THE MOTIF OF LOVE IN THE HELEN AND THE
ALCESTIS OF EURIPIDES

by

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For my family,
and especially for my children…

«Αν κάποιος προηγείται απλώς του καιρού του,
κάποια μέρα ο καιρός θα τον προλάβει.»

«Η θάλασσα που μας πίκρανε είναι βαθιά
κι ανεξερεύνητη
και ξεδιπλώνει μιαν απέραντη γαλήνη.»
(Seferis, G. 1967).
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CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS
ABSTRACT xiii
ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ xi

I. INTRODUCTION
The Helen and the Alcestis  1
Rationale  3
Problem Statement  5
Methodology  6
Layout and Structure  8
Overview of Literature  12
Note to the Reader  14

II. THE PHILOSOPHY OF EURIPIDES AND WITTGENSTEIN
Euripides’ Profile: Life and Works  15
Wittgenstein’s Profile: Life and Works  23
Euripides and Wittgenstein: Parallel Patterns of Thought  33
The Motif of Love, Language and Gloss analysis  37

III. THE ROLES OF MALE AND FEMALE IN ANCIENT GREEK SOCIETY
Athenian Ideology–The Life of Athens  44
Leisure and Ancient Greek Drama  55
The Character of the Family–Οἶκος  61
Woman and Marriage: A Guided Story  65
IV. THE MOTIF OF LOVE IN THE HELEN OF EURIPIDES
   From Tradition to Literary Text: The Image of Helen 71
   The Motif of Love 77
   The Theme of Illusion 89
   The Female Character 98
   The Male Character 103

V. GLOSS ANALYSIS OF THE MOTIF OF LOVE IN THE HELEN OF EURIPIDES
   The Use of Language 107
   Philosophical Grammar 115
   The Theme of Illusion as a Language Game 120
   The Cubist Helen of Euripides 127

VI. THE MOTIF OF LOVE IN THE ALCESTIS OF EURIPIDES
   From Tradition to Literary Text: The Image of Alcestis 132
   The Motif of Love 137
   The Theme of Restoration 153
   The Female Character 160
   The Male Character 163

VII. GLOSS ANALYSIS OF THE MOTIF OF LOVE IN THE ALCESTIS OF EURIPIDES
   The Use of Language 167
   Philosophical Grammar 175
   The Theme of Restoration as a Language Game 181
   The Post–modern Perspective 190
LIST OF DIAGRAMS, FIGURES AND TABLES

DIAGRAMS

2.1 Language, Grammar, Philosophy and Reality  26
3.1 Male and Female Class System  48
3.2 Civic Characterisation of an Athenian Family Unit  64
4.1 Structure of the Helen of Euripides  75
4.2 Helen’s Ethos  78
4.3 Menelaus’ Ethos  84
4.4 Cardiograph of the Helen  89
5.1 The Function of Helen’s Ethos  111
5.2 The Function of Menelaus’ Ethos  112
5.3 The Philosophical Grammar of Helen’s Ethos  116
5.4 The Philosophical Grammar of Menelaus’ Ethos  118
5.5 The Order of Propositions A1  123
5.6 The Order of Propositions B1  125
5.7 The Order of Propositions C1  126
5.8 The Cubist Helen  130
6.1 Structure of the Alcestis of Euripides  134
6.2 Alcestis’ Ethos  137
6.3 Admetus’ Ethos  144
6.4 Cardiograph of the Alcestis  152
6.5 The Theme of Restoration  156
7.1 The Function of Alcestis’ Ethos  170
7.2 The Function of Admetus’ Ethos  172
7.3 The Philosophical Grammar of Alcestis’ Ethos 177
7.4 The Philosophical Grammar of Admetus’ Ethos 179
7.5 The Order of Propositions A2 184
7.6 The Order of Propositions B2 188
7.7 The Order of Propositions C2 189
8.1 Mythic, Tragic and Social Realities of Euripides 229
8.2 The Characters in the Helen and the Alcestis 248

FIGURES

1. Euripides, the Dramatist 22
2. Wittgenstein, the Philosopher of Language 32
3a. A plan of the Athenian Agora 53
3b. Bust of Pericles 53
4. A Symposium–Scene 54
5. The Head of the Wine–God, Dionysos 59
6. Plan of an Ancient Theatre 60
7a. Women at Home 70
7b. Helen and Menelaus 70
8a. The Traditional Myth of Alcestis 159
8b. Hermes Assists Heracles to Bring Alcestis Back to Life 159

TABLES

2.1 Chronology of Euripides’ Life and his Age 17
2.2 Chronology of Wittgenstein’s Life and his Age 24
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

1. Wittgenstein’s published works (translated from German into English).


2. References

   MIET  Educational Foundation of the National Bank.
   OEΔB  Organisation for the Publication of Didactic Books.
ABSTRACT

The purpose of this dissertation is to provide a contemporary reading of Euripides’ dramas, the Helen and the Alcestis. The main problem investigated is how Euripides treats the motif of love in the Helen and the Alcestis. This problem is approached by way of an analysis of the function of language. It is not just a simple interpretation of the female and male type but an exposition of the characteristics of the motif of love.

The motif of love is explored as an event between husband and wife regulated by certain norms and expectations. The result of this research is given as an account of how Euripides deconstructs the traditional social norms governing the interaction between husband and wife.

The method used is the application of Wittgenstein’s gloss analysis as it is described in his work Tractatus Logico Philosophicus. Gloss analysis is the philosophical analysis of language that extracts the underlying propositions. It is chosen because it allows for a deconstruction of the social order implied in literary texts. It also allows for a rereading of such texts within a surrealistic and post–modern framework that reveals Euripides’ enduring relevance.

Gloss analysis is applied to the Helen and the Alcestis as follows: first of all, the use of language and how it functions are analysed both in the traditional myth and in Euripides’s version. Secondly, the philosophical grammar of his language is examined so that the reader can understand the function of the surface and the depth grammar especially with regard to the use of metaphors. Thirdly, his language games are analysed pragmatically by illuminating the elementary propositions of the traditional myth as well as of Euripides’ version. Finally, the theme of illusion related to the Helen and the theme of restoration with regard to the Alcestis are recreated in a modern–day version.
Generally speaking, special emphasis is placed on the role of metaphorical language in order to show up the tensions in a classical marriage. Classical society was patriarchal and military and it prescribed fixed roles to male and female. Public life was organised mostly around the male, while domestic life was organised around the female. It is especially through the use of metaphors that Euripides shows up the dysfunctions of gender ideology and that he calls for social reform. Through gloss analysis his use of metaphors is illuminated, and this reveals the function of the value system and how it failed in the classical era.

In the Helen, the result of the method applied to the motif of love is a new image of Helen: through gloss analysis, the Helen of Euripides appears as a cubist product of modern art because it represents a double reality, namely the theme of illusion. It reflects a false world which the couple must escape. The tragic world of Euripides speaks to the contemporary reader or artist in a surrealist way. The epic Helen is represented by a range of circles that symbolise irrationalism, while the Egyptian Helen is represented by squares that symbolise rationalism.

In the Alcestis the heroine’s restoration is the antidote to her husband’s patriarchal deficiency, namely his selfishness. Through gloss analysis, the Alcestis of Euripides is rewritten as an experiment in the principles of what is called today the Theatre of the Absurd. The result of the method applied to the motif of love is a new reading of the Alcestis – the most creative part of this study – that is based upon the irrational elements of Euripides’ version, such as the theme of restoration.

The Helen and the Alcestis are still relevant because the problems dealt with, such as the gender role, adultery and woman’s value remain crucial issues in modern society. The female and male interaction is regulated by rules which may vary but still show how people are controlled in a loving relationship and how they experience interpersonal problems. The modern reader who enters the fictional world of Euripides comes back to reality wiser after a therapeutic self-discovery journey that is worthwhile.
Finally, it is hoped that the findings of this research may lead to a better understanding of the Euripidean dramas, the *Helen* and the *Alcestis*.

### Terms to Remember

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gloss analysis</th>
<th>Surface Grammar</th>
<th>Depth Grammar</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Philosophical Grammar</td>
<td>Language Games</td>
<td>Theme of Restoration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surface Grammar</td>
<td>Theme of Illusion</td>
<td>Post–modern Alcestis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depth Grammar</td>
<td>Elementary Propositions</td>
<td>Cubist Helen</td>
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ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Ο σκοπός αυτής της διατριβής είναι να εισάγει τον αναγνώστη στο βαθύτερο νόημα δύο δραματικών έργων του Ευριπίδη, την Ελένη και την Άλκηστή. Η εξέταση βασίζεται στα αρχαία κείμενα όπως μεταφράστηκαν από τη σειρά Loeb Classical Library. Ιδιαίτερη προσοχή δίνεται στο μοτίβο της αγάπης, όπως περιγράφεται από το δραματουργό. Ο ανδρικός και γυναικείος τύπος –συμπεριλαμβανόμενου και του ανταγωνιστή– αναλύεται επίσης λεπτομερώς. Η δομή αυτής της μελέτης έχει ως ακολούθως:

Αρχικά, παρέχεται μια λίστα από βραχυγραφίες, διαγράμματα, εικόνες και πίνακες που είναι άκρως απαραίτητη για την κατανόηση της ερευνητικής διαδικασίας.

Το Κεφάλαιο Ι, Εισαγωγή περιέχει το σκοπό που προαναφέρθηκε, τα πρωταρχικά κίνητρα, τη διασαφήνιση του προβλήματος έρευνας, τη μεθοδολογία, τη δομή και μια λογοτεχνική κριτική στα προηγούμενα δηλαδή τι έκαναν οι προηγούμενοι μελετητές καθώς και ένα σημείωμα για την κατανόηση της ερευνητικής διαδικασίας.

Στο Κεφάλαιο ΙΙ, Η φιλοσοφία του Ευριπίδη και του Wittgenstein εξετάζονται τα έργα και το προφίλ τόσο του δραματουργού όσο και του φιλοσόφου. Στο ίδιο κεφάλαιο, γίνεται μια σύντομη περιγραφή του ιστορικού και πολιτιστικού περιβάλλοντος – στο οποίο συμπεριλαμβάνεται η ζωή και η σκέψη τους. Ειδικότερα, αναφέρονται τα πιο σημαντικά γεγονότα καθώς και οι θεωρίες που έλαβαν χώρα στην εποχή του Ευριπίδη και επηρέασαν το χαρακτήρα και τα έργα του.
Επιπλέον ιδιαίτερη αναφορά δίνεται στη θεωρία του Wittgenstein και στους γλωσσαναλυτικούς όρους, όπως φιλοσοφική γραμματική, φιλοσοφική φαντασία και γλωσσικά παιγνίδια. Επιπρόσθετα, εξετάζεται η σχέση της γλωσσανάλυσης και της πραγματικότητας έτσι ώστε ο αναγνώστης να μπορέσει να κατανοήσει τις βασικές αρχές της μεθοδολογίας που εφαρμόζεται στο μοτίβο της αγάπης, όπως αυτό περιγράφεται από τον Ευριπίδη.

Στο ίδιο κεφάλαιο η σκέψη του Ευριπίδη και του Wittgenstein δίνεται λεπτομερώς σε παράλληλισμούς. Μ’ αυτό τον τρόπο, ο αναγνώστης πιθανόν να αντληθεί τον κόσμο του Ευριπίδη και του Wittgenstein. Καταδεικνύονται τα κοινά στοιχεία που έχουν σχέση με τη χρήση της γλώσσας, τη χρήση των γλωσσικών παιγνιδιών, την ηθική και γενικά τους τρόπους κατανόησης της πραγματικότητας. Ιδιαίτερα, συζητείται η σχέση του μοτίβου της αγάπης με τη γλώσσα και τη γλωσσανάλυση τόσο στην εποχή του Ευριπίδη όσο και στη σύγχρονη κοινωνία επίσης.

Στο Κεφάλαιο III, Ο ρόλος του άνδρα και της γυναίκας στην αρχαία Ελληνική κοινωνία περιέχεται μια λεπτομερής περιγραφή της Αθηναϊκής ιδεολογίας όσον αφορά την κοινωνική θέση του άνδρα και της γυναίκας. Ακόμη, εκτίθεται η ζωή της κλασικής Αθήνας και τα σπουδαίτερα γεγονότα της καθημερινότητας. Διαφορετικοί τρόποι διασκέδασης επιτρέπονταν για τα δύο φύλα: τα συμπόσια ήταν για τους άνδρες ενώ οι θρησκευτικές γιορτές προορίζονταν για τις γυναίκες. Ο ρόλος του αρχαίου Ελληνικού δράματος και ειδικά του Ευριπίδη αναλύεται σ’ αυτό το κεφάλαιο. Επιπλέον, αναλύεται ο χαρακτήρας και η ιεραρχία της ιερογλυφίας. Στην πραγματικότητα, η Αθηναϊκή κοινωνία περιόριζε τη γυναίκα στις οικιακές εργασίες ενώ η δημόσια και στρατιωτική ζωή ήταν το πεδίο δράσης του άνδρα. Επίσης, εξετάζεται αναλυτικά ο ρόλος των δύο φύλων καθώς και το εθιμοτυπικό σύστημα διακανονισμού του γάμου. Γενικότερα, σ’ αυτό το κεφάλαιο καταδεικνύονται οι παραδοσιακές νόμιμες που ρυθμίζουν τη σχέση των δύο φύλων έτσι ώστε ο αναγνώστης να μπορέσει να παρακολουθήσει τι συμβαίνει στην Ελένη και στην Άλκηστη.

xii
Στο Κεφάλαιο IV, Το μοτίβο της αγάπης στην Ελένη του Ευριπίδη περιγράφεται η Ελένη των Ομηρικών επών σε σχέση με τη λογοτεχνική παράδοση, από τον Στησίχορο και τους συγχρόνους τους ως τον Ομηρό και τον Ευριπίδη. Η Ομηρική Ελένη είναι μια άπιστη σύζυγος που κλέφτηκε μετά την Πάρη στην Τροία πιθανόν με τη θέληση της και έτσι προκάλεσε τον Τρωϊκό πόλεμο. Αυτή η εικόνα χρησιμοποιείται κυρίως από τον επικό κύκλο της Ομηρίας της Τροίας πίθανον με τη θέληση της και με τη σχεδίαση της θέλησης της και έτσι προκάλεσε τον Τρωϊκό πόλεμο. Αυτή η εικόνα χρησιμοποιείται κυρίως από τον επικό κύκλο της Ομηρίας. Στα τελευταία αιώνα δημιουργεί έναν τραγικό ποιητή, ο Τρωϊκός και τον Ομηρό και τον Ευριπίδη. Ο Τρωϊκός έγραψε τη δική του Ελένη βασισμένη στην εκδοχή του Στησίχορου με σκοπό να παρουσιαστεί στη γιορτή των γυναικών, στα Θεσμοφόρια.

Στο ίδιο κεφάλαιο αναλύεται το μοτίβο της αγάπης και της Ελένης του Ευριπίδη με την θέληση των γυναικών και τους συγχρόνους τους ως τον Ομηρό και τον Ευριπίδη. Ο Πάρης κλέφτηκε την Ελένη της Τροίας και προκάλεσε τον Τρωϊκό πόλεμο. Αυτή η εικόνα χρησιμοποιείται κυρίως από τον επικό κύκλο της Ομηρίας. Στα τελευταία αιώνα δημιουργεί έναν τραγικό ποιητή, ο Τρωϊκός και τον Ομηρό και τον Ευριπίδη. Ο Τρωϊκός έγραψε τη δική του Ελένη βασισμένη στην εκδοχή του Στησίχορου με σκοπό να παρουσιαστεί στη γιορτή των γυναικών, στα Θεσμοφόρια.

Στο Κεφάλαιο V, Γλωσσανάλυση του μοτίβου της αγάπης στην Ελένη του Ευριπίδη περιγράφεται το αποτέλεσμα της μεθόδου που εφαρμόστηκε στο μοτίβο της αγάπης. Καταρχήν, αναλύεται η χρήση της γλώσσας τόσο στον παραδοσιακό μύθο όσο και στην εκδοχή του Ευριπίδη.
Δεύτερον, εξετάζεται η φιλοσοφική γραμματική της γλώσσας ώστε ο αναγνώστης να μπορέσει να κατανοήσει τη λειτουργία της γραμματικής της επιφανείας αλλά και της εκ βαθέων γραμματικής, ειδικά τις μεταφορές που χρησιμοποιήθηκαν από τον Ευριπίδη. Τρίτον, αναλύεται το όνομα της αυταπάτης ως γλωσσικό παιγνίδι θέτοντας τις βασικές θεωρητικές προτάσεις για τον παραδοσιακό μύθο και για την εκδοχή του Ευριπίδη. Επιπλέον, το όνομα της αυταπάτης μεταφέρεται σε γλωσσικό ιδίωμα στην σύγχρονη εποχή. Τέταρτον, το συμπέρασμα οδηγεί σε μια νέα εικόνα της Ελένης: δια μέσου της γλωσσικούσαναλυσης η Ελένη του Ευριπίδη είναι ένα προϊόν κυβισμού της μοντέρνης τέχνης.

Ο τραγικός κόσμος του Ευριπίδη ομιλεί στο σύγχρονο αναγνώστη ή καλλιτέχνη με τρόπο υπέρ-ρεαλιστικό: η διπλή εικόνα της Ελένης είναι μια αυταπάτη που παρουσιάζεται με μια ποικιλία κύκλων. Η Ομηρική Ελένη απεικονίζεται με κύκλους ενώ ο Μενέλαος παρουσιάζεται ως ένα μοντέρνο σύμπλεγμα κύκλων μέσα στο οποίο είναι παγιδευμένος. Η Ελένη του Ευριπίδη παριστάνεται ως μια φιγούρα που συμβολίζει την εκλογίκευση σε αντίθεση με τους κύκλους που συμβολίζουν το στοιχείο του παραλόγου.

Στο Κεφάλαιο VI, το μοτίβο της αγάπης στην Άλκηστη του Ευριπίδη περιγράφεται ο παραδοσιακός μύθος για την Άλκηστη και πώς τον αναδημιουργεί ο Ευριπίδης. Η Άλκηστη του παραδοσιακού μύθου είναι μια τέλεια σύζυγος που θυσίασε τη ζωή της για τον άνδρα της. Ο Ευριπίδης ξεκινά από αυτή την ιστορία για να φτάσει σε ένα διαφορετικό τέλος. Η Άλκηστη του Ευριπίδη είναι μια ιδανική σύζυγος επίσης που πρέπει να ακολουθήσει τους κανόνες που διέπουν τη σχέση των δυο φύλων. Τελικά όμως επανέρχεται στην ζωή διότι αξίζει ένα καλλίτερο μέλλον.

Στο ίδιο κεφάλαιο αναλύεται το μοτίβο της αγάπης μεταξύ της Άλκηστης, του Αδμητού και του Θανάτου – ο οποίος εμφανίζεται ως θεατρικό πρόσωπο. Ιδιαίτερως, περιγράφεται η θέση του γυναικείου και του ανδρικού χαρακτήρα, καθώς επίσης περιγράφεται και το αποτέλεσμα της Φρούδικης θεωρίας περί μαθηματικής.
προσωπικότητας που εφαρμόστηκε τόσο στον παραδοσιακό μύθο όσο και στον ανανεωμένο μύθο του Ευριπίδη. Έτσι, φαίνονται οι διαφορές ανάμεσα στους παραδοσιακούς χαρακτήρες και στους χαρακτήρες του Ευριπίδη. Εμφασίζεται στα επίθετα και στις εκφράσεις που αναφέρονται στο γυναικείο και ανδρικό χαρακτήρα. Επίσης, στο ίδιο κεφάλαιο αναλύεται το θέμα της επαναφοράς στη ζωή. Ο Ευριπίδης περιγράφει την επαναφορά της Άλκηστης ως ένα φαινόμενο που πιθανό να συμβεί σε κάποιον που το αξίζει. Χωρίς αμφιβολία, αυτό είναι μια μεταφορική απεικόνιση της πραγματικότητας. Ο Ευριπίδης περιγράφει την επαναφορά της Άλκηστης ως ένα φαινόμενο που πιθανό να συμβεί σε κάποιον που το αξίζει. Χωρίς αμφιβολία, αυτό είναι μια μεταφορική απεικόνιση της πραγματικότητας. Ο δραματουργός δομεί τον τραγικό του κόσμο παρουσιάζοντας αρχικά μια Άλκηστη που πεθαίνει πάνω στη σκηνή και κατόπιν αναστάνεται: η νεκρή Άλκηστη πιθανότατα συμβολίζει την παράδοση που πρέπει να πεθάνει ενώ η Άλκηστη που επαναφέρεται στη ζωή μάλλον σχετίζεται με την αναστροφή των κοινωνικών θεσμών.

Στο Κεφάλαιο VII, Γλωσσανάλυση του μοτίβου της αγάπης στην Άλκηστη του Ευριπίδη περιγράφεται το αποτέλεσμα της μεθόδου που εφαρμόστηκε στο μοτίβο της αγάπης. Πρώτον, εξετάζεται η χρήση της γλώσσας και πώς λειτουργεί τόσο στον παραδοσιακό μύθο όσο και στην εκδοχή του Ευριπίδη. Δεύτερον, αναλύεται η φιλοσοφική γραμματική της γλώσσας δια μέσου της λειτουργίας της γραμματικής της επιφανείας και της εκ βαθέων γραμματικής και ειδικά της μεταφορικής γλώσσας, όπως χρησιμοποιήθηκε από τον Ευριπίδη. Τρίτον, περιγράφεται το θέμα της επαναφοράς της ζωής θέτοντας τις βασικές θεωρητικές προτάσεις στον παραδοσιακό μύθο και στην εκδοχή του Ευριπίδη. Επιπλέον, μεταφέρεται το θέμα της επαναφοράς σε γλωσσικό ιδίωμα της σύγχρονης κοινωνίας. Τέταρτον, το συμπέρασμα οδηγεί σε μια μετα–μοντέρνα Άλκηστη: δια μέσου της γλωσσανάλυσης η Άλκηστη του Ευριπίδη είναι ένα πείραμα που βασίζεται στις αρχές του αποκαλούμενου Θεάτρου του Παραλόγου.

Ο τραγικός κόσμος του Ευριπίδη επικοινωνεί με τον σύγχρονο αναγνώστη με ένα μετα–μοντέρνο τρόπο: Η επαναφορά της Άλκηστης στη ζωή είναι το αντιδότο στη θεραπεία του άνδρα της, δηλαδή στον εγωϊσμό. Το νέο σενάριο της
Άλκηστης που είναι ένα προϊόν της γλωσσανάλυσης και τίτλοφορείται ALCESTIS OR THE HORSE FARM, βασίζεται στα παράλογα στοιχεία που υπάρχουν στην εκδοχή του Ευριπίδη. Με αυτόν τον τρόπο, ο αναγνώστης ερμηνεύει εκ νέου την κοινωνική πραγματικότητα τόσο της κλασσικής εποχής όσο και της μοντέρνας.

Το Κεφάλαιο VIII, Επίλογος περιέχει τα γενικά και τα ειδικά συμπέρασματα που απέδειξε αυτή η έρευνα. Η έκθεση του προβλήματος έφτασε στ’ ένα επιτυχές αποτέλεσμα αφού αποδείχθηκε πώς ο Ευριπίδης αποδομεί τις παραδοσιακές νόμιμες που διέπουν τη σχέση των δύο φύλων τόσο στην Ελένη όσο και στην Άλκηστη. Στην εποχή του Ευριπίδη, η γυναίκα είχε μάθει να διοργανώνει τη λίμνη της στην αντιφάσιση των τέχνων και φυσικά προς τις ανάγκες του συζύγου. Οι απαντήσεις που δίνονται στις κύριες ερωτήσεις και οι συνέπειές τους οδήγησαν σε κοινωνική ασυμμετρία των δύο φύλων, η οποία εξετάζεται πλήρως στο ίδιο κεφάλαιο. Οι απαντήσεις δίνονται υψηλής αξίας ακολουθούν τα κεφάλαια.

Ιδιαίτερη έμφαση δίνεται στο ρόλο της μεταφορικής γλώσσας του Ευριπίδη, όπως χρησιμοποιήθηκε από τον ίδιο με σκοπό να δείξει τις εντάσεις στο θεσμικό πλαίσιο του γάμου της κλασσικής κοινωνίας. Το συμπέρασμα που αφορά τις μεταφορές έχει να κάνει και με την κατανόηση των προβλημάτων στην σύγχρονη κοινωνία επίσης. Οι διαπροσωπικές σχέσεις ελέγχονται δια μέσου της γλώσσας. Η κοινωνία της κλασσικής εποχής ήταν πατριαρχική και στρατιωτική και θέσπισε καθορισμένους ρόλους για τον άνδρα και τη γυναίκα. H δημόσια ζωή ήταν προαγμένης του άνδρα και η οικιακή για τη γυναίκα όπως προαναφέρθηκε. Μέσω των μεταφορών ο Ευριπίδης δείχνει τις δυσλειτουργίες της ιδεολογίας των δύο φύλων και καλεί για κοινωνική μεταρρύθμιση. Μέσω της γλωσσανάλυσης αναδομείται ο θεατρικός κόσμος του Ευριπίδη και αντιστρώνεται η λειτουργία του συστήματος αξιών τότε και σήμερα.

Η Ελένη και η Άλκηστη είναι έργα επίκαιρα σήμερα γιατί τα προβλήματα τα οποία θίγουν όπως ο ρόλος των δύο φύλων, η μοιχεία και η αξία της γυναίκας παραμένουν κατά ξεκάθαρα ακόμη και στη σύγχρονη κοινωνία. Η σχέση της
γυναίκας και του άνδρα καθορίζεται ακόμη και σήμερα από άγραφους κανονισμούς, οι οποίοι πιθανό να διαφοροποιούνται σε αρκετά σημεία από το σύστημα αξιών της κλασσικής εποχής, δείχνουν όμως με ποιό τρόπο οι άνθρωποι ελέγχονται σε μια σχέση. Αλλά και ο σύγχρονος αναγνώστης ευαισθητοποιείται για το θέμα της ιδεολογίας των δύο φύλων σήμερα και σε ποιές περιπτώσεις πρέπει να επαναπροσδιοριστεί.

Η έρευνα κλείνει με ένα σύστημα βιβλιογραφικών αναφορών και με ένα γλώσσαρι. Τελικά, ελπίζω ότι τα ευρήματα αυτής της έρευνας θα οδηγήσουν σε μια καλλιτερή κατανόηση των δραμάτων του Ευριπίδη και συγκεκριμένα της Ελένης και της Άλκηστης.
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Helen and the Alcestis

«... Μν μα μ ν Ελλ ν πασ' Εριπδου, στ α δ' σχει γ Μακεδ ν, περ δ ξατο τ ρμα β ου ...».

Thucydides

(<«... The whole Greece is the tomb of Euripides but the land of the Macedonians has his remains, for it received his dead body »»).

To write about classical literature and especially about Greek drama is a difficult task, since the scholar’s and the reader’s views must be balanced. I have addressed myself to those lovers of the classical era who combine enjoyment with a curiosity about all that forms part of their intellectual heritage. The reader must not expect a feminist criticism, for my approach is an application of philosophical analysis of language to Euripidean drama. Therefore, my approach covers the area between literature and philosophy, especially between ancient Greek drama and analytic philosophy.

The purpose of this study is to introduce the reader to the cultural contribution of Euripides, the tragic poet, and two of his most important works the Helen and the Alcestis. The focus will be the male–female motif of love as it is treated by the author. Greek tragedy reflects Athenian ideology regarding male and female roles and status within the social structure of the family (Doyle, 2003: 211). This study, therefore, examines the behaviour of the characters of Helen and Alcestis in terms of their epic–mythical heritage.

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1 The epigram above is taken from Zacharopoulos (1994: 6). In this study all the translations are Loeb’s.
and their status. Both of them take matters into their own hands; they are certainly dramatic protagonists.

By analysing the *Helen* and the *Alcestis* together, the juxtapositions of gender relationships are highlighted. However, the plays are also differentiated from one another and from modern experience. To do justice to both dramas the conditions of production of the Greek theatre, the social and political context of fifth-century Athens and the life of Euripides are reviewed.

It is common knowledge that Euripides made extensive use of female characters in his dramas. Some of his female characters, like Helen, are potentially dangerous and carry with them the threat of a tragic *peripeteia* (περιπέτεια), or reversal of fortune, which is an important element in the production of a tragic drama. Indeed, in traditional drama the catastrophe was usually the result of female actions. Euripides, however, subverts this tradition by presenting this reversal of good fortune to bad as a result of male actions. In the *Helen*, for example, Menelaus’ disloyalty caused Helen’s abduction. In the *Alcestis*, Admetus’ search to have his life extended caused Alcestis’ sacrificial death. Although the women in Greek drama function symbolically for humankind’s suffering, they are still stereotyped by their gender and the ideologies, which determine the male understanding of the female (Doyle, 2003: 209).

In comparing the *Helen* and the *Alcestis* interesting similarities and differences are found. Both are based on a plot that comes from a mythological background. In the *Helen*, the female seems to be the cause of the central problem – the Trojan War – and the male fights for her. Greek mythology has it that Helen’s beauty caused the legendary Trojan War. She was, therefore, responsible for all of the Greeks’ subsequent misfortunes. Helen was a Greek woman who eloped to a foreign country (Troy, as the traditional story has it, or Egypt, according to Euripides’ version).

In the *Alcestis*, the male is the cause of the tragic problem but the female is forced to solve it. Alcestis also serves a mythical function: she originates from a mythical past but she is transferred to the tragic scene. She symbolises the perfect wife in classical society because she does not hesitate to sacrifice her life in order to prolong her husband’s life.
The two stories are viewed in this study as aetiological myths\(^2\) because they generally try to explain social and psychological phenomena in a figurative and metaphorical manner (Morford & Lenardon, 1999: 6). Both myths traditionally function in a patriarchal society to encourage females to accept male domination, holding them captive in domestic activities.

**Rationale**

Euripides’ works contain themes of ancient myths that are retold and reinterpreted. The *Helen* and the *Alcestis* are a pleasure to read, as they take the reader’s mind away into another world. One can see through Euripides’ poems the life–struggle of women. Both tragedies bring into play most of the topics that are central to contemporary society, such as the woman’s role as a mother and wife, contradictions inherent in the marital system, and the female who has to make ethical choices in a moral realm. They also carry messages concerning both male and female within the marital system\(^3\).

Furthermore, I am motivated primarily by the following factors:

i. The *Helen* and the *Alcestis* represent two opposing female types active in Euripides’ world. Helen is the unfaithful wife and Alcestis the perfect wife. An analysis of the mystery of a woman’s life in the classical world allows one to discover the secret language of feminine emotion and imagination.

ii. Myths, sometimes, make life bearable.

iii. The mythic realm is a place where people struggle to meet their basic needs; it also reflects social reality.

\(^2\) According to Harris & Platzner (1998: 8), myth is defined as a story about gods and humans. Wolmarans (personal communication) states that a myth is a symbolic reaction of humans to an internal and external environment. Jung interprets myths as a projection of the *collective unconscious* of the race, that is, a revelation of the physic tendencies of society (Morford & Lenardon, 1999: 8). Moreover, the conditions of the myth’s existence are memory, orality and tradition (Vernant, 2001: x). The above mentioned definitions will be used as a point of departure for this study. See also how Botha (1999: 2) uses these terms in order to explain the Eve and Pandora stories.

\(^3\) See, the **Epilogue**.
I have, therefore, chosen two of Euripides’ works, the *Helen* and the *Alcestis*, mostly, because they represent different female types: for me they are the most mystical and apocalyptic dramas of Euripides. They have to do with the female enigma and female attitudes to society. Euripides uses ancient myths but interprets them anew. Helen is presented by the author as a faithful wife who has done partly what many women wish to do: escape from reality. Alcestis is represented as the typical archetype of the wife who ought to accept the destiny assigned to her by society. She dies but is eventually restored to life because she deserves it. In both cases, the female action is depicted as a flight from reality indicating a symbolic struggle against it.

The contribution this thesis hopes to make is to practically apply an innovative method (*gloss analysis*) to a critical reading of the Euripidean texts, the *Helen* and the *Alcestis*, in order to elucidate the motif of love. This aspect has been neglected as the gender relationship of classical era has never been the subject of a systematic philosophical analysis of language. Most scholars have studied the female’s position and her inferiority to the male’s position or the class ideology and the family structures (see *Overview of Literature*). I shall approach the texts in relation to my own critical interest: the question of ideological interests in Euripides’ symbolic universe. Especially important here is to examine how social reality is interpreted through the function of language in order to understand how language controls people both in classical marriage and in modern society. In this way, a new window is opened on Attic tragedy. My study is potentially important because it provides a new perspective on Euripidean drama related to modern society.

Actually, myths had immediacy and vividness for the Greeks. The boundaries between myths and history are fluid, as Woodford (2003: 141) notes. Real people could be recognised in mythological figures and mythological figures similarly could be fashioned on the models of real people, just like Helen or Alcestis.

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4 For Euripides and tragic tradition see Michelini (1987).
Problem Statement

The main problem investigated is how Euripides treats the motif of love in his works, the *Helen* and the *Alcestis*. The outcome of this research is to render an account of how Euripides deconstructs the traditional social norms governing the interaction between husband and wife in classical marriage. In order to realise this outcome, the style of communication between male and female and the language games associated with the motif of love in the *Helen* and the *Alcestis* of Euripides are investigated. Methodologically speaking, there are two ways to approach it:

i. Firstly, as an analysis of the social norms governing the interaction between male and female within a marriage. This is not just a simple interpretation of the female and male type but an exposition of the characteristics of the literal motif of love through the function of language.

ii. Secondly, as an examination of the female ideal and non–ideal types especially with regard to social morals not regarded as appropriate for females.

In this study I opt for the first approach, mainly because the second does not elucidate the tensions between a woman and a man in ancient Greek society. The second approach is one–sided because it focuses mainly on the female position and not on the interaction between male and female through the use of language.

Therefore, in this study, the motif of love is explored as it functions in the relationship between husband and wife. It is accepted as a point of departure, that the relationship between them is regulated by certain social norms and expectations. The motif of love has to do with the interaction between the main female and male character as well as with the interaction of the secondary male character to the female, namely the protagonist and the antagonist. In the *Helen* the triangle is between Menelaus (main male character), Helen (main female character) and Theoclymenus (secondary male character). In the *Alcestis* it is between Admetus (main male character), Alcestis (main female character) and Death (secondary male character). It must be stressed that Death is a supernatural character and
therefore, not in parallel with other characters, like Theoclymenus. It would be beyond the scope of this study to deal with all the secondary female and male parts in detail.

**Methodology**

The modern method used in approaching this problem is the application of Wittgenstein’s *gloss analysis*, as it is described in his work the *Tractatus Logico Philosophicus* (Wittgenstein, 1966). The *Tractatus* is a key work in Wittgenstein’s thought and is selected because it has a special position amongst the philosopher’s writings. It lays the foundation for almost everything else he wrote. The language games of Euripides will be explored as they are described in Wittgenstein’s later work, the *Philosophical Investigations* (Wittgenstein, 1975), because in this work Wittgenstein develops his thought on language games as function games. His earlier and later views are systematised where this is relevant for the purpose of this study.

*Gloss analysis* is quite relevant for the purposes of this study as it allows for a deconstruction of the social order of Euripides’ dramas. It also allows for the re-reading of the texts within a surrealistic and a post-modern framework that illuminates Euripides’ relevance for today. It reveals the ideological interests inherent in Euripides’ writing and elucidates the position of females and males as exhibited by the use of language. For this reason I will describe in brief Wittgenstein’s philosophy of language and also the parallel patterns of thought between Euripides and Wittgenstein.

Furthermore, in order to establish the connections between the motif of love in the *Helen* and the *Alcestis* of Euripides and *gloss analysis*, the following questions originating from a reader’s point of view are posed (the aim is to compare answers supplied in the two literary texts):

i. What are the areas of contact between Euripides’ and Wittgenstein’s philosophy? What is the relationship between the motif of love, language and *gloss analysis*?

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5 In this thesis, I use the term *gloss analysis* in order to describe the logical analysis of language as it is developed by the philosopher Wittgenstein (1994: 23–26).
ii. What is a woman’s social position in ancient Greek society? In which way is the author’s view affected by the social position of males and the interaction between male and female?

iii. Does Euripides provide oppressed females with a voice? How close is his representation of a woman to the social reality of his time?

iv. How does the author perceive gender relations? How does Euripides deconstruct the social norms governing the relationship between husband and wife?

v. How can we define the motif of love in the Helen and the Alcestis?

vi. What is the meaning of the double reality in the Helen? What is the role of the second self\(^6\) with regard to the relationship between husband and wife?

vii. What is the value of a woman’s life in classical society? What is the message of the Alcestis in this regard?

viii. What is the use of language and what is the function of female and male ethos in the Helen and in the Alcestis of Euripides?

ix. What is the philosophical grammar of language games and what is the relationship between language games and reality in the two dramas?

Indeed, the Helen and the Alcestis have a profound implication for Wittgenstein’s philosophy of language. I intend to examine the motif of love as a language game, not in observing female characters but in exploring how Helen and Alcestis experience their femininity through the use of language. I shall also juxtapose them in order to compare answers on an antithetical level as was mentioned above.

I shall try to discover literary dependencies between the Helen and the Alcestis in order to explain the motif of love as it is described by Euripides. I shall start to analyse the motif of love in the later work of Euripides (the Helen) and then in the earlier work (the Alcestis) in order to compare the development of Euripides’ thought. In this way the similarities and the differences become clearer.

\(^6\) In the Helen the theme of illusion is connected with the doubleness of Helen (the epic image–the Egyptian image) which reflects the doubling of reality. The second self of Helen functions as her alter ego.
Then, I shall apply *gloss analysis* to the construction of the tragic universe. For this purpose it is essential to lay the foundation: firstly to provide socio–historical information about the life and culture of ancient Athens; secondly to describe the actions of the main female and male characters of the *Helen* and the *Alcestis* according to Freud’s personality system. His framework of the *ego, id* and *superego* shows the development of these characters from the traditional myth to the way Euripides constructs them. In this way, a dialectical and polyphonous structure will be built between the *Helen* and the *Alcestis*.

In this study the motif of love will be analysed as follows: as a first step, all passages relevant to the motif of love are identified, and the ethos and character of the male and female protagonists are analysed. As a second step, in order to stabilise the texts *gloss analytically*, the function of the identified passages are analysed with special attention to patterns operating on the philosophical grammar of language. In the *Helen*, for example, the function of beauty, faithfulness and honesty – the main features of Helen’s ethos – are examined both in the mythic and the tragic world. In the *Alcestis*, the function of self sacrifice and honour–virtue – the main features of Alcestis’ ethos – are examined both in the mythic and the tragic world.

As a third step, in order to understand how Euripides perceives gender relationships and how he reinterprets reality, the identified passages are analysed pragmatically. It is especially important to examine the use of Euripides’ metaphorical language and language games to establish how the tragic heroes survived catastrophe through the mechanism of supernatural events which become an essential part of the real world, in allegorical terms (i. e. Helen’s *alter ego* and Alcestis’ restoration). As a fourth step, the language games are recreated in an experimental modern–day version so that the reader may experience the relevance of Euripides today.

**Layout and Structure**

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7 This study is not a socio–historical analysis but specific information about gender ideology must be provided in order to apply *gloss analysis*; more specifically, *surface and depth grammar* has to do with the function of the value system.

8 I study pragmatics as an aspect of meaning that is dependent on its function. See Chomsky (1980: 224).
The layout of this study is as follows:
A list of abbreviations, a list of illustrations and an abstract open the study.

Chapter I, Introduction, contains general information about the selected works of Euripides, the Helen and the Alcestis, the problem statement, the motivation, the method, the structure and the results of previous studies on this topic.

Chapter II, The Philosophy of Euripides and Wittgenstein, is an introductory chapter because it sets the scene for the application of gloss analysis to the motif of love. It contains an analysis of Euripides’ and Wittgenstein’s life and works. I also examine the patterns of thoughts which Wittgenstein and Euripides have in common and how language and gloss analysis are connected to the motif of love.

Chapter III, The Roles of Male and Female in Ancient Greek Society, explores women’s social position in fifth century classical Athens and the interaction with the male gender. Firstly, I describe the Athenian ideology, the life of Athens and Greek drama as an essential part of leisure that influenced social culture. Secondly, I analyse the character of the family-οἶκος and I examine the marital status of the female so that the reader can understand how social norms regulated female and male in a loving relationship.

Chapter IV, The Motif of Love in the Helen of Euripides, points out the features of the motif of love. The image of Helen is examined according to tradition and according to the literary text as well. The theme of illusion is of great importance as it formulates the main function of the motif of love in the Helen. The role of the main female (Helen) and male part (Menelaus) including the interpersonal relationship between the protagonist and the antagonist (Theoclymenus) is interpreted.

Chapter V, Gloss Analysis of the Motif of Love in the Helen of Euripides, consists of a philosophical analysis of language applied to the identified passages of the text, which has to do with the use of language and its philosophical grammar. Then I do a pragmatic analysis in order to deconstruct Euripides’ motif of love. The theme of illusion is analysed
as a language game. Finally, the results of the gloss analysis are supplied in detail, namely how I arrived at the surreal and cubist Helen of Euripides.

Chapter VI, The Motif of Love in the Alcestis of Euripides, examines the features of the motif of love. The image of Alcestis is analysed according to tradition and to the literary text. The theme of restoration determines the motif of love and interprets reality through supernatural events. The female and the male characters, Admetus and Alcestis, are also examined with regard to Death, the antagonist – who, surprisingly, is overpowered by a hero, Heracles.

Chapter VII, Gloss Analysis of the Motif of Love in the Alcestis of Euripides, contains a philosophical analysis of language applied to the identified passages of the text that has to do with the use of language and its philosophical grammar. A pragmatic analysis is also done in order to deconstruct Euripides’ motif of love. The theme of restoration is examined as a language game. Finally, the results of the gloss analysis are supplied, namely how I arrived at the Euripidean Theatre of the Absurd.

Chapter VIII, Epilogue, consists of conclusions, a bibliography and a short glossary.

It is assumed that the role of the wife in ancient Greek society can be explored by way of an analysis of her dependent position in the patriarchal–orientated community structure. Euripides’ view of women is relative to his time: the author reflects the image of family in this society of which he himself was a part. But the author shows an essential element that should be considered: sometimes the man is overpowered by the woman because she induces him to love her either by using her beauty, such as Helen, or her virtues, like Alcestis.

Among the dramatist’s plays that use a female as the main character, are the Andromache, the Hecuba, the Alcestis, the Electra, and the Iphigenia. All of these tend to fall into the category of the good woman archetypes, which are the female slave, the mother–martyr, the patient wife and the obedient maid. In the bad category are those who do not properly serve man or his interests: the adulterer or the murderess, such as the Helen and the Medea.
Much of Western culture in fact depends upon a series of fixed images of female archetypes. Woman is defined insofar as she serves or thwarts the interests of men. This dualism is conceived by Donovan (1997: 213) as spiritual or material, good or evil\(^9\). In other words, this dualism can be divided into the woman who does damage, and the woman who does not. Actually, Euripides uses this dualism in the sense given to it by Donovan because it is placed within a moral order. Indeed, the motif of love is based on the mechanism of dualism both in the Helen and on the Alcestis. On the one hand, in the Helen special emphasis is placed in the female’s underlying libido, as Euripides deals mostly with Helen’s beauty (material) and how it influenced her domestic and public life. On the other hand, in the Alcestis he is concerned with the virtues of the ideal wife (spiritual) and how she leads a better life by adhering to traditional morality.

As I deal specifically with the motif of love and gloss analysis, I realised that, on the one hand, in the Helen its characteristics seemed to have little in common with the characteristics in the Alcestis. On the other hand, the basis is similar: the author comes across two different types of women, both from the higher classes from ancient Greek society. Helen is the queen of Sparta and spouse of king Menelaus, brother of Agamemnon. She could be considered as a true image, responsible for problems in society: a casus belli – the cause of the Trojan War. In contrast, Alcestis is the queen of Pheres and spouse of Admetus. She is the ideal wife and therefore probably not a true image of a female. She decides to die for her husband because she thinks this is what a good wife should do.

Most all of the difficulties are centred on the motif of love and its connection to gloss analysis. Intertextuality\(^10\) is a post-modern literary concept that has proven to be

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\(^9\) According to Donovan (1997: 213), the following oppositions show how this dualism is conceived: spiritual–material; spirit / soul–body; virginal–ideal; Mary–Eve; inspiration–seductress; good–evil.

\(^10\) According to Van Zyl (1999: 65), intertextuality views the reader as an intertext, reading her/his own perceptions and life-experiences into the text. The role of the reader will not be neglected in my approach, as more attention must be given to text as a process of production. The role of a reader is analysed in detail by Voelz (1995: 156) as follows: «… as readers read, they read not only the signs of a given text in intertextual relationship, also with their own life-experience as a sign, to obtain a meaning for that text – but
extremely useful in solving some difficulties in this study. These relate to an examination of the function of language in order to establish a dynamic link between Euripides’ versions and modern society. Perhaps, this combination of the ancient drama and gloss analysis puts the problem squarely on a strong methodological foundation. There is no doubt that this approach calls for a more intimate knowledge of Euripides’ works.

**Overview of Literature**

The stories of the *Helen* and the *Alcestis* were told and retold by men and women. In general, the biographical approach emphasises the sources of the author’s life and his age. A remarkable contribution was made by Murray (1955), who focused on Euripides’ historical context in shaping his life and art.


The literary–philological approach focuses on a presentation of antiquity and its thought as a whole. For a better understanding of Attic tragedy, the best introduction remains Lesky (1983). Others have read tragedy as a dramatic construction, analysing the plot or main characters, like Kitto (1961), Burnett (1973), Seidensticker (1995) and Lattimore (2003). Whitman (1974) has composed a good book on Euripidean dramaturgy. A noteworthy literary essay on the character of the family of classical Athens has been written by Lacey (1968). The works on ancient Greek mythology by Harris & Platzner (1998) and by Morford & Lenardon (1999) deserve special mention. In addition, there have been some special technical studies of structure and meter such as Greenwood they read also and simultaneously their own life–experiences as textual signs ...». In this study, I consider the reader in this sense particularly because gloss analysis is applied both to the Euripidean texts and modern society. In general, for an experiment in intertextuality – the Epistle of James is read together with the cartoon series *Calvin and Hobbes* – see Wolmarans (1999: 45). See also Aichele & Phillips (1995: 15).
(1953), Dale (1967), and Sommerstein (2002). A more old–fashioned but still useful approach can be found in Conacher (1967).

A sociological approach, like that of Arnott (1990), indicates the social norms governing female behaviour. This kind of approach laid the foundation for modern socio–historical criticism. The most important works covering different areas of the same topic, namely *The Position of Women in Antiquity*, have been made by Pomeroy (1975), Blok & Mason (1987) and Cohen (1989), who have studied the female gender from a sociological perspective. Furthermore, the work of Des Bouvrie (1992) is an extremely important anthropological study.

From a Freudian perspective, both stories deal with the female attitude and *libido*\(^1\). Having read many books about different methods of understanding feminine psychology\(^2\), I felt that they would confuse me rather than help me find what I was looking for: not only to point out women’s inner experience but to do a comprehensive study of Euripidean drama through gloss–analysis.

Modern feminist approaches show how females were treated in classical drama. Powell (1990) edited the book *Euripides, Women, and Sexuality* in which the female dramatic parts in Euripides’ works are analysed. Demand (1994) applies a sophisticated psychological approach to the aspects of marriage and mothering. Deserving of special notice is Doyle (2001), who concentrates on elements related to the female position in traditional myths and literary texts as well.

The ideological approach analyses the ideological interests according to the critic’s point of view. With regard to the *Helen* the following deserve mention: Lindsay (1965), Dale

\(^1\) In this study the term *libido* refers to sexuality as a part of women’s identity; it is regarded as energy with regard to physiological, social, religious and cultural influences. For the traditional definition of female sexuality, see Freud (1948). More recently, Ferguson (1981), Andersen & Cyranowski (1995), and Paludi (1998) have developed this topic.

\(^2\) The woman is *the other* in De Beauvoir’s (1960) sense of the term. See also more recently, Chodorow (1978), Lerner (1979), Unger (1979), Andersen (1983), Mitchell (1984), Gardiner (1985), and Paludi (1998).

*Alcestis* has been well studied by Verall (1905), Kynaston (1906), Vellacott (1975), Conacher (1984) and Lombard (1984). The articles of Lesky (1925) and Garzya (1965) are still fundamental to the *Alcestis*. Foley (2001) also describes the character of Helen and Alcestis as they were treated by Euripides. On the male characters of Euripidean drama see Blaiklock (1952).

All the above mentioned studies set the background for my research. Indeed, my thesis is related to them as it describes the life of Athens and the gender ideology. In contrast, my study differs from them as it investigates the motif of love through the prism of analytic philosophy, namely *gloss analysis*. I have found little or no interest in the philosophy of language applied to the analysis of drama. Most critics discuss plays which were written in verse as if they were written in plain prose. However, I do not here wish to question the validity of these approaches. I wish merely to explore some of the alternative ways in which a tragic play can be read.


The bibliography is based on the ancient Greek texts the *Helen* and the *Alcestis*. The literary translation into English is also considered a useful tool. Here I rely on the remarkable work done in the Loeb Classical Library (Euripides, 1994, 2002).

**Note to the Reader**
For ease of reading, “Helen” and “Alcestis” refer to the characters, while “the Helen” and “the Alcestis” would refer to the dramatic works of Euripides. An abstract is also provided in two languages, English and Greek, for those students of classical studies who may find it useful.
CHAPTER II

THE PHILOSOPHY OF EURIPIDES AND WITTGENSTEIN

Euripides’ Profile: Life and Works

Every great poet is part of his times but he also helps to create them. Time is expressed through life and every period of time has three elements: the dying past, the flourishing present and the promising future. Relatively speaking, Euripides experienced the dying past of the Athenian glory (Figure 1), the crisis between Athens and Sparta, the Peloponnesian War and the end of the Golden Age\(^1\), as is shown in Table 2.1.

According to Murray (1955: 6) we should view Euripides in his own context and milieu. Euripides is first the child of a particular age, society and tradition, and secondly, to some extent a rebel against that tradition. The first step, then, is to situate him in his socio-historical context. In this way the reader can become familiar with the political-historical events, the cultural happenings, the gender ideology of his time and the value system in general.

Euripides was probably born in 485 B. C. on Salamis, an island near Athens\(^2\). He came from a wealthy social class; his mother, Kleito, was a green grocer and his father, Mnesarchus, a farmer. He spent most of his life in Athens, the spiritual centre of the Greek world in the 5\(^{th}\) century B. C.

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\(^1\) For further details, see Dialisma (2003: 39–42), Sommerstein (2002: 79–82) and Cartledge (1998: 368).

\(^2\) According to Murray (1955: 11) very few dates of birth in antiquity are known because the system of chronology was badly confused: for instance, the three dramatists were grouped together round the navy battle of Salamis in 480. B. C.; Aeschylus fought, Sophocles danced in a choir of boys to celebrate the victory and Euripides was born on Salamis on the day of the battle. A very ancient chronicle, called the *Parian Marble*, puts the birth of Euripides at 484 B. C. An anonymous and quite ancient document, called *Life and Race of Euripides*, is derived from early sources; fragments from these sources have been detected in the Latin authors Varro and Gellius and also influenced the biographical notice in the Greek Lexikon of Suidas.
## CHRONOLOGY OF EURIPIDES’ LIFE AND HIS AGE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Contemporary Historical Events</th>
<th>Authors and Works</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
### Table 2.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year Range</th>
<th>Events</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>425–400 B.C.</td>
<td>Death of Pericles (429) / Construction of Erectheum, the temple (421–406) / Sicilian Expedition (415–413) / Athenian democracy overthrown (411) but restored (403) / Euripides goes to Pella (408) / Death of Euripides &amp; Sophocles (407/5) / Death of Socrates (399).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Euripides’ Medea (431) / Hecuba (424) / Euripides’ Ion, Iphigeneia in Tauris (414) / Sophocles’ Electra (418) / Aristophanes’ Birds (414) / Euripides’ Helen (412) / Sophocles’ Philoctetes (409) / Euripides’ Orestes (408) / Euripides’ Bacchae and Iphigeneia at Aulis produced posthumously.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Euripides was about eight when the ruined walls of Athens were rebuilt and the city could begin to restore the temples and the festivals throughout Attica. His youth was spent in an age which perhaps saw the revolt of the Ionian cities on the coast of Asia Minor and its suppression by the Persians. Large numbers of Ionian wise men—philosophers, poets, men of science—were forced to seek refuge in Greece, especially in Athens. Their voices must have proclaimed that all men were equal or that slavery was a crime; this kind of awakening must have occurred in the minds of a large part of the Greek population and perhaps in Euripides’ mind in the early 5th century (Murray, 1955: 26–27).

Anaxagoras of Clazomenae in Ionia was a teacher of Euripides; he was about fifteen years older than the tragedian and he spent thirty years of his life in Athens. He is reported to have been a close friend and adviser of Pericles. He is represented as having influenced Euripides by his theory of *Mind* (Nοι). Other teachers of Euripides were Protagoras and

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3 He discovered for the first time that the moon shines by the reflection of the sun’s light and the sun is a white–hot mass of stone or earth in enormous size. Besides, he stated that there was an order in the world and this was a work of a conscious power called *Nοι* ζ. See Murray (1955: 31) and Cartledge (1998: 299).
Prodicus, the sophists, Socrates, the philosopher and Plato’s teacher as well as Archelaus, who was absorbed by Anaxagoras’ Mind.

Euripides’ dramatic career started in 466/5 – the year of Aeschylus’ death – and he achieved his first triumph in 441. Nineteen plays (including one Satyr–play) survive complete; one of these, Iphigeneia at Aulis, seems to have been left unfinished at his death. The surviving plays are as follows:


It is said (Murray, 1955: 15) that Euripides lived in a cave which had two openings and a beautiful view on the island of Salamis. This may have been an eccentricity of his. It has also been said that he had a quantity of books and he avoided society. In 498/7 Euripides accepted an invitation to the court of Archelaus, king of Macedon (413–399). There he wrote the Archelaus in honour of his host, and The Bacchae. He is understood to have died in 406, probably killed by his first Macedonian winter. He left three sons, one of whom, also named Euripides, was responsible for the posthumous production of his father’s last plays.

4 The word sophist means one who makes wise or one who deals in wisdom. Murray (1955: 30) declares that the difference is slight. According to ancient Greek thought one who makes wise pretends to be a wise man (δοκισίσοφος), while one who is occupied with wisdom seriously is considered to be a wise man (σοφός). See how Toyas & Roussos (1996: 9–11) point out this difference in the practice of teaching between Socrates, the philosopher, and sophists.

5 In addition, there are substantial papyrus fragments of Alexander (415), Antiope (427–419), Archelaus (407), Creshontes (427?–425), The Cretans (413?), Erechteus (417?), Hipsipyle (410–408), Melanippe the Captive (420?), Oedipus (after 415), Phaethon (420) and Telephus (438). See also Sommerstein (2002: 50).
The plays after 415 fall into two main divisions. The first of these are the light works of fancy or romance in which the dramatist seems to turn away from reality, i. e. the *Iphigeneia in Tauris* and the *Helen*. They depict strange adventures and have a sharp change of direction in mid–play but happy endings. Next, are true tragedies reflecting bitterness, rage and punishment: examples of these include the *Medea*, the *Hippolytus*, and the *Orestes* (Murray, 1955: 92). It is hard to say what is exactly true, despair, pessimism or progression in Euripides’ universe. In the first place, I do not think that the change of mood is far away from reality when he started to experiment with the tragic myths. In the second place, that is why a great variety is evident in the plays of this period.

According to Lattimore (2003: 105), Euripides made his characters as they were, whereas Sophocles made them such as they ought to be and Aeschylus made his major characters seem larger than life. Euripides’ heroes and heroines seem very much like ordinary people. His presentation of women is ambivalent: indeed contemporaries accused him of being misogynistic because he did not often represent the perfect woman, namely the good wife and mother. Sometimes, Euripides’ women commit atrocious acts such as adultery and child murder. Certainly, he could make a character speak persuasively in its defence. Otherwise, some of his characters do not argue for values with which women were traditionally associated; on the one hand, Medea justifies her murder of her children but on the other hand, wicked women did not escape unpunished.6

The art of Euripides is a mosaic of traditional forms and modern elements. His language is close to the vocabulary of ordinary speech; he also makes occasional use of colloquial expressions. But his metaphorical language is of major importance because it is through this device that he reinterprets reality – especially the language games that he uses in order to recreate the traditional myths, such as the theme of illusion in the *Helen* and the theme of restoration in the *Alcestis*. In addition, he used to innovate by reintroducing into dialogue scenes the trochaic tetrameter; his lyrics, both choral and solo, show an increasing variety in the range of rhythms. He made full and enthusiastic use of the

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mechane not only for divine epiphanies but also for flying scenes involving human heroes (Medea, Perseus, Bellerophon).

In most of his plays the action is announced by a prologue speaker which sometimes serves to destroy the reader’s interest. However, what is told is not what will happen but how it will happen. Indeed, most of the prologues have something mysterious or supernatural about them, such as the Helen or the Trojan Women. In general, they are scenes of waiting not acting and certainly justify themselves in the acting as they introduce the reader to the plot (Murray, 1955: 135–137). At a later stage in Euripides’ plays one finds another fixed element in the tragedy: the messenger’s speech which is carefully prepared and illustrates the situation in which the action is uttered as it happened, for example, in the Helen.

The chorus in Euripides is blamed by modern scholars for not advancing the action; if this is so, the chorus is still useful for creating atmosphere and pathos. For instance, in the

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7 In the Helen (lines: 33–36, 44–46) Helen says in front of the royal palace in Egypt:

33 «…"Hra ... d...dwso d' oŬk œm' ell' 'omoĩsas' TMmo' / eĴdwlon œmpnoun oŬranoû xunqeûs' \apo / Pri,Ľ̓nou tur,Ľ̓nou paid... ‘ka’ doke m' oœcein, / ken%n dŎkhsin, oŬk oœcwn... / ‘ErnÂj TMn ptucasin a,quaʃroj / neʃlhî kalŬyaj – oŬ gʃr "mšhlsš mou ...»

(«… Hera gave to King Priam’s son not me but a breathing image / she fashioned from the heavens to resemble me ... / He imagines – vain imagination – that he has me, though he does not / So Hermes took me up within the recesses of the sky – for Zeus had not forgotten me ...»). In The Trojan Women, (lines: 1–6).

Poseidon prologues:

1 «... κω λα υ Α γα αν λμυρ ν β θος / π ντου Ποσειδ ν, νθα Νηρ υδον χορο / κ ἀλλατον χνος ξελ σσουν ποδ ς...».

(«... I am the god of the sea and the ocean / from under the waters of Aegean / I have come … / where sea–nymphs dance / weaving subtle patterns through the weeds …»).

8 The messenger announces to Theoclymenus (lines: 1571–1593) how Helen escaped:

1571 «... δ’ ν πρ μνηθεν Ελ νης Πο τ Τροϊκ ν κλ ος / δε ξατε πρ ς νδρας βαρβ ρους... σπουδ ς δ’ πο / πιπουν, ο δ’ ρθο ντο ... / ο δ’ στ ν ραν, ο ριαι δ’ κον πνοα / βεβ σι δ’ κ γ ς...».

(«...Helen was there, / up in the stern, cheering them on: “now then, show these peasants how you fought at Troy!” / … they hoisted sail and the wind was right. / And so they have gone…»).
Medea\(^9\) its role is vital but in the Helen or the Iphigenia in Tauris it has little function and no bearing whatever on the action (Sommerstein, 2002: 56–57). In the Alcestis, the chorus interferes by judging Admetus’ decision to offer hospitality to Heracles on the day of Alcestis’ funeral (lines: 551–552).

Euripides’ mixing of real life and supernatural atmosphere, of realism and legend, of rationalism and irrationalism remains a discord and he still stands out, as Aristotle states in his Poetics V, as the most tragic of the poets; he is a figure of high significance in the history of humanity.

9 Medea is in the house; then one of the women of the chorus is listening to the children’s voice crying for help from the other side. This is an unnatural atmosphere (lines: 1271–1280):

«... (σωθεν) 
– ο πο δελφ φ λτα... 
– παρ λθο μους ρ ξαι φ νον ./... 
– α να , πρ ρ ξαι ν δ ανγ ρ./ – γ γ γ δη γ σμ ν ρκ ρ μν ξ φους. 
– τ λαιν', ζ ρ' σακ τρος σ δαρος τις τ κνων / ν τεκες ροτον α τ χειρι μο ραι 
κτενε ς./».

(«... – The other Child: I know nothing. Brother! Oh, / I think she means to kill us ... – A Woman: Let me go! / ... – The Other Child: ... She has a sword ... – Women at the door: ... thing of iron! / spill with thine hand that life the vintage stored ...»).
Ludwig Wittgenstein was born in Vienna in 1889, the son of a rich Austrian Jewish engineer (Figure 2). At first, he became an engineering student in Berlin and then in Manchester (1908). But his interest passed from engineering to mathematics. He then studied philosophy at Trinity College, in Cambridge, where he was a pupil of the British logician Bertrand Russell (see Table 2.2). After 1913, he went to live in a primitive dwelling in Norway in order to work in solitude. During World War I he served in the Austrian Army. During his imprisonment in the war camp at Monte Casino, he composed *Tractatus Logico Philosophicus*, which was the only work he published in his lifetime (1922).

The book has an introduction by Russell and it also has an English translation of the original German text. Wittgenstein was not satisfied with the translation, as he thought it did not correspond to the German original. He was also dissatisfied with Russell’s introduction. In general, the *Tractatus* had a remarkable influence on the movement of the logical positivism that was fashionable in the years between the World Wars. More recently, there has been a renewed interest in the *Tractatus* mostly because of the discovery of the original German manuscripts after Wittgenstein’s death (Hartnack, 1965: 4).

On the death of his father (1912) he inherited a considerable fortune but he gave this away and he earned his living in various jobs: for a while he was a gardener in a monastery, and then a schoolteacher in Austria. Later, he returned to Cambridge (1929) and he was elected Professor of Philosophy (1939). He filled his chair only from 1945–1947 because he most likely had moral objections to being a professor. The lectures he gave were only for students who took philosophy seriously. He served as a medical orderly during the World War II. After his retirement from Cambridge, he settled in Ireland in a cottage for a

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10 For more commentary on this, see Hacker (1996: 67–87).
while, where he worked on his *Philosophical Investigations*; this is a work of his mature years which revisits some of his earlier thoughts. He also spent some time in America (1949). In 1951 he died of cancer in Cambridge (Kenny, 1996: vii–viii).

His works are as follows:


### CHRONOLOGY OF WITTGENSTEIN’S LIFE AND HIS AGE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Contemporary Events</th>
<th>Life and Works</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1889–1895</td>
<td>Invention of cinemascope by Luis Lumiere (1895).</td>
<td>Wittgenstein was born in Vienna (1889).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1914–1918</td>
<td>World War I.</td>
<td>Served in the Austrian Army.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1922</td>
<td>War between Greeks and Turks in Asia Minor.</td>
<td>Published the <em>Tractatus</em> (1922).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td></td>
<td>Died of cancer in Cambridge.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.2

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11 Malcolm (1958: 21–37) and Kenny (1996: vii–viii) were consulted in the process of drawing up this chronology.
Wittgenstein is regarded as the foremost philosopher of the 20th century. He started to work on logical atomism\(^\text{12}\), and progressed to ethics and the meaning of life. His place in twentieth century analytic philosophy is major mostly for his conception that the future of philosophy would be an analysis of language. As Hacker rightly notes (1996: 12–38, 43) he gave such analysis a linguistic orientation on the basis on the function of propositions.

His books are fragmentary with the exception of the *Tractatus Logico Philosophicus* his thought is concentrated on single problems like ethics, faith or language. But sometimes the connections between the single remarks seem to be elliptical\(^\text{13}\). Positions from different periods of thought are centred on the same set of themes, e. g. one reads about the meaning of a word in the *Tractatus Logico Philosophicus*, in the *Blue and Brown Book*, in the *Philosophical Grammar* and in the *Philosophical Investigations*. So sometimes, the inner unity of his total work appears unsystematic and discontinuous (Brand, 1979: xx–xxi).

Certainly, Wittgenstein himself did not present his philosophy as a system. But he gives us a general approach from which we can analyse broader issues like language games and language *bumps*. He rejects some of his earlier thoughts – a normal progression in philosophy – like the rejection of *Logical Atomism* (Kenny, 1996: 35–49). When the reader compares his early with his late philosophy (s)he finds several intermediate phases but the links between the comments on the use of language are relevant. He links his earlier thought to his later insights, so that his development is quite clear – but sometimes the reader may find it difficult to enter Wittgenstein’s world.

\(^{12}\) Logical atomism is a theory concerning the basic structure of natural language which developed in British philosophy during the early years of the 20th century. Russell and Wittgenstein were followers of this theory; their contribution to its formulation was made through their discussions in Cambridge before World War I. The principle thesis of logical atomism is that all significant sentences of natural language are truth–functions of elementary propositions. For more commentary see Russell (1966: 179) and Hunnings (1988: 32–34).

\(^{13}\) That is probably why Russell (1959: 216f) states that Wittgenstein’s efforts after the *Tractatus* are ungrounded as their concern is an unimportant investigation of language. It is likely that Wittgenstein wanted to replace theory with therapy and this goal gave his work its broken and fragmented style. See also Wittgenstein (1986).
Wittgenstein’s philosophy resembles more an art\textsuperscript{14} than a science because the development of his thoughts is cyclical; he revisits the same themes again and again. So his works are open to various interpretations. On the one hand, his comments are still sharp and clear and they have critical power. On the other hand, they are in some parts dark and enigmatical. Wittgenstein’s thought moves between two poles: appearance and reality. He analyses the propositions of life and language. He describes how the propositions operate in order to understand the world – he is simply a phenomenologist. He deconstructs current phenomena of life by analysing their misunderstanding of language and its philosophical grammar (Brand, 1979: xxv).

This linguistic orientation noted above is the result of his effort to dissolve philosophical problems by reflecting on language games, the grammar of expressions, reality and life itself. Indeed, his concentration on these themes gives a phenomenological character to his work. For Wittgenstein, language is an instrument of thought and philosophical grammar describes the links between language and reality (Brand: 1979: 137). The relation of language, grammar, philosophy and reality is as follows (see Diagram 2.1).

\textit{LANGUAGE, GRAMMAR, PHILOSOPHY AND REALITY}

\textsuperscript{14} According to Plato, Socrates noted that \textit{philosophy is the greater of the arts} (\textit{Phaedo}: 61a).
Diagram 2.1

Language is a picture of reality. It is the communal life–praxis of humankind; the fundamental role of propositions, sentences in a sense, is to describe states of affairs in accordance with logical syntax\(^{15}\). The logical syntax of language and the grammar reflect the logico–metaphysical\(^{16}\) structure of the world. The internal relation between language, philosophy and reality is an inter–grammatical relation. The importance of this relation lies in the fact that it requires a logico–metaphysical explanation. The picture of language and reality is expressed by a variant of conception of thought and understanding (Hacker, 1996: 23–32).

A language game is defined as the whole consisting of language and the activities with which it is interwoven (\(PI\) 17). Indeed, language games are closed systems of understanding reality\(^{17}\); they emphasise that the speaking of a language is part of an activity or a form of life (\(PI\) 23). If we consider language from the viewpoint of a game played according to fixed rules then a language game is something sensical when the propositions are also sensical (true). In contrast, a language game is something non–sensical when the propositions are also non–sensical (false). Certainly, it supplies a reason for the initiation of the language games: the language games are changed, if the concepts and their meaning are changed (\(OC\) 65).

Wittgenstein introduced language games in order to deconstruct the idea of a necessary and prescriptive form of language. We do not need to accept traditional language in

\(^{15}\) Wittgenstein accepted Augustine’s picture of language: the role of words is to name and of sentences, to describe. There is also a connection between words and their meanings, regarded as the things they signify or name. See Hacker (1996: 23). In general, on Wittgenstein’s philosophy of language as a view that originates in human life, see Bolton (1979: 75–79).

\(^{16}\) In this thesis I use the term metaphysical to describe the world beyond the senses, which is used to explain real things that can be seen or felt, according to Wittgenstein’s way of viewing reality: by analysing the surface and the depth grammar of the language games that go beyond the laws of nature, e.g. the doubleness of Helen and the restoration of Alcestis.

\(^{17}\) Wittgenstein speaks of different language games as systems of communication (\(BB\) 81). See also Berggren (1961).
interpreting reality; we can make new pictures. Language games participate in a process of understanding reality. For this reason they are not regarded as incomplete parts of a language but as languages complete in themselves. Language games are different forms of language; they are stages in a discussion leading up to the question of what language is (Wittgenstein, 1958: xii–xi). Different language games reveal a family resemblance and the number of different language games is infinite. Philosophical problems are about to arise when one language game is falsely considered to be analogous to another language game. The solution of a philosophical problem is reached through a deeper insight into the real function of the propositions, by understanding the language game which is usually being used. Complete clarity does not lead to a solution to the problem but to its disappearance (Hartnack, 1965: 65–69). Philosophy does not need to describe the many uses of a word or an expression but only the one that will make the problem disappear.

Philosophical grammar does not say how language has to be constructed; it investigates and describes the use of language. It describes but it does not explain (PI 496). It investigates the relations between language and reality as was mentioned above; the connection between language and reality is effected by the clarification of words and

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18 The rules governing the relation between different propositions cause the multiplicity of language games (PI 23):

- Giving orders and obeying them
- Constructing an object from a description
- Speculating about an event
- Representing the results of the experiments in tables and diagrams
- Making up a story and reading it
- Singing catches
- Making a joke and telling it
- Translating from one language to another

- Describing the appearance of an object
- Reporting an event
- Forming and testing an hypothesis
- Play-acting
- Guessing riddles
- Solving a problem in practical arithmetic
- Asking, thanking, cursing, greeting, praying.

See further Berggren (1962: 708–709), Raskin (1967: 279–280) and Manser (1967: 210–220). In the Helen, I will use the rule Describing the appearance of an object but in the Alcestis I will use the rule Making up a story and reading it in order to dissolve the philosophical problem that emerges.

19 Wittgenstein says that the problem is like a fly in a fly–bottle; and the philosophers’ job is to show the fly the way out of the bottle. See Hartnack (1965: 68–69).

20 The term philosophical or logical grammar means the grammar of Wittgenstein’s philosophy; it is the grammar of logical analysis of language that represents reality: this grammar is called by Hunnings (1988: 220) grammar of unreal and it leads to a metaphysical picture of the world.
meanings\textsuperscript{21}. The relation between thought and reality is to be discovered by the grammar of language. The foundation of the grammar is the distinction between sense and non-sense; it consists of combinations between propositions (\textit{PG} 138). Logic is not a theory but a reflection of the world; logic is transcendental (\textit{TLP} 6. 13)\textsuperscript{22}. As there is only a \textit{logical} necessity, so there is only a \textit{logical} impossibility (\textit{TLP} 6. 375). Logic fills the world: the limits of the world are also its limits (\textit{TLP} 5. 61).

The \textit{Alcestis} of Euripides is a transcendental experiment in logical impossibility as it is described above by Wittgenstein, especially her restoration from death to life. The restoration of Alcestis dissolves the distinction between sense and non-sense in the tragic universe because it reconstructs the relation between thought and reality through the supernatural element. At first, Euripides breaks the limits of the world but he finally brings them together: if logic is transcendental then fiction is \textit{a priori} transcendental.

To sum up «... The essence of language is however a picture of the essence of the world, and philosophy as custodian of grammar can in fact grasp the essence of the world only not in the propositions of language but in rules for this language which exclude non-sensical combinations of signs ...» (\textit{PR} 54).

For Wittgenstein, the role of the proposition is major because the proposition is a picture of reality (\textit{TLP} 4. 01); a proposition is a description of a fact (\textit{TLP} 023). The proposition is a picture of its states of affairs only in so far as it is logically articulated (\textit{TLP} 4. 032). Propositions show the logical form of reality; they exhibit it (\textit{TLP} 4. 121). The sense of a proposition is its agreement and disagreement with the possibilities of the existence and

\textsuperscript{21} In the use of words one might distinguish between \textit{surface grammar} and \textit{depth grammar}. In this study I intend to use the term \textit{surface grammar} in order to describe the contradictions or the falsity of the propositions; I will use the term \textit{depth grammar} in order to show the tautology or the truth of the propositions. See further Brand (1979: 143).

\textsuperscript{22} In this thesis I use the term transcendental according to Wittgenstein’s metaphorical way of understanding reality: one language game transcends another when it goes beyond it; when the language games are compared, the use of \textit{depth grammar} is more important than the use of \textit{surface grammar} e. g. the alter ego of Helen with regard to the theme of illusion and the restoration of Alcestis with regard to Admetus’ inner change.
non–existence of the atomic facts (TLP 4. 2). Contradiction is the external limit of the propositions, tautology their substanceless centre (TLP 5. 143).

Wittgenstein conceived the idea that philosophy is a therapeutic analysis of language. Language is the vehicle of thought but philosophy can describe the use of words in order to cure philosophical illness; what philosophy does is to dispel illusion. For Wittgenstein, philosophy is not a theory but an activity. The result of philosophy is not a number of philosophical propositions but to make propositions clear (TLP 4. 112). Philosophy is the clarification of grammar (Brand, 1979: 137). A clarified understanding of the connections between language, grammar and reality is the main aim of philosophy. The philosophical problems arise from misinterpretation of the form of language. So we must struggle against the grammatical illusions by means of language (Hacker, 1996: 113–115).

The totality of existent atomic facts is the world (TLP2. 04). The existence and non–existence of atomic facts is the reality (TLP 2. 06). The total reality is the world (TLP 2. 063). The logical picture can depict the world (TLP 2. 19) and the logical picture of the facts is the thought (TLP 3). What every picture, of whatever form, must have in common with reality in order to be able to represent it at all – right or falsely – is the logical form that is the form of reality (TLP 2. 18). Between the world and I there is effected a constant doubling which appears to start from things and leads further in various stages. Finally, one arrives at a doubling which appears to be accomplished by the I.

The transcended logic and the metaphysical investigation of philosophy lead to the metaphysical structure of the world, as was shown in Diagram 2.1. Grammar poses metaphilosophical questions and pseudo–propositions of metaphysics which philosophy causes to disappear. Wittgenstein’s vocabulary of grammar transcends the facts because

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23 The philosopher’s treatment of a question is like the treatment of an illness. On philosophy see Philosophical Remarks (Wittgenstein, 1975) and Binkley (1973: 112–132).

24 The philosophical I is not the man, not the human body or the human soul of which psychology treats, but the metaphysical subject, the limit – not a part of the world (TLP 5. 641).

25 This is similar to what happened to the Helen of Euripides; the doubleness of Helen is a reflection of the logical picture of the world.
he categorises as language what others would count as non-linguistic facts of reality, e. g. the treatment of colour samples which give sense to colour words as part of grammar (Hunnings, 1988: 246–250). The following passage is an example in metaphysics of sense:

«... is green a primary colour and not a mixture of blue and yellow? ... But how do I know that I mean the same by the words primary colours as someone else who calls green a primary colour? No, here there are language games that decide these questions ...» (RC III 158).

A sentence is composed of words: a word has a meaning and a sentence has a sense. The distinction between sense and truth is rooted in the accomplished doubling and reality. Between doubled reality and reality itself there is an agreement: pictorial character (PG 212). It is the reality itself which shows, expresses, and says itself in the picture. So, the shadow is a kind of picture that is very similar to the representational picture.

That is what Euripides practised in the Helen in order to introduce the reader to an alternative real world. What happens in the Helen has to do with double reality where Helen’s phantom is regarded as a representational picture of the true Helen. The shadow of Helen is a pictorial character that compares reality with the proposition which pictured it: Helen eloped to Troy with Paris. The circle of this tragic myth is based on this elementary proposition and the distinction between sense and truth: Helen has never gone to Troy.
Euripides and Wittgenstein: Parallel Patterns of Thought

One could ask why it is appropriate to use Wittgenstein to analyse a Greek drama of Euripides and not an ancient philosopher who is closer to Euripides’ time. The question is partially answered by looking at the development of their thought. Indeed, the tragic poet of fifth-century B.C. has some topics in common with the modern philosopher of the twentieth-century A.D. But it is also necessary to have a look at the patterns of thought they share as they are summarised in Table 2.3.

**EUPIPIDES AND WITTGENSTEIN: PARALLEL PATTERNS OF THOUGHT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Features of Euripides’ thought</th>
<th>Common elements</th>
<th>Features of Wittgenstein’s thought</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language is a picture of the tragic world.</td>
<td><strong>The use of language</strong></td>
<td>Language is a picture of reality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He uses language games to dissolve societal problems (e.g. marriage).</td>
<td><strong>The use of language games</strong></td>
<td>He theorises about language games as a distinct form of language and a closed system of communication.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethics is governed by rules but sometimes the situation demands renewal of tradition.</td>
<td><strong>Ethics</strong></td>
<td>Ethics is transcendental.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tragic world interprets reality by describing the possibilities of phenomena.</td>
<td><strong>The way of understanding reality</strong></td>
<td>The limits of language are the limits of the world.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Euripides and Wittgenstein have a large topic in common: the use of language as a representation of reality. The use of language in the Helen and the Alcestis of Euripides is a tool to interpret reality. Euripides’ language is a picture of the tragic world; it is a representation of Athenian society because it describes the dysfunctions that arose in the classical marital system. His language becomes a medium of communication that may change the tragic world, e.g. in the Helen the distinction between name and body is the key that deconstructs the image of the epic Helen. So, he suggests an alternative tragic world which corresponds to the real world through the use of language. Euripides’ language of ordinary life progresses mostly to a transparent and metaphorical type of language.26

For Wittgenstein, language is a picture of reality; the metaphors of the philosophical grammar are not for decoration. Indeed, philosophy as the analysis of language is basically a metaphorical or analogical experiment in reality (Binkley, 1973: 211). For Wittgenstein, the task of philosophy is not to find the correct logical form of particular propositions but to understand what function the propositions perform; whether a proposition is true or false depends on the language game. For example, let us imagine a chessboard.

Proposition 1: the chessboard is made up of black and white squares.
Proposition 2: the chessboard is made up of black and white colours.
The word square does not mean the same as the word colours.
Inference: the chessboard is made up of coloured squares.

But if one says so one will not follow the appropriate context (Hartnack, 1965: 61). In this case, the logical form of the propositions mentioned above was supposed to be determined by the relation between them; the falsity or truth of these propositions is not the point. But the function of these propositions has to do with the way of interpreting reality: is the

chessboard a picture of the real world that consists of squares, colours or coloured squares? If one follows proposition I, one may interpret reality through mathematical logic; if one follows proposition II, one may interpret reality through art; if one follows the inference, one may understand reality as a mixture of maths and art, too.

Euripides and Wittgenstein use language games as systems of communication; they both describe how reality is constructed through the function of opposed propositions. In Euripides’ world, language games are the means language uses in order to reinterpret reality. For example, in the Helen, the main language game has to do with the theme of illusion: the doubleness of Helen is a philosophical problem that emerges from the misunderstanding of language; Menelaus is the hero who has to solve it but he finds himself unable to understand the distinction between appearance and reality (lines: 483–489). In the Alcestis, the central language game has to do the theme of restoration: how could it be possible for the dead Alcestis to come back to life again? In this case, her husband, Admetus accepts it as a reward for his moral development (lines: 1156–1158).

But the reader could reject the restoration of Alcestis by saying that it is a paradox phenomenon which is related to myths. But what we have to examine is the function of the above mentioned language game in order to describe an alternative way of understanding reality. So, the reader enters the fictional world of Euripides but when he comes back he has a better understanding of human nature. He also accepts this language game as a metaphor for reality.

Ethics is another major topic that Euripides and Wittgenstein have in common. They both perceive ethics as a modus vivendi that is valuable. Euripides regards ethics as a system of moral standards governed by particular societal norms; these standards concerning male and female relationships must be changed if they do any harm. That is what he tries to say both in the Helen and in the Alcestis by using metaphorical language.

The tragic world of the Helen and the Alcestis is a metaphor for the tensions in the classical marital system. In the Helen, the theme of illusion functions allegorically: in the first place, the alter ego of Helen works as a symbol for the suppressed libido of the female; it transcends the facts. In the second place, if adultery is regarded in classical
society as a sin committed by females then we must change the moral standards concerning males because this strict role division causes tensions in marriage. In the *Alcestis*, the tension is clearer because a woman’s life is less valuable than a man’s life, according to societal rules in classical Athens. Alcestis accepts dying for her husband but Euripides does not agree either with her decision or with the norms that forced her to make this decision. The theme of restoration functions on a post–modern level: Euripides transcends the facts by restoring Alcestis. In this way, ethics says what is right and wrong so that life can be changed.

For Wittgenstein, ethics is the enquiry into what is valuable or into what makes life worth living or into the right way of living a meaningful life. That is why ethics is transcendental. He uses the term ethics in a sense which includes what he believes to be the most important part of what is called aesthetics: ethics and aesthetics are one (*TLP* 6. 421). Ethics is transcendental because it may transcend the facts; the words will only express facts. The words used as we use them in science are vessels capable only of containing and conveying meaning and sense, e. g. a teacup will only hold a teacup full of water even if I were to pour out a gallon over it (Brand, 1979: 291).

The way of understanding reality is a significant area of commonality between Euripides and Wittgenstein. They both reinterpret reality through the use of language; language is regarded as a construction whose rules may change if the philosophical grammar decides so. Euripides reinterprets reality by showing allegorically that the societal norms may change. In the *Helen*, the problem of committing adultery is dissolved as being part of an illusion that lies in the classical marriage. He shows how the *alter ego* of Helen changes the moral code in relation to the suppressed *libido* of the female. New societal norms can define the position and role of female and male. In the *Alcestis*, Euripides describes norms which correspond to the limits of the world as they are defined by Wittgenstein. Alcestis restored is a philosophical fiction because Euripides transcends the natural law metaphorically; he wants to show a way to replace the traditional rules governing gender relations in order to create a new world.

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According to Wittgenstein, the world is a construction of philosophical grammar as was mentioned above; language represents the world through the analogy of propositions as logical pictures of facts (Hunnings, 1988: 267). The metaphysical structure of the world results from philosophical investigation and grammar as was illustrated in Table 2.3; philosophical fiction\(^{28}\) has to do with the picture of the word as an inner object (*PI* 307).

For Wittgenstein, the limits of my language are the limits of my world (*TLP* 5.6) because the world and life are one (*TLP* 5.621) and I am my world (*TLP* 5.63). At the basis of the whole modern view of the world lies the illusion that the so–called laws of nature are explanations of natural phenomena (*TLP* 6.371). So people stop short at natural laws as at something unassailable, as did the ancients at God and Fate. And they are both right and wrong. But the ancients were clearer, in so far as they recognised one clear terminus, whereas the modern system makes it appear as though everything has been explained (*TLP* 6.372). And the thinker concludes that the world is independent of the will (*TLP* 6.373). If good or bad volition changes the world, it can only change the limits of the world, not the facts (*TLP* 6.43). So for what we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence (*TLP* 7).

The areas of contact between Euripides and Wittgenstein indicated above, are focused on the use of language, language games and the ways of viewing ethics and reality. These topics that they have in common allow the application of *gloss analysis* to the motif of love in the *Helen* and the *Alcestis* of Euripides. Classical society is restructured through the use of language games as used by Euripides and the whole tragic world is reconstructed through philosophical grammar. By applying *gloss analysis* to the way in which Euripides uses language games, I hope the reader can understand how the tragic author proposes new roles for better balanced relationships.

**The Motif of Love, Language and Gloss analysis**

The motif of love is the main motif regarding gender relationships described by Euripides in the *Helen* and the *Alcestis*. It is regarded as an event between husband and wife as was

\(^{28}\) I use the term philosophical fiction in the Wittgensteinian sense of something that projects the features of the logical grammar as a particular method of representation of the world.
mentioned above. The basic question posed here concerns the relationship between the motif of love and the language used by Euripides through *gloss analysis*. In order to reach an answer related to modern life I must unite the tragic past with the *gloss analytical* present: to describe in brief the motif of love today and the language used by husband and wife; then to compare it with the motif of love and the language used by the tragic poet.

Euripides describes the gender relationship within a royal classical marriage according to cultural norms as they were accepted by society. He does not try to change them directly but shows how the implication of this marital system causes dysfunctions. In this way, he sensitises the reader to the negative aspects of tradition and to the renewal of gender roles. He shows it by using techniques that underline the possible and the impossible, the real and the non–real, e. g. in *Helen*, the doubleness of Helen is the result of a dysfunction in the dyadic relationship; in *Alcestis*, the sacrificial death of Alcestis is the result of an unbalanced marriage too.

Indeed, the relationship between husband and wife is still a problematic area today. The motif of love between husband and wife remains a topic of interest; the tensions concerning this relationship vary because the rules governing it vary as well. The role division is fully discussed especially by educated or young people. But a major feature of the female position is still the same: the stereotype of the contemporary woman is to be a good mother and wife. Besides this, she often has to develop a career. So, to be a perfect wife and a perfect worker simultaneously is the double role of the contemporary woman. Many women find themselves doing double duty in the workplace and at home (Paludi, 1998: 94–45). If a female fails to be a good mother and wife, this is regarded as a big failing. But if a female fails to be a good paid worker it is not of major importance in comparison with her role as the perfect mother and wife. Many women assume that combining a career and a family is nearly impossible²⁹.

But the position of the male seems to have changed as well: sometimes, the husband is not the primary financial provider but he undertakes responsibility for rearing the children.

This is not regarded as essential for males. If a male fails to be a good father, it is not of major importance. But if he fails to be a good careerist or professional this is what is regarded as a failure. Today, many married couples still accept the validity of the male provider role. In this case, household responsibilities usually fall to the woman but for those couples where both husband and wife work, unequal contribution to housework signifies inequality for women\textsuperscript{30}.

Currently, the language used to describe the gender relationships and especially the motif of love has to do with gender differences in communication; men and women talk differently because they follow different social and cultural moral standards. Men usually try to dominate the conversation while women use more linguistic forms more associated with politeness (Mesthrie et al., 2000: 139, 229). In general, feminine speech appears indirect and powerless while masculine speech seems direct and powerful; the language patterns demonstrate societal asymmetry by explaining the sex differences as power differences\textsuperscript{31}.

The powerful style of communication typical of males results in male societal dominance while the powerless style of communication typical of females results in defensive or submissive behaviour (Worell, 1990: 34–37). It can also be the other way around because the powerless style of communication atypical of males results in a loss of societal dominance, like the position in which Admetus found himself after Alcestis’ death, which probably induced an important change in his status. But for females, things are quite different: the powerful style of communication atypical for females results in female social superiority, like Helen’s position after her successful plan for escape.


\textsuperscript{31} The \textit{politics of gender} and the unequal balance of power between male and female are discussed by Lakoff (1975: 45–49), and Unger (1979: 19–25). Also see Pearson (1985: 27–37), and Wood (1994: 5–67). In general, for the links between language, attitudes and social change, see Chodorow (1978), Lerner (1979), Romaine (1984), Milroy & Milroy (1985), and Coates (1993).
The language used by Euripides to describe the gender relationship mentioned above and the tensions aroused within a classical marriage are not only the language of ordinary life but above all the metaphorical language of the language games. The beauty of his language consists of rhetorical power as Haigh correctly notes (1896: 257). In the Helen, it lies in the theme of illusion (Episode B, Scene A, Scene B) and how it is interpreted differently by both Helen and Menelaus (lines: 620–655,734–783). In the Alcestis, it lies in the theme of restoration (Episode C, Scene B, Scene C) and its function in the tragic and the real world (lines: 836–860, 870–926). The question posed here is why the modern reader should occupy herself / himself with Greek drama and especially with Euripides instead of reading modern psychology in order to have a better understanding of marital relationships.

Actually, the modern reader has reasons to read Euripides. Firstly, classical literature describes gender relationships and life through the prism of morality. Secondly, the basic themes concerning gender psychology remain the same, like sex differences and behaviour. Thirdly, Euripides’ writings, like the Helen and the Alcestis, are relevant to current society because they describe marital dysfunctions by departing from the traditional norms and solving the problems allegorically; the same marital dysfunctions still exist – although in a different way, e. g. adultery, the value of a woman’s life or gender inequality. Euripides expresses the female and male style of communication as differences in power, e.g. in the Helen, Helen’s speech about the escape plan is powerful; her husband is overshadowed by the abilities of Helen. In contrast, in the Alcestis, Alcestis’ speech about her sacrificial death is not as powerful as it should be; Admetus’ request about the substitutable offer is more powerful.

Euripides’ language concerns the ethos and character of the main female and male protagonist. The language game is part of his metaphorical language; actually, it is a form of language and it functions as a system of communication between husband, wife and people inside or outside the family. In the Helen, the language game has to do with the theme of illusion: basically, it is a system of communication between Helen and Menelaus, but Theoclymenus and other characters from the mythic or the tragic world, like the chorus, people of Troy and Sparta, the audience and the readers are also involved.
In the *Alcestis*, the language game has to do with the theme of restoration: it is a system of communication between Alcestis and Admetus, but other characters, like Death, Heracles, Pheres, the chorus, the audience and the readers are also involved. In this study I will analyse the language games as a system of communication primarily between husband and wife. But if it is necessary other people’s style of communication regarding the motif of love inside or outside the family will be mentioned.

As mentioned above, *gloss analysis* is the philosophical analysis of language. *Gloss analysis* of the metaphorical language of Euripides refers to the underlying language games and their philosophical grammar. It also includes expressions describing the ethos and character of the main female and male protagonists. The reader can see how the tragic world of Euripides represents reality in two ways: this thesis analyses how Euripides represents reality – firstly, by examining his metaphorical language in the *Helen* and the *Alcestis*, and secondly, by applying *gloss analysis* to these metaphors.

Metaphorical language and *gloss analysis* go together because metaphor is used in poetry in particular; the poetic metaphor can be read in terms of Wittgenstein’s analytical philosophy: this approach implies describing Euripides’ figurative language by using the concepts of philosophical grammar, surface grammar, depth grammar, philosophical fiction and investigation. *Gloss analysis* of metaphors interprets the textual world with regard to gender relations. Of interest here is the system of morality governing male–female relationships and how it shows up inconsistencies in classical society. A philosophical explanation of metaphorical language focuses on the function of the propositions of the play itself and the language games used. Of course, I am concerned with how Euripides deviates from the traditional myth. *Gloss analysis* works synchronically and diachronically because it allows for the interpretation of the tragic myth in its time as well as in the contemporary age.

Words and chess pieces are analogous: knowing how to use a word is like knowing how to move a chess piece. The meaning of a word is defined not by its semantic features, but by describing the rules for its use in the textual world. All the rules together supply the

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32 See Chapter I, Methodology.
meaning, and these are not fixed by giving a definition\textsuperscript{33}. The rules of grammar are very likely independent of one another (\textit{WL 2}). Philosophical problems arise when the critical reader perceives a system of rules operational in a textual or social world and becomes aware of inconsistencies. As a peripheral figure, Euripides becomes aware of the inconsistencies of Athenian society and its myths. By retelling these myths, he raised the sensitivity of his audience.

The grammatical concepts of \textit{reason} and \textit{cause}\textsuperscript{34} describe philosophically the misunderstanding of language in relation to reality by exhibiting the grammatical confusion of the propositions. In other words, the philosophical grammar of Euripides – in the Wittgensteinian sense – describes the dysfunctions in the marital system by expressing the reasons and the causes. For instance, in the \textit{Helen}, the mythical reason for the Trojan War was Helen’s abduction with Paris; for Helen herself the reason was overpopulation; but according to history, the cause for this war was the colonial policy of the ancient Greeks. Euripides raises questions regarding classical society by using the doubleness of Helen. Similarly, in the \textit{Alcestis}, the reason for the restoration of Alcestis is the hospitality code. Heracles rescued Alcestis in order to thank Admetus for the kind treatment he received; but actually the restoration of Alcestis is caused by her husband’s moral development.

The relation of the motif of love to language through \textit{gloss analysis} is close as was shown above. The emphasis upon rules determines the analogy between language, \textit{gloss analysis} and reality; the rules of grammar determine the use of propositions. The stress upon the social relation between language and reality justifies the meaning and the use of the proposition. The idea of language as a rule–governed activity has to do with what is called

\textsuperscript{33} Two words have the same meaning if they have the same rules for their use. Rules are arbitrary in the sense that they are not responsible for some sort of reality – they are not like natural laws. Indeed, Wittgenstein does not provide a fixed rule for his philosophical grammar but he allows the reader to make her or his rules in order to understand the relationship between language and reality. For example, the game of chess is defined in terms of its rules; but the game does not change if a rule for moving a piece were to be changed (\textit{WL 2}).

\textsuperscript{34} In this study I use the term \textit{reason} to refer to the facts that seem to make something happen (\textit{surface grammar}); but I use the term \textit{cause} to refer to the facts that explain how something happened (\textit{depth grammar}). See Katz (1966: 56–59) and Kennick (1972: 140–185).
the grammar of justification (Richardson, 1976: 45–46, 76–77). Euripides’ tragic myths imply in full the grammar of justification by showing that the function of language games justifies the meaning of the existing or new propositions.

Otherwise, Euripides shows how gender roles demand change by describing the traditional rules within a marriage. In the Helen, the alter ego of Helen justifies the male–female role division and woman’s position in classical society. In the Alcestis, the restoration of Alcestis justifies gender ideology about the relative value of a woman’s life; only old Pheres critiqued Alcestis’ decision to offer her life for his son (lines: 696–701, 728). In this way, the traditional moral standards are opened up for change.
CHAPTER III

THE ROLES OF THE MALE AND FEMALE IN ANCIENT GREEK SOCIETY

Athenian Ideology–The Life of Athens

It is generally accepted that of all the cultural legacies left by the ancient Greeks three have had the most obvious impact on modern Western life: democracy, drama, and the Olympic Games. Most have watched a politician engaged in democratic debate or a performance of a play or an athletic event.

Athenian democracy was not in fact introduced until the reforms of the aristocratic Cleisthenes (508 B.C.). He headed a revolution that truly changed Athens into a democratic state as it ended the power of the old aristocratic families to control admission to citizenship. Actually, he redrew the political map of Athens by forming ten new tribes – which included (δήμοι) of military organisation and each of them also selected fifty members for a new council. The old powers were transferred from the Council of 500 to the assembly and above all to Solon’s (the forefather of democracy) Heliaea, the people’s court. According to Cartledge (1998: 140–156), the most fundamental functions of the new self–government system were the equality of privileges for all citizens (ἰσονομία) and equality of public speech in assembly (ἰσηγορία).

Under the leadership of Pericles (Figure 3b), the statesman and general, Athens flourished. The Parthenon, a masterpiece of architecture and sculpture, reflected the

1 The study of the Athenian ideology in Golden Age is the main focus of this chapter because it formulates the main principles of the ancient Greek culture. There can be no doubt that Athenian ideology influenced Euripides, his thought and his works.

2 More ancient plays, especially those of Euripides, are now performed on stage than in any time since antiquity (Cartledge, 1998: 223).

3 According to Spyropoulos (1998: 18, 26) Thucydides, the historian, states that it is true that Athenian government is called democracy because its administration is in the hands of many and not the few. At the same time, he also states that in words the government was called democracy but in practice it was a leadership of one man, namely Pericles.
ideals and visions of the Athenians. According to Spyropoulos (1998: 34), the most uplifting portrayal of Athenian democracy was composed by Thucydides\(^4\) and it could hardly have been bettered.

Classical Athens was a *polis–state* (πόλις–κράτος); it is often characterized as a *male club* because in general the public realm belonged to men, as they constituted the citizen assembly (κκλησία το δήμου), and they were the jurymen in the courts. The Athenian ideology was structured through the principles of polarity and analogy and the opposition between rich and poor, civilized–monstrous, Greek–barbarians, male–female and freedom–slavery (Cartledge, 1998: 100–101).

The inhabitants of Athens included its male citizens who possessed political rights, a population of resident aliens (μέτοικοι), a large number of male and female slaves and the wives of the citizen men\(^5\). Citizen’s wives had limited rights – they did not vote – as they could bear sons who would become citizens or daughters who would become the wives of citizens as is shown in the Diagram 3.1.

Apparently, the Athenian society operated in a role division between male–female, master–slave and high class–low class people. The Athenian society expresses the basic needs of everyday survival although needs for safety, belonging, self–esteem and self–actualisation play a role only for the male citizens of the higher or middle class. The class ideology and the polarity mentioned above did not permit a person of a low class – especially a woman or a slave – whose needs have been satisfied at one level in order to progress to a new set of needs higher up.

According to modern psychology, Maslow’s need model explains how people experience main needs such as psychological needs (food and shelter), safety needs (freedom from threat), the need to belong and to be loved (friendship and love), the need to have esteem

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\(^4\) Thucydides, the historian, states through the mouth of Pericles in a funeral speech that the Athenian system did not imitate the laws of the neighbouring city states. Athenians cultivated refinement without extravagance and knowledge without effeminacy. They also regarded those who took no part in these civic duties not as unambitious but as useless.

\(^5\) On class ideology, see Blackwell (1978: 26–32).
(respect from others) and the need for self–actualisation (using of abilities and skills)\(^6\). The Athenian democracy did not promote these basic needs for females, foreigners or slaves; in fact, it offered asymmetry which caused societal problems.

In the first place, Athenian democracy expected its citizens to practise a great deal of self-help (Lacey, 1968: 155). It also made a considerable use of slave labour; the presence of large numbers of chattel slaves meant that many of the propertied classes did not need to employ the free poor; all hoped to be able to buy slaves of their own. In the second place, women did not qualify for full citizenship and the privileges of male citizens; they also spent their time indoors working wool and doing other household tasks, like weaving, cooking and bearing children (Pomeroy, 1975: 53, 78).

Military service was the most important of citizens’ obligation to the polis–state (πόλις–κράτος); females did not go to war. The social ideal of a classical Athenian citizen was to be a good and virtuous warrior (καλός κάρδιας στρατιώτης). It was generally accepted that one had to protect the polis–state and to lose one’s life if necessary – a glorious death was one that occurred in a battle\(^7\).

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\(^7\) In the Persae, Aeschylus (lines: 402–405) writes:

\[«...πα δες Ελλ νον, τε, \lambda θερο τε πατρ δ', λευθερο τε θ πα δας, γυνα κας, θε ν τε πατρ ον δη, \theta κας τε προγ νον ν ν π ρ π ντου γ ν...»\]

(«... Sons of Greeks, forward liberate your homeland, your children, wives, … your fathers’ tombs’ now is the struggle for all of them …»).

Plato, the philosopher, states in the Crito «... μητρ ς τε κα πατρ ς κα τ ν λλων προγ νον π ντου τμι τερ ν στιν πατρ ς κα σεμν ηρον κα γι ηρον…», («...The most valuable ideal is the polis–state, even more than mother, father and ancestors …»). See Boegehold & Scafuro (1994: 45–57), Garland (1985: 35), Zamarou (1999: 16) and Argiroudi (2001: 163).
### Male and Female Class System

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class Type</th>
<th>Rights</th>
<th>Obligations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aristocrats (elite)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Vote–speak in the assembly</td>
<td>Military service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leisure at symposia / festivals / Theatre / educated</td>
<td>Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female citizens</td>
<td>Participate in religious festivals/ Theatre (?) more educated</td>
<td>Bear children (heirs–citizens–warriors) / Domestic duties / Supervise the slave’s work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Middle Class (shop–owners)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Vote–speak in the assembly</td>
<td>Military service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leisure at symposia / festivals / Theatre / educated</td>
<td>Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Participate in religious festivals/ Theatre (?) less educated</td>
<td>Bear children (heirs, citizens, warriors) / Domestic duties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Low Class (workers)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Vote–speak in the assembly</td>
<td>Military service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leisure at symposia / festivals / Theatre / educated</td>
<td>Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Participate in religious festivals/ Theatre (?) / uneducated</td>
<td>Bear children / Domestic duties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Metics–foreigners</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Participate in some festivals</td>
<td>Military service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Work / pay tax</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female (non–citizens)</td>
<td>Participate in symposia (Courtesans)</td>
<td>Bear children–non citizens–warriors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concubines</td>
<td>Usually better educated</td>
<td>Bear non–legal children–warriors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The main gathering place of Athens was the *agora* (ἀγορά), both a political and a commercial public centre, and also the core of economical and cultural life (Figure 3a). In the *agora* were located not only shops but temples and public buildings as well. It was the place where males used to gather to take decisions, to discuss politics, to attend the speeches of the politicians or the philosophers, to learn the latest news and of course to do shopping (males, slaves). The male citizens entered the *agora* but not free women, *metics*, slaves or young boys. But males and females or slaves often worked in many craft shops located in and around the *agora*. Most of the low classes' women were engaged in selling foodstuffs, perfumes and garland; others were woolworkers or tavern–keepers (Cartledge, 1998: 117).

Athenians believed that *a healthy mind is developed in a healthy body* (*Νοῦς ἡδῆς ἐν σώματι γε*) as Argiroudi (2001: 116) notes; that was why they emphasized bodily exercise. The Olympic Games were the most splendid athletic festival in honour of Zeus8. *Palaestrae* (παλαίστρες) and *Gymnasia* (γυμναστήρια) were also social centres for young

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8 The stadium in Athens, built in marble, held the first Olympic Games. They started in 776 B. C. and ended in 395 A. D. An olive wreath (*κότυνος*), was the prize for the victors of the games. See Argiroudi (2001: 116–123).
men but women and slaves were excluded from the gymnastic life. They housed exercise–rooms, equipment, baths and a library. The boys practised various sports\(^9\) to develop strong and healthy bodies. The most famous gymnasium were the Lyceum of Aristotle, the Academy of Plato and the Cynosarges of Diogenes the Cynic. They were also sites for the pursuit of courtship and pederastic relationships, therefore, desire was not defined by the love–object.\(^{10}\)

Performances were big social events, as was mentioned above, and part of some festivals of Athens. Religious festivals were also a part of the life in ancient Athens\(^11\). Some of them, such as the splendid Panathenaea (Παναθήναια) which celebrated the birthday of Athena, the city’s tutelary deity, were restricted to citizen women. The sacrificial procession (πομπή), was headed by maidens, usually of aristocratic birth, bearing different sets of ritual objects; they performed a number of ritual functions, like weaving the robe (πέπλος) for Athena or washing the cult–statue. The Thesmophoria (Θεσμοφόρια) was an exclusively woman’s festival focused on its function as a holiday from the routine of domestic life and associated with woman’s fertility both human and agricultural\(^12\). Slaves had a recognized part in some city celebrations, like the Anthesteria (Ανθεστήρια) and initiation to the Eleusinian Mysteries (Ελευσίνια Μυστήρια)\(^13\).

On one side, the symposium (συμπόσιον) was a characteristic evening activity of the elite and its activities included reclining on couches, drinking wine mixed with water, libations to the gods and accompanying musical and conversational or sexual entertainment at the end of the party (Figure 4). Of course, respectable free wives and daughters were excluded. Wealth was seen by the Greeks in general as a means for enjoying leisure but not as a goal. Rich men often spent their evenings entertaining friends to expensive food,

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\(^9\) Wrestling was among the most popular sports in Athens. See Argiroudi (2001: 120).

\(^{10}\) On the sexual morality of classical Athens, see Roy (1997: 11–17).

\(^{11}\) For detail, see Chapter III, Leisure and Ancient Greek Drama.

\(^{12}\) This festival in Athens extended over three days; on the first, the women set out of their homes, on the second, they fasted and on the third, they celebrated and mixed the offerings with the seed–grain, a function connected with Demeter and Kore, goddesses of grain and agriculture. See Cartledge (1998: 105) and Dillon (2001: 54–63).

\(^{13}\) For details of mystic practice, see Wasson et al. (1978: 22–28) and Jung & Kerényi (1985: 27–35).
quality wines and mistresses or boyfriends in their privative houses or they used to hunt
dogs or to dress themselves in elegant clothes. The poor also drank in wine-shops called
capeleia (καπηλειά). All Athenians liked occasionally to gamble with dice or at
cockfighting contests. As regards eroticism, for men it was regarded as quite normal to
feel homosexual as well as heterosexual desire: it was common for them to pass through
these two distinct stages (Cartledge, 1998: 213–218).

On the other hand, the Athenians were deeply religious: they believed in twelve major
gods who dwelled upon mount Olympus. The gods were partly human in nature and
partly alien to it; the powers they represent are sometimes exercised in ways which
humans find cruel or paradoxical. For instance, in the Hippolytus of Euripides, Aphrodite
punishes Hippolytus by making his stepmother, Phaedra, fall in love with him – an event
that brings disaster. According to mythology, Aphrodite also promises Paris to make
Helen, the most beautiful woman of the world, fall in love with him if he awards the
golden apple to her (Vernant, 2001: 78).

Greek gods also stand as arbiters of the moral order and the idea of harmony. In
Euripides’ Helen, the poet comments on the nature of gods in a modern way (lines: 1254–
1255):

1137 «… τι θες ζ μ θες τ μ σον…».

(«… what is god, what is not god
and what lies between …»).

The Olympian gods also used to take the form of a human being in order to help
humans. The Greek pantheistic religious system justified the social system. Indeed, the

14 The myths say that gods have been immortals; their food was ambrosia and their drink was nectar. When
a mortal married a goddess the children of the union were semi–mortal and semi–immortals, like Achilles
(son of a mortal hero, Peleus, and the goddess Thetis) and Helen (daughter of Leda and Zeus/Swan). See

15 The words hamartia–hybris–themis (μαρτία–βρις–θέμις) are connected with the breaking of the
behaviour of gods mirrored the attitude of the people. The myths also supplied a foundation of the social system at that time. Most Greek stories reflect a universal preoccupation with creation, the nature of god and mankind and the afterlife (Morford & Lenardon, 1999: 3). Generally speaking, Euripides treats the usual myths as allegorical stories and symbols of universal truths; if they were told in another way they would provide the basis for an alternative interpretation of social problems.

The Athenians used to go to oracles to ask the advice of gods about the future. Euripides in the Helen criticises this belief and express his opinion though the mouth of the messenger (lines: 822, 836).

758 «...γν μη δ' ρ στη μ ντις τ' ε βουλ. α...».

(«... the best way to tell fortune is to be intelligent ...»).

The slogan of the Athenian democracy was to live well (εζν), but it was not as liberating as it sounds; in practice the democracy imposed a considerable measure of

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16 Like Athena who took the form of Mentor, a friend of Odysseus in order to assist his son, Telemachus. See the Odyssey (1: 115–120).

17 For instance, it is reported that Athena emerged from Zeus’ head brandishing her shield. That is why she was called Pallas Athena. Her connection with Poseidon can be interpreted as the struggle between the old aristocratic system and the rising democracy in which the figure of the maiden is revived (Harrison, 1907: 301–302). See also Burkert (1985: 26–36) and Stefanides (1994: 12–15). For the place of women in myths, in general, see Lefkowitz & Frant (1986: 34–38).

18 The most popular oracle of the ancient world was of Delphi, dedicated to Apollo. Greeks from all over the world used to come there to worship the god, to attend the festival in honour of him and to receive the god’s answer about the future which was delivered by his priestess, the Pythia. She was seated on a tripod and while she was chewing bay leaves she was given the oracles; they were obscure and could be interpreted by the receiver in many ways so that the god would be always right. For the belief in oracles and the different views of this see also Euripides, the Electra (line: 400), Sophocles, the Oedipus Rex (lines: 387–389, 396–398), Sophocles, the Antigone (line: 1055) and Theocritus, the Fishermen (lines: 32–33) as Argiroudi states (2001: 139–140). Ancient Greeks also believed that the Fates, (Μορφ, were three goddesses who had the control of human destiny (Greene, 1944: 23–32).
conformity with the customs of the dominant middle and lower-middle classes\textsuperscript{19}. For instance, the trial of Socrates in 399 provides an example of a man whose independence of mind brought suspicion on him. The Golden Age seems to have passed; all questions in Greek history have been – and many still are – of extended debate.

\textsuperscript{19} See Lacey (1968: 156–157) for a critique of this.
Figure 3a. A plan of the Athenian agora in the 5th century. In Cartledge (1998: 114).

Figure 3b. Bust of Pericles, son of Xanthippus, Athenian (Roman copy). In Cartledge (1998: 154).
Figure 4. *A symposium scene.* In Cartledge (1998: 212).
Leisure and Ancient Greek Drama

It is common knowledge that the history of drama began at the festivals of Dionysos in classical Athens. Greek drama originated from the Dionysiac or Bacchic mysteries. The myth referred to these mysteries is that of Dionysos, son of Zeus and Semele, who came from Phrygia (Figure 5). He was the guardian of the wine\(^{20}\). His celebration was, as usual, transferred into a mythical sphere and the partakers were represented as maenads, satyrs and silens (Nilson, 1975: 18, 142–143). Classical Greek drama is divided into three principal genres: tragedy, comedy and satyr–drama. Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides, the Athenian tragic poets, are considered among the greatest dramatists that have ever been; they were inspired by the ancient rituals and myths.

Music played an important role in drama: the special danced hymn in Dionysos’ honour to the tune of the aulos was called the dithyramb; it was a type of performance\(^{21}\). It represented the highest individual development in the field of choric poetry. Drama must have been devoted to myths about the wine–god and themes from the rituals surrounding his worship. The first master of it, Arion, was active in Athens. The importance of this song in the literary ramifications of ancient Greek music is comparable only to that of the nome (Lang, 1963: 11).

Actually, by some mysterious evolutionary process the dithyramb gave birth to the tragedy\(^{22}\). But we do not know how these performances metamorphosed into something

\[^{20}\] The Dionysiac cult is connected to a hymn known as a dithyramb and to a divine function, namely ecstasy (κατακασία). Kerenyi (1951: 251–252) sees Dionysos as a Zeus of women. See also Lucas (1959) and Schlesinger (1963). For further details, see also Adrados (1975), Else (1965), Lindsay (1965), Pickard–Cambridge (1962) and Mercouris (1997: 74–75, 93). For an analysis of Dionysos’ multiple personae, see the remarkable work done by Callas–Cambridge (1993).


\[^{22}\] The term tragedy (τραγῳδία=τράγον δή) in the ancient sense referred to the masks used by the actors representing goats in the dithyramb. In modern Greece, the custom of Bourani survives at a carnival festival in which the partakers use similar masks, while they drink wine from phallus–shaped jugs; it is said that it comes from the Dionysiac cult (personal experience).
that can be called drama in which each performer represents a person in the framework of a story or a fixed text. The founder of tragedy, Thespis, came from Icaria in Eastern Attica; he won the first competition at Athens in 533\(^{23}\). From then until the mid 3\(^{rd}\) century Athens was the premier home of drama. According to Sommerstein (2002: 2), Aeschylus made his debut a few years later and the earliest tragedy whose date is known is Phrynichus’ *Fall of Miletus* in 493.

According to Aristotle (*Poetics* V: 1449b), the definition of tragedy and its principal purpose is as follows:

«… στιν ο ν τραγ δ α μ μησις πρ ξεως σπουδα ας κα τελε ας μ γεθος χο σης, δυσμι ν λ γ χωρ ς κ – στ τ ν ε δ ν ν το ς μορ οις, δρ ντον κα ο δι παγ– γελ ας, δι ς ου κα φ βου περα νουςα τ τ τ ν τοι τουν παθημ των κ θαρσιν \(^{24}\)…».

(«…Tragedy is an imitation of an action that is serious and complete, of a certain magnitude, a melody with each kind of ornament, the several kinds being in separate parts of the play, in the form of action, not of narrative, through pity and fear effecting the release of similar passions…»).

Theatrical performances were big social, public and civic events put on as part of religious festivals. Athenian citizens were encouraged to attend them which provided not only entertainment but education as well and promoted their culture. That some women attended the theatre is shown by one passage in Aristophanes’ *Lysistrata* (lines: 1050–1051) where the chorus, pretending to offer the audience the gifts of money ask *every man and woman* to let them know if they want some. For Sommerstein (2002: 5, note 3), while women and children were not officially barred from attending the performances in Athens – as they were excluded from attending the Olympic games – relatively few actually did

\(^{23}\) Thespis, then, organized a group of actors on tour in Attica; he also used a mode of transport, called *Chariot of Thespis*. See Georgousopoulos (1999: 16).

\(^{24}\) From this definition one can conclude that the main aim of tragedy was both to entertain and educate as well. For a different view, see Des Bouvrie (1992: 64).
so. Pericles initiated the policy under which the state undertook payment of the entrance ticket (θεωρικά) for those citizens who could not afford it. It was probably because firstly it was a popular art and secondly it had to do with the moulding of behaviour; actually, performances expressed the myths in dramatic forms (Argiroudi, 2001: 179–180).

The ancient Greek theatre was an open–air one, built in a hillside, where the audience could sit (Figure 6). The seats were arranged around a circular flat area, called ὁρχήστρα, where the action took place. In the middle of it was an altar, later called θυμήλη dedicated to Dionysos and beyond the orchestra was the stage (λογε ον) from where the actors emerged. The theatre of Dionysos, built in stone, under the slopes of the Acropolis, was the oldest theatre in ancient Athens. Associated with the skene were two special effects or devices. One, reported as κκόκλημα was used to display indoor scenes to the audience. The second one was αἰώρημα, a crane that hoisted characters making airborne entries or the divinities who intervene at the end of the tragedy to impose a solution.

All plays were performed in competitions undertaken by choregoi (χορηγοί), each of them sponsored at Athenian festivals, i. e. the City (Great) Dionysia (νστει or Μεγάλα Διονύσια) and Lenaea (Λήναια). The role of the sponsor was an expensive one; the financing of productions were effected through a combined system of λειτουργίαι, namely taxation and sponsorship. For each competition it was the responsibility of the magistrate in charge to choose the persons who would be allowed to compete; applicants were said to have asked for a chorus (τουν χορόν) and the successful ones were given a chorus.

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26 For example, it is used in Aeschylus’ Agamemnon to display the scene of Clytaemnestra standing sword in hand over the corpses of Agamemnon and Cassandra; the theme of a murder was not represented in front of the audience in ancient theatre.

27 Like Bellerophon on his winged horse or Dioscuri (dei ex machina or πό μηχαν ζ θεός) in the Helen. of Euripides. See Sommerstein (2002: 10).

28 The City Dionysia began at the tenth of Elaphobelion (March–April) and lasted four or five days. The Lenaea was held in the month of Gamelion (January–February) and was attended by the resident population of Attica, citizen and non–citizen. See Sommerstein (2002: 6). For further reading see also Pickard–Cambridge (1953: 19–20).
The role of these applicants was to be the of the chorus (διδάσκαλος), the director and the choreographer at the same time. That is why another term for ancient Greek drama is διδασκαλία, which means the process of education through the performance of drama.

The actors were always men who played male and female parts as well. The tragedian Phrynichus first introduced female characters and choruses. In contrast, all the numerous strong roles i. e. Medea, Trojan Women, Iphigeneia, Phaedra or Antigone, which still enthral us, were created for female characters. They wore tight bodysuits which they put on costumes appropriate to genre and character; actors playing female roles would have their bodysuits suitably padded. All actors, chorus and mutes wore masks to change characters and express feelings at a certain time during the action. These head pieces covered most of the head and including hair. The mask could tell the audience a good deal about the character’s age, genre and social status as well (Sommerstein, 2002: 13).

All drama was composed in verse, not prose, and used language that was not always the language of prose; the language of the ancient theatre was poetry. The verse (spoken or sung) obeyed strict rules (Lattimore, 2003: 4). Common to all forms of drama was the iambic trimeter which was the standard verse–form for spoken dialogue. Generally speaking, it is beyond of the scope of this study to deal with the ancient metrical systems.

29 Cartledge (1998: 246) believes that private theatricals of an informal kind in private houses probably used female actors, slaves or hetaerae. He also agrees with Sommerstein that tragedy was written and performed exclusively by men and watched at festivals by audiences overwhelmingly dominated by men.

30 See Rosenmeyer (1963: 23–29) for the meaning of masks.

31 A line of three metrical units (μέτρα) each of the form is \( x - y \). See further, Dale (1968: 28–34) and also Dale (1971: 21).
Figure 5. *The head of the wine–god, Dionysos*. In Curry (1981), cover page.
Figure 6. *Plan of an ancient theatre*. In Curry (1981: 1).
The Character of the Family—Οἰκος

The smallest unit of the *polis*—state was the family, the *oikos* or *oixia* which consisted of the following elements: the father, his legal wife, the children (sons and unmarried daughters), the means of subsistence and the servants—slaves. The Athenian society was patriarchal: the father was the *pater familias*, the head of the family, called *kyrios* (*κύριος*) and of course the master of the *oikos*; he had the right of life and death over the other members of his household. His legal wife, *kyria* (*κυρία*), was the manager of the household and under the control of the *kyrios*. The woman could look after the man’s property when he was absent abroad on military service or for trade. When a man died, his widow looked after his possessions until his heir was established; this period was temporary (Aristotle, *Politics* I: 152A–B).

The practice of keeping a concubine appeared to have been quite common. The unions with concubines would have a formal status without being recognised as marriages; bigamy was legalised in classical society. Normally, these women would have been foreigners or slaves and in some cases they may have lived alongside a man’s legitimate wife as part of the family. The children who were born as a result of these relationships, namely the bastards, were excluded from citizenship and they could receive only a small portion of the inheritance set aside for illegitimate children (Blundell, 1995: 124–125).

The husband and wife have a natural instinct – common to all living creatures – to create offspring. An *oikos* without children was not fully an *oikos*; it looked forward to its own continuance as it was a living organism which supported its living members’ needs for food and safety. The family’s land always remained of fundamental importance; this land was divided into *kleroi* (*κλῆροι*), which were allotted to the various heads of kinship–groups. If a woman owned a property (dowry) it then always remained separate from her husband’s *oikos*. He had the control of it while he lived, and control passed to their


33 Cassandra was Agamemnon’s concubine imported from Troy. Tekmessa was Ajax’ concubine as well. See further Foley (2001: 214).
children or guardians after his death. If a family was forced to sell the lands of the *oikos* to outsiders belonging to a different deme, it would then still exist but the *kyrios* would lose his good reputation (Lacey, 1968: 15–16, 98).

The sons of the house, especially a first-born son, therefore, held the obligation to marry and create an heir, in order to keep the *oikos* vivid. Of course, there were occasions in which a man had only daughters, but the interest in maintaining the continuity of the family was so strong that he arranged for the girl (*ἐπίκληρος*) to be married to her nearest kin, e.g. an uncle or a cousin. The family’s rights were fully protected by the law (Lacey, 1968: 22–24, 30).

An *oikos* also included outsiders whom the master of the house accepted into it; the servants or the slaves who came into it in order to serve it and the visitors (*ξένοι*), both hosts and guests. A slave was also made a member of the family and normally took part in the family’s religious festivals. The *xenoi* were part of the Greek idea of the family and the respect for them was among the unwritten commandments upon which the ethical code of the *polis–state* was based (Lacey, 1968: 30–32). In the *Helen* of Euripides, Paris, it is the *ξένοι* who broke the code of hospitality (*philoxenia*) and finally caused the damage done to Menelaus’ *oikos*. In contrast, in the *Alcestis* of Euripides, it is Heracles who respects Admetus’ hospitable treatment; Heracles benefits Admetus by rescuing his wife. In this way, he returns the favour offered him.

Each *oikos* was itself a member of one or more larger groups – the clan (*γένος*), the phratry (*φατρία*), the tribe (*φυλή*), the deme (*δήμος*) – whose members were fully members of the *polis–state*, as is shown in Diagram 3.2. The tribe was a group of families coming from a common ancestor; *phratry* was a military group larger than *genos* in the sense of blood–brotherhood. The word *φυλή* referred to a unit larger than the phratry, and deme was a civic grouping for maintaining the register of citizens.

Private houses of classical Athens had no windows looking into the street but an inner yard; they were divided into men’s, women’s and slaves’ quarters with separate entrances (Keuls, 1993: 93–97). This was a symbol for male versus female dominance even though
the female controlled the finances of the household management\textsuperscript{34}. In tragedy, the house is often a metaphor for the polis–state and the head of the house (Doyle, 2001: 5–6). So the family–οἶκος functions as a microcosm of a greater social unit within a social structure, norms and stability.

To sum up, Athenian women were regarded as much a part of the polis–state as Athenian men because they were expected to bear the next generation of warriors and be their husband’s partner in maintaining the economic power of the οἶκος and participating in its religious life.

\textsuperscript{34} See Xenophon, Oeconomicus III: 15.
Diagram 3.2
Women and Marriage: A Guided Story

In classical Athens marriage was unequivocally the main purpose of a girl’s life. The necessity for premarital virginity forced the girls to get married very young, often at the age of fourteen. For males it was regarded as a standard practice to get married and procreate children at about the age of thirty, an age at which the most peremptory sexual desires are almost over (Sissa, 1990: 17–24). Girls also were less well educated than boys. Many were taught to read and write but only a few had higher education in the middle of 5th century, as Diagram 3.1 shows. Some of them were non–citizens, like Pericles’ wife, Aspasia the Milesian (Lacey, 1968: 162–166).

A bride usually had no education and, therefore, needed to be taught by her future husband; from this point of view of society at that time it meant that a woman’s opportunity to learn was less than that of the man. A beautiful, desirable girl had a lot of opportunities to get married, but there are indications that a girl who was not attractive to look at, might not get a husband. Moreover, it is unlikely that a girl had ever met the bridegroom face to face before her betrothal. Personal descriptions of the bride would probably have been part of the duty of the match–maker. A marriage was arranged by the girl’s kyrios preferably of the same class and deme but the prospective husband had to come to terms with the head of the bride’s family. A bride usually had no right to choose the bridegroom. The kyrios was also expected to arrange marriages for his sisters in the event that his father died. According to Lacey (1968: 105–106), the law for epikleroi, which permitted marriages within the wider family, as was mentioned above, was called anchisteia (ἀγχιστεία).

Sometimes, the excess of girls seeking husbands created a competitive situation for the fathers of the girls, which resulted in larger dowries being negotiated. These were accepted as an accompaniment depending on the financial ability of the kyrios. Girls who had a small dowry or no dowry could not get married easily; friends gave dowries to the daughters of the poor. Unmarried girls had to remain at home. A dowry

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35 Aristotle (Politics, I, 5, 12 – 1260B) suggested that, since women constituted half of the population, they should be educated.

36 See Plato, Republic 454D–456C and Timeaeus 42A, 90E.
consisted of a sum of cash or real estate valued in cash; household furniture is reported as part of a dowry (Foxhall, 1989: 23–29).

An Athenian marriage was recognized as a legal one by the process of a betrothal; witnesses were present on both sides. After the betrothal, the wedding (γάμος) came at which the bride was brought to the bridegroom’s house and the marriage really began. Wedding gifts were also made by relatives and friends as today. Living together (συνοικεῖον), but in separate quarters of the same house, and the procreation of children were a question of fact, as was noted above. In Euripides’ Helen, the messenger reminds Menelaus and Helen of their happy days and their brilliant wedding (lines: 724–726).

Doyle (2001: 7–8) describes the Athenian marriage as a dangerous exchange between male and female, because marriage meant a traumatic change in life for a young girl; she was of value only because of her ability to bear male children. In classical Athens the birth of a child had a public side as it was exhibited to relatives on the 10th day of a specific festival; on this occasion the father named him to prove his legitimacy (Lacey, 1968: 105–109, 169).

As a maiden of the household, a woman was brought up knowing that her time with her parents would be short. As a mother she knew that her time with her son was even shorter, because he had to be removed from her quarter to begin life as young man. This separation at the age of seven must have been traumatic for the mother and son alike. The family tie between them would be disrupted at soon as he moved from her care. In addition, as a wife she knew that her husband was rarely present at home and unfaithful, while she was forced to be present and faithful. She was also taught to be a good manager and to make the family independent in the production of clothes and to have something in reserve (Lacey, 1968: 167).

The lives of most Athenian married women, as indicated above, were spent at home and indoors. Childcare, food preparation, breadmaking, housekeeping and wool working would have occupied the bulk of a normal working day (Figure 7a). Besides,
they had to supervise the servants’ work and inspect whether everything was in its place.

Married women also had social contacts with their neighbours; they used to visit them with their maids in order to borrow something. Older women had more freedom of movement within the city, especially if they were widowed, as there would not have been any interest in them as contributors of children. They were also allowed to take part in the funerals as professional mourners. Widows sometimes remarried; in the choice of their second husband, sometimes they were able to choose them. In ancient Athens, according to the Attic law, women had as much right to divorce their husbands37 as they had – but women never did. Divorce was also possible in the case of an *epikleros* girl, but the woman’s dowry had to be returned to her *kyrios* (Lacey, 1968: 108, 168).

Poor women went out to work, while citizen women had at least a privileged position in the *agora*. Both foreigners and slaves worked as entertainers: they were often flute-girls or *hetaerae* (ταίραι)38 providing the female company at men’s *symposia*. They were viewed as the first liberated women in antiquity, and were also desirable and capable of discoursing on a philosophical subject.

It was common in classical Athens for the poet to use a particular colour term (“whiteness”) in passages to mention women. The term white (*λευκή*) is often used in descriptions of women in tragedy39. For instance, Medea is described by Euripides as a white and desirable woman in the beginning of the play, when she is still a sympathetic figure; he emphasises the connection between whiteness, femininity, physical beauty, youth, desirability and vulnerability as well:

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38 Most *hetaerae* were probably not of Attic birth but worked or resided in Athens. A long-distance trade in the 6th century brought women like Aspasia of Miletus from Asia Minor to the city. For more information about *hetaerae* (ταίραι), *auletrides* (αὐλητρίδες), *eromenes* (ἐρωμένες) and *pallakides* (παλλακίδες), see Pomeroy (1975: 456), Schaps (1977: 323–325), Rousselle (1988: 25–28) and Andersen & Cyranowski (1995: 35–42).

The clothing and the ornaments of ancient Greek women signalled much about the status and the morality assigned to them. Female stereotypes usually showed the social status of them; women were portrayed as ideal figures of male desire and ideology. Athenian women used to wear long voluminous linen gowns and their heads were covered by a veil\textsuperscript{40}. This clothing, many times, existed to reveal the body to its best advantage and to provoke fantasies about its curves and movements, at least in its artistic representation.

Greek iconography, especially Athenian vase–painting has been used to illustrate aspects of daily life; the types of representation of women were desirable and probably ideal erotic images. According to Kilmer (1993: 154) a striking example of transparency comes from a red cup signed by Makron (Figure 7b) which shows Helen’s confrontation with Menelaus; one can see the full outline of her body – details of both ankles, the right knee, breasts and shoulders. Anderson (1997: 204) correctly notes that the viewer of the vase is put into the mind of Menelaus and perceives what Menelaus perceived as he looked upon his wife.

At that time, adultery (\textit{μοιχεία}) usually meant the sins of a wife as a result of its being viewed as a public as well as private affair. Athenian women had no sexual liberty and were allowed no extra–marital relationships\textsuperscript{41}. Death for an adulterer, even if caught


in the act, was very commonly but not always demanded; obviously a divorce for a woman taken in adultery was compulsory (Lacey, 1968: 115).

It was sometimes, reported that a man was punished as an adulterer if he seduced a woman – though not for rape. He was limited to having intercourse with his legal wife, his concubine, or prostitutes\textsuperscript{42}. The activities of a seducer were more dangerous than a rapist; firstly, because he won the wife’s confidence and could steal the household goods and, secondly, because a seduced woman could pass off the adulterer’s child as her husband’s (Blundell, 1995: 126). In Euripides’ Helen, the theme of adultery is treated in a different way: the pattern of illusion becomes the other side of a hidden lie that saves the heroine from her bad epic reputation.

No doubt, at that time many wives were neglected by their husbands; others were dominated or dissatisfied with their lot, and as a result, much 5\textsuperscript{th} century Athenian drama has to do with marriage and dysfunctional relationships between couples. For instance, in Euripides’ plays such as the in the Alcestis, the marriage is not in balance, and, in the Helen the marriage is characterised by adultery.

As a matter of fact, tragedies were written and performed by men and aimed at a large public male audience, as was noted above. Athenian ideology did not permit women to exercise social autonomy; however, the tragedies, especially of Euripides often represent them as moral forces in their own right. This seeming contradiction has to do with the problematic areas where women intervene in the tragic action involving marriage, death and the making of difficult ethical choices (Foley, 2001: 4–14). Indeed, Euripides managed to show a different view of the mythological world and the opposition between male and female of the classical era: the plot of the Helen and the Alcestis is all due to female acts so that everyone may be aware of the female’s voice.

\textsuperscript{42} In the Andromache, Hermione resists this injustice that permits his husband, Neoptolemos, to have a concubine, Andromache, by trying to kill her and her son. The dialogue between Hermione and Andromache (lines: 198–308) shows the tensions between the legal wife and the illegal second one.
Figure 7a. *Women at home: Working wool.* In Cartledge (1998: 100).

Figure 7b. *Helen and Menelaus.* London, British Museum. In Woodford (1993: 87).
CHAPTER IV

THE MOTIF OF LOVE IN THE HELEN OF EURIPIDES

From Tradition to Literary Text: The Image of Helen

The whole point of Euripides’ Helen, which was written in 412 B.C., is that it does not tell the traditional story of Helen of Troy. That had already been dealt with in the Trojan Women. Euripides probably took hints from a lyric poem called the Palinode, written around 600 B.C. by Stesichorus. Stesichorus had said some harsh things about Helen and according to tradition, was struck blind as a punishment; but he regained his eyesight after he had written the Palinode or apology in which he said that Helen herself had never gone to Troy at all. It was only a phantom of her that was there.

To this source, Euripides added another suggestion made by Herodotus that Paris did abduct Helen but that bad weather drove his ship onto the coast of Egypt. The king of Egypt, Proteus, sent him away but kept Helen safely in his own palace to wait for her husband, Menelaus. Meanwhile, the Trojan War went on and the Trojans insisted that they had Helen with them. Finally, Euripides added the idea that Hera made the phantom

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1 When Troy fell to the Greek army, Menelaus recovered his wife, Helen. She was frightened of what her angry husband would do. Indeed, when he found her he intended to kill her, as Hecuba advised him. Finally, however, dazzled by her beauty, he dropped his sword. See Clement (1958: 47–56), Vellacott (1975: 133–148), Woodford (1993: 23) and Zacharopoulos (1994:155–166).

2 Plato (Phaedrus, 243 a) rewrites a few lines of this Palinode:
   «...ο κ στυ τμως λ γος ο τος,δ' βας ν καλς ν υπσ σ λμος / ο δ' κε ι π ραμα Τρο ας ...
   («... this is not true, / you did not go in the ship / nor did you go to Troy ...»).

3 As a matter of fact, Helen’s abduction by Paris was not the first one. According to mythology, when Helen was fifteen years old, she was abducted by Theseus and was kept safely by his mother, Ethra, until the Dioscuri set her free. Then her father decided to choose a husband for her, Menelaus. In this way, Helen would probably be protected. See further Eleftheroudakis (1971: 216).

4 Herodotus, the historian, reports the story of Helen in the preface to the Histories, as Pelliccia (1992: 74–82) notes. In the Odyssey (4: 238–254) there is a passing mention of Helen, who knows the magic herb of
to spite Aphrodite, and Hermes transported the real Helen to Egypt. Proteus’ son, Theoclymenus, was set on marrying her himself. Then, Menelaus on his way back to Troy, was shipwrecked off the coast of Egypt carrying the phantom of Helen (Curry, 1981: 54).

According to Pelliccia (1992: 82), Herodotus espoused a version of the Stesichorean solution as did Euripides in his Helen; he probably based this upon a good sophistic argument that Helen could not have gone with Paris to Troy; for if she had, the Trojans would certainly have handed her back to the Greeks, if not immediately, then as soon as it became clear that they would suffer. As a matter of fact, Helen was herself the victim of eros as Gorgias, the orator, supports. Actually, the story of Helen has two parts: first she is the active victimiser and then she is victimised (Choral Ode B) due to her supreme beauty. The two works mentioned above, Herodotus’ Preface and Gorgias’ Encomium of Helen are complement to one another.

Euripides’ version of Helen of Troy offers a completely different aspect of the usual myth which was told by Homer and the epic cycle. Homer’s tale of Helen’s beauty was in itself no adequate proof. Scientists have argued for thousands of years about the historical accuracy of the tradition about the Trojan War. Ancient Troy or Ilion stood out among all cities of Asia Minor for its power and wealth. In the Iliad and Odyssey, Troy appears as a big city covering a large area defended by walls and towers. Probably, the city was an obstacle to Greece’s commercial and colonial expansion. For that reason – a far more

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5 Gorgias poses the moral questions only to argue that the nature of passion absolves Helen of moral responsibility. See how Pelliccia (1992: 63–68) demonstrates a connection, depending on Sappho 16, Herodotus’ Preface and Gorgias’ Encomium of Helen.

6 Pelliccia (1992: 81) correctly points out that some passages seem to imply some kind of connection between these two prose works or make the reader suspect direct influence one way or the other regarding the story of Helen and the cause of the Trojan War.

7 Sappho, Alcaeus, Theocritus and Hesiod have dealt with Helen as well, treating her according to the traditional story pattern. See Alexopoulou (2003: 197–206) and Du Bois (1978: 89–99). In romantic literature, Goethe is concerned with Helen in the second part of his epic work, the Dr. Faustus. See further Emmanouel & Kitsia (1973:10).
likely one than the abduction of Menelaus’ wife, which is usually mentioned – the Greeks organised an expedition against Troy.\(^8\)

As was noted above\(^9\), in this chapter I shall deal with the main female and male character extensively but I shall provide more than a passing mention of the second male character involved in the motif of love. I intend to analyse Helen’s and Menelaus’ action according to Freud’s personality system. The characters of the play are as follows:

**Helen**

daughter of Zeus and Leda\(^{10}\), wife of Menelaus

**Teucer**
a Greek warrior of Troy (Ajax’s brother).

**Chorus**
of captive Spartan women.

**Menelaus**
king of Sparta (husband of Helen).

**Portress**
an old woman.

**Messenger**
one of Menelaus’ crew.

**Theonoe**
a prophetess (sister of Theoclymenus).

**Theoclymenus**
king of Egypt

**Messenger**
a servant of Theoclymenus.

**Servant**
a slave

**Dioscuri**
Castor and Pollux (Helen’s brothers). Non-speaking role: Pollux

The structure of Euripides’ *Helen* is illustrated in Diagram 4.1. There are two Helens, the real one and the phantom one (the epic Helen) as noted above. The real Helen is in Egypt in the royal palace, waiting for her husband to come and collect her; she took sanctuary at the tomb of the former king, Proteus (Prologue, Parodus, Episode A). Euripides

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\(^8\) It can no longer be doubted that there really was an actual historical Trojan War in about 1184 B. C. However, the magnitude and the duration of the struggle may have been exaggerated by folk tales. The excavations carried out at Troy by Schliemann and the result of work done by Blegen, have fully pointed out that Priam’s city did exist and was burned in a great catastrophe. Agamemnon must be viewed as an historic figure as well. For the archaeological Troy, see Page (1959: 36–4) and Blegen (1966: 21–40), and Morford & Lenardon (1999: 20–21). For the mythical Troy, see Lyotard (1984).

\(^9\) See Chapter I, Introduction, Methodology.

\(^{10}\) According to Attic tradition, Helen was the daughter of Zeus and Nemesus. Hesiod notes that Helen’s parents were Ocean and Tethea but Euripides states that Leda and Tyndareus or Zeus were her parents. For a full discussion of this see Alexopoulou (2002: 43).
introduces Teucer, a warrior of Troy, who carries the epic tradition and informs Helen what happened to her husband after the end of the Trojan War (Prologue). Helen laments her lost private and public reputation and shares her sadness with the chorus because Theoclymenus, the king, expects her to marry him (Parodus). Menelaus comes to Egypt after a shipwreck, and he hopes to find accommodation at the palace; he discusses his problem with a woman of the palace (Episode A). Actually, the plot starts when he recognises his real wife after a short moment of doubt. Helen devises an escape plan and persuades Theonoe – Theoclymenus’ sister (Episode B).

Euripides comments on the effects of the Trojan War in Choral Ode A. Helen and Menelaus trap Theoclymenus by pretending that Menelaus is dead (Episode C). Therefore, Helen has to place offerings to her husband in the sea; for this purpose, she must use a king’s ship (Episode D). The hymn to Persephone is sung in the Choral Ode B and a prayer to dei ex machina, the Dioscuri, is sung in Choral Ode C. The real action of escape is described by the messenger to Theoclymenus, who is surprised and angry but he comes back to normal after the intervention of the Dioscuri (Outcome).

**STRUCTURE OF THE HELEN OF EURIPIDES**

**Prologue** (1–163)
- **Scene A** (1–67) Helen’s monologue (fall of the heroine—περιπέτεια).
- **Scene B** (68–163) Dialogue between Helen and Teucer.

**Episode A** (386–514)
- **Scene A** (386–436) Menelaus’ monologue (fall of the hero—περιπέτεια).
- **Scene B** (437–482) Dialogue between Menelaus and portress.
- **Scene C** (483–514) Menelaus’ monologue (form of ε ἑξολον—theme of illusion).

**Parodus** (164–385)
- **Scene A** 164–177) Helen’s lament.
- **Scene B** (178–254) Ode—dialogue between Chorus and Helen.
- **Scene C** (255–305) Helen’s monologue of her bad luck.
- **Scene D** (306–385) Chorus advises Helen to side Theonoe with her.

**Mini Parodus – Mini Choral Ode** (515–527).
Some scholars have been concerned with the problem of what kind of tragedy Euripides’ *Helen* is. It does not follow the accepted patterns of tragedy: the ending is happy

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11 For a discussion of this, see Curry (1981: 54–55), who supports the notion that this play is a parody or a comedy romance: the main characters are not bright and the whore of Sparta is represented as a virtuous and
because no one suffers; and it does not treat, in a serious way, the downfall of a main figure, nor does it inspire pity or terror. In 412 B.C., when the Helen was produced, the Athenians had embarked on an impossible project on Sicily and the power of Persia had threatened Greece. Though certainly affected by such issues, the Helen was not a war drama but a story of the lost one found. The thematic idea of illusion holds the play together; it is the key of the action where the lost one stands unrecognised.

The false story of Helen and the false image of her are played against the virtuous wife who Helen really was and she, in turn, against the nature goddess of Sparta. According to Segal (1968: 553–559), Euripides created a form that transcends the distinctions between genres; Shakespeare’s late tragic romance Cymbeline and Pericles are close analogies. The equally romantic and comic features of the Helen show that Euripides was in a period of artistic exploration.

For instance, the structure of Euripides’ Helen with long messengers’ speeches and separate episodes divided by choruses, may seem to the modern reader quite formal; this is because the Helen’s choruses broke tradition with respect to religion and to the hymns sung at festivals in honour of Dionysos. It is believed that later the choral dances were not related to these hymns, for example the chorals odes (Choral Ode, A, B, C) in the Helen (lines: 515–527, 1106–1164, 1301–1368 and 1451–1511).

Actually, Euripides is a philosophical poet (Lattimore, 2003: 123–124) and he develops the dialogues in a similar way to Socrates. In dialogues, Euripides uses the Socratic method in order to come closer to reality. He pretends, like Socrates did, that he does not know the truth, until it comes into the light by the means of the reversal of fortune and catharsis. He also knows better than anyone else the problems caused by the war or the marital system with regard to the social and cultural classification and ideology. His heroes speak his behalf.

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12 For a full discussion on the philosophy of Socrates, see Toyas & Roussos (1996: 11–13, note 1).
He also looks at the world around him. Nobody won the Trojan War; and nobody will win the Peloponnesian War or the Sicilian expedition: both sides can only lose. So, the illusion of the classical world is the social illusion that constructs it and this is what Euripidean tragic poetry shows. Actually, Euripides’ Egyptian Helen reflects his weariness of the war and the brutality that accompanied it. The Helen also reiterates a challenge to the epic world by demonstrating with irony the impossibility of escaping fully from the traditional myth\(^\text{13}\). But in Euripides’ version, Helen could escape from her literary past and her image that destroyed Troy (Foley, 2001: 320).

In order to comprehend better the way that this play manipulates gender relations and ethical questions, I think I must place special emphasis on the theme of illusion treated within a cultural context. Tragic action and clichés about gender can be explored by focusing upon the links created by active or resistant women, like Helen who represents an impulse for social change.

**The Motif of Love**

As a matter of fact, love is an event with participants (male–female or husband–wife) and rules governing this relationship which is developed according to certain social and cultural expectations\(^\text{14}\). In Helen’s case, *eros* is a passion–desire treated in a different way by the epic circle and Euripides. The motif of love consists of Helen’s ethos and Menelaus’ ethos as well\(^\text{15}\); Theoclymenus’ ethos is of minor importance as he plays the role of antagonist – the second male part. Euripides uses some traditional characteristics

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\(^\text{13}\) See the *Trojan Women* and the *Hecuba* of Euripides, which describe the epic Helen. In general for the image of Helen on poetry see Alexopoulou (2003: 211–225).

\(^\text{14}\) According to Fradersdorff (1867: 380), in the classical world, the word love may function as follows: φιλε νυ = pleasure of another person / ρως = passion–desire. See also Liddell–Scott (1968: 335) and Coumanoudis (1972: 50), who identifies the Latin word amor (erga aliquem / alicujus in) to ρως (πρός πνεύμα / ρως πνεύμα). Faraone (2001: 146) observes that ancient Greek love falls into two distinct categories; one group used by men in order to instil uncontrollable passion (*eros*) in women and another group usually used by women against men in order to regain *eros* or *philia* or other forms of affection.

\(^\text{15}\) Ethos refers to the code of cultural values associated with morality and behaviour, while character refers to the specific features of ethos. See Eleftheroudakis (1971: 290).
such as beauty, faithfulness and honesty–honour in order to explain how Helen plays the role of the epic Penelope.

These three repetitive characteristics of ethos – beauty, faithfulness and honesty–honour – restructure a new image of Helen in contrast to her epic image in the Trojan venture (Diagram 4.2). At first, Euripides focuses on her beauty (material element) but turns to her virtues (spiritual element) just before the reversal of fortune takes place. Probably, her new ethos is connected with a pre–Greek worship of Helen (Outcome, Scene C). She was an early fertility Greek goddess at Sparta who eventually became an epic heroine. According to Foley (2001: 323, n. 81), Helen renews her purity in Euripides’ play as the cultic Helen renews her virginity even though we cannot be sure whether Euripides had invented these cults in whole or in part. It is possible that Euripides ascribed to Helen the paradoxical chastity that can be possessed by a woman like her – she was a daughter of an unequal union between a human, Leda and a god, Zeus/Swan.

**HELEN’S ETHOS**

Diagram 4.2

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16 For Helen’s role as a goddess very similar to Kore, see Nilsson (1967: 1, 475). For the cult of the divinized Helen and Menelaus, see Wide (1973: 340–346) and Calame (1977: 337, 346–348). Greek mythology also reports that a festival was held for Helen called Εἰδέων. See further Eleftheroudakis (1971: 216).
In her prologue speech (Scene A), Helen has lost her true identity and she wishes to replace the public lie with the private truth (lines: 19–56). She states that her false reputation has to do with the Trojan War (public lie–δεολον) but she must replace it, according to the above mentioned cultural and ethical norms; she stays in safety in Egypt waiting for her husband (private truth–real Helen). In the Parodus, Scene C Helen’s lament (lines: 230–233) refers to her beauty. The price paid for beauty is viewed by her in the prologue as the main cause for her suffering: firstly, she caused private damage because she broke with her family (lines: 26–34, 200–224, 270–276), and secondly, she also caused huge public damage (Parodus, Scene B, C and D) between the Trojans and Greeks (lines: 350–359).

Helen’s misfortune reflects the ruin of family (Parodus, Scene A, B and C). Her natal family–οικος is destroyed. Her mother, Leda, committed suicide and her brothers became stars in the sky, according to mythology (lines: 135–141, 200–210, 280–282). But her new family–οικος of Menelaus is also destroyed because its κυρια is missing (lines: 132, 223–227) and its κυρια eloped17. Their daughter, Hermione, had no opportunity to get a husband (line: 284). All these consequences likely explain why Helen becomes a tragic woman gradually by losing her good reputation.

Actually, a damaged house is a big disaster for the epic and classical people, because it gives rise to a bad reputation, as was noted above18. In general, the house of Atreus experienced considerable marital difficulties: Menelaus’ wife, Helen, eloped with a xenos and his brother, Agamemnon, was murdered by his wife, Clytemnestra – Helen’s sister – when he returned from the Trojan War.

As Juffras (1993: 45–48) observes, when Helen herself reflects on the Trojan War, she says that its true cause was overpopulation. The gods decided to purge a part of the

17The family tree of Helen is as follows: Thestios>Leda+Tyndareus or Zeus>Castor+Pollux+Clytemnystra +Helen. The family tree of Menelaus is as follows: Tandalos>Pelops>Hippodameia>Atreus+Aerope> Agamemnon+Clytemnstrystra>Orestes, Menelaus+Helen >Hermione.

ancient Greek world from the earth’s surface and bring fame to the Achaeans (lines: 37–41). In Helen’s view her dazzling beauty and the goddesses of Hera and Aphrodite were responsible for the problem (Parodus, Scene C, Choral Ode A) which damaged her family (lines: 261–264, 1106). Aphrodite in particular is accused of being against the harmony and the normal human rules (Episode B, Scene E) which destroyed her normal life (lines: 1097–1106).

Helen compares herself with two other women, Persephone, Demeter’s daughter, and Callisto as well (Parodus, Scene D and Choral Ode B). She exploits the Persephone myth because Helen, like Persephone, was abducted and she had to stay in a foreign country (Persephone who was obliged to stay in the underworld for a six–month period) waiting for Menelaus to save her and to bring her back to the light (home at Sparta). Helen also laments the effects of her beauty to the point that she would prefer a metamorphosis into a beast (lines: 375–385) like Callisto19. This simile has to do with Helen’s aura of the divine even in the disasters she brings on (Vernant, 2001: 80). This provides a tragic tone in the dialogue between her and the chorus (lines: 304–360).

304 «… αφ' μ' η γ' ς' κατ' ε' ρίζα τυλλαι δι'TεκλΟπυργοποιήσατει, γυνακέj, τ'μόj δ' α'ρτ' τοάτ' επέλεσαν…».

(«… while other women are made happy by their beauty, mine is the very thing that has destroyed me …»).

In the recognition scene (εγνώρισις) Menelaus and Helen can recognise each other through their appearance (Episode B, Scene A). It is not necessary for them to use certain tokens known only to the two of them as Penelope and Odysseus did20. But the recognition of the real Helen by Menelaus does not at once restore Helen’s epic reputation

19 According to Greek mythology, Callisto was a nymph, dedicated to Artemis. But Zeus, dazzled by her beauty, took the form of the goddesses and she fell pregnant. Artemis got very upset about this event and she decided to metamorphose her into a beast, likely a bear. It is said that she finally became a star in the sky, the Great Bear. The same story is reported by Ovidus, Metamorphosis, 405, as Alexopoulou (2003: 67) points out.

20 See also the Ion (line: 1386) and the Electra (lines: 577–578) of Euripides.
(Episode B, Scene B) because she momentarily poses a problem for her husband who fought for an illusion (lines: 605–615).

Euripides’ heroine confronts the ambivalent nature of the classical ideal wife – virtuous and sexual – in the person of the most notorious of all wives, Helen. Euripides splits the disasters caused by her beauty, by creating the phantom Helen. The real and virtuous Helen was always there; it was a phantom of her, the adulterous Helen who caused the war. Therefore, she is not guilty. In this way, the adulterous alter ego dissipates. To abandon her beauty, as she does when she cuts off her hair to mourn Menelaus is a proof of her loyalty (Foley, 2001: 317–138). Helen’s appearance in mourning (lines: 1353–1368) immediately follows the Choral Ode B in which Helen is accused of neglecting the cult of Demeter and trusting too much in her beauty, as Wolff notes (1944: 71). The chorus comments that the innocence of Helen has to do with her supernatural beauty by connecting it to the moonlight.

1366 «... ᲈ βαλε σελ να μορφ ᲈ....».

(«... your beauty surpasses the moon...»).

The features of faithfulness and honesty–honour (lines: 35–51) fit a new ethos according to the traditional type of a virtuous woman. Helen becomes a part of fifth–century re–evaluation of domestic life; her example points out the contradictions in the masculine ethics concerning public and private reputation acquired by hospitality and war. The social context in which epic and tragedy were composed may explain the differences between the treatment of Homer’s Penelope and the reworking of the similar plot in

21 Vernant (1969: 35) points out how the Greek wife is treated precisely because she must be both chaste and sexual. For ethics of honour see Cairns (1993: 28–29).

22 For the etymology of Helen’s name see Chapter V, The Use of Language.

23 Ἐνδὲν γαν was a social value associated with the ideal of harmony which characterized the Athenians. For hybris, see Greene (1944; 28–43), Kitto (1961: 38), and Mostratou (1994: 28). For Aristotle (Ethics, Nich. B 6, 9) μεσοτις is the golden rule in life, as Alexopoulou states (2003: 77).
Euripides’ *Helen* (Foley, 2001: 327–328). Helen was not always at home; she was away (in Troy according to Homer, or in Egypt according to Euripides), whereas Penelope was always at home. Anyway, the characteristics of Helen’s morality are similar to the ethical code of heroic glory (*κλέος*), as is also celebrated in the epic cycle (63–65):

64 «… μν μα προσπ τνω τ δε
κ τις ... ε καθ' Ελλ δ'
νομα δυσκλε ς φ ρω,
μ μοι τ σ μ γ' νθ δ' α σχ νην φλη…».

(«… I have flung myself as a suppliant
upon this tomb ... even my name is
reviled in Greece, my body
shall not here be put to shame…»).

The dichotomy between the epic image of Helen and the new image of the Egyptian Helen is represented by Euripides on an allegorical level: was she guilty or innocent? Her bad reputation played a main role in the epic tradition. She was not the ideal woman as she herself would acknowledge (lines: 248–251). She tries to regain a good reputation in order to restructure her family–*οἰκος* (lines: 270–271, 283, 1092–1105). She faces her predicament with dignity because she states (lines: 290–298, 795) that she would like to avoid remarriage, and to die for Menelaus (*Parodus, Scene C, Episode B, Scene E*).

296 «... λλ' ταν π σις πικρ ς
ξον ι γυναικ , κα τ σ μ' στ ν πικρ ν.
θανε ν κρ τιστον24 ...».

(«... when a woman is married to a man she dislikes,
even her own body becomes distasteful to her.
Death is best…»).

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24 See similarly the *Antigone* of Sophocles (line: 97).
The messenger also supports the innocent Helen (lines: 613–621, 720–721); in the recognition scene (Episode B, Scene B) when the reversal of fortune begins (περιπέτεια). Particular emphasis is placed on how the tragic wife, Helen, secures a full recognition through the repetitive form of faithfulness, honesty–honour (lines: 666–686, 692–697). She is expected to remarry Theoclymenus, the King of Egypt, but she states that she has taken sanctuary in the tomb of his father, Proteus, in order to escape his bed (lines: 795). She maintains her faithfulness to her husband, Menelaus. When she tries to persuade Theonoe (knowing the divine), the priestess, to side with her (Episode B, Scene D) she mentions that her aim is to regain her reputation through her approved honesty (lines: 929–932).

The chorus, which consists of Spartan maidens are on her side and call on dei ex machina, the Dioscuri, Helen’s brothers, to defend her (Choral Ode C) in the closing lines of the play (lines: 1496–1507). Indeed, they intervene only to preserve her marriage to Menelaus (Outcome, Scene C) and her ties to her natal family (lines: 1642–1655). They also support the apotheosis of Helen by establishing her good reputation and divinisation (lines: 1840–1844).

Unquestionably, the shipwrecked Menelaus suffers from the loss of his wife and the loss of his reputation as a king and successful warrior at Troy. He experiences a negative reputation because his wife apparently left him and he would like to restore it by getting her back (Episode A, Scene A and Episode D). Menelaus’ ethos consists of lost glory and cowardice (Diagram 4.3). His experience echoes that of Odysseus before getting back home, as is shown in the following lines (395–413, 1441–1450).

402 «… κ ἐπι τραν χρ ιζον μολε ν
ο κ ξιο μαι το δε πρ ς θε ν τυχε ν  ...».

(«… though I long to reach home, the gods do not see fit to grant me this boon…»).
Menelaus’ actions form part of the theme of illusion for he actually believes that he has his wife who is kept safe in a cave (lines: 411–413), while in fact she is a phantom. At his entrance, he is humiliated by a slave porteress who has no interest in his Trojan reputation (lines: 453–454):

453 «... α α·τ κλειν πο 'στ μοι στρατε ματα; ...».

(«... ah me! My famous military campaigns, where are they now? ...»).

His appearance on stage (Episode A, Scene A) dressed in rags makes the hero appear inferior. He is also unable to take the right decision and this is a dilemma from which he must be rescued by his wife (Arnott, 1990: 12–14). He finds himself in a new world of reversal in which the war has lost its former significance (Episode A, Scene B). As soon as he is informed that the real Helen is here (lines: 470–472) the comic–dramatic tone is about to begin.

470 «... – Ελ νη κατ' ο κους στ το σδ' το Δι ς.”
Euripides’ Menelaus is clearly not like the epic one. Menelaus is now not characterised by his previous military glory, which he has lost. This is not an ordinary husband. This is a famous king who lost his reputation because of his wife, and experienced the damage to his family—οἶκος (lines: 503–505, 512–514, 775–776):

511 «… κακὸν τὸ δ’ μὲν σχατὸν τὸ χρόνος θλησθεὶς,
ἀλλ’ ὁν προσαιτέναιν λαλῶς ναγκα ως χεί…».

(«… One thing caps all my other miserable woes,
that I, myself a king, must beg my livelihood from other kings;
nothing has more power than cruel necessity…»).

Menelaus is proud of his former glory, which is viewed as apt for an ideal man; it motivates him to face the possibility of Helen’s remarriage because she is forced by Theoclymenus (Episode B, Scene C and D). His ethos seems to be heroic, as fits a king and warrior. He fought for a phantom at Troy once but now he has to fight again to regain his real wife, his reputation and his family—οἶκος (lines: 842–844). He does not want to rely on supplication – a mode of feminine behaviour (990–994) but he uses a direct verbal confrontation to Theonoe:

953 «… ἀρχεμαίγειρός σθε τε χρή ψυχή ας…».

(«… in preference to acting bravely …»).

As noted above, Menelaus is represented as a cowardly man who cannot take the right decision. At first (Episode A, Scene C) Menelaus thinks to get back to his ship, in case he finds the king inhospitable (lines: 505–509). He philosophises about his courage (Episode
B, Scene C) by asking himself if he can die for his wife (lines: 849–851) but the answer given by him confirms his cowardice. He cannot persuade the reader (Episode B, Scene D) even though when he says that he prefers courage to tears (line: 953).

Helen’s escape plan and Menelaus’ final battle with the Egyptians on board of the ship, restores his reputation (lines: 1593–1604). Helen devises the plan for the escape\(^{25}\), and Menelaus carries it out. This reversal of traditional gender roles, results in a reversal of fortune (περιπέτεια), which is necessary to reach catharsis (κάθαρσις) and a happy ending (Outcome, Scene A). The apotheosis of Helen – she now achieves heroic status – is catharsis for the reader as well.

Helen’s new image, the Euripidean Helen, can be analysed according to the personality system developed by Freud as illustrated in Table 4.1. For Freud, personality consists of three relative systems providing the basis for moral behaviour: the ego, the id and the superego. The ego represents rational thinking, the id the unconscious impulses and the superego functions according to a punishment–reward principle: it is the voice of conscience as formed by society or the father’s voice in the patriarchal family structure. The ego derives its power from the id but also meet the demands of the superego (Hall & Lindzey, 1985: 26–50).

In this regard, the epic (Homer’s) Helen reflects the id as she was motivated by desire; the id is in close touch with psychic and sexual energy, the libido, which was regarded as negative in females. The dysfunction between the id, ego and superego caused Helen’s unacceptable behaviour disapproved by the society at that time. The epic Helen was controlled by the id. But the Egyptian Helen (of Euripides) functions in the very same way as the superego. She uses a system of morals – beauty, faithfulness, honesty–honour – in order to establish her new female image approved by the majority in classical society.

Temporary sex–roles reversals are a common feature of Euripides’ dramaturgy, e. g. when Helen devises an escape plan, while it was expected by Menelaus, who was regarded as a

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successful warrior, or when she becomes a supplicant, to avoid remarriage. Her *ego* is in full control to deal properly with a problem: to escape from Egypt and to save her husband. So, the three systems of personality as propounded by Freud, function morally and in balance to assist Helen to regain her good reputation.

The *ego* is reflected in the epic Menelaus when he acts as a leader of the Trojan War, driven by his bad reputation caused by his damaged family—*oîκος*. But the Menelaus of Euripides reflects the *superego*, driven by his former epic glory. He is overshadowed by his wife, as he is incapable of initiating an escape plan himself and he follows the lead of Helen. He also protects his spousal reputation: he is apparently motivated by acceptable societal codes. So, the three systems of personality mentioned above, function morally as well, promising that the male protagonist will restructure his family—*oîκος* and live back to Sparta the cultural *status quo*.

**THE PERSONALITY SYSTEM OF FREUD APPLIED TO THE EPIC AND EURIPIDEAN HELEN**

Freud | Homer | Euripides
---|---|---
Helen | Menelaus | Helen | Menelaus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ego</th>
<th>not in control</th>
<th>in control</th>
<th>escape plan</th>
<th>in control</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Rational thinking)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Id (Impulses)</th>
<th>driven by desire</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Superego</th>
<th>driven by reputation</th>
<th>driven by faithfulness</th>
<th>driven by epic glory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Acceptable societal behaviour)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1
Theoclymenus’ action (Outcome, Scene A) is inferior to that of Menelaus’ and Helen’s (lines: 1621–1622); he is regarded as a barbarian king whose ethos is alien to the Greek ethos (lines: 1170–1179, 1281–1288, 1430–1345). He is not represented as an ideal figure Outcome, Scene B). Therefore, he does not respect the idea of hospitality or the rights of humans (lines: 1630–1639). His behaviour to Helen is gentle (lines: 1185–1192) but when he finds out the truth he threatens to kill his sister, Theonoe, who kept her silence (line: 1633). He is the king and the master as well, who has the right of life and death over his family and his kingdom (lines: 1624–1626, 1630, 1639–1641). Finally, he comes to a rational and just end right after the appearance of the Dioscuri (Outcome, Scene A, B). According to Verrall (1905, 52–54), the despot is powerless because he is represented as an incapable king who cannot govern his country and at the same time as an ordinary character unable to control his emotions (lines: 1519–1522, 1635).

Indeed, the motif of love in the Helen of Euripides is characterised as symbolic which departs from reality to reach its multiple face: the temporary reversal of fortune reaches a happy ending. The male and female protagonists will go back to Sparta to live peacefully. Ultimately, Helen serves the maintenance of traditional sex roles even though Euripides points out how to solve the difficulties of the classical marital system.

For Fantham et al. (1994: 69–70) drama is a problematic source for the lives of women in classical Athens because it is based on myths from the remote past interpreted by male poets who fictionalised women. Apparently, the vivid portraits of women in drama – often more rebellious than those we have from sources that represent historical reality – may reflect real social tensions. As a matter of fact, Helen maintained the modesty and the dignity appropriate to the life of a classical wife who should have spent most of her time indoors. The cardiograph of the motif of love in the Helen of Euripides is represented in Diagram 4.4.
The Theme of Illusion

Euripides uses the theme of illusion\(^{26}\), which consists of the \(\varepsilon\ \delta\omega\lambda\nu\) from the beginning of the play (Prologue, Scene A, Choral Ode A), in order to establish the motif of love (lines 31–36, 1130–1131). Indeed, in this way he restructures the traditional tragic world.

\(^{26}\) The theme of illusion as \(\varepsilon\ \delta\omega\lambda\nu\) is quite common in ancient Greek literature; similarly, for this theme concerning Helen, see the Orestes (lines: 1639–1642) and the Electra (lines: 1282–1283) of Euripides. See also how Lucianos in the Dialogues of the Dead (Zamarou, 2003: 70) uses the story of Heracles and his \(\varepsilon\ \delta\omega\lambda\nu\); a humorous dialogue takes place between Diogenes, the cynic philosopher, and the copy of Heracles in the underworld. See also Barlow (1971).
Helen is temporarily the victim of an undeserved bad reputation based upon the theme of illusion; Euripides proves that Helen was not the Helen of Troy as mentioned by the epic tradition but the Helen of Sparta who had never gone to Troy.

31 «… Ηρα … Ἀλεξ. νῷοι λ. χη,
δ ἄωσι δ' ο κ. μ' λλ' μοι σασ' μο
ε δωλον μπνουν ρανο ξνθε σ' πο …».

(«… But Hera …
gave to (Paris) a breathing image
she fashioned from the heavens to resemble me …»).

Euripides uses Teucer27, a warrior at Troy who comes to Egypt to be advised by the prophetess Theonoe, in order to show how the non–real–real world may work (Prologue, Scene A and B). According to the tradition, his father believed that he was responsible for the suicide of his brother, Ajax, so he was expelled from the house; he would travel to Cyprus to found a new town in honour of his birth place, Salamis (lines: 144–150). Teucer is the first male character who is against Helen. He represents the Greek common sense about her (lines: 160–164).

Teucer is also the male who carries the epic tradition (lines: 71–76, 81–84, 99, 110) and interprets reality by denying the possibility of Helen having a double (lines: 76–77, 116, 121–122). He supports the lie that Helen of Troy was the Helen of disaster and that she had a bad public reputation. The discussion between Teucer and Helen (στιχωμθια) is a

27 Teucer is a veteran of the Trojan War and tells Helen what happened to her husband after the war–Aeschylus, in his Agamemnon (lines: 645–659), describes Menelaus’ adventures in the sea as Alexopoulou notes (2002: 57). In the Helen of Euripides, Teucer appears from nowhere and disappears into the same nowhere (Sakalis, 1980: 171). Hajianestis (1989, 111–112) reports that Euripides uses Teucer to remind Athenians of the king of Cyprus, Evagoras, who supported them during Sicilian Expedition; this is a connection with the political and historical context of Euripides’ age. Seferis, the Greek poet who was awarded the Nobel Prize (1969), dealt with this meeting of Teucer and Helen in Egypt. See how Seferis (2000: 239–242) represents Teucer as an astute observer of the effects of the Trojan War.
game between real–non–real, \( \phi\alpha\iota\nu\varepsilon\sigma\theta\alpha\iota\epsilon \) \( \nu\alpha\iota \) (lines: 78–150); this is the basis of the Euripidean tragic world, namely the world of illusion.

117 «...– \( \epsilon \) \( \delta\varepsilon\zeta \) \( \tau \) \( \nu \) \( \delta \) \( \sigma\tau\gamma\nu \), \( \kappa\lambda\omega \) \( \nu \) \( \lambda \) \( \gamma\epsilon\iota \);

– \( \sigma\pi\rho \) \( \gamma \), \( \omicron \) \( \delta \) \( \nu \) \( \sigma\sigma\nu \), \( \phi\theta\alpha\lambda\mu\omicron \) \( \varsigma \) \( \rho \) ...».

(«...– did you see the poor creature? Or do you speak at second hand?
– I saw her with my eyes no less than I see you ...»).

121 «...– \( \omicron \) \( \tau \) \( \omega \) \( \delta\omega\kappa\varepsilon \) \( \tau \varepsilon \) \( \tau \) \( \nu \) \( \delta \) \( \kappa\sigma\iota\nu \) \( \sigma\phi\alpha \); 

– \( \alpha \) \( \tau \) \( \varsigma \) \( \gamma \) \( \rho \) \( \sigma\sigma\iota\epsilon \) \( \delta \) \( \mu\eta\nu \), \( \kappa\alpha \) \( \nu \) \( \circ \) \( \varsigma \) \( \rho \) 28...».

(«...– Are you convinced that your impression is right?
– I saw her with my eyes. And my mind also sees ...»).

Euripides, actually, uses the dualism between male–female, tradition–modernism, public–private (Table 4.2), lie–truth, real–non–real and \( \phi\alpha\iota\nu\varepsilon\sigma\theta\alpha\iota\epsilon \) \( \nu\alpha\iota \) (Table 4.3) in order to structure his tragic world29. The Euripidean motif of love is built on this foundation. The mechanism of dualism works effectively as it shows the theme of illusion, which is an essential part of this dualism.

For Euripides, the epic Helen was the Helen of illusion. He, therefore, treats her differently in order to reinterpret her as a tragic wife. Choices made by tragic wives are not always negative: Helen becomes a positive character, just like the wife of Odysseus, Penelope. Helen’s choice to remain in Egypt and not to remarry has implications for the

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28 This is apparently an influence of Anaxagoras’ thought about \( \Nu \) \( \varsigma \); it is outside things and not mixed with them. Mind is a conscious power that imposes on order upon things. Teucer replies to Helen that he had seen her at Troy himself with his eyes and with his mind, i.e. he uses his mind to interpret visual information. Also see Murray (1955: 31).

29 Probably, Euripides uses this dualism in the Helen because he is influenced by the philosophical theory of Anaxagoras as mentioned above. Things could be broken up into their elements and could grow together again, but nothing could be destroyed; this is what happened to Helen and Menelaus and their family–\( \circ\iota\kappa\omicron \). See further Murray (1955: 31).
public as well as the private domains because in this way she achieves an escape from her epic bad reputation. Foley (2001: 303) supports this view as Helen’s loyalty and fidelity restores her reputation.

Euripides departs from epic tradition to tell a version of the usual story: the classical marital system had various and antithetical functions. On the first level, it prescribed fixed roles for husband and wife. On the second level, it required husband and wife to behave according to social and cultural expectations which they opposed to emotional needs, especially those of women, because husbands were always absent at home but women always present, as was shown above\(^{30}\). Helen and Menelaus act temporarily in a non–traditional way. They shatter traditional expectations, but in the end they revert to them: Menelaus seeks his lost wife, but he has no idea that she is a phantom (Episode B, Scene A). As soon as he finds the real one, he comes back to reality in order to make his family—οἶκος alive and to regain his lost reputation again (Outcome, Scene A).

### THE THEME OF ILLUSION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Male–Female.</th>
<th>Husband–Wife</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tradition–Subversion</td>
<td>Classical Marital System–Reform</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public–Private</td>
<td>Reputation of the Family–Οἶκος</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2

### THE FORM OF ΕΙΔΩΛΟΝ

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lie–Truth</th>
<th>Epic Helen–Egyptian Helen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non–real–Real</td>
<td>Use of name–Body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Φαινεσθαι – E ναι</td>
<td>Use of name–Body</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.3

\(^{30}\) See Woman and Marriage: A Guided Story, Chapter III.
Euripides also uses the key word *name* (ὄνομα) that characterises Helen’s reputation (lines: 43, 66, 199, 250, 1649–1651, 1506). Her *name* is the carrier of the theme of illusion but her body – the real or Egyptian Helen – has nothing to do with this (Episode B, Scene A, Choral Ode A). The dualism between non–real (*name*) and real (body) causes an emotional tension in Helen (line: 588, 1110). The sophistic distinction of this phenomenon between *name* as appearance and body as reality becomes a philosophical question that Menelaus must answer\(^\text{31}\).

\[1653 \text{ «... κα το \ς θεο \ς παρ \sigmaχε \το νομ', \ ο κ τι' \nτο \sigma δ' α \το \ς δε \ νιν \ζε \ χθαι γ μοις ...»}.
\]

(«... and she has lent her name to the gods, she will live here no longer. She must remain yoked in the same marriage...»).

The word ε ὀδωλον is used in Helen’s lament about the negative effect of her beauty (lines: 362–374, 383–385), as was mentioned above (Parodus, Scene D). The image of Helen at Troy was likewise created from the ether or upperair (lines: 34, 44–45 584, 1219) an idea that connects with Anaxagoras’ notion\(^\text{32}\) – the cosmos was created from the consolidation of the ether (Wright, 1995: 112–124). Euripides also believes that the soul which is identified with Νοῦς (Episode B, Scene D) unites with the ether after its death (lines: 1014–1016). This would certainly be an idea with which Plato would agree (Halliwell, 1988: 118–119).

At this point, the contrast between appearance and reality is used by Euripides to make an alternative image of Helen so that the reader wonders which Helen is the real one: the

\(^{31}\) Similarly, see the Iphigenia at Tauris of Euripides (line: 541), where Orestes reports himself to Iphigenia.

\(^{32}\) Both Euripides and Plato philosophise about the theme of illusion. Plato says that our sensory world is the world of illusion; Νοῦς helps us to escape the illusions of our senses. Similarly, Euripides states that senses (ὅραν) create εἴδωλα, reflections of the real world (νοεῖν). For Plato, phantasma (φάντασμα) is a metaphor for a mental image, but εἴδωλον is the artist’s mental image of his or her subject. According to this, Hera was the artist who created the ε ὀδωλον of Helen. On the dialectic of εἴδωλον and eros see Markus (1955).
Helen of Troy, the Helen of Egypt or neither. A problem that emerges in viewing an original and a copy is how the audience can distinguish between the real and the fraudulent. For example, in Euripides’ Helen a copy of Helen appeared at Troy but the original was in Egypt. This phenomenon has clearly to do with the kinship between lie–truth, non–real–real, φαίνεσθαι–ε ναί.

Euripides tends to structure a dualistic tragic world in which these elements are put in a holistic order: the word εἴδωλον consists of the paradoxical phenomenon of φαίνεσθαι–ε ναί, lie–truth, non–real–real which is stressed (Parodus, Scene C and D) by Helen herself (lines: 286, 310) and by the chorus as well (line: 309). The reader establishes a connection between the terms male, tradition, public, lie, non–real, φαίνεσθαι (Table 4.2 and Table 4.3) because they all form part of the male position in classical Athens. Similarly, the terms female, subversion, private, truth, real, ε ναί (Table 4.2 and Table 4.3) are relevant to the female role in the classical marital system, as was shown above.

Helen is speaking to Menelaus:

286 «... το ζ πρ γμασιν τ θνηκα, το ζ δ’ γροισιν ο ...».  
(«... I am dead in my fortunes if not in deed ...»).

309 «... π λλ’ ν λ γοιτο κα δι ψευδ ν σαφ ...».  
( «... many things plainly said may be false...»).

Menelaus’ participation in the theme of illusion is active; he fought for the epic Helen (Episode A, Scene A) at Troy (lines: 393–395) and is now fighting for the real one (Outcome, Scene A) in Egypt (lines: 1570–1610). At first, he is surprised because he cannot understand the doubleness of Helen as a phantom at Troy and reality in Egypt at

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34 See above, Chapter III, Athenian Ideology–The Life of Athens, and also The Character of the Family–οικος.
the same time (lines: 412–414, 425–429). This causes a comic–tragic tone that becomes a metaphor for the duality of the self. His explanation is quite simple:

495 «... Λακεδαμόσ δ γα τις ξυν νομος
Τρο ας ... γ μ ν ο κ χω τ χρ λ γειν.
ν πολλ ι χθον
ν ματα τα τ᾽ χουσι κα π λις π λει
γυν γυναικ ...».

(«... What other lands are called Lacedaemon and Troy?
I do not know what to make of it. Many men ....
it seems have the same names as other men,
and the same is true of women and cities...»).

Menelaus’ doubt about this paradoxical appearance of Helen is stressed in Episode B, Scene A; the word εἴδολον functions as a fantasy or as a utopia (lines: 569–574, 580–585, 593). Menelaus is close to φαίνεσθαι which is why he cannot understand the doubleness of his wife and he recognises as truth what his eyes accept:

593 «... το κε με μ γεθος τ ν κακ ν πε θει, σ δ ’ ο ...».

(«... I trust my many labours at Troy, not you ...»).

Helen tells him that she has never gone to Troy (line: 582) but he cannot make sense of her statement. He recognises his real wife as soon as the messenger informs him that Helen who was kept in the cave disappeared (lines: 605–611), just like a phantom in the ether35. This technique of cross–checking information creates a balance between the non–real and the real world so that Menelaus no longer doubts the word of Egyptian Helen (lines: 621–623).

605 «... β βηκεν λοχος σ πρ ρ ζ α 0 ρος πτυχ ς

35 Similarly, see the Iphigenia in Tauris of Euripides (lines: 38–41).
ρθε σ’ φαντος...».

«... Your wife has disappeared, swept out of sight into the sky’s recesses vanished into the heavens ...».

621 «... το τ’ στ’ κε νο· ξυμβεβ σ μοι λ γοι
ο τ σδ’ ληθε ς ...».

«... Why, this is just what she said! Her words turn out to be true...»).

The recognition scene (ἀναγνώρισις) is one of the most moving and lyrical of this play36. Helen behaves like a person who finds her soul–mate again (lines: 636–637, 648–651) and similarly Menelaus (lines: 630–635, 654–655).

634 «... νεπτ ρωσα κα δ κρυ σταλ σσω,
περ δ γυ α χ ρας βαλον δον ν,
π σις, ς λ βω...».

«... the hair of my head stands on end, tears stream from my eyes!
I throw my arms about you with pleasure to receive you my husband...»).

654 «... μ δ χαρμον δ κρυα πλ ον χει
χ ριτος λ πας ...».

«... my tears are those of joy: they have more in them of gratefulness than grief ...»).

36 The emotional tension is quite similar to the Iphigenia in Tauris (lines: 827–899) and the Ion (lines: 1437–1509) of Euripides.
As a matter of fact, the word εἴδωλον is no longer used because the recognition scene takes place; the mechanism of dualism changes from non–real to real, from lie to truth, from φαίνεσθαι to ε ναι. After a short dialogue between Menelaus and Helen (lines: 665–690) in which Helen describes her disappearance, the surprised messenger expresses what the reader ponders (line: 706):

706 «...νεφ λης ρ′ λλως ε χοινεν π νοους π ρι; ...».

(«... do you mean we toiled in vain for a cloud? ...»).

Theonoe, the prophetesses, knows about the εἴδωλον (Episode B, Scene D) and informs Helen that Hera is on her side now but not Aphrodite (lines: 880–886). For her, the theme of illusion is believable (lines: 873–876). Thus the dramatic tension is heightened, and it causes the reader to feel pity and fear (ἔλεον καὶ φόβον). Theonoe also knows that Menelaus’ and Helen’s successful return after the escape depends on her silence (lines: 890–893) because she plays a major role in helping the couple to escape (lines: 1023–1025). Theoclymenus also interrogates Helen (Episode C, Scene B) about her phantom because he wants to be sure that this Helen is the real one (line: 1219–1220).

The theme of illusion loses his basis as soon as Menelaus recognises the Egyptian Helen as his proper wife as was noted above. Helen plays the main role in the form of εἴδωλον from which she escapes when the phantom goes up in the ether. So, Euripides deals with the dualism of non–real–real lie–truth, φαίνεσθαι–ε ναι in order to point out the problems and the paradoxes of the classical marital system but in the Helen he does not go the whole way. He analyses the societal rules governing the gender relations and he subverts them by creating a tragic reversal of fortune. Finally, he returns back to tradition. In the end, tradition is victorious. Euripides’ alternative world speaks to the modern reader through the theme of illusion37. All the marital dysfunctions can be dissolved in this way because an illusion usually covers the human mistakes and the cause–effect as well.

The εἶδολον of Helen plays the role of her alter ego; an excuse that can be believed in the world of classical Athens where the male–female role division was compulsory and the female was limited to staying at home, as was shown above\textsuperscript{38}. Similarly, one sees on contemporary reality T.V. shows, that people guilty of adultery explains the mishap by referring to loss of control, namely an alter ego.

Euripides deals with the multiple options of the truth and the ability of the human mind to interpret the reality according to this. So, for him probably drama means the endless adventure of a person who is trapped in the world of illusion, e.g. in the Prologue, Scene B, Teucer identifies the words ὀραν and νοεῖν (line: 122) as was shown above. Chorus (Outcome, Scene C) notes that there many versions of the same thing (lines: 1688–1692), a thought that carries the essence of the Euripidean dramaturgy.

1688 «... πολλα μορφα τ ν δαιμον ον, πολλ δ' λπως κρα νουσι θεο . κα μ δοκηθντ ι το κ τελ σθη ...».

(«... what heaven sends has many shapes, and many things the gods accomplish against our expectation. What men look for is not brought to pass ...»).

The Female Character

The character of Helen reaffirms the typical view of the Attic married woman as Euripides depicts her as a rational, self–controlled woman, capable of correct decisions and actions. She also changes the traditional balance of roles between the sexes because now she devises an escape plan (Foley, 2001: 329). Helen of Euripides is metamorphosed into a wise wife (Episode B, Scene A, B) who attains her own aim: to go back to Sparta with her husband and to regain her reputation (lines: 641, 666–668).

\textsuperscript{38} See Chapter III, Women and Marriage: A Guided Story.
She is represented as a young woman protecting her reputation by Theoclymenus (Episode B, Scene C), the current king of Egypt, son of Proteus (line: 785). She is totally different from the epic image; she has been waiting for her husband to save her (Episode B, Scene D, E) and she intends to regain her family—οἶκος. (929–935, 1090–1093).

929 «... ν δ΄ Ἑλλάδος λθω κ πιβ Σπρτης <π λιν>, κλω ντες ε σιδ ντες ς τ χαις θε ν λοντ', γ δ' προδ' τις ο κ ρ' φ λων ... δν σομα τε θυγατ' ρ', ν ο δε γαμε ...».

(«... But if I reach Greece and walk once more in Sparta, men will see that they were ruined by the god’s contrivances and that I was not after all a traitor to my family ... I shall betroth my unmarried daughter to a husband ...»).

She is also represented as a real lady and a good housekeeper who experienced damage to her family—οἶκος; this ideal image makes Helen more mysterious so that the reader wonders whether it is the historical or the mythical figure that fits into this model. Euripides’ art has to do with the reversal of fortune, with symbolism and allegory, which is addressed to society and which can make life bearable and meaningful. Helen may symbolise an utopian ideal, a driving force for private or public action, a fantasy never captured. For the poet, she is an archetypal woman who reaches deification (Outcome, Scene C).

Euripides invites his audience to choose between the two Helens indicated above: the adulterous epic one and the virtuous one of Egypt. This play is about the distinction between appearance and reality, as I noted before. The tragic poet also contrasts reversals as he sets non–real against real, tragic against comic, archaic against contemporary, myth against fact or things as they are said to be against things as they are, peace against war, poetry against reality. The result is a revelation of the enigma of reality itself, because the reader feels the presence of a design, but its meaning is interpretable in more than one correct way (Arrowsmith, 1964: 6–9).
The epithets and short phrases concerning Helen’s character are shown in Table 4.4. Euripides uses the traditionally negative words to describe Helen’s past and present situation. The most striking words are προδότις, πιστος, δίκος, θεος (traitor, faithless, lawless, godless). He tries to purify the epic image of Helen and he manages to replace the negative words by the positive words θεός (goddess) and εὐγενεστάτης (noble heart) by using the theme of illusion.

**HELEN’S CHARACTER**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>epithet (hateful)</th>
<th>Line</th>
<th>epithet (hateful)</th>
<th>Line</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>τλ. μον (poor)</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>δύστηνον (poor)</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>τ λαίανα (miserable)</td>
<td>336</td>
<td>ἀθλιωτέρα (ill-starred)</td>
<td>594</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>τάλαινα Τυνδάρις (ill-starred daughter of Tyndareus)</td>
<td>614</td>
<td>φιλτάτη πρόσοψις (dearest sight)</td>
<td>636</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>τλ. μονα τλ. μον’ (in misery)</td>
<td>682–683</td>
<td>τάλαιν’ (miserable)</td>
<td>791</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>τάλαινα (miserable)</td>
<td>857</td>
<td>δύστηνος (poor)</td>
<td>862</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>θ κον οὐκ ε δα μονα (sitting in an attitude of misery)</td>
<td>895</td>
<td>ἀθλίαν (miserable)</td>
<td>924</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ε προδούσα’ ἐμὸν πόσιν (I abandoned my husband)</td>
<td>927</td>
<td>προδότις, πιστος, δίκος, θεος (traitor, faithless, lawless, godless)</td>
<td>1148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>πιστή (faithful)</td>
<td>1230</td>
<td>μ ναιος ἡμιοτός (marriage enviable)</td>
<td>1435</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>θεός (goddess)</td>
<td>1667</td>
<td>εὐγενεστάτης (noble heart)</td>
<td>1686</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total: τάλαινα: 4, τλ. μον: 3, ἀθλίαν: 2, δύστηνον: 2, προδούσα’/προδότις: 2

Table 4.4
The Helen of Euripides is a woman’s play because in it the poet apologises to the female sex for all the injustices that men have done; the rehabilitation of Helen is his aim. The play probably is connected with the women’s festival, the Thesmophoria, as the text itself shows, especially to women[^39]. The Helen contains juxtapositions that go far beyond the name–body contrast, for instance, feminine values and masculine values, logical–illogical, religious norms–sophistic mysticism, ritual birth and rebirth relevant to feminine values (Choral Ode B), cultural–political standards and extremely unacceptable standards as well (Verrall, 1905: 43–113).

The Helen can perhaps not be called a tragedy in the technical sense, as was noted above, but behind it lies one of civilisation’s greatest tragedies: the decline of the classical marital system, its moral code and the decline of the glorious ideals of the polis–state as well. Helen is the notorious scandal of her sex; Euripides, by developing the paradoxical hints of the poet Stesichorus, presents her as a supreme example of fidelity. He defends the reputation of his heroine and asks the reader’s sympathy for a faithful wife because fidelity in a spouse is admired and valued.

An essential question that the reader poses is why Euripides uses the version of the phantom in the Helen in spite of her epic image, which is used by him in the Trojan Women (415 B. C.). Helen of Egypt is totally different from the epic Helen who appeared as character of medium importance in the Trojan Women. She was also faced with death after the fall of Troy at the hands of Menelaus. So, it is likely that Euripides changed his mind because the traditional story did not suit his dramatic purpose and he wanted to cater for a changed audience. If it is for the sake of his audience, then Euripides’ Helen is an anti–epic Helen who is liked only by the female sex at the festival, the Thesmophoria. By the way, Euripides got an opportunity to point out not only the faults but the virtues of women in general as well. Verrall (1905: 49, 72) notes that if he had portrayed only the epic Helen, he would have offended current female sensibilities.

[^39]: According to Verrall (1905: 61), this play was composed for a private recitation at the Thesmophoria and not originally composed for the theatre. Therefore, the play had to be acceptable to women defending the female sex. This view interprets the connection of the Choral Ode B – an ode in honour of Demeter and her daughter – with the above–mentioned women’s festival.
One could also ask why a virtuous Helen is given back to her husband, who loved her even as the non-virtuous copy. For ten years Menelaus fought to possess a Helen that was different from his true wife. This is dramatic irony that connects with the theme of illusion and the fantasy theory. According to Greenwood (1953: 7–15), Euripides’ stories imply that the gods do such actions as no right-minded but sensible men can think possible; several plots are impossible as they do not obey the laws of human nature, e.g. the double Helen and the story of substitution. Of course, parts of his story are plausible but the plot as a whole is an impossible fiction. So, the reader who enters the fictional world of Euripides may find happiness in the virtue of Helen only if (s)he accepts this paradox that the poet deals with.

Finally, for Euripides, tragedy is a picture of the terrible in human life: it is the folly or the selfishness of individual human beings that brings misery, as Hecuba correctly says to Helen in the *Trojan Women* (lines: 983–987); but there is no comment on this in the *Helen*.

983 «... σς δδνινοι ποι θη δρ...».

(«... It was not Cypris but your own heart that made you yield to Paris...»).

Helen is a character who transcends reality through her doubleness. It seems that she knew that she had been double since the Trojan War started. She explained this as an illusion that Hera created, as noted above. She was the centre of this illusion and could escape at any time. Her need for escape is given by Euripides as a dysfunction of the classical marital system. He does not clearly state how Menelaus caused Helen’s need for escape but the reader may conclude this by looking at the norms governing the gender relationship in general.
The Male Character

Menelaus appears on stage as a shipwrecked mariner should appear. He is ashamed to approach people to ask about the land in which he has been marooned (Episode A, Scene B). He has neither food nor accommodation and he cannot decide what to do, just like Odysseus in the land of Cyclops. Menelaus has lost his wardrobe and he looks like a beggar, but this may be an exaggerated figure. His humble appearance elicits compassion from the audience. This scene and the following one (Episode A, B) with Menelaus in rags did no good to Euripides’ reputation – at least in the eyes of Aristophanes, who parodied Menelaus, the king, clothed in rags.

His first speech – a second prologue – is a long, unbroken piece and a pompous representation of himself. Menelaus is a victim of Euripides’ realism; he is represented as a beggar at the door by the gatekeeper of the palace (lines: 500–514). As Blaiklock argues (1952: 88), realism can be used as parody. In the case of Menelaus, the epic dignity on the lips of the Spartan king would ring hollow in an Attic theatre. In other words, the Attic audience could not accept him as a champion, because he is a Spartan enemy.

According to Verrall (1905: 99–101, 117), he is represented as a caricature figure of a king who does not exhibit the capacity to conceive of the doubleness of Helen. The puzzle about here and there is solved after the disappearance of Helen’s phantom, as was noted above. So, the main aim of the story can emerge: Menelaus will be reunited with his wife, and they will return happily to their house status. Because there is no chorus on stage,

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40 See Aristophanes, the Thesmophoriazousae (lines: 849–918) and Arrowsmith (1964: 9).

41 It is possible to accept Kitto’s (1961: 98) suggestion that this treatment of Menelaus has to do with the requirement of an audience that no longer wanted tragedy pure and strong. Menelaus is no better in the other plays of Euripides, such as the Trojan Women (lines: 861–866), the Andromache (lines: 629–631) and the Orestes (346–365). He is represented as weak, with no moral depth or character. In the Ajax of Sophocles (lines:1159–116) he appears as a man preoccupied with his rightful authority.

42 The chorus is removed by Euripides at Menelaus’ entrance unless its role is to be present during the whole plot. This is an economy part of the plot: Helen and not the chorus shall be the first person to see Menelaus’ arrival. For a different view, see Burnett (1973: 80). Compare, also the removal of the chorus in the Ajax of Sophocles (line: 814).
one can imagine Menelaus walking around in the space before he exits (Episode B, Scene E).

This Menelaus is an open enemy of the king of Egypt, Theoklymenus, because he comes from Greece. That is why he is a persona non grata in the palace; a Greek sailor is a threat to the king because he might rescue Helen (Episode A, Scene B, Episode B, Scene C). So, Menelaus will be executed unless he can devise a plan to escape (lines: 777–778, 789–791). The reader is not impressed by the superficiality of Menelaus because he uncritically accepts all Helen’s prescriptions, e.g. he must play an incognito role and he must pretend to be dead (Episode B, Scene B). The strongest depiction of Menelaus is where he expresses his confidence that the ship will experience favourable winds (lines: 1071–1074).

Menelaus is impractical in intention: in short, anything but a hero as Arrowsmith correctly states (1964: 6–7). By contrast, Helen exhibits poise compared to Menelaus, (Episode B, scene C) and of course she is faithful, practical and never despairing (lines: 825–830). He seems inferior in front of his wife, who dominates him as she dominated Theoclymenus as well (Blaiklock, 1952: 93). Menelaus’ only opportunity to shine is during the final battle on board (Outcome, Scene A) when he fights as an epic officer (lines: 1570–1611). So, he tries to regain, in a small degree, something of his heroic prestige.

The epithets and short phrases concerning Menelaus’ character are shown in Table 4.5. Euripides uses mostly negative words to describe Menelaus’ character; the strongest expression is φιλος φ λων (bereft of friends). The positive words balance the past and the present situations: the most positive words for Menelaus are γεννα αν χ ρα (noble arm) and νδρ ζ ε γενο (nobleman).
## MENELAUS’ CHARACTER

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Line</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ἄθλιος (poor)</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>μέλεος (unhappy)</td>
<td>340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>τραννος o δ</td>
<td>395</td>
<td>σεμινός ἢσθ’ οὐχ (person of importance, but not here)</td>
<td>456</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>δύστηνος (miserable)</td>
<td>461</td>
<td>ταλά φρον, φιλός φ λων (poor man, bereft of friends)</td>
<td>523</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Δυστυχέστατον (man of great misery)</td>
<td>565</td>
<td>φ λτατ’ νδρ ν (man I love best)</td>
<td>625</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ὦναξ (lord)</td>
<td>744</td>
<td>ἄθλιώτατος (most miserable)</td>
<td>804</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>τλ. μον (poor)</td>
<td>876</td>
<td>νδρ ζε γενόν τς (nobleman)</td>
<td>950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ἄθλιος (unfortunate)</td>
<td>958</td>
<td>λεινός δραστ ριος (pitiful than a man of action)</td>
<td>992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>τάλας (poor)</td>
<td>1295</td>
<td>φιλτάτωι (dear)</td>
<td>1299</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>γεννα αν χ ρα (noble arm)</td>
<td>1376</td>
<td>ε τυχ θ σετε (make me blessed)</td>
<td>1450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>πλαν τη (wanderer)</td>
<td>1676</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total: ἄθλιος: 2, φιλτάτοι / φιλτάτωι: 2

Table 4.5
Euripides uses the contrast of character in the *Helen* to damage the character of Menelaus. So, he is treated as a realistic male character, while Helen is a surrealistic female one. The theme of illusion allows the poet to explore appearance and reality extensively. Ultimately, the weak and superficial Menelaus is close to comedy, while the virtuous Helen reaches a surrealistic level. But the audience must not forget that both have survived a catastrophe. It is possible for a *dramatis persona* to survive after a disaster and to make a new start, just like Helen and Menelaus.

Doubtless, Euripides does not represent Menelaus as the traditional theatre would want him: strong, masterful and a good warrior. He is an anti–hero, because he thinks that she would live better with his wife if tradition could be reformed. So, his experience was a result of the traditional marital system that failed. He knew it even though this is expressed by the tragic author as a possibility. It is clearer that Helen realised this truth before Menelaus did. Indeed, Helen’s recovery is absolutely final proof of this. Menelaus wants his wife back even though history places an emphasis on the financial aspect of the Trojan War. And, of course, Helen wants her husband back to live better as tradition requires\(^4^3\). Certainly, the audience does not know how the couple would spend their life together after this experience – this is another story that Euripides does not deal with: this happy ending leads to a better future that is quite possible.

\(^{43}\) Greek mythology reports that Menelaus killed Diifovos (Paris’ brother) who married Helen (as *epikleros*) after Paris’ death at Troy. Moreover, Menelaus and Helen went back to Sparta and they both spent the rest of their lives there. Their tomb was built in Therapnes. According to a first version, after Menelaus’ death Helen was forced to leave the royal palace (by the sons of Menelaus and his concubine). Then she went to the island of Rhodes and she finally was hanged upon a tree by Polexus, in revenge for her husband’s death at Troy. The locals built a temple for Helen, called *Helen of tree*. It is also reported that after her death, Helen got married to Achilles in the underworld. It is quite possible that *Helen of tree* was identified to an ancient Cretan deity (likely Ariadne – the Minotaur’s sister) who was related to a cult about trees and who also eloped with a lover and finally hanged. According to a second version, Menelaus did not die but he descended into the *Ηλύσια Πεδία*, the place of the dead heroes. See further Eleftheroudakis (1971: 216).
CHAPTER V

GLOSS ANALYSIS OF THE MOTIF OF LOVE IN THE HELEN OF EURIPIDES

The Use of Language

The main aim of this chapter is to apply gloss analysis to the linguistic forms and passages which have to do with the motif of love in the Helen of Euripides. The linguistic forms and passages concern the ethos and character of Helen and Menelaus, i.e. characteristic epithets and expressions. Euripides uses language in two ways. Firstly, he uses it as an instrument of communication in order to describe a dyadic relationship: it concerns the style of communication between husband and wife, Menelaus and Helen. This is the language of ordinary life that shows up the tensions in classical marriage. Pathos (πάθος) is expressed in scenes of deep feeling – e.g., in the Helen, the recognition scene between Helen and Menelaus (Episode B, Scene A) is a good example of an expression of the finest chords of emotion. Secondly, language is used as a metaphorical vehicle to express his voice for social reform. His metaphorical language has to do with the theme of illusion as a language game.

The typical style of communication between married couples, like Helen and Menelaus is expressed in monologues and dialogues relevant to the motif of love (Prologue, Scene A, Episode B, Scene A). Diagrams 4.2 and 4.3 (see previous chapter) are supplementary because they summarise the features of Helen’s and Menelaus’ ethos. So, the question posed here is how the features of the main female and male ethos would function. In order to give an answer, gloss analysis is applied as follows: as a first step the function of the features of each one’s ethos is analysed both in the traditional myth and the tragic myth of Euripides; as a second step the function of the epithets and the expressions regarding Helen’s and Menelaus’ character are analysed both in the traditional myth and in the tragic myth of Euripides too. For this reason, Tables 4.4 and 4.5 (see previous chapter) are helpful tools. For instance, the loyalty and honesty of Helen are expressed repeatedly by

1 On gloss analysis applied to the works of Euripides, the Helen and the Alcestis, see Chapter I, Introduction, Methodology.

2 According to Aristotle (Rhet. 3.2) Euripides invented this way of describing reality.
herself (Prologue, Scene A, Parodus, Scene C) in order to reconstruct her epic image (lines: 55–59, 65–67, 270–273, 280–286). The epithets purposefully used by Euripides, such as πιστή and εὔγενεστάτη, help to rehabilitate Helen’s bad reputation as ἀθλίαν (miserable) and μισητή (hateful).

The theme of illusion used as a language game is of major importance because Helen and Menelaus are represented by the author in a way that assist the reader to decode the metaphorical language of Euripides: the recovery of Helen is the result of a change that could occur in classical marriage. The philosophical grammar of the language game, the ethos and the character are explored in the next section of this chapter.

Beauty, faithfulness and honesty–honour are the features of Helen’s ethos – as were illustrated in Diagram 4.2 – which totally change her epic image. In the Prologue, Scene A, Helen monologues about her past and her present situation. Her speech is introductory and is focused on her mythic abduction by Paris (lines: 25–34). Euripides departs from this mythological reason and proposes a real cause at the end of the play. For this purpose, he uses three ordinary words to describe the basic features of Helen’s ethos: beauty, faithfulness and honesty. These words are relevant to female morality in general and were valued by classical society, as was indicated above³.

According to the mythic explanation, Helen’s beauty functions negatively because it caused the Trojan War. Helen explains how Hera created a copy of her body in order to save the real Helen, and cause the Greeks and Trojans to fight over a phantom because of overpopulation (lines: 31–55). Euripides stresses that the problem lies beyond the real world, which is shadowed by the non–real (lines: 35–36, 65–67). Helen too speaks about this paradoxical phenomenon as being a possible part of the mythic and the tragic world:

35 «... καὶ (Μενέλαιος) δοκεῖ μὲν χεῖν, 
                 κεν ν δὲ κησιν, ο ἐκ χων ...».

(«... He imagines, vain imagination, that

³ See Chapter IV, The Motif of Love.
he has me, though he does not...»).

According to the tragic explanation that Euripides proposes, Helen’s beauty is regarded as part of her personality: it is an advantage. In classical society a good–looking woman had more opportunity of marrying, as was noted above⁴. But whenever mythology refers to Helen’s beauty, and the Trojan War it is described as a bad feature of her personality. In general, a woman’s beauty, like Helen’s, is regarded as the beginning of misfortunes⁵. Euripides shows (Choral Ode B) how her beauty is a form of power (line: 1365–1368), and Helen has to use this power for her own benefit. In this way, Euripides defends Helen by stressing her beauty as a positive feature of her ethos.

Faithfulness is the second main feature of her ethos. According to the traditional myth, Helen is accused of being unfaithful and of being responsible for the disaster that assails her family—οἶκος. Adultery committed by a woman is regarded as a sin that must be followed by punishment, as was mentioned above. In Euripides’ retelling of the myth Helen’s bad reputation is salvaged by setting her in Egypt waiting for her husband to collect her. In this way, she does not commit adultery but remains faithful to Menelaus. This is why Menelaus does not divorce her but accompanies her back to Sparta. The topic of Helen’s faithfulness functions negatively in the traditional myth but positively in the recreated tragic myth of Euripides.

Helen’s epic character influences the tragic plays such as The Trojan Women, Orestes and Hecuba. What Euripides does in his Helen is to change the tradition about Helen’s ethos and her responsibility for the Trojan War (Episode B, Scene B). Gods and not humans can cause misfortunes like wars or physical disasters (lines: 658–660). This explanation that Helen gives for her misfortune is acceptable to the audience in classical society, who used to regard gods as being responsible for human unhappiness but for the modern reader this is not a adequate explanation.

⁵ In ancient Greek society the motto πῦρ, γυνῆ καί θάλασσα («... fire, woman and sea ...») concerning the female ethos as the beginning of misfortunes that still survives in ordinary language (personal experience) shows how woman’s power was regarded as equal to physical disasters, such as fire or shipwrecks.
Honesty–honour is the third main feature of Helen’s ethos. It goes with faithfulness and it functions negatively in the traditional myth but positively in the tragic world recreated by Euripides. Mythology charges Helen with a lack of honesty towards her husband when she left him rather willingly for Paris. Euripides constructs a new image of Helen (Prologue, Scene A, Parodus, Scene C) in Egypt – one that is full of honesty and honour (lines: 61–65, 294–297).

As we have seen above (Table 4.4), the epithets ἀθλίαν (miserable), μισητή (hateful), προδότης (traitor), πιστος (faithless), δικος (lawless), θεος (godless), ἀθλιωτέρα (ill starred), and χθιστης (most hateful) concerning Helen’s character function negatively in the traditional myth because they result in Helen’s bad reputation; the public opinion of Greeks and Trojans about Helen is mostly negative. Euripides changes this opinion by emphasising the bright side of Helen’s character. For this purpose, he uses the epithets πιστη (faithful), εὔγενεστάτη (noble heart), τάλαινα (miserable), δύσσηνος (poor), τό μον (in misery), θεος (goddess) and the expressions φιλτάτη πρόσοψις (dearest sight), θυ ναος ζηλωτὸς (marriage enviable) which function positively in the tragic world of Euripides (see Diagram 5.1).

The Helen of Euripides, as was noted above, shows how the impossible works against the possible. The reversal of fortune – from bad to good – functions positively in the tragic world of Euripides which is a representation of the real world. The reason why Euripides recreated the image of Helen is probably to suggest that traditional marriage was seriously flawed and should be renewed. The male–female role division thus comes up for a re-examination.

6 The historical context of the Helen is related to the disaster of the Sicilian Expedition. Euripides wants to encourage the Athenians by creating a new positive image of Helen, which is a symbol of renewal. See Alexopoulou (2002: 90–91).
The function of Helen’s ethos

Traditional Myth

Beauty: ἀθλίαν (miserable), μαςτή (hateful), προδότης (traitor), πιστος (faithless), δικος (lawless), θεος (godless), ἄθλιετα (ill starred), and χθες (most hateful).

Function negatively for Helen’s reputation (epic image).

Euripides’ Version

Beauty–Faithfulness–Honesty: πιστή (faithful), εὐγενεστάτης (noble heart), τάλανα (miserable), δύστην (poor), τό μον (in misery), θεος (goddess) and the expressions φιλτάτη πρόσοψις (dearest sight), θο sis μονα (sitting in an attitude of misery), μ ναις ζηλωτὸς (marriage enviable).

Function positively for Helen’s reputation (new image).

Diagram 5.1

The basic features of Menelaus’ ethos are glory and cowardice (see Diagram 4.3). In the traditional myth, military glory functions entirely positively for his ethos; he was one of the Greek leaders against the Trojans. In the recreated tragic world of Euripides his glory functions neutrally or rather negatively because nobody is interested in his glorious past (lines: 511–516). In contrast, Euripides represents Menelaus as a coward as was noted above. The only common element between the epic Menelaus and the tragic one is his bad reputation; in the traditional myth, Menelaus experienced the damage of his family—οἶκος when his wife was abducted. In the recreated tragic world of Euripides, his epic reputation follows him and it functions negatively as Diagram 5.2 shows.

The expressions ὤναζ (lord), νδρς (man I love best), τραννος ο δ (not as a despot), ε τυχ θ σετε (make me blessed), and
γεννα αν χρα (noble arm), as was portrayed in Table 4.5, fit in with the character of the
epic Menelaus. According to the traditional myth, these expressions work positively.
Euripides changes the epic tradition by representing an inferior Menelaus. He uses the
epithets τάλας (poor), ἄθλιος (unfortunate), μέλεος (unhappy), δύστηνος (miserable),
τλ μον (poor), ταλαιφρον (poor man), ἄθλιωτατος (most miserable), δουσποχέστατος (man
of great misery), λεινός δραστ ριος (pitiful than a man of action), πλανήτη
(wanderer) in order to construct his character. He also uses the expressions φιλος
φλων (bereft of friends) and σεμνός ἡσθ’ οὐχ (person of importance but not here) to
show his cowardice.

**THE FUNCTION OF MENELAUS’ ETHOS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional Myth</th>
<th>Euripides’ Version</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Glory:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Glory:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ὦναξ (lord),</td>
<td>ὦναξ (lord),</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>νὸδρ ἦγεν (noble man),</td>
<td>νὸδρ ἦγεν (noble man),</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>φλαττ’ νὸδρ ν (man I love</td>
<td>φλαττ’ νὸδρ ν (man I love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>best), τ ραννος ο δ (not as a</td>
<td>best), τ ραννος ο δ (not as a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>despot), ε τυχ θετε (make</td>
<td>despot), ε τυχ θετε (make</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>me blessed), and</td>
<td>me blessed), and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>γεννα αν χρα (noble</td>
<td>γεννα αν χρα (noble</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>arm).</td>
<td>arm).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Function:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Function:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>positively</td>
<td>negatively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for his ethos.</td>
<td>for his ethos.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Diagram 5.2

It is important to describe the style of communication between husband and wife in order
to analyse the gender relationship of Helen and Menelaus. In the Helen, the female style
of communication is dominant. Helen finds herself in a foreign land (lines: 53–56, 754) and, as usual in Euripides, it is the woman who has the brains (Prologue, Scene A). In her monologue Helen does her best to persuade the reader that she is sincerely a faithful and virtuous wife (lines: 24–55). Helen also finds it difficult to make her husband understand her doubleness (lines: 570–571, 577, 580–582,) in order to persuade him of her virtue (Episode B, Scene A, Scene B). Menelaus’ answer that he believes his labours at Troy, as was mentioned above, are remarkable (line: 593) because they show why this problem is difficult to be solved: he believes only what he experienced.

This problem is solved by the messenger who informs Menelaus about the disappearance of Helen kept in the cave, as was seen above (Episode B, Scene B). In this way, the double reality is understood by Menelaus; he accepts the explanation that Helen gives (lines: 666–681) because the co–existence of the epic Helen and the true one is dissolved. Helen suggests that Menelaus pretends to be dead (Episode B, Scene C, Scene E) so that they may both escape (lines: 782, 799, 1050–1070). Menelaus thinks as a general and he suggests that he would kill the king (lines: 809–810) but Helen stops him by telling him that this not a good idea at all (line: 811).

811 «... τολμ' ν δ' νατ' νορ ζο σοφο...».

(«... But a wise man does not undertake the impossible...»).

For Menelaus, there are three avenues of escape: money, killing the king, or asking a favour. He does not insist on them because he relies on Helen’s diplomatic plan (line: 815); firstly, to get the king’s sister on their side (line: 821–825) and secondly, to trick him by pretending that he is dead (lines: 1055–1067, 1076). Menelaus’ style of communication is not powerful because he is not able to take the right decision like a king or leader should do. As we have seen above, Menelaus is represented as a caricature of a king, so the reader can expect little from him. Menelaus is the head of his family–οἶκος, in words only: he is overshadowed by his wife. In practice, Helen is the head of the family and of Menelaus.

See also the Antigone of Sophocles (line: 90).
By representing the female as superior to the male, Euripides probably shows up how gender relationships could function in a classical marriage. The male is regarded as the kyrios of the family—οἶκος, but the female is dominant by using solid arguments and by taking the right decisions. Of course, this is not a rule but the reader must consider this incident seriously because it represents reality by showing the underlying standards governing gender relationships.

Through this use of language, Euripides shows up sexism in classical society. The use of language as a sexist communication instrument is rooted deeply and it is relevant to societal and cultural norms. The philosophical grammar of these norms is examined through gloss analysis of Helen’s and Menelaus’ ethos and their character. Sexism is built into language itself in classical society and through the use of the words like beauty, faithfulness and honesty—honour in order to achieve social control of the female. Helen always defends herself against accusations of not being a good example for females (lines: 41–43, 260–261, 586, 769–772, and 1105–1106).

Euripides describes language as a form of social control by focusing on the image of the epic Helen and her bad reputation. He points out the function of sexist language. For instance, the etymology of Helen’s name fits in with her character (Alexopoulou, 2003: 41) as it is described by Euripides: in the Trojan Women he uses the negative interpretation of her name: \( \lambda \nu \eta = \lambda \varepsilon \ \nu \tau \acute{a} \zeta \ \varsigma \) (destroy the ships); but in his Helen he uses its positive interpretation: \( \lambda \nu \eta = \sigma \varepsilon \lambda \nu \varsigma \) (moonlight). The etymology of Menelaus’ name is relevant to his epic glory: \( \text{Μενέλαιος} = \lambda \varepsilon \ \nu \tau \acute{a} \zeta \ \varsigma \) (destroy the ships).

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8 In the Iphigenia at Tauris of Euripides, the female is also represented as superior to the male – Orestes – by devising a plan for escape (lines: 1100–1129). Orestes is Iphigenia’s brother and like Menelaus suggests killing the king in order to escape but Iphigenia tells him that this is a sin (lines: 1092–1095).

9 The term sexism is used here to refer to ideas or practises that treat either sex differently or even just unfairly. For the problem of defining sexist language see Cameron (1992: 5–6). For an interpretation of sexist terms, see Ehrlich & King (1998: 3).
Philosophical Grammar

The central aim of philosophical grammar applied to the motif of love in the Helen of Euripides is to describe the use of language – in other words, to explain why the features of ethos and character of female and male function in the way that was indicated above both in the traditional myth and in the recreated tragic myth of Euripides. Gloss analysis is used to describe the motif of love in the Helen by showing up the tensions in the traditional relationship between male and female. Philosophical grammar is then applied to understand and resolve these tensions. The connection between language and reality is showed clearly by applying philosophical grammar to linguistic forms and passages relevant to Helen’s and Menelaus’ ethos and character.

The question arising here is what the philosophical grammar of the female and the male ethos would be. In order to reach an answer, I shall apply gloss analysis mostly to Diagram 5.1 and Diagram 5.2. For instance, gloss analysis applied to the function of the female and the male ethos both in the traditional myth and the recreated tragic world examines the surface grammar and the depth grammar of their characters. It also explains why Euripides reconstructs the image of the epic Helen and Menelaus.

The philosophical grammar of Helen’s ethos has to do with the surface and depth grammar of beauty, faithfulness and honesty–honour. In the traditional myth the philosophical grammar of Helen’s beauty is problematic because it functions negatively, as was noted above: it caused the Trojan War and the disaster of her family—οἶκος. Her beauty functions as the surface grammar because it tries to cover up the depth grammar which is the Greek colonization of Troy. In the recreated tragic myth of Euripides the philosophical grammar of Helen’s beauty is striking because her beauty is regarded as a form of power. It functions as the surface grammar as well because it tries to cover the depth grammar, which refers to the dysfunctions within a classical marriage.

According to tradition, Helen is regarded as an unfaithful and dishonest wife. The philosophical grammar of Helen’s abduction shows the rule governing the gender
relationship clearly: male adultery corresponds to *surface grammar* but female adultery to *depth grammar* in classical society. In Euripides’ version, Helen’s faithfulness and honesty–honour correspond to the *surface grammar* and the marital dysfunctional system to the *depth grammar*.

In the traditional myth, the epithets προδότις (traitor), πιστος (faithless), δικος (lawless), θεος (godless), ἀθλιωτέρα (ill-starred), χθις στης (most hateful), μισητης (hateful), and ἀθλιαν (miserable) correspond to the *depth grammar* because Helen is not represented as the ideal wife. In the recreated tragic myth of Euripides, the epithets πιστη (faithful), εὐγενεστάτη (noble heart), τι μον (in misery), τάλαινα (miserable), δύστηνος (poor) and θεός (goddess) and the expressions φιλτάτη πρόσοψις (dearest sight), θα κον οίκε δα μονα (sitting in an attitude of misery), μοναζηλωτος (marriage enviable) correspond to the *depth grammar* as well because they reconstruct the epic image of Helen. In this way, Euripides shows how the marital system functions in classical society (real world) and how it should have functioned (ideal world). So, the philosophical grammar of the above epithets and expressions correspond to the *depth grammar* both in the traditional myth and in Euripides’ version. It moulds the female stereotype: how it is and how it should be (see Diagram 5.3).

*THE PHILOSOPHICAL GRAMMAR OF HELEN’S ETHOS*
Diagram 5.3

The philosophical grammar of Menelaus’ ethos has to do with the surface and the depth grammar of glory and cowardice. In the traditional myth, glory corresponds to the depth grammar because it is regarded as a virtue for male; in contrast, cowardice corresponds to the surface grammar because it is regarded as a disadvantage for the male. In the recreated tragic myth of Euripides, glory corresponds to the surface grammar because it is not regarded as a virtue for the male; cowardice corresponds to the depth grammar because it is regarded as quite common feature even for a king, like Menelaus. Euripides wants to represent the male as being inferior to the female by opposing the traditional features of the ideal male to his version.

In the traditional myth, the expressions, ὦ ναξ (lord), νὸν ζὲ γενός (noble man), φιλτάτη πρόσοψις (dearest sight), τλμον (in misery), τάλαινα (miserable), δύστηνος (poor) and θεός (goddess) and the expressions φιλτάτη πρόσοψις (dearest sight), θ’ κον οὐκε ὑ σε (sitting in an attitude of misery), μ νας ξριοως (marriage enviable), and the

προδότις (traitor), πιστος (faithless), δίκος (lawless), δύστηνος (ill-starred), τλμον (most hateful), μυστήριον (hateful), and τλμον (miserable)
expressions φιλος φ λων (bereft of friends) and σεμνός ἦσθ’ ούχ (person of importance but not here) correspond to the depth grammar as well because they mould Menelaus’ character in a different way that is contrary to tradition. So, the philosophical grammar of the above epithets and expressions corresponds to the depth grammar both in the traditional myth and in Euripides’ version. The philosophical grammar describes the ideal stereotype for the male: how it is according to tradition and how Euripides recreates it (see Diagram 5.4).

THE PHILOSOPHICAL GRAMMAR OF MENELAUS’ ETHOS

Traditional Myth
Glory: depth grammar
Cowardice: surface grammar

τάλας (poor), ἄθλιος (unfortunate),
μέλος (unhappy), δύστηνος (miserable),
τλ μον (poor), παιδίφων (poor man),
ἀθλιώτατος (most miserable),
dυστυχέστατον (man of great misery),
λεινὸς δραστ (pitiful),
πλανήτης (wanderer), and the expressions, φιλος φ λων (bereft of friends) and σεμνός ἦσθ’ ούχ (person of importance but not here).

Depth grammar

Euripides’ Version
Glory: surface grammar
Cowardice: depth grammar

ὦ ναξ (lord), νδρ εγενο (noble man), φ λτατ νόρ ν (man I love best), τ ρανος (not as a despot),
ε νοχ θ σεπ: (make me blessed), and γεννα αν χ ρα (noble arm).

Depth grammar

Diagram 5.4
The philosophical grammar of Euripides is the grammar that points out the use of language in classical society. Euripides uses the *surface* and the *depth grammar* of particular linguistic forms and passages with regard to the motif of love in order to describe the use of language and the connection between language and reality. These forms and passages concerning Helen’s and Menelaus’ ethos show the function of the gender relationship within a classical marriage, e.g. the philosophical grammar of Helen’s name is double, as was noted above; in the traditional myth her name corresponds to the *depth grammar* because it is interpreted as \( \lambda \varepsilon \nu \tau \acute{a} \zeta \nu \alpha \varsigma \); the same name in the recreated tragic myth of Euripides corresponds to the *depth grammar* as well even though it is interpreted as \( \sigma \varepsilon \lambda \acute{h} \eta \nu \eta \). This double significance of Helen’s name corresponds to the double reality, which is the theme of illusion.

*Gloss analysis* applied in the *Helen* of Euripides explains the functions and the dysfunctions of the traditional marital system. It also explains how sexist language functions in classical society through the use of its grammar. Euripides reaches the *grammar of justification* as was noted above by showing that *surface grammar* concerns mostly the male because it is the grammar of male moral standards; it remains flexible for the male, e.g. both a legal spouse and a concubine is acceptable for a male. The *depth grammar* concerns mostly the female because it is the grammar of female moral standards; it is strict for the female, namely that she must be a good wife and always faithful and virtuous.

Euripides *gloss analyses* sexism in language by expressing it and showing its *surface* and *depth grammar* and the relationship between them. For him, the *depth grammar* is hidden and it calls for social reform, because the gender relationship is not well balanced. The rules that Euripides suggests for change have to do with the traditional moral standards governing the interaction between male and female; these rules concern topics such as role division, adultery, ethics, and marriage\(^{10}\). That is why Euripides uses the *alter ego* of Helen to reconstruct her epic image. The theme of illusion is a representation of gender

\(^{10}\) In the *Andromache* of Euripides (line: 909) the tragic poet says clearly through the mouth of Orestes that

\[ \kappa \alpha \kappa \nu \gamma \tau \acute{o} \mu \acute{a} \varsigma \varsigma, \delta \sigma \sigma \nu \nu \delta \rho \iota \varsigma \chi \iota \nu \nu \lambda \nu \varsigma \varsigma \ldots \] («...Your words spell bane, one man has two women ...»).
asymmetry in classical society. It is used by the tragic poet as a language game, as is shown in the next section.

To sum up, the connection between language and reality in classical society is strong because language – both ordinary and metaphorical language – is the instrument of communication that incorporates the moral standards governing gender relationships; it also transmits this moral code from one generation to another by reaffirming the status quo, so that changes occur with difficulty. Euripides shows the disadvantages of the classical marital system as was mentioned above but he does not intend to destroy this system totally. He wishes only to reform it so that his heroes come back to tradition with the knowledge that the male and female will both experience a moral improvement and they will have a better future. In Helen’s and Menelaus’ case their venture is not for nothing. At the same time, when the Trojan War breaks out their trip to self–knowledge begins: Menelaus fights for Helen’s phantom only to find his true wife in a foreign land waiting for him to rescue her.

The Theme of Illusion as a Language Game

The theme of illusion is the main theme in the Helen of Euripides; it is based on the antithesis between φαίνεσθαι–εἶναι, body–name, as was noted above. Euripides uses this contradiction between appearance and reality in order to construct a language game. The main aim of this subsection is to describe the theme of illusion as a language game in terms of gloss analysis. As a first step, I will use the rule Describing the appearance of an object which is one of the basic rules governing the relationship between different language games as they were described by Wittgenstein. It is parallel to the theme of illusion because it demonstrates the connection between the appearance of Helen and reality. As a second step, I will propose the elementary propositions (P) for the traditional myth and the recreated tragic world of Euripides and I will gloss analyse their functions. As a third step, I will apply the theme of illusion to modern society by proposing propositions (P) and examining their functions.

The basic problem examined here concerns the philosophical grammar of the theme of illusion. Firstly, the function of the theme of illusion and the *alter ego* of Helen both in the traditional myth and in Euripides’ version is specified. Secondly, the result of *gloss analysis* is applied to the theme of illusion. Thirdly, the relationship between appearance and reality in classical and in modern society is described as well. The appearance of Helen is the rule that causes the multiplicity of the language game concerning the theme of illusion in the traditional myth and in the recreated tragic world, as Table 5.1 shows.

**THE THEME OF ILLUSION AS A LANGUAGE GAME**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional Myth</th>
<th>Euripides’ Version</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P2. Helen caused the Trojan War.</td>
<td>P2.1. Trojan War is a result of overpopulation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P4. Helen is not the perfect wife.</td>
<td>P4.1. Helen is the perfect wife.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P5. Dysfunctions of the classical marital system; opened up for reform.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
cause and P2 is the effect. Similarly, P3 leads to P4 because P3 is the cause and P4 is the effect; but P3 and P4 are also the effect of P1. P1 and P2 correspond to the depth grammar because, according to tradition, they function negatively for Helen’s reputation. P3 and P4 correspond to the depth grammar as well because they function negatively for Helen’s ethos: eventually, Helen falls into the bad category of unfaithful wife.

The philosophical grammar of the above elementary propositions has to do with the function of the surface and the depth grammar: traditionally, the gender relationship works according to strict moral standards. The communication system between husband and wife is regulated by strict norms in classical society, as was indicated above. P2 is a pseudo–proposition because Trojan War could happen with or without Helen as the P2.1 objects.

In the recreated tragic world of Euripides, the elementary propositions P1.1, P2.1, P3.1 and P4.1 describe reality. Actually, they are the result of a double reality because they represent reality through the meaning of εἶναι and body. So, P1.1 leads to P2.1 because P1.1 is the cause and P2.1 is the effect. Similarly, P3.1 leads to P4.1 because P3.1 is the cause and P4.1 is the effect; but P3.1 and P4.1 are also the effect of P1.1. P1.1 corresponds to the depth grammar but P2.1 corresponds to the surface grammar, because it rehabilitates Helen’s bad reputation. P3.1 and P4.1 correspond to the depth grammar as well because they rehabilitate Helen’s ethos: generally speaking, Helen is a perfect wife.

The philosophical grammar of the above propositions has to do with the function of the surface and the depth grammar in the recreated tragic world of Euripides: his Helen is a renewed image of the epic Helen. According to the author, the dyad comes back to tradition but the communication system between husband and wife is also renewed. P1+P2 is equivalent to P3+P4; similarly P1.1+P2.2 is equivalent to P3.1+P4.1. So, the anti–propositions that Euripides suggests both in the mythic and in the tragic world supply a deducibility: P5 is a conclusion of P1, P2, P3 and P4. At the same time, P5 is a conclusion of P1, P2, P3, P4 and of P1.1, P2.1, P3.1 and P4.1 because P5 is the effect and P1, P2, P3, P4, P1.1, P2.1, P3.1, P4.1 are the causes.

\[\text{12 See Chapter III, Athenian Ideology--The Life of Athens.}\]
Euripides uses a parallel structure to show how the theme of illusion functions in the traditional myth and in Euripides’ version. In the traditional myth, the theme of illusion makes no sense because it is not acceptable to the epic tradition. But in the recreated tragic world of Euripides, the alter ego of Helen functions positively because it helps Helen to regain her prestige. The result of gloss analysis applied to the theme of illusion is to show up the antitheses between the traditional myth and Euripides’ version. The antithesis creates a balance between two contrasting ideas: φαίνεσθαι–εἶναι, body–name, appearance and reality. The same fate is not applicable to Helen and Menelaus; in the traditional myth, the classical marriage is dysfunctional but in the recreated tragic world of Euripides it experiences a change (P5, P5.1) as is illustrated below by means of gloss analysis (Diagram 5.5).
The relationship between appearance and reality in classical society is close. The only reality is not the present: past and future are just as real. In the motif of love in the *Helen*, it is Menelaus who cannot meet this point at first because the only reality for him is his experience. The grammatical confusion concerns the doubleness of Helen. Euripides suggests double reality as an alternative world that reflects the multiple face of the real world. *Gloss analysis* interprets the theme of illusion and double reality as a language game. The multiplicity of this language game symbolises the multiplicity of reality. It also leads to a metaphysical structure of the world because it examines what is behind the physical world: the *alter ego* of Helen is her metaphysical image. The limits of her metaphysical image are the limits of the recreated tragic and real world in allegorical terms.

The text of the *Helen* is open to the grammar of justification, because Euripides subverts the limits of the tragic and the real world: he uses the traditional norms governing the gender relationship and he shows up the dysfunctions of the classical marital system; he also poses questions concerning the renewal of gender relationships. Euripides dissolves the philosophical confusion between name and body by successfully using grammatical fiction: the *alter ego* of Helen. Now, let us see what would happen if the theme of illusion is translated into a modern–day idiom (Table 5.2).

**THE THEME OF ILLUSION IN MODERN SOCIETY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example A</th>
<th>Example B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P7. Helen has a lover.</td>
<td>P7.1. Helen has a male friend.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P8. Helen demands a divorce.</td>
<td>P8.1. Helen is faithful to her husband.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P9. Helen is not a good wife.</td>
<td>P9.1. Helen is still a good wife.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

P10. Many modern couples may need a specialist (Clinical Psychologist).

Table 5.2
Example A corresponds to the traditional myth, where Helen falls into the bad category of unfaithful women. Example A describes the appearance of Helen (body). P6 leads to P7 because P6 is the cause and P7 is the effect. P8 leads to P9 because P8 is the cause and P9 is the effect. But P8 and P9 are also the effects of P6. P6+P7 is equivalent to P8+P9. So, a tautology (T) exists between P6, P7 and P8, P9. P6 and P7 correspond to the surface grammar but P8 and P9 correspond to the depth grammar; in modern society, sexism in language is still present: Helen is not a good wife because she distanced herself from her husband, she had a lover and finally she demanded a divorce.

Example B corresponds to the recreated tragic world of Euripides, where Helen is rehabilitated. Example B describes appearance and reality as part of the doubleness of Helen. P6.1 leads to P7.1 because P6.1 is the cause and P7.1 is the effect. P8.1 leads to P9.1 because P8.1 is the cause and P9.1 is the effect. But P8.1 and P9.1 are also the effects of P6.1. Besides, P6.1+P7.1 is equivalent to P8.1+P9.1. So, a tautology (T) exists between P6.1, P7.1 and P8.1, P9.1. P6.1 and P7.1 correspond to the surface grammar but P8.1 and P9.1 correspond to the depth grammar; P7 and P7.1 correspond to the alter ego of Helen (see Diagram 5.6). In modern society, the alter ego of Helen functions as a catalyst to dissolve the confusion between appearance and reality; nowadays, it is the second self of Helen that causes marital tension, as the modern reader may observe in reality shows on television. P10 is a conclusion regarding the gender relationships in modern society.

The second self has to do with what is called the uncontrolled side of the self and it usually corresponds to the id of Freudian psychology, as noted above\(^\text{13}\). The relationship between appearance and reality is close in modern society as well. It usually functions as an excuse for both husband and wife in order to apologise for committing adultery. In this way, male and female interpret marital dysfunction. In Example B, Helen places more emphasis on modern friendship than on traditional marriage; ultimately, her second self is the result of bad communication between husband and wife.

\(^{13}\) See Chapter IV, Table 4.1.
So, the philosophical grammar of the theme of illusion concerns the order of propositions and their function in the traditional myth and the recreated tragic world but in modern society as well. The theme of illusion as a language game describes marital tensions in a different way either in classical or in modern society, as was noted above. That is why Euripides’ works, especially the *Helen*, is still relevant: it deals with the important topic of loyalty in gender relationships (see Diagram 5.7).

The elementary propositions of the traditional myth correspond to the elementary propositions of Example A: P1 leads to P6; P2 to P7; P3 to P8 and P4 to P9. Besides, P1+P6 is equivalent to P4+P9 because P1=P6 and P4=P9. One concludes that there is a tautology (T) between P4 and P9 so that Helen is not a good exemplary female type. Similarly, the elementary propositions of the tragic world correspond to the elementary propositions of Example B: P1.1 leads to P6.1; P2.1 to P7.1; P3.1 to P8.1 and P4.1 to P9.1. Besides, P1.1+P6.1 is equivalent to P4.1+P9.1 because P1.1=P6.1 and P4.1=P9.1. So, the reader concludes that tautology (T) exists between P4.1 and P9.1 so that Helen is a good exemplary female type.

*THE ORDER OF PROPOSITIONS C1*
Euripides proposes an alternative way to interpret reality; he *gloss analyses* the phenomenon of φαίνεσθαι – εἶναι as part of the metaphysical structure of the world; this phenomenon may occur not only in philosophy but in the real world as well because philosophy is an activity associated with human nature. It must not be forgotten that this tragic poet is called the *Poet of Ancient Greek Enlightenment* and the *Philosopher of the Scene* because he critiques societal norms and also demythologises traditional standards.

**The Cubist Helen of Euripides**

In his *Helen* Euripides starts by using ordinary language, and then he progresses to metaphorical language, as was mentioned above. On the one hand, this technique allows him to describe clearly the tensions in a classical marriage. On the other hand, he gives voice to the need for social change through the mouth of his heroine, Helen, by introducing the theme of illusion in the tragic scene. His metaphorical language analyses double reality as a language game: through *gloss analysis* double reality becomes a

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14 See further Van Lennep (1949: 7) and Alexopoulou (2003: 28).
language game that transcends reality because it goes beyond the limits of the real self and the real world too.

In the Helen, the recreated tragic world of Euripides represents reality allegorically, as was indicated above; this allegory becomes a metaphysical picture of the tragic scene of Euripides. It results in a metaphysical view of the real world. There the dyad tries to interpret reality through the prism of misunderstanding in language (name–body). This is quite similar to what an analytical philosopher does by dealing with how to dissolve the pseudo–propositions.

Euripides dissolves the dysfunctions in classical marriage by placing the dyad within a language game where the elementary proposition relevant to φαίνεσθαι–εἶναι must be examined in allegorical terms. But through gloss analysis Euripides practises realism to progress to surrealism. He describes the metaphysical picture of the world by dealing with the question: what is φαίνεσθαι, what is εἶναι, and what lies between them? This main question is similar to another philosophical problem (lines: 1138–1139) posed by the author in Choral Ode A: what is god, what is not god and what lies between them?

The phenomenological similarity between these two problems is as follows: φαίνεσθαι is relevant to appearance and εἶναι is relevant to reality; god is φαίνεσθαι and εἶναι as well. So Helen’s doubleness has to do with her φαίνεσθαι and εἶναι – in other words, with her appearance and reality. Her copy (name) corresponds to φαίνεσθαι, but her true image corresponds to εἶναι (body). According to tradition, Helen was worshiped as a deity at Sparta. Her copy or epiphany (φαίνεσθαι) at Troy is likely connected with her worship. In contrast, Helen’s true εἶναι is placed in Egypt by Euripides.

The distinction between appearance and reality is obviously a philosophical problem that involves the distinction between name and body. But through gloss analysis it becomes a

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15 In Greek drama, the epiphany (appearance) of a god was common: in the Helen, the epiphany of dei ex machina, the Dioscuri, plays a major role in Helen’s regaining her good reputation.
surrealistic\(^{16}\) problem because it transcends reality by causing confusion in language between the husband and wife. For Menelaus, the pseudo–Helen was a true reason to make war at Troy. He cannot ignore it at all. Menelaus examines his problem in phenomenological terms because he believes what he experienced. He uses the sensory world to interpret reality. He cannot see beyond the senses because his mind does not help him to escape from the illusion. The problem seems to be dissolved when the messenger describes (Episode B, Scene B) how the pseudo–Helen disappeared (lines: 605–620).

This point provides the best solution for Menelaus and it opens a new window on reality. But he still cannot understand what lies between \(\phi\alpha\iota\nu\varepsilon\sigma\theta\mu\varepsilon\iota\nu\) that is the multiplicity of reality. Euripides allows his audience to interpret the doubleness of Helen as it wishes. One likely explanation is connected with the epilogue of the play (lines: 1688–1692). Helen’s second self is one of the shapes that a god has and it shows it in many ways.

The innovation of Euripides in his Helen is to create an unusual version of the traditional myth in order to show how the human mind (\(\nu\omicron\ \varsigma\)) can escape from the sensory world. He describes a metaphysical view of the real world. He philosophises about appearance and reality as part of the real world; it is not just philosophical fiction. It may be a possibility. Euripides also philosophises about the function of tradition in marriage. Through gloss analysis the theme of illusion used as a language game is made possible not only in the textual world of Euripides but in the real world as well. In this way, the Helen is still relevant today.

Euripides’ mind (\(\nu\omicron\ \varsigma\)) is concerned with what Anaxagoras, the philosopher, dealt with: the world can be deconstructed into its elements and then it can be reconstructed again without the elements losing their previous quality. This is quite similar to what happened to Helen. She has a second self that appeared at Troy and caused misfortunes. She also has a true self that has no idea of the existence of her copy. Her family was damaged by her second self. But after her recovery, her family will be united again like the elements of

\(^{16}\) Surrealism is an art movement that emphasised the importance of the dream world, influenced by the theories of Freud. See further Standard Education Corporation (1971: S–512). In this thesis, surrealism is mostly referred to philosophical fiction, namely the transcendental tragic world of Euripides.
the deconstructed world of Anaxagoras. Euripides imagines a tragic world – likely a real one, such as the philosophical world of Anaxagoras.

The tragic world of the Helen through gloss analysis speaks surrealistically to the modern reader; the problems shown allegorically by Euripides become metaphysical questions concerning modern society because they go beyond reality. So, Euripides’ philosophical fiction becomes surrealism through gloss analysis. Euripides’ tragic world becomes gloss analytical because it shows the metaphysical structure of the textual and probably the real world as well. This conclusion leads to a surrealist perspective that investigates the philosophical problems as being part of the real–non–real world.

Besides, the grammar of justification results in the surrealistic perspective: the justified Helen is a character that emerges through the theme of illusion. This language game serves to justify Helen by showing the function of the traditional rules governing the dyadic relationship. Through gloss analysis, Helen is a surrealistic female symbol who struggles for her survival, and she is presented as someone who used to live in the shadow of her husband. Ultimately, a justification results from the recreated tragic world of Euripides but surrealism comes from his gloss analytical deconstructed world. The grammar of justification consists of elementary propositions, as was shown above, which function differently in the traditional myth and Euripides’ version but similarly to modern society (see Diagram 5.5, Diagram 5.6 and Diagram 5.7).

Actually, the grammar of justification signifies the beginning of Euripides’ surrealism. His Helen lies between drama and comedy, real and non–real, realism and surrealism. Euripides is a surrealistic author and his Helen introduces the reader to his tragic world. The surrealism of this play lies beyond the truth and the limits of the self. The doubleness of Helen does not sound strange to modern ears. Today, the multiplicity of reality is a main topic of modern art – an expression of real and non–real in the art movement of cubism. The Helen is a product of the 5th century B. C., but through gloss analysis it can
be illustrated as a product of modern Cubism\textsuperscript{17}. Indeed, it is a surrealistic manifestation against the sensory world (see Diagram 5.8).

\textit{THE CUBIST HELEN}

Through \textit{gloss analysis} the epic Helen is represented by a figure of circles, while the Helen of Euripides is represented by a figure of squares. The two parallel diagonal lines symbolise the limits of the self and the limits of the world as well. This is the contact area between Euripides and Wittgenstein. The attached square at right represents how \textit{gloss analysis} works. The theme of illusion is symbolised by a range of different circles; illusion is a circle in which some people are enclosed, like Menelaus. Logic is a square that reaffirms tradition through arrows.

Through \textit{gloss analysis} the recreated tragic world of Euripides is represented as a cubist world by big and small squares, where the true image of Helen looks like an analytical proposition. She is all logic: faithful and virtuous. The \textit{status quo} is reaffirmed by Euripides, but special emphasis is placed on the existence of the non–real world. There

\textsuperscript{17} Cubism is a modern movement in painting generally influenced by the principles of surrealism. According to the cubist manner, nature is composed of cones, cubes and spheres, which represent reality and emotions. On cubism and its founders, see Standard Education Corporation (1971: C–648) and also Ashton (1972: 59–63).
the *alter ego* of Helen is of major importance. The traditional tragic world loses its balance by the function of P1.1. Through *gloss analysis* this proposition makes Euripides’ version look totally different and his heroes unfamiliar to the traditional tragic world. The *gloss analytical Helen* of Euripides becomes a cubist product of multiple realities which represents the enigma of human nature.
CHAPTER VI

THE MOTIF OF LOVE IN THE *ALCESTIS* OF EURIPIDES

From Tradition to Literary Text: The Image of Alcestis

The relationship between husband and wife is the main concern of one of the most remarkable plays of Euripides, the *Alcestis*. This is a short play on the theme of a deserved rescue from death. It was performed in the place of the satyr drama, but it is indeed very different from it: it is a tragedy with a happy ending. The *Alcestis* is the oldest surviving play (438 B.C. second prize) of the tragic poet and also the first of his experiments with the tragic myths.

We cannot be sure whether the poet invented the plot himself or took it from some predecessor; Euripides’ possible literary source is Phrinichus’ *Alcestis*\(^1\). According to Murray (1929: ix), the *Alcestis* of Euripides is a clear instance of a pro–satiric tradition; it has a regular saga plot and one character straight from the Satyr world, Heracles. In addition, the theme of the loving wife substituting herself to her husband who is about to die belongs to old folk tales. Today, various versions still circulate in certain Greek–speaking parts of southern Russia\(^2\).

The characters of the play are as follows:

- **Apollo** the god of music and light.
- **Death**
- **Leader of the Chorus**
- **Chorus** of men of Pherae.
- **A female servant**
- **Alcestis** queen of Pherae (wife of Admetus).

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\(^{1}\) The only remaining fragment refers to the single wrestle between Heracles and Death; it is quite possible that the character of Death was an invention of Phrinichus, and that Euripides to a certain degree depended on it (Van Lennep, 1949: 6–7).

\(^{2}\) The tradition of the folk tale tells us about a man who must die suddenly, and is abandoned by his relatives and friends; he is then unexpectedly saved by the young bride. See further Van Lennep (1949: 5–7).
Admetus  
king of Pherae (husband of Alcestis).

Eumelos  
son of Admetus and Alcestis.

Daughter of Admetus and Alcestis (non speaking character).

Heracles  
the mythic hero.

Pheres  
father of Admetus.

A male servant

I will deal with the main male and female characters – Admetus and Alcestis – in order to explain the motif of love in the *Alcestis*. I will also provide detail about the second male character – Death – that is involved in the motif of love. I intend to analyse Admetus’ and Alcestis’ actions according to Freud’s personality system, as was done in the *Helen* above.

Euripides deals with the sacrificial death of Alcestis but he does not retell the traditional myth. The juxtaposition of life and death is of major importance in Euripides’ version of the *Alcestis*; the theme of restoration results in a happy finale. This finale makes the play quite extraordinary for the modern reader (Greenwood, 1953: 12–13). Despite the supernatural element (the event of a female being rescued falls strangely on modern ears), the play still speaks strongly about the relative value of life, whether the life of a male is worth more than that of a female. The story runs as follows:

Admetus, the king of Pherae, has been condemned by fate to die. Apollo, in return for having being treated kindly by Admetus³, decrees that Admetus can be substituted by someone else to die in his place⁴. His aged parents refuse, so his wife, Alcestis, offers to do so (*Prologue, Scene A*). The refusal of the parents is placed in the mythical past; so is Alcestis’ decision. The play opens and closes on the prescribed day of the queen’s funeral.

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³ According to mythology, Apollo was exiled from Olympus because his father, Zeus, was unhappy with him; Asclepius, Apollo’s son, used to heal people: sometimes either to extend their life or resurrect them against Zeus’ will. That is why Zeus decided to kill Asclepius by sending him a bolt of lighting. In revenge, Apollo killed the Cyclops who produced this lighting. Furthermore, Apollo was punished by losing his divine position. He was also sent to Admetus’ palace to serve the king as a slave. See further Eleftheroudakis (1971: 226).

⁴ As regards the phenomenon of death, the idea of substitution was not unfamiliar to the ancient Greeks. Compare the *Andromache* (lines: 410) and the *Phoinissae* (lines: 968–969) of Euripides.
The traditional myth stops here⁵. But Euripides develops the story based on the following version: Heracles, on his way to Thrace, comes to the palace of Admetus asking hospitality, just in time (Episode B, Scene A). When Heracles hears from the leader of the Chorus how the matters are with the family, he decides to rescue Alcestis for Admetus’ sake (Episode C, Scene B). So, in return for hospitable treatment, he wrestles and overcomes Death (Outcome) – who comes as a character in the play to fetch his victim. He is visible only to Apollo, the god, and to his victim, Alcestis, but to nobody else. The traditional myth is represented in a Roman sarcophagus⁶ from the Villa Albani (see Figure 8a). The structure of Euripides’ Alcestis (Diagram 6.1) is as follows:

**STRUCTURE OF THE ALCESTIS OF EURIPIDES**

![Diagram of the structure of Alcestis by Euripides]

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⁵ Indeed, the traditional myth seems to stop at Alcestis’ death, because it is reported that Alcestis voluntarily died in her husband’s place. According to Eleftheroudakis (1971: 226, 795), the finale of this myth was changed in two versions, likely at a later stage: the first version is that, when Alcestis descended into the underworld, Persephone did not accept her to stay in the land of the dead because she did not agree with her sacrifice and then she let her go back to life again (see Figure 8a); the second version has two different endings: firstly, Heracles descended into the underworld to restore Alcestis (see Figure 8b: Heracles is being helped by Hermes, the soul-transporter, to restore Alcestis), and secondly, Heracles wrestled Death at the grave of Alcestis – this ending is used by Euripides probably based upon the Alcestis of Phrinichus, as was noted above.

⁶ The traditional myth of Alcestis is represented in a sarcophagus from the Villa Albani in ancient Pompeii. See further Eletheroudakis (1971: 226).
Diagram 6.1

The *Alcestis* expresses a typical view of reality in Euripides. Traditionally, the *peripeteia* (περιπέτεια) is good fortune reversed\(^7\). In this play, Euripides shows humans trying to live in a world ruled by unexpected events, e.g. commands of fate, destruction, despair and catastrophe. On the one hand, Alcestis’ self-sacrifice is regarded as a love-sacrifice ruled by the female standards of morality: faithfulness, honour, virtue and devotion to her husband. On the other, Alcestis buys back her husband from Death, as Burnett (1973: 26) correctly notes.

Euripides uses the traditional image of Alcestis as a starting point to describe the problems of married life. For him, the classical society is sick, and seeks a victim to suffer for its ideals (*Choral Ode A*) so that it will have a new subject for its songs of virtue (lines: 447–456). His Alcestis is, like all the other sacrificial victims\(^8\) young and willing.

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\(^7\) In contrast, see the *Hecuba* of Euripides (lines: 441–443), where Polyxena plays the role of the victim being sacrificed, a truly tragic action.

\(^8\) Compare Iphigenia in the *Iphigenia at Aulis* (lines: 28–36), Polyxena in the *Hecuba*. (lines: 416–420) of Euripides, and Antigone in the *Antigone* of Sophocles (lines: 36–45).
to die (Episode A, Scene A). She also laments mournfully her own death (lines: 244–245).

Admetus in the traditional pattern of myth expects everyone, including his wife to die for him, but Euripides does not agree with this. He changes the result of the usual myth by restoring Alcestis. Euripides’ humanity does not accept her paradoxical death; therefore, he reverses the fortune in a more paradoxical way in order to justify her as a wife who deserves the best (Outcome). Euripides recreates the traditional image of Alcestis in order to highlight her heroic sacrifice. This idea is contrasted with the traditional ethic code in which a woman should be a perfect wife and mother but also willing to die for her husband—κύριος (Episode A, Scene B) which is a supreme proof of her dedicated love to her husband (lines: 150–156). At his point, Euripides breaks this standard cliché about genders, and he proffers a better version: the woman who sacrifices her life for her family deserves reward (Episode C, Scene A), while she is alive (line: 728), and she does not need a glorious fame after her death (Outcome).

Euripides’ Alcestis is a true tragic wife: she is a priori not responsible for the damage to her family—οἶκος. During her last moments, she treats her husband in a very similar way to the way he had treated her before her fatal decision: she makes him promise not to remarry (Episode A, Scene A), because their children may suffer from an enemy—stepmother (lines: 315–337). Indeed, it seems that she wants her marriage to continue after death⁹. At a later stage (Episode C, Scene C), Admetus realises that his own life is not worth living any more (lines: 935–961); he experiences what Jung (1973: 3–5), the modern psychologist, once said about males who lives without females: without the anima, the animus is incomplete.

The new image of Alcestis based on the theme of restoration makes this play unusual; Heracles plays the role of superman who dares to bring back Alcestis. In this way, husband and wife come back into their family—οἶκος each aware of this renaissance.

⁹ At this point Burnett’s opinion about an immortal marriage, a house empty of joy for Admetus and a life that is like a death for him is not correct (Burnett, 1973: 36–37), because Alcestis simply wishes an equal sacrifice and Admetus promises her to do so (lines: 347–397).
According to mythology, two occasions are reported similar to Alcestis: Semele was brought back from death (Burnett, 1973: 45) and Eurydice as well (Dooley, 1997: 31–41). Alcestis and Admetus act exactly opposite to the mythical pair, Orpheus and Eurydice. Admetus refuses to die and allows his wife to substitute for him. Eurydice died and Orpheus descends into the underworld to bring his wife back to life using his lyre.

The Motif of Love

The motif of love consists of Alcestis’ ethos and Admetus’ ethos as well. The features of Alcestis’ ethos are self–sacrifice and honour–virtue (spiritual elements) as they are shown in Diagram 6.2. Alcestis is the archetypical image of the perfect wife in classical society. In the drama, she is the main character who sacrifices herself for her husband, as was mentioned above. She functions as a tragic character who will be remembered for her virtue (Parodus, Scene A).

**ALCESTIS’ ETHOS**

![Diagram 6.2](image_url)

*Diagram 6.2*
The Chorus describes the character of Alcestis following the royal protocol (lines: 81–85, 110). First, her title is given (queen – βασίλειαν), then her name (Alcestis), and finally her characterisation (best – ἀρίστη). The feature of honour and reputation are stressed here:

81  «... βασίλειαν πενθεν ν
       Ἀλκηστις ... μο π σ τ' ρ στη
       δ ξασα γυν πόσιν...».

(«... one should mourn her, the queen ...
   Alcestis ... the best of wives to her husband –
   who honoured him...»).

The female servant confirms (Parodus, Scene B) the Chorus’ above statement about the mistress’s self-sacrifice (lines: 150–157). Euripides makes the servant’s answer ambiguous when the situation is dramatic: she tells the Chorus that Alcestis is alive and dead at the same time – that she is between life and death10. Particular emphasis is placed on the feature of Alcestis’ farewell to her marriage bed 11. The servant describes her final words spoken to her bed concerning her married life; the bed becomes a symbol of her faithful marriage to her husband. However, she is the one that is dispensable. Alcestis,

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10 The fatal day has been fixed in the past, maybe several years after the marriage of Admetus and Alcestis. Van Lennep (1949: 8) concludes this because Alcestis had ample time to make a decision about her children’s future. For a different view, see Eleftheroudakis (1971: 226), who states that Admetus was condemned to death, because on the day of his wedding, Admetus neglected to sacrifice to Diana – that is why the wedding room was full of dragons. Clearly, this meant that Admetus should die, but Apollo saved him by making this deal with the Fates. This is not the first time that Apollo helped Admetus. Mythology reports how Apollo assisted Admetus to marry Alcestis: Alcestis’ father, Pelias, announced that he would allow Admetus to marry Alcestis only in the event he would be able to match a lion and a wild pig to draw a chariot. Apollo performed this great task for Admetus’ sake by driving the chariot, while Admetus was seated next to him. This scene is represented in the throne of Amilkeos in ancient Olympia. See also Tzortzoylou (1988: 52).

11 For a woman, the marriage bed is a symbol of her virginity and loyalty. See the Odyssey (23: 210–231), the recognition scene between Odysseus and Penelope, how much importance is given by Odysseus to his marriage bed. He mentions that one of the bed’s legs is made from an olive tree and that it is still standing firm – a sign of faithfulness.
therefore, in an impressive way, speaks about her sacrifice\textsuperscript{12} as an extra virtue (lines: 177–191).

177 «... Ω λ κτρον ... ο γ ρ χθα ρω σ’...  
κα π σιν θν ισκω... λλη τις γυν κεκτ σεται,  
σ φρων μ ν ο κ ν μ λλον, ε τυχ ζ δ’ σως ...».  

(«... My marriage bed ... I do not hate you  
for my husband I now die ... some other woman will possess you  
luckier perhaps than I but not more virtuous ...»).

Alcestis expresses her desperation by weeping copiously on her bed; she is bidding farewell to life. The whole family is present; the domestic staff is present as well. When Alcestis enters the stage she is supported by Admetus and followed by her children (Episode A, Scene A). The domestic staff carries a couch which is placed on stage. Alcestis is a dying woman: she turns back and falls down haunted by terrible visions of the underworld (lines: 252–264).

She salutes the sunlight\textsuperscript{13} – the joy of life – and the household as a unit for the last time before she is taken by Death (lines: 243–245). She is a lonely woman in her dying hour

\textsuperscript{12} According to Homer (the \textit{Iliad}, 2: 715), in the underworld Alcestis enjoyed a very good position among other virtuous women, like Penelope. Apart from her sacrifice, ancient Greek mythology reports another virtue of Alcestis: she is the only one who did not participate in her father’s murder; all her sisters were persuaded by Medea to kill their father, Pelias. See also Eleftheroudakis (1971: 795). Generally speaking – as regards the value of female virtues – in classical society, it was unfamiliar for a woman to speak aloud about her virtue; she was characterised only by the others: the less she was spoken about among men the better for her (Van Lennep, 1949: 20). Euripides allows Alcestis to represent herself differently.

\textsuperscript{13} For the ancient Greeks, the significance of the sunlight symbolises the light of life itself; they believed that the upper world was the world of light, joy and happiness, while the underworld was a palace of darkness, misery and unhappiness, e.g. Sisyphus’ punishment. This belief survived in the folk tales: the dead used to drink the water of forgetfulness in order to forget the upper world. Achilles, the epic hero, told Odysseus during his descent to Hades that he wished to have been a slave in the upper world instead of being a king of the dead (\textit{Odyssey} 11: 550–554). Actually, the distinction between Christian afterlife world

139
Admetus is unable to encourage her even though he makes some rhetorical efforts to support her (lines: 246–247, 258–259, 275–279). At this stage, Death is visible only to his victim whose words approach self-pity (lines: 252–257, 258–263).

252 «... ῥεκφσ ν' λ' μναι
νεκ ων δ' πορθμε ζ
δή καλε ...
γει μ' ...
ο αν δ' ν' δειλαιωτ τα προβα νω...».

(«... I see ... a boat in the lake
and the Ferryman of the dead ...
calls me now
... someone is taking me ...
Ah, what a journey it is that I am making ...»).

Alcestis, having recovered momentarily, states her last will. For the reader, this is an astonishingly well-constructed praise of herself; she delivers her own laudatio. It seems to have been prepared a long time ago. She first sums up the history of her sacrifice, the reason for it and the conditions (lines: 280–299). She blames Admetus’ parents for their refusal to substitute for him. In her opinion, they are both old enough and they have little to expect from life. So, their refusal means that their grandchildren will be orphans because their mother will die. She then states what she wants in return for her sacrifice and why (lines: 300–319). She wants to secure their children’s future: she wishes a good wife for their son and a good marriage for their daughter. She makes Admetus promise her that he will not remarry because in such case their children may suffer from a bad stepmother, as was noted above – especially the girl whose good reputation may be destroyed by a hostile second wife (lines: 310–325).

and ancient Hades is obvious: for the ancient Greeks, heaven is the upper world, a place of light and justice, while Hades is the underworld – a place similar to the Christian afterlife world (heaven and hell). For the Christians, the world of the living is a world of temptations, good and evil. See further Kriaris (1971: 319) and Politis (1975: 219).
Finally, she announces that the end is coming (lines: 385, 387, 389, 391–393) and she restates all the above mentioned (lines: 371–373). She wants her husband to be father and mother to their children at the same time (lines: 377); their children are witnesses of this dialogue between their parents. The Chorus then announces (Episode A, Scene B) that the queen is finished (lines: 395). Indeed, the sacrificial death of Alcestis takes place on stage\textsuperscript{14}. This is where the Alcestis of Euripides is different from other sacrificial tragedies, such as the Iphigenia in Aulis, Antigone, and Hecuba, as these tragic heroines die off stage.

The modern reader could reject Alcestis’ speech by saying that Alcestis does not love Admetus passionately. At this stage, she speaks only about herself and about her children, but not a word about the good qualities of her husband. Actually, we must consider that a classical marriage, as indicated above\textsuperscript{15} is not a loving affair but the result of a bargaining process between the husband and the father’s bride. Under these circumstances, it is likely that neither the exchanged wife was in love with her future husband, nor the bridegroom.

Euripides shows up the problems in this marital system. He does portray Alcestis as a traditionally perfect wife but he allows her to speak about her decision: actually, she was forced to make this decision by the cultural standards of morality\textsuperscript{16}. In other words, if she had she would have been accused of being a bad wife; her life would have been a nightmare. She would have a bad reputation and she would be prevented from attending the religious festivals. Therefore, Alcestis does not speak the language of love because Admetus did not speak the language of love as well but instead he accepted his wife’s

\textsuperscript{14} In ancient Greek drama a violent scene, such as death, suicide or murder, takes place off stage. But Alcestis’ death and funeral is seen where other such events are only described usually by a messenger or a second character – this is an innovation of Euripides. The presence of a dead body would be pollution. That was why Apollo left the stage as soon as Death comes to fetch Alcestis (line: 70). See, the Ajax (lines: 899–900), the Oedipus the King (lines: 1853–1891) of Sophocles and the Hecuba (lines: 655–600) of Euripides.

\textsuperscript{15} See, Chapter III, Woman and Marriage: A Guided Story.

\textsuperscript{16} According to the classical ideology, the life of the wife had less value than the life of the husband. Vellacott (1975: 100–105) talks about a dislocation of values in the Athenian society in which a husband had to organise the world for his own purposes; in this male world a woman’s life was a reasonable price for the man’s life.
sacrifice: he is not motivated by true love. The death of Admetus would mean the end of the royal house; it is not only about personal survival but about the survival of the whole family—οἶκος. In contrast, Alcestis’ death would mean nothing for the maintenance of the dynasty because she has already given birth to Admetus’ male offspring (Hadley, 1912: 62, 129–130).

Alcestis’ corpse must be prepared for the funeral. As soon as she leaves the stage, the Chorus (Choral Ode A) praises her virtue (lines: 440–465) and her self–sacrifice again (lines: 470–475). Then, Heracles comes on stage (Episode B, Scene A, B) as an unexpected guest to ask for hospitality (lines: 540–544). When Pheres, Admetus’ father, appears on stage (Episode C, Scene A), he first reaffirms what the Chorus stated above for Alcestis (line: 615, 623–624). But when the outburst between him and his son occurs, Pheres remarks that Alcestis did a foolish act (line: 728–733) because according to him we have to be content with one life and should not ask for a second, supplementary one (line: 712). This cynical characterisation φρονα of Alcestis’ ethos is the only negative in the whole play that calls upon the reader to rethink her decision:

728 «... δ’ο θανει τ’ νδ’ ημε τη τε φρονα...».

(«... she was not shameless. What she lacked was sense ...»).

Moreover, when Alcestis’ funeral takes place – off stage – the leader of the Chorus continues to praise her mistress’ virtue (Episode C, Scene A) by stressing her brave decision (lines: 742–746). Similarly, the Chorus sings a hymn to Alcestis (Choral Ode C) who will be honoured as she deserves: like a deity (lines: 990–1005). So, the queen, Alcestis, will be an object of worship due to her sacrifice, just exactly as happened to Helen but for reasons of loyalty.

991 «... φλα μυ τ’ ν μεθυ μυ ν,
φ λα δ’ θανο σ’ τ’ σται...
ν ν δ’ στι μ καιρα δα μον ...».

(«... she was loved when she was with us

142
she will be loved still in death ...
now she is a blessed divinity...»).

At this point, Alcestis is no longer a tragic character but a purified saint. When Heracles, comes back on stage with Alcestis (Outcome) whose face is veiled, a miracle takes place: a human being returns from the grave. In Euripides’ day, the idea of Alcestis canonisation was quite natural to those who had loved and admired her.

Admetus’ ethos consists of cowardice–egotism, honesty–loyalty and hospitality, as the following diagram shows (Diagram 6.3). Euripides represents him as a typical husband of classical society: he escapes death at the price of his wife’s life. But in this way, he works his own catastrophe (Episode C, Scene C) as he realises it in the end of the play (lines: 935–961) according to Blaiklock (1952: 4–5). Admetus becomes human when he gradually realises that his wife, Alcestis, means more to him than all the moral standards, than life itself. Traditionally, women were dispensable in the life of a hero, such as Tekmessa was to Ajax. But in the Alcestis, the peripeteia is a good lesson for the tragic pair because it touches a universal truth about gender relationships as they are conceived by a modern mind: a marriage is a συζυγία, which means that a husband and a wife must be in cooperation in order to work through the problems of their married life. In other words, if only one of them, like Alcestis, raises the problems herself, then this συζυγία is totally one–sided and unbalanced.
At the beginning of the play, Admetus does not appreciate the virtues of his wife. When he therefore allows her to sacrifice her own life for him, he has to take responsibility for the consequences that follow. By attempting to escape his destiny, he creates a whole fortune for himself. In the **Prologue** (lines: 11–14) Apollo explains how he managed to extend Admetus’ life: he intoxicated the fates ('Moipai) and made them promise to extend the life span of the king if he could find someone to die in his place\(^\text{17}\). Actually, he is a selfish and a weak husband because he accepts not only this paradoxical contract with the fates but also his wife’s last will, as was shown above. According to Wilamowitz (1922: 88–93), Admetus would not be able to fulfil these undertakings because he is rather egocentric and a blusterer. Besides, he paradoxically promises to have a statue made of her,\(^\text{18}\) to call it by her name, and lie in bed with it (lines: 348–353) – an unbalanced and neurotic way of honouring his wife (**Episode A, Scene A**).

\[^{17}\text{Euripides does not say how long Admetus will live after the contract with the Fates. For Van Lennep (1949: 51, note 13) another period of as many years as he had already lived would be accorded to him; or half of the years, which was the lot of his wife, were to be added to Admetus’ life.}\]

\[^{18}\text{This strange idea of the statue was taken over by Euripides maybe from Athenaios, an ancient author. See Van Lennep (1949, 84).}\]
Admetus realises gradually the cost of losing his wife (lines: 278–279, 430–341). This is why he comes up with the idea that her statue would console him. When he has a vision of her in dream (lines: 353–355) and experiences a desire to share the same coffin with Alcestis, he starts to realise the horrible effects of her death on his own life (lines: 365–368). Without her he is like a living corpse. Euripides emphasises Admetus’ collapse by portraying him as weak and miserable, anything but a king. Admetus asks for forgiveness, not while Alcestis is still alive but only after her death. By asking for forgiveness, pity and fear are evoked in the audience. This is typical of all tragic heroes and prepares the audience for a catharsis of these emotions.

The ultimate price for his exchange is paid in Episode A, Scene A, B: sorrow and misery (lines: 274–278, 336, 384–386, 394, 405). Admetus is a pitiful man; he wishes that he could descend to the underworld like Orpheus. Of course, he realises that this is impossible, and he asks his wife to wait for him till he eventually dies. This is somewhat ironical, as he thwarted fate. But this conception adds a comical touch because his life did not follow the usual route and he allowed his wife to die first (lines: 356–364). The reader cannot be persuaded by his efforts to lament Alcestis. His desire to accompany Alcestis on her last journey is ridiculous when one thinks of the events that preceded the funeral:

278 «... σο γροφτιμνηζο κ τε νε τν ...
σν γροφλι αν σεβ μεσθα ...».

(«... for if you are gone I live no more ... your love we hold in reverence ...»).

When Heracles appears on stage (Episode B, Scene B) Admetus does not hesitate to offer him hospitality without informing him about the present situation; he prefers to be ambiguous (lines: 519–527). He does not tell him specifically that his wife died, mentioning only an orphaned woman (lines: 531–535, 541). Indeed, it is curious that Heracles, knowing that Alcestis promised to die in Admetus’ stead, does not find out the truth at once (line: 524). The necessity of Heracles remaining in ignorance has more to do
with Admetus’ fear of public opinion than with the hospitality code (Episode C, Scene C) as it is expressed by him later (lines: 935–961).

956 «... ψυχ ἀποφευγεν Αἰδην κε ν ἐναι δοκε; στυγε δὲ το ζεκ νταις ἄ τς ὀ λων θανε ν...».

(«... in cowardice he escaped death
can we think him a man
he hates his parents though he himself
is unwilling to die »).

Then old Pheres, carrying the funeral gifts, appears on stage to tell some home–truths (Episode C, Scene A). Admetus gets upset with his father by blaming him for his refusal (lines: 635–639, 658–659). He declares that his father does not deserve respect; he will be childless now as Admetus will disown him as parent (lines: 655–660, 735). He recognises his wife’s sacrifice as the bravest act she has done (lines: 644–647). He stresses the idea of blood relationship (his parents’ refusal) in contrast to the relationship of an kin in low (Alcestis’ decision). Admetus ends his blame by declaring a universal truth (lines: 669–672) concerning old age19.

669 «... μ τιν ρ ο γ ροντες ε χονται θανε ν...
ν δ' γγ ζ ληπ θ νατος,
o δε ς βο λεται θν ισκειν...».

(«... old men pray for death insincerely ...
for once death comes near,
none of them wishes to die... »).

Pheres’ speech is a masterpiece of realism: he holds the view that we must live our own lives (lines: 690–691, 712). He comes to the point of accusing his son of being coward

19 Aristotle (Rhetorics II, 13) wrote about old age that they are selfish and stubborn more than they should be: for this is a kind of smallness of soul.
because he escaped his destiny (694–701). Pheres opposes his son openly and he leaves the stage (lines: 730–733) by charging him with the wilful murder of Alcestis.  

730  «... θεὶς δ’ α τ ζ ν α τ ζ φονε ζ ...».

(<«... but you will bury her being yourself her murderer ...»)).

When Admetus comes back from his wife’s burial (Episode C, Scene C) he is a changed man: he is totally broken. He does not say much, but enough to convey this (lines: 939–940). He has learnt his lesson – not completely, perhaps, but to that degree that most humans can learn such lessons (Murray, 1929: xii). Admetus echoes the essential statement of his father because he begins to realise his moral weakness. The reader can feel pity for him; he is therefore, a humiliated king. Admetus recognises his basic mistake and the source of his misfortune as well by lamenting the ruin of his family—οἶκος.

939  «... γ δ’, νο χρ ν ζ, παρε ζ τ μ ρσιμον λυπρ ν δι ξο β οτον ρτι μανθ νω...».

(<«... But I, who ought not to be be alive and have escaped my fate shall now live out of my life in pain; now I understand...»)).

Euripides goes against tradition and has his own reasons for not making Admetus an ideal husband. He depicts him as a hospitable, but also as a pitiful, miserable and fundamentally selfish man, but mostly as a king who is in a continuous process of self–discovery and self–judgment (lines: 895–902). He was blind once but the veil is removed from his eyes as soon as the above–mentioned quarrel between him and his father finishes. In this way, Euripides saves his hero’s character.

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20 In this case, according to Attic law, if Alcestis had indeed been murdered by Admetus, her next–of–kin, e. g. her brother, could take proceedings against Admetus. See Van Lennep (1949, 118).

21 Tradition focuses on the powerful and military virtues of Admetus. According to mythology, Admetus was an excellent warrior and a glorious king: he took part in the Argos’ crew, under the leadership of Jason in order to get the golden fleece as well as participating in hunting (a kind of safari) in order to kill the wild pig of Calidonia. See further Eleftheroudakis (1971: 226).
He now feels guilty of Alcestis’ premature death; his fear of public opinion, indicated above (lines: 950–955), is well founded. He thinks about his changed social position and his reputation, too. Now, he is afraid of other women’s criticism where he would meet them, e. g. at a wedding ceremony or a public festival where women show themselves. Admetus’ shyness and egotism disappear (Outcome), while he asks for mercy (line: 1048). Euripides believes in a divine kind of mercy, and that is why he wants a happy ending to this story.

Heracles is the person who characterises Admetus as hospitable and fair because he treated him kindly (lines: 830, 1011–1013, 1146). The Chorus criticises Admetus for being hospitable on the day of the queen’s burial (lines: 551–552). The hospitality code plays a major role in Alcestis’ restoration as the following subparagraph shows.

In the Alcestis, the second main male part is Death. He is Admetus’ antagonist but the only man capable of beating him is Heracles. Death arrives as a character carrying a sword to take away Alcestis (Prologue, Scene B). He is a terrifying figure on the tragic stage because he is the servant of Hades, the king of underworld, who sent him to fetch the appointed victim. He plays the role of the sacrificer. One may imagine him as a skeleton or as a supernatural abominable creature.

A dialogue filled with dark humour follows between Apollo and Death. As soon as death sees Apollo, he is angry because he feels that the god is going to deprive him of his rights (lines: 32–36). Apollo, after relating the events preceding the play, asks him a favour: to let Alcestis live to an old age (lines: 50, 52). He pretends not to understand why Apollo asks him this favour (lines: 45, 47, 53, 61). Death says that he takes special delight in carrying away young people; this is a general belief as it makes people fear him (line: 55). He refuses to postpone Alcestis’ death and he finally declares that he must begin the sacrifice by using his sword to cut her hair. This is the first step for a sacrificial death (lines: 72–76).

22 See below, The Theme of Restoration.

23 Alcestis is not dying from a disease but she is mysteriously being drawn away by the power of Death. Indeed, hair–offerings are still a frequent phenomenon among modern Greeks. They are made during times
Death appears in the Prologue, Scene A, B (lines: 24–76); he is visible to Apollo and of course the audience. Next, he appears in the death scene (Episode A, Scene A) – where he is visible only to Alcestis (lines: 252–257, 258–263) and finally in the last scene (Outcome) – where Heracles describes in brief his wrestle with Death (lines: 1140, 1142). In between, Death does not appear visibly because Euripides does not use Death; the audience does not know where he goes.

In the Prologue, the prince of darkness walks on stage like a living man. The priest of the dead is furious (line: 25). He enters the palace in silence creating a grotesque atmosphere in order to separate the pair because Admetus’ unusual contract has expired24. Death is represented as a ferryman using a punting pole to push his boat away from the shore (Episode A, Scene A). Alcestis in her agony describes Death as a disgusting creature with wings (lines: 253–263). For the ancient Greeks, the last journey was a journey of descent25. In the final scene (Outcome) Death is absent; Heracles describes in brief how

of mourning or during a baby’s baptism (personal experience). In Alcestis’ case, the hair–offering symbolises the life–offering: the hair of a living being is the main part of its vital force (Van Lennep, 1949: 90). According to Wolmarans (personal communication), Alcestis is not under the authority of her husband any more. As soon as Alcestis dies, Admetus cuts his hair because he wants to keep her memory vivid (line: 512).

24 The portrait of Death in Hesiod’s Theogony (764–766) is similar to Euripides’: Death is described as an enemy not only of humans but of the Gods as well (Van Lennep, 1949: 53).

25 According to ancient Greek mythology, the underworld – the place of the dead – was ruled over by Pluton, the king. In front of the gate was a three–headed dog with a tail like a dragon’s, Cerberus. Death, or Charon, was an old man with wild white hair and eyes made of fire. In order to take the dead safely across the river Acheron, the surface of which was burning, he demanded money for the passage (Dooley, 1997: 37–42). The custom of fees paid on the day the dead is buried survives today, mostly in central and northern Greece: a corpse lying in the coffin has money in his pocket (personal experience). In folk songs, Death is represented as a horse–rider dressed in black; he looks like a beast and he has sparkling eyes (Gregoriades, 1996: 330). In Christian tradition, Death is represented as the angel, Michael, who holds a sword. A living person was not allowed to enter the underworld; only the mythic Orpheus descended there to bring back to
Death is beaten by him so that the reader has a little knowledge about this supernatural wrestling match.

In Freudian terms, Alcestis’ and Admetus’ characters may be represented as in Table 6.1. The mythic Alcestis acts according to the dictates of the superego because she was motivated by the traditional female standards of morality. The Alcestis of Euripides acts in the same way. But the distinction between the mythic Alcestis and the tragic one reflects justice: the mythic Alcestis died undeservedly but the tragic one is rescued and restored. She deserved a better treatment. That is why Euripides rehabilitated her in this supernatural way. So, the three systems of personality function properly and in balance again, promising a better married life through understanding (Outcome) as Admetus finally admits (lines: 1157–1158).

The mythic Admetus reflects the ego, because he was driven by his own rationality: his life is more precious than his wife’s because he is the king and the head as well. The royal system will survive if its head survives. Besides, the Admetus of Euripides reflects the demands of the superego, because he is driven by the voice of self-judgment. He realises his mistake and he asks for mercy.

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**THE PERSONALITY SYSTEM OF FREUD APPLIED TO THE ALCESTIS OF EURIPIDES**

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<tr>
<th>Freud</th>
<th>Traditional Myth</th>
<th>Euripides’ Version</th>
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<td>life his partner, Eurydice. The ancient Greek literature contains Odysseus’ extraordinary descent as it is described by Homer in the <em>Odyssey</em>, 11 – where the dead were shadows and blood pleased them. The Cretan School of literature also has the same theme: Bergadis describes the accidental descent of his hero in his <em>Apokapos</em>. See further Gregoriades (1997: 100–102).</td>
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Alcestis’ and Admetus’ marriage was not harmonious. Both Alcestis and Admetus experienced a major trial: Alcestis by deciding to die for her husband and Admetus by realising that he made a mistake in accepting Alcestis’ sacrifice. The moral question concerning which life is more precious, according to cultural criteria, is answered by Admetus himself. A human life is always precious; generally speaking, in a harmonious marital system, the wife’s life completes the husband’s life and the husband’s life completes the wife’s life, too.

That is what Admetus finally discovers. Alcestis knew this underlying truth and tried to make Admetus aware by asking him to make an equal sacrifice, as was shown above. They both experience fear and pity before they finally reach a *catharsis*: Alcestis’ restoration is a true *catharsis* (Diagram 6.4). Admetus realises the truth that shines in the mind of Euripides. The ambiguity of this play results from the ambiguity of Admetus’ personality as it is represented by Euripides. As a matter of fact, the portrait of this pair is so true to life that the readers are afraid of recognising themselves in it. There can be no doubt that, in the *Alcestis*, Euripides shows the image of the life of royalty and the mirror of its gender relationships within a marriage.

*Cardiograph of the Alcestis*
The Theme of Restoration
Euripides uses the theme of restoration\textsuperscript{26} in order to establish the motif of love in the \textit{Alcestis}. In this way, he restructures the traditional tragic world because the mythic Alcestis is a victim of an undeserved death. But Alcestis restored is a triumphal tragic wife. For Euripides, the belief in fate is the starting point of Alcestis’ restoration. He uses Heracles, the hero, purposefully to change Alcestis’ lot. This is a rebellious act against the traditional belief in fate\textsuperscript{27}.

Euripides unites the mythic and the tragic world by using two figures: Death, a folk tale figure, as was stated above and Heracles, a mythic figure. In the \textit{Alcestis}, the poet does not use a \textit{deus ex machina} to restore Alcestis because Zeus had outlawed all possible resurrections,\textsuperscript{28} as was stated by Apollo in the \textbf{Prologue, Scene B}. He uses Heracles, the half god and half man, to play the role of a supernatural being: his mythical past charges him with dangerous labours that only a charismatic man could do\textsuperscript{29}.

\textsuperscript{26} The theme of restoration is used by Euripides for the first time in the ancient Greek drama. It is rooted in the mythic world (see above, the descent of Orpheus, Persephone and Odysseus). A folk song of the \textsuperscript{9}th century A. D., \textit{The Dead Brother’s}, treats the theme of restoration in a different way: it deals with the self–resurrection of the hero in order to bring his sister back to his birth place. His mother’s curse made him to resurrect himself, so that he keeps the promise that he made to his mother a long time before his death. See Gregoriades (2004: 24–26).

\textsuperscript{27} According to ancient Greek mythology, the Goddesses of Fate (\textit{Mοραί}) were three female figures who manufactured the destiny of a human: Clotho determined the fate, Lachesis was responsible for manipulating the luck of the human during his life–time and Atropos was responsible for the day of death. Nobody could escape from his destiny: \textit{τὸ πεπρομένο φυγεῖν δύνατον}. As a matter of fact, Admetus’ contract was against the human nature of destiny; it was an act of \textit{hybris} – and that is why he was punished by feeling guilty for Alcestis’ sacrifice. See Kynaston (1906: 37).

\textsuperscript{28} Apollo describes how he was exiled from Olympus, because his son, Asclepius, managed to heal a person who was about to die, Hypollitus (see footnote 10). See also Conacher (1984: 76).

\textsuperscript{29} Mythology charges Heracles with brave labours from the time that he was a little baby: he wrestled with two snakes and he killed them. He also descended to Hades in order to bring to Euritheas the triple–headed dog, Cerberus, who guarded the gate of the underworld. See Stefanides (1994: 24–34) and Argiroudi (2001: 74–78).
Heracles is the ideal person to rescue Alcestis (Figure 8b). He wrestles with Death\(^\text{30}\) near the grave and comes back on stage with Alcestis restored and veiled (Outcome). Heracles puts Admetus’ loyalty to Alcestis to the test. He tells him that he gained a woman as a prize and he asks him to stay at the palace (lines: 1072–1095). Admetus’ resistance (lines: 1060, 1084, 1088, 1092, 1096, 1104) shows his loyalty–forgiveness.

Then, Heracles puts an end to this test and returns Alcestis to her surprised husband who can hardly believe his eyes; the recognition scene is impressive (lines: 1118, 1123–1125). Admetus fears that he is holding a ghost instead of his true wife (line: 1127) even though he has already touched her (lines: 1117–1118). But he soon realises that the mysterious lady is Alcestis restored: probably his unconscious nature feels Alcestis there or probably Heracles, with a sudden movement of the hand, unveils Alcestis (lines: 1123–1134). Admetus thanks Zeus and Heracles for this miracle (lines: 1136–1138).

1118 «... καὶ δ’ προτε νῦ, Γοργ’ καρατών ν...».

(«... there I stretch it out, as if I were cutting off a Gorgon’s head...»).

1136 «... το μεγ’ στοῦ Ζηνς κε γεντ κε κνον,
ε δαιμον ης ...».

(«... O! noble son of mighty Zeus
may good fortune attend you...»).

According to the tradition, Alcestis is silent because a person risen from the dead cannot speak. For a period of three days after returning from Hades she will remain in quarantine before she can communicate freely with the world of the living (lines: 1143–1147). This is an artistic necessity because she has just returned from an undiscovered country from

\(^\text{30}\) In folk songs, Digenis Acritas is the Byzantine hero who wrestles with Death in a place called marble fields (μαρμαρένια αλώνια); it is mentioned that Death is beaten by him first but in this version of the supernatural wrestle, Digenis is finally taken by Death: the mountains move as they form part of this death–scene (Gregoriades, 1996: 33–331). In Christian tradition, Jesus is the only charismatic human who can heal (the paraplegic of Capernaum) or resurrect the dead (Lazarus).
where no traveller normally returns. In addition, Alcestis’ silence creates a mysterious atmosphere in which the reader can visualise the unbelievable. The play closes exactly in the same way as the Helen; actually, it is a customary Euripidean formula.

1163 «... τ ν δ’ δοκ των π ρον η ρε θε ζ ...».

(«... but a god finds a way to achieve the unexpected ...»).

The theme of restoration operates on a metaphysical level because it breaks the human law (Diagram 6.5). But miracles always happen either in tales or in real life. Alcestis is brought back to life again from the unknown land of the dead. This is against fate, as Admetus’ contract was as well. The hospitality code seems to play a major role in the theme of restoration. The famous act of hospitality is a datum of the story (Murray, 1929: xv). Heracles is motivated by Admetus’ hospitable treatment (Episode C, Scene B) to rescue Alcestis (lines: 855–860). Euripides uses an acceptable societal value like the hospitality code as a means of achieving his purpose: to resurrect Alcestis. It is a typical technique used by Euripides as part of the plot. The reversal of fortune (περιπέτεια) is based upon the idea of hospitality. As soon as Heracles discovers the whole truth, a reversal of fortune occurs, thanks to him. However, the theme of hospitality requires

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31 Similarly, the Gospel does not tell us what Lazarus said after his resurrection (947–948: 1–45).

32 Euripides occasionally uses this method of ending a play: not with a complete finish of catastrophe but with an opening of a new door (Murray, 1929: 81–82).

33 This is probably the meaning of Verall’s (1905) statement about Alcestis’ death: Alcestis had never really died. She only had a short of nervous catalepsy. See Murray’s comment on this view (1929: vii).

34 The idea of hospitality (φιλοξενία) was a respectable ethical code among the ancient Greeks; this unwritten commandment was part of the Greek culture which was protected by Zeus Xenius. See Chapter III, The Character of the Family–Οἶκος. According to Ferguson (1977: 8), in general the word xenos may correspond to stranger, foreigner, guest, host or friend. But the most appropriate in Heracles’ case is an unexpected quest. The visitor (ξένος) was treated in a respectable manner: first, he had a luxurious bath and then he was offered food and wine accompanied by music. Finally, before he left the house gifts were offered to him as a souvenir. This obligation of hospitality passed down from one generation to another. See the memorable φιλοξενία of Odysseus by the king, Alcinoos (Odyssey, 8: 70–705); in honour of Odysseus athletic games were held. Today, the idea of φιλοξενία survives in particular areas of Greece – especially in the villages – but in a totally different way: accommodation and food is offered to a visitor and under certain circumstances to a total stranger (personal experience).
firstly the moral enlightenment of Admetus and secondly the reversal of philoxenia practised by Heracles.

THE THEME OF RESTORATION

Heracles devises a plan to trap Death: as a first step, he must go to Alcestis’ grave (lines: 844–845) because he thinks he will find Death there feasting on the blood of his victim.\footnote{In the Alcestis, Death is represented as blood-drinking monster. For popular ideas on Death, see Waser (1916–1925: 481–527).} As a second step, Heracles intends to grab Death so tightly that he cannot avoid a rib pain (lines: 846–849). As a third step, in case that Heracles should not meet Death near the grave, he would descend to the underworld to bring Alcestis back to life (lines: 851–854). Then, he leaves the scene and finally (Outcome) Heracles meets Death near the grave and he wrestles with him as he first planned (line: 1142).

1142 «... τ μβον παρ' α τ ν, κ λ χου μ ρψας χερο ν...».

(«... lying in ambush hard by the tomb I caught him in my grip...»).
The problem raised here concerns Admetus’ reward: does Admetus deserve to win back Alcestis? As a result of the hospitality offered to Heracles (Episode C, Scene B), he gains grace (χάρις), as Heracles states (line: 842). This has to do with the societal rules but it should not be confused with Admetus’ inner change. Actually, Alcestis’ return is the result of Admetus’ moral development, as Euripides shows: the realisation of his weakness is his virtue. The theme of restoration is the key to understanding the drama: Admetus is rescued by Apollo. During the dramatic action he is saved from spiritual decline by Alcestis because, thanks to her, he becomes a human in the sense that ancient Greeks understood. He is a tragic man because he follows the usual pattern of a tragic hero: fall, reversal of fortune, fear–pity and catharsis.

Euripides invented the idea of Alcestis restored in order to show the reader that a marital problem has a solution if it is worked through by both partners: the husband and wife. In a marital union, the members have equal rights and obligations as well. In this way, each member must be treated by the other one in an equal and comprehensive manner. The value of life is not interchangeable, and the fates finally may not be manipulated. A human is able to change his destiny when he realises his mistakes and he fully deserves a better life, such as Admetus did.

The theme of restoration carries the impossible happy ending of a folk tale: the real world is mixed with the non–real world within a supernatural frame. Indeed, Euripides is the representative of irrationalism. The impulses of human nature and unreasonable forces,

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36 On charis and hospitality see further Scully (1973: 70–83).
38 For ancient Greeks human was νθρώπος (νω–θρώσκω), which means one who looks up. So, Alcestis’ death was not in vain because it caused Admetus’ πάθος–μάθος, as Garzya (1962: 25) correctly notes.
39 Apollo’s interference brought suffering upon the married couple, Admetus and Alcestis; Apollo foretells in the Prologue (lines: 65–69) a happy ending (Lombard, 1984: 64). This play contains a hidden criticism of the god (Kullmann, 1967: 130–135) even though Lesky (1964: 257) notes that this criticism of the god is not serious.
like *eros*, motivate the mechanism of irrationalism in Euripidean drama, as Dodds correctly states (1929: 97–104), (1951: 23–27).

Euripides applied his usual method in his *Alcestis*: first, he accepted the story as given in the tradition and then he represented it in his own way. At first glance, the seeming simplicity of the play led to the criticism that it was unsatisfactory. At second glance, this play deals with an important problem: what is the value of human life? The problems of love and marriage are a favourite topic of Euripides’ pen and his characters are subject to a psychological judgment when they are brought onto the tragic stage.
Figure 8 a. *The traditional myth of Alcestis* (Roman sarcophagus).

Scene A: *Admetus asks his father to die for him*. Scene B: *Alcestis is dying*.

Scene C: *Alcestis is restored*. In Eleftheroudakis (1971: 226).

Figure 8 b. *Hermes assists Heracles to bring Alcestis back to life*.

In Argiroudi (2001: 80).
The Female Character

The modern reader may pose the following question: why did Alcestis offer to die in place of Admetus? The answer is given by Alcestis herself (lines: 180–182, 284–286) when she speaks to her marriage–bed (Parodus, Scene B, Episode A, Scene A). Indeed, Alcestis cannot bear to fail in her duty as the perfect wife (Table 6.2). This ideal of a wife’s devotion to her husband was the general norm in classical society, as was indicated above, a wife’s life was at the service of her husband’s. A woman’s death was pitiful if she was a good wife but it was of limited importance (Vellacott, 1975: 101).

Euripides uses the contrast between altruism–egotism in order to describe what happens when someone meets the claim of others. Ancient Greek thinking about interpersonal ethics is analysed through altruism. This was an ideal that a fully human person could reach: it constituted the deepest kind of self–realisation. This way of thinking understands ethics as form of self–denial (Gill, 1996: 334–335), and is similar to the Christian sense of love. That is what Alcestis does, but she is not motivated by pure altruism, as was noted above.

Alcestis finds that she has to conform to this societal ideal even though this is not the one she sets for herself. Her tears are not for her death but for Admetus’ lack of feeling; to die for her husband is the ultimate sacrifice, but in reality she has no choice. According to Ferguson (1977: 10), this is the reason why Alcestis in her delirium speech asks him to partake in an equal share of suffering: not to remarry.

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41 For Aristotelian friendship and norms of interpersonal ethics, see Blum (1980) and Gill (1996: 346–347).
### ALCESTIS’ CHARACTER

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<tr>
<th>Greek Phrase</th>
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<th>Greek Phrase</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>βασίλεια, ἀρίστη (queen, the best of wives)</td>
<td>80–83</td>
<td>χρηστός (noble)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Lines: 110</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>μψυχός γυν (daring woman)</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>ε κλέ ς (glorious)</td>
<td>150</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ἀρίστη (the noblest woman)</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>σώφρον (virtuous)</td>
<td>182</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>σθλ. ς (noble)</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>φιλήν (beloved)</td>
<td>201</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>φιλτάταν (dearest)</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>ἀρίστη (noble)</td>
<td>241</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>τάλαινα (poor)</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>δύσδαιμον (luckless)</td>
<td>259</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ὁ κράν (loved)</td>
<td>264</td>
<td>πιστής (faithful)</td>
<td>368</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>σθλ. ς (noble)</td>
<td>418</td>
<td>ἄμείνοιν (kinder)</td>
<td>433</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ε κλέ στερον β ον (fairer repute)</td>
<td>623</td>
<td>φρονα (luck of sense)</td>
<td>728</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>σχετλία τόλμης (resolute in courage)</td>
<td>741</td>
<td>δέσποιναν (mistress)</td>
<td>762</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>γενναία—ρίστη (generous, the best)</td>
<td>742</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>γυν θυρα ς (woman with no relation)</td>
<td>805</td>
<td>ρίστον σύζιγες (both nobly born become man and wife)</td>
<td>921</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ε τυχέστερον (happier)</td>
<td>935</td>
<td>φιλα-γενναίοτάτα (loved, noblest)</td>
<td>991–994</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>μάκαιρα δαίμον πότνις (blessed divinity)</td>
<td>1003–1004</td>
<td>ἀξία σέβειν (deserves my)</td>
<td>1060</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Alcestis is a drama about a good wife who gave her life for her husband, and she was prepared to do this. Alcestis speaks on behalf of all the women who are forced by societal values to sacrifice themselves for their family. So, she fully deserves the epithet ἄριστη (the best of the wives). In Alcestis’ case, she assigned all blame (Episode A, Scene B) to the selfishness of Pheres and his wife as was mentioned above (lines: 290–297). She also thinks that a god may be responsible for this unfair situation (line: 297).

297 «... λλ τα τα μ ν
θε ν τις ξ πραζεν σθ’ ο τως χειν ...».

(«... but some god has brought these things to pass ...»).

Alcestis’ action is from beginning to end at the centre of the drama; it is curious that everyone – even her children – unquestioningly accepts her sacrificial death. Indeed, Alcestis is admirable enough (lines: 150–153, 241), because she sacrificed herself for the survival of her royal house (Parodus, Scene B, Episode A, Scene A), as was shown
above. Euripides in the *Alcestis* describes two separate worlds living side by side: the world of free males and the world of non–free females. According to Vellacott (1975: 107), the individual character of Alcestis is not important, because she is a traditional good wife who accepts her role and status in classical society. She may not accept her gender’s inferiority, but she is only allowed to verbally complain about it. In fact, Euripides presents Alcestis as a submissive wife, but the words spoken by her (*Episode A, Scene A*) are powerful (lines: 280–325). She loses her life for her husband; this is why old Pheres characterises her φρονα (lack of sense), as was mentioned above. This epithet has to do with the lack of Alcestis’ rationality. Actually, Alcestis was more σώφρων (virtuous) than φρων (lack of sense), because she took her time to think about her decision, her children’s and her husband’s future as well. She knew that she was not able to change the cultural norms concerning a woman’s position. So she went the traditional way but she was finally justified (*Outcome*) and sympathy was on her side (lines: 1153–1158).

**The Male Character**

Admetus cannot attend Alcestis’ funeral with a good conscience because he had no thought about the agony of her dying. He makes the preparations for her burial, but he does not know how dependent he is on her. Admetus realises it only when he is wrapped up in self–pity. In the first place, when he speaks to Heracles, he covers up Alcestis’ death with a philosophical paradox (*Episode B, Scene B*) about being and non–being (lines: 519, 527). In the second place, the quarrel scene between Admetus and his father shows Admetus’ real character (Ferguson, 1977: 10–13) through his behaviour, and the home truths about him spoken by Pheres in *Episode C, Scene B* (lines: 675–705). Admetus comments that Alcestis’ self–sacrifice (*Episode A, Scene A*) is part of a complete Aristotelian friendship (*φιλίαν*) that treats him as a second self, as was indicated above (line: 280).

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42 In contrast, the sacrifices of Iphigenia, Polyxena, Macaria and Menoeceus were made to ensure military victory. See Vellacott (1975: 179).
43 In Aristotle’s theory of friendship the relationship between *self and others* is so close that it is rendered as *each of us is our real self*. See Gill (1996: 346–378).
For Ferguson (1977: 14), Admetus has encouraged Alcestis to die for him, to give him a longer life; but this turned to dust and ashes. His action has had the opposite of the intended result. And this led him to self–knowledge because he probably had never known suffering before. Now he is suffering because he escaped his death and he is feeling the loss of Alcestis. Admetus fails to express himself in a way that would help the reader to sympathise him, as Smith correctly notes (1960: 127–135). Instead he utters the presumed words that are usually spoken at a funeral so that the people would charge him with cowardice—ψυχα (Table 6.3).

### ADMETUS’ CHARACTER

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>σου (godly man)</th>
<th>Line: 10</th>
<th>δ’ο κακ’ς πεπραγ’ τας (two unfortunates)</th>
<th>Line: 246</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>τάλας (miserable)</td>
<td>392</td>
<td>ναξ (king)</td>
<td>510</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>μ’ ρος (foolish)</td>
<td>552</td>
<td>ε’ γενές (noble)</td>
<td>601</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>γαν βρ ζεις (go too far in insult)</td>
<td>679</td>
<td>ἀναιὸδ’ ε’ διεμ’ χου (shamelessly striven)</td>
<td>694</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ε’ τυχ’ς (fortunate)</td>
<td>685</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>δυστυχ’ς (unfortunate)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>φονε’ς (murderer)</td>
<td>730</td>
<td>σοφώτερος (wiser)</td>
<td>779</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ἀνδρ’ς ν φιλοξ νον δόμοις (hospitable man)</td>
<td>830</td>
<td>α’ σχρ’ς ζζ’ νθ’ (live on his discharge)</td>
<td>955</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ἀψυχ’ς α’ π’ φευγεν’ Αιδὴν (in cowardice escaped death)</td>
<td>957</td>
<td>δ’ καιος ν (righteous man)</td>
<td>1147</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total: positive epithets and expressions: 7
negative epithets and expressions: 9

Table 6.3

Admetus comes to his moment of truth: he encountered a crisis of necessity in his marriage, but was capable of learning (lines: 719–720). Admetus recognises his own guilt which he shares with all other men who demand that their wives sacrifice themselves for them (Episode C, Scene A). When Alcestis comes back to life – in reality the dead do not live again of course – he knows he is forgiven. In this way, the frozen personality of Admetus becomes more human, because he realises that he committed an act of hybris and was punished for this, as was indicated above. Indeed, the real power of this play lies in the recognition of forgiveness (Vellacott, 1975: 228). Admetus, having suffered guilt to the full, realises his wrong doing in contrast to what he believed at the beginning of the play (lines: 246–247, 251, 258, 384, 723) in Episode A, Scene A, Episode C, Scene A:

246 «... ρ σε κ μ , δ ο κκ κ πεπραγ τας,
ο δ ν θεο ζ δρ σαινας νθ του θαν ...».

(«... you and me, two unfortunates
who have done nothing to the gods to deserve your death ...»).

The Admetus of Euripides is an enigmatic character. Evaluating his character is not an easy task: one must take in account not only the negative side of his self but also the result of his self–criticism. On the one hand, he is portrayed as an aristocrat who follows the rules of what is called savoir vivre (good manners). For him, retaining his reputation for hospitality seems to be of more importance (Episode B, Scene B) than mourning for Alcestis (line: 541). But on the other hand, the awareness of the consequences of his action reveals the superficial quality of Admetus’ personality. So, his pathos–mathos has to do with emotional and moral suffering.

44 The view that the play minimises the moral justification of Admetus’ personality is supported by Zurcher (1947), Dale (1954), Steidle (1968) and Rivier (1972).
45 On this point Golden (1970–1971: 116–125) perceives that Alcestis’ redemption is to be understood as a reward for Admetus’ altruism, as he gradually progresses to an altruistic attitude. Certainly, it is an...
The problem that emerges concerns the nature of his change: is his \textit{pathos} superficial? Does he learn his lesson or not? Of course, the \textit{Alcestis} is a myth transferred into reality and nobody knows how Admetus reunited with his wife after Alcestis’ return\footnote{According to Bell (1980: 43–65), Admetus realises his mistake in his second meeting with Heracles when he is put through a test of loyalty that proves his moral improvement. Indeed, Admetus experiences an inner change because of the emotional sterility of his wife; in other words, the death of Alcestis results in Admetus’ learning his lesson. See further, Lesky (1925: 6ff), Garzya (1962: 25–27) and Erbse (1972: 50).}. Euripides allows his audience to reach various conclusions. Moreover, Admetus finally appreciates the qualities of Alcestis (\textbf{Episode C, Scene C}) and recognises that death is now preferable to life without Alcestis (lines: 895–902). So, his \textit{pathos} is a condition for his \textit{mathos}, as Lombard (1984: 79) notes.

\begin{verbatim}
895  «... μακρ π νθη λ πα τε ϕ λων
     τ ν π γα αζ ...».
\end{verbatim}

(«... Oh, how great is the pain and grief for loved ones who lie beneath the earth ...»).

In fact, Euripides represents the male character in a way that gives rise to questions regarding his ethos but, finally, if some of the answers are sufficient it is due to his doubtful inner change. If this improvement is not quite clear, it may be because the emphasis of the plot is primarily on the restoration of Alcestis as a process that causes the moral improvement of the male character. Moreover, the \textit{Alcestis} is a play about an apparently ideal marriage in classical society\footnote{Mythology reports that this marriage was balanced in the sense that both partners worked together to solve their problems, although this aspect concerning Admetus’ attitude is not clear. It is also reported that when Admetus and Alcestis got old, they were forced to leave the royal palace at Pheres, and finally took refuge in the palace of Theseus in Athens. See further Eleftheroudakis (1971: 226).}. It is a heroic drama with both comic and tragic elements; the result is to laugh, to feel and to learn, and it is no small achievement on Euripides’ part to lead us all there.

e.xaggeration to talk about Admetus’ altruism without considering Alcestis’ sacrifice as an act of altruism as well; it is true that neither Alcestis nor Admetus are motivated by altruism. They are both driven by gender standards of morality, as was shown above. See Lombard (1984: 78).
CHAPTER VII

GLOSS ANALYSIS OF THE MOTIF OF LOVE IN THE ALCESTIS OF EURIPIDES

The Use of Language

The basic aim of this chapter is to apply gloss analysis to the linguistic forms and passages with regard to the motif of love in the *Alcestis* of Euripides. The linguistic forms and passages concern the ethos and character of Alcestis and Admetus, i.e. characteristic epithets and expressions. Euripides uses language in two functions, as we have seen above. Firstly, he uses it as an instrument of communication in order to describe a gender relationship; the language of ordinary life concerns mostly the style of communication between husband and wife – Admetus and Alcestis. In the *Alcestis*, the injustice done to her is expressed through her melodramatic monologue (*Episode A, Scene A*). Alcestis confronts brutal reality by meeting Admetus’ claim (lines: 287–342). Secondly, he uses it as a metaphorical vehicle to express his opinion for social reform. His metaphorical language has to do with the theme of restoration (*Outcome*) as a language game (lines: 1123–1160).

The typical communication between Alcestis and Admetus is expressed in their monologues and dialogues relevant to the motif of love (*Episode A, Scene A and Scene B*). In the dialogue between Admetus and Heracles (*Episode B, Scene B*) and in the dialogue between Admetus and his father (*Episode C, Scene A*). For this reason, Diagrams 6.2 and 6.3 (see previous chapter) are referred to, as they summarise the features of Alcestis’ and Admetus’ ethos. So, the question posed here is how the features of the main female and male ethos would function. In order to give an answer, gloss analysis is applied as follows: as a first step the function of the features of each one’s ethos is analysed both in the traditional myth and in the recreated tragic world of Euripides; as a second step the function of the epithets and the expressions regarding Alcestis’ and Admetus’ character is analysed both in the traditional myth and in

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1 On *gloss analysis* applied to the works of Euripides, the *Helen* and the *Alcestis*, see Chapter I, *Introduction, Methodology.*
2 See Chapter V.
Euripides’ version. Tables 6.2 and 6.3 (see previous chapter) are referred to as helpful summaries. For instance, in Episode A, Scene A, the virtue of Alcestis is expressed repeatedly by herself in order to emphasise her sacrificial death (lines: 282–294, 300–307, 320–325). The epithets purposefully used by Euripides, such as ἀρίστην (the best) and σθλήν (noble), focus on her premature death.

The theme of restoration used as a language game is of major importance and will be analysed next. This language game, the ethos and character of Alcestis and Admetus as expressed by the author are parts of his metaphorical language; the theme of restoration is connected with the ethos and the character of Admetus and Alcestis because it is the result of their virtues. This is obvious at the end of the play, when Alcestis is restored to her husband. Admetus has recovered not only her but gains a new appreciation of mortal existence together with Alcestis. The philosophical grammar of the theme of restoration is explored in the next section.

Self–sacrifice and honour–virtue are the features of Alcestis’ ethos – as were illustrated in Diagram 6.2. Both were regarded as positive characteristics of the female ethos. In classical society the value of a woman’s life was less than that of a man’s as was noted above. Self–sacrifice was the ultimate act that brought glory to women. In the Choral Ode A this is what is said repeatedly by the Chorus (lines: 435–444, 456–475). But in the Alcestis of Euripides, the author doubts the use of this traditional standard concerning female ethos. He describes its function within a marriage and the results of maintaining this expectation for the female.

At this point, the modern reader may ask if Alcestis’ sacrifice has elements in common with Jesus’ sacrifice. I think it is not very useful to compare Alcestis’ sacrificial death to Jesus’ self–sacrifice because there is a very important difference: His sacrifice was a source of unlimited love and the symbol of His love is the cross. It shows a higher state of being (Matthew 16: 24–8, Mark 8: 34–8). Christianity places a supreme value on returning God’s love in one’s relationship with others (Mark 12: 30–1, Luke 19: 25–8). Above all, Alcestis is not motivated by pure altruism, as was noted above, but by the strict moral code concerning female behaviour. In Episode A, Scene A, Admetus interprets her offer to substitute for him as her moral obligation according to the values of friendship (lines:
Here a misunderstanding of language occurs that is expressed through the different personalities of the male and the female. For Admetus, she sacrifices herself because of φιλίαν but for Alcestis it is pure social obligation to her husband, as was mentioned in the previous chapter.

The feature of honour–virtue functions positively in the traditional myth, where the female is characterised by her monogamist attitude to the male. This basic feature has a similar sense in the recreated tragic world of Euripides; it does not lose its importance but it is compared to the male honour–virtue. In classical society, honour–virtue does not have the same sense for both female and male: it has to do with female sexuality and morality but for the male it refers to his military virtue – a male must be the best soldier, as was noted above. In Admetus’ case, his virtue has to do with his reputation (Episode C, Scene C) among the citizens of Pherae (lines: 950–961). The bad reputation that is likely to accrue to him as a result of his wife’s undeserved death is balanced by his actions within the hospitality code. Euripides shows the different functions of honour–virtue concerning the female and the male.

The epithets (see Table 6.2) ἀρίστη (the best of wives), χρηστός (noble), μψυχος γυν (daring woman), ε κλε ς (glorious), σώφρων (virtuous), σθλ ς (noble), φίλην (beloved), πιστή (faithful), ἀμείνον’ (kinder), γενναία (generous), δέσποιναν (mistress) and ναυδος (silent) and the expressions γυν θυρα ος (woman with no family), ε κλε στερον β ον (fairer repute), σχετλία τόλμης (resolute in courage) μάκαιρα δαίμων πότνις (blessed divinity), ἄξια σέβειν (deserves my honour), γοργόν’ ὡς καρατομὼν (cutting off the gorgons’ head) function positively both in the traditional myth and in the recreated tragic world of Euripides. They also oppose the epithets τάλαινα (poor), δῖσθαμμον (luckless), ο κτράν (loved) and φρωνα (lack of sense) concerning Alcestis character; φρων (lack of sense) is the most negative epithet that contrasts with σώφρων (virtuous). Euripides uses φρων (lack of sense) to describe vividly – through the mouth of her father in law – Alcestis’ decision to obey Admetus’ illogical claim.
So, the features of self-sacrifice and honour-virtue and the above mentioned epithets function positively in the traditional myth and partly in Euripides’ version (see Diagram 7.1). The contrast between φρων (lack of sense) and σώφρων (virtuous) makes the difference: Alcestis is σώφρων (virtuous) to all inside or outside the family who believe in androcentric society; but for open-minded thinkers like Euripides, Alcestis is likely more φρων (lack of sense) than σώφρων (virtuous), because she confronts reality in a submissive and tragic way.

**THE FUNCTION OF ALCESTIS’ ETHOS**

Traditional Myth – Euripides’ version
self-sacrifice, honour–virtue:
αρίστη (the best of wives), χρηστός (noble), μυκης γυν (daring woman), ζηλις (glorious), σώφρων (virtuous), θυλη (noble), φίλην (beloved), πιστή (faithful), άμείνοι (kinder), γενναία (generous), δέσποινα (mistress) and ναυδος (silent), μάκαιρα δαίμων πότν (blessed divinity)

Function positively for Alcestis’ ethos but in a different sense.
The φρων (lack of sense) and σώφρων (virtuous) contrast function positively for Alcestis’ ethos.

Diagram 7.1

The main features of Admetus’ ethos are cowardice–egotism, honesty–loyalty and hospitality (see Diagram 6.3). According to traditional myth, cowardice–egotism is a neglected and unknown element of Admetus’ ethos. It is not stressed as a negative feature; in an androcentric Athenian society the male was dominant to the female. His claims and expectations were part of the marriage contract. In Alcestis’ case, the extraordinary claim of Admetus for extending his life was based upon his viewpoint that
this is the duty of a good wife, namely to sacrifice herself for her husband. In his version of the *Alcestis* Euripides describes the gender relationship as a language game that functions within culture at large.

The second feature of Admetus’ ethos is honesty–loyalty. In the traditional myth this feature is not emphasised at all. In Euripides’ version, Admetus is represented not as an ideal husband but as having some hidden virtues like honesty and loyalty. Actually, he promises to remain faithful to Alcestis in return for her sacrifice but this promise is probably fake: Admetus cannot persuade the reader about his promise (lines: 345–349) even though he successfully passes the loyalty test done by Heracles (*Episode A, Scene B*). By having Admetus express his intention to be faithful to Alcestis, Euripides instead creates an unbalanced character more than a normal one who is close to reality.

The third feature of Admetus’ ethos is hospitality. In the traditional myth this feature is not mentioned at all. Just like the previous feature, hospitality is stressed by Euripides as another virtue of Admetus. Admetus is represented as a gentleman who respects the hospitality code, while his wife is dead because of his paradoxical claim. Of course, Euripides does not want his audience to share Admetus’ point of view: on the contrary, he wants to show the typical manner of behaviour of the most powerful dynast (*Episode B, Scene C*); even a man like Admetus has a lighter side (lines: 553–565).

The epithets ὁσου (godly man), ευγενές (noble), and the noun ναξ (king) fit in with the traditional myth and they work positively (Table 6.3). In Euripides’ recreated myth these words function ironically for Admetus’ ethos. They are substituted by the expressions ἀνδρὸς ἐν ψυχής ὑπερανάγον (hospitable man) and δ καὶ ὁ ἀνδρὸς ἐν ψυχής (righteous man) so that they function positively. The epithets τάλας (poor man), μωρός (foolish), σοφώτερος (wiser) fit in with the new human ethos of Admetus and they function positively; they also try to cover up the dominating noun φονεύς (murderer) spoken by his father. The expressions δ ο κακ τις πεπραγότας (two unfortunates), καί βριζέας (go too far in insult), ἀναιδῶς διεμένω (shamelessly striven), α σχρίζεως καί νθ’ (live in discharge), ἀναιδῶς πέφειν Άιδην (in cowardice escaped death) function negatively for
Admetus’ ethos and create a strange male character with more obvious bad characteristics than virtues, as the following Diagram 7.2 shows.

**THE FUNCTION OF ADMETUS’ ETHOS**

**Traditional Myth**
- cowardice–egotism:
  - epithets Ὅσου (godly man), εὐγενές (noble), and the noun ναξ.
  - Function positively for Admetus’ ethos.

**Euripides’ Version**
- cowardice–egotism:
  - δοκακς πεπραγότας (two unfortunates), γαν βρίζεις (go too far in insult), άνασδως διμάχον (shamelessly striven), α σηρ ζ ς νθ (live in discharge), άνθρωποι ἐφεξέ (in cowardice escaped death) function negatively for Admetus’ ethos.
  - Honesty, hospitality:
    - ἀνδρὸς ἐν φιλοξένῳ δόμοι (hospitable man) and δ κως ν (righteous man) so that they function positively.
    - The epithets τάξας (poor man), μόρος (foolish), σοφότερος (wiser) and the noun: φονεύς (murderer) function negatively for Admetus’ ethos.

**Diagram 7.2**

The style of communication between husband and wife is expressed by Euripides mostly in **Episode A, Scene A, Scene B**: in the *Alcestis* the female style of communication is weak, while the male style of communication is typical. Alcestis in her dying agony expresses the reasons for her sacrifice and critiques the egotism on the part of Admetus’ parents but not her husband’s cowardice directly (lines: 284–287, 290–297). Alcestis’ mentality is different from Admetus’ but her delirious speech cannot make him change his mind; she uses the psychological approach, namely emotional blackmail, in order to secure her children’s future, as was noted above (lines: 309–322). Her self-praise is a good requiem and is valued by the reader, but not by her husband as it should be (lines: 324–326) at least in the beginning of the play.

323 «... κα σο μ ν, π σι,
γνα κ’ ρ στην στι κομπ σαι λαβε ν,
μ ν δ , πα δες, μητρ ς καρφκ ναι...».

(«... You, my husband
have the right to boast the best of wives
and you my children, the best of mothers ...»).

In **Episode B, Scene B**, Admetus’ style of communication towards his dead wife is ambiguous when he has to explain what happened to people outside the family like Heracles. Heracles suspects that something is wrong when he asks him about his mourning (lines: 512–518). Admetus answers by playing on the double meaning of γυνή (woman, wife) so that he cleverly manages to tell the truth without making Heracles wiser (lines: 519, 521, 527, 531, 533). The final statement made by Admetus about the dead who must bury the dead charges him with more brutality towards his wife than affection (line: 541).

531 «... γυν · γυναικ ς ρτ ως μεμμεν μεθα...».

(«... A woman: it was a woman I spoke of just now ...»).

In **Episode C, Scene A** Admetus’ style of communication towards Alcestis is hypocritical when he has to give reasons for his wife’s death to people inside the family, like his father, Pheres or likely to Alcestis’ family. He blames his parents for being responsible for Alcestis’ death (lines: 644–650). He also transfers the expectation he had for his parents to his wife (lines: 663–672); this declaration is quite hyperbolic because he is still a selfish son and husband. Pheres comes to the point by charging him with rebellion against his fate and with wilful murder (lines: 679, 694–695, 730).

694 «... σ γο ν ναιδ ς διεμ χου τ μ θανε ν
κα ς ις παρελθ ν τ ν πεπρωμ νην τ χην ...».

(«... At all events you have shamelessly striven to avoid death
and you live beyond your fated day ...»).
By describing the smallness of soul on the part of Admetus Euripides probably wants to show up how a typical gender relationship could function in a classical marriage. The male is not only the *kyrios* of the family but the despot who claims his wife’s life to extend his life. According to classical culture, this is an act of *hybris* that is followed by a punishment, as was noted above³. In Admetus’ case his punishment is to lament for his lost wife until he realises his mistake and becomes human again. Only for this reason, he deserves Alcestis back.

Euripides shows up the sexism in ancient society though his use of language. In the *Alcestis* it is the male who is superior to the female; he can demand that his wife sacrifice her life for him. Admetus is not only the king of Pherae, but he is a true despot. Euripides vividly describes the complexities of marital relationships though the use of ordinary language. He retells the traditional myth not only to show up the dysfunctions in traditional marriage but to supply an alternative.

Sexism in classical society is a common topic; in the *Alcestis* it is expressed to a high degree by the author, who does not try to hide the sexism between husband and wife: he brings it to light intentionally. In fact, the *Alcestis* is a therapeutic myth because it offers a philosophical therapy to the marital problems especially though the use of his metaphorical language. For *gloss analysis*, philosophy is mainly therapy, as was mentioned above⁴ and Euripides in the *Alcestis* proposes such therapy.

The sexism in language is obvious in Alcestis’ speech (**Episode A, Scene A**) when she has to explain to herself, to her children and to the audience why she must die in her husband’s place (lines: 284–297, 320–325). Her sacrificial death is not a voluntary one, as was shown above⁵. On the contrary, it is forced by sexism, as was expressed in the traditional myth. Through old Pheres, who truly judges his son’s claim, Euripides points out how sexism works. This judgment is typically Euripidean and it leads to a conclusion: if Admetus develops his character morally then he will have his wife back as the result of therapy for his previous patriarchal disease, namely egotism.

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³ See Chapter VI, The Motif of Love and The Male Character.
⁴ See Chapter II, Wittgenstein’s Profile: Life and Works.
⁵ See Chapter VI, The Motif of Love.
Philosophical Grammar

The main purpose of applying philosophical grammar to the motif of love in the Alcestis of Euripides is to describe the use of language between husband and wife; in other words, to explore the function of ethos and character of female and male indicated above both in the traditional myth and in the recreated tragic myth of Euripides. Gloss analysis is used to describe the motif of love in the Alcestis, pointing out the function of the traditional relationship between male and female. Philosophical grammar is then applied to understand and resolve the dysfunctions. The connection between language and reality is showed clearly by applying philosophical grammar to the linguistic forms and passages relevant to Alcestis’ and Admetus’ ethos and character.

The question posed here is what the philosophical grammar of the female and the male ethos would be. In order to reach an answer, I shall apply gloss analysis mostly to Diagrams 7.1 and 7.2. For instance, gloss analysis applied to the function of the female and the male ethos both in the traditional myth and the recreated tragic world shows the surface and the depth grammar of their characters. It also explains why Euripides uses Heracles to restore Alcestis at the end of the play, instead of using a deus ex machina to solve the problem.

The philosophical grammar of Alcestis’ ethos has to do with the surface and depth grammar of self-sacrifice and honour—virtue. In the traditional myth the philosophical grammar of Alcestis’ sacrifice and her virtue is acceptable to society because it functions positively for a wife’s ethos as was noted above⁶. Her premature death functions as the depth grammar, which is the value of the wife’s life compared with the husband’s in classical society. In the recreated tragic myth of Euripides the philosophical grammar of Alcestis’ sacrifice shows automatically the imbalance between male and female in a loving relationship.

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⁶ See Chapter VI, The Motif of Love.
According to tradition, Alcestis is regarded as an honest and virtuous wife. The philosophical grammar of Alcestis’ sacrifice shows the rule governing the gender relationship clearly: Admetus’ request corresponds to the *surface grammar* but Alcestis’ sacrificial death to the *depth grammar* in classical society by expressing the female position. But in Euripides’ version, Alcestis’ death corresponds to the *depth grammar* too, but in a different way by exhibiting the dysfunctional marital system.

In the traditional myth, the epithets ἀρίστη (the best of wives), χρηστός (noble), μυσχος γυν (daring woman), ε κλε ς (glorious), σώφρων (virtuous), άθλις (noble), φίλην (beloved), πιστή (faithful), δμείνον’ (kinder), γενναιά (generous), δέσποιναν (mistress) and ναυδος (silent) correspond to the *depth grammar* because Alcestis is the ideal wife. In the recreated tragic myth of Euripides, the above epithets correspond to the *depth grammar* as well because they show the traditional female type.

The expressions γυνή θυρα (woman with no family), ε κλε στερον β ον (fairer repute), σχετλία τόλμης (resolute in courage), μάκαιρα δαίμων πότνι (blessed divinity), ἀξία σέβειν (deserves my honour), γοργόν’ ως καρατομ (cutting off the gorgons’ head) correspond to the *depth grammar*, because they show how the traditional female type is appreciated by the others and also how Alcestis is characterised before her act. The epithets τάλαινα (poor), δύσδαιμον (luckless), ο κτραν (loved), and φρων (lack of sense) concerning Alcestis’ character correspond to the *depth grammar* because they stress how she is valued after her sacrifice.

In this way, Euripides points out how the gender relationship works within a marriage in classical society (real world) and how it should have worked (ideal world). So, the philosophical grammar of the above epithets and expressions correspond to the *depth grammar* both in the traditional myth and in a different way in Euripides’s version. Indeed, the philosophical grammar moulds the gender relationship: how it is and how it should be. The epithet φρων (lack of sense) is intentionally used by Euripides in particular to show the do’s and the don’ts required to restore the balance in marriage (see Diagram 7.3).
The philosophical grammar of Admetus’ ethos has to do with the surface and the depth grammar of cowardice–egotism, honesty–loyalty and hospitality. In the traditional myth, these features of Admetus’ ethos correspond to the surface grammar because the male is dominant over the female; in Euripides’ version, cowardice–egotism corresponds to the depth grammar because Admetus should not be proud of it. In contrast, honesty–loyalty and hospitality correspond to the surface grammar because they try to keep a balance between the bad and the good side of Admetus’ character; honesty–loyalty and hospitality are regarded as Admetus’ virtues versus his egotism. In his version of the Alcestis Euripides describes male superiority over the female by showing the consequences of the traditional male attitude: Admetus loses his wife due to his selfishness but he finally gains her back thanks to Heracles and mostly due to his inner change.
In the traditional myth, the epithets ὡσ ὦν (godly man), εὐγενὲς (noble), and the noun ναξ (king) correspond to the depth grammar because they characterise the ideal male. In Euripides’ version, the epithets ὡσ ὦν (godly man), εὐγενὲς (noble), and the noun ναξ (king) and the expressions ἀνδρὸς ἐν φιλοξένου δόμοι (hospitable man) and δόκαιος ὄν (righteous man) correspond to the surface grammar because they try to cover up Admetus’ cowardice. Alcestis’ restoration is the result of her peripeteia. As a matter of fact, Admetus deserves Alcestis back not because he is honest and hospitable, as was noted above, but because of his inner change that is the depth grammar. Alcestis deserves to come back to life and to have a good husband because she went the whole way: she took on her husband’s problem and sacrificed herself even though she knew that she did not take the right decision on her part.

In the recreated tragic myth of Euripides, the epithets τάλας (poor man), μῶρος (foolish), σοφώτερος (wiser) correspond to the depth grammar because they describe the new humanistic ethos of Admetus. The noun φονεύς (murderer) and the expressions δ’ οικακς πεπραγότας (two unfortunates), γαν βριζέτας (go too far in insult), ἀναιδὸς διεμάχον (shamelessly striven), α. σχρ. ζευγαρθ’ (live in discharge), ἀνηχία πέφευγεν Ἄιδην (in cowardice escaped death) correspond to the depth grammar because they express Admetus’ old selfish ethos. So, the philosophical grammar of these epithets and expressions describes the typical male: how he acts according to tradition and how Euripides recreates it (see Diagram 7.4).

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7 See Chapter VI, The Motif of Love and The Male Character.
Euripides’ philosophical grammar is a grammar that points out the use of language in classical society. He uses the *surface* and the *depth grammar* of particular linguistic forms and passages with regard to the motif of love in order to describe the use of language and the connection between language and reality. These forms and passages regarding Alcestis’ and Admetus’ ethos show the function of the gender relationship within a classical marriage. The philosophical grammar of Alcestis’ name has to do also with her sacrifice: Alcestis is *the wife who has courage*. In Euripides’ version her name corresponds to the *depth grammar* because it shows her brave attitude to her husband.
philosophical grammar of Admetus’ name corresponds to the depth grammar because it contains his old selfish character and the new humanistic one: Admetus means the man who is indomitable.

Besides, Euripides uses the hospitality code, which corresponds to the surface grammar and gives impetus to the plot. The moral change of Admetus corresponds to the depth grammar because it leads to the grammar of justification. Gloss analysis applied to the Alcestis of Euripides shows up the functions and the dysfunctions of the traditional marital system. It also demonstrates how sexist language functions in classical society through the use of its philosophical grammar.

Euripides proposes the grammar of justification (as was noted above) by showing that the surface grammar concerns mostly the unbalanced male functions within a marriage; for the author the depth grammar concerns both the male and the female. According to tradition, if a wife dies, the husband remarries; but if the husband dies, the wife does not change because she cannot remarry easily. Euripides tries to subvert these conditions in the following way:

A marriage that survives a catastrophe is a marriage in which the husband and wife worked together to solve the problem, even though, like Alcestis, one had to work harder. But in this case, Admetus starts the journey of self-knowledge from a lower moral level; the day that his wife died was the day that he had to fight his inner self – in Freudian terms his ego and his superego. In Episode C, Scene C he passes firstly through the stage of personal consciousness (lines: 911–925) and secondly the stage of social consciousness (lines: 950–961). Finally, he experiences catharsis not in a tragic ending but in a new start to his married life.

Euripides gloss analyses sexism in language by showing its surface and depth grammar and the relationship between them. For him, the depth grammar is hidden and it controls the gender relationship within a marriage. The rules that Euripides suggests for change have to do with the traditional moral standards governing the interaction between male and female; in the Alcestis these rules concern topics such as the value of the wife’s life, ethics, and marriage. Euripides believes in social reform and that is why he restores
Alcestis to her husband. The theme of restoration is a rehabilitation of the gender asymmetry in classical society. It is used by the dramatist as a language game and it is explored in the next section.

The connection between language and reality in classical society is strong because language is always the instrument of communication between male and female. Clearly, the gender style of communication expresses sexism in language. The metaphorical language of Euripides also expresses the connection between language and reality by representing it as a game whose rules are opened up for change. Euripides shows the disadvantages of the classical marital system (as was mentioned above) but he does not intend to destroy this system totally: he wishes only to subvert it so that his heroes come back to tradition with the knowledge that the male and female will both live a better life, just like Alcestis and Admetus.

The Theme of Restoration as a Language Game

In the *Alcestis* of Euripides the theme of restoration plays the major role in the motif of love. At first glance Alcestis is restored due to Admetus’ adherence to the hospitality code. However, at second glance it seems to be the result of Admetus’ moral development, as was noted above. Alcestis herself posthumously plays the main role in her husband’s change. Euripides uses this tension between outside (hospitality code) and inner world (moral development) in order to construct a language game. He weights the social values including the hospitality code and the personal moral values which lead to Admetus’ inner change.

The basic aim of this section is to describe the theme of restoration as a language game in terms of *gloss analysis*. As a first step, I will use the rule *Making up a story and reading it*, which is one of the basic rules governing the relationship between different language games. Euripides follows this rule by retelling the traditional myth in his own way. This rule is relevant to the theme of restoration because it can be read as an interpretation of reality. As a second step, I will propose the elementary propositions (P) for the traditional

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myth and the recreated tragic world of Euripides and I will gloss analyse their functions. As a third step, I will apply the theme of restoration to modern society by proposing the propositions (P) and I will explore their functions.

The central question posed here has to do with the philosophical grammar of the theme of restoration. Firstly, the function of the theme of restoration in Euripides’ version will be specified. Secondly, the result of gloss analysis is applied to the theme of restoration. Thirdly, a proposed new scenario of the Alcestis in modern society is presented at the end of this chapter. As Table 7.1 shows the theme of restoration causes the multiplicity of the language game in the recreated tragic world of Euripides.

**THE THEME OF RESTORATION AS A LANGUAGE GAME**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional Myth</th>
<th>Euripides’ Version</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P1. <em>Admetus asked his wife to die for him.</em></td>
<td>P1.1. <em>Admetus asked his wife to die for him.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2. <em>Alcestis sacrificed her life for her husband willingly.</em></td>
<td>P2.1. <em>Alcestis sacrificed her life for her husband reluctantly.</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| P3. *Alcestis did her duty.* | P3.1. *Alcestis restored to life thanks to hospitality code.*  
| | P3.2. *Alcestis restored to life thanks to Admetus’ moral development.* |
| P4. *Alcestis is the best wife.* | P4.1. *Alcestis is a virtuous wife who deserves a good husband.* |

**P5. Dysfunctions of the classical marital system; opened up for reform.**

Table 7.1

In the traditional myth the elementary propositions P1, P2, P3 and P4 describe the wife’s position in classical society. Alcestis is an extraordinary case that shows how the *status quo* works: a good wife must do all for her family even if she has to give up her life for
her husband who is the *kyrios* of the house. Indeed, P1 leads to P2 because P1 is the cause and P2 is the effect. Similarly, P3 leads to P4 because P3 is the cause and P4 is the effect; but P3 and P4 are also the effect of P1. P1 corresponds to the *depth grammar* because, according to tradition, the male is master over the members of his family—οἶκος; P2 corresponds to the *depth grammar* because the female is subordinate to the male in classical society. P3 and P4 correspond to the *depth grammar* because they function positively for Alcestis’ ethos: Alcestis falls into the category of virtuous wives.

The function of the *surface* and the *depth grammar* is the philosophical grammar of the above propositions. The gender relationship works according to strict social rules. The communication system between husband and wife is regulated by strict rules in classical society as was indicated above. P4 is a pseudo–proposition that intends to control the female but P4.1 is a true proposition which the reader would deduce. In Euripides’ version P3.1 functions as a pseudo–proposition that intends to impress the reader about Admetus’ character; P3.2 is a true proposition that results from the theme of restoration.

In the recreated tragic world of Euripides, the elementary propositions P1.1, P2.1, P3.1, P3.2 and P4.1 express the textual world. So, P1.1 leads to P2.1 because P 1.1 is the cause and P2.1 is the effect. Similarly, P3.1 and P3.2 lead to P4.1 because P3.1 and P3.2 are the causes and P4.1 is the effect; but P3.1, P3.2 and P4.1 are also the effect of P1.1. P1.1 and P2.1 correspond to the *depth grammar* because they describe the moral standards and what the wife does when she meets her husband’s claim. P3.1 corresponds to the *surface grammar* because the hospitality code is used as a dramatic technique, but P3.2 and P4.1 correspond to the *depth grammar* because Alcestis deserves better treatment: she is the ideal wife who deserves an ideal husband too; at least she will find a human Admetus.

The philosophical grammar of the above propositions has to do with the function of the *surface* and the *depth grammar* in the recreated tragic world of Euripides: his Alcestis is a renewed image of the traditional one. For Euripides, the pair comes back to tradition but the communication system between husband and wife is also renewed. So, the anti–propositions that Euripides suggests both in the mythic and in the tragic world conclude

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this: P5 is a conclusion of P1, P2, P3, P4 and of P1.1, P2.1, P3.1, P3.2 and P4.1 because P.5 is the effect and P1, P2, P3, P4, P1.1, P2.1, P3.1, P3.2, P4.1 are the causes.

Euripides uses the theme of restoration to show the bad side of the traditional marital system; a man without a woman is a loser. In the traditional myth, the male is the winner because he survives by willingly letting his wife die. But in the recreated tragic world of Euripides, the male is a loser because he has to live with shame in a lonely world in which the traditional rules boomerang against him. The result of gloss analysis applied to the theme of restoration is to show up the contradictions between the traditional myth and Euripides’ version. In the Alcestis two ideas are contrasted: duty and what is right. In the traditional myth, Alcestis did her duty even though her husband was the cause of her dying; in Euripides’ version, she did her duty as well, but after the peripeteia a new future is opened up for Alcestis and Admetus. So, in the traditional myth, the classical marriage is dysfunctional but in the recreated tragic world of Euripides it undergoes reform (P5), as is illustrated below through gloss analysis (Diagram 7.5).

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{P1} & \rightarrow \text{P2} \\
\text{P3} & \rightarrow \text{P4} \\
\text{P1} & \rightarrow \text{P3 + P4} \\
\text{P1} & = \text{P3 + P4} \\
* \text{P4} & \neq \text{P4.1} \\
\text{P1.1} & \rightarrow \text{P2.1} \\
\text{P3.1 + P3.2} & \rightarrow \text{P4.1} \\
\text{P1.1} & \rightarrow \text{P3.1 + P4.1} \\
\text{P1.1} & = \text{P3.1 + P3.2 + P4.1}
\end{align*}
\]

Diagram 7.5
The relationship between language and reality in classical society is close. The only reality is not the present: past and future are just as real. In the *Alcestis*, Admetus talks about being and non–being to stress the ambiguity (lines: 519, 521, 527, 541) in **Episode B, Scene B**. He thinks that his wife’s death is a completed event, while it was not so. Euripides transcends the event of Alcestis’ death; he deals with the question of being and non–being and uses it as a technique, in an attempt to balance the dramatic tension. He also prepares the audience to accept the theme of restoration as a language game that emphasises the ambiguity of reality.

519 «... διπλος πιμυ θος στι μοι λ γειν...».

(«... there is a double tale to tell off her ...»).

521 «... στιν τε κο κ τ στιν...».

(«... she is and she is no more ...»).

2527 «... θνηχ μλλων κ νθ δ κ στι ...».

(«... someone who is doomed too die is dead, has died and is no more...»).

**Gloss analysis** interprets the theme of restoration as a language game that leads to a metaphysical structure of the world because it expresses what is behind the physical world: the ambiguity of this language game symbolises the ambiguity of reality. The theme of restoration is the metaphysical image of Alcestis where a new start is possible; she lives in a sexist world where the male is not just the head of the family but the master who may become a true despot. The limits of her metaphysical image are the limits of the recreated tragic and real world – in allegorical terms, of course.

The text of the *Alcestis* is open to the **grammar of justification**, because Euripides changes the limits of the tragic and the real world; he uses the traditional norms governing the gender relationship and he shows up the complexities of the classical marital system; he also poses questions regarding the renewal of societal rules and the relationship between language and reality. By using grammatical fiction (Alcestis’ restoration) Euripides
successfully dissolves the philosophical confusion between being and non–being raised by Admetus. Now, let us see what would happen if the theme of restoration is translated into a modern idiom (Table 7.2).

**THE THEME OF RESTORATION IN MODERN SOCIETY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example A</th>
<th>Example B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P7. <em>Alcestis is the nearest kin who could be the donor; Admetus’ father is old enough.</em></td>
<td>P7.1. <em>Alcestis is the nearest kin who could be the donor; Admetus’ father is old enough.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P8. <em>Admetus asks his wife to donate him one of her kidneys.</em></td>
<td>P8.1. <em>Admetus asks his wife to donate him one of her kidneys.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P9. <em>Alcestis does so but she dies a few days later; Admetus extends his life thanks to her.</em></td>
<td>P9.1. <em>Alcestis is fearful, because there is a possibility of failure, but she finally does it; a few days later she dies. Admetus feels guilty because she gave her life for him. But finally, she is restored because (she just suffered from catalepsy).</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

P10. *Many modern couples may need a specialist (Clinical Psychologist).*

Table 7.2
Example A corresponds to the traditional myth, where Alcestis does not fail as a perfect wife. So, Admetus extends his life thanks to his wife donating a kidney but she finally loses her life. Example A describes the traditional couple where the male persuades the female that this is the right choice. P6 and P7 lead to P8 because P6 and P7 are causes but P8 is the effect. P8 leads to P9 because P8 is the cause and P9 is the effect. But P8 and P9 are also the effects of P6. A tautology (T) exists between P6 and P8 and between P7 and P8 as well (T) because these propositions are equivalent to each other. P6 and P7 correspond to the surface grammar but P8 and P9 correspond to the depth grammar; in modern society, sexism in language is still present.

The modern Admetus has a problem: he desperately needs a kidney transplant to live better, but it is very difficult to find a suitable donor. His parents are old enough; but the only healthy person who could donate one of her kidneys is his wife. That is why he asks her to do so and she says yes. The dark point in this scenario is that the wife dies just a few days later. Admetus lives thanks to her.

Example B corresponds to the recreated tragic world of Euripides where Alcestis is rescued. Example B describes the theme of restoration under current circumstances. P6.1 and P7.1 lead to P8.1 because P6.1 and P7.1 are the causes but P8.1 is the effect. P8.1 and P9.1 are also the effects of P6.1. In addition, P6.1 leads to P8.2 and P9.1 but P8.1 is equivalent to P9.1. A tautology (T) exists between P6.1 and P8.1; P7.1 and P8.1 as well (T) because these propositions are equivalent to each other. P6.1 and P7.1 correspond to the surface grammar but P8.1 and P9.1 correspond to the depth grammar; P9.1 corresponds to the theme of restoration in modern society where the fairy-tale of Heracles is replaced by a rare physical phenomenon: catalepsy.

At first, Admetus is unhappy because he realises that life without his wife is not worth it moreover; besides he feels guilty and he has to live with this. But when Alcestis is back to life a new start is about to begin. To sum up, P9 and P9.1 function differently in a gender relationship by showing up alternative ways of confronting reality; so P10 is a conclusion regarding the modern husband and wife who still experience problems in role division and in their communication.
The relationship between language and reality is close in modern society as well. Example A describes a traditional pair in modern society, where the male style of communication is still dominant to the female. The husband and wife are both hopeless. The husband’s claim is based on his fear of death and is a result of bad communication between the pair. Voices are not equally heard. In Example B, this claim is rejected by the female but a sudden event makes the husband realise his mistake, like Admetus in Euripides’ version: his wife dies because of catalepsy; her restoration is a start of new hopeful life together. Eventually, the *peripeteia* leads to self–knowledge and self discovery leads to humanism.

**THE ORDER OF PROPOSITIONS B2**

![Diagram 7.6](image)

So, the philosophical grammar of the theme of restoration concerns the order of propositions and their function in the traditional myth and the recreated tragic world but in modern society as well. The theme of restoration as a language game describes marital tensions in a different way – whether in classical society or in modern society, as was noted above. Admetus realises that by destroying the other the self is destroyed too. This is why the *Alcestis* of Euripides is still relevant: it deals with the value of the wife’s life
and it restores self-image, hope, confidence and individuality – all of which are constructive for both (see Diagram 7.7). In our own day, a destructive relationship in marriage can kill one partner if she/he loses confidence, or has low self-esteem. For instance, if the male is chauvinistic the female may suffer or may hate him. If one partner is unhappy the marriage is unbalanced and they both may need a therapist specialising in marital problems.

The elementary propositions of the traditional myth correspond to the elementary propositions of Example A: P1 leads to P6+P8; P2 to P9; P3 +P4 to P7. But P1+P3 leads to P8+P9 because P1=P3 and P8=P9. One concludes that there is a tautology between P1, P3 and P8, P9 because these propositions clearly correspond to each other. Similarly, the elementary propositions of the recreated tragic world of Euripides correspond to the elementary propositions of Example B: P1.1 leads to P6.1+P8.1; P2.1 to P9.1; P3.1+P3.2+P4 to P7.1. But P1.1+P2.1=P8.1 + P9.1 because P1.1=P2.1 and P8.1=P9.1. One concludes that a tautology exists between P1.1, P2.1 and P8.1, P9.1 because it is quite obvious how these propositions correspond to each other.

\[ \text{THE ORDER OF PROPOSITIONS C2} \]

![Diagram 7.7](image)
Euripides proposes an alternative way to interpret reality: he *gloss analyses* the phenomenon of restoration as part of the metaphysical structure of the world; this phenomenon may occur not only in philosophy but in the real world as well because philosophy is an activity associated with human nature.

**The Post–modern Perspective**

For the contemporary reader the ambiguity of the theme of restoration as a language game symbolises the ambiguity of reality, as was shown above. Does Alcestis die on stage in order to impress the audience, or is it just a game that the textual world creates? If Alcestis dies truly in the textual world then is she finally restored to life due to Euripides’ fiction? In modern society the fairy–tale of a brave hero like Heracles who beats death is not believable anymore. This story survived as part of Greek mythology that influenced the culture of the classical era; in the time of Euripides, gods and semi–gods did get involved in human affairs. Supernatural beings and forces were regarded as part of the real world. People normally explained natural phenomena in a supernatural way by ascribing them to gods or semi–gods. For instance, the restoration of Alcestis was a credible story to an Athenian audience, because it was a result of the interference of a semi–god, namely Heracles.

In the *Alcestis*, Euripides begins by using ordinary language, and he then progresses to metaphorical language, exactly as he did in the *Helen*. This technique allows him firstly to describe vividly the tensions in a classical marriage, and secondly to express his voice for social reform by introducing the theme of restoration on the tragic scene. His metaphorical language examines the theme of restoration as a language game. Through *gloss analysis* Alcestis’ restoration becomes a post–modern language game, because it goes beyond the limits of the tragic and the real world too.

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10 For example, Minerva helped Odysseus during and after the Trojan War. See the *Iliad* of Homer (4: 1–73, 5: 711–846), and the *Odyssey* of Homer (1: 52–72, 94–108).


In the *Alcestis*, reality is represented allegorically, as was indicated above; this allegory becomes a metaphysical picture of the tragic world of Euripides. It also results in a metaphysical view of the real world. There the husband makes sense of the ambiguity of reality through the prism of misunderstanding in language (being–non–being). Euripides creates pseudo–propositions in order to dissolve them at the end of the play through *catharsis*. In **Episode B, Scene B** Admetus advances the pseudo–propositions noted above (lines: 519, 521, 527, 540) so that they will be dissolved by the theme of restoration. Similarly, the concern of an analytical philosopher is to dissolve the pseudo–propositions in language.

Euripides dissolves the dysfunctions in classical marriage by placing the dyad within a language game where the theme of restoration must be analysed in allegorical terms. But through *gloss analysis* a post–modern reading of Euripides is arrived at. He presents a metaphysical picture of the world by using irony and creating the theme of restoration: what is being, what is non–being, and what lies between them? This question is similar to another philosophical problem posed by the author in the *Helen*: what is φαίνεσθαι what is ε ναι? The analogy between these two problems is as follows: being and non–being are relevant to the ambiguity of reality but φαίνεσθαι and ε ναι have to do with the multiplicity of reality, as shown above.⁰¹³

Clearly, the distinction between being and non–being is a philosophical problem. But through *gloss analysis* it becomes a post–modern problem, because it causes misunderstanding in language between Admetus and Heracles. For Admetus, Alcestis’ non–existence is about to happen because her time is finished; but his extended time is about to begin. She helped him to exist for longer than the time allotted. But to the modern reader it is the demythologisation of time that actually happened to her. Past and present is one thing: it is the point where running time does not exist as a rule governing humanity and social life. In the **Outcome**, the problem seems to be dissolved when Heracles restores Alcestis (lines: 1072–1074).

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⁰¹³ See Chapter VI, Gloss Analysis of the Motif of Love in the Helen of Euripides.
For the reader this point provides a new way of interpreting reality. Admetus is happy and expresses little surprise at the restoration of his wife (lines: 1127, 1129, 1131). Of course, he doubts this extraordinary phenomenon but accepts Alcestis’ restoration with ease. These three lines mentioned above are enough to express the mystery of existence between being and non–being:

1129 «... λλ' ν θαπτον ε σορ δ ματμ' μ ν; ...».

(«... But do I see my wife whom I buried? ...»).

Euripides allows his audience to interpret the restoration of Alcestis as it wishes. One likely explanation has to do with the epilogue (lines: 1159–1163) of the play: the restoration of Alcestis is one of the shapes that the gods (in this case, a semi–god) may take and (s)he may show it in many ways. Another likely explanation is associated with the ambiguity of reality, which was not totally alien to the ancient Greeks. The priestess of the oracle of Delphi, Pythia, used to give ambiguous answers so that the receiver could interpret reality in many ways14. Euripides possibly transferred this way of thinking to the stage by creating an alternative plot, in order to impress his audience.

The *Alcestis* of Euripides is still relevant today; through *gloss analysis* it is possible that the theme of restoration used as a language game may happen not only in the textual world of Euripides, but in the real world as well. He presents a metaphysical view of the real world. He philosophises about the nature of human life and especially about the value of a woman’s life. The theme of restoration is not just philosophical fiction; it may be possible under certain circumstances. Alcestis died for her husband’s sake but she was restored to life after the process of his moral improvement.

Euripides imagines a tragic world – likely a real one – such as the philosophical world of Anaxagoras: the world can be deconstructed into its elements and then it can be reconstructed again without the elements losing their previous quality. This is quite similar to what happened to Alcestis. Euripides in his *Alcestis* creates an unusual scenario

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of the traditional myth in order to show how the human mind (Νοὶ ζ) can escape from the sensory world.

Through gloss analysis, the tragic world of the Alcestis speaks in a post–modern way today; the problems presented allegorically by Euripides become post–modern questions concerning modern society, because they go beyond reality by critiquing their traditional function. Euripides’ tragic world becomes gloss analytical because it shows the metaphysical structure of the textual and probably the real world as well.

Euripides’ philosophical fiction becomes post–modern through gloss analysis. Alcestis is a post–modern female symbol who struggles for survival in spite of her deconstruction. The grammar of justification results in the post–modern perspective, because the vindicated Alcestis is a character that emerges through the theme of restoration, which is ultimately a post–modern game. This theme transcends reality by showing up the function of the traditional rules governing the gender relationships. In fact, justification is something that comes from the recreated tragic world of Euripides; but the post–modern perspective comes from the deconstruction of his textual world through gloss analysis. The grammar of justification concludes elementary propositions, as was noted above. But it functions in different ways in the traditional myth, in Euripides’ version, and in modern society (see Diagrams 7.5, 7.6, and 7.7).

Actually, the grammar of justification signifies the beginning of Euripides’ post–modernism. His Alcestis lies between the real and the non–real world, the rational and the irrational. He introduces the reader to his post–modern tragic world. The post–modernism of this play lies beyond the truth and the limits of the existence. The restoration of Alcestis does not sound strange to modern ears. Today the ambiguity of reality is a central topic in the performing arts. For example, it is an expression of the real and the non–real in the Theatre of the Absurd. The Alcestis of Euripides is a product of the 5th century B.

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15 The Theatre of the Absurd is a movement on the modernist stage. The basic principle of theatrical absurdism is focused on the situation of humanity, which is philosophically absurd – comic as well as tragic. Eugene Ionesco (1912–1994) is regarded as the pioneer of the Theatre of Absurd. He established theatrical absurdism in countries (like Britain) previously resistant to it. According to him, pure drama is an action of universal significance that reproduces the nature of existence itself: in other words to represent the
C., but through *gloss analysis* it could be performed in the Theatre of the Absurd\(^{16}\) because it manifests against a world where people (like Admetus) live as prisoners of their ideas. The *Alcestis* of Euripides has the following elements in common with what is known as the Theatre of the Absurd:

a. The paradoxical contract of Admetus with the Fates is a unique event that supplies the possibility for a new paradoxical phenomenon, namely the theme of restoration.

b. The theme of restoration is an effort made by Euripides to represent the non–representable: the death of Alcestis is not a final event; her restoration is a possibility because of the phenomenon of death.

c. The appearance of Apollo on the tragic stage, who is the narrator in the *Prologue, Scene A, B* and visible to the audience, is obviously a unique event; it elevates the play to supernatural level.

d. The appearance of Death as a character on the tragic stage in the *Prologue, Scene B* is surely another unique event that creates a grotesque atmosphere.

e. The appearance of Heracles, who is a semi–god and semi–man on the tragic stage in *Episode B, Scene B* is another unique event that introduces the reader to the world of absurdity where:

Firstly, the hospitality offered to Heracles at the moment of Alcestis’ funeral and his ignorance about her death is another unique event that conveys a sense meaninglessness; secondly, the restoration of Alcestis in the *Outcome* is an achievement of Heracles who is a mythic hero; he struggles with Death and manages to rescue his victim, Alcestis. This paradoxical struggle is another unique event that makes the play unique.

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\(^{16}\) In this thesis the term absurd is used to refer to the irrational characteristics of the *Alcestis* of Euripides that assigns meaninglessness to the plot.
All of these elements create a new tragic world foreign to all others, which the audience has to experience for itself. So, a proposed contemporary version of the *Alcestis* of Euripides could be produced through *gloss analysis*: above all, the modern Alcestis is an experiment in the Theatre of the Absurd. It could be performed either as a single act or as an extension of Euripides’ tragic myth. The propositions proposed for the translation of the theme of restoration into a modern idiom (see Table 7.2, Example B) are used for this new version of the *Alcestis* based upon the rule *Making up a story and reading it*, as was noted above.
ALCESTIS OR THE HORSE FARM

SINGLE ACT

Characters

Admetus farmer, 47 years old.

His voice

Butler narrator, man about 60 years old.

Alcestis the farmer’s wife, 41 years old, she helps her husband at work; she is the manager of the museum of horses.

Her voice

Thomas son of Admetus and Alcestis, 13 years old.

Richard father of Admetus, he is responsible for the Guest House.

Hector Alcestis’ favourite horse.

Visitor A Richard’s old friend.

Visitor B visitor A’s son, doctor.

A note on staging

The scene is a house on a horse farm somewhere in Gauteng, South Africa. In the lounge there is a corner leather couch, an armchair, a coffee–table, a small bookcase, a fire–place, a phone device and pictures of horses everywhere. There is also an old round wall clock that has stopped at 5.30. The blinds are half–closed. A square mirror hangs above the couch. Admetus sleeps on the couch. Alcestis is about to enter the house. The butler–narrator is already on stage; he does not face the audience, so that his face is shown in the mirror. The light focuses on the movement of his legs – his shoes are dark brown and he is walking slowly and lazily.

Butler–Narrator: I am the butler of this house; my father was the butler of this house as well. I have been working here for almost thirty years. My lord is sleeping on the
couch (he points to Admetus, who is starting to snore; the light focuses on his naked legs – no socks and shoes). He is probably exhausted; he has been busy with the little foals all day long. He is ill. He suffers from a serious illness of the kidneys and needs a kidney transplant (whispering to the audience while Alcestis unlocks the door; the light focuses on the movement of her legs and on her white sport shoes – she walks proudly).

**Alcestis:** Oh! (she looks at her husband still sleeping; then to the butler). Did he have his supper?

**Butler–Narrator:** It’s raining again! It’s almost six o’clock (he looks at the clock on the wall which has stopped). Everyday it rains around six just for ten minutes. What strange weather!

**Alcestis:** The typical worlds... (she corrects her mistake) oh ... I mean words (pause ... she seats herself on the arm–chair, taking off her jacket and her shoes). Can you serve the supper on the tray please? Here.

**Butler–Narrator:** Yes, madam (he leaves the stage slowly).

**Alcestis:** (she thinks aloud but her voice is heard by the audience). It is unbelievable; he is sleeping without having had supper and without brushing his teeth. And he will wake up after two hours to have his supper and then he will continue sleeping on the couch. (A light is visible behind the blinds but she continues unperturbed). Just like his father. What can I do about it? Ignore him. No. Kick him. Wake him up. No I cannot do it, he will be scared – pause – Yes, why not? He is not the only person who works here. (She goes towards him and she finally stands near him looking at his face). He is looking tired (aloud now) like a horse who refuses to work. I will be waiting for him to wake up. (She moves back to her position while Admetus opens one eye only to watch her and then he closes it again. The butler enters the stage carrying a big rose wooden tray with no food at all, just the forks and the serviettes. He puts the tray on the coffee–table and he remains on the stage behind the small door that leads off stage so that half his face is visible in the mirror. Alcestis takes the tray and she starts eating normally – the song *Love will tear us apart* by Joy Division is on. Alcestis enjoys her meal by making a sound like mm... Before she is finished Admetus wakes up. (He is still sleepy; Alcestis does not pay any attention to him).

**Admetus:** Bon appetite (to Alcestis; he goes near the blinds; he thinks aloud; Alcestis does not hear but the audience does). Should I tell her my dream? She is not interested
in dreams, I know it. She won’t understand it; forget about it say something else; it is not important (now speaking aloud). Oh, I had a strange dream (pause) but I thought it was not mine (pause, he looks at her but she is still busy) of course when you sleep you probably dream of something (pause – he seats himself on the couch) I was about to die (pause) lying down on this couch of which the colour is orange (pause).

**Alcestis:** Orange, yes, I would like an orange. Can I have one please? (she looks at the mirror where the butler’s face is shown; he moves his head positively but he remains there).

**Admetus:** (he thinks aloud; Alcestis does not hear but the audience does). Did you see? she ignores you; you waste your time (he speaks aloud) then a horseman in white enters the house holding a letter; it was written in a strange language, it looked like Coptic (pause) anyway, he gave it to me to correct the mistakes. How could I do this without understanding the message? I told him to wait for you but he answered me that he was in a hurry (the butler leaves the stage).

**Alcestis:** Just to remind you that Thomas will get his report tomorrow (she uses the serviette while the butler comes again holding a green apple).

**Admetus:** (he thinks aloud; Alcestis does not hear but the audience does). She thinks that she is the only person who must remember everything about her son; do not answer her (he speaks aloud). I tried to offer him my cup of tea in order to delay him but I could not move; my legs were frozen, like deep frozen lamb leg. He was unhappy with me, I knew it. At last, you came to translate the letter.

**Alcestis:** (she thinks aloud; Admetus does not hear but the audience does). He thinks that I am an idiot; I must do everything for him even though in a dream! (now aloud). What clothes did I wear? (she eats the apple while the butler takes the tray; the rain stops).

**Admetus:** (he thinks aloud; Alcestis does not hear but the audience does). She wants to know what clothes she wore; this is ridiculous ... don’t answer ... actually I don’t remember at all (now speaking aloud) you were a shadow talking this language I could not understand; finally you drank my tea and the horseman went away silently but he left the horse (pause). No, I think the horse was there before he came but (pause) I am not sure.

**Alcestis:** What kind of horse was that?
Admetus: (he thinks aloud; Alcestis does not hear but the audience does). Oh yes, she is interested in horses as well (he speaks aloud). A normal horse, like Hector (he moves back to the couch – the music stops).

Alcestis: You know what, I must write to my cousin in Australia to invite her here to spend her holidays with us. She loves horses. You remember her, don’t you?

Admetus: You can phone her. It is not necessary to send her a letter. Are you talking about Lisa? Oh, she is deaf so it is better to write her. I think you are right, my dear.

Alcestis: No, you are right. I will phone her; otherwise she will think that I treat her like a deaf person.

Admetus: But, as far as I know she is deaf.

Alcestis: (she thinks aloud; Admetus does not hear but the audience does). What is he trying to tell me? That he does not want her to come here, or is he disparaging my relatives again? (she speaks aloud) my darling, you will never understand. If a deaf person is truly deaf do not treat him like a deaf person, because you will hurt him.

Admetus: I am sure you will manage to communicate with her; she speaks to you quite properly, you answer her quite properly but the result is not quite proper...

Alcestis: Oh, don’t be rude (pause) you know she never got married because she is a deaf person. This still hurts her, you know it.

Admetus: (he thinks aloud; Alcestis does not hear but the audience does). Again this cousin; she is so boring, she eats nuts all the time and she says I lose weight by eating nuts (now he speaks aloud) no, I did not know it. I though she became deaf because she married twice (the butler brings the same empty tray and he puts it on the coffee–table; he moves back off stage).

Alcestis: This is what is called black humour, my darling (she goes now towards the window).

Admetus: Your cousin is so friendly; I remember her sitting here in the armchair reading a magazine – I think it was about marriage and wedding venues – when Thomas came to pick her up for a horse ride (pause) and did you know what she told him? (pause).

Alcestis: The rain starts again (she raises the blinds).

Admetus: Can I take this magazine with me? (he imitates her voice).

Alcestis: And how did Thomas answer?

Admetus: I do not know but this is not the point.
Alcestis: Of course, it is the point. He told her that she could take her magazine with but she should ask Hector first.

Admetus: Thomas is like me (proudly). Only my son could give such an answer.

Alcestis: (she thinks aloud; Admetus does not hear but the audience does). He thinks that his son is a copy of himself; how selfish he is (she speaks aloud). Thomas is not like you. Thomas is Thomas. You are you.

Admetus: (he thinks aloud; Alcestis does not hear but the audience does). She thinks that her son takes after her: serious and mysterious but she is mistaken; Thomas belongs to me (he speaks aloud). You are talking about Thomas. Look at him. He looks like me, the same eyes, the same hair, the same profile, and the same character. They are in his genes (he starts eating).

Alcestis: Thomas is himself. Brown eyes, brown hair ... look at you ... Blue eyes. No hair ...

Admetus: My eyes are not blue any more.

Alcestis: Really? What colour are they?

Admetus: Grey... Green–grey.

Alcestis: Sorry, I thought they were still blue. I did not notice it this morning.

Admetus: (he thinks aloud; Alcestis does not hear but the audience does). She didn’t notice it, you see, if I die will she notice it or not? Of course she will. An absence is usually remarkable, at least the first six months (now speaking aloud). One blue, one green–grey (he is still eating).

Alcestis: What?

Admetus: Nothing. Just forget about it. Did you see the little foals? How cute they are...

Alcestis: Yes, they are adorable, especially this one with the white birthmark on his left leg ... (she moves back to the armchair while the butler appears into the mirror; pause – it lasts about one minute; then Alcestis says). Hector is jealous of his babies, you know; I saw him kicking the last one, you must watch him all the time.

Admetus: (he thinks aloud; Alcestis does not hear but the audience does). If ... if I tell her about my illness how will she react? Probably she will start mourning before my time comes. No, she will ask the doctor first or ... she will suggest me to try a homeopathic therapy (pause) or she will cancel her cousin’s journey.

Alcestis: (she thinks aloud; Admetus does not hear but the audience does). Nonsense.
I am talking nonsense. I wish I could go away for a while, a trip to Europe or Latin America; what about Italy or Peru? Why not? Thomas could accompany me after his exams. How can I tell it to my husband? I have never gone anywhere without him (pause) expect when my father died. It’s a long time ago. This is his country. I am a foreigner here but of course he needs me (she goes towards him but after a while she comes back to her position). Yes, this is the proper word: he needs me but he does not love me any more. He loves Thomas more than anyone else; if something happens to Thomas he would die for him but not for me (pause).

Admetus: The soup is not spicy tonight (he finishes his meal and he puts the tray on the coffee-table). Can I have the dessert please? (He looks at the mirror – the butler moves back; someone is knocking at the door. Admetus’ father, Richard, enters the stage. He is tall and gorgeous – the light focuses on the movement of his legs. (He walks lazily).

Alcestis: Come in.

Richard: Well, I have a surprise for both of you (pause). Guests.

Admetus: Guests? What guests? (he thinks aloud; Alcestis does not hear but the audience does). I don’t like unexpected guests.

Richard: They are special guests. It’s about my best friend in the army and his son. He has been looking for me for years and finally he found me thanks to his son’s horse.

Alcestis: (she is thinking but his voice is heard by the audience). I like unexpected guests especially if it happens every ten years. Let’s see them.

Admetus: What happened to his son’s horse?

Richard: His horse has the same name as yours, Hector.

Admetus: Oh, this name is not so common. How did he choose this name?

Richard: He is fond of ancient Greek mythology, that’s all.

Admetus: I see. And where are they now? (Richard sits down on the couch next to his son).

Richard: They are resting in their room; I gave them the Horse room, you know.

Admetus: Are they going to stay here for a couple of days? (with doubt).

Richard: I think for a couple of weeks; they didn’t take a holiday for two years in a row you know.

Admetus: Two years! I didn’t take a holiday for five years!

Alcestis: Really? When? (surprised).
Admetus: When Thomas was born. You remember, don’t you?
Alcestis: No, I don’t remember. I remember that you went to Cairo for some horses.
Admetus: It was not to Cairo. I went to Pretoria for business. Not for a holiday.
Alcestis: This does not make any sense; sometimes business and holidays go together.
(Richard becomes nervous about this conversation).
Richard: I invited them to come here for tea. Do you mind?
Admetus: Yes, I do. I am not in a good mood today.
Alcestis: No, I don’t mind. What time will they come?
Richard: Around six (he looks at the wall clock that has stopped at 5.30).
Alcestis: Go to the bedroom if you feel tired (to Admetus).
Admetus: I don’t want to be rude (the butler comes and brings a small tray with nuts; he put it on the coffee–table).
Richard: They won’t be boring to you, you’ll see. Stay.
Admetus: Should I stay or should I go? (he is thinking but his voice is heard by the audience). A meeting with strangers who used to be friends once upon a time make me sick.
Richard: This is not a philosophical problem, you know.
Admetus: Will we talk about philosophy?
Richard: I don’t know. Probably we will talk about the weather and globalization.
(a knocking at the door). Oh, they are coming.
Alcestis: Smile and be polite (the butler opens the door; two men enter the stage, they are both dressed in white; the old man looks younger and the young looks older. The young man holds a silver sword).
Richard: Come in. Let me introduce you to my family; this is my son, Admetus, and that is my daughter–in law, Alcestis. Take a seat please (they sit down the couch but in opposite directions).
Visitor A: Hello. Nice to meet you (softly).
Visitor B: Good evening. I am terribly sorry that we arrived so late but we have been travelling for two days.
Alcestis: Don’t mention it (she thinks aloud; Alcestis does not hear but the audience does). His hair looks silky and he has a baby face, his hands are old enough and the skin looks rough, of course the clothes are clean and modern but the shoes (the light focuses on
his crème leather shoes) looks dirty. He is supposed to be tired but he looks refreshed; and
his eyes ... (pause).

Admetus: May I offer you tea or ... (kindly; he thinks aloud; Admetus does not hear but
the audience does). He tries to be gentle in order to impress my wife, yes, of course but he
looks like a doctor who cares about his patience only in case that he pays him in advance.
He is not gentle at all.

Visitor B: I would like a cup of wine, if you don’t mind (he thinks aloud; Admetus and
Alcestis do not hear but the audience does). What a strange couple! The wife seems
stressed but she still has beauty; the husband is selfish but he tries to be good to us.

Admetus: Yes... Why not? (he looks at the butler who stands beyond the arm–chair; he is
thinking but his voice is heard by the audience). He wants to drink wine, of course like a
real lord (to the Visitor A). What can I offer you?

Visitor A: Tea please. It will relax me.

Admetus: (he thinks aloud; Alcestis does not hear but the audience does). I think that
wine can relax you but tea ... a real Englishman.

Alcestis: (he thinks aloud; Alcestis does not hear but the audience does). Oh, his eyes ...
they are sparkling like ... like ... the god of love in ancient myths ... what is his name? I
will ask Thomas; I am sure he will remember it.

Richard: My old friend, I’ m so happy to see you again after 32 years. You know, when I
think about my youth I always think about you and the time we spent together in the
army. Oh, happy days... (nostalgically – the butler leaves the stage).

Visitor A: Do you remember when I first met you? You asked me to do you a favour; to
do your duty in order to meet your girlfriend and in return you would do double duty for
me the next day.

Richard: Of course, I remember it but it was you who asked me this favour; you had a
date with a girl with red hair. I think her name was Sara or Shirley... she smoked cigars...

Visitor A: No, no wait a minute. I used to smoke  marijuana....

Richard: That was why you stopped seeing her (pause).

Visitor A: No, no ... as a matter of fact, I stopped going out with her because she was in
love with someone else. She was a fan of the Rolling Stones and Mick Jagger.

Richard: Are you talking about the real Mick Jagger? (Admetus gets bored but Alcestis
and visitor B are interested in this dialogue).
Visitor A: Yes, unfortunately I could not compete with him; she finally bore a son to him but he never recognised him...

Richard: Oh, that’s celebrities...

Admetus: Excuse me, this conversation is very interesting but I think (pause).

Richard: No, don’t go.

Admetus: I’m not going anywhere (the butler brings a tray with an empty glass of wine and an empty mug; he appears in the mirror).

Alcestis: Well, I don’t feel so good today. I think this rainy weather makes me feel like a cloud ...

Visitor B: Hm... How does a cloud feel? (impressed).

Alcestis: A cloud full of rain wants to break out and when it does so it may feel free (surprised also – pause).

Admetus: Very good example.... And what happens if the whole sky gets angry? (anxiously).

Visitor B: I guess the sky will break out in a real storm (the rain outside gets stronger and a thunder falls) like this tonight...

Alcestis: (she thinks aloud; Admetus does not hear but the audience does). Apparently, he is on my side.

Admetus: Similarly to volcanoes. You know, in Mexico there is whole village built up near an active volcano and people living there worship it like a god.

Visitor A: Yes, that’s true. I have been in Mexico many years ago with my first wife; I still remember the faces of Indians when they were told to go away from the volcano. They refused to leave this area because they believed that it was blessed.

Admetus: I read it in National Geographic magazine. I was impressed by the way that poor people think about a natural phenomenon. You know, they believe that the volcano protects them and gives them the means to live because they produce very good quality maize. The volcano is to them both god and doctor.

Richard: What is your opinion about this, doctor? (to Visitor B).

Visitor B: (he takes his empty glass) Cheers! Of course, it is very interesting to study ancient cultures and medicines; in some cases it helps modern doctors to understand the psychology of patience.
Admetus: Such as? (Now he is interested in this conversation; he thinks aloud; Alcestis and Visitor B do not hear but the audience does). Is he a real doctor? He looks like a secretary in a doctor’s room, too.

Alcestis: (she thinks aloud; Admetus and Visitor B do not hear but the audience does). A doctor holding a sword is a real doctor. I bet he is a cardiologist.

Visitor B: (he thinks aloud; Admetus and Alcestis do not hear but the audience does). I am sure that they both don’t believe that I am a doctor. This is an absolute surprise to them.

Alcestis: Doctor, are you experienced in treating a chronic disease like diabetes?

Visitor B: I specialise in the treatment of cancer but I meet many patients who suffer from other diseases like heart troubles or diabetes.

Admetus: (he thinks aloud; Alcestis and Visitor B do not hear but the audience does). Who the hell is this man? Why did he come here? Was it quite by accident or... something else...

Alcestis: You know I live with one kidney because I donated the other one to my husband two weeks ago.

Admetus: I desperately needed a kidney transplant because I am a diabetic who used insulin for more than 10 years. My kidneys got damaged; so I had no choice. My father could have but he didn’t because he was too old. My mother is not alive so the only person to support me was my wife.

Visitor B: (he takes his empty glass). Cheers! As a matter of fact, insulin is a tried and tasted medicine; it helps the patient to live a normal life, you know, and not to be on a strict diet for his/her whole life ... now some doctors are researching new medications for treating cancer or for diabetes but they are still in the experimental stage (waiting for the next question).

Alcestis: So, patches are still an experiment (sadly).

Visitor: Science progresses thanks to these patients who want to test a new medication first...

Alcestis: This is a very difficult decision but it’s up to the person of course.

Visitor B: Some terminal patients decide to have euthanasia, you know.

Alcestis: Are you talking about what is called mercy killing?

Visitor: In such cases the doctor relieves someone who suffers from an incurable illness.
Alcestis: From a scientific perspective it seems to be easy. But from a human perspective it is the act of killing someone painlessly, isn’t it?

Admetus: And what is the new medicine for cancer? (seriously).

Visitor B: There is a new triple injection that has to do with the mood of the patient...

Admetus: What do you mean by that? (he thinks aloud; Alcestis and Visitor B do not hear but the audience does). He thinks that we believe in his lies.

Alcestis: I think I heard of this but it has to do with the function of the cells that cancer effects. The natural hormones have to do with the mood ... And sometimes, optimistic patients may help to heal themselves. Is it so, doctor?

Visitor B: Not exactly. I am talking about a new medicine based on the hormones produced by the body. It is similar to what happens with in vitro fertilisation.

Admetus: How many terminal patients are trying this new injection?

Visitor B: About 40, as far as I know.

Admetus: And how many took the option of euthanasia?

Visitor B: I do not know. (He tries to avoid questions like this).

Admetus: You are a doctor ... You have to know (suspiciously – pause).

Visitor B: A lot of people believe that a doctor is a small god; this is quite similar to what Mexicans used to believe about volcanoes. A volcano is a god and a doctor at the same time as you said before. In Western culture, a doctor is a god but not a volcano. If he were a volcano could he be automatically a doctor?

Admetus: Sorry, I’m not with you...

Alcestis: I think you mean that a real doctor is not a volcano of course but he could be regarded as a god.

Admetus: Or that a doctor could be regarded as a volcano – an active one of course, but not as a god; because god is everywhere but a volcano is not.

Visitor B: Listen to me ... In our society a volcano has nothing to do with a doctor or a god because a volcano is something natural like a mountain but it has a difference: if it sleeps it functions like a mountain; if it is an active one it can cause a lot of damage. If a doctor works similar to an active volcano he will lose the majority of his patients... (pause) think of a doctor who is about to explode in anger because his patient is lying to him that he takes his medicine but in fact he tries an alternative cure like homeopathy.

Admetus: I still cannot understand what the relationship is between a doctor, a god and a volcano.
Richard: My son, you cannot understand it because you are not a doctor.

Admetus: I am not a doctor either, or a god, or a volcano.

Richard: You are not a doctor either or a god but you are an active volcano ... For instance, if the food is not good enough you become very angry ... or if Thomas does not get good marks at maths you are about to break out ...

Admetus: Because I pay for extra lessons, you know it very well ... About food, you also know my theory; if you get good food you are happy because you have the right level of energy. And energy is the basis for a healthy life.

Alcestis: I think that a volcano viewed as a doctor and a god is paganism, isn’t it? But a doctor is similar to a god because he can save a patient’s life. But how can a volcano save people’s lives?

Admetus: By protecting them from its disaster; by warning them to go away when it is about to explode...

Visitor B: This is a good question to be answered especially by the Mexicans...

Alcestis: And how can a doctor protect his patient from bad information?

Visitor B: A patient protects himself by following the rules; he takes the medicine, he goes for a medical check–up frequently and he trusts his doctor.

Alcestis: Sometimes, the relationship between a patient and a doctor is problematic because a doctor is superior and the patient is inferior; a patient is dependent on a doctor. He hopes that a good doctor can cure him.

Visitor B: Sometimes, a doctor is dependent on a patient as well because a doctor needs patients of course. So, he must be good to his patients.

Admetus: And a patient must be good to his doctor so that the doctor will be good to him as well.

Visitor B: This reminds me of the question Did the chicken make the egg or the egg make the chicken?

Admetus: Both, because they are parts of a genetic code.

Alcestis: Oh, this problem has to do more with philosophy than biology.

Visitor B: It is a problem that comes from biology and influences philosophy in some way.
Admetus: If a chicken is made by an egg, and an egg is made by a chicken where can you find the beginning of this story?
Alcestis: In religion. God is the creator of the universe, so he made the chicken that made the egg.
Visitor B: Or in philosophy. If life on the planet Earth exists because of what is called biological progress and only this happens, one can say that a big egg is the beginning of life.
Richard: Or that a monkey was the first being on earth ... I’ m just joking....
Admetus: We are talking seriously here, you know...
Richard: Oh, I am sorry. I just wanted to give a lighter tone to this conversation.
Alcestis: The embryo grows in a bag inside the womb; in fact, this bag looks like an egg. If this egg breaks, the embryo must come out immediately because the water of the bag breaks (seriously).
Admetus: Anyway, I do not like eggs.
Visitor B: Omelette with mushrooms is fine.
Visitor A: I prefer fried eggs with sausages.
Richard: A real English breakfast.
Alcestis: Egg is a basic food of a balanced nutrition. Look at its shape and colour. It has the shape of an ellipse and it is usually white or crème; it can not stand anywhere by itself due to its shape (seriously).
Admetus: Crème eggs are free–range eggs.
Visitor A: Oh, is that so?
Admetus: Yes. If you want eggs for breakfast you will taste our crème eggs.
Visitor A: No, thanks. Actually I have not eaten eggs since I was nine years old; my mother fed me eggs with sugar; the smell was terrible because they were raw beaten eggs with sugar (disgusting).
Admetus: What about chocolate eggs?
Visitor A: Ask my son; he loved them when he was a child.
Visitor B: Really, I liked them very much because a chocolate egg is neither white nor crème. It is the king of eggs. When I studied at University, my girlfriend gave me a chocolate egg made from Belgian chocolate, and I fell in love with her for the whole semester! (He laughs).
Admetus: So, chocolate, eggs and love go together.
Visitor B: Chocolate eggs and love may go together if you are young.
Admetus: Love and eggs are made from chocolate if you still feel young...
Alcestis: Or chocolate is made from love and love is made from an egg...
Visitor B: Love is like a chocolate egg at the beginning but it may become a raw beaten egg that smells badly in the end...
Alcestis: You are quite a pessimistic person, doctor (suspiciously).
Admetus: No, my dear, he is telling the whole truth ... that’s all.
Visitor B: Love is truly a fine quality chocolate, no doubt. Chocolate is a temptation so love may be a chocolate temptation if you cannot avoid eating chocolates.
Richard: Indeed, this is a very good explanation to what may occur to one who likes eating chocolates, while he is not a child any more (sadly).
Alcestis: You remember the Tolds, the old pair who lived in a small cottage in the village? They had four children and they spent their life raising them; even though when the children had their own families sometimes they had to look after their grandchildren, until they went to school.
Admetus: That was why they passed away early...
Alcestis: This is what I am talking about. When a stroke hit the husband, the wife looked after him like a small boy. And he was happy when he met death...
Admetus: Yes, lying in bed and all the family waiting for him to die...
Alcestis: It is happiness, isn’t it? He had a full life, he raised his children and his grandchildren; what else could he expect from life?
Admetus: Health, travelling, peace. A few years just to see people living on Mars (pause).
Alcestis: But he saw people going to the moon, he used all the modern facilities, like television, the washing machine, a mobile phone even though a computer. You know very well that he had an e-mail address and he communicated with his granddaughter, Alice.
Admetus: Because he felt isolated, that was why. He was an old man but he wanted to live (emphasis).
Alcestis: Oh, no. I do not believe it. His wife loved him so much that she wanted to jump into the grave at his funeral. You remember it, don’t you?
Admetus: Of course, I remember that day. It was so funny.... it was a rainy day; the sand was very wet and she finally slipped down and then she used her umbrella to get up.
Alcestis: It was very sad, my dear; she was almost a pitiful wife just before the end of the world. What did you want to do? To stay there in the open grave?

Admetus: She said so...

Alcestis: Yes, but she did not mean it.

Admetus: But she should mean it.

Alcestis: Are you serious? To be buried alive with her dead husband?

Admetus: This is what is called eternal love... (emphasis).

Alcestis: I am sorry, but this is not true love; you are talking about a sacrifice.

Admetus: I do not think that she sacrificed herself for her husband. In fact, she did not wait for a whole year to pass after her husband’s death and she remarried! She was only 65 years old (ironically).

Alcestis: No, twelve months passed from his death and then she decided to remarry because she felt alone; she could not live in an empty house. That’s all.

Admetus: But the whole family was against this second marriage, you know.

Richard: Well, I am sorry but I think it is time to go to bed. I have to wake up early in the morning (he gets up).

Visitor A: Wait, wait for me. I am coming with you. Let the young stay up (they go out).

Good–night.

Admetus: Could you do it for me, my darling?

Alcestis: To do what? I have already done my duty (she thinks aloud; Admetus and Visitor B do not hear but the audience does). I knew that he was about to ask such a personal question in front of a stranger. He is rude!

Visitor B: Don’t worry. This is a very interesting conversation. If I can help you it is my pleasure.
Admetus: I am sorry about this but you cannot help us.
Visitor B: You never know. Can I ask what the problem is?
Alcestis: The problem is complicated ... just forget it.
Admetus: It is not very complicated ... can I explain it to you? I just want to have a second opinion. You are a doctor, aren’t you? (the butler comes back with an empty glass for visitor B and than he goes off stage).
Visitor B: I am not sure if it is only a medical problem...
Admetus: Here we have a couple who lived together for almost sixteen years and have a child of 13.
Visitor B: That’s nice. Where is your child? I did not meet him.
Alcestis: He is studying maths in his room. He wants to be an analytical philosopher.
Visitor B: Very unusual job.
Alcestis: He believes that this is an activity and not a real job... but you know how teenagers think about the world. They think they can earn money by doing philosophy or they can change the world by using a poem...
Visitor B: This is not totally a mistake. It is the first step to understand the outside and the inner world (he is touching his sword).
Admetus: I am wondering what the first step for a husband to understand his wife would be. The case is as follows; the husband is a farmer and his wife helps him. They spent a good life together but someday he finds out that only one of his kidneys is functional but the other one is almost damaged because he was a diabetic.
Alcestis: The husband expects a donor but nobody can help him except his good wife... we know the story.
Admetus: The point is that this good wife does not want to donate her healthy kidney to her hopeless husband...
Alcestis: In fact, the hopeless wife decides to do so even though there is a 40% possibility of failure ... that means that her life is in danger after all ... or that two lives are in danger.
Visitor B: This is not an unusual event; it has to do with ethics and medical science.
Admetus: And what do ethics say about illness?
Visitor B: This is a personal matter you know. It’s up to both of you.
Admetus: It is not only a personal problem but a social one.
Alcestis: How can your personal problem be a societal one at the same time?
Admetus: It is not only my personal problem, my dear; it is also a personal problem for many people all over the world. Do you know how many people suffer from such illness? So if many people have the same problem, then you can talk about a societal problem and not only a personal one (emphasis).

Alcestis: I know that the problem of drugs is a family and societal problem as well because a lot of young people take drugs and they get addicted; that is why we talk about a social problem which the whole family is involved.

Visitor B: A societal problem is a problem that concerns the whole society and not only the family (pause).

Admetus: Personal medical problems are societal because they concern people living in society.

Alcestis: How must society solve all these personal problems that may affect the whole society?

Admetus: People must solve them because people living together make up a society; me, you, neighbours, doctors, teachers, priests, philosophers, artists, plumbers, electricians, governors, everyone...

Alcestis: How can a plumber solve your problem? He knows only how to fix taps...

Admetus: But if a plumber knows a good doctor who may help me, I will consider him as a person who is concerned about other peoples’ problems.

Visitor B: People sensitised to societal problems will create a better society or they will live together in a global world where the neighbour’s problem is not foreign to them...

Alcestis: But my husband solved his problem. I can not understand why he talks about it any more...

Admetus: I did not solve it because it is not easy to solve a problem relating to health and then to forget it. You see, I have to live with it for the rest of my life and this is not simple at all. I must change my lifestyle; for example, I cannot drink wine any more, only to pretend that I drink (he raises his empty glass).

Alcestis: And your wife supports you (she raises her empty glass as well) because a good wife must support her husband not only in good moments but in bad ones too (neutrally).

Admetus: The family is a support system, isn’t it? So, the wife must support her husband and the husband must support his wife (pause). What is so strange about this?

Alcestis: Oh, this is a theory, my darling, just a theory that makes husbands proud of their humanism...
Admetus: But I did not force you to donate one of your healthy kidneys, did I?
Alcestis: I did not have a choice, you know (she goes near the fire–place that is off) oh, it burns here...
Admetus: Why do you say so? You were not under any obligation of course...
Alcestis: Really? (annoyed). Tell me who else was available to help you expect me (pause). What about your father? Or anyone of your relatives or your friends? You remember that your father told you that he was old enough and he was in high risk; your relatives did not answer at all and your friends did not even phone you ... So I was the only person left to help you even though there was a possibility of failure. I had also to change my lifestyle and to adjust it to yours as well.
Visitor B: Congratulations, you took the right decision.
Alcestis: Thank you. At least, somebody says that it was the right thing. But you know what... if this happened to me would my husband have helped me? This is a question that I am trying to answer.
Admetus: First of all, you are happy because you don’t have such a problem. Secondly, you waste your time by thinking of such a possibility.
Alcestis: Sometimes a possibility is not far from reality and reality quite close to a possibility...
Admetus: Reality is reality and nothing more than this.
Alcestis: Reality is an illusion. We see only reflections of something else (pause).
Visitor B: But an illusion is a possibility that may come true.
Alcestis: So, reality is an illusion that may be possible.
Admetus: A possibility is an illusion that may be real under certain circumstances. For example, if a few years ago one told me that I would suffer from kidney desease I would have regarded him as mad. But you never know. Good luck may change to bad luck. And look at me now (sadly). I had to beg you for my life (pause).
Visitor B: And things may change from bad luck to good luck. After all thanks to your wife (Alcestis goes back to the arm–chair and she closes her eyes; she looks tired).
Admetus: I hope so.
Visitor B: I think your wife wants you to thank her for her gift and to share your thoughts with her. I am talking as a doctor (the butler comes back and he takes the empty glasses).
Admetus: You know what ... can you keep a secret? I am not a bad husband (he whispers to him) I thought of going on a holiday to the Greek islands, just the two of us. We have not been on holiday for a long time ... this is a surprise.

Visitor B: This is a very good idea, but you must consult your doctor first.

Admetus: Yes, of course, we are under medical supervision always (he looks at visitor B’s sword; he did not notice it earlier). What’s this? Is it a real sword?

Visitor B: Yes. I bought it in Malta when I went there for a medical seminar ... last year. Do you like it? Have a look at it (he gives it to Admetus).

Admetus: Oh, thank you (he takes it with pleasure).

Admetus: It looks like a medieval sword.

Visitor B: It is medieval. It belonged to Frederic Ahlieri B’, Duke of Sicily, and the most barbarian killer of pirates. He lived at the end of the 15th century.

Admetus: It seems very old but it is in a very good condition.

Visitor B: Exactly. I picked it up at an auction. As a matter of fact, I chose it from many other swords for my collection because its shape appealed to me.

Admetus: Do you collect swords? (surprised).

Visitor B: Yes, I do. I have a big collection of ancient, medieval and modern swords. My grandfather started to collect swords a long time ago and I inherited from him.

Admetus: Hmm... very good idea (he observes the sword and then gives it back to visitor B).

Visitor B: I will show my collection to you if you would like, of course.

Admetus: With pleasure (excited).

Visitor B: (he thinks aloud; Admetus does not hear but the audience does). Is this the first step to know each other? He looks at Alcestis, who seems to be asleep.

Admetus: Would you like me to show you my collection of wines?

Visitor B: Oh, do you collect wines?

Admetus: Yes I do. I have a good collection of local and imported wines. Tonight we taste Chevalier dry red. It is French.

Visitor B: Nice taste; smooth and ... (he tries to find the proper word).

Admetus: I will give this collection to my son one day. Why do I keep it since I cannot drink any more?

Visitor B: Never forget. A collection is always precious. It is an investment. The older it is the better it becomes.
Admetus: Come with me to the cellar. You will see the best wine collection in the whole country (to Alcestis). My darling, would you like to join us? (no answer). Ok, have some rest (they go off stage; Alcestis does not move and the light is switched off; the butler appears into the mirror holding a candle).

Butler–Narrator: What happens if death comes so close and nobody realises it? She looks like she is sleeping but she is dead. Look at her; she sits so peacefully because...

*The face of death is not scary*

*It comes with joy*

*Petals of roses are scattered*

*Oh, why did you leave us so early?*

Her husband is busy showing his wine collection to his guest and he does not notice that Alcestis is not with them (the butler continues in dramatic way).

*How can I capture the moment that becomes a butterfly;*

*How can I capture the time that flies?*

*Snow, snail, sneeze...*

Now they are touching the dust on the bottles and they are telling to each other *this wine comes from times past straight to our table... it is amazing...* while Alcestis is dead.

Sometimes, in such a case the whole family laments the person who has just passed away. But how will Admetus react? And what about their son? (Richard comes back, he knocks at the door and he then opens it).

Richard: I must have left them here (he looks for his glasses ... then he sees Alcestis; he talks to her). Oh, I am back because I lost my glasses. Did you see them? I think I forgot them at the table ... but they are not here ... (again to her). Oh did you fall asleep on the arm–chair? You will twist your neck there. It happened to me, you know... (he still looks for his glasses around – pause – suddenly he looks at her and he hesitatingly goes near her; he touches her but no reaction). Alcestis ... Alcestis ... Can you hear me? What happened to you? Where is your husband?

Butler–Narrator: In the cellar. Admetus is showing his wine collection to the guest.

Richard: Go and tell them to come here immediately. Quickly. Alcestis does not wake up (the butler goes off stage). Why is the light switched off? (Richard tries to switch it on but no result). Oh, is there a power cut? Oh, my God what happened here? (he touches Alcestis so that her arm lies on the arm–chair). Come on Alcestis... wake up! Wake up!
(he slaps her gently on the cheek and then he checks her pulse. At this time Admetus and the guest enter the stage again, while the butler lights a few candles in the room and then he appears in the mirror holding his candle).

**Admetus:** What happened here? (he carries a bottle of wine and he puts it on the table).

**Richard:** Alcestis cannot wake up (twice).

**Admetus:** What are you talking about? (scared).

**Richard:** I found her sitting on the arm–chair. I thought she was sleeping. I called her but she is not responding. I cannot find a pulse (scared).

**Visitor B:** Let me see her. I am a doctor. Don’t panic (he comes closer and he checks her pulse – pause). She is not breathing. Let us lie her down on the floor and try artificial respiration (Admetus and his father do so but the corpse is about to fall down so they try to hold it). Carefully, is she too heavy? (finally they lie her down). Okay, who wants to try first?

**Admetus:** I don’t know how to do this (scared).

**Richard:** Neither do I. I am sorry.

**Visitor B:** Let me show you. I will perform it ten times (he does so, but to no avail – he looks exhausted). Now it is your turn (to Admetus).

**Admetus:** Oh, can you help me? Please show me how to do this.

**Visitor B:** Do not waste time. Take a deep breath and then blow into her mouth. Don’t forget to push her chest rhythmically every time you blow in (Admetus does so ten times but nothing happens – to his father). Now it is your turn.

**Richard:** I will try to bring her back to life (he does so for ten times but no benefit again – he collapses). What will we do now, doctor? Thanks God you are here tonight...

**Visitor B:** I will have to examine her. Let me go to my room and fetch my instruments. Do not remove her (he runs).

**Richard:** What happened here? (scared).

**Admetus:** Nothing. We were talking when Alcestis sat down to the arm–chair.

**Richard:** You must tell me the truth. I am your father. You can trust me.

**Admetus:** Do you know what are you talking about?

**Richard:** How did she die?

**Admetus:** I do not know. I ... I am astonished ... I was talking to the guest when she sat down in the arm–chair and we both thought that she was sleeping. I did not see anything strange.
Richard: Are you saying that you did not realise your wife had died?
Admetus: I am telling you the truth. I don’t know what happened to her. Before we left she was talking to us and she did not complain of anything ... (scared).
Richard: But nobody will believe your story, especially the police.
Admetus: I ... I do not understand.
Richard: I just warn you that you must keep your temper when the police will come.
Admetus: Did you call the police?
Richard: No, but we must call them as quickly as possible.
Admetus: Oh, I really do not know what to say. Just a few minutes ago we were sitting here and then our guest and I went down to the cellar. But I told you I thought she was asleep. And now I am back and she is dead. It is unbelievable...
Richard: Do you understand what will happen? What are you going to tell to your son? That you left his mother in order to show your quest your wine collection...
Admetus: Yes. It is true.
Richard: Look my son. Probably, people will say: he lives thanks to his wife but he is behind her death. He accepted her donation.
Admetus: But I have a witness.
Richard: And will he tell the same story as you? (The visitor B enters the stage holding his stethoscope).
Visitor B: Let me examine her (they both go away – the doctor examines her and then he turns to her husband). Your wife is dead. I am sorry. It seems that she died from a heart attack.
Admetus: Could this be because she donated her kidney?
Visitor B: It is possible. In such cases the donor must be under medical supervision for at least twelve months.
Admetus: She went to our doctor last week. She was fine. Oh my God... I cannot believe it (he walks slowly; he is about to collapse).
Visitor B: Sometimes a heart attack is a sudden event that even a doctor cannot predict (he is still above Alcestis’ corpse).
Admetus: Are you trying to tell me that it just happened, doctor?
Visitor B: No, what I am trying to say is that your wife was in high risk after her kidney was donated and she finally had a heart attack. I know she was fine ten minutes ago and
she talked to us. It must have happened after we went down to the wine cellar or just in
time. We should not have gone. And, who knows, I could have saved her...

**Admetus**: Now it is over. This silly idea to show you my wine collection was mine.
That’s very unfortunate (he sits down to the arm–chair). And now? What will I do now?
How can I live without her? She meant a lot to me. It’s my fault. Why did I leave her to
donate her kidney? (to his father). You should have been on her place...

**Richard**: What?

**Admetus**: You should have donated a kidney to me. You are my father.

**Richard**: How do you dare to tell such things now? I could not do this because I am too
old to be a donor ... You remember what the doctor told us... that you need a young donor
(angrily).

**Visitor B**: I am giving you the death certificate right now (he looks for his pen and his
paper).

**Admetus**: We must prepare ourselves for the funeral (to his father).

**Visitor B**: Yes, as soon as possible. Do you want us to stay to help you or ... (he still
writes the certificate).

**Admetus**: No, don’t go please. You are my ... our guests.

**Visitor B**: But you are in mourning now...

**Admetus**: No, please stay. Dead is dead.

**Visitor B**: We will stay just for the funeral and we will leave the day after. Is it fine?

**Admetus**: Yes, it is. And please do not wake up your father now. Life is life and death is
death, you know.

**Richard**: And what about Thomas? We must call him to come here right now.

**Admetus**: Oh, my God, I cannot think properly any longer. I do not know what to do.

**Richard**: Okay, I will call the funeral parlour for you. Give me five minutes to look up
the phone number. My friend Joseph knows a very good agent ... (the doctor gives the
certificate to Admetus and then he sits down to the couch while Richard phones – the
butler says).

**Butler–Narrator**: *Now that you are leaving,*

*now that the day of payment dawns
now that no one knows
whom he will kill and how he will die,
take with you the boy who saw the light*
under the leaves of that plane tree
and teach him to study the trees\textsuperscript{17}.

Richard: Do you want her body to be buried or to be cremated? (pause). They ask me...
Admetus: I ... I do not know.
Richard: What was her wish? They ask me...
Admetus: I do not know. She never talked to me about it.
Richard: Okay. But we must decide quickly (the phone line is open). We want a beautiful
traditional funeral please. Yes. I am waiting ... Yes. I have all the details with me. Please
come as soon as possible. What? I do not know. Do you do a discount if I pay you in
cash? Yes ... only 5%? Let me think about it and I call you back. Thank you. Bye–bye (he
puts the phone down).
Admetus: What did they tell you? I do not care about money, you know. I lost my dearest
wife who gave her life for me ... I will pay for a first class funeral.
Richard: As you wish.
Admetus: And our marriage, the cool coronal
and the fingers
become enigmas inexplicable to our soul.
how were our children born?
how did they grow strong?
The companions died one by one
with lowered eyes.
Their oars mark the place
where they sleep on the shore.
No one remembers them. Justice\textsuperscript{18}.

Admetus: I think we must remove her.

\textsuperscript{17} In this play script I try to represent the theme of restoration as a motif of the Theatre of the Absurd. This
extract and the following ones are drawn from Seferis’ (1967) poem Mythistorema. This is section 17, titled
Astyanax; it refers to Hector’s son and his luck after the fall of Troy. The poetry of Seferis was influenced
by the ancient and tragic myths. These poems are chosen because they obviously reflect Euripides’ version
of the Alcestis and they fit in with the modern characters of Admetus and Alcestis as well.

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid (1967). These extracts are drawn from section 10 and 4 titled Argonauts.
Visitor B: I am afraid we must wait for the undertaker. Please do not remove her. Do you want to have a post mortem examination done?

Admetus: I ... I don’t know. What for? She is dead.

Visitor B: To examine the cause of her sudden death.

Admetus: I do not want to let them cut her body.

Visitor B: It is just a medical examination.

Admetus: I know but I do not like this idea very much... (he stares at her corpse). Look ... she is moving...

Visitor B: What?

Admetus: She is moving her leg ... I saw her moving her leg ... (he stares at her).

Visitor B: I think you need some rest.

Richard: Do you want to go upstairs to the bedroom and have some rest?
I will talk to Thomas. Don’t worry about this. I will call you when the undertaker comes.

Admetus: How can I lie in our bed in which we have been sleeping together for almost sixteen years? I will order a portrait of her so that I can keep it when I sleep.

Richard: I think you are losing your mind, my son. You can build a new bedroom, but don’t think about it right now.

Admetus: Do you think that I am crazy? I am sure that she moved her leg... (he stares at her again).

Richard: I did not say so.

Admetus: Yes, but you think so. It is the same thing. Look ... look. She is moving her hand now (they all look surprisingly at the corpse who started to move slowly her right hand towards the head).

Richard: Oh my God. This is impossible.

Admetus: Do you believe me now? (the light comes on again, the butler blows out the candles and he appears in the mirror).

Visitor B: Oh, let me examine her again. Please stay away (he listens to her heart beating).

Alcestis: (she started whispering).

\[
\begin{align*}
I & \text{ woke with this marble head} \\
& \text{in my hands;}
\]

\[
I & \text{ look at the eyes: neither open nor closed} \\
I & \text{ speak to the mouth}
\]

220
which keeps trying to speak
I hold the cheeks
which have broken
through the skin.
I don’t have any more strength.
My hands disappear and come toward me
mutilated19.

Admetus: Oh, my God (he comes closer). She is talking ... Do you hear her? (to his
father).

Richard: Yes ... but this is impossible. She died, didn’t she?

Admetus: But she is alive now. She came back to life again...

Richard: How did she come back? I don’t know of anyone who died and then came back
to life again ... I wish it could happen to my wife!

Admetus: We did artificial respiration for ten minutes ... Thank God! (happily).

Visitor B: Well, gentlemen: here we have a rare phenomenon of restoration. This woman
had apparently died but she is restored to life just a short time after her death.

Richard: What is the scientific explanation of this apparent death, doctor?

Visitor B: It may happen to one in a million. It is called catalepsy. The person seems to
be dead; the heart seems to stop beating – and then he recovers due to unknown factors...
You know, when I was doing my internship, I had such an experience. I attended an open
heart surgery. During the operation the patient apparently died – there was no pulse. The
surgeon doctor and I started artificial respiration and we were sure that he was totally
dead. We were about to call his family when suddenly he moved his eyelids and then his
heart started to beat. He came back to life.

Richard: Was he happy to come back or not?

Visitor B: He just told us that the only thing that he remembered was a light at the end of
a tunnel. And he heard a voice; it was so sweet like a melody that he could not resist this
voice ... His death experience is similar to other patients’ experience of what happened
when their hearts stopped for a while, but then they recovered afterwards.

19 Ibid (1967). This is section 3 in which there is the epigraph Μέμνησο λουτρά π α γ νοσφίσθης
(Remember the baths where you where murdered).This epigraph, drawn from the Oresteia of Aeschylus
brings to mind firstly the ancient myth about the murder of Agamemnon and secondly the unfair death of
the Alcestis of Euripides.
Richard: But in death the world does not change, but ceases. Death is not an event of life. Death is not lived through\textsuperscript{20}.

Visitor B: Who says so? This is a proof that logic is a reflection of the world (he shows Alcestis, who is moving both her legs). Logic is transcendental\textsuperscript{21}.

Admetus: The truth is that the scientific way of looking at a fact is not the way to look at it as a miracle. And what is this experience of seeing the world as a miracle?\textsuperscript{22}.

Visitor B: Just go beyond the world, run against the boundaries of language and you will find that the ultimate meaning of life, the absolute good, the absolute valuable, is not scientific\textsuperscript{23}.

Richard: You are not talking like a doctor now (Alcestis whispers again while the others try to help her to sit herself on the arm–chair).

Alcestis: We returned to our homes broken, 
\begin{quote}
limbs incapable, mouths cracked 
by the taste of rust and brine.
When we woke we travelled 
towards the north, strangers
plunged into mists by the spotless
wings of swans that wounded us...\textsuperscript{24}
\end{quote}

Richard: And I called the funeral parlour. If they come what will I tell them? That the newly dead has just returned from the land of the dead?

Admetus: Phone them again and just cancel it...

Richard: Yes, sure. I must do it right now (he dials).

Admetus: Can I talk to her, doctor?

Visitor B: I think so.

Admetus: Alcestis, my dear (he holds her hands) you scared me very much. Don’t do it again, please. I am so sorry about all these. Oh, my dear, I am grateful to you because you saved my life. Tell me what happened to you.

\textsuperscript{20} See Kenny’s (1996) extracts from Wittgenstein work, TLP: 6.431, 6.4311. In this playscript I try to present the reader with the essence of Wittgenstein’s thought.

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid, see (LTP: 6.13).

\textsuperscript{22} Drawn from notes of Wittgenstein’s lectures (1979: 295).

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid (1979: 296).

\textsuperscript{24} See Seferis (1967). This is section 1, based on the idea of waiting.
Alcestis: The harbour is old,
I cannot wait any longer
I stroke the rusted cannons,
I stroke the oars
so that my body may revive and decide.
The sails give off only the smell
of salt from the other storm25.

Admetus: I understand you, my darling. I know what you are trying to tell me. You don’t have to worry about anything anymore. A better life is open to us now. You will have a precious place in my heart. We will talk more to each other. I promise.

Alcestis: I raised my hand glorious,
and they roared triumphally
the froth of the horses strikes me,
when will the horses tire?

Visitor B: I think she needs some rest and the next day she will recover totally.

Admetus: Do you think that she is hallucinating?
Visitor B: She is trying to express what happened to her. Try to understand what she is saying.

Alcestis: A little further
we will see the almond trees blossoming
the marble gleaming in the sun,
the sea breaking into waves.
A little further
let us rise a little higher... 26

Admetus: Yes. That is exactly what I want to do: to live a better life together, to see what we have created and to be proud of it.

Richard: Done (he puts the phone down). The funeral is cancelled.

Admetus: Ssss ... Don’t talk about this any more. Listen to her. She is trying to tell us something.

Alcestis: So very much have passed
before our eyes,

26 Ibid, section 23.
that our eye in the end saw nothing.
But beyond and behind was memory
like the white sheet
one night in the enclosure
where we saw strange visions
..............................................
pass by and vanish into the notionless
foliage of a pepper–tree...  

Admetus: It is a miracle, isn’t it? I still cannot believe it (he turns around). I remember my dream. Yes, it came true. I understand now. The letter... the horseman...


Admetus: I changed my mind. I will explain to you later.

Visitor B: I think it is time for the patients to have a rest (Thomas comes down from the stairs and he holds a maths book).

Thomas: I am finished and I am tired. I have been studying maths for four hours.

Admetus: So, you are very well prepared for the final exams tomorrow.

Thomas: Sure. No doubt.

Admetus: Do you have a break now?

Thomas: No, I am finished. I heard some voices earlier (he looks at the visitor B).

Admetus: Oh, this is our guest. He is a doctor and he collects swords.

Thomas: Nice to meet you, sir (he sits himself on the couch. Alcestis opens her eyes but she cannot recognise anyone yet). Mum, can I ask you a favour?

Admetus: Your mother fainted and she needs some rest. Please, don’t disturb her right now.

Thomas: Is it something serious, doctor?

Visitor B: No, it is not serious anymore.

Richard: Thereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent. Thomas, can you come with me? I would like to ask your opinion about a book on maths and philosophy.

Thomas: But promise me it will not take us long. I must go to bed early.

Richard: Don’t worry. Let’s go (they leave the stage – pause).

Admetus: Alcestis, it’s me, your husband.

27 Ibid, section 22.

28 See Kenny (1996) and (TLP: 31).
Alcestis: Hmm...
Admetus: Doctor, she cannot recognise me yet.
Visitor B: You must wait. It was a shock for her body. It may take her a short while to have her memory back. But, don’t forget she is under medical supervision. So, let her take her time. You must visit your doctor tomorrow. I will come with you.
Admetus: Thank you, doctor, for all you have done. If you were not here tonight, I could have lost my wife. A thank you is the least I can tell you. I ... I appreciate it.
Visitor B: Don’t mention it. I will keep it a secret. This event is a medical experience to me. Will you tell it to your wife and your son?
Admetus: Yes, but not now. I will find a proper moment. It is something so valuable that it requires the right time ... Good–night, doctor.
Visitor B: Good–night (when the visitor B leaves the stage his sword falls down in the rug. The light focuses on the sword. Admetus holds his wife’s hands).
Butler–Narrator: We who set on this pilgrimage

    looked at the broken statues
    we forgot ourselves and said that life
    is not so easily lost
    that death has unexpected paths,
    and its own justice.

    That while we still upright on our feet
    are dying,
    become brothers in stone
    united in hardness and weakness.

    The ancient dead have escaped
    the circle and risen again
    and smile in strange silence... 29

(the light focuses on Alcestis’ face. She smiles. She gets up and she takes the fallen sword. Then, the dark falls into the stage. Classical music is heard: preferably by Vivaldi).

THE END

CHAPTER VIII

EPILOGUE

The two Euripidean dramas analysed in this dissertation, the Helen and the Alcestis, deal with the classical Attic marital system. The main function of the wife at this time was to produce children. Greek drama allowed male citizens to watch theatrical performances or to play the female roles. Although male actors played the female parts in these dramas, this does not imply that the female characters were of lesser importance. In fact, the lamentations of Helen and Alcestis were central to the development of the plot. In the Helen, traditional family structures are problematised, while in the Alcestis resistance to traditional marriage is voiced.

In the Helen and the Alcestis we encounter two main female characters that make ethical choices to preserve their family. The tragic household thus serves as a microcosm of a larger world by bringing private life onto the stage. The Helen was written and performed against the background of the Peloponnesian War with its devastating effect on family life. Both, however, affirm the value of family relationships in the polis–state, especially between husband and wife, although in an adapted form. Therefore, I am of the opinion that Greek tragedy, and particularly Euripidean drama despite all the clichés about gender relations that it expresses, poses questions about gender roles and cultural values in a way that remains of interest to the modern reader.

In general, Euripides’ plays offer a dialogue between husbands and foreign wives or concubines, between slaves or barbarians like Andromache, Hecuba or Medea who are represented as tragic personas. Euripides was apparently notorious for his depiction of passionate and violent women such as Medea or Phaedra. Medea is a woman who conforms to the ideological stereotype of a dangerous female, but is also capable of appearing justified in her actions. However, in the two dramas analysed in this dissertation, the dialogue is between husbands and their proper Greek wives, Helen and Alcestis. Euripides shows up the imbalance of the traditional marriage by exhibiting this gender relationship.
Euripidean drama tends to leave us with more questions and revolutionary critiques than answers. But, firstly, I will try to reach an answer to the general questions posed in the **Introduction** (see **Chapter I**). Secondly, I will give an answer to the secondary questions posed in each chapter. Thirdly, I will formulate conclusions relevant to each chapter and finally I will deal with the general conclusions. Euripides is an intellectual dramatist and his art appears modern. Most of his contemporaries did not like him or his ideas. It is still the case, as gender differences in the 5th century Athenian society also reflect modern problems of gender relationships, such as adultery or the relative value of the woman.

Therefore, the aim of this study was given as the analysis of the gender relationship within a classical marriage based upon the motif of love. **Gloss analysis**, a method developed by Wittgenstein as a tool to analyse the power play inherent in the use of language, was used and applied to those passages of the *Helen* and the *Alcestis* that were relevant to the motif of love. This is the original contribution of this study: it deals not only with the interaction between female and male in Attic society, but also analyses it through the function of language games.

The *Helen* and the *Alcestis* were selected because these dramas depict the classical marital system: the main female characters are Greek and the fact that they have happy endings would indicate Euripides’ alternative to the traditional system: firstly, I have found that Euripides utilises and adapts traditional myths to show up the tensions in the traditional system of marriage. Secondly, in this way the myths function as metaphors which interpret and structure reality. In the *Helen*, the theme of illusion indicates that everything is not as it seems to be. In the *Alcestis*, the theme of restoration shows that broken relationships can start again and grow. It is through this metaphorical language that the reader is allowed to reinterpret the reality of the traditional relationships between husband and wife.

For me, the motivation to analyse these texts was very strong, because Helen and Alcestis represent two opposing female types who arrive at the same point by different routes: they both try to change traditional perspectives on gender relationships. So, if traditional myths made life bearable by continuing the past, then Euripides’s reworked tragic myths reconstructed tradition where it failed. And this meaning supplied though metaphors helps
the reader to make sense of classical and modern society too. Doubtless, this creative process through his metaphorical language is the cultural contribution of Euripides and his plays, the *Helen* and the *Alcestis*.

For Euripides, Helen’s *alter ego* is a way of exhibiting the marital dysfunctions, especially in female adultery. Helen is represented as a faithful wife who made her husband to follow her. Similarly, Alcestis’ restoration is a way to express the problems between husband and wife especially those connected with the value of the wife’s life. Alcestis is represented as the traditional perfect wife who is restored, because she deserved a better husband and a more fulfilling life.

Mythic reality is a space where people struggle for their lives, while tragic reality is a space where husband and wife meet their basic needs through the prism of changing their personalities. This change is a shock to traditional society, because tradition does not like changes as it tends to reaffirm the *status quo*. Myths reflect social reality. The tragic world of Euripides concerns themes from the mythic reality (Helen’s abduction, Alcestis’ sacrifice) but they are represented in an alternative form in order to create a new reality.

The mythic and tragic realities of Euripides represent social reality but in a different way: mythic reality intends to maintain tradition, while tragic reality shows another way of understanding and reconstructing social reality. Euripides exhibits the difference between mythic and tragic reality by describing the world as it is (real world) and as it should be (ideal world). The relationship between mythic, tragic and social realities of Euripides’ art is shown in Diagram 8.1.
In the traditional myths of the Helen and the Alcestis, the male is elevated and he does not change. The wife has to change according to her husband’s wishes. In Euripides’ recreated tragic myths the female is elevated. She makes her husband a more complete person and her attitude stimulates social reform. Helen’s doubleness has a main role both in explaining the gender relationship and in establishing her new position in the family unit. Similarly, Alcestis’ restoration signifies a better life for the couple and improves her social position.

The method of *gloss analysis* was chosen because it successfully explains the functions of classical ideology regarding gender relationships, as they are described by Euripides, and makes these comparable with marital problems in modern society. *Gloss analysis* is the philosophical analysis of language. The reference tool of this analysis is philosophical grammar. This grammar has to do with the *depth* and the *surface grammar* that shows up the functions of the elementary propositions. The proposed propositions are drawn from the male and female style of communication and language games. These are the main
components of language that bridge between language, reality and ethics both in Euripides’ time and in modern society.

Euripides was a dramatist of the 5th century B.C. and Wittgenstein an analytical philosopher of the 20th century A.D. In order to make Euripides comparable to modern society it seemed appropriate to utilise Wittgenstein (rather than an ancient philosopher) to analyse his dramas, the Helen and the Alcestis. Wittgenstein and Euripides have some ideas in common: the use of language to represent reality is the first very important element that brings Euripides and Wittgenstein together. For Euripides, language is a picture of the tragic world which reflects the real world, as was mentioned above. For Wittgenstein, language is a picture of reality.

The function of language games is the second common element. Euripides uses metaphors or language games in order to dissolve problems within marriage. In the Helen, the language game has to do with the doubleness of Helen that becomes a metaphor for the duality of the self. In the Alcestis, the language game deals with the theme of restoration that is a metaphor for reality, as was noted above. Wittgenstein regards language games as closed systems of communication that explain the functions of the elementary propositions.

The third common element is the way of theorising about ethics and reality. For Euripides, the traditional moral code governing the gender relationships demands renewal. That is why he retells the traditional myths in his own way. The language games create a new version of the traditional myths. For Wittgenstein, ethics is an enquiry into the meaning of life, or into what makes life worth living, or into the right way of living. In other words, ethics is the general enquiry into what is valuable and really important. This is an enquiry that Euripides deals with: Menelaus fought for his wife until he discovered that she was an illusion, while Admetus temporarily lost his wife until he realised his mistake. That is why ethics and aesthetics are one. Ethics is transcendental because it goes beyond the known reality.

In the Helen, the theme of illusion is the recreated tragic myth that transcends reality. It also sensitises the audience to marital dysfunctions. In the Alcestis, the theme of
restoration is Euripides’s version that transcends reality and it offers an alternative way to understand it. The tragic poet shows up the functions of the gender ideology in Athenian society. He shows up what is good and valuable and what is bad and not important in a dyadic relationship. In general, he shows up the ethics and aesthetics of the classical era.

The fourth topic that Euripides and Wittgenstein have in common is the way of understanding reality. For the dramatist, the tragic myth interprets reality by deconstructing the limits of the real world. It reconstructs them in a way that brings closer the possible and the impossible, the rational and the irrational, the real and the non–real. For Wittgenstein, the limits of language are the limits of the world. Logic is a reflection of the world and transcendent because it is possible to go beyond the real world. The tragic poet transcend is the possible, the rational and the real, namely logic as a whole that structures the limits of the world.

Euripides subverts the limits of traditional society – the moral code – through language games. In the Helen, the alter ego of Helen is a reflection of the impossible. The theme of illusion as a language game deconstructs the limits of the traditional world and it reconstructs new limits for a renewed world. In the Alcestis, the theme of restoration is a reflection of the irrationalism that deconstructs the limits of the traditional world. It then reconstructs new limits in a new world for partners in a marriage. In both cases, the limits of the real world are broken and then they appeared reconstructed in such a way that nobody suffers.

So, the relationship between the motif of love, language and gloss analysis is very important, because language structures the way of communication between male and female. The motif of love is regarded as an event between husband and wife. But a second male part is introduced in the texts of the Helen and the Alcestis because it has a serious role in the plot. In the Helen, it is Theoclymenus, the current king of Egypt, who intends to marry Helen and in general he is not friendly to foreigners, especially Greeks. In the Alcestis, it is Death, who comes as a character onto the stage in order to separate the couple.
In one sense the term language refers to the use of ordinary language, namely the style of communication between male and female. In another sense language also refers to metaphors, namely the language games as used by Euripides. *Gloss analysis* analyses the function of language within a gender relationship. In other words, it explains the functions of the elementary propositions regarding the male and female style of communication as well as language games. *Gloss analysis* uses philosophical grammar in order to describe the functions of the propositions in the traditional myths, in Euripides’ versions and finally in modern society.

Philosophical grammar is the main tool of *gloss analysis* that describes the function of language, but not the correct or the incorrect use of it. It also describes the connection between language and reality through logic. Logic consists of propositions that reflect the world. Philosophical grammar dissolves the pseudo–propositions by revealing sense and non–sense. The language games are based upon rules that defy the sensical function of the propositions.

Language games are regarded as different forms of language. They are closed systems of understanding reality. For instance, in *the Helen* of Euripides, the theme of illusion as a language game is a system that shows the misunderstanding in communication between Helen and Menelaus. In the *Alcestis* of Euripides, the theme of restoration as a language game is a system that shows the bad communication between Alcestis and Admetus too. Through language Euripides struggles against marital problems.

Euripides proposes new propositions because he understands that the traditional Attic marital system is dysfunctional. Sometimes, a family as a unit experiences problems that result in bad communication between husband and wife. If this phenomenon becomes endemic in society, it will become a societal problem that will have to be addressed. Euripides foresees reforms and the only way to persuade his audience that the reforms must be done is to use metaphorical language. In his time, freedom of speech was theoretically a social ideal that accompanied the rise of democracy. But in practice, sometimes, freedom of speech exhibits some truths regarding the male–female relationship which traditional society accepts as the only right code governing this gender relationship. If someone speaks against this stereotypes, (s)he may automatically become
an peripheral figure, like Euripides. It is very difficult to change tradition because its roots are very strong.

So, Euripides fights tradition in a painless way: through metaphors which express ideology and culture. *Gloss analysis* of metaphorical language establishes its function. Metaphors interpret the textual and the real world with regard to gender relationships. The reader can see how the tragic world represents reality in two ways: though language games used as metaphors by Euripides and though *gloss analysis* of these language games. Nobody could object that Euripides is an enemy of the traditional marital system. And no one could say also that he reforms the whole of society by performing his recreated tragic myths. He just sensitises his audience to think more about how the system works. Finally, he allows his audience to interpret reality as it wishes.

Euripides was not accused of corrupting the consciousness of Athenian citizens as happened to Socrates. Euripides is only attacked in the comedy of Aristophanes for being a misogynist. He may have realised that Euripides wanted to change tradition though his tragic myths. That was why Aristophanes represented Euripides in a mistaken way: everyone who does not represent the ideal wife on the tragic scene, like Euripides is an enemy to the female sex. So, according to Aristophanes, females will not take Euripides’s plays seriously. This ancient propaganda did not harm Euripides’ reputation at all. The exaggeration of the truth risks ridicule, however.

If the modern reader reads the *Helen* and the *Alcestis* of Euripides, (s)he will discover a way to arrive at self–knowledge. The reader also will find answers to topics that still remain problematic areas in a gender relationship, such as adultery, woman’s value and the role of husband and wife. (S)he will find also a way to understand reality better and the interaction between male and female. (S)he will be sensitised about interpersonal problems and (s)he may discover a whole new world in which (s)he will place her/him self among tragic heroes like Helen, Menelaus, Alcestis and Admetus. Finally, the reader who enters the fictional world of Euripides (s)he will come back to reality wiser.

Euripides’ tragic myths are primarily therapeutic in the context of marital problems. In general, they are not only applicable to male–female relationships but also to homosexual
relationships where partners experience similar problems in ethics. The function of language games justifies the meaning of the existing or new propositions. In other words, the philosophical grammar exhibits the functions of the propositions in traditional myths, in Euripides’ version, and finally in modern society. The surface and the depth grammar examine the result of the propositions in the above mentioned cases. Euripides reaches catharsis and a happy ending through the reversal of fortune. Through gloss analysis he suggests the grammar of justification as a therapy to these couples who experience problems that may damage their marriage life.

In the Helen, the grammar of justification confirms the result of gloss analysis applied to the motif of love. In other words, it is the catharsis of the philosophical analysis of language applied to identified passages in relation to main female and male ethos and character. Euripides’ Helen is a vindicated character who becomes a good wife in spite of her epic image. Menelaus and Helen finally return to Sparta to live a better life together.

In the Alcestis, the grammar of justification concerns both Alcestis and Admetus. Through gloss analysis Alcestis is also vindicated, because she did not deserve to die in place of her husband; Admetus is justified as well, because he realised his mistake and he finally becomes a fuller human being who deserves his wife back.

If the reader pays attention to the female and male position and role in Athenian society, (s)he will make sense of Helen’s and Alcestis’ attitude – even though these characters look totally opposed. According to tradition a woman’s social position in ancient Greek society was limited to the home. A good wife and mother was the perfect female type. An Athenian wife spent her life indoors; she was allowed to go out only in order to take part in religious festivals. She could also visit a neighbour, although probably under an older woman’s supervision. Older women had more freedom because they could not bear children any more.

The motto for the perfect wife was this: the less she was talked to by others the better she was. The first liberated women in antiquity were hetaerae – mostly foreigners or slaves who used to work as entertainers at men’s drinking parties known as symposia. Marriage was the main ideal for girls, but it was usually arranged by their fathers or older brothers in case of the father’s death. Women had no right to choose their future husbands.
Dowries consisted of cash or real estate and played a major role in marriage. Girls who had small dowries or no dowries at all would not have found it easy to get married.

Above all, the male citizen was the master—*kyrios* of the family unit and he had the power of death and life over the members of his family. The idea of *philoxenia* was very popular and respectable among ancient Greeks. The male spent most of his life outdoors. He was allowed to vote in the assembly known as ἱκλησία το δ μου, to go to the γυμναστήρια, to the ἄγορά, to watch a performance or to participate in συμπόσια. Military service was the most important obligation of the male citizen. In contrast to the female who had to be the perfect wife, the social ideal of the male was to be a good and virtuous warrior. Bigamy was permitted only for the male: he could have his legal spouse who would bear legal children to him in order to continue his family. According to Athenian ideology a family without children was not a living organism. At the same time, the male could have a second wife, namely the concubine whose children would never become heirs.

The male position in classical Athens was elevated in comparison with the female’s position. At first glance, it would appear that he had privileges with regard to his private and public life, as was noted above. Athenian democracy was organised by males for the benefit of male citizens. Public life was organised for the males in such a way as to serve best the πόλις-κράτος. But at second glance, the male’s position does not seem an ideal one, because his life was devoted to the πόλις-κράτος and he could lose his life at any time. Firstly, he was a warrior forever, and secondly, he was a father and husband. The husband and the wife used to live in the same house (*συνοικε ν*) but in separate quarters. The wife controlled the finances of the household management and was expected to bear the next generation of warriors (see Table 8.1).
Euripides describes the life of Athens and gender ideology in his plays the *Helen* and the *Alcestis*. The author’s view about the interaction between male and female is partly affected by the social position of males. He describes Athenian ideology that has to do with married life. Euripides deals with the traditional marital system, but he exhibits its dysfunctions. His aim was not to totally damage the tradition, as he was not an enemy of it, but he wishes to subvert tradition in order to restore some balance to the dyadic relationship.

In the *Helen*, Euripides describes a tension within royal marriage and he portrays a problem that was regarded as sin for the female, namely adultery. He subverts the norm regarding male sexual liberty by having Menelaus search for his wife and get her back alive in spite of tradition. He also represents the female as tradition requires: a faithful wife. In this way he reforms Helen’s epic image, which functioned as a bad standard for females.
In the *Alcestis*, Euripides also deals with a royal marriage – a Greek tragedy was mostly concerned with an aristocratic family and its problems – and he portrays the tension regarding a woman’s value. According to tradition it was the male’s life that was more valuable, because he was the head of the family, the warrior and the king of a royal house. In this case, the female had less value, because she had already bore offspring and she could be replaced at any time by a second wife.

As a matter of fact, Euripides supplies oppressed females with a voice in his plays the *Helen* and the *Alcestis* but he does the same for oppressed males, who act within the traditional system. Both husband and wife realise that the system produces some unexpected tensions. Ultimately, they do understand that they will live better if they dissolve the tensions and reform the societal norms regarding gender relationships. The representation of a woman by Euripides in his plays the *Helen* and the *Alcestis* is only partially close to reality. On the one hand, the representation of a female character in his reworked myth tends to have little in common with a real woman (*Helen*). But his versions are regarded as metaphors for reality in which a woman has a major role (*Alcestis*). His metaphorical language is very strong and it therefore speaks vividly to the audience and to the modern reader as well.

In the *Helen*, the epic character is not close to reality, but functions as a bad female type who should not be followed. It was not very common in antiquity for a female to commit adultery, although such cases were not reported by historical sources. So it is difficult to determine how often this happened. It is fair to assume that there were unfaithful wives, but there were probably very few, because according to Attic law, adultery was a punishable offence for females, as was noted above.

The epic Helen should have been punished after her recovery by Menelaus, but this did not happen. In the *Hecuba* of Euripides, Menelaus was advised by Hecuba to kill his unfaithful wife. Indeed, he is depicted on an ancient vase (see Figure 7b) holding a sword and running after Helen, but ultimately dazzled by her beauty, he dropped the sword. Menelaus went against tradition. In Euripides’ version this is what happened but in a subversive way: Helen did not go to Troy but remained faithful to Menelaus by staying safely in Egypt waiting for her husband to collect her. Helen is represented as a virtuous
wife and Menelaus as a good husband who wants his wife back to create a better future for both.

In the *Alcestis*, the character of the traditional myth is of course close to the societal expectations for a female. The traditional Alcestis serves as a good paradigm for females. In Euripides’ version, Alcestis’ sacrifice sensitises the audience to the necessity or the rightness of such a death. Even though substitutable female deaths are not reported in the history of the classical era – and if they happened, they would probably not be reported in the official historical books – how, in reality can a wife die in the stead of her husband? The traditional myth tells that a perfect wife must devote her whole life to her husband and her family even though she had to sacrifice herself. Euripides’ version tells that this proposition is not useful anymore because it may cause more problems than it would solve. The Euripidean presentation of Alcestis comes close to the social reality of his time to the point of her figurative death. Unquestionably, the restored Alcestis goes beyond reality; that was why it is interpreted as a metaphor.

Euripides regards traditional marriage and gender relations as problematical. An ideal marriage should be based upon the devotion towards a partner of the other sex. But sometimes, a man and a woman are not well prepared for love, marriage or interpersonal problems. In the *Helen* the author regards the dyadic relationship though the prism of double reality. In Euripides’ time the husband’s disloyalty was not a good reason for a divorce, but a wife’s unfaithfulness was regarded as a sin. Euripides uses his *Helen* to subvert this value, which was unfair for the whole family and society. Males’ adultery offered more children than the *polis–state* required, and these children grew up as second–class citizens, namely the bastards, and of course without a normal family structure. Euripides uses the theme of illusion as an alternative. He does not destroy tradition by this but deconstructs it by reforming the value system to create a new world.

In the *Alcestis*, Euripides perceives gender relationships through the theme of restoration. When a married individual is brought up to look after his own interest, like Admetus, he may find it difficult to function in a group. Euripides’ view of marriage is close to the Adlerian theory of life problems. For Adler (Ansbacher, 1956: 437–438), mistaken expectations and more interest in the self than in the partner usually cause dysfunctions in
a marriage; this is precisely what happened to Alcestis and Admetus. Admetus had little interest in his wife’s value. Alcestis had a mistaken expectation of Admetus. Finally, they both found out that marriage is not only synergy in general for the happiness of two persons and family but cooperation for the welfare of mankind. In this way, Euripides deconstructs the social norm relating to women’s value.

Being a person and being fully human are the big questions that engaged both ancient Greek drama and modern philosophy – especially the analytical movement that deals with the use of language by exhibiting the function of the elementary propositions indicated above (see Chapter II). Wisdom is achieved through the correct combination of interpersonal exchange and understanding of the human nature. Admetus reached this wisdom after his wife’s death. The idea of being responsible for your own actions is a standard criterion of personality in modern philosophy.

Moreover, the main concern of this study is to describe the motif of love in the Helen and the Alcestis of Euripides. The motif of love is defined as an event with participants and rules governing the husband–and–wife relationship. In order to describe this event as used by Euripides, I firstly had to analyse the ethos and the character of the male and the female. Secondly, I described it from a psychological perspective, namely the Freudian personality theory. I used the system of the ego, id and superego to show how the motivations drove the characters to act in the traditional myth and in Euripides’ version.

In the Helen I found that the main features of her ethos were beauty, faithfulness and honesty–honour (see Diagram 4.2). According to tradition, she was regarded as an unfaithful and dishonest wife whose beauty caused the legendary Trojan War. In Euripides’s reworked myth, Helen is represented as a faithful and honest wife. Her beauty, which was traditionally regarded as a bad feature is subverted to a good one in this way: her beauty is her feminine power that goes together with her loyalty. In Egypt, Helen waits for Menelaus to save her. The rules governing this relationship had to do in general with the social value system (see Table 8.1) and particularly with adultery. I also found that the main features of Menelaus’ ethos were cowardice and glory (see Diagram 4.3). In the traditional myth, military glory was regarded as the societal ideal for the male (see Table 8.1). In Euripides’ version, Menelaus is represented as a caricature of a king.
who cannot even make a decision and he is overpowered by his wife, who is more capable than he is of devising an escape plan. His epic glory is totally neglected by Euripides and replaced by cowardice.

According to Freud’s personality system the epic Helen was driven by her libido, while the epic Menelaus was motivated by societal values like glory and reputation to make a war against Trojans. So, the ego was controlled by Menelaus, but not by Helen, who was mostly motivated by the id (see table 4.1). But the Egyptian Helen was driven by loyalty. So, in this case the ego was controlled by the Helen of Euripides.

Euripides allows his audience to choose between the two Helens noted above, the adulterous and the virtuous one. Above all, he rehabilitated the epic image of Helen and he tried to replace the negative epithets ἀθλίαν, μισητήν, πιστος with the positive epithets θεός and εὐγενεστάτη (see Table 4.4). In contrast, Euripides described Menelaus negatively by using the strong epithets ἄθλιος, δύστηνος, and πλανήτης. The most positive words for Menelaus’ character were γεννα χρα and ἀνδρὸς ε γενος (see Table 4.5).

The third character who participated in the motif of love in the Helen was the current king of Egypt, Theoclymenus, who intended to marry her. He is represented as nothing but a king who is unable to govern either his country or his emotions in relation to Helen. That was why he was persuaded by Helen of the necessity for the funeral offerings to her husband.

For Euripides, the epic Helen was the Helen of illusion. Helen becomes a positive character such as the epic Penelope, the wife of Odysseus. The tragic poet treats her differently in order to deconstruct the image of the epic Helen and to reform the fixed roles for husband and wife in classical society. The key words used by Euripides are name–body, which express in full the Helen’s two worlds, the real and the non–real. The contrast between appearance and reality is a problem that Menelaus found difficult to understand. He used his eyes to make sense of a phenomenon that in fact is not perceptible by the senses but is interpreted though the mind.
The theme of illusion reflects a double reality; Euripides uses the dualism between real–non–real, name–body, φαίνεσθαι–ε ναι (see Table 4.2). The form of ε δολον functions as a fantasy or as a copy of the true Helen. He was apparently influenced by the philosophical theory of Anaxagoras about Νο ζ: things could be broken up into their elements and could grow together again, but nothing could be destroyed. This is what happened to Helen and Menelaus. This idea of restructuring is extended in the Alcestis, as will be shown below.

The double reality symbolises the multiple options of the truth that are understandable through the mind, as was noted above. For Euripides, drama probably means the endless adventure of a person, who is trapped in an illusory world, like Menelaus or Teucer in the Helen. Indeed, the essence of Euripidean dramaturgy is carried in the outcome of this play, where the happy ending is defined as one of the many shapes that a god has: Helen serves to maintain the traditional gender roles, but in a better balanced household.

Helen’s second self functions as her alter ego. Particularly, the second self is a metaphor for the world of illusion, where a person lives and from which she has to escape. The epic Helen was a victim of a bad reputation. Euripides showed that the Helen of Troy was the Helen of Sparta, who had never gone to Troy. Similarly, contemporary reality shows how people guilty of adultery usually explain it by referring to a loss of self–control by that part of the personality (id) known as the alter ego.

In the Alcestis I found that the main features of the female ethos were self–sacrifice and honour–virtue (see Diagram 6.2). In the traditional myth, all these features characterised the perfect wife. They were standards for a good female type. But in Euripides’ version, these features function positively for the female in this way: Alcestis is restored to life because she deserves to live better and doubtless to improve her social position. The rules governing the relationship between husband and wife in the Alcestis had to do in general with the value system (see Table 8.1) and particularly with a woman’s value.

I also found that the main features of the male character were egotism, honesty–loyalty and hospitality (see Diagram 6.3). In the traditional myth egotism is not referred to as a
bad feature for the male type; the other two features are not related to tradition at all. But in Euripides’s reworked myth, these features function negatively for the male’s prestige. In fact, Admetus suddenly realised that his life had no meaning after his wife’s sacrificial death. This was a new value that tradition did not accept, but it could keep a classical marriage in balance.

Euripides described Alcestis as the perfect wife, who managed to reform the traditional value system by doing what tradition required: she sacrificed her life for her husband. He repeatedly used the epithets ἀρίστη, φίλην, and μψυχος. The only negative epithet spoken by Pheres, her father–in–law, was φρων (see Table 6.2). This word was a catalyst because it deconstructed the image of the traditional wife. Finally, Admetus realised how much φρων his wife was and how much ἀφρωνέστερος he was, because he forced her to do so. Admetus is described by Euripides as an egotistic husband who gradually becomes human. The most striking noun spoken by his father again was φονεύς (see Table 6.3). Euripides tried to keep in balance the egocentric character of Admetus by emphasising his hospitable side.

According to Freud’s personality system (see Table 6.1) in the traditional myth, Admetus was driven by egotism: the ego and the id were in control but not the superego. Alcestis was motivated by female standards: her ego was not in control but her superego was stronger. In Euripides’ version Admetus was at first driven by egotism, but finally the voice of his consciousness spoke louder. His superego was in control and his ego was reformed.

The third character involved in the motif of love in the Alcestis of Euripides was Death, who was represented as a dramatic character on the tragic stage. Death came to fetch his victim, Alcestis, instead of her husband as was stipulated by the unusual contract between Admetus and the Fates. Thanatos separated husband and wife but finally he was beaten by Heracles, the hero. Alcestis was rescued and returned to life from the land of the dead. This extraordinary journey that belongs to fairy–tales is used by Euripides as a quite possible phenomenon that happens in tragedy in order to reach catharsis.
The theme of restoration is a metaphor that goes beyond the limits of the real world: in fact, it replaces the *deus ex machina* whose role played by Heracles. It broke natural law in which nobody could come back from death to life. Death is the last journey for humans. Euripides used the idea of Alcestis rescued to show to the reader that broken relationships may work again if both partners arrive at a sufficient level of self–knowledge. Human beings are able to improve their lives when they realise their mistakes and they fully deserve a better future, like Admetus and Alcestis.

Admetus achieved what was impossible for a human: firstly to escape his destiny and secondly to experience an inner change that led his wife back to him. The famous act of hospitality was a datum of the reworked myth. Alcestis’ restoration functions on two levels: firstly on the surface and secondly on the deeper level. Euripides used a respectable value in antiquity, namely *philoxenia*, and a hero like Heracles as the means to rescue Alcestis.

The reversal of fortune has to do with the idea of hospitality. It must be stressed that Alcestis is not restored due to Admetus’ hospitable treatment, but thanks to his moral improvement. The *Alcestis* of Euripides is based upon a fairy–tale that gradually becomes a therapeutic myth teaching that the continuous process of self–discovery remains a personal goal. This process was what Socrates once told as *γνθι σαυτόν*; it brings a human being closer to his self and to others. Finally, self–discovery leads to improved interpersonal relationships.

The value of a wife’s life in ancient society was not equal to that of the husband’s. As was indicated above, her position was limited to domestic work, to the maternity room and to the management of domestic financial affairs. In general, the female role was not appreciated either by her husband or by society as a whole. A good wife could co–exist any time with a second one, namely the concubine. This topic and its consequences are fully discussed in the *Andromache* of Euripides – a very good argument takes place between Hermione, Neoptolemus’ legal wife and his concubine, Andromache, just after the fall of Troy.
In the *Alcestis*, the crucial topic that is discussed is the sacrificial death of a perfect wife in order to extend her husband’s life, and in addition, to extend the survival of the royal house. Alcestis devoted her life to her husband even though this was not an ideal that she set for herself; she just followed the cultural norms. She offered to die in place of Admetus because she did not want to fail in her duty as a good wife. She tried to raise her voice by asking Admetus an equal share in suffering, namely not to remarry.

The wife’s life was at the service of her husband in Athenian society. Alcestis’ sacrifice was forced by this general norm governing the gender relationship and not by pure love or altruism. The only person inside the family who rejected this undeserved death was Pheres, Admetus’ father, who refused to die in his son’s place. Ultimately, her sacrifice is similar to Isaac’s sacrifice. Euripides represented Alcestis as a bride of death and sacrificed her in order to put the pair through a test: how far she could go as a perfect wife and how long Admetus’ egotism could last. Similarly, God tried Abraham by asking him to sacrifice his only child.

Euripides in the *Alcestis* describes two different worlds living side by side: the world of free males and the world of non–free females. Moreover, Admetus experienced an inner change that the reader can see in his second meeting with Heracles (Episode C, Scene B) but the problem associated with the nature of his change had to do with an apparent superficiality of his pathos. If Euripides presents Admetus as an egotistical and superficial character he has his reasons: to juxtapose the traditional female who had to be wise and the traditional male who did not have to be wise. Finally, Admetus’ superficial pathos is a condition for his efficient mathos to develop at the end of the play.

The *Alcestis* shows a depth of physiological and emotional insight that is comparable with those of the later dramas of Euripides, such as the *Orestes*, the *Phoenician Maidens* and the *Bacchae*. Euripides conveys a revolutionary message on the Attic stage by emphasising the misery of the surviving husband and also re–evaluates the significance of the deceased wife. Admetus’ realisation that Alcestis’ sacrifice has damaged the essence of his life opposes the ideal for which Alcestis died. He also recognises the value of co–existence. Indeed, this play carries a universal message for mankind because it demonstrates the ideal of synergy noted above.
The similarities and the differences between the Helen and the Alcestis regarding the female and the main male character are noted below (Diagram 8.2). Indeed, the recreated tragic myths of Euripides form dramas of ideas. The motif of love is based on the mechanism of dualism – especially focusing on material and spiritual, good or evil – both in the Helen and in the Alcestis. Euripides works mostly on this dualism concerning the traditional moral code in a gender relationship. In the Helen, the female underlying libido is stressed by the tragic poet as the main problem centred on Helen’s beauty (material) and how it influenced her domestic and public life. But in the Alcestis, Euripides describes the virtues of the ideal wife (spiritual) and how she achieves to change her life after her restoration.

The Alcestis is a play written early (438 B.C.), when Euripides just started his career, while the Helen is a play of his mature years (412 B.C.). Even though the gap between these two plays is twenty-six years, the reader may observe that Euripides’ thought is developed successfully as he treats marital problems in a way that brings together tradition and reform: a moral code is useful, but it is open to reform, because it does not serve in full the needs of female and male so that they can live proudly in a more symmetrical society.

In the Alcestis, Euripides’ thought is daring, as he uses the fiction that goes beyond reality: Heracles wrestles with Death and he finally rescues a mortal wife. At this point, the modern reader may wonder to what degree youthfulness influenced Euripides’ thought, because youth is restless, daring and believes in a world that can be changed through the impossible. In the Helen, his thought is closer to reality, as he treats the problem within the limits of the real world and through the phenomenon of possibilities that may occur to everyone. In both cases Euripides’ thought remains allegorical and he escapes reality in a way that shows how powerful poetry is in life.

So the main female and male characters of Euripides act according to the above line of thought: in the Alcestis, they act through the prism of the impossible; in the Helen, they act phenomenologically through the possible. But in both cases, the dramatis personae are tragic characters that experience a reversal of fortune concerning either their status or
their social position. For instance, in the Helen the main female character is represented as a strong wife who lost her previous status and her good reputation, but she is capable of coping with the difficulties. Therefore, she devises a plan for escape. The main male character, Menelaus, is represented as a beggar who is not even able to take the right decision. He also loses his previous status and reputation. In the dramatised world of the Helen Euripides describes a double reality and how his heroes escape it. Finally, they come back to tradition, but in a renewed marital system.

In contrast, in the Alcestis the main female character is represented as a submissive traditional wife, who raises her voice only to demand that her husband does not remarry after her death. She cannot save her own life, but she can secure her children’s future. She does not lose her status and reputation. Indeed, after her death, her reputation is enhanced, because she was a queen who lost her life for her husband’s sake. The main male character, Admetus, is represented as a typical king who is selfish and domineering. He demands his wife’s sacrifice in order to extend his life. During the process of catharsis he realises that he has kept his previous status but has lost the meaning of his life. In the Alcestis Euripides goes beyond what already exists: he transcends reality by restoring Alcestis to life. Finally, Alcestis came back to Admetus to live together with him but on better terms for both of them.

Doubtless, Euripides supports the female character and elevates her social position at the end of his plays. But he also treats the male character in a wise way so that both husband and wife can live together in a better world. Like Alcestis, Helen seems to be more daring and active. Equally, like Helen, Alcestis appears to be miserable, melodramatic and, above all, unable to rescue herself. Alcestis is therefore a tragic character and her problem is more complicated, because it relates to her life. Indeed, Alcestis did not wait for someone to help her; she was absolutely lonely at her time of death. In contrast, Helen stayed in a foreign land safe, waiting for her husband to collect her. He finally came but she helped him to escape.

In comparison with Admetus, Menelaus is the lesser character: pitiful and dressed in rags. On the one hand, he has an advantage that becomes a problem: he finds his true wife in Egypt, while he was pursuing her Trojan copy. He is trapped in a world of illusions and
he must distinguish between truth and falsehood. He is concerned more with the phenomenon of appearance than reality. He interprets reality through his senses, as was indicated above. It takes him a while to develop beyond this, but it may justly be felt that, at the end of the Helen, he seems to be as superficial as Admetus. Menelaus finally cannot persuade anyone that he has understood the problem: he explains it through his senses and not through his mind. But this is probably the male way of understanding reality: he sees the surface of the sea and he is not able to dive into its depths.

On the other hand, Admetus looks better than Menelaus in his appearance on stage but he is more miserable because he could not find a new meaning to his life after his wife’s sacrificial death. In fact, Admetus lost her due to his selfishness. Admetus is a tragic character in the dramatic sense because he has to deal with the result of his wife’s death. Indeed, he was not concerned very much with the phenomenon of restoration as a possibility but with the result of this extraordinary event. This is quite possible because he thinks differently after his moral improvement; he can see the depths of the sea. At this point, Heracles performs the most redeeming act of his mythic past by restoring Alcestis. Admetus is not able to do this, but after all he deserves it.

To sum up, the male characters of Euripides in the Helen and in the Alcestis seem to be incomplete, as compared with the female characters, who are represented as more complete. The marital problem, in both cases, is caused by the male attitude, while the female has to make an ethical choice. In the Helen, the problem had to do with adultery. The reader may suppose that in the epic cycle, Helen’s abduction was the effect of her husband’s disloyalty. Of course, Menelaus is clearly not accused of such an offence, but this is maybe in the mind of the reader, because male adultery was common in classical society.

In the Alcestis, the marital problem starts from the husband’s attitude to his allotted time of death. Admetus’ attitude has to do with his irrational claim and with under appreciating of his wife’s value. Alcestis, who is at the receiving end of this problem, unfortunately has no choice. At this point, Helen is in a better position because she could choose between her husband and her lover. But she finally chose to go back to tradition and live a better life.
The modern reader must consider that these opposing female characters, Helen and Alcestis, who followed different ways, finally achieved the same goal noted above: to gain their husband’s appreciation and to improve their position. In particular, they gained the audience’s sympathy and they sensitised them to rethink the relationship between the mythic, tragic and social realities. Euripides’ theatre is didactic and ideological in nature. In general, Euripides represents his characters as they were; Helen is the exception because from the beginning of the play she is represented as she should be.

If Alcestis were represented as a strong character like Helen, and Helen as a submissive wife like Alcestis, the result would never be the same. The reason is very simple: they could not work as partners with their husbands, because each couple has to solve problems that are theirs and only theirs; if one partner changed then the synergy is totally different. That is why the Helen and the Alcestis of Euripides are still relevant today: the messages carried offer us an alternative way of understanding our pluralistic modern world.

THE CHARACTERS IN THE HELEN AND THE ALCESTIS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THE HELEN</th>
<th>THE ALCESTIS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HELEN:</td>
<td>ADMETUS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Status: queen</td>
<td>Status: king</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Character: strong, clever (the wife as she should be).</td>
<td>Character: domineering, selfish (the husband as he was).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

MENELAUS

Status: king-warrior
Character: weak, incapable (the husband as he was).

ALCESTIS

Status: queen
Character: submissive, (the wife as she was).

Diagram 8.2
As a matter of fact, Euripides transcends reality though the use of language games. He sees beyond the boundaries of a particular world that generate the need for escape. In the Helen, the theme of illusion transcends what is called known reality: the doubleness of Helen is the reflection of a multiple world. Helen becomes a transcendental female figure because she is double until her copy disappears. But Menelaus cannot understand the doubleness of his wife because he interprets it though his senses (as indicated above). He was not able to follow his wife to this world of illusions until the moment he knew that her Trojan copy united into the ether. Menelaus seems not to experience the inner change that Admetus did. So, he could not easily explain what happened to Helen.

In the Alcestis, Euripides transcends reality in a way that concerns both partners: by restoring Alcestis back to life. Alcestis’ death may symbolise a tradition that must die, while Alcestis restored may symbolise social reform. Of course, in practice, the audience does not know her reaction after her restoration. The only thing that is known is her silence: according to tradition, the dead who come back to life cannot speak until three days pass. This explanation is enough for the Attic audience. Alcestis’ death is a transcendence of the known reality. But it is quite possible that Alcestis could not remember anything from this journey. She had the role of the traveller who has experienced death and then returned to the world of the living without a complete memory. Admetus also transcended reality with ease after his wife’s rescue by Heracles. He accepted Heracles’ statement and thanked Zeus. Obviously, he was happy and he did not want to know more about this. Finally, he gained her back and that is all he wanted.

The use of language has to do with either the language of ordinary life, namely the style of communication between husband and wife, or the metaphorical language regarding the language games. In the Helen, the female style of communication is dominant because Helen is represented as a powerful wife who has brains. The male style of communication is weaker because Menelaus is represented as a caricature of a king, as was indicated above. In the traditional myth, the features of Helen’s ethos function negatively for her reputation. But in the reworked world of Euripides the same features function positively (see Diagram 5.1). In this way, Euripides rehabilitates Helen’s image. In the traditional myth, the features of Menelaus’ ethos function positively for his reputation. In Euripides’
version the same features – including a new one, cowardice – function negatively for his ethos (see Diagram 5.2).

In the Helen, Euripides shows up how sexism works in classical society. Sexism is built into language itself and pays attention to the features of the female and male ethos in order to control the female most. The tragic author knows very well how societal norms control couples in a marriage and how difficult it is to reform them. That is why he uses language games to show up the underlying tensions in a gender relationship. Philosophical grammar is the reference tool of gloss analysis applied to the Diagrams 5.1 and 5.2. In fact, philosophical grammar deals with the exhibition of surface grammar and depth grammar.

As noted above, the philosophical grammar of Helen’s ethos refers to the features of her character as was noted above. In the traditional myth, her beauty corresponds to the surface grammar, but unfaithfulness and dishonesty correspond to the depth grammar. In Euripides’ version, the same features correspond to the surface grammar. The epithets concerning her ethos correspond to the depth grammar both in the traditional myth and in the reworked myth of Euripides (see Diagram 5.3).

The philosophical grammar of Menelaus’ ethos has to do with the features of his character. Particularly, in the traditional myth, glory corresponds to the depth grammar but cowardice corresponds to the surface grammar. In contrast, in Euripides’ version, glory corresponds to the surface grammar but cowardice corresponds to the depth grammar. The epithets regarding his ethos correspond to the depth grammar both in the traditional myth and in Euripides’ version as well (see Diagram 5.4).

The theme of illusion as a language game is analysed through gloss analysis. Euripides uses the contradiction between appearance and reality in order to construct this language game. The elementary propositions are based upon the rule Describing the appearance of an object (see Table 5.1) and they describe the function of ϕαίνεσθαι–ε ναι in the traditional myth and in Euripides’ version. The philosophical grammar of these propositions has to do with the function of the surface grammar and the depth grammar. P2 is a pseudo–proposition because the Trojan War could happen with or without Helen.
So, the result is what Euripides suggests: dysfunctions of the classical marital system are opened up for reform.

Indeed, the result of *gloss analysis* applied to the theme of illusion is to exhibit the antithesis between the traditional myth and the recreated tragic myth of Euripides. This antithesis causes a balance between two opposing ideas: *name–body*, *appearance–reality*, and φαίνεσθαι–ε ναι. The same future is not applicable to Helen and Menelaus. The dyad experiences a tension in the traditional myth which is solved in Euripides’ version. In this way, the tragic author subverts tradition: Helen becomes a virtuous wife who Menelaus wanted back whether she had a false copy or not. Helen’s prestige is definitely rehabilitated by Euripides.

The relationship between the theme of illusion and reality is as follows: the appearance and reality of Helen cause the multiplicity of this language game that simply symbolises the multiplicity of reality (see Table 5.2). The theme of illusion transferred into a modern idiom shows how the same topics concern modern society, but of course in different terms. The theme of illusion as a language game depicts a metaphysical structure of the world that describes what is behind the physical world. In fact, the alter ego of Helen is her metaphysical image. The limits of this image are the limits of the recreated tragic myth and of the real world as well. The phenomenon of φαίνεσθαι–ε ναι may occur not only in philosophy or in a performance but in reality too. Indeed, philosophy is an activity associated with human nature and the tragic stage is a representation of the real world of which philosophy is an essential part.

Clearly, the distinction between appearance and reality is a philosophical problem that becomes a surrealistic one because it transcends reality. Euripides’ philosophical fiction is surrealism in a modern sense because it lies beyond the limits of the self. Through *gloss analysis* double reality becomes a surrealistic language game that transcends the limits of the real self. The couple works like an analytical philosopher who deals with dissolving pseudo–propositions. Helen and Menelaus interpret multiple realities through the prism of misunderstanding in language (*name–body*).
The grammar of justification showed above corresponds to the catharsis and results from the function of the surface grammar and the depth grammar of the elementary propositions. Helen is virtuous and justified in Euripides’ version. Through gloss analysis Helen becomes a surrealistic character of modern art. In fact her doubleness is not totally strange to the modern artist. The Helen of Euripides corresponds to a product of a cubist painting of the 20th century (see Figure 5.1), because it shows up what lies between the real and the non–real. It also manifests the need for escape from the sensory world.

As a matter of fact, cubism is a product of surrealism that represents nature as cubes, spheres, cones or squares. The epic Helen is represented as a figure of circles, while the Helen of Euripides is represented as a figure of squares: the Helen of Troy is an illusion but the Egyptian one is a true wife filled with logic. Logic is symbolised by a square. In contrast, the epic Menelaus is represented as a union of circles in which he is enclosed: a circle symbolises an illusion. To sum up, the Helen of Euripides through gloss analysis is represented as a cubist Helen that speaks surrealistically to modern society.

In the Alcestis, the male style of communication is dominant: Admetus asks a favour that becomes a question of life and death. In the traditional myth, the features of Alcestis’ ethos function positively for her reputation. But in the recreated myth of Euripides, the same features through the theme of restoration make the reader rethink how they function (see Diagram 7.1). In this way, Euripides deconstructs Alcestis’ image. In the traditional myth, the features of Admetus’ ethos function positively for his reputation. In Euripides’ version the same features– including a new one, cowardice – function entirely negatively for his ethos (see Diagram 7.2).

In the Alcestis, Euripides points out how sexism works in classical society, just as he did in the Helen. Sexism in language is expressed mostly in Alcestis’ speech when she tries to explain her sacrifice (Episode A, Scene A). On the part of Admetus, sexism apparently co–exists with his selfishness. Admetus committed hybris according to the cultural norms of classical society. His punishment was to understand his wife’s value after losing her. Finally, Admetus developed his character morally, and for this he deserved his wife back. Alcestis’ restoration was the result of Admetus’ therapy, namely chauvinism. The philosophical grammar is the tool of gloss analysis applied to the Diagrams 7.1 and 7.2.
Indeed, the philosophical grammar shows the function of the *surface grammar* and *depth grammar*.

The philosophical grammar of Alcestis’ ethos has to do with the features of her character, as indicated above. In the traditional myth, her self-sacrifice and her honour–virtue correspond to the *depth grammar*. In Euripides’ version, the same features correspond to the *depth grammar* but they are subverted because Alcestis is justified. The epithets concerning her ethos correspond to the *depth grammar* both in the traditional myth and in the recreated myth of Euripides (see Diagram 7.3).

The philosophical grammar of Admetus’ ethos deals with the features of his character. Particularly, in the traditional myth, his request corresponds to the *surface grammar*. In contrast, in Euripides’ version, cowardice, honesty–loyalty and hospitality correspond to the *depth grammar*. The epithets regarding his ethos correspond to the *depth grammar* both in the traditional myth and in Euripides’ version as well. Only those epithets and expressions concerning the hospitality code correspond to the *surface grammar* in Euripides’ version (see Diagram 7.4).

The theme of restoration as a language game is described through *gloss analysis*. Euripides uses this language game as a rehabilitation of gender asymmetry in classical society. The elementary propositions are based upon the rule *Making up a story and reading it* (see Table 7.1) and they describe the function of Alcestis’ premature death in the traditional myth and in Euripides’ version. The philosophical grammar of these propositions has to do with the function of the *surface grammar* and the *depth grammar*. Euripides concludes that dysfunctions of the classical marital system are open to reform. This is the same conclusion arrived at in the *Helen*.

The result of *gloss analysis* applied to the theme of restoration is to show up the antithesis between the traditional myth and Euripides’ version. In the traditional myth, the male is dominant because he survives by letting his wife die in his place. This tension is solved in Euripides’ version by subverting tradition: the male is a loser because he must live with shame in a lonely world. Firstly, Alcestis is restored to life because she deserves to live
better and, secondly she is restored to her husband because he deserves her back after his inner change.

The relationship between the theme of restoration and reality has to do with the ambiguity of being and non-being that simply symbolises the ambiguity of reality (see Table 7.2). The theme of restoration transferred into a modern idiom shows the woman’s value and her position in modern society. The theme of restoration as a language game reflects the metaphysical structure of the world, because it describes the possibility of a phenomenon that goes behind the physical world. In fact, the restoration of Alcestis is her metaphysical image. The limits of this image are the limits of the recreated tragic myth of Euripides and of the real world as well. Alcestis’ restoration functions as a metaphor for reality, because it shows that a new start is possible to broken relationships.

Obviously, the phenomenon of Alcestis’ death and restoration transcends reality; it is a philosophical problem that becomes absurd in modern terms. In the Alcestis, Euripides’ philosophical fiction is absurd because it lies beyond the limits of known reality and it is impossible. Through gloss analysis the restoration of Alcestis becomes a language game of the Theatre of the Absurd. The husband interprets reality through the prism of misunderstanding in language (being – non-being).

The grammar of justification noted above corresponds to catharsis, namely the restoration of Alcestis. It also results from the function of the surface and the depth grammar of the elementary propositions. Alcestis is a perfect wife in the traditional myth but completely justified in Euripides’ version. Through gloss analysis Alcestis becomes a post–modern character of the Theatre of the Absurd. The Alcestis of Euripides is a post–modern play, because it presents the non representable. Euripides discovers a unique event – Alcestis’ restoration – to create an inimitable tragic world.

Finally, the tragic author retells the traditional myth of Alcestis in his own way: he subverts the traditional norms governing the gender relationship and changes them for the better. He offers an antidote to marital problems in classical society and he also sensitises the modern reader. He uses the dualism between good and bad wives simply to reform it by emphasising that there are no perfect wives or husbands just fair and unfair norms.
governing their relationship. The modern reader will find a totally contemporary version of the *Alcestis* that is produced through *gloss analysis*. This is the most creative part of this study. This version is titled *ALCESTIS OR THE HORSE FARM* and it is based upon the main principles of the Theatre of the Absurd. It could also be performed by students of the performing arts as an experiment in the Theatre of the Absurd.

Finally, I hope that the practical application of *gloss analysis* in the *Helen* and the *Alcestis* of Euripides will lead to a critical reading of Euripidean drama, an aspect that has been neglected. The philosophical analysis of language in these texts shows clearly the connection between mythic, tragic and social realities and how the boundaries between myth and reality are still fluid. On the one hand, I hope that the findings of this study may lead to a better understanding of Euripidean dramaturgy. On the other hand, I trust that I demonstrated that Greek drama, analytic philosophy and practice can function closer.
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269
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GLOSSARY

Literary and Philosophical terms as they are used in this study:

**Admetus** king of Pherae, husband of Alcestis, who asked her wife to die in his place.

**aeteological** a myth supplying the cause or reason for something.

**agora** marketplace, civic centre.

**Alcestis** queen of ancient Pherae, who sacrificed her life for her husband. Euripides retells the traditional myth in a way that shows gender asymmetry in classical society.

**anagnorisis** the recognition scene of the protagonists in a drama.

**Anaxagoras** c. 500–428, natural philosopher famous for holding that the sun was a red–hot mass of stone.

**Arion** the first composer of dithyramb.

**catharsis** release of the emotions effected through the pity and fear in tragedy.

**choregos** a wealthy Athenian sponsor or impresario required to support financially a dramatic performance.

**chorus** group of people who dance and sing in tragedy.

**City (Great) Dionysia** the most important annual religious festival held in Athens in honour of Dionysos; theatrical competitions took place during the last three days of the festival.

**cleos** a glorious reputation usually gained at the time of a battle.

**cotenos** an olive wreath for the victors of the Olympic Games.

**didaskalos** the trainer of the chorus identified with the dramatist, the composer and the director of the play.

**deme** people; a local group or unit used for maintaining the register of citizens.

**democracy** system of government where the citizens elect their governors.

**Dionysos** god of wine and ecstasy associated with the birth of tragedy.

**dithyramb** a dance hymn sung by chorus in tragedies in honour of Dionysos.

**ecclesia** the assembly of men in classical Athens.

**ecstasy** a divine function connected to Dionysiac cult in which the partakers tend to be united with their god through dance, wine, and mysticism.
ekkyklema wheeled trolley used in ancient theatre to display indoor scenes to the audience.

epikleros girl or woman without living male brothers at the time of her father’s or husband’s death; she was obligated to marry the nearest kin on male side in order to maintain the land–kleros.

ethos the code of social and cultural values associated with morality.

Euripides c. 485–406, a dramatist; nineteen of his eighty plays survive. He is the most popular of the Big Three tragedians after his death.

Golden Age 4th–5th century of classical Athens, the spiritual centre of the ancient world.

gymnasia social centre of exercise and education as well.

hamartia sin as moral fault that causes punishment.

Heleaea a public court of Athens.

Helen daughter of Zeus (or Tyndareus) and Leda (or Nemese or Thethea); Menelaus’ wife who caused the Trojan War. Euripides had dealt with Helen, but he did not tell the traditional story; Paris did steal Helen, but bad weather drove his ships to Egypt where the king, Proteus, kept her in safety to wait for her husband.

hetaera courtesan, expensive prostitute, usually free in status.

Homer epic poet who is regarded as author both of the Iliad and the Odyssey.

hybris break or order of natural elements and moral code that causes punishment.

isegoria equality of privileges for all citizens.

isenomia equality of public speech in assembly.

kleros the estate–allotment of land transmitted to heirs.

Lenaea a religious festival in classical Athens held in the month of Gemalion.

litourgia/os system of taxation and sponsorship in ancient Athens.

logion the stage of the ancient theatre.

mechane a flying–machine or a crane swung on stage used by characters making airborne entries (deux ex machina).

Menelaus a legendary king of Sparta, brother of Agamemnon and husband of Helen.

meter a metrical unit of various forms in tragedy associated with the verse.

metics permanently residents aliens of Athens; they had to pay a tax called meticion.

Moirae three female figures of goddess believed to have control of human destiny.

mythological a story based on a myth / legend.

oikos household, both family members and property.
**Olympic Games** a national athletic festival held at Olympia every four years.

**oracle** a place where the ancient Greeks went to ask the advice of gods about the future.

**orchestra** a circular flat area of ancient theatre where the action took place.

**palaestrae** wrestling school of Athens.

**Panatheneae** a festival in honour of Athena.

**Pericles** c. 495–429, Athenian democratic statesman and commander connected with a building programme.

**peripeteia** the fall of hero and the reversal of fortune in drama.

**peplos** a robe made by Athenian maidens in honour of Athena.

**polis** a city–state, urban centre.

**pompe** the ritual procession of maidens in the Panathenaic way.

**Socrates** c. 469–399, Athenian philosopher, who devoted most of his mature life to philosophy, never wrote a word of his teaching, accused by his enemies that he had bad influence on the youth so that Athenians condemned him to death in 399.

**Solon** a lawgiver of classical Athens; the forefather of democracy.

**sophist** an orator who dealt with spiritual matters (such as Prodicus, and Protagoras).

**symposium** a drinking–party consisting of men, boys and hetaerae often accompanied by musical and sexual activities.

**theorica** the entrance ticket fee for needy people paid by the state.

**Thesmophoria** a women’s festival in which women used to live away from home for three days, while the men had to do the domestic duties.

**Thespis** founder of tragedy.

**Thucydides** c. 455–400, Athenian historian, who wrote an unfinished history of the Peloponnesian War.

**thymele** altar in the centre of the *orchestra* that served as a focus of ritual activity.

**tragedy** etymologically a *song for goats* a competitive dramatic performance in ancient Athens held at religious festivals.

**Trojan War** the–ten year–siege of ancient Troy by the Greeks.

**xenos** both visitor and foreigner allowed to reside in a house under the circumstances of hospitality.