.* 129; in this line the poet of the *Orestes* looks back, via Ar. *Thesmo*. 850, to his own *Helen*: cf. Wright, 'Euripidean Sequel' 37, and see below, section **2.4**.

[69] For the various senses in which the Helen of *Hel.* is characterised at the play's outset as a victim, cf. esp. Juffras, 'Victims' 45-52. Note, however, that it is only at a later stage that *Helen*'s Helen will shave her head and exchange her white robes for black ones: unlike Hecabe's and Electra's, her diminished status does not seem to be matched initially by sordidness of costume.

**2.1.2** One of the expectations immediately raised by the play's opening, then – and quite possibly established among the audience already through hearsay – is the pleasurable prospect of seeing a reinvented Helen, her name cleared from the blame traditionally associated with it: and indeed, it is with Helen's 'name' that the play will be overwhelmingly concerned.

The drama's main themes can already be seen to be inscribed in the opening lines of the prologue, as the heroine, before addressing her present predicament (*Hel.* 16: ἡμῖν δέ...), locates the scene in Egypt and mentions the recent demise of Proteus, the country's former king: her very first words, Νείλου μὲν αἵδε καλλιπάρθενοι ῥοαί ('Nile's beautiful-virgin streams') indicate the key parameters of the drama that is about to ensue, as the two components of the quasi-Homeric but untraditional epithet, κάλλος and παρθενεία, bear an obvious significance to Helen's myth.[70] 'Names' come up when Helen – who still has not said a word about herself – identifies the country's present king Theoclymenus and his sister Theonoe:

> τίκτει δὲ τέκνα δισσὰ τοῖσδ' ἐν δώμασιν,
> Θεοκλύμενον ἄρσεν' [† ὅτι δὴ † θεοὺς σέβων
> βίον διήνεγκ'] εὐγενῆ τε παρθένον
> Εἰδώ, τὸ μητρὸς ἀγλάισμ', ὅτ' ἦν βρέφος·
> ἐπεὶ δ' ἐς ἥβην ἦλθεν ὡραίαν γάμων,
> καλοῦσιν αὐτὴν Θεονόην· τὰ θειὰ γὰρ
> τὰ τ' ὄντα καὶ μέλλοντα πάντ' ἠπίστατο,
> προγόνου λαβοῦσα Νηρέως τιμὰς πάρα.
>
> 'In this house [Proteus' wife] bore two children, a boy named Theoclymenus{...}and a high-born maiden named Eido, who was her mother's jewel when still a baby; but when she became of marriageable age, they called her Theonoe, for she knew all godly things, what was and will be, having received this office from her ancestor Nereus.'

These lines involve the audience in an intertextual play with *Helen*'s subtexts that seems almost Hellenistic in its allusive subtlety. Presumably, the audience would not have known about Theoclymenus;[71] but Proteus' daughter, on the other hand, is

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[70] Moreover, as Downing, '*Apate*' 1-4 argues, the subsequent references to the country's changeable climate and variegated landscape, look forward to the themes of controversy, transformation and multiplicity that are central to Euripides' handling of this myth. For the topicality of Helen's reference to the sources of the Nile (*Hel.* 1-3), cf. Egli, *Zeitgenössische Strömungen* 72-6 with references.

[71] As Proteus' son and present incumbent of Egypt's throne, he is probably a Euripidean invention, with a name designed to form a structurally significant pair with that of his sister: the only mythical Theoclymenus known to us is the seer in *Od.* 15.256 (for the antithetical relationship between the two characters, cf. Sansone, 'Theonoe & Theoclymenus' 25). The name itself can be unproblematically derived from θεός and κλύομαι 'to be famous' (cf. the attested names Θεόκλειτος and Θεοκλῆς, as well as e.g. Περικλύμενος and Περικλῆς). Kannicht on *Hel.* 9-10 (pp. 2.18-9) argues compellingly that the

known to the spectators from the *Odyssey* as Εἰδοθέα, and it is this previous knowledge that the poet exploits in the lines cited above. The name Εἰδοθέα can be derived from εἶδος 'appearance' and θεός; and this etymologisation seems to have been on Euripides' mind as the name is shortened to Εἰδώ 'Beauty',[72] and 'glossed' in line 11 with the substantive ἀγλάισμα 'jewel'. On an alternative interpretation, however, 'Εἰδοθέα' can be taken as an inversion of θεοειδής, in the sense of 'knowing τὰ θεῖα' – and this may well have been how Homer had intended his audience to understand it. In Euripides' text this alternative interpretation of the Homeric name, initially rejected by means of the ἀγλάισμα gloss, is reintroduced through the mentioning of the nickname that the girl acquired later on: Θεονόη 'divine mind'.[73]

Why this complicated manoeuvre – opting for one reading of the traditional name of Proteus' daughter, and then replacing it with another, ostensibly more apt, one? Has this ostentatious display of learning any bearing on Helen's Egyptian sojourn and her phantom double? Not in an immediately perceptible way, perhaps;[74] but looking back upon the Εἰδώ ~ Θεονόη passage with knowledge of what happens in the rest of the play, some points of contact can be discerned. The name 'Helen', or so it will presently transpire, has come to have not one but two referents: the flesh-and-blood Helen who is presently speaking the prologue lines on the banks of the river Nile, and the εἴδωλον that Menelaus is presently bringing home from Troy. In the case of Proteus' daughter, we have exactly the opposite: one female, who goes by two names, first Εἰδώ, then Θεονόη. At the least, then, it can be said that these lines, apart from simply introducing a character that will play an important role later on in the play, also contribute to the establishment of one of the drama's main themes: the apparently unstable relationship between 'names' and their referents.[75]

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rival etymologisation of Theoclymenus' name in lines 9b-10a is interpolated, as Nauck first saw and all modern editors accept; cf. also Allan *ad loc.* (p. 146-7).

[72] For hypokoristic 'pet names', see Kannicht on *Hel.* 11 (p. 2.20) with references; for shortening the metrically unwieldy Εἰδοθέα to Εἰδώ, Euripides could point to the precedence of Aeschylus' *Protheus* (*fr.* 212).

[73] For Eidothea's role in the *Odyssey*, see *Od.* 4.363-425; as S. West on *Od.* 4.365-6 (p. 216) suggests, for all we know she is the poet's invention. For the derivation of her name from εἰδυῖα and θεῖα (already offered by Σ *Od.* 4.366), cf. *LfgrE* s.v. Εἰδοθέα with references. The name Θεονόη is, like that of Theoclymenus, probably Euripides' invention (Kannicht on *Hel.* p. 1.50-1); Plato seems to cite it as such at *Crat.* 407b: cf. Kannicht on *Hel.* p. 1.85; Sansone, 'Theonoe & Theoclymenus' 18.

[74] Wright, *Escape Tragedies* 314 asks: "Can it be entirely accidental that [the name] Εἰδώ so closely resembles [the word] εἴδωλον?" (cf. already Sansone, 'Theonoe & Theoclymenus' 20), but refrains from pursuing the question; the brief discussion of Downing, '*Apate*' 4-5 is similarly non-committal.

[75] Supplementarily, the Theonoe passage can be seen to touch upon other themes that are relevant to the play's main story-line. Note, e.g., the following correspondence: as her mother's child, Proteus' daughter was noted solely on account of her looks, while upon coming of marriageable age she assumed her rightful identity as her father's daughter; similarly, Greece fought a ten-year war over Helen's outward form, and it is only as the war is fought and its misguided heroes return home that

**2.2 *Helen*'s two Helens (*Hel.* 16-384)**

In the passage discussed above, Euripides turns the uncomplicated Homeric character Eidothea into a more complex figure, going under two different names; in the remainder of her prologue speech, he can be seen to apply the opposite procedure to Helen's mythical identity: as the audience learn from Helen's own words, it is not her ὄνομα, but her physical manifestation that is doubled.

As yet, the prologue speaker has given the audience no formal clue to her identity; but if any doubts still lingered in their minds, they are progressively dispelled when she discloses her native country and parentage,[76] and gives a brief and somewhat depersonalised account of Leda's encounter with the swan (17-21), before finally revealing that 'she is called' or 'known by the name of' Helen (Ἑλένη δ' ἐκλήθην 22). As in the Eido/Theonoe passage, these words incorporate an appeal to the audience's previous knowledge. Although it is common practice for Euripidean prologue speakers to help the audience along and identify themselves by name,[77] they do not normally use the passive voice.[78] Helen does; and in doing so, she invites the spectators to recall that, in the course of the poetic tradition, the name 'Helen' has come to stand for a lot of things, few of them pleasant. By saying that she was 'called Helen', Euripides' heroine shoulders the burden of this tradition: she is 'what people think of as Helen', cause of the Trojan war, seducer of men and paradigm of the disloyal wife.[79]

She is not, however simply that. As she goes on to relate the novel story of her chaste Egyptian sojourn, the audience learn that Hera, dispatching the flesh-and-blood Helen to Egypt, 'fashioned for her an εἴδωλον ἔμπνουν made of air' (33-4) and gave it to Paris, who now believes he 'has' Helen, though he does not: all he 'has' is an

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Helen is recognised for whom she really is: a paradigm of marital fidelity and resourcefulness, and a scion of Zeus.

[76] *Hel.* 16-7: ἡμῖν δὲ γῆ μὲν πατρὶς οὐκ ἀνώνυμος | Σπάρτη, πατὴρ δὲ Τυνδάρεως ('My native country is Sparta, not a name you will not have heard of, and my father is Tyndareus').

[77] E.g., confining ourselves to the later plays, *Her.* 1-4 (τίς ... οὐκ οἶδεν... | ... Ἀμφιτρύων'... || ὃς τάσδε Θήβας ἔσχον...); *IT* 4-5 (τοῦ δ' ἔφυν ἐγώ | τῆς Τυνδαρείας θυγατρὸς Ἰφιγένεια παῖς); *Ion* 3-4 (ἣ μ' ἐγείνατο | Ἑρμῆν μεγίστωι Ζηνί); cf. also *Or.* 23 (Ἠλέκτρα τ' ἐγώ), *Tro.* 1-2 (ἥκω | ... Ποσειδῶν) and *Ba.* 1. For the phenomenon, cf. e.g. Bond on *Her.* 1 (p. 63).

[78] Closest to the locution exploited by Helen is *Pho.* 10-3: ἐγὼ δὲ παῖς μὲν <u>κλήιζομαι</u> Μενοικέως |...| καλοῦσι δ' Ἰοκάστην με· τοῦτο γὰρ πατὴρ | ἔθετο ('I am known as the child of Menoeceus: they call me Iocasta, for that is how my father named me'): here, as the scholiast *ad loc*. observes, Iocasta's circumspection may be due to the fact that alternative names for Oedipus' mother-*cum*-wife seem to have been prevalent.

[79] It is noteworthy that in the mouth of the disguised Kinsman of Ar. *Thesmo.*, the words spoken by Helen similarly take on a significance that goes beyond the speaker simply declaring hrs identity (862 [Kinsman:] Ἑλένη δ' ἐκλήθην): just as Euripides' heroine self-consciously assumes the role assigned to her by the poetic tradition, so Aristophanes' hero would draw attention to the fact that he is transparently impersonating *Euripides'* Helen.

'empty semblance'.[80] Accordingly, so Helen observes, it was '[her] name' (τὸ δ' ὄνομα τοὐμόν) that went to Troy, not herself (ἐγὼ μὲν οὔ), as a prize for the Greeks to gain in the battle (42-3); and consequently, it is her 'name' that the Greeks now disdain (καθ' Ἑλλάδ' ὄνομα δυσκλεὲς φέρω), while Helen herself is presently struggling to keep her 'body' blameless (... μή μοι τὸ σῶμα γ' ἐνθάδ' αἰσχύνην ὄφλῃ, 67-8) for her faraway husband Menelaus. The way Helen construes the state of affairs that presently pertains, the ὄνομα 'Helen' now does double duty, referring both to her innocent self and to the culpable εἴδωλον: her name is still her own – she 'was called Helen' and still goes by that name – but it is no longer *exclusively* her own, for it is also the token by which the folks at home know her substitute.

This construction would go a long way to exonerating the mythical Helen. At the outset of his own effort at exculpating the archetypical culprit, Gorgias – as we have seen – observes that Helen's ὄνομα has become a μνήμη τῶν συμφορῶν (cited above, n.65); and Aeschylus transformed this very ὄνομα into the resounding *tricolon* 'ἑλέναυς, ἕλανδρος, ἡλέπτολις'.[81] In combination with the fanciful εἴδωλον story, the insight that a single ὄνομα can have several distinct referents would conspire to form a powerful means of clearing Helen's name – or, rather, her person – from these negative associations. Just as Euripides' noble slaves are only nominally slaves, so his Helen is only nominally accountable for the misery that ensued from the Trojan war.

Before we proceed, however, we should pause briefly to consider that none of what we have heard so far is spoken in the voice of the *poet*: though given the privilege of discharging the prologue (and so getting her own interpretation of the mythical facts in first), Helen speaks with no more authority than Teucer or Menelaus, who will presently appear on the scene. Had the poet wished to give the audience, at the outset of the drama, a more authoritative account of the mythical facts – as he did in *Ion* (section **1.1** above) – then he might have had his prologue spoken by the impartial and omniscient Theonoe, or by Helen's divine brothers (who, as things are, take care of the epilogue rather than the beginning of the play: below, section **2.4.2**). Euripides chose otherwise: the prologue speaker of his choice can, by the nature of things, only give her personal view on the situation. Consequently, the question to be asked about Helen's remarkable framing of her own myth is: does it hold up as the drama unfolds?

The answer seems to be that it does not. Already in the prologue speech itself, Helen fails to apply the ὄνομα-πρᾶγμα distinction consistently to her own case. A

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[80] *Hel.* 35-6: καὶ δοκεῖ μ' ἔχειν | κενὴν δόκησιν οὐκ ἔχων ('He thinks he possesses me, a vain thought/ semblance, for he does not possess me'). The Greek is ambiguous: Kannicht *ad loc.* (p. 2.28) interprets κενὴν δόκησιν in 36 as an "innere Akkusativ" to be construed with δοκεῖ (paraphrasing 'δοκῶν ἔχειν με κενὴν δόκησιν δοκεῖ': for this construction, cf. Wilamowitz on *Her.* 59 [p.3.19]); but the phrase can also be construed as an object accusative verb ἔχειν (i.e., 'δοκεῖ μ' ἔχειν <u>κενὴν δόκησιν ἔχων</u>').

[81] A. *Ag.* 680-1. Taking his cue from the Aeschylean passage cited above, Skutsch, 'Name & Nature' has suggested that the epiklesis ἑλέναυς 'destroyer of ships' might actually have been a cult name of Helen: it certainly was in the 3rd cent. (anon. *fr.* 595 *FGrHist.*).

mere handful of lines after she had distinguished her 'self' from her name (ἐγὼ μὲν οὐ, | τὸ δ' ὄνομα τοὐμόν: 42-3), she already appears to have forgotten all about it:

> ψυχαὶ δὲ πολλαὶ δι' ἔμ' ἐπὶ Σκαμανδρίοις | ῥοαῖσιν ἔθανον. (52-3)
>
> 'Many lives were lost, because of me, near Scamander's streams.'

In these lines, the reminiscence of the *Iliad* proem underscores the magnitude of the liability that, εἴδωλον or not, Helen is prepared to load upon her own shoulders;[82] and as the drama proceeds, the heroine's readiness to take the blame in spite of all the extenuating circumstances becomes ever more pronounced.

There is thus a tension between the interpretation that Helen, in her prologue speech, imposes upon the εἴδωλον mytheme and the extent to which she allows this interpretation to speak in her favour: on her own view of herself, even if she is only *nominally* accountable for the Trojan war, this accountability *still* makes her a culprit. As several commentators have pointed out, it is this tension that constitutes the tragic burden that Euripides' Helen is made to bear: in Kannicht's memorable phrase, the heroine's inability to wholeheartedly exculpate herself brings about in her a "tödliche Selbstentfremdung" that sets the tone for a significant part of the dramatic action.[83]

This "Selbstentfremdung" is dramatised to a brilliant quasi-comical effect in the dialogue with the detouring Teucer that comes between Helen's prologue speech and the play's *parodos*.[84] Arriving fresh from the sack of Troy, all Teucer can do is restrain himself from killing Helen on sight 'for looking like the daughter of Zeus'; so that, understandably, Helen is loth to introduce herself:

> τί δ'... | ταῖς ἐκείνης συμφοραῖς ἐμὲ στυγεῖς; (78-9)
>
> 'Why... do you hate me for the misery *she* caused?'

Here, the distinction between Helen-the-εἴδωλον and Helen-the-real-Helen is safely in place, as it is when – after Teucer has declared himself to be 'one of the lamentable Achaeans' (84) – she professes no surprise that he 'hates Helen' (οὐ τἄρα σ' Ἑλένην εἰ στυγεῖς θαυμαστέον, 85); or again, when, Teucer mentioning Achilles (98), Helen recalls the rumour that that man 'was once Helen's suitor' (μνηστήρ ποθ' Ἑλένης γ' ἦλθεν ὡς ἀκούομεν, 99): for an audience sharing Helen's knowledge, all these remarks unambiguously refer to Helen-the-εἴδωλον, not to the real Helen. As Teucer informs his interlocutor about the sack of Troy, however, it becomes more difficult for Helen to uphold the distinction between her phantom double and herself:

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[82] For the Iliadic overtones here, cf. Kannicht on *Hel.* 49-55 (p. 32): note that Helen herself has just spoken of τὰ Διὸς βουλεύματα (36-7), recalling the Διὸς βουλή of *Il.* 1.5.

[83] Kannicht on *Hel.* p.1.61.

[84] For a characterisation of what is at stake in this scene, see esp. Kannicht on *Hel.* 68-136 (p. 2.38-9); Pucci, 'Comic Arts' 42-8.

ὦ τλῆμον Ἑλένη, διὰ σ᾽ ἀπόλλυνται Φρύγες. (109)

‘Ah Helen! On your account the Trojans are ruined!’

In this line, Helen could be seen to address herself (with τλῆμον in the sense ‘lamentable’), just as much as to apostrophise the absent ‘Helen’ (with τλῆμον as ‘brutal’): to the audience – though not, of course, to Teucer – the pointed echo with her own prologue speech (δι᾽ ἔμ᾽ 52 ~ διὰ σ᾽ 109) suggests the former interpretation, rather than the latter. Again, when she is informed by Teucer that Menelaus has not managed to reach home, Helen almost betrays herself;[85] and she does so once more when she learns that her husband is reported to be dead (saying, ‘ἀπωλόμεσθα’: 133). When, finally, the report of Leda’s death makes Helen ask ‘whether it is Helen’s shame’ that killed her mother, it has become impossible to tell – for the audience, if still not for Teucer – whether she is talking about herself or about the εἴδωλον any more;[86] and her initial reaction to the news of her brothers’ death is unequivocal (139: ὦ τάλαιν᾽ ἐγὼ κακῶν). Thus, the scene with Teucer serves the purpose of vividly dramatising the tensions inherent in Helen’s ὄνομα-πρᾶγμα interpretation of the εἴδωλον mytheme. It is all very well to conclude that the name ‘Helen’ is not the exclusive property of the mythical character to whom this name had originally been given, and that consequently, this character should be held nominally rather than factually accountable for the misdeeds of which she traditionally bears the blame; but psychologically, this construction proves to be very difficult to keep up.[87]

In the speech that follows upon the play’s *parodos*, Helen proceeds to give the audience a deeper insight in the extent to which, in spite of the exonerating circumstances, she still thinks of herself as culpable. Right at the start, she complains about the ‘singularity’ of her ‘life and her πράγματα’, for which she assigns the blame partly to Hera, partly to her κάλλος;[88] and she goes on to express the double wish that ***a***. she

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[85] *Hel.* 125: κακὸν τόδ᾽ εἶπας οἷς κακὸν λέγεις (‘You say a thing that is dreadful for those whom the dreadful thing you say touches’). Kannicht *ad loc.* (p. 2.51) observes that the ambivalent construction – less tortuous in Greek than in English – serves the purpose “[Helenas] bereits demaskierte Identität wieder zu maskieren”.

[86] *Hel.* 135. Helen’s question is prefaced with οὔ που, which makes it a direct appeal for Teucer to deny what she fears is the truth (viz., ‘Say it isn’t so!’: cf. Caspers, ‘Euripidean οὔ που’ and n.108 below); as Kannicht on *Hel.* 68-136 (p. 2.39) notes, this once more betrays the speaker’s tendency “ihre Betroffenheit zu kaschieren”.

[87] In the *parodos* that follows the Teucer scene, Helen continues to have trouble to distinguish properly between nominal and factual accountability: cf. esp. *Hel.* 198-9 ([Troy is ruined] δι᾽ ἐμὲ τὰν πολύπονον, | δι᾽ ἐμὸν ὄνομα πολύπονον [‘On account of unfortunate me, of my unfortunate name’) and 250 (τὸ δ᾽ ἐμὸν ὄνομα παρὰ Σιμουντίοις ῥοαῖσι | μαψίδιον ἔχει φάτιν [‘My name beside the streams of Simois has a shameful reputation’]).

[88] *Hel.* 260: τέρας γὰρ ὁ βίος καὶ τὰ πράγματ᾽ ἐστί μου, | τὰ μὲν δι᾽ Ἥραν, τὰ δὲ τὸ κάλλος αἴτιον – cf. 256: ἦρ᾽ ἡ τεκοῦσά μ᾽ ἔτεκεν ἀνθρώποις τέρας; (‘Didn’t my mother bear me as a singularity for

could be 'swept clean like an image and become shameful in appearance (εἶδος) rather than beautiful',[89] and that ***b***. the Greeks would 'forget the bad τύχαι' that she has now, and 'treasure the good ones'.[90] The chiastic construction of this passage (Hera ~ κάλλος :: εἶδος ~ τύχαι) artfully suggests how, in Helen's mind, divine engineering of life's circumstances and the basic, unchangeable fact of her physical beauty are inextricably intertwined. Hera may be responsible for the 'εἴδωλον' on account of which Helen's name is now reviled, but this cannot be seen in isolation from the 'εἶδος' that makes her who she is: if it weren't for her εἶδος, there would not have been an εἴδωλον in the first place!

Helen continues her speech by expatiating on the paradoxical nature of her liability: she would rather be 'truly guilty' than unjustly reviled, as she is now;[91] and, justly or unjustly, she cannot get round the fact that she is the 'murderer' of her own mother.[92] With Menelaus presumed to be dead, her chances of clearing her name are gone: Helen's misery is complete,[93] and as things are, her life is 'over':

> τοῖς πράγμασιν τέθνηκα, τοῖς δ' ἔργοισιν οὔ. (286)
>
> 'In these circumstances I am dead, even if, effectively, I'm not'.

I take τὰ πράγματα here to refer to Helen's entire, impossible situation: given what she has been highlighting all through her speech, *it is as if she no longer exists*.[94]

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mankind to behold?'). The intervening lines (257-9), in which Helen somewhat skeptically goes over her miraculous birth-story, are deleted by Kannicht, Diggle and Kovacs as an interpolation. *Pace* Allan *ad loc*. (p. 180: "perfectly acceptable"), this is probably correct: quite apart from the compelling mythological considerations adduced by Kannicht *ad loc.* (p. 2.87-9), Helen's complaint concerns her entire personal history rather than just the business with the egg. I take ὁ βίος καὶ τὰ πράγματα in 260 as a ἓν διὰ δυοῖν figure ('the facts of my life' *vel sim*.), rather than – with e.g. Allan, *loc. cit.* – as 'my life and my circumstances' (as if πράγματα = τύχαι [264-6]): 'πράγματα' is picked up in this sense at line 286, cf. below n.94.

[89] *Hel.* 262-3: εἴθ' ἐξαλειφθεῖσ' ὡς ἄγαλμ' αὖθις πάλιν | αἴσχιον εἶδος ἔλαβον ἀντὶ τοῦ καλοῦ ('O that I could be wiped clean again like an image, and assume a shameful face instead of my beautiful one...')

[90] *Hel.* 264-5: καὶ τὰς τύχας μὲν τὰς κακὰς ἃς νῦν ἔχω | Ἕλληνες ἀπελάθοντο, τὰς δὲ μὴ κακὰς | ἔσωιζον ὥσπερ τὰς κακὰς σώιζουσί μου ('... and that the Greeks would forget the misfortunes that beset me now, and treasure the good things about me as they now treasure the bad ones').

[91] *Hel.* 270-2: πρῶτον μὲν οὐκ οὖσ' ἄδικός εἰμι δυσκλεής· | καὶ τοῦτο μεῖζον τῆς ἀληθείας κακόν, | ὅστις τὰ μὴ προσόντα κέκτηται κακά ('First, I have a bad reputation, though I am no criminal; and to be reviled for things one has not done is worse than if the charges were true').

[92] *Hel.* 280-1: μήτηρ δ' ὄλωλε καὶ φονεὺς αὐτῆς ἐγώ, | ἀδίκως μέν, ἀλλὰ τἄδικον τοῦτ' ἔστ' ἐμόν ('My mother is dead and I am her killer – that is not fair, but the unfairness is for me to deal with').

[93] *Hel.* 285: ἀλλὰ πάντ' ἔχουσα δυστυχῆ ('Now that everything has turned against me...')

[94] For this interpretation of τὰ πράγματα cf. also above, n.91 on *Hel.* 260. Allan *ad loc.* (p. 182) laconically observes that the opposition of πράγματα and ἔργα in *Hel.* 286 "is less transparent than the common λόγος / ἔργον antithesis", and translates: 'I am as good as dead, though in fact alive' – heed-

What, with these momentous implications hanging over her head, has Helen left to live for?[95] By giving in to Theoclymenus' advances, she would forfeit her respect for her σῶμα as well as that, already lost, for her ὄνομα;[96] so things being as they are, death is preferable (θάνειν κράτιστον, 298).[97] 'Other women have been fortunate on account of their κάλλος' – or so Helen concludes – 'but this very thing is the death of me'.[98]

On the face of it, Helen's situation is fairly straightforward: because she shares her ὄνομα with the εἴδωλον that Hera fashioned in her likeness, Helen is unjustly held accountable for the Trojan war. In her tortuous speech, however, Helen reveals that correctly apportioning blame is not as easy as it seems to be: there may be 'injustice' in the fact that Helen is held responsible for the Trojan war and its concomittant miseries, but when all is said and done, Helen's own καλὸν εἶδος is just as much to blame as Hera's καλὸν εἴδωλον; and what remains of Helen if you take away her κάλλος? There would thus seem to be a mismatch between the idea of nominal culpability introduced in Helen's opening monologue, and the extent to which the poet allows this idea to let his mythical heroine off the hook. The play began, auspiciously enough, as one more attempt to present the audience with a καινὴ Ἑλένη; but as the action pro-

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less, apparently, of Kannicht's palmary observation that "noch nicht einmal die notorische Vorliebe der Griechen für polare Formulierungen könnte eine Platitude wie diese rechtfertigen" (on *Hel.* 285-6 [p. 2.95]). Kannicht himself argues that Helen's πράγματα are "die ihrer eigenen Initiative entzogenen Umstände" (which is how Allan takes them at *Hel.* 260), while her ἔργα refer to "nicht von ihr selbst initiierten Handlungen" – which would yield something like, 'I am ruined because of what happened to me, not because of what I have done'; but I feel it would be odd to have causal, rather than circumstantial, datives with the perfect τέθνηκα.

[95] Diggle and Kovacs are probably right to delete *Hel.* 287-92, in which Helen wonders what would happen if she were to return to Sparta without Menelaus: internal problems apart, these lines seem certainly inappropriate – when, in the framing verses, Helen claims that she is 'dead' (286, cf. 293 τί δ' ἔτι ζῶ;), she is not talking about her chances of being rescued, but about the more complicated problem of her culpability. Kannicht accepts the passage as authentic but puts most of it between *cruces*; Allan's defence of the transmitted text (*ad loc.* [p. 182]) is too perfunctory to be of any help.

[96] *Hel.* 296-7: ἀλλ' ὅταν πόσις πικρὸς | ξυνῆι γυναικί, καὶ τὸ σῶμ' ἐστὶν πικρόν ('When a woman is with a man she dislikes, her body becomes a matter of dislike to her as well [sc. as her ὄνομα]'). Kannicht on *Hel.* 293-8 (p. 2.98) translates: "... so ist ihr auch ihr leibliches Wohl zuwider", arguing that what Helen has in mind is her physical comfort (*coll.* 295-6 ...πρὸς πλουσίαν | τράπεζαν...); but surely, the sexual overtones of the verb ξυνεῖναι suggest that what she objects to is sharing Theoclymenus' bed rather than just, trivially, his table.

[97] Most editors would delete Helen's subsequent contemplation of various modes of suicide (299-302), which looks suspiciously as though an interpolator misread the question πῶς θάνοιμ' ἂν οὐ καλῶς; (298: perhaps he had οὖν rather than οὐ in his text? cf. Kovacs, *Euripidea tertia* 30): but if these lines are inauthentic, they are at least *ben trovate*, prolonging the crucial moment where Helen is on the verge of doing what the mythological tradition absolutely forbids her to do.

[98] *Hel.* 304-5: αἱ μὲν γὰρ ἄλλαι διὰ τὸ κάλλος εὐτυχεῖς | γυναῖκες, ἡμᾶς δ' αὐτὸ τοῦτ' ἀπώλεσεν.

gresses, it turns out that the poet is less concerned with establishing Helen's innocence than with exploring the extent to which Helen *can* be considered innocent.

### 2.3 The two wives of Menelaus (*Hel.* 385-624)

At roughly this point in the drama, the focus shifts away from Helen and the question of her nominal liability for the Trojan war to her husband, washed up on Egypt's seashore and approaching Theoclymenus' palace without having as yet an inkling of the situation's complexity. As many scholars have noted, Menelaus' entry can be seen as a "second beginning" – the hero embarking, on an empty stage, upon what could easily be mistaken for an expository prologue speech;[99] and so the audience are invited to go over the same ground once more, as Menelaus willy-nilly deals with his own version of the ὄνομα-πρᾶγμα problem that complicates his wife's identity.

The problem that confronts Menelaus upon his arrival at Theoclymenus's is the same as the problem that the play's first half has explored: it seems that the name 'Helen' has not just one, but two referents. After elaborately introducing himself as the man who singlehandedly sacked Troy and bore his runaway wife back home,[100] he is eventually informed that 'Helen, daughter of Zeus' (470) – 'child of Tyndareus, hailing from Sparta' (472) – is in the palace, and has been since the Greeks sailed for Troy. 'τί φῶ; τί λέξω;', exclaims Menelaus (483); for *he* is under the impression that he left Helen just now, under guard, on the Egyptian sea-shore (485-6). Then, he launches an elaborate ratiocination, that eventually leaves him satisfied that he has resolved the riddle of 'there being another woman, with the same name as my wife, living in this house'.[101] He carefully weighs the possibility that there are other men named 'Zeus' or 'Tyndareus', other cities called 'Sparta' and 'Troy' (490-6): this seems hard to believe (496) – but must after all be accepted, 'for in the wide world there are many men, it seems, that share the same name, and many cities and many women: so there is no cause for wonder'.[102]

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[99] The parallel construction of the Helen-centred (1-385) and the Menelaus-centred part (386-514) of the play's first half is most elaborately explicated by Kannicht on *Hel.* 1-514 (p. 2.10-13); for *Hel.* 386ff. as a "second beginning", see also Allan on *Hel.* 386-434 (p. 194). The disappearance of the Chorus into the σκήνη building is unique in extant tragedy (the absence of the Chorus during part of the drama is, by itself, exceptional: only A. *Eum.* 231ff., S. *Aj.* 813ff., E. *Alc.* 741ff. and *Rhes.* 564ff.).

[100] Single-handedly: *Hel.* 401-2 'Ιλίου | πύργους ἔπερσα (cf. also 503-4: κλεινὸν τὸ Τροίας πῦρ ἐγώ θ' ὃς ἧψα νιν, Μενέλαος οὐκ ἄγνωστος ἐν πάσηι χθονί ['The fires of Troy are famous, and so am I who lit them, Menelaus well known all over the world']). These words have arguably earned Menelaus more patronising remarks from Euripidean scholars than any other tragic character: cf. e.g. Grube, *Drama of Euripides* 339; Blaicklock, *Male Characters* 92; Griffith, 'Some Thoughts' 37-8; Burnett, 'Comedy' 153; Segal, 'Two Worlds' 576; Arnott, 'Newfangled Helen' 15-6. *Contra* all this abuse, cf. sensibly Alt, 'Anagnorisis' 17; Kannicht on *Hel.* 393-401 (p. 125n.3).

[101] *Hel.* 487-8: ὄνομα δὲ ταὐτὸν τῆς ἐμῆς ἔχουσά τις | δάμαρτος ἄλλη τοισίδ' ἐνναίει δόμοις.

[102] *Hel.* 497-99: πολλοὶ γὰρ, ὡς εἴξασιν, ἐν πολλῆι χθονὶ | ὀνόματα ταὔτ' ἔχουσι καὶ πόλις πόλει | γυνὴ γυναικί τ'· οὐδὲν οὖν θαυμαστέον. Diggle and Kovacs bracket 497-9 as incompatible with Menelaus'

The poet gives this reasoning maximum exposure – the stage is empty again, the doorkeeper having left Menelaus to his own devices and the Chorus still being inside the palace with Helen, presently to reemerge with what is conventionally known as an *epiparodos*.[103] One effect of Menelaus' isolation[104] is to make his 'λύσις ἐξ ὁμωνυμίας' (I gratefully adopt Kannicht's handy phrase) stand out – just as the programmatic differentiation between Helen's ὄνομα and her σῶμα in the final lines of her prologue speech stood out – as a starting point for the upcoming dramatic action: as Karin Alt observes: "das Verwirrend-Irrationale, das Beunruhigende ist überwunden; verdrängt, möchte man sagen".[105] In this continuation, the problems that dominate the drama's first half are eventually to be resolved through the dissolution of the εἴδωλον and husband and wife's mutual acceptance of each other for who they really are; but, as in the recognition scenes of *Ion* and *IT*, that point is reached in spite of, not thanks to the characters' efforts to achieve a resolution: their efforts at interpreting the situation can be seen, more than anything else, to get in the way of their objective.

Initially, confusion reigns supreme as Menelaus is struck dumb by a sight that he cannot reconcile with his conviction that his wife is safely tucked away in a seashore cave (548-9, 557, 559), and Helen takes her dishevelled husband for a rapist or a ruffian (550-4). However, as husband and wife eventually face each other,[106] their different states of knowledge come into play: whereas Helen straightaway recognises Menelaus in the full sense of the word (565), Menelaus refuses to acknowledge what is right before his eyes. 'Being one man', he 'cannot have two wives', says he;[107] and, when Helen insists that there is only one wife, he exclaims:

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profession of despair in 496 (see Kovacs, *Euripidea tertia* 35-6), but Kannicht's circumstantial explanation of the transmitted text seems sound (on *Hel.* 496-500 [p. 2.142]): removing Menelaus' solution and having him end on a note of *aporia* would be dramatically ruinous.

[103] For the term and the practice, rare in the surviving plays, see Allan on *Hel.* 515-27 (p. 205).

[104] There are more, of course: cf. e.g. Burnett, *Catastrophe Survived* 80-1; Allan on *Hel.* 327-8 (p. 185).

[105] Alt, 'Anagnorisis' 19. The following lines suggest that Menelaus' newly established conviction that ὀνόματα are unreliable tokens of identification does not run so deep that it can be applied to his own situation (*Hel.* 501-2: ἀνὴρ γὰρ οὐδεὶς ὧδε βάρβαρος φρένας | ὃς ὄνομ' ἀκούσας τοὐμὸν οὐ δώσει βοράν ['No man has such a barbarous mind as to refuse to give food to *Menelaus*, once he has heard his name']): on the irony of what may be seen as a Freudian slip-of-the-tongue here, cf. esp. Burnett, 'Comedy' 153.

[106] *Hel.* 563-4: – Ἑλένηι σ' ὁμοίαν δὴ μάλιστ' εἶδον, γύναι. – ἐγὼ δὲ Μενέλεώι γε σ'· οὐδ' ἔχω τί φῶ ([Men.:] 'You are more like Helen than any woman I have seen.' [Hel.:] 'So you are like Menelaus: I don't know what to say').

[107] *Hel.* 571: οὐ μὴν γυναικῶν γ' εἷς δυοῖν ἔφυν πόσις. I follow Diggle and Kovacs in retaining the transmitted *ordo versuum* (*contra* Kannicht on *Hel.* 571-82 [p. 2.161-3]; West, 'Tragica V' 66).

ἦ που φρονῶ μὲν εὖ, τὸ δ' ὄμμα μου νοσεῖ; (575)

'Surely it must be so that I am sound of mind, and *my eyes* deceive me ?'[108]

Here, Menelaus clings desperately to the provisional solution that he devised upon first hearing of 'Helen's' presence in Egypt: in spite of the likeness, she *must* be another, simply going by the same name. In response, Helen insists that he trust his eyes rather than his mind;[109] and Menelaus seems willing to make the effort:

τὸ σῶμ' ὅμοιον, τὸ δὲ σαφές γ' ἀποστατεῖ. (577)

'Your body is like hers, but clarity is far to seek.'

Helen enjoins him to look harder,[110] and ever so gradually her husband's resistance can be seen to break down;[111] until finally, Menelaus is ready to acknowledge that what is 'wrong' with him is not his vision, but the content of his mind:

ἐκεῖ νοσοῦμεν, ὅτι δάμαρτ' ἄλλην ἔχω; (580)

'So my problem is that I have another wife...?'

That brings Menelaus back full circle to line 571 (cited above, n.107), where he claimed authoritatively – note the particle combination οὐ μήν – that 'being one man', he 'cannot have two wives'; but now the conviction has gone out of his words, and Helen capitalises upon his wavering by informing him succinctly about the εἴδωλον (583-6). Rather than clinching the case, however, this information effectively reintroduces into Menelaus' mind the confusion that his 'λύσις ἐξ ὁμωνυμίας', now discarded, was designed to expel:

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[108] Not, *pace* the transmitted text, <u>οὔ</u> που φρονῶ... κτλ. (×'It can't be that...?'). With οὔ που, Menelaus would request the disaffirmation of the combined proposition, ***a.*** 'I am sound of mind' + ***b.*** 'I am seeing wrong'; while what he *wants* is to safeguard the belief that he is sound of mind (***a***), *through* being told that he is seeing wrong (***b***): cf. Caspers, 'Euripidean οὔ που'. Note that, here as elsewhere, ἦ που does not register "open-minded interrogation" (so Diggle, *Studies* 57: cf. e.g. Denniston, *Particles* 286, Page on *Med.* 695, Collard on *Su.* 153, Willink on *Or.* 844 &c.): in all its occurrences, it introduces a request – timidly or imperiously, depending on the circumstances – for the interlocutor to affirm the speaker's expressed belief (Caspers, *op. cit.* with examples).

[109] *Hel.* 576: οὐ γάρ με λεύσσων σὴν δάμαρθ' ὁρᾶν δοκεῖς ('Does *seeing* me not convince you that I am your wife?').

[110] *Hel.* 578: σκέψαι· †τί σου δεῖ; τις ἔστι σου σοφώτερος; † Rather than adopt, with all recent editors, the adventurous restoration of Badham (which involves, *inter alia*, changing the transmitted σοφώτερος to σαφέστερας), I prefer to leave the *cruces* in place.

[111] *Hel.* 579-80: ἔοικας· οὗτοι τοῦτό γ' ἐξαρνήσομαι. – τίς οὖν διδάξει σ' ἄλλος ἢ τὰ σ' ὄμματα; ([Men.:] 'You resemble her: *that* cannot be gainsaid.' [Hel.:] 'Who should teach you but your eyes?').

πῶς οὖν; ἆμ’ ἐνθάδ’ ἦσθ’ἄρ’ ἐν Τροίαι θ’ ἅμα; (587)

‘What am I to make of that? Were you then here and in Troy at the same time?’

In response to this, Helen falls back upon her own ὄνομα-πρᾶγμα explanation of the baffling facts:

τοὔνομα γένοιτ’ ἄν πολλαχοῦ, τὸ σῶμα δ’ οὐ. (588)

‘A name may be in many places, but not a body.’

But it is to no avail: having just glimpsed the implications of what is at stake, Menelaus prefers to give up (μέθες με... 589), trusting – or so he says – in his Trojan labours rather than in the woman who claims to be his wife.[112]

Thus, in spite of the tremendous amount of human effort that has gone into the process of ἀναγνώρισις, the transaction – as far as Menelaus is concerned – fails to come off: the hero is back at square one. Fortunately, however, what reasoning and interpretation cannot accomplish, may be achieved by revelation: a Messenger appears to inform the unhappy couple of the sudden dissolution of the εἴδωλον and its final message to the Achaeans, in which it assumes all the blame and completely exonerates ‘the unfortunate daughter of Tyndareus’ (605-15). It is on this fairy-tale note that the action once more comes to a standstill.

### 2.4. *Helen*’s other half and Helen’s apotheosis

So, what do we have so far? With its spectacular incorporation of Helen’s Egyptian sojourn and the εἴδωλον motif, Euripides’ *Helen* inscribes itself from the outset in a tradition known to us from such texts as Stesichorus’ *Palinode* and Gorgias’ *Defence of Helen* – a tradition that defines itself against a supposedly mainstream version of the Helen myth according to which she takes full blame for the Trojan war. Accordingly, in the prologue speech, Helen launches an interpretation of the εἴδωλον mytheme in terms of ὀνόματα *versus* πράγματα: both she herself and Hera’s εἴδωλον go by the name of ‘Helen’, and this would explain why the whole of Greece thinks of Helen as the guilty party, while in fact she is as innocent as can be. However, it soon becomes clear that the idea of Helen’s merely nominal culpability fails to absolve the heroine even to her own satisfaction. Then, in what may be seen as the mirror action, Menelaus independently comes up with precisely the same intellectual construct – one ὄνομα, two Helens; but rather than help him out, this provisional solution fatally gets

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[112] *Hel.* 591-3: καὶ χαῖρε γ’, Ἑλένηι προσφερὴς ὀθούνεκ’ εἶ. |...| τοὐκεῖ με μέγεθος τῶν κακῶν πείθει, σὺ δ’ οὔ (‘And good luck to you, for looking so much like Helen... The magnitude of my Trojan woes weighs more with me than you do’). For a fuller account of the dynamics of the recognition scene exposed above, cf. esp. Burnett, *Catastrophe Survived* 83-4.

in the way of his recognising his wife for who she really is. Each in their own way, these two strands of action show up the limitations of ὄνομα-πρᾶγμα talk as a way of making sense of the world: at the outset, it all seems clever enough; but as things turn out, ὄνομα-πρᾶγμα talk just does not do the job it is expected to do – viz., to clear Helen wholly from the blame attaching to her name and facilitate her honourable return to Hellas. True, the eventual dissolution of the εἴδωλον brings these objectives closer to hand; but all the human effort of the play's first half has contributed little, if anything, towards this achievement. In the words of Terence Cave (section **1.2** above), the audience – who were initially invited to go along with the characters' interpretations – are left with the disquieting feeling that, "as the trap is sprung, the commonly accepted parameters of knowledge have gone awry".

The play, however, is not over: there yet remains a second half, whose swift-paced action is taken up with Helen's and Menelaus' escape from Egypt. Helen devises an escape plan that involves the pretence that Menelaus is dead;[113] and the ensuing action can be seen as a further variation on the problematics that govern the drama's first episodes. Thus, not immediately grasping the full implication of Helen's proposal, Menelaus qualifies this plan as 'familiar':

> σωτηρίας δὲ τοῦτ' ἔχει τί νῶιν ἄκος;
> παλαιότης γὰρ τῶι λόγωι γ' ἔνεστι τις. (1055-6)
>
> 'And how does that help us save ourselves? There is something old-like about your account.'

As commentators have noted, Helen's plan – which involves asking Theoclymenus to deck out a ship for the 'dead' Menelaus's cenotaph, and thus unwittingly provide the couple with a means of escape – somewhat resembles the ruse by which, in Aeschylus' *Choephori* and Sophocles' *Electra*, Orestes feigned his own death to get at his enemies;[114] and accordingly, *Hel.* 1056 has commonly been taken as an intertextual reference targetting the older Electra tragedies.[115] It is perhaps more likely that the 'παλαιότης' that Menelaus discerns in Helen's proposal may concern, not the content of her escape plan, but the 'familiar' spirit of the proposer. As we have seen, in his

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[113] *Hel.* 1050-2: βούλῃ λέγεσθαι μὴ θανὼν λόγωι θανεῖν; – ... ἕτοιμός εἰμι μὴ θανὼν λόγωι θανεῖν ([Hel.:] 'Are you willing, though not actually dead, to be reported dead?' – [Men.:] '... I am willing to die by report, though not actually dead')

[114] Cf. Dale on *Hel.* 1050ff. (p. 133); Allan on *Hel.* 1050-6 (p. 258-9). Like Menelaus, the Sophoclean Orestes plans to 'die λόγωι, so that he may be saved ἔργοισι' (S. *El.* 59-60:... λόγωι θανὼν | ἔργοισι σώθω); cf. *ibid.* 62-3 (ἤδη γὰρ εἶδον πολλάκις καὶ τοὺς σοφοὺς | λόγωι μάτην θνήισκοντας κτλ. ['I have seen many clever men 'dying' λόγωι...']). For the remarkable prominence of the λόγος / ἔργον opposition in S. *El.*, see esp. Woodard, 'Dialectical Design'.

[115] Cf. Allan on *Hel.* 1055-6 (p. 260-1) with full references. Conversely, Ringer, *Empty Urn* 141-2 assumes that S. *El.* was produced after 412, and takes *El.* 62-3 (cited in the preceding n.) as an allusion to E. *Hel.*

*Thesmophoriazusae* Aristophanes characterises the Helen of Euripides' 412 play as ἡ καινὴ Ἑλένη (the 'novel' Helen); and in Euripides' own *Orestes*, Electra disparagingly refers to her aunt as ἡ παλαὶ γύνη ('same old Helen'). Here, in *Helen* itself, Menelaus can be seen to anticipate these terms of reference: in proposing such a bold plan, Helen reveals herself once more as the familiar figure that we know of old: she is, 'once again', the agent rather than the victim of her own destiny.

This reversal would seem to undermine further the play's ostensible project of of establishing, through the dramatisation of the εἴδωλον mytheme, that Helen's bad reputation is undeserved: not only does the heroine fail to draw full advantage of her merely nominal culpability, but once the problem of the εἴδωλον has magically disappeared, she can be seen to revert to her true colours, leaving Theoclymenus in the lurch and eloping overseas, not with Paris this time, but with Menelaus.[116] To be sure, all is well that ends well; but all the same, if Euripides' *Helen* presents its heroine as a καινὴ Ἑλένη, it is not in any straightforwardly simple sense. In the structuring of the dramatic action and the juxtaposition of his characters' rival perspectives, the poet artfully interweaves an overarching perspective, from which it can be seen that the drama's original premises are not realised.

We have, however, not yet come to the end of the twists and turns to which Euripides treats his audience; for towards the close of the drama comes the *e machina* intervention of Castor and Polydeuces. Appearing at a point where Theoclymenus is contemplating whether to pursue Helen and Menelaus and kill his treacherous sister, the Dioscuri's first charge is to put a stop to the chain of events by reconciling the Egyptian king to the loss of what he assumed was his bride-to-be:

> εἰς μὲν γὰρ αἰεὶ τὸν παρόντα νῦν χρόνον
> κείνην κατοικεῖν σοῖσιν ἐν δόμοις ἐχρῆν·
> ἐπεὶ δὲ Τροίας ἐξανεστάθη βάθρα
> καὶ τοῖς θεοῖς παρέσχε τοὔνομ', οὐκέτι. (1650-3)
>
> 'It was ordained that she should live in your house all the time up until the present; but now that Troy's foundations have been destroyed and she has lent her name to the gods, no longer.'

So far, we have seen ὄνομα-πρᾶγμα talk being used – as it is in *Ion* and *IT* – by the drama's human characters, in their attempts to make sense of the dramatic world's bewildering reality; here, however, Helen's interpretation of the relationship between her εἴδωλον and herself is sanctioned after all by her divine brother: apparently, eve-

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[116] For Helen's transformation from victim to perpetrator in *Hel.*'s second half, cf. Juffras, 'Victims'; Allan on *Hel.* 1050-6 (p. 258). Helen herself can be seen to underscore the reversal when, praying for the success of her present endeavour, she reminds Aphrodite of her former victimisation (*Hel.* 1099-1100: ἅλις δὲ λύμης ἦν μ' ἐλυμήνω πάρος | τοὔνομα παρασχοῦσ', οὐ τὸ σῶμ', ἐν βαρβάροις ['You harmed me enough in the past, when you harmed me by offering my name, not my body, to barbarians']).

rything that happened was, indeed, a case of Helen 'lending her name' (not her body) to the divine plan. This gives the irony of the dramatic situation the same kind of final twist that we also observed in *Ion*, where Ion's manifestly self-deluding theory about Apollo's 'nominal' parenthood turns out to be spot-on. Similarly, we here seem to have Helen and Menelaus getting themselves into trouble over an interpretation that, in spite of them, turns out to be the *right* one.

In the same stroke, Castor and Polydeuces absolve their sister from the blame attaching to her person: she is to return home in safety and, at Zeus' behest, upon her death to become a goddess (1662-70). In her supposed isolation, Helen could express reservations even about her divine parentage, and thus come close to effectively negating things that every member of the audience knows about her – that she *did* hatch from an egg, and that Zeus was her father.[117] This issue was left undecided in the play's first half, as other pressing concerns (recognising Menelaus, escaping from Egypt) took precedence, and the audience was left to wonder where the project of exculpating Helen had landed them; and in the second half, the extent of Helen being a καινὴ Ἑλένη had been considerably called into doubt. Here, however, it is authoritatively said that, after her death, Helen will assume her rightful place among the immortals; so that in the end the project of clearing Helen's name, obviated throughout the play's action by the human characters' lack of insight and rash endeavours, is after all in a way completed.[118]

### 2.5 Conclusion

Such, then, is the way I would read *Helen*'s sustained engagement with ὄνομα-πρᾶγμα thinking. As we have seen, in the course of the play Helen herself uses ὄνομα-πρᾶγμα talk to make provisional sense of her own myth (section **2**); Menelaus uses it to get his head around the problem of the 'two Helens' with which he finds himself faced upon his arrival in Egypt (section **3**); and in the end it turns out to be part of divine, as well as human vocabulary (section **4**). What, incidentally, we have not seen is that even such a minor character as Menelaus' Servant uses ὄνομα-πρᾶγμα talk to describe the departure of the εἴδωλον:

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[117] Note e.g. the skepticism with which Helen, in her prologue speech, frames the story of Leda and the swan (ἔστιν δὲ δὴ | λόγος τις ὡς... 17-8; ... εἰ σαφὴς οὗτος λόγος, 21); and similarly at *Hel.* 257-9: cf. the discussions of Stinton, '*Credere dignum*' 74-5; Allan on *Hel.* 17-21 (p. 148; cf. on 257-9 [p. 180]); Kannicht on *Hel.* 16-22 (p. 2.24) .

[118] The level of irony in Euripides' *deus e machina* interventions has been variously assessed in modern scholarship: some would argue that their artificiality has an alienating effect, which would prevent the audience from taking them seriously (for *Hel.* in particular, see Kannicht on *Hel.* 1621-41 [p. 2.421-2]; Dunn, *Tragedy's End* 133-57 with references); for others, by contrast, these endings more or less authoritatively impose a genuine closure upon the plays' human drama (e.g. Spira, *Deus ex machina* [esp. 122-3 on *Hel*., with full references to earlier discussions]; Burnett, *Catastrophe Survived* 126-8; Kovacs, *Heroic Muse* 71-7; Allan on *Hel*. 1642-79 [p. 340]). My sympathies are with the latter line of reading.

θαῦμ᾽ ἔστ᾽, ἔλασσον τοὔνομ᾽ ἢ τὸ πρᾶγμ᾽ ἔχον. (601)

‘It’s a miracle, not so much by the name of it as by the thing itself!’

In any other Euripidean play, such a remark would have passed virtually unnoticed;[119] but in *Helen*, where ὄνομα-πρᾶγμα thinking is so prominent in the main characters’ understanding of the drama’s central facts, the Servant’s seemingly gratuitous remark briefly raises the question: is such thinking perhaps *contagious*?[120]

Contagious or not, ὄνομα-πρᾶγμα talk is certainly remarkably prominent among the means that *Helen*’s characters have at their disposal to make sense of the situation in which the poet has placed them. As I noted at the start of this discussion, many commentators on the play would accordingly reckon that the disjunction between names and their referents – the “gap between language and reality” or the “Widerspruch zwischen der konventionellen Bezeichnung und dem wahren Wesen der Dinge oder Sachverhalte” – is an essential feature of the dramatic world with which Euripides confronts his audience. What I have tried to show is that this inference is not borne out by the development of the dramatic action. True, in creating a story in which the name ‘Helen’ has two referents rather than one – in which there are two distinct beings, one real and one illusory, that share the name ‘Helen’ – Euripides certainly seems to open up the prospect of a world in which the names/things relationship is as unstable as in any sophist’s account of the universe; but by counterbalancing his characters’ efforts at understanding their situation, he creates a perspective from which this instability can be seen to be of little consequence on the human plane. Helen’s tragedy, in the play’s first episode, is that the alluring notion of her nominal culpability proves insufficiently powerful to let her off the hook; and much of the near-comedy of the second episode is occasioned by Menelaus’ misguided confidence in the principle that ὀνόματα are not inextricably bound up with their referents. Only in the play’s *deus e machina* resolution does the disjunction between Helen’s σῶμα and her ὄνομα make straightforward sense. Accordingly, as in *Ion*, the conclusion seems warranted that, if the ὄνομα-πρᾶγμα disjunction eventually manages to capture something of the truth of the matter, it is not in any way mere human beings can foresee.

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[119] The same may be said of *Hel.* 791-2 (Hel.: ‘Surely you haven’t been begging for food?’– Men.: τοὖργον μὲν ἦν τοῦτ᾽, ὄνομα δ᾽ οὐκ εἶχεν τόδε): Kannicht on *Hel.* p. 1.58 calls such passages “Variationen des Hauptthemas” and lists similar passages in the Euripidean corpus.

[120] It may be observed that the characterisation of the Servant and the dramatisation of his role is decidedly quasi-comical (note esp. *Hel.* 616 ὦ χαῖρε, Λήδας θύγατερ· ἐνθάδ᾽ ἦσθ᾽ ἄρα [aptly translated by Kovacs: ‘O hello, daughter of Leda! So this is where you are hiding!’]); and to have slaves speak like their betters is a well-tried technique in Old comedy, cf. Kloss, *Erscheinungsformen* 132-7.

**3. Names and Things in *Iphigenia in Aulis***

We now turn, from the plays Euripides produced in the later 410s, to a drama that was first staged, as far as we know, after the poet's death: *Iphigenia in Aulis.* Whereas, as we have seen, the importance of ὄνομα-πρᾶγμα talk in *Helen* has been widely acknowledged, its presence in *IA* has not received a great deal of attention.[121] Indeed, commentators on either of these plays have been at pains to deny that they are on the same level: thus, Richard Kannicht observes that

> das ὄνομα-σῶμα-Motiv der *IA*... dem der *Helena* nur oberflächlich nachgebildet ist. Das Motiv hat hier weder die psychologischen noch die erkenntnistheoretischen Dimensionen, die es in der *Helena* hat: es thematisiert weder eine wirkliche Selbstentfremdung noch das im ὄνομα-σῶμα-Problem mitgegebene δόξα-ἀλήθεια-Problem als Erkenntnis- und Identitätsproblem.[122]

On the surface, the two plays' ὄνομα-πρᾶγμα problematics seem quite alike. Just like *Helen*'s Helen, in the words of her divine brother, 'lent her name to the gods' in order for Troy to be destroyed, so *IA*'s Achilles is made to 'lend his name' to Agamemnon so that Iphignia can be lured to Aulis and the Greek expedition against Troy can proceed: in both cases, there is a master plan, in the service of which it appears justified to effect a divorce between a person's ὄνομα and his/her σῶμα. Nor would I agree with Kannicht and Stockert that the ὄνομα-σῶμα 'motive' in *IA* lacks the psychological or even the philosophical dimension that it can be seen to have in *Helen*: as we shall see, the relationship between 'name' and 'body' is every bit as crucial to Achilles' conception of himself as it is to the integrity of Helen's mythical identity; and even if the *specific* ὄνομα-πρᾶγμα problems thematised in the plays are quite different (whereas Helen has to share her name with a rival referent, Achilles simply has to deal with the unauthorised use of his), they both revolve around the same notion of nominal accountability.

To be sure, there is a difference between the earlier play's handling of ὄνομα-πρᾶγμα talk and *IA*'s; but on my reading, this difference has more to do with the degree to which Euripides can be seen to distance himself from his characters' use of the ὄνομα-πρᾶγμα disjunction than in the prominence, depth or scope that this disjunction takes up in the plays' action. As we have seen, both in *Ion* and in *Helen* Euripides would still allow that, in seeking to understand their world in terms of ὀνόματα *versus* πράγματα, his human characters may, however circuitously, approach the true state of

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[121] *Hel.*: cf. above, n. 55. *IA*: the main exception is Michelakis, *Achilles,* with whose interpretation I engage below.

[122] Kannicht on *Hel*. p. 1.61n.12; in similar terms, Stockert on *IA* 128: "Während die Antithese ὄνομα – ἔργον (πρᾶγμα) in der *Helena* ontologisch und erkenntnistheoretisch von zentraler Bedeutung ist, erreicht das Motiv in der *IA* nicht solche Dimensionen".

affairs, if not in the way they intended. *IA* does not seem to offer such a comforting final twist: the dramatic world created in this play resists being understood in these terms altogether.

Before we begin, we must briefly consider another issue that, arguably, has come in the way of *IA* receiving its full critical due: its problematic textual status as the poet's '*Unvollendete*'. After two centuries of analytical scholarship on the play, it is hardly self-evident any more that its transmitted text can be treated as having anything much to do with Euripides. To quote James Diggle:

> Just as the textual critic of this play must consider whose is the handiwork which causes him offence and decide whether the ailment merits a cure, so all literary discussion of the play will be founded on the most perilous ground unless the disparate nature of the material is acknowledged at the outset and never thereafter lost sight of.[123]

The ὄνομα-πρᾶγμα theme that I would trace through *IA* runs right through several disputed areas, notably the play's prologue and Achilles' long ῥῆσις in the second episode; and therefore, a preliminary note of caution may seem in order. As is well-known, *IA* was produced by the tragedian's son or nephew alongside the now fragmentary *Alcmeon in Corinth* and the extant *Bacchae*, sometime after his death early in the Athenian year 407/6;[124] but the idea that the producer had a hand in creating the text of *IA* as well as the production of the posthumous *ensemble* has less to do with external evidence than with certain imperfections of style and content, distributed somewhat unevenly over the transmitted text.[125] Elsewhere, I have undertaken a comparison of the two surviving plays from Euripides' final production, and concluded that I see no compelling reason why the poet should not have substantially written *IA*, as it is transmitted, by way of a companion play to his *Bacchae* (whose Euripidean credentials have never been called into doubt): although the cumulative evidence for distinguishing at least two stages of composition in the text is impressive, it does not follow automatically that the prologue's imperfections must be due to the work of someone other than Euripides.[126] The transmitted text's

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[123] Diggle, 'Review'. For a comprehensive overview of textual scholarship on *IA*, and some insightful remarks about its influence on the play's appreciation, see Gurd, *Iphigenias* 63-127; also Michelakis, *Achilles* 128-43.

[124] Probably no later than 406: cf. Σ Ar. *Ran.* 66-7 (= DID C 22 *TrGF* I) with the palmary discussion of Carrière, 'Message des *Bacchantes*'.

[125] The most extreme hypothesis presented to date is that of Kovacs, 'Reconstruction', who distinguishes between an original production that already incorporates contributions by the posthumous producer, and a 4th-cent. revision that resulted not only in very extensive additions but also in the loss of several parts of the original text.

[126] For the comparison between *IA* and *Ba.*, see Caspers, 'Diversity & Common Ground'; here, I reproduce only those parts of my argument that deal directly with *IA*.

flaws need not be dismissed as the result of unauthorised tinkering, but can equally be seen as representing imperfectly integrated stages in the poet's finalization of his last production; and that is the assumption on which I will proceed.[127]

The complicated structure of the play's transmitted prologue in particular, involving an iambic ῥῆσις embedded in two sections of anapaestic dialogue, has prompted a number of more or less drastic genetic hypotheses;[128] but for all its eccentricity, the transmitted prologue is quite effective in putting the play's action on track. In the conventional 65-line iambic prologue speech embedded in the anapaests, Agamemnon recounts *ab ovo* the events that led to the Greeks' arrival in Aulis (49-86), the adverse wind and Artemis' request for Iphigenia's sacrifice (87-96), and the secret dispatch of a deceptive letter summoning Iphigenia to Aulis in order to be married to Achilles (97-107). He then instructs a servant to deliver a second letter, revoking his earlier summons, in Argos (107-14). In the anapaests preceding this speech, Agamemnon calls the servant from his tent and converses with him about his distress; and in those following, he reads out the letter (117-23), answers the servant's query about Achilles' involvement in the deception of Iphigenia (124-37) and sends him on his way (138-63).

The central feature of this elaborate composition is the articulation of a deception plan, clearly announced as such in Agamemnon's ῥῆσις:

> πειθὼ γὰρ εἶχον τήνδε πρὸς δάμαρτ' ἐμὴν,
> ψευδῆ συνάψας ἀμφὶ παρθένου γάμον. (104-5)
>
> 'I chose this as a means of persuading my wife, concocting a fictive marriage that concerns my daughter.'

The pretext of a proposed marriage between Iphigenia and Achilles will not have caused the audience much surprise: it featured in the *Cypria* and in Stesichorus' *Oresteia*, as well as in Sophocles' *Iphigenia*, where the marriage scheme appears to

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[127] This line of approach was once more popular than it is now: e.g., Pohlenz, *Griechische Tragoedie* 2.183 argues that Euripides first wrote an independent anapaestic prologue, then realised that a more complete exposition was needed and composed the iambics, "doch ist er nicht mehr dazu gekommen, diese organisch mit dem ersten Entwurf zu verbinden und innerlich auszugleichen".

[128] For Kovacs' hypothesis, cf. above, n.125. Bain, 'Prologues' argues that both the anapaestic and the iambic sections were tacked onto a script that Euripides bequeathed without a prologue; Willink, 'Prologue' accepts that Euripides wrote most of the text, but reorders the prologue in a sequence that refines upon the arrangement of England's edition, adopted in Murray's OCT. There are also, however, unitarian readings on the market: Friedrich, 'Iphigenie'; Mellert-Hofmann,*Untersuchungen* 1-155; Knox, '*Iphigenia in Aulide*'; Mizen, 'Prologue anapaests'; and Erbse, *Prolog* 271-6. Bain's objections to Knox are refuted by Foley, *Ritual Irony* 102-6. See further Stockert on *IA* 70-9 and n.123 above.

have been the invention of Odysseus.[129] In Euripides' play, however, the plan is complicated on two counts: first, by the fact that neither Achilles nor the army at large knows about the false betrothal, and second, by Agamemnon's second thoughts about the whole project. Rather than the marriage pretext itself, it is this pair of considerations that accounts for much of the dramatic interest of the action preceding Iphigenia's spectacular change of mind towards the end of the play.

The complication of the traditional marriage stratagem is announced and elaborated upon in sections that do not harmonize very well with one another. Thus in *IA* 124-7, the servant entrusted with the second letter asks Agamemnon whether depriving Achilles of his promised bride will not antagonize the prospective bridegroom. Wasn't this servant listening, then, when Agamemnon told him that apart from himself, 'only Calchas, Odysseus and Menelaus' knew about the first letter, in which the marriage was proposed (106-7)? Given this secrecy, Achilles does not know that he is implicated in a duplicitous marriage plan in the first place; so how can he be angry if he finds out that the deception is called off? Explaining away this inconcinnity necessitates a great deal of psychologizing, be it on the part of the servant, the audience or the poet;[130] and it seems preferable to admit frankly that *IA* 106-14 (Agamemnon's iambic announcement of the plan's secrecy and the dispatch of the second letter) and the anapaests are less than ideally coordinated. But whether or not this imperfect coordination is due to a second redaction of this portion of the play,[131] within the transmitted text the servant's otiose question serves a pivotal function, not least by prompting a rephrasing of Agamemnon's deception plan in terms that focus more closely on Achilles' involvement in the plot. Here is what Agamemnon says:

> ὄνομ', οὐκ ἔργον παρέχων Ἀχιλεὺς
> οὐκ οἶδε γάμους οὐδ' ὅτι πράσσομεν ·
> οὐδέ τι κείνωι παῖδ' ἐπεφήμισα
> νυμφείους εἰς ἀγκώνων
> εὐνὰς ἐκδώσειν λέκτροις.
>
> 'Achilles provides his name, not his active involvement; he does not know about the marriage or what we are doing. In no way have I pro-

[129] See *Cypr.* ap. Procl. p. 32.58-60 Davies; Stesich. *fr.* 217.25-7 Davies; and cf. Jouan, *Chants Cypriens* 277. Sophocles' *Iphigenia*: *fr.* 305 with Radt's apparatus. What remains of Aeschylus' *Iphigenia* is a single damaged line (*fr.* 94).

[130] Cf. Bain, 'Prologues' 16n.27 (contra Page, *Actors' Interpolations* 135), Erbse, *Prolog* 271-2 (contra Knox, '*Iphigenia in Aulide*' 249-51 and Mellert-Hoffmann, *Untersuchungen* 147-9; cf. also Foley, *Ritual Irony* 103-4) and Kovacs, 'Reconstruction' 101 (contra Erbse, loc. cit.). Mellert-Hoffmann, *Untersuchungen* 143-6 provides full references to earlier treatments of this problem.

[131] Kovacs, 'Reconstruction' 81-2 athetises both 106-14 and the anapaests as they stand, assuming that they replaced an original passage (iambic or anapaestic) now lost. Page, *Actors' Interpolations* 138 registers no problems with the inconcinnity between the iambs and the anapaestic 124-8, but nonetheless strikes 106-14 (for reasons refuted by Knox, '*Iphigenia in Aulide*' 250n.43).

> claimed that I would hand over my daughter as his bride, to take into his embrace and his bed.'[132]

Invoking the resonant opposition between ὀνόματα and ἔργα or πράγματα, Agamemnon considers that he has implicated Achilles 'by name' but not 'in fact';[133] and that consequently, he is under no obligation to act upon the promise stated in his first letter and become Achilles' father-in-law.

What we have here, then, is a prologue, possibly composed in two less than perfectly integrated stages, in which the announcement of the traditional false summons of Iphigenia is overlaid with complicating factors, announced in the coda to Agamemnon's ῥῆσις (106-14) and dramatized in the surrounding anapaests:[134] with this elaborate affair, Euripides sets out a familiar story in such a way that its premises become unstable. The business with the second letter, revoking the first, need not concern us much here: it informs the play's first episode, in which Agamemnon is found out by Menelaus, and taken to task for neglecting his obligations; but, as Agamemnon eventually comes round again, its significance is soon played out. The second complication – Achilles' ignorance of the whole deception plan – on the other hand, has a longer-lasting effect. As the development of *IA*'s action will reveal, separating Achilles' ὄνομα from the man himself is a fatal mistake on Agamemnon's part, causing not only the final breakdown of the plan, but also playing its part in motivating the deadlock that is eventually resolved by Iphigenia's decision to sacrifice herself for the greater good of Hellas.

That there is something wrong with the terms of Agamemnon's plan becomes evident as soon as Clytaemestra arrives in Aulis. Apparently never having heard of Achilles before – the hero is depicted in the play as someone who has yet to establish his fame – the first thing Clytaemestra asks her husband is:

> τοὔνομα μὲν οὖν παῖδ' οἶδ' ὅτωι κατήινεσας,
> γένους δὲ ποίου χὠπόθεν μαθεῖν θέλω. (695-96)
>
> 'I now know the name of the man to whom you promised our child;
> but I also want to learn what lineage and what country he is from.'

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[132] οὐδέ τι for cod. οὐδ' ὅτι is persuasively argued for by Willink, 'Prologue' 357 (in spite of the objections of Bain, 'Prologues' 22n.63 and Stockert *ad loc.* [p. 216]): on the transmitted reading, the third clause dependent on the verb οἶδε (viz., οὐκ οἶδε... οὐδ' ὅτι κεινῶι παῖδ' ἐπεφήμισα ... ἐκδώσειν) improbably doubles the first, οὐκ οἶδε γάμους.

[133] The translation given above is approximate. Kovacs translates ἔργον in *IA* 128 as "...actual self" (cf. also Morwood: "...his name, nothing more substantial"): such translations, though justifiable in view of the special resonance of the ὄνομα-πρᾶγμα opposition, seem overcharged. No matter how we translate the phrase, however, its point is – as we shall see below – that Agamemnon here introduces the notion of Achilles' *nominal* (as opposed to his *actual*) involvement in the plot.

[134] The main indication that the anapestic section preceding Agamemnon's ῥῆσις is secondary is the abrupt transition between them and the iambs: see esp. Fraenkel, 'Motiv'.

For Clytaemestra, having learned the mere ὄνομα of her daughter's future husband is not enough; and consequently, in spite of the fact that he never intended to marry his daughter to Achilles, Agamemnon is now faced with the quasi-comical task of constructing the picture of an ideal son-in-law (697-711), and answer specific questions about the imminent ceremony (716-38).[135]

In spite of Agamemnon's confidence in having successfully separated Achilles' ὄνομα from his 'self', and thus having absolved himself from really betrothing Iphigenia to the hero, the fictional wedding threatens to become altogether too real for comfort. To be sure, Clytaemestra's encounter with the ignorant Achilles in the third episode makes her realize soon enough that she has been preparing a 'non-existent marriage' (μνηστεύω γάμους | οὐκ ὄντας, 847-48); but, turning on the man who was only nominally her son-in-law-to-be, she proceeds to plead that, since her interlocutor 'has been called Iphigenia's own husband',[136] he must consider himself to be under a real obligation to stand up for his 'fiancée'. Moreover, since it is Achilles' ὄνομα that brought Iphigenia to Aulis, it is on account of his ὄνομα that he must now make a stand:

> ὄνομα γὰρ τὸ σόν μ' ἀπώλεσ', ᾧι σ' ἀμυναθεῖν χρεών. (910)
>
> 'Your name has been my undoing, and on account of this you must rush to my defence.'[137]

The upshot of this argument is that, in spite of his assumptions to the contrary, by giving away his daughter λόγωι to Achilles, Agamemnon has also done so ἔργωι; and by using Achilles' ὄνομα, he has *ipso facto* implicated the name's owner in the action that ensues from his deception plan.[138]

In his reply, Achilles proves to be susceptible to Clytaemestra's arguments.[139] He readily agrees that his name has become a 'swordless killer';[140] the abuse of his

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[135] Schwinge, *Stichomythie* 224-6 argues that by inquiring after Achilles' identity, Clytaemestra allows Agamemnon to assume initial control over the conversation, which he starts to lose again only when Clytaemestra begins about the wedding; but as Strohm, *Interpretationen* 139n.2 observes, the entire dialogue gives an "etwas gequält[e]" impression.

[136] *IA* 908: ἀλλ' ἐκλήθης γοῦν ταλαίνης παρθένου φίλος πόσις.

[137] The construction of this sentence is difficult: Stockert *ad loc.* (p. 459) assumes ᾧι to function as object with ἀμυναθεῖν, and Kovacs accordingly translates "... you must come to *its* defence"; but to this interpretation, it must be objected but the verb normally takes an accusative, not a dative complement (cf. LSJ[9] s.v. ἀμυναθῶ). England on *IA* 910 takes ᾧι as an instrumental dative ("... and it is *with your name* that you must come to my defence"), which yields an elegant balance between ἀπώλεσε 'destroyed' and ἀμυναθεῖν 'protect', but contorted sense.

[138] On Clytaemestra's persuasive strategy, cf. also Cairns, *Aidos* 283 and Michelakis, *Achilles* 86-7.

[139] Kovacs, 'Reconstruction' 91 athetises the first part of this speech (919-43) as well as 955-69 for their apparent irrelevance, retaining only 944-54 and 970-2 in which Achilles declares his commitment

ὄνομα has affected the hero, to the extent that his very σῶμα is no longer 'pure' (940). With his name committing murder for Agamemnon, Achilles considers himself reduced to the level of the 'lowliest of Greeks' (κάκιστος Ἀργείων 944), a 'nobody' (ἐγὼ τὸ μηδέν 945); indeed, without his name, he might as well be Menelaus;[141] no longer Peleus' son, but the son of an ἀλάστωρ (946). Clearly, far from accepting that his heroic identity is not at stake in his 'nominal' involvement in Agamemnon's plan, Achilles chooses to think otherwise.

Not only does Achilles follow up Clytaemestra's suggestion as to his name, he also takes to the idea that the fictive marriage proposed by Agamemnon entails a real-life obligation for him to commit himself to Iphigenia's cause: he promises that the girl shall not be killed, since she 'has been called his' (ἐμὴ φατισθεῖσα 936).[142] All in all, as the speech progresses, the confidence with which Agamemnon in his prologue anapaests differentiated between Achilles' ὄνομα and his person proves to be wholly confounded: Achilles declares himself to be deeply involved in the deception plot, and he considers Agamemnon's false promise a binding contract.

It is at this point that Achilles signals an alternative to the actual plot development that has already taken its course (962-67):

> χρῆν δ' αὐτὸν αἰτεῖν τοὐμὸν ὄνομ' ἐμοῦ πάρα
> θήραμα παιδός· ἡ Κλυταιμήστρα δ' ἐμοὶ
> μάλιστ' ἐπείσθη θυγατὲρ ἐκδοῦναι πόσει,
> ἔδωκά τἂν Ἕλλησιν, εἰ πρὸς Ἴλιον
> ἐν τῶιδ' ἔκαμνε νόστος. οὐκ ἠρνούμεθ' ἄν
> τὸ κοινὸν αὔξειν ὧν μέτ' ἐστρατευόμην.
> νῦν δ' οὐδέν εἰμι, παρὰ δὲ τοῖς στρατηλάταις
> ἐν εὐμαρεῖ μὲ δρᾶν τε καὶ μὴ δρᾶν καλῶς.
>
> '[Agamemnon] ought to have asked me for the use of my name to ensnare his daughter: Clytaemestra would have been readily persuaded to hand her over to me. I would have given it to the Greeks, if

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to Clytaemestra's cause. For a defence of the speech as it stands, cf. Ritchie, '*Iphigenia at Aulis* 919-974'; Stockert on *IA* 919-74 (p. 462-3).

[140] *IA* 938-9: τοὔνομα γὰρ, εἰ καὶ μὴ σίδηρον ἥρατο, | τοὐμὸν φονεύσει παῖδα σήν.

[141] *IA* 945: Μενέλεως δ' ἐν ἀνδράσιν: i.e., a man Achilles knows to be Agamemnon's collaborator (cf. 895). The Greek is ambiguous: Morwood makes Achilles say, "I would be a nothing, while Menelaus would be ranked among real men" (so also Michelakis, *Achilles* 88); but the drift of Achilles' argument speaks in favour of the interpretation of Kovacs: "... I would be a Menelaus among men".

[142] In the continuation of his speech, Achilles indeed refers to Agamemnon's fictive marriage proposal as if it has created a real marriage bond between himself and Iphigenia (*IA* 941 τοὺς ἐμοὺς γάμους; 972 εἴ τις με τὴν σὴν θυγατέρ' ἐξαιρήσεται); and later on in the play, this appears to have been the state of affairs that he put before the Greek army (1355-6: τὴν ἐμὴν μέλλουσαν εὐνὴν μὴ κτανεῖν... | ἦν ἐφήμισεν πατήρ μοι). On Achilles' acceptance of his role as Agamemnon's 'son in law', cf. Foley, *Ritual Irony* 162.

> our journey to Troy would have needed it: I would not have refused to serve the common interest of my fellow soldiers. Now, I am nothing and among the army it is a matter of indifference whether I act well or not.'

These are notorious lines, whose bluntness has often been thought to be incompatible with the noble sentiments expressed in the first part of Achilles' speech, and with Clytaemestra's continued presence on stage: would the hero who prides himself on his abiding only by his own judgment (926-29) associate himself in the same breath with Agamemnon's deceptive plotting – and would he inform the mother of the intended victim of his willingness to do so too?[143] Inconsistent and tactless though Achilles' words may be, however, they serve an important purpose in emphasizing the extent to which Achilles regards his heroic identity to be bound up with his 'name': in order to be able to make moral choices at all, the hero needs to be in control of his ὄνομα – take it away, and all that is left is an οὐδέν (cf. 945, cited above).[144] Thus, not only is the ὄνομα-πρᾶγμα disjunction (or rather, its negation) central to Achilles' conception of himself as a mythical hero, but it is also integral to the plot as it is set out in the prologue. According to the alternative story-line envisaged by Achilles, Agamemnon would have played above the board, secured Achilles' aid, and brought about an easy solution to the play's dramatic problems; whereas as things are, all is set for a deadlock that can only be resolved by Iphigenia willingly offering herself up for the common good of Hellas.[145]

The hypothetical course of events foregrounded by Achilles (which may well reflect how things came to pass in the pre-Euripidean treatments of the Iphigenia myth) conflicts with the actual dramatic action of *IA* in precisely that respect which Agamemnon highlighted at its outset – the disjunction between ὀνόματα and ἔργα or πράγματα. In having Achilles observe that, had Agamemnon respected the integrity of

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[143] The passage is athetised *en bloc* by Dindorff, who is followed by Kovacs; Achilles' entire speech is marked '*vix Euripidei*' by Diggle. The appropriateness of the lines cited above is defended by Ritchie, '*Iphigenia*' 193-95, the third-person reference to Clytaemestra by Stockert *ad loc.* (p. 477: like England before him, Stockert suspects 963-4 to be interpolated). *Pace* Kovacs, 'Reconstruction' 92, the counterfactual mood of 965-69 makes good sense: Achilles' readiness to deliver the goods is not conditional upon the (actual) need of his fellow soldiers, but upon Agamemnon's having asked for the use of his name. For a defence of the text at 968-9, cf. Ritchie, '*Iphigenia*' 195-6; Stockert *ad loc.* (p. 478-9).

[144] On the Iliadic intertext of Achilles' speech (with the final lines, cf. esp. *Il.* 9.319 ἐν δὲ ἴῃι τιμῆι ἠμὲν κακὸς ἠδὲ καὶ ἐσθλός) see e.g. Conacher, *Euripidean Drama* 259-60, Ritchie, '*Iphigenia*' 183; Foley, *Ritual Irony* 79-80; Griffin, 'Characterization' 146-7; Michelini, 'Expansion of Myth' 47-8 and 56-7; Sorum, 'Myth, Choice & Meaning' 535.

[145] Cf. esp. Friedrich, 'Iphigenie' 75. On the unexpected resolution offered by Iphigenia's voluntary self-sacrifice, see e.g. Conacher, *Euripidean Drama* 263-4; Siegel, 'Self-delusion & Volte-face' 310-1; Foley, *Ritual Irony* 100-2; Sorum, 'Myth, Choice & Meaning' 539-41; Gibert, *Change of Mind* 222-6, Michelini, 'Expansion of Myth' 53.

his heroic identity, he would have gladly complied, Euripides can be seen to mark off his version of the Iphigenia myth from its predecessors: it is the commander's ready recourse to ὄνομα-πρᾶγμα thinking – his facile assumption that he could avail himself without asking of Achilles' 'name' – that motivates the novel course this drama takes.

What are we to make of this? As I observed above (n.121), the main exception to the general critical neglect that has befallen the ὄνομα-πρᾶγμα theme in *IA* is Pantelis Michelakis' wide-ranging study of the Achilles figure in Greek tragedy. On Michelakis' reading, the Achilles of Euripides' final play hardly counts as a hero:[146] throughout the drama, he tries to live up to a standard that, in the circumstances offered by the dramatic fiction, is not attainable;[147] and his conception of himself and his environment is seriously flawed.[148] As for Achilles' insistence that his ὄνομα ought not to have been used without his permission:

> Achilles' language denies the fact that the unity of person, name and body has been lost... [his] discursive world-view... does not overlap with the dramatic world in which it is produced and operates.[149]

Here, Michelakis' deconstruction of the (non)hero's noble ῥῆσις seems to me to overstep a bound. Surely, you can only speak of the "loss of the unity of person, name and body" as a "fact" if you are prepared to privilege Agamemnon's contrasting, analytical world-view to a degree that is hardly warranted by Agamemnon's status as one dramatic character among others? On the reading I have presented above, the play's action confronts the audience from beginning to end with the fact that Agamemnon was *mistaken* in believing that he could avail himself of Achilles' name without taking on the man in full; and although admittedly, Achilles in the end fails to be a hero in the full sense of the ὄνομα – compelled by forces greater than himself, he cannot prevent the sacrifice: that is his tragedy – the general *possibility* of being a hero in that sense is thereby not necessarily called into doubt.

What is called into doubt, by the movement of the drama itself, is precisely the feasibility of dissolving the "unity of person, name, and body", undertaken by Agamemnon by way of complicating the mainstream version of the myth against which *IA*'s drama plays itself out. In the commander's original plan, this dissolution would

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[146] E.g. Michelakis, *Achilles* 84: "*IA* shows how familiar aspects of Achilles' mythological personality enter a narrative which scrutinises them and deprives the dramatic character of the young Achilles of his heroic qualities".

[147] E.g. Michelakis, *Achilles* 143: "Though the heroic attributes of his mythological background are evoked throughout the play, these are only to be confined within unsuccessful plans of action, or projected onto the distant future of Achilles' glory at Troy". Other interpretations that emphasise Achilles' failure to live up to his traditional heroic status are discussed by Stockert on *IA* p. 17.

[148] E.g. Michelakis, *Achilles* 87: "The image Clytemnestra creates for Achilles is a fiction, the product of the ritualised and theatricalised framework of her on-stage supplication".

[149] Michelakis, *Achilles* 88.

make Achilles the mere unwitting accessory to the deception of Iphigenia, and the whole marriage scheme a mere fiction; but, as we have seen, this neat solution to Agamemnon's quandary simply does not work. Already in the build-up to Achilles' speech, it turns out that it is impossible to confine the hero's role to a nominal involvement – for Clytaemestra, tellingly, to be told the mere ὄνομα of her son-in-law-to-be is not enough; and no matter what we think of Achilles' overly idealistic image of himself, the fact remains that his refusal to comply with the terms set by Agamemnon presents a real obstacle. Declining to accept the notion of 'nominal' involvement, the aspiring hero creates a collision between two incompatible world-views: Agamemnon's, in which a man has no specially privileged relationship with his ὄνομα – to all intents and purposes, it is up for grabs – and Achilles's, according to which the use of a man's name is his own prerogative, abandoned at the cost of the disintegration of his heroic identity. Given such a "design of the whole" – a design, moreover, that appears to reproduce the design of the *Iliad*, in which Agamemnon and Achilles similarly come to blows over irresolvably conflicting value systems – it seems unwarranted to raise Agamemnon's analytical world-view to the level of the "dramatic world" created by the poet.

## 4. Conclusion

I began this chapter by noting that scholars tend to approach the prominence of ὄνομα-πρᾶγμα talk in Euripidean drama with reference to a purported trend in Greek thought, initiated as far as we can see by Xenophanes and culminating in the thought of the sophists, according to which the stable relationship between a name and its referent was progressively called into doubt. Situating Euripides at the receiving end of this trend, commentators on his *Helen* and *Iphigenia in Aulis* – the plays in which ὄνομα-πρᾶγμα talk features most prominently – have assumed that the poet confronts his audiences with dramatic worlds in which ὀνόματα have ceased to be reliable tokens for the πράγματα or σώματα that they conventionally refer to. For instance, Matthew Wright argues that in *IT* and *Helen* the poet is "taking Gorgias' ideas further and presenting them from new angles";[150] and Pantelis Michelakis, as we have seen, posits that in *IA*'s dramatic universe, "the unity of person, name and body has been lost".[151]

What I have argued in this chapter is that, precisely in those plays where ὄνομα-πρᾶγμα talk assumes a certain prominence, Euripides handles the ὄνομα-πρᾶγμα distinction with considerable distanciation. Unlike most scholars, I would read the poet's handling of ὄνομα-πρᾶγμα talk not so much in the light of a philosophical ὄνομα-πρᾶγμα 'problem' that exercised, as such, the ingenuity of such thinkers as Parmenides and Protagoras; rather, I would read it in the light of the interpretative strategies that every human being has at his/her disposal for making sense of the

[150] Wright, *Escape Tragedies* 276-7 (in conclusion of a long argument [ibid. 260-78] that would posit Gorgias as "the principal inspiration" for the "escape tragedies" *Helen* and *IT* [270]).

[151] Michelakis, *Achilles* 88 (as cited fully above, in section **3**).

world in which s/he is situated. Making sense of their world is what Euripides' dramatic characters are shown to be doing – for better or for worse; and what I have tried to show is that, in each of the plays discussed above, the poet, through the "design of the whole", creates a perspective from which his characters' efforts can be seen to be, at best, circuitous roads to the truth, and, at worst, mistaken.

So, by accepting too readily that Apollo is his nominal, not his actual father, *Ion*'s Ion comes close to jeopardising the god's project of establishing him as the founding father of the Ionan race; and so, by offering up "his body rather than his ὄνομα", *IT*'s Orestes all but puts a premature stop to the myth associated with his name. So, in a play that revolves around the name 'Helen' having multiple referents, *Helen*'s Helen fails to come to terms with the idea of her nominal responsibility for the Trojan war, and also (but for divine intervention) fails to secure her return to Greece, in spite of her expert command of ὄνομα-πρᾶγμα talk. And so, *IA*'s Achilles cannot square the assumption of mere nominal responsibility, imposed upon him by Agamemnon, with his conception of an integral heroic identity.

Careful consideration of the way in which Euripides shapes his dramatic action and, in doing so, exposes the shortcomings of his characters' discursive strategies, suggests in my view that, rather than endorsing the notion that there is a "gap between language and reality" (Allan) or a "Widerspruch zwischen der konventionellen Bezeichnung und dem wahren Wesen der Dinge oder Sachverhalte" (Kraus), the poet consistently sets out to create a dramatic universe in which this notion fails to do justice to the situation. In the hands of Euripides' human characters, ὄνομα-πρᾶγμα talk simply does not do what it is supposed to do: viz., provide them with a reliable perspective on reality. It may well be that the poet, when asked, would happily agree with the assorted thinkers mentioned above that there *is* such a gap; yet in the dramas discussed in this chapter, he is more concerned with exploring mankind's failure to grasp the true relationship between 'names' and 'things', than with propagating ὄνομα-πρᾶγμα talk as a means of understanding this relationship.