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GABALDA

Evagoras I and Athens in the *Helen* of Euripides ?

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στους γονείς μου, Θεόδωρο και Ελένη

Résumé : Selon l'interprétation qui suit, l'*Hélène* d'Euripide dramatise d'une façon métaphorique une perspective de collaboration navale d'Athènes avec Salamine de Chypre à la suite de la destruction de la flotte athénienne en Sicile (413 av. J.-C.). Ce double sens de l'*Hélène* peut être inféré des parallèles, bien que déguisés en métaphores, entre la situation fâcheuse de Ménélaos et l'échec militaire qu'avait subi Athènes, entre les aventures d'Hélène et Teucros et celles de Salamine et son roi Évagoras (comme les décrit Isocrate) et, pas moins important, entre le comportement du personnage mythique de Théonoé et le protocole des rois perses achéménides, qui contrôlaient Salamine en ce temps-là.

The present communication is based on a lengthier discussion of *Helen* in my Ph. D. dissertation entitled *Evagoras I, Athens and Persia : ca. 412 to 387/6 B.C.* (University of California at Berkeley, 1991). In developing my ideas on the *Helen*, I have benefited from the advice and criticisms of Professors J.K. Anderson, R. Sealey and D. Stronach who supervised my doctoral work. I am also most grateful to Professor E. Badian for pointing out to me a number of possibly serious errors of expression and interpretation. To him as well as to Professors G. Azarpay, A. Henrichs, A. Kilmer, E. Lipiński, D.J. Mastronarde and W.K. Pritchett, Ms. K. McCaffrey and Mr. Th. Skiathas, who each read and commented on an earlier version of my work on *Helen*, I would also like to record my debt for both additional bibliographical references and for indicating various ways in which I could better explain my thesis. Not all of the advice received from the above individuals is represented in this summary. I hope to be able to take such advice into fuller account, however, in a more detailed, future publication. Responsibility for the interpretation is naturally mine as is the responsibility for any errors.

All excerpts from the Greek text of *Helen* are from the edition of G. Murray : *Euripidis 'Fabulae'* III², Oxford 1913. I usually follow the translation of A.S. Way in the Loeb edition.

Euripides' tragedy *Helen* was based upon a myth, which dated back to at least the mid-sixth century¹, and which, in contrast to the standard account of the *Iliad*, claimed that the Helen who followed Paris to Troy was merely an εἶδωλον, a likeness. In the interpretation of Euripides, the real Helen is said to have been snatched by Hermes and to have been carried by him to Egypt, where she remained under the guardianship of the wise and virtuous Egyptian king Proteus. After ten years of fighting in Troy and seven years of futile wanderings, shipwrecked and clothed in rags, Menelaus turns up in Egypt. He is carrying with him his trophy, the εἶδωλον-Helen, still unaware that she is not his real wife. In the meantime, the situation of the real Helen has become desperate due to the death of her guardian Proteus and the machinations of his son Theoclymenus to marry her against her will. Menelaus is eventually reunited with the real Helen, and the εἶδωλον ascends to heaven. With the aid of Theonoe, the daughter of king Proteus, Helen and Menelaus outwit Theoclymenus into giving them a ship, and escape from Egypt.

On the testimony of ancient *scholia* the date of the production of *Helen* is commonly set to the spring of 412 B.C.²

This paper submits for consideration an interpretation of *Helen* as a metaphorical (or allegorical) play, which dwells on the consequences of the Athenian defeat in Sicily (413)³ and propounds a plan of rebuilding the naval strength of Athens with Cypriot Salaminian assistance.

That the story (as told by Euripides) of the mythical adventures of Helen and Menelaus contains veiled references to contemporary affairs, and, in particular, to the major military disaster of the Athenians in Syracuse, is not a novel suggestion. Beginning in the nineteenth century, a number of students of tragedy have related the contents of *Helen* to the events of 413-412. Among earlier critics of *Helen*, F.A. Paley⁴, A.C. Pearson⁵ and L. Radermacher⁶, for instance, compared *Helen* 744-751 to Thucydides' description of the reactions of the Athenians to the news of their defeat in Sicily. According to Thucydides, the news of the defeat was at first greeted with incredulity in Athens. As soon as the Athenians were convinced, however, they became angry with the orators who had encouraged the expedition at its outset, and with the soothsayers and diviners, and whomever by means of divination had led them to hope that they could conquer Sicily⁷. *Helen*

1. See R. Kannicht, *Euripides 'Helena'* I, Heidelberg 1969, pp. 26-33.

2. *Schol. Ar.*, *Th.* 1012, 1040, *Ran.* 53. Kannicht, *ibid.*, pp. 78-79, is considered by most scholars today as the authoritative discussion of the date of *Helen*.

3. The main account is *Thc.* 7.71 ff.

4. *Euripides* II, F.A. Paley ed., London 1874, pp. xix f.

5. *The Helena of Euripides*, A.C. Pearson ed., Cambridge 1903, p. 122.

6. L. Radermacher, « Euripides und die Mantik », *RhM* 1898, pp. 497-98.

7. *Thc.* 8.1.1.

744-751 echoes a remarkably similar disillusionment against oracles and seers :

...ἀλλά τοι τὰ μάντεων	...But the lore of seers,
ἔσειδον ὡς φαῦλ' ἔστι καὶ ψευδῶν πλέα.	how vain it is I see, how full of lies.
οὐδ' ἦν ἄρ' ὑγιᾶς οὐδὲν ἐμπύρου φλογός	Utterly naught then were the altar-
	flames,
οὐδὲ πτερωτῶν φθέγματ'· εὐηθεῖς δέ τοι	the voices of winged things ! Sheer folly
	this
τὸ καὶ δοκεῖν ὄρνιθας ὠφελεῖν βροτούς.	even to dream that birds may help
	mankind.
Κάλχας γὰρ οὐκ εἶπ' οὐδ' ἐσήμηνε	Calchas told not, nor gave sign to the
	host,
νεφέλης ὑπερθνήσκοντας εἰσορῶν	yet saw, when for a cloud's sake died his
	friends :
οὐδ' Ἑλενος, ἀλλὰ πόλις ἀνηπάσθη	Nor Helenus told ; but Troy for nought
	was stormed !

Had *Helen* 744-751 been indeed meant to evoke contemporary Athenian feelings as they are described by Thucydides, it should not surprise us that this tragedy carefully avoids explicit references to Sicily and to Athens. Herodotus reports that, when the Athenian playwright Phrynichus had produced a play about the capture of Miletus by the Persians in the 490's, the audience in the theater burst into tears and the author was fined a thousand drachmai « for reminding them of a disaster which touched them so closely »⁸. The audience of *Helen* would have been at least as much sensitive to any reminders of the recent defeat in Sicily. Among those who attended the performance, a great number would have been mourning relatives lost in the expedition ; and every single Athenian at the time would have been preoccupied with the future of their city, now that her resources in men and ships had been reduced to a critical level, and now that she was imminently threatened with losing the Peloponnesian war, her empire and her freedom to the Lacedaemonians. The precedent of Phrynichus may have served Euripides as a warning about the dangers of going too far in touching upon sensitive political and social issues and may have induced him to conceal his comments about those issues under the protective guise of myth.

In a rather long series of historical interpretations of *Helen*, specific historical identities have also been ascribed to certain ones among the characters of the play. Thus, J.A. Hartung⁹ had suggested that the condition of the heroine of the play alludes to the fortunes of Alcibiades. The association of Helen with Alcibiades was proposed again more recently by M. Vickers¹⁰.

8. Hdt. 6.21.

9. J.A. Hartung, *Euripides* XII, Leipzig 1851.

10. M. Vickers, « Alcibiades on stage : *Thesmophoriazusae* and *Helen* », *Historia* 38, 1989, pp. 41-65.

The thesis of the latter scholar also allows for references in the play to the satrap of Sardis, Tissaphernes, whose underhanded diplomacy had caused much distress to Athenians and Spartans alike during the period in question. H. Grégoire and R. Goossens¹¹ associated the character of Teucer who makes a brief appearance in the prologue of the play — ostensibly on his way to found Salamis on Cyprus — with Evagoras, who is known to have been king in Cypriot Salamis at about the time of the performance of *Helen*, and whose legendary descent from Teucer was well known in antiquity¹².

This list is not representative of the full range of suggestions that have been made concerning the relevance of the plot and characters of *Helen* to contemporary Athenian affairs. Nevertheless, it ought to be sufficient as an illustration of the concurrence of the opinion of a number of scholars who have studied this tragedy that the story of Helen and Menelaus as told by Euripides is simply not what it purports to be. It is further significant that a considerable number of interpretations of this play, however different they may be from one another in regard to their details, have referred the play in one way or another to contemporary Athenian affairs related to the Peloponnesian war¹³. These basic grounds and some of the details of the earlier interpretations of *Helen* are accepted in the thesis presented here.

Central to this reconstruction of *Helen* is, first, the identification of the character of Menelaus as a *prosopopoeia* of Athenian military concerns in the aftermath of the defeat in Sicily¹⁴. Secondly, it will be remembered that Grégoire and Goossens had proposed that the tragedian has incorporated in the part of Teucer allusions to the ruler Evagoras of Salamis. In the opinion of these two scholars, the allusions had a very limited scope, having been added to the play as an afterthought. But, in the author's opinion, the potential of the play to allude to Cypriot Salaminian affairs is far more extensive than has been recognized hitherto. In addition to the allusions to Evagoras in the part of Teucer, Euripides can be argued to have effected by means of metaphorical procedures a sustained comparison of the heroine of this tragedy with Cypriot Salamis¹⁵.

11. H. Grégoire and R. Goossens, « Les allusions politiques dans l'Hélène d'Euripide ; l'épisode de Teucros et les débuts du Teucride Évagoras », *CRAI*, 1940, pp. 215-227. These two scholars' association of the character of Teucer in *Helen* with Evagoras constitutes welcome support to the thesis, which is outlined in the present communication, and which was initially developed independently of their observations.

12. For the descent of Evagoras from Teucer, see Isocrates, *Evagoras* 18, *Nicocles* 28. The evidence available for dating the beginning of the reign of Evagoras is [Lysias] 6.26-28, *IG I³* 113 and possibly Andocides 2.11. That evidence only affords an approximate *terminus ante quem*, which is 410 or 411, for the beginning of Evagoras' rule.

13. Supplementary references to earlier discussions of the possible political significance of *Helen* can be found in Π.Α. Παττίχης, *Εὐριπίδου Ἑλένη*, Ἀθήναι, 1978, pp. 39-41.

14. Some of the basic grounds for the proposed identification are outlined in Appendix 1.

15. The basic grounds for this identification are outlined in Appendix 2.

Sustained metaphorical assemblance of the heroine of *Helen* with Cypriot Salamis makes possible a transposition. Salamis accedes to a leading role in the issues enacted in this tragedy and claims the title of the play. Within the proposed schema of the double significance of *Helen*, the appearance of Salaminian Teucer in the prologue and his explicit reference to Cypriot Salamis (*Helen* 149-150) — the only reference to the Cypriot city in the entire play — give the clue to the Cypriot Salaminian theme which underlies Helen's adventures in this tragedy.

The interpretation of the tragedy of Euripides as representing ideas connected with a rapprochement between Cypriot Salamis (during the reign of Evagoras) and Athens rests in part upon the allusions to Evagoras, Salamis and Athens in the individual parts of Teucer, Helen and Menelaus, respectively. To a larger extent, however, this interpretation derives from the parallel that can be inferred from these allusions between the restoration of Helen, which is the central point of the myth of this play, and Isocrates' account of the restoration of Cypriot Salamis.

According to the Athenian orator (who was speaking a generation later than the production of *Helen*), Salamis was a Greek city, founded by a hero of the Trojan war, Teucer¹⁶. It was subsequently reduced to vassalage and to a state of barbarism by the Persians with the aid of Phoenicians, who had usurped the throne of Salamis from its legitimate Teucid rulers sometime before Evagoras was born¹⁷. The policies of those Phoenicians, who continued to rule Salamis until they were replaced by Evagoras, had barred relations between that city and the rest of Hellas¹⁸.

One can draw an analogy between the condition of Salamis, as it is described by Isocrates, and the character of Helen, who is portrayed in this tragedy as a Greek of fair and noble lineage, and who is said, moreover, to have been banished to a land where barbarian customs rule, to have become a helpless vassal of a foreign man, and to have been closely guarded by her captor, Theoclymenus, from being approached by Greeks. The determination of Theoclymenus to keep Helen out of the reach of Greeks and his hostility against them (*Helen* 155, 439-40, 468 and 1175-1176) reminds one of the Phoenician predecessors of Evagoras who, according to Isocrates, set a prize of excellence for alienating and mistreating the Greeks¹⁹. An evocation of the figurative function of the notions of the heroine's alienation from her homeland, exposure to barbarian customs and enslavement can be detected in *Helen* 273-76 in particular :

16. Isocr., *Evag.* 18.

17. *Ibid.*, 20.

18. *Ibid.*, 47, 49.

19. *Ibid.*, 49.

HE :

ἔπειτα πατρίδος θεοί μ'ἀφιδρύσαντο	Then, from my homeland the Gods
γῆς	banished me
ἐς βάρβαρ' ἦθη, καὶ φίλων τητωμένη	to alien (lit. barbarian) customs, and,
	bereft of friends,
δούλη καθέστηκ' οὐδ' ἐλευθέρων ἄπο·	a slave am I, the daughter of free sires ;
τὰ βαρβάρων γὰρ δοῦλα πάντα πλὴν	for midst barbarians slaves are all save
ἑνός.	one.

One must remember that the play was addressed to people who were capable of, indeed prone to, perceiving images of kinship as expressions of political relationships²⁰. A Greek-thinking audience would be able to perceive Helen's banishment from her homeland and isolation from her friends (and family) as an illustration of the severing of the political ties of Salamis with the Greek world, due to the incorporation of the island of Cyprus in the Persian Empire. The terms *βαρβάρων*, « barbarian(s) », *ἐλευθέρων*, « free », *δούλη/δοῦλα*, « slave/slaves », also give away a chronologically and ethnically definable political worldview : namely, that of fifth-century Greeks towards the phenomenon of the Persian Empire. Our Greek sources commonly depict opposition to Persian rule as a struggle for *ἐλευθερία*. Notably, the revolt of the Cypriots from Persia in the 490's is described in these same terms by Herodotus²¹, who also employs vocabulary appropriate to enslavement to designate the status of the Cypriots both before that revolt and following its suppression by the Persians²². The audience of Euripides was further capable of associating *βάρβαρ' ἦθη*, « barbarian customs », with the Persian Empire since the Empire encompassed hosts of « barbarian » (lit. non-Greek speaking) peoples and since its ruling caste, the Persians, were already perceived at the time as the barbarians par excellence by the Greeks²³. One last suggestion of an intended comparison of Helen's condition with that of a subject of the Persian Empire may be contained in verse 276, which can be taken to refer to the Persian king (*ἑνός*) and to the virtual slave status of all others in relation to the king.

The turning point in Helen's fortune in this play also admits comparison with a critical turning point in the history of Salamis in the description of Isocrates. In the play, Helen's escape from her predicaments is accomplished through joint action with her husband Menelaus following their unexpected encounter in Egypt after years of separation. According to Isocrates, the escape of Salamis (and Cyprus) from barbarism and the revival of the island's ties with Hellas coincided chronologically with the accession of

20. Cf. Hdt. 5.49.3.

21. *Ibid.*, 5.109.2.

22. *Ibid.*, 5.109.3 and 5.116.1.

23. This perception continues into the fourth century, e.g., in Isocr., *Paneg.* 163.

Evagoras — or, to also take into account the pro-Athenian bias of the orator, with the beginnings of that ruler's collaboration with Athens²⁴.

Salamis, which is likened in the myth of Euripides with the beautiful and delicate figure of Helen, was in actuality an important naval power. Accordingly, the proposition of a rapprochement between Athens and Salamis in a play produced in 412, in the immediate aftermath of the destruction of the Athenian expedition to Sicily, can be interpreted as having been guided primarily by hopes of rebuilding the naval strength of Athens with Salamiian assistance²⁵. This interpretation would seem to be supported not least by the representation of Menelaus as a shipwrecked sailor, the numerous veiled allusions of the play to the recent naval defeat of Athens, as well as by the emphasis on the naval means for the escape of Helen and Menelaus from their misfortunes (*Helen* 1047f., 1061-2).

However, military cooperation between the two cities would not have been solely subject to the mutual consent of Evagoras and of the Athenian *demos*. Cyprus was a vassal of Persia. Moreover, the island occupied a position of enormous strategic significance for the defense (frequently against the Greeks) of the entire western flank of the Persian Empire. The latter circumstance had compelled Achaemenid rulers to consistently oppose the political and military collaboration of the Cypriot dynasts with the Greek states of the Aegean when the activities of those states posed a threat to the Persian regime²⁶.

The catastrophic defeat in Sicily would have served, naturally enough, to reduce the menace which Athens had represented for the Persians through most of the fifth century. And possibly, it was this consideration which had led Euripides (perhaps others, too) to hope that Persia might not object to an Athenian alliance with Salamis. Nonetheless, Persian approval would seem to have been required in the event of an actual military collaboration of Cypriot Salamis with Athens, and there are a plethora of references in the play which can be taken to imply that Euripides was aware of the necessity of securing Persian sanction to Athens' plans. The main cluster of such references are incorporated in the part of Theonoe, the daughter of Proteus, without whose approval the couple cannot escape from Egypt.

It does not much matter that the play is set in Egypt and that Theonoe is said to be the daughter of an Egyptian king. Tragic poets had to work

24. An interpretation of the disrupted and then reinstated marriage of Helen and Menelaus as an illustration of the changing circumstances in the political relations of Athens with Salamis would not be inapposite. In Greek thought, notions appropriate to political relationships could function as illustrations of marriage relationships, as in *Ar., Th.* 413 δέσποινα γὰρ γέροντι νυμφίῳ γυνή. The reverse application should also be possible in theory and seems to be presupposed by such expressions as ἐρασθεῖς τυραννίδος in *Hdt.* 1.96.2.

25. Cf. Grégoire and Goossens, *loc. cit.* (n. 11).

26. E.g., at the time of the Ionian revolt, *Hdt.* 5.104-115, and in the terms of the « King's Peace », *Xen., Hell.* 5.1.31.

within the constraints of earlier myth. Euripides could not alter the motif of Helen's guardianship by an Egyptian royal family without doing violence to tradition. The playwright, however, could endow Theonoe with attributes of royalty which would have been readily recognized by an Athenian audience as descriptive of an oriental monarch — and thus also as descriptive of the monarch who ruled Egypt and the Near East at the time²⁷.

There were certain features of etiquette and custom common to all oriental monarchs. Those features were the highly elevated status of the person of the king, the emphasis the king placed on his just conduct, his expectations of the performance of acts of homage in his presence, the pomp and ceremony which accompanied his public appearances, his elaborate retinue, and his opulent attire. All these elements can be detected in the characterization of Theonoe.

Her elevated status is impressed upon us by her description as being equal to gods (*Helen* 819 ἔστ' ἔνδον αὐτῷ ξύμμαχος θεοῖς ἴση, « an ally equal to gods he has within »)²⁸ ; clangs of bolts shot back announce the emergence of her grandeur from the palace (*Helen* 858-60) ; elaborate rituals performed by her attendants, and an act of purification, usher her step to the stage (*Helen* 865-872).

We must not let Theonoe's feminine name and guise mislead us. On the one hand, her femininity may have been dictated by the strict requirements of ambiguity in this play. On the other, it may be perceived as an exaggeration of the notion of effeminacy, which the Greeks were only too eager to attach to the status of foreigners who were clad in long robes and adorned themselves with jewellery²⁹. The Persian king would have typified those effeminate foreigners.

Although most certainly a part of the Persian king's wardrobe, the trousered costume, which enhanced the ferociousness of the Persian warrior, was not a part of the official image of royalty. In representations, from the minuscule engravings on coins and seals which circulated throughout the Empire to the monumental reliefs which were affixed on the buildings and carved on rock faces of the Persian homeland, the figure of the king poses in the opulent — hence, for the Greek observer, effeminate — ceremonial Persian robe. Rather than conceal the allusions to the Persian king, the feminine name of Theonoe may have been meant to further parody his effeminate outlook. During the performance, the oriental royal manners of Theonoe and the contrast of her feminine appearance to her inevitably male voice

27. The character of Theonoe is not attested in the extant references to earlier versions of the myth of Helen and her εἰδωλον and is supposed to have been invented by Euripides, see A.M. Dale, *Euripides' Helen*, Oxford 1967, p. xiii. Hence, the tragedian would have had considerably greater freedom in fashioning the details of that character than he would have had in the cases of traditional figures of myth.

28. For comparisons of the Persian king to divinity, see Isocr., *Paneg.* 151 and Plut., *Th.* 27.3.

29. E.g., Xen, *Hell.* 3.4.19.

(the actors of tragedy were male) would have more than compensated for the ambiguity caused by her feminine alias.

Among other possible motives that Euripides may have had for representing a Persian king in the feminine guise of Theonoe, one might consider the perception of the Persian monarch as a good housekeeper which is to be found in the *Oeconomicus*, a work composed by Xenophon less than a generation after *Helen*. In that work the Persian Empire and the Greek *oikos* (household) of Ischomachus and his wife are described as two paradigms of successful administration. S.B. Pomeroy discusses the analogies that are drawn in the *Oeconomicus* between, on the one hand, « the division of labor between the civil and military commands in Persia and their interdependence » and, on the other, « the reciprocal relationship of the domestic sphere which is supervised by the wife of Ischomachus and of her husband's realm which lies beyond the house »³⁰. One of the conclusions is that Xenophon adopted the Persian king, in his capacity as the head of the civilian sphere of the Empire, as a model for the wife of Ischomachus.

Theonoe's utterances and self-perception also carry us to a world which is only too familiar to students of ancient Near Eastern political propaganda. Near Eastern rulers in general sought to legitimize their demands and decisions by making appeal to their just character. Achaemenid royalty were no exception in this respect. The propaganda of righteousness repeatedly manifests itself in official Achaemenid inscriptions³¹ as well as in Greek references³² to the principles justifying Achaemenid conduct. At any rate, one need only think of the formula Ἄρταξέρξης βασιλεύς νομίζει δίκαιον..., « King Artaxerxes thinks it righteous... »³³ which prefaces, and sanctions, the terms of the treaty that Artaxerxes II dictated to the Greeks in 387/6 in order to realize the preoccupation of Achaemenid rulers with righteousness in the image they presented to their subjects — or, in this case, to their Greek adversaries.

In the play, Helen and Menelaus acknowledge the righteousness of Theonoe and her family and base their appeal to her for help on that principle. Standing in front of the rock-cut tomb of the father of Theonoe, Helen and Menelaus invoke the just character of the deceased, pointing out that should she not agree to help their just cause, namely, to escape from the hands of Theoclymenus, she would in fact « pervert the righteous purpose of (her) father and give grace to (her) unjust brother » (*Helen* 920-21). Menelaus repeatedly stresses the just nature of his demand to recover Helen (*Helen*

30. S.B. Pomeroy, « The Persian King and the Queen Bee », *AJAH* 9, 1984, pp. 98-108.

31. E.g., R.G. Kent, *Old Persian. Grammar, Texts, Lexicon*², New Haven 1953, BNb 5-27 (one of the two inscriptions of Darius from Nasq-i Rostam) on which see, in particular, the comments of E. Badian, « The Peace of Callias », *JHS* 107, 1987, pp. 27-28, with n. 50.

32. E.g., Hdt. 5.25.

33. Xen., *Hell.* 5.1.31.

955 : ζητοῦντά γ' ὀρθῶς ἀπολαβεῖν δάμαρτ' ἐμήν, « I who seek *justly* to recover my wife » and, again, in 959 : ἃ δ' ἄξι' ἡμῶν καὶ δίκαι' ἡγούμεθα, « those, which *worthy* of ourselves we deem and *just* ») and pointedly reminds Theonoe of the compatibility between his claims and her father's principles (*Helen* 960ff.).

Menelaus and Helen challenge Theonoe to live up to her father's reputation for justice. With her personal and family honor at stake, Theonoe feels compelled to acknowledge the just character of the request of Helen and Menelaus, and she vows to help them escape. She further sees fit to make a speech in defense of the proverbial justice of her father, herself and, indeed, her family (*Helen* 999-1004) :

ΘΕ :

...καὶ κλέος τοῦμοῦ πατρὸς	...and my sire's renown
οὐκ ἄν μιάναίμ', οὐδὲ συγγόνῳ χάριν	I will not stain, nor show my brother grace
δοίην ἂν ἐξ ἧς δυσκλεῆς φανήσομαι.	wherefrom shall open infamy be mine.
Ἔνεστι δ' ἱερὸν τῆς δίκης ἐμοὶ μέγα	For there is a great shrine of justice in me
ἐν τῇ φύσει· καὶ τοῦτο Νηρέως πάρα	by nature ; having inherited this from Nereus,
ἔχουσα σῶζειν, Μενέλεως, πειράσομαι	I will attempt, Menelaus, to preserve it.

The Egyptian princess is exclusively motivated by a need to uphold her family's reputation for justice. At the time of the composition of *Helen*, the imperative to uphold a dynastic reputation for justice would have been nowhere more expected than among the Achaemenid rulers.

If Theonoe is to be identified as a Persian king, Euripides could not ignore the fact that the performance of acts of homage was required by those who approached that character. It is conceivable that such an act of homage is conveyed by the manner of the appeal of Helen and Menelaus for help. Helen kneels before Theonoe and calls herself an *ικέτις*, « suppliant » (*Helen* 894). This act of supplication has numerous counterparts in Greek tragedy. In this case, however, the context in which it is performed and the details by which it is rendered may allow it to be associated with the Persian custom of *proskynesis*.

Herodotus tells us that the Persian mode of greeting depended on social rank. Equals exchanged a kiss with their equals on the mouth ; with those somewhat superior on the cheek ; while those, who were greatly inferior socially were expected to perform *proskynesis* by prostrating themselves (προσπίπτων προσκυνέει)³⁴. In the same passage, Herodotus goes on to tell that the Persians held their nearest neighbors most in honor and that their measure of esteem for other foreigners depended on the geographical distance of the countries of those foreigners from Persia. Greece — on the

34. Hdt. 1.134.

far fringe of the Persian Empire — must have ranked very low in Persian esteem !

Herodotus does not specifically refer to any gestures of homage to the king by either Persians or foreigners. The lack of such explicit references notwithstanding, one can infer from his report that Greeks would have been among those who would be expected to show the greatest deference to the Persian ruler : that is, those who would be expected to perform *proskynesis* by prostrating themselves.

This customary show of respect was an insult to the Greeks who reserved *proskynesis* for the worship of divinities and took offense at the notion that they were regarded by the Persians as being socially inferior. Accordingly, Greeks who wished to approach the king resorted to various strategies. One of them was to employ intermediaries. This method is described in Plutarch's account of the defection of Themistocles to Persia³⁵. Another stratagem is described by the same author in the biography of Artaxerxes³⁶ : Ismenias, we are told, an ambassador of the Greek city of Thebes, upon being brought to the presence of Artaxerxes II (367 B.C.), dropped his ring on the ground and by stooping to pick it up sought to give the impression of performing *proskynesis*.

Perhaps both methods of avoiding to perform *proskynesis* can be detected in *Helen*. The prostration of an Athenian, namely, Menelaus, before a Persian king could not be admitted in front of the citizens and subjects of Athens — not even under the protective guise of myth on the stage. In the play, Menelaus proudly refuses to kneel before Theonoe (*Helen* 947) and uses Helen as his intermediary. At the same time, Helen's prostration in front of Theonoe is designated by the term ἰκέτις as an act of supplication rather than homage because, for the Greeks, supplication was the only socially acceptable occasion for an individual to prostrate himself in front of another.

In the anecdote recorded by Plutarch, the innocuous act of retrieving a ring from the ground was substituted by Ismenias for the humiliating act of *proskynesis*. On the stage, Euripides would also be able to satisfy the conflicting requirements of the necessary deference due to an oriental monarch and the Greek defiance of the superior status of the Persian king by substituting the notion of *proskynesis* which was abhorrent to the Greeks with the similar, yet socially acceptable, act of supplication — which is here justified, moreover, by the desperate attempts of Helen to save her life and that of Menelaus.

The staging of the meeting of Menelaus with Theonoe may be held to reflect the diplomatic subtleties and political sensitivities which Athenian relations with Persia entailed. Should the foregoing interpretation of *Helen* be accepted, there are also implications in this meeting for the roles of Eva-

35. Plut., *Th.* 27.3.

36. *Id.*, *Artax.* 22.4.

goras and Salamis in the context of Perso-Athenian relations. The plan, which is here suggested to have been proposed by Euripides in 412, is not known to have materialized, at least not immediately³⁷. The point is, however, that at a time of crisis Evagoras could be proposed as a potential ally to the Athenians, and the embarrassment of an Athenian collaboration with the Persian regime could also be disguised by an emphasis on the strong Hellenic ties of Salamis and her then current ruler, Evagoras. One wonders whether or not the emphasis of the Athenian sources on the « Hellenization » of Salamis during the reign of Evagoras was not as much a consequence of Athenian political and military expediency as it was the outcome of Evagoras' philo-Athenian policies.

Appendix 1

The predicaments of Menelaus

The proposed identification of Menelaus emerges primarily from the details of the speech which he delivers when he first appears on the stage (*Helen* 386-436). The characterization of the hero in this speech differs from representations of Menelaus in earlier myth and bears, simultaneously, resemblances to Thucydides' description of the defeated Athenians of 413-412.

In *Helen* 408-412 (cf. 421-424 and 1079-1080), Menelaus is portrayed as a shipwrecked sailor. In *Odyssey* 4.351ff., Menelaus is said to have been held back in Egypt during his homeward journey from Troy, but the motif of shipwreck is conspicuously absent. In Herodotus' version of the myth of Helen's stay in Egypt, Menelaus does not wash up on the shore of Egypt by maritime accident. He goes there on purpose, having at last let himself be convinced by the Trojans that Egypt, not Ilium, is the place where he should be searching for his long-lost wife (Hdt. 2.118.4). The motif of shipwreck is prominent in the story of the return of Odysseus. One could assume, therefore, an influence of the *nostoi* on the representation of Menelaus as a shipwrecked sailor in *Helen*. There are a number of other indications, however, which, when taken together, would appear to suggest that by introducing (and subsequently referring to) Menelaus as a shipwrecked sailor Euripides is trying to make a point.

Menelaus' shipwreck can be perceived as a caption in a story of collective naval disaster. Suppressing the progress of fighting on land, Euripides brings in the foreground the naval moments of the Trojan expedition. A naval affair

37. Secure evidence for a trilateral military collaboration as is prefigured in this play is only available for the 390's. See Isocr., *Evag.* 55-57 and the Athenian decree in honor of Evagoras (*IG II²* 20) discussed (with the addition of two previously unpublished fragments) by D.M. Lewis and R.S. Stroud, « Athens Honors King Evagoras of Salamis », *Hesperia* 48, 1979, pp. 180-193.

from its outset (*Helen* 394 : στράτευμα κώπη διορίσαι Τροίαν ἔπι), the expedition also paid a heavy toll to the sea (*Helen* 398 : τοὺς δ' ἔκ θαλάσσης ἀσμένους πεφευγότας).

Further alterations of the homeric tradition can be detected in the pronounced feeling of failure which is haunting Menelaus in the play over and above the fact of his shipwreck. Trojan expedition in name, the expedition that was led by Menelaus is not, like its counterpart in Homer, the theme for songs to a warrior's *arete*. Instead, it is an undertaking which has brought αἰσχύνην upon its leader. Menelaus' αἰσχύνη (*Helen* 415) is explained as a result of failure of a high-standing individual (*Helen* 417-418) and as a feeling of self-contempt engendered in such an individual when, after his fall, opens his eyes to the necessity, alien to him so far but now overpowering, of begging for his survival (*Helen* 428-434, cf. 510-514).

Considering the climate which prevailed in Athens at the time of the production of *Helen*, Euripides' portrayal of Menelaus must have had a great poignancy. The feelings of failure and self-contempt of Menelaus had the potential to arouse in the audience fear and pity about their own existence. His αἰσχύνη could resound the humiliation of the Athenian soldiers who were utterly defeated in Sicily (Thc. 7.75.6). The fall of Menelaus could serve as an allusion to the fall of Athenian power (Thc. 7.77.7). One could even detect in *Helen* 395-396 a disclaimer of Menelaus' responsibility for the deaths and sufferings of the young Hellenes who followed him in the expedition. Such a disclaimer could then be said to echo the answers of those public speakers in Athens « who had been in favor of the expedition » to those who, « as though they themselves had not voted for it », had turned against them after its failure (Thc. 8.1.1). The lack of provisions of Menelaus and his few surviving companions (*Helen* 428-434, cf. 502) was also the plague of the retreating Athenian troops (Thc. 7.75.6, 77.6, 80.1). Ἐλπίς, the hope with which Nicias attempted to infuse his demoralized soldiers in Sicily (Thc. 7.77.1, 77.3, 77.4), is the only force which remains a spur to action in the case of Menelaus as well (*Helen* 432). The despair of Menelaus over the lack of a ship (*Helen* 1047-1048 and 1059-60) repeats a concern which must have been uttered often in Athens after the destruction of her fleet (e.g., Thc. 8.1.2).

Should these comparisons be accepted as valid, the monologue of Menelaus in *Helen* 386-436 could be said to set the theme of Athens in this play and to have been meant to signal the pertinence of the revised myth of Helen and her εἶδωλον to the fortunes and to the then current concerns of the audience.

Appendix 2

Twin themes : Helen and Salamis

...πολύ δὲ μέγιστον τὸ μεταφορικὸν εἶναι. Μόνον γὰρ τοῦτο οὔτε παρ' ἄλλου ἔστι λαβεῖν εὐφροσύνης τε σημεῖον ἔστι· τὸ γὰρ εὖ μεταφέρειν τὸ τὸ ὅμοιον θεωρεῖν ἔστιν.

« ...but by far the greatest thing (in poetry/tragedy) is the use of metaphor. That alone cannot be learnt ; it is the token of genius. For the right use of metaphor means an eye for resemblances. »

(Aristotle, *Poetics* 1459a, W. Hamilton Fyfe, transl., Loeb, parenthesis mine.)

The counterpoint Helen-Salamis is built on a fundamental resemblance of their particular myths introduced in the prologue. The source-myth of this play involves, in addition to the heroine, a ghost-double of hers also named Helen. The concept of homonymy, which is inherent in this myth, is expressly activated by the heroine's proclamation, first made in the prologue (*Helen* 42-43 : ἐξ ἀλκὴν προὔτεθην ἐγὼ μὲν οὔ, / τὸ δ' ὄνομα τοῦμόν) and repeated in the course of the play (e.g., *Helen* 244-251, 1100, 1653), that the εἶδωλον-Helen represents her name. The myth of the foundation of Salamis is also a myth of two homonyms. This time, the homonyms are localities rather than women : Salamis on Cyprus and the Attic island of Salamis, which Athenian legend promoted as the metropolis of the Cypriot city (*Helen* 149-150 ὄνομα νησιωτικὸν / Σαλαμίνα θέμενον τῆς ἐκεῖ χάριν πάτρας). The earliest attestation of the myth is Aeschylus, *Persae* 895-96.

Salamis is not mentioned again after the prologue, but the theme of homonymy has taken its course. It will keep resurfacing in a variety of forms as the play progresses, prompting the association of the story of Helen with the story of Salamis. In my opinion, the two most intelligible instances of the use of homonymy as a prompt to references to Salamis through the story of Helen occur in verses 497-99 and 1673-74.

The first instance is the conclusion of a long passage which reverberates with homonyms. Menelaus has just arrived at the gate of the palace of Proteus. He receives news from the portress that a woman who has the same name, Spartan origin and lineage as his wife is dwelling in the palace. This sounds incredible to Menelaus since he is convinced that the phantom-Helen, whom he had recovered from Troy, and whom he had just a while ago hidden in a sea cave, is his real wife. Menelaus, now left alone on the stage, reasons aloud the paradox (*Helen* 485-499, emphasis mine) :

ME :

εἰ τὴν μὲν αἰρεθεῖσαν ἐκ Τροίας ἄγων	« If I have brought the wife I won from Troy
ἦκω δάμαρτα καὶ κατ' ἄντρα σφύζεται,	hither, and safe within the cave she lies,
ὄνομα δὲ ταῦτόν τῆς ἐμῆς ἔχουσά τις	yet in these halls another woman dwells

δάμαρτος ἄλλη τοισίδ' ἐνναίει δόμοις.	who bears the selfsame name as mine own wife.
Διὸς δ' ἔλεξε παῖδά νιν πεφυκέναι.	You woman named her born of Zeus, his daughter.
Ἄλλ' ἢ τις ἔστι Ζηνὸς ὄνομ' ἔχων ἀνὴρ Νείλου παρ' ὄχθας ; εἷς γὰρ ὁ γε κατ' οὐρανόν.	Can any man that bears this name of Zeus by Nile's banks dwell ? One is there, he in heaven.
Σπάρτη δὲ ποῦ γῆς ἔστι πλὴν ἴνα ῥοαί τοῦ καλλιδόνακός εἰσιν Εὐρώτα μόνον ;	And where hath earth a Sparta, save alone there where Eurotas' streams are fair with reeds ?
[διπλοῦν] ³⁸ δὲ Τυνδάρειον ὄνομα κλήζεται	Do two men bear the name of Tyndarus ?
Λακεδαίμονος δὲ γαῖα τίς ξυνώνυμος	Is there a land twin-named with Lacedaemon
Τροίας τε ; ἐγὼ μὲν οὐκ ἔχω τί χρὴ λέγειν. πολλοὶ γὰρ, ὡς εἷξασιν, ἐν πολλῇ χθονὶ ὀνόματα ταῦτ' ἔχουσι καὶ πόλις πόλει γυνὴ γυναικί τ'. οὐδὲν οὖν θαυμαστέον.	Or Troy ? I know not what to say hereof : For on the wide earth many, as men grant, bear like names, <i>city bearing city's name,</i> <i>and woman woman's</i> : marvel none is here. »

Homonymy is four times stated and twice implied. The theme of this passage is difficult to miss and could have been put across to the audience even more effectively during the performance. Then, in addition to repetition, the tenor of the terms ὄνομα...ταῦτόν, διπλοῦν...ὄνομα, ξυνώνυμος could also be stressed by vocalization while the sequence of phrases which carry these terms may have been asked towards the *theatron*, exacting the audience's attention to their meaning. Having put his audience in the right frame of mind, homonyms, Euripides drops the clue. The opinion « city may bear city's name and woman woman's » tallies with the instructions of the prologue, that is, that both Helen, a woman, and Cypriot Salamis, a city, have a corresponding homonym. But, unlike the prologue, where the two pairs of homonyms are mentioned separately, and we are left to infer on our own their basic common property of homonymy, and their comparability, in verses 498-99, the comparison and association are directly drawn. Euripides seems to me to be in the process of weaving together the themes of Helen and Salamis which were initially laid out as separate in the prologue.

The second instance occurs in the epilogue in 1673-74 :

— φρουρὸν παρ' Ἀκτὴν τεταμένην νῆσον λέγω —
Ἑλένη τὸ λοιπὸν ἐν βροτοῖς κεκλήσεται,

« the sentinel isle that flanks the Coast
henceforth shall be called Helen among the mortals ».

38. Nauck for ἀπλοῦν of Mss.

Helen is associated in this passage, as Cypriot Salamis is in the prologue, with a henceforth homonymous island. Is this a coincidence or a metaphor ?

The conversion of 'Salamis' to 'Helen' in verses 1673-4 was within the capacities of tragic metaphor. The procedure for such a conversion is explained by Aristotle under the category of 'metaphor by analogy' in *Poetics* 1457b :

τὸ δὲ ἀνάλογον λέγω, ὅταν ὁμοίως ἔχη τὸ δεύτερον πρὸς τὸ πρῶτον καὶ τὸ τέταρτον πρὸς τὸ τρίτον· ἐρεῖ γὰρ ἀντὶ τοῦ δευτέρου τὸ τέταρτον ἢ ἀντὶ τοῦ τετάρτου τὸ δεύτερον. καὶ ἐνίοτε προστιθέασιν ἀνθ' οὗ λέγει πρὸς ὃ ἐστὶ.

« this I mean "analogon" : when B is to A what D is to C, (it is possible) to say D instead of B or B instead of D. Sometimes they add that to which the term supplanted by the metaphor is relative. »

According to this definition, Helen could provide an analogon for Cypriot Salamis by virtue of her being associated with a homonymous island. It may be significant for this interpretation, furthermore, that the peninsula of the Peiraeus is named Ἀκτὴ in Aristotle (*Ath. Pol.* 42.3 εἶτ' εἰς Πειραιέα πορεύονται καὶ φρουροῦσιν οἱ μὲν τὴν Μουνηχίαν οἱ δὲ τὴν Ἀκτὴν). The characterization φρουρὸν παρ' Ἀκτὴν would make perfect sense in the case of the island of Salamis, which not only stretches across from the locality which is called Ἀκτὴ in Aristotle but also, by virtue of its geographical location, actually guards the seaward approach to Athens. If we were to equate Ἀκτὴν with the peninsula of the Peiraeus, *Helen* 1673 would correspond to the last clause of the Aristotelian definition of metaphor by analogy, καὶ ἐνίοτε προστιθέασιν ἀνθ' οὗ λέγει πρὸς ὃ ἐστὶ, and would be meant to make the metaphorical reference to Salamis explicit.

To summarize, the suggestion that there is a sustained comparison of the heroine of *Helen* to Salamis derives primarily from : *a)* the parallel introduction in the prologue by Helen and Teucer, respectively, of a myth about Helen and a myth about Salamis which are fundamentally similar with each other, *b)* the subsequent exploitation of the basic common property, the element of homonymy, of the myths of Helen and Cypriot Salamis in the comparison involving homonymous women and cities during the course of the play, and *c)* the potential use of Helen as a metaphor for Salamis in the epilogue.