Utrecht University
Master Programme:
Contemporary Theatre, Dance and Dramaturgy.

Women Empowerment:
Representing Clytemnestra as the paradigm for female emancipation – the case of *Electra* by Theodora Voutsa.

Eugenia Antypa
6392288
Supervisor: Dr. Laura Karreman
Second Reader: Dr. Konstantina Georgelou

Submission Date: 24-07-2019

Abstract

The thesis researches the way the character of Clytemnestra is adapted by Theodora Voutsa in her adaptation of *Electra* in order to empower women, as well as the importance this adaptation carries for both, the audiences and for the research. At first, there is an appointment of the objectives that Greek drama had during theatre's emergence in (prominently) the fifth century BCE, which was religious, political and, consequently, educational, while it promotes the importance myth had for its context, its construction and its rise; on top of that there is a description how Greeks tragedy keeps educating audiences today through contemporary productions and possibilities. In order for the reader to comprehend and follow the development of the character of Clytemnestra in the adaptation by Voutsa, the research continues with the review of the ancient literature, the epic and lyric poetry texts where there are references of the character, while in the following chapter it deepens with Clytemnestra's representation in tragedy, from Aeschylus to Euripides and the variations they created, since there was enough space for alternations. Later, the thesis investigates the motives and goals that Theodora Voutsa has in order for her to create a feminist character (Clytemnestra) who empowers women, while it continues with the hypothesis of the new play's context, and the details of its adaptation. At the same time, there is a comparison between the two characters, Clytemnestra of the original tradition and Clytemnestra by Voutsa and it further analyses how this adopted, alternated character may educate and empower women and assist in their own emancipation and freedom. Finally, the thesis concludes with the evaluation of the process as well as with suggestions for further research, while in the Appendix there is the whole interview with Theodora Voutsa about the play.

Contents

Introduction

1. How it all Started……………………………………………………………..3

2. The Purpose of the Thesis………………………………………………….3

3. The current context and discourses……………………………………...4

4. The Research Question…………………………………………………….5

Chapter 1: Educating Audiences since Antiquity

1. The Objectives of Theatre in Ancient Greece……………………………...7

2. Greek Drama's teaching in modern and contemporary stagings…………………..9

Chapter 2: The Representation of Clytemnestra in epic and lyric poetry

1. Who is Clytemnestra?……………………………………………………….11

2. The bitch-eyed one: Clytemnestra in Epic Poetry………………………...12

3. From a heartless bitch-eyed mistress to a mourning mother: Clytemnestra in Lyric Poetry……………………………………………………………….13

Chapter 3: Clytemnestra's multidimensionality – the character's aspects in Tragic Poetry

1. The Woman who thinks like a man………………………………………….15

2. The Hateful Mother…………………………………………………………….16

3. The Afraid Wife……………………………………………………………...…18

4. Clytemnestra down to Earth………………………………………………….19

5. The multidimensionality and potentiality of the character………………………..21

Chapter 4: Clytemnestra: The real Protagonist in *Electra* by Theodora Voutsa

1. Empowerment via theatre……………………………………………………...23

2. The creation of the play's context……………………………………………...25

3. *Electra.* Based on the myth of the Oresteia. A new play by Theodora Voutsa.

i. Hypothesis…………………………………………………………………....25

ii. Adaptation and Analysis……………………………………………………..26

Conclusion………………………………………………………………………….29

Appendix…………………………………………………………………………….31

Bibliography……………………………………………………………………...…34

Introduction

1. How it all started

The first time that I came across an ancient female voice who attempts to re-narrate history and myth, was in 2006, when my mother brought home a book with an illustrated cover called *Penelopiad*.[1] As a teenager I could not understand why an adult would want to read a fairy-tale about Odysseus' wife, since the *Odyssey* for me had been a bedtime story when I was a kid and in my teenage mind I wanted nothing to do with things that connected me with childhood. For a few years I was observing the book, whether it lied on the coffee table, or in the bookcase, or on the night stand, never asking about it, never opening it or reading the back cover. When I finished my undergraduate studies in 2014, I was going to study Classics in England and I thought that I should start practising my English so I began reading the book. It was not a book for kids, neither a bedtime story. It was a female voice struggling to be heard. Female voices struggling to be heard had become an everyday observation: feminist websites and accounts were reported and shut down, social media were full of people shaming women's pictures, there were scandals regarding women's exploitation in Hollywood by producers or directors, hashtags like #*feminazi* and #*feminismisnonecessary* were created. All that, in combination with my personal experiences and encounters with patriarchy and its ideas lead me to want to take action.

There needed to follow another two years, until I was present in a discussion between classicists claiming that classics are dying and I should not pursue a career in the field. At that moment my heart melted and my anxiety about my future started taking over. But when I returned home that same afternoon, that book, *Penelopiad*, was waiting for me. The book that when I first laid eyes on I pretended to ignore; the book that was to become a mere excuse for me to declare that classics are not dying, since there is a worldwide legacy that cannot be ignored and rejected. I wanted to take action and address these issues that bothered me to the world; only I could do it my way: through theatre.

2. The purpose of the thesis

The journey of the research for this thesis was long, not in terms of time, but in terms of my personal conflict between my studies in Classics and my studies in Contemporary Theatre. As I have been a classicist for more than ten years it was a (creative) challenge for me to see the theoretical framework and the practices of contemporary theatre being applied into the classical texts, practices and ideas of ancient Greek drama. But as it is my firm belief that ancient Greek drama is eternal and the ideas it represents can and should be transferred and adapted into the modern and contemporary stage – and in contemporary thought as well – I began my research on how adaptations of the ancient Greek theatre may teach and educate their audiences and give prominence to its value.

1 Atwood, Margaret. *Penelopiad*. Canongate U.S., 2005.

My initial thought once I started both my research and my internship was to make a comparative dramaturgical analysis between the original text and play *Electra* by Sophocles and the adaptation of Sophocles' *Electra* by Theodora Voutsa. I had in mind to question, research and prove that ancient Greek drama has the ability to adapt into any time frame and (socially) educate the audiences worldwide, as the ideas it represents are perpetual. Additionally, while conducting my internship with Theodora Voutsa Productions Foundation (TVPF), I was quite inspired and influenced by my internship provider and supervisor Theodora Voutsa regarding the feminist aspects of ancient Greek drama transmitted into the contemporary stage. Her statement that "the real protagonist of the tragedy is not Electra herself, but her mother Clytemnestra", and the fact that Theodora concentrates her attention equally on both female characters, as, according to her, "they are the two sides of the same coin: they are the same person,"[2] led my research and thought also towards the feminist aspects of the character(s).

3. The current context and discourse

The reason I have chosen to concentrate my attention on that specific subject matter, the representation of Clytemnestra in contemporary stagings of the ancient Greek drama, is because of the fact that, currently, in theatrical research there is not a big variety of scholars and researchers concentrated interdisciplinarily in all three fields of ancient Greek theatre, contemporary theatre and feminist studies. Scholars who are interested in the theatrical fields (Classical and Contemporary) and are simultaneously cognizant of both fields are fewer,[3] while I am aware only of one scholar whose interests lie on both classical reception and feminism.[4] I am not claiming that I am a specialist in the field of feminism; I only mention that my research for this thesis includes a couple of references in the field. My intention is to attempt to conduct my research stepping on the two fields of theatre and feminism studies. Of course, it is not insignificant that my academic and personal interests lie on these fields; my fondness of ancient Greek drama is prominent, since my studies and my research have primarily regarded the Athenian drama, while at the same time I consider feminism an institution more topical and necessary than ever before during its history.

As Voutsa's objective through the production *Electra* is "women's empowerment", I read a couple of works on history and theory of feminism[5] and I gathered information from online sources regarding feminism in theatre, in order to make some observations: apart

2 These are phrases stated by her in both the interview in the Appendix and our personal correspondence.

3 E.g. Lorna Hardwick, Edith Hall, Simon Goldhill, Helene Foley, Fiona Macintosh, Pantelis Michelakis. There are some more scholars whose research and interest lie on the interdisciplinarity of these two fields, however, I have chosen to mention the scholars whose works I read for the thesis.

4 Vanda Zajko, who has argued that combining the two fields "could lead to a feeling of voicelessness, exclusion and invisibility so that instead of being a cross-disciplinary mode of textual analysis, academic feminism, within the fairly small world of Classics sometimes seemed a barely acknowledged sub-grouping of the discipline" in "'What Difference has is made?': Feminist Models of Reception". *A Companion to Classical Reception*, edited by Lorna Hardwick and Christopher Stray. Blackwell Publishing, 2008, p.226. Her feminist work also includes "Women in Greek Myth" and *Laughing with Medusa: Classical Greek and Feminist Thought*.

5 The two main studies I consulted in regards with feminism theory and history are Jason Powell, *Feminism*, Nova Science Publishers, Inc, 2013, and Susan Osborne, *Feminism*, Pocket Essentials, 2001.

from the fact that women still get less hired than men in the theatre industry, any motivation for empowerment by women is not as large as one might think. From what I have observed during these few months of my research,[6] and from some conversations I have had with female comedian actresses and directors from Greece, women prefer to be accepted by their male counterparts in the theatre industry, rather than indicate the inequality that exists. Besides, as Vanda Zajko states "a commitment to feminist modes of analysis depends upon a belief that systems of representation structured around the binary of sexual difference continue to propagate imparity … one of the questionable issues here is whether feminism can operate as meta-narrative, as somehow 'outside' or in the vanguard of other discourses, commenting critically upon them." (2008: 227).[7] If women themselves do not realise and acknowledge that in the 21st century there is discrimination, there will not be any change; if women are not educated and empowered and reassured that they are not alone, they will not probably react. As a consequence to that fact, I decided that this is what should be not only merely mentioned once or twice, but should be indicated as a strong reason and motivation for the research of this thesis to investigate the new (contemporary) attempt by female authors, playwrights, directors, activists etc to empower women once again in the dawn of the 21st century.

And then, the news about the abortion law in Georgia came out. All over the internet and the news people – mostly women – are protesting against men making laws about women's bodies. All over the (mainly western) world there has been a huge conversation about a subject that should be totally and exclusively a personal decision. In combination with other female and feminist movements, like #*metoo* and #*sayno*, I once more noticed the necessity for protest, each one the way they can. I am not going to discuss further here about the patriarchal and quite dangerous mentality behind these decisions, but I want to state that contemporary political and social incidents affect artistic production and consequently my own interest orientation, from an analysis of character to a feminist review of the ancient Greek theatrical character(s).

4. The Research Question

The words *classics* and *classical* may be mentioned quite a few times in this research thesis, however, this is not a thesis about classics. The thematics are based on ancient Greek theatre as a field of study, especially on the myth of the Oresteia, and the research about the representations of Clytemnestra's character is based on and conducted through the original (ancient) texts of the dramatists and the poets of antiquity, but the results of the research do

6 The results of my observations on feminism in the theatre sector indicate a few things: (i) that all over Europe there is a strong attempt to create (feminist) theatre companies and plays that address the problems of contemporary society and target for equality in employment and salaries; (ii) that no matter the fact that companies declare to be on board with equality, male employees and artists are still more than female; (iii) that women today, including those in the audience, still have fear in regards with the male gaze and patriarchal prototypes and exemplars. For further information see the links in Bibliography – 4. Online References.

7 Followed by p. 232: "this constant reference to classical texts forms a continuity between the new forms of feminism and the old because classical myth, in particular, has always been central to the development of feminist thought." Zajko, Vanda, ibid.

not regard situations and conditions of the antiquity. The question this research intends to investigate is the way the character of Clytemnestra has been represented by male authors, mainly in theatre and also in other genres (epic and lyric poetry); moreover it investigates the way this long inheritance has been perceived, adapted and represented by Theodora Voutsa in the script-in-the-making *Electra*[8] in order to educate and empower women today. It may be said that this is a cross-disciplinary research in the academic fields of theatre studies (dramaturgy) and the reception of Athenian drama[9] into contemporary stage.

My approach on the research question included some steps: first, I scanned the ancient texts (epic, lyric and tragic poetry) where Clytemnestra is mentioned and made a working definition, so that my reader can follow the character as it has been described and also comprehend the importance of the adaptations and changes in the new play. At the same time, I worked with Theodora Voutsa on the making process of the play and I extracted all information about the new character she creates. Next, I recorded the details of the new character and I compared it with the original one, in order to reach my conclusion. I also interviewed Theodora in regards with the play and the character.

In the chapters that follow, first I introduce the general aspects of ancient Greek theatre: from antiquity its purpose, its goals and objectives were, among others like religious and political context, to educate its audiences; it the chapter I also discuss how contemporary theatre has and continues to educate today. In the second chapter, I talk about the character of Clytemnestra as it was perceived in the ancient Greek tradition, in epic and lyric poetry and the difference of perspectives between these two genres. There follows (chapter 3) the representation of the character in tragic poetry of the fifth century BCE in the works of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides. In the fourth and final chapter, I appoint the adaptations made by Theodora Voutsa in regards with the character of Clytemnestra – I also include in the analysis Electra – whom Voutsa treats as the other half of Clytemnestra – in order for Voutsa to showcase the conditions of females today and, through the production, to educate, empower and denote to contemporary women that they can act, they have to do it and I can have positive results. Since the script is in progress, I indicate her main objectives and the description of the (new) character of Clytemnestra.

8 The script of the play is currently being worked by Voutsa and is about to be produced during the next (couple of) year(s).

9 For further reading regarding the reception of Greek drama in ancient and modern times see van Zyl Smit, Betine (ed.). *A Handbook to the Reception of Greek Drama*. Wiley Blackwell, 2016.

Chapter 1

Educating Audience since Antiquity

1. The Objectives of Theatre in Ancient Greece and the *polis*

In order for the reader to comprehend the importance of the adaptations and re-makings of characters of Greek myth in the modern stage, there needs to be a short discussion of the customs and traditions of Greek tragedy as well as the position female characters have in tragic plays. This is necessary, in order to create awareness regarding the central position that drama had in the city's life. It is also quite important for the reader to be aware of the fact that alternations in character representation is not a new practice; it has been happening since antiquity, when the first dramatic event occurred and the first dramatist adapted his mythological characters into a play, with a purpose to serve the social urgencies and needs of the time.

Tragedy in 5th century BC Athens was more that just custom. It was a tradition, a religious festival, a cult and a devotion to the gods. More than that, it was also a political means to give prominence to the democratic city-state, to denote the power of the imperialistic Athenian Alliance and Hegemony and to educate its audiences – who also participated in and were educated by the other democratic institutions: the Assembly, the Council and the Law Court. Tragedy's didactic aftermath has been well established in classical scholarship and its value has often been appointed throughout the centuries. Besides, drama was not only a way to (philosophically) represent ideas, ideals and concepts, but also the way to create new characters, formulate and change the established storylines of the myth and alternate it in order to form new traditions.[10] The modification of the characters was the tragic poets' and even the *polis*' way to introduce or criticize behaviours, and consequently form political ramifications.

The main source that ancient Greek drama used in order to create and adapt the storylines for the plays was the Greek mythology.[11] The dramatists used the mythological incidents, adapted them and created (new) worlds for each play. Since most myths had variations, the dramatists were able – and also were expected – to transform the stories according to the play's (and the audience's) needs. The myths were themselves didactic (in many cases the protagonists suffered consequences due to their own arrogance), and the dramatists also transformed and adapted them according to the themes they wished to explore (e.g. the protagonists' incompetence to control their fate was an important and significant theme). Most popular where the myths about royal and heroic families and the

10 See, for example, Medea, who is notorious for killing her children from Euripides's homonym tragedy; Medea nowhere else in mythological tradition is guilty of infanticide.

11 There have been testimonies of earlier and later dramatists using contemporary events, eg the poet Phrynichus in 493 BCE and Agathon in 417 BCE, but the vast majority of the extant corpus of drama is consistent with mythology (see Coally, Neil. "Tragedy's Teaching", 2008, p. 67).

way they descended from the power,[12] a theme that also served the institution of democracy or, in other cases, criticized it.[13]

Hence, the primary aim of the dramatists would be, as long as they had the responsibility of educating and forming character to the audience, to bring up core themes of humanity which are eternal and have no borders and eras.[14] The educational aspect of the dramatic production may be termed in this chapter as *didaskalia*.[15] *Didaskalia* was indirectly linked with the passing of the knowledge of mythology to the audience, hence it was promptly connected with the intellectual learning, the education and the formation of character of the audience. It is quite significant to introduce the reason why *didaskalia* is connected not only with the didactic aspect of drama, but also with mythology.[16] Both mythology and ancient Greek drama used to be (among others) the means and particularly the themes of education for the Athenian (and foreign) audience. Education in Athens was a private issue and it depended on the financial resources and the willingness of the family to educate their children. As a matter of fact, it was mostly the rich(er) citizens who were able to afford education and hire private tutors to teach their children to read and write, and later send them to private educational groups to learn music, mathematics, geometry, poetry. As a consequence, the rest of the Athenian citizens as well as women, children, slaves, were educated through the myths as story-telling and also during the several religious festivals that used to take place annually in honour of the gods, such as the Great or City Dionysia in the name of Dionysus, when and where new drama plays debuted. As a result, the dramatists, tragedians and comedians, had the responsibility for the quality of education[17]

12 For example, the way Oedipus' arrogance led to his self-blinding.

13 cf. Bonnie Honig's article "Antigone's Lament, Creon's Grief: Mourning, Membership and the Politics of Exception" (2009) where the author argues that Creon represents the democratic institution while Antigone, on the other hand, is the reminiscent of the older, aristocratic mentality, according to which aristocratic families inherited their power and excellence, (*aristeia*) from their ancestors. See also Page duBois "The Death of the Character" (2014) who, occasioned by Honig, expands the idea of the individual and the city. Further, B. X. de Wet in his 1977 article "The *Electra* of Sophocles – a Study in Social Values" discusses the contemporary to the tragedy laws and ethics regarding family and social bonds.

14 Such themes are whether the human laws should be above divine or ethical laws (in *Antigone*), whether a woman should revenge her child's murder and an adultery as well as be in charge of the household (in *Agamemnon*).

15 Also cf. the definition from LSJ online: http://stephanus.tlg.uci.edu/lsj/#eid=27286&context=lsj&action=from-search. *Didaskalia* derives from the Greek verb *didaskō* that translates into **teach**, instruct. Therefore, the definition of *didaskalia* from modern Greek to English is the **teaching** of a subject. *Didaskalia* in terms of connotation is mostly educational: first and foremost it is the transfer of the knowledge from one individual or group to another individual or group, for example a lesson at school or a lecture at university, even in some cases a mere presentation of a subject; in a broader context it is the (amount of) information or knowledge that is being given or passed to someone or oneself. However, we have been inherited the concept of *didaskalia* as a term by the ancient Greek theatre-making and the dramatists: *didaskalia*, in the context of ancient Greek drama, was the procedure of creating the theatre performances (three tragedies and a satyr drama) from its beginning to its end. It included the conception of the idea (of a trilogy), the writing of the texts, the selection of the actors, the rehearsals, the memorization of the verses by the actors, the staging, the performance and, finally, the results of the voting. Some scholars also include in the definition of *didaskalia* the sponsorship (*chorēgia*).

16 For a broader and extensive perspective see Neil Croally's "Tragedy's Traching" (2008), who has done a thorough and meticulous research on the didactic aspect of drama. Croally also argues that tragedy was expected to teach its audience – which was rather diverse – and was implicitly one of the institutions (among the Law Court, *dikastērion*, the Council, *boulē* and the Assembly, *ekklēsia*) where the public education of the Athenian democratic *polis* of the fifth century BCE was taking place.

17 In this chapter I use the term *didaskalia* as connected to the modern Greek meaning of the term (teach). Here, when I talk about *didaskalia* I refer to the educational aspect of the Athenian drama to its contemporaries. The formation

they were providing these groups of people with, who were theoretically educated by the city-state.[18]

In the corpus of the dramatic plays there are themes that may not be obvious from a first reading of a text or from a mere spectating of a play. For example, female characters such as Clytemnestra, Medea, Antigone, Deianira have been said (and often proved) to chime with female power, female will, gender, feminism, actions against patriarchy. Simultaneously, male heroes as Agamemnon, Orestes, Oedipus, Heracles have been considered to be tragic figures as they are led by fate (*Moira*) to their inevitable fortunes. But it can also be supported that they are tragic characters because they are at odds with their own beliefs and in conflict with themselves in relation to their will and their obligations. The problematic behaviours of the heroes and the confusing and often ambivalent outcomes of their deeds, as well as the social and political context and the effects on and by their environment regards the ethics of the Athenian society; tragedy was a means of criticism and social and political education.

2. Greek Drama's teaching in modern and contemporary stagings

The productions of Greek tragedy is not an uncommon practice for most theatres and theatrical companies. Greek tragedy has been continuously staged and has also been adapted in new plays since antiquity (see Roman Drama). Of course, we cannot claim that today all productions are created to have and educational role. However, stagings in the second half of the twentieth and in the twenty first century have been abundant, some more discussed than others. Plays like Peter Hall's *Oresteia* (1981) and Ariane Mnouchkine *Les Atrides* (1990) are still remembered for their grandeur; there are also plays that have raised disagreement and dispute between the audience(s) and have been socially and academically discussed, such as Peter Sellars' *Persians* (1993) and Katie Mitchell's *The Home Guard* (a renaming for the play *Agamemnon*, 1999) both of which included political criticism especially regarding warfare matters.[19]

Nonetheless, tragedy's impact today has been as great (if not greater) as the impact it had during its original stagings, since Greek tragedy is a source with a lot of material to be

of a character in order to educate the audiences and the way the character is received and perceived by the author, the director, the actor/actress and is then represented (i.e. *didaskalia* in the ancient context of creating a performance), will be discussed in the following chapters, and will be termed as *education*.

18 For a discussion on the cultural aspects of performance in Athens see Richard Martin's "Ancient Theatre and Performance Culture" (2007) and concentrate especially on pp. 42-47. See also Storey & Allan *A Guide to Ancient Greek Drama* (2005) regarding the broader context and practice of ancient drama as well as *The Cambridge Companion to Greek Tragedy* edited by Pat Easterling (1997) passim.

19 For a very detailed discussion of these and more performances with political and social context, see Sorkin Rabinowitz, Nancy. *Greek Tragedy*. Blackwell Publishing, 2008, pp. 180-199. For more information and cases regarding the re-staging of Greek tragedy see van Zyl Smit, Betine, ed. *A Handbook to the Reception of Greek Drama.* NY Wiley & Sons, 2016; Hardwick, Lorna and Christopher Stray, eds. *A Companion to Classical Receptions.* John Wiley & Sons, Inc, 2008; Hall, Edith et al. *Dionysus since 69: Greek Tragedy at the dawn of the Third Millennium.* Oxford, 2004; Foley, Helene P. "Modern Performance and Adaptation in Greek Tragedy." *Transactions of the American Philological Association/ TAPA*, Vol. 129, 1999, pp. 1-12; Macintosh, Fiona et. al. *Agamemnon in Performance: 458 BC to AD 2004.* Oxford University Press, 2006; Rodosthenous, George, ed. *Contemporary Adaptations of Greek Tragedy: auteurship and directorial visions.* Bloomsbury, 2017. See also *Didaskalia* Online Journal, url www.didaskalia.net.

adapted, transformed and produced in new plays. Political and social issues may always be part of these adaptations and the very same ancient play may be interpreted in various ways (for example *Antigone*, which can be either a strongly feminist play or a means to indicate how a political man (or woman) like Creon can lose everything because of acting the 'right' way.) In any case, drama, even without attempting on purpose, always affects and teaches its spectators one way or another.

The repertoire of Greek Drama, their mythological frameworks and their storylines may be a starting point for creating more plays and performances that address the ethics and socio-political themes and institutions. It may be a motive for new and contemporary makers to bring up such themes either by using the original text (in translation), or by creating adaptations and even completely new plays, transmitted into the contemporary (needs of the) era, inspired (or not) by the myth. Such a character adaptation is Clytemnestra in *Electra* by Theodora Voutsa. Before digging into Voutsa's character and its contextualisation, I include two chapters that discuss the variations this character has had during its history. Afterwards, there is the description of the character in the contemporary play *Electra* and some reasoning for this adaptation.

Chapter 2

The Representation of Clytemnestra in epic and lyric poetry

1. Who is Clytemnestra?

What comes into mind once the name Clytemnestra is mentioned? Is it fear, revulsion, awe, or is it respect, admiration, impression? Further, why may these thoughts turn up? What is it that makes Clytemnestra inspire fear and loathing in Argos? *Clytemnestra*, the wife, mother, ruler, mistress, seducer, murderer, victimizer and victim. Maybe one would find even more names to describe her and more ways to depict her. But the most interesting thing about the character is that she takes many forms and many personalities; her motives differ from one poet to another and there is often an unclear image regarding her 'person', not only in antiquity but also today. Besides, the character has been represented ofttimes not only on stage but also on screen.[20] Thus, the formation of the character is based on the impression that has been constructed around her and the idea(s) for the character's development is very much based on this previous tradition. The reader should be, again, aware of the tradition Clytemnestra carries in order to be able to comprehend and evaluate the contemporary adaptations and alternations of the character.

Clytemnestra is known already from mythology and Homer, but what is interesting is that the character we know today has been moulded by the three major tragedians in different ways and with distinct aspects. Clytemnestra is quite a controversial character of the ancient Greek corpus of mythology, literature and poetry. Even the etymology of the name is ambiguous: it is either the notorious (klytos) female suitor (mnaomai) hence the Clyte**mne**stra, the name that we come across in epic; or the the woman who is notorious (klytos) for her ability to deceit (mēdomai), Clyte**me**stra, which is the existent name in the Greek lyric and tragedy.[21] As it is discussed below, the ambiguity of Clytemnestra's name is not settled only in the etymology of the name; it is also found in the stories, the mythology – and its variations – that is extant and delivered to us. There are variations of the character in each poetic genre, even among different poems of the same genre.

The two famous epics that are attributed to Homer are the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, in both of which there are references of Clytemnestra; Clytemnestra is also mentioned in other epic poems as well: in Hesiod's *Women's Catalogue*, in *Nostoi* and in *Cypria* for which we have a description for each by the ancient commentator Proclus. References of the character

20 See for example *Elektra* (1962) and Iphigenia (1977) by Michael Cacoyannis, *Thiasos* by Theodoros Angelopoulos (1975), *Helen of Troy* (2003) by Ronni Kern. For a detailed discussion regarding the reception of ancient Greek tragedy in cinema see Michelakis, Pantelis. "Greek Tragedy in Cinema: Theatre, Politics, History." Dionysus since 69: Greek Tragedy and the Dawn of the Third Millennium, edited by Edith Hall, Fiona Macintosh and Amanda Wrigley. Oxford University Press 2004, pp. 199-218. See also Pomeroy, Arthur, J. (ed.) *A Companion to Ancient Greece and Rome on Screen.* Wiley Blackwell, 2017.

21 On the matter, see also Tsitsibakou-Vasalos, Evanthia. "Chance or Design? Language and Plot Management in the Odyssey. Klytaimnestra ἄλοχος μνηστὴ ἐμήσατο." *Narratology and Interpretation* edited by Jonas Grethlein and Antonios Rengakos. Berlin & New York, 2008, pp. 177-212. During the thesis, I am using the name Clyte**mn**estra, not as a result of personal preference for the chracterisation that lies behind its etymology, but because it is the name that is mostly well-known worldwide.

exist in the extant lyric corpus of Stesichorus and Simonides as well as Pindar and, of course, in tragedy, in the works of the three main tragedians which I discuss in the following chapter (3), Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides.

2. The bitch-eyed[22] one: Clytemnestra in Epic Poetry

In the *Iliad* Clytemnestra is mentioned only once, in the beginning of Book 1 (*Il*. 1. 113-115) by Agamemnon, when the latter, talking to the seer Kalchas compares his wife to the daughter of Chryses and states that he prefers the Trojan woman to his wife, as he describes the latter to be not just equal, but superior to his wife.[23] In the *Odyssey* the myth of the Oresteia is mentioned twelve times[24] whereas only half of those are reference to Clytemnestra's participation to Agamemnon's murder.[25] As scholars have already observed, those mentions of Clytemnestra exist mainly to compare her evil character to Penelope's chastise.[26] However, what we are informed by these references is that Clytemnestra neither is the planner of the murder, nor is she the one who strikes the sword. On the contrary, she is confronted as the morally weak woman who yielded to Aegisthus' court and laid with him, betraying her wedded husband. In *Odyssey*, only in Odysseus' trip to the Underworld in *Book* 11 Agamemnon describes her as an evil woman who, not only aided his murderer (*Od*. 11. 409-410)[27], but also killed Cassandra by herself (*Od*. 11. 422),[28] while at the same time she appears snob, cold hearted and uninterested in front of her husband's death (*Od*. 11.424-426).[29]

As we see, the *Odyssey* begins with the image of a Clytemnestra not only innocent of the crime of murdering Agamemnon, but also, in some cases, to have not participated in the murder of Agamemnon at all. So, until *Odyssey's Book 4* Clytemnestra is either absent from

22 Bitch-eyed is the term that translates *kunōpis*, the ancient Greek word the woman who looks like a female dog – the shameless.

23 Homer, *Iliad*: "[…] For in fact I prefer her to Clytemnestra, my wedded wife, since she is in no way inferior to her, either in form or in stature, or in mind, or in handiwork."

24 Homer, *Od*. 1. 35-43 and 298-300; *Od.* 3. 193-198, 234-235 and 255-312; *Od.* 4. 90-92, 512-537 and 546-547; *Od.* 11. 387-389, 409-434 and 452-453; *Od.* 13. 383-384; *Od.* 24. 19-22, 96-97 and 199-200. In *Odyssey* Book 1 what is mentioned is the murder of Agamemnon by Aegisthus without a lot of details while in Book 3 the assistance of Clytemnestra is introduced by Nestor with the weaving of the deceit (3. 234-235). In Book 4 there are more details about the murder of king Agamemnon since we are informed by Menelaus that Aegisthus with the assistance of armed forces kills Agamemnon in an ambush whilst the king's soldiers strongly resist (4. 536). On the other hand, in Book 11 when we have Agamemnon's confession to Odysseus the crime takes place during a banquet in Aegisthus' house (11. 410) and Agamemnon's companions don't have the chance to react and get slaughtered (11. 412-413) while is projected strongly the collaboration of Clytemnestra, the evil of whom continues in Book 24 where there is the final comparison of Clytemnestra to Penelope.

25 Homer, *Od*. 234-235 and 255-312; *Od.* 4. 90-92; *Od.* 409-434 and 452-453; *Od*. 24. 199-200.

26 On this matter, see Tsitsibakou-Vasalos, ibid and especially March, Jennifer, R. *The Creative Poet: Studies on the Treatment of Myths in Greek Poetry.* Bulletin Supplement 49. London, Institute of Classical Studies, 1987; in regards with the stories told of Clytemnestra to Telemachus see Olson, Douglas. "The stories of Helen and Menelaus and the return of Odysseus." T*he American Journal of Philology/ AJP*, Vol. 110, No. 3, 1989, pp. 387-389 and Olson, Douglas. "The stories of Agamemnon in Homer's Odyssey." *Transactions of the American Philological Association/ TAPA* Vol. 120, 1990, pp. 57-71.

27 "But Aegisthus […] slew me with the aid of my accursed wife."

28 "Cassandra, whom guileful Clytemnestra slew."

29 " […] But she, bitch that she was, turned away, and did not deign, though I was going to the house of Hades, either to draw down my eyelids with her fingers or to close my mouth."

the murder or is subordinate in planning Agamemnon's murder. However, as the story in *Odyssey* progresses, we see that Clytemnestra is involved in the murder, first as an accessory to Aegisthus, who seduced her in killing her husband, until she is later emphatically denounced by Agamemnon in *Book 11* and is convicted as associate to his, and the master mind of Cassandra's murder. Finally, in the last *Book (24)* there is a general comparison of the two wives, where Penelope is the example of the pious faithful wife while Clytemnestra is the evil deceitful woman who pairs with the enemy and aids in the loathsome murder.

In regards with the rest of the extant epic, in the description of the *Nostoi (Returns)* we have by the ancient commentator Proclus, there is the reference that Orestes avenged his father's murder by killing Clytemnestra and Aegisthus[30] while in Hesiod's *The Catalogue of Women*, Electra and Orestes who took revenge on the death of his father's murderer (Aegisthus) and his mother.[31] These two references hint that both Aegisthus and Clytemnestra were equally guilty for Agamemnon's murder. Clytemnestra in epic is not alone in killing but always with Aegisthus and his name is always mentioned before hers.

Although Clytemnestra could have appeared to have a strong excuse why she assisted Aegisthus to kill their king[32] – she wished to avenge Agamemnon for Iphigenia's sacrifice at Aulis[33]– and although Clytemnestra is the woman notorious for her ability to deceit and the unfaithful wife, she could be justified for her actions if she is considered as a mother whose child was murdered. However, in Hesiod's *The Catalogue of Women*, the daughter that is about to be sacrificed to Artemis, Iphimede (Iphigenia), is saved by the goddess and made immortal; we also come across that incident in *Cypria*, in a summary by Proclus.[34] So, in these two fragments Iphigenia, although she is brought to Aulis to be sacrificed, she is not killed by the Greeks but is saved by Artemis,[35] hence there is no reason for Clytemnestra to seek revenge for her daughter's death. Clytemnestra still appears as a woman with sexual passion who assists her lover in killing her husband.

3. From a heartless bitch-eyed mistress to a mourning mother: Clytemnestra in Lyric Poetry

Since lyric poetry is variable in its own genre, so is Clytemnestra's representation in it. Among the lyric poets, the ones who refer to the myth of the Oresteia and particularly to Clytemnestra are Stesichorus, Simonides and Pindar. Stesichorus wrote an *Oresteia* of his own, however what is extant are fragments of the poem and comments about the poem by

30 *Greek Epic Fragments: From the Seventh to the Fifth Centuries BC.* Edited and translated by Martin L. West. Loeb Classical Library 497. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003, pp. 156-157.

31 Hesiod. *The Shield. Catalogue of Women. Other Fragments.* Edited and translated by Glenn W. Most. Loeb Classical Library 503. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018, pp. 72-73,

32 The way she appears in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* where she takes revenge for her daughter's sacrifice.

33 Let us note here, that Iphigenia does not exist in the Homeric tradition.

34 *Greek Epic Fragments: From the Seventh to the Fifth Centuries BC.* Edited and translated by Martin L. West. Loeb Classical Library 497. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003, pp72-73.

35 What we should bear in mind here is that in epic the Achaeans are guilty as a total for the murder of Iphigenia, so they are killed as a group in the epic tradition. See March, ibid.

ancient commentators. From these comments on Stesichorus' *Oresteia* we extract that Stesichorus in his poem follows Hesiod and connects Agamemnon's daughter Iphigenia with the goddess called Hecate,[36] another name for Artemis; in Stesichorus Iphigenia is also saved by Artemis, hence Clytemnestra has no other motive to murder Agamemnon, rather than her passion for Aegisthus.

In Pindar's *Pythian XI*[37] there is a brief mention on the myth of the Oresteia where the poet wonders whether it is Iphigenia's sacrifice or her own lust that incited Clytemnestra to kill Agamemnon. It is quite usual and expected of Pindar to mention briefly the well-known mythological facts. But between Pindar's ode (in 474 BCE) and Stesichorus' death (556/2 BCE) intercede eighty years, even more if we assume that the latter composed his *Oresteia* earlier than the date of his death. The question is when did this version of the myth that includes Clytemnestra's grief and her avenge of Iphigenia's murder become well-known? Jennifer March has done a thorough research on the subject and has come up with a very persuasive – although quite speculative – theory[38] about who is the creator of this Clytemnestra: it is Simonides, the popular Attic lyric poet of the early fifth century. The poet was popular and genius enough to have formed a Clytemnestra wailing for her child's death and plotting on the killer's murder.

Whether or not (part of) March's theory applies to reality we cannot know, however we are able to connect Simonides' name with the myth of the Oresteia and also leave some space for new possible theories or evidence on the subject matter. What we can be certain about is that between Stesichorus' and Aeschylus' *Oresteias* (middle 6th to middle 5th century BCE) there had existed a factor that shifted Clytemnestra's representation from an evil unfaithful wife to a grieving mother seeking for vengeance.

Clytemnestra at first existed as the example of the weak woman who gives in to another man and simultaneously to support Agamemnon's murder by Aegisthus. While in Odyssey there are a few contradictions to her character, either being detached from the murder and or actively assisting in killing her husband, the epic tradition agrees that Clytemnestra acted out to weakness and lust. Although Stesichorus follows the epic tradition, other lyric poets introduce the factor of her grief for Iphigenia's sacrifice as a reasoning for her actions. There need to follow the fifth century tragedy and the three major tragedians until the transformation of the character of Clytemnestra as a woman with more dimensions and inner thoughts is shaped, the image of her during the following centuries.

36 Stesichorus, Ibycus, Simonides. *Greek Lyric, Volume III: Stesichorus, Ibycus, Simonides, and Others.* Edited and translated by David A. Campbell. Loeb Classical Library 476. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991, pp. 128-129.

37 Pindar. *Olympian Odes. Pythian Odes.* Edited and translated by William H. Race. Loeb Classical Library 56. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997, pp 382-383.

38 March, ibid, pp. 92-98.

Chapter 3

Clytemnestra's multidimensionality – the character's aspects in Tragic Poetry

1. The Woman who thinks like a man

In contrast to the epic and lyric representation of Clytemnestra, where she exists in the background and is described by others, in tragedy Clytemnestra speaks and acts for herself and explains the reason behind her actions.

In Aeschylus Clytemnestra is a character that appears in all three tragedies of the trilogy of the *Oresteia*. She is the main character in *Agamemnon*, has an important part in *Choephoroi* (*Libation Bearers*) and her ghost appears in *Eumenides*. However, it is only in the two first tragedies that her character is unfolded and it is these two plays that I talk about in this chapter. The characteristic expression that follows Clytemnestra during *Agamemnon* is confronted already in line 11, where she is attributed by the watchman the characterisation of *androboulon kear*, the woman "who plans/thinks like a man." In *Agamemnon* she is indeed the vigorous woman who acts like the ruler of Argos and of Agamemnon's home. She talks with the chorus of the elderly Argive men who, although at first do not believe the news she brings about Troy having been sacked, due to the deceitfulness and credulity of her gender, they later admit that she talks and thinks like a man, in contrast to her female nature. During their dialogue she manages to convince them that her claims are true, through a male-like rhetoric speech. Her manner changes to a female-like speech once the Herald appears and announces their arrival.[39]

When Agamemnon enters the stage and Clytemnestra arrives to greet him, her speech is altered. She in now in front of the king and talks to him accordingly. She declares her love for her husband in public space[40] and her faithfulness to him all these years he was at war.[41] As McClure has argued, her language has a linguistic bilingualism[42]: not only she uses male- and female-like speech the way it serves her best, she also manages to say one thing and mean another. Clytemnestra achieves to manipulate the opinion of those who have come to greet the king with her rhetoric and at the same time with a veil of enigmatic phrases with which she covers the true meaning of her words.[43] By the end of her speech she manages to

39 Regarding the speech of Clytemnestra and the male and female language she uses, see Laura McClure, *Spoken Like a Woman: Speech and Gender in Athenian Drama*, Princeton University Press, 1999, pp. 70-92.

40 For a woman to express her feelings in public space and also in front of other men was an action considered shameful. For women's speech in public and outside space see Patricia Easterling, "Women in Tragic Space." *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies/ BICS*, No. 34, 1987, pp. 15-26.

41 Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*, 856-857: "I will not be ashamed to speak to you of my feelings of love for my husband."

42 McClure, ibid, p. 27.

43 The best examples are the following lines: Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*, 866-868: "And if this man met with as many wounds as was said in the reports that were channelled into our house, he's got more holes in him to count than a net has;", where she implies Agamemnon's future death in the bath trapped in a net. While in Homer Agamemnon dies among his companions, in Aeschylus he is killed in his bath with a sword by Clytemnestra. The killing is revenge for her daughter Iphigenia – not primarily for Cassandra, since Clytemnestra wasn't aware of her arrival, although she kills her too.
883-884: "and the possibility that the clamorous populace, in the absence of a ruler, might hatch a wicked plot;", where Clytemnestra talks about the absence of Orestes is a result of her protecting him from the wrath of the

persuade everyone for her good intentions towards Agamemnon and his concubine Cassandra.

Clytemnestra intentionally locates herself in both worlds, that of men, male, rhetoric, logic, war and that of women, female, wail, sentiment emotion, house/*oikos*. With her speech to the chorus she tries and manages to enter the realm of men by her rhetoric, causing them to admit that she speaks wisely like a man; she also reminds them of her female nature when she claims that she has been waiting for her husband. It has been implied by several scholars[44] that there is also an eroticism towards the chorus, especially after killing Agamemnon and Cassandra as she implicitly flirts with them and her sexuality is promiscuous. Clytemnestra in *Agamemnon* is a woman emancipated and independent. She acts on her own with Aegisthus being to her more like a puppet, a means to achieve her goals, rather than true companion and lover.

2. The Hateful Mother

Libation Bearers is the play where Clytemnestra transforms from an independent woman with strong rhetoric to a dependent wife who strives for persuasion and ability to cause empathy. Her character is mentioned by the chorus already in the very beginning of the play in line 41, where they describe that the reason why they are sent to Agamemnon's tomb is to offer libations on her behalf,[45] while line 46 is the one where they clearly describe her with the phrase "godless woman". Electra's speech to the old women of the chorus (84-105) immediately demonstrates the feelings she has towards her mother: Clytemnestra is not a loving wife[46] and she is not honourable[47] which justifies Electra's and the chorus' hatred towards her.[48] During Electra's plead to her dead father Agamemnon, she also describes the state in which she has been put in by Clytemnestra after his death: she lives like a slave in her father's house and her brother Orestes is an exile while the murderers of the king enjoy his wealth;[49] Clytemnestra is wicked (154) and has an impious spirit towards her children

people, but in fact she talks about her own rage and plotting against Agamemnon.
910-11: "Let his way forthwith be spread with crimson, so that Justice may lead him into a home he never hoped to see." Clytemnestra is profoundly implying that Justice is with her side and indeed Agamemnon will not see his house, since he will be killed.
912-13: "Careful thought, not overcome by sleep, will set everything else <in order> in accordance with justice, with the gods' help." This is ostensibly a prayer for her husband, but in reality it is a prayer for her forecoming murderous act.

44 For the erotic and sexual speech of Clytemnestra see Pulleyn, Simon. "Erotic Undertones in the Language of Clytemnestra." *The Classical Quarterly*, Vol. 47, No. 2, 1997, pp. 565-567.

45 As Electra comments in the next few lines, the libations are not send by her mother to honour the dead, but to tame the spirits that might seek revenge, a fact that is also mentioned later in 523-525: "That godless woman sent these drink-offerings because she was shaken by dreams and wandering terrors of the night."

46 Aeschylus, *Libation Bearers*, 89-90: "Should I say that I am bringing them from a loving wife to a dear husband—when they come from my mother?", a phrase that is said in an ironic tone by Electra.

47 Aeschylus, *Libation Bearers*, 95-96: "a mark of dishonour, just as my father perished dishonourably".

48 Aeschylus, *Libation Bearers*, 101-102: "or we cherish the same enmity within our home. Don't hide your thoughts within your heart."

49 Aeschylus, *Libation Bearers*, 132-137: "For at present we are virtually vagrants, sold by our mother, who has received in exchange a new man —Aegisthus, the same who shared the guilt of your murder. I am in the position of a slave, Orestes is in exile, deprived of his property, and they are greatly and extravagantly luxuriating in the wealth", something that she repeats in 420-422.

(191). Later Electra says that she hates her mother “with every justification” (241) and repeats that she is a “cruel mother of limitless audacity” (429-431). Orestes is also aware that she is hostile towards them[50] and call her a “fearsome viper” (249).

The chorus take their turn and express their hatred for Clytemnestra. They tell Orestes that she mutilated Agamemnon’s corpse[51] (439) and describe to Orestes his mother’s prophetic dream (523-549) before their choral song in 585-652. In the song the chorus compares the queen to some evil mythological female figures, Althea who killed her son, Scylla who betrayed her father, the women of Lemnos with Hypsipyle as their leader who killed their husbands and took the Argonauts as lovers, and they openly blame the queen for her passion(s) and her evil heart that led to the murder of the king and her wedding with Aegisthus.

After this long description of Clytemnestra by others, in line 668 she herself appears on stage. Her first lines may indicate a hospitable woman who is willing to take care of the guests and offer them *philoxenia*,[52] while at the same time she declares her honesty.[53] Once she is informed about Orestes’ (false) death, she seemingly mourns for him, but spends only 9 lines (691-699) to do so – especially in comparison with Kilissa’s (Orestes’ wet nurse) 32 lines of lamenting Orestes (734-765) – and concentrates her attention, not on the death itself, but on the curse that lives in the house. In lines 707-718 Clytemnestra is more concerned about the procedural acts regarding hospitality and she cares more to announce the news to Aegisthus, rather than her son’s death.[54]

Once Orestes has killed Aegisthus and Clytemnestra hears it, for the first – and last – time in the trilogy she expresses love for him.[55] This is not only peculiar to Orestes’ ears who asks her “You love the man?” (894), but also for the audience, since Clytemnestra has not shown any affection for Aegisthus but has merely used him to achieve her goal – to kill Agamemnon. The queen, who becomes aware of the fact that her own death is approaching, pleads her son to spare her, showing him the breast she fed and reared him.[56] Clytemnestra’s rhetoric ability and reasoning for her actions that followed her so far, now only exist to fail her, where they previously justified her. Although for a moment Orestes stops his killing spree to ask his companion Pylades for advice,[57] and although Clytemnestra emphatically

50 Aeschylus, *Libation Bearers*, 234: “out closest kin are bitterly hostile to us both.?

51 The mutilation of a corpse, i. e. cutting off the hands, feet, nose and ears of the dead, served the belief that this way they would not return to seek revenge. See Aeschylus. *Oresteia: Agamemnon. Libation-Bearers. Eumenides.* Edited and translated by Alan H. Sommerstein. Loeb Classical Library 146. Harvard University Press, 2009, p. 267, footnote 99.

52 Aeschylus, *Libation Bearers*, 668-671: “Strangers, please tell me anything you need. We have here just the kinds of things that befit a house like this—hot baths, good bedding to soothe away your fatigue”

53 Aeschylus, *Libation Bearers*, 671: “and the company of honest faces.”

54 In case one would argue that Clytemnestra would go to a separate place to mourn for her son, we ought to have in mind that women were “allowed” and expected to publicly show their sorrow and lament. Compare the chorus’ previous lament in front of Agamemnon’s tomb and Cilissa’s following mourning of Orestes’ death.

55 Aeschylus, *Libation Bearers*, 893: “Ah me! Mighty Aegisthus, my beloved, are you dead?”

56 Aeschylus, *Libation Bearers*, 896-898: “Stop, my son, and have respect, my child, for this breast, at which you many times drowsed while sucking the nourishing milk with your gums!”

57 Aeschylus, *Libation Bearers*, 899:”Pylades, what shall I do? Should respect prevent me from killing my mother?”

attempts to change his mind trying to legitimise her actions,[58] Orestes eventually kills her. Clytemnestra's *androboulon kear* could not save her from her son's and the god's punishment. Once more, after her death her son has nothing more than despise for her.[59]

3. The Afraid Wife

In Sophocles the *androboulon kear* that Aeschylus created in his trilogy gives its position to a Clytemnestra who is a selfish but afraid woman, without the competence to cause respect and/or fear without Aegisthus by her side. The first characteristic attributed to Clytemnestra by her daughter Electra is that she is a cunning woman and a killer due to her (sexual) passion.[60] Electra in her first speech when she comes on stage delivers a certain image about Clytemnestra: she is sexual, she is cruel and unmotherly; she enjoys the power she shares with her lover, blames her daughter for lamenting Agamemnon and accuses her of conspiring against her. During Electra's dialogue with her sister Chrysothemis, she once again presents to the audience the impression that Clytemnestra is a cruel woman without any maternal instinct, since she has forced Electra to live in poverty like a household slave, while on top of that, as Chrysothemis states, she has agreed with her lover Aegisthus to imprison Electra in a dungeon away from the house. Chrysothemis tells Electra that Clytemnestra has sent her to their father's tomb to offer libations because of a dream she had and that with those libations she wishes to tame the spirit of the dead king: she is superstitious and afraid of revenge on his behalf.

The image created for and attributed to Clytemnestra as a heartless, unmotherly woman is extended by the queen's own appearance and speech. Clytemnestra refutes the impression of the strong heartless woman Electra has created for her before her appearance. The first thing she says when she enters is to remind of Aegisthus' power and rule in the city. She is defensive towards Electra and admits to abuse her only in return, because her daughter abuses her verbally. She admits to have killed Agamemnon but adds an important clue, that Justice (not Aegisthus) was also his killer, since he killed Iphigenia first for the sake of war. She appears to have killed Agamemnon as a retaliation justice for he took something of hers – her daughter Iphigenia. Although Clytemnestra appears powerless and incapable of methodologically planned murder, she declares that she does not regret for her actions.[61] Electra on the other hand, constantly reminds her that it was because of Aegisthus that Agamemnon was murdered.[62] Electra accuses her of sleeping with the killer and to have bore him children while at the same time she has forgotten her earlier ones; she thinks of her

58 Aeschylus, *Libation Bearers*, 908-929, a more extended dialogue between the two.

59 Aeschylus, *Libation Bearers,* 991-996: "But the woman who contrived this hateful device against her husband, when she had borne the weight of his children beneath her girdle—children who were once her friends but are now, as they have shown, her deadly enemies—what do you think of her? That if she were a moray-eel or a viper, she would make a man rot by her mere touch even though he had not been bitten, such was her audacity and the wickedness of her mind?"

60 Sophocles. *Electra,* 197: "Cunning was the teacher, passion was the killer."

61 Sophocles. *Electra*, 549-550: "I for my part feel no regret at what was done;"

62 Sophocles. *Electra,* 560-561: "but were impelled by persuasion coming from an evil man, with whom you are now living."

more a tyrant than a mother. Clytemnestra threatens Electra that she will be punished by Aegisthus.[63] Electra continuously mentions that both Clytemnestra and Aegisthus are equally the murderers of her father, not blaming one more than the other. Clytemnestra is afraid of the revenge of either the living or the dead, the punishment of the gods, the public opinion as well as Electra who treats her like an enemy.

Clytemnestra prays to Apollo for her well-being and for her enemies' disaster. When she is informed about Orestes' death she admits that her son's death is beneficial to her,[64] but is despondent to the news since no parent can ever hate their own children.[65] Orestes' death is an salvation for her, since she disclaims the fear of death in which she has lived since the murder. She is also so keen to believe that his death is true, that she does not ask for proof. Finally, when Orestes is inside he house and is killing her, Clytemnestra begs for her life.[66]

Sophocles' Clytemnestra is the least dimensional of all the corpus of Greek Tragedy. She is a woman aware of her position in the society – although she is a queen. She has to mention Aegisthus' name in order to provoke fear to her subjects. She is on the one hand cruel and heartless towards Electra, but she justifies it as self-defence (she has not punished her other daughter Chrysothemis in any way). On the other hand, however, she is afraid both of Electra and her accusations and of Orestes and his returning back to Argos to avenge his father's murder. She is superstitious and we could even say naive, when she believes that her prayers have been heard and that she will be safe. Unlike Aeschylus' character, the Sophoclean Clytemnestra is neither independent nor decisive; she is another woman of her time. The character, however, is again adapted by Euripides into a new Clytemnestra.

4. Clytemnestra down to Earth

Finally, the Euripidean Clytemnestra is the most humane Clytemnestra in the ancient tradition. She not only has a kind attitude towards her children, but she also shows affection to her daughter Electra, since she tried to avoid her being murdered by Aegisthus, by marrying her to the farmer, a man with lower social status – that way Electra could not have royal male descendants who would potentially avenge Agamemnon's death.[67] Electra, in turn, does not speak in such a hateful and cruel way towards her mother in comparison to the two aforementioned plays. She does wail for her father's murder and mourns her destiny[68] (112-212), but her words for Clytemnestra are milder.[69] In the play the women of

---

63 Sophocles. *Electra*, 627: "you shall not escape the consequences of this insolence when Aegisthus comes!"

64 Sophocles. *Electra*, 766-768: "What of this? Am I to call it fortunate, or terrible, but beneficial? It is painful, if I preserve my life by means of my own calamities"

65 Sophocles. *Electra*, 771: "one does not hate one's children."

66 Sophocles. *Electra*, 1411: "My child, my child, have pity on your mother!"

67 Euripides, *Electra*, 22-24: "But Aegisthus was afraid she might bear to one of the nobility a son who would avenge Agamemnon's death, and so he kept her in the house and would not give her to a husband" and 28-30: "Aegisthus determined to kill her. But her mother, cruel-minded though she was, rescued her from Aegisthus' hand."

68 Euripides, *Electra*, 118-121: "and the citizens call me Electra the unfortunate. Alas for my cruel toil, alas for my hateful life!"

69 When Electra mentions Agamemnon's death, she does not name his murderers; she speaks with neutral tone such as "avenge your father for his shameful murder" (138-139), "slain in the guileful snare of meshes" (154), "You bathed yourself for the last time in the pitiable place where you lay down in death." (157-158), "how cruel the cut of the axe that slew you, father, how cruel the plot after your journey from Troy!" (160-162). When she mentions

the chorus are those who speak more hatefully for Clytemnestra and blame her to be a godless woman.[70] Later, when Electra speaks with Orestes, she tells him that their mother loves Aegisthus more than her children[71] and that her greatest wish is to kill her mother.[72]

However, Clytemnestra in the beginning of the play does not appear to have killed Agamemnon or to have planned his murder. Orestes asks "how can I punish the man who slew my father and also my mother who shares an unholy union with him?"[73] accusing her only of adultery and relieving her from the burden of the murder. Clytemnestra is attached to Aegisthus[74] whom she assisted with her husband's murder,[75] but does indeed give the maternal care to her children, since Electra herself admits that her mother cares about her and her supposed child[76] and Orestes says that she nurtured him[77] – unlike the custom of the royals to give their children to a wet nurse.

During Electra and Clytemnestra's confrontational dialogue, that could also be described as Clytemnestra's trial,[78] the queen attempts to justify the reasons she killed Agamemnon. According to Clytemnestra, it was him who started the killing spree by murdering their daughter Iphigone (Iphigenia),[79] not for the greater good for the city, but "because Helen was a whore."[80] Further, she adds that the reason that bewildered her was Cassandra being brought into their home and she herself being neglected[81] that led her to the acquire a lover and kill her husband.[82] Also Clytemnestra comments on the inequality of the patriarchal mentality about female sexuality and on the injustice women suffer in men's

Clytemnestra, she pairs her with Aegisthus and places him as the master mind of the murder: "with the two-edged sword she worked for Aegisthus' sake grim outrage and won as her mate that man of guile." (164-166). Accordingly, the chorus also make a comment on the queen, not blaming Clytemnestra entirely for the misfortune that has come upon the city, bus also her sister Helen: "Greece and your house can blame your mother's sister Helen for many woes." (213-214).

70 Euripides, *Electra*, 645: "Right: they hate her as a godless woman." and 745-746: "the gods you forgot, kinswoman of glorious brothers, when you murdered your husband."

71 Euripides, *Electra*, 265: "Women, stranger, love their husbands, not their children."

72 Euripides, *Electra*, 281: "When I have shed my mother's blood, then let me die!" Later on (647) Electra announces that she is the one to plan Clytemnestra's murder: "I shall manage my mother's death."

73 Euripides, *Electra*, 599-600.

74 Aegisthus, on the other hand, appears to be in lower status that that of Clytemnestra: 930-931: "And among all the Argives this was said of you, 'The man belongs to his wife, not she to him.' and 934-935: "For when a man marries a wife of greater eminence than himself, no account is taken of the man but only of his wife."

75 Euripides, *Electra*, 919-920: "she was unfaithful to the bed of my father" and 923-924: "in her former marriage she had no chastity".

76 Euripides, *Electra*, 657-658: "-Do you imagine that she cares about you, my child? -Yes, and she will weep for the low standing of my baby."

77 Euripides, *Electra*, 969: "Ah me! How can I kill her, the woman who bore and nurtured me?"

78 Euripides here, influenced by the Sophists of his era, creates a dialogue where both the defendants make reasonable arguments regarding their actions. Further, see John Poulakos, *Sophistical Rhetoric in Classical Greece*, University of South Carolina Press, 1994; Nathan Crick, *Rhetoric and Power: The Drama of Classical Greece*, University of South Carolina Press, 2014; David Sansone, *Greek Drama and the Invention of Rhetoric*, John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2012.

79 Euripides, *Electra*, 1011-1012: "Well, that is the kind of plot your father made against those of his kin he ought least to have plotted against." and 1020-1023: "Yet that man, enticing my child with a marriage to Achilles, went off with her to the harbor at Aulis, and there, stretching Iphigenia out above an altar, he slit her pale white throat."

80 Euripides, *Electra*, 1027-1029: "But as it is, he killed her only because Helen was a whore and the man who married her did not know how to chastise the wife who betrayed him."

81 Euripides, *Electra*, 1031: "it was not this that made me savage, and not for this would I have killed him", and 1033: "meant to keep two women at the same time in the same house."

82 Euripides, *Electra*, 1038: "the wife desires to imitate her husband and acquire a new lover."

hands.[83] On the other hand, there is Electra to counter Clytemnestra’s arguments with the established perception about female behaviour: Clytemnestra’s excuse, according to Electra, is not Iphigenia’s murder[84] but the lust for her lover, which makes her impious in the eyes of the people.[85] While the queen had a husband superior in class than her lover, she did not honour him;[86] while she could have been chaste and gain fame as the opposite of her sister Helen, she chose to commit the murder and be a villain.[87] Electra lastly asks Clytemnestra that, if she murdered Agamemnon for her children’s sake, for what reason the one is exile from the city and the other exile from her home.[88] Clytemnestra’s reply to Electra is that the daughter was always more attached to her father.[89]

Clytemnestra’s last moments in life seem braver than in the other plays. The chorus characterise her in her life as a lioness looking for her pray,[90] and the queen herself, while she might have come to the conclusion that she will be killed once she enters Electra’s home, she is not reluctant even for one moment.[91] Her plea to her children to spare her is one mere sentence,[92] and the description Orestes and Electra give about the moment of her death[93] can be considered as their mother’s natural and instinctive words when facing her demise. Besides Clytemnestra’s love for her children in this tragedy appears genuine, since she calls them “my children” and never accuses them of having wronged her.

5. The multidimensionality and potentiality of the character

So far, what we see is that Clytemnestra is a character that can be transformed, alternated, adapted and adjusted in many forms that serve the plot of the play and the author’s purpose and goals. In epic Clytemnestra was presented as the weak and unethical

83 Euripides, *Electra*, 1039-1040: “And after this it is we who are loudly blamed, while men, the authors of this situation, hear no criticism!” and 1044-1045: “So can you claim it would have been wrong for him to be killed for killing my child, yet right for me to suffer at his hands?”

84 Euripides, *Electra*, 1067-1068: “[you] gave as your excuse that you were killing your husband in recompense for your child.”

85 Euripides, *Electra*, 1072-1075: “Any woman who preens while her husband is away from home you may scratch off your list as a whore. She has no need to show a lovely face to those outside the house unless she is looking for mischief.”

86 Euripides, *Electra*, 1080-1081: “And yet you had every inducement to be virtuous: you had a man as your husband who was superior to Aegisthus”

87 Euripides, *Electra*, 1083-1084: “and when your sister Helen had behaved so badly, you could have won great glory for yourself.”

88 Euripides, *Electra*, 1087-1089: “what wrong did my brother and I do you? Why, when you had killed your husband, did you not give us our ancestral home” and 1091-1092: “Why is not your husband now in exile in requital for Orestes’ exile, why is he not dead in requital for me”

89 Euripides, *Electra*, 1102-1104: “My child, you have always been inclined to love your father. This is a fact of life: some children belong to the male side, others love their mothers more than their fathers”

90 Euripides, *Electra*, 1163 -1164: “Like some lioness of the mountain, prowling the wooded glens, she wrought this deed.”

91 Charles Segal stated that, unlike the other two Clytemnestras, the Euripidean one does not beg for her life; Segal, Charles, P. “Tragedy, Corporeality, and the Texture of Language: Matricide in the Three *Electra* Plays”. *The Classical World/ CW*, Vol. 79, No. 1, 1985, p. 17.

92 Euripides, *Electra*, 1165: “My children, in the gods’ name, do not kill your mother!”

93 Euripides, *Electra*, 1206-1209: “Did you see how the poor woman stripped off her clothing and exposed her breast as we killed her? Ah, did you see how on the ground she laid the limbs that gave me birth? It caused me to melt!” and 1214-1216: “This was the cry she uttered as against my chin she put her hand: “My child, I beg you!” From my cheek she hung, so that my hands let go of the weapon!”

woman, the anti-paradigm of the ‘proper’ female behaviour. The only reason for killing her husband was her lust and her inadequacy as wife and mother. In lyric, and probably under the influence of a new tradition that is not known to us, for the first time her actions were justified and the murder of the husband was due to or for the sake of her lover, but for her very own vengeance and justice. Tragic poetry was the ground were the character of Clytemnestra has space to grow, evolve and alter: she became independent, the emancipated woman who was not afraid of her opinion and was fearless and ready to act; she was a hateful mother and a shameless mistress who begged for her life; she, finally, became the mother who revenged her child’s murder, the mother who did not stop caring about her children, the woman who fearlessly walked towards her punishment and death.

Clytemnestra’s strong femininity was been an origin for argumentation since the very antiquity, as the character presented in tragedy has been a representation of the male anxiety towards their male self.[94] The fearless woman, the caring mother, the revengeful female, the boss of her own existence has been the role model for quite some time and many productions depicting her have been staged worldwide. However, this role model may be again transformed and adjusted in order to serve the new and contemporary concerns of the maker and address social issues, like those mentioned in the introduction of the thesis. Such an approach is Theodora Voutsa’s *Electra*, which is discussed in the chapter following.

94 See Easterling, Patricia, E. “Women in Tragic Space.” *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies/ BICS*, No. 34, 1987, pp. 15-26.

Chapter 4

Clytemnestra: The real protagonist in *Electra* by Theodora Voutsa.

1. Empowerment via theatre

“Femininity can be viewed as an artificial condition which subordinates women within a patriarchal culture.” says Jason Powell in his book *Feminism* (2013)[95] who, in a small phrase, has included one of the reasons why some women themselves consider feminism unnecessary and/or outdated: because it allegedly strips women from their femininity. However, femininity has been constructed by men for their own pleasure. Having that in mind, what has been constructed by women for their own pleasure? I would argue that this element is Feminism itself; and since feminism has been mistreated and vilified, women have a lot more way to go. So does feminist theatre, the kind that attempts to educate and empower women any way possible.

That is what Theodora Voutsa pursues: theatre that empowers women. Clytemnestra in Voutsa’s play is negotiated in order to be altered and therefore, through this behaviour, to empower women. In her attempt to do so, Voutsa takes Clytemnestra as a perpetual example of women who protest against male authority and adapts it into a new play, where Clytemnestra’s character is transformed, alternated and empowered. Women’s characters are interesting for Voutsa in general, since, according to her, one doesn’t find them that often in theatre plays – most theatre plays are written with men in mind. Clytemnestra’s character is a strong female character and is also very mistreated, according to Voutsa; “people consider her a bitch, a woman who thinks only of herself, but in fact, I don’t think that’s true. So, I would like to showcase a different perspective, give her a different light in the production.”[96]

The play discusses the authority women can(not) have and the way, not only men, but also other women (like Electra does in the play) can doubt the effort and trouble women have been through in order to gain from scratch what could have been originally theirs, if they were men in the first place. Nevertheless, the element that concerns my research in regards with the representation of Clytemnestra’s character is the fact that, for Voutsa, Clytemnestra has been living her life through the glasses of fear for a very long time and suddenly she decided to love herself and stand up for what she wants and against the wrong that she has been done.[97]

For Voursa, the play *Electra*, and the mythology of the Oresteia in general, is a vehicle to express her beliefs regarding “women’s empowerment, women’s rights and women’s voice in the society.” Even though it is a play written 2500 years ago or more, “it

95 Powell. Jason. *Feminism*. Nova Science Publishers, Inc, 2013.

96 The quotations attributed to Theodora Voutsa in this chapter are the result of an interview on April 24, 2019. The rest of Voutsa’s opinions are the product of both our personal correspondence and conversations and the knowledge I obtained in regards with her work during my internship between February and April of 2019.

97 According to Voutsa and her teachings to actors during her classes, everything comes from the choice we make between love and fear – not hate but love being the opposite of fear.

still puts women in the same position as we put them today in 2019; the freedom Clytemnestra did *not* have then, if she lived today, she would *still* not have that freedom either." Theodora Voutsa has chosen to stage this tragedy in her own terms because the story is personal for her. As she says "it needs to be filtered through the things I have lived because the more personal [a story is], the more universal [it is]. Also good theatre needs to have truth and needs to be a personal truth, so Clytemnestra has a lot of things I see in myself, she is a part of me."

Voutsa states that there are different views to think, and one will not see everything just by looking at it from one frame, one needs to turn the camera 360° and see the whole situation, the whole scene. So, Clytemnestra looks like a woman who killed her husband, and then took advantage of her daughter and later she got what she deserved – her children killed her. While there is a lot of pain [in between], there is a big history behind her. Her story starts when she is around 40 or 50, but her life, her decisions, the choices that brought her here started way back; we need to dig deeper and "judge" this person through the [spectrum of] love, not the fear, and understand why they did certain things.

For Voutsa educating through theatre and its characters is quite an important aspect of her work:

> My base is to empower women. An the way to empower is by educating. We need to start changing people's perspectives on certain things. And theatre – entertainment in general – is a good way to subconsciously send certain messages out. The reason we chose *Electra* is because of Clytemnestra *and* Electra, the relationship between mother and daughter, and the two women, the two archetypes of women: one that is obedient with the rules and another one who decides to become her own boss. They both want justice, they both want what is right. The reason we chose Electra after *Antigone* is because Antigone sacrificed herself for the greater good. It's like 'I don't exist as an individual, I'm going to offer myself as a lamp to be slaughtered for the world to survive.' Whereas in *Electra* I see women who are more into themselves. Clytemnestra takes charge of her life by the actions she takes and in a sense Electra does it too: by deciding to kill her mother she decides not to be the victim anymore, she decides not to be in the sidelines anymore, she's taking action. So, it is three women, Antigone, Electra and Clytemnestra that were born and raised in similar ways but bring different results in their lives.

Therefore, it is quite interesting that the character of Clytemnestra is negotiated in order to be altered in Voutsa's version of the myth. The director brings the character into the contemporary society, the era (still) of gender (in)equality and (lack of) freedom, in order to indicate that the character's personality may be judged for the power she begot and her empowerment as a woman. Can this judgement lead in the positive outcome to encourage other women do so?

2. The creation of the play's context.

During our first meeting Theodora was discussing to stage *Electra* by Sophocles, the author of her two previous productions *Oedipus* and *Antigone*.[98] But during our discussions and because of her creating a certain image about Clytemnestra and the hypothesis of the play, it was quite obvious to me that she wanted to create a character for her heroine that was a fusion, a mixture, of the character(s) we have read so far, with her own experiences. Having in mind that the character has not been represented that way in Sophocles' play, she has (probably) agreed with me to name her play *Electra* with the asterisk/subtitle that is it influenced by the myth of the Oresteia. The naming of the play was quite important to me,[99] because, as her dramaturg and also as her academic collaborator, I could not accept that the play would be known as a mere translation of the text, but I wanted to make sure that spectators are aware that it is a whole new adaptation of this mythological story, with the very important – at least to us – goal to empower women in the contemporary society.

Having set that as a fact, there was plenty of room for adaptations of the characters and the storylines, to introduce new characters and to alternate the *oikos*, the house (and family) of the Atrides' family into the space inside which everything happens.[100] Since I am not aware which are the personal incidents that Theodora is about to include in her script, I am just going to discuss about the adaptations made (so far), in order for the character of Clytemnestra to be a archetype, a lighthouse, an original model that may assist women to find their way and voice towards their own empowerment.

3. *Electra.* Based on the myth of the Oresteia.[101] A new play by Theodora Voutsa.

i. Hypothesis

Clytemnestra in *Electra* by Voutsa, is not a woman sold to a husband like the one in epic; she chose that husband, even though he was inferior to her – Clytemnestra is from a rich aristocratic family, while Agamemnon is not. She has taught him how to be rich and he taught her how to be a boss. Iphigenia was their love child, Electra an attempt to keep the marriage, Orestes the result of rape. Agamemnon has mistresses and is not discreet about it. After he kills his eldest daughter for his company's sake, he leaves the country and travels to east tropical places (the equivalent of Troy). Clytemnestra is devastated, she closes the house with Electra in it and sends Orestes away to boarding school. After her mourning period, she decides that she will take no more – no man or woman decides for her, only herself. She stands up, suits up and takes over the family business, the company that thrives during her direction. Agamemnon comes back with a new mistress Cassandra, an exotic

98 In 2015 and 2016 respectively.

99 Quite important was also the educating aspect of tragedy for Theodora herself. I read, shared and discussed with her some academic matters I believed to be important for a production of ancient Greek tragedy. These academic works are Taplin, Oliver. *Greek Tragedy in Action*. Routledge, 1978; Raeburn, David. *Greek Tragedies as Plays for Performance.* NY Wiley & Sons, 2017; Goldhill, Simon. *How to Stage Greek Tragedy Today.* Chicago University Press, 2007.

100 Unlike the ancient plays where the whole action was taking place outside of the house.

101 This is the title of the play, as I have discussed it with Theodora so far.

young woman, and wants to take back the lead of the company. Clytemnestra refuses him, he misbehaves and she kills him – she declares it an accident.

Electra is the daughter who grew up inside the house, alienated from the world as well as her own mother, with only friend her father's one time cell-mate and good friend. He teaches her to follow the rules – that is the only way to become a professional boxer, as that is her objective in the beginning of the play. So Electra has grew up alone, under the protection of coach Joe, worshipping her father, hating her mother and waiting for her brother to man up and take over what is his – the company. When Orestes comes back, he looks like a college guy, with expensive clothes, car and habits but with no attitude and character. Electra with years of anger towards her mother accumulating, asks him to revenge their father but he denies. Clytemnestra and Electra have an inspiring confrontational dialogue where Electra tells her that she was never there as a mother to support her and Clytemnestra responds that all she did she did it for her daughter(s). Electra kills her for vengeance for her father and Orestes, a quite incompetent person takes the lead of the business. Electra lives to an old age, isolated like she always was, in order to avoid prison. Her last line is "Have you ever heard about the Electra complex?" Electra and Clytemnestra are the two sides of the same coin. The one has what the other lacks.

ii. Adaptation and Analysis

Clytemnestra in Voutsa's *Electra*, unlike her mythological counterpart, chooses a husband by herself. Her emancipation begins with her decision to marry a man of lower social status, no matter her family's opposition, an addition to the original by Voutsa. From the beginning of the play, Clytemnestra is a woman who creates her own fate and has her own terms, mostly like Clytemnestra in *Agamemnon*. Unfortunately, like her mythological counterpart, the husband she chose to marry proved to be unsuitable for her, not in terms of social status, but in terms of character: as we also encounter in the epic tradition, he is a womaniser, he mistreats her and rapes her and, most importantly, his kills her daughter for his business' sake – Agamemnon in the myth killed Iphigenia for the sake of the war. When she kills her husband she does it alone and declares it an accident; Aegisthus exists only in the background as her lover, but he has no participation in the murder. Following the lead of *Agamemnon*'s Clytemnestra, Voutsa creates a woman much more determined than the Aeschylean heroine who takes decisions alone, also for the plot to continue build her character. She wants to keep being the boss of her home and her company and Agamemnon is an obstacle for her. In the adaptation Clytemnestra is presented as the person who saves the company from bankrupting and in addition works hard to make it great, while in the original she is presented as a tyrannic ruler who does not earn anything, but steals it from the dead king. Even during her confrontational dialogue with Electra, a scene which is entirely Voutsa's inspiration by the dialogues the two have in the original plays, all she says to her daughter is to be(come) strong and emancipated, not to give prominence to patriarchy

and the opinion of others. She does not beg for her life – like the Euripidean Clytemnestra – but patiently waits for her daughter to make *her own* decision.

Clytemnestra's empowerment does not result because of the murder, but the murder is the result of her empowerment. The murder of Agamemnon in this play is not a declaration for crime; it is the figurative killing of every obstacle that a woman may face or may have faced in her life and a move forward for her own freedom. When Agamemnon kills Iphigenia, he kills their love and what is "left" is an unhappy relationship, a reference to relationships and marriages that are ill, but women do not chose to leave. When Clytemnestra kills Agamemnon the main thing that remains as the enemy, is the other side of herself, Electra.

Clytemnestra is the boss of herself, like her Aeschylean counterpart in *Agamemnon* and loves her children like in Euripides. After the loss of her daughter Iphigenia, she has taken matters into her own hands and has created her own fate. However, no matter how much she loves her daughter Electra, like her Euripidean counterpart, she has neglected her, and Electra, unlike her mother's independence from the male gaze, is subject to social patriarchal opinions. Voutsa's Electra is as angry with her mother as in the Sophoclean treatment of the myth. She is mentally dependent to her father and his image and at the same time she is angry with her mother and her emancipation. Electra symbolises the woman who wants to follow the rules in order to fulfil the patriarchal conventions of women's behaviours and destinies. In the myth, which Voutsa follows here, Electra is the daughter who plans to kill the mother for revenge of her father's death. In translation to the play, it is the prejudice rooted in women from a young age to follow male social regulations regarding their fates and choices. Electra is what keeps Clytemnestra's emancipation from ruling over, it is the rooted misogyny of society that keeps women from wanting and trying to reach the top. Electra is the death of female empowerment, the killer from within, the one who does not reject patriarchy but sides with it in order to demolish feminism.

Orestes in the play is mostly transformed in character but also keeps some features of the original: he is an incompetent man who is what he is because of his status: white, male, straight and rich. He does not *earn* his position in the company in the end, but it is given to him by Electra. He denies to kill his mother, so Electra has to do it herself. Nevertheless, the more powerful male figure in Electra's life who can influence her in the play is coach Joe – who has replaced the Old Tutor – who teaches Electra how to be independent and strong by following the rules – the male rules. Joe, as a physically strong, underground, delinquent male represents patriarchy in a world of equality. He is quite active in the play – unlike the Old Tutor who shares a scene in the original – and is the person with whom Electra socialises the years she is shut in her house. He is what holds Electra back from reaching her own potential and guides her to kill the feminist inside and around her.

Clytemnestra during the play is on her own, while the other side is teamed with Electra, who is Clytemnestra's dubiety, Orestes, the incompetent privileged male, and Joe, the male gaze. No matter the odds, however, Clytemnestra manages to keep the expectations

high and, in the end, die in her own terms, knowing that Electra will live to probably regret and hopefully emancipate. However, what Voutsa wants to indicate in their relationship is that they are not just mother and daughter; they complete one another, the one has what the other lacks: Clytemnestra, the mother, is independent, emancipated, empowered, a real feminist; Electra, the daughter, lives with(in) her father's shadow, cares too much about the public opinion and is bound to the male gaze. While Clytemnestra loves herself and her actions are made out of love, Electra is afraid and fear is what keeps her handcuffed. Clytemnestra is also a woman who has tried to take over the world and has succeeded in a large percentage for her daughter to not have to live her years afraid the way she herself did. All Clytemnestra does, she does it for herself and her daughter. She wants to be the example for Electra. Nonetheless, Electra does not succeed to overcome her fear and judges her mother for her actions. She will eventually kill her mother, like Electra does in the myth; is this an act of empowerment and emancipation?

The version of the play which Voutsa has created so far is admittedly empowering, not only for female voices to be heard, but also for more people groups and minorities to get educated in order to act and be encouraged to disagree and fight against the status quo of contemporary societies that suppress them. Theodora Voutsa has in her mind to also make a screen version of the play, for its messages to spread easier and quicker to a wider audience. It is my strong belief that the adaptations Voutsa has chosen to make in her version of *Electra* may be alternated by other makers who aim to emancipate oppressed voices to come up. Educational theatre has a great power towards its audiences.

Conclusion

The script of Theodora Voutsa's play *Electra* is not finished yet and more time for reflection needs to take place for the production to be staged. However, now that we have reached the end of this research, we may once again mention its purpose: to study Clytemnestra's character as it has been represented from Homer to Euripides, in order for the reader to comprehend the approach and the changes Voutsa has brought upon the character in order to empower women. As we saw, Clytemnestra has been the example of the impious, unfaithful and manipulative woman, the anti-paradigm of proper female behaviour – in a men's world. What Voutsa sees in her, however, is that she has been a woman who raised and stood against her oppressors, and for that reason her voice and inner thoughts have not been developed but hushed. This way, Voutsa believes, women may be educated, empowered and encouraged to react. The attempt to bring older plays and characters into today is not an entirely new practice. However, the creative process to find or create new inner motives and approach the female voices of characters such as Clytemnestra and Electra through the spectrum of feminism and with the perspective to openly educate and awake women, is quite new. Works (and re-workings) with a feminist vision are still necessary and the representation of Clytemnestra's character may reach its goal.

There also needs to be a reflection on the thesis and its approaches. In order for this thesis to be completed and to answer the main question it poses, I had planned a priori to take some steps during the conduction of my research. First I planned to create a definition about who Clytemnestra is, so I could discuss about her on common grounds with my reader. The sources in order to create this definition were the ancient literature texts, where I extracted the information and details needed to construct the character of Clytemnestra as it has been represented by the ancient Greek poets. Afterwards, while working with Theodora Voutsa, I also got the information about the character she creates to build a general image of this contemporary character. I made a comparative analysis of the two characters, the ancient and the contemporary and I came to the conclusion that the new contemporary character that Voutsa constructs has the potential to educate and empower women regarding their own emancipation and uprising. In the end, to finalise my research process, I interviewed Theodora asking her about the in-progress play and character.

Looking back at the process, I am positive that I have been successful while conducting the (ancient) literature review. I have mentioned all sources I am aware that interest the character of Clytemnestra and I have recorded the changing images of her person*. I believe I have also succeeded in recording the details of the contemporary character and comparing her with the original; additionally, I have confirmed my initial question which was the way Voutsa's character may empower women. However, although these results are successful, I think that writing about a character in the making and also being the only one who works with this particular character and her maker, makes my

research single dimensional, since there can always exist elements that I have not detected and brought up. On the other hand, no matter how precious Voutsa's interview has been for my thesis, I believe that the questions I asked her were the ones we had already discussed during our collaboration, while I did not come up with new questions. On top of that, I had interviewed another female director whose interview I do not include neither in the thesis not in the appendix, as I believe that the questions I posed did not coincide with my research.

This research of the in-progress performance *Electra* by Voutsa may influence theatre scholars who are not familiar with Greek tragedy in order for them to add a new field of study in their own research interests. Besides, many may have been already interested in (researching) the power Greek tragedy has to be transformed and adapted into various concepts and cultures. I believe that this research contributes in the discourse regarding both Clytemnestra's interpretations and the ability of theatre performances to empower women, as I have brought together the field of Contemporary Theatre and Classics, as well as the Reception of ancient dramatic texts and merge them into one trans-disciplinary field. The way I have discussed and handled Clytemnestra's character in this thesis gives prominence to a silenced figure of Greek mythology to develop and evolve; also, my research and reflection on the adapted persona of Clytemnestra is an indicator of passion towards female characters that can educate audiences. Since academics who are actively involved in this (trans- or inter-) field are few (and specific) and since in science and especially in humanities there is no solid line to segregate the fields and genres of study, I hope this thesis is a motive and influence for more new scholars to start new from the old texts.

Many worldwide productions of ancient Greek drama with educational purpose have already been discussed by academics and theatre scholars, but the field needs more material regarding motives, practices, purpose and outcomes of such plays. Theatre scholars are already doing a great job discussing modern and contemporary productions of Greek drama, but the research field is also in quest of (more) people with classical knowledge who have the ability and the skills to read and comprehend the original texts in their context and influences, to suggest or create translations, interpretations and adaptations. At the same time, the field of Reception of Athenian drama is in need for more scholars who are cognisant of the concepts and theories of Contemporary theatre studies and dramaturgs who can creatively reflect on these concepts applied on the original texts.

Now, after having concluding my research I wish to pause writing; not stop, but pause. Because I know that there will exist new makers to make new adaptations and I wish I will be there to support their attempt, absorb and relate it for the audiences. Theatre, as it has already done so before, can always surprise us.

Appendix

Interview with Theodora Voutsa on 24-04-2019.

How are women characters in the centre?
women characters are interesting for me I general and you dint find them that often in theatre plays – most theatre plays are written with male/men in mind. Clytemnestra's character is strong female character in my opinion and is also very mistreated; people consider her a bitch, a woman who thinks only of herself and in fact I don't think that's true. So I would like to showcase a different perspective, give her a different light in the production.

Who is Clytemnestra for you?
First of all she is a part of me; everything is personal. It needs to be filtered through the things I have lived because the more personal, the more universal. Also good theatre needs to have truth and needs to be a personal truth, so Clytemnestra has a lot of things I see in myself, a part of me. She is also a vehicle to me to express my beliefs regarding women's empowerment and women's rights and women's voice in the society. Even though it is a play written 2500 years ago or more, it still puts women in the same position as we put them today in 2019. The freedom Clytemnestra did not have then, if she lived today she would still not have the freedom – only the costumes would change probably.

What would you narrate to the audiences?
What I would like to tell the audience is that everything comes from the choice we make between love and fear. And Clytemnestra has been living her life through the glasses of fear for a very long time and I think suddenly she decided to love herself and stand up for what she wants and the wrong that she has been done. I want the audience to see that no matter… there are different views to think, you won't see everything just by looking at it from one frame, you need to turn the camera 360º and see the whole situation, the whole scene. By using Clytemnestra this is the point I am trying to make: when you come from love you will do the right thing, when you love yourself you will do the right thing and that things are not the way they seem in the first place, like in the first time, you need to dig a little deeper. So, Clytemnestra looks like a woman who killed her husband, and then took advantage of her daughter and then she got what she deserved – her children killed her. While there is a lot of pain, there is a big history behind her. Her story starts at when she is like 50 but her life, her decisions, the choices that brought her here started way way back, so, when you see a person and he's treating you badly, or he is annoying in a negative way, the easy thing to say is that he is an arsehole, she is a bitch. You ought it to yourself and you ought it to society to dig deeper and "judge" this person through the love, not the fear, and understand why they did certain things. And if they, because that doesn't mean that everything is justifiable (there

are actions where you say what the fuck did you do), but you need to give them the time – everybody deserves the time.

I am aware that you have already staged and Antigone. What is that urges you towards plays with female characters?
My base is to empower women. An the way to empower is by educating. We need to tart changing peoples perspectives on certain things. And theatre – entertainment in general – is a good way to subconsciously send certain messages out. So, my productions, I want to believe are entertaining, we have a big cast, 25-30 actors, we have music, we have film, we have costumes, big stages, so, it's not something that is ina little room that is all philosophical stuff. The whole message is hidden.

Electra closes a trilogy that started with *Oedipus*, a Sophoclean trilogy, we did *Oedipus*, we did *Antigone* and now we're doing *Electra*, so that is one thing it serves. The reason we chore *Electra* is because of Clytemnestra and Electra, the relationship between mother and daughter, and the two women, the two archetypes of women: one that is obedient with the rules and another one who decides to become her own boss. They both want justice, they both want what is right. The reason we chose Electra after Antigone is because Antigone sacrificed herself for the greater good. it's like 'I don't exist as an individual, I'm going to offer myself as a lamp to be slaughtered for the world to survive.' whereas in Electra I see women who are more into themselves. Clytemnestra takes charge of her life by the actions she takes and in a sense Electra does it too: by deciding to kill her mother she decides not to be the victim any more, she decides not to be in the sidelines anymore, she;s taking action. So it is three women, Antigone, Electra and Clytemnestra that were born and raised similar ways but bring different results in their lives.

Are you inspired by female characters from classical literature or of today's?
How are you inspired my feminism?
it's something very personal for me, I'm not inspired by something that has come up, because nothing has come up in my opinion. We need to have stronger voices because… I have not been doing my job correctly and other co-creators have not. If we have people like Trump in power and say that they can grab the women by their pussy and that they don't have to say anything… we have been wrong when people are accused of raping and they are not punished, we are not doing our job right when we still have companies that have women as minorities, when there is no equal pay, when there are about 100 million girls uneducated, there are still girls that are missing school because and in progressive countries because they have their periods and they don't have access to pads and such. Women are in the worst situation they could be for hundreds and hundreds of years and nothing has been happening so there is nobody to inspire me.
Well, there are people to inspire me. You read about Ruth Bader-Ginsberg there are politicians, there are artists and stuff, but we still have a lot way to go, we still need to do a

lot of things and we need to embrace the word feminism, even if somebody don’t want it. We cannot replace it by femininity; we have to replace it by empowerment, by capability, equality freedom and humanism, but we cannot replace it right now, because we need to be very vocal and we need to be very loud when it comes to inequality. We are talking about women; imagine being an African American woman, being a black woman in America right now is the worst thing that can happen to you. Being a woman in the corporate world is the worst that can happen to you. Being a woman in the creative world is a bad thing that can happen to you, being called a bitch, having to deal with technicians, with actors, so, what was the question??
If I am inspired by other groups that present feminist plays. I am inspired and I would feel very honoured to stand next to them and be called a company that presents feminist plays and a company that supports women’s rights and somebody who puts a little more towards reaching independence and towards having the Vagina Revolution finally happen.

Bibliography

1. Original Texts in Translation

Aeschylus. *Oresteia: Agamemnon. Libation-Bearers. Eumenides.* Edited and translated by Alan H. Sommerstein. Loeb Classical Library 146. Harvard University Press, 2009.

Euripides. *Suppliant Women. Electra. Heracles.* Edited and translated by David Kovacs. Loeb Classical Library 9. Harvard University Press, 1998.

Greek Epic Fragments: From the Seventh to the Fifth Centuries BC. Edited and translated by Martin L. West. Loeb Classical Library 497. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003.

Hesiod. *The Shield. Catalogue of Women. Other Fragments.* Edited and translated by Glenn W. Most. Loeb Classical Library 503. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018.

Homer. Iliad, Vo*lume I: Books 1-12.* Translated by A. T. Murray. Revised by William F. Wyatt. Loeb Classical Library 170. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1924.

Homer. *Odyssey, Volume I: Books 1-12.* Translated by A. T. Murray. Revised by George E. Dimock. Loeb Classical Library 104. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1919.

Homer. *Odyssey, Volume II: Books 13-24.* Translated by A. T. Murray. Revised by George E. Dimock. Loeb Classical Library 105. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1919.

Pindar. *Olympian Odes. Pythian Odes.* Edited and translated by William H. Race. Loeb Classical Library 56. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997.

Sophocles. *Ajax. Electra. Oedipus Tyrannus.* Edited and translated by Hugh Lloyd-Jones. Loeb Classical Library 20. Harvard University Press, 1994.

Stesichorus, Ibycus, Simonides. *Greek Lyric, Volume III: Stesichorus, Ibycus, Simonides, and Others.* Edited and translated by David A. Campbell. Loeb Classical Library 476. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991.

2. Academic Literature

Crick, Nathan. *Rhetoric and Power: The Drama of Classical Greece*, University of South Carolina Press, 2014.

Croally, Neil. “Tragedy’s Teaching”. *A Companion to Greek Tragedy,* edited by Justina Gregory. Wiley & Sons, 2008, pp. 55-70.

de Wet, B. X. “The *Electra* of Sophocles – a Study in Social Values”. *Acta Classica*, Vol. 20, 1977, pp. 23-36.

duBois, Page. “The Death of the Character”. *International Journal of the Classical Tradition/ IJCT,* Vol. 21, No. 3, 2014, pp. 301-308.

Easterling, Patricia, E. “Women in Tragic Space.” *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies/ BICS,* No. 34, 1987, pp. 15-26.

Easterling, Patricia, E., ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Greek Tragedy.* Cambridge University Press, 1997.

Foley, Helene P. “Modern Performance and Adaptation in Greek Tragedy.” *Transactions of the American Philological Association/ TAPA,* Vol. 129, 1999, pp. 1-12.

Goldhill, Simon. *How to Stage Greek Tragedy Today.* Chicago University Press, 2007.

Hall, Edith et al. *Dionysus since 69: Greek Tragedy at the Dawn of the Third Millennium.* Oxford University Press, 2004.

Hardwick, Lorna. “Translating Greek Tragedy to the Modern Stage.” *Theatre Journal*, Vol. 59, No. 3, 2007, pp. 358-361.

Hardwick, Lorna and Christopher Stray, eds. *A Companion to Classical Receptions.* John Wiley & Sons, Inc, 2008.

Honig, Bonnie. “Antigone's Laments, Creon's Grief: Mourning, Membership, and the Politics of Exception”. *Political Theory*, Vol. 37, No. 1, 2009, pp. 5-43.

Macintosh, Fiona et. al. *Agamemnon in Performance: 458 BC to AD 2004.* Oxford University Press, 2006.

March, Jennifer, R. *The Creative Poet: Studies on the Treatment of Myths in Greek Poetry.* Bulletin Supplement 49. London, Institute of Classical Studies, 1987.

Martin, Richard. "Ancient theatre and performance culture." *The Cambridge Companion to Greek and Roman Theatre,* edited by Marianne McDonald & Michael Walton. Cambridge University Press, 2007, pp. 36-54.

McClure, Laura. *Spoken Like a Woman: Speech and Gender in Athenian Drama*. Princeton University Press, 1999.

Michelakis, Pantelis. "Greek Tragedy in Cinema: Theatre, Politics, History." Dionysus since 69: Greek Tragedy and the Dawn of the Third Millennium, edited by Edith Hall, Fiona Macintosh and Amanda Wrigley. Oxford University Press 2004, pp. 199-218.

Olson, Douglas. "The stories of Helen and Menelaus and the return of Odysseus." T*he American Journal of Philology/ AJP*, Vol. 110, No. 3, 1989, pp. 387-389.

Olson, Douglas. "The stories of Agamemnon in Homer's Odyssey." *Transactions of the American Philological Association/ TAPA* Vol. 120, 1990, pp. 57-71.

Osborne, Susan. *Feminism.* Pocket Essentials, 2001.

Pomeroy, Arthur, J., ed. *A Companion to Ancient Greece and Rome on Screen.* Wiley Blackwell, 2017.

Poulakos, John. *Sophistical Rhetoric in Classical Greece*, University of South Carolina Press, 1994.

Powell, Jason L. *Feminism*. Nova Science Publishers, Inc, 2013.

Pulleyn, Simon. "Erotic Undertones in the Language of Clytemnestra." *The Classical Quarterly*, Vol. 47, No. 2, 1997, pp. 565-567.

Raeburn, David. *Greek Tragedies as Plays for Performance.* NY Wiley & Sons, 2017.

Rodosthenous, George, ed. *Contemporary Adaptations of Greek Tragedy: auteurship and directorial visions.* Bloomsbury, 2017.

Sansone, David. *Greek Drama and the Invention of Rhetoric*, John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2012.

Segal, Charles. "Tragedy, Corporeality, and the Texture of Language: Matricide in the Three *Electra* Plays". *The Classical World/ CW,* Vol. 79, No. 1, 1985, pp. 7-23.

Sorkin Rabinowitz, Nancy. *Greek Tragedy*. Blackwell Publishing, 2008.

Storey, Ian C. and Arlene Allan. A *Guide to Ancient Greek Drama*. John Wiley & Sons, 2005.

Taplin, Oliver. *Greek Tragedy in Action*. Routledge, 1978.

Tsitsibakou-Vasalos, Evanthia. "Chance or Design? Language and Plot Management in the Odyssey. Klytaimnestra ἄλοχος μνηστὴ ἐμήσατο." *Narratology and Interpretation* edited by Jonas Grethlein and Antonios Rengakos. Berlin & New York, 2008, pp. 177-212.

van Zyl Smit, Betine, ed. *A Handbook to the Reception of Greek Drama.* NY Wiley & Sons, 2016.

Zajko, Vanda and Miriam Leonard. *Laughing with Medusa: Classical Greek and Feminist Thought*. Oxford University Press, 2006.

Zajko, Vanda. "Women in Greek Myth." *The Cambridge Companion to Greek Mythology* edited by Roger Woodard. Cambridge University Press, pp.387-406.

Zajko, Vanda. "'What Difference has is made?': Feminist Models of Reception." *A Companion to Classical Reception*, edited by Lorna Hardwick and Christopher Stray. Blackwell Publishing, 2008, pp. 221-233.

3. Fiction

Atwood, Margaret. *Penelopiad*. Canongate U.S., 2005.

4. Online References

Bittencourt Hersan, Fernando. "Gender Checklist for Theatre." *IETM, Inclusion,* 2016. url: https://www.ietm.org/fr/themes/gender-checklist-for-theatre

Crompton, Sarah. "Theatre is as capable of gender equality as any other industry." *What's On Stage*, 2016. url: https://www.whatsonstage.com/-theatre/news/sarah-crompton-gender-equality-tonic-theatre-blog_41854.html

Herrin, Jeremy. “Our Question: Does our current commissioning model suit men better than women? If so, what could we do about that?” *Tonic Theatre*, *Advance*. url: http://www.tonictheatre-advance.co.uk/headlong/#question

Hope, Florence. “Gender in Theatre.” *Purple Seven*, 2015. url:

http://purpleseven.com/media.ashx/gender-thought-leadership.pdf.

Hotchin, Becky. “International Women's Day celebrated at Theatr Gwaun.” *Western Telegraph*, 2019. url: https://www.westerntelegraph.co.uk/news/17483072.international-womens-day-celebrated-at-theatr-gwaun/

Kerrow, Kate. “INTERVIEW: Women@RADA – Gender Equality in Theatre.” *The Heroine Collective*, 2016. url: http://www.theheroinecollective.com/women-at-rada/.

Lippman, Mike, ed. *Didaskalia Online Journal*. url: www.didaskalia.net

Shearman, Jennifer. “Documenta 14: Learning from Women.” *Dispatch | Feminist Moving Image*, 2017. url: https://www.dispatchfmi.com/single-post/2017/07/16/documenta-14-Learning-from-Women

“Theatres make gender equality pledge.” Entertainment & Arts, BBC, 2014. url: https://www.bbc.com/news/entertainment-arts-29318005

“The Royal Court Theatre Recipient of 50/50 Applause Award for Gender Equality.” *Royal Court Theatre*, 2017. url: https://royalcourttheatre.com/royal-court-theatre-recipient-5050-applause-award-gender-equality/

Woolley, Alexander. “Why is there still a gender imbalance in theatre?” *New Statesman*, 2014. url: https://www.newstatesman.com/culture/2014/09/why-there-still-gender-imbalance-theatre