The homecoming (*νόστος*) pattern in Greek tragedy

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Declaration

I declare that the work described in this thesis has been carried out by myself unless otherwise cited or acknowledged. It is entirely of my own composition and has not, in whole or in part, been submitted for any other degree.

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Abstract

This thesis is an analysis of the use of the homecoming (*nostos* in Greek) in Greek tragedy. I concentrate not just on the treatment of the *nostos*-theme within the plot and the imagery of the plays in question but also on *nostos* as part of Greek cultural experience. In order to illuminate the nature of *nostos* both as a life-event and as a story-pattern in the early literary tradition I begin with an overview of *nostos* in life and literature, and then give a detailed account of *nostos* in the *Odyssey*, since it is a major example of the *nostos*-pattern for Greek culture. By considering the literary treatment of *nostos* in the *Odyssey* one may understand the nature of *nostos* as a story-pattern and how that influences audience expectations. This is particularly important since the analysis of *nostos* in Greek tragedy will be especially related to the *Odyssey*. Specifically the thesis aims to describe and analyse common elements within the plot and the imagery of the plays that might be called *nostos*-plays. Primary *nostos*-plays are those where *nostos* serves as the fulcrum of the action, such as Aeschylus' *Persians* and *Agamemnon* and Sophocles' *Trachiniae*. The bulk of this study is devoted to the structural use of *nostos* in these plays. I stress at the outset, however, that the *nostos*-pattern in Greek tragedy is exploited more widely, and there are many occasions in Greek drama where *nostos* is an element of the plot. Among these, those with closest association to the treatment of *nostos* in the second half of the *Odyssey* are the Orestes-plots (notably Aeschylus' *Choephori*, Sophocles' *Electra* and Euripides' *Electra*). I also consider the use of *nostos* in Euripides' *Andromache* and *Heracles* since both plays illustrate that *nostos* is a means of creative variation on the part of the poet. Interpretation of the specific plays shows that the *nostos*-pattern common to these plays is a flexible set of conventions with significant variation in each case. Common themes and roles are developed in divergent ways, expectations raised are not necessarily met. Thus the thesis will recognise the variety of specific uses of the *nostos*-pattern on tragic stage. Finally, I suggest in the Appendix a new reading of Seferis' poem (*Ὁ γυρισμὸς τοῦ ξενιτεμένου*). In particular I relate the return of the exile in Seferis' poem to the return of Orestes, which underlines the idealistic nature of the notion of a return to the same. This notion is embodied in both the *nostos*-plays and Seferis' poem.

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Contents

Abbreviations

(of ancient authors / works as *OCD*[3]
of journals as *L'Année philologique*)

ABV	J.D. Beazley, *Athenian Black-Figure Vase Painters* (Oxford, 1956).
ARV[2]	J. D. Beazley, *Athenian Red-Figure Vase-Painters*[2] (Oxford, 1963).
DK	H. Diels and W. Kranz (edd.), *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*[6] (Berlin, 1951).
EGF	M. Davies, *Epicorum Graecorum Fragmenta* (Göttingen, 1988).
F grH	Fragments of the Greek historians cited according to F. Jacoby. *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker* (Leiden, 1923-58).
Kaibel	G. Kaibel (ed.), *Comicorum Graecorum Fragmenta* (Berlin, 1899).
LIMC	H. C. Ackerman, J. R. Gisler, *et al.* (edd.), *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae* (Zurich, 1981-1997).
LSJ	H. G. Liddell, R. Scott, and H. Stuart Jones, *A Greek-English Lexicon*[9] (with new Suppl., 1996) (Oxford, 1968).
MW	R. Merkelbach and M. L. West, *Fragmenta Hesiodea* (Oxford, 1967).
Para	J. D. Beazley, *Paralipomena. Additions to 'Athenian Black-Figure Painters' and to 'Athenian Red–Figure Vase-Painters'* (Oxford, 1971).
PEG	Bernabé A., *Poetarum Epicorum Graecorum* (Leipzig, 1987).
PMG	Fragments of the Greek lyric poets cited according to D. L. Page, *Poetae Melici Graeci* (Oxford, 1962).
POxy	Papyrus fragments from Oxyrhynchus in Egypt, as published in the *Oxyrhynchus Papyri* series (London, 1898-).
R	Fragments of Aeschylus' or Sophocles' lost plays, cited according to S. Radt's *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta* editions (Göttingen 1985, 1977).
Snell-Maehler	Fragments of Pindar or Bacchylides cited according to the Teubner edition of B. Snell and H. Maehler (Pindar: Leipzig 1975; Bacchylides: Leipzig, 1970).
TGF	B. Snell, R. Kannicht, and S. Radt (edd.), *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta* (Göttingen, 1977-).
West	M. L. West (ed.), *Iambi et Elegi Graeci ante Alexandrum Cantati* (Oxford, i², 1989; ii², 1992).

1. General

Nostos, the homecoming of someone who has been away, occurs with varying elaboration throughout much of Greek literature. This thesis aims to describe and analyse the use of *nostos* in Greek tragedy. Before examining the use of *nostos* as a structural device within the plot of Greek drama it is important to introduce a general account of *nostos* in life and literature. Thus, I intend first to consider *nostos* as part of Greek cultural experience. This analysis will show that *nostos* was deeply embedded within the social context. Poetry is part of living culture. The poet chose to exploit a *nostos*-story, since this theme would make sense to his audience. For the Greek audience and tragedians *nostos* was not an isolated theme in literature. Leaving home – whether travelling, especially by sea, or going to war – was a repeated moment of crisis. As we will discover in the course of our enquiry, *nostos* is bound up with uncertainties over failure to return. After looking at the cultural context for *nostos* this thesis will take as a starting point the literary treatment of *nostos* in the *Odyssey* in order to illuminate the nature of *nostos* as a story-pattern and as a plot-structure. The story of Odysseus' return and parallel stories hinted at especially in books three and four may be of service in interpreting Greek dramatists for versions of a homecoming story. All these general characteristics provide a common frame of reference in interpreting the specific tragic *nostoi* in question. In particular, they may help us to understand how *nostos* was developed as a concept in life and in literature before it was shaped into a form suitable for the tragic stage.

1.1. The prominence of *nostos* in Greek poetry and life

'Why do I always paint Vitebsk (=his hometown)? With these pictures I create my own reality for myself, I recreate my home'

Marc Chagall[1]

Marc Chagall descibes how when he returned to Russia in 1914, to his provincial town (Vitebsk), he began to rediscover and record his roots in a series of about seventy paintings that he called 'documents'. These paintings of his family and scenes of Vitebsk reflect the painter's process of coming to terms with himself and his hometown in emotion. In this section I would like to suggest that, as in Chagall's documents, the theme of homecoming

[1] See Goodman (2001) 36.

in ancient Greek literature documents reality. It would be thus useful to think of *nostos* in Greek poetry and life before attempting to interpret the individual plays of Greek drama that are structured around *nostos*. We know that *νόστος*, the homecoming, was a popular theme as is clear from *Od.* 1.326, where the bard Phemius sings of the *'Αχαιῶν νόστον λυγρόν*. It occurs with varying emphasis and elaboration in the early literary tradition. The *Odyssey* organised around the *nostos* of Odysseus, as I intend to show, is sung in comparison with the *nostoi* of the others such as Agamemnon, Nestor, Diomedes and Menelaos. A poem called the *Nostoi*, ascribed by Proclus to an Agias of Trozen, dealt with the return of the various heroes from Troy and finished with that of Agamemnon, his death by Clytaemestra and Aegisthus (see Bernabé *PEG* I (1987) 94ff., Davies *EFG* (1988) 66f.).[2] Three fragments of the Hesiodic catalogue treat various features of the story of Agamemnon's fatal return (see esp. Hesiod: 23(a) MW). Stesichorus wrote a poem called *Nostoi*, (Page *PMG* 208, 209) and a poem called *Oresteia* (*PMG* 210-19). This actually suggests that the Returns of the Greek veterans from Troy was a magnetic theme in the literary tradition, both in epic and in lyric.[3] The importance of the hero's return is not confined to the *Odyssey* and the stories mentioned above. Teiresias' prophecy, in Homer's narrative, alludes to some later adventures of Odysseus and his death. The *Telegony*[4] credited to Eugammon of Cyrene as the closing part of the Epic cycle deals with these adventures. Odysseus' death by his son Telegonus results from the latter's ignorance. In the same way that Odysseus in the *Odyssey* is thought to be far away and possibly dead, unrecognised by the suitors and his wife in his own house, Telegonus fails to recognise the identity of his father. The *Odyssey* also alludes to the *Argonautica* (Argo, *Od.*12.70; Circe, sister of Aietes, *Od.*10.137-39). Moreover, *nostos* is a recurring motif in Greek myth. The hero's return can either be beneficial or dangerous for its community. Oedipus' return to Thebes led to the death of king Laius and brought about a plague. Theseus on his return from Crete forgot to hoist the white sail and caused his father's death, Aegeus. In other cases the hero's return can restore society as in the return of Orestes. All this suggests that a whole matrix of *nostos* poems, stories and images coexisted in the Archaic period and even earlier. Thus, the tradition included variants of the *nostos*-theme before it was developed into a form suitable for the tragic stage. In what follows, I shall attempt to identify the connection of the *nostos*-theme with everyday life in the ancient Greek world.

[2] For the uniqueness of Homer in comparison to the cyclic material see Griffin (1977).
[3] Cf. E. *Tro.* 78-83; A. *Ag.* 627, 635, 650-57; E. *Hel.* 407-10.
[4] Bernabé *PEG* I (1987) 100-105, Davies *EGF* (1988) 71-4.

In stressing similarities and parallels from literary figures to the historical community of especially the fifth century in Athens, with travellers going away from home on different occasions, using both poetic and artistic evidence I intend to speculate why *nostos* was a prominent theme for poetry and what kind of association did *nostos* have for the dramatists and their contemporaries.

1.1.1. *Nostos* and war

First, I propose to begin the enquiry about the assumptions that the dramatists and their audiences shared on *nostos* by considering the nature of homecoming in terms of warfare. The *Odyssey* is set ten years after the fall of Troy and thus often assumes the impact of the war on the Greek veterans. Odysseus' *nostos* is related to the *nostoi* of his colleagues in the Trojan War. At the very first lines of the poem (*Od.* 1.11-12) it is made clear that he has survived the war but many of his colleagues met their death in the war. There are Greeks who went away to fight in Troy and were killed in the battle. Achilles, Patroclus, Aias and Antilochus are mentioned by name in the *Odyssey* (3.107-112, 11.467-470, 24.15-18). Some of the heroes returned home successfully (Nestor, Diomedes: 3.165-7, 170-85, Philoctetes: 3.190, Idomeneus: 3.191 and Menelaus: 3.276-302, 4.81-96, 4.351-586). But the tragic *nostos* of Agamemnon (cf. the *nostos* of Aias Oileiades who was killed on the way back) reminds us of the effect of change in both the returning hero and the waiting figures at home. This well illustrates that it was not guaranteed that the departing warrior would always come home.[5] Odysseus on hearing Demodocus' 'Song of Troy' is reduced to tears (*Od.* 8.84-6). Most remarkably, the dilemma between a glorious death and an inglorious return (*Il.* 9.415 cf. A. *Cho.* 345ff.) is well shown in the case of Achilles in the *Iliad*.[6] In this poem *nostos* seems to be understood as part of the mortality of the warrior heroes. The warrior leaves the camp to fight and his return to the camp is described in terms of *nostos*.[7]

Furthermore, in Greek society the individual was driven from home in search of κλέος both in athletic contests and in war.[8] This competitive search for glory and

[5] See *ARV*² 1021,117: the placement of the helmet of the warrior within a large area of black glaze on the centre of composition effectively suggests that the warrior may not return.
[6] For a discussion of this heroic dilemma see Nagy (1979).
[7] For a typology of *nostos* in the *Iliad* see Maronitis (1999) 104-20.
[8] Crotty (1982) 120ff. has traced similarities between the victor's departure-return in Pindar's epinician odes and rites of passage that involve initiation of the young into the life of the society. This kind of ritual might have helped to shape stories of the returning hero.

achievement was constant. The *Odyssey*'s ending, where peace and happiness reign over Ithaca,[9] does not reveal the 'full' return of Odysseus. Like the athletes who constantly had to leave home[10] in an ongoing struggle of challenge, victory or defeat, the narrative of Odysseus' return reflects this continuity. The bearing of *κλέος* was also important in war. Achilles' immortal glory signifies the heroic ideal of a *θάνατος καλός* (glorious death). He did not return home, like Odysseus, but by dying young in Troy he obtained immortal glory (*Il.* 9.413 *ὤλετο μέν μοι νόστος, ἀτὰρ κλέος ἄφθιτον ἔσται*). These are literary figures but they were shaped in a world where war was a constant. The ancient Greek world, especially in the fifth and fourth centuries BC, was perpetually at war. The numerous 'departure-scenes' on Attic vases that have come down to us[11] suggest that most free Greeks would have been obliged to say farewell to wife and family and go off to war. A departure from home was a popular scene in Athenian black-figure vases (e.g. *ABV* 405,17). By the end of the fifth century the scene is more realistic, sometimes with a libation poured or entrails inspected for omens (e.g. *ABV* 283, 13). The scene of a warrior departing remains common in the red-figure vases of the archaic period (e.g. *ARV²* 31, 2; *ARV²* 181, 1) and it is especially favoured in the fifth century on the paintings of the classical period, sometimes with a libation poured or ready (*ARV²* 600,12; *ARV²* 604,56; *ARV²* 991, 61; *ARV²* 1143, 2; *ARV²* 1145, 37; *ARV²* 1021, 117). On a red-figure vase painting featuring the departure of Neoptolemus Kalliope is depicted as engaged in a libation-scene (*ARV²* 1044, 1). The performance of ritual could facilitate difficult events such as the departure of a warrior.[12]

In these scenes wife, mother and father are often identified. The relatives of the warrior had to wait for him to return. Priam on a neck amphora by the Hector painter (*ARV* 1036, 1) sheds a tear while he sees off his son, Hector. In the departure-scenes of those vases the expression of the waiting figures is very sad. Women's duty is mostly to wait for

[9] In particular Odysseus and Penelope go to bed together after the slaughter of the suitors (23.254; cf. the bed-motif as a token: 23.184).

[10] Morgan (1990) 209 points out, however, that 'In the case of Athens, there is evidence for athletic contests within state territory, and also for Athenian participation at contests and festivals elsewhere prior to 566, the traditional date of the institution of athletics in the Great Panathenaia...', the main civic festival of Athens. Still state recognition of victories also at inner-state festivals illustrates the importance of individual victories to the whole community.

[11] See Boardman (1989) 220.

[12] This therapeutic effect of the ritual is depicted in a variety of pyrrhic dances that were performed by the soldiers of the army of Cyrus (Xen., *An.* 6.1.5-13). These dances were part of a feast in Paphlagonia after the army had fought its way out of Anatolia. This kind of celebration came after hundreds had died. Like the funeral games performed in memory of Patroclus in the *Iliad* (23.257-897) this celebration was not only festive but it also had a religious and ritual dimension. Through these dances, the warriors were able to leave behind the violence that they had experienced; see Tritle (2000) 189-91 for a more general discussion on the nature of such rituals.

the warrior's return and to provide moral support to their men. Andromache is a waiting wife in the *Iliad* (6. 369-502)) and she represents the loneliness and anxiety of the waiting women at home on the absence of their husbands on a mission or expedition. Hector will not return from the battle and Andromache will have to face the impact of war (22.477-514). Penelope, longing for the return of Odysseus, does not want to hear Phemius' song about the *Nostoi* of the Greeks (*Od.* 1.340-44) because it brings her *πένθος ἄλαστον* (unforgetable grief, 1.342). She is engaged in waiting and Odysseus' homecoming is not guaranteed. Waiting for the warriors to come home explains the dramatic possibilities of the *nostos*-story involving a female waiting figure. Aeschylus, who himself belonged to the Marathon-generation, depicts in the *Persians* the impact of war in terms of *nostos* (e.g. 166: emptiness of men in Asia).[13] Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* (cf. Euripides' depiction of women in *Andromache*, *Hecuba* and *Trojan women*) reveals the cost of war for women (see esp. *Lys.* 585-90 and 594-7). 'Historically, women have borne a terrible burden in war: bearing the sons who will so often fight and die, married to men who will do the same'.[14] Women especially had thus to face the impact of the war. Pericles refers to the widows and mothers of the Athenians who died in battle in his funeral speech.[15] Funeral orations were part of a ritualized and regular process of the remembering of the dead who left for war never to return. State graves and other mementoes found in the streets and homes of Athens, as well as the rest of Greece, were reminders of real conflicts for the war-dead who were being singled out for special honour. This is clearly demonstrated in the case of the war-dead at Marathon and Plataia.[16] All this helps us to understand how a *θάνατος καλός* (glorious death) in war excluded the possibility of a homecoming. This further explains the feelings of those waiting at home who were left to live with the non-return of their beloved ones. The choice of no return is especially embodied in the case of Achilles in the *Iliad*. Odysseus, unlike his colleagues at Troy who met their death in the battle, gets his *nostos* in the end. The *Odyssey*, structured around the hero's return, is made to vindicate the value of homecoming and the pleasures of life.[17]

[13] See also A. *Pers.* 8, 118, 548, 718, 730, 761.
[14] Tritle (2000) 100.
[15] Thucydides 2.45.2.
[16] See Paus. 1.32 and 9.5-6; Hdt 9.85; Thuc. 2.34-5 and 3.58.4.
[17] Cf. Achilles' comment at *Od.* 11.489ff.

1.1.2. *Nostos* and the seafaring experience

Secondly, the geographical position of Greece has favoured travel and trade. The Greeks both in antiquity and in our age have taken advantage of the country's maritime location. This is suggested by several paths of investigation, including literary sources and archaeological evidence. The Greeks in classical antiquity sailed and established guest friendship (xenia) relations, to north, south, east and west.[18] This is evident in the development of long-distance exchange given the strong trading interests especially of the main colonising cities. The building of specialised types of ships from the Archaic period onwards[19] contributed to this network of exchange. Furthermore, the islands played a major role in the situation of metal processing[20] and other sorts of commodity-manufacture such as pottery. This has further implications for the homecoming theme rooted in Greek life since the manufactures were themselves mobile. 'Carrying the raw materials, as the wrecks of their vessels have sometimes shown, they sailed the Mediterranean, manufacturing where they found demand. It is essential to stress that Mediterranean redistribution is closely tied to the mobility of the producer: the wandering craftsman is a key figure.'[21] Thus the Greeks sailed and expected to return. This was facilitated by the environment, the sea itself and its chains of islands. But as in the case of the departure of the warriors *nostos* was not guaranteed on the occasion of seafaring. People had to take their chances at the mercy of the weather. This is well illustrated in Hesiod's practical instruction on seafaring. The poet in particular draws attention to the right season for sailing (*W&D* 694) and emphasizes that it is terrible to die in the sea (*δεινὸν δ'ἐστὶ θανεῖν μετὰ κύμασιν W&D* 687). The wild and rough nature of the sea was depicted in many literary sources.[22] Archilochus in one of his poems (W 13) relates the death of some people who were whelmed in the roaring sea. The Greeks knew that seafaring sometimes excluded the possibility of return because of the roughness of the sea.

The themes thus that recur in literature are not remote from real life. The dramatic repertoire naturally draws on the incidents of life. Warriors had to leave their home very

[18] For the material evidence for relations between Greeks and barbarians down to about 480BC see Boardman (1999).
[19] See Casson (1994).
[20] Delos and Aegina, for example, are considered as archaic centres of workmanship in bronze.
[21] Horden and Purcell (2000) 346; and see their analysis on the Mediterranean sea and its meaning for further evidence. For my present purpose it will suffice to emphasise that sailing away from home was quite a common experience.
[22] See Lesky (1973).

often. Real people had experienced the situation of sailing away from home. The homecoming theme gave rise to many stories and images of vase-paintings related to the necessity of leaving home. But as we have already seen *nostos* was not a safe and guaranteed passage. The returning hero in a *nostos*-story does not always manage to return and if he does return he does not always succeed in adjusting to the normal life of the community. *Nostos* thus is a fit subject for literature since it has to do with the presentation of mutability. The staging of a *nostos*-plot makes a good story for a tragedy, since tragedy provokes fear and pity by presenting a coherent action in which a change (*μετάβασις* or *μεταβολή*) occurs (Arist. *Poet.* 52a 14-18). The returning hero is an ambiguous figure since he is in a transitional stage.[23] Once he returns he is not the same man as he was when he was first separated from his environment. In the same way waiting for the absent hero can also bring changes to his household. These changes on both the hero and his environment involve danger as in the case of Odysseus where he had to face obstacles until he was re-integrated into his *oikos*. In that sense no return is return to the same place. The notion of the return to the same, that is not exactly the same, is what makes the nature of the return tragic. This utopian quality of a return to the same is actually suggested by the souring of the return, which is typical of tragic *nostoi*. If I may anticipate, this argument will be made when it comes to the interpretation of *nostos* in drama. The use of *nostos* in drama and its effect on the audience has to be inferred from what would be considered as traditional on a homecoming-theme both in life and in literature.

[23] The quest of the golden fleece by Jason is a story full of *nostos*-elements. The existence of an early epic *Argonautica* remains conjectural. For my present purpose it will suffice to refer to the description of this story by one of our surviving sources, Pindar in *Pythian* 4, in order to emphasise the ambiguous elements of the returning figure. On his return to Iolkos from his childhood in the mountains Jason was an awesome figure. He is described as being 'like a stranger (*ξένος*), although a townsman (*ἀστός*)', (78). This description here of Jason's liminal character is indicative of the ambiguous nature of the returning hero after a long absence. The returning person has changed in his absence and when he eventually returns he cannot be easily classified. This might explain why *nostos* is such a popular theme in myth and poetry. Jason has to go away on an expedition to bring back the golden fleece (156-67) in order to get the sceptre and the throne of Iolkos (136-55). The crew that will accompany him has to leave their mother's side (186:*παρὰ ματρὶ μένειν*). Pindar suggests that the safety of the family must be rejected in favour of an expedition. It is important for young men to leave their home in order to achieve fame (184-7). Before their departure they get involved in a ritual, in order to have a favourable homecoming (197:*φιλίαν νόστοιο μοῖραν*). A departure-scene accompanied by some kind of ritual is also a common scene in Attic vases (see pp. 3-4).

1.2. The *nostos*-story in the *Odyssey*

Tragedy, as Aristotle puts it, is the imitation of an action.[24] Lattimore paraphrases this definition and points out that tragedy 'acts out a story or, as we more often meet it, gives the story in a form that could be acted out. It is a kind of story telling, whatever else it may be'.[25] The elements and sequence of a story reveal numerous patterns of action or tragic themes. *Nostos* is one of those narrative patterns that is present in some of the stories acted out in tragedies. A major example of the literary treatment of *nostos* in earlier Greek literature is the *Odyssey*. *Nostos*, a nominal derivative of *νέομαι* (return home), is a key word in the tale of Odysseus' travels. The question of his *nostos* is introduced at the very beginning of the poem: 1.5, 9, 13 cf. 8.9, 102=252, 156, 466. What Odysseus is to 'do' is to 'return home'. The *Odyssey* narrates one particular *nostos* but, as I mentioned above, the tradition included narratives of other variants of the *nostos*-plot. Homer[26] himself was aware of the return songs told in his own time. Some of them were in Homer's repertory and are hinted at in the *Odyssey*: the return of Agamemnon, the return of Menelaus, the return of Nestor and other Greek heroes. Therefore, it is clear that within the Homeric poem, there is more than one form of potential *nostos*. However, one should recognise that the *Odyssey* was a particular important intertext for the Greek culture. This is evident in the prominence of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* in Athenian festival and educational contexts. Thus, before analysing the Greek tragedies dealing with a homecoming story I will consider the literary treatment of *nostos* in the narrative progress of the *Odyssey*. The existence of *nostos* as a familiar story-pattern means that once its presence is clear to the audience various expectations are brought into the play that the dramatists may fill out or modify. The consideration of the use of *nostos* in the *Odyssey* may be of service in discovering its use in the plays of Greek tragedy.

[24] *μίμησις πράξεως Poetics* 6.2 (1449 b 24).
[25] Lattimore (1964) 2; so Goward (1999) 1: 'On a simple level, tragedy makes use of the same characters and the same story-lines as those in Homeric and Cyclic epic, dramatising, for example, many Odyssean *nostoi* tales, centred on a hero's problematic homecoming with its attendant plotting and deceits.'
[26] I use Homer to describe the poet of the *Odyssey* for convenience. For a discussion of whether Homer is the composer of the *Odyssey* see Garvie (1994) 1-7 and for a more recent theory on the composition of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* see West (1999).

1.2.1 *Nostos* as a story-pattern

It is now widely accepted that the *Odyssey* is a product of oral composition.[27] Parry's early works and Lord's development of them provide us with a better understanding of the function of oral traditional poetry. The homecoming of someone is one of those stories of traditional oral poetry that crop up throughout the centuries and throughout the continents in near identical form — so far as motif and plot go. The *Odyssey* provides a major example of the *nosto*s-pattern of a hero's return. However, it is clear within the text of the Homeric poem that there other ways a *nostos* could unfold. Later epic stories make use of the same pattern in the Serbo-Croatian tradition. The Return song, as Albert Lord has shown, is one of those widespread and recurrent mythic patterns throughout the history of Balkan oral epic song.[28] The events in such a pattern follow a consistent order: 'The god or hero disappears for a relatively long period of time and is seemingly dead, but eventually he returns, or is sought after and brought back. During his absence there has been devastation, but upon his reestablishment, which is performed ceremonially, order is restored, prosperity returns, and frequently he remarries.'[29] Of course the *nostos*-story in the *Odyssey* follows this pattern very closely. As Lord has put it, 'I like to think that in 'The Captivity of Sarac Mehmedagha' and in other similar songs in the Yugoslav tradition one is hearing the *Odyssey* or other similar songs, still alive on the lips of men, ever new, yet ever the same.'[30]

It is obvious, then, that there are similarities between the *Odyssey* and the proposed Serbo-Croatian epic relatives. My immediate interest is to demonstrate how the *nostos*-pattern manifests itself within the *Odyssey*. First, one should define the term story-pattern. A story-pattern, according to Lord's definition from his work in Serbia on oral traditional songs, is one of those 'narrative patterns that, no matter how much the stories built around them may seem to vary, have great vitality and function as organizing elements in the composition and transmission of oral story texts'.[31] In the Yugoslav oral epic tradition the basic Return schema is a 'story pattern' that consists of five elements: Absence, Devastation, Return, Retribution and Wedding. There are certain themes associated with each of the five elements. Those themes express the abstract elements of the story-pattern

[27] See Foley (1988).
[28] See esp. Lord (1969); Lord (1960) 186-97. For a close examination of a sample of the Return song in the Serbo-Croatian tradition see Foley (1990) 364-387.
[29] Lord (1972) 31.
[30] Lord (1962) 320.
[31] Lord (1969) 18.

and provide a characteristic texture to the story at the level of the typical scene. Many Yugoslav return epics begin, for example with three introductory themes: 'Shouting in Prison', 'Bargaining for Release', and 'Preparation for Journey Home'.[32] The story-pattern in the *Odyssey* consists of similar elements to the one suggested by Lord for the Yugoslav return songs: Absence, Transition and Wandering, Return, Retribution and Reunion with Penelope. Certain themes cluster around each of the five elements.[33] We should not, however, privilege the Slavic tradition. The story of someone going away from home is found in epic tales from peoples and cultures contiguous to Greek and with which the Greeks had contact. *Gilgamesh*, the most famous work of Mesopotamian poetic literature, provides a parallel to the *Odyssey* for the motif of the great traveller.[34] The homecoming theme with the series of disguise and recognition is popular all over the world.[35] One should think of the Modern Greek Ballad,[36] the Bulgar folk tale[37] or the Russian fairy tales studied by Propp, where the last portion of the *Odyssey* is strikingly similar to Propp's functions 23-31 (see my footnote 87). This tale of the husband's return which informs both the *Odyssey* and other similar songs in other traditions of oral poetry has for its theme a husband who comes home after a long absence, often in disguise, just as his wife has married or is about to marry another. The development of this Weltmärchen varies. In the story of Odysseus' homecoming it is united with another type of folktale, that of a contest between suitors with a bride as a prize.[38]

In most societies changes of state are marked by ritual. Such rituals, or rites of passage, are, as identified by Van Gennep (1960, p.21) tripartite in structure, consisting of rites of separation, rites of exclusion and rites of (re-) incorporation. Both weddings and funerals share a tripartite structure, marking important rites of passage from one social or biological circumstance to another.[39] This is a useful way of analysing *nostos*, since *nostos* is a journey that follows a similar constant pattern that consists of the stage of going away from home, the stage of wandering and the stage of return. There is a period of time when

[32] See Lord (1960) appendix 3, 245-9.
[33] These categories should not be pressed. There is a certain overlap.
[34] See West (1997) 66.
[35] See N 681 in Thompson's *Motif Index*
[36] The 'Return of the long absent husband' (*Ὁ Γυρισμὸς τοῦ Ξενιτεμένου*); see Rhomaios (1952) 334 with his n.1.
[37] See Rhomaios (1952) 351ff.
[38] See H 331 in Thompson's *Motif Index*
[39] See Van Gennep (1960) 116-65. This might explain why such different events are mutually attracted in Greek tragedy. 'Characters conceive of their deaths in terms of a marriage to a loved one already dead, or as a union with Hades, where the god of the underworld takes the place of a living bride or groom'; see Rehm (1994) 4.

the absent hero dissociates himself from the social group of which he is a member. This is a period of transition and in a *nostos*-story it is symbolised by the journey. The phenomenon of transition (passage or change) is a very common fact of human life but very difficult to comprehend. While Odysseus is part of this transition, wandering away from home, he is an ambiguous figure. 'For the man out of touch with the family and country, cut off from his roots in the known and familiar ties that tell him what he is, nothing is quite 'real'; there is no firm, clear point of reference either for victory or for defeat'.[40] Odysseus' *nostos* consists of elements of death. While he is away the world that the hero has left is subject to ageing and death (e.g. the parents of Odysseus: Laertes (*Od.* 11.187-196) in his old age isolates himself out of longing for his son, and Anticleia (*Od.* 11.197) dies out of longing for her son's homecoming). Odysseus himself once he returns has to leave behind the world of travelling and regain the past. I will next consider the literary treatment of *nostos* in the *Odyssey*. The *nostos*-story must be understood in terms of the other return stories of the Greek heroes which surround it. This analysis may be of service in identifying a full range of possibilities of the *nostos*-theme as a plot-structure. Clearly, the *Odyssey* must have been an influential example for the Attic dramatists in shaping stories with a homecoming theme presented in tragedies. In what follows, the analogies (Absence, Transition and Wandering, and Return) are perhaps too specific. However, this division is useful for demonstrating the sequence of events that lead to Odysseus' return.

1.2.2. Absence (Books 1-4)

The *Odyssey's* story of its hero's *nostos* is an account of his return to a place, his own home. The conception of starting the poem with Odysseus offstage, on Calypso's island, sets the *nostos*-pattern from the very beginning. In his absence Odysseus is kept vividly in mind by those left at home. His wife and son long for him. They are not certain if he is alive. Penelope postpones her decision on remarriage. Telemachus grows more and more impatient since with his mother and the suitors in the house he cannot assert his authority. The first two books reveal the sad consequences of Odysseus' long absence from Ithaca. We are encouraged to see the weakened order, which should be restored once Odysseus is back. The suitors, who should in reality be the guests of the house, have overstepped all bounds of propriety. Telemachus' attempts to claim his inheritance in the house are not

[40] Segal (1994) 62.

taken seriously by the suitors. The absence of Odysseus is striking. The need for his return is urgent. What is of great importance in a *nostos*-story is what we learn about the absent hero through others' recollections of him. This is very vivid in the first four books of the *Odyssey*. We learn of his relationships with very different kinds of people and in that way we get to know Odysseus himself. The loyal Ithakans remember him as a king who was kind like a father (2.229-234) and Nestor, Menelaus and Helen as a great warrior (3.120-129, 4.104-110, 4.240-258, 266-289). Penelope remembers him as a husband. Telemachus has mixed feelings about the possibility of his mother's remarriage. He wants Odysseus to return but he also needs to go on with his life if Odysseus is not to come home. The present stalemate in the house makes him daydream of his father's return (1.114-118).

Telemachus is sent by Athena to Pylos and Sparta to seek news of his father. The son of Odysseus travels outward, away from home, just as Odysseus is returning. The story of Agamemnon's return, which is mentioned by Zeus in the beginning of the *Odyssey* (1.35f.) is in Homer's mind. There is a parallel between Telemachus and Orestes. Orestes was exiled[41] when Agamemnon returned home and thus Agamemnon was an easy victim to the murder-plot. In the same way when Odysseus returns to Ithaca Telemachus is not present. In addition Telemachus on his homecoming brings a friend, Theoclymenus, like Orestes who brings Pylades. Moreover, what awaits Telemachus on his homecoming, the murder-plot of the suitors, resembles the murder-plot that Aegisthus has in store in the *nostos*-story of Agamemnon. So Telemachus travels to win *kleos* (1.95, 3.77-8, 13.422) and he falls into the story- pattern of the returning hero who has to encounter evils at home. This makes him a parallel to his own father, Odysseus.[42] There are troubles awaiting him at home. The leaders of the suitors are lying in wait for him in the strait between Ithaca and rocky Samos, intent on killing him before he can reach his native land (4.670-2, 770-8, 13.426-9, 14.178-82, 15.28-31). He has to face obstacles before his *nostos* turns out successful. The Orestes -Telemachus correspondence is obvious when Orestes, the avenger of his father, is set as a glorious example before Telemachus by Athene and by Nestor in order to arouse him to action (1.298ff., 3.195ff.). Thus the return-story of Agamemnon has been effective in the shaping of the section of the *Odyssey* where the part of Telemachus is

[41] In *Agamemnon* (877-885) Orestes is said to have been sent to Strophios. In *Choephori* (912ff. cf. 8-9) the absence of Orestes is mentioned. Whether Orestes was away when Agamemnon returned is not made clear in the *Odyssey*. We only learn from the *Odyssey* that Menelaus was away on Agamemnon's homecoming (see 3.303ff., 4.90-92)

[42] Odysseus returns in disguise, which makes him a parallel to Orestes in tragedy, who returns to Argos in disguise and tells a deceptive tale about his identity. This will be further discussed in Aeschylus' *Choephori*, and the two *Electra* plays in chapter 5.

involved. In what follows I will draw attention to the *nostos* of Agamemnon, which is used by Homer in order to provide a parallel and a contrast to this main theme of the return of Odysseus.

On his visit to Pylos and Sparta Telemachus sees two returned heroes and hears from them about the others. There is a reference to Agamemnon's return-story at the very beginning of the poem (1.35ff.). This allusion to the return of Agamemnon has its deliberate function. Throughout the *Odyssey* Agamemnon's fate is kept vividly in front of the listener. What is said in the *Odyssey* is told in relation to the hero, Odysseus. The stories of the returns of the other Greek heroes are a foil for the return of Odysseus. Viewed in this light the *nostoi*[43] of the Greek heroes with their parallels and contrasts help us to understand the structure and function of Odysseus' return. In particular Nestor recounts Agamemnon's return (3.253-312). Homer was aware of the similarities and differences between Odysseus' and Agamemnon's return. In their story-pattern the figures who participate are similar. On the one side there are Agamemnon – Clytaemestra – Aegisthus – Orestes, on the other Odysseus – Penelope – the suitors – Telemachus. But the final contrast in Agamemnon's homecoming makes his story vary from that of Odysseus. The contrast between the two stories is clear: Agamemnon returns more directly and openly and so meets his death at the mercy of his wife and her lover, whereas Odysseus returns in disguise and punishes his wife's suitors. The faithful waiting of Penelope contrasted to the faithless Clytaemestra spares Odysseus from Agamemnon's doom. Later in the *Odyssey* Homer emphasizes those differences between the two stories (Agamemnon's unfortunate homecoming is referred to several times during the *Odyssey*, notably in Books, 1, 4 and 11).

Nestor faced no obstacles on his return and this is contrasted with that of Agamemnon. His contentment with a stable life is contrasted also with Odysseus' continuing wandering and his longing for home. He recounts those who survived: Diomedes, Neoptolemus, Philoktetes, Idomeneus and himself. The blissful condition of the many who did return home gloriously is here contrasted with the special pain of those (Agamemnon, Odysseus) who did not. Nestor tells part of Menelaus' story, which has remarkable similarities to Odysseus' story-pattern. In the same way that the part of

[43] According to Lord (1960) 159-60 the references to the returns of other Greek warriors make sense 'if they are taken as part of a song telling the story of the heroes of Troy, a song in other words, that would include both the events of the Cyclic epic, the *Nostoi*, and the *Odyssey*, and possibly also the *Telegony*'. In that sense oral theory is compatible with the modified version of Neoanalysis that is mainly concerned with the models of oral songs; for the rapprochement of neoanalysis and oral theory see Kullmann (1984).

Telemachus in the *Odyssey* is relevant to elements of Agamemnon's story pattern, Menelaus' return narrated in Book 4 of the *Odyssey* and also in *Nostoi* has similarities to the Circe and Underworld episodes. Both Menelaus and Odysseus have to stay in a strange land. Menelaus was detained on an island off the coast of Egypt (cf. Odysseus' sojourn in Circe's island). A supernatural female (Eidothea – Circe, 4.389-390 = 10.539-40) advises them to seek information from a prophet (Proteus – Teiresias). There is some kind of difficulty until they get the seer to talk. The thematic correspondence between those two *nostos*-stories is confirmed by the role of Elpenor. Odysseus meets his companion in the underworld, where the latter asks him to go back — into Circe's island — and bury him. Menelaus' story-pattern provides the element of a loss of a companion, Phrontis (3.276-285). The difference is that Elpenor is left unburied and Odysseus has to go to the underworld and then provide him with a burial.

What is different from Menelaus' parallel in Odysseus' *nostos*-story is the journey to the underworld. An undercurrent of death permeates the *Odyssey* especially by the journey of Odysseus to the underworld. Heracles also descended to the underworld in order to fetch Cerberus. Apart from Odysseus and Heracles, Dionysos, Orpheus, Psyche and Theseus undertook the descent. *Κατάβασις* is not essentially associated with *nostos* but a visit to the underworld is a fit subject for the hero who has been away for a long period and returns. The lower world journey in *Νέκυια* suggests the connection of *nostos* with death.[44] One should speculate about the difference when the *nostos* is a return from Hades. A *κατάβασις* reveals the heavy burden of death. Odysseus pays a visit to the underworld like shamans everywhere. He shares through the *κατάβασις* affinities with a shaman who 'may in fact be seen simultaneously in different places'.[45] This is a good way to define metaphorically how a hero who undertakes a *nostos* feels. Like a shaman the returning hero has the power of bilocation. He has been wandering in places away from home, longing to go home. Once he returns home he carries with him the experience of other places, even of another world, that may also have been the underworld. Odysseus like Heracles made it to the ends of the earth and chose to return home. Moreover, *nostos* resembles death. Any major change is analogous to death. Death, like marriage, and *nostos* deal with a transition in human life. Odysseus' part of himself wandering will be forgotten and in that sense this

[44] *Nostoi* also contain a visit to the underworld; see: Bernabé *PEG* I (1987) 94ff., Davies *EFG* (1988) 66f. *Nostos* and death intermingle in the *Iliad* with the return of the dead Sarpedon to Lycia (16.663-83) and the return of the dead Hector to Troy, see especially the role of Hermes as a *ψυχοπομπός* (24.359-69, 679-94). For the similarity between these two scenes on the level of a typical scene see Maronitis (1999) 111-119.
[45] Dodds (1951) 140 and see his chapter on 'The Greek shamans and the origin of Puritanism' 135-78.

part of him will die away. His return, as for any voyager, is a reclaiming of his entire life in Ithaca. He rediscovers those left behind amid the feeling of change, ageing and death. He comes back from darkness. This association is especially supported by the name of *Καλυψώ* that derives from the verb *καλύπτειν* (to cover) and suggests darkness.[46] Odysseus, however, was desperate to return home and he eventually achieves a successful homecoming even if his return involves the effects of change on both himself and his home and relatives, whereas Agamemnon meets on his arrival at home a real death.

On the whole, we have dealt so far with the most prominent return-stories of the other Greek heroes, Agamemnon and Menelaus, in the *Odyssey*. Their return-stories must be read in connection with Odysseus' *nostos*-story. The Greeks who returned from Troy had either an easy and happy homecoming (Diomedes, Nestor, Neoptolemus, Idomeneus and Philoktetes) or faced obstacles in their homecoming (Menelaus, Odysseus) or had an unsuccessful homecoming (Agamemnon meets his death when he returns, Aias Oileiades is drowned in a wreck at the Gyraian rocks as Menelaus reported to Telemachus (4.499ff.) and he never reaches home). These return stories vary from the story pattern of Odysseus' homecoming. The most obvious difference from Odysseus' story pattern (Absence – Return in disguise – Retribution and Reunion) is Agamemnon's homecoming (Absence – Return openly – Death). Homer exploits also through these two stories the antithesis of the speedy but disastrous homecoming of Agamemnon and the long-delayed but ultimately happy homecoming of Odysseus. Also the delayed homecoming of Menelaus is connected to Odysseus' homecoming as far as the same kinds of obstacles, that they both face, are concerned. By contrast Nestor knows where he is going and he is never lost. His *nostos* is simple, like that of Diomedes. One may think that the return pattern is a multiform capable of variations. Thus, *nostos* is flexible and multiform.

1.2.3. Odysseus in transition (Books 5-8) and Odysseus wandering (Books 9-13)

Odysseus was away fighting at Troy for ten years. It took him another ten years to return home. The *Odyssey* begins in the tenth year of Odysseus' wanderings. Most of Odysseus' adventures would have to be told in retrospect. In the first four books the other figures taking part in the *nostos*-story have been identified. We leave Telemachus at Sparta, and

[46] For Odysseus' return home (*nostos*) as 'return from death' expressed by the root meanings and associations of *nostos* and *neomai* see Frame (1978) 137-65; for the ambiguity of Odysseus' relationship to Calypso see Crane (1988) esp. 16-17.

the suitors lying in ambush for his return. Now we turn to Odysseus himself. What has changed for Odysseus while he is away? He is eventually released from Calypso's island, who has offered him immortality. But Odysseus has declined it. He prefers home and fame. Odysseus chooses mortality and prefers Penelope. Penelope attracts Odysseus' desire for homecoming not only because of sensual pleasure. She represents the social environment from which Odysseus derives his identity as a man. Living with Calypso will mean Odysseus' cutting himself off from society, whereas Penelope is part of his family, kin and friends. Circe acts in a similar way in Odysseus' *nostos*- story. At some point she as a lover threatens Odysseus' desire for homecoming. Odysseus is reminded of Ithaca by his men (10.467-472). Even innocent Nausicaa stands for Odysseus as a temptation. The lotus, Circe's drugs, and the Sirens take away the desire for home. The episode with the Lotus-eaters, who make anyone who eats their lotus blossom to forget his desire to return home, brings about the association of *nostos* with death. The land of the Lotus-eaters suggests a kind of death since it is a place of oblivion. Some of Odysseus' companions who consume the lotus forget their homecoming (9.95-7). The same effect is intended by Circe's magic potion (10.236). In Book 12 the Sirens with their song appear as another temptation to Odysseus' desire to return home. The hypnotic power of their song (*θέλγουσιν* 12.40, 44) makes the listener forget his thoughts about homecoming. Odysseus manages to free himself from all these temptations that would detain his return to domesticity and ordered life. This evidence actually suggests that there is an intellectual connection between *nostos* and *noos* through the verbs *λανθάνομαι* (9.97, 9.102 cf. 10.236), *μιμνήσκομαι* (3.142, 10.472, 15.3) and *μέδομαι* (11.110, 12.137). In terms of etymology, as we have seen in page 8, *nostos* is a nominal derivative of *νέομαι*, return home. In addition, *nostos* is associated with *noos* in certain episodes of the poem. A man should keep his homecoming in mind if he wants to go back home. 'What is suggested by the forms of *lanthánomai*, "to forget" in these collocations is that the loss of a "return" is at the same time a loss of "mind".'[47] A lack of *noos* leads to a lack of *nostos*. Some of Odysseus' companions ate the cattle of Hyperion the Sun and lost their *νόστιμον ἦμαρ*. At the beginning of the *Odyssey* (1.8) they are described as *νήπιοι* (foolish). Elpenor, another companion of Odysseus, lost his return by falling from the roof of Circe's palace. He is described as *οὔτε φρεσὶν ἦσιν ἀρηρώς*

[47] Frame (1978) 35. He suggests (1978) 1-33 that the etymology of the word *noos*, 'mind', is connected with the verb *neomai* 'return home' through the verbal root **nes*.- For the primitive Greek meaning of the root **nes*- he provides evidence from the participial form *ἄσμενος*. Although the connection of *nostos* and *noos* is evident in the story of Odysseus' return it remains a mere speculation whether *ἄσμενος* belongs to *νέομαι;* see Frisk (1960) on *ἄσμενος* and on *νέομαι*.

(10.553). Unlike his companions Odysseus is distinguished for his intelligence. Odysseus is the self-controlled survivor who gets his *nostos* in the end. The epithet *πολύτροπος*[48] substitutes for the name of Odysseus in book 1 (1.1). He could either return home or remain unseen from his fellows and family in Ithaca. One who chooses not to return home sinks into oblivion (*Od.* 1.95, 3.77-8, 1.232-243, 13.422). In contrast Pindar and Bacchylides celebrated the victor who came back from the Panhellenic games in epinician odes. Sitting at home for one's whole life meant in Pindar being *ἐν σκότῳ* (*O.*1.82-4). One had to leave one's mother's side (*P.*4.186) in order to participate in the contests. Never to leave home leaves the individual in darkness.[49]

The transitional nature of Odysseus' return is underlined in Books 5-8, which present the Phaeacian episode. That is the last of Odysseus' adventures in the fantasy world. His sojourn in the Phaeacians' land looks forward to his return home, in the second half of the poem. It prepares him for his return to the real world of Ithaca. Odysseus survives the storm that Poseidon sent him while he was sailing from Ogygia. He arrives at Scheria and exhausted lies down in the shelter of the bushes. Athena sends him to sleep.[50] He first makes contact with the human community through his encounter with Nausicaa. Naked and exhausted as he is, Nausicaa arranges for him to take a bath (6.216). She gives him clothes (6.228) and a meal (6.249), which is rather a picnic. These three themes which mark Odysseus' transition from the unreal world of Ogygia to the 'real' transitional world of the Phaeacians[51] recur in the story of the return. The bath as a sign of welcome emphasizes the passage to a new situation. Odysseus refuses to be bathed by Nausicaa's maidens out of reluctance to be seen naked (6.222). The bathing by Eurycleia (19.343ff.) is similar. Odysseus again holds back, permitting himself only to be washed by an old servant. Odysseus' final bath in Book 23 signifies the fulfilment of his return.[52] The motif

[48] In tragedy the connection of *nostos* and *noos* is dramatised in the thematic complex of disguise. Orestes, like Odysseus, uses deceit on his return and achieves a successful homecoming whereas Agamemnon, who returns direct and undisguised, has a fatal *nostos*.

[49] Cf. Telemachus' journey, p.4. This journey would bring *κλέος* to the young man (1.95, 3.77-8, 13.422).

[50] See Segal (1967) 325-9 on sleep as a recurrent motif that involves or accompanies transition. He points out (326) that: 'Sleep seems to frame Odysseus' entire return. On Scheria, the bridge between the fantasy world and reality, he sleeps on arrival and departs in sleep'. Odysseus' return from the Phaeacians is an awakening out of a sleep 'likest to death' (13.80). The sleep that falls upon Odysseus is equated with death. (cf. the connection of *θάνατος* and *ὕπνος* on the lecythoi *ARV*² 851, 272). In the *Iliad* (16.671) they are sent to remove the body of Sarpedon from the battlefield; cf. the calyx crater signed by Euphronios (New York Metropolitan Museum 1972.11.10).

[51] So Segal (1994) 66, who observes that the Phaeacians are 'between two worlds': 'The sojourn with the Phaeacians is a primarily *transitional* [original emphasis] situation, succeeding the total suspension from "reality" on Ogygia and preceding the reentrance into Ithaca'; cf. Segal (1962) 17 and also 27.

[52] By contrast in the *nostos*-story of Agamemnon by Aeschylus the bath scene ends in death. The bath with its ritual significance of entrance is also a means of revealing identity. It marks the acceptance of a stranger into

of clothes is also present in the narrative of return. Odysseus in the Phaeacian episode re-enters civilisation by being clothed by Nausikaa.[53] Nothing declares his social position and thus his identity. In the same way Odysseus will appear in Ithaca as a beggar. This time he is not naked but his rags are merely a disguise. The sharing of food[54] is also connected with the transitional situation of Odysseus' sojourn in the Phaeacians' land. The encounter with Nausicaa indicates a point of crucial entrance, which is underlined by those three themes of bath, clothes and sharing of food. Odysseus will conceal his identity and remain a suppliant for books 7 and 8. Insulted at the Games Odysseus decides to show his strength by throwing the discus. This demonstration of his physical prowess looks forward to the trial of the bow. The final declaration of Odysseus' identity comes after the third song of Demodocus about the wooden horse (8.499-520), which moves Odysseus to tears. He at last reveals that he is the famous hero of the Trojan War. In the same way, the trial of the bow brings about the revelation of Odysseus to the farm hands and then to all the rest.

The audience know that Odysseus is to return. At 1.76ff. Zeus agrees with Athena to help Odysseus to return home. He is stuck on Calypso's island. But his return is constantly put off. All of his adventures delay his return to his much desired home. We become aware of Odysseus' wanderings when he himself tells the Phaeacians (like a messenger in tragedy who recounts what the absent hero has been doing, see p.37) his experiences from the time he left Troy to his arrival on the shore of Scheria. The wanderings of Odysseus, while narrated by a flashback technique, indicate the changes that took place in the hero. Odysseus first lost his fleet and most of his companions, then the rest of them and his last ship together with his possessions, and finally, even his own identity. Naked and shipwrecked he first encounters Nausicaa. Through the Phaeacian-episode Odysseus wins his name and personality again. However, the Ithaca to which he will return cannot be the same as it was when he left. The suitors and the question of Penelope's remarriage express the changes that take place in Ithaca, while Odysseus is absent. The search for a return to an unchanged world of his remembrance is vain. While he wanders constantly seeking to return home the suitors are wasting his substance. They

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a new environment. Bath scenes are typical in the *Odyssey*. What in the *nostos*-story is relevant is its ambiguity. Bath is supposed to be something physically pleasant but in the homecoming of Agamemnon in Aeschylus' text the bath scene is fatal.

[53] For the importance of the motif of clothes in the Phaeacian episode see Schadewaldt (1959).

[54] The feasting has also a dangerous aspect in the *nostos*-story of Agamemnon. The king of Mycenae in the *Odyssey* is killed at supper (11.411 and 418ff. followed by Sophocles' *El.* 203, 284, whereas according to the Aeschylean account Agamemnon is killed in his bath (A. *Ag* 1540, *Cho.* 999). The preparation for a feast remains in the background but is clearly hinted at in *Agamemnon* at 1056f., 1310.

treat strangers badly and drag the maidens in a shameful way. When the *Odyssey* opens the return of Odysseus is not a serious possibility for those left behind. The presence of the suitors indicates that Penelope must marry again. They are not just wooing Penelope but they are after the house and the treasure belonging to Odysseus, which is the basis of his kingship. Although no one disputes Telemachus' right to succeed his father the suitors grudge it to Telemachus (see Antinous' speech: 1.384-7, 1.394-404; cf.22.50ff.). There arises a political aspect to Penelope's remarriage. The suitors' presence in the house of Odysseus is directed against Telemachus as prospective heir of Odysseus' possessions and kingdom.[55] We are encouraged to expect Odysseus' return in order to restore the order and resume the authority. It is obvious that Odysseus' nostalgia must be exchanged for a more flexible idea of Ithaca on his homecoming.

1.2.4. Return, Retribution on the suitors, and Reunion with Penelope (Books 13-24 disguise, deceptive stories, testing, recognition)

We can follow the unfolding of Odysseus' return through a series of disguise, deception tests and recognition. In Book 13 Odysseus is back in Ithaca. Athena is in disguise and Odysseus tells her one of his false tales. He thus reveals one of his inherent characteristics, to conceal himself in unknown surroundings. Athena is delighted by Odysseus' deviousness and with her aid he adopts the disguise[56] of an old beggar. Odysseus is willing to endure a period of disguise on his homecoming and thus ensure a successful *nostos*. The disguise distinguishes Odysseus from Agamemnon, who comes home openly.[57] Odysseus' capacity for concealing himself is marked out in the Phaeacians' episode where he is to remain incognito for some time, as later he will be incognito in Ithaca (cf. 'Outis' and the disguise that Odysseus uses against the Cyclops; see also my comment above on his loss of identity in Scheria). Along with his disguise Odysseus adopts a false history of someone

[55] So Van Wees (1992) 289: 'Normally, men stay at home and make bride-price offers to the prospective wife's family. But the suitors use the fact that Penelope fails to give them an outright "yes" or "no", as an excuse for paying her daily visits and consuming huge quantities of food and drink at her expense. They argue that this will keep her under pressure and force her to come to a decision (2.87-126). The effect of their intimidating continual presence in his house is to prevent Telemakhos from claiming his property, let alone the monarchy.'

[56] Disguise is the first element of the series of recognition scenes, which have more or less the same narrative element: 1.Odysseus in disguise 2. Conversation and questioning (false story) 3. Testing of the loyalty to Odysseus (Suitors and disloyal servants fail the test) 4.Odysseus reveals himself 5. The other person expresses disbelief 6. Sign of identity 7. Final recognition.

[57] Agamemnon is incapable of concealing his return since Clytaemestra is in control of his homecoming with the beacons' system (cf. 11.454-56). His wife's murder-plot and his undisguised return result in his failed *nostos*.

who fell from prominence to misfortune (see e.g. 14.192) and he is made to have a set of variations on his fictitious assumed names (as Aithon: 19.172-202 and as Eperitos: 24.303-8). But the persona of an old man is temporary. His disguise is a sign of Odysseus' eventual triumph over the suitors. Odysseus is *πολύτροπος*[58] in a sense that he manipulates his falsehood. It is not out of fortune that he has to endure the life of poverty. It is rather his capacity to adapt to any circumstances. The audience is aware of the irony of his disguise. We know that he can shed his disguise and reveal his identity at any time. Disguise is typically a divine strategy. In Greek mythology gods often go among mortals in disguise, usually for the purpose of testing them, and eventually reveal themselves. There is an analogy between Odysseus' return and stories with gods in disguise. The common feature is that the speakers do not realize with whom they talk (e.g. 17.483-487). Odysseus is repeatedly insulted. Melanthius abuses Odysseus and kicks him on the hip (17.204-254). Again in book 17 Antinous hurls a footstool at him (462-465). Near the close of Book 18 (394) Eurymachus throws a footstool at Odysseus. And at line 20.299 Ctesippus displays a similar kind of violence against Odysseus. He hurls a cow's hoof at him, missing him but striking the wall. Moreover, Odysseus' way of self-disclosure is similar to scenes of divine epiphany. In particular Odysseus reveals himself to the suitors in a way that closely parallels god's epiphany to punish the unworthy. He suddenly throws off his rags (22.1) and with the bow that only Odysseus can wield dispatches Antinous (22.8-12).[59] Furthermore, when Odysseus comes back he has to face the sad consequences of his long absence. The presence of the suitors in his house represents the change in his environment due to the passage of time. Odysseus' disguise expresses a false story but it is true because it conveys conditions to which he might have been subject. The long time of wanderings could have affected Odysseus and turned him into a weak man unable to fight against the suitors. This is what the disguise mimics. But the question whether Odysseus is still the same man as he was in the past is an explicit issue of his contest against the suitors (21.281-284).[60]

[58] On the nature of a man who is *πολύτροπος* see Marcel Detienne and Jean-Pierre Vernant (1978) esp.40.
[59] Like a newly arrived god, he reproaches those who have displeased him and punishes them. Odysseus' actions once he returns to Ithaca are godlike in a sense that the suitors are punished, Penelope, Telemachus and the loyal servants are rewarded by the master's return. A prerequisite for the story is his hidden identity. All this is similar to the moral version of theoxeny. 'Like the god in theoxeny he punishes transgressors and sets to rights a moral order which has gone wrong', Kearns (1982) 7.
[60] Cf. 8.179-85. By throwing the discus Odysseus proves his heroic worth and his act also foreshadows the contest of the bow.

The passage of time makes it also difficult for those left in Ithaca to enjoy the status they used to have. Odysseus' absence has affected the life of the loyal members of his household. As his dependants those characters derive their identities from their place in the *oikos* (household) of which he is the head. Odysseus tests the members of the household. There are two kinds of testing: 'Odysseus coming home tests the loyalty of those at home (type 1); and those at home test the truthfulness of Odysseus regarding his identity (type 2).[61] All this forms of course part of the major theme of 'recognition'.' Moreover, his disguise is associated with a deceptive story. He tells his false story to Athena (13.253ff.), to Eumaios (14.192-359), to the suitors (17.419ff.) to Penelope (19.172-202, 262-307) and to Laertes (24.303-308). In that way for the most part Odysseus controls the timing and circumstances of recognition. The recognition-scene between Telemachus and Odysseus (16.187ff.) follows as a climax of Telemachus' search for his father. The situation changes: the old beggar becomes Odysseus, and Telemachus is no longer alone. As a result the latter amazes (18.408-421, 20.262-274 etc.) the suitors with his new boldness. Only Telemachus knows the beggar's identity at this point. Odysseus reveals himself to his son because he needs his help in the revenge-plan against the suitors. It is the actions and reactions of all persons involved in this escalation of the beggar's importance in the royal household that give us the events of the return, revenge and reunion which take place in books 17-20 of the *Odyssey*. It is only Argus, his old dog, that recognizes Odysseus instinctively and he dies overwhelmed by emotion (*Odyssey* 17.290ff.).

All the recognition scenes that derive from the narrative pattern of the return are effective in their structure and crucial in their placement. Odysseus is recognised by Eurycleia (19.329f.). It is Odysseus who provokes his self-disclosure to Eurycleia, since he asks for an old servant to bathe him. Eurycleia recognises Odysseus by his scar (19.467-470).[62] The bath-scene is here a means of revealing identity. Odysseus indicates to

[61] Thornton (1970) 47-8.

[62] Recognition by tokens is an essential feature of a *nostos*-story. The hero in Russian fairy tales is often recognised by a mark, a brand, see Propp (1968) 62. As in the *Odyssey* so also in the Modern Greek Ballad, the husband has to give marks as proofs of his identity, in order to achieve his recognition (see my section 1.2.4. on the demotic song). Aristotle emphasized the centrality of recognition in narrative as an element of the plot (*Poet.* 1452a4). Recognition occurs in many forms of Greek tragedy. Concealment and unperceived identity are fit subjects for all sorts of ironies. In Euripides' *Ion*, for example, the recognition of the hero's identity is the climax of the story, its moment of truth. The play is based on the plot-pattern drawn from the familiar tale of the hero exposed as a baby, rescued and eventually restored to his true identity; see Huys (1995) and see also Lattimore (1964) 8-10 on the story-pattern of the foundling theme in tragedy and in general on the pattern of the mistaken identity. We are concerned here, however, with a particular formal type of recognition accompanied by a series of disguise, deceptions and tests that is associated with the homecoming of someone who has been absent and expected to return, as in the case of Odysseus. The epic material of recognition by tokens is not a regular feature of a *nostos*-play except in the preserved tragic

Eurycleia that the revelation of his identity would be dangerous (19.479-490). The bathing of her master retains its ambiguity. Although it should mark his safe and welcome official entrance into the life of the palace, it exposes Odysseus to danger.[63] The bath-scene enables the poet to retreat further into the past of the hero and thus establish his full identity before the reunion between the hero and his wife. Odysseus reveals himself to Eumaeus and Philoetius (21.205ff.) in order to have them as mutual supporters in the arrangement of the contest. Like Odysseus' reunion with Eumaeus, Odysseus' reunion with Penelope comes only after a long period of testing and negotiation. This allows the loyal members of the household, who remain deceived by Odysseus' disguise, to reveal the effects of Odysseus' long absence. Penelope's dependence on Odysseus' presence for her identity is reflected in her response to his absence which combines elements of grief and longing. She describes her condition to the stranger during their meeting in Book 19. When he compliments her by saying that she has been able to take Odysseus' place in his absence, she quite correctly denies it (19.124-128). The theme of longing recurs in Penelope's portrayal (18.202ff., 19.136 etc.). While Odysseus makes an external journey, away from Ithaca, Penelope has withdrawn to grief, despair and inactivity. Her journey is internal.[64] She retires to her upstairs room full of grief and longing for her absent husband. The entrance of the stranger in the household changes Penelope's attitude. Although the actual recognition scene comes after much testing in Books 21-3 (trial of the bow, bath, tokens of the bed) their encounters go through the motion of recognition. Odysseus as he strings the bow makes himself publicly known. It is only after he has killed Antinous that he indirectly tells the suitors who he is (22.35-36).

Books 17-20 set the stage for the great self-disclosure of Odysseus. In these books the revenge of Odysseus against the hated usurpers is prepared. The suitors rule the house of Odysseus while he is away. But now Odysseus has returned and with the aid of his god-given disguise he becomes part of the household. He reveals himself to those who can help him in his revenge-plan. With the help of Telemachus and the support of a few loyal

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accounts of Orestes' return and revenge (A. *Cho.* 164-245, S. *El.* 1222, E. *El.* 572-3, see also Aristotle's typology of recognition in *Poetics* Ch. 16 *ἀναγνώρισις...ἡ διὰ των σημείων* and see below p.17). The treatment of the recognition-scene by the three dramatists in the return of Orestes may lead us to the conclusion that the tokens were little more than conventional.

[63] The bathing scene at 23.152ff. seals the re-entrance to his past life in the society of Ithaca. The dangerous aspect of the bath-motif is fully demonstrated in the case of Agamemnon. While Odysseus through his bath in Book 23 is restored as a hero in the household of Ithaca, the king of Argos through his bath meets his death (see my n. 33). I believe that Aeschylus chose to locate Agamemnon's death as part of a bath scene, since this obviously underlines the flaw in Agamemnon's return. This will be discussed in my chapter 3, on Aeschylus' *Agamemnon.*

[64] For Penelope's emotional withdrawal see Sowa (1984) 107.

servants he is ready to turn the test of the bow into a means of taking revenge. During this scenario of return Odysseus manages to win Penelope's strong respect. In Book 19 Penelope is moved and becomes attracted to the beggar to the extent of confiding in him. She believes she is speaking to a friend of her husband (19.254: *ἐν μεγάροισιν ἐμοῖσι φίλος τ'ἔσηι αἰδοῖός τε*). The trial of the bow proves the superiority of Odysseus against the suitors, who are taken by surprise. By concealing his identity from them he succeeds in his murder-plot. Laertes in response to Odysseus' absence has retired to the country and has withdrawn from both home and society (11.187-196). Like Penelope, with the revelation of Odysseus' return Laertes recovers his lost fullness of identity. The bathing of Laertes (24.365-371) marks this change. Odysseus' return is a crucial event that comes after much foreshadowing.[65] When Telemachus returns from his journey, Penelope is eager for news (17.44 and 101ff.). He gives to Penelope an account of his journey (17.28-150) and brings Theoclymenus home. The seer Theoclymenus prophesies that Odysseus is coming or is already present in Ithaca (151-165). There are also signs in form of omens which prepare us for Odysseus' return. In addition, Odysseus as a beggar has been giving assurances that Odysseus will soon be home (see 14.391ff., 18.145-146, 19.300-307, 20.232-234 etc.). In that way an increasing excitement is built up as we see further ahead than the characters in the story can. Odysseus' return to the palace is bound to be a central event, and so tends to be the object of considerable dramatic preparation and attention.

1.3. The demotic song (*Ὁ Γυρισμὸς τοῦ ξενιτεμένου*) and its similarity with the Homeric scenes of recognition

Finally, the type of recognition scene accompanied by a series of disguise, deceptions and tests that is associated with the homecoming of someone who has been absent for a long time and expected to return is not confined to the story of Odysseus' return in the *Odyssey* and Orestes' return in the preserved tragic accounts (see my note 62) but it is a frequent element of the return stories of other traditions. Apart from the parallels of this Märchen to other cultures (see my p.10) the homecoming of a long absent husband has been preserved and exploited in Modern Greek literature. One of the best-known ballads (*Παραλογές*) in modern Greece is the 'Return of the long absent husband' (*Ὁ Γυρισμὸς τοῦ Ξενιτεμένου*). There are more than 280 variants of the ballad in the *Λαογραφικὸν Ἀρχεῖον* (Folklore

[65] On foreshadowing and suspense see Duckworth (1966); Morrison (1992) on the *Iliad*.

Archives) of the Academy of Athens.[66] The reason I choose to mention this demotic song is not only to stress the sense of continuity in Greek literature but also to present a parallel example of the *nostos*-story as a recurrent motif in world folklore. In particular this demotic song, as I intend to show, provides interesting similarities with the *Odyssey*, with reference especially to the duo *nostos-ἀναγνώρισις*. Thus, the analysis of this demotic song as a parallel to the *Odyssey* may help us to understand the different ways of exploiting the themes of an *ἀναγνώρισις*. This in turn will illuminate the treatment of the *nostos*-pattern in Greek tragedy especially as to the use of the deceit in the return of Orestes.[67]

Let us take a look at the story of this ballad. A husband from abroad, after many years of silence, returns one day unexpected at his home. He meets and recognises his wife either at a fountain or at the house. The woman answers his questions, but fails to recognise him. He does not reveal his identity, since he doubts the fidelity of his wife. After a while he lies to her in order to test her. He tells her that her husband died in his arms while they were both abroad and he is sent from him almost to take his place. The woman refuses to listen any of his proposals, so the man satisfied by her reaction eventually reveals that he is her husband. He must have changed so much in the course of time that his wife retains her doubts on his identity. She asks for tokens.[68] I will quote the lines of the demotic song that refer to the tokens from the variant of Politis (Nr.84):

'Ξένε μου, ἂν εἶσαι ὁ ἄντρας μου, ἂν εἶσαι κι' ὁ καλός μου,
δεῖξε σημάδια τῆς αὐλῆς, καὶ τότες νὰ πιστέψω.'
''Ἔχεις μηλιὰ στὴν πόρτα σου καὶ κλῆμα στὴν αὐλή σου,
κάνει σταφύλι ραζακὶ καὶ τὸ κρασὶ μοσκάτο,
κι' ὅποιος τὸ πιεῖ δροσίζεται καὶ πάλι ἀναζητᾶ το.'
'Αὐτά εἶν' σημάδια τῆς αὐλῆς, τὰ ξέρει ὁ κόσμος ὅλος,
διαβάτης ἤσουν, πέρασες, τὰ εἶδες καὶ μοῦ τὰ λέεις.
Πές μου σημάδια τοῦ σπιτιοῦ, καὶ τότες νὰ πιστέψω.'
'Ἀνάμεσα στὴν κάμαρα χρυσὸ καντῖλι ἀνάφτει,
καὶ φέγγει σου ποὺ γδύνεσαι καὶ πλέκεις τὰ μαλλιά σου,
φέγγει σου τὶς γλυκὲς αὐγές, ποὺ τὰ καλά σου βάζεις.'
'Κάποιος κακός μου γείτονας σοῦ τά'πε καὶ τὰ ξέρεις.

[66] See Rhomaios (1952) 334 with his n.1.
[67] See Lattimore (1964) 50-1 for the dramatic importance of the element of the deceit in Sophocles' *Electra*.
[68] I use the variant of Politis (Nr. 84, Introduction) of the demotic song of the 'Return of the long absent husband' in order to compare this type of song with the *Odyssey*.

40 *Πές μου σημάδια τοῦ κορμιοῦ, σημάδια τῆς ἀγάπης.'*
''Ἔχεις ἐλιὰ στὰ στήθη σου κι'ἐλιὰ στὴν ἁμασκάλη,
κι'ἀνάμεσα στὰ δυὸ βυζιὰ τοῦ ἀντροῦ σου φυλαχτάρι.'
'Ξένε μου, ἐσύ 'σαι ὁ ἄντρας μου, ἐσύ 'σαι κι'ὁ καλός μου!'[69]

The tokens (*σημάδια*) of the Modern Greek ballad are usually marks of three kinds: a) of the courtyard (Politis 29ff.) b) of the house (Politis 35ff.) and c) of the body of the wife (Politis 40ff.). The marks of the courtyard are apple-trees and vines (Politis 30). The marks of the house are connected with the interior of the house (a golden lamp, or silver tables etc.) and in particular with the bedchamber. The last kinds of tokens are intimate marks on the wife's body, such as dark spots (*ἐλιές*) on the woman's breast and in her armpit (Politis 41).

Nikolaus Politis[70] was the first to suggest that this demotic song is related to the recognition-scene of Odysseus and Penelope. In Politis' opinion this ballad has a superficial connection with the corresponding scene of book 23 of the *Odyssey*, while it has many similarities with homecoming-ballads of other countries. At a later date S. Baud-Bovy[71] rejected any connection of this demotic song with the recognition-scene of Odysseus and Penelope. I am convinced by Rhomaios' argumentation that the *Odyssey* and the Modern Greek ballad are closely related. Rhomaios[72] observed that in the *Odyssey* there is more than one recognition scene and the number of marks are, as in the demotic song, three and of the same kind: apple trees and vines (24.340ff. ~ Politis 30), description of the bed chamber (23.184ff. ~ Politis 35ff.) and the scar of Odysseus from a wound on his thigh (24.327 ~ Politis 40ff.). The Modern Greek *σημάδι* of the Modern Greek ballad is named after the ancient Greek *σῆμα* of the *Odyssey*. Apart from the above similarities Rhomaios also emphasises that in some variants of this demotic song after the recognition scene the

[69] I quote the translation of these lines from Kakridis (1971) 153: 'My good stranger, if you are my husband, my beloved man, tell me of marks in the courtyard, and then I will believe you.'/(30) 'An apple-tree grows by your door, a vine grows in your courtyard; / excellent are the grapes it bears and muscat is their wine,/ and he who drinks it is refreshed and asks to drink again,' / 'There are marks in my courtyard and everybody knows them; / a passer-by you were and passed, you tell me what you saw, / (35) Tell me of marks inside the house, and then I will believe you.' / 'Right in the midst of the bedroom there burns a golden lamp; / it gives you light while you undress and while you plait your tresses; / it gives you light at sweet daybreak, as you dress in your best.' / 'A wicked neighbour it must be, who told you what you know. / (40) Tell me of marks on my body, give me tokens of love.' / 'You have a dark spot on your chest, a dark spot in your armpit, / and between your breasts you wear your husband's amulet ' / 'Good stranger, you are my husband, and you are my beloved man!'

[70] See N.G. Politis (1914).

[71] S.Baud-Bovy (1936) maintained by using evidence from Russian folk-tales that this demotic song cannot be earlier than the Byzantine age.

[72] See Rhomaios (1952).

wife orders the house maidens to prepare the conjugal bed, e.g. in a variant from Sozopolis, (*Θρακικά* 3, 1932, 257, 28ff.):

> *Σύρτε, δοῦλες, ἀνοίξετε νά'ρθει ὁ νιὸς ἀπάνου,*
> *καὶ ἄλλες δοῦλες στρώσετε τὴν ἀργυρή μας κλίνη,*
> *νά'ρθει ὁ νιὸς νὰ κοιμηθεῖ, ὁ ἄντρας μου ὁ χαμένος.*[73]

This point is common to the conclusion of the Homeric recognition-scene of Odysseus and Penelope (23.254 *ἀλλ' ἔρχευ, λέκτρονδ' ἴομεν, γύναι;* cf. 300-301: *τὼ δ' ἐπεὶ οὖν φιλότητος ἐταρπήτην ἐρατεινῆς / τερπάσθην μύθοισι πρὸς ἀλλήλους ἐνέποντε*). The picture of Penelope weaving is also repeated in the woman of the variant of the modern Greek ballad, where the husband meets her at the house. By pointing out these similarities Rhomaios argues[74] that the demotic song borrowed the motif of recognition from Homer's narratives and joined the recognition scenes (especially of books 23 and 24) into one. J. Kakridis[75] accepts the close connection of the *Odyssey* with this demotic song but he suggests that the motif of the homecoming was a pre-homeric one. In his opinion 'it is not the folk-song which borrowed the motif of recognition from Homer's narratives...it is Homer who after borrowing the motif from the folk poetry of his time, developed out of the single scene in his model two separate scenes, to meet the requirements of his plot' (1971, p.156). In any case the theme of the return is a very old and panhellenic song. The similarities between the *Odyssey* and the demotic song of the 'Return of the long absent husband' provide a common frame of reference useful for studying the treatment of the *nostos*-theme in Greek tragedy. In particular, this demotic song illuminates the Homeric scenes of recognition and offers a valuable way of interpreting the use of the *nostos*-pattern in Greek tragedy, especially the tragic accounts dealing with Orestes' return and revenge. Thus the analysis of this demotic song as a parallel extends our understanding of the treatment of a return in disguise that involves deceit. Elaborate recognition sequences presuppose an audience attuned to appreciate variation on the familiar patterns of this theme.

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[73] 'Go, maids, open the door and let the young man come up / and you, the other maidens, too, go make our silver bed, / for the young man to come and lay down and sleep, for my lost husband.' I quote again the translation from Kakridis (1971) 154.

[74] Rhomaios bases his arguments on the theory of Stilpon Kyriakidis (1954). According to Kyriakidis' theory the Modern Greek ballads are a continuation of the ancient Greek pantomime (orchestic tragedy), which were performed already in the classical times and were continued through the Byzantine epoch up to the 12th century till well into the Middle Ages.

[75] J. Kakridis (1971) 156-63.

By way of summing up, we have now considered *nostos* as a cultural concept in Greek poetry and life and as a story-pattern in the *Odyssey*. The Homeric text is shaped in comparison with the *nostoi* of others, such as Agamemnon, Nestor, Diomedes and Menelaos. Clearly there are different ways of handling a *nostos*. Thus one should be aware of the multiformity of *nostos*. In addition, the *Odyssey* demonstrates the existence and importance of organizational elements, which build up the basic story pattern of homecoming (Absence-Transition and Wandering-Return-Retribution and Reunion). South Slavic singers, who at the time of A.B. Lord (in the 1960s) still practised the pure oral art, sang similar Return songs to that of Odysseus. All these general characteristics will serve as guidelines when it comes to the interpretation of the treatment of the *nostos*-pattern in drama.

1.4. *Nostos* in drama

Nostos, the absence of a hero and his return, is one of the characteristic plot-elements of Greek tragedy. It receives different treatment and emphasis throughout much of Greek drama. First, there is a broad category of plays which make some use of *nostos*. Some examples could be mentioned here. *Alcestis* is brought back to the living in Euripides' play and Iphigeneia is brought back by Orestes and Pylades in *Iphigeneia in Tauris*. *Nostos* is an anticipated goal in Euripides' *Helen* where Helen and a disguised Menelaus make their escape in the end of the play. In all these cases the plays have *nostos* in them but they are not structured around the homecoming-theme. Most remarkably, there is no heroine who undertakes a mission or expedition and is expected to come back in the extant tragedies. This can be explained by the cultural concept of a woman's role in ancient Greece. Wedding and death, according to Hipponax,[76] constitute two fundamental transitions in the life of a woman. Most strikingly, in artistic tradition Helen's return with Menelaus is depicted in images reminiscent of a wedding since in some vase-paintings Menelaus leads Helen by the wrist.[77] Helen's return in the *Odyssey* (4.120-289) is an example of a female *nostos*. However, her husband brings her back. One can think that women's journeys tend to be associated with marriage or death. In addition, in *Eumenides nostos* is a passing reference since it is mentioned that Orestes is going home again. In *Bacchae*, Dionysus comes back to his home; and Pentheus comes back again but *nostos* is not the fulcrum of

[76] Hipponax *fr.* 68 West: *δύ' ἡμέραι γυναικός εἰσιν ἥδισται, / ὅταν γαμῆι τις κἀκφέρηι τεθνηκυῖαν.*
[77] See *LIMC* IV 1, Kahil 'Retour d' Hélène auprès de Ménélas' pp. 559-61.

the action. One should acknowledge the existence of *nostos*-elements in *Hyppolytus*.[78] It could be said that Theseus' return is integrated into the plot of the play but *nostos* is not used by the poet as an essential structural mechanism of the action. On the other hand, *nostos* is not the dominant element in the Orestes plays (notably A. *Cho*, S. *El.* and E. *El.*) but it is still an important theme for the development of the plot. This suggests that there is a degree of *nostos* in the Orestes-plots. One may think that in Greek drama there is a gradation of the use of *nostos*. Finally, in this broad category there are examples of an ironic *nostos* such as the return of Oedipus to Thebes in *Oedipus Tyrannus*.

Secondly, there is a narrow category of plays in Greek drama where *nostos* is not incidental or one element among several but is the basic framework of their construction. Among the surviving tragedies Aeschylus' *Persae*, Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* and Sophocles' *Trachiniae* may properly be called *nostos*-plays, since *nostos* is enacted as a basic element of their plot. The formal similarity of the *nostos*-plays has been acknowledged[79], but has not been discussed explicitly. Taplin first traced the use of the *nostos*-pattern in Greek tragedy and discussed briefly which of the surviving tragedies should be called *nostos*-plays. He defines the *nostos*-plays as follows: 'First *Pers* is an example of a form or pattern of plot which is recurrent in Greek drama: it is what might be called a '*νόστος*' play. In such plays a 'hero' returns from some mission or expedition; he may return safely to some catastrophe at home, or may (as here, i.e. in A. *Pers.*) return from a catastrophe'.[80] The bulk of this study is devoted to the structural use of *nostos* in these plays, that could be called *nostos*-plays. However, the term *nostos*-play cannot be taken as self-evident and unproblematic, since it is clear already within the Homeric text that *nostos* is flexible and multiform. Thus this study will recognise the diversity of the *nostos*-plays. For this reason, apart from the straightforward *nostos*-plays, I have included in my discussion the study of the treatment of *nostos* in Euripides' *Andromache* and his *Heracles*. In *Andromache* Neoptolemus is constantly expected to come back but he returns only as a corpse. The ironical treatment of the *nostos*-pattern by Euripides illuminates the primary *nostos*-plays, since it demonstrates that *nostos* in drama was a means of creative variation on the part of the poet. To this aim, I have included in my discussion the study of

[78] Cf. also Teucer in S. *Aj.* and Polyphemus in E. *Cycl.* Taplin (1977) 124-5 n.5 further suggests that 'the heavy father of New Comedy, who is absent for the first acts of the play, seems in turn to be a descendant of these tragic prototypes; e.g. in Men. *Sam*, *Dysc.*; Pl. *Most*, Ter. *Phormio*'.
[79] See Taplin (1977) 124 cf. 84; Heath (1987) 147-8; Ireland (1973) 165-8 on *Persae* as a *nostos*-drama; Easterling (1982) 1 on *Trachiniae* as a *nostos*-play; Lloyd (1994) 3-6 and Allan (2000) 47 on *Andromache* as a variation of a *nostos*-play.
[80] Taplin (1977) 124.

Euripides' *Heracles*, where the plot-structure goes beyond the closure implied in a pure *nostos*-pattern (contrast e.g. *Tr.* or *Andr.* where *nostos* structure is used to avoid premature closure) in order to demonstrate that '*nostos*-plays' is not a uniform grouping.

On the whole, I should stress in the beginning that this thesis aims to set out a typology of the *nostos*-theme in the plays that are structured around *nostos*, relating it particularly to the *Odyssey*. Homer's narrative may be not the total model for the pure *nostos*-pattern in drama but it provides a full range of possibilities for the transformation of *nostos* into drama. Therefore, in my discussion of *nostos* as a structural device within the plot of Greek drama I take the *Odyssey* as a particularly important intertext. As I intend to show, there are important features in the primary *nostos*-plays that bear relevance to the *nostos*-pattern of the hero's return in the *Odyssey*. Finally, among the plays where *nostos* is an element but not the dominant element of the plot the most useful example for postulating the use of the *nostos*-pattern in Greek tragedy with reference to the narrative of Homer's *Odyssey* is the Orestes-plots (notably A. *Cho.*, S. *El.* and E. *El.*). Orestes' return in drama may bear comparison specifically with that of Odysseus in the second half of the *Odyssey*. The isolation of the elements associated with Orestes' return in Greek tragedy makes it possible to understand the differences in the handling of themes, roles and situations common to the *nostos*-plays. Orestes' return in drama will emerge as a set of variations on the themes associated with Odysseus' return accompanied by deceitful stories, tests and recognitions. Thus, the analysis of Orestes' return in drama will illuminate our conception of the *nostos*-pattern in Greek tragedy especially associated with the feature of deceit.

To summarise, the dramatic situation produced by *nostos* in Greek tragedy is susceptible to varied treatment. This thesis is interested in the plays that focus on the absence and the homecoming of a hero. This story, well known from the *Odyssey* and other epic or lyric variants, formulates in drama a pattern of plot of recognisable configurations of features. It is the first task of this thesis to describe and analyse the treatment of the *nostos*-pattern common to the plays in Greek drama whose themes are comparable and whose parts are comparably arranged. We have considered the nature of this story-pattern in the *Odyssey*. A story-pattern, as Lattimore first uses the term in his analysis of story-patterns in Greek tragedy, is a description of a tale's inner logic. 'The story itself, as an ordered series of events, has its own rights.'[81] It produces the feeling to the audience that

[81] Lattimore (1964) 6.

what happens must happen. However, Lattimore's definition of a story-pattern is not consistent with the multiformity of the *nostos*-pattern. This will be evident in the study of the themes and imagery of *nostos* in Greek drama and the different treatment of *nostos* as a means of manipulating audience response. Therefore, it should be emphasized that *nostos* is exploited in tragic drama in order to influence expectations and emotions. The explicit concern of this thesis is formal. *Nostos* drama came into life when the *nostos*-pattern was shaped into a form suitable for the tragic stage. In order to understand the treatment of *nostos* in Greek drama we require an outline of the fundamental elements of the *nostos*-plays that will permit us to see how each dramatist combines them in their particular dramatic context. The isolation of these recognisable features contributes to the feeling that they may be variously arranged, may be relatively more or less essential. Although each *nostos*-play is highly distinctive, *nostos* can be conveniently analysed in terms of common roles and frequent elements.

1.4.1. Lost *nostos*-plays

Before introducing the set of variations of the identifiable features that one should expect to find in the tragic *nostoi* in question I will briefly consider the use of the *nostos*-theme in the lost plays. The earliest example of a *nostos*-play is the *Persians*. It remains conjectural whether there had been any *nostos*-plays before the *Persians*. It is more likely that there had been. The obvious precedent is Phrynichus' *Phoinissai,*[82] on which Aeschylus' *Persians* is partially dependent (Hypoth. *Pers.*). But since in Phrynichus' play the king's defeat was announced at the very beginning (3 *TGF* F 8) the *nostos*-theme could not have been exploited in such a dramatic way as in Aeschylus' *Persians* where the waiting for news builds up a tension of anxiety and foreboding.[83] Moreover, the lost *Tereus* of Sophocles might have been a *nostos*-play. Despite the hints of the story of Procne and Philomela real accounts come only from much later sources including Conon 26F1.31, Ovid *Met.* 6.424-674, and Apollodorus (3.14-18). 'These seem likely to go back to Sophocles' *Tereus*, which must have dramatised the whole story and which gives us the name "Procne" for the first time (fr 585 R). Indeed, if a recently published Oxyrhynchus

[82] See my next chapter on the *Persians* with my n. 7 for the suggestion that Phrynichus' play was not called *Phoinissai.*

[83] So Michelini (1982) 130: '*Phoinissai* ... opened with a eunuch *ἀγγέλων ἐν ἀρχῇι τὴν Ξέρξου ἥτταν.* There was thus no place in the Phrynichan play for a sequence of foreboding and uncertainty, followed by realization.'

papyrus (POxy 42.3013) is the hypothesis to this play, as many scholars believe, we would have sure confirmation of the standard plot found later'.[84] In this version of events, Tereus leaves Procne, his wife, in Thrace, and goes to Athens to fetch her sister Philomela. Tereus falls in love with Philomela and rapes her, then cuts out her tongue to ensure her silence. Philomela, however, weaves her fate into a robe (mentioned by Sophocles, fr 586R) and sends this to Procne. The consequences are fatal for the whole household. The two sisters kill Procne's son Itys and serve him to Tereus.

We do not know whether Sophocles dramatised this story by exploiting the dramatic effect of the actual arrival home but the plot of the lost *Tereus* suggests elements of a *nostos*-story. Tereus goes away on a mission. In his absence things go wrong, since he becomes enamoured of his wife's sister, Philomela. On his return with Philomela disaster strikes at home. The plot of Sophocles' *Tereus* has elements in common with Sophocles' *Trachiniae* especially with the theme of clothes (S. *Tr.* 674; cf. A. *Ag* 1115-6, 1492, 1580). In addition, there are tragic fragments[85] dealing with a hero's death who gets killed while he is away. In terms of story the hero's death is the outcome of a *nostos* pattern but it is uncertain if those lost plays were actually structured around the hero's return. In particular in A. *Cares* or *Europa* [*Sarpedon*] Europa especially fears for Sarpedon, who is rumoured to be fighting at Troy. The play almost certainly continued this theme that ended in Sarpedon's death in the battle. His mother's grief was the consequence of Sarpedon's unsuccessful homecoming. Sophocles seems also to have treated a similar story-pattern, probably in a play entitled *Eurypylus* that would have brought the hero to Troy and included his death by Achilles. The play must have resolved in the lamentation of his mother, Astyoche. Finally, both Aeschylus and Euripides in two lost plays (A. *Heliades* and E. *Phaethon*) treat the fatal death of the son of Helios, that derives from a *nostos*-story.[86] In particular, the death of Phaethon is related to the ill-fated chariot ride in Euripides' text. This is reported back to his mother Klymene in a messenger-scene (fr. 779 N²). Subsequently, the corpse of Phaethon is brought in and this recalls the final scene of Euripides' *Andromache*, which is a variation of a *nostos*-play, as I will set out to show (see my chapter 6).

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[84] Gantz (1993) 240.

[85] Pearson (1917) i p.xxxi lists eleven lost plays of Sophocles derived from *Nostoi* but from what we can tell from the surviving fragments they did not seem to have been structured around the homecoming-theme; see also Taplin (1977) 124 with his n.3.

[86] For the different treatment of the myth by both dramatists see Gantz (1993) 31-2.

1.4.2. Typical roles of a *nostos*-play

Story-patterns operate not only in epic and in tragedy but also in folk tales. Propp's analysis, which is applied to Russian fairy tales,[87] is a landmark in the study of folklore. Operating with a limited group of fairy tales he abstracts the compositional pattern that underlines the structure of the fairy tale as a whole. According to this structural pattern 'all fairy tales are of one type in regard to their structure'.[88] Propp comes to this conclusion by starting from motifs (smallest narrative units) and defining them in terms of their function, that is in terms of what the *dramatis personae* do. The significance and position of these functions produce the arrangement of the events in the fairy tale. Propp's morphology provides us with a useful point for attempting to identify the typical elements of the *nostos*-pattern in terms of actants. One should expect to identify in a *nostos*-story the same kind of action performed by various persons. The names of the *dramatis personae* change, but their action or functions might be similar. As in the *Odyssey* a *nostos*-play requires two kinds of typical roles: the absent male figure and the female waiting figure. In the *Odyssey*, Odysseus and Penelope represent these typical roles (cf. Xerxes – Atossa in A. *Pers.*).[89] Two other vital figures in the *Odyssey* are the suitors and Telemachus. This may bear comparison to the typical roles in Agamemnon's *nostos* (Agamemnon – Clytaemestra – Aegisthus – Orestes). Sophocles' *Trachiniae* suggests that Heracles, his wife Deianeira, and his son Hyllus are parallel with Odysseus, Penelope and Telemachus. Euripides' *Heracles* shares the same kind of typical Homeric roles (Heracles – Megara –Lycus – the children). In the case of Euripides' *Andromache* there are two female figures (Andromache – Hermione) who are affected differently by the absence of Neoptolemus (cf. Electra – Clytaemestra in the story of Orestes' return and revenge).[90]

[87] Propp (1968) limits his analysis to only one kind of folk tale, that is to fairy tales or Aarne Thompson tale types 300-749.
[88] Propp (1968) 23.
[89] In the *Persians* we are encouraged to expect the return of Xerxes and his army (A. *Pers.* 8-11). I think of this *nostos*-play as a double tragedy of a country and its king; see my chapter 2, on Aeschylus' *Persians*.
[90] Sophocles in his version adds Chrysothemis to the cast.

1.4.3. Female waiting figure

The story-pattern influences the representation of these typical characters, since it raises a series of expectations. As in the *Odyssey*, the absence and the return of the head of the household are fundamental situations for the dramatic form of a *nostos*-play. His absence gives occasion to a complex of events at his home and his return is central to the play's dynamic. If I may anticipate, in each *nostos*-play the dramatists treat differently the story of the hero's return. However, we can identify a set of necessary characteristics that is varied in each case. Each *nostos*-play begins with the absence of the 'hero', normally the head of the household. In his absence, the waiting female figure keeps waiting for his return. Staying behind and waiting for the absent hero is required as an essential precondition for the storytelling. There are common elements associated with this stage of waiting. The effect of the absence of the 'hero' is identified in the anxiety of the female waiting figure. These features related to the waiting female figure suggest that the hero's homecoming becomes the source of suspense. From the point of view of dramatic construction, *nostos* has an obvious appeal: the use of *nostos* as a dramatic strategy within the plot of Greek drama, and in particular of the use of the themes and imagery of *nostos* influences the audience response in many sorts of ways by creating irony, suspense and surprise. Thus, the thesis will also recognise that in drama *nostos* elicits a commitment from the audience which produces certain expectations about the action of the play as it unfolds, and influences the response to that action.

1.4.4. Absent male figure

As far as the absent hero is concerned, we get to know him through his dependants in the *oikos*. In one respect, this makes a *nostos*-story similar to a detective story, where the detective tracks down the murderer by coming to know the victim from his relatives and friends.[91] In that way, the dramatists encourage us to foresee his return but in all cases the return of the absent hero turns out more tragic than had been anticipated. While the hero is away changes take place in the hero and his environment. This gives essence to nostalgia that should in the end be exchanged for a more realistic picture of how the absent hero is and how his *oikos* has changed during his absence. To illustrate this one need to refer to

[91] I owe this parallel to Mossman. She interestingly introduces (1996) 146 a comparison between Euripides' *Andromache* and the classic detective story, see my chapter 6 on Euripidean *nostos*.

some examples from the tragic *nostoi* in question. As we will discover in the course of our enquiry, the effect of change is evident on the return of the hero. Instead of a triumphant homecoming Xerxes returns defeated in Aeschylus' *Persians*. Agamemnon comes back victorious but he is responsible for the sacrifice of Iphigeneia and the death of thousands. He is condemned before (see first stasimon: theme of sacrilege, resentment against the Atreidai and the bloodshed in Troy) and on his return (A. *Ag.*; 799f. cf. the Darius-scene in A. *Pers.*, where Xerxes is blamed by his father). A visual consequence of the effect of absence on Agamemnon is the arrival of Cassandra. In the same way Heracles falls in love while absent and sends Iole back to his house. This throws his household into confusion. Heracles comes back in a state of helplessness and this is contrasted with his past victorious exploits (e.g. S. *Tr.* 1089-1106; cf. E. *Her.* where, Heracles' return is marred by the divine assault which turns the rescue into a slaughter of his family). On the contrary Odysseus' image of Ithaca's domestic world is constructed around Penelope. He comes back on his own, although his return has been threatened by the mysterious figures of such women as Calypso and Circe (cf. the Sirens: *Od.*12.39-54, 158-200). Even innocent Nausicaa stands for Odysseus as a temptation that could delay his return to domesticity. Odysseus is ready to accept his past life in Ithaca that is associated with his reunion with Penelope, the constant wife faithfully weaving at her loom. Moreover, in his *Andromache* Euripides treats ironically the *nostos*-pattern since Neoptolemus, who is constantly expected back, returns only as a corpse. Finally, Orestes, whose return and revenge are associated with victory, becomes polluted. All this suggests that *nostos* involves change. One may feel that tragedy is undercutting the utopian quality of a return to the same without any differences. Thus, in addition to the formal concerns the thesis is also interested in the interpretation of the specific *nostoi* in question. In particular, the argument is made that *nostos* in Greek tragedy represents (especially in A. *Pers.* and *Ag* and S. *Tr.*) the impossibility of a 'return to the same'.

1.5. Typical themes (of clothes, bath, bed and sacrifice)

To illustrate this, one should look at the themes that cluster around the arrival of the absent hero and indicate how a welcome scene turns into a horrible parody of return. First, the theme of clothes is a typical feature of a *nostos*-story. Eurynome put a robe around Odysseus after his bath (*Od.* 23.153-5 cf. Scheria: 6.228). The tasks of women in the *oikos* are associated with the theme of clothes through weaving. As we shall discover in the

course of our enquiry, in the *nostos*-plays the use of this theme underlines the flaw of the tragic *nostoi*. Thus, instead of signifying the happy homecoming of the absent hero it leads to a disastrous return. Secondly, the theme of bath marks the homecoming of Odysseus in Ithaca (*Od.* 23.153-5 cf. Scheria 6.216ff.). Moreover, Andromache ignorant of the death of her husband takes care that there should be a hot bath after Hector's return from the battle (*Il.* 22.444: *Ἕκτορι θερμὰ λοετρὰ μάχης ἐκ νοστήσαντι*). In addition, we can trace elements of the significance of the bath-motif in the athlete's achievements. The reference to the warm baths in Pindar (*O.*12. 17-19: *νῦν δ' Ὀλυμπία στεφανωσάμενος/ καὶ δὶς ἐκ Πυθῶνος Ἰσθμοῖ τ' Ἐργότελες, / θερμὰ Νυμφᾶν λουτρὰ βαστάζεις ὁμιλέων παρ' οἰκείαις ἀρούραις*) marks the end of the journeying. Ergoteles left home and now after winning *kleos* he returns home. Therefore, it should be emphasized that the bath marks the accomplishment of a difficult task and the conclusion of wanderings. The artistic evidence also suggests this. A bath is usually implied in the vase paintings of a return-scene (*Para.* 110,8). An amphora signed by Exekias (*ABV* 145,13) features the Return of the Dioscuri, where Leda on the homecoming of her sons offers Castor a flower and a servant holds an *aryballos* implying some kind of ritual activity, possibly a bath. Exekias has depicted the young men, Castor and Polydeuces, with their parents, Leda and Tyndareos. The Dioscuri might be divine but they act in a human, everyday scene. If I may anticipate, the commonplace of the bath, however, is transformed in Aeschylus' text to Agamemnon's own death (A. *Ag.* 1109, 1128, cf. *Cho.* 1071).

Moreover, the bed motif is perverted in Sophocles' *Trachiniae*. The making ready of Heracles' bed is followed by Deianeira's death. In Homer this gesture signifies the reunion of a couple (see: *Od.* 7.346-7 and my chapter on S. *Tr.*). In particular after the recognition scene between Odysseus and Penelope they go to bed together (*Od.* 23.254 cf. 300-1). The bed-motif in *Trachiniae*, however, is perverted to the ritual of Deianeira's death. Finally a performing of ritual on the return of a warrior denotes the end of a difficult enterprise[92] and the reintegration of the returning hero into his *oikos*. *Nostos* is difficult since it is connected with the effects of a transition on both the returning hero and his *oikos*. This transition is symbolically overcome by the performance of ritual. A homecoming-scene, like the departure scene that is ubiquitous in vase paintings of the archaic and classical period,[93] involving actual religious sacrifices, would facilitate the warrior's

[92] A sacrificial feast, or just a sacrifice did occur to open and/or to conclude a dangerous activity; e.g. *Od.* 3.144-79 (before and after a long sea journey).
[93] On the farewell-scene in attic vases see p.4.

departure or return home. This performance of ritual suggests the terrible wrongness of a perverted sacrifice in the tragic *nostoi* where, as we shall see, the killing of the returning hero involves an inverted sacrifice (A. *Ag.* 1433; S. *Tr.* 756; E. *Andr.* Neoptolemus is killed at Delphi; cf. the supposed urn of ashes of Orestes, S. *El.*756ff.). Through these themes the text entertains the possibility of sameness on the occasion of the homecoming of the absent hero. Most importantly, both Clytaemestra (*Ag.* 609-10) and Deianeira (*Tr.* 624-5) want their husband to know that all has been kept safe in their absence. These scenes of the perversion of homecoming are to be appreciated in the light of the themes that traditionally marked the wanderer's true homecoming. By being perverted they underline the flaw in the tragic *nostoi* and contribute to the feeling that the nature of the return excludes the possibility of a return without any differences.

1.5.1. Athletic imagery in a *nostos*-play

That the absent hero in tragic *nostoi* cannot return without difference is also suggested by another frequent element in the imagery of the *nostos*-plays. The absent hero is usually expected as a victor. The athletic imagery is specifically applied to Orestes (e.g. S. *El.* 48-50; cf. the false chariot-story: 682ff. and the athletic metaphors in E. *El.*: 614, 751, 761-2, 854-89 etc.). Heracles is also associated with athletic imagery both in Sophocles' *Trachiniae* (186, 497-530) and in Euripides' *Heracles* (49, 180, 348-441, 570). This athletic imagery is reminiscent of epinician poetry. The odes of Pindar and Bacchylides attest that there was considerable celebration for victors. These poems are one of our sources of information for victory processions and receptions. The athlete left home in order to participate in one of the Panhellenic games.[94] He went out of the *oikos* and came back again. The winning of new *κλέος* is a support for the *oikos*.[95] The epinician ode ensures the continuity of glory (*Nem.* 6.8-34, *Nem.* 8.45-50, *Isth.* 4.2-30) by commemorating the athlete's victory. His victory was integrated into the substance of the house (e.g. *Isth.*1.18-23). The bearing of *κλέος* of a victor contributed to the maintenance of the continuity of the *oikos*. When an athlete was defeated his *nostos* was *ἔχθιστος* (*O.* 8.67-9) whereas Timodemus' return is *εὐκλέης* (*Nem.* 2.24-5) since he came back home bearing the glory of the games. Pindar refers to the ignominy of the defeated (*P.* 8.83-7) who were hiding from their enemies. As it was shameful to lose in a contest it was disgraceful to

[94] But see my note 10 for the civic festivals in Athens.
[95] Cf. A. *Ag.* 897-8: Clytaemestra describes Agamemnon's homecoming as *ὑψηλῆς στέγης στῦλον ποδήρη.*

come home from battle in the wrong circumstances.[96] This suggests that by contrast we are to imagine a splendid reception of a victor.[97] His relatives on his homecoming welcomed the returning hero. There could usually be a jovial festivity (*κῶμος*)[98] on the return of the victor to his hometown (e.g. Bacch. 13.67-75). The same function of a *κῶμος* in a welcome-scene is performed by the Dionysiac procession that escorted the drunken Hephaestus back to Olympus featuring in vase paintings.[99] In addition, there is a large number of Attic vases which show Heracles setting off for Olympus or being welcomed when he gets there.[100] The existence of this type of action — the welcome scene — means that once its presence is clear to the audience in a given context, various expectations are brought into play. This helps us to understand what it meant for the poets and their audience to watch the reception of the absent hero turned into a mournful situation and not as quite triumphant as had been expected. As I will show, in Greek tragedy the longed-for victory turns out to be no victory at all. Thus, the thesis, will recognise that the notion of the heroic victor returning seems to be undermined in the tragic *nostoi* in question.

1.5.2 The messenger-scene in a *nostos*-play

Moreover, a formal similarity between the *nostos*-plays is the messenger-scene that normally precedes the arrival of the absent hero. In terms of dramatic form the arrival of a messenger is a frequent element in the *nostos*-plays since there is no news about the absent hero (A. *Pers.* 14-5, A. *Ag*, see the opening lines with the Watchman, S. *Tr.* 40f.). Each dramatist treats differently the use of the messenger in order to develop the *nostos*-pattern for its own end. The dramatic function of the messenger is common in the *nostos*-plays but is not to be thought as exhaustively specific. This actually suggests that all the common themes named here are recognised as conforming to a familiar pattern and are not to be

[96] Two such examples are the Spartans Aristodemus and Pantites, who both survived Thermopylae but not for long (Hdt 7.230, 232 for Aristodemus and Pantites respectively). Aristodemus delayed getting into the battle against the Persians at Thermopylae and survived. Herodotus tells how the Spartans were angry with him and virtually cut him off from human contact upon his return home. Pantites met the same reception in his return from those left at home. He had been sent to Thessaly on some diplomatic mission and also missed the final battle. He preferred to hang himself rather than continue living in disgrace.

[97] Crotty (1982) 108 suggests that 'the odes are in part attempts to secure the victor's reception by his fellow citizens.' Most interestingly he further refers (1982) 122-4 to three stories of an athlete-hero dealing with the returned athlete and the community's rejection of him.

[98] On *κῶμος* as a festive procession associated with epinician poetry see Heath (1989b) 182-3.

[99] E.g. *ABV* 108,5; *ARV* 185,31; see Brommer (1978) 10-17.

[100] See Brommer (1973).

considered as inflexible. They bring with them certain expectations that the dramatists may wish to fill out or modify.

On the whole, all these characteristic elements provide a common frame of reference in understanding the treatment of *nostos* in Greek tragedy, relating it particularly to the *Odyssey*. They are useful in interpreting the individual plays. Each play, however, is distinctive and only by examining each in detail can the use of *nostos* be fully understood. A set of identifiable features is varied in each case to shape the *nostos*-story into a suitable form for the tragic stage. The isolation of these elements will lead in turn to further consideration of the special qualities of the *nostos*-pattern common to the specific plays in question. It should be emhasized before discussing each individual play that the thesis will recognise the use of *nostos* in drama as a means of manipulating audience response, in reference to the creation of irony, suspense and surprise. The study of the use of *nostos* in formal terms will eventually lead me to consider the variety of the specific uses of the *nostos*-pattern in the specific *nostoi* in question. The internal evidence for this enquiry is the extant tragedies but I also have touched on peripheral elements on the homecoming theme from Greek poetry and life that could further illuminate the dramatic possibilities of *nostos*.

2. *Nostos* in Aeschylus' *Persians*

'An emotion suspended in time'

In this chapter I intend to demonstrate that the *Persians* is the first extant example of a *nostos*-play in Greek drama. As I will show, the *nostos*-theme in the *Persians* is established at the very beginning of the play (see 8-11) and everything culminates in Xerxes' return. In what follows, I will draw attention to the use of *nostos* as a structural device within the plot (waiting, Messenger with news of the disaster, Darius-scene, return) and in particular of the use of themes (e.g. the themes of yearning, theme of clothes) and imagery of *nostos* as a means of manipulating audience response. To anticipate, in the *Persians*, Xerxes is the absent hero, like Odysseus in the *Odyssey*. His departure implies his return. *Nostos* is the source of action and with Xerxes' arrival in the final scene of the play much that has been heard is seen to be directed towards his actual return. Critics have drawn attention to the figure of Xerxes as a unifying element for the play.[1] Taplin first suggested that the *Persians* 'is an example of a form or pattern of plot which is recurrent in Greek drama: it is what might be called a "*νόστος*" play'.[2] It should be emphasized that in this play Xerxes is not the only one who is absent. The Persian army (8-9) is also expected to return home. As we will discover in the course of our enquiry, the *nostos*-theme applies both to Xerxes and to the Persians. The play both anticipates and reacts to the king and his army's arrival. This double focus makes the use of *nostos* in the *Persians* highly distinctive among the *nostos*-plays. Moreover, the *Persians* is the only extant Greek tragedy that treats a historical event:[3] the defeat at Salamis and its aftermath. The subject matter of the *Persians* raises the dialectic of survival and return. *Nostos* affects not only the household of the returning hero, as in the other *nostos*-plays, but is also associated more broadly with his nation at large. In what follows, I treat this national dimension of the *Persians* as unique among the *nostos*-plays. At the outset it is necessary to stress that *nostos* in Aeschylus' text emphasises a

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[1] See Ireland (1973) 165-8.

[2] Taplin (1977) 124; see also my introduction p.28. Cf. Hall (1996) on line 8. She briefly (1996) 18 traced the use of *nostos* in the play: the *Persians* 'is essentially a 'homecoming' drama, like tragedies derived from the cyclic *Nostoi* and is spent either anticipating or reacting to the King's arrival'.

[3] Since Aeschylus' *Persians* is the only extant tragedy on a historical event it has been tempting to interpret the play in terms of its historical status. As Hall (1989) demonstrates *Persians* is a mine of evidence of the ways in which the Athenians liked to think about their great enemy. Much criticism has focused on the political background of the play; for attempts to relate the play to a political background see Goldhill (1988) 189 with his n.2 and see most recently Harrison (2000). This debate on the nature of the historical aspect of the play does not affect my point. I am concerned here to show how the *nostos*-pattern is effective in the play's logic of structure.

common human vulnerability. This play deals with people who seem very different from the Greek audience but liable to the same human suffering and fragility. The nature of the play's subject matter made sense to the audience since they shared the experience of the violence and the trauma of the war, and the anxiety regarding the return of their warriors. To anticipate, this aspect of common vulnerability is skillfully illustrated in the play especially in the scene when Aeschylus seems to be reflecting on the agony of the waiting wives. All this will be discussed on the basis of the plot and the themes clustering around *nostos*. The study of *nostos* in the *Persians* in this chapter shall also recognise how the poet takes care to use the *nostos*-pattern as an effective dramatic strategy in order to create tension and suspense. Finally, the argument is made that the return of Xerxes underlines the futility of a 'return to the same'.

2.1. *Nostos* of a nation and its king

The *Persians* opens with a choral prologue that establishes the *nostos*-theme (*ἀμφὶ δὲ νόστωι τῶι βασιλείωι / καὶ πολυχρύσου*[4] *στρατιᾶς ἥδη* 8-9) at the very beginning and sets forth the themes (of yearning and clothes) that will recur in the course of the play. Unlike Phrynichus' *Phoenissae*,[5] where a messenger comes at the very beginning of the play and announces Xerxes' disaster, as we are told from the hypothesis of the *Persians*, the news of the defeat is postponed in Aeschylus' text. As a result the question of the return of Xerxes and his army provokes obvious anxiety in the waiting elders. By opening the play with a choral prologue and not with a prologue spoken by an actor Aeschylus encourages us to think of *nostos* connected both with Xerxes and his army. They are both expected to come home. This is a play about a country and its king. One may feel that this is a double plot. This is evident, as we shall see, in the imagery and the dramatic development of the play. In particular the effects of the *nostos*-story are identified in the community and at the same time on Xerxes' environment. The gradual increase of tension leads eventually to the appearance of Xerxes. Aeschylus chooses to start off the play with a choral opening that reflects the reactions of those left behind (in Susa), represented by the faithful elders. There

[4] West (1990) has *πολυάνδρου*. I keep the manuscripts' text *πολυχρύσου*. I believe that Aeschylus deliberately repeats himself at 3, 45, and 53 (see Garvie (2001) 3-4) in order to emphasize the theme of wealth which is an important theme in the *Persians*; see e.g. Gagarin (1976) 44-5; Petrounias (1976) 23-4.

[5] I am unconvinced by the suggestion that the play in question was not, as we are told in the hypothesis to the *Persians*, Phrynichus' *Phoenissae*; see Lloyd-Jones (1990), 234 = (1966) 24; Taplin (1972) 68 with his n. 36 and (1977) 63 with his n.2. This, however, would not affect my point.

is no reason to suppose that a choral opening was an archaic feature. In early tragedy both a choral opening and an actors' prologue may have been available.[6] Aeschylus first takes care to introduce the effects of the absence of the Persian army on the community. The reality of the violence of war and its human toll is depicted in the very first line with *οἰχομένων*.[7] Tension is built up from the very beginning of the play. Broadhead claims that *οἰχομένων* is purely factual here.[8] However, I believe that the use of *οἰχομένων* suggests deliberately a sinister ambiguity and introduces the theme of anxiety. In the *Odyssey* the participle is used as a standard epithet of Odysseus (*Odyssey* 1.135, 253, 281, 2.215, 264, 3.77; 4.164,14.8, 144, 376, 450, 15.270, 355, 17.296, 18.313, 19.19, 20.216, 290, 21.70, 395, 24.125).[9] *Οἰχομένων* sustains its Odyssean ambiguity in the *Persians*.[10] In Greek tragedy a choice of theme cannot be divorced from its dramatic use. The dramatic irony of *οἰχομένων* of the Persians 'gone' is especially indicated in the following lines, where the Chorus appear anxious about the homecoming of their king and his gold-bedecked army. Most importantly, *οἰχομένων* topicalizes *nostos*. The audience should sense that the thematic structure of the play is about the departure of the Persians. Their departure raises expectations for their return. Thus *οἰχομένων* at the very first line identifies *nostos* as the theme of the play.

2.1.1. Waiting for news

In the absence of Xerxes and the Persian army the Chorus think of themselves as their faithful representatives (*πιστά* 2; cf. 171). These elders are the first to share with the

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[6] The redating of the *Supplices* forces us to revise our ideas of Aeschylus' stylistic development. In addition, if we accept the truth of the statement of Themistius (for bibliography on the Themistius passage see Garvie (1969) 104 with his n.1) that Aristotle ascribed to Thespis the invention of the prologue it seems that the spoken prologue as well as the choral prologue was in use by the time of the *Persians*; contra Scullion (2002) 97-9 who dismisses this piece of evidence since he finds good reason to suspect that the Themistius passage is an unreliable source. For further evidence on the choice of a prologue as an alternative form of a choral opening found in the plays and fragments of Aeschylus and his contemporaries see Taplin (1977) 62-5.

[7] Cf. *βεβηκότων*, in the first line of Phrynichus' *Phoenissae* as quoted in the hypothesis, *τάδ' ἔστι Περσῶν τῶν πάλαι βεβηκότων*. In Phrynichus' play, however, the audience know that the verb means plainly dead, since the news of the defeat is announced immediately by the eunuch. See Stanford (1942) 36: 'The change from *βεβηκότων* to *οἰχομένων*, which at first glance seems merely made to suit Aeschylus' anapaestic parodos, is significant. For *οἰχομένων* suggests a sinister arrière pensée of death (as our departed instead of simply gone) and the word recurs ominously throughout the play (11, 13, 60, 178, 252, 546, 916) till at the last it plainly and unequivocally means dead'. So Petrounias (1976) 22: 'Im bild des Schwarmes ist das *οἴχονται*-gegen-*νόστος*–Motiv inbegriffen. Wir hören das doppeldeutige *οἰχομένων* schon im ersten Vers.' See also Winnington-Ingram (1983) 198-9 who demonstrates how Aeschylus has gradually unfolded in the course of the play the implications of *οἴχεσθαι*.

[8] Broadhead (1960) on 1-2; cf. Smethurst (1989) 26-75.

[9] It is used only once to depict Menelaus' wanderings (4.393); cf. *Il.* 22.213, 23.101.

[10] Cf. Pindar's participle *παροιχομένων* in *Nem* .6. 28-30.

audience how the absence of the Persians reflects on their community. There is a feeling of waiting, which is intensified by the lack of news. It is one of the cases that show how Aeschylus creates myth out of history. In Herodotus' account there was news at this stage (Hdt 8.99). Without any news in Aeschylus' text the anxiety for the homecoming of the Persians is increased. This arrangement gives the opportunity to the dramatist to arouse the audience's expectation for their return. The impressive list of some of the Persians who have departed adds to the theme of splendour and gold (3, 9, 45, 53 and see my n.4). This is a keynote for much of the play. By referring to the prosperity of the Persian Empire in the opening of the play we become aware of its vulnerability. The verb *οἴχεται* that comes (59) in a kind of ring composition marks the ominous nature of their departure and contributes to the feeling that the Persian army is exposed to danger. With Müller's transposition (93-100) the elders seem to fear that because Persia has been very successful she may now suffer as a result.[11] There is no guarantee that this *περσέπτολις* (62) army will once more destroy the enemy. In fact it will destroy their own city. The connection between *Πέρσαι* and *πέρθω*, most possibly hinted here,[12] is more than a pun. The term *περσέπτολις* almost certainly involves a word play that intensifies the ambiguous nature of the expedition. In the absence of Xerxes and his army the elders are left with no news and just with the reminiscence of a mighty army. Instead of consoling themselves by dwelling on the glory of the Persian army they become more anxious lest there is a reversal of fortune. A sense of foreboding is developed. The elders encourage us to see the communal dread in the description of the waiting figures. Aeschylus chooses first to exploit the dramatic possibilities of *nostos* on the community. In the parodos the focus is turned to the offstage figures, who are engaged into waiting for the Persian host to return. This is well illustrated in the description of the waiting wives and parents. They feel yearning (*πόθωι* 62) for those who are absent. Every day that passes makes their absence more painful. The marriage beds are soaking with tears out of longing (134). The cost of war for waiting wives who had to send away their warrior husbands is depicted in lines 133-9 (*λέκτρα δ'ἀνδρῶν πόθωι πίμπλαται δακρύμασιν,/Περσίδες δ' ἀβροπενθεῖς ἑκάστα πόθωι φιλάνορι*). These lines could have been an appropriate caption to the illustration of the vases with a farewell-scene that were so common in Attic vases (see pp. 3-5 of my Introduction). Aeschylus

[11] With the transmitted order of the stanzas the Chorus already fear that Xerxes has committed an act of hybris, which is related to the crossing of the Hellespont. But the Chorus in the first part of the play does not blame Xerxes. They are worried about the excessive success of Persia. For a further discussion of this textual problem see Garvie (1999) 22.

[12] See Broadhead (1960) on 65-7.

depicts the agony of the *Περσίδες* aching in the absence of their husbands (*πόθος* theme: 61-2, 133-9, 512, 541-2). In a *nostos*-story every waiting wife shares this agony (see Penelope). This generic characteristic (see for example the lonely waiting of Deianeira in S. *Tr.*) is first identified in the offstage female waiting figures. The sufferings of the Persian women while they keep waiting for their absent husbands could afflict any women waiting for the warrior's return at any time. *Κενανδρία* (Susa's emptiness of men, 118 cf.166, 549, 718, 761)[13] is the effect of the Persian army's departure. Women are left with fear that tears their heart in the absence of their husbands (*ἀμύσσεται* 116). A crucial theme of the play, the tearing of clothes, is transferred here (115; cf. 125) metaphorically to the chorus' heart or '*φρήν*'. Most remarkably, the same verb (*ἀμύσσει* 161) is used to depict the Queen's anxiety about the absence of her son. Later the theme of clothes becomes an essential feature of the imagery associated with the *nostos*-pattern.[14] On the whole the parodos is framed by the fear for the fate of Xerxes and his army. This is evident in lines 140-59 where the Chorus return again to the sense of foreboding first expressed in lines 1-11.[15] The Chorus are about to sit down and consider the situation when the Queen appears. She embodies the onstage female waiting figure of this *nostos*-play. We have seen so far the anxious waiting of the Persian women. We turn now to the anxious waiting of the Queen who is mainly concerned about her son. This suggests that Aeschylus' *Persians* is a *nostos*-play with a double focus.

2.1.2. The anxiety of the Queen

The first entry of the Queen contributes to the mood of anxiety (161). The Chorus address Atossa as both the wife and mother of a god (156). At this part of the play Xerxes and Darius are both godlike. Xerxes is respected in the same way as Darius.[16] We have seen so far how the Chorus and the Persian wives and parents react to the absence of the Persians. The Queen, who is naturally worried about her son, is the prominent female-figure of the *nostos*-story in the *Persians*. Her worries associated with the dream and the portent give

[13] Line 13 deserves a mention here with Page's app. crit. He is in favour of the ancient variant of *ἐόν*, with a lacuna after 13, in which the subject is identified as the women left at home who are yearning for their husbands. If we accept Page's preference we can take line 13 as a preparation for the *κενανδρία*.

[14] The theme of tearing clothes has a special visual significance for the play. The repeated references to Xerxes' clothes (199, 468, 832-6, 845-50, 1017, 1030) are finally re-enacted by the Chorus in the lyrics of the closing dirge; as Thalmann (1980) 268 remarks: 'At the end of the play, Xerxes tells the chorus to tear their robes, and as they cry out at line 1061 they probably gesture an imitation of that action'.

[15] For the correspondence of these two passages in terms of ring-composition and the large ring structure of the play as a whole see Holtsmark (1970).

[16] See also 5, 144: Xerxes in his absence is thought of as *βασιλεύς*.

more concrete expression to the fears hinted by the Chorus in the parodos. We are made to feel that Xerxes is the actor behind the scenes. She, like the elders, fears a reversal of fortune (163-4). Xerxes is in our mind when Atossa considers that the 'light' (169 *ὄμμα*) of a household is the presence of its master. The 'light' (169) of the household is absent now and the Queen is engaged in anxious waiting. She has had a dream that brings Xerxes to life in her mind. The dream of Atossa is a device of crisis and as with the portent it gives hints that the Persians will not be victorious. The dream serves to heighten the dramatic tension. Most importantly, in the Queen's dream the imagery of the yoke is part of building up the sense of foreboding. Xerxes tries to 'yoke' Greece and Asia to the same chariot (191, cf. 68-2, 722, 736) but Greece smashes the yoke (196). The yoke metaphor, which is one of the most prominent images in the play,[17] casts an ominous shadow over Xerxes' expedition against Greece. In her dream Darius appears for the first time in the play while Xerxes in the sight of his father tears his robes (199). The dream derives from the *nostos*-story. As we have seen already in the *Odyssey* the dreamer in a *nostos*-story is the female figure (Penelope: *Od.*19.559-68). [18] She is the one who is engaged into waiting. When the dream appears it adds to the sense of foreboding already established in the *nostos*-plot. In the *Persians* the dream particularly initiates the theme of tearing clothes that with its repeated references (see my n.14) contributes to the impression that the whole play is centred on the actual arrival home. The first reference in the play to Xerxes' tearing his robes is associated with the breaking of the yoke in the dream. What is here symbolically implied will become eventually visually concrete with the return of Xerxes in the final scene. The dream with its ominous context is a guide to the subsequent scene of libations to Darius and the Necromancy-scene. By the end of her speech the Queen considers the possible results of the invasion of Greece. If he would be successful he would be greatly admired. In the case of his failure Atossa breaks off her speech (213). Xerxes would not have to submit himself to an *εὔθυνα* like the Athenian magistrates.[19] No matter what the result of the battle would be Xerxes, if he survives, will still be the ruler of the country. If he eventually survives he could come back either victorious or defeated. The Queen comments here on the nature of Xerxes' return. As we have seen in the *Odyssey* a *nostos* is

[17] The symbol of the yoke first appears in the play as a yoke of slavery (*ζυγὸν ἀμφιβαλεῖν δούλιον Ἑλλάδι* 50). The picture of the Persian wife supporting alone the yoke of marriage provides another example of the use of the 'yoke' (*λείπεται μονόζυξ* 135). For the repertoire of uses to which the image of the yoke is put in this play see Anderson (1972) 167-8 and Petrounias (1976) 7-15.

[18] Cf. *Ch.* 44-46, 523-50; S. *El.* 406-10, 426-7, 630-59.

[19] See Arist. *Ath. Pol.* esp. 48.4, (also 25.2 on the procedures before the reforms of Ephialtes).

a multiform capable of variations. A departure raises not only the question of the return but also the nature of this return if it is eventually achieved. An inglorious return in the ancient Greek world was not desired (see my Introduction pp. 36-7). In the case of Xerxes the Queen makes us believe that if he returns home defeated he would still be the king. In the stichomythia two references to Marathon (236, 244) contribute to the sense of foreboding (245). The Greek army did great harm to the Persians once before so this might happen again. So far Xerxes' responsibility for the great expedition lies behind the parodos. He is the leading figure in Atossa's dream and through this *στιχομυθία* we are made to feel that she is naturally worrying about her son's eagerness to capture Athens. When Aeschylus refers to the 'emptiness of men in Asia' (166 and see above p.43 with my note 13) and the yearning of the Persian wives he is referring to the reality of war in the absence of the warrior husbands. Aeschylus consciously chose to explore first the effects of waiting in the community (Chorus) and the *oikos* (Queen) and then present the account of the battle. By developing the mood of anxiety the Messenger-scene (249-514) is to achieve its full emotional impact. I would like to argue that with what follows everything culminates in the play in Xerxes' actual return home. This becomes clear by examining the sequence of the scenes that lead up to Xerxes' homecoming.

2.2. Messenger-scene (anxiety realised)

A messenger precedes the arrival of Xerxes. The *νόστιμον ... φάος* (261) clearly alludes to the Homeric *νόστιμον ἦμαρ ἰδέσθαι* (*Od.* 5.220). He is an eyewitness of the catastrophe who has achieved his *nostos*. With the news of the defeat he realises the foreboding (249-55) and leads towards the arrival of Xerxes. The Chorus first react to the news of the defeat.[20] The disaster of the Persian Empire comes first. We know that many of Xerxes' men will not achieve their *nostos*, since they met their death in the battle. The epirrhematic passage, where the Chorus consider the effects of the defeat at Salamis, ends up with the Persian wives as bedfellows in vain (*εὔνιδες μάταν* 289).[21] Their husband's return is no more expected. When the Persian disaster has been briefly considered Atossa breaks her silence

[20] It is possible that the second actor at this time was a recent innovation and thus the Chorus is still the focal point; see Michelini (1982) 27-40 on archaic elements in the *Persians*. There may be some truth in this but even so Aeschylus makes an excellent use of this dramatic convention. He makes Atossa keep silent for his own dramatic reasons. The disaster affects the Persians as a whole. As I have already pointed out this is play about country and a king. The Chorus represent the Persian Empire and thus they are first addressed by the Messenger.

[21] So Page apud Broadhead but not Belloni (1994).

and indirectly asks about her son (296). The messenger is made to reveal that Xerxes is alive (299). The prospect of his return brings to the Queen temporary joy. Although the defeat at Salamis is seen as the disaster of the whole nation (cf. e.g. 249-55, 532ff., esp. 548-9), the Queen can still talk of the 'great light' and 'day from night' that shines for her house because Xerxes is alive (300-1). A messenger-scene is a common feature in the dramatic form of a *nostos*-play (cf. in A. *Ag.* the herald who precedes the arrival of Agamemnon; in S. *Tr.* where Hyllus functions as a herald though he has been in turn preceded by the old man and Lichas). In the *Persians* the Messenger enters in the first part of the play and his entry does not precede the disaster (as in A. *Ag.* and S. *Tr.*) but it stands for it.[22] The Messenger-scene looks at the past and the future. His first big narrative speech lists the splendid men who met their death in Salamis. This catalogue echoes ironically the catalogue in the parodos. It reminds us of the opening anapaests and marks the contrast, since now we know for certain that these men are not coming back. The word *μέτοικος* (319) is applied metaphorically to Arabos[23] and/or Artabes killed fighting against Greece. *Μέτοικος* (319) recalls the irony with which this word was applied by the Attic poets[24] to one who has found his last home in foreign earth. We learn through the Messenger's speeches that many of Xerxes' men will not achieve their *nostos*, since they met their death in the battle.

The personality of Xerxes depends not on Xerxes' acts and words but on the traits given by the others.[25] We get to know Xerxes, like every absent hero in a *nostos*-story, in his absence. He made the decision to invade Greece and he entered the battle cheerfully (*ὑπ' εὐθύμου φρενός* 372 cf. 351-2). He did not understand (361) how he had been misled by a Greek man (Themistocles) and that the gods were resentful (362). The last detail of Xerxes tearing his robes (468) at the sight of the catastrophe prepares us for Xerxes' return at the end of the play. Now every detail of Atossa's dream, apart from Darius' appearance, has been fulfilled. With the Messenger-scene anxiety is realised but the tension is maintained. Xerxes escaped the catastrophe (299). The description of the journey home prepares us for his arrival. Those who survived have now reached Persia (508-11) but it is not explicitly stated that Xerxes will return in the play. At the same time the description of the journey home is an account of those who will never achieve their *nostos*. The theme of yearning (512) is more appropriate for something that is lost. Before the news of defeat

[22] See Taplin (1977) 84, and for a typology of the tragic *ἄγγελοι* see 80-5.
[23] Some think his name is Magos; see Broadhead (1960) on 317-9.
[24] Cf. A. *Choephori* 684, Orestes died as a *μέτοικος*; see Garvie (1986) 231-2.
[25] Cf. Michelini (1982) 149.

πόθος was connected to something which was absent (62, 135). From now on yearning is related to those who did not manage to survive and return home (512, 542). The Queen's final instructions to the Chorus (529-31) 'to console Xerxes if he returns earlier than she' remind us of the individual tragedy of Xerxes. The play has a double-plot. So far the effects of the catastrophe on the Persia has been revealed. Lines 529-31 make us expect the return of Xerxes but this occurs much later, in fact in the last scene of the play. As in Odysseus' return, Xerxes' return tends to be an object of considerable attention. In a *nostos*-story we are encouraged to foresee the return of the absent hero. Aeschylus here takes care to raise and then thwart expectations for an imminent return of Xerxes. This builds up the tension and contributes to the feeling that Xerxes' return is made the source of suspense. It is a device of false preparation. Taplin[26] raises reservations about this dramatic explanation and accepts Nikitine's transposition of lines 529-31 to after 851. I believe, however, that the text is sound here.[27] This textual emendation will deprive the text of the implication that Xerxes' catastrophe is to be developed dramatically in the play after the elaboration of the catastrophe of the whole of Persia. The preparation for the return of Xerxes runs throughout the play. So far the calamity of the whole of Persia has been revealed. The individual devastation of Xerxes is to follow. Aeschylus thus keeps Xerxes in the mind of the audience.[28]

2.3.Preparation for Xerxes' return

Instead of a speedy arrival of Xerxes a major scene intervenes, the Darius-scene. I would like to suggest that Aeschylus consciously holds back Xerxes' return. The reason must be dramatic. A comparison between Darius and Xerxes appears for the first time (555)[29] in the ode (532-97) that follows. The Chorus has never suggested until now that Xerxes was not a good general. The returning hero will no more be described as the ἰσόθεος φώς of line 80, and no longer is Atossa the mother as well as the wife of a god (157). The function of this contrast between Darius and Xerxes contributes to the treatment of *nostos* as a structural device within the plot of the play. The returning hero is not the same when he eventually

[26] Taplin (1977) 97. He also suggests emending καὶ παῖδα in line 529 to ὑμεῖς δ(έ) in order to avoid the awkwardness after παιδί in line 850.
[27] See also Thalmann (1980), esp. 265-8, who demonstrates that Nikitine's transposition is unnecessary.
[28] Cf. Sidgwick's explanation (1903: 66) of lines 529-31: 'They keep up the expectation of the return of the defeated and disgraced Xerxes.'
[29] Whether we accept Page's emendation (οὐ καὶ τότ') or leave the manuscripts' text (οὕτω τότ') with the question of the Chorus emphasis is placed on the success of Darius.

comes back. Xerxes' defeat at the battle of Salamis has affected the way those left behind judge him. The king is clearly blamed by the Chorus. With the use of anaphora (550-3) Xerxes is acknowledged as responsible for the destruction of the fleet and the army. The ode (532-97) makes extensive use of themes that reveal the reaction of the waiting Persians to the failed *nostos* of their husbands and sons. The theme of yearning is expressed in a yoking metaphor (541-2 and see my note 17). The Persian women are tearing their clothes (537), which echoes line 125 (cf. 115-16). Both themes of yearning and clothes are connected now to the *πένθος* of these women. The reversal of fortune is emphasized by the use of *οἰχομένων* at 546. These Persian men who departed will never come back. There is no more waiting for their return. Their households are deprived of their men and parents are left childless (579-80). After the news of the defeat Xerxes is charged with the destruction. He has fallen from grace whereas Darius is envisaged as a successful general. Broadhead remarks[30] that the first half of the play looks as if everything hangs together, and with a suitable alteration of 521-31, the play could have ended with what is the first stasimon. In terms of structure, therefore, according to Broadhead the play could have ended in 597. He maintains that it is only in terms of its moral content that the play would be deficient. However, I think that if Broadhead is right the expectations of Xerxes' return, raised so far by Aeschylus, in terms of story and dramatic form would make no sense (see especially the connection made by the Chorus that even the king has only just escaped: 564-7 cf. 299, 508-11 and the repeated references to the theme of clothes: see my n.14). The whole play leads up to Xerxes' arrival. The structure of the play would be incomplete without the final scene. When the Queen returns, after the ode (532-97), her lack of *χλιδή* in her appearance puts the defeat of the Persians into visual effect. The audience is meant to realise that her pompous first entry is contrasted now to her return which embodies the reversal of fortune (see esp. 607-8).[31] She returns without her chariot (607) this time. She instructs the Chorus to call up Darius from his tomb (620f.) in order to seek advice.

The Darius scene intervenes between the news of the defeat and Xerxes' return. Aeschylus chose to arrange the scenes in this sequence in order to prepare us for the return of Xerxes as the focus and the conclusion of the tragedy. The dramatist develops an idealised picture of Darius (653f. cf. 555-6, 663: The Chorus ignore Marathon and the Scythian destruction, see Hdt 4.1). This is essential for the dramatic contrast between the

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[30] See Broadhead (1960) xxxvi.
[31] For these two entries of the Queen as mirror-scenes see Taplin (1977) 98f.

unimpaired Darius and the defeated Xerxes. The opposition between father and son is even marked by the stage business of the entrance of the ghost and of the defeated Xerxes. More specifically the clothing of Darius is royal (see 658-64) unlike that of Xerxes who enters in rags (see below: pp. 50-51). In the Darius scene Xerxes' individual catastrophe is explored. The absent hero becomes vivid in our mind. Xerxes is described as θούριος (718; cf. 754). Now the ambiguity of this word comes out. It is no longer used in a neutral sense as in 73.[32] Xerxes is blamed by the Chorus (550ff.) and is held responsible by Darius (747ff.). He made the decision to engage in this battle, albeit from bad counsel (753ff.). His youth and its accompanying enthusiasm (744, 782; cf. 718, 754) [33] and ignorance (361, 454) are emphasized in the play. The returning hero is not unimpaired anymore as in the beginning of the play (the same technique is prominent in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, where the king is condemned before his return). Darius has come and gone, interpreting the events that shed an unfavourable light on Xerxes just before his appearance. In his closing lines Darius turns to Atossa (832ff.) and gives her instructions on Xerxes' clothes. Atossa takes up the significance of the clothes in her final lines and gives a clue to the audience that she will not succeed in meeting Xerxes (πειράσομαι 850).[34] The reasons why Xerxes and his mother never meet in the play must be dramatic. First, if they met the final scene would resemble the Darius scene. Secondly, perhaps the protagonist could reappear as Xerxes. We cannot be certain about the distributions of the parts between the two actors in the play. I suggest that the protagonist, who played Atossa, could reappear as Xerxes. This arrangement is significant for the dramatic form of the play. In Xerxes' absence Atossa represents her son. On his return, in the final scene, Xerxes represents himself. If thus both parts were played by the same actor this would convey clearly to the audience the dramatic purpose of Xerxes' absence and return for the play as a whole. We can, however, only speculate on the arrangement of the distribution of the parts in the play since the actor who played Darius could also play Xerxes. Most importantly, the play leads up to and concludes with Xerxes' appearance. Xerxes represents in the end the visual effect of the defeat at Salamis and his inglorious *nostos*. His appearance on his own makes this more effective.

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[32] Not all editors would agree. In Broadhead for example θούριος at 73 suggests something of Xerxes' rash impetuosity.

[33] Some editors would add 13.

[34] Broadhead suggests πορεύσομαι. He again explains these lines (845-51 as he did with lines 529-31) in terms of characterisation of the Queen. But in Greek tragedy character is subordinated to the plot, as Aristotle has recognised: *Poetics* 6, 1450a 15-b 4; see Jones (1962) 30-31.

2.4. Return to a catastrophe

The final stasimon takes us back to the great days of the past when the Persian Empire was under the leadership of Darius. At that time Persian men returned home successfully (*νόστοι δ' ἐκ πολέμων ἀπόνους ἀπαθεῖς / <αὖθις ἐς> εὖ πράσσοντας ἄγον οἴκους* 861). They won wars and conquered a long list of Aegean islands. This ode prepares us for the long-anticipated appearance of the ruined Xerxes. Its theme and nostalgic tone make an effective contrast to the final scene. The bitter opposition between the past and the present is also emphasized by the final sentence 904-8, introduced by *νῦν δέ*.[35] The reversal of fortune is enacted before our eyes in the final scene of the play where Xerxes eventually returns home after the catastrophe. He has been present in our mind in all the previous scenes. His return is reserved for the end of the play as the conclusion of the tragedy. The return scene (908-1077), a *κομμός*, a sung dialogue between Xerxes and the Chorus, is contrasted with the first song, where the Chorus envisaged the departure of the Persians in a context of splendour and wealth. One could emphasize the similarities between Xerxes' cries and the lamentation of Greek private bereavement.[36] The long anticipated appearance of Xerxes is more tragic than had been expected before the news of the defeat. In particular the Chorus salute Xerxes' *nostos* with an ill-omened cry (*πρόσφθογγόν σοι νόστου ταύταν / κακοφάτιδα βοάν* 935-6). This picks up the homecoming-theme established at the very beginning of the play (*ἀμφὶ δὲ νόστωι τῶι βασιλείωι / καὶ πολυχρύσου στρατιᾶς ἥδη* 8-9).[37] Xerxes has achieved his return but he comes back defeated. A distinctive element of the *Persians*, in comparison to the other *nostos*-plays (A. *Ag.*, S. *Tr.*, E. *Her.*), is that this is not just a play about a domestic situation. Although the domestic theme is implicit in the desire of the Queen to meet her son with new clothes the play moves beyond this. It has a national dimension as well. Xerxes' return represents the destruction of a nation. Like a defeated athlete, who had no happy homecoming (Pi. *P.* 8.83-7 cf. Pi. *O.* 8.67-9), Xerxes is not reintegrated into his community as he would have been if he were victorious. He will still be the ruler (according to Atossa: 214) but he brings no *kleos* either to his *oikos* or to his nation. The

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[35] See Taplin (1977) 126.

[36] On the *κομμός* as a lamentation reminiscent of funeral rituals see Pelling (1997) 14. It remains an important difference that these lamentation-cries are uttered by a male actor and a male Chorus, see Pelling (1997) 14 with his n.61.

[37] Cf. Holtsmark (1970) 21: 'The chorus have at last, after many interruptions, been placed in a position of truly considering *πῶς ἄρα πράσσει Ξέρξης βασιλεὺς Δαρειογενής* (144-5). We recall that their first foreboding (10: *κακόμαντις*) concern was for the return (8: *ἀμφὶ δὲ νόστωι*) of the king and his army, and on this they have now acted (cf. 935-40: *νόστου σοι... κακοφάτιδαν βοάν...πέμψω*)'.

source of the action is still connected to the absence of the male head of the household, as in the other *nostos*-plays, but it is not a wife who stands for the waiting female figure in the *Persians* but a mother. This is possibly why Aeschylus has not chosen the motifs that would emphasize a domestic tragedy related to a *nostos*-story such as the bath-motif or the bed-motif. In the *Persians* the disaster of the nation is emphasized (584ff.). The *polis* is destroyed but the *oikos* survives (see 211-4).

The list of commanders mentioned in the final scene of lamentation ironically echoes the list of commanders mentioned in the parodos in a context of glory. This is an example of ring composition that applies to the failed *nostos* of the Persians. Like an emotion suspended in time the list of commanders comes at three points in the play (21-58, 302-29, 950-1001). 'There is, however, a rather important distinction between the two, for while the opening catalogue is emphatic about the wealth and power of the men and contingents listed, the closing catalogue is indeed threadbare. The fullness of the former is now replaced by the bare skeletal listing of names.'[38] The theme of yearning (992) is again related to something that is lost. After Xerxes has arrived he points to his rags (1016-7; cf. 1030)[39] and goes on to his empty quiver (1020). The bow is the typical weapon of the Persians (26-30, 146-9, 239-40, Page: 237-8). The empty quiver signifies the loss of military power. His rags embody the ruin of the Persians. 'Because fine robes are a sign of royal station and power, their tatters ought to stand for the loss of that power.'[40] Seeck[41] suggests that the arrival of Xerxes is not a homecoming scene but just a lamentation scene of a devasted king. I hope that I have shown that he fails to judge the appearance of Xerxes in its full dramatic context. With the entry of Xerxes much that has been heard is seen to be directed towards his actual arrival. The repeated references to Xerxes' clothes (199, 468, 835-6, 845-51) have a direct bearing on the king, now that he returns alone (1036) and in rags (1030). His appearance embodies the disaster of the Persians and has a visual effect. What was described as setting out in the opening anapaests did not return with Xerxes. The king has lost his army and his arrival symbolises the fall of Persia.

On the whole, I hope that I have shown that the *Persians* is the first *nostos*-play. The choral prologue of the play establishes the preparation for the return of Xerxes at the

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[38] Holtsmark (1970) 20.
[39] There is a possible ambiguity. *Στολή* might also be his army. I take it as 'robe' in order to make sense of the repeated references in the play to the theme of clothes. For the discussion of the meaning of *στολᾶς* in 1017, see Taplin (1977) 121-2.
[40] Thalmann (1980). He thoroughly discusses the significance of the theme of rending clothes especially related to Xerxes' rags in the final scene.
[41] See Seeck (1984) 21.

very beginning (8-11) and presents the *nostos*-themes (of yearning and clothes) that will recur throughout the play. The departure of Xerxes and his army implies their return. We are thus encouraged to feel that their return is crucial to the action. This is demonstrated in the course of the play. Every aspect of the imagery and the dramatic form of the *Persians* reveals the significance of Xerxes' return as structurally effective and contributes to the feeling that his return will come within the play and will somehow fulfil our expectations and provide a sense of closure. In particular the poet takes care to raise and then thwart expectations for an imminent return of Xerxes. This is evident in the arrangement of the scenes of the play. Xerxes does not return immediately after the news of the defeat. The Darius-scene, which intervenes before the arrival of Xerxes, leads up to the return of Xerxes and prepares us for his homecoming in light of the opposition between the successful father and the defeated son. Thus, the poet uses *nostos* as an effective dramatic device in order to manipulate audience response. Taplin, who discusses the visual significance of Xerxes' entry, points out that: 'With the entry of Xerxes much of the play up to this point takes on new sense and direction; or, rather, much that has been heard again and again is seen to have a direct bearing on the King, once he is actually before our eyes'.[42] The Chorus fulfil the Queen's instruction (530) to escort Xerxes into the palace in the last line of the play. Xerxes' return is not only the focus but also the conclusion of the tragedy. His entry contrasts with the first song which presented a wealthy and powerful Persian empire. The final scene of the play supplements, in some way, the beginning. Thus, the argument is made that in the *Persians* we are encouraged to feel that with the return of the absent hero the *praxis* has achieved completion. Most remarkably, the long-awaited return of Xerxes in the *Persians* turns out to be more tragic than had been anticipated. The reception of the defeated Xerxes comes to its end in lamentation. In the *Persians*, the final scene is constructed so as to show that there is no return to past glory. Therefore, one may think that Aeschylus' text demonstrates the impossibility of a 'return to the same'. Moreover, the *Persians* is unique among the extant Greek *nostos*-plays since it deals with a historical event. The subject-matter of the play considers the reality of an expedition. The *Persians* refers to the violence of war and depicts a double catastrophe of both a country and its king. Thus, the *Persians* is a singular example in tragic drama of this use of *nostos* since it is related both to Xerxes' environment and to his country. In particular, the violence of the war and the effects of *nostos* in terms of warfare are made especially

[42] Taplin (1977) 126.

perceptible to the nation and less so to the household of Xerxes, unlike the other *nostos*-plays that present clearly a domestic tragedy, as we will see in the following chapters. All this suggests that the treatment of the *nostos*-pattern is especially distinctive in the *Persians* since it is not only connected with a domestic return but raises questions about the responses to victory and decline. Xerxes' return in the final scene emphasises the symbolic destruction of a nation. It should be stressed that in terms of structure and imagery the text is encouraging the audience to feel that suffering and fragility is the experience of humanity. This is figured at various points in my discussion of the *nostos* in the Persians.[43] Finally, as I have shown, *nostos* in Aeschylus' text becomes an effective structural device: a means of creating tension and suspense about the homecoming of Xerxes and his army.

[43] The *Iliad* supplies an analogy to this. See Goldhill (1988) 191 with his n.35: 'A complex model of weeping with (though not precisely for) an enemy is provided by the end of the *Iliad* in Achilles' tears for his father and Patroclus, shared with Priam's tears for Hector (*Il.* xxiv 470ff., esp.507-12)'.

3. *Nostos* in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*

ἔστιν θάλασσα, τίς δέ νιν καταβέσει;
There is the sea, and who can exhaust it?
A. *Ag.* (958)

The *Persians* is the first *nostos*-play.[1] In the *Persians*, as we have seen, Aeschylus draws his material for the description of a *nostos*-story from a historical event. My analysis will next consider how Aeschylus dramatised the return of Agamemnon from Troy to Argos,[2] which was a story familiar from the earliest Greek poetry. As I have mentioned in my Introduction (p. 2) the *nostos*-story of Agamemnon was familiar to the dramatists and their audience from the earliest Greek poetry. In epic the *Nostoi* of the victors of Troy exemplified that no one was safe until he was ensconced in his own home. In the *Odyssey*[3] Agamemnon's return is used in explicit contrast to Odysseus' return. We are told in Homeric narrative that Aegisthus went out with horses and chariot and invited Agamemnon to the palace where a banquet was prepared, at which he was killed (*Od.* 4.512-37 and 11.405-35). One should recognise that among the returns of the Greeks from Troy Agamemnon's return appealed to the Greek imagination as exemplary of a disastrous homecoming. Thus the tradition included the narrative of Agamemnon's return as one of the variants of the *nostos*-plot. In this chapter I will discuss the use of the *nostos*-pattern in *Agamemnon*. On the outset it should be emphasised that the overall argument and implications of this chapter are grounded in narrative elements. In particular, I will attempt to show that in Aeschylus' play the story of Agamemnon's return provides the overall pattern of the plot, its basic framework.[4] To this aim, I am going to examine how Aeschylus has arranged the elements of the play, both in imagery and in structure, in order to anticipate Agamemnon's return. The opening soliloquy sets up a mood of foreboding

[1] See also Taplin (1977) p.124.
[2] The reason why Aeschylus places both the Atreidae (= Menelaus and Agamemnon) in Argos is discussed by Bollack – Judet de la Combe (1982) 54ff.
[3] The passages in the *Odyssey* referring to the murder of Agamemnon are not unanimous. Clytaemestra normally plays a less important role and Aegisthus is the murderer of Agamemnon (1.29ff., 1.298ff., 3.193ff., 3.248ff., 3.303ff., 4.90-92, 4.512ff.) but Homer stresses the role of either lover depending upon the speaker and the current situation. In these first accounts it may or may not be supposed that Clytaemestra did participate in the killing, whereas it is the case in the later ones. In 24.192ff. Clytaemestra stands on her own as a murderer and in 24.20ff. (24.93ff, cf. 11.453) the two lovers have joint responsibility. In these cases she is set as a foil to the faithful Penelope. Homer uses the *nostos*-story of Agamemnon in order to provide a parallel and a contrast to Odysseus' return. They both have sons and wives. The Aegisthus-suitors correspondence is also exploited.
[4] See Taplin (1977) 124-5 and 302; cf. Crane (1993) 117.

and anticipates the return of Agamemnon. The expectation of the king's homecoming is first engendered by the beacon. Thus the argument is made that Agamemnon's return structures the play through the imagery. Moreover, a distinctive use of the *nostos*-pattern in Aeschylus' text is that it also anticipates the king's homecoming through the extensive narrative of the past. One of the most striking features of the *Agamemnon* is that it takes us back to the past of the royal house and of Troy.[5] All the events of the past narrated by the Chorus and recalled by Clytaemestra lead up to Agamemnon's arrival. Agamemnon is the visual epiphany of what has preceded in the play. Most remarkably, in *Agamemnon* 'a powerful emotional effect is achieved by the anticipatory concentration on the adversary who will spoil the return'.[6] This is well shown by the manner of Agamemnon's return and the manner of his death that emphasizes the flaw in his *nostos*. To illustrate this I examine how Aeschylus dramatises both verbally and visually the transition from the hero's arrival to his own death, relating it particularly to the intertextual engagement with the *Odyssey*. A distinctive use of the *nostos*-pattern in Aeschylus' text is that the return of the absent hero comes in the middle of the play. Thus the ending of *Agamemnon* is far more expansive and variegated than those of *Persians* and *Trachiniae*. The timing of Agamemnon's return emphasises the importance of the homecoming-scene as a structural device within the plot of Aeschylus' text. Indeed, as we will discover in the course of our enquiry, Aeschylus has made Agamemnon return in the middle of the play in order to demonstrate the terrible wrongness of his homecoming that turns out to be a parody of a welcome scene. The study of *nostos* in this scene will be related to the *Odyssey* and particularly to the role of Clytaemestra, as the opposite to Penelope. In addition, I will discuss the return of Agamemnon in the light of epinician poetry in order to show that the notion of the heroic victor returning seems to be undermined in Aeschylus' play. As with the *Persians*, the argument is made that the *nostos*-theme in *Agamemnon* is associated with the futility of 'a return to the same'. Finally, I will also consider the use of *nostos* in Aeschylus' text as a means of creating disquiet and suspense.

[5] See Denniston-Page (1957) xxxiii; Taplin (1977) 302; Herington (1984) 141.
[6] Heath (1987) 148.

3.1. Waiting

Aeschylus' creative response to Agamemnon's story of return is evident in the use of the Watchman, who is already known from the *Odyssey*, as a bribed *σκοπός* of Aegisthus (4.524ff.). It is Clytaemestra who has employed the Watchman in his present post in the *Agamemnon*. This is implied in *ὧδε γὰρ κρατεῖ γυναικὸς ἀνδρόβουλον ἐλπίζον κέαρ* (10f.).[7] Aeschylus gives this minor character the opening lines of the play. His opening soliloquy sets up a mood of foreboding and points forward to the return of Agamemnon. In a few lines (1-19) the Watchman describes his feeling of waiting for news of the fall of Troy. But he makes clear that a woman, with manly counsel (10f.), Agamemnon's wife, is in charge at home.[8] This is rather unnatural. The effect of Agamemnon's absence on his environment is hinted at from the very beginning. When the beacon appears we are made to feel that Agamemnon will soon be back. The Watchman implies that there is evil rooted in the house (18, 36).[9] This builds up the suspense. Agamemnon is expected with desire by the Watchman. He shows affectionate feelings for his master.[10] The emotional development of the Watchman by Aeschylus contributes to the *nostos*-pattern of the play. The news of the fall of Troy points towards the return of Agamemnon. However, the veiled implications of the Watchman about his absent master's *oikos* create disquiet over his return. We find out about the victory of the Greeks in Troy through the Watchman-scene. This is a very effective theatrical device. The opening lines of the play introduce the *nostos*-theme since the beacon appears and the return of Agamemnon is expected to come within the play. But we are made to feel that there is danger impending for Agamemnon when he returns. In his absence life in his *oikos* has changed. His wife is the ruler and we are encouraged to feel that his return will not be a return to the same place (19f., 36ff.). With the entrance of the Chorus the plot of the play is extended in the past. Like his dependants at home Agamemnon from the time of his departure has changed during his absence. Before we see Agamemnon returning to Argos, we see him in Aulis. The Chorus refer to the events at Aulis ten years ago. This research into things past will extend our understanding of the consequences of Agamemnon's departure on himself and those waiting for him at home.

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[7] See Käppel (1998) 40 with his n.5.
[8] See Winnington-Ingram (1983) 101-31 on the sexual polarity in the play and for a discussion of Clytaemestra as an anomaly due to her masculinity.
[9] See Heath (1987) 17 who comments on the repetition of *ἀπαλλαγὴ πόνων*: 'So when, in the manner of ring-composition, his prayer for apallagê ponôn recurs (20) its significance has been broadened and deepened; it refers now, not to the troubles of one lowly individual, but to those of the whole royal house.'
[10] See Fraenkel (1950) II 26.

The handling of the Chorus in the *Agamemnon* contributes to the feeling that Agamemnon's return is made the centre of expectation and anxiety. 'A chorus of old men, left at home, is concerned about the return of the King, and sense that his departure was not wholly propitious.'[11] The parodos confirms the sense of foreboding of the prologue. We begin to realise what is wrong in the house. Agamemnon is not just a warrior who is expected to return home. He has been in charge of the expedition against Troy and now after the capture of Troy the events of the past endanger the nature of his return. He is responsible for the loss of thousands for the sake of Helen, a woman/wife of many men/husbands (62). Greeks and Trojans fell in the battle for her sake as a first offering (65). The term *ἐν προτελείοις* means specifically 'the sacrifice before the telos of marriage'.[12] The deaths of Trojans and Greeks should precede the marriage of Helen and Paris according to the ritual sequence but Aeschylus here uses this marriage as a poetic image beyond the temporal logic. The reference on Agamemnon's departure to this destructive marriage implies his ominous return. Clytaemestra's first appearance on stage is on the silent act of sacrifice (87-103, and this act is stressed again at 262, 587, 594-7).[13] The Chorus are curious to find out what motivated her offerings. A sacrifice denotes the end or the beginning of a difficult enterprise such as warfare. Clytaemestra sacrifices on the occasion of the Greeks' victory and Agamemnon's imminent return (83f., 261ff., 587ff.). Sacrifice is a leitmotiv in the play.[14] The sacrificial activities of a wife on the occasion of her husband's impending return is a *topos*. But Clytaemestra's attitude towards the return of her husband is coloured by her desire for revenge. The sacrificial activity of his wife may entertain the possibility of his return to normality but this cannot be achieved. In the lyric part of the parodos the Chorus give us the main reason of their anxiety for the return

[11] Taplin (1977) 69; cf. Heath (1987) 96: 'In the parodos, Agamemnon himself is put into the focal position, as the character whose *nostos* is anticipated and about whose fate we are anxious'.
[12] Denniston-Page (1957) on 65; cf. Lebeck (1971) 186 n.35 on *προτέλεια*.
[13] With Denniston-Page (see on 83ff. and 489ff.) I think that it is more 'dramatically effective' to see her presence during the entire first song; contra Taplin (1977) 281, Käppel (1998) 45-55, who makes an interesting stage suggestion: the Chorus approach the door of the house and call Clytaemestra (*Ag.* 83-103) to come out. The Chorus (*Ag.* 103) just stand and extend the narrative of the history of the Trojan war (104-257). At 257 Clytaemestra comes out of the house and the Chorus go back to their previous unanswered enquiries. However, I hold that the form and content of the address to Clytaemestra at 83f. suggest that she is on stage. In terms of staging I think that Clytaemestra is visible to the audience but she is not standing in the middle of the orchestra, since this would distract the audience's attention from what the Chorus relate in the parodos. *Θυοπολεῖς* (262) gives an indication of what she might be doing in the background; contra Taplin (1977) 282-5, who finds that Clytaemestra's silence after 103 is unexplained and thinks that her sacrificial activity is not an effective justification for her early entry. For a brief account of the history of the problem see Bollack – Judet de la Combe (1981) on 83.
[14] On the development of the theme of sacrifice in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* see Zeitlin (1965) 464-88; cf. Burkert (1966) 119.

of Agamemnon. The king has slaughtered his daughter, Iphigeneia (*δόμων ἀγαλμα* 207) and Calchas has warned that a child-avenging wrath lies in wait for Agamemnon (154-5). Clytaemestra expects Agamemnon's homecoming with the hope of revenge for her daughter's death. 'Clytemnestra will nurse her anger at home until her husband's return, and will then exact a terrible and treacherous revenge for her daughter's death.'[15] In Aeschylus there is no mention of Iphigeneia's immortality and this makes Clytaemestra's motive for revenge on her daughter's death stronger in contrast to the previous myth[16] where Iphigeneia was immortalised. Agamemnon becomes the 'sacrificer' of his own daughter (224; cf. 215). This evil will give birth to another evil, his own death, that is related in terms of a sacrifice (1057). The sacrificial imagery that surrounds Iphigeneia's death would be recalled in the death of Cassandra later in the play. The omen of the eagles (104-25) feasting on the pregnant hare is also reminiscent of sacrificial imagery. Both Iphigeneia and Cassandra remove their garments (238; cf.1266-72). This metaphorically suggests the transition of a bride in a wedding ritual. They are both the brides of death. The sacrifice of Iphigeneia gives rise to the way Agamemnon's *nostos* will be handled in the play. Clytaemestra is seen as a threat to the return of Agamemnon. The events of Aulis are a painful memory for the Chorus (*μνησιπήμων πόνος* 180). This pain is compounded with fear; fear that Agamemnon on his homecoming would have to face the consequences of the sacrifice of his own daughter. All this obscures Agamemnon's imminent return and prepares us for the treacherous encounter with his own wife.

Clytaemestra gives form to the worries of the old men. In the parodos they implied that Agamemnon is in danger of death at her hands on his return (154f.). In the absence of Agamemnon it is Clytaemestra who stands as a ruler (*κράτος* 258). She is the waiting-wife of Agamemnon who will receive him if the war has ended. Normally a faithful wife would long passionately for her husband's return. In the case of Clytaemestra the return of Agamemnon means revenge.[17] When the Chorus address (258-63) her in order to find out about the news of Agamemnon's victory at Troy they express their uncertainty about the victory and their joy in it (270). We are encouraged to feel that the old men are hostile towards her. Aeschylus in the first part of the play creates a conflict between the genuine loyalty of the Chorus and the superficial loyalty of Clytaemestra. The Chorus cannot forget

[15] Denniston-Page (1957) on 152f.
[16] See *Cypria*; Stesichorus: 217 *PMG*; Hesiod: 23 (a) MW 26.
[17] So Winnington-Ingram (1983) 106: 'Yet so great is she that she does not fear his return, but rather longs passionately for it, because it will give her the opportunity of avenging herself and of demonstrating her superiority'.

that she is hypocritical on Agamemnon's homecoming. At 275 and 277 Clytaemestra rebukes the Chorus for accusing her of being a victim of dreams or rumour. She attempts to dispel their doubting by her speeches which follow. The war has ended successfully for the Atreidae and this implies that Agamemnon will soon be back.

Aeschylus explores further the female waiting figure of this *nostos*-play. What was just mentioned in the *Odyssey* very briefly about Clytaemestra's character (contrasted with Penelope, see esp. *Od.* 11.422 and 24.199-200) becomes now an element of the plot. Her concern about the homecoming of the Greek army and her husband establishes her dissimulation. She fears (338ff.) that the Greeks may not win safe return, if they should offend the gods overcome by desire.[18] Most significantly, is the ambiguity of her words at 346-7. 'By *πῆμα τῶν ὀλωλότων* Clytemnestra refers to Iphigeneia; the Chorus understands her to mean the dead at Troy; a theme which they take up at 456ff.'.[19] This double meaning of Clytaemestra's words is present in her wish: *τὸ δ'εὖ κρατοίη* (349). She repeats what the Chorus wish: the punishment of Paris by the Atreidae must be successful (121, 139, 159) but in reality Clytaemestra has in her mind the punishment of Agamemnon on his return.[20] The ambivalence of her words will be developed dramatically in the double meaning of her actions. Aeschylus chooses to explore motifs that were a *topos* in a traditional *nostos*-story. But in the case of Agamemnon they are ambiguous. This is embodied in the way that she transforms in the course of the play the instruments (welcome-scene, clothing, bath) of a loving wife into the instruments of a murderer.

Along with the sacrifice of Iphigeneia that gives rise to the death of Agamemnon on his return there are more ominous events of the past that are explicitly mentioned in the stasimon that follows. The impending return of Agamemnon is in the mind of the Chorus and in the first stasimon they begin a hymn of thanksgiving for Agamemnon's victory over Troy. The first strophic pair is concerned with Paris' theft of Helen. But each statement is filled with implications that could apply to the case of Agamemnon. In the first strophe the Chorus tell us that the gods do not neglect transgressors. The metaphor (366-72) in which they express their statement prepares us for the tapestry scene. We are made to feel that Paris got what he deserved. But the victory of *Dike* over the Trojan malefactors cannot fail to remind us of what *Dike* holds for Agamemnon, who has sacrificed his own daughter.

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[18] The text here is obscure. West (1990) suggests a lacuna e.g. *κοιμώμενον μάθοις ἄν, οὐδ' ἔτι βλάβῃ*. With West's lacuna the meaning is that all will be well. In that case we limit the ambiguity of Clytaemestra's words; see Käppel (1998) 138 with his n. 234.

[19] Denniston-Page (1957) on 345-7.

[20] See Käppel (1998) 139.

Most strikingly, the theme of hereditary guilt (374) refers to Paris, but it could be applicable to Agamemnon since the use of the wind metaphor (*πνεόντων*) reminds us of the wind in Aulis.[21] The news of the victory turns to an account of ominous events. The Chorus develop the theme of the sacrilege (370-84) which was first introduced by Clytaemestra (338). Moreover, the old men return to the image of the wedding of Paris and Helen. Helen's bridal appearance in Troy where she brings a dowry of death / passing lightly through / the city gates (406-8) anticipates the arrival of the bridelike Cassandra. Helen brings death whereas Cassandra arrives to meet her death. With what follows we are encouraged to think that Agamemnon is criticized before his arrival. We learn before his impending return how people feel about their king. There is resentment (450-1) against the Atreidae at the death of those fallen in the war. Instead of a safe homecoming their ashes come back to their homes (434-6). We already know from the *Odyssey* that many Greeks had not a successful *nostos*.[22]Agamemnon is expected to return but most of his companions will never achieve their return. This pitiful picture of the arrival back home of *λέβητες* (cinerary urns) containing ashes was familiar to some members of the poet's audience.[23] They knew well that a man could lose his *nostos* in a war and return only in ashes after being cremated. A victory has a heavy price. The citizens are enraged against the Atreidae because of the bloodshed in Troy (458) and the gods are also not unwatchful (461f.) of those who inflict so many deaths. The Chorus conclude that they would not choose to be in the position of a sacker of cities (*πτολιπόρθης* 472). Agamemnon is expected to come back as a guilty man. Thus a striking feature of the *nostos*-story in *Agamemnon* is that the returning hero is criticized before his arrival.[24] In the final epode (475ff.) the elders doubt the fact of Troy's fall. In terms of dramatic form taken with the herald-scene that follows this state of wishful thinking is necessary as an effectual foil[25] to the breaking of the anxiety that comes with the herald-scene.[26] Moreover, the old people along with Clytaemestra are the main waiting characters of this *nostos*-play. After a period of long waiting the elders are the prey of a mixture of feelings. The Chorus' confidence about the

[21] Cf. also 219; see Garvie (1986) on 202-3 on wind imagery.
[22] Odysseus on hearing Demodocus' 'Song of Troy' reduces himself to tears (*Od.* 8.84-6). He has survived the war but many of the Greeks met their death in the battle.
[23] See Garland (1985) 92.
[24] Xerxes is criticised before his return in the Darius-scene in the *Persians*. Agamemnon is also criticized on his arrival (799ff.)
[25] See Fraenkel II (1950) at the epode on 475ff. as a whole.; cf. Denniston-Page (1957) 114.
[26] Aeschylus *Persians* is similar but the sense of foreboding is resolved much earlier with the news of the defeat at Salamis.

sack of Troy is undermined when they consider the threat overhanging Agamemnon on his return.

3.2. Messenger-scene

Their anxiety returns after the account of the beacon by Clytaemestra. The entry announcement[27] maintains the doubtful atmosphere of the epode. It prolongs the anticipation for the news of the fall of Troy. 'There is uncertainty: the Herald is required to resolve it.'[28] The entry of a messenger before the return of the long awaited absent hero is a frequent element of the *nostos*-plays. It clearly prepares us for the arrival of the king. The messenger-scene describes what the absent hero has been doing.[29] In the case of *Agamemnon* the herald is a returning hero himself. He, therefore, instead of declaring his news immediately, opens with a moving address to his native land. His first words are of generic significance. It is a *topos* for the returning traveller to salute his native land on his arrival.[30] Literature is part of the culture. From the form of salutation spoken on the herald's arrival we may gather perhaps the way in which a returning traveller (after a campaign or journey) felt about his homeland on his arrival. The homecoming after a long

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[27] Although the manuscripts give 489-500 to Clytaemestra, 501-2 to the Chorus' a series of scholars (see Flintoff (1989) 147), have gone against the manuscripts and attributed the lines at *Agamemnon* 489ff. to the Chorus. I am in favour of the view according to which Clytaemestra at 489f. announces the herald. With Denniston-Page (1957) 116 '*σοι* in 496 is evidence that two persons or parties are engaged'. By contrast Taplin suggests that (1977) 295 'even if Clytemnestra speaks the lines, it would still be rather obtrusive: it 'specializes awkwardly and unnecessarily'. Flintoff (1989) 149, after emphasizing the kind of vocabulary used in the announcement, concludes that 'in almost every detail in these lines (489ff.) the speaker is attempting to devalue Clytemnestra's earlier claims in the face of the certainty about to be brought by the Herald.' Bearing in mind, according to Flintoff, that it is rare for most of the time to doubt our own views these lines must be attributed to the Chorus. He goes on to explain that the use of the first person plural (*εἰσόμεσθα*: 489) is never used by Clytaemestra to refer to herself up to 1046, whereas the Chorus use the plural quite a lot. But *εἰσόμεσθα* is not necessarily used by Clytaemestra in order to refer to herself. This first plural could include the Queen and the Chorus. In addition, it would be the largest speech given to a Chorus-leader in Aeschylus. It would be longer (14 lines) than the speech given to the Chorus in the *Persians* which is exceptionally long (215-225, 11 lines). I do not think, thus, that the arguments which are in favour of the attribution of the lines to the Chorus are sufficient. I suppose that Clytaemestra is silent in the background since her early entry at 83 or before. She comes forward and announces the herald. The queen remains on stage, while the herald makes clear that Agamemnon has arrived in Argos. She leaves the stage at 614.

[28] Taplin (1977) 298; contra Dawe (1963) 51, who comments on this entry: 'then a herald when we are expecting the king'. But I see no justification for his comment. The messenger-scene before the return of the absent hero is a frequent structural element of the *nostos*-plays; see my note 29 and Taplin (1977) 125.

[29] *Persae* is similar except that there the messenger comes much earlier (249; cf. S. *Tr.*: Hyllus as a messenger; E. *Andr.*: ironical treatment of the messenger-scene: an account of Neoptolemus' death, E. *Her.*: the return must remain a kind of surprise).

[30] For examples of this *topos* see Fraenkel (1950) II on 503. He further illustrates from the *Odyssey* (e.g. *Od.* 4.521f. where Agamemnon himself on his return kisses the ground. The scholion here is: *ἔθος εἶχον οἱ ἀποδημοῦντες τῆς πατρίδος, ὅταν ἐνδημήσωσι, κυνεῖν αὐτὴν καὶ κατασπάζεσθαι;* cf. *Od.* 5.463, 13.354 (Odysseus) *κύσε δὲ ζείδωρον ἄρουραν*) how the first words of those returning are often enacted in a similar way.

absence (warfare in remote lands, sea voyage and so on) was, thus, near to the hearts of Aeschylus and his countrymen. Agamemnon could have arrived without a messenger-scene preceding his return. However, Aeschylus has arranged it so that the herald is the first man to return. As a result he relates all those elements connected with the theme of homecoming after a long absence in the war. If the king had returned without being preceded by the herald, he would have had to answer for the fate of the returning army.[31] Moreover, the herald prepares us for the return of the king without Menelaus. The brother of Agamemnon has been lost and his case denotes that *nostos* was not a guaranteed passage. But in the case of Agamemnon his homecoming is expected to come soon in the play (more explicitly by *ἥκει* in 522 and again in 531). The members of Aeschylus' audience knew that there were successful and unsuccessful *nostoi* of the victors of Troy and no one was safe until he was firmly received at home. Aeschylus adapts here the story of the storm caused by the wrath of the gods on the return of the victors of Troy for his own dramatic purpose. First, in his version[32] Menelaus and Agamemnon depart together and this stresses more the sacrilege of the Greeks over the temples of the gods.[33] Secondly, the return of Agamemnon without his brother fits into the form of the *nostos*-story. Agamemnon will be an easy victim for the murder-plot of Clytaemestra. The herald-scene[34] gives Clytaemestra time to get ready (604-14) for the murder-plot. On the whole the herald confirms what has been speculated so far (the sacrilege: 527ff.,[35] the suffering for the Greeks: 551-66, the great loss of Greek men: 567-74). He calls Agamemnon a man blessed by fortune (*εὐδαίμων*, 530). On the one hand this *μακαρισμός* of the returning hero is reminiscent of the poetry of praise for athletic victory, the epinician ode. A victorious enterprise cannot attain real fulfillment without praise. But in the case of Agamemnon this Pindaric element has an ominous effect, as

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[31] Cf. Fraenkel (1950) II on 586: 'The appearance of such a character [herald] upon the stage has the effect of a lull before the breaking of a storm.'

[32] Aeschylus has departed from the epic tradition (*Od.* 3.136ff., Procl. *Nostoi* Bernabé *PEG* I (1987) 94, Davies *EFG* (1988) 67; cf. E. *Tro* 75) where the Atreidae quarrelled after the sack of Troy and Menelaus and other leaders departed together, while Agamemnon stayed behind.

[33] See Käppel (1998) 147 n. 248.

[34] On the herald-scene as a whole see Fraenkel (1950) II on 586.

[35] Line 527 is deleted by Salzmann, Fraenkel and West. The line is rejected as an interpolation, since firstly it disturbs the context; see Fraenkel (1950) II on 525ff. Secondly it is similar to a line found elsewhere in Aeschylus (*Pers.* 811 *βωμοὶ δ'ἄιστοι δαιμόνων θ'ἱδρύματα*). A third argument is suggested by Fraenkel who claims that 'to the poet and his contemporaries the destruction of holy places by the enemy seemed an unparalleled atrocity'. It seems shocking to the religious attitude of the Greeks to make a herald boast about such an action. By contrast as most scholars believe this line is an answer to the question raised by Clytaemestra at 338ff. whether the Greeks may have committed sacrilege by not respecting the gods, and therefore may not gain a safe return. This is expressed ironically as a fear of the queen. This element of foreboding is further developed by the Chorus (370-384). The fear thus expressed by Clytaemestra and the Chorus has come true. Without this line the sense of foreboding connected with the sacrilege would not have been fulfilled.

(things in context — sacrilege, suffering and death at Troy, hints at Clytaemestra) give reason to doubt that Agamemnon is *εὐδαίμων*.

3.2.1 Preparation for the reception of Agamemnon

We already feel Clytaemestra's dissimulation when she comes forward and expresses her joy on her husband's impending return. Her hypocritical behaviour gives substance to the mood of fear already maintained by the Chorus. She prepares us for the return of Agamemnon by pointing out that she will learn all the news from Agamemnon himself (599). Her purpose is hidden. All her actions are according to her female waiting role. On the news of the capture of Troy she prepared offerings for a sacrifice (594). Now that after the messenger-scene there is no doubt about Agamemnon's homecoming she is ready to receive him in the best way (600f.) and she will open the doors to him (601ff.). At the end of her speech she dwells on his return (605ff.). She speaks as a faithful wife waiting on a lonely bed. This is what the head of the household would normally expect from his wife at home. It is a recurring theme of a *nostos*-story (see for example the difficult nights of Deianeira in S. *Tr.* 28-30 etc.). Clytaemestra is presented as the loyal housekeeper (see esp. *δωμάτων κύνα*, 607) in the absence of her husband. As we shall see this idea of the housekeeping is a typical element in a *nostos*-story. The waiting wife is supposed to maintain the house of the absent hero (see e.g. S. *Tr.* 540-2, E. *Her.* 1373). If I may anticipate, the generic importance of this theme is evident in the different treatment of Deianeira and Clytaemestra. Although Deianeira's intentions are innocent she like Clytaemestra embodies the dramatic potential of *nostos* to go wrong. Clytaemestra assumes the existence of a return of Agamemnon to a place of fixity. She presumes to establish herself as a waiting wife who has retained the same integrity in his absence (*οἵανπερ οὖν ἔλειπε*, 607). The text here entertains the possibility of a return of Agamemnon without any obstacles (see *καὶ τἄλλ' ὁμοίαν πάντα*, 609, and compare the use of *δοκεῖ* in 1238: *δοκεῖ δὲ χαίρειν νοστίμωι σωτηρίαι*) but it cannot achieve it. Clytaemestra's masked purpose is implied at *χαλκοῦ βαφάς* (612). For a waiting wife to assert that she has no more experience of infidelity to her husband than she knows how to dye bronze would be normal. However, her expression, that carries the idea of dye (cf. A. *Cho.* 1011) looks forward to the

preparations for the murder[36] and the murder weapon.[37] In addition, throughout this scene the Chorus express some guarded hints (550; cf. 615f.) to the herald about the peril that threatens Agamemnon on his homecoming. The herald fails to understand that all is not well at home but once he has mentioned that Menelaus is not yet *νόστιμος* (618) the mood is clouded. Agamemnon's brother is lost and some Greeks met their death on their way home.[38] This has an ominous implication for Agamemnon's direct return since we are encouraged to think of the ambivalent nature of *nostos*. Just before the king's arrival we become to realise that *nostos* is not always a safe passage but it includes danger and we wonder whether it is a good thing to have reached this *οἶκος* quickly and without impediment. The sense of foreboding is intensified by the 'paean to the Furies' (645), a blasphemous paradox as Fraenkel puts it (on 645). This inversion of a happy content of a paean on a victory to a 'paean to the Furies' indicates that Agamemnon is burdened with the events of the past that are associated with the victory over Troy.

3.2.2. The Chorus' reaction on Agamemnon's impending return

After the bad news about Menelaus the second stasimon begins in a sombre atmosphere. Before the king's return and reunion with his wife the Chorus refer to the marriage of Helen and Paris as a union which brings disaster. Marriage is a *telos*.[39] The idea of *telos* (700, 720, 745, 751-2; cf. the prayer of Clytaemestra while Agamemnon walks upon the carpet) dominates the entire lyric that precedes Agamemnon's homecoming. There is a reference to the ritual of unveiling of Helen as a bride (*προκαλύμματα*, 690-2).[40] This anticipates the use of *κάλυμμα* by Cassandra (*καὶ μὴν ὁ χρησμὸς οὐκέτ' ἐκ καλυμμάτων / ἔσται δεδορκώς*, 1178-9). The destructive effect of the wedding of Helen and Paris is revealed through the fusion of marriage and death in *κῆδος*; 'a word-group that refers both to a 'relation by marriage' (*kēdē*, *kēdea*, *kēdestēs* were 'in-laws') and to the 'funeral ritual'.[41] The marriage-song (706-6) of Helen turns to a dirge (711, 714).[42] The perversion of the positive elements of this marriage into its negative prepares us with a sense of

[36] In the tapestry scene Agamemnon steps on a textile that is dyed. Aeschylus uses words (*βαφή,πορφυρό-*) that are figurative of blood; cf. *κρόκου βαφάς* (239).
[37] See Fraenkel (1950) II on 612.
[38] Cf. 843 where Agamemnon refers with uncertainty to the fate of Odysseus after the war.
[39] See Lebeck (1971) 72.
[40] Cf. S. *Tr.* 1078 and see Seaford (1987) 124; Rehm (1994) 44.
[41] Rehm (1994) 22.
[42] See also Seaford (1987) 126.

foreboding for the reunion of Clytaemestra and Agamemnon. The marriage of Paris and Helen, which ends bitterly with the Fury bringing tears to brides, is suggestive of an inversion of positive *nostos*. Thus the images of the fatal marriage of Helen and Paris just before the king's arrival evoke for the spectators sinister associations for the reunion of Agamemnon with his wife. What awaits Agamemnon inside the palace is conceived as a *telos* (on *telos* see my note 39). He comes back after a long absence and his return will be accompanied with the ritual of sacrifice and marriage that signifies his reintegration into his *oikos*. But in the case of Agamemnon's homecoming all the elements of the ritual are transformed to intruments of his murder. The last antistrophe of the present ode dwells on the dangers of excessive wealth, before the entry of Agamemnon who later will be tempted to a wasteful display of wealth in the tapestry scene. The concept of the proper use of wealth is a generic characteristic of epinician poetry. In the same way in Aeschylus' text the Chorus make us think that too much prosperity could lead to ὕβρις[43] and thus over-prosperous men could in that case be heading for a fall. A prosperous man should be cautious. This idea is expanded to the theme of δίκη (774f.), which anticipates the return of Agamemnon as surely as it comments on the fall of Troy. The Chorus' reflections on the marriage of Paris and Helen that ends bitterly and their comments on ὕβρις and δίκη make us feel that Agamemnon's return will not be an occasion of joy and celebration. Agamemnon is a fortunate man since he has achieved his νόστος. However, good fortune (εὐδαιμονία) must be enjoyed with caution.

3.3. The Return-scene

When Agammenon eventually arrives the greeting of their king by the Chorus is long. He is after all the sacker of Troy. They welcome him as a victor.[44] He has been prepared as a triumphant victor over Troy throughout the first dramatic part of the play (e.g. 264ff., 355ff., 524ff., 575ff.). The choral greeting reminds us of this aspect at 783ff. (Τροίας πτολίπορθ'). But Agamemnon is also the son of Atreus (Ἀτρέως γένεθλον 784). The House of Atreus is not necessarily going to prove the destination of a positive νόστος. In addition, our joy at the return of the victorious king is thwarted once more when the Chorus admit that

[43] "Υβρις is one of the most difficult Greek words to translate. For a detailed study of the concept of hybris see Fisher (1992).
[44] A *nostos* of a victorious athlete is celebrated by Pindar and it is considered εὐκλεής (P. *N.* 2.2-5 and see my Introduction on athletic imagery in a *nostos*-play, pp.36-7).

they disapproved of his decision to get involved in a war for the sake of Helen.[45] The returning hero is condemned on his arrival (799-802; cf. A. *Pers.* 956ff.: in Xerxes' case it is less obvious that he is openly condemned on his return). The past cannot be forgotten. Agamemnon is held responsible for a number of crimes: Iphigeneia, a war for the sake of Helen, the heavy loss of life at Troy, the sacrilege. The returning hero is not the same man as he was before. His absence has also affected the status of the members of the household who are left behind. Before Agamemnon's speech the Chorus give a clear hint at Aegisthus (*ἀκαίρως οἰκουροῦντα* 808-9; cf. 1225, 1625). In contrast with him stand the old men, *δικαίως οἰκουροῦντες*, who are loyal to their king while he is away. On his homecoming the returning hero has to face the effects of his absence on his environment and himself. This in the *Odyssey* makes a messy but ultimately happy *nostos*. Tragedy dramatises the tragic effect of *nostos* on the household. The returning hero is no longer the person that he was when he departed and his *oikos* has changed during his absence. One may think that *nostos* is sad by its nature since it involves mutability. The return-scene of Agamemnon clearly demonstrates that the notion of a return to the same is a utopian ideal.

Agamemnon probably enters on a chariot shortly before or at the moment when the Chorus begin the anapaests. The king returns undisguised (contra Odysseus and Orestes) and directly (contra Odysseus' long wanderings). Cassandra enters with Agamemnon probably on the same chariot.[46] The silent presence of this female stranger is a disquieting element for Agamemnon's return. Her status is revealed at 950-5. This is his *ἐξαίρετον ἄνθος* (954f.), a familiar way to praise a Greek bride.[47] Her arrival on a chariot resembles a chariot wedding procession, a scene illustrated frequently on black-figure vase paintings.[48] Her bride-like arrival, like Iole's in Sophocles' *Trachiniae*, threatens the symmetry of the marriage of Agamemnon and Clytaemestra and excludes a harmonious reintegration of the absent hero to his *oikos*. It is as if Odysseus came back with Nausicaa (see below). Aeschylus explores Cassandra's resemblance to a bride further.[49] She is a stranger (*ξένη* 950 = 1062, 1093 when the Chorus call her) as a Trojan but the word also defines the Greek bride, a stranger integrated into her husband's *oikos*.[50] Agamemnon was expected to

[45] The etymological play on Helen's name in the preceding lines (681-90) brings forth the theme that a dreadful war was fought all for one woman.
[46] See Taplin (1977) 304f.
[47] See Seaford (1987) 111-12.
[48] See Jenkins (1983) 138; Seaford (1987) 128; Rehm (1994) 30.
[49] See Seaford (1987) 128.
[50] So Deianeira refers to Iole as *ξένη* (S. *Tr.* 310, 627), the second time knowing Heracles' passion for Iole; see Rehm (1994) 172 with his n.8.

return on his own. But this female-figure is one of the consequences of his absence. Cassandra, like Iole in Sophocles' *Trachiniae*, is the visual evidence of the concept of change on the returning hero, while he is away. Unlike Agamemnon and Heracles who come back with a mistress, Odysseus chooses to come back to his wedded wife. Penelope represents for Odysseus that close network of family, kin and friends and she marks his safe return and successful resumption of authority. Agamemnon, however, returns from a war and he brings with him Cassandra, his *στρατοῦ δώρημα* (955). Cassandra with her bride-like arrival is in a transitional state. The same state applies also to Agamemnon who has been away for so long. In their transitional state there is a main difference. Agamemnon returns to his own home whereas Cassandra has left her Trojan home behind and is about to enter a new home. The returning hero returns to the same place from a geographical point of view but his arrival raises the expectation of an integration into his *oikos*, as in the case of a bride. Agamemnon has returned to his *oikos*, in which he used to live before, but he is an ambiguous figure. He has changed during his absence and plans to change his *oikos* further (848-50). He will need to adjust to his community and household. However, in the case of Agamemnon's return the ritual of his reintegration to his own house is perverted to its opposite effect. Both Cassandra and Agamemnon participate in their own death. The tapestry scene and the visions of Cassandra that reveal Agamemnon's mode[51] of death are a horrible parody of a welcome-scene. Neither will manage to move from their transitional state. The homecoming of Agamemnon postulates a return to the same place while in fact — as the text shows — the nature of the return excludes the possibility of sameness.

In terms of dramatic form the returning-scene in Agamemnon is the centre of the play. Agamemnon holds the stage very briefly (783-974) but the first part of the play has been leading up to his arrival. His return is not the conclusion of the tragedy as in *Persians* or *Trachiniae*. The *Agamemnon* is constructed around the homecoming of the king but the 'part of Clytemnestra and the choral treatment of the past of the royal house and of Troy look both to Agamemnon and beyond'.[52] As a result Clytaemestra and Agamemnon are made to meet each other in the play, whereas in *Persians* and *Trachiniae* the two principals (Xerxes – Atossa, Heracles – Deianeira) of a *nostos*-story do not meet. The history of the family as much as Agamemnon's own crimes determines the nature of his return and thus

[51] See Heath (1987) 148 with his n.51: 'Fränkel observed that the bath traditionally marked the wanderer's true homecoming (1960: 97-9); the manner of Agamemnon's death therefore underlines the flaw in his *nostos*.' Note also the perverted use of the theme of clothes in Aeschylus' text. Most remarkably, Agamemnon steps on them instead of wearing them. The fatal robe (1115-6 etc.) also underlines the flaw in his *nostos*.

[52] Taplin (1977) 302.

the dramatic arrangements of the scenes. The first part of the play has been leading up to his arrival. Agamemnon's appearance might be brief 'but that one scene is the centre of the tragedy: not only is it placed in the middle of the whole fabric but it is also as it were the centre of gravity. Its density its enormous.'[53] Therefore, we need to study this scene very carefully, since every element has a bearing upon Agamemnon's tragic return. 'This scene dramatizes both visually and verbally the transition from victor to victim, using gesture and action to foreshadow and, in some measure, explain the fate that awaits the returning hero.'[54]

Agamemnon addresses the Chorus.[55] The victorious king is back. The homecoming of a victorious king is an occasion for joy. However, his speech awakens our emotions that something horrible is going to happen. His words are heavily loaded for the audience, when he mentions the destruction of Ilion (814f.), and the cause of the war (*γυναικὸς οὕνεκα* 823). Most remarkably, in terms of the *nostos*-story the tapestry scene in the *Agamemnon* gives the indication that the motifs of the welcome-scene of a victorious returning hero are going to be perverted. By Aeschylus' time at the latest the actual entry and reception of a victor must have been a climax of a considerable formal celebration. One should think of the odes of Pindar and Bacchylides that have echoes in their poems of a victory celebration.[56] Already in the *Odyssey* Agamemnon's reception by Aegisthus and his followers was associated with his own death (4.512-37). The king was killed at a banquet (4.535 = 11.411). In Aeschylus' play the preparations for the festal meal remain in the background (hinted at in1056f., 1310). Aeschylus' creative response to the tragic return of Agamemnon is evident in the treatment of the king's return and his reception by Clytaemestra. The welcome-scene functions like the recognition-scene in a traditional *nostos*-story.[57] The theme of recognition, which acts as a re-activation of one's former knowledge, leads to that of return. The welcome-scene in the *Agamemnon*, although it presumes to establish the feeling of sameness and repetition after a long absence, underlines the terrible wrongness in Agamemnon's return. Unlike Odysseus who eventually adjusts to the life of Ithaca the welcome-scene of the *Agamemnon* foreshadows the subsequent death of the king. Clytaemestra is made to transform what would have been proper to the master's

[53] Fraenkel (1950) II on 586.
[54] Crane (1993) 117.
[55] Clytaemestra is probably off stage since 614. Only Denniston-Page (1957) on 489ff. keep her on and Lattimore (1953) 53 keeps her on the back of the stage.
[56] See Slater (1984) 242.
[57] One, however, should point out that a recognition requires a disguise, whereas this is not a prerequisite of a welcome-scene.

homecoming into a horrible parody. She is the one who interrupts Agamemnon's transition from the public to the household. Most importantly Agamemnon is made to fail to address his wife. It is Clytaemestra who makes the first move. Agamemnon's first words are formal, announcing his return from Troy. Agamemnon is trying on his return to resume normal relationships with the people. He treats his success as a sign of divine support (811-12, 821-22). After addressing the *polis* and its particular divinities he turns to the elders of the Chorus. He is just about to enter his palace and the household (851) when 'Clytemnestra interrupts her husband's transition from the public to the private space of the household'.[58] This arrangement contributes to the feeling that the welcome-scene of this *nostos*-play will not establish the connection of continuity in the *oikos* without any differences.

At the very moment Agamemnon prays victory may stay with him Clytaemestra enters at 855 or one or two lines before and blocks the door. Agamemnon arrives as a victor but he cannot enter his house when he wants.[59] It looks as if *νίκη* deserts him as soon as he is confronted with his wife. The irony of the situation here is that the woman who feigns devotion will destroy the *nostos* of Agamemnon. It is remarkable that she addresses the Chorus first and not her husband whom she now sees for the first time in ten years.[60] Before turning to him she stresses her innocence as a wife and dwells on the hardships of her husband's absence (861f.). It looks as if she is very careful in presenting the image of a faithful wife. She has to pretend that nothing has changed in Agamemnon's absence. Clytaemestra is trying to establish the idea of the 'return to the same' while in fact – as the text shows (we cannot miss the ironical effect of the phrase *ἄρσενος δίχα* 861, cf. the ambiguity of *φιλάνορας τρόπους* 856) – it can be no more than a return to a different place. This could explain why she takes so long to address her husband directly. She is unsure of what the situation is now. The welcome-scene assumes the existence of a possibility of reunion between husband and wife without difference. But as the welcome-scene proceeds the feeling of sameness becomes less and less certain. They remain two separate persons who are by no means reunited.

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[58] Crane (1993) 119.
[59] Taplin (1977) 306-7 discusses the visual significance of this stage arrangement.
[60] See Page (1957) on 854-5; Mastronarde (1979) 26f. suggests that one may perhaps see archaic technique or 'etiquette'. We cannot be certain that this stage arrangement was necessarily an archaic feature. Even if that is the case here, Aeschylus makes an excellent use of the lack of 'horizontal' interrelation between the actors at *Agamemnon* 855 in Clytaemestra's speech since he leads up slowly both Clytaemestra's and Agamemnon's speeches to the moment where they address each other. This builds up the suspense for the audience who are encouraged to suspect that Clytaemestra is not made to expect her husband like Penelope.

Clytaemestra then leads up her speech to the reasons of Orestes' absence. One should expect that Orestes would be home to welcome his father back. Agamemnon without his brother and with his son away from home is an easy victim to Clytaemestra's murder-plot. She is the one to receive the returning hero. One would expect a man to address the returning *βασιλεύς*. This *γέρας* (privilege) does not belong to Clytaemestra as Agamemnon says (915-17). Usually a man addresses the returning *βασιλεύς*.[61] Clytaemestra transgresses her position in the *oikos* as a woman and her actions and words together initiate the chain of transgressions that underline the flaw in the welcome-scene of the returning Agamemnon. She still has not turned to her husband personally, when she insists on presenting herself as a faithful waiting wife, who has difficult nights worrying about her husband while he is away. She invents dreams that would wake her up (891).[62] She delivers a flattering welcome speech (895-903) that culminates in her direct address to her husband (905-11). The content of her speech on the arrival of Agamemnon is appropriate to his victorious return after a long absence. This is well shown, when she describes how the victory of Agamemnon is connected to his household (*ὑψηλῆς στέγης στῦλον ποδήρη*, 897-8).[63] Clytaemestra uses specific metaphors in order to welcome her victorious husband home. One cannot miss, however, the ambiguity of her direct address to Agamemnon (especially 895-903), since it could also be appropriate to a funeral oration.[64] In addition, praise is an attribute of victory. Her exaggerated rhetoric (895-903) ends with a comment on *φθόνος* (*φθόνος δ'ἀπέστω* 904). *Φθόνος* is a consequence of victory and its praise. In Pindar *φθόνος* is a necessary aspect of great deeds.[65] All this seems to be appropriate in greeting a

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[61] See Crane (1993) 120.

[62] Cf. Penelope: *Od.* 13.333ff., 16.37ff. ; Deaneira's sleepless nights (S. *Tr.* 28-30, 103-11, 109-10, 149f., 175-7).

[63] Pindar's ideology asserts the central importance of the house in athletic victory and celebration (e.g. Pi. *I.*18-23, *Py.* 4.267-9); cf. the destruction of the wrongdoer's house as a punishment (*κατασκαφὴ δόμων*), see Connor (1985); Glotz (1904) 456-492.

[64] See Seaford (1985) 315ff.

[65] The distinction between human and divine *φθόνος* is important in Pindar. Human envy in victory odes (for *φθόνος* of the victor's fellow citizens see for example: Pi. *I.* 2.43, *P.* 7.19) serves as a foil for success of the victor. There is a good deal about divine *φθόνος* in Pindar (Pi. *O.* 13. 24-8, *P.* 8. 71-2, *P.* 10. 20-1, *I.* 7. 39-42; cf. *O.*5.24, *I.* 5.14; also *N.*11.15-6; see Kirkwood (1984) 176) in which Pindar refers to the *φθόνος* of the gods. This too is a form of praise, since the primary intent of a victory ode is encomiastic. Most importantly, the passage at *P.* 10.17ff. refers to the *φθονεραὶ μετατρόπιαι* (resentful reverses) from the gods. The idea of alternation in Pindar serves mostly as a form of praise. It is a necessary aspect of great deeds. As Kirkwood puts it (1984) 179 'The concept of *phthonos* in the poetry of Pindar is twofold; one part of it, the "envy of the gods", suggests that victory raises a man momentarily to superhuman, heroic heights, such that there is danger of divine envy of his success. I take this to be rhetorical hyperbole rather than an intimation that victory in the Games is, in Pindar's religious view, an event to stir divine displeasure'. I think that there is also the fear that human happiness may not last and that it may attract the resentment of the gods. It is, thus, slightly dangerous to be resented by the gods. The theme, however, of the *φθόνος* of the gods is not in victory

victorious husband (*Ἰλίου πορθήτορα*, 907). But her challenge in the end to make Agamemnon walk from his chariot to his home over crimson cloths indicates that 'his homecoming is a harming of his house'.[66] One can recognise that an improper use of wealth is implicit in this scene. Agamemnon will destroy part of the household's property by stepping on these rich fabrics. In that way, the tapestry scene shows how Clytaemestra is made to endanger Agamemnon's return and his resumption of authority. She poses a threat to Agamemnon's return by transforming what would have been proper to the master's homecoming into its opposite effect. The theme of clothing associated with the *nostos*-story is first presented in this textile that Agamemnon walks upon. Clothes are connected with the tasks of a woman in the *oikos* through weaving. Eurynome put a robe around Odysseus after his bath (*Od.* 23.153-5 and see also the theme of clothes in Scheria *Od.* 6.228). It is an important element for the reintegration of the returning hero in a traditional *nostos*-story. The use of this textile in this scene entertains the possibility of reception without difference in the *oikos* of a hero who has been away for a long time. Agamemnon, however, steps on the clothes instead of wearing them. From the perspective of the audience's response the use of this textile would be seen as out of place. By walking upon it Agamemnon participates in the perversion of his own homecoming. The stage properties were few. It is possible that the textile of the carpet-scene and the fatal robe are the same[67] since the same Greek textiles were used for many different purposes, because of the way they were made.[68] Moreover, the language which is used to describe the net-cloth in which Clytaemestra trapped Agamemnon is reminiscent of the cloth on which he walked (1382-3, 1492, 1580; cf. A. *Cho.* 1010-3). What matters is that the use of a commonplace object transformed into an element of disquiet would have a great emotional effect on the spectators in a theatre space of Greek drama that was starkly bare. The returning hero, as we know from Odysseus' return, would be expected to wear a fabric on his homecoming, not to walk on it. 'The Greeks did not after all use carpets and none of the words used to describe the cloth — *πετάσματα, εἵματα, ποίκιλα, ὑφαί* — actually means "carpet".'[69] Most remarkably, Clytaemestra's challenge that Agamemnon should walk on the

odes for its own sake but it serves as a form of praise. So it may be wrong to associate this theme with a kind of warning in Pindar.

[66] Jones (1962) 86-7.

[67] See Taplin (1977) 315.

[68] See Jenkins (1985) 117.

[69] Jenkins (1985) 117; cf. Denniston-Page (1957) on 909: 'It is worth noticing that floor-carpets were not common articles of furniture in Greece till the time of Alexander the Great'; see also Crane (1993) 122 on the carpets as not a regular part of Greek culture.

πορφυρόστρωτος πόρος (910) is suggestive of a contemptuous use of the prosperity of the household. This is related to the preceding ode. Agamemnon will fall short of the idea, that a fortunate man has to be cautious. All this has a strong epinician flavour.

In particular, Clytaemestra instead of the positive aspect of φθόνος as the inevitable concomitant of victory and its celebration is urging Agamemnon to be honoured in a way that is appropriate to the gods (922, 925). For a mortal to walk on embroidered textile is impossible without incurring fear (919-24). Clytaemestra cheats Agamemnon in her arguments, which diverts from what makes Agamemnon terrified. It is not for nothing that Clytaemestra is made to refer to Priam, an eastern despot who would have walked on the crimson path in a similar situation as Agamemnon admits (935-6). She then refers to the idea that 'the man of whom none is jealous (ἀφθόνητος) is not envied (ἐπίζηλος)'at 939. 'With these words Clytemnestra poses what was a basic dilemma for any Greek – a man strives after reputation but as he acquires prestige and reputation, he arouses the envy of others.'[70] Such envy is better than pity and it is desirable.[71] Clytaemestra wins her point and Agamemnon fulfills her request but as he succumbs he prays 'let no eye's envy strike me from afar' (947). The word 'gods' (θεῶν)[72] in the preceding line brings out the fear of Agamemnon. He is worried that his action will invite the divine anger. There is a suggestion of guilt in the words of Agamemnon as he is about to walk on the crimson cloth (946-7). The tapestry scene represents the transition of a victor to a victim. Victory, in Pindar, brings the achiever to heroic heights and the divine resentment is a possibility. Divine φθόνος is a prize of achievement (see my n. 65). However, Agamemnon is not treated as a victor who resumes his relations with society. While the returning hero is ready to take up his activities as a king and lord of his household he remains segregated from the community. Clytaemestra receives him in a way that does not secure his return. This is well illustrated in the sinister associations of this valuable textile. First, its colour (910, 957ff.; cf. A. *Pers.* 317 where πορφυρᾶι βαφῆι is blood) evokes the idea of blood.[73] Secondly, the cloth spread before Agamemnon is expensive. Clytaemestra prompts Agamemnon to walk

[70] Walcot (1978) 34.
[71] See Pi. *P.* I. 85, Hdt. 3. 52, Thales 17 DK, Epicharmus 285 Kaibel/B 34 DK.
[72] Both Fraenkel and Denniston-Page take θεῶν with ἀλουργέσιν. Page maintains that θεῶν could not well be taken with the next line because of its position as a first word of the clause. However, even if the audience, as Fraenkel points out, were inclined in line 947 to think of human vision, the word θεῶν in the preceding line makes it quite clear that it is the divine eye that Agamemnon is afraid of.
[73] The sight of dark red looks like blood. There are passages in the *Oresteia* where βαφή takes the form of blood symbolically (*Ag.* 239 κρόκου βαφάς, which denotes Iphigeneia's robe but alludes to blood, 612 where χαλκοῦ βαφάς 'acquires a secondary meaning and conveys some hint of the murder to an audience who know the story' Fraenkel (1950) II on 612 cf. *Cho.* 1010-1013).

on 'a path strewn with purple' (*πορφυρόστρωτος πόρος*, 910). Wool was a homegrown product. But dyeing with purple is not a craft that the household can do for itself.[74] Self-sufficiency was an important value of the *oikos*. By walking on this rich type of cloth Agamemnon violates the economic stability of the *oikos*. The dye porphyra was extremely expensive.[75] Agamemnon himself expresses his concern on walking on such a material (*φθείροντα πλοῦτον ἀργυρωνήτους ϑ' ὑφάς*, 949). As he steps on the purple cloth Clytaemestra exults in the act (958-60) and the value of the cloth is reflected in her own use of the word *ἰσάργυρος* (959). Agamemnon's walking upon this precious textile is a waste of wealth for not a purposeful reason. The victorious king falls short of another Pindaric norm (the proper use of wealth, *δαπάνα*).[76] Pindar's patrons consume their property in ways that mitigate the envy of the others.[77]At the same time, the athletes spend their stored wealth in order to gain glory in the Panhellenic games. This was reflected on their *polis* and their fellow citizens. Agamemnon's gesture, however, does not match this Pindaric element. Aeschylus presents a man who destroys a valuable material for no communal purpose. His model of attitude is also opposed to the principle of Athenian democracy, that the wealthy should spend their wealth for public services – such as a *χορηγία*.[78] With their ominous sense the rich robes point forward to the garment in which Clytaemestra entangles Agamemnon to his death.[79] The image of praise employed by Clytaemestra on Agamemnon's arrival is appropriate. But the comparison of the beloved one to a tree can be applied not only to the living (e.g. *Od.* 6.162f.) but also to the beloved dead in a context of lamentation.[80] In this fusion of the homecoming-scene to his death Agamemnon has walked into the palace. This is in the mind of the Chorus when they associate the safe return of the Greeks (*νόστον, αὐτόμαρτυς ὤν· / τὸν δ'ἄνευ λύρας ὅμως ὑμνωιδεῖ*, 989-90) with a lyreless (gloomy) song. On the whole the victorious athlete is resented but this is used as a foil for praise in the epinician. Unlike Pindar, Clytaemestra is made to encourage Agamemnon to act in a way that obscures his victory, in order to justify her act.

[74] See Plato *Laws* 847c; cf. Jenkins (1985) 125.
[75] See Crane (1993) 131.
[76] See Pi. *P.* 1. 87-94, *Ol.* 5.15-6, *I.* 5.57-8, *I.* 4.28-30, *I.*1. 42-5.
[77] Crane comments (1993) 134: 'Hieron, for example, lavishes his wealth on hospitality and uses it to be a generous and kindly host'; see also Kurke (1991) 163-94.
[78] See Crane (1993) 135.
[79] See MacLeod (1975) 202.
[80] See *Il.* 18.55-7; Alexiou (1974) 198-201.

3.4. The Cassandra-scene

The returning hero has come and gone to the palace. His last words refer to Cassandra (950-55). The existence of his mistress on stage is a visual sign that his return rules out the hope of a return without any changes. It is not only Agamemnon who returns to a different place with Clytaemestra transgressing her role as a woman but he also brings back from Troy the Trojan princess, Cassandra.[81] Clytaemestra comes to fetch her. She attempts to make Cassandra leave her seat in the chariot (1054). Clytaemestra says that there is a sacrifice ready to be performed (1057). Apart from the sacrifice Clytaemestra reminds her that she will stand at the altar with the other slaves and share the household rites (1036-38). When the bride entered the groom's home she took part in a ritual of incorporation.[82] In the case of the bride-like Cassandra her death is revealed in a nuptial context. She has arrived with Agamemnon in the same chariot[83] like a bride and a groom and her undressing (1266-72) is reminiscent of the unveiling of a bride (see below for further elements that associate Cassandra with a bride). Both marriage and *nostos* deal with a transition. This change of state is marked with ritual. The ritual, however, in the case of Agamemnon and Cassandra is inverted. Instead of signifying their integration into the *oikos* it denotes their own funeral. This contributes to the feeling that the nature of the return excludes the possibility of normality. In Homer it is a *topos* that a sacrifice is being performed while a stranger arrives. Cassandra seems to refuse with her silence to follow Clytaemestra into the palace. Both the Chorus and Clytaemestra try to persuade her in a way that resembles the arrival of the bride outside her new home. 'The position of Clytemnestra at the doorway of the house is that occupied by the groom's mother in the vase scenes of bride fetching.'[84] Once Clytaemestra is gone Cassandra breaks her silence. She sees both past and future. The children of Thyestes whom Atreus killed and fed to their own father (1096-7) come to her vision. Cassandra shifts to the present: Clytaemestra's murder-plot. Among other purposes Aeschylus uses the Cassandra-scene to make the spectators see how Clytaemestra receives Agamemnon. Cassandra sees into the house how the topical process of safe return at home turns into a horrible parody of a *nostos*. This is well illustrated, as we shall see, in the demonic *κῶμος* that awaits Agamemnon into the house. This was usually associated with

[81] Cf. Iole in S. *Tr.*
[82] See Rehm (1994) 17.
[83] See Taplin (1977) 304f.
[84] Jenkins (1983) 138.

the celebration of the arrival of the returning victor but in the case of Agamemnon it signifies the inversion of a happy *nostos*.

3.4.1. The reception of Agamemnon by Clytaemestra in the palace

Most significantly, in the play a piece of cloth has already been ruined (*δωματοφθορεῖν...φθείροντα* 948f.; cf. *Cho.*1013 *φθείρουσα*) and misused. We have seen (cf. p.52) that in Homer Aegisthus killed Agamemnon *δειπνίσσας, ὥς τίς τε κατέκτανε βοῦν ἐπὶ φάτνῃ* (*Od.* 4.535 = 11.411; also S. *El.* 203) whereas in the *Agamemnon* the preparations for the festal meal remain in the background but are clearly hinted at 1056f., 1310. Furthermore, the scene of murder in the *Odyssey*, when it is mentioned, is in Aegisthus' house (*Od.* 3.234 where *ἐφέστιος* most probably refers to Agamemnon's house is an exception). Agamemnon in tragedy returns to his own house and he is killed. This emphasizes more the utopian domesticated quality of the return to a place of fixity. The audience might have expected a sacrifice and a consequent feast marking Agamemnon's return in Aeschylus' version of the king's death. The killing of Cassandra, as of Agamemnon, is presented as a sacrifice (*Ag.* 1118, 1297-8, 1433, 1504) but Aeschylus abandons the Homeric version and introduces two other themes in the manner of Agamemnon's death: the bath and the cloak thrown over the victim. His choice[85] is determined by the kind of story he is writing. The play is based on the *nostos*-pattern familiar from earlier Greek poetry and it shares thematic affinities especially with Homer's narrative of the hero's return to his waiting wife. In particular the perversion of Agamemnon's homecoming in Aeschylus' text is constructed in a way that emphasizes the terrible wrongness of the king's return. A bath marks the homecoming of Odysseus in Ithaca (*Od.* 23.153-5; cf. Scheria *Od.* 6.216ff.). Odysseus' bath is followed by the theme of clothing offered by Eurynome to his master. Aeschylus keeps this sequence. In the *Odyssey* normally a woman helps with the bath, sometimes a slave (4.49, 8.454, 17.88, 19.317ff., 23.154, 24.366), sometimes the mistress of the house 4.252 (Helen), 5.264 (Calypso), 10.361, 450 (Circe). According to the epic tradition there were stages in the bathing of the noble guests (see for example *Od.* 3.464ff.). The guest is washed and anointed by a woman. He is then dressed up with special garments and finally he gets out of the bath. The fine

[85]The fatal bath is a theme for myth (Seaford (1984) 250) and we know from pre-Aeschylean artistic evidence that the net cloth existed in popular tradition as we can see from the Dokimasia Painter's krater (Boston 63.1246), which precedes the play by about a decade, see Lebeck (1971) 63-4. But Aeschylus is the first writer that we know who combined those two themes in a literary context; see Prag (1985) 81.

garments are to be worn by the guest at the subsequent feast. For most of the time the bath in Homer is followed by a meal (cf. *Od.* 4.48ff., 6.210ff., 10.358ff., 449ff.). Cassandra envisages Clytaemestra washing Agamemnon (1128). But the commonplace and innocent event of the bath is transformed to Agamemnon's own ritual of death. Clytaemestra ironically resembles a wife washing her husband's corpse before burial.[86]

The clothes are once again misused in the play. A net appears to Cassandra in her vision as a *ξύνευνος* (*ἄλλ' ἄρκυς ἡ ξύνευνος, ἡ ξυναιτία φόνου* 1116). The association of the net with *εὐνή* brings out the irony of this welcome-scene. On Agamemnon's homecoming it would have been proper for Clytaemestra to put a robe around Agamemnon, as it was a normal part of the reintegration of the returning hero to his *oikos* in the Homeric model. But the robe that follows Agamemnon's bath is an instrument of murder. The net is the robe itself that traps Agamemnon to his death. The word *ξύνευνος* that means elsewhere the woman who sleeps with a man[87] suggests the role of wife as a *ξύνευνος* (bedmate). The word *εὐνή* must have evoked to the original audience the connection between the robe (bed-robe) and the wife (bed-fellow) and it alludes to the marriage bed that Agamemnon will never see (cf. S. *Tr.* where Deianeira dies on the marriage bed) in contrast to the *nostos*-story in the Homeric narrative where the motif of bed is significant for the reunion of the returning hero and his wife (see *Od.* 23.254). The horror of the fatal robe is a recurring image in the trilogy (*Ag.* 1492, 1580). In the *Choephori* Orestes attempts in vain to define the fatal garment (*Cho.* 980ff.).[88] He finds several names to call it: a snare, a shroud, a hunting net. We need not make up our mind on the exact quality of the fatal garment. 'Versatility was diagnostic of Greek textiles.'[89] What matters for the *nostos*-story is that it is being misused. Most remarkably, after the murder the robe is called by Clytaemestra *ἄπειρον ἀμφίβληστρον* (1382). The use of the word *ἀμφίβληστρον* seems designed to suggest *ἀμφιβάλλειν*, used in all Homeric passages (as Fraenkel points out at 1382) for dressing the guest after his bath.[90] Aeschylus departs from this Homeric *topos* and *ἀμφιβάλλειν* becomes fatal.[91] All these elements in the text symbolically reflect the fact that Agamemnon's homecoming is not

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[86] See Seaford (1984) 248-9.
[87] Cf. 1442 where Clytaemestra uses it for Cassandra; see also Seaford (1984) 251 n.34.
[88] Cf. the theme of clothes in the *nostos*-plays: A. *Pers.* 115, 125, 199, 468, 537, 833ff., 845ff., 1016-8, 1030; S. *Tr.* 674: *τὸν ἐνδυτῆρα πέπλον.*
[89] Jenkins (1985) 117.
[90] See Fraenkel (1950) III on *ἀμφίβληστρον* at 1382: 'In *Ag.* 1382 and *Cho.* 492 the word was undoubtedly chosen because of the connotations of *ἀμφιβάλλειν*; it is obvious that another name for a fishing-net would not have served the poet's purpose. We have already noticed in general (on 1109) that the whole conception of Agamemnon's murder in the *Oresteia* rests on premises that are characteristically 'Homeric'.'
[91] *Ἀμφιβάλλειν* is also used for dressing the corpse; see Seaford (1984) 252 with his n.39.

accomplished with his re-integration into the *oikos* but with his own death. This is also well illustrated by the use of the imagery of the demonic *κῶμος* (1189). A *κῶμος*, a festive procession, would normally be part of the celebration of the victory of an athlete.[92] In the case, however, of Agamemnon this action is inverted in order to denote in terms of imagery the fatal return of the king. It is a *κῶμος* (1189-92) which derives from the *χορός* of Erinyes (1186). It drinks blood and it sings of destruction (*ἄτη*) instead of victory. This powerful image manifests that the day of Agamemnon's *νοστίμωι σωτηρίαι* (safe homecoming 1238) will never come.

3.4.2. Cassandra's vision of her own death

In the same way Cassandra's vision of her own death is reflected in a nuptial context that has an opposite effect (1178-9). The image of *anakalupteria* evokes for the audience the ritual of marriage. Cassandra later casts off the robes she wears as a priestess of Apollo (1269-78). With both 'undressings' she acknowledges her true situation. She throws off her metaphorical veils. She will go into the palace as a bride and share the ritual of sacrifice but in its opposite effect (especially with *προσφάγματι*[93] at 1278 Cassandra views her own death as a prior sacrifice that precedes the burial of Agamemnon). Both Iphigeneia and Cassandra are linked by the correspondence of the 'undressing' of their garments before meeting death. In the case of Iphigeneia her saffron-dyed garment drops down over the altar (239), whereas Cassandra casts off herself her prophetic garb at 1264-72. They will become from innocent maidens the brides of death. This transition is signified through these metaphorical 'undressings'. Clytaemestra, like the mother of the bride receives Cassandra into the palace. But this is not a normal passage to the house of the groom. Clytaemestra leads Cassandra to the gates of Hades (1291). Unlike Agamemnon Cassandra enters the palace completely aware of her death. They are both going to the house of death (cf. 911 where this is implied in Clytaemestra's ambiguous expression: *ἐς δῶμ' ἅελπτον*). Once Clytaemestra appears with the corpses of Agamemnon and Cassandra (1372-1576) she celebrates their death in a perversion of the customary rite of pouring three libations. The pouring of wine has been transformed into Agamemnon's blood and the third libation in

[92] See Heath (1989) 193.
[93] See Denniston-Page (1957) on *Ag.* 1278.

honour of Zeus changes into the honour of Zeus of Hades (1384-87).[94] Agamemnon's blood falls like spring rain on the newly planted seeds (1388-92). This fertilising image is recalled in an occasion of death. The same perversion of a joyous occasion to death is effected by the motif of the bowl (1397f.) filled with crimes that now Agamemnon on his return has to drain himself. The fertilising image that promises life and the normally happy occasion of a libation with a mixing bowl becomes death in the case of Agamemnon. The perversion of ritual is completed. The homecoming of Agamemnon did not bring the renewal of his *oikos* but fulfilled Clytaemestra's desire for revenge. With the deaths of Agamemnon and Cassandra the house will never be restored. The marriage is not renewed since all the ritual goes wrong. The play ends far from the murder of Agamemnon. With the appearance of Aegisthus the next act of vengeance in the *Choephori* is foreshadowed. Aegisthus is made to come so late in the play since the *Agamemnon* is part of a trilogy and the dramatic form of the play is affected by the rest of the trilogy. Cassandra (1280ff.) has already foreshadowed Orestes' return and revenge (1280ff.) and he is expected as a victor (*παγκρατὴς φονεύς*, 1648). The play is based on Agamemnon's return but in the final scene it moves beyond his homecoming. The murder of Agamemnon raises our expectations for the return and revenge of Orestes, which is exploited in the rest of the trilogy.

To sum up: Agamemnon's return structures the play through anticipatory imagery. In particular, the king's return is related to an extensive narrative of the past. In Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* the past cannot be forgotten. The sacrifice of Iphigeneia gives rise to the way Agamemnon's *nostos* will be handled in the play. Agamemnon is also held responsible for a number of crimes: a war for the sake of Helen, the heavy loss of life at Troy, the sacrilege. All this obscures the victory of Agamemnon (see how he is criticised before and on his arrival). As the play proceeds we become aware of the threat embodied in his wife, Clytaemestra, whose words and acts have a double meaning. Although all her words (e.g. she is ready to receive him in the best way: 600ff.) and actions (she prepares offerings for a sacrifice at 594) are in keeping with her female waiting role, she is made to endanger Agamemnon's return. In particular, Clytaemestra is made to receive and kill Agamemnon in a way that underlines the terrible wrongness of his return. She transforms the attributes of a loving wife into the instruments of death (see how she receives him in the tapestry scene and how she conceives his death as part of the bath-motif). The welcome-scene with

[94] See Zeitlin (1965) 473; cf. Garvie (1986) xxxviii: 'The third libation to Zeus Soter, whose blasphemous use by Clytaemestra (*Ag.* 1385-7) is picked up by Orestes at *Cho.* 577-8 (cf. n.; also I, 1073-4 nn.) is finally taken up in a healthy context at *Eum.* 759f.'.

its ominous effect clearly demonstrates that the husband and the wife of this *nostos*-story will not be reunited as in the Homeric model. This is well illustrated by the whole conception of Agamemnon's murder that rests on the perversion of the elements that would normally mark the wanderer's homecoming in the world of the epic. The argument is made that the audience is encouraged to sense the flaw in Agamemnon's return through the perversion of the elements that would normally signify the return of the long absent husband. This is grounded in the intertextual engagement with the *Odyssey* and with epinician poetry. A distinctive use of the *nostos*-pattern in Aeschylus' text is the timing of Agamemnon's homecoming. The return of Agamemnon in Aeschylus' text comes within the play but it occurs half way through it. This has further implications for the dramatic qualities of the *nostos*-story in *Agamemnon*. In particular, there is no recognition-scene in Aeschylus' play but the welcome-scene, like that of recognition, leads normally to the reintegration of the absent hero to his house and the reunion of husband and wife. However, while the welcome-scene in Aeschylus' text assumes the possibility of reunion between husband and wife without any obstacles, as the scene proceeds one feels that Agamemnon and Clytaemestra remain two separate persons. The return of the absent hero in a *nostos*-play tends to be expected as a central event (cf. real-life returns and receptions, see my Introduction pp. 36-7), and so in all *nostos*-plays it is the object of ample dramatic preparation. It is an important moment for a wife to welcome her husband home after such a long absence. However, it is only in *Agamemnon*, among the *nostos*-plays in tragic drama, that his wife receives the king. The welcome scene has an important structural function in the *nostos*-story of Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*. This structural element may explain why the two principals meet in *Agamemnon* unlike Xerxes and Atossa in *Persians* and Deianeira and Heracles in *Trachiniae* who never meet. In addition to these formal concerns the argument is made that *nostos* excludes the possibility of a return to the same place. Finally, resort to the *nostos*-theme during the course of the dramatic action can serve to heighten the dramatic action. Thus the utility of *nostos* is recognised as an effective dramatic device in order to manipulate audience response and expectations.

4. *Nostos* in Sophocles' *Trachiniae*

τὸ κάλλος αὐτῆς τὸν βίον διώλεσεν

S. *Tr.* (465)

I have looked at *nostos* as providing the overall pattern of action in Aeschylus' *Persians* and *Agamemnon*. Sophocles' *Trachiniae* and Euripides' *Heracles* depend on the role of the absent Heracles. They both tell the story of Heracles' return as a variation of the established *nostos*-pattern familiar from earlier Greek poetry: a hero long absent returns home to his waiting wife.[1] Heracles' prolonged absence, as in the *Odyssey* with Odysseus' absence, leads to problems at home and his return is effected after much preparation. This is well shown by the sequence of the events in his home. Our thoughts of the expected Heracles are directed by the arrangement of the scenes that precede his return. As in the *Persians*, *Agamemnon*, *Heracles* and *Andromache* (see my following chapter on Euripidean use of *nostos*) the homecoming of the hero in the *Trachiniae* is the focus of tragedy. But in this play the homecoming scene we are waiting for is not only the focus but it also takes place in the final part of the play.[2] The whole action of the play is a waiting for his homecoming. We are confronted with his household for the first 970 of the play's 1278 lines and Sophocles encourages us to foresee the return of Heracles as the completion of the action.[3] In a sense Heracles is present by his absence. 'For present he is all through the early section of the drama: all incidents, all the characters point towards him, and the entire action is a kind of arched tension, a waiting for his final coming.'[4]

In this chapter I will attempt to analyse to what extent the *nostos*-pattern influences the dramatic form of the *Trachiniae* and to demonstrate its integration into the imagery of the play. It should be emphasised that dramatic form and imagery are indivisible. In the course of my enquiry I intend to relate this element with the study of *nostos* in Sophocles'

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[1] Taplin (1977)124; and see my Introduction on the *Odyssey* as a major example of the use of the *nostos*-pattern in earlier Greek literature, p.8.

[2] As Taplin has pointed out (1977: 84): 'the long final scene is, like that of *Pers*, the focus and conclusion of the tragedy'. In this *Trachiniae* shares the same structural affinity with the *Persians*. The return of Neoptolemus in the final scene of the *Andromache* supplies an analogy to this but it is treated ironically by Euripides since Neoptolemus comes back only as a corpse.

[3] So Heath (1987) 148.

[4] Musurillo (1967) 62. Cf. March (1987) 71: 'Heracles is onstage only for the last three hundred lines or so of the *Trachiniae*. Nevertheless it is he who gives the play its unity, since he is virtually present from its beginning: all that is said and done in the play converges on him; his fate and achievements are in the minds and mouths of all characters, from Deianeira's first mention of him (19) onwards; and his arrival on stage is expectantly awaited by characters and audience alike'.

text. Thus I will draw attention to the images and dramatic motifs of the play that keep alive the return of Heracles within the audience's horizon of expectation. In particular, my aim is to analyse the various means by which *nostos* becomes an effective structural device for manipulating audience knowledge and expectations. Both the imagery that recurs throughout the play and intertextuality are pursued in my study of *nostos* as means to this end. As I will show, this is grounded in the intertextual engagement with the *Odyssey* and with Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* in particular. Sophocles at first creates a false hope of a happy homecoming and then shifts to elements that are reminiscent of Agamemnon's fatal return and point towards the catastrophe of Heracles' return. It should also be stressed that the handling of return in Sophocles' text is ironic. This is evident in the thematic imagery, especially associated with (perverted) sacrifice and marriage. To anticipate, Heracles gets death as a reward for his life of *πόνος* through the robe that turns his sacrifice into its opposite. Moreover, in *Trachiniae* the effect of *nostos* in the household is told in terms suggestive of a tragic wedding. Further elements that need to be presented as themes of this chapter are foreshadowing and suspense. *Nostos* with its interaction with hope and anticipatory imagery becomes effective in manipulating audience response. Thus my study of *nostos* in the *Trachiniae* will recognise how the poet takes care to exploit Heracles' return as a crucial event that comes after much preparation and foreshadowing. Finally, the argument is again that *nostos* in *Trachiniae* excludes the possibility of 'a return to the same'.

4.1. The effects of absence on Deianeira

Typical plots involve typical roles: a *nostos*-plot implies an absent hero and a waiting female figure at home. The opening of the *Trachiniae* suggests that Sophocles uses *nostos* to anticipate the return of Heracles as a variation on that of Odysseus in the *Odyssey*. Heracles, his wife Deianeira, and his son Hyllus are parallel with Odysseus, Penelope, and Telemachus. Heracles' absence on labours is reflected in Deianeira's prologue who relates her marriage directly to her unhappy life. Heracles saved her from the union with the monstrous river-god and took her as his own bride. But her agony persists in her life as Heracles' bride because of his unsettledness. Her marriage to Heracles has been dysfunctional from the very first day. The absence of Heracles brings her fear upon fear (28) in her heart. Her nights are difficult (29-30) in the absence of her husband. *Nostos* has been an ongoing situation in the marriage of Heracles and Deianeira. The infrequency of

his visits to his wife and children is emphasized by the simile at 31-3. 'Its effect is to bring out the loneliness of D. and her family, and also to suggest a rhythmic pattern in Heracles' life: his comings and goings are like the recurring seasons (cf. 34n.).'[5] Heracles only comes home very rarely, like a farmer visiting a distant field. One may feel that the point of this comparison is to suggest the negative emotions of Deianeira in her marriage. She is an ambiguous figure. She has not managed to overcome the transitional situation of a bride and achieve the *εὐδαιμονία* of incorporation in her wedding because of her husband's absence on his labours.[6] His departure throughout their marriage implied his return on all other occasions (see *ἀλλ' ὥς τι δράσων εἶρπε, κοὐ θανούμενος*, 160). But now Deianeira's anxiety is at its greatest (*μάλιστα ταρβήσασ' ἔχω*, 37). This time Heracles has been absent for fifteen months (44-5) and his absence emphasizes the dislocation of his family (*ἀνάστατοι*, 39). Due to Iphitus' murder (38) Heracles' sons are scattered to three households (Tiryns, Thebes, Trachis; see 1151ff.) and Deianeira must live in exile. The house is empty of the husband, and even the oracle (79)[7] creates for Deianeira fearful uncertainties. Marriage for a Greek woman was supposed to lead to childbirth. Deianeira feels labour pains (*ὠδίναις*, 42) for her absent husband. This word is used here to describe Deianeira's longing for Heracles (similarly Lichas uses *ὠδίνουσα* 325, to describe Iole's pain for her absent home). She has no news of him (40ff.).[8] In addition, Deianeira mentions the ominous *δέλτον* (47) that Heracles left her. He has been away for fifteen months and the reference to the tablet creates a feeling of uncertainty. The lack of news is necessary for the mood of foreboding that Sophocles is developing here. It also affects the dramatic form of the play, with the Nurse's suggestion that Hyllus go in search of his father (54-6). This recalls Telemachus' journey to learn of Odysseus' fate.[9] The Homeric analogy is intensified by the adjective *ἀρτίπους* (58),[10] which marks Hyllus' timely coming. Hyllus' mention of Eurytus' city (74) in relation to Heracles' last exploit builds up the tension of the play. Deianeira relates to her son the oracle that foretells two alternatives for Heracles: he will either meet his death through his exploit or he will live in peace after he has succeeded (76ff.). This recalls the idea of rest (*ἡσυχία*) after the hard work (*πόνος*) required

[5] Easterling (1982) on 31-3 on the point of the simile.
[6] See Seaford (1986) 58 and (1987) 119.
[7] Cf. 85, 155ff., 176-7, 822, 1159ff.
[8] Cf. A. *Pers.* *οὔτε τις ἄγγελος / οὔτε τις ἱππεύς*, 14-5; cf. the waiting of the Watchman for news for the fall of Troy in A. *Ag.* (1-19).
[9] This has been noted frequently; see, for example, Segal (1981) 82, Garner (1990) 101.
[10] It occurs once in each of the Homeric poems as *ἀρτίπος* (*Il.*9.505 and *Od.*8.310); see Garner (1990) 101.

for success which is a recurring theme in the epinicia (e.g. Pi. *P.*8).[11] The oracle contributes to the mood of fear. The fluidity of the form of the oracle (see my note 7) affects our expectations for the return of Heracles. Sophocles is concerned here to build up tension and the oracle seems designed to create ambivalent feelings about Heracles' return. Heracles' *nostos* is anticipated as the means for ending Deianeira's anxiety. Only in his presence in the household could Deianeira feel the happiness embodied in a marriage. Thus Sophocles introduces the *nostos*-pattern of the play at the very beginning in as far as the structure of the play depends strongly on the role of the absent hero.

4.2. Waiting for Heracles' return

The Chorus have no knowledge of the news that Heracles is, or will soon be, in Euboea. The anxiety regarding Heracles' whereabouts makes the young girls of Trachis appeal to the all-seeing sun. The first noun of the ode is *νύξ* (94). Night is born by the sun and puts the sun to rest. Through this light-dark-imagery the idea of cyclicity is conveyed that was implicit in the opening of the play (1-3). The relevance of the idea of cyclicity[12] has a further implication when it is applied to Heracles' absence. The Chorus seek to comfort Deianeira through the imagery, which conveys the notion of vicissitudes of fortunes.[13] They hope that with Heracles' homecoming sorrow will give place to happiness in the life of Deianeira. This well illustrates that in the first part of the play Heracles' return is expected as the source of domestic order. The movements of the absent Heracles are seen by the ubiquitous eye of the sun. The appeal to the sun is appropriate here since he can reveal Heracles' whereabouts.[14] Sun is the source of knowledge but it is night which controls the light (94-6).[15] The night put the sun to sleep, but Deianeira cannot put her cares to sleep. The image of Deianeira as a poor bird longing[16] (*ποθουμέναι...πόθον*, 103-7) for her absent husband recalls the darkness of Deianeira's husbandless nights in 29-30. The theme of yearning is connected to absence and, therefore, it is prominent in a *nostos*-story.[17] It presents the agony of Deianeira in Heracles' absence, while Hyllus is sent to enquire about

[11] A ramification of the idea of rest after victory is evident in the release from toil in the afterlife (see Pi. *O.* 2). For this eschatological element in Pindar's poetry see Lloyd-Jones (1990) 80-109.
[12] See Easterling (1982) on 94-140; cf. de Romilly (1968) 89-90.
[13] Cf. S. *Aj.* 672-3 and see Garvie (1998) on 646-7.
[14] For Helios as the god who travels across the sky and can see everything, see Garvie (1986) on 984-6.
[15] See Winnington-Ingram (1980) 330.
[16] So Easterling (1982) on 105: 'the simile of the sorrowful bird is pathetic: it suggests D.'s vulnerability as well as her longing'.
[17] Cf. Penelope (*Od.* 18.202ff., 19.136 etc.), Persian women (A. *Pers.* 62, 135-9, 512, 541-2).

his father.[18] Although the Chorus point out that some god always saves Heracles from the House of Hades (120-1; cf. Hyllus 88) Deianeira's premonitions about her husband remain. The metaphor (144-7) of the youth as the growth of a young plant[19] reveals the contrast between the protected life of the maidens of the Chorus and her own current sorrows in her marriage.[20] The chief cause of Deianeira's anxiety is associated with the oracle. Sophocles takes care to build up tension and uncertainty. Deianeira is made to confess that, according to the oracle (166ff. and see my note 7 for other references to the oracle), Heracles would either face death or an untroubled life. The repetition of *χρόνον, χρόνωι, χρόνου* (166-7) express Deianeira's anxiety about the time limit embodied in the oracle. Deianeira's picture of staying awake in fear in the thought that she might soon be a widow contributes to the feeling that Heracles might not return home alive. She concludes that she is terrified at the idea of being deprived of the 'best of men' (*πάντων ἀρίστου φωτὸς ἐστερημένην*, 177). Her fears and sorrow are typical of those who await *νόστος* (cf. the Queen and the Persian elders in A. *Pers.*; they feel disquiet over the fortunes of the absent Xerxes and the army). A messenger is required to realise or release the anxiety. The Chorus see a man approaching with a garland on his head, which betokens success.[21] The messenger declares that his good news of Heracles' return will free Deianeira from *ὄκνος* (181; cf. 7-8 where Deianeira's premarital anxiety is described as *ὄκνον ἄλγιστον*).[22] Heracles lives and it is implied that he is engaged in a sacrifice of thanksgiving (*ἀπαρχάς*, 183; cf. 327-41, 287-8, 608-13, 750-66, 993-5). The sacrifice is an important theme of the play and its perversion signifies the flaw in Heracles' *nostos*. At this part of the play this theme just denotes the normal performance of a sacrifice after a dangerous enterprise. The messenger prepares us for Heracles' impending return (*ἥξειν*, 186). Heracles is expected to return as a victor. This is well shown in the use of the words *πολύζηλος* (185) and *σὺν κράτει νικηφόρωι* (186) which are reminiscent of the return of a victorious athlete. As a result, we are encouraged to expect a triumphant homecoming of Heracles (181-6). The good news would soon be confirmed by

[18] Garner (1990) 101-2 remarks that there is a Homeric echo in the two similes (112-3; cf. *Il.* 2.394-7; 130-1; cf. *Od.* 5.273-5) that ornament the lines that follow Hyllus' departure and in the metaphor that Deianeira uses to describe sheltered youth (144 cf. *Od.*5.478-81). He claims that apart from simply maintaining a Homeric tone the similes (esp. the second one at 130-1 with the echo of the Homeric passage *Od.* 5.273-5) and the image of the metaphor (144-7) serve in 'keeping alive the allusive suggestion of Odysseus' return from the sea to a happy reunion with his wife.'

[19] Deianeira alludes here to the protected life not only of the flowering plant but also of the untroubled animal; see Easterling (1982) on 144-7: '*βόσκεται* sugests a living creature'.

[20] Cf. S. *Aj.* 552-5 for the innocence of childhood.

[21] See Fraenkel (1950) II on A. *Ag.* 493-4.

[22] The v.l. *ὄτλον* is a less fitting word: the point here is the fear of Deianeira at the prospect of marriage with the Centaur, see Jebb (1892) on 7.

Lichas (199), Heracles' herald. Deianeira's joy is somehow hesitant but she calls on the women to sing. In her misguided joy over Heracles' return Deianeira cries out with delight to the 'rising daylight' (literally to 'the rising eye', *ὄμμ'ἐμοὶ φήμης ἀνασχόν*, 203-4). This phrase is ironical since it recalls the alternation of night and day in the parodos (94ff., esp. 103).[23] It will turn out that the homecoming of Heracles will not bring happiness to Deianeira. At this part of the play we are deluded into awaiting Heracles' return as the occasion for the happy reunion of Deianeira with her husband that will in turn signify the end of her sorrows.

The Chorus celebrate with a short lyric. Their choral song is more joyful than Deianeira's somewhat hesitant joy. They begin, in the text printed by Lloyd-Jones and Wilson, with *ἀνολολυξάτω*[24] *δόμος / ἐφεστίοις ἀλαλαγαῖς / ὁ μελλόνυμφος* (205-7). Scholars have found the idea of a house ready to celebrate a wedding obscure. Page proposed *ἀνολολύξατ' ἐν δόμοις...ὦ μελλόνυμφοι* (i.e. 'O maidens') which is printed by Dawe in his Teubner edition. But on the basis of my argument that Sophocles encourages us to see Heracles' return as the reinstatement of the domestic order the implication of *ὁ μελλόνυμφος δόμος* is dramatically significant. 'The word (*μελλόνυμφος*) does not appear in a metaphorical sense elsewhere, but applied to *δόμος* it may mean "ready for a marriage", which would be apt for the house awaiting the reunion of Heracles and Deianeira.'[25] For Seaford, once Heracles returns to his *oikos* the marriage to Deianeira would be completed and, thus, she should overcome the transitional state of her present anxiety as a bride.[26] In any case Sophocles with this short lyric directs us to foresee a happy reunion of Heracles and Deianeira.[27] As in the other *nostos*-plays[28] the return of the king is preceded by a messenger who describes what he has been doing. Lichas, the official herald of Heracles relates what kept Heracles away all this time. Deianeira receives twice the news of Heracles' safe return (*ἥξειν*, 186: cf. *ἥξοντα*, 289).[29] In this scene *μελλόνυμφος* begins to take on a fatal ambiguity.

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[23] One may think also the use of light and darkness in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*. Aeschylus' text starts at dawn. The beacons, that signify the capture of Troy, well illustrate the effect of this imagery in the play. Most remarkably, Agamemnon is said to return as bringing light in the night-time (522).

[24] For the idea of the house sending up the cry cf. Eur. *El.* 691 *ὀλολύξεται πᾶν δῶμα.*

[25] Easterling (1982) on 205-7.

[26] See Seaford (1986) 56.

[27] The imagery of the song suggests a connection to weddings. Note, for example, the reference to the Nymphs who were associated with nuptial bathing and fertility; see Rehm (1994) 74 and his n.9.

[28] See A. *Pers.* (249-514) and A. *Ag.* (503-680).

[29] Davies (1991) 87 points out the double reception of the news about Heracles: 'By means of a characteristic Sophoclean doublet (cf. the double burial of Polyneices in the *Antigone*, Teucer's encounter with first Menelaus and then Agamemnon in the *Ajax*, Electra's similar debate with Chrysothemis and then

By the end of the choral lyric Lichas arrives at the house with a group of female captives, one of whom is noticed from among the others by Deianeira (298-313). This is Iole and her appearance will increasingly suggest that Heracles' return will not resemble Odysseus' but rather Agamemnon's homecoming. Deianeira is, without realising, standing in front of the house with the 'new bride'[30] in the same position as Cassandra. Implications of this allusion are developed by the silence of Iole. Like Cassandra in the face of Clytaemestra's requests (*Ag.* 1035-68)[31] Iole remains mute at Deianeira's sympathetic questions (298-313). She, like Cassandra, has been brought forcibly to the house. She is Heracles' *ἐξαίρετον ἄνθος* (as Agamemnon calls Cassandra on his return: *Ag.* 954-5) and her presence in Heracles' *οἶκος* is a tangible consequence of the effect of change that *nostos* has achieved on the returning hero. Lichas reveals that Heracles at the moment is sacrificing to Zeus Caenaeus in fulfilment of his vow of the sack of Oechalia (237-8). 'A man might promise the gods a special sacrifice in return for special favour such as a victory'[32] (cf. *νίκης ἄγων τροπαῖα κἀκροθίνια*, 751; note also Agamemnon's perverse 'dedication' of the tapestries, A. *Ag.* 933-4). Heracles, thus, shares common elements with a victorious athlete (237-41; cf. 186, first stasimon: 497-530 and see pp. 88-9). Caenaeum is close to Trachis. We are made, therefore, to expect that Heracles could appear soon. While we get to know Heracles through his latest exploits (quarrel with Eurytus, the murder of Iphitus, the enslavement in Lydia and the sack of Oechalia in revenge) Deianeira becomes aware of the presence of the captive women. Lichas has concealed the real motive in sacking Oechalia.[33] The effect of this arrangement is to postulate an impending return of Heracles to his *oikos* without any obstacles. The yet unnamed Iole moves Deianeira to pity (311f.). Lichas concludes his speech with a promise of Heracles' imminent return. The scene seems to be coming to an end and Deianeira bids them all enter the palace. Deianeira herself is about to make all things ready in the house (334) in order to receive her husband. The eagerly awaited *nostos* of Heracles seems to have been successful. The absent hero is performing a sacrifice before his reunion with his wife and his wife is ready to prepare things in the house in order to welcome him in his *oikos*. Deianeira is looking forward to living with her husband as a normal bride.

Clytemnestra) D is twice brought the news of Heracles' safe return, and the second occasion has the nature of a climax.'

[30] 546, 843, 857, 894; with 536 *ἐζευγμένην*.

[31] The resemblance is noted by Kapsomenos (1963) 39; cf. Segal (1977) 120.

[32] Easterling (1982) on 239.

[33] So Winnington-Ingram (1980) 332: 'The basic lie of Lichas is about motives, not about facts.'

It is an important moment for a wife to welcome her husband home after such a long absence. The welcome-scene in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, as the original audience would know, turns into a horrible parody of a reception-scene. In Sophocles' *Trachiniae* the silent presence of Iole has already cast an ominous shadow over the homecoming of Heracles. When the truth is revealed to Deianeira about Iole as the new bride (see my note 30) of Heracles our attention is drawn to Deianeira. The attitude of the female waiting figure normally in a *nostos*-story ensures or endangers the homecoming of the returning hero (cf. Penelope and Clytaemestra respectively in the *Odyssey*). Deianeira learns that Iole has been led here 'as a wife of Heracles' (*δάμαρτ' ἔφασκες Ἡρακλεῖ ταύτην ἄγειν;* 428) which ironically recalls Lichas' greeting of Deianeira as 'wife of Heracles' (*δάμαρτά θ'Ἡρακλέους*, 406). Another woman threatens Deianeira's marriage. Heracles' *nostos* is related to the power of *ἔρως* (*Ἔρως δέ νιν / μόνος θεῶν θέλξειεν αἰχμάσαι τάδε*, 354-5; cf. 435, 441-5, 544f.). Lichas had first confirmed that Heracles is doing well unburdened by any *nosos* (*νόσωι*, 235). But now we learn that a disease has affected his *nostos* (445, 491, 544). This turns out to be ironical since the effect of the poison on Heracles is described later in the play in terms suggestive of *ἔρως* (cf. 767f. with 1225f.).[34] Although Deianeira is devoted to Heracles her speech (436-69) sets the seal upon the paradox of her role. She is an innocent, devoted wife who pities Iole, even when she learns that Heracles sacked Oechalia because he wanted the girl 'as a secret bed [mate]' (*κρύφιον λέχος*, 360).[35] Moreover, Deianeira identifies with Iole, through beauty (*κάλλος*, 465). Iole's beauty was the cause of the destruction of her city and her present plight. Earlier Deianeira was the potential bride, fearing that 'my own beauty might someday bring me pain' (25). Beauty is revealed in a tragic context. It seems that Deianeira shows understanding towards the noble captive and she attributes Heracles' actions to Eros (443-4). The etymology, however, of Deianeira's name (= man-destroyer or husband-destroyer)[36] expresses the effect of the dramatic irony of her actions. She appears completely disqualified for this role but still she will prove herself man-destroyer of Heracles in spite of her good intentions. Thus one may think that Deianeira's actions lead to an anti-*νόστος*.

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[34] So Segal (1977) 144: 'Heracles' 'appearance' so eagerly awaited (188, 228), becomes interwinded with the more ominous 'appearances' of Eros (433), of the Centaur's poison revealed to the light (608), and of Aphrodite (863).'

[35] So Hester (1980) 8: 'She (= Deianeira) will not play Clytemnestra in Clytemnestra's situation; rather she will take upon herself in fact the role that Andromache was willing to accept in theory, and receive her husband's mistress as an honoured member of her own house.'

[36] Deianeira was perhaps, as March points out (1987) 51, 'originally an Amazonian character – just as the Amazons were called *ἀντιανείραι* – and who lived up to her name'. For the examination of the evidence for the myth of a vengeful and murderous Deianeira in earlier tradition, see March (1987) 49-60.

Deianeira's suffering was first due to her husbandless marriage. Now with the arrival of the old man and Lichas the uncertainty about Heracles' whereabouts is dispelled but there is a new source of suspense: the presence of Iole in Heracles' household. Heracles is criticised before his return.[37] The best of men (177, cf. 811), who has been in all else victorious, has been a victim of the power of love (488-9 cf. A. *Ag.* 941-3: the victor is vanquished).[38] This contributes to the feeling that Heracles will not return as the same man. With Iole in the house Heracles' homecoming does not signal any more the re-establishment of his marriage to Deianeira. Iole resembles Cassandra. This analogy keeps alive the fatal return of Agamemnon. The first episode ends with the ominous phrase *ἀντὶ δώρων δῶρα χρὴ προσαρμόσαι* (494). One of these gifts, namely the robe, will shape the rest of the play. Sophocles carefully prepares the use of magic by Deianeira in the next episode (531ff.) as a surprise. In this light the first stasimon presents Heracles as a victor.[39] While we keep waiting for his return he is associated with athletic imagery. This is well shown in the subject matter and style of the stasimon, which is reminiscent of an epinician ode.[40] The Chorus use as illustration the story of the duel between Heracles and Achelous. We are encouraged to think of Heracles as a victorious athlete. The Pindaric praise proclaims glorious *νόστος* and success for the *οἶκος* and the *πόλις* in future. In tragedy these occurrences in a *nostos*-play are always ironic. The mutability of fortune that Pindar emphasizes is presented negatively in the case of the retuning hero. Heracles' return in Sophocles' text is not expected, after Lichas has revealed the truth about Iole, as the reinstatement of domestic order (see 536-7, 539-40, 545-6). The ode does not fail to remind us of the link of Deianeira to Iole. Compelled by the same power of love, embodied in Aphrodite (497), Heracles has forcibly taken Iole as a war- bride, just as years before he won Deianeira as a prize in the contest with Achelous. The Chorus conclude with a simile, Deianeira taken away from Heracles 'like a calf from her mother' (529-30). The simile is apt in the *Trachiniae* where marriage is depicted as the forceful removal of women from

[37] Xerxes is criticised in the Darius scene in Aeschylus *Persians* and Agamemnon is criticised before (456ff.) and on his arrival (799ff.) in Aeschylus *Agamemnon.*

[38] Note also Bacch. 5. 57 (the unconquerable Heracles) and the implication of being conquered by Aphrodite at 175 that comes in a kind of ring composition around the myth of Heracles' *κατάβασις*..

[39] Cf. the expectation and reception of Agamemnon as a victor in A. *Ag.*; the return of Orestes as a victor (e.g. S. *El.* 48-50, the false chariot-story 682ff.); the return of Heracles in E. *Her.* as *καλλίνικος* (180, 570 etc.).

[40] Note the agonistic language used of the duel, e.g. *κατέβαν* 504, *ἄεθλ'ἀγώνων* 506 and 507ff. which is reminiscent of the herald's proclamation of athletic games. The use of dactylo-epitrite emphasizes the comparison of the stasimon with an epinician ode. On the relationship between the first stasimon and the epinician poetry in terms of metre and imagery see Davies (1991) on 497-530.

the sheltered life they have known (39, 144-50, 240, 547-9).[41] Most remarkably, Deianeira's *ἐρημία* has been suspended in her marriage, with Heracles coming back rarely. Now with Iole in the house Deianeira's expectations for a 'symmetrical' reunion with her husband have been frustrated.

4.3. Crisis at Heracles' home

Instead of a speedy arrival of Heracles after the arrival of Lichas, the love-charm scene intervenes.[42] Heracles' prolonged absence gives occasion to a crisis in his *oikos*. Deianeira comes back with a gift for Heracles, as promised (496). But now it is clear that she cannot put up with living with Iole as her rival in her *oikos*. No matter how different Deianeira is from Clytaemestra, in this scene she sounds like Aeschylus' Clytaemestra. This is well shown at line 538. Iole, says Deianeira, has been brought as *λωβητὸν ἐμπόλημα τῆς ἐμῆς φρενός* (a piece of merchandise destructive to my heart). This is perhaps an imitative echo of Clytaemestra's words about Cassandra at Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* (*παροψώνημα τῆς ἐμῆς χλιδῆς*...1447).[43] Deianeira is not willing to share with another woman the same lovemaking (*κοινωνοῦσα τῶν αὐτῶν γάμων*, 546). What Deianeira gets for her lonely homekeeping (*οἰκούρια*, 540-2; cf. E. *Her.* 1373) is the sharing of the bed with another woman (*ὑπαγκάλισμα*, 540). The image depicted in the word *ὑπαγκάλισμα* of the 'two women who metaphorically wait in one bed for one lover'[44] contributes to the feeling that the reunion of Heracles and Deianeira would not be like the happy reunion of Odysseus and Penelope. Heracles' homecoming is rather made to resemble Agamemnon's return to a catastrophe. This analogy can be identified in the dramatic use of the female waiting figure of the *Trachiniae*. Deianeira, without knowing it, acts like Clytaemestra.

In the very influential *nostos* of Odysseus' for Greek culutre the theme of clothes is one of the means of the reintegration of the returning hero into his *oikos*.[45] Deianeira's response to Heracles' passion for Iole is evident in the ceremonial robe that she intends to send as a gift to her husband. Instead of ensuring the safe return of Heracles the ceremonial

[41] See Seaford (1986) 50-53 and (1987), 111-12 and nn. 62-5 where he lists passages that compare a newly wedded bride to a tender plant. The image of these comparisons could also point to a fusion of marriage and death, since we know that later Greek laments compare the dead (often unwedded girls) to plants, flowers and trees; see Danforth and Tsiaras (1982) 96-99 and Alexiou (1974) 34-42, 159, and 192-201.
[42] Cf. the Darius-scene in Aeschylus *Persians*.
[43] See Fraenkel (1950) III on A. *Ag.* 1446f.
[44] Easterling (1982) on 539-40 and see also her comment on the sense of the line 540: '*μία χλαῖνα* would normally suggest the harmonious union of a pair of lovers...; but here the picture is distorted by *δύ'οὖσαι*'.
[45] See *Od.* 23.153-5; Cf. Scheria 6.228.

robe will trap him into his death (cf. the use of clothes in A. *Ag.* 1116, 1382-3, 1492, 1580 etc.). Deianeira has applied a love charm to the robe (580, 610-4, 622 cf. 602, 674) that was given to her by the Centaur Nessus. All she wants is to save her marriage. She is aware, however, of her deception and she asks the Chorus to be silent about her deeds (596). She is desperate to win back Heracles' affection and she cannot stop herself from using a philtre originating from the monster, Nessus. But we cannot miss the fatal ambiguity of her action, when she tells Lichas that she sends the robe to Heracles in fulfilment of a vow for his safe return (610-3). The robe is imagined as the robe worn to perform sacrifice.[46] The ritual of sacrifice in relation to this gift would have normally a happy outcome but in the *Trachiniae* its effects are subverted. The festal robe, which is supposed to symbolise Heracles' *nostos* in terms of ritual, is the robe of death. This tragic irony is sharpened at 613 with the θυτῆρι καινός. Although Deianeira's intentions are innocent she recalls Clytaemestra's acts and words. This is well shown in her instructions to Lichas about her message to Heracles (624-32). She wants her returning husband to know that all has been kept safe in the house (καὶ γὰρ ἐξεπίστασαι /τά γ'ἐν δόμοισιν ὡς ἔχοντα τυγχάνει, 624-5). This recalls Clytaemestra's remarks to the herald (καὶ τἄλλα ὁμοίαν πάντα / σημαντήριον οὐδὲν διαφθείρασαν ἐν μήκει χρόνου, 609-10). The text in both cases entertains the idea of the return to the same. Deianeira assumes that with the love charm she will save the stability of her household and Heracles will return to a place of fixity. When she mentions her longing (πόθον, 631) for her absent husband she again reminds us of Clytaemestra's comments on her integrity in the absence of Agamemnon. Although Deianeira acts out of love she may bear comparison with Aeschylus' Clytaemestra. This comparison suggests that Heracles' homecoming will be similar to Agamemnon's return – something that Iole's presence has already implied.

The possibility of a return of Heracles without any obstacles is sustained in the second stasimon (633-62). The young girls from Trachis in the first strophic pair appeal to the local inhabitants to join in welcoming Heracles. They resume the effects of Heracles' absence on Deianeira's long period of waiting (651-2) and they envisage a triumphant homecoming of Heracles (644-5). As the focus on Heracles' return becomes increasingly fixed there is a secondary sense in the Chorus' song that is implicit in the closing lines. This is highly suggestive in the word θυτήρ (659). The Chorus are thinking that now Heracles might be sacrificing on Mt Oeta (cf. 237-8, 287-8). The robe smeared with the

[46] See Stengel (1920) 108; cf. Jebb (1892) on 674.

blood of Nessus is supposed to restore the hope of the return of Heracles full of love for Deianeira (*μόλοι πανίμερος*[47] / *τᾶς Πειθοῦς παγχρίστωι ⏑συγκραθεὶς ἐπὶ προφάσει θηρός*[48] +660-2). This, however, cannot be achieved. The use of a love charm originated by a monster contradicts the wish of the Chorus for a safe return of Heracles and a happy reunion with Deianeira. The robe that Deianeira sends Heracles is structurally effective as a source of suspense in the third episode (663-820). Disquiet over Heracles' homecoming dominates her speech. She has reasons (674ff.) to think that Nessus through this gift wanted to take revenge on Heracles. The *ἐνδυτῆρα πέπλον* (674) points towards the catastrophe. It is not just a garment for putting on (see my note 46). *Ἐνδυτήριος* implies solemnity.[49] It is, thus, appropriate for Heracles performing the sacrifice. But *ἔνδυμα* could also be applied to the robe in which the corpse was wrapped.[50] This carries a sinister overtone for the original audience. Deianeira has decided that if she has destroyed Heracles, she is determined to die (720).

4.4. News of the catastrophe

In terms of the dramatic form the sending of the robe has raised a course of action that leads to a catastrophe for both Heracles and Deianeira. First, Heracles' horrific suffering in the poisoned robe is depicted in Hyllus' scene. Hyllus brings the news of the catastrophe. He functions as a messenger-herald although the old man and Lichas have preceded him.[51] He confirms Deianeira's greatest fear. The gift was fatal for Heracles (*τὸν σὸν φέρων δώρημα, θανάσιμον πέπλον,* 758) and the sacrifice turned into an inverted slaughter. The Hyllus-scene does not precede the catastrophe like the herald–scene in the *Agamemnon* but it stands for it (cf. the messenger-scene in the *Persians*). Hyllus' speech brings Heracles to life. Throughout the play he is present in our thoughts through Deianeira's fears and

[47] The mss read *πανάμερος* printed by Lloyd-Jones and Wilson. With *πανίμερος* (Mudge) the Chorus are praying that the love charm will affect Heracles on his return.
[48] These lines also prefigure the manner of Heracles' death, see Seaford (1986) 56. The returning husband will be ultimately sacrificed. Burton (1980) 62 compares the phrase *τᾶς πειθοῦς πάγχριστος πρόφασις* with the phrase for lamp oil at A. *Ag.* 93ff. (*χρίματος ἀγνοῦ μαλακαῖς ἀδόλοισι παρηγορίαις*) that describes Clytaemestra's preliminary sacrifices on the occasion of her husband's imminent return. The comparison of these two passages brings the association that both returning heroes will become a sacrifice; see Garner (1990) 105: 'Persuasion in the form of unguent for her husband's return, the uncomfortable mixture of sacrifice and sexuality, and, on top of everything else, the dramatic irony which in both plays means that the returning husband will ultimately be sacrificed'.
[49] See Easterling (1982) on 674.
[50] See Seaford (1984) 252 n.42.
[51] See Taplin (1977) 84.

expectations. But now he becomes vivid, while Hyllus describes how the deadly poison affected him.[52] We visualise through his speech how Heracles killed Lichas in his great agony of pain. Hyllus, deceived by his ignorance of Deianeira's motives blames his mother (758, 773, 775-6, 791-3, 807-12) and invokes a curse upon her (815-20). He is in the same position as Orestes. He has to confront his mother who is the destroyer of his father (cf. the fatal encounter of Orestes and Clytaemestra, A. *Cho.* 887ff.). Hyllus becomes the counterpart of Orestes and not of Telemachus. Heracles' return will not be like Odysseus'. Moreover, the snake imagery in the simile which describes the action of the poison on Heracles (*ἐχθρᾶς ἐχίδνης*, 771) recalls the images of the robe and the snake that are associated with Agamemnon's death (see esp. *δεινῆς ἐχίδνης*, A. *Cho.* 249; cf. 994).[53] This contributes to the feeling that Heracles' homecoming may bear comparison to Agamemnon's return. The idea of the (marriage) bed receives emphasis in the phrase *δυσπάρευνον λέκτρον* (791) when Heracles blames his marriage for his disaster. The adjective *δυσπάρευνον* is akin in sense to the noun *λέκτρον*. This construction prepares us to foresee that the long absent hero will not be reunited with his wife in the manner of Odysseus and Penelope, who eventually slept happily together (*Od.* 23.254) after the killing of the suitors.

4.5. Return to a catastrophe

The long awaited homecoming of Heracles is no longer expected as the means of the reunion of Heracles and Deianeira. We wonder whether Heracles will arrive in his death-throes or we are going to see him at all (*καί νιν αὐτίκα / ἢ ζῶντ' ἐσόψεσθ' ἢ τεθνηκότ' ἀρτίως*, 805). In the same way that the ritual of sacrifice produces the opposite result and culminates in Heracles' doom Deianeira's focus on saving her marriage shifts to a preparation of her own death. The Chorus in the third stasimon (821-62), full of foreboding, realise the advancing destruction of Heracles' household (see 849-50). They gain insight into the meaning of the oracle. Heracles will find his release from toil (*ἀναδοχὰν τελεῖν πόνων*, 825), according to the oracle. *Πόνος* is one of the requirements for victory in Pindar. Athletic victors knew that glory comes to those who weary. The toil gives way to the joy of victory and this is integral to the idea of alternation in life (e.g. at

[52] Throughout the play the disease caused by the poison of the Hydra combined with the blood of Nessus is characterised as creature, beast. Biggs (1966) discusses this metaphor at length.
[53] Clytaemestra is already compared to a snake in the *Agamemnon* (1233). For the snake imagery in the *Oresteia* see Garvie (1986) xxxvi-xxxvii.

the end of *P.*12.28-9: *εἰ δέ τις ὄλβος ἐν ἀνθρώποισιν, ἄνευ καμάτου / οὐ φαίνεται*). The epinician poem serves as a reward, a glorious requital of toils (e.g. I.8.4 *λύτρον εὔδοξον...καμάτων*). But Heracles is rewarded with death (834) after his *πόνος*. The negative tendency of a victory persists in the case of Heracles in the same way that the negative tendency of the wedding will emerge as a reality 'with the actual isolated death of Deianeira'.[54] The Chorus visualise Heracles in his agony and then turn to Deianeira who 'saw great harm on the house' (842) coming from Heracles' passion for Iole. The arrival of Iole is conceived by the Chorus as a new marriage (843). The gift represents the last hope for a conjugal union between Deianeira and Heracles. It achieved, however, what none of Heracles' opponents ever accomplished: his death. The conqueror is conquered by his wife (cf. the defeat of Agamemnon by Clytaemestra in Aeschylus' text). This is particular relevant to the epinician and domestic aspects of *nostos*. The theme of reception associated with the return of a victorious athlete and the domestic theme of the reunion of the long-absent husband and his wife go wrong in Sophocles' text. Both topical aspects that normally signify a glorious *nostos* are presented negatively in the case of Heracles' return. The fatal gift manifests how *nostos* excludes the possibility of a return to the same place. When the Nurse comes back to relate Deianeira's suicide she begins her report by referring to the gift. *Τὸ δῶρον Ἡρακλεῖ τὸ πόμπιμον* was the cause of great sufferings (871-2). The gift instead of sending him home escorts him to Hades. 'This has been prefigured by the dramatic irony of Lichas, instructed to take the garment to Herakles, comparing himself as *πομπός* (escort) to Hermes, for it was Hermes who as *πομπός* escorted mortals to the underworld.'[55] The gift had the same effect on Deianeira's end. She departed for her last journey, to Hades (874-5). Usually Homeric gifts have a positive role.[56] But in the *Trachiniae* the gift[57] turns fatal and also turns the ritual of sacrifice into its opposite. Most importantly, it is the loving wife who creates a counter-gift. It has a destructive power on him and not a beneficial one as she was hoping. The *οἶκος* is destroyed and it is not renewed by Heracles' *nostos*.

[54] Seaford (1987) 119. His point is more explicitly developed in his article (1986) 58 on the wedding ritual in Sophocles *Trachiniae*.
[55] Seaford (1994) 390.
[56] See for example especially the garments given as gifts only by women in Homer. Helen gives a *peplos* to Telemachus' future wife (*Od.* 15.105-8). Hecabe offers a *peplos* to Athena (*Il.* 6.90-1, 271-2, 289-95). Aphrodite gives a *kredemnon* to Andromache as a wedding present (*Il.* 22.470-2).
[57] Gifts in tragedy are usually fatal: A. *Cho.* 618, S. *Aj.* 665, E. *Med.* 618, *Supp.* 875-7, *Tro.* 382, 623, *Hel.* 363, 663, 883.

4.5.1. The mode of Deianeira's death

There is no welcome-scene of the absent hero and this is part of the inversion of a normal homecoming-story. *Nostos* did not accomplish the reunion of Deianeira and Heracles but it accomplished fatal consequences for both. This is well illustrated by the Chorus when they conclude that the offspring of the union of Iole and Heracles is death: the suicide of Deianeira and the coming death of her husband (893-5). The mode of Deianeira's death recalls elements from the reunion of a husband and a wife. The altar, which is the actual focus of an *oikos*, is the place where Deianeira falls wailing before her suicide. Most importantly, she goes into their marriage chamber (*θάλαμον*, 913) and makes Heracles' bed. We are reminded of Deianeira's lonely nights on her husbandless bed. In addition, in Homer when a woman 'makes a bed' for a man she goes to bed with him.[58] All of Deianeira's last ritual is related to Heracles. We watch Deianeira's loosening of her robe (924-25). This gesture, which recalls the undressing of a wife on her first night (e.g. *Od.* 11.245), along with the bed-motif is full of marital connotations.[59] The ritual of marriage that would be performed on the first night of Heracles' return to his wife is perverted to the ritual of death. The Chorus cannot tell whether they should mourn more for Deianeira or for Heracles (947-9). The two tragedies are common (952). They are both the outcome of a *nostos*-story. We are still engaged in waiting for Heracles' return. 'Sophocles ensures that his audience will not respond to Deianeira's tragedy, formally self-contained though it is (even to the extent of ring-composition: 1ff. is recalled in 943-6), with a premature sense that the *praxis* has achieved completion; the audience still has unsatisfied expectations which will carry them across the death of Deianeira without the dislocation of a premature sense of closure.'[60] Thus the play is designed to direct us into waiting for Heracles' return. After the Nurse's narrative about Deianeira's suicide Heracles' approach heralds the thoughts of the maidens. They now await Heracles in awe and fear. The Chorus conclude that the two tragedies are 'common' (952). In this blend of fear and grief the Chorus pray to be elsewhere.[61]

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[58] See Kamerbeek (1963) on *Tr.* 896-946 and Easterling (1982) on *Tr.* 915-6, citing *Od.* 7. 346-47.
[59] Alcestis acts in a very similar way (E. *Alc.* 162, 170, 186-8).
[60] Heath (1987) 148.
[61] This is a common theme in Euripides; see Garvie (1998) on 1216-22: 'A tragic chorus frequently expresses the wish to escape to some distant place usually a kind of fantasy world, which is described in terms of great beauty that contrasts with horror of what is happening on stage: e.g. Eur. *Hipp.* 732-51, *Hel.*1479-86, *Ba.* 402-16.'

4.5.2. Return-scene

At last Heracles enters the play physically. His entry is silent (965-67) carried on his deathbed and longing for the sleep of Hades (1004-5 and 1040-43). This is nothing like the triumphant homecoming that we were encouraged to expect earlier in the play (181-6, 640-6). With Heracles' entry Deianeira's suicide moves aside. The silent procession is very different from the victorious procession of the hero to Olympus that was a favourite theme in the Attic vase painters.[62] The paradigmatic athletic victor, the founder of the Olympic (see e.g. Pi. *O.* 2, 3, 6 & 10) and the Nemean games (see hyp. *Nem.* in the Pind. schol., ed. Drachmann (1927)) who figured large in the epic Gigantomachies comes back defeated by his own wife. The entry of Heracles into Olympus was his reward for his life of *πόνος*. He could enjoy among the Olympians lasting peace (*εἰρήνα* Pi. *N.*1.69; *ἡσυχία N.*1.70 cf. *N.* 9.48 and *αἰὼν ἡμέρα N.*9.44). Heracles, however, in the *Trachiniae* gets death as a reward for his labours. In his case, the reward for his labours is fatal and has also disastrous effects for the whole family. Sophocles takes care to dramatise how the absence of the head of the household embodies danger for his *oikos*. In terms of dramatic form the return of Heracles is the conclusion of the tragedy (cf. Xerxes' return in the *Persians*). Heracles is central to the play's dynamic in so far as its structure is based on the *nostos*-pattern of the hero's return familiar from the *Odyssey*. He has been present in his absence through the narratives of the waiting figures (Deianeira, Nurse, Chorus) and those who function as messengers (old man, Lichas, Hyllus). We know that he hurled Iphitus from the towers of Tiryns (270-3, 357), sacked Oechalia out of desire for a girl (351-5, 359-74, 431-33, 476-83) and killed Lichas without waiting to find out that he is innocent (772-82). We now see Heracles with our own eyes. He has achieved the most difficult labours but becomes weak as a girl on his return: he weeps like a *παρθένος* (1071-2; cf. 1075). The returning hero is not as he was described before his return (e.g. 177, 811-2: 'the best of men'). This is a common feature of a *nostos*-story. Heracles has changed during his absence. A *nostos*-story suggests the effect of mutability both on the absent hero and those waiting for him at home. 'Return to the same' is a theme that the tragic text may entertain but cannot achieve. Deianeira, whom Heracles calls ironically *δολῶπις* (1050), has transformed Heracles' safe return into his death. Deianeira, like Iole (895), is seen as an instrument of *Erinys* (1051-2; cf. A. *Ag.*

[62] See Brommer (1973) 159-74.

1580 where Clytaemestra acts as *Erinys*). Deianeira is the instrument of Heracles' death but she unwittingly takes up this role. She remains tied to her household and to her husband.

The sending of the gift was supposed to ensure Heracles' return home full of love for Deianeira — while in fact its murderous outcome manifests that the notion of the return excludes the possibility of sameness. The paradox in the case of Deianeira is that she acted out of love but her part in this *nostos*-story does not fail to remind us of Clytaemestra. Agamemnon's wife feigns the role of the faithful, welcoming wife; Deianeira tries to play it, but fails. The same *topos* of a *nostos*-story is exploited in very different ways. Deianeira might have been devoted to her husband in contrast to Clytaemestra but they both use a fatal garment in receiving their husbands on their return. This is recalled in the metaphors that Heracles uses to describe the poisoned robe. The phrase *ὑφαντὸν ἀμφίσβλητρον* (1052) echoes Aeschylus' *ἄπειρον ἀμφίσβλητρον* (cf. A. *Ag.* 1382, *Cho.* 492).[63] The theme of clothes that in the very influential Homeric text for Greek culutre symbolises the reintegration of the returning hero (see above n.45), thus in tragedy has an opposite effect. Heracles being defeated by a woman is reduced to a female (1071-5). The sacker of cities is described as 'sacked' (*ἐκπεπόρθημαι*, 1104) like a city. There is an element that resembles marriage in Heracles' uncovering his wracked body (1078-9). It brings to mind the ritual of *ἀνακαλυπτήρια*, the unveiling of the bride at the wedding feast.[64] These two principals, Deianeira and Heracles (cf. Atossa and Xerxes in the *Persians*) never meet[65] but they both reenact aspects of the wedding ritual as they prepare to die. This is one of the elements that link Deianeira and Heracles together. It demonstrates how their wedded union that the homecoming was expected to accomplish has become a mutual catastrophe. Heracles could not achieve symmetry for his *oikos* even after his return. Unsettledness is his characteristic. He himself never enters the house. Heracles now according to his first request to his son (1191ff.)[66] will be the victim at Mt Oeta whereas at Caenaum he was called a sacrificer (*θυτήρ*, 659). The ritual of sacrifice is inverted.[67] This recalls the killing of Agamemnon that was presented as a sacrifice. Both Agamemnon and Heracles return to a catastrophe.

[63] The allusion is reinforced by the image of fetters (*Tr.* 1057 cf. *Cho.* 493, 982).
[64] See Seaford (1986) 56-7; Rehm (1994) 78-9.
[65] This has been seen as one of the dramatic flaws of the play. But with Easterling (1982) 2ff. there are things (e.g. the robe) and people (Iole, Lichas) that strengthen their connection; cf. Xerxes and Atossa in the *Persians* who are linked together through the theme of clothes.
[66] It is possible that Heracles ultimately gets his rest with the apotheosis. It has been disputed whether Sophocles intended the audience to remember Heracles' apotheosis from the pyre. For a lengthy discussion of this problem, see Holt (1989). He sensibly points out (1989) 76 that 'the play emphasizes Herakles' sufferings and strength of will, not his eventual repose, and so it ends with its "tragic" tone intact'.
[67] Heracles' death as a sacrifice: esp. 609, 613 cf. 760ff.; cf. A. *Ag.* 1118, 1297-8, 1433, 1504 on the killing of Agamemnon as a sacrifice.

The net imagery along with the motif of the sacrifice would certainly fit in this play where Heracles' fate at the hands of his wife is compared to that of Agamemnon's at Clytaemestra's. In the end Hyllus defends his mother (1122-3, 1136) and this does not correspond to Orestes, his counterpart in the *nostos*-story of the *Agamemnon*. Hyllus becomes the agent of a peaceful resolution to his family. With his final request Heracles is concerned with the survival of his *oikos*. It is only Hyllus who is left in Trachis. The rest of the family is scattered (1151-6). The *oikos* is fragile. Hyllus is forced to marry Iole. The play ends with a funeral: ἐκφορά of the dying Heracles to his cremation and burial. Even his funeral is taking place away from home.[68] Heracles' last movement in the play is once more a journey outward. 'The bed on which he will be carried up to Oeta is brought out of the house (901-2). The bed of longed for-union becomes a separate bed of pain and death for each protagonist. In a play full of Odyssean echoes the motif of the bed carried outside the house is a harsh inversion of the immovable bed of the *Odyssey*, ultimate token of recognition between husband and wife in a restored house.'[69] Thus on his return all the ritual (theme of clothes: the poisoned robe, sacrifice, motif of bed etc.) go wrong. Instead of a happy reunion with her husband Deianeira dies on Heracles' bed and he finds his last home away from his *oikos*.

On the whole, I hope that I have shown that *nostos* in the *Trachiniae* frames the structure and that we are made to feel that with the return of the absent hero the *praxis* has achieved completion. In particular, *nostos* is used in Sophocles' text to avoid premature closure. The return of Heracles is not only the focus but also the final scene of the play. Thus Sophocles' text is centred on the actual arrival of the absent hero. Most remarkably, the reception of Heracles comes to its end in lamentation. As we have seen, Heracles' entry is at first silent (965-7), as he is carried on his deathbed. The silent procession is very different from a victorious procession that would be appropriate for a hero such as Heracles, the paradigmatic athletic victor and the founder of the Olympic games, whose victorious procession to Olympus was a favourite theme in the Attic vase painters.[70] Therefore, it seems that the notion of the heroic victor returning is undermined in Sophocles' text. The argument is again, as in the *Persians* and the *Agamemnon*, that *nostos* excludes the possibility of return without any differences. Heracles' prolonged absence gives occasion to a series of events that precede his homecoming and lead towards a more

[68] For the Greek desire for death at home see A. *Ag.* 503-7 and 539.
[69] Segal (1977) 125.
[70] See Brommer (1973) 159-74.

tragic return than was anticipated. For all her faithful waiting and yearning Deianeira cannot reach Heracles, nor can Heracles succeed in settling down with her. Heracles' return does not bring joy to the household, as we were invited to expect in the first part of the play. The hope of the Chorus that Heracles' return will bring happiness to Deianeira encourages us to foresee his return as the source of domestic order. In fact this hope is quite ironical. All the ritual that was supposed to precede Heracles' homecoming and symbolise reintegration into his home goes wrong. Sophocles carefully introduces the images and events related to the homecoming of the absent hero in order to create foreshadowing and suspense. It is Iole who suggests the change that *nostos* has achieved on Heracles. By sending Iole home he brings his household into confusion. In Sophocles' text the hero who has been in all else victorious is defeated by the power of love. As I have shown, Deianeira in Sophocles' text acts like Clytaemestra without knowing it. Deianeira appears completely disqualified for the role that Clytaemestra plays but still she, like Clytaemestra, will prove herself man-destroyer of Heracles by sending a fatal garment in receiving her husband on his return. Once Heracles is back there is no way to feel incorporated in a sheltered *oikos*. A failed homecoming means that both Heracles and Deianeira will never overcome their transitional state. The returning hero is not re-integrated into his *oikos* and his waiting wife will never accomplish *εὐδαιμονία* embodied in a marriage — unlike Penelope whose extended liminality in the *Odyssey* concluded in the restoration of her wedding ritual.[71] This is evident in the thematic imagery of the play, especially associated with marriage and sacrifice. Heracles and Deianeira, like Xerxes and Atossa in the *Persians*, never meet in the play but they both reenact aspects of the wedding ritual as they prepare to die. The ironical treatment of *nostos* in Sophocles' text is also incorporated in images of (perverted) sacrifice. In particular, the ritual of sacrifice in relation to Deianeira's gift leads to an anti-*nostos*. The souring of the return indicates that Heracles returns to a different place from his former knowledge. Finally, all the images and the events of the play demonstrate that *nostos* is not a guaranteed passage. As I have shown in my introduction (pp. 3-7) *nostos* by its nature is one of the most ambiguous life-events, since it is bound up with uncertainties over failure to return. This feature of *nostos* was perhaps what made it prominent as a theme in tragedy, the genre that deals with catastrophes.

[71] On the narrative in the *Odyssey* 'constructed (consciously or unconsciously) as to connote the pattern of danger and separation concluded by the joy of a wedding' see Seaford (1994) 37.

5. The return of Orestes

οἰκτρὰ μὲν νόστοις αὐδά
S. *El.* 193

We have seen so far that *nostos* is the fulcrum of the action in Aeschylus' *Persians* and *Agamemnon* and Sophocles' *Trachiniae*. As I have emphasised in my Introduction this thesis is interested in the study of the *nostos*-theme in the plays that are structured around *nostos*, relating it particularly to the *Odyssey*. Homer's narrative is not the total model for these primary *nostos*-plays but I hope that I have shown, that some of their features within the plot and the imagery may bear relevance to the *nostos*-pattern of the hero's return in the *Odyssey*. This chapter will next consider the Orestes-plots. It is a happy coincidence that we possess plays (notably A. *Cho.*, S. *El.* and E. *El.*)[1] by all three dramatists dealing with the return of Orestes. The trigger of Orestes' return is the plan of revenge for his father's murder. A discussion of the return of Orestes in Greek tragedy falls outside the strict scope of the study of the narrow category of the *nostos*-plays, where *nostos* is the basic framework of their construction. I have included it because I believe it complements the analysis of the *nostos*-plays, since it may add further depth to our understanding of the nature of *nostos* in drama with reference especially to the narrative of Homer's *Odyssey*. In particular, the preserved tragic accounts of Orestes' return share affinities with the construction of the *nostos*-story of Odysseus, especially with the second half of the *Odyssey*, where strong effects of irony are developed through the element of deceit. Therefore, the study of Orestes' return in drama, where *nostos* is an element but not the dominant element of the plot,[2] may be of service in understanding the use of the *nostos*-pattern in Greek tragedy, with reference in particular to the *Odyssey*. As we will discover in the course of our enquiry the chief remark in this chapter is that disguise and recognition are central to the return of Orestes. To understand the nature of Orestes' homecoming we must remain alert to its correspondence with the homecoming of Odysseus. The epic motifs of disguise and recognition lay waiting for transformation into drama. The audience was familiar with these epic motifs that were exploited by the dramatists to provide different

[1] It is uncertain which Electra preceded and influenced the other. For a discussion of the question with bibliography see Matthiessen (1964) 81-8.
[2] So Taplin (1977) 124 'There are also elements of the plot pattern (i.e. *nostos* pattern) in the plays of return and revenge (notably A. *Cho.*, S. *El.*, E. *El.*).

narrative possibilities. To illustrate this one need only examine how these motifs have a dramatic effect on the plot of the tragedies. As I intend to show, a distinctive feature of the use of *nostos* in the Orestes-plots is that there is variation between the plays. The principle of variation leads also to the idea that the dramatists are manipulating expectations on the part of the audience. Thus *nostos* in Orestes drama will emerge in a system of roles and expectations. To anticipate, as in the plays in which *nostos* provides the overall pattern of the plot (A. *Pers.*, A. *Ag.* and S. *Tr.*), the account of Orestes' return in Greek tragedy requires two kinds of typical character: the absent hero (Orestes) and the female waiting figure (Electra–Clytaemestra). On the outset it should be stressed that in Orestes drama, especially in Sophocles' text, the plot is depended on the multiplication of waiting figures. For all the variety in the treatment of the waiting figures it is their fears and expectations that generate the drama. In what follows, I intend to show that Orestes' return bears relevance first to that of Agamemnon and secondly to that of Odysseus. Finally, there is also a particular interest in the use of *nostos* in Orestes drama as an effective structural device in creating irony, suspense and surprise. In this chapter I suggest that, the use of *nostos* in Orestes-plays leads to strong ironical effects on the plot and brings about the plan of revenge.

5.1. The story before Aeschylus

The story of Orestes' return and revenge was a well-known motif to the contemporary audience of Aeschylus. There is no place for the murder of Agamemnon and Orestes' revenge in the *Iliad*. In the *Odyssey* the various stories of homecoming of the Greeks after the Trojan War show that there are different ways to handle a *nostos* in a poem. The most obvious contrast is between Odysseus' and Agamemnon's mode of return. This is further exploited by Homer when Orestes, the son of Agamemnon, is introduced in the poem as the counterpart of Telemachus, the son of Odysseus (Orestes as a example to Telemachus: 1.298-305, 3.195-200: killed Aegisthus to avenge his murder of Agamemnon: 1.40, 3.306-10, 4.546-7). In the *Odyssey* there is no mention of Electra, and Orestes' part in the striking down of his mother is vague (3.306-10). The names of Agamemnon's daughters in the *Iliad* and the *Cypria* did not include Electra (*Il.* 9.145=287: Chrysothemis and Laodice and Iphianassa). The brief extant summary of the epic *Nostoi* (Bernabé *PEG* I (1987) 94ff.; Davies *EFG* (1988) 66f.) ends with the vengeance of Orestes and Pylades and the

homecoming of Menelaus. For the first time in Agias' poem we are introduced to Pylades, who comes back as a friend with Orestes, as Theoclymenus accompanies Telemachus on his homecoming to Ithaca. It is in the poetry of the sixth century that the features of the story of Orestes' return handled by the Attic dramatists start to emerge more clearly. In the *Hesiodic Catalogue of Women* (a sixth century work)[3] Electra makes her first appearance (23 (a) MW 15-16) and for the first time in the literary sources it is said that Orestes killed his mother (23 (a) MW 28-30). The earliest poem specifically about *Oresteia* of whose existence we know is that of Xanthus, a forerunner of Stesichorus. The only thing we know about its content is that Laodice's name (*Il.* 9.145) was changed to Electra because she remained a virgin ἄλεκτρος (*PMG* 700; see also *PMG* 699). This is a feature of Electra that was developed by the dramatists. For us the most significant pre-dramatic version of Orestes' return is Stesichorus' *Oresteia* (Pindar *P.* 11. 15-37 is also relevant). Unfortunately of his large poem only fragments survive. The most interesting fragment of Stesichorus' poem is the one that shows that Clytaemestra dreamed of a snake with a bloody head, which clearly represents Agamemnon and changes to the human shape of Agamemnon (*PMG* 219).[4] The dream-motif has a dramatic effect in the story of Orestes' return as it is used in the *Choephori* and Sophocles' *Electra*. In the same way the lock of Orestes' hair as the recognition-token is used by Stesichorus (*PMG* 217) and is taken over by the dramatists in the recognition-scene between brother and sister. The story of Orestes' return in pre-dramatic pictorial evidence[5] also shows that the handling of the tradition was already established by the time of Aeschylus. Electra first appears in the pictorial tradition around 475-70 BC (Prag (1985) 57 with Plate 12a-b) assisting Orestes in the death of Aegisthus. When she reappears on the Sappho Painter's lekythos (Prag (1985) Plate 33b-c) meeting with Orestes at Agamemnon's tomb she becomes more prominent in the story (see also the early Melian reliefs: Prag (1985) Plates 34-35).

[3] West (1985) dates the Catalogue between 580 and 520, perhaps after Stesichorus' *Oresteia*.
[4] It is disputed whether the snake is transformed to Agamemnon or Orestes. The expression βασιλεύς Πλεισθενίδας fits more satisfactorily to Agamemnon. See Prag (1985) 74; Garvie (1986) xix-xx.
[5] Prag (1985) lists many representations of Orestes killing Aegisthus especially in early Attic Red-Figure (pp. 10-34 with Plates 6-21). The problem of matricide is identified in a 6th century bronze strip from Olympia; see Prag (1985) 35-43 and Garvie (1986) xvi. It is represented in a portrayal of Orestes attacked by an Erinys in a serpentine form on a metope from Foce del Sele, dated about 570 BC; Prag (1985) 44-5 with Plate 28b.

5.2. Orestes and Agamemnon

The dramatists were to shape their plays variously around the motifs of the story of Orestes' return. In particular, the three plays that present the revenge action share a sequence of events. The ritual act of cutting off a lock of hair and putting it on the grave[6] is a common element of the plot that first introduces the connection of Orestes' return with Agamemnon's death and it initiates the recognition scene between Orestes and Electra. Orestes' return thus should be placed in the larger pattern of Agamemnon's fatal homecoming. Most importantly, in *Choephori* when Orestes offers the belated funeral rites (*Cho.* 3ff.) there is a sense of continuity with *Agamemnon.* On Agamemnon's homecoming Orestes was not present (*Ag.* 877-86) to welcome his father and this ensured the success of Clytaemestra's murder plan. Cassandra's premonition of Orestes and his homecoming (*Ag.*1280-5, 1318f., 1324f.) looks forward to his return. Furthermore, in the final scene of *Agamemnon* the Chorus hope that Orestes is alive and will return as an avenger (*Ag.* 1646-8, 1667). When Electra welcomes her brother as ἐλπὶς σπέρματος watered by tears (*Cho.* 236) we recall the fertilising image of the spring rain on the newly planted seeds that was perverted in a context of murder (1388-92) in *Agamemnon.* Orestes' homecoming will now generate fresh plans for bloodshed. The last image of the stasimon before Orestes knocks at the palace is of a new murderer returning home as the child of the former murders (648-51).[7] When Orestes demands entry at the palace he fulfills the Chorus' image.

In addition, the *nostos*-pattern must be understood as a flexible set of variations for the representation of dramatic action. This is evident in the comparison of Agamemnon's return and that of Orestes. Aeschylus explores the thematic correspondence between the homecoming of father and son. This brings about certain similarities and differences. Like his father Orestes has been away for a long time and he stops before the door of the palace. Unlike Agamemnon, however, but like Odysseus he uses deceit on his return and he brings back a friend, Pylades (cf. S. *El.*51ff., E. *El.* 82ff.).[8] Orestes first encounters Clytaemestra from the safe distance of disguise. He is on foot carrying his own package on his back

[6] For the possible meanings of this custom see Garvie (1986) on 6.
[7] The meaning of τέκνον is ambiguous in this complicated passage (648-52). The predominant idea is, as Garvie (1986) on 648-52 points out, that 'the Erinys brings into the house a new crime to pay for the more ancient crimes which are its parents'. But we also think of Orestes here.
[8] This links the figure of Orestes with that of Telemachus who is accompanied by Peisistratus on his visit to Sparta. In Sophocles' text Orestes is accompanied not only by Pylades but also by the παιδαγωγός. The poet makes the latter play a significant role in the plot preceding the recognition-scene.

(*Cho.* 560, 675)[9] and has to go and knock on the door himself. Orestes' simple homecoming contrasts with the return of Agamemnon who came back undisguised and on a chariot. [10] The audience will now not fail to recognise the visual differences that emerge from those two homecoming-scenes. Agamemnon came back as a victorious king, whereas Orestes returns as a stranger and he uses the language of everyday life (*Cho.* 653). Clytaemestra's 'plot against Agamemnon worked through exotic, startling, oblique words and actions: Orestes' plot against her works through the domestic and everyday round, direct and real'.[11] Orestes has news to deliver, more fitting for a man to hear than a woman (cf. *Ag.* 916-7). However, it is Clytaemestra that appears in the doorway instead of Aegisthus. Given the welcome for her husband in *Agamemnon* Clytaemestra's offer of a bath to the strangers (*καὶ θερμὰ λουτρὰ καὶ πόνων θελκτηρία Cho.* 670) makes this scene more ironic, especially if we recall that in both plays she is the one who controls the palace's door.[12] This suggests that in *Choephori* the *nostos*-elements of Orestes' revenge may first bear comparison to the return of Agamemnon specifically. Secondly, Orestes' return in Aeschylus' text draws on the generic characteristics of the *νόστος*-plot in general.

5.3. Orestes and Odysseus

Orestes' false story of his own death puts his plan of revenge into effect. His return is like Odysseus' return. There is trouble awaiting both. Orestes is faced with usurpers who are 'wasting' his ancestral wealth,[13] just like Odysseus. The possibility of being deprived of his ancestral wealth is similar also to the case of Telemachus in the absence of his father. 'Both young men are threatened in their position as heir to a patrimony.'[14] The avenger-figure, however, of someone coming home after a long absence abroad clearly recalls the return of Odysseus.[15] Orestes and Odysseus share the same thematic complex of the return of the hero in disguise. Orestes returns as a foreigner and tells a deceptive tale about his identity

[9] This interpretation conflicts with the unemended 713 *ὀπισθόπους δὲ τούσδε καὶ ξυνεμπόρους*. One, however, may think that since Orestes plans his homecoming with stealth and guile, he should not be accompanied by any servants; see Taplin (1977) 341. I read here, therefore, Pauw's emendation of 713 to *ὀπισθόπουν τε τοῦδε καὶ ξυνέμπορον*.
[10] See Taplin (1977) 340, 343.
[11] Taplin (1978) 105.
[12] See Taplin (1978) 124.
[13] See Garvie (1986) on 299-304; cf. S. *El.* 1290-1.
[14] Goldhill (1986) 147 with his discussion on the relationship between the Aeschylean Orestes and Odysseus / Telemachus.
[15] So Davidson (1988) 53 and see also his article for further links of a number of themes and situations between S. *El.* and the *Odyssey*.

(*Cho.* 674ff.). Odysseus and Orestes who use deceit on their return achieve a successful *nostos* whereas Agamemnon, who returns direct and undisguised, has a fatal *nostos*. The *nostos*-stories of Odysseus, Agamemnon and Orestes merge and then separate again. The returning hero, who devises his homecoming from the safe distance of disguise and deceit, ensures a safe homecoming.[16] But unlike Odysseus, Orestes is not restored to his house. 'At the opening of *Cho* he comes out of a homeless wandering, and at the end he returns to it.'[17] Orestes' deed drives him away from home. In the preserved tragic accounts dealing with the story of Orestes' homecoming he returns not to be reunited with his mother but with the express intention of avenging his father's murder. In Aeschylus' *Choephori* like the homecoming-scene in *Agamemnon* the confrontation between mother and son is a confrontation of a victim and a murderer. This time the roles have been reversed. It is Clytaemestra who will be the victim. The welcome-scene thus underlines the flaw in Orestes' return.[18] The motifs that would traditionally mark the wanderer's true homecoming are perverted. 'We remember the hospitality given in this house to Agamemnon and Cassandra, we look ahead to the murder of the hostess by her guest, the horror of which is emphasized by the reiteration of *ξένος* (cf. 561-2n.).'[19] In this way on Orestes' homecoming we remain alert to its correspondence with Agamemnon's return. In both plays a man returns to be welcomed by Clytaemestra. Thus *nostos* provides the local pattern of both situations and a striking parallelism is effected in the stage-action.

5.4. The *nostos*-elements in Orestes' revenge action

In Sophocles' *Electra* the perversion of the homecoming scene of Agamemnon to an occasion of his death is recalled in a few lines (*οἰκτρὰ μὲν νόστοις αὐδά / οἰκτρὰ δ' ἐν κοίταις πατρώιαις* S. *El.* 193-4). The use of the word *νόστος* here suggests that the word was familiar to the audience in relation to the return of Agamemnon from Troy. *Nostos* also receives

[16] See my introduction (p.16 esp. my note 47) for the connection of *nostos* and *noos*. Note too how the spirit of Agamemnon specifically advises a return to Ithaca *κρύβδην, μηδ' ἀναφανδά* (*Od.* 11.455).
[17] Taplin (1977) 360. He comments on the brief tenure of Orestes at his home. Orestes in *Choephori* facing exile for killing his mother will return to Delphi for supplication according to Apollo's advice. In *Eumenides* it is implied that he will go back to Argos since we learn that he will establish a truce between Athens and Argos (*Eum.* 669-73 cf. 764). Thus, in the light of the whole trilogy Orestes achieves his return but this does not affect my analysis on *nostos* as the starting point of the revenge-plot in *Choephori*. In Sophocles' version the play ends with Orestes' entering his paternal home to complete his quest. Euripides in his *Electra* removes the murders from the palace. Orestes does not return to the palace but to the humble cottage, where Electra lives, far from the city of Argos (E. *El.* 246) and he will eventually settle in an Arcadian city (1273ff.).
[18] So Heath (1987) 148: 'A. *Ch.* also contains a flawed *nostos*'.
[19] Garvie (1986) at 653-718.

certain emphasis in this line (193) by the word order, since it is framed by the adjective (*οἰκτρά*) and its noun (*αὐδά*). The repetition of the word *οἰκτρά* clearly indicates how Agamemnon's *nostos* turned fatal. The *αὐδά* at Agamemnon's return is *οἰκτρά* instead of joyful[20] as it should have normally been in a reunion of husband and wife on his homecoming.[21] Sophocles in a few lines connects the present situation of Electra's plight (230-2, 255, 599-600 etc.) in the house of Atreus with Agamemnon's fatal return. Agamemnon is killed in Sophocles' version *ἐν κοίταις πατρώιαις*, an expression consistent with the Homeric version that Agamemnon was killed at a banquet (*Od.* 4.535 = 11.411; cf. S. *El.* 203-4, 284). Euripides in his *Electra* follows the Aeschylean version that Agamemnon was killed in his bath (*Ag.* 1109, 1540; *Cho.* 491, 999; E. *El.* 157). Clytaemestra did not receive Agamemnon after his victory at Troy with wreaths. Electra recalls the lack of *στέφανοι* on the reception of her father by her mother (E. *El.* 163)[22] and she describes how his homecoming turned into a parody of a welcome scene. Thus the fatal *nostos* of Agamemnon is kept vividly in the mind of the audience in the two *Electra* plays,[23] and it may bear comparison as a visual parallel to the homecoming of Orestes in *Choephori*. This evidence so far suggests that Orestes' *nostos* occurs with varying elaboration of Odysseus' return and that of Agamemnon.

5.4.1. Female waiting figures

My analysis will next consider the elements of the *nostos*-pattern underlying the plays that present Orestes' revenge. The story of Orestes' homecoming inheres in a pattern of action involving analogous figures in analogous situations. A *nostos*-story can be dramatised within a pattern of plot involving the absent hero and the waiting figures, who are normally female. In the story of Orestes' return Electra and Clytaemestra are the main female waiting figures. Sophocles adds to the cast Chrysothemis (cf. Ismene in S. *Ant.*), a foil to Electra's greater aggressiveness. In *Choephori* the Nurse represents a special connection to

[20] Cf. A. *Pers.* 935-6 (*πρόσφθογγον σοι νόστου ταύταν / κακοφάτιδα βοάν κακομέλετον ἰάν*). Xerxes' *nostos* is saluted by the Chorus with a cry of ill omen.
[21] Seaford (1987) 127 interestingly sees that 'here the homecoming of Agamemnon and his death at the hands of Klytaimestra and Aigisthos is described in terms suggestive of a wedding'.
[22] So Zeitlin (1970) 655: 'The theme of ritual connected with victory is established at the beginning of the play. Agamemnon is portrayed as a victorious warrior, and the murderous welcome he receives is contrasted with the celebration ordinarily accorded a military victor.'
[23] See also the debate between mother and daughter in Sophocles *Electra* 516-659 and Euripides *Electra* 998-1096. We are encouraged to think of the fatal homecoming of Agamemnon while in both plays Clytaemestra is trying to justify her act and Electra is criticizing her.

the absent hero, Orestes, since she remembers him as a baby.[24] In Aeschylus' version Cilissa presents an emotional account of Orestes in his absence. The Nurse, like Electra, is contrasted with Clytaemestra on her reaction over the supposed death of Orestes. From the waiting figures of the *Choephori* only the Nurse could provide this contrast since Electra and the Chorus know already that Orestes is back. Cilissa, like Eurycleia with the absent Odysseus in the *Odyssey*, has seen him growing up. While she reminisces about the infant Orestes we realise that he now has grown into his mother's murderer. Unlike the primary *nostos*-plays (A. *Pers.*, A. *Ag.* and S. *Tr.*) where we expect with the stage actors the return of the absent hero, in *Choephori* and the two *Electra* plays the playwrights do not involve us in waiting. We know that Orestes is back from the very beginning. However, like Odysseus who avoided recognition not only by enemies but also by supporters, Orestes is made to conceal his identity on his homecoming. Within the effect of deceit, which is a traditional element of 'return and revenge' plots, the stage figures repeatedly focus on Orestes' return. Strong effects of irony and suspense are achieved. The ignorance of those waiting for the return of Orestes encourages us to see their grief, loyalty, fears and expectations. This is exploited differently by the three dramatists. If I may anticipate, this is evident in the treatment of the recognition-scene that comes in a different part of the plot in each of the preserved tragic accounts dealing with Orestes' return. Most importantly, in Sophocles' text the extended deceit gives occasion to a complex of events that precede the recognition and create a strong ironical effect to the development of the central episodes.

5.4.2. Clytaemestra

The subject of Orestes' return polarises the attitude of Clytaemestra and Electra. Clytaemestra lives in fear of punishment by her son (e.g. S. *El.* 780-2; E. *El.* 1114-5). Within the 'loop of deceit' at the news of Orestes' supposed death Clytaemestra's response is ambivalent (*Cho.* 696-9, 734-41 cf. S. *El.* 766ff.). It would be natural for a mother to express her grief at the loss of her son. Clytaemestra, however, in Aeschylus is already proven hypocritical on the homecoming of Agamemnon and the Nurse testifies to her hypocrisy (737ff.). In Sophocles there is a sign of maternal affection at the supposed death of Orestes (S. *El.* 773ff., cf. 791, 1344-5). Even if Clytaemestra is sincere in her grief she is depicted as being united in a hateful marriage (*δυσφιλὲς γαμήλευμ'*, *Cho.* 624) that she chose

[24] On Cilissa's feelings about Orestes see *Cho.* 750ff.; cf. Eurycleia in *Od.* 19.353. The old man in Euripides' version, like the Nurse in *Choephori*, has acted as a parent to Orestes.

out of sexual passion[25] and she is called *δύσθεος γυνά* (*Cho.* 46, 525 cf. 191; *δύσθεον μίσημα*, S. *El.* 289; also Pindar's description of her at *P.* 11.22 *νηλὴς γυνά*). Sophocles has created the most extended deceit among the preserved accounts of Orestes' return. This prolonged *δόλος* focuses extensively on Clytaemestra and Electra and on the relationship between them. Waiting for Orestes directs the feelings (e.g. S. *El.* 305-6, 780-2) and the actions of both women. In Orestes' absence Sophocles' Clytaemestra prays to Apollo that she may retain the wealth and the power that she regained by murdering Agamemnon (S. *El.* 648ff.). She ill-treats Electra (S. *El.* 189-92, 597-600, 814-16), even beats her, and with Aegisthus she threatens to imprison her (S. *El.* 379ff.). Clytaemestra is expected to be pleased at news of Orestes' death (S. *El.* 56-7, 666-7) and she is called an unnatural mother by her daughter (*μήτηρ ἀμήτωρ*, S. *El.* 1154 cf. 1194).

5.4.3. Electra

Electra plays the counter-role of Clytaemestra. She is made to long passionately for Orestes' return and revenge and her *θυμός* derives from her mother's deed.[26] The extended deceit in Sophocles' version places Electra in a larger perspective and gives the occasion for a complex of events until the reunion of brother and sister which lead to the climax of the great climax of the murders. In the parodos of Sophocles' *Electra* we learn about her sorrow and despair and courage, with a great loyalty to her father's memory and with a strong feeling of duty to avenge him. Sophocles introduces the absence of Orestes as a source of suspense for the stage actors. There have been messages of Orestes' return but none of them has materialised yet (*τί γὰρ οὐκ ἐμοὶ / ἔρχεται ἀγγελίας ἀπατώμενον*, S. *El.* 169-70). The Chorus in the first episode specifically ask for news about Orestes (*καὶ δή σ'ἐρωτῶ, τοῦ κασιγνήτου τί φής, / ἥξοντος, ἢ μέλλοντος;* S. *El.* 318) and Electra's ignorance (169-70, 319 cf. 304-7) emphasizes her prolonged waiting. Electra's integrity is explored further in a dialogue with Chrysothemis, who admits that Electra is right even if Chrysothemis does not have the courage to act in the same way (S. *El.* 338-40; cf. 357-8, 396). This is also visually represented. Chrysothemis, in her fine robes is contrasted with Electra's shabby clothes (190-2). So the whole scene between the two sisters is set to reveal

[25] S. *El.* 271-6 cf. 197. Compare Electra's attitude towards Clytaemestra's relationship to Aegisthus in Euripides' version: *El.* 60-3, 166, 207-12, 1068-90, 1142-6.

[26] Garvie (1986) at 420-2 notes on Electra's character: 'The tragic irony of one who, for pure and innocent motives, must become impure and guilty is exploited by Sophocles at *El.* 616ff. (cf. 221ff., 224ff./ 307ff., 254ff.)'.

Electra's sufferings and deprivations since Agamemnon's death. In the absence of Orestes Electra defends what is right whereas Chrysothemis is morally weak, although both sisters suffer from the sorrows of lovelessness and childlessness (S. *El.* 164-7, 187 cf. Electra on Chrysothemis: 961-6). Sophocles adds Chrysothemis to the cast in order to throw light on Electra's frustrated waiting for Orestes' return and revenge.

Electra is made to remind us of a liminal death-in-life position (e.g. 141; 185-6; 207-8). This is well illustrated especially with her choice to spend her life full of mourning for her father (104, 211 etc.).[27] In terms of dramatic form with Orestes' supposed death Sophocles creates an ironic effect since what Clytaemestra thinks fulfilled will be destroyed by Orestes' homecoming. Instead of a passionate grief Clytaemestra rejoices over her son's supposed death (S. *El.* 1343-5 cf. 1153). Most importantly, the response of Electra at the false story of Orestes' death indicates the magnitude of her struggle specifically now that Orestes' return is not a possibility. Her lament stresses the lack of a maternal grief, since what she says are the words that normally a mother would say over her dead child (*οἴμοι τάλαινα τῆς ἐμῆς πάλαι τροφῆς*, S. *El.* 1143-5). Her love of Orestes is proven stronger than her lust for revenge against her mother and her lover, when she holds in her arm the urn which is supposed to contain Orestes' ashes (S. *El.* 1163-9). The supposed urn of Orestes derives from the *nostos*-story. Deceit, as with the return of Odysseus in disguise in Ithaca, is the kernel of the situation. In this case the *nostos*-story provides the source of strong ironical effect since Electra is deceived. Her hopes are frustrated (810,cf. 856-7 etc.) and she receives the long-awaited hero in a more tragic way than she had expected (*ὥς <σ'> ἀπ' ἐλπίδων / οὐχ ὥνπερ ἐξέπεμπον εἰσεδεξάμην*, S. *El.* 1127).[28] In *Choephori* Electra experiences great suffering by the absence of Orestes but her torment in Aeschylus' text is not made to last as long as in Sophocles' version, for at line 225 she is reunited with Orestes. But still she retains in Aeschylus her unmarried state (cf. 700 *PMG* on my p.96), as she says of herself that she is *ἄτεκνος* and *ἀνύμφευτος* in Sophocles' version (164-7 cf. 187). Her lack of children and husband is a source of bitterness for her. Electra's beauty wastes away while she waits *ἄλεκτρα* for Orestes' return (S. *El.* 962). In Euripides' version Electra is married to a peasant. This humiliating

[27] See Seaford (1985) 315-23 for the perversion of mourning in S. *El.* Electra's condition in *Choephori* is also associated with the fusion of marriage into death. She promises offerings to her father's tomb (*Cho.* 486-8) that will come from her dowry (*παγκληρίας*, *Cho.* 486; the word is used for dowry in Eur. *Ion* 814) and will be dedicated on her wedding day (*Cho.* 487). There is a connection of marriage and death ritual when Electra prays to Persephone (*Cho.* 490), the archetypal bride of Hades.

[28] This reminds us how the return of the absent hero in the *nostos*- plays of Greek tragedy (e.g. the return of Xerxes and Agamemnon in A. *Pers.* and A. *Ag.* respectively) turns out more tragic than had been anticipated.

marriage is no marriage since it prolongs her virginity and she remains childless (E. *El.* 247-71). It does not, as a result, deliver her from sufferings. In Euripides' text the different emotional responses to Orestes' homecoming by mother and daughter are represented visually. A self-indulgent Clytaemestra specifically in her grand entrance (E. *El.* 998ff.) is contrasted with a deprived Electra. Thus one can see that Orestes' *nostos* raises certain reactions and expectations especially for Electra and Clytaemestra.

5.4.4. Dream-motif

Moreover, it is the response of the waiting figures to Orestes' return that generates the drama in a series of incidents. The anxiety of the waiting figures over the absent hero is explored in a series of events. There are two distinctive *nostos*-motifs with dramatic effect in the story of Orestes' return and revenge. First, the motif of dream derives from the *nostos*-story and affects the dramatic action of *Choephori* and Sophocles' *Electra.* We possess a Stesichorean, an Aeschylean and a Sophoclean version of Clytaemestra's dream. Stesichorus' fragment (219 *PMG*) — the only surviving pre-Aeschylean account of Clytaemestra's dream — influenced both Aeschylus and Sophocles. Aeschylus adapts this theme to his own purpose, making it part of the snake imagery of his trilogy. Clytaemestra in Aeschylus gives birth to a snake. She thinks it represents Agamemnon (A. *Cho.* 32-41, 523-31) and she sends Electra to placate the spirit of the husband she has long ago murdered and consigned to a dishonoured grave. The libation-scene underlines the flaw in Orestes' return (see pp. 103-4 and esp. my n.18). The pouring of the libations, normally an appeasement (*θελκτήριον*) for the dead, becomes an appeal for help for the murder. At 928 Clytaemestra realises that Orestes and the snake are one and the same. The snake first symbolises the avenger, then his enemies (1046-7), and it eventually turns into a visual symbol for the Furies (1049-50). Like the web/robe imagery the snake underlines thematically the ambiguity of the retribution. The dream of Clytaemestra in *Choephori* serves as a model for the dream Sophocles gives his Clytaemestra (S. *El.* 410-27, 459-60, 498-502, 644-47). In Sophocles' version a sceptre is substituted for the snake. This is a powerful symbol that contains echoes from Homer[29] (*Il.* 2.101ff.) and Aeschylus' *Agamemnon,* where at 966-7 Clytaemestra compares Agamemnon to a plant producing shade against excessive heat. This image of fertility uttered by Clytaemestra as

[29] On the sceptre of Pelops as a symbol of power, see Van Wees (1992) 284-5.

Agamemnon is about to walk into the house over the expensive carpet has an ominous effect and it is now recalled by the symbol of the sceptre in Clytaemestra's dream.

Sophocles does not introduce the dream early on as in *Choephori*, where it has a stronger functional relevance, since it sets up the initial entry of the Chorus and Electra that leads up to the recognition-scene. What matters is that in both dramatists the purpose of Clytaemestra's dream is to remind her of the crime and to make her send propitiatory offerings in the hands of a daughter (Electra in *Choephori*/ Chrysothemis in S. *Electra*) to the tomb of Agamemnon. She hopes that by sending libations she can appease his anger. On the contrary the dramatic action which derives from the warning dream of Clytaemestra leads to the event that will fulfill Agamemnon's anger. This dramatic irony is emphasized by the fact that Clytaemestra has been scornful of dreams (*Ag.* 274f.) and she also invented dreams (*Ag.* 891) in order to present the image of the faithful waiting wife worrying in her lonely bed. In the absence of her husband a wife is normally expected to have difficult nights. One has in mind how Penelope spent her days and nights in tears (*Od.*13.333ff. cf. 16.37ff. etc.) and how Heracles's absence affected Deianeira's sleeping patterns.[30] In a *nostos*-story the female waiting figure worries about the fortune of the absent hero. This affects her nights and it can, thus, be reflected in her dreams. In the case of Clytaemestra her nights are sleepless (S. *El.* 777ff.)[31] since she lives under the threat of Orestes' return.

Atossa sees Xerxes in her dream (*Pers.*176-230), since she has no news from the day of his departure. The dream is a means of bringing the absent hero to life in the mind of the waiting figure. Penelope has a dream (*Od.*19.535-53) that symbolises the effect of Odysseus' absence in her life. It is a manifest message of Odysseus' return. Penelope does not believe in it (*Od.*19.560). Her decision to set a contest after such a symbolical reassurance of Odysseus' imminent homecoming has puzzled commentators.[32] I think that after many years of waiting one is a prey to a mixture of feelings and Penelope after such desperate waiting does not believe in Odysseus' return.[33] She states that her dream issued through the gates of ivory (*Od.*19.559-68). Her sceptical comments are exploited in the ambiguous role of dreams in tragedy (*Ag.* 274-5, *OT* 981-3, *IT* 1259-84 S. *El.*645). In the tragedies that have come down to us the dreams afflict women, with one exception in *Rhesus* (780-88). All the dreams in tragedy, apart from Io's (*Pr.* 640-72), were imagined to

[30] See Easterling (1982) on 28-30: 'the stress on night suggests D. lying awake'.
[31] On Clytaemestra's restless nights because of the dreams see also *Cho.* (523-5).
[32] For possible solutions to this problem see: Russo (1992) Vol.3 at 19.572-81.
[33] So Rutherford (2001) 270: 'Her failure to interpret the omen, recognizing the eagle as Odysseus surely prefigures her doubts and hesitation in Book 23, and this is consistent with Penelope's disillusioned hopelessness, the trait of many disappointments.'

have originated in the chthonic world of Gaia and the dead. It is Agamemnon who sends Clytaemestra's dream in Sophocles' *Electra* (459f.) and the powers below in *Choephori*.[34] Clytaemestra's dream (*Cho.*32-46, 523-50; S. *El.* 410-27) foreshadows her murder, Io's dream (*Pr.* 640-72) orders her to submit to Zeus, and Atossa's dream (*Pers.* 176-230) prefigures the defeat of Xerxes at Salamis.

The dream of Atossa (*Pers.*) and Clytaemestra (*Cho.* and S. *El.*) is a device of crisis. One should appreciate the utility of this *nostos*-motif in the dramatic form of the plays. There is foreboding when the dream appears. It seems merely to feed into the fears or expectations of the stage figures. Because the dreams uniformly portend evil, characters pray and make offerings to avert evil (A. *Pers.* 201-30, 517-26, *Ch.* 44-46, 523-50; S. *El.* 406-10, 426-7, 630-59). It is thus a guide to the action with the subsequent scene of libations to Darius and the Necromancy-scene where Xerxes is blamed just before his return, and the libations to the tomb of Agamemnon where the recognition of Orestes and his sister takes place. The course of the play fulfills the dream itself. But the themes in Atossa's (e.g. theme of clothes) dream will be understood by the audience only later. Clytaemestra's dream builds up towards Orestes' return and revenge. As in the *Persians* where the foreboding atmosphere is established long before the dream appears, in *Choephori* and Sophocles' *Electra* Clytaemestra's dream is added to the situation of tension already created by Orestes' return. The dream has scared Clytaemestra (S. *El.* 636 cf. *Cho.*532ff) and inspires her to offer sacrifice and prayer. In Sophocles' *Electra* Clytaemestra feels open about the outcome (S. *El.* 646-9) and her silent prayer for Orestes' death is ironically fulfilled by the false messenger speech (660-763). Sophocles by introducing the dream-motif later in the play explores further the responses to its context by the female-waiting figures. Chrysothemis is vague about it (esp. at 414). Electra assumes that the dream has a divine provenance (415-16) and some hope is rekindled in her heart (see 453ff. esp. 459f.). The Chorus interpret it in a positive way (474ff.). They have confidence that dreams have meaning (495ff.) and that the correct interpretation of this dream is that *Δίκη* and *Ἐρινύς* are coming to avenge Agamemnon. In the same way Orestes interprets Clytaemestra's dream as a prediction of his return and revenge in *Choephori* (549-50). Resort to the dream-motif can serve to heighten the dramatic tension. It derives from the *nostos*-story. Absence leads to anxiety. A dream is a warning sign that in tragedy

[34] See Garvie (1986) at 43-6.

comes true.[35] The dreamers in a *nostos*-story are women. They are those who are engaged in waiting. When the dream appears it adds to the sense of foreboding already established in the play. It is an agent of ambiguity and it initiates themes that the audience will understand only later. Its ominous context portends evil and thus it inspires characters to make offerings. This has a dramatic effect on the plot.

5.4.5. Recognition-scene

Secondly, the recognition-scene with its deception tales, disguise and tokens is a motif internal to the epic *nostos*. Recognition is an integral motif of the return stories of other cultures such as the Yugoslav tradition as A.B. Lord has shown. In Russian fairy tales the hero is often recognised by a mark or a brand.[36] In the ballad of Modern Greek poetry the 'Return of the long absent hero' the homecoming theme is interwoven with the features of a recognition (deceit, false story, testing and tokens).[37] In the second half of the *Odyssey* long after his return to Ithaca Odysseus avoided recognition. This has an ironic effect on the narrative when the disguised Odysseus encounters those who wait for him and tells them one of his false stories. There is constant suspense in case premature recognition would thwart Odysseus' revenge-plans. This epic material of recognition was dramatised in tragedy. The recognition-scene is not used in the most straightforward *nostos*-plays (*Pers. Ag. Trach.*). But *nostos* is a multiform capable of variations. Thus the story of Orestes' return and revenge provides us with another feature of a *nostos*-story. By examining the use of the recognition-scene in the preserved tragic accounts of Orestes' return we enrich our understanding of the treatment of the *nostos*-pattern in Greek tragedy, relating it particularly to the *Odyssey*. The first surviving tragic recognition appears in *Choephori* (164-245). Delay is not a particular feature of the recognition between brother and sister in Aeschylus' version of Orestes' return. But by hiding himself (16ff.) Orestes, like the returning hero who makes his relative undergo a trial to prove his loyalty, can make sure that Electra is on his side. Electra first in stichomythia with the Chorus finds the lock of hair, which arouses hesitant hopes (*Cho.* 183-211 cf. Penelope's feelings at *Od.* 23.1-84). At the sight of the prints (*Cho.* 203f.) her hopes increase. When she is confronted with Orestes she is again not willing to believe in his identity. Only with the proof of the

[35] The only case in the surviving tragedies that a dream does not come true is the dream of Iphigeneia in E. *IT* (42ff. cf. 150ff.). Later in the play (569f.) Iphigeneia complains that the dream misled her.
[36] See Propp (1968) 62.
[37] See my section 1.3, pp. 23-7.

embroidery (212-45 cf. *Od.* 19.221ff.) does she eventually break down. Aeschylus takes care to explore Electra's agonising uncertainties between hope and doubt.[38] In addition, Orestes recognises his sister without fuss and immediately. The poet is mainly concerned to explore Electra's feelings on the occasion of Orestes' return after so much waiting. In the corresponding scene in Euripides' text Orestes himself raises the question of his return (E. *El.* 274) after he is reassured by Electra that she has nothing *φίλτερον* (243). Most remarkably, Orestes does not express any significant emotion when he meets Electra and she is not made to feel any particular warmth towards the disguised Orestes. We are encouraged to concentrate on her persistence in error about Orestes' identity. Euripides carefully prepares the recognition scene when Electra sends her husband to the aged tutor, who as we learn from the preceding stichomythia (see 285) is the only man certain that could identify Orestes (see my next page). As in Aeschylus' *Choephori* Orestes in Euripides' text is made to withdraw when he first sees Electra. It is in both plays ironical that Electra prays for Orestes' homecoming when he has already returned (*Cho.* 138; E. *El.* 277ff.). In these two plays, when Orestes speak to his sister he knows her true identity whereas in Sophocles' text he fails at first to recognise his sister when he comes face to face with her.[39] Thus *nostos* gives occasion for strong ironical effects. The recognition scene comes late in Sophocles' *Electra*. By arranging the recognition-scene late in the play Sophocles explores further the effects of waiting for Orestes' return on the stage figures (see pages 106-109) and we are kept in suspense as to how he is going to be received, although we, unlike the stage actors, know he is back. Electra is alone for the greater part of the play and we are made to admire her integrity. The effect, therefore, of the postponement of the reunion is reflected in the extended focus on Electra. Most remarkably, Electra rejects the genuine evidence of Orestes' lock of hair (see 920ff.; see also 879f., 883f.) and she accepts the false and deceptive one (the supposed urn of ashes) while Orestes stands before her (see e.g. 1129). Moreover, once Orestes' death is no longer questioned (see esp. 954) Electra feels that the task of avenging her father falls to her and to her sister, Chrysothemis. In this way Sophocles explores the emotional responses of Electra until *dolos* drops away with the recognition scene.

In addition, deceit is structurally effective. Rather than having Orestes tell his own lies, as at *Choephori* 674f., Sophocles makes the Paidagogus act as messenger who

[38] Solmsen (1967) 7-9 has drawn attention to the psychological insight displayed throughout this episode.
[39] The interpreters of Sophocles' *Electra* differ on whether Orestes realises Electra's identity as soon as he meets her. With Solmsen (1967) 26-9 I believe that Orestes fails to recognise his sister immediately.

announces the supposed death of Orestes (680ff.). This scene leads up to the arrival of the fictitious remains of Orestes.[40] The supposed urn of ashes derives from the *nostos*-pattern. As in the other *nostos*-plays (A. *Pers.* 249ff.; A. *Ag.* 503ff.; S. *Tr.* 794ff.), a messenger precedes the arrival of the absent hero and describes what he has been doing in his absence. But the irony of Sophocles' treatment of this *nostos*-element of the plot is that in his *Electra* the Paidagogus who acts as a messenger describes Orestes' death (cf. E. *Andr.* 1085-1165, where Neoptolemus returns only as a corpse). We picture Orestes in our mind during the Paidagogus' false narrative. Instead of his imminent return the deceptive story leads to the arrival of the Phocian men with Orestes' ashes (S. *El.* 756ff.). Most importantly, the style and the subject matter of the false chariot story are reminiscent of the Pindaric odes.[41] His supposed death derives from the chariot race.[42] Sophocles, therefore, carefully creates the picture of a brilliant Orestes who is associated with athletic victory (682ff., cf. 85, 505). Orestes is also expected as a victor in Euripides' version and is associated with athletic imagery (e.g. E. *El.* 614, 751, 761-2, 854-89). His victory would be the murders. Electra will crown Orestes on his return (872, 874, 880ff.) after the death of Aegisthus. Unlike Agamemnon who is condemned before his return (*Ag.* 471ff.) Orestes' return in *Choephori* is expected with an optimistic feeling by Electra (see e.g. 138) and the Chorus (see e.g. 115). However, the longed for-victory (see *Cho.*148, 866-8) turns into no victory at all (as in Heracles' return in S. *Tr.* and E. *Her.*). Orestes is not enviable, as one would expect in the case of a victorious athlete, since he is polluted (*ἄζηλα νίκης τῆσδ' ἔχων μιάσματα*, A. *Cho.* 1017).

In Euripides it is the old man that brings about the recognition (578) by a chance visit to the tomb. We are encouraged to expect him to identify Orestes, since in the preceding stichomythia (see above p.113) he was mentioned as the only person certain to recognise the returning hero. The poet thus carefully prepares a promising situation, when Electra sends her husband to the aged tutor (408-19) who may help them out with some guest-fare for a meal. However, what we are led to expect does not happen immediately but Euripides first introduces a scene between Electra and the old tutor where she refuses to accept the *τεκμήρια* for Orestes' presence in Argos. Electra rejects the recognition-by-tokens that echo the equivalent scene in *Choephori*. There are features reminiscent of the *Odyssey*. The scar on Orestes' forehead (E. *El.* 572-3) echoes the scene where Odysseus is

[40] See Taplin (1977) 83 with his n.2; cf. Solmsen (1965) 21.
[41] Note for example the proclamation of the herald at 693-4. Cf. the epinician motifs associated with the returning hero in Aeschylus *Agamemnon* (esp. in the tapestry scene) and in Sophocles' *Trachiniae* (186 etc.).
[42] The image of Orestes as a charioteer is prominent in *Choephori* (1022f., cf. 794-6).

identified through an ancient scar by his old nurse (*Od.* 19.202). Odysseus, like Orestes in Euripides, pushes his disguise to the limit until revealing himself to Laertes (*Od.*24). Electra's scepticism could be compared with Penelope's (*Od.* 23. 85-240). The old man reminds us of Eurycleia or Eumaeus in Odysseus' *nostos*-story. Unlike Euripides' handling of the recognition-scene, where there is no time for brother and sister to rejoice, in Sophocles' text the feeling of joy and relief fills Electra's mind. She forgets the next step of vengeance. Her life is dominated so far by the memory of the murder of her father but the reunion with Orestes overwhelmed her with joy (see esp. 1272, 1278, 1302f. etc.). It is the aged tutor who reproaches brother and sister for not being mindful of the dangerous aspects of the situation (1326ff. esp. 1333ff.) and thus reminds them of the necessity to proceed with the vengeance-plan. One can, therefore, see that the dramatic situation produced by the recognition-scene is susceptible to varied treatment. For all the variety in its treatment there are three fundamental situations. First, the desired brother (husband in *Odyssey*) is absent. Secondly, there is a sign of the absent hero, his lock of hair, that is integrally associated with grave-offerings (*Cho.* 164-245; S. *El.* 885-6; E. *El* 514-15). Finally, brother and sister meet but the true identity of Orestes is concealed. He is in disguise. In *Choephori* Orestes reveals himself more quickly than in the other two tragic accounts of his return. In Sophocles'version the delay between mutual recognition is longer than in *Choephori* and in Euripides' *Electra.* This heightens the tension before Orestes' ultimate self-declaration. The Paidagogus acts as a messenger who leads towards the arrival of the fictitious remains of Orestes. The deceitful story of Orestes' death motivates Electra's desperate decision to act alone against Aegisthus. In Euripides' text recognition is made dependent upon the tritagonist thus increasing the variety of possible reaction. This evidence suggests that the recognition-scene is an essential feature of the plot in Greek tragedy involving Orestes' return and revenge.

On the whole, I hope that I have shown that disguise and recognition are essential in the return of Orestes-plots. Each of the three dramatists carefully prepares the recognition-scene between Electra and Orestes at a different point of the plot. Most importantly, the prolonged use of deceit by Sophocles in his *Electra* makes the recognition-scene the climax of the plot that leads to the equally great climax of the murders. Thus it is evident that each dramatist exploits the *nostos*-theme in Orestes-plots in a different way. In particular, as we have seen, Orestes' *nostos* occurs with varying elaboration of Agamemnon's return and that of Odysseus. In addition, in the Orestes-plots the *nostos*-story is based upon the return of the head of the household. His homecoming involves, apart from the revenge, issues of

justice and inheritance.[43] Orestes in that way may bear comparison to Telemachus' case in the absence of Odysseus, since apart from the grief for his father's absence he has to face the political aspect of his mother's remarriage. However, as the figure of the avenger returning home Orestes resembles clearly the homecoming of Odysseus. In any case all three tragic accounts of Orestes' return contain a flawed *nostos* of the absent hero. He returns not to be reunited with his mother but in order to take revenge for his father's murder. The motifs (see e.g. the motif of hospitality at A. *Cho.* 653-718) that would normally mark the wanderer's true homecoming are perverted. Thus the expectations aroused by the *nostos*-pattern, with its simple movement towards achievement of the return of the absent hero, cannot be seen as inflexible. The dramatists were exploiting the *nostos*-pattern by modifying or even thwarting these expectations. One may conclude that there was variation between the Orestes-plots. Furthermore, I have shown that the distinctive use of *nostos* in the Orestes-plots is that we are aware of the hero's return. However, we are still kept in suspense as to how Orestes is going to be received. Unlike the audience the stage actors are engaged in waiting for Orestes' homecoming. This creates ironical effects on the plot and brings about the plan of revenge. Therefore, I have suggested that irony is central to the *nostos*-theme as a structural device within the Orestes-plots. In addition, a chief remark in the study of *nostos* in Orestes-plots is that the *nostos*-pattern depends in large upon the doubling of the waiting between Electra and Clytaemestra (cf. Andromache and Hermione in E. *Andr.*)[44]. As I have shown, the subject of Orestes' return polarises the attitude of Clytaemestra and Electra. Waiting for Orestes dominates the words and deeds of both women. Finally, it is fair to say that *nostos* is not the fulcrum of the action in the preserved tragic accounts of Orestes' return. They move beyond the return of Orestes to events which have only analogies with the treatment of the pure *nostos*-pattern, especially associated with the element of deceit, and finally transcend it. They thus shape elements of the pure *nostos*-pattern in a form suitable for Orestes' revenge action.

[43] See Garvie (1986) on 299-301; cf. S. *El.* 1290-1.
[44] Sophocles in his version of Orestes' return and revenge adds Chrysothemis to the cast. She splits the role that Electra plays in *Choephori.*

6. Euripidean *nostos*-drama

What has so far been said about the use of the *nostos*-pattern in Greek tragedy can be extended to the treatment of *nostos* by Euripides. I have examined how the *nostos*-story, with reference especially to the literary treatment of *nostos* in the *Odyssey*, was transformed into the plots of tragedy. In particular, this *nostos*-story is the fulcrum of the dramatic action in Aeschylus *Persians*, Aeschylus *Agamemnon* and Sophocles *Trachiniae*. These tragedies may be properly called *nostos*-plays. I have also suggested that elements of the *nostos*-pattern are perceptible in the plays which deal with Orestes' return and his subsequent revenge (A. *Cho.*, S. *El.* and E. *El.*). In this chapter I will discuss the use of the *nostos*-theme in Euripides' *Andromache* and *Heracles*. As I intend to show, these two plays are considered here, since *nostos* is being manipulated and used by the poet as a means of creative variation within the plot and the imagery of both plays. Nonetheless, it should be emphasised that, as I mentioned in my Introduction (pp.27-8), Euripides treats *nostos* in other occasions. Of these, one should recognise the poetic manipulation of the *nostos*-theme in the absence of Theseus in Euripides *Hippolytus*. Both his absence and his return allow things to happen in the storyline of the play. Most remarkably, Theseus' absence gives occasion to a complex of events: the prolonged secret passion of Phaedra for Hippolytus that leads to the intervention of the Nurse and the suicide of Theseus' wife. In addition, we are invited to expect his return as a crucial element for the working out of the plot, since Aphrodite from the very beginning of the play says that she will reveal (42) the passion of Phaedra for Hippolytus to Theseus and the latter will kill his son with the curses that Poseidon gave him (44-5). So when the Nurse explains to the Chorus that Theseus is away (see 281 and the reason of his absence is explained upon his return, 790ff.) his return would be associated with the plans of Aphrodite mentioned in the prologue. However, the focus of the audience is not exclusively turned to Theseus. Most importantly, from the dramatic point of view the play is not structured around the hero's return.[1] Unlike this

[1] See also Taplin (1977) 124: 'We may detect a diluted version of the returning hero and his entry in the Euripidean 'tyrants', who are away on a mission and expected back'. He cites as examples from Euripides' work (see his n.5) Theseus in *Hippolytus* and the local tyrant in *Helen* and *Iphigeneia in Tauris*. In all three plays the absence of these figures is not the frame of the plot. I suggest, however, that there is a clear distinction between Theseus and these two foreign tyrants (Thoas and Theoclymenus). Theseus' *nostos* is an essential mechanism in the plot whereas the kind of *nostos* in the case of the two local 'tyrants' is a minor element for the dramatic structure of the plays. Their entry is exploited as part of the escape-stories in the end of the plot. A similar figure to this local 'tyrant' is Aegisthus especially in Sophocles' *Electra*, whose entry leads to his murder.

diluted version of the use of *nostos* Euripides' creative response to the *nostos*-pattern is evident in his *Andromache* and *Heracles*, where the return of the absent hero influences the inner logic of the plays. The treatment of *nostos* as a means of creative variation on the part of Euripides is well demonstrated in the account of *Andromache*. To anticipate, the plot in Euripides' *Andromache* is depended on the doubling of the waiting figure. Neoptolemus is expected to return by a concubine (Andromache) and a wife (Hermione). I also suggest that in both *Andromache* and *Heracles* the poetic manipulation of the *nostos*-theme is evident in the crossing of a suppliant-plot with a *nostos*-plot. Moreover, my discussion of *nostos* especially in the account of *Andromache* will consider the creation of suspense and surprise through the interaction with the audience response and expectations based on earlier plays. The argument is made that *nostos* emphasises the impossibility of a 'return to the same'. I also show the effect of *nostos* on the household. Finally, I should stress that my treatment of *Heracles* proceeds as far as the final catastrophe. I have included it in my discussion because I believe that it well illustrates the divergences in the use of *nostos* in tragedy. As I intend to show, in *Heracles* the plot-structure goes beyond the closure implied in a pure *nostos*-pattern, such as Sophocles' *Trachiniae*, where *nostos*-structure is used to avoid premature closure.

6.1. *Andromache* and *Heracles*

Before turning to the specific *nostos*-elements of each play I shall point out the similarities between these plays. This comparison will illustrate how the *nostos*-pattern can provide interesting parallels. In both *Andromache* and *Heracles* the absence of Neoptolemus and Heracles respectively has made the crises of the opening lines possible. What begins as a suppliant play is combined with the *nostos*-pattern. In the absence of their 'husbands' both Megara and Andromache are suppliants at altars.[2] They both look back to the happy days of the past in their helplessness (Megara thinks of her happy past in Thebes: *Her.* 63ff., and Andromache does to hers in (Hypoplakian) Thebes and Troy: *Andr.* 1-5). Euripides carefully prepares a scenario where the suppliants' saviour is supposed to be the returning hero. Thus the *σωτήρ*-figure of the suppliant drama[3] and the returning hero of the *nostos*-pattern overlap. The combination of the two multiforms well illustrates the flexibility of

[2] A suppliant scene is one of Euripides' favourite openings (cf. *Hcld.*, *Suppl.*, *Hel.* at the tomb of Proteus).
[3] On the use of *ἱκεσία* as a dramatic form in Euripides' *Andromache* and *Heracles* see Kopperschmidt (1967) 161-92; on the suppliant drama as a multiform see Burian (1971) esp. 1-33.

Euripidean composition. The transformation of the suppliant enhances the multiple impact of the *nostos*-drama. The episode until Andromache's rescue and Menelaus' rout has a similar structure to that of the saved suppliants in *Heracles*. Having in common the threat of the expulsion from a sanctuary the defiant speech of Andromache (*Andr.* 319-63) resembles that of Amphitryo (*Her.* 339-347), also a suppliant at an altar who makes a defiant speech in response to the threats of the tyrant Lycus.[4] The last-minute appearance of a rescuer was a favourite motif of Euripides. But in Euripides' *Heracles* it is the absent father of the household that arrives in the nick of time and saves the suppliants whereas the rescuer in *Andromache* is not the absent father but Peleus. The return of Neoptolemus is suspended until the conclusion of the tragedy. In that way *Andromache* is more relevant to my discussion of the *nostos*-pattern since Neoptolemus' return is the focus and the conclusion of tragedy. In *Heracles* the rescue is overturned by the surprising entry of the two goddesses, Iris and Lyssa. Euripides was interested in the dramatic effects of the sudden plot turns. For my present purpose it will be sufficient to show how Euripides uses the *nostos*-pattern to bring Heracles back. My immediate interest is to analyse the *Andromache* in terms of *nostos*. Then I will turn to *Heracles* and discuss the elements of the play that lead up to Heracles' return. This analysis will permit us to see how the *nostos*-pattern is arranged and varied by Euripides.

6.2. *Nostos* in Euripides *Andromache*

In each tragedy that deals with a *nostos*-story the dramatist adapts the *nostos*-pattern to its particular dramatic context. The structure of *Andromache* is based on the well-known *nostos*-pattern of the hero's return.[5] As in the *Odyssey*, the absence of the head of the household leads to problems at home. In *Andromache* disaster strikes while Neoptolemus is away. We are encouraged to foresee his return as a crucial event. But as Lloyd points out: 'Neoptolemus' return is preceded by an unusually complex sequence of events in his home: not only the persecution of Andromache by Hermione and Menelaus, but also Hermione's elopement with Orestes.'[6] Most remarkably, Neoptolemus returns only as a corpse. Euripides is self-consciously playing with the *nostos*-pattern. He raises expectations for his

[4] For the parallelism on the theme of trickery in the suppliant situation in *Andr.* and *Her.*, see Gould (1973) 83 n.46.
[5] See Lloyd (1994) 3 and my Introduction on pp. 2-3 and especially my account of *nostos* in the *Odyssey* as a particular important intertext for Greek culture, pp. 8-23.
[6] Lloyd (1994) 3.

audience in anticipating the return of Neoptolemus and the reinstatement of social and domestic order, which he then frustrates. To illustrate this one need only examine how Euripides combines the *nostos*-elements (already identified in A. *Pers.*, A. *Ag.*, S. *Tr.*) in his *Andromache*.

In *Andromache* Euripides takes characters familiar from the Trojan war and explores their post-war sufferings. The play takes place when many Homeric heroes, like Hector, have lost their *nostos* in the battle. Andromache, Hector's wife, now belongs to the household of Neoptolemus. The son of Achilles returned home safely after the war (see *Od.* 3.189). Euripides uses a *nostos*-pattern to bring out the impact of the Trojan concubine's presence on the post-war household of a Greek warrior. He chooses to focus at length on the clash between wife and concubine.[7] This is foregrounded by the absence of Neoptolemus.[8] I would argue that Euripides keeps Neoptolemus in mind throughout the play and despite his absence he is the source of suspense. The expectation of his return directs the feelings and actions of the stage actors. This expectation is ironically met with a tragic homecoming. Discussion of the structure of the play will show that the play's dynamic is based on the hero's return in so far as Euripides adapts the *nostos*-pattern in *Andromache*. However, the treatment of *nostos* in Euripides' text is ironical. When Neoptolemus does return, it is only as a corpse. 'In this *Andromache* is closer to that genre which is most strongly addicted (even more so than tragedy) to cause and effect: the detective story, where often the detective tracks down the murderer by coming to know the deceased through the eyes of his acquaintances, friends and relations, one of whom, of course, is the murderer.'[9] As with the character of the victim in a classic detective story that never appears except dead, in *Andromache* Neoptolemus exists for us, the audience, only by virtue of the fact that the characters on stage speak about him. [10]

6.3. Waiting for Neoptolemus

This is well shown in the opening apostrophe of the play (1-55) where Andromache functions as one of the two[11] waiting females of this *nostos*-play. Andromache has a

[7] It is very likely that this was an innovation of Euripides. On the alteration and combination of heroic myth in *Andromache*, see Allan (2000) 36. Note that the stability of the house is also threatened by the concubine that the absent hero brings into his house in Aeschylus *Agamemnon* and Sophocles *Trachiniae*.
[8] This is another significant difference from Sophocles' *Hermione*, see Allan (2000) 17-8.
[9] Mossman (1996) 146 and for the prominence of Neoptolemus despite his absence see esp. 149ff.
[10] Contra Grube (1961) 213: 'When his body is carried in, it is to us the body of a stranger.'
[11] The other waiting-female figure in this play is Hermione, the wife of the absent hero.

mixture of feelings about Neoptolemus. He is for Andromache an unwanted lover and loving father.[12] She is not like Penelope, the loving waiting-wife of the *Odyssey*. Andromache's evocation of the past (1-15) in her opening speech reveals this most clearly. The repetition of δοθεῖσα (4 ~ 15) enhances the contrast between her past status as a loved and loving wife of Hector and the present one as a concubine and a slave of Neoptolemus' household. Andromache represents the bearer of sufferings for women in war. Euripides takes care to place Andromache in the household of Neoptolemus with the past echoes of her Iliadic features. The recollection of her past happy days (2-5) sets up the crisis facing her now in the starkest emotional terms. Andromache's speech is merely expository but it affects our response to the other main figures of the play. Most remarkable is that she refers to Neoptolemus in many cases. He is mentioned at 14, 21-3, 33, 36-8 and we are clearly meant to keep him in mind at 49-50, where his concubine gives the reasons of his absence. Neoptolemus is not an abstract principle.[13] Andromache is his concubine (14), who bore Molossus to him (24-5) and he has a grandfather, Peleus (22-3). Although Neoptolemus never speaks we are encouraged to reconstruct his persona. We learn that Neoptolemus lives privately, not wanting to usurp Peleus' authority (21-3). He has a wife, Hermione, who in her jealousy intends to kill Andromache (39) with the aid of Menelaus, a bitter enemy of Neoptolemus. The absence of Neoptolemus is the key to the situation. Hermione dares to operate while he is away. Andromache takes refuge at the temple of Thetis (42-4) in her isolation. Neoptolemus is Molossus' father and she expects him as a source of succour (49-50) for herself and her son, whom she has smuggled out (47-8). When Andromache by the end of her prologue speech gives the reasons for Neoptolemus' absence (49-55: to atone for a former insult against Apollo)[14] we are encouraged to wonder whether Neoptolemus will return from his mission and what he will make of his crisis at home.

The prologue-speech sets the *nostos*-pattern (50: Neoptolemus is ἀπών) and it affects our response to the ensuing action. As in the other *nostos* - plays (A. *Pers.*, A. *Ag.*, S. *Tr.*) the absence of the 'hero' points towards his return. Neoptolemus' absence is blamed for the present crisis (49-50). When the Trojan handmaid brings news of developments in the plot against Molossus Neoptolemus' absence is again cited as a criticism (75-6). We are made aware that if Neoptolemus were present none of this would be happening (75-8). This

[12] See Allan (2000) 52; cf. Mossman (1996) 150-1.
[13] See Mossman (1996) 146.
[14] The second visit of Neoptolemus to Delphi is likely a Euripidean invention, see Lloyd (1994) 2; Allan (2000) 36 n.120.

has the effect of making us think that Neoptolemus may be about to come back and rescue his family. However, instead of a speedy homecoming, as in the case of Heracles (in E. *Her.* 514), the possibility of Peleus' arrival is raised for the first time (79ff.). Peleus' arrival is another source of suspense. Euripides deploys in *Andromache* sudden shifts of focus. Neoptolemus is kept in our mind but he never quite appears. The play goes on to elaborate what kind of distress the absence of Neoptolemus has caused to those left at home. Before we actually see on stage the clash of Andromache and Hermione foregrounded by the absence of Neoptolemus our attention is drawn to the suppliant role of Andromache. Euripides has taken care to place her in the large context of her sufferings. In a short monologue she looks back on the reality of the Trojan war. As Hector's widow with her city defeated she fell into an undeserved slavery to Neoptolemus (99 *δούλειον ἦμαρ*). This feeling of victimization and loss is well emphasized by the elegiacs (instead of lyrics) at the end of her short monologue. The dactylic metre in the elegy is highly reminiscent of Andromache's Iliadic grief over Hector.[15] Andromache recounts her past sufferings in view of her current condition, a weeping suppliant in need of divine protection (113-16). Her final remark on her servitude to Hermione (114 *Ἑρμιόνας δούλαν*) increases the impact of Neoptolemus' absence. The servitude of Andromache in the household of Neoptolemus was known by the epic cycle.[16] The marriage of Hermione and Neoptolemus was mentioned in the *Odyssey* (4.3-9). Sophocles (in his lost *Hermione*[17]), Philocles (*TGF* i. 24 F 2) and Theognis (*TGF* i. 28 F 2) present the betrothal of Hermione and Orestes. Euripides' probable contribution[18] to his *Andromache* is to combine these stories in such a way as to focus on the quarrel of Andromache and Hermione. Instead of the epic triangle of two men over a woman Euripides changes it to a triangle of two women over one man. This sheds more light on the trouble in the household of Neoptolemus in his absence. The Chorus' entry is a transition to the actual debate between Andromache and Hermione. The entry of the Phthian women is motivated by the crisis in the household (see esp. 120-1). Sharing the same man, Neoptolemus, is the problem, as the Chorus make clear (122-5). Neoptolemus, the absent hero, is seen as both the solution to Andromache's plight and the cause of the strife between the two women, his concubine and his wife. The Chorus sympathise with Andromache but they reproach her for useless resistance to necessity (cf. E. *Her.* 282-6).

[15] For a discussion of the style and the structure of her lament see Page (1936).
[16] See Lloyd (1994) 1.
[17] See Sutton (1984) 58.
[18] See Lloyd (1994) 7; Conacher (1967) 167-9; Friedrich (1953) 47-50.

6.3.1. Hermione and Andromache

It is Hermione who is responsible for Andromache's suppliant position. Euripides explores the consequences of having a concubine and a wife in the same house in the following scene, which is structured as an agon. So far we have concentrated on the plight of Andromache. Now we are introduced to the other female figure of this *nostos*-play, Hermione. She has every right to feel resentment for Andromache, a rival in her house. However, it is not Andromache's fault who was already the concubine of Neoptolemus at the time of his marriage.[19] Hermione is determined not to tolerate her presence in her household now that her husband is absent. The two opposing speeches by the female-waiting figures, who are related to Neoptolemus, show how central to their preoccupations the absent hero is. Hermione puts the blame on Andromache for being childless and hated by her husband (157f.). She has no reason to be suspicious of Andromache for using drugs (157f. cf. 32f, 205, 355, 709). In her speech Andromache explains Neoptolemus' feelings towards his wife (205-8). We are made to reconstruct Neoptolemus' feelings in his absence. The contrast between the two women is also emphasized visually. Hermione is richly attired and wearing her jewellery (147-8).[20] The quarrel culminates in Hermione's threat to kill Andromache before Neoptolemus' return (255). When Hermione repeats her threat (268) Andromache seems confident (269: *πέποιθα*) that Neoptolemus will come back and save her. Andromache's expectation of Neoptolemus as a saviour contributes to the feeling that he may be back at any moment.

6.3.2. Menelaus

The feeling that Neoptolemus may come back soon and put an end to the trouble at his house is intensified by the treatment of the plot by Euripides. He has innovated[21] in

[19] In contrast to Cassandra and Iole who were introduced into houses where there was already a wife. Seaford interestingly suggests (1987) 129-30 that in the prologue speech of Euripides' text Andromache's departure from Troy appears as the perverted bridal journey. This idea is also implicit in the case of Cassandra and Iole.
[20] We find the same visual opposition in Euripides' *Electra*, where Clytaemestra — like Hermione here — is richly dressed in contrast to Electra who rejects fineries (E. *El.* 175-8). For Eurpides' technique in representing visually these oppositions see Dingel (1971) 366.
[21] Webster (1971) 32 sees 'Euripides experimenting with a new form of tragedy, a triangle of characters, Andromache, Hermione and Neoptolemus – Hermione with her own background of Menelaos and Orestes, and Neoptolemos with his own background of Peleus, who in fact represents him on stage – who are examined in turn, each at a crisis'.

combining the stories of the concubinage of Andromache with the recovery of Hermione by Orestes and the death of Neoptolemus. The audience is kept in suspense as to the precise turn of events. The references to Helen at the conclusion of the debate between Andromache and Hermione and the Chorus' account of the judgement of Paris provide a contrast between Neoptolemus and Menelaus. Euripides takes care to associate these two male figures with their Trojan war echoes. The Trojan background emphasizes Neoptolemus' manhood as it was demonstrated in Troy (cf. 341 where Andromache sounds almost proud of Neoptolemus). This could well have functioned as a prelude to Neoptolemus' appearance. Instead of his heroic homecoming it is Menelaus who enters with Andromache's son and an armed retinue. His intention to kill the child (see 68-9) now becomes part of the plot. If one examines the references to Neoptolemus in the following episode (309-463) one could conclude that the play's dynamics focus on his return. Andromache threatens Menelaus and Hermione that they should beware of Neoptolemus' anger when he returns (339-41 and 344: Neoptolemus will never leave the death of his son unavenged). In addition, Neoptolemus' return becomes vivid in our mind when Andromache declares (355-60) that if she is responsible for making Hermione childless she will account for it to Neoptolemus. As Mossman puts it,[22] 'once again Neoptolemus' arrival in the role of the judge is anticipated, and his role as head of the *oikos* asserted'.

It is Menelaus who tries to usurp Neoptolemus' role as the head of the household (374-7: see how he claims that it is right for him to command his son-in law's-slaves).[23] He refuses (cf. Hermione at 568f.) to wait for Neoptolemus' return. When Andromache makes the selfless choice to leave the shrine to save Molossus the future presence of Neoptolemus is again anticipated. She tells Molossus to go to Neoptolemus and 'kissing him and shedding tears and wrapping your arms around him, tell your father what I did' (414-18). In addition, while Andromache expects Neoptolemus to return home as a rescuer and avenger he is also presented as the cause of events. One need only think of the second stasimon (464-93) where the Chorus reassert the fact that it is Neoptolemus who created this domestic crisis by having a wife and a concubine (see esp. 465:*δίδυμα λέκτρα*). In a *nostos*-story we learn about the character of the absent hero through the viewpoints of those waiting for him at home. Andromache's relationship to Neoptolemus is complex (see pp.120-121). She does not want to sleep with him (390: *βίαι*), but he is the loving father of

[22] Mossman (1996) 150.
[23] On Menelaus' character see what Peleus says about him (694ff.: Menelaus has derived undeserved benefit from the sufferings of the others); cf. Conacher (1967) 178-9, Kovacs (1980) 61-3.

Molossus. This connection is expressed by her son when he cries *ὦ πάτερ,/ μόλε φίλοις ἐπίκουρος* (507-8).[24] The theme of Neoptolemus' absence is again taken up. This is contrasted by the invocation of Andromache to her true husband, *ὦ πόσις πόσις, εἶδε σὰν / χεῖρα καὶ δόρυ σύμμαχον / κτησαίμαν, Πριάμου παῖ* (523-5). The impossibility of Hector's return reveals that by this time Andromache has lost faith in waiting for Neoptolemus as the source of domestic order.

6.3.3. Peleus

In fact a last-minute rescuer is made to appear at this moment but he is not Neoptolemus as was expected.[25] His return is suspended. Although there is no more waiting for Neoptolemus as a rescuer Peleus and Menelaus talk as if they clearly anticipate his arrival. Once again Neoptolemus' absence is considered as the cause of the suppliant drama (558, 567-71). Euripides might have frustrated our expectations of an arrival of Neoptolemus in the role of a rescuer but Peleus reasserts his grandson's importance as the head of the household who will come back and take revenge on Hermione (709-10: *ἦν ὅ γ' ἐξ ἡμῶν γεγὼς / ἐλᾶι δι'οἴκων τήνδ' ἐπισπάσας κόμης*). His return is also kept in Menelaus' mind who makes clear that he will return to discuss things with Neoptolemus face to face (738-9). 'His promise to return to claim justice from Neoptolemus (737ff.) is a subtle instance of deceptive plot prolepsis that again raises the possibility of Neoptolemus' return.'[26] Euripides gives substance to the absent Neoptolemus.[27] We get to know him through the viewpoints of the actors on stage. Peleus offers a new element of his grandson's character. He would not listen to Peleus' advice not to get married to Hermione (619-23). This is another instance where we are encouraged to reconstruct Neoptolemus' character. In terms of dramatic form the possibility of his return is kept vividly in the mind of those on stage. Euripides' decision to prolong the waiting for Neoptolemus' return allows greater scope for examining the consequences of his absence for his household.[28]

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[24] Cf. Heracles' supplicating son who is in danger from his own father (*Her.* 988-9: *Ὦ φίλτατ' αὐδᾶι μή μ'ἀποκτείνηις πάτερ· σός εἰμι, σὸς παῖς·*).
[25] Contrast the suppliant-rescue return pattern of *Heracles*, where the absent father returns in the nick of time.
[26] Allan (2000) 67.
[27] See Mossman (1996) 156 n.40 on lines 738-46: 'The heavy use of polyptoton stresses the reciprocity of Menelaus' relations with Neoptolemus and, while making Menelaus sound splendidly pompous, it also succeeds in making Neoptolemus seem very real.'
[28] Cf. Heath (1987) 103 n.18: 'a premature impression of completeness is avoided in this play by the *nostos* plot'.

6.3.4. Orestes (the intrigue against Neoptolemus)

This is well shown in the reaction of Hermione, who, we are told, wants to kill herself in terror of Neoptolemus' revenge (808-13). We are brought to see the consequences of her actions in the absence of her husband. In a *nostos*-story the return of the absent male figure has a certain meaning for the female waiting figure. By the thought of Neoptolemus' arrival Hermione is panic-stricken. Her distress emerges from the prospect of punishment on the return of Neoptolemus. She thinks that he will throw her out of the house (808-9 cf. what Peleus says at 709-10). She even thinks that he may kill her (856-8 cf. 925-28) but the Nurse claims that Neoptolemus will forgive her (840 cf. 869-70). We are made to speculate what kind of line Neoptolemus will take on his return. It is Orestes who enters (from Delphi) this time. This is again a sudden plot turn (cf. how the anticipated return of Neoptolemus has been substituted by the arrival of Peleus). Neoptolemus is still kept in our mind because Orestes asks Hermione about her household. When Orestes gives the background of his feud with Neoptolemus (966) an arrogant aspect of Neoptolemus' character appears (see esp. 977: *ὁ δ' ἦν ὑβριστής*). Orestes with his grudge against Neoptolemus gives a different picture of him (966-68). 'At this point our perspective of Neoptolemus suddenly changes and from a fearful avenger he becomes himself the object of revenge.'[29] Orestes' final speech focuses on Neoptolemus. The announcement of his plan against Neoptolemus is prompted by Hermione's fear of her husband's return (989-992). Euripides explores Hermione's fearful reaction to Neoptolemus' homecoming dramatically. It is her influence on Orestes which ensures the death of Neoptolemus. 'The anticipated return of Neoptolemus helps to smooth the transition from the action of supplication and rescue to the intrigue against Neoptolemus; and this in turn leads to a more tragic homecoming for him than had been anticipated.'[30] It is still left open whether he will arrive in his death-throes (like Heracles in S. *Tr.*) or whether he might not come back at all.

The final choral ode recalls the matricide of Orestes. The origins of this crime lay in the treachery of a wife, Clytaemestra (1028-36). This alludes to Hermione's present betrayal of Neoptolemus. Thus the ode is related to the preceding action. It also directs the audience's response to the following act. The references to the consequences of the Trojan war on both Greeks (1038-41) and Trojans (1020-3) are dramatically relevant here. Just

[29] De Jong (1990) 10.
[30] Heath (1987) 148.

before Neoptolemus returns as a corpse the Chorus refer to the men who died in battle and were ἀστέφανοι (1021: without a garland as a prize). The reference to Agamemnon's fatal homecoming, which already in the *Odyssey* is used in explicit contrast with Odysseus' return, clearly prepares the audience for the tragic return of Neoptolemus. The short introduction to the messenger-scene continues to intensify our fears for Neoptolemus. Peleus who has heard of Hermione's departure comes from Pharsalus for a second time. The Chorus tell Peleus of Hermione's fear at the prospect of her husband's return (1057). It has motivated her flight with Orestes. This illustrates how Neoptolemus remains central to the actions of the other characters. When Peleus learns about Neoptolemus' danger it is all too late. Peleus is unable to help his grandson. His command to send a warning message to Neoptolemus (1066f.) is prevented by the entry of the messenger from Delphi reporting his death (1070). 'The technique of an intended exit which is prevented by a new entry is a powerful dramatic moment. It well expresses the catastrophe which has suddenly come upon the house of Peleus.'[31] We now see the ironic effect of the use of the *nostos*-pattern in *Andromache*. Euripides has made Neoptolemus the key to the situation through the hopes and fears of Andromache and Hermione. The expectation of his return is shockingly subverted. In a *nostos*-play usually a messenger scene that describes what the head of the household has been doing precedes his arrival.[32] Euripides gives the same structure to his *Andromache* but he adapts the *nostos*-pattern in order to achieve an ironical effect. The messenger scene describes the death of Neoptolemus who returns only as a corpse.

6.4. Neoptolemus' death

In the light of what has so far been discussed the absence of Neoptolemus is the cause of the domestic crisis in his household. A man who will not return alive has determined the fears, expectations and actions of the two female waiting figures of the play, Andromache and Hermione. Even now the audience do not see his corpse.[33] 'It is almost as if Euripides wants us to "see" him alive first, brought to life by the words of the messenger, before we see him dead.'[34] The presentation of Neoptolemus as a heroic warrior (see esp. 1123) intensifies the grief of Peleus and contributes to the emotional pathos at the entry of his

[31] Allan (2000) 78.
[32] See A. *Pers.* 249-531, A. *Ag.*503-680, S. *Tr.*: Hyllus plays the Messenger (749-812), although he has been preceded by Lichas and the old man, S. *El.* 673, the supposed death of Orestes by the Paedagogus cf. A. *Cho.* 700ff., the disguised Orestes is a messenger with news of his supposed death.
[33] Neoptolemus' corpse is brought back at 1166.
[34] Mossman (1996) 152.

grandson's corpse. The death of Neoptolemus is presented as a perverted sacrifice (1100 etc.).[35] After the messenger scene[36] Neoptolemus does appear on stage, but as a corpse. His corpse is brought from Delphi to Phthia (1166-72). This contributes to the ironical treatment of the *nostos*-pattern. Euripides has consciously arranged a *kommos* at the final part of the play.[37] Peleus' grief is constructed around the loss of Neoptolemus. The absent hero once again remains the focus. Some scholars have called Neoptolemus the real hero of the play. First Hartung (1844, ii. 113f.) proposed that the structure of the play depends on the absent hero. This theory was developed by Friedländer (1926) 99-102: 'Denn als Abwesender bestimmt er alles, was auf der Bühne geschiet' (101).[38] Peleus' grief expresses his personal sorrow and the civic catastrophe (1222). It is Neoptolemus' death that has brought the royal house of Phthia into confusion. Thetis has come, as dea ex machina, to create a balanced closure to an unsettling complex of events. Neoptolemus' death has been the root of the disruption. Thetis appears as a rescuer for the mournful Peleus (1231-32). It is not Neoptolemus, as was expected, the source of the domestic order. Instead of his return in the role of the head of the household Thetis instructs Peleus to carry his grandson's body to Delphi and bury it there (1239-42, cf. 1263-4). Thetis arranges the continuity of the *oikos* (1243); it is not ensured by the return of Neoptolemus. Euripides has misdirected us into waiting for Neoptolemus as the head of the household who in his homecoming will set things right. He has exploited the *nostos*-pattern to structure his *Andromache* in a purposeful way, to achieve an ironic effect. There has, thus, been much preparation for Neoptolemus' return. He is kept central to the preoccupations of the characters on stage. He is the cause of the quarrel between Hermione and Andromache and his prolonged absence allows the interventions of Menelaus, Peleus and Orestes. But the man who determines the actions of the other characters appears only as a corpse.[39] Euripides is, therefore, self-consciously playing with the *nostos*-pattern familiar from the Homeric narrative,[40] raising expectations for Neoptolemus' return which he then frustrates. The ironical treatment of the *nostos*-pattern recalls a play of our age: Samuel Beckett's *En Attendant Godot* (*Waiting*

[35] Compare the killing of the returning hero in Sophocles' *Trachiniae* (755ff.) and in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* (1433, 1503) that involves an inverted sacrifice to the hero's death.
[36] For a full discussion of Neoptolemus as the focal character of the Messenger scene, see De Jong (1990).
[37] The Messenger scene is usually followed by corpses and mourners in the concluding parts of a Greek tragedy (cf. A. *Pers.* 909-1001, S. *El.* 756ff.: the supposed urn of Orestes' ashes), see Taplin (1977) 171-2.
[38] Cf. Friedrich (1953) 47 and 56, Pohlenz (1954) 287, Erdmann (1964) 138. This theory has been criticized by Conacher on account of his off-stage status, cf. Lattimore (1958) 115-16 and Grube (1961) 213 and above my n. 10.
[39] Cf. Taplin, 1977 p.124 n.5: 'In Eur. *Andr* Neoptolemus is constantly expected back, but returns only as a corpse.' Taplin (1977) 95 cites this part of the play as an example of the device of 'counter-preparation'.
[40] See Lloyd (1994) 3-6.

for Godot)[41] in as far as a figure is constantly awaited but never turns up. The *nostos*-pattern thus does not need to be inflexible. It is necessary only that there is some recognisable *nostos*-plot type which, when invoked, will bring with it expectations of a general kind. The dramatist might wish to fill out or modify this plot-type by thwarting its expectations. The *nostos*-pattern operates differently in each play. Euripides in his *Andromache*, as I have mentioned before, elaborates and combines the *nostos*-plot with the motif of supplication. Most remarkably, Neoptolemus who is expected to return as the saviour never appears as such. Thus both in terms of the *nostos* and the suppliant drama we are misdirected into waiting the return of Neoptolemus as the source of the domestic order.

6.5. *Nostos* in Euripides' *Heracles*

I have looked at *Andromache* as providing an example of the use of the pure *nostos*-pattetn in Greek tragedy, where *nostos* structure is used to avoid premature closure. Euripides treats differently the *nostos*-pattern in his *Heracles*. There are, however, common elements between the return of Neoptolemus and the return of Heracles. In particular the poet again takes the suppliant-situation as a starting point in order to anticipate the return of Heracles as *σωτήρ* — the traditional role in suppliant drama. The first part of the play is built on the *nostos*-pattern familiar from the *Odyssey*. A typical plot requires typical roles. Heracles (like Odysseus) is absent while at home he has a wife: Megara (cf. Penelope), a father: Amphitryon (cf. Laertes), his children (cf. Telemachus) and an enemy: Lycus (cf. the suitors). Heracles like Odysseus comes home 'to find and set right a threat to his dependants and status by enemies who assume him dead'.[42] But unlike the ultimate happy return of Odysseus the entry of Heracles into the house will lead to great disaster as it did for Agamemnon. Not surprisingly a disastrous homecoming was typical for tragic *nostoi*. Both Euripides' *Heracles* and Sophocles' *Trachiniae* deal with the unhappy return of Heracles. There is disquiet over the fortunes of the absent hero (as in A. *Pers.*, A. *Ag.*, S.

[41] Judith Mossman suggests this comparison. The title of her article (1996 'Waiting for Neoptolemus') refers to this play. We may also recognise a resemblance of the messenger scene in Euripides' *Andromache* to the opening of Menander's work *Aspis*, where the slave believes that his master, Kleostratos, is dead and he recounts the events that led to his death in the battle. From the dramatic point of view this arrangement provides Menander with the possibilities of strong ironical effects (cf. the false story of Orestes' death in S. *Electra*). Unlike Neoptolemus, whose return has been kept constantly in mind throughout the play we are made to believe *from* the very beginning of Menander's play that Kleostratos is dead. He comes back, like Heracles in Euripides' text, as a surprise. However, since the rest of the act three, where Kleostratos returns, is badly damaged we do not know what part there is for him to play after his return.

[42] Heath (1987) 147.

Tr.) but in Euripides' *Heracles* his absence is cause for even greater anxiety in the opening scenes. Amphitryon and Heracles' wife and children face imminent death at the hands of Lycus. It is the absence of Heracles (37-40) that has made the crisis of his household possible. The salvation of his family lies in his timely arrival. But Heracles is not just away on a mission or expedition. He has undertaken a journey to the underworld (23-5 cf.37). The departure of an absent hero points to his return. However, *κατάβασις* is not like every kind of journey. Lycus takes it that Heracles will not come back (see Bond on line145: '*κείμενον* is certainly emphatic: it turns Heracles' visit to the underworld into certain death'). Megara assumes that he is dead and she thus does not expect Heracles as a source of rescue (see 296). Nevertheless, the ambiguity of his absence in Hades still remains. The boy's question *πόθ' ἥξει* at 75 and Amphitryon's hope that his son may still come home (97) introduces to the audience the idea of a possible return by Heracles.[43] For Amphitryon he is the *ἐσθλός*, the *ἀνὴρ ἄριστος* (171-87) and the concept of his *ἀρετή* is to anticipate his return. The exercise of *ἀρετή* in the labours (e.g. *γενναίων ἀρεταὶ πόνων* 357) is the source of hope for his return as a rescuer. The status of Heracles is in question; he could be either alive or dead. This is intensified by the development of the theme of Heracles' strength. Euripides presents Heracles in this play as the archetypal victor.[44]

If only Heracles were present he would be capable of any action. Euripides reinforces the victorious aspect of the absent hero by contrasting him with the feeble old men of the Chorus (see Parodos: 107-37) and his weak mortal father Amphitryon (228). They provide a foil to Heracles' strength. In his absence Heracles becomes present in our mind in an athletic context. For example, in *Heracles* Euripides has repeatedly used the word *καλλίνικος* (49, 180, 570 etc.), which is used in the refrain of Archilochus' victory hymn (324W) as an epithet of Heracles. Furthermore, Heracles' greatness is given a complex presentation in the first stasimon (348-441). 'The song defies precise classification: it simultaneously resembles a hymn to a god, a victory song for a mortal and a lament.'[45] It is a *θρῆνος* that lists the hero's deeds in a form of a hymn. Despite the ambiguity of 352f. (*ἐγὼ δὲ τὸν γᾶς ἐνέρων τ'/ ἐς ὄρφναν μολόντα παῖδ'*) the Chorus regard Heracles as dead. The ode will be a *στεφάνωμα μόχθων* (355) — a Pindaric phrase — for

[43] So Chalk (1962) 10: '*Ἐλπίς* here means the return of Herakles (97) and this depends on his bravery and, more, on his descent from Zeus, which should ensure the god's good-will.'
[44] As he had done in *Alcestis*, see Garner (1990) 74-7; Heracles is also associated with athletic imagery reminiscent of a strong flavour of the epinician ode in Sophocles *Trachiniae* (see esp. first stasimon: 497-530 cf. 186, 237-41).
[45] Garner (1990) 111; cf. Bond (1981) at 348.

the great deeds of Heracles. All this is reinforced by Pindaric echoes already in the first sentence of the first strophe (349-51 cf. *N.* 5.24-5). As the Chorus narrate the labours of Heracles, their language has the sound of a victory ode. The allusions to the epinician poetry highlight the brilliance of Heracles as a victor. But Heracles' last labour, his descent to Hades (426), raises the possibility of no return. When Megara calls on Heracles' shade to appear (494) we are encouraged to think that he belongs to the defeated. Heracles appears almost afterwards. No messenger precedes his return as in the other *nostos*-plays (see above my n.32) since in this play his homecoming must remain a kind of surprise.

6.5.1. The return of Heracles

Euripides in his *Heracles* brings back the absent father in the nick of time (532) in order to rescue his family. Unlike Neoptolemus' return, which is the conclusion of *Andromache*, Heracles comes home in the middle of the play. As in the other *nostos*-plays (A. *Pers.*: 14-15, A. *Ag.*: 1-10 and S. *Tr.*: 40-1) there is no news of the absent hero while he is away. In Euripides' *Heracles* the heralds of Eurystheus have proclaimed Heracles dead (553). When he returns he himself knows that he has to stand up to his traditional status as a victor.[46] Unless he defends his family, he will no longer be called *καλλίνικος* (581-2). There seems to be little doubt that Heracles will achieve a successful homecoming. The second stasimon is even more reminiscent of epinician poetry.[47] Euripides prolongs the idea of Heracles as the paradigmatic athletic victor. 'The themes of wealth, time and human excellence are developed in a Pindaric manner.'[48] Here the Pindaric echoes function as a prelude to a triumphant homecoming. The resurrection Amphitryon hinted at (719: *οὔκ, εἴ γε μή τις θεῶν ἀναστήσειέ νιν*), has taken place. Heracles who was considered 'dead' by his dependants and his enemy (Lycus) has returned from Hades to kill the living Lycus (769-71).[49] The Pindaric echoes are put into effect. There is no more the ambiguity of the epinician echoes before the return of Heracles. So far the plot of Heracles resembles the *Odyssey*. The absent hero, who was assumed dead, returns and with the murder of his house's usurper, restores the domestic order of his household. In contrast to Aeschylus'

[46] Heracles is the paradigmatic athletic victor, the founder of the Olympic games, as Pindar notes (*Ol.* 2, 3, 6 and 10). For examples and parallels of Heracles featuring as an athlete see Cairns (1996) with his nn.48-50.
[47] See Parry (1965) and Bond's (1981) comments on the stasimon.
[48] Garner (1990) 113.
[49] Cf. *Cho.* 886: *τὸν ζῶντα καίνειν τοὺς τεθνηκότας λέγω.* Orestes is also associated with athletic imagery (in S. *El.* 48-50, 673ff.; in E. *El.* 614, 751, 761-2, 854-9 etc.) before his return and revenge for the murder of Agamemnon.

play where Agamemnon's death cries are heard (*Ag.* 1343, 1345) after the entry to his house, in *Heracles* the Chorus hear the death cries of the house's usurper Lycus (750, 754) after the return of the victorious athlete Heracles. Whereas in Aeschylus' play Agamemnon's entry to his house fulfilled his disastrous homecoming, in *Heracles* with the return of the victorious father and the murder of Lycus justice seems to have prevailed. As the third stasimon closes with another Pindaric allusion (*N.*10.54; see also above p.130 with my n.44) relating Heracles to his divine parentage (802) the plot seems to have been constructed around the triumphant return of Heracles. The last two odes (637-700 and 763-814) are celebration of his homecoming and his victory over Lycus. Heracles is back and after the murder of Lycus all seems well. In Pindar praise proclaims a victorious *νόστος*. There is normally a joyful *κῶμος* as part of the celebration of the success for the *οἶκος* and the *πόλις*. In tragedy the treatment of these motifs is ironic. In Euripides' text the glorious affirmation of victory (e.g. 781, 788) which contrasts with the previous despair of the family will be shattered by the forthcoming reversal in Heracles' fortune brought about by Iris and Lyssa (822ff.).

6.5.2. Catastrophe

The surprising entry of the two goddesses (Iris and Lyssa) will overturn the successful homecoming-plot into a horrible slaughter of Heracles' family. Thus Heracles' entry into the house will eventually lead to great disaster for Heracles as it did for Agamemnon. This actually suggests that Euripides introduces a new and horrible parallel for *Agamemnon.* Instead of a purification sacrifice (926-9) as expected after the murder of Lycus the sacrificial ritual is perverted to an occasion of death (cf. A. *Ag.* the death of Agamemnon 1433, 1503: S. *Tr.*: the death of Heracles: 755f., E. El.: 791ff., E. *Andr.*: the death of Neoptolemus at Delphi). The athletic image of Heracles is put into a new light (961 cf. Bond at line 1046 '*τὸ καλλίνικον κάρα*: the grand formula for Heracles (see on 681) is used in pity'). Heracles' return is vitiated by the divine assault, which turns the rescue of his family into their murder.[50] The remainder of Euripides' play deals with the aftermath of Heracles' disaster during which Theseus arrives. He might be offered a resolution by Theseus but his situation is tragic. His new state includes understanding induced by

[50] On Heracles' reaction to the enormity of his crime see Cairns (1993) 291-5.

suffering. He accepts Theseus' offer of help but his acceptance entails endurance.[51] Heracles is rescued but he has slaughtered his family and he has to live with the tragic nature of his action. His *nostos*, which is an essential element of the plot, turns out more tragic than that of Odysseus. This has a further sense for the nature of *nostos* in tragedy. Euripides' text dramatises the effect of mutability both on the returning hero and his dependants at home. The utopian quality of a return to the same is embodied in the final scene of the play. This idea is also implicit, as we have seen, in the tragic return of Heracles in Sophocles' text. There is a conscious recollection of Heracles in *Trachiniae* when Euripides' Heracles is weak after all and not a victorious athlete as has been expected (*Her.* 1412 *θῆλυν ὄντ'* cf. *Tr.* 1075 *θῆλυς ηὗρημαι τάλας*). There is another verbal similarity (*Her.* 1373: *μακρὰς διαντλοῦσ' ἐν δόμοις οἰκουρίας* cf. S. *Tr.* 540-2: *τοιάδ' Ἡρακλῆς, / ὁ πιστὸς ἡμῖν κἀγαθὸς καλούμενος/ οἰκούρι' ἀντέπεμψε τοῦ μακροῦ χρόνου*) between the two plays that reinforces the parallel situations of the female waiting figures. There is irony in the idea that what Megara gets for her housekeeping from her husband is her death. The same idea applies to Deianeira who gets Iole as a 'reward' for maintaining the household of Heracles in his absence. Euripides' Heracles (like Sophocles' Heracles in *Trachiniae*) does not restore the household as in the happier Homeric model. This is well illustrated by the simile of a bird crying for the loss of its young (1039-41) used to describe Amphitryon's reaction to the death of the children. It recalls the Homeric use of the same simile in the *Odyssey* at the reunion of Odysseus and Telemachus (16.216-19).[52] Laertes would have felt like Amphitryon if Odysseus had killed Telemachus along with the suitors. The simile here indicates that Euripides may have used a plot pattern familiar from the *Odyssey*, except that in this case the return is flawed by the sinister entry of the two goddesses that turn the reunion of the family into a slaughter of the suppliants. Catastrophic events are essential to tragic *nostoi*. Nevertheless, there are different ways of presenting a *nostos*-story on stage. This is evident in my analysis of the *nostos*-elements in *Andromache* and *Heracles*.

On the whole, Euripides takes the *nostos*-plot to anticipate the return of Neoptolemus and the return of Heracles and produces certain expectations about the action of the play. In particular, I have shown that in both *Andromache* and *Heracles* the absence of the male hero has made the crises of the opening lines possible. In his *Andromache* Euripides sets the *nostos*-pattern with the prologue speech (50: Neoptolemus is *ἀπών*) and

[51] See Chalk (1962) esp. 14 and his discussion on the unity of the play found in the handling of Heracles' *ἀρετή*.

[52] Garner (1990) 115 suggests this connection here and comments that 'the closer parallelism between tenor and vehicle in Euripides' simile corrects the inverted Homeric relationship...'

we are meant to wonder whether Neoptolemus will return soon. In Euripides' *Heracles* there is no news of the absent hero while he is away. The heralds of Eurystheus have proclaimed Heracles dead (553). Nevertheless, the ambiguity of his absence in Hades keeps alive the idea of a possible return by Heracles, who comes home in the nick of time as a rescuer. Therefore, we have seen that in both plays the *σωτήρ*-figure of a suppliant-plot and the returning-figure of a *nostos*-plot overlap. This suggests that *nostos* is being manipulated and used by the poet. Moreover, this kind of poetic manipulation is well demonstrated in the account of *Andromache*. By prolonging Neoptolemus' absence Euripides explores the consequences of his absence for his household. Most importantly, the prominence of Neoptolemus despite his absence is strengthened by his role as the cause of the conflict between the waiting figures. The absence of Neoptolemus is the key to the situation. Hermione dares to operate against his husband's concubine while he is away. As I have shown, the poet first encourages us to foresee the return of Neoptolemus which he then frustrates, since Neoptolemus returns only as a corpse. One may conclude that Euripides is self-consciously playing with the dramatic possibilities of the *nostos*-pattern of a hero's return in order to create surprise and suspense. Once we learn about Orestes' intrigue against Neoptolemus we are no longer encouraged to foresee his return as the reinstatement of domestic order. The expectation of his return is subverted. A man who will not return alive is the cause of the crisis at his home. Thus Euripides achieves an ironic effect by arranging a *kommos* at the final part of the play. In Euripides' *Heracles* the return of Heracles plays a far more limited role than in *Andromache*. *Nostos* in *Heracles* is the occasion rather than fully the frame of the dramatic action. Euripides takes care to introduce first as the source of suspense the return of Heracles, who comes back as a surprise, and then his return is marred by the slaughter of the suppliants. All this suggests that the use of the *nostos*-plot is varied according to the circumstances of each play. An instructive example of the variation of *nostos* on the part of the poet is the treatment of the messenger-scene. We have seen that in the primary *nostos*-plays a messenger-scene leads to the arrival of the absent hero. Euripides treats the messenger-scene in his *Andromache* ironically, since it is an account of Neoptolemus' death. In his *Heracles* the poet consciously avoids a messenger-scene before the return of Heracles. This arrangement would be structurally effective as a source of surprise for an audience who would not be prepared by an advance messenger, as in the other *nostos*-plays, for the return of the absent hero. In particular, the return of Heracles in Euripides' text seems to continue with steady certainty, in an atmosphere reminiscent of the return of Odysseus, until the entry of the two

goddesses, Iris and Lyssa, reverses the movement of the play suddenly. I have claimed that Euripides' text exploits the scenario of a happy return into presuming that Heracles' return would be like that of Odysseus. One may suggest that Euripides uses the same tantalising technique in the return of Neoptolemus in the *Andromache*, where the long-anticipated hero returns only as a corpse. Thus in *Andromache nostos* structure is used to avoid premature closure. This is well-exploited by the poet in the multiplication of waiting figures. We have seen that in *Andromache* Euripides reverses the traditional roles of the wife and the concubine. Neoptolemus is expected by a faithful concubine and an errant wife. In addition to these formal remarks there is a further implication for the meaning of *nostos*. In both cases the return of Neoptolemus and Heracles is not the source of the domestic order. Thus I have suggested that especially *Andromache* well illustrates the effect of *nostos* on the household. As I have shown above, a verbal similarity[53] in Sophocles' *Trachiniae* and Euripides' *Heracles* reinforces the idea that Heracles' homecoming in both plays does not restore the household as in the happier Homeric model. Accepting this dramatic effect one may again think that the tragic *nostoi* in question underline the utopian quality of the return to the same.

[53] E. *Her.* 1373: *μακρὰς διαντλοῦσ' ἐν δόμοις οἰκουρίας* cf. S. *Tr.* 540-2: *τοιάδ' Ἡρακλῆς, / ὁ πιστὸς ἡμῖν κἀγαθὸς καλούμενος/ οἰκούρι' ἀντέπεμψε τοῦ μακροῦ χρόνου.*

7. Conclusion

–'Παλιέ μου φίλε συλλογίσου
σιγὰ-σιγὰ θὰ συνηθίσεις
ἡ νοσταλγία σοῦ ἔχει πλάσει
μιὰ χώρα ἀνύπαρχτη μὲ νόμους
ἔξω ἀπ'τὴ γῆς κι ἀπ'τοὺς ἀνθρώπους'.[1]

The thesis, as I have mentioned in my Introduction, aims to present a typology of the *nostos*-theme in Greek tragedy, relating it particularly to the *Odyssey*. Our study began by looking at the cultural context of *nostos*. In particular, we have seen *nostos* in relation to departure for war, for sailing and for athletic competition. The purpose of this external evidence is to illuminate the treatment of *nostos* in Greek literature since it well demonstrates that *nostos* was deeply embedded within the social context. I have also considered the treatment of *nostos* in the earlier literary tradition. Our enquiry has sought to display that *nostos*, the homecoming of someone who has been away, was a popular theme for poetry. I hope that I have shown that the tradition included several variants of the *nostos*-plot both in epic and in lyric versions. Among these versions, the *Odyssey* is taken in my discussion as a particularly important intertext for Greek culture. I have suggested that Homer's narrative is a major example of the treatment of *nostos* in literature. As I have shown in my Introduction, the *Odyssey* captures a full range of possibilities and it helps us to understand the nature of *nostos* as a story-pattern and how that affects audience expectation. Thus the *Odyssey*'s influence is treated as extending into the tragic stage. All this is useful for attempting to speculate on the assumptions and expectations on *nostos* shared by the dramatists and their contemporaries, when the *nostos*-theme was exploited in drama. There is no need here for a summary of the detailed findings on the individual plays. Nevertheless, some final remarks would be clearly in order.

My analysis is, above all, devoted to the study of *nostos* as a structural device within the plot and the imagery of the plays that share a common pattern of plot and could be called *nostos*-plays. However, it should be emphasised that, as I have discussed in my Introduction, the *nostos*-pattern is exploited more widely in a number of occasions in Greek drama. Of these, apart from looking closely at the primary *nostos*-plays (namely A. *Pers.*

[1] I quote the translation of these lines of Seferis' poem *Ὁ γυρισμὸς τοῦ ξενιτεμένου'* (The return of the exile) by Keeley and Sherrard (1995): – 'My old friend, stop a moment and think: /you'll get used to it little by little. / Your nostalgia has created / a non-existent country, with laws / alien to earth and man'.

and *Ag.* and S. *Tr.*), I have considered the use of *nostos* in the Orestes-plots, since they may be useful for attempting to set out a typology of the *nostos*-theme in Greek tragedy, relating it particularly to the *Odyssey*. The point of this typology is to understand that the *nostos*-theme in drama is a means of creative variation on the part of the poet. In fact by looking closely at the underlying similarities and differences between the *nostos*-plays one may think that '*nostos*-plays' is not a *uniform* grouping. The idea of creative variation is well demonstrated in the treatment of *nostos* by Euripides especially in his *Andromache* and in his *Heracles*. Therefore, I have included these two plays in my discussion because I believe that they well illustrate that *nostos* was a form capable of variations. The variation one observes within the plot and the imagery of the *nostos*-plays is what makes the study of the *nostos*-theme in Greek tragedy compelling. We have already considered in the *Odyssey* how Homer exploits through the return stories of the Greek heroes (especially in books 3 and 4) the different ways of handling a *nostos*. Accepting the principle of variation one becomes aware of the multiformity of *nostos*. In addition, I suggest that *nostos* was exploited in drama for its utility as a means of manipulating audience response, in terms of both expectation and emotion. Although, each play develops the *nostos*-pattern, in each own way, for each own dramatic purpose, the poets encourages us to foresee the actual return of the absent hero as a central event for the development of the plot. We have seen that *nostos* is made thematic from the start of the specific plays in question. The poets use *nostos* in order to create irony, foreshadowing and surprise especially with reference to the *Trachiniae*, the Orestes-plays and the *Andromache*. Moreover, the lack of news about the absent hero in the primary *nostos*-plays creates disquiet and suspense. There is irony in the handling of the return of Heracles in Sophocles' text, especially related to the thematic imagery of the play. *Nostos* is manipulated by the poet through the interaction with the audience and their expectations based on earlier plays. This kind of poetic manipulation is also well demonstrated in Euripides' *Andromache*. As we have seen *nostos* in the Orestes plays is exploited on the part of the poets for creating strong ironical effects through the element of deceit. Thus the *nostos*-pattern in drama was exploited for its utility as a means of manipulating audience response and expectations about the nature of the actual arrival of the absent hero. This meaningful pattern of foreshadowing, suspense and delay provides a starting point for commenting on the individual dramatic qualities of the plays in question. Discussion of the different ways of handling the themes, roles and situations common to the tragic *nostoi* in question makes it possible to recognise the variety of the specific uses of the *nostos*-pattern in Greek tragedy. This will lead me on the one hand to assess which

of the tragic *nostoi* in question are more or less typical and on the other hand to identify the creative variation of *nostos* on the part of the poet.

The thesis has considered how various elements combine and interact in terms of the individual dramatic texts dealing with a *nostos*-story. Thus after looking closely at the underlying similarities and differences between the specific plays in question we enrich our understanding of their individual forms. In particular, I have suggested that Aeschylus *Persians* and *Agamemnon* and Sophocles' *Trachiniae* are structured around *nostos*. Accepting this structural use of *nostos* I suggest that these plays are the primary *nostos*-plays. However, as we have seen, the use of *nostos* in these plays is qualitatively different. This is particularly evident in *Agamemnon* where the return comes in the middle of the play, unlike the *Persians* and the *Trachiniae* where the homecoming-scene is not only the focus but also the conclusion of the tragedy. The welcome-scene has an important structural function in the *nostos*-story of Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*. I have claimed that Aeschylus has made Agamemnon return in the middle of the play, unlike Xerxes' and Heracles' return in the final scene of the *Persians* and the *Trachiniae* respectively, in order to demonstrate the terrible wrongness of his homecoming that turns out a parody of a welcome-scene. In *Trachiniae* the effect of *nostos* in the household is told in terms suggestive of a tragic wedding. Heracles and Deianeira, like Xerxes and Atossa in Aeschylus' *Persians*, never meet in the play but they both reenact aspects of the wedding ritual as they prepare to die. Accepting this diversity of the *nostos*-plays one may think that the concept of *nostos*-plays is not a coherent category. There is acknowledgement of this in my discussion of the manipulation of the *nostos* structure by Euripides in *Andromache* and *Heracles*. The poet introduces in both plays the *nostos*-theme as an essential element of the plot. Most importantly, the kind of poetic manipulation on the part of the poet is evident in the crossing of a suppliant-plot with a *nostos*-plot. My discussion of the *nostos*-pattern in these two plays also demonstrates that one may conclude that the plot-structure in *Heracles* goes beyond the closure implied in a pure *nostos*-pattern, as in Sophocles' *Trachiniae* or Euripides' *Andromache* where *nostos* structure is used to avoid premature closure. It should also be stressed that *nostos* is not the fulcrum of the action in the preserved tragic accounts of Orestes' return. As I have mentioned above, I have included them in my discussion since they well demonstrate the utility of *nostos* as a dramatic motif, relating it particularly to the theme of disguise and recognition that are central to the Orestes-drama and may bear relevance to the second half of the *Odyssey*.

For all the variety in its treatment the *nostos*-pattern that refers to the specific plays in question is a distinctive form or pattern of plot whose elements have broadly definable thematic and dramatic functions. In terms of story, we may take it as the story of the absence of a male 'hero', the waiting of the female figure, and his return to or from a catastrophe. These prescribe within broad limits the central roles and main action of the plays in question. Yet there is variation between the plays. In what follows, I intend to present the common or frequent elements of this pattern that are identified in my individual chapters by observation and are not to be thought of as exhaustively specific or inflexible. But since they are recognised as conforming to a familiar pattern they bring with them certain expectations that the dramatists may wish to fill out or modify. As in the *Odyssey*, a *nostos*-plot requires two kinds of typical roles: the absent male figure and the female waiting figure. According to the Proppian analysis, as I have mentioned in my Introduction, the names of the *dramatis personae* change but their action might be similar. Thus, the *nostos*-theme in Greek tragedy is related to the functions of the returning hero and the waiting female. Each poet treats these two agents in a *nostos*-story differently. This kind of poetic manipulation of the *nostos*-theme is particularly evident in the multiplication of the waiting figure in the Orestes-drama (especially in Sophocles' *Electra*) and in the doubling of the waiting figure in the *Andromache*. Nonetheless, in all cases it is the absence of the returning hero that generates the *nostos*-drama in a number of incidents. Most importantly, the waiting of the female figure is an essential precondition of the *nostos*-story. There are frequent elements associated with this stage of waiting. First, the waiting female suffers from sleepless nights (e.g. Clytaemestra in A. *Ag.* 889-91, Deianeira at S. *Tr.* 28-30, 103-11, 149f., 175-7, cf. Penelope in the *Odyssey*: 13.333ff. etc.). Similarly Clytaemestra also who lives in the threat of Orestes' return and revenge cannot sleep properly (S. *El.* 780). Secondly, there are dreams that afflict the waiting female in the absence of the 'hero'. Clytaemestra who feigns despair at her husband's non-return (*Ag.* 874-6) invents dreams at *Ag.* 891. The dream is a means of bringing the absent hero to life (cf. *Od.* 19.535-53). In tragedy the dream of Atossa (A. *Pers.* 176-230) and Clytaemestra (A. *Cho.* 32-46, 523-50, 928-9 and S. *El.*410-27, 635ff) is a guide to the action. Atossa's dream leads to the subsequent scene of libations to Darius and the Necromancy-scene. In both Aeschylus' and Sophocles' versions the purpose of Clytaemestra's dream is to remind her of her crime and to make her send propitiatory offerings in the hands of a daughter (Electra in A. *Cho.*, Chrysothemis in S. *El.*). The dream motif thus derives from the *nostos*-story and with its ominous context inspires characters to make offerings. In addition, the motif of longing is

normally associated with the female waiting figure (the Persian women feel longing for the absent Persian warriors, A. *Pers.* 61-2, 135-9; Deianeira feels longing for her absent husband, S. *Tr.* 103-7, 631; cf. Penelope and the motif of longing in the *Odyssey*: 18.202ff., 19.136 etc). These features related to the waiting female figure suggest that *nostos* is exploited in drama as a means of creating anxiety and suspense.

Moreover, the principle of variation is also evident in the flexibility of the treatment of the returning hero. In the *Persians*, as we have seen, the *nostos*-theme is applied both to Xerxes and to his army. Aeschylus exploits the utility of *nostos* as a structural device within the plot with a double focus. In *Agamemnon* the returning hero is especially anticipated through extensive narrative of the past. The absence of the king is the cause of problems at home. The same effect on the household is evident in the case of Neoptolemus' absence (cf. Heracles in both Sophocles' and Euripides' text) who is the cause of the quarrel between Hermione and Andromache and his prolonged absence allows a complex of events to happen in the course of the play. The creative variation on the part of the poet is evident in the case of Orestes' return. As we have seen, his return occurs with varying elaboration of Odysseus' return and that of Agamemnon. On the other hand one should acknowledge the thematic correspondence between the homecoming of the heroes. As with the waiting female there are common themes associated with the treatment of the returning figure. To illustrate this one should look at the themes that cluster around his return. In particular, the poets present *nostos* in Greek tragedy as a means of creating suspense through the interaction with the audience and their knowledge based on prior poetic or non-poetic versions of the *nostos*-theme (see my Introduction), especially related to the treatment of *nostos* in the *Odyssey*. Thus the themes of clothes, bath, bed and sacrifice that would normally signify the re-integration of the returning hero are presented as perverted in Greek tragedy. One may conclude that the use of this thematic imagery in drama underlines the flaw of the tragic *nostoi*. In Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* the theme of clothing is first presented in the tapestry scene. Agamemnon steps on the clothes instead of wearing them. The perversion of this theme is also evident in the fatal robe (1115-6, 1382-3, 1492, 1580; cf. net-cloth: *Cho.* 980ff., 1010-3) in which Clytaemestra trapped Agamemnon. This theme has the same ominous effect in the ceremonial robe that Deianeira sends to Heracles as a gift but instead of ensuring a safe homecoming it traps Heracles into his death (S. *Tr.* 580, 602-3, 674, 758, 769, 774, 1052: echoes of the robe in which Agamemnon was trapped). The theme of clothes also contributes to the treatment of the *nostos*-pattern in Aeschylus' *Persians*. It first appears in connection with Xerxes in his mother's dream,

where he tears his robes (199) in the sight of his father. When the messenger comes with news he tells us of Xerxes tearing his robes (468; also 833-6, 845-51) at the sight of the catastrophe. This prepares us for Xerxes' return in rags (1016-18, 1030) at the end of the play. We have also seen in *Agamemnon* how the theme of bath is transformed in Agamemnon's own death (A. *Ag.* 1109, 1128, cf. *Cho.* 1071). In addition, the theme of bed is presented as perverted in Sophocles' *Trachiniae* to the ritual of Deianeira's death. One should acknowledge that in *Trachiniae* there is thematic imagery especially to do with marriage that suggests the terrible wrongness of Heracles' return. Our enquiry has also recognised the frequent theme of perverted sacrifice in the killing of the returning hero (A. *Ag.* 1433; S. *Tr.* 756; E. *Andr.* Neoptolemus is killed at Delphi; cf. the supposed urn of ashes of Orestes, S. *El.*756ff.). Thus *nostos* in Greek tragedy seems to represent that the nature of the return excludes the possibility of a return without difference.

This is also suggested by the athletic imagery related to the returning hero. We have seen in the course of our enquiry that in Greek tragedy the returning hero is usually expected as a victor. This thematic imagery should be appreciated in the light of epinician poetry. It should be emphasised that the notion of the heroic victor returning seems to be undermined in the tragic *nostoi* in question. Orestes who in the Orestes-plays is specifically expected as a victor (e.g. S. *El.* 48-50; the false chariot story: 682ff.) is polluted after the murders. Furthermore, the mournful procession in the final scene of Sophocles' *Trachiniae* (cf. the return of Xerxes in lamentation in the final scene of the *Persians*) suggests that Heracles' return is not as triumphant as was expected in the first part of the play (e.g. 186, 497-530). The same effect is evident in the case of Heracles' return in Euripides' text, where the rescue turns into a slaughter of the suppliants. In Euripides' *Heracles* the glorious affirmation of victory (e.g. 781, 788) is shattered by the forthcoming reversal in Heracles' fortune brought about by Iris and Lyssa (822ff.). Furthermore, Agamemnon returns from Troy victorious. But instead of being received amid a pageantry of triumph, arrival and procession, the reception by his wife turns into a horrible parody of a welcome-scene. The manner of his return foreshadows his fatal death. The transition of a victor to a victim is well illustrated by the demonic *κῶμος* in the imagery of *Agamemnon* (1189-92). This powerful image underlines the flaw in Agamemnon's return. The *κῶμος* in *Agamemnon* drinks blood and sings of destruction (*ἄτη*) instead of victory.[2] One may think that in the tragic *nostoi* there is an ironic treatment of the Pindaric motifs that proclaim

[2] For the transformation of a victor to a victim see my chapter on A. *Ag.*, esp. on the tapestry-scene.

victory. Thus the impossibility of a return to the same is reinforced in tragedy by the images of the heroic victor returning, that seems to be undermined in the tragic *nostoi* in question. All these themes related to the returning hero suggest that there are frequent or common elements associated with *nostos* in Greek tragedy.

The variations of the *nostos*-pattern are evident not only in the comparison of roles and in the handling of frequent themes but also in structural elements. The development of the messenger-scene in each of the tragic *nostoi* in question provides an instructive example. As we have seen in the course of our enquiry the messenger scene in a *nostos*-play leads to the arrival of the absent hero. In particular, in Aeschylus' *Persians* the messenger fulfils the sense of foreboding with the news of the defeat at Salamis. He encourages us to foresee an imminent return of Xerxes, when we specifically learn that Xerxes escaped the catastrophe (299). The description of the journey home (480-515) prepares us for his arrival. However, in the *Persians* the Darius-scene intervenes before Xerxes physically arrives on stage. In addition, the messenger enters in the first part of the play and his entry does not precede the disaster (as in A. *Ag.*) but it stands for it. In this Sophocles' *Trachiniae* provides the closest parallel. The role of the messenger in Sophocles' text is played by Hyllus, although the old man and Lichas have preceded him. Hyllus, like the messenger in Aeschylus' *Persians*, leads up to the return of Heracles, and the final scene is like that of the *Persians*, the conclusion of the tragedy.[3] There is no messenger-scene in Euripides' *Heracles*. In this play the return of the absent hero must remain some kind of surprise. The poet consciously avoids a messenger-scene before the return of Heracles. This arrangement would be structurally effective as a source of suspense for an audience who would not be prepared by an advance messenger, as in the primary *nostos*-plays, for the return of the absent hero. In addition, Euripides treats the messenger-scene ironically in his *Andromache*. It is an account of Neoptolemus' death (E. *Andr.* 1085-1165) and it precedes his return only as a corpse. In the case of Orestes' return deceit is the kernel of his revenge action. In that way the announcement of the supposed death of Orestes by the Paidagogus (S. *El.* 673f.)[4] leads to Orestes' supposed urn of ashes. One may conclude that the specific plays in question might be similar in the underlying pattern of action but each play develops the pattern for its own end. The consideration of such variations suggest that the significance of the use of the *nostos*-pattern is not that it prescribes what happens in the plays themselves, but rather that it provides a useful starting

[3] See Taplin (1977) 84.
[4] In Aeschylus' *Choephori* the disguised Orestes is a messenger with news of his supposed death (700ff.).

point for the understanding of their individual forms. Thus the expectations aroused by the *nostos*-pattern, with its simple movement towards achievement of the return of the absent hero, cannot be seen as inflexible. This is suggestive of the poet's freedom to exploit the communicative potential of the *nostos*-pattern by modifying and even thwarting these expectations. Both the thematic imagery and the intertextual engagement especially with the *Odyssey* contribute to this end. One may think that the tragedians were exploiting *nostos* in drama as a means of suspense and surprise through the interaction with the audience's knowledge and their expectations based on earlier plays. This is particularly evident in the case of Deianeira whose words and acts are reminiscent of Clytaemestra. All these common or frequent elements identified so far in the treatment of *nostos* as a structural device within the plot and the imagery (and intertexts) suggest that *nostos* in drama is effective for manipulating audience response about the homecoming of the returning hero. Therefore, one may conclude that *nostos* was exploited in drama for its emotive force, eliciting a commitment from the audience which produces certain expectations about the nature of the homecoming of the returning hero.

In addition to these formal concerns, the thesis is also interested in the interpretation of the specific *nostoi* in question. There is a further sense in which an understanding of the effect of the return-scene in the *nostos*-plays can illuminate the nature of *nostos*. The emotional impact of each *nostos*-play is distinct. Yet each *nostos*-play is structured around the effect of absence and the return and in all cases the homecoming is more tragic than it had been anticipated, which underlines a broadly philosophical reflection on the essence of *nostos*. This notion of the return in terms of nostalgia is embodied in the *nostos*-plays. My argument specifically has been that a *nostos*-story exploits the effect of mutability both on the absent hero and those waiting for him at home. The nature of return excludes the possibility of return without any differences. First, the world that the absent hero leaves behind has changed in his absence. The text may entertain 'a return to the same' but cannot achieve it. Most remarkably, those left behind assume that things would be the same. Although Deianeira's intentions are innocent her instructions to Lichas about her message to Heracles (624-32, see esp. *καὶ γὰρ ἐξεπίστασαι /τά γ'ἐν δόμοισιν ὡς ἔχοντα τυγχάνει* 624-5) strongly recall Clytaemestra's remarks to the herald (604-14, see esp. *καὶ τἄλλ' ὁμοίαν πάντα* 609 and the use of *δοκεῖ* in 1238). Both women want their returning husbands to know that all has been kept safe in the house. In both plays the text deludes us into assuming a return to exactly the same place. However, this is developed in different ways.

Clytaemestra embodies a threat to Agamemnon's return. Her hypocritical behaviour gives substance to the mood of fear already maintained by the Chorus in the first part of the play. Although all her words (e.g. she is ready to receive him in the best way: 600ff.) and actions (she prepares offerings for a sacrifice at 594) are according to her female waiting role, she is made to endanger Agamemnon's return. In the case of Deianeira she appears completely disqualified for the role that Clytaemestra plays but still she, like Clytaemestra, will prove herself man-destroyer of Heracles by sending a fatal garment in receiving her husband on his return. The souring of the return indicates that the absent hero returns to a different place from his former knowledge. One should emphasise that only in the *Persians* this key recurrent theme in my argument is associated with a national dimension. As I have shown, the final scene of the play is constructed so as to show that there is no return to past glory. Thus in the *Persians nostos* affects not only the household but is also associated with the nation of the returning hero.

Secondly, the same effect of change is evident in the absent hero. He is an ambiguous figure when he comes back after his long absence. In the case of Agamemnon the past looms largely over his return. He is responsible for a number of crimes. In addition, he returns with Cassandra. She is the visual evidence of change on the returning hero. Her bride-like arrival, like Iole's in Sophocles' *Trachiniae*[5], threatens the symmetry of the marriage of Agamemnon and Clytaemestra. The absent hero returns to the same place from a geographical point of view but his arrival raises the expectation of integration into his *oikos*. The ritual of his reintegration to his own house is perverted to its opposite effect. A verbal similarity[6] in Sophocles' *Trachiniae* and Euripides' *Heracles* reinforces the idea that Heracles' homecoming in both plays does not restore the household as in the happier Homeric model. There is irony in the idea that what Megara gets for her housekeeping from her husband is her death. The same idea applies to Deianeira who gets Iole as a 'reward' for maintaining the household of Heracles in his absence (cf. the idea of housekeeping embodied in Clytaemestra who feigns devotion to her husband: A. *Ag.* 607). This underlines the utopian quality of the return to the same. I maintain that this aspect of return operates deeply in Greek tragedy and I have suggested that it is the 'liminal' character of the absent hero that makes *nostos* a good story for tragedy, since tragedy provokes fear and pity by presenting a coherent action in which a change (*μετάβασις* or

[5] Deianeira is, without realising, standing in front of the house with the 'new bride' (546, 843, 857, 894; with 536 *ἐζευγμένην*) in the same position as Cassandra.

[6] E. *Her.* 1373: *μακρὰς διαντλοῦσ' ἐν δόμοις οἰκουρίας* cf. S. *Tr.* 540-2: *τοιάδ' Ἡρακλῆς, / ὁ πιστὸς ἡμῖν κἀγαθὸς καλούμενος/ οἰκούρι' ἀντέπεμψε τοῦ μακροῦ χρόνου.*

μεταβολή) occurs (Arist. *Poetics* 52a 14-18).[7] As I have set out to show in my Introduction, the theme of homecoming in ancient Greek literature was not remote from real life experience. Poetry apart from giving pleasure also gives comfort since it helps us to see that our sufferings are part of the common lot.[8] This has a further implication for the usefulness of tragedy dealing with a homecoming story. The treatment of *nostos* in Greek tragedy reflects the fact that return cannot be the same after a long absence. A *nostos*-play could help the audience understand that the effect of mutability is a persistent feature of *nostos*. Even in the *Odyssey* in Odysseus' and Penelope's reunion 'the joy of rediscovery is...mixed with the sadness of irreparable loss'[9] and there are hints in the end of the *Odyssey* that Odysseus will have to leave Penelope again (23.248-50). I have also suggested that *nostos* was not a safe and guaranteed passage. As I have shown in my Introduction's account of the relation of the *nostos*-theme to real life, *nostos* by its nature is one of the most ambiguous life-events since it is bound up with uncertainties over failure to return. Therefore, it is tempting to speculate that this feature of *nostos* was perhaps what made it prominent as a theme on tragic stage. With its interaction with hope and (lack of) knowledge about the homecoming of the returning hero and with its anticipatory imagery, it is structurally effective in creating strong ironical effects and manipulating audience response and expectations.

[7] See my introduction p.7.
[8] See Macleod (1982) 6-7 with his insightful discussion of the *Iliad* as a tragic poem.
[9] Segal (1962) 30.

Appendix

My thesis is confined an analysis of the handling of *nostos* in Greek tragedy. However, we have already seen in the Introduction (pp.23-6) that a consideration of the demotic song of the 'Return of the long absent husband' (*Ὁ γυρισμὸς τοῦ ξενιτεμένου*) provides interesting parallels with the *Odyssey*, with reference especially to the duo *nostos-ἀναγνώρισις*. There are ample instances of the use of *nostos* in Modern Greek poetry.[1] *Ὁ γυρισμὸς τοῦ ξενιτεμένου* ('The return of the exile' of the collection *Logbook I, Ἡμερολόγιο Καταστρώματος Α'*) by Seferis illustrates the persistence of the *nostos*-theme in modern Greek writing. There is a further sense in which an understanding of the treatment of *nostos* in this poem can illuminate the treatment of the *nostos*-pattern in Greek tragedy, since it reveals an interesting connection between ancient and modern Greek poetry. Seferis' poetry proceeds from earlier sources. The poetry of Homer and elements of the folk songs are here to shape and illuminate an image of the present. In particular in Seferis' poem the wandering Odysseus-figure[2] is denied the full sweetness of his return.[3] Seferis adopts the title of this poem from the popular demotic song[4] and exploits *nostos* with its traditional feature of recognition (see my Introduction, for a discussion of the basic elements of the story of the Modern Greek ballad, pp.23-6). In terms of the story the demotic song and the

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[1] An analysis of the treatment of the ancient theme of return by the Modern Greek poets could be the subject of a separate study. For my present purpose it will suffice to explore in brief the use of the Odyssean *nostos* in the sense of a return that is not return to the same by Seferis in one of his poems. This would be useful in drawing a parallel to the use of the Odyssean *nostos* in tragedy where the souring of the return is typical.

[2] Maronitis (1984) 29-43 and 148f. recognises that in the seaman in Seferis' poem we have a type of Odysseus. Ricks (1989) 147-57 has discussed thoroughly the use of the Odysseus-figure by Seferis as the archetype of the poem's exile. He well illustrates how the exile's return becomes a bleak revision of the Odyssean *nostos*.

[3] The *νόστιμον ἦμαρ*, which is occasionally called 'honey-like return' in the *Odyssey* (see 11.100) and is a thing passionately longed for by Odysseus, usually remains just out of reach or turns out to be not sweet at all in the cases where the *nostos*- theme comes forward to Seferis' work; see for example: *Οἱ σύντροφοι στὸν Ἅδη* (The companions in Hades), *Πάνω σ'ἕνα ξένο στίχο* (Upon a foreign verse). *Nostos* is a central theme in two of his collections *Μυθιστόρημα* (*Mythistorema*) and *Κίχλη* (*Kichli or Thrush*); see esp. the poems: *Ὁ ἡδονικὸς Ἐλπήνωρ* (Sensual Elpenor), *Τὸ ναυάγιο της Κίχλης* (The wreck 'Thrush'). Critics have acknowledged a connection of the two collections with the Homeric poems and have drawn attention to the Homeric roots of Seferis' poetry in general. For a detailed account of the poetry of Seferis in terms of *nostos* see Maronitis (1984) esp. 13-63 on *Νόστος καὶ Θάνατος* ; see most recently Keeley (1996) 81-95 and his discussion of the use of *nostos* in Seferis' poetry as revealing the poet's individual vision of a significant contemporary Greek reality; cf. Padel (1985). She suggests that Homer illuminates the poetry of Seferis and that his poetry can function as an interpretation of the Homeric poems, especially the *Odyssey*.

[4] Maronitis (1984) 29-43 has thoroughly discussed the folklore elements in Seferis' poem as a search for a significant relationship in his poetry with the duet *nostos*-death. I am indebted to his discussion.

poem by Seferis are similar. In both poems return is associated with the element of recognition. Most importantly, in the demotic song *nostos* is fulfilled through the tokens and the testing of recognition. The positive element (*nostos*) assimilates the negative element (recognition) of the narrative. In Seferis' poem, however, *nostos* and recognition are mutually rejected by the element of death. The presence of death breaks down the traditional duo of *nostos*-recognition and comments on the political conditions.[5] *Nostos* is frustrated not only as a homeward journey to a place that has changed but also by the destructive effects of war. The historical situation that Seferis' poem depicts does not allow the poet to present a happy *nostos*. This is well illustrated by the two final lines of the poem[6] that underline the prospect of war associated with the date (Athens 1938) that Seferis has appended at the end of the poem. This depiction of the Homeric figure by Seferis[7] could be suggestive of the return of Orestes in the preserved tragic accounts where, as I have set out to show, the traditional theme of recognition accompanied by a series of disguise and deceit is shaped into suitable material for the tragic stage. Critics (see my notes 2 and 4) have discussed the affinities shared by Seferis' exile with the Homeric model and the returning hero of the Modern Greek ballad (*Ὁ γυρισμὸς τοῦ ξενιτεμένου*). What has not been acknowledged so far is the connection of the exile in Seferis' poem with Orestes in Greek tragedy. Without attempting to dismiss the interpretation of the Homeric and folklore elements in the poem I shall devote attention here to a connection with the return of Orestes in tragedy as giving further resonance to Seferis' poem, 'The return of the exile'. In particular in the preserved tragic accounts Orestes' *νόστιμον ἦμαρ* is frustrated by his act of revenge. In the same way *nostos* is not attained by the exile in Seferis' poem as it had been expected. With this comparison I merely want to suggest a philosophical emphasis on the nature of *nostos*. We have seen that in the *nostos*-plays return cannot be a return to the same place. The progress of composition in 'The return of the exile' reveals the misfortunes of the journey home to a place that is not the same and ends with the threat of the imminent war. In Seferis' poem the two traditions of Homer and the folk songs are

[5] See Maronitis (1984) 43 and Ricks (1989) 156.

[6] *ἐδῶ διαβαίνουν καὶ θερίζουν / χιλιάδες ἅρματα δρεπανηφόρα* (Here a thousand scythe-bearing chariots go past / and mow everything down).

[7] Cf. the use of *nostos* in Ritsos' poem: *Ἡ ἀπόγνωση τῆς Πηνελόπης* (*Penelope's despair*). The Homeric reunion between Odysseus and Penelope is the landscape into which the new poem adventures but in Ritsos' poem the long waiting of Penelope is not made to look vindicated with Odysseus' return. As Keeley points out (1996) 94 'It is the blood-soaked, white-bearded' hero himself who frightens her and brings upon her the kind of bitter recognition that we don't find in Homer: a sudden perception of the years that have been used up by Odysseus's absence and those desires of hers that have been killed in the process, here brilliantly evoked in an image that compares them to the dead suitors on the floor in front of her.'

interwined in a form with sinister associations, drawing attention to the politics of the poem's composition. *Nostos* becomes the opportunity for a form of expression of the poet's vision of a significant contemporary Greek reality. The poetry of Homer and elements of popular poetry are here to shape the image of the present in terms of nostalgia. The sweet day of return turns out to be not sweet at all. This treatment of *nostos* by Seferis in his poem 'The return of the exile' provides an interesting analogy to the essence of *nostos* in Greek tragedy. *Nostos* in both cases underlines the idealistic essence of a return to the same. To come to a sort of conclusion, I would like to suggest that within this poem which delibarately interrelates with Homer and the popular tradition Seferis goes a step further by adding his own personal twist: the creation of Odyssean experience based on the 'recognition' of the native land linked to a sense of loss and change, while the prospect of war provokes feelings of danger. *Nostos* is frustrated and this reminds us of the souring of the tragic *nostoi*, especially the case of Orestes' return where the recognition-scene is a crucial part of the story. In his poetry Seferis retains the symbols and the names that are related to Odysseus' return, in order to write about his own times. 'He (= Seferis) lives with the emotional life of the poetic texts he loves, and searches for an equally live presence in his own poetry and the Greece of his own day.'[8] Odysseus' Ithaca becomes in his poetry the symbol that cannot be seen as the home of our dreams. This reading of one of Seferis' best-known poems illuminates the essence of *nostos* in terms of *nostalgia* and offers a significant relationship with the souring of the return in tragedy, especially with the return of Orestes, whose happy momentary reunion with his sister is marred by his act of revenge. My survey of the *nostos* theme has taken us from Greek tragedy to Seferis' image of homecoming. Given the dramatic possibilities of the theme of *nostos* and its connection with the effect of mutability it is understandable that the image of *nostos* in literature can serve as a major metaphor for the concept of change, a persistent thing in life but very difficult to comprehend.

[8] Padel (1985) 92.

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