The symbol of the warrior in Greek tragedy?

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THE PRESENT contribution aims at exploring Greek tragedy within the vast and varied field of myth and symbol. I propose to investigate the way culturally important notions and values, that is symbols, emerge and are revitalised within this cultural medium. Complexes of notions and values, which are central to a community are labeled key symbols. They can be identified by several criteria, first and foremost by the amount of attention devoted to them and the wealth of expressions, discussion, rules and taboos surrounding them.[1]

The notion and value of the warrior was central to ancient society and we may thus expect that this key symbol emerged in Attic drama. Given the fact that cultural symbols tend to manifest themself in collective celebrations, we may assume the theatre to offer some examples of this manifestation. The theatre institution certainly was a collective celebration, framed within time and space, and gathering the community in a symbolic process. The ancient theatre of Dionysos was situated within the sacred space of Dionysos' sanctuary, and its celebrations were organised according to sacred time, the *Rural Dionysia,* the *Lenaia,* and the *City Dionysia.* The entire citizenship congregated in regular collective festivities, which were essentially public celebrations within the Athenian demes and polis.[2] The rites and ceremonies surrounding the theatre performances as well as the way they were organised do not leave any doubt that the events were embraced with the most serious public attention.

While the arrangement was in the hands of the chief magistrate, the *arkhon eponymos,* the choruses consisted of citizens performing their civic duty, being organised according to their membership in a *phyle* or civic tribe.[3] The prize-winning dramas were selected by a jury of 10 members, one from each of the civic tribes.[4] Paying the costs of production was assigned to wealthy citizens who in this way per-

1 Ortner 1973:1339.

2 Pickard-Cambridge 1968:57ff.

3 Pickard-Cambridge 1968:58, 76, 88.

4 Pickard-Cambridge 1968:96ff.; Pope 1986.

formed their duty towards the community. Citizens not in a position to attend the theatre festival received public support, the *theorikon*, funds providing free entrance.[5]

The Attic theatre then differed in important ways from our modern theatre institution: it expected the audience to attend the performances. We should not hesitate therefore to call this theatre a 'ritual' theatre, in the sense of a phenomenon attracting the community towards its awe-inspring magnetic centre. By contrast, our modern theatre expects us to keep a certain aesthetic distance. For this reason I would qualify our modern theatre as an 'aesthetic theatre.' Ancient Greek theatre on the other hand appeared within a religious setting presupposing and revitalising shared meanings.

This view of Greek theatre and drama finds support in several Ancient testimonies, some of which I will briefly discuss. What is characteristic of this theatre is its polarisation between tragic *vs.* comic expression, with a mitigated form of tragedy represented in satyr drama. The clear distinction between tragic and comic events is certainly one of subject matter, mythical heroes on the one hand, and ordinary human beings or historical persons on the other.

In tragic events the heroes are suffering and awaiting disaster, inexorably hunted down by fate, in comic events we witness the heroisation of the powerless, miraculously attaining power and triumphing through the implausible whims of luck.[6]

Both genres created a *mundus inversus, 'verkehrte Welt'* or *world upside-down* on stage, disrupting the normal moral and social order, a common cultural phenomenon (Luria 1929, Kenner 1970, Babcock 1978, Auffarth 1991, Baudy 1993). The comic theatre of Aristophanes created a carnival world on stage, disrupting the laws of nature and abolishing the norms of society, a ridiculous topsy-turvey, in order to rouse boisterous laughter in the audience.

In a similar way tragic theatre created its own *world upside down*, a revolting inversion, disrupting the values and institutions of the social world, but this time in order to rouse tragic reactions.[7] These tragic reactions, labelled *eleos* and *phobos*, 'shock' and 'horror',[8] are mentioned by several authors of the classical age, by Gorgias, Plato, and other sources, and they are studied explicitly by Aristoteles.[9] In his

5 Pickard-Cambridge 1968:270.

6 For the distinction between the tragic and the comic genre see Taplin 1986, *cf.* Landfester 1977:210ff.

7 *Cf.* Turner and Turner 1982: 204, 'In liminality, "dramatic" performances may be presented, by ritual specialist or adepts, drawn from episodes in myths or religious epics. Such myths often embody cultural ideals, but often they transcend or transgress conventional morality when portraying the deeds of deities or heroes, the originators of cosmos, nature and society.'

8 For the semantic content see the study by Schadewaldt 1955. For a detailed discussion of the issue see Bouvrie 1988.

9 Bouvrie 1990:67ff.

Chapter 14 Aristotle discusses the conditions for creating a tragic effect by choosing the proper relationship between the antagonists:

> But when these terrible acts happen within relationships of *philia*, for example when a brother kills or intends to kill a brother, or a son his father or a mother her son or a son his mother or they do something similar, [the poet] must seek to achieve this.[10]

Philoi, that is relatives and adopted relatives, were bound together by the bonds of *philia*, solidarity and reciprocity.[11] In my interpretation this passage implies that the tragic emotions, which I translate as 'shock' and 'horror', are not a consequence of any physical violence as such, tragic shock and horror were the reflex-like reactions upon the violation of a fundamental institution in society, *philia*.

When Plato in Book 8 of the *Laws* discusses the sanctions upon crime, he states that some crimes are so unspeakable, and abhorred even by the gods, that we need not codify them in law. These crimes (he hints at incest) are condemned in everyday life, he tells us, but in addition they are exposed in drama as well:

> Each of us hears this [the shame of incestuous acts] always and everywhere expressed, it is mentioned in comic contexts but often also in the serious medium of tragedy (Pl. *Leg.* 838c).

Plato in fact offers Oidipous and other mythical characters as examples of offenders against the incest prohibition, again implying that the violation of the social order is at work in tragic drama.

I would however not maintain, as Plato suggests, that the workings of tragedy were moralistic. On the contrary, it is an important feature of tragedy to blur the boundaries of deserved and undeserved disaster. The audience is discouraged to think in simple categories of crime and punishment, good and evil, immoral and moral. Instead there is some overwhelming, inescapable necessity, inexorable death and fate pulling down the events, in opposition to comedy, where these powers evaporate into the fantastic air of resilient vitality, invincibility, and wish fulfilment.

When we consider the nature of Attic tragedy we have to distinguish between on the one hand the *'dramatic'* events, the more or less recognisable world of the characters, their motivations, conflicts and actions—that is morals—and on the other hand running throught these events what we may label the *'symbolic'* strand of fundamental values and institutions of the Athenian polis, key symbols, unargued for and independent of the motives and conflicts of the characters. Following Aristotle I would suggest that tragic drama as a genre presented violations of this *'symbolic'* order, the disruptions of central values and institutions, in short, a breach in the community's key symbols, in order to rouse the prescribed tragic re-

10 Arist. *Poet.* 1453b12-26 (the author's transl.).

11 Dirlmeyer 1931, Adkins 1963, Herman 1987.

actions, Aristotle's 'shock' and 'horror', with the effect of revitalising these key symbols. The disruptive elements constitute the *'tragic'* process of the drama, all the defects, shortcomings, anomalies, threatening and realised transgressions and violations of the world order as well as the staged reactions to these violations, the lyrical outbursts and other exclamations of shock and horror echoing globally the 'prescribed' reactions in contemporary audiences. These reactions, I suggest, are to be understood as immediate reflexes rather than reflection, provoked by a cultural world upside down (Stallybrass and White 1995).

This complex composition may explain the distortions of tragic drama, the often exaggerated lyrical outbursts, the sudden and unmotivated actions of the characters, the multiple plots, the apparently incongruous events, and not in the least the fact that quite a few tragedies end in a mood of comfort or even jubilation.

In this connection I emphasise that the tragic *disruption* of some institution may be followed by a *restoration.* This restoration however should not be confused with a happy ending, which is a feature of the dramatic events, and a function of the audience's sympathy for some of the characters. A restoration on the contrary is a cancelling of the disruption of some key institution and values in the *symbolic* strand: when in the end the violation is dissolved, the audience is relieved, even though sympathetic characters may be struck down. The development of Sophokles' *Antigone* may serve as an example, in which the protagonist dies, thereby causing an unhappy end. However, the key symbol of *philia* and the norm of burying one's *philoi,* which is being violated during the dramatic events, is eventually restored. The horrible acts of sending the living below the earth (Antigone when enclosed alive in her cave), while leaving the dead unburied above the earth (Polyneikes' corpse lying unburied), generate the tragic workings in the drama (Bouvrie 1990:188)

The dramatic composition as a whole is then subordinated to the demands of the 'tragic' process, first and foremost creating an *inversion*, the violation of institutions and values around which the drama evolves. The results of these complex workings are the well-known 'defective' dramas, those with double plots, disappearing protagonists, unmotivated reactions and other breaches of dramatic composition. A phenomenon I have labelled *twisting*,[12] I think, is due to the processual nature of ancient tragedy, subordinating the representation of consistent characters (*mimesis*) to the demand for tragic effects, and creating shifts of emphasis and sympathy during the events.[13] We may consider as an example the twisting of Kreon's and Polyneikes' statuses within the *Antigone*: Kreon is initially presented as a reasonable decision maker, justified in his demand for retribution against the en-

12 Bouvrie 1990:318f. and *s.v.* 'shift of emphasis/sympathy.'

13 For detailed analyses of the following see Bouvrie 1990, 1997 and forthcoming.

emy. Polyneikes is simultaneously presented as an abominous traitor threatening the city. In the course of the tragedy Kreon is twisted into a tyrant, while Polyneikes' status is twisted into a *philos*.[14]

General overview of the symbolic level in tragic drama

Tragic drama, it seems, evolved around the fundamental institutions of the *oikos* and the *polis*. The *oikos* with its complex relationships, rules and norms, constituted a key symbol within Greek culture. It consisted of its essential members, the male head and his descendant (both are missing in Sophocles' *Elektra*, the male head is destroyed in Euripides' *Andromakhe*), as well as his wife (missing in Euripides' *Alkestis*). Husband and wife are to be united in normal marriage (disrupted in the drama about *Danaos' daughters*, and in *Oidipous*), there has to be a proper hierarchy between male and female (inverted in *Oresteia*, *cf.* Zeitlin 1978), succession is to be guaranteed (disrupted in *Medeia* and missing in *Andromakhe*, missing, but restored in *Ion*), and marriage has to be monogamous, demanding strict marital fidelity of the wife (threatened in *Hippolytos* and in *Helene*), in order to secure legitimate successors to the *oikos*. Its members or *philoi*, should be duly honoured and protected in life (this norm is violated in *Oidipous*) and provided with burial rites when deceased (refused in *Antigone*).

In the dramas I have listed one or another of the *oikos* rules and values is violated. There may also be a disruption of the *polis*-institution, the social order *per se*, embodied by *Dike*, (violated in *Prometheus*), hospitality and *xenia* (disrupted in *Hekabe*), some rite ordained by the gods (in *Bakkhai* the taboo on male intrusion in the female rites is inverted, *cf.* Bouvrie 1997). These fundamental values on which the tragic action turned were subconsiously revitalised by the audience's sense of shock and horror when confronted with the outrageous violations enacted on the stage. During the dramatic performance the tragic inversion of the central symbols of *oikos* and *polis* in their various aspects were thus staged in order to be recreated and revitalised.

The institution or key symbol of the warrior

The *polis* symbol I now will draw attention to is that of the institution of the warrior.[15] The way warriors were honoured in ancient Greece testifies to their crucial value to the *polis*.[16] The warrior's nature and the rules and restrictions surrounding this institution certainly qualifies it for the status of key symbol. In several trage-

14 Bouvrie 1990:191f.

15 On war in general see *e.g.* Detienne 1968, Vernant 1968, Vidal-Naquet 1968, Garlan 1972, Pritchett 1971, 1974, 1985. Hanson 1989.

16 *E.g.* Jacoby 1944, Clairmont 1970, Loraux 1981b, Stupperich 1972, Bergemann 1997.

dies this symbol is underlying the dramatic events. But the importance of the warrior is not expressed directly by way of a positive discourse, it is implied in the dramatic action, which disrupts the normal world order presenting an absent or an abnormal warrior.

Warrior cult

Athenian culture in the classical age not only honoured their fallen warriors, they considered warfare an unquestionable element of male nature.[17] Men who died in war were honoured in military oratory and poetry with the predicate *aner agathos genomenos*, 'proved himself an excellent male.'[18]

Homer presenting a standard for the Greek world already drew the contours of the ideal warrior: he is brave, a real man (*andreios*), he is in the bloom of his youth and strength (*anthos hebes*), and he dies young.

When great warriors die it is said that: his soul went to Hades, lamenting its fate and leaving behind his manhood and youth (*androteta kai heben* Hom. *Il.* 22.363; 16.857). Aineias has the bloom of youth (*hebes anthos*), which is the mightiest strength (*kratos megiston*, Hom. *Il.* 13.484).[19]

We will see that these sentiments surrounding the warrior are still alive in Athens in the classical age. In the epigram poems on their war memorials we find: the noble death (*thanatos kalos*) of the proper male (*aner agathos*), the excellence and 'manliness' (*arete, andreia*) he exhibits, and the loss of his youthful strength (*hebe*, *e.g.* Peek 1955:nrs. 13, 14, 18, 20 Peek 1960:nrs. 8, 9, 11, 12).[20]

Collective burial of the fallen

Men who died in combat were cremated on the battle field. Their bones were collected and buried collectively in a mass grave, *polyandrion*, on the public burial ground, the *Demosion sema*, in the Kerameikos.

A prominent official delivered the funeral speech praising the courage of the fallen, who had died a noble death, *thanatos kalos*. There is no reason for doubting that warriors were surrounded with the utmost care and extraordinary awe, raising them to superhuman status, suggesting that death on the battlefield meant 'life' as a hero.[21] Those who fell at Marathon were held in exceptional honour as *heroas*

17 Meier 1990:87, 1991:44.

18 Loraux 1981b:99.

19 Loraux 1981a. On the reading of Ploutarkhos (Plut. *Lyc.* 27.1-4) on the Spartan funeral rules (37) see however Toher 1999:122-125.

20 Loraux 1975.

21 Hoffmann 1999:132.

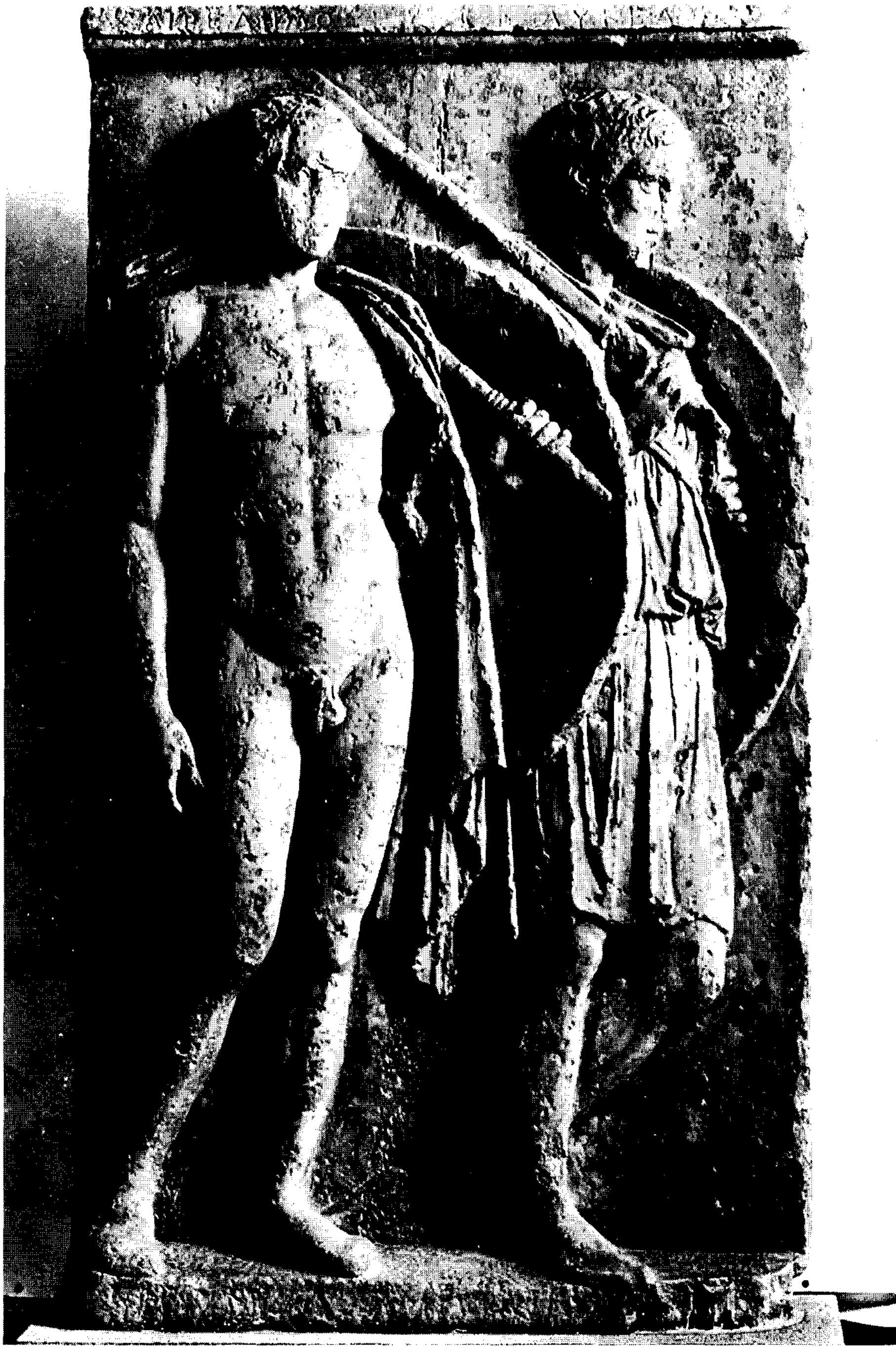

Fig. 1 Grave stele from Salamis for Khairedemos and Lykeas, who have probably fallen in war. The relief shows two hoplite warriors carrying large shields (hoplon) and lances, which were partly painted. From the last part of the 5th century BC. Clairmont 2.156 (v.). Piraeus Museum nr. 385.

(Paus. 1.32.4), but the care for ordinary warriors took over elements from the same tradition.

In epigrams the fallen are frequently represented as having left their '*aglaon heben*' (radiant youth), in spite of the fact that hoplites often were of mature age or even greyhaired (*e.g.* Clairmont 1983: nr. 32b, Athens EM 10618, pls. 45-46). In the context of funeral poetry then the tradition of the youthful warrior remains, the concept of '*hebe*' now carrying clear overtones of 'supreme male strength.'[22]

Euripides, Iphigeneia in Aulis

The Akhaian fleet is waiting for prosperous winds in Aulis in order to sail to Troy. King Agamemnon has received an oracle from the goddess Artemis demanding that he should sacrifice his daughter Iphigeneia. The king sends a message to his wife Klytaimnestra and tells her that Iphigeneia is to be married to Akhilleus. King Agamemnon develops his treacherous plans inviting his wife Klytaimnestra to come with his daughter to the military camp in Aulis. He has decided to kill his daughter as a sacrifice to the goddess. Akhilleus tries to rescue Iphigeneia, but the army threatens him, and Iphigeneia suddenly declares herself prepared to die for the benefit of Hellas. When she is to be slain, a deer is sent in her place by Artemis.

In Euripides' *Iphigeneia in Aulis* a female is being brought to the warrior camp where she 'will be married to Achilleus'. The warrior being a male corresponds to the female status of the bride, male and female thus fulfilling their essential nature.[23] In the course of events however instead of being given in marriage she will be sacrificed. It has been stated that Euripides' *Iphigeneia in Aulis* mixes the worlds of marriage and sacrifice.[24] But the drama in a far more surprising way blurs the boundary between marriage and war.

Initially Iphigeneia conforms to the roles of female and bride, submitting to the wishes of her parents[25] and expressing anxiety for her chastity.[26] She manifests a violent fear of death supplicating her father to spare her life: 'Whoever desires to die is mad; to live in dishonour (*kakos*) is preferable to dying glorious (*kalos thanein*).'[27] Suddenly however Iphigeneia heroically accepts her fate and is thus transformed from bride into warrior, dying a heroic death. 'I have decided to die; this I wish to accomplish honourably (*eukleos*), dismissing all ignoble ways (*to dusgenes*).'[28]

22 Mitchell 1996:96.

23 Vernant 1974, Loraux 1981a.

24 Borghini 1986 has studied the parallels between the nuptial rites, *proteleia*, for Artemis, and sacrificial rites before battle, *e.g.* Eur. *IA* 718. *Cf.* Foley 1985.

25 *E.g.* Eur. *IA* 631-677, 1279.

26 Eur. *IA* 1340ff.

27 Eur. *IA* 1252f.

28 Eur. *IA* 1375f.

Her death inverts the proper course of female destiny, which would be marriage, and it is this immature, 'unnatural' because female, death which prompts the drama's tragic lament. At the same time an improper warrior emerges, who, being a heroic young woman violates the gender norm.

It is strange of course, that the wedding is prepared in a military camp, or that the mother of the bride is ordered to go home instead of adorning and accompanying her daughter at the wedding. What is still more surprising is the fact that after having lamented her fate in a childlike manner, Iphigeneia suddenly declares herself prepared to be sacrificed.[29] The motive for launching the war expedition is similarly changed. Initially the war against Troy was a revenge expedition in order to punish Paris for having kidnapped Helene (71-83, 171-180, 488, 582-589, 764-772, 879-881). However, justifying his decision in front of his wife and daughter Agamemnon suddenly proclaims that the expedition must be carried through on behalf of Hellas and the protection of Hellenic women in general (1264-1272). And in her heroic speech Iphigeneia declares herself prepared to give her life (*soma* 1397) for the freedom of Hellas (1384, 1400f.). We are thus witnessing the phenomenon of *twisting*, the changing of the balance of motives and perspectives, in order to create the inversion of normality. The scope of the war is changed from a revenge expedition to a panhellenic mobilisation.[30]

Like an ideal hoplite would do (*andres aspisin pephragmenoi* 1387ff.) Iphigeneia is suddenly prepared of her own free will (1375f.) to die for her homeland (1503), asking her family not to lament or shed tears (1433-35, 1466), nor to cut their hair in sorrow or dress in funeral garment (1437f., 1448). She desires to rescue (*soisai* 1420, *soteria* 1472f.) Hellas and win a warrior's glory, *kleos* (1376, 1383, 1504, *cf.* 1440),[31] urging the chorus to entone a *paian* (1468).[32]

When Achilleus praises Iphigeneia's excellent courage (*lem' ariston*, 1421), he echoes the award for outstanding courage, the *aristeion*,[33] won on the battlefield. Iphigeneia is given titles and epithets appropriate to gloryfying war heroes, 'Benefactress' of Hellas (1446), 'Destroyer of Troy' (1475f., *cf.* 1511), and she expects a war memorial, *mnema* (1444). Iphigeneia thus in fact expresses her own funeral oration (the traditional *epitaphios logos*). All these elements belong to the warrior's ethos: the hoplite will be prepared to give his life for the freedom of his homeland,[34]

29 Buxton 1988 explictly notes the baffling effect of unexpected reversals like the one discussed.

30 Flower 2000.

31 Chant 1986:85, Loraux 1981b:51.

32 Although the *paian* was performed at different occasions, it belonged in particular to the sphere of war, Pritchett 1971:105.

33 Pritchett 1974:276-290.

34 Loraux 1981b:101.

winning eternal glory. When fallen he will be the object of praise, while it was improper to lament the noble death of the *andres agathoi genomenoi*.[35]

During the drama an intertwining of the worlds of war and marriage is created. It is noteworthy that the chorus of women arriving from the city of Chalkis express their feeling of shame and embarassment at arriving at the military camp and transgressing the boundary between the female and male worlds (1886ff.), poetically signalled by the Euripos, the sea strait between Boiotia and Euboia. The chorus could have consisted of several categories of human beings. At several points in the drama the anomaly of female intrusion into the male realm is signalled. For the contemporary audience this development must have caused tragic reactions.

Towards the end of the drama a massive inversion of the proper social order is created, manifested in Iphigeneia's declaration that giving her life for Hellas will be equivalent to marrying and having children. Her self-sacrifice will offer her a lasting memorial (*mnemeia dia makrou*, 1397ff.). This inversion causes horror among protagonists and chorus alike, the reason for this being the fact that it is a female who is sacrificing herself 'in war'.

The specific *tragic* quality of a tragedy then does not lie in its way of representing the world, its imitation or *mimesis*. Other forms of poetry or art also create first and foremost a recognisable world. Tragedy affects the audience with shock and horror as a result of presenting events which mean a violation of the normal social order.

The death of a male for the cause of his homeland would have been praised as a nobel death and a reason for pride. The death of a young woman, that is, a potential bride, evokes the most bitter lament. This inversion does however not only dominate the end. The goddess' demand for sacrifice is announced early in the drama and directs the dramatic events. The doom hanging over Iphigeneia prompts Akhilleus to stand up and defend her. Akhilleus' declaration in defence of Iphigeneia drives the tragic process, the ebb and flow of imminent and averted violation of the symbolic order of *oikos* and *polis*, in dramatic termes the waves of fear and hope, until the young woman goes to her death, disrupting the normal social order of marriage and warfare.

Rather than documenting the lamentable fate of an individual as our aesthetic theatre does, the ritual drama launches a disturbing inversion of the warrior symbol as well as a violation of female destiny, marriage, sending tragic shocks through the course of events. Being a woman and destined for marriage, the heroine is transformed into a courageous warrior, willingly going to her heroic self-sacrifice for the rescue of her *polis*. The end then does not offer any restoration of the proper

35 Loraux 1981b:44, 98ff.; Sourvinou-Inwood 1995:191.

order, it may however have included a final relief and comfort in a *deus ex machina* scene, as some verses cited by Aelian suggest, presenting Artemis' conciliatory pronouncement.

> I will deliver into the hands of the Akhaians a horned hind,
> when sacrificing it they will boast sacrificing your daughter
> (Ael. *NA* 7.39)[36]

Euripides, Trojan Women

Euripides' drama *The Trojan Women* brings Trojan wives and mothers on the scene who are utterly defenseless and lamenting their fate, since their sons and husbands have been killed. Even their last hope, Hektor's son Astyanax is in the end torn from his mother's arms and thrown from the walls of Troy. Towards the end he is being buried, lying in the big shield of his father, while his father's spear is to be planted on the grave. His grandmother Hekabe pronounces a ritual lament, and while Troy is set aflame she rushes into the ruins, but is halted by the chorus.

The drama has been criticised for being static, repetitive and lacking a clearly defined conflict.[37] The dramatic events develop around the protagonist, queen Hekabe, who witnesses how her daughters and daughter in law are dragged away into slavery by the victorious enemy. The *Trojan Women* presents abundant lamentation on the part of these women, who exclaim their utter helplessness in the absence of their husbands and sons. Most interpreters have therefore understood the drama as an accusation against war, on the part of the author, Euripides' pacifistic manifesto,[38] and a concrete protest against the Athenian brutality perpetrated on the Melians. In particular the poet is criticising the violation of women.[39]

This interpretation however remains confined within the dramatic events only and does not pay attention to the positive expressions of the value of defending

36 Jouan 1990:26

> ἔλαφον δ' Ἀχαιῶν χερσίν ἐνθήσω φίλαις
> κεροῦσσαν, ἣν σφάζοντες αὐχήσουσι σὴν
> σφάζειν θυγατέρα.

37 *E.g.* Conacher 1967:139, 1983:334 conceives of the drama as 'a rythm of hope and desolation.' Lesky 1972:391 'die parataktische Struktur dieses Dramas.' Albini 1970:153 'una seria di scene staccate.'

38 *E.g.* Manuwald 1987-88:396, 393, Byl 2000:51 'Le pacifisme d'Euripide n'éclate-t-il pas dans les vers ... 95-97?' Villemonteix 1985. Erp Taalman Kip 1987 however refutes the proposition that Euripides should condemn the Athenian destruction of Melos, concluding that the drama must have been completed before this act of violence occurred. Bosworth 1993:42ff. challenges the notion that Thoukydides should have condemned the Melian expedition. 'There is no hint that Thucydides had any sympathy with the victims or even expected his readers to sympathise.'

39 Goldhill 1986:165f. 'The suffering of the female protagonists is conceived as the direct outcome of the actions of men .... Euripides challenges, then, the direct linkage of fifth-century militarism to homeric heroism.'

one's homeland which occur side by side with the abominations of war. This suggests that, in spite of the fact that nearly all the principal characters are women, the *Trojan Women* evolves around the warrior. While expressing their despair the women implicitly emphasise the importance of those who could have defended them, a key symbol in Greek culture.

The question that now arises is how such diverse utterances are to be understood. On the one hand one has the abomination of war, on the other hand an unequivocal praise of those who might stand up in defense. Answering this question I suggest that this ritual drama does not offer a positive version of the world; rather by documenting the horrors of war, it presents an inversion or disruption of the 'true and ideal' world order. In this way tragic drama *presupposes* 'the truth' rather than expresses it, its workings are like a hypothetical clause provoking cultural reflexes: 'War is horrible, *if* there are no warriors to defend the *polis*.' The drama develops by implying the normal and 'natural' existence of warriors, but it creates a *tragic world upside down*, in which all warriors are absent, exposing their wives and children to the arbitrary cruelty of the enemy. Far from condemning war, this drama thrives on the the essential value of the defender of the *polis*.

In the end Hekabe laments the fact that Hektor's son Astyanax' did not reach the age of manhood, *hebe*.[40] The young Astyanax' death becomes, in fact, the magnetic centre focusing on the value of the warrior.

The prologue is spoken by the gods Athena and Poseidon. Poseidon commenting on the behaviour of the Akhaian host foreshadows the future of those who, after winning the Trojan war, will be struck by disaster.[41] This scene has the effect of creating an inimical attitude to the Akhaians while encouraging identification with the Trojans, a condition for appreciating the symbolic values underlying the drama. The god concludes his speech with a statement which is generally understood as a condemnation of waging war, the text being read and interpreted as follows:

> That human being is a fool (*i.e.* immoral), whoever destroys cities, temples and grave monuments, the sacred places of the deceased; laying <them> waste he is ruined himself later on (95ff.)[42]

40 His untimely death precluded him from reaching manhood and die for his *polis* (1168).

41 Eur. *Tro.* 72, 77-84

42 OCT ed. J. Diggle.

> μῶρος δὲ θνητῶν ὅστις ἐκπορθεῖ πόλεις
> ναούς τε τύμβους θ', ἱερὰ τῶν κεκμηκότων·
> ἐρημίᾳ δοὺς <σφ'> αὐτὸς ὤλεθ' ὕστερον. (95ff.)

Page who has added the object <them> has created the second independent clause as a parallel expression to the first. In this interpretation the word 'αὐτὸς' (himself) lacks a clear function and the addition 'ὕστερον' (later on) does not seem necessary either: every punishment follows the crime.

In this interpretation being a fool, that is, immoral, and being ruined are seen as a necessary causal nexus, constituting the *apodosis* of the indefinite hypothetical clause, which is resumed by the participle clause. What is being expressed is a general condemnation of waging war and the proper retribution upon those who do so ('whoever' wages war).

The last sentence however includes the expressions '*autos*, himself,' which suggests the opposite 'others', and '*husteron*, afterwards,' which implies a 'before.' The Greek clause may be construed with the conjunction *but* (δὲ, proposed by Blomfield) in line 96, so that 'who destroys ...' in the conditional clause is paralleled by the finite '*but* ... afterwards is destroyed himself'(97 ὤλετο).

I choose to follow the slightly different reading offered by Kovacs, who proposes that only the clause 'he is a fool' represents the *apodosis*—the meaning of '*moros*' being rather 'an object of ridicule, contempt' than 'immoral'[43]—while the rest of the sentence constitutes the *protasis* clause.[44]

> That human being is a fool [an object of ridicule and contempt], whoever destroys cities, *but* laying waste temples and graves, the sacred places of the deceased, afterwards is destroyed himself (emphasis added).

The interpretation then will be: while he succeeds in winning a war over others, he does not succeed in avoiding his own destruction. With this expression Poseidon does not condemn war as such, he forebodes the destruction of his and Athena's enemies and expresses his hostility and contempt. Although the horrors of war were obvious, the thought of abolishing war did not emerge in classical Greece. In addition warfare was a central source of prestige.[45] This is expressed several times in the drama. The Trojans dying in defence of their homeland earned most honourable renown (*kleos* 386ff.), and

43 *Cf.* Hekabe's parallel sentence: 'The human being is a fool (θνητῶν δὲ μῶρος ὅστις), whoever while prospering rejoices [in this] thinking it is guaranteed.' (1203 f.).

44 Kovacs 1983:337. δὲ (line 96) was proposed by Blomfield

> μῶρος δὲ θνητῶν ὅστις ἐκπορθεῖ πόλεις,
> ναούς δὲ τύμβους θ', ἱερὰ τῶν κεκμηκότων,
> ἐρημίᾳ δοὺς αὐτὸς ὤλεθ' ὕστερον. (95ff.)

I would suggest that we keep the text as it is transmitted ἐκπορθεῖ, and interpret the clause ναούς ... δοὺς as a *distributio* equivalent to the general verb while introducing the contrast between destroying and being destroyed with δὲ: 'He is a fool, whoever destroys cities, but [having destroyed them] is afterwards destroyed himself,' *cf.* Kovacs' paraphrase (1983:337): 'Foolish is that mortal who sacks cities but who, when he has emptied the temples and tombs, holy places of the departed, perishes later himself.'

45 Runciman 1998: 742 'In this culture, there was no prestige to be gained by repudiating the values bound up with warfare as such. Nowhere out of Greek religion did there ever emerge either pacifists or conscientious objectors .... the variations all presupposed that hoplite warfare between citizens of rival *poleis* was an estimable as well as unavoidable human activity, and conformity to the "indicator traits" associated with it was the obvious means for adult males to acquire prestige.'

Hektor's fate proves that military glory is not despised (*doxas aristos* 395). In the same vein the notion of 'noble death' is expressed by Kassandra

> Whoever is in his senses must avoid war;
> Whenever it comes so far though, it is a not despisable crown [glory]
> to be destroyed with honour for the *polis*, without honour it is ignoble. (400ff.)

As often with Euripides, the part immediately following the expository prologue introduces the tragic process.[46] This 'emotional prologue' sounds the tone around the central inversion and launches strong emotions in Hekabe's lament, giving voice to the despair and utter desolation of the wives of the 'bronze-lanced Trojans.' (143).

Several interpreters have underscored the importance of erotic elements in the *Trojan women*, in particular Elizabeth Craik.[47] Kassandra the virgin is forced to become the concubine of the enemy (252ff.). The women foresee their fate as prisoners, now that the Trojans have been massacred (562ff.). To Andromakhe the mere thought of being unfaithful to her former husband is abhorrent (662ff.). The fact that the Trojan catastrophe is seen from the viewpoint of the women victims, who are exposed to the mercy of their enemies and incapable of defending themselves serves again to exarcerbate the reactions of the male audience. Already early in the drama the loss of males is signaled, the death of Priamos and his sons is deplored (41), an alarm bell which will gradually sound louder. Andromakhe addressing Hekabe presents a panegyric of her husband Hektor:

> Mother of the man who with his spear destroyed most Argives (610f.)

During the *parodos* Hekabe once more laments the destruction of the *polis* (173) and the distress of eslavement (194ff.), while the chorus amplifies her lament. The following episode brings on the scene the despair of the prisoners of war in all its horror. They are assigned by lot to the enemy, deprived of all dignity, terror stricken, degraded, delivered to slavery, and robbed of their children (239-292). The episode is ended with Hekabe's complaint that her excellent sons have fallen, by the lance of the Akhaians (475-479). In the next episode Hektor's son Astyanax is brought together with the bronze arms of his father Hektor (574), who is invoked as the protector of his wife (587, 590). Andromakhe's desperate apostrophe to her husband (673f.) underscores that the wives are reduced to slavery and drawn in exile as result of the warriors' absence (677f.). The episode ends with Talthybios announcing the death sentence of Astyanax (719), the male who had been the ultimate hope of reviving the *polis* (703ff.).[48]

46 Bouvrie 1990 (1992): *e.g.* 226, 247, 279, 299.

47 Craik 1990:14 'Marriage and what can be done with it is the vehicle, almost the "objective correlative" ... of the play's dramatic statement.'

Nor will the father's kin be there or the force of the Trojans (754). Talthybios' order is accompanied by a menace towards Andromakhe:

> You do not have protection anywhere, you have to realise;
> the city is destroyed as is your husband,
> and you are in our hands (730).

The central episode offers a fierce debate between Hekabe, Menelaos and Helene, bringing into focus a wife's obligation of chastity (1027, 1056), and the honour and shame surrounding this value (982, 1013, 1027, 1041). We may then suggest that the symbol of marriage is drawn into the centre of attention as well, exacerbating the future fate of the prisoner women.

After the debate scene the chorus once more addresses their husbands complaining of their powerlessness in front of the victorious Akhaians (1081 ff.), their inability to protect their children (1098f.), in particular the vulnerability of their daughters (1091 ff.).

Andromakhe has now left, forced to follow Neoptolemos, while apostrophing her husband's grave and once more praying that their child be buried in the shield of his father, once 'the terror of the Akhaians' (1130-1142). The way this object is given prominence in the drama supports the hypothesis that the symbolic centre of the tragedy is the institution of the hoplite warrior, expressed in the image of the hoplite's crucial attribute, his large shield (*hoplon*). Hekabe's monologue before burying her grandson Astyanax further strengthens this assumption. She introduces her funeral lament speaking to Hektor's child (1167), to his shield (1194, 1221f.), and to his son's arm (1178). Hekabe addresses the shield, as if she spoke to her son Hektor, the defender of Troy, bursting into a lyrical hymn to the honour and glory of the great warrior. Hektor's son will not reach the age of '*hebe*, manhood' and fall for his city (1167 ff.), but he will fill the shield, that brought his father the greatest honour (1225). Hektor's arm as well as his shield, the latter being personified as the 'mother of innumerable victories' (!), are amplified with Homeric *epitheta ornantia* 'bronze-clad', 'noble-limbed' and later on 'noble-victorious' (*kallinike*), an expression which is the cult epithet of Herakles, the protector of warriors (1221f.).[49]

The burning of Troy prompts the women to leave for their slaves' abode (1311) addressing their fallen husbands and sons in despair (1303, 1309).

48 '... not to keep alive the son of 'excellent' Hektor (723, *cf.* 709)
'Hektor however will not emerge from the earth
grasping his famous lance to your rescue' (752f.).

49 Eur. *Tro.* 1193f., 1221 χαλκόνωτον, καλλίπηχυν, καλλίνικε.

Euripides, Herakles

In the first part Herakles' aged father Amphitryon, his wife Megara, and his young sons are threatened by the usurper king Lykos in Thebes. While Herakles is absent in Hades, Lykos has decided to kill them and is about to drag them from the altar of Zeus. Just in time Herakles arrives and succeeds in saving his family. He kills Lykos. Suddenly Iris and Lyssa (Madness) arrive, sent by Hera. They strike Herakles with mad rage, and he attacks and kills his children and wife. He is only stopped by Athena from killing his father. In the last part of the drama Herakles is calmed by king Theseus who promises to hand over all his shrines in Attika and escort him to Athens.

Euripides' *Herakles* presents at the dramatic level a series of highly disturbing events with sudden and violent shifts in the intrigue. This drama which is split into two (or three) separate actions has brought interpreters to despair.[50]

How indeed can we understand a drama in which the protagonist comes to the rescue of his beloved *philoi*, only to kill them immediately afterwards in mad rage, without any reasonable motive, just by the intervention of some divine power? How in addition should we explain the fact that the protagonist is one of the most revered heroes of Athenian cult?[51]

We should however by now be prepared to ask questions about the specific *tragic* quality of this drama. We should not ask: how is the hero represented (through *mimesis*) and what document does his portrait offer us on human existence in general? Nor again: How does the hero's horrible act develop causally? Instead we should explore: What fundamental institution or values, that is, key symbol, is violated, which social roles are involved? Now defending one's *philoi*, kin and adopted kin, and killing one's *ekhthroi*, enemies, are the central duties of a warrior. We may therefore once more start with the working hypothesis that Euripides' *Herakles* turns around the key symbol of the warrior, and compare its prominence in Athenian culture. Not *human* existence is at stake, but the nature of the *adult male warrior* and the conditions of his existence.

The cult of Herakles

The cult of Herakles was particularly vital in Athens. Young warriors were trained as boys at the gymnasion, until they were of mature age. War training was put under the protection of Hermes and Herakles. In Kynosarges, Akademeia, Melite, Marathon, and Tetrakomos they had a common altar.[52] The ephebes had

50 *E.g.* Chalk (1962:7) 'Despite the discussion of a hundred years, the unity of Euripides' *Herakles* remains a problem'. *Cf.* Shelton 1979.

51 Woodford 1971.

52 Woodford 1971:214

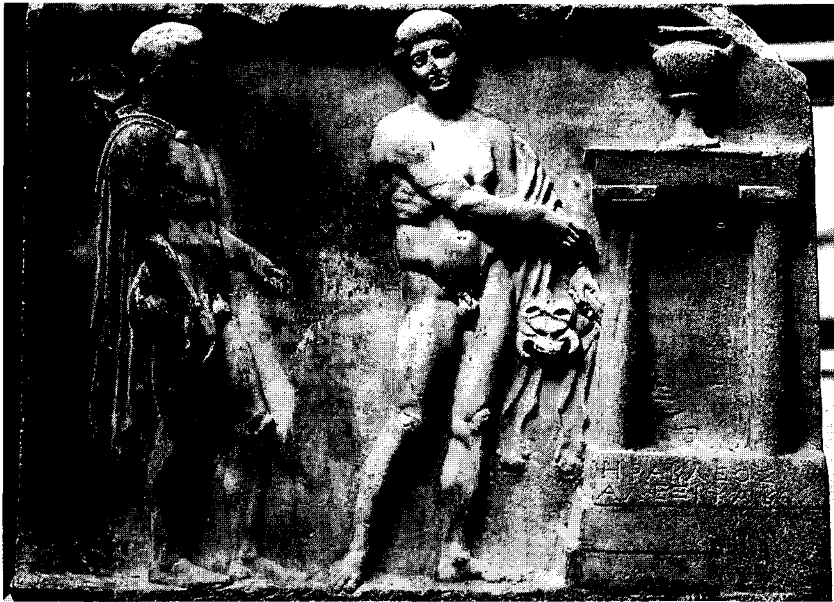

Fig. 2 Votive relief from Attika dedicated to Herakles Alexikakos (Averter of evil). Herakles stands near a four-column Doric shrine related to the oinisteria ritual of the ephebes. Hermes approaches from the left. Both were central in the education of young warriors. Early 4th century BC. Boston Museum of Fine Arts, MFA nr. 96.696

to swear their oath of loyalty to the polis invoking a number of divinities among whom Herakles.[53]

It was from the shrine of Herakles in Marathon that the hoplite army departed for the battle against the Persians, and the army returned to Herakles' shrine in Kynosarges (Hdt. 6.108, 116). After the famous battle the athletic celebration was organised on a pan-Attic scale.[54] The painting which was set up in commemoration in the Stoa Poikile on the Agora represented the battle scene, with Athena and Herakles witnessing the event as well as Theseus rising from the soil (Paus. 1.15.39).

There were many other, minor, shrines dedicated to Herakles, at which the young warriors offered their hair and celebrated their coming of age, at a rite called *oinisteria*.[55] To adult men he could figure as the prototype of the hoplite warrior. Just before the Battle of Leuktra in 371 the Thebans received a favourable omen: the arms hanging in the Herakleion had disappeared from the walls of the shrine,

53 *Cf.* the inscription found at Akharnai, Conomis 1959:120.

54 Woodford 1971:217.

55 Hsch. *s.v.* '*oinisteria*', Phot. *Bibl. s.v.* '*oinisteria*', Ath. 11.494f., *cf.* Woodford 1971:214, Travlos 1971:274ff., Walter 1937.

Fig. 3 Red-figure Attic pelikè vase. Herakles attacks Geras (Old-Age, GERAS is added on the vase). From the Geras-painter, about 480-70 BC. Beazley, ARV 175.11. Brommer AA 67, 1952. Paris, Musée du Louvre nr. G 234. Photo RMN-Hervé Lewandowski.

just as if Herakles had gone to battle, Xenophon tells us (Xen. *Hell.* 6.4.7). A prominent cult epithet of Herakles is *Kallinikos* ('Noble Victory,' Conomis 1959:130).

Xenophon the Athenian who led the expedition of ten thousand warriors home from Persia in 400, tells us in his work *Anabasis* how he rallied his troops before a hoplite attack: 'My men, you should keep in mind how many battles we have gone through with the aid of the gods, so you should follow Herakles as your leader, *hegemon*.' Later on Xenophon sacrifices to Herakles and consults the god about his strategy (Xen. *An.* 6.5.25).

The representation of Herakles in mythical tales and iconography includes scenes in which the hero, the paragon of Greek male strength and warrior excellence, fights a peculiar creature, named *Geras*, Old Age (*LIMC s.v.* 'Geras', Brommer 1952, Hafner 1958, Shapiro 1993:89-94). In other scenes Herakles is welcomed at Mount Olympos as a god and married to *Hebe*, Youth (*LIMC s.v.* 'Hebe'), Schauenburg 1963:127, Harrison 1967:52, Laurens 1996:239).

These aspects combine to a symbol of glorious male strength, celebrated in *Hebe*, and opposed to *Geras*. In contexts of war and war training, then, Herakles figures as the magnetic field generating feelings of awe for the warrior symbol.

Euripides' drama

With this brief overview of Athenian customs, cult and symbolic representations, we should once more consider Euripides' *Herakles*. The initial situation of the drama is the danger which threatens Herakles' familiy, his aged father Amphitryon, his three small sons and his wife Megara. The person of Lykos has been invented, but in Athenian tradition the hero Theseus has two enemies of the same name, suggesting that the audience associated the name with 'enemy.'[56] Amphitryon wishes he still had his *hebe*, and the chorus which consists of former warriors deplores their state of weakness in the *parodos*, emphasising their age (*geron geronta* 126) and looking back to the time they carried their spear in common attack.[57]

The first part of the Herakles can thus be said to create a tragic disruption of the normal world order. There are no adult warriors present able to protect their *polis*, their aged parents, their wives and children (295-300, 322-326). In the hero's absence his family is defenseless.

After this scene the chorus sing an ode to the glory of Herakles' invincible strength (348-435), while they end their ode lamenting their own lack of strength and power (436-441) to avert the death doom that threathens Herakles' family (454f., 490ff., 501f.).

56 Mills 1997:131 n.7.

57 Meyer 1989.

When Herakles has arrived, the chorus of elder warriors entones a hymn of praise to youth, *hebe*, and an abomination of hateful *geras*, old age (637-668). They close their ode with a *kallinikon* song in honour of Herakles' excellence *(arete* 681, 697).[58] Shortly afterwards Lukos, the enemy, is killed (760).

As soon as this scene is over the goddesses Iris and Lyssa arrive and strike Herakles with mad rage (863, 931ff.). The consequences are terrible, when the hero attacks his wife and sons. In Homer Lyssa is the expression for war frenzy (Hom. *Il.* 9.237-39), when warriors are possessed with murderous rage killing all and everybody, going berserk.[59] This condition is opposed to the orderly march in the collective hoplite attack.

The whole scene then can be seen as an inversion of warrior practice: believing that he attacks the enemy, Herakles directs his martial violence towards his own *philoi*. In addition Herakles engages in an act of warrior frenzy, *lyssa*, the sort of irresistible murderous rage, which characterises Hektor and Achilleus in the *Iliad* (9, 239, 395; 21, 542) slaughtering their enemies. Instead of fighting in ordely rank and file Herakles goes utterly berserk.

During the whole drama Herakles' duty to protect his family and kill his enemy are the principal values underlying the dramatic events. Lykos on the contrary evokes the sentiments of 'our enemy.'

In tragic violation of the positive values Herakles is first an absent warrior and thus unable to defend his *philoi*, and after that he behaves like an 'anti-warrior' attacking and killing the wrong enemy, his wife and children, and addition an 'anti-hoplite' raging in wild and murderous frenzy.

The interesting fact is that their death as well as Herakles' downfall is not presented as a domestic tragedy. When Herakles kills his sons, he believes he is attacking the family of Eurystheus, his arch-enemy and the verb that is used is the expression for killing in combat *(enairein* 866) His father describes Herakles' attack as a 'war that is no war' (ἀπόλεμον ... πόλεμον 1133).

We have, at last, to ask, in what sense Herakles can be said to have been a symbol of the hoplite warrior. His arms and weapons, belonging to mythical tradition, are of course the wrong ones.[60]At the end of the 5th century however more differentiated military techniques were introduced, and it seems that the drama turns around the abstract essence of warriorship: to protect one's polis possessing full masculine strength (*hebe*), the warrior's excellence (*arete*), and courage (*andreia*),

58 Pralon 1992.

59 Lincoln 1991, *cf.* Shay 1994:77-91, 218-19, Baudy 1993.

60 Sergent (1991) suggests that the bow is generically a weapon of marginal groups (*ephebes*, Scythians, Amazons) as well as the superhuman Herakles. *Cf.* Hamilton 1985.

Fig. 4 Kalyx-krater vase from Paestum signed by the painter Asteas, 4th century BC. Theatre scene of the madness of Herakles: Herakles throwing a child on a pyre. To the right his wife Megara tries to escape. In the upper gallery from the far left Mania (Madness), his companion Iolaos and his mother Alkmene are watching the scene. A.D. Trendall, Paestan Pottery. 31. pl. vii. Madrid. Museo Arqueológico nacional. nr. 11094. Photo Archivo fotográfico.

to fight in orderly attack, and stand firm in the face of death (1351, *cf.* Gibert 1997:252).

Xenophon reports a speech held by the Spartan king Arkhidamos, who exhorts his troops: 'Men, countrymen, let us be brave *(agathoi)* and look forward with steadfast eyes. Let us hand over our homeland to our descendants, as we received it from our fathers. Let us avoid feeling ashamed in front of our children, wives, aged parents *(gerontes)* and guest friends' *(xenoi,* Xen. *Hell.* 7.1.30). After the speech, Xenophon continues, thunder and lightning struck from heaven. There happened to be a shrine and a statue of Herakles on the right wing. As a consequence of all this the warriors were filled with such a fighting urge and courage that their commanders had a tough job holding them back.

Conclusion: the warrior as a key symbol?

The tragedies investigated in this paper do not represent the *polis* symbol or institution of the warrior in its positive image, an admirable paragon of male virtue. Nor do they present a moralistic warning against misbehaviour. The audience was instead presented with a *world-upside-down* staging absent, abnormal, or misguided warriors, which provoked its sense of the normal and natural order. The tragic events sent electrical charges of shock and horror through the theatre, revitalising the audience's cultural reflexes towards the correct order of warrior existence.

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