

MISZELLEN

TWO PROBLEMS OF STAGING IN EURIPIDES' *PHOENISSAE*

1. Entrances at Euripides' *Phoenissae* 834

The third episode of Euripides' *Phoenissae* begins with the arrival of Teiresias, who is accompanied by his daughter and Menoeceus, Creon's son. In his Teubner edition of the play, Mastronarde makes Teiresias and his escorts enter by the foreign eisodos (834).¹ This stage direction, indicating that these three characters have just arrived from abroad, is problematic in regard to the action.

In the second episode, Eteocles sends Menoeceus to fetch Teiresias, in the hope that some words of wisdom may be given before the commencement of hostilities; however, because of a former quarrel between Teiresias and Eteocles, it is decided that Creon will consult the seer (768–74). This episode draws to a close, with Creon remaining on stage during the second stasimon. The third episode then begins with the arrival of Teiresias and his entourage, and in the ensuing conversation, we learn that Teiresias has just returned from Athens the previous day, τῆς παροιθεν ἡμέρας (852–7). If we follow Mastronarde's stage direction at 834, we have to imagine that Menoeceus left the city, found Teiresias somewhere outside the gates, and after informing him that his presence was required at the palace, returned to the city, leading him and his daughter directly to Creon. So much is implied if we make these characters enter by the foreign eisodos.

Yet this course of events is highly unlikely for two reasons. First, Teiresias explicitly says that he arrived the day before (τῆς παροιθεν ἡμέρας); this means that he must have been in Thebes when Menoeceus found him. Second, the gates are blockaded, preventing any entering or exiting: in the second episode, Creon informed Eteocles that the Argives have encircled the city and have stationed themselves at the gates (737–9). Therefore Menoeceus could not have left Thebes to find Teiresias.

One must then come to the conclusion that Menoeceus found Teiresias within the city. Teiresias evidently returned from Athens a day before the besiegement and was probably at home with his daughter when Menoeceus came

1) D.J. Mastronarde, *Euripides Phoenissae* (Leipzig 1988). Greek tragedy generally uses two eisodoi in a simple and schematic way. One eisodos usually leads to and from foreign locations, while the other leads to and from domestic locations. One can assume that the audience, at the start of each play, would have readily perceived the topographical differences between the two eisodoi. For further discussion, see Taplin, *Stagecraft in Aeschylus* (Oxford 1977) 449–51.

knocking on his door. This notion is further corroborated by the fact that Teiresias' daughter arrives at the palace carrying 'lots' (κλήρους), which are, presumably, written records of divinatory information (838–40).² These divination lots must have been brought directly from home, for it would have been quite difficult for Teiresias' daughter, in the long and arduous journey from Athens to Thebes, to carry these items and support her father at the same time; Teiresias, as he is depicted from his very entrance in the play, is weak and has trouble walking on his own.³

As can be seen, contextual sense demands that our three characters arrive at the palace from within Thebes. Therefore we have to make them enter at 834 by the local eisodos.

2. *When is Creon on Stage in the Latter Half of Euripides' Phoenissae?*

If we follow the transmitted text of *Phoenissae*, Creon remains silently on stage for almost 230 lines, from the second messenger speech to the start of the exodos (1356–1583). Fraenkel finds Creon's silence offensive and removes him altogether from the fifth episode.⁴ But as Mueller-Goldingen and Mastronarde have shown, an actor standing silently for an extended period of time is not unique in Euripidean dramaturgy.⁵ Four other cases, in fact, can be found: Pylades in *IT* (792–901), the attendant in *Hel.* (621–699), Adrastus in *Su.* (650–730), and Peleus in *Andr.* (1085–1165). Creon's silence, however, is much longer than these other cases, and Mastronarde, in the apparent attempt to make it less awkward, makes Creon recede from center stage before Antigone's arrival. It is only upon the completion of Antigone's lament with her father that Creon is allowed to return to center stage, so that the exodos may begin.⁶

The parallels offered by Mueller-Goldingen and Mastronarde, however, do not fully justify Creon's long silence in *Phoenissae*. Creon's opening words in the exodos, as shown by Fraenkel, is a "παύσαι-Motiv", that is, the stopping-action that is associated with an entering character: οἰκτῶν μὲν ἤδη λήγεθ', ὡς ὅρα τάφου μνήμην τίθεσθαι (1584–5). Fraenkel cites five parallels from tragedy that support this point: Or. 1022, Or. 1625, IT 1425, OC 1751, and Ant. 883.⁷ Phoe. 1584–5 thus suggests that Creon has just stepped on stage.

We seem to be in quagmire, for we have good reason for keeping Creon on stage as a silent figure for almost 230 verses and for making him enter before the

2) For further discussion on the divinatory 'lots', see Mastronarde, *Euripides Phoenissae* (Cambridge 1994) 394.

3) Teiresias enters while resting one hand on his daughter's shoulder (834–7) and complains that his knees are tired from the walk (843–4). Creon notices the difficulties Teiresias is having and tells Menoeceus to grab hold of him (845–8).

4) E. Fraenkel, *Zu den Phoenissen des Euripides* (SBAW 1963, Heft 1) 71–6.

5) C. Mueller-Goldingen, *Untersuchungen zu den Phoenissen des Euripides* (Stuttgart 1985) [Palingenesia XXII] 210; Mastronarde (above, n. 2) 512–3.

6) Mastronarde (above, n. 1).

7) Fraenkel (above, n. 4) 74–7. Mueller-Goldingen and Mastronarde both do not deny the validity of the "παύσαι-Motiv".

exodos. Can we reconcile both approaches? Perhaps. A plausible solution is to keep Creon on stage throughout the whole messenger speech, make him depart before Antigone's arrival, and then make return before the exodos. Making Creon depart before Antigone's arrival ought not to be seen as unfounded or implausible because of the lack of textual indication. Similarly, Taplin, in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, makes Clytemnestra exit at 350 and 614, two places where departure is implicit but not explicit; and his main reason for doing so is that her protracted silence is unjustifiable and undesirable on dramaturgical grounds.⁸

Creon's silence during the laments of Oedipus and Antigone is likewise objectionable. Granted, keeping Creon on stage during the messenger speech makes good dramatic sense and is supported by his request and interest to hear how Polyneices, Eteocles, and Jocasta died (1354–5). Yet, there is no justification for his presence in the laments. Mueller-Goldingen argues that Creon is not addressed during lamentation because any reference to him would only detract and destroy the scene's effect. Furthermore, he also argues, following Wilamowitz, that Creon utters no word at the end of the messenger speech because Antigone's sudden entrance gives him no time.⁹ Mastronarde justifies Creon's silence by claiming that it is inappropriate for him to participate in the mourning of Jocasta and her sons.¹⁰ All these arguments, however, can be countered. One may argue that mourning is appropriate for Creon because he is a relative of the deceased, that if he is indeed present during lamentation, there ought to be some acknowledgement of his presence, and that Antigone's entrance should not prevent him from uttering some word.

Kingston, Canada

Erez Natanblut

8) Taplin (above, n. 1) 300–2.

9) Mueller-Goldingen (above, n. 5) 210–1.

10) Mastronarde (above, n. 2) 513–4.