

MALCOLM DAVIES

The Three Electras: Strauss, Hofmannsthal, Sophocles, and the Tragic Vision*

I have given my article the above title partly to distinguish it more clearly from the most substantial treatment so far in English¹ of its theme, partly to emphasise my conviction that it is the combination of Hofmannsthal's words and Strauss's music² that creates the twentieth

* This article aims to complement and continue (rather than reduplicate or replace) the earlier contribution by Lloyd-Jones mentioned below (n. 1), to whose lucid summaries of the action of Aeschylus' *Libation-Bearers* (from the Oresteian trilogy) and of Sophocles' as well as Hofmannsthal's *Elektra* the reader requiring such orientation is referred. In what follows, passages from Hofmannsthal are generally taken from the new edition (*Sämtliche Werke. Kritische Ausgabe*): *Elektra* is printed in volume VII: *Dramen* 5, pp. 61 ff. (play) and 111 ff. (libretto), ed. Mathias Mayer. The English translation of the *libretto* to Strauss's opera is that produced by G. M. Holland and K. Chalmers for the notable Decca recording; while the translation of Hofmannsthal's original drama (i.e. those few portions I have quoted from those parts of the text that Strauss eliminated) is that of Alfred Schwarz in Michael Hamburger, *Selected Plays and Libretti of Hugo von Hofmannsthal* (London 1963). Translations from the *Electra* and other plays of Sophocles are taken from the new Loeb text by Lloyd-Jones (2 vols, 1994). The useful introduction to Hamburger's volume (mentioned above and reprinted in *Hofmannsthal: Three Essays* (Princeton 1972)) and the studies by Lloyd-Jones (note 1 below) and Gilliam (note 2 below) are mentioned by author's name alone below. I do not attempt a complete bibliography; further references may be found in the notes of articles mentioned below.

¹ H. Lloyd-Jones, «The Two Electras: Hofmannsthal's *Elektra* as a Goethean drama,» *Publications of the English Goethe Society* 59 (1989) 16 ff. = *Greek in a Cold Climate* (1991) 155 ff. In p. 18 n. 9 = p. 157 n. 8 the author modestly defines his article as «little more than an attempt to remind students of Hofmannsthal» of the earlier contribution by H.-J. Newiger, «Hofmannsthal's *Elektra* und die griechische Tragödie,» *Arcadia* 4 (1969) 138 ff.

² For the fullest musical analysis of the Strauss-Hofmannsthal opera see Bryan Gilliam, *Richard Strauss's Elektra* (Oxford 1991). Note also the Cambridge opera handbook (ed. D. Puffett, 1989). Of this book's various contributors, it is Karen Forsyth in Chapter 2 («Hofmannsthal's *Elektra*: from Sophocles to Strauss:» pp. 17–32) who provides material most relevant to the present article. She has perceptive comments on both Sophocles and Hofmannsthal. Her main defect is failure to take into account (cf. Lloyd-Jones as quoted in the previous note) the article by Newiger mentioned above. This apart, I agree with her observation (p. 20) that too «few critics have actually troubled to read and compare Hofmannsthal with the Greek sources,» and hope that the present enterprise, following on Lloyd-Jones' treatment, will remedy the situation. Michael Ewans, «Elektra: Sophokles, von Hofmannsthal, Strauss,» *Ramus* 13 (1984) 135–54, cited by Forsyth, though not by Lloyd-Jones, does move some way in the right direction. But although he is right to stress (e.g. p. 142 f.) that Hofmannsthal's treatment was much closer to Sophocles than is usually recognised, I feel he is wrong to detect in Sophocles' treatment (and Strauss', for that matter: see n. 19 below) a «sexual obsession with her father» on Electra's part (p. 145), or to talk (pp. 146 ff.) of «sadism» in the temporary deceptions of Electra by Orestes (see p. 44), and of Aegisthus by the same hero. Similarly, his view (p. 151) that Sophocles' Electra is «corrupted, by her desire for vengeance, to a level of savagery» equivalent to that of Aegisthus and Clytemnestra, and that she «deteriorates (like Euripides' Hecuba) into a raging and savage avenger by the end of the recognition scene» (p. 148) takes in a wrong and crude direction the undeniably ferocious aspects of Electra's character. (Euripides' Hecuba should be cited in terms of *contrast*, not comparison.)

century's best reconstitution of Greek tragedy's emotional impact, «not merely the ability to move, but an actual shattering of the emotions, the Tragic shattering, which also bears within itself the possibility of exaltation.»³ And it is this unique twentieth century collaboration with Sophocles, I feel, which makes the significant difference. After all, Strauss and Hofmannsthal were to produce together other works exploiting Greek myth (*Ariadne on Naxos*, *Helen in Egypt*) but never again with the same impact or force as here.

Of course one should not exaggerate the influence of Sophocles. Some details of the Strauss-Hofmannsthal treatment do, after all, seem blatantly, almost aggressively, «modern.» This is nowhere more provocatively the case than in the scene where, Orestes' death having been falsely reported, Electra (to quote Gilliam⁴) «tries to seduce Chrysothemis into taking part in the murders ... The most sensual language of the play is contained in this quasi-incestuous scene, as Electra flatters her sister with words praising her beauty and strength.» In the last decade of the twentieth century, Channel Four's soap opera *Brookside* on British television has employed first the motif of lesbianism and then that of incest to keep its audience; but it was Strauss and Hofmannsthal in the first decade who put a scene of would-be lesbian incest on the stage.

It cannot be denied that the effect as such is deeply unSophoclean. But neither can it be denied that the scene has at least its roots in the equivalent scene of Sophocles' *Electra*. There the heroine tells her sister (vv. 951 ff.) that so long as Orestes was known to be living all her hopes reposed upon him:

But now that he is no more, I look to you, not to be afraid to kill with me your sister the author of our father's murder, Aegisthus ... To what hope that still stands upright can you look? You can lament at being cheated of the possession of your father's wealth, and you can grieve at growing older to this point in time without a wedding and without a marriage. And think no longer that you will ever get these things. Aegisthus is not so stupid a man as to allow your children or mine to come into being, bringing obvious trouble for

³ The (translated) words of Wolfgang Schadewaldt, «Richard Wagner und die Griechen,» *Hellas und Hesperien* 2 (Zürich/Stuttgart 1970) (a reprinting of articles originally published in the programmes of the Bayreuth festival) p. 405. It is important to observe (a) that Schadewaldt is here comparing the effect of Greek tragedy with that of Wagner's music-dramas (for the influence of Wagner's music upon Strauss's *Electra* see Gilliam's *Index* s.v. «Wagner»); (b) that Schadewaldt thought that, of the three great Attic tragedians, the one most fully embodying his definition of Greek tragedy's impact was Sophocles (see his study of *Sophokles und das Leid* (below n. 14)). Classicists may be gratified to note in passing what one of his grandsons said of Strauss's general attitude to the humanities: «A cultivated European must know Latin and Greek, or else he's not a fully qualified human being, he must read philosophy, he must have Goethe on his bedside table, Herder, Wieland, Homer and Sophocles in the original; he must study, get a good education, concentrate, not waste time.» (The younger Richard Strauss *ap.* Kurt Wilhelm, *Richard Strauss Persönlich* (Munich 1984) p. 197 ≈ *Richard Strauss, an Intimate Portrait* (London 1989) p. 197).

⁴ P. 41. Compare Robertson's description («Ich habe ihm das Beil nicht geben können»: The Heroine's Failure in Hofmannsthal's *Elektra*,» *Orbis Litterarum* 41 (1986) 321) of the equivalent scene in Hofmannsthal's original play: Electra «fondles and embraces her sister ... and promises, in sensuous, almost voyeuristic language, to prepare her for her wedding night.» The effect Hofmannsthal's elimination of the chorus has on scenes such as this is well conveyed by Forsyth (as cited above n. 2): «the chorus is ... the institution of rational dialogue, ensuring at least a level of rational contact between the protagonists.» Compare Ewans (as cited above n. 2) p. 144 on the way in which Hofmannsthal «rejects the delight in words» of Sophocles' *Electra*, and, indeed, much 5th century Attic literature (cf. his p. 153 n. 42 on the «anti-rhetorical style» of Hofmannsthal's play). Cf. *Sämtliche Werke* VII: *Dramen* 5 p. 368.

himself. But if you fall in with my counsels ... you will obtain a worthy marriage; for what is excellent draws the eyes of all.

The prospect of marriage here held out to Chrysothemis is the reason, or at least the excuse, for Electra's appeal to her sister in Hofmannsthal's treatment. The Greek tragedian's characters express themselves in a more obviously structured and rational manner: it is typical, for example, that Chrysothemis rejects Electra's proposal in a formal speech initially addressed to the chorus and only turning directly to her sister in its fourth line (vv. 992 ff.: «Before giving tongue, women, she would have preserved caution, if she had good sense, but she does not preserve it! Why, with what aim in view, do you arm yourself with such rashness and call on me to second you?» etc). Compare this with what Gilliam calls⁴ «one large monologue for Electra with short outbursts by Chrysothemis» (such as «lass mich!» or «Ich kann nicht!») in the scene which Strauss has cut down from Hofmannsthal's original text. But the contrast in formality of presentation is largely to be explained in terms of Hofmannsthal's elimination of the chorus. The Sophoclean Chrysothemis and Electra converse semi-publically in the presence (and hearing) of a chorus of local young girls (see below p. 45). The encounter of the equivalent figures in the Strauss-Hofmannsthal version is inevitably more intimate and less formalised.

The theme of marriage is resumed negatively in this latter version at a point within the recognition scene between Electra and Orestes, and in a manner which has no parallel in the Sophoclean original. Electra tells her brother that, for her father's sake, she has had to sacrifice all her natural feelings: «the dead are jealous; and he [i.e. Agamemnon] sent me hate, hollow-eyed hate, as a bridegroom. So I became a prophetess evermore, and have brought forth nothing out of myself and my body except curses and despair.» There is nothing directly comparable to this devastating passage in Sophocles' play. But we should remember that he and his audience will have been familiar with an artificial but effective etymologising of the name *Ēlektra* as *ālektra* (beginning with the privative Greek alpha familiar from words such as *apathy* or *atypical*) i.e. the *un*-married girl.⁵ We should also note that, in a famous passage from *Antigone*, the Sophoclean heroine who most closely resembles Electra complains, as she is led off to her death, «I shall be the bride of Acheron» (v. 816), in effect the god of death.⁶

⁵ The etymology is attributed to a little-known lyric poet called Xanthus, who lived before the three Attic tragedians (see fragment 700 in D.L. Page's *Poetae Melici Graeci* (Oxford 1962)). None of his works have survived. The motif is adapted by Euripides in his *Electra*, where the heroine occupies an uneasy grey area between the states of marriage and non-marriage: she has been given for a husband (in order to reduce her potential danger value) a poor farmer living in a hovel. He, however, nobly refuses to sleep with her, so that she is still a virgin (v. 43 f.). Perhaps this was the inspiration for Chrysothemis' contrasting wish in Strauss and Hofmannsthal's treatment that she could have a child even if its father were a peasant («Kinder will ich haben, bevor mein Leib verwelkt, /und wär's ein Bauer, dem sie mich geben, /Kinder will ich ihm gebären und mit meinem Leib /sie wärmen in kalten Nächten, /wenn der Sturm die Hütte zusammenschüttelt!»). But Hofmannsthal may not have known Euripides' play: see n. 33 below.

⁶ The *Antigone* may be relevant for an understanding of Strauss and Hofmannsthal's treatment in another way. The issue of marriage and children in their version is a way of distinguishing the normal Chrysothemis from the heroic, intransigent Electra, who has sacrificed such bourgeois concerns for vengeance's sake (see below n. 54). That aspect of the contrast does not appear in Sophocles' original (where Electra's appeal to Chrysothemis' continued unmarried existence is part of a formalised rhetorical persuasion). At v. 572 of *Antigone*, however, the heroine's sister Ismene reveals her position by showing an every-

I

The critical reception of Hofmannsthal's play has been summarised and analysed by Hugh Lloyd-Jones, that of Strauss' opera by Bryan Gilliam.⁷ Among much in the way of adverse comments perhaps the most striking and repeated refrain is that Sophocles' original had been grievously perverted and distorted. To quote but one example, Ernest Newman, writing in the year of the opera's British premiere (1910), expressed himself in the following terms:⁸

If it were not for this strain of coarseness and thoughtlessness in him, [Strauss] would never have taken up so crude a perversion of the old Greek story as that of Hugo von Hofmannsthal ... To make a play a study of human madness, and then to lay such excessive stress upon the merely physical concomitants of madness, is to ask us to tune our notions of dramatic terror and horror down to too low a pitch.

A few weeks later he returned to this theme, finding in the opera «a most unpleasant specimen of that crudity and physical violence that a certain school of modern German artists mistakes for intellectual and emotional power. In setting this violence to music, Strauss tries to outHerod Herod.» And some time later he still professed to discover «a good deal that is crude and melodramatic in von Hofmannsthal's play. He is not content, for example, with having Aegisthus slaughtered at one window, but must needs have the poor man chased to another window and the agony prolonged there – for all the world, as one American critic puts it, like a bullock in a Chicago stock-yard.»⁹

day, non-heroic concern for marriage and the continuities of life to which the remorseless Antigone is completely indifferent: see my remarks in *Prometheus* 12 (1986) 19 ff. (where I also discuss the general Sophoclean use of «foil-figures» like Ismene).

⁷ Pp. 16–17 = 155–7 (Lloyd-Jones) and pp. 6 ff. (Gilliam). Cf. *Sämtliche Werke VII: Dramen* 5 p. 310 n. 18, pp. 381 ff. An amusingly extreme after-echo of these original controversies comes from W. N. Bates, *Sophocles Poet and Dramatist* (New York 1940) p. 133: «The shrieking mad woman of Strauss has nothing in common with the heroine of Sophocles.» This is not so very different from, e.g., J. L. Styan, *Max Reinhardt* (Cambridge 1982) p. 26: «Sophocles' controlled and dignified heroine, in [the first production of Hofmannsthal's play] became a woman consumed by the passions of a prima donna» (cf. n. 14 below for an uncontrolled and undignified aspect of Sophocles' Electra). In Hofmannsthal's first scene, the absent Electra is admittedly said (by the distinctly unsympathetic maids) to groan, shriek, scream, howl (and spit like a cat). Her Sophoclean equivalent is not so described. But Sophocles' Heracles (in *Women of Trachis*) and his Philoctetes do, under pressure of physical anguish, groan, roar and utter animal-like sounds, *all on stage* (cf. n. 42).

⁸ Newman's critique (together with the delightful «yell of remonstrance» which it provoked from G. B. Shaw) may most conveniently be consulted in volume iii of the *Bodley Head Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music*, pp. 594 ff. The first quotation in the text above is from 597, the second from 611, the third from 615 f.

⁹ The scene thus contradicts the ban in Greek tragedy upon showing murder on stage, a ban epitomised by Horace's famous injunction *ne pueros coram populo Medea trucidet* (from *Ars Poetica*, v. 185): see C. O. Brink's commentary *ad loc.* (*Horace on Poetry: the Ars Poetica* (Cambridge 1971) p. 244 f.). It is striking (though Newman could not have known this) that while Strauss was well into work on the opera, Hofmannsthal actually suggested the elimination of Aegisthus' role. It was Strauss (in his reply 22nd December 1907) who thought differently: «we can't leave out Aegisthus altogether. He is definitely part of the plot and must be killed with the rest, preferably before the eyes of the audience.» See *Sämtliche Werke VII: Dramen* 5 p. 430 = *Richard Strauss und Hugo von Hofmannsthal: Briefwechsel* (ed. Willi Schuh) p. 33 = *The Correspondence between Richard Strauss and Hugo von Hofmannsthal* p. 12. Of the three Attic tragedians, Euripides alone dispensed with Aegisthus' direct presence.

There is certainly much that is perverse about Newman's critique (he prophesied,¹⁰ it will be remembered, only «a few short years of life for» the opera) but he is not untypical of critical reaction in his assumption that the Greek original has been sadly traduced. No written criticism, however, can match, in the vigour and simplicity of its viewpoint, the famous cartoon which showed Strauss and Hofmannsthal doing to the hapless Sophocles what they themselves had just represented Orestes and his tutor as doing to Aegisthus (see p. 65).

This wide-spread view has, in fact, far less basis in the actual surviving works of Sophocles than one might initially suspect. Rather, it seems to rely ultimately on the second-hand, idealised, picture of the perfectly-balanced «classical» Sophocles that received its most famous English encapsulation in Matthew Arnold's once famous sonnet:

whose even-balanced soul,
From first youth tested up to extreme old age,
Business could not make dull, nor passion wild;
Who saw life steadily, and saw it whole;
The mellow glory of the Attic stage,
Singer of sweet Colonus, and its child.

These plaster-of-paris banalities actually derive not from the original texts of Sophocles' dramas but from the ancient (and distinctly unreliable) biographical tradition about Sophocles, which consistently represents him as possessing an irresistibly charming and admirable personal character. Since this tradition is, at least in part, an artificial and schematic construct designed to contrast him with his contemporary (but far less successful) tragic rival Euripides – who, by a similar schematism is portrayed as an unsociable misanthrope – it must be treated with extreme caution. If we turn instead to an examination of those relatively few (seven) actual plays by Sophocles that have survived, we may be surprised to find a greater interest in what Newman calls «physical violence» than we might have expected. For instance, the *Women of Trachis*, probably one of the earliest of the surviving Sophoclean tragedies, brings on stage in its final scene the great Greek hero Heracles, his body ravaged by the effects of the famous poisoned robe of Nessus. No detail is spared of the physical effects of the poison as Heracles, maddened with pain, raves in delirium, demanding that the wife who sent him this deadly shirt (and who, unbeknown to Heracles, has since killed herself in remorse) be placed in his hands for instant revenge.¹²

¹⁰ P. 600. For his later recantation see Gilliam p. 16 f.

¹¹ For the biographical tradition of the charming, refined (and pious) Sophocles (what W. S. Ferguson, *Harvard Theological Review* 37 (1944) 90, summed up as «the idol of the Athenians ... a genial, serene, dignified greybeard,»), see, for instance Mary Lefkowitz, *Lives of the Greek Poets* (London 1981) p. 79 ff. For the artificial and schematic contrast with Euripides see P. T. Stevens, *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 56 (1956) 89. These considerations are overlooked by Ewans (as cited n. 2 above) p. 141, who consequently oversimplifies the issue when he derives the «idealisation» of Sophocles entirely from Aristophanes' *Frogs* (esp. v. 82) and Aristotle's *Poetics*.

¹² Cf. R. G. A. Buxton, *Sophocles (Greece and Rome New Surveys in the Classics* 16 (1984)) p. 32, on how, in the late twentieth century, «we seem now to be more receptive to the violent emotions which lurk beneath and sometimes burst out from this work,» with its «uneasy tension between the barbarous and the civilised, the wild outside and the sheltered inside.» Interestingly enough, just as the critical views of August Wilhelm Schlegel (see n. 13) impeded until quite recently a proper understanding of Sophocles' *Electra*, so they made an understanding of the *Women of Trachis* more difficult: see the Introduction to my commentary on this work (Oxford 1991) p. xvii.

In the probably later, and certainly more famous, *Oedipus Tyrannus*, a messenger speech relates in detail Oedipus' act of self-blinding (the sequel to his discovering that he has killed his father and married his mother). Immediately afterwards, the self-mutilated Oedipus himself appears on stage, all but shattered by his physical and emotional sufferings. Or again, the late drama called *Philoctetes* (first produced in 409 B.C.) tells the story of the Greek hero of that name who has been bitten in the foot by a poisonous snake and been abandoned on a deserted island. The stench and suppuration from his wound are vividly described in the text. Half-way through the play, Philoctetes is struck down on stage in full view of the audience by a fresh spasm of pain and his cries of physical agony leave little to the imagination.

Though we only possess seven extant tragedies by Sophocles, it nevertheless seems unlikely that the *Electra* would be an exception to this general trend. The main reason why a view of this play incompatible with Hofmannsthal's approach prevailed at the start of the twentieth century was the highly influential (and highly idealising) interpretation offered by August Wilhelm Schlegel, the character of which is aptly conveyed by the following extract:

What more especially characterizes the tragedy of Sophocles, is the heavenly serenity beside a subject so terrific, the fresh air of life and youth which breathes through the whole. The bright divinity of Apollo, who enjoined the deed, seems to shed his influence over it; even the break of day, in the opening scene, is significant. The grave and the world of shadows, are kept in the background ... The disposition to avoid everything dark and ominous, is remarkable even in the very first speech of Orestes, where he says he feels no concern at being thought dead, so long as he knows himself to be alive, and in the full enjoyment of health and strength.

While this verdict¹³ (which has been epigrammatically boiled down to a view of the work as a «mixture of matricide and good spirits») was the prevalent view of the play, it is hardly surprising that Hofmannsthal's, and then Strauss and Hofmannsthal's, treatments seemed a crude and violent betrayal of a beautiful and poised original. But, in fact, Schlegel's idealisation is no more acceptable than any of the others outlined above. It is perfectly clear that it too derives from the ancient biographical tradition (note, for instance, his own remarks on the life and character of Sophocles: «beauty of person and of mind, and the uninterrupted enjoyment of both in the utmost perfection, to the extreme term of human existence ... the sweet bloom of youth, and the ripe fruit of age» etc.) and that it too, in full keeping with this derivation, is designed to form a contrasting foil to the artistic personality of Euripides, whom Schlegel had little time for. («The *Electra* is perhaps the very worst of Euripides' pieces ... But what compelled him ... to write an *Electra* at all?») Recent decades have seen a waning of the Schlegel-inspired view of the play as one in which Orestes' killing of his

¹³ Quoted from «A Course of Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature by A. W. Schlegel» (translated by John Black, London 1846) p. 132 (for the original German *Vorlesungen über dramatische Kunst und Literatur* see the critical edition by G. V. Amoretti (Bonn and Leipzig 1923)), part of a comparison between the *Libation-Bearers* of Aeschylus and the *Electras* of Sophocles and Euripides. Note the (unacceptable) comment of A. J. A. Waldock, *Sophocles the Dramatist* (Cambridge 1951) p. 174 n. 1: «A mixture of matricide and good spirits: this paraphrase [deriving from Gilbert Murray's introduction to his translation of Euripides' *Electra* (London 1905) p. vii.] of Schlegel's description really hits off the play rather well.» Murray himself found Hofmannsthal's play «really more primitive than Sophocles» (see *Sämtliche Werke* VII: *Dramen* 5 p. 432).

mother is thrust very much into the background and his pursuit by the Erinyes or Furies therefore «omitted.» If «the disposition to avoid everything dark and ominous is remarkable,» that is seen as truer of Schlegel's interpretation and its followers than of Sophocles' actual treatment. In its place we find a greater readiness¹⁴ to grasp the play's tragic dilemmas and the formidable aspects of Electra's (and Clytemnestra's) characters.

Hofmannsthal's general tragic vision in *Electra* is therefore a good deal closer to Sophocles than its original critics were prepared to concede. In his «Szenische Vorschriften zu Elektra» of 1903, the poet specifically warned against «antikisierende Banalitäten» and «falsches Antikisieren» in matters of staging and costume respectively,¹⁵ and we must be on our guard against allowing similar false banalities concerning a perfectly-balanced and impossibly ideal Sophocles to conceal the fact that in other areas too Hofmannsthal and Strauss came close to the Sophoclean original. Let us consider first the question of dramatic structure.

II

Gilliam¹⁶ well stresses the dramatic economy of Hofmannsthal's adaptation: «the play is remarkably concise; its concentration of action and structural clarity ... make for a powerful stage work.» Concision is one of the traits generally (and rightly) supposed to distinguish Greek tragedy from e.g. the Shakespearian variety¹⁷ or many modern examples of tragedy.

¹⁴ See in particular the remarks of Newiger (pp. 144 ff.) and of Lloyd-Jones (p. 26 f. = p. 164 f. with literature). An intelligent attempt to reconcile the biographical tradition of a blithe and pious Sophocles with the grim, indeed shattering intensity of the actual seven surviving plays was made by Wolfgang Schadewaldt in *Sophocles und das Leid* (Potsdamer Vorträge 4 (1947) = *Hellas und Hesperien* 1. 385 ff.). We should be careful to keep the right balance in estimating Electra's character: Robertson (cited in n. 4 above) p. 319 thinks it «gratuitously savage» of her «not to be content with Aegisthus' death but to demand that his corpse should be treated with contempt» (vv. 1487 ff.). The original audience *may* have been more tolerant of the consequences of revenge: see, for instance, G. W. Bond's commentary (Oxford 1983) on Euripides' *Heracles* 562–82, 571 and 604 f., and D. Hester, *Antichthon* 15 (1981) 23 (cf. *ib.* 7 (1973) p. 12 n. 12). But the problem is a complex one (contrast e.g. G. H. Gellie, *Sophocles A Reading* (Melbourne 1972) p. 128 («Greek sensitivities about burial would find it ugly») and n. 25, Ewans (cited in n. 2 above) p. 147).

¹⁵ See *Sämtliche Werke* VII: *Dramen* 5 pp. 379 and 381. Hofmannsthal himself (*Aufzeichnungen und Tagebücher aus dem Nachlass* (in: *Aufzeichnungen*, ed. Steiner, p. 131)) observed that he always wished his *Electra* to be totally different from Goethe's adaptation of a Greek tragedy, *Iphigenia*, whose own author confessed that it was «damnable human» («verteufelt human»). Various names have been invoked as responsible for Hofmannsthal's escape from earlier, excessively idealised, views of Greek literature and culture: Hermann Bahr (*Briefe der Freundschaft* (1953) 50 f. = Hofmannsthal, *Briefe* (ed. Steiner 2. 168 f.) mentions Nietzsche, with Jacob Burckhardt (who published their *Briefwechsel* in 1957 (S. Fischer Verlag)); Hamburger p. xxxv = p. 7 adds Bachofen and Erwin Rohde. For Nietzsche see further Ewans (cited above n. 2) p. 139 f., Lorna Martens (cited below, n. 31) p. 47; cf. in general H. Jürgen Meyer-Wendt, *Der frühe Hofmannsthal und die Gedankenwelt Nietzsches* (Heidelberg 1973). For Rohde cf. Robertson (as cited in n. 4) pp. 312 f. and pp. 315 f. Cf. Ekkehard Stärk, *Hermann Nitschs <Orgien Mysterien Theater> und die <Hysterie der Griechen>*. *Quellen und Traditionen im Wiener Antikebild seit 1900*, Munich 1987, Index s. v. Hofmannsthal.

¹⁶ P. 24. Cf. pp. 26 f., 35 f.

¹⁷ The difference is epigrammatically summed-up by Eduard Fraenkel (see *Due Seminari Romani di Ed. Fraenkel* (*Sussidi Eruditi* 28 (Rome 1977) p. 31)): «our taste is formed on Shakespeare, where there are many characters and much movement. Greek art is one of essentials, and it eliminates anything that does not contribute to the dramatic conflict» (my translation of the original Italian).

But there is a complication in the case of Sophocles: the three latest extant dramas (*Electra*, *Philoctetes*, *Oedipus at Colonus*) are, in at least one sense, generally less economic than their four predecessors. A crude line-count is not altogether misleading: *Ajax* 1420, *Women of Trachis* 1278, *Antigone* 1353, *Oedipus Tyrannus* 1530; as opposed to *Electra* 1510, *Philoctetes* 1471, *Oedipus at Colonus* 1779. In certain parts of his later plays, indeed, Sophocles sometimes seems to be using length for emphasis: the sufferings and endurance of his main characters are brought out by long lyric scenes of lament shared between the chorus and the actor, which do not strictly advance the action but rather reprise earlier themes and seem designed to prevent any superficial verdict that the plays have a «happy ending» merely because they do not conclude with the death of the central figure. Thus in the case of *Electra*, the heroine's lengthy lament over what she wrongly assumes to be an urn containing her brother Orestes' ashes serves this purpose, as, in his play, does Philoctetes' lament at seemingly being abandoned, once more, this time for ever, on his desert isle.

Hofmannsthal's approach was different, and, as Gilliam observes,¹⁸ Strauss «sought to make» his already taut drama «even more concise with some cuts of his own» (amounting to approximately one third of the text).¹⁹ Hofmannsthal's play fell into seven symmetrically balanced episodes:²⁰

1. Introduction: serving-maids' conversation
2. Electra's monologue
3. Electra – Chrysothemis dialogue
4. Electra – Clytemnestra dialogue
(Cook – Servants scene)
5. Electra – Chrysothemis dialogue
6. Recognition scene between Electra and Orestes
(Electra – Aegisthus dialogue)
7. Final scene: Electra's triumph and dance of death.

In Sophocles' *Electra*, the play opens with a long speech addressed to Orestes by his *paedagogus* or tutor, which sets the scene and reminds Orestes of his duty. At vv. 660 ff. the *paedagogus* will re-enter and deliver the false news of Orestes' death, professing to confirm the fact in a speech so lengthy, detailed and convincing (680 ff.), that more than one

¹⁸ P. 35. Hofmannsthal's original drama was approximately the length of Sophocles' *Electra* (just over 1500 lines); after Strauss's cuts (*and* additions) the libretto reaches c. 825 lines.

¹⁹ For details of these cuts see Chapter 2 of Gilliam's monograph («From Play to Libretto»), pp. 18–48. Strauss also required a few additional passages from Hofmannsthal for purely musical reasons. These «Texterweiterungen im Opernbuch» are clearly laid out in *Sämtliche Werke VII: Dramen* 5 pp. 347 ff.; cf. Newiger (cited above n. 1) pp. 157 ff. Interestingly, the cuts sometimes have the (doubtless unintended) effect of rendering the text more «Sophoclean,» by omitting some of the more self-consciously «modern» aspects. Gilliam (p. 41) has observed, for instance, Strauss's elimination of many sexual elements and images (on which cf. Robertson (as cited in n. 4) pp. 319 ff.). And the cutting down of the first scene between Electra and Chrysothemis by about 50 per cent (Gilliam p. 37) and the second by about 20 (Gilliam p. 40) largely restores to Chrysothemis her purely secondary status as a «foil figure» (see above n. 6) intended to illuminate by contrast the central heroism of her sister, instead of the more independent and autonomous figure Hofmannsthal may have intended (see below p.56).

²⁰ For a more detailed breakdown of the seven scenes' contents see Gilliam p. 75 f. The similarity of this *schema* to that of Sophocles' play is diagrammatically illustrated by Ewans (as cited in n. 2) p. 138.

scholar²¹ has concluded (implausibly to my mind) that the audience must be temporarily persuaded of its truth, in spite of the evidence of their own eyes at the play's beginning. Finally, after the recognition scene between Electra and her brother, the *paedagogus* enters for a third time to cut short their untimely loquacity and hurry them into action (1326 ff.). The authoritative, if not imperious, language he uses on this last occasion («You utter fools, you senseless people, do you take no heed any longer for your lives, or have you no inborn sense, that you fail to see that you are not merely close to but are in the midst of the greatest dangers» etc.) is a powerful reminder that, although he is technically a slave, this old man is an impressive figure, crucial for the success of the plot against Clytemnestra and Aegisthus. His entire role, however, is compressed by Hofmannsthal into barely more than five lines, which convey the import of his third and final appearance in Sophocles («Are you out of your minds, not to restrain your speech when a breath, a sound, a mere nothing can destroy us and our work? She [i.e. Clytemnestra] is waiting inside, her maids are looking for you. There is not a man in the house, Orestes!» This last sentence is equivalent to 1368 f. of Sophocles' play: «Now is the time to act: now Clytemnestra is alone, now none of the men is inside»).

As we have just seen, Sophocles begins the drama with Orestes and his old slave on stage before Electra has appeared. Aeschylus in his *Libation-Bearers* had already done something comparable, with more obvious justification, since this play is the second of a connected trilogy dealing with the successive sufferings, generation by generation, of the house of Agamemnon, and the poet is more interested in Orestes' role (both as avenger and next victim in the chain of suffering) than he is in Electra (a merely secondary figure in his treatment). In having Orestes on stage at the start, Sophocles is not merely paying homage to Aeschylus, or emphasising some of the differences in his own treatment (for instance, in Aeschylus the brother remains to eavesdrop on his sister's lamentation, whereas in Sophocles a greater sense of urgency impels Orestes to leave the stage before Electra enters). He is also setting up the opportunity for a number of profoundly ironic effects later on in the play, effects that include the *paedagogus*' lying speech on Orestes' death and Electra's lament over the urn supposedly containing her brother's ashes.

In strongest conceivable contrast, Hofmannsthal elected to delay Orestes' entry until the latest possible moment. (We know, indeed, from a letter he wrote to a friend on 6th October 1904²² that he even contemplated the total omission of Orestes, or at least conceded that his version of the drama might have been purer without that figure). Yet even here, Hofmannsthal's changes have the effect of taking further a process already begun by Sophocles. As was implied above, Sophocles was more concerned with the character of Electra than Aeschylus had been, and without Orestes as a competing centre for its interests, the audience is able to concentrate on the heroine still more completely. Indeed, if they do not know their Greek tragedy, until the recognition scene they may be as convinced as Strauss and Hofmannsthal's Electra that Orestes really is dead.

²¹ E.g. Tycho von Wilamowitz, *Die dramatische Technik des Sophocles* (Berlin 1917) p. 191. Cf. Lloyd-Jones, p. 23 = p. 161: «listening to this, it is hard even for an audience that has seen this man in the company of Orestes not to be carried away and for the moment to believe it.» Against see, e.g. A. J. A. Waldo, *Sophocles the Dramatist* (Cambridge 1951) p. 184.

²² *Sämtliche Werke VII: Dramen* 5 p. 403 = *Hugo von Hofmannsthal: Briefe 1900–09* (Vienna 1937) p. 170 (the letter is to Eberhard Freiherrn von Bodenhausen-Degener) = H. v. H.-Eberhard von Bodenhausen, *Briefe der Freundschaft*, Cologne 1953, p. 51.

There is a further point. Perhaps the most significant feature of Sophoclean heroes (and Sophoclean heroines like Antigone and Electra) is their isolation, their solitariness and alienation from society. In *Electra*, Sophocles mitigates this standard feature to a degree by his choice of chorus: young women, like Electra herself, they are able to console and advise her (note, for instance, their tone at vv. 233–5: «I speak as a well-wisher, like a mother in whom you can have trust»). Their support, together with the play's opening reminder that Orestes is not only still alive but has already returned to his native land and is actively pursuing the revenge that his sister yearns for, ensures that Electra does not appear quite so isolated and abandoned in her struggle as, for instance, Antigone. Now Hofmannsthal, as is well known, eliminated the chorus, or rather replaced them by a vestigial quintet of serving-maids, four-fifths of whom, as appears from the first scene, are extremely unsympathetic and hostile to Electra. This, as well as the drastically postponed entry of Orestes, exacerbates the isolation of his heroine. No wonder that her very first words are «Allein! Weh, ganz allein,» a phrase opening Hofmannsthal's episode 2, which is symmetrically picked up by «Nun denn, allein!» at the start of episode 6. Following the latter words, Electra, as Hofmannsthal's stage-direction puts it, «begins to dig by the wall of the palace, silently, like an animal, looking round from time to time.» She is searching for the axe, originally used to kill Agamemnon, which she had buried ready for Orestes to wield: as Chrysothemis has refused to collaborate with her sister, Electra intends to wield it on her own. There is no exact equivalent to this vivid scenic activity in Sophocles' play, but here too what initially seems a bold departure by Hofmannsthal again transpires to be a following-through of a motif Sophocles had already sketched out. For he also makes Electra, once she is convinced that her brother has been killed, try to persuade her weaker sister to join her in a murder attempt: «now that he [i.e. Orestes] is no more, I look to you, not to be afraid to kill with me your sister the author of our father's murder, Aegisthus» (vv. 954–957). It is true that some classical scholars have been perplexed at this detail. Eduard Fraenkel, for instance,²³ protested that «Sophocles gives no indication as to how the two of them could carry out this plan,» and others have thought Electra's suggestion unrealistic and impractical, or have noted its failure to reappear in the ensuing events. It is also striking that Electra implies but does not mention the murder of Clytemnestra when proposing to her sister the murder of Aegisthus. Recent scholars²⁴ have dispelled most of these difficulties: for instance, since Electra is endeavouring to encourage the timid Chrysothemis into action, it would hardly be helpful for her case to add the prospect of matricide, inevitable though it might be if the death of Aegisthus were ever to be carried out. The proposal is obviously made in order to emphasise the extreme heroic determination of Electra, by showing that she can bring herself even to kill Aegisthus and her own mother, now that she believes Orestes is dead. Sophocles wishes to show her as *capable* of killing Aegisthus and her mother, even though the mythical tradition did not represent her as so doing, and has hit on a highly effective and economical way of conveying this point about Electra's character. When Hofmannsthal and Strauss have

²³ Quoted *ap.* Lloyd-Jones, «Tycho von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf on the Dramatic Technique of Sophocles» in *Classical Quarterly* 22 (1972) p. 224 f.n. 3 = *Academic Papers* [1] p. 413 f. ≈ *Blood for the Ghosts* p. 232 n. 36. Similar objections had already been raised by Tycho von Wilamowitz (as cited above in n. 21) pp. 195 ff.

²⁴ E.g. Holger Friis Johansen, *Classica et Mediaevalia* 25 (1964) 21 f., and Lloyd-Jones as cited in the preceding note.

their heroine frankly and fearlessly confess to Chrysothemis the need for the death of Clytemnestra as well as Aegisthus («Nun müssen du und ich/hingehn und das Weib und ihren Mann/erschlagen»), they are again taking further an idea whose potentiality Sophocles had already sketched.

III

Even in Sophocles' *Electra*, the encounter between Clytemnestra and her daughter has a climactic effect, one that is achieved in a way that is highly characteristic of this playwright. Classical scholars have come to talk in terms of the «Sophoclean doublet,»²⁶ an apparently primitive, but actually most effective, dramatic technique, whereby two parallel scenes are juxtaposed (usually separated by a choral interlude), and the second scene is in the nature of a climax. So, for instance, in the *Antigone* the heroine has to defy Creon's edict by burying her brother's corpse on two successive occasions (the burial having been detected and undone in the intervening passage of time) and the second occasion is climactic because Antigone is discovered and arrested while repeating the act. So in *Electra*, the heroine undergoes two successive encounters with members of her family who are critical of her attitude. The first encounter, which involves the weaker sister Chrysothemis (vv. 328–471), ends with Electra easily triumphing and changing Chrysothemis' mind as to her course of action. But the second encounter (vv. 516–659), with the far more formidable Clytemnestra, seems to reverse the situation, since it is followed by the *paedagogus*' report of Orestes' death and thus by Clytemnestra's apparent triumph.

Hofmannsthal's economy and concision in dramatic structure achieves a comparable effect through different means. By the radical excisions and reductions considered above, he makes the scene of Electra's encounter with her mother quite literally central as well as climactic. As Gilliam²⁷ says, «the scene is ... the keystone to Hofmannsthal's and Strauss's arch-like structure,» and «the steadily increasing dramatic intensity of this scene is without equal in the opera.» It is well-known that «Strauss himself decided to renumber rehearsal cues (i.e.: reh. 1a, 2a, etc.) with scene 5,» a symbol of how strongly the composer too felt that «the end of scene 4 marks the turning point of the opera.»²⁸

Among all the figures in Hofmannsthal's reworking of the *Electra* theme, it is Clytemnestra whom many scholars have found to be least indebted to the Sophoclean

²⁵ The closest we get to this is in Euripides' *Electra*, where (at v. 1224 f.) Electra retrospectively admits to having «touched the sword» wielded by Orestes, as well as having urged him on. A parallel to the technique used in his *Electra* by Sophocles for conveying his central figure's heroic intransigence is afforded by the famous «double-ending» of the same playwright's *Philoctetes* (another late play, significantly enough: see above p. 43). Here he sets himself a task analogous but potentially even more difficult: to show that Philoctetes is capable, in his heroic self-will, of abandoning the Greek expedition and even his newly-won friend Neoptolemus, and refusing to set sail for Troy, when the unanimous voice of tradition insists that he did sail to Troy and help in its sack. In the case of this play it is only by the divine intervention of Heracles as *deus ex machina* that the two apparently irreconcilable demands (of tradition and of characterisation) are reconciled and Philoctetes' capacity for going to extremes in his hatred of the enemies who left him on the desert island fully brought out.

²⁶ See, for instance, my commentary on Sophocles' *Trachiniae* (Oxford 1991) p. 87.

²⁷ P. 88 f. Cf. p. 77.

²⁸ Gilliam p. 92.

original. So, to quote Gilliam again,²⁹ «if any one character of Hofmannsthal's play best exemplifies the difference between the worlds of Sophocles and Hofmannsthal» it is surely her, «a decadent despot, covered with talismans, haunted by nightmares and hallucinations, and unable to come to terms with» her murder of Agamemnon. By contrast, he finds that «Clytemnestra's dream, in Sophocles' treatment, plays a comparatively minor role in the play. She neither wears talismans nor makes daily sacrifices to purge herself of nightmares. Sophocles' Clytemnestra feels justified in her action, which, after all, was to avenge the death of her first daughter, Iphigenia, by Agamemnon's hand – an element of the story missing in Hofmannsthal's version. Furthermore, Sophocles' Clytemnestra is a character not tormented by dreams of Orestes and was truly saddened by the news of his death. The hysterical, hollow-eyed Clytemnestra of Hofmannsthal's play, on the other hand, seems a fit subject for one of Freud's famous case studies.»

On the whole, this is well said. One may, however, object to the statement *tout court* that Sophocles' Clytemnestra is truly «saddened by the news of» her son's death. For as Hugh Lloyd-Jones³⁰ has observed, «as in Aeschylus [*Libation-Bearers* vv. 707 ff.] Clytemnestra's reaction [at vv. 766 ff. of Sophocles' play] is complicated. Shall she account this fortunate, she asks, or terrible but advantageous? It is painful if she preserves her life through disasters to herself ... But when the tutor, like Orestes himself in the *Libation-Bearers*, wonders whether he has brought bad news after all, Clytemnestra is quick to reassure him; this son of hers distanced himself from her, and by the threats he offered made it impossible for her to sleep soundly.» This latter reference to vv. 780 ff. of Sophocles' play («neither by night nor day would sweet sleep cover me, but from one moment to another I lived like one about to die») further reminds us that it may be a little misleading to state that for Sophocles Clytemnestra's dream «plays a comparatively minor role,» or that his queen «is not tormented by dreams of Orestes.» (The other reference to these dreams, implied by Gilliam, is at vv. 645 ff., where Clytemnestra prays to Apollo «that if the visions in two dreams that I saw last night are favourable, they may be accomplished, but if they are inimical, send them back upon my enemies!»). It is rather that she is too proud to admit the devastating effect of these dreams before she believes that, Orestes being dead, their grim import will not in fact be fulfilled. This is a fine detail of characterisation. Clytemnestra's nightmare about Orestes certainly looms large at the start of Aeschylus' the *Libation-Bearers* (which Hofmannsthal knew: see Appendix One) and a two-line fragment from a narrative *Oresteia* by the pre-Aeschylean lyric poet Stesichorus shows just how early (and deeply) this detail was embedded in the story.³¹

²⁹ P. 30. Cf. Norman del Mar, *Richard Strauss: a critical commentary on his life and works* 1 (London 1962) p. 308: «there is nothing in the whole text (*sic*) of Greek literature to prepare one for Hofmannsthal's re-creation of the figure of Clytemnestra,» etc.

³⁰ P. 23 = p. 161 f.

³¹ Fr. 219 of this poet in my *Poetarum Melicorum Graecorum Fragmenta* vol. 1 (Oxford 1991), p. 211. In this, Clytemnestra dreams of a snake from which emerges either (the text is ambiguous) Agamemnon or Orestes. Aeschylus' Clytemnestra (*Libation-Bearers* vv. 527 ff.) dreams she suckles a snake. Lorna Marten, «The Theme of the Repressed Memory in Hofmannsthal's *Elektra*,» *German Quarterly* 60 (1987) 43, as part of her thesis that in the figure of Clytemnestra «Hofmannsthal plainly wished to portray a hysteric,» observes that his Clytemnestra «hallucinates a snake» (v. 417) and adds that one of the «most persistent and dramatic hallucinations of Anna O.» («Breuer's and Freud's most dramatic patient») «was of a snake.» The failure here to adduce the relevant sources for Clytemnestra's snake in Greek literature, especially

It is undeniably true that Sophocles' Clytemnestra does not wear talismans. Lloyd-Jones³² observes that «Hofmannsthal's description of Clytemnestra's appearance» (she is at first seen leaning on a confidante and on an ivory staff, her train carried by an Egyptian slave, her body bedecked with precious stones and amulets) «recalls Wilde's Herodias» in *Salome*. However, in the wider context of Greek tragedy's influence, it may be worth observing that when Clytemnestra appears in Euripides' *Electra* (vv. 988 ff.) she makes a «showy entrance in a carriage attended by Trojan slaves» which can be interpreted «as evidence of a desire for luxury, but with equal justification it can be defended as the acceptable pomp of royalty.»³³ *Electra* herself in that play has already referred carpingly to Clytemnestra's addiction to luxury in the form of carriages and clothing (966) and at 1071 she mentions her mirrors and coiffure.

Perhaps the most important divergence from the Sophoclean original, and one which crucially affects the encounter between *Electra* and her mother, is Hofmannsthal's elimination of any mention³⁴ of Iphigenia, the daughter of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra whom the former was obliged to sacrifice at Aulis before the Greek expedition could set sail for Troy. Each of the three main Attic tragedians exploits Clytemnestra's resentment at her daughter's death to motivate, at least in part, her murder of her husband. The greatest part of the Sophoclean Clytemnestra's self-defence to *Electra* is taken up by this theme (vv. 530–48):

Why, that father of yours, whom you are always lamenting, alone among the Greeks brought himself to sacrifice your sister to the gods, though he felt less pain when he begot her than I did when I bore her. So, explain this! For whose sake did he sacrifice her? Will you say for that of the Argives? But they had no right to kill her, who was mine. But if they killed her who was mine for his brother Menelaus, was he not to pay the penalty to me? Had not Menelaus two children, who ought to have died in preference to her, since it was for the sake of their father and mother that the voyage took place? Had Hades a desire to feast on my children rather than hers? Or did your accursed father feel sorrow for the

Tragedy, raises an important point of principle, especially since (see Newiger (as cited above n. 1) p. 138 f.) much hostile criticism of Hofmannsthal's drama supposed that he had betrayed the spirit of Greek tragedy in favour of ideas imported from contemporary psychopathology. But the crude antithesis «either Sophoclean or Freudian» can surely now be dispensed with. I would accept the balanced formulation of Robertson (cited above n. 4) p. 315: Hofmannsthal's work is «an adaptation of a classical play in which the motives disclosed by Freud were woven into the text» (cf. p. 318: «adapting Sophocles in the light of Freud»), while bearing in mind the reminder of Forsyth (cited above n. 2) p. 20 that «the originality of the ideas current in Vienna at the turn of the century should not be overestimated, and few people were less likely to make this mistake than Hofmannsthal.» For a poised consideration of the extent to which Hofmannsthal's *Electra* or (much more plausibly) Clytemnestra were influenced by contemporary psychoanalytic theory cf. Robertson pp. 321 ff. and see further Bernd Urban, *Hofmannsthal, Freud und die Psychoanalyse: Quellenkundliche Untersuchungen* (Frankfurt 1978).

³² P. 28 = p. 165.

³³ W. G. Arnott, *Greece and Rome* 28 (1981) 184 = *Greek Tragedy (Greece and Rome Studies 2 (1993))* 209. That Hofmannsthal was directly acquainted with Euripides' tragedy when he wrote his play seems unlikely: see Newiger (as cited in n. 1) p. 140 f. (but cf. his p. 152 n. 75).

³⁴ Though note that in her futile attempt to guess the identity of the sacrificial victim required to end her dreams (see below p. 51) Hofmannsthal's Clytemnestra lists both a child and a virgin («ein Kind? ein jungfräuliches Weib?») and this may have been inspired by the motif of Iphigenia. Christopher Wintle, writing in *Salome/Elektra Opera Guide 37* (London 1988) p. 76 f. suggests that *Electra's* death at the close of the play may have been suggested by the idea of a daughter sacrificed for her father. See below p. 58.

children of Menelaus, but none for mine? Is that not like a father who was foolish and lacked judgement? She who dies would say so, if she could acquire a voice.

The reason Sophocles thus allows Clytemnestra to appeal to the killing of Iphigenia was not because he wanted to give her an irrefutable case. Electra in her reply rejects much of her mother's argumentation (vv. 563–83: it was the goddess Artemis who commanded an unwilling Agamemnon to sacrifice his daughter; and even if the action was done for Menelaus' sake, the principle of a life for a life will have damaging repercussions for Clytemnestra herself). But he did want to give her *a* case, a case which requires some sort of response, rather than presenting an over-simplified *schema* with Electra manifestly in the right, and her mother manifestly in the wrong. The preference for a morally «grey» area over black and white simplifications is characteristic of Sophoclean (some would say Greek) tragedy. It is most notably exemplified by *Antigone*: Hegel went too far³⁵ when he suggested that this play represents the conflict of two equally justified and justifiable positions; but Creon is given a sufficiently strong case, and Antigone is represented as sufficiently fallible in her extremes of emotion, for the dramatic conflict between the two to be complex, unpredictable, and therefore interesting. Likewise in the *Ajax*, the debate over whether the titular hero deserves normal burial is not treated one-sidedly. He was indeed a great hero, but he behaved extremely, and in particular his assault on the joint leaders of his own army was criminal folly, however unattractive the personalities of those two leaders are shown to be. Why Hofmannsthal rejected this more complex presentation of opposed sides it is not altogether easy to say. Perhaps one should assimilate this issue with that move towards concentration and economy in matters of dramatic structure which we considered above (p. 43). Certainly the simplified presentation was a gift to Strauss the composer, who would not have welcomed the complications of an «Iphigenia motif» in addition to (and competition with) the «Agamemnon motif.» And, more importantly, a «grey» or balanced presentation of moral issues does not fit musical so well as spoken drama: for the former, strong and clearly defined and distinguished personalities are demanded and Strauss (as Gilliam remarks) was clearly «fascinated by Clytemnestra and composed some of the most complex music of the score for this scene» between mother and daughter.³⁶ Complexities ironed out from one level re-enter on another, then.

IV

The climax of the encounter between mother and daughter exhibits a devastating example of dramatic irony, which will handily take us on to our next topic. Although all three Attic

³⁵ See, for instance, George Steiner, *Antigones* (Oxford 1984) pp. 27–42 and Index of Proper Names s.v. «Hegel ... and Sophocles' *Antigone*.»

³⁶ P. 30. Lorna Martens (cited above n. 31) claims that «the interdependence of the Electra and Clytemnestra figures» in Hofmannsthal's treatment is «not present in the Greek source» (p. 42). But Lloyd-Jones rightly notes (p. 23 = p. 161) that «the resemblance between mother and daughter, something that was not lost on Hofmannsthal, is clearly brought out» by Sophocles. Robertson (as cited in n. 4 above) pp. 324 ff. suggests that Hofmannsthal went further in hinting at an unconscious identification by Electra with her mother, which leads to «inhibition» and «paralysis of the will» and ultimately her forgetting and failure to hand the prepared axe to Orestes at the climactic moment. Cf. W. E. Yates, *Schnitzler, Hofmannsthal and the Austrian Theatre* (London 1992) p. 146.

tragedians made frequent and effective use of dramatic irony, the device is particularly (and rightly) associated with Sophocles, most notably in his *Oedipus Tyrannus*, but in his other six plays too. For instance, at the end of her interview with Electra (vv. 634 ff.), Sophocles' Clytemnestra prays to Apollo that she may live a life free from harm and unbeset by hostile offspring. As soon as the prayer is finished (vv. 660 ff.), the *paedagogus* enters with (false) news of Orestes' death. The prayer, it would seem, has been fulfilled. The reality, of course, is quite different; but ironies of this sort abound in Sophoclean drama. An unusually effective specimen is provided by the exchange between Electra and Aegisthus near the end of the play (v. 1450 ff.). The latter asks questions based on the premise that strangers have arrived bringing news of Orestes' death. The former gives answers that indeed fit such a premise, but fit still better her knowledge that Orestes and his allies have arrived and have already killed Clytemnestra:

- Aeg.* Then where are the strangers? Tell me!
El. Inside; they have found a kindly hostess.
Aeg. Did they in truth announce that he was dead?
El. No, they even proved it, not by word only.
Aeg. So can we even see with our own eyes?
El. We can, and it is a most unenviable sight.
Aeg. Your words have given me much pleasure, not a usual thing.
El. You may feel pleasure, if this truly pleases you.

The whole exchange ends with the supreme irony of Electra's feigned modesty (vv. 1464–5):³⁷ «see, what is required from me is being accomplished! In time I have learned sense, so as to be in accord with those more powerful.»

The general tone and content of this scene is conveyed with remarkable closeness by Hofmannsthal, who confines himself merely to slight expansion or clarification of the irony:

- Aeg.* Where shall I find the strangers who brought the message about Orestes?
El. Inside. They have met with a charming hostess, and are enjoying themselves in her company.
Aeg. And do they really report that he is dead, and tell it so that there is no doubt?
El. Oh sir, they tell it not only with words, no, but with lively gestures, which leave no room for doubt.

When Aegisthus asks Electra why she is staggering about with her lighted torch she replies, again in close correspondence with her Sophoclean model: «All that has happened is that at last I have grown wise and am on the side of the strongest.»

A similar sort of mystification had already been employed by Electra against her mother in the Strauss-Hofmannsthal climax to their encounter mentioned above at the start of the present account of dramatic irony (p. 49). In this particular case there is no direct model in Sophocles' *Electra*, but the effect is not merely Sophoclean by virtue of its irony, but is distinctly Greek in other aspects too. Plagued by dreams, Clytemnestra jumps at the opportunity to end them which Electra apparently offers: «when the appointed victim falls under

³⁷ The ancient Greek for this type of feigned modesty (one particularly associated with Socrates: cf. D. Hester, *Prudentia* 27 (1995) 14 f.) was *eironeia*, which gives us the English word «irony.» It has been defined as the minimising of one's own potentialities (Ed. Fraenkel, *Horace* (Oxford 1957) p. 434). For dramatic irony in Sophocles in general see Hester as cited pp. 14 ff.

the axe, then you will dream no longer.» The audience soon realises that the victim whose death will end Clytemnestra's dreams is Clytemnestra herself, but the infatuated queen is led on by Electra's riddling language to ask a variety of questions as to the victim's identity («How is it to be killed? Who shall kill it? Whose blood is to flow?»). The riddles are abruptly cut short when Electra substitutes the plain language of revelation: «What blood must flow? Blood from your own neck, when the hunter has caught you!» The irony here has several aspects. But whatever form it takes, – whether that of the would-be hunter who becomes the hunted; the would-be sacrificer who becomes the sacrificial victim; or the initially misunderstood riddle followed by its disconcerting solution – all are intensely characteristic of Greek tragedy.³⁸ Of the misread riddle, an early and comparatively unrefined specimen occurs in the *Women of Trachis*, where we learn that the hero Heracles was told by an oracle that at a specific moment in time he was fated either to die or to live thenceforward free from pain (vv. 165–8). An optimistic interpretation of the latter alternative is excluded when enlightenment comes later in the play (828–30): Heracles is certainly fated to die, for who but the dead are free from pain? As he himself observes (1170–73): «it said that at the time that is now alive and present my release from the labours that stood over me should be accomplished; and I thought I should be happy, but it meant no more than that I should die; for the dead do not have to labour.»³⁹

A comparable, though considerably more subtle, type of irony has been detected in the *Antigone's* fourth choral ode (vv. 1115 ff.), especially the appeal to Dionysus at vv. 1131 ff. («the ivy-covered slopes of the hills of Nysa and the green coast with many grapes send you here, while voices divine cry «euhoe» as you visit the streets of Thebes»). Sophocles often uses the chorus in this way to provide a «false dawn» to underline all the more strongly the actual tragedy (here the deaths of Antigone and her fiancé Haemon, followed by that of the latter's mother). One classical scholar has interpreted the sequence as follows:⁴⁰ «What the messenger relates is an outbreak of pathological violence which it would be vain to hope that Dionysus would cure, since it springs from mad emotion. That is the epiphany, that is the dispensation» I myself have elsewhere⁴¹ argued that something similar may be detected in the *Oedipus Tyrannus* where first of all Oedipus himself (v. 1080 f.) and then the chorus (1097 ff.) engage in «over-excited speculation» as to the hero's identity: Oedipus identifies himself as the child of Fate and the year's months as his sisters. «The sequel, of course, shows all too clearly who the parents of Oedipus actually are,» and who his sisters (or rather the

³⁸ For the tragic motif of the would-be hunter who himself becomes the hunted animal, one thinks most obviously and literally of Pentheus in Euripides' *Bacchae*, who sets out to track down and vanquish the female worshippers of Dionysus, but is detected and torn to pieces by the very women he sought to overcome. On a more metaphysical level there is Sophocles' own Oedipus in the *Oedipus Tyrannus*, a hero who searches for the polluted wretch that has brought plague upon Thebes only to discover he himself is that wretch. This cannot be entirely distinguished from the related motif of the sacrificer sacrificed (the fate, for instance, of Aegisthus in Euripides' treatment of the Electra theme) and classical scholars have become interested within recent decades in Greek tragedy's use of sacrificial language and ideas. (See, to quote merely one interesting and recent study, R. Seaford, «Homeric and Tragic Sacrifice», *Transactions of the American Philological Association*, 119 (1989) 87 ff., and also various remarks in his *Reciprocity and Ritual* (Oxford 1994), e.g. pp. 281 ff.).

³⁹ See further my remarks in my commentary on this play (Oxford 1991) pp. 254 and 268 f.

⁴⁰ R. P. Winnington-Ingram, *Sophocles, An Interpretation* (Cambridge 1980) p. 115 f.

⁴¹ *Prometheus* 17 (1991) 11 f.

unfortunate children who are simultaneously his sisters and his daughters), and that «grim and ghastly truth has no room for such conceits and fancies as those offered earlier by the chorus,» when they named Pan or Apollo, Hermes or Dionysus as possible candidates.

Hofmannsthal seems to me to have adapted this profounder, more metaphysical version of Sophoclean irony in a manner one can almost envisage Sophocles himself as approving. The context of this *tour de force* is Electra's longed-for dance of revenge, which turns out to be a veritable dance of death for the heroine herself. There are various explanations underlying this concept (including the interpretation of Greek tragedy as a union of speech, song and *dance*⁴², and the influence of Wilde's *Salome*). But a particularly helpful tool for comprehension is, I believe, offered by the concept of irony. As is clear from Electra's initial monologue, she has been envisaging for herself, for Orestes and Chrysothemis, a dance of triumph when Agamemnon is finally avenged:

we, we,
 Your flesh and blood, your son Orestes and your daughters,
 We three, when all this has been performed,
 And when the fumes of the blood, drawn up
 By the sun, hang in the air like purple pavilions,
 Then we, your blood, will dance around your grave:
 And over the bodies, step by step,
 I will raise my knees high, and they who see me
 Dancing thus, even if from afar
 They see only my shadow dancing,
 They will say: for a great king
 A magnificent feast has been arranged
 By his flesh and blood, and he is a happy man
 Who has children to dance round his grave
 Such royal dances of triumph!

The idea of such a dance occurs nowhere in Sophocles' *Electra*, of course, but that play has provided Hofmannsthal with the kernel of the monologue's climax, for when, at a much later stage, Sophocles' heroine is trying to persuade Chrysothemis to join with her in killing Aegisthus, she uses the device of imagining what other people will say if the enterprise succeeds (vv. 970–85):

⁴² Wagner's *Gesamtkunstwerk* (itself derived from Greek tragedy's combination of speech, music and dance) for whose influence upon Hofmannsthal see, e.g. Hanns Hammelmann, *Hofmannsthal* (Studies in Modern European Literature and Thought (London 1957)) p. 22. See further, stressing the relevance of *Salome*, L. Dieckmann, «The Dancing Electra,» *Texas Studies in Lit. and Lang.* 2 (1960) 1 ff. For the particular significance of dance in Hofmannsthal's work in general see Michael Hamburger pp. xxv ff. = p. 20 and in particular W. Rasch's essay «Tanz als Lebenssymbol in Drama um 1900» in his *Zur Deutschen Lit. seit der Jahrhundertwende* (Stuttgart 1967) pp. 67 ff. As Robertson points out (as cited in n. 4) p. 313 f., Electra's dance is more prominent in the opera than in the play, and Ewans (cited in n. 2) p. 150 convincingly argues that Electra's dance, with its expression of *enthousiasmos* and ecstasy, presents the heroine as «at once both super- and sub-human.» This is important (in a way that Ewans does not bring out) since the *Sophoclean* hero (and heroine) is characteristically a blend of the super- and sub-human (think, for instance, of Heracles (in the *Women of Trachis*) or Philoctetes, who utter animal-like cries of pain on stage, yet possess the capacity to benefit humanity). On the dance see further *Sämtliche Werke* VII: *Dramen* 5 p. 493.

As to fame on the lips of men, do you not see how much you will add to you and me if you obey me? Which of the citizens or strangers when he sees us will not greet us with praise? «Look on these sisters, friends, who preserved their father's house, who when their enemies were firmly based took no thought of their lives, but stood forth to avenge murder! All should love them, all should reverence them; all should honour them at feasts and among the assembled citizens for their courage!» Such things will be said of us by all men, so that in life and death our fame will never die.

Hofmannsthal totally transforms this motif by taking it in the direction of the characteristically Sophoclean irony outlined above. The dance on the occasion of Orestes' return, which Electra envisages so eagerly in anticipation, is a dance of joy and triumph. Shortly before it begins in the opera, Electra observes (in lines Hofmannsthal added to his original drama) «I was a blackened corpse among the living, and in this /hour I am the fire of life, /and my flame is burning up /the darkness of the world.» But the dance which actually materialises is not one of life-giving joy but of death and destruction. «Who can live without love?» asks the innocent Chrysothemis, shortly before her sister's dance begins. Electra has grown wiser at the end, and knows that «Love kills, but no one dies without having known love!»

V

This discussion of Electra's dance of death inevitably leads us to the last and most important question of all: why does the Strauss-Hofmannsthal heroine die? Why does she die, unlike her Sophoclean (or for that matter her Aeschylean and Euripidean) counterpart? It is a question that conveniently raises a number of central issues (one recalls, for instance, the similar dilemma concerning the death of Cordelia (again contrary to the story's source) in Shakespeare's *King Lear*.⁴⁴ How crucial, for example, to tragedy and its definition is the death of the given drama's central figure?⁴⁵ Such an issue is particularly relevant to the seven surviving plays of Sophocles. Although the dating of most of these is quite uncertain, many scholars would accept as a likely hypothesis the notion that *Ajax* and the *Women of Trachis* are perhaps the earliest, followed, possibly, by *Antigone*.⁴⁶ However that may be, it is striking that these plays abound in suicides, of the central figures and of others beside. So in

⁴³ «*Electra*, the first of Hofmannsthal's works to be set to music by Strauss, was written, published, and performed as a play several years before Strauss started work on the composition. But for this fact, which is sometimes overlooked, it might well seem as though Hofmannsthal had deliberately set out to provide Strauss with the kind of text best fitted to succeed Wilde's *Salome*» (Hamburger p. xxxi f. = p. 4). On Hofmannsthal's abortive plans for a dance-libretto on *Salome* see Rasch (cited n. 42) p. 67 f.

⁴⁴ See, for instance, Kenneth Muir's Introduction to his Arden edition of this play p. lviii f. («But Cordelia dies. To some critics ... it would have been better if Shakespeare had allowed the miseries of *Lear* to be concluded in the reconciliation scene» etc.). The most famous protest against the death of Cordelia is, of course, Dr. Johnson's (*Notes on Shakespeare*: Yale edition (ed. A. Sherbo) 8.704 f.) on which see the sensitive remarks of Mary Lascelles, *Notions and Facts: collected criticism and research* (Oxford 1972) pp. 72 ff. Cf. G. F. Parker, *Johnson's Shakespeare* (Oxford 1989) p. 176 f.

⁴⁵ Cf. J. L. Styan, *Max Reinhardt* (Cambridge 1982) p. 26: «[the actress in the first production of Hofmannsthal's play] executed a savage dance of triumph and then collapsed – an effect unimaginable in Greek tragedy.»

⁴⁶ On the difficulties of dating Sophocles' plays see, for instance, Winnington – Ingram (as cited above n. 40) pp. 341 ff.

Ajax the titular hero kills himself; in the *Women of Trachis* Deianeira commits suicide after having unintentionally sent her husband Heracles a poisoned shirt to wear, and Heracles himself commits suicide by burning himself to death on Mount Oeta. *Antigone* positively pullulates with this form of death: its heroine hangs herself rather than face a lingering death by solitary imprisonment; her fiancé Haemon stabs himself when he learns of Antigone's act; and his mother then commits suicide in grief. Sophocles' most famous play, *Oedipus Tyrannus*, is subtly different: Jocasta admittedly kills herself on hearing that, unintentionally, she has married her own son; but that son, Oedipus himself, though self-blinded in guilt, chooses to go on living and suffering, as if he has rejected the easier way out that suicide would represent. And it must be said that, in the remaining three tragedies, which can, on stylistic and other grounds, be grouped together as «late,» no central (or, indeed, any other) figure commits suicide. Apart from *Electra* itself, there is *Philoctetes* (dateable to 409 B.C.), in which the hero of that name, ravaged by the disgusting pain of a wounded and suppurating foot, has survived for almost ten years on a deserted and uninhabited island without succumbing to the temptation of suicide. Finally there is Sophocles' last play, *Oedipus at Colonus*, produced posthumously in 401: this shows us the continuing misfortunes and the ultimate mysterious disappearance of the aged Oedipus, whose life of sorrows has not led him to suicide.

The above seven dramas represent a tiny proportion of the almost one hundred plays which Sophocles originally produced; we had better stoically resist, therefore, the temptations offered by facile schematism. In our present limited state of knowledge, it may seem attractive to detect a pattern of development, in which the Sophoclean concept of heroism evolves from an intransigence that cannot endure a life lived on any terms but its own, to a profounder view of the heroic, one where endurance and survival are the true marks of greatness. Whether or not the relevant surviving play opened or closed its trilogy may also have been important. But the lost plays of Sophocles, could we but know them, might complicate and distort this simple picture. Nevertheless, it is surely striking that the three final surviving tragedies of this playwright contain no suicides, indeed no deaths at all for the central figure. Sophocles, however, seems (as we saw above (p. 43)) to have gone out of his way to avoid the impression of a «happy ending» for them. In *Electra*, the heroine's long and poignant lament over the urn which she supposes to contain her brother's ashes forestalls any excessively optimistic colouring for the play's conclusion. Similarly, towards the end of *Philoctetes*, that hero delivers himself of a prolonged and passionate lament at the renewed prospect of his continued detention on the desolate island of Lemnos. So anxious is Sophocles to dispel the flavour of a happy ending that he even has Philoctetes end the episode in question with language distinctly suggestive of his impending death.⁴⁷

Nevertheless, Philoctetes does not die, nor does Sophocles' *Electra*; but the heroine of Strauss and Hofmannsthal does. Why? Hofmannsthal himself supplied an answer *post factum*.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ See O. Taplin, *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 12 (1971) p. 39 n. 29.

⁴⁸ I quote the translation given by Gilliam p. 233, who prints (p. 233 n. 19) the original German as from «Zwei bisher unveröffentlichte Aufzeichnungen von Hugo von Hofmannsthal,» *Programmheft 2: Salome und Elektra* (Frankfurter Oper: 1974), 28. But see also *Sämtliche Werke VII: Dramen* 5 p. 416. We should note the salutary warning of Robertson (as cited above n. 4) p. 314 about such pronouncements from Hofmannsthal: his «own remarks were made at different times and are not wholly consistent,» and his

in *Electra* the individual is dissolved in the empirical way, in which the content of her life explodes outwards from inside like water that becomes ice in an earthen jug. *Electra* is no more *Electra*, because she has devoted herself entirely to being only *Electra*. The individual can only remain to endure where a compromise has been struck between the community and the individual.

Sophocles would probably have found the first sentence here incomprehensible.⁴⁹ The second and third, however, find a ready echo in his tragic vision, with the important difference that they reflect the world of his *earlier* plays. Of both *Ajax* and *Antigone*, for instance, it could be said with considerable justice that they cease to exist because they have devoted themselves entirely to being *Ajax* and *Antigone*, and their inability to compromise with the community is crucial in their destruction. (*Ajax* is threatened with communal stoning because he has tried to kill the two leaders of the Greek army that is besieging Troy; and an important part of *Antigone's* tragedy has been thought to lie in her elevation of family values over those of the city or *polis*).⁵⁰ «Compromise ... between the community and the individual,» however, is successfully achieved in the two final surviving plays of Sophocles. *Philoctetes*, the most literally isolated and lonely of all Sophoclean heroes, is finally re-integrated into society⁵¹ at the end of his play, when he consents to rejoin the Greek army that originally abandoned him on his desert island. *Oedipus' alienation* from human society (as parricide and incestuous husband) in the *Colonus* drama is more metaphorical and metaphysical, but none the less real or poignant for that. Yet even he is finally re-integrated with humanity: not, admittedly, during the course of his life on this earth; but it is anticipated (vv. 607 ff.), that, after his mysterious disappearance beneath the ground, he will be a potent and beneficial force of support for the Athenians (who received him as a wandering and suppliant beggar) and against his – and their – enemies the Thebans.

Electra's death, then, and her failure to achieve a compromise with society, might be seen as a regression to the world of earlier Sophoclean tragedy. But building upon Hofmannsthal's own gloss, Bryan Gilliam has arrived at a reading which, if correct, would produce an interpretation quite at odds with anything Sophocles could ever have envisaged. According to this,⁵² «With *Electra's* dissolution, Hofmannsthal endorses Chrysothemis, for ultimately

«interpretations after the fact ... have a quite different status from remarks made during the composition of the play» (thus lacking any «unchallengeable authority»). Furthermore «his later self-interpretations belong more to the study than the stage» (a crucial distinction).

⁴⁹ For the probable meaning of «the empirical way» («der empirischen Weise») in this first sentence see Hamburger p. xxxv = p. 9. A more intelligible metaphor was used on another occasion by Hofmannsthal to explain his heroine's death (*Sämtliche Werke* VII: *Dramen* 5 p. 304: 17th July 1904): *Electra* must die like the drone who dies when he has fulfilled his function of impregnating the queen. In this context Hofmannsthal also observed that the idea of his *Electra* first came to him after he had read Shakespeare's *Richard III* and Sophocles' *Electra*. A strange juxtaposition, perhaps, yet one recalls that Schiller, writing to Goethe 28th November 1797 (*Briefe* No. 165 (Weimar ed. 29. 162)), said of Shakespeare's play that no other drama by this author «has so much reminded me of Greek tragedy.» Cf. A. Hammond's Arden edition of *Richard III* (London 1981) p. 97.

⁵⁰ See, for instance, Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood, *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 109 (1989) 138 ff.

⁵¹ For this reading of the play see e.g. P. Vidal-Nacquet, *Mythe et tragédie en Grèce Ancienne* (Paris 1973) p. 179 = *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece* p. 167.

⁵² P. 233, following Lorna Martens, cited above (n. 31) p. 48. That Chrysothemis in the Strauss-Hofmannsthal treatment is «the representative of normal, life-affirming sexuality, with a desire to live, marry, and have children,» was already asserted by Ewans (as cited above n. 2) p. 148. For Rasch (cited above n. 42) p. 72

the play's values – and those of nearly every play or libretto of Hofmannsthal – are anchored in vitalism. His concern – indeed preoccupation – with the continuity of life is evident in Chrysothemis' monologue in scene 3» (a reference to vv. 374 ff. follows). This transformation of the original Chrysothemis, from a merely secondary and negative «foil figure» to a positive advocate of «the continuity of life,» the new drama's main theme, would be radically unSophoclean (which does not, in itself, of course, constitute a refutation of this reading). It may, however, be possible to offer an alternative, and more Sophoclean, interpretation of Electra's death which is itself grounded in a comment by Hofmannsthal (for whose outlook the term and notion of «vitalism» seems decidedly crude).

In his famous letter of 1911 to Strauss,⁵³ expounding and justifying «the underlying idea or meaning of *Ariadne auf Naxos*,» Hofmannsthal expressed himself as follows:

What it is about is one of the straightforward and stupendous problems of life: fidelity; whether to hold fast to that which is lost, to cling to it even unto death – or to live, to live on, to get over it, to transform oneself, to sacrifice the integrity of the soul and yet in this transmutation to preserve one's essence, to remain a human being and not to sink to the level of the beast, which is without recollection. It is the fundamental theme of *Electra*, the voice of Electra opposed to the voice of Chrysothemis, the heroic voice against the human.

He proceeds to explain the contrast between Ariadne and Zerbinetta along similar lines (the uncompromising heroine who «could be the wife or mistress of *one* man only» set against «the frivolous ... [and] earth-bound» nature of Zerbinetta: «these two spiritual worlds are in the end ironically brought together in the only way in which they can be brought together: in non-comprehension»). But a juxtaposition that in the world of a comedy like *Ariadne auf Naxos* can be treated with light-hearted irony and crowned with a happy ending through a *deus ex machina* has a very different effect in the genre of tragedy.⁵⁴

The attempt to detect in Chrysothemis a source of positive values must depend of course not merely on the final scene of the Strauss-Hofmannsthal drama, but upon the impression made by Chrysothemis in her two earlier appearances. And it may not be irrelevant to note that the effect produced by her music in the first of these scenes in particular was a fertile source of dispute in the controversies that greeted the earliest performances of *Electra*. Thus Ernest Newman⁵⁵ was of the opinion that «the first solo of Chrysothemis ... is merely agreeable commonplace ... friendly and accommodating ..., in parts ... fit for musical

it is *Electra*'s dance that is a «Lebenssymbol,» as dance certainly was in much drama around the start of the twentieth century. But can a dance that leads to *death* be symbolic of *life*?

⁵³ *Sämtliche Werke* VII: *Dramen* 5 p. 451 = *ib.* XXIV: *Operndichtungen* 2 p. 172 f. = *Richard Strauss und Hugo von Hofmannsthal: Briefwechsel* pp. 132 ff. ≈ *The Correspondence between Richard Strauss and Hugo von Hofmannsthal* pp. 93 ff. (the quotation is from p. 130 ≈ p. 94).

⁵⁴ I find the same point (more or less) already made by Michael Hamburger p. xxxvi f. = p. 7: «Whereas in the comedies [of Hofmannsthal] marriage is presented as the state in which men and women establish the necessary continuity, and the adventurer or libertine stands for the opposite way, Electra's fixation on her murdered father assumes the kind of significance that marriage has in circumstances less extreme, and in fact makes the very idea of marriage impossible and loathsome to her. It is Chrysothemis who corresponds to the adventurers and libertines of the comedies in her failure to establish a higher continuity. To entertain human hopes in these particular circumstances, Electra suggests, is to be bestial.» Cf. Newiger (as cited above n. 1) pp. 154 ff.

⁵⁵ As cited above (n. 8), pp. 598 f., 612, and 617 f.

comedy or the music-halls.» I myself have never seen any reason to dissent from this part of Newman's critique. Only, in view of Chrysothemis' original Sophoclean role as «foil-figure,» the banality could well have been a deliberate ploy on Strauss' part to distinguish the earth-bound sister from the more heroic Electra. Hofmannsthal certainly thought, as he put it to Helene Nostitz,⁵⁶ that Strauss was «unbelievably successful in contrasting the figures of Electra and her gentler sister.» If one likewise considers the music given to these two at the close of the entire drama, it is surely rather difficult to identify the helpless figure hammering at the closed door and pathetically calling for «Orest» with Gilliam's representative of «vitalism.» (Difficult too to see where is the «social harmony» being «restored».)⁵⁷ Gilliam's own fascinating analysis of Strauss's sketches for this part of the opera suggests to him that the composer originally misunderstood «the meaning of Electra's death (and, more generally, of her role in the play) in the early stages of the opera's genesis,»⁵⁸ but finally came round to the idea that he should «interpret Electra's death in a more positive way.»⁵⁹ Her death «allows for a restoration of harmony, and the final, emphatic cadence on C major is as much a reflection of that sense of restoration as it is a symbol of triumph.» One may agree in general while questioning what it is that has triumphed and what it is that has been restored. Gilliam is absolutely right to state⁶⁰ that the final «blatant alternation between the quiet, static E-flat-minor chord and the vociferous C-minor Agamemnon motive is one of the most gripping juxtapositions in the score;» but when he goes on to allege that «the powerful cadence on C major celebrates the avengement of Agamemnon's death and the preservation of the status quo,» a classical scholar with no musical training may perhaps be allowed to protest that no treatment of the Orestes' story could ever end by celebrating «the status quo,» since the very logic of the myth would not allow it. Electra's death symbolises a triumph, but hardly that of the values supposedly represented by Chrysothemis. The final transformation of Agamemnon's C-minor motive into C-major surely conveys the triumph of Agamemnon's spirit (in which Electra has a share).

⁵⁶ *Sämtliche Werke VII: Dramen* 5 p. 427 = *Hugo von Hofmannsthal – Helene von Nostitz: Briefwechsel* (ed. O. Nostitz) p. 29.

⁵⁷ Gilliam pp. 235 and 231 ff. Likewise I am quite unable to accept Robertson's notion (as cited above n. 4) p. 326 f. that «the lines Hofmannsthal added to the opera text in 1908 imply a much more positive conclusion. Orestes' return envelops the household in an atmosphere of love and joy, releasing Chrysothemis to a normal emotional life, but giving Electra a mystical ecstasy so intense that she perishes of it» [shades of *Salome*!]. «This is quite different from, and inferior to, Hofmannsthal's original conception; it is a sentimental attempt to supply an up-beat ending.» It would be such a betrayal were it not that Electra dies and Chrysothemis is left distraught and banging on a closed door, calling out to an Orestes who does not reply. Is not the preceding «atmosphere of love and joy» mere «foil» to emphasise all the more the grim ending (a rather Sophoclean device: see above p. 51)

⁵⁸ P. 231.

⁵⁹ P. 234. The question whether in Hofmannsthal's play the heroine's death is to be viewed as triumph or failure, affirmation or defeat, is considered by Robertson (cited above n. 4), pp. 312 ff. But perhaps the antithesis is meaningless in this context and the heroine's death is above or beyond triumph or defeat. Lloyd-Jones' paradox «in her triumph lies her death, and in her death her triumph» (p. 34 = p. 170) brings this out well.

⁶⁰ P. 235.

In Aeschylus' treatment of the story, when Orestes has infiltrated the palace in disguise – by pretending to bring news of his own death – and has then killed Aegisthus, a frightened servant announces, with significant irony, that «the dead are killing the living» (*Libation-Bearers* v. 886). The same motif is adapted by Sophocles: at vv. 1341–2 of his play he has Orestes say to the *paedagogus* «You have reported, it seems, that I am dead,» which elicits the response «Know that here you are one of those in Hades.» More significantly, when Clytemnestra's final death-cry has been heard off stage, the chorus sing (vv. 1417 ff.), in words that would alone serve to refute Schlegel's view of the play's «heavenly serenity»: «The curses are at work! Those who lie beneath the ground are living, for the blood of the killers flows in turn, drained by those who perished long ago!» In Aeschylus' treatment «the living» killed are Aegisthus (to be followed by Clytemnestra), «the dead» primarily Orestes. But the central part of the *Libation-Bearers* has been taken up by a massive appeal from Orestes, Electra and the chorus to the tomb (and ghost) of Agamemnon aimed at ensuring that his dead spirit supports their enterprise, so Agamemnon may be included with his supposedly dead son. And the phrasing of the words used by Sophocles' chorus seems even more precisely calculated to suggest Agamemnon among the dead who are now doing the killing. When Strauss and Hofmannsthal ended their drama with the death of Electra it is hard not to feel they were taking this concept⁶¹ one stage further to its logical conclusion: Agamemnon among the dead is killing the living: Clytemnestra, Aegisthus, but also Electra (who knows (see above p. 53) that «the dead are jealous of the living»). As she herself has just said (or sung) in lines Hofmannsthal added for the libretto, «Love kills, but no-one dies without having known love!»⁶² When the living Chrysothemis vainly calls out the name of the living Orestes, Strauss' music barks back, as if in triumph, the *motif* of the dead Agamemnon.

VII

At the end of her drama, the heroine of Strauss and Hofmannsthal twice enjoins the on-lookers to be silent and dance («schweigen und tanzen»). Hofmannsthal's final stage direction, after Chrysothemis' despairing cry «*Orest! Orest!*» and before the curtain, is

⁶¹ Which actually had its place in Hofmannsthal's play (it was cut by Strauss), though disguised by its new comic context. At the end of the young manservant's boisterous encounter with the cook, the former, before rushing off, says «Well, in a word: the young fellow Orestes, the son of the house, who was always away from home, and therefore as good as dead: in short, this fellow, who after all has, so to speak, been always dead, is now, so to speak, really dead!» Ewans (as cited in n. 2 above) p. 143 rightly observes that Strauss's music for Orestes associates him with Agamemnon and his *motif*, and that Clytemnestra's dream at vv. 419 ff. of Sophocles' play is suggestive of Orestes as a «returned Agamemnon.»

⁶² Cf. *Sämtliche Werke VII: Dramen* 5 p. 494. I cannot follow Forsyth (as cited in n. 2) p. 31, who finds these lines «the weakest in the libretto.» They may seem, on superficial viewing, a mere repetition of the motif from the end of Salome's final monologue. But they have been (e.g. Robertson (cited in n. 4) p. 312 f.) associated with Rohde's quotation (*Psyche* 2.27: cf. Engl. tr. p. 266) of the Persian Sūfis' «mystical doctrine»: «Who knows the power of the Dance dwells in God: for he knows how Love kills,» a quotation that lodged in Hofmannsthal's mind deeply enough for him to recur to it at the end of his 1905 essay on Oscar Wilde («Sebastian Melmoth»).

«Silence.»⁶³ Gesture and action replace words in a manner congenial to the Austrian poet's preoccupations but also highly compatible with Sophoclean drama.⁶⁴ Hofmannsthal once quoted from Lucian's treatise *peri orchēseos* (which, appropriately in this context, means *On Dance*) the following passage:⁶⁵

When every spectator becomes one with what happens on the stage, when everyone recognises in the performance, as in a mirror, the reflection of his own true impulses, then, but not until then, success has been achieved. Such a dumb spectacle is at the same time nothing less than the fulfilment of the Delphic maxim «Know thyself,» and those who return from the theatre have experienced what was truly an experience.

These words seem to me to convey more accurately than any others the unique achievement of Strauss and Hofmannsthal in their opera *Elektra*, the recovery of that shattering emotional impact, «bearing within itself the possibility of exaltation» which is the benchmark of Greek, and especially Sophoclean, tragedy.⁶⁶

⁶³ Given the context, it is hard not to think also of Hamlet's «the rest is silence,» Flaminio's «I am i' th' way to study a long silence» (at the end of Webster's *The White Devil*) and similar passages. «*Hamlet* is arguably the most important «secondary» source» for Hofmannsthal's *Elektra* after Sophocles (so Forsyth as cited n. 2, p. 20). See, for instance, Schadewaldt, «Shakespeare und die griechische Tragödie: Sophokles *Elektra* und *Hamlet*,» *Jbb. d. Deutsch. Sh. Gesellsch.* 96 (1960) 7 ff. = *Hellas und Hesperien* 2. 7 ff., Robertson (cited n. 4 above) pp. 323 ff., Forsyth p. 24 f.

⁶⁴ See Gilliam pp. 22 ff., 219, etc. and Rasch (as cited in n. 42) pp. 68–70. It is noteworthy that Schadewaldt, whose remarks on the «shattering» emotional impact of Greek tragedy I quoted at the start of this study, found the most profound comment on Sophocles' tragic emotion in a sentence by Winkelmann: «Sophokles rührt das Herz durch innere Empfindungen, die nicht durch Worte, sondern durch empfindliche Bilder bis zur Seele dringen.» («Empfindlich meint in Winkelmanns Sprache das, was unsere Empfindung bewegt, was eindringt»): *Sophokles und das Leid* (cited above n. 14) p. 26≈) *Hellas und Hesperien* 1. 398.

⁶⁵ For the original Greek text see M. D. Macleod, Oxford text of Lucian vol. iii. 313 ff. I quote the translation given by Hans Hammelmann, *Hofmannsthal* (Studies in Modern European Literature and Thought (London 1957)) p. 35, though I cannot accept his negative gloss that «with his adaptations from Sophocles, Hofmannsthal had discovered that Greek tragedy, owing to its specific conventions and limitations, can no longer create such a direct collective experience for a modern audience.» Or rather, though this may be true of such works as *Ödipus und die Sphinx* (1905) or his 1906 adaptation of *Oedipus Tyrannus*, it does not apply to the unique collaboration with Strauss and Sophocles which this article has examined.

⁶⁶ Note George Steiner's recent claim (in *Tragedy and the Tragic* (ed. M. S. Silk, Oxford 1996) p. 543 that «it is twentieth century opera which comes closest to the absolute tragedies which I have cited. And it does so in returning to some of those very texts: as in ... Strauss's *Elektra*.» I prefer this view to that of Robertson (cited above n. 4) p. 329, according to which Hofmannsthal's «*Elektra* suffers from the narrow focus characteristic of modern versions of classical drama. The deed that in Sophocles' *Elektra* was intended to purify the household ... has been reduced to the resolution of a domestic quarrel.» I seem to detect here distant echoes of the contemporary criticisms directed against Hofmannsthal's original production (see above p. 39) and perhaps even of Schlegel's excessively idealised approach (above p. 41) to Sophocles. I doubt that the Greek playwright really intended to suggest Clytemnestra and Aegisthus' murders had the simple effect of «purifying the household» (see the studies referred to in n. 14 above, for instance), and whatever one thinks of «domestic quarrel» as a summary of Hofmannsthal's adaptation, I see (cf. n. 57 above) no indication of a *resolution*: «the fact that [the play] makes no attempt to provide answers to the problems it poses, but instead describes the sensational effects of concealed causes, lays bare its aesthetic aims. What is celebrated here is the mystery of the dark workings of the mind, and their relation to the awesomely destructive and self-destructive energies of nature» (Christopher Wintle (cited above n. 34) p. 77).

APPENDIX ONE

Hofmannsthal and Aeschylus' Oresteian trilogy

Newiger followed by Lloyd-Jones⁶⁷ suggests that Hofmannsthal's Electra «has been invested», in the scene where she confronts Clytemnestra, «with much of the prophetic power, as much of the passionate nature, of the Cassandra of Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*.» Lloyd-Jones further suggests⁶⁸ that when Hofmannsthal's Orestes says «that he must take care not to look his mother in the eyes» as he kills her (a remark eliminated by Strauss) «Hofmannsthal remembers how the chorus of the *Libation-Bearers* exhorts Orestes to behave like Perseus, who looked away from the Gorgon even as he struck her.»

These would not be the only reminiscence of the Oresteian trilogy in Hofmannsthal's text. What Gilliam⁶⁹ has called «the recurring allusions to animals, in stage directions and the dramatic language itself ... the recurring animal imagery», has no particular counterpart in Sophocles' *Electra*. In the Oresteian trilogy, by contrast, animal imagery binds together the three component parts of the work and has a complex and unifying effect.⁷⁰ The same is true of other aspects of «the dramatic language» of Hofmannsthal's text touched upon by Gilliam, for instance «the fundamental role in the drama» of the word and image of blood. Gilliam notes⁷¹ that the word «Blut» occurs «no less than eight times in Electra's monologue alone ... where it serves a threefold purpose – as a reference to Agamemnon's violent death, to the sacrificial blood that will avenge that death, and to the blood relation between Agamemnon and his children.» The image of blood in the Oresteian trilogy serves a similarly complex purpose,⁷² most notably, perhaps, in the climactic scene in the *Agamemnon*, where the king enters his palace by trampling over precious purple-coloured tapestries, as if he were wading through blood. Gilliam⁷³ further comments on the imagery of darkness and light in Hofmannsthal's treatment, whereby, for instance, «Agamemnon's murder took place in the dark palace,» and both Clytemnestra and Aegisthus call for light in the form of torches. «Darkness,» he says, «no doubt symbolises the realm of the subconscious.» No doubt, indeed. But we should also remember the symbolic importance of the movement from darkness to light in Aeschylus' trilogy,⁷⁴ where the first play (the *Agamemnon*) opens in the dark-

⁶⁷ Pp. 141–3 and p. 29 = p. 166. Robertson (as cited in n. 4) p. 323 suggests the specific influence of Rohde's *Psyche* (see above n. 15) with its vivid description (2.68 f. ≈ Engl. tr. p. 293) of Aeschylus' Cassandra, «a true picture of the primitive Sibyl.»

⁶⁸ P. 31 = p. 168.

⁶⁹ P. 26 f. with examples. That Hofmannsthal was acquainted with Aeschylus' Oresteian trilogy is shown as likely by Newiger (cited above n. 1) p. 141 f., with reference to matters of stagecraft.

⁷⁰ Classical scholars during the last two decades or so have produced several studies of imagery in the Oresteian trilogy. I confine myself here to noticing Anne Lebeck's pioneering *The Oresteia: a study in Language and Structure* (Harvard 1971) (on animal imagery cf. *Index* s.v. «Birds,» «Dog,» «Hounds,» «Lion cub parable,» «Serpent,» etc.)

⁷¹ P. 27.

⁷² See Lebeck, *Index* s.v. «blood.» The relevance of the Oresteian trilogy here is observed by Forsyth (cited above n. 2) p. 27 f.

⁷³ Pp. 28 ff.

⁷⁴ See Lebeck, *Index* s.v. «Movement from obscurity to clarity,» D. Bremer, *Licht und Dunkel in der frühgriechischen Dichtung: Interpretationen zur Vorgeschichte der Lichtmetaphysik* (Bonn 1976) pp. 341 ff., T. N. Gantz, «The Fires of the Oresteia,» *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 97 (1977) 28 ff., etc. Lorna Martens

ness before dawn, and the last (the *Eumenides*) closes with a torch-light procession. As we have seen (above p. 53), shortly before her dance, the Electra of Strauss and Hofmannsthal proclaims herself the fire of life whose flame is burning up the world's darkness.

There are other analogies which might be drawn, but I confine myself to one final instance which could easily be overlooked. One of the most obvious divergences between Hofmannsthal's treatment and that of Sophocles is the short comic scene which elapses between Chrysothemis' return onstage with the apparent news of Orestes' death; and Electra's unsuccessful attempt to persuade her sister to participate in the murder of Aegisthus and Clytemnestra. In between these two scenes of maximum tragic stress and tension, the comic interlude of cook and servants has a deliberately jarring effect, almost reminiscent of the famous Porter's Scene in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. This effect is underlined by the way in which the Cook-Servants scene, like the later encounter (also comic, in a darker, more sinister sense) between Electra and Aegisthus, is both «short and extraneous to the fundamental structure of the play,»⁷⁵ the overarching division into seven segments which was mentioned above (p. 43).

In this comic scene, reduced in length, but by no means eliminated, by Strauss (whose musical treatment actually emphasises the comedy),⁷⁶ a young servant hurrying out of the palace stumbles over a prone form lying at the threshold, and, while his horse is being saddled, conveys to a startled cook the news of Orestes' death. He then speeds off on horseback to convey this good news to Aegisthus.

There is, as indicated above, absolutely no correspondence between this scene and anything in Sophocles' *Electra*. There is, however, something analogous in effect and positioning, within Aeschylus' *Libation-Bearers*. There, after the false news of Orestes' death has been conveyed to Clytemnestra by the disguised Orestes himself, a scene that ostensibly lowers the tension ensues. Orestes' aged nurse enters, in tears at the news she has heard, and on her way to convey it to Aegisthus. Ironically, this innocent old woman, with her garrulous prattle about Orestes' nappy-wetting as a baby, becomes the instrument for facilitating the grown-up Orestes' revenge, since the chorus persuade her to change the terms of the

(cited above n. 31) p. 51 n. 23 states that in the speech where Hofmannsthal's heroine anticipates the vengeance that awaits her mother «the motifs of the torch and the chase were added by Hofmannsthal.» They were probably added from Aeschylus' Oresteian trilogy.

⁷⁵ Gilliam p. 76. On the comic effect of the Aegisthus – Electra scene one might further observe that though there is nothing strictly like it in Sophocles' original, the final scene of that play, in particular the dialogue between Aegisthus and Orestes at v. 1502 f. («Lead the way!» – «You must go first!» – «In case I should escape?») is disconcerting to say the least. (It has been dubbed «knockabout tragedy» by one unsympathetic scholar (R. D. Dawe, *Studies on the text of Sophocles 1* (Leiden 1973), p. 204). Immediately after Aegisthus and Orestes exit, the play ends, with a brief choral address to Electra (on which see Newiger (as cited above n. 1) p. 145). Robertson (cited above n. 4) p. 329 finds fault with the «extreme intensity» and «abrupt, unsatisfying ending» of Hofmannsthal's adaptation, but the Sophoclean original has an equally abrupt close. (Waldock (as cited above n. 13) p. 190 goes so far as to say «The drama is cut off short – the theme, in this sense, is truncated.») Indeed Ewans (as cited in n. 2) p. 150 argues that the ending provided by Strauss's music (especially the reversion to the «Agamemnon *motif*,» but now in the *major* key) has a «real feeling of finality» in contrast to Sophocles' play. (On p. 147 the same scholar suggests that the ending of the Strauss-Hofmannsthal drama is actually more noble and tragic as regards the figure of Electra than Sophocles' original).

⁷⁶ «A mixture of Viennese humour and Shakespeare's comic servants,» according to Forsyth (as cited above n. 2) p. 29, who thus misses the Aeschylean aspect.

message to Aegisthus, so that he returns to the palace without a bodyguard and is the more easily killed. That element of underlying serious irony does not recur in the scene from Hofmannsthal's *Electra* under consideration. But there are similarities: in particular, the use of a character of low social standing, who is being dispatched to Aegisthus with news of Orestes' death, to introduce an element of apparent comedy that clashes with the surrounding tragic tension. We have other evidence that Aeschylus' treatment influenced Hofmannsthal, and I should be surprised were that not the case here too.

APPENDIX TWO

Lovis Corinth and the death of Agamemnon (see p. 64)

When first published, the cover of the vocal score of Strauss and Hofmannsthal's opera was adorned, as it still is, with an illustration by the German Expressionist painter Lovis Corinth (1858–1925).⁷⁷ Norman del Mar⁷⁸ has pointed out an oddity in this: it depicts «the scene of Agamemnon's death, an event which took place many years before the action of the opera. This device is rendered additionally obscure by the fact that Corinth gives an oddly false state of affairs. Agamemnon is shown asleep and Clytemnestra is drawing back the hanging of the bedchamber while encouraging Aegisthus on his way in to commit the crime, axe in hand. Throughout Greek mythology it is made plain that Agamemnon was slain on his way out of the bath ... Hofmannsthal adheres to this account in broad outline, as is apparent from *Electra's* great soliloquy [cf. «Sie schlügen dich im Bade tot, dein Blut/ rann über deine Augen, und das Bad/ dampfte von deinem Blut» («They slaughtered you in your bath, your blood ran over your eyes, and the bath steamed with your blood»)].

So gross a discrepancy between illustration and text supposedly illustrated is surely worth trying to explain (and in terms rather less negative than Vladimir Nabokov's disillusioned observation⁷⁹: «I have noticed long ago that for some reason illustrators do not read the books they illustrate»). A possible solution lies to hand in a fact overlooked by del Mar: although the vast majority of sources, both literary and visual, do indeed presuppose that Agamemnon was cut down as he emerged from the bath that regularly greeted Greek heroes when they returned home from war, there is an alternative tradition, and that of great antiquity. Homer's *Odyssey*, perhaps because its author found the bath version too frightening or unheroic, perhaps because he wanted to create a parallel with his own poem's climax, where the returned Odysseus kills the suitors as they banquet in his halls, represents Agamemnon as being slain at the side of his warriors by an ambush while he was feasting.⁸⁰ Sophocles' *Electra*, as it happens, also presupposes this much rarer version: at vv. 193 ff. the chorus sing to Electra «piteous was the cry at his return, piteous as your father lay there,

⁷⁷ For a recent monograph on this artist see Horst Uhr, *Lovis Corinth* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/Oxford, 1990); cf. the study with the same title edited by Schuster, Vitali and Butts (Munich/New York 1997). Corinth also designed the costumes for Hofmannsthal's 1903 *Electra* (cf. Uhr p. 167).

⁷⁸ Cited above (n. 29) p. 297 n. 5.

⁷⁹ *Vladimir Nabokov: Selected Letters 1940–1977* (ed. D. Nabokov and M. J. Bruccoli, 1989) p. 191.

⁸⁰ For a survey of the relevant literary and artistic evidence see the article in *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae* s.v. «Agamemnon».

when the blow of the brazen axe came straight upon him». The phrase «as your father lay there» is a reasonable rendering of the Greek original which itself reflects the fact that Athenians of Sophocles' day «lay» or «reclined» on couches while they dined, a practice that their poets often read back into the times of heroic myth.

But, in spite of Jebb's observation in his commentary *ad loc.*, that the Greek phrase «implies merely reclining, and does not necessarily involve the notion of sleeping»,⁸¹ it is also easy to see how a translation like «as your father lay there» could give rise to the misapprehension that Agamemnon was killed while lying asleep in bed. And one wonders whether Corinth arrived at his vivid visual scheme not so much because, to recall Nabokov's words, he had failed to read Hofmannsthal's text, as because he was already under the influence of what he took to be Sophocles' text (which was, after all, the original which Hofmannsthal was «freely adapting»).

What one is looking for, therefore, is a nineteenth century German translation, or mistranslation, of Sophocles which renders vv. 193 ff. of *Electra* in such a way as to have misled Corinth into thinking in terms of an Agamemnon killed while asleep. One does not have to look very far: «Im Ahnherrnruhbett» is S. Thudicum's rendering of the relevant phrase in his translation (Darmstadt 1855), while H. Viehoff has «auf heimischem Ruhebett» (Hildburghausen, 1866).⁸² It would be an exaggeration to talk of proof positive, but I find it hard not to think that some such texts lie at the root of Corinth's iconographic autoschediasm, though other factors, such as cross-influence from depictions of the story of Judith and Holofernes, may also have played their part.⁸³

⁸¹ Cambridge 1894, p. 35.

⁸² Several influential dictionaries (e. g. Ellendt-Genthe, *Lexicon Sophocleum* (1872) s. v. *koité*) took the phrase to mean 'marriage bed'. Incidentally, Thudicum's translation was used by Hofmannsthal: see *Sämtliche Werke*: VII: *Dramen* 5 p. 304 f. and n. 3.

⁸³ I am grateful to my St. John's colleague Ritchie Robertson for reading an earlier draft of this article and providing helpful comments and information.



See p. 62



See p. 40