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REASSESSING THE NONCONFORMIST CHARGES AGAINST EURIPIDES: A STUDY OF SELECTED PLAYS OF EURIPIDES AND ARISTOPHANES' *FROGS*

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DECLARATION

This is to certify that this dissertation is the result of research undertaken by LETICIA KARIKARI towards the award of MPhil Classics in the Department of Philosophy and Classics, University of Ghana.

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ABSTRACT

Ancient Greek tragedy came to Euripides with its general conditions fixed in a manner which he could not attempt to alter. There is a governing diction, tone and propriety which define the genre and sustains its elevation; three actors in a play, a chorus, and subject-matter that must be taken from the heroic legends and myths. Wounds and death were not supposed to be presented on stage. These are some of the basic conventions of ancient Greek play. But it is widely held against the background of the criticisms of Euripides' drama that his plays generally represent a sharp departure from the existing traditions, customs, and theatrical conventions of the tragic genre. To Aristophanes in particular, and some modern scholars such as August W. Schlegel, Friedrich Schlegel, Ann Norris Michelini, Paul Decharme, Stahlin Schmid and Ebener Dietrich, Euripides is an immoral dramatist, a misogynist, an anti-traditionalist, impious, a lover of rhetoric, a sophist, a systematic thinker and a skeptical dramatist whose plays show nonconformist attitudes and views towards the traditional religion, morality and the mythological stories of the tragic genre.

However, some other commentators like Adele Robert, Donald Mastronarde, Helen Foley, Desmond Conacher, David Kovacs, and G. M. A. Grube are of the view that Euripides is an innovative, realistic, and creative dramatist, whose drama should not be misinterpreted from our modern perspectives. Thus, there appears to be lack of consensus among ancient and modern scholars about the interpretations of Euripides' plays.

The problem I identify is that some of the arguments from both sides about the interpretations of Euripides' drama are either incorrect or misconstrued. Therefore, the questions that this dissertation attempts to address are: what are the aspects of Euripides' writings that give rise to the criticism that he is a nonconformist? What are the interpretations that are favored by scholars who charge Euripides with nonconformism? What are the interpretations of Euripides' plays that are preferred by scholars who argue that he is an innovative and creative dramatist? In what ways are the allegations against Euripides in Aristophanes' *Frogs* justified? Which interpretations of Euripides' works would be more representative of his perspective of Greek society?

My main focus of investigation in my attempt to address the questions noted above, will be on Aristophanes' *Frogs* in which the comic poet criticises and stigmatizes Euripides in various ways, and the *Hippolytus* and *Hecuba* of Euripides which commentators and critics consider as among the plays which are reflective of the attitudes and thoughts of Euripides. By and large, my fundamental objective here is to reassess the charges against Euripides; and by way of methodology, I hope to argue, where necessary, and critique and comment on not only the views of scholars about the works of Euripides but also the communicative intentions of the playwright with particular reference to his two plays in focus.

To

K.K and Elizabeth,

My Parents

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background to the Study

The object of criticism is to achieve a meeting of minds, the critic's and the poet's, and that criticism properly carried out will allow us to arrive, not at another interesting interpretation, but at the poet's meaning, a meaning he has put in his work for all to see.[1] But the criticism of the interpretations of Euripidean drama has not been able to achieve its meeting of minds. There is lack of consensus among ancient and modern critics. In one sense of the debates, August Wilhelm Schlegel, Friedrich Schlegel, Ann N. Michelini, Paul Decharme, Stahlin Schmid and Albrecht Dietrich conceive Euripides as an immoral dramatist, a misogynist, an anti-traditionalist, impious, a lover of rhetoric, a sophist, a systematic thinker and a skeptical dramatist whose plays generally represent a sharp departure from the existing traditions and customs of the tragic genre.

However, Adele Robert, Donald Mastronarde, Helen Foley, Desmond Conacher, David Kovacs, G. M. A. Grube and Oliver Taplin maintain not only that Euripides is a man of his age, a realist, a creative dramatist, a conservative, but also an innovator and a pacifist feminist, who understands the problems and issues of his time. In order to distinguish between these two schools of thought in this dissertation, I will refer to scholars who charge Euripides of nonconformism

[1]David Kovacs, *The Heroic Muse: Studies in the Hippolytus and Hecuba of Euripides*, London, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987, p 1

in the interpretation of his plays as “conservatives” and the others who defend and sympathize with him as “liberals”.

This study is motivated by Michelini’s article “Euripides: Conformist, Deviant, Neo-Conservative?” After reading this article, and after reading views of Euripides as Aristophanes purports in his *Acharnians, Thesmophoriazusae* and *Frogs,* as well as modern debates about Euripides involving Aeschylus or Sophocles from Michelini, Donald Mastronarde, David Kovacs and G. M. A. Grube, I resolved to clarify and simplify the debate about Euripides’ attitude to his society, since I noticed excesses on both sides of the debate about him.

1.1 Literature Review

Following Aristophanes' lead in his comedies such as *Acharnians, Thesmophoriazusae,* and *Frogs,* modern derogation of Euripides' works culminate in the lectures of F. Schlegel and A. W. Schlegel in the nineteen century. Both brothers consider Euripides as a revolutionary in the theater of Dionysus who, through his skeptical and pessimistic attitude, killed Greek tragedy. They assume that moral and epistemological disquietude is the background against which Euripides' plays find their fullest and accurate interpretation.[2] To W. Schlegel, F. Schlegel and later Michelini, Euripides does not fit the norm embodied in the work of Aeschylus, and particularly Sophocles, because, he constructs his art around a deliberate distortion of tragic norms which are intrinsic to his plays.[3]

W. Schlegel, in his 1802 Berlin lectures on aesthetics claims that F. Schlegel, his brother, is the first in modern age to discern the "immeasurable gulf" separating Euripides from Aeschylus and Sophocles, thereby reviving an attitude the Greeks themselves have assumed towards Euripides.[4] Schlegel's criticism is particularly on the aesthetic value of Greek tragedy. He argues that the chorus in ancient tragedy is inseparable from the structure of the play, and a combination of a perfect harmony and an appropriate relationship between the chorus and dramatic action are the most essential requirements of Greek tragedy. The

[2]David Kovacs, op. cit., p. ix

[3]Ann Michelini, "Euripides: Conformist, Deviant, Neo-Conservative?" *Arion,* Vol. 4, No. 3 (1997), pp. 208-222

[4]Ernst Behler, "A. W. Schlegel and the Nineteenth-Century Damnatio of Euripides", *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies, Vol.* 27, No. 4, (1985), pp. 335-367

Schlegels argue that Euripides' chorus has no structural interrelationship with the action of his play. To them, Euripides detaches his chorus from the structure of his plays because it is of no relevant value to him. They claim that Euripides' plays lack proportion to the whole of the dramatic action due to his fondness for inappropriate embellishment, which leads to a virtual "insurrection of the individual parts against the unity of the whole".[5] Schlegel insists that, to acquaint oneself with the genuinely great style of ancient tragedy, it should be limited to Aeschylus and Sophocles and simply ignores Euripides[6] because, Aeschylus conjures up Titans and calls down gods; Sophocles graciously leads the row of heroines and heroes; but Euripides, as a sophistic rhetorician, gossips at the market-place.[7] In addition, Richard Jebb avers that the choral ode of Euripides came to be either wholly irrelevant to the dramatic context or connected with it only slightly and occasionally.[8]

But, Mastronarde and Grube argue that Euripides' chorus passages are quite relevant to the plot and very integrated in his plays. Both scholars argue that this idea that the chorus in Euripides' plays are detached from the dramatic action possibly emerges from Aristotle's *Poetics* (*Poetics, 1456, a, 25*).[9] According to Grube, Aristotle is not blaming Euripides that his portrayal of the chorus is detached from his plays or a mere interlude. Rather, Aristotle contrasts the chorus

[5]Ann Michelini, *Euripides and the Tragic Tradition*, London, Wisconsin University Press, 1987, p. 20-1
[6]Ernst Behler, op. cit., p. 355
[7]Ibid.
[8]Richard C. Jebb, *The Growth and Influence Of Classical Greek Poetry*, London, Macmillan and Co., 1893, p. 224
[9]G. M. A Grube, *The Drama of Euripides*, London, Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1961, p. 99

in the tragedy of the old poets with that of the new tragic playwrights such as Agathon, because, the chorus has drastically declined from the structure of the plays in his time. Grube continues that because the change in dramatic relevance of the chorus is a historical process, scholars are tempted to assume that Euripides, who is the youngest and less orthodox among the three great tragic poets, diverts from his predecessors. To Grube, Euripides' chorus is connected to his plot, therefore, scholars must not allow whatever subsidiary difference Aristotle is establishing obscure the main distinction between those who, like Agathon, use interludes, and the older poets like Euripides who do not.[10] I agree with both Mastronarde's and Grube's observation but with one reserve which is Grube's assertion that Euripides' detached chorus in, for instance, *Phoenissae*, and *Iphigenia at Aulis* is for a specific purpose. If that specific purpose is contrary to the relevance of the chorus in his plays, then the conservatives' accusation that Euripides does not regard the chorus as an important part of the tragedy is justified.

For characterization in Euripides' plays, both Schlegels and Theodor Mommsen posit that Euripides allows much passion (*leidenschaft*) to his characters, whether noble or ignoble, without respect for the requirement of the tragic art. They argue that the characters in Euripides' plays do not exhibit the mystic grandeur and universality common in Aeschylus' and Sophocles' plays because it is of no great interest to him. According to them, Euripides spoils the nobility of the heroes and heroines in the Greek mythical stories through the

[10]G. M. A Grube, op. cit., p. 100

expression of impulsive passion. He takes delight in violent manifestation of unnecessary passion.[11] Schlegel asserts that when Aristotle in the *Poetics* (*Poetics1453a10)* refers to Euripides as the most tragic of all the ancient poets, Aristotle is rather talking about Euripides' mastery art of exciting passions in his plays.

On the contrary, I argue that the idea of the excessive passion that the conservatives accuse Euripides of is particularly about the passion of some female characters which Aristophanes satirized in the *Frogs*, lines *1026-1084*.[12] Moreover, I argue that the conservatives are exaggerating their charge about the promotion of passion in Euripides' character portrayal. For instance, how will the Schlegels consider the passion in the female character Alcestis in Euripides' play, *Alcestis*? As such, I disagree with the generalization and exaggeration of the conservatives' claim about the issue of passion because such criticism assumes an Apollonian view of human beings as only coldly calculating agents, and it seems to me that any comprehensive view of the human world must incorporate both calculation and passion.

Thirdly, according to the F. Schlegel, W. Schlegel, and Mommsen[13], Euripides is attitudinally a misogynist. Euripides is perceived as a woman-hater

[11]Ernst Behler, op. cit., p. 35; William M Calder III, "Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff: Sospitator Euripidis" The University of Colorado, Boulder, (1985), p. 414-5

[12]Aristophanes: *The Wasps, The Poet and the Women, The Frogs,* Trans. with introduction by David Barrett, Harmondsworth, Penguin Books Ltd., 1981, p. 194

[13]Albert Henrichs, "The Last of the Detractors: Friedrich Nietzsche's Condemnation of Euripides" Harvard University, (1986), p. 373

who employs the chance he gets to make harsh tirades against the female sex.[14] Both of the Schlegels assert that Euripides' hatred for women is usually expressed as the animosity of the offended party rather than the arrogance of an unjust oppressor, in the sense that F. Schlegel is concerned with the artistic implication rather than the social values.[15] But I see a problem with the charge of misogyny as part of a border charge of nonconformism. This is because, misogyny, I think should rather be the norm in a patriarchal society such as Athens and that would make Euripides a conformist. Moreover, Helen Foley argues that even though Euripides creates adulterous and murderous women as well as male characters like Jason (*Med, 572-75*), Hippolytus (*Hipp, 616-68*) or Polymestor (*Hec*. 1160-1198) who indulge in misogynistic outbursts, Euripides also creates courageous female sacrificial victims like Polyxena in his *Hecuba*, female advocates of public ideals, and defenders of the female sex like Melanippe.[16] This means that Euripides is sometimes perceived as a feminist in some of his plays. Therefore, I agree with Foley and Adele Robert that Euripides creates both sides of the female characters, in that he does not consistently project the negative sides of womanhood, neither does he persistently portray their positive side as well. They vary, depending on the role, circumstance and the communicative intention of the poet in a particular play.

Again, I support Robert's observation that Euripides portrays the female gender in his plays this way, probably, because he is influenced by the gender

[14]Ernst Behler, op. cit., p. 351
[15]ibid
[16]Helen P. Foley, *Female Acts in Greek Tragedy*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2001, p. 268

hierarchy of his day. It is therefore, unlikely that he can be properly considered a feminist, but defining him as a misogynist is also problematic.[17] In his *Medea* for instance, I think that Euripides' desire is not only to portray Medea as a beleaguered woman desperate to overcome adversity, but also to illustrate how grievously women in his society are injured by an oppressive patriarchy.[18] Again, Nancy Rabinowitz's attempt to show how Euripides' self-sacrificing maidens such as Polyxena paradoxically mimic male achievement and glory results in a kind of self-erasure[19] exhibits reflection of feminism in the poet's work. I think that Foley's and Robert's arguments dislodge the conservatives' attack that Euripides hates women because there are reflections of true feminism in some of Euripides' plays.

Furthermore, Schlegel and Schmid[20] claim that Euripides does not believe in the gods and goddesses of the popular Athenian religion. They argue that as a dramatist, Euripides takes every opportunity to launch all kinds of abusive language onto the gods. For instance, in Euripides' *Heracles* (*Her., 3339-47*), Amphitryon reproaches the gods as more despicable than mortals. In Schlegel's view, Hippolytus' apology for perjury: "it was my tongue that swore, my mind took no oath" (*Hipp, 612*) or Euripides' *Ion* (*Ion, 437-51*), exemplifies Euripides'

[17]Adele Robert, "The Nature of and Motivations Behind the Portrayals of Women in the Plays of Euripides" *Tiresias*: *The Classical and Medieval Studies Journal of the University of Waterloo and St. Jerome's University*, Vo. 1, (2012), p. 25-33.
[18]Andrew Messing, "Protofeminist or Misogynist? Medea as a case study of gendered discourse in Euripidean drama" (2009), p.5
[19]Ann Michelini, op. cit., p. 216
[20]Herbert Edward Mierow, "The Trend of Euripidean Criticism", *The Classical Weekly*, Vol. 29, No. 2, (1935), p.9-11

impiety and disrespect to the gods and the popular belief in oath.[21] But in Mastronarde's opinion, what scholars should consider to be of more significance is the dramatic relevance of the statements. Again, scholars must remain aware of the imperfect fits of Greek religion which is different from the modern conception of monotheism.

According to Grube, the Greek word *θεός* (god) that Euripides frequently uses in his plays does not carry the same meaning or the same association as the word 'God' in English, or its equivalent in any modern language. Grube asserts that what is important to realize is that, in Greek religion, a 'god' may be shown to have behaved in an improper manner without ceasing to be recognized as a god.[22] Take for instance the anthropomorphic nature of the gods and goddesses in Homer's *Iliad*. Apollo, Athena, Hera, and Zeus actively took part in the actions and affairs of man by fighting, tricking or manipulating situations from time to time, especially when their favorites are involve. Yet, they never ceased to be divine.

I agree with both Mastronarde and Grube that the popular religion among the Athenians had no fixed creed, no accepted version of consecrated books, or a priestly class with the right supervision.[23] The Greeks could think what they like about them without necessarily denying the existence of the gods or being considered atheists, as long as one conforms to the ritual practices. For Grube, if

[21] Ernst Behler, op. cit., p. 358
[22]G. M. A Grube, op. cit., p. 43; Donald Mastronarde, *The Art of Euripides: Dramatic Technique and Social Context*, U. K., Cambridge University Press, 2011, p. 155
[23]ibid

Euripides' play leads one to doubt the story of Apollo's fatherhood to Ion in the *Ion*, it is not necessarily an attack upon the god whom the Greeks called Apollo.[24] In disagreement with Grube, however, I argue that perhaps, Euripides doubts the nature and existence of the anthropomorphic gods because of the new teachings of the sophists about the gods.

Schlegel, Albrecht Dieterich and Paul Decharme claim that the traditional myth of ancient tragedy is an important material for the tragic poets. But, they argue that the freedom in the treatment of the myth which is one of the privileges of the tragic art is abused by Euripides. Schlegel contends that, because Euripides is indifferent to everything familiar and habitual in the tragic tradition, he modifies the traditional myths to suit his arbitrary peculiarities. Dieterich maintains that no matter how much Euripides modifies the traditional myths, he cannot do away with them entirely. And since his own religious and moral thoughts are in opposition to the stories in the traditional myths, he is compelled to destroy the sacred traditional myths that the theater presents.[25] Decharme, on his part, argues that as a tragic poet, Euripides could not cast doubt upon the myths nor question their truth as a whole. But while he never had the impudence to say that the traditions which furnished the plots of his plays were purely fable, he has no scruples about expressing his scepticism regarding other legends that he met on his way. Decharme uses the myth surrounding the birth of Helen and

[24]G. M. A. Grube, op. cit., p. 44
[25]Herbert E. Mierow, op. cit p. 9-11

Dioscuri and the Argive legend of Atreus and Thyestes as examples to emphasize this.[26]

In disagreement, Grube argues that "it would be interesting if some commentators who scorn the idea that Heracles' divine birth could have any meaning for Euripides would back their opinion by explaining how far the Christian myth of divine birth has any meaning for them".[27] He posits that Euripides is a dramatist as Aeschylus and Sophocles, and since they all adapt their theme from the traditional myth, Euripides also does same though each poets' way of presenting the story differ. I agree with Grube that the only way to identify Aeschylus' drama from that of Euripides or Sophocles is through their individual innovatory skills. As Taplin claims, what matters for the dramatists and their audience is the way the mythological stories are shaped into drama.[28] For instance, in the *Odyssey*, Aegisthus is the murderer of Agamemnon and he became the chief object of Orestes' vengeance; but, Aeschylus adds a different twist to the same mythological story in the *Oresteia.* It is rather Clytemnestra who murders Agamemnon, her husband. I agree with the liberals that the basic idea of the mythical stories are always visible in Euripides' plays even though how he presents the story is always different from his predecessors. And I disagree with the conservatives on the part that by being innovative and creative as a dramatist makes Euripides a deviant.

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[26]Paul Decharme, *Euripides and the Spirit of His Drama*, Trans., James Loeb, A. B., 2nd edition, New York, MacMillan & Co. Ltd., 1909, pp. 46- 47

[27]G. M. A. Grube, op. cit., p. 44

[28]Oliver Taplin, "Emotion and Meaning in Greek Tragedy" In *Oxford Readings in Greek Tragedy*, Ed. by E. Segal, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1983, p. 5

Whenever scholars criticize how the influences of philosophy destroy Greek tragedy, the name of Euripides is usually associated with it. The Schlegels consider him as a sophist and a philosopher of the tragic stage. The Schlegels and Decharme claim that the influence of philosophy on the destruction of Greek tragedy is exemplified in the work of Euripides because of his relationship with philosophers such as Socrates, Anaxagoras, and Protagoras, the sophist. Decharme argues that in one of Euripides' plays, he praises the happiness of the sage, the man wholly devoted to the pursuit of knowledge that he adapts from Anaxagoras' teachings. Decharme continues that another influence of Anaxagoras' teachings is identified in Euripides' *Medea, lines 294-301.*[29] Decharme concedes that nothing obstructs us from recognizing the philosopher, Anaxagoras, speaking through the character of Medea about his exile in 431 B.C. which coincides with the same time Euripides' *Medea* is staged.[30] Decharme argues again that the popular ridicule in Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriasuzae* (*Thesm.* 1-44) about how Euripides accounts for the coming of the world is another idea from Anaxagoras in Euripides' plays. Decharme states that two of Euripides' lost plays, *Chrysippus,* and *Melanippe the Philosopher,* emphasize this idea from Anaxagoras.

In addition, both of the Schlegels and Decharme assert that Euripides is influenced by Socrates' teachings in his plays and a chorus in the latter part of Aristophanes' *Frogs* (*1519-1533*) accuses Euripides of collaborating with Socrates in writing his plays. In Aristophanes' *Clouds* one character claims that it

[29] Paul Decharme, op. cit., p. 23-25
[30] Ibid.

is Socrates who composes for Euripides those blabbing and sophistical tragedies.[31] Decharme maintains that since Plato and Xenophon are silent on the accusations of Aristophanes concerning the relations between Euripides and Socrates, it is likely that intimacy existed between these men who, in varying degree and by different means, revolutionalized their ideas in their day. Decharme claims that the remark made by one of the characters in Euripides' *Aeolus*, 'that no practice is disgraceful if it does not appear as such to those who indulge in it', is an immediate consequence of Protagoras' principle: 'Man is the measure of all things that are, that they are, of things are not, that they are not'. Also, from this same principle of Protagoras springs the declaration of Eteocles in Euripides' *Phoenician Maidens* that men attach different meanings to the same words and they do not agree among themselves upon what they call the beautiful and the good.

Contrary to the view that Euripides is influenced by the teachings of Socrates or the philosophers, Desmond Conacher argues that Euripides is a creative artist who only refashions and develops some leading sophistic teachings into his themes through his dramatic skills and makes them his own.[32] Conacher discusses the dramatic exploitation of some leading sophistic ideas such as *kairos* (the right time or moment), *aidôs* (shame, respect, modesty), *charis* (grace, reciprocity, favour), and *sôphrosunê* (self-control, moderation, prudence) in Euripides' *Hippolytus*, *Hecuba* and other plays. But I think that Conacher's

[31] Paul Decharme, op. cit., p. 31

[32] Desmond Conacher, *Euripides and the Sophist: Some Dramatic Treatments of Philosophical Ideas*, London, Duckworth, 1998, p. 7

interpretation of the notions *aidôs and charis* from philosophic approach alone in the selected Euripidean plays mentioned is inadequate considering the meaning of terms. If Conacher seeks for Euripides, the creative dramatist, then, he should also explore how Euripides incorporates the popular religious beliefs and moral values in his plays through the application of these terms. I think that if Conacher had paid attention to the incorporation of the popular beliefs in Euripides' plays beyond the exploitation of these terms from the sophistic and rhetorical approach that he did, his interpretation would have escaped the argument that Euripides is in a hurry to proclaim what he thinks about these leading ideas, using the tragic stage, as Wilhelm Nestle argues, or he is a sophist by nature.

Again, I argue that if Conacher accepts that in Euripides' plays, we sometimes identify ambiguities concerning traditional virtues reflected in the contrasting reactions of the chorus and the characters to varying circumstances or what seems a simple sophistic theme acquires a new complexity or an outrageously novel sophistic doctrine may be given an ironic twist[33], then, there is no doubt that he either projects his own inherent sophistic ideas on the tragic stage or there is a natural affinity between his mind and that of the sophists.

Conacher states that from what we know from Euripides' plays, of his attitudes to traditional beliefs, the society, and politics, it is not surprising that he finds much that is similar in the approaches of the sophists. But Conacher cautions that it is impossible to know how much of the sophistic ideas that Euripides used in his plays due to the limited knowledge about these ideas. I agree

[33] Desmond Conacher, op. cit., pp. 10-11

with Conacher that Euripides is familiar with popular sophistic topics which have possibly, become part of the daily intellectual conversation in Athens during his time. Also I agree that it is possible that Euripides may have even attended some of the lectures of the sophists or conversed with some however, there is no real evidence to prove that. Nevertheless, Conacher avers that the dexographers' picture of Euripides listening to the sophist Prodicus and the assumption that Protagoras recites one of his treatises at Euripides' house represents only a kind of association that seems possible between him and the sophists. If Conacher has previously argued that there is no real evidence to support the claim that there exists a possible relation or encounter between Euripides and the sophist, how can he at the same time, account for a kind of possible association between the poet and the sophists in this tale about Protagoras? Conacher admits that he finds much similarity in the approaches of the sophists observing Euripides plays. This means that the conservatives' allegation that Euripides is influenced by the teachings of the sophists or Socrates cannot be outright fallacy.

Concerning the accusation that Euripides uses the art of rhetoric in his dramas, John Harrison postulates that Hecabe's appeal in *Hecuba*, *784-819* echo the teachings of Anaxagoras, (who posited an intelligence that governs the world known variously as Zeus, Reason, Necessity or Law).[34] Decharme also claims that Euripides' plays written after the first years of the Peloponnesian War especially, recall the art of oratorical methods from Gorgias and Protagoras.[35] Decharme

[34]John Harrison, *Euripides Hecuba* in Cambridge Translations from Greek Drama, ed. John Harrison and Judith Affleck, U. K., Cambridge University Press, 2008, p. 62
[35]Paul Decharme, op. cit., p. 37

posits that it is in those singular controversies where the poet amuses himself by letting two of his *dramatis personae* maintain the pro and the contra of the same matter, where he develops two arguments contrasting each other.[36] For instance, Decharme quotes an example from Euripides' *Heracles* that exemplifies the discussion between Lycus and Amphitryon about the value of the bow which is not a very long passage but forms part of a more important debate. The second instance is the argument between Theseus and the herald of Creon in the *Suppliants* and according to Decharme, Euripides accords a large space to this antithetical argument on the disadvantages of a democracy and the disadvantages of a tyranny.[37]

In contrast, Grube asserts that Hecabe's appeal to Agamemnon which some scholars such as Harrison refers to as rhetoric, is an exaggeration. Grube argues that though Hecabe philosophizes to some extent, every word of her oratory is dramatically effective in her plea.[38] Again, Mastronarde argues that it is from Aristophanes' *Frogs* that this long history of the use of rhetorical element in Euripides' plays emerged. Euripides, in the *Frogs* argues that he teaches the audience how to twist, contrive, and interpret. He claims he introduces a bit of logic into drama. I agree with Mastronarde that the Platonic critique of the sophists has also influenced many to accept too easily such negative evaluations and to ignore the contestation of values and the hypocrisy of many of those who attack the 'sophistic rhetoric'. According to Mastronarde, skillfully organized

[36]Ibid.
[37]Paul Decharme, op. cit., p. 39
[38]G. M. A. Grube, op. cit., 97

speeches are identified in Homeric Epic far earlier than the emergence of the orators and rhetoricians because such speeches are an essential tool of the Epic genre. As such, I agree with Mastronarde that many of the techniques of rhetoric are native to traditional forms of oral discourse and poetry and not an invention of those who explicitly organize and teach the art in the second half of the fifth century.

In addition, Mastronarde dislodges the conservatives' argument that Euripides' writing is influenced by Gorgias' method of oratory. According to Mastronarde, before Gorgias' famous first visit to Athens in 427 B.C., the rhetorical features for which Euripides is famously associated with had already been developed. For instance, striking argumentation and sophisticated rhetoric are already evident in *Telephus* and *Alcestis* of 438, *Cretans* (probably of similar date), and *Philoctetes* and *Medea* of 431. All that we can say about Gorgias' teachings is that he carries to an extreme level, some tendencies of style that are already in existence, not only in Athens (where Euripides and Thucydides and Antiphon reflect them most prominently) but in other cities as well.

As Mastronarde maintains, I also think that the generalization of all rhetorical speeches in the interpretation of Euripides' plays sometimes lead to what I will consider as wrong evaluations and understanding of the reception of rhetorical speeches in the plays. Because in Mastronarde's argument, he asserts that within Euripides' plays, the condemnation of the dangers of skillfully constructed speeches used in support of immoral or disapproved positions frequently find expression, and an example is seen from the speech of Phaedra's

nurse in Euripides' *Hippolytus (Hipp. 453–61).*[39] Euripides may appear more rhetorical in his plays than his predecessors, but I think that on a whole, Euripides does not deviate from the traditions of his time. Rhetorical speeches are common among the fifth century Athenian audience.

In summary, the general assumption about the interpretation of Euripides' drama is that he is against the popular religious beliefs, moral and ethical values, and conventions of Athenian culture and the tragic art. Euripides is seen by scholars such as Schlegels, Michelini, Decharme, Schmid and Dietrich as a dramatist who gives no relevance to the choral passages in his plays, a lover of rhetoric, a misogynist, an atheist or irreligious, immoral, a sophist and a systematic thinker, who exhibits varying attitudes of nonconformism in his works. He is considered as a nonconformist because his plays generally represent a sharp departure from the existing traditions and customs of the people and the tragic genre. However, Adele, Mastronarde, Foley, Conacher, Kovacs, Grube and Taplin defend Euripides by arguing that he is a man of his age, a realist, a creative dramatist, a conservative, an innovator and a pacifist feminist, who understands the problems and issues of his time. They consider some of these charges against Euripides as irrelevant to the interpretation of Euripides' drama.

The problem I identify in the preceding discourse is that some arguments from both sides of the debate about the interpretations of Euripides' dramas are either incorrect or misconstrued. Therefore, the objective of this study is to examine critically and reassess the debate about interpreting Euripides' works. To do this, I will argue that first of all, the charges of nonconformism against

[39]Donald Mastronarde, op. cit., p. 211-2

Euripides by the conservatives are not entirely accurate since misogyny, for instance, is natural to patriarchal societies. Secondly, I will argue that some of the instances of the exoneration of Euripides by the liberals are also exaggerated and that some of the conservative arguments have merits. I hope that the clarification that I provide in this study will simplify the debate about interpreting Euripides' works.

In order to solve this problem, the following questions will be addressed:

1. What are the aspects of Euripides' writings that give rise to the criticism that he is a nonconformist?
2. What are the interpretations that are favored by scholars who charge Euripides with nonconformism?
3. What are the interpretations of Euripides that are preferred by scholars who argue that the poet is an innovative and creative dramatist?
4. In what ways are the allegations against Euripides justified in Aristophanes' *Frogs*?
5. Which interpretations of Euripides' works would be more representative of his perspective of Greek society?

Against the background and aim to subject Aristophanes' *Frogs*, and two Euripidean plays, *Hippolytus* and *Hecuba* to critical contextual analysis in this study in answering the above-listed questions, in my effort to reassess the nonconformist charges leveled against Euripides by critics. These plays will serve

as the primary texts. Books, journals, and commentaries will be my secondary source in the study. This dissertation is divided into four chapters and a conclusion. Chapter one introduces the study and highlights its motivation and aim. It also highlights the various arguments about the criticisms of Euripides' drama from scholarly literature, journals and books. It clearly outlines some of the various charges of nonconformism against Euripides as well as the debate surrounding the charges from different scholarly views.

Chapter two is a contextual and critical analysis of the charges that Aristophanes put in the mouth of Aeschylus against Euripides in the *Frogs.* It illuminates statements and passages which, in all probability, may have formed the bases of the nonconformist charges against Euripides in this comedy. It also reassesses the charges as presented by Aristophanes and some modern scholars, in attempt to clarify their views of Euripides.

Chapter three conducts a textual and contextual analysis of Euripides' *Hippolytus.* It exposes and evaluates the various interpretations of the popular isolated statements that have been considered as reflective of the nonconformist charges leveled against Euripides by some scholars.

Chapter four analyses the interpretations of Euripides *Hecuba*. It focuses on the passages in the play that have been perceived by some scholars as evidences of the poet's nonconformist attitudes. The study will expose and evaluate the various interpretations of the popular isolated statements that have called for disagreement among scholars.

The conclusion summarizes the various arguments and findings in chapters two, three and four. This study will expose the excesses of the various arguments of the liberals and the conservatives thereby simplifying the debate by making some value judgments as to which set of interpretations ought to be representative of Euripides' attitude toward the Greek society in his works.

1.2 Definitions

The Cambridge Advanced Leaner's Dictionary defines a nonconformist as someone who lives and thinks in a way which is different from other people.[40] On the other hand, the Concise Oxford English Dictionary explains a conformist as a person who agrees to social convention.[41] For the purpose of this study, I will consider a conformist as a person who accepts or adopts customs, religious orthodoxy, moral and political beliefs, without analyzing, discriminating or questioning what is good and bad, whereas a nonconformist is an individual who does not adopt or accept customs, religious orthodoxy, moral and political beliefs, without analyzing or questioning it. Nevertheless, a nonconformist here does not mean a person who expresses a contradicting viewpoint or someone who denounces the majority persuasion, thus a contrarian.

[40]'nonconformist', *Cambridge Advanced Leaner's Dictionary*, Second Edition, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2005
[41]'Conformist', 'nonconformist', *Concise Oxford English Dictionary*, Eleventh Edition, Ed., Catherine Soanes and Angus Stevenson, New York, Oxford University Press, 2004

CHAPTER TWO

ARISTOPHANES' *FROGS*

2.0 Introduction

Euripides is smeared by some ancient and modern commentators and scholars with all kinds of deviant sentiments, particularly, behaviors as reflected in his characters, and Aristophanes appears to be his most bitter critic. It is often said that Aristophanes attacks Euripides mercilessly in the *Frogs*, or even throughout his career; that he condemns Euripides entirely or counts him with Cleon and the sophists amongst his worst enemies. Other scholars, on the other hand, maintain that Aristophanes thought Euripides as a great poet and even felt a curious fascination in his poetry but, insist that from a moral standpoint he condemns Euripides' works uncompromisingly.[42] As for Aristophanes, Euripides is in the cloak of the sophists and rhetoricians or orators, he is a misogynist, an atheist, anti-traditionalist, and an immoralist. Aristophanes gives Euripides a defamatory caricature in some of his comedies, especially, the *Frogs*. Aeschylus accuses Euripides of killing tragedy with his unsavoury topics when the duty of the poet is to teach the audience good moral conduct. He is considered as a nonconformist because his plays generally represent a sharp departure from the existing traditions and customs of the people and the tragic genre.

The purpose of this present chapter is to examine Aristophanes' *Frogs*, illuminating statements and passages which, in all probability, may have formed

[42]R. E. Wycherley, "Aristophanes and Euripides", *Greece & Rome*, Vol. 15, No. 45, (1946), p. 98

the bases of the nonconformist charges against Euripides, and then to reassess the charges as presented by Aristophanes and modern scholars, in an attempt to clarify their views of Euripides. I seek to establish that much of the controversy which has surrounded the interpretations of Euripides' works may have derived from differing interpretations of the *Frogs* in general, and that his critics either misinterpret his portraits or misconstrue this comedy. David Barrett's translation of the *Frogs* is my primary text.

The *Frogs* is among the eleven surviving comedies of Aristophanes that have come down to us. It was produced in 405 B. C at the Lenaia festival, shortly before the disastrous end of the Peloponnesian War and soon after the deaths of both Euripides and Sophocles. The *Frogs* received the first prize and an unprecedented honor of a second production because of its *parabasis*[43] according to Dicaearchus report, although the occasion of that second production is not certain.[44] According to Mark Griffiths, almost every aspect of Greek experience of life, ranging from war, politics, labor, mythology, aesthetics, religion, death and salvation, freedom and slavery, sex and gender, as well as humor of all kinds, come into play in Aristophanes' *Frogs*.[45] The play is divided into two sections. The first part is about Dionysus' desire and journey to go into the underworld and fetch Euripides back to Athens because there are no more good poets left alive to

[43]The direct address from the chorus to the theater audience in Greek comedy

[44]Ian C. Storey and Arlene Allan, *A Guide to Ancient Drama*, U.S.A., Blackwell Publishing, 2005, p. 210; Kenneth Dover, *Aristophanic Comedy*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1972, p. 183; cf. Arthur M. Young, "The *Frogs* of Aristophanes as a type of play", *The Classical Journal*, Vol. 29, No. 1, (1933), pp.19-20; cf. W. Geoffrey Arnott, "A Lesson from the 'Frogs'", *Greece & Rome*, Vol. 38, No. 1 (1991), p. 19-20

[45]Mark Griffith, "Aristophanes' *Frogs*", in *Oxford Approaches to Classical Literature*, Ed., Kathleen Coleman and Richard Rutherford, New York, Oxford University Press, 2013, p. ix

save the city. The other half is about the contest between Aeschylus and Euripides for the throne of poetry that occurred at Hades.

2.1 Synopsis

In a brief synopsis, Dionysus disguises himself as Heracles since he is one of the few men, who have successfully made a return journey from the underworld. Dionysus wears his appropriate and traditional long yellow dress and a youthful mask but, with a lionskin and club as Heracles' disguised with the hope of fortifying himself against all dangers that may come his way. Dionysus is accompanied by his slave, Xanthias, who takes care of the luggage. Dionysus claims that he suddenly felt a passionate longing for Euripides who had recently died when he was reading his *Andromeda* on the ship of Cleisthenes. And since there are no more good poets alive, he is determined to go and fetch Euripides back to Athens to come and save the city. The first half of the *Frogs* contains a dialogue between Dionysus and the real Heracles. We are introduced also to a chorus of Frogs who accompanied Dionysus to cross the lake at the frontier of the underworld, comic incidents on their arrival at Hades, the entry of the chorus of initiates who live close to the palace of Pluto, god of the underworld, and a succession of comic scenes.

The second part begins with a conversation between Xanthias and a slave of Pluto about the disagreement between Aeschylus and Euripides over the throne of poetry in the underworld which has long been occupied by Aeschylus. Their

conversation serves as an introduction to the banter between the two tragic poets. The slave of Pluto narrates to Xanthias that immediately Euripides arrives at Hades, he lays claim to the seat next to Pluto's which belongs as a right to the supreme poet which is presently occupied by Aeschylus. Aeschylus, on hearing Euripides' claim, opposes it which eventually leads to the disagreement between the two poets. Since Dionysus, the god of drama has arrived at Hades at this unfortunate time, Pluto asks the god of drama to adjudicate between the two poets in a contest. The debate between Aeschylus and Euripides which takes place in the underworld ranges from their style of writing, moral values and religious beliefs, to their view of the political status of Athenian society. Pluto rules that if Dionysus decides between the rival claimants to the throne of poetry, he can take back with him whichever of the two he chooses. Although Dionysus' original desire is for Euripides, he ends up choosing Aeschylus. Both Dionysus and Aeschylus are invited to the house of Pluto for a feast before they are escorted by the chorus back to the world.

2.2 Reassessment of Aeschylus' Charges against Euripides in the Contest at Hades

The *Frogs,* according to Zachary P. Biles, responds to the general state of crisis in which the Athenians found themselves. First, the war against Sparta and its allies is going bad for Athens because the city cannot carry out their military objective due to lack of resources. To make matters worse is the literary crisis that

had befallen the city with the deaths of Euripides and Sophocles.[46] Athens is in difficult crisis and it needs a savior. Fortunately, the god of drama, Dionysus, is already having the desire to go and fetch Euripides back to Athens after reading his *Andromeda* on the ship of Cleisthenes. Accompanied by his slave, Xanthias, both embark on a journey to Hades to go and bring Euripides back to Athens. On their arrival at Hades, Xanthias is informed by the slave of Pluto that there is no peace at Hades too. Ever since Euripides arrived, he has been going about saying that he is a better poet than Aeschylus, the occupant of the throne of poetry. Euripides claims he deserves the throne of poetry more than Aeschylus. To settle this misunderstanding among the two poets, Pluto has arranged for a contest for them to come and show their skills and talents before an appointed judge, Dionysus, who has come to fetch a poet back to Athens. Pluto declares that the poet whom Dionysus chooses as the winner of the contest will leave with him to the land of the living.

Euripides and Aeschylus engage in some preliminary 'sparring and fussing'[47] around before the beginning of the proper contest. Dionysus request that they offer a prayer and pour libation as it is always done in the Athenian culture. He prays and pours libation, inviting the Muses to descent after which he asks both poets to offer a word of prayer too. Aeschylus offers his prayer first. He calls on Demeter to come and nourish his brain so that he may prove worthy of the Mysteries, but Euripides indicates that he will pray to other gods, precisely,

[46]Zachary P. Biles, *Aristophanes and the Poetics of Competition*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 20011, p. 211
[47]Mark Griffith, op. cit., p. 72

his private gods. Dionysus asks Euripides to go ahead and pray to his 'lay gods'. Euripides prays:

> Hail, Ether, my grazing ground! Hail, Pivot of my tongue! Hail, Mind! Hail, sentient Nostrils! Inspire me with all the right answers, amen! (881-883).

Now, before Euripides even says his prayer, Dionysus has already considered him as someone who does not believe and accept the traditional gods of the Athenians.

Douglas MacDowell observes that Euripides' prayer to the Sky, Tongue, Intelligence, and Nostril is a joke, mocking Euripides for adhering to irreligious ideas of some sophists and it is as much the same joke as the one made in the *Clouds* about Socrates' religion. But to judge from Euripides' works that are in extant, this charge is no more accurate in Euripides' case than it is in Socrates' in the *Clouds*.[48] I agree with MacDowell that Aristophanes makes mockery of Euripides because some ideas in his plays adhere to irreligious ideas of the sophists and I think that perhaps, Aristophanes is alarmed at the teachings of the new schools about religious issues in the fifth century. Euripides belongs to this age of science and skepticism, religious, and political ferment in the Athenian society. Therefore, it is convenient to represent him as such. Though, Decharme has mentioned Euripides' *Heracles*, *Chrysippus* and *Melanippe the Philosopher* as examples of plays that present Anaxagoras' ideas, I think that it cannot be infer from this comedy that Euripides is an atheist because Aeschylus calls him an enemy of the gods. It is probable that Euripides is influenced by the teachings of

[48]Douglas MacDowell, *Aristophanes and Athens: An Introduction to the Plays*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1995, p. 289; cf. R. E. Wycherley, "Aristophanes and Euripides", *Greece & Rome*, Vol. 15, No. 45, (1946), p. 106

the sophists; yet, I maintain that this charge is generalized and exaggerated since Aristophanes does not give us names of Euripides' plays that have been influenced by the irreligious teachings of the sophists.

Dionysus and the poets take their seat after which he asks Euripides to start the contest. First of all, he attacks the portrayal of Aeschylus' characters in his plays. Euripides asserts in *lines 833-4/836-8 and 910-914* that Aeschylus' characters come on stage mute and remain silent for a long time without a word to the audience, and when they finally speak, they use big words and phrases that are difficult for the audience to understand. Euripides names Niobe and Achilles as examples of Aeschylus' characters that come on stage and sit silently without a word for a period of time. But as for Euripides, the first character to come on stage explains the background and origin of the play right away (*954-955*). He uses simple words and everyday language that everyone among the audience will understand. Yet Dionysus retorts that he enjoys the old silent days of Aeschylus than the talk he gets nowadays: "I must say I rather enjoyed the old silent days. Better than all this talk we get nowadays" (919-920).

For Charles Segal, Aeschylus associates himself with the Mystae therefore the silent entrance of his characters on the stage is akin to the *semnotes* (honour/dignity/majesty) of his tragedies (832ff).[49] Nevertheless, I think that Aristophanes intends to exhibit his nostalgic feeling for the good old Aeschylean days as Dionysus mentioned. Aristophanes seems worried about the proliferation

[49]Charles Segal, "The Character and Cults of Dionysus and the Unity of the *Frogs*" *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, Vol. 65, (1961), p. 218

of new schools, the sophists and the teachings that have emerged in the Athenian society. Euripides continues that when he took over the tragic art from Aeschylus, it was in a bad shape. Tragedy was in a very dreadful state because of Aeschylus' superlative and padded diction: "when I took over Tragedy from you, the poor creature was in a dreadful state. Fatty degeneration of the Art. All swollen up with high-falutin' diction" (945-6). He has to put the fatty art on diet and slip her down with his simple words and expressions before it becomes healthy:

> I soon got her weight down, though: put her on a diet of particles, with a little finely chopped logic (taken peripatetically), and a special decoction of dialectic, cooked up from books and strained to facilitate digestion. Then I put her on to monodies (947-50)

According to Richard C. Jebb, there is a biting truth in this mockery because Euripides replaces the heroic with sensational.[50] As Aeschylus argues, Euripides focuses more on emotions and he ends up creating immoral themes instead of heroic virtues in the society. Griffith, on the other hand, asserts that this 'fat lady' is obviously a metaphor for the grandness and inflation of Aeschylean style and much of Aristophanic humor depends on concretizing and making visible notions that are usually purely conceptual. Griffith claims that having Aeschylus and Euripides on stage as the embodiments of old and new styles of tragedy allows for particularly vivid and grotesque contrasts.[51] It is true that Euripides uses simple and easy expressions in his plays as Jebb establishes. I doubt if Aristophanes is interested in anything more than making fun of the

[50]Richard C. Jebb, op.cit., p. 226
[51]Mark Griffith, op. cit., p. 73

contrasting diction of the two poets as Griffith argues. I think that there is no serious gibe at Euripides as far as this point is concerned.

Aeschylus, on the other hand, accuses Euripides of clustering his stage with cripples and beggars and allowing his heroes to sing and dance as Cretans. Aeschylus states that Euripides portrays heroes, kings, and noble characters in his plays in an inappropriate costume and lower-class manner. But, the characters that he left for Euripides were dignified, brave, and courageous men who did not run away from their responsibilities.

> My heroes weren't like these market-place loafers, swindlers, and rogues they write about nowadays: they were real heroes, breathing spears and lance, white-plumed helmets, breast-plates and greaves; heroes with hearts of good solid ox-leather, seven hides thick (1009-1013).

Aeschylus claims that his heroes are warriors and he shows the superiority of these characters through martial dramas such as his *Seven Against Thebe* and the *Persians*. Here, Dionysus confirms that he enjoys the *Persians* more, especially, the part they sing about the days of the great Darius. Aeschylus continues that his plays outlived him but Euripides' own died with him. He accuses Euripides of destroying tragedy. Contrary to Aeschylus' charges, Euripides argues that he does not portray heroes alone rather, he involves everyone: women and slave, master, young maiden and aged crone in his plays. He has everyone's hand at work and no one stands idle. To Euripides, his drama is democratic in action therefore, he allows everyone to participate.

MacDowell concedes that the implied criticism of Aeschylus seems less convincing because some of his extant plays have slaves and women who play major roles and an example is his *Libation-bearers*. This means that not all his plays exemplify heroes and fighters as he wants us to believe, he portrays slaves and women who play prominent roles as well. On his part, Dover contends that it is understandable that Aristophanes represents Euripides as a symbol of Athenian decline because during the time he lived, Aeschylus had become a symbol of Athenian power, wealth and success. Moreover, the decree that was passed after the death of Aeschylus which authorized the continued production of his plays is very important for Aristophanes' *Frogs* because it means that for the audience, the contest is not between a familiar style and a style known only to the oldest generation or small number of people; but between two styles which were both put to the test in the contemporary theater. This, according to Dover, explains why Aeschylus claims that his tragedies did not die with him in lines 838-901.[52]

By and large, I agree to Jebb's assertion that the wit of Aristophanes often packs a great deal of sound criticism into a few words.[53] There is evidence in Euripides' lost play *Telephus*, and *Electra*, in which he portrays the noble in common cloths and rags, and Aristophanes made fun of Euripides in the *Acharnians* before this play. It is true that Euripides involves everyone in his plays but Aristophanes is right too when he makes Aeschylus accuse him of dressing his heroes in an inappropriate outfit. Jebb concedes that Homer is regarded by the Greeks as their greatest teacher all because his heroes are the

[52]Kenneth Dover, op. cit., p. 22-3
[53]Richard. C. Jebb, op. cit., pp. 225-6

noblest ideals of human life which they possessed. Both Aeschylus and Sophocles preserve this noble and heroic spirit, but Euripides destroys it. And to depose the heroes from their noble elevation above commonplace humanity as Euripides does in some of his plays means destroying an indispensable link between the gods and man in the popular religion which is at the root of the Greek citizen's loyalty to the city.[54] Hence, in this polemic against Euripides, Aristophanes is sometimes just and acute although he generalizes and exaggerates his attacks. Aeschylus may have involved female characters or slaves, yet, it does not mean that what he says about Euripides' noble character's costume is not valid. Perhaps, Aristophanes' intention here is to affirm that Euripides has debased the dignity of the heroes and heroines of the tragic art and he puts these words in the mouth of Aeschylus.

In addition, Euripides posits that he writes about familiar things that the audience knows about; he teaches them how to talk:

> I taught them subtle rules they could apply; how to turn a phrase neatly. I taught them to see, to observe, to interpret; to twist, to contrive; to suspect the worst, take nothing at its face value (956-7).

Euripides maintains that he teaches the people how to use their brains and he introduces a bit of logic into his drama. "The public have learnt from me how to think, how to run their own households, to ask, 'why is this so! What do we mean by that?" (971-973). He introduces rhetorical skills and clever argumentation into Greek tragedy. Euripides indicates that even men like Cleitophon and Theramenes have learned from him. Theramenes is perceived as an unprincipled turncoat who

[54]Richard. C. Jebb, op. cit., p. 232

maneuvers from one administration to another when is at his convenient and interest in Greek politics and Dionysus rejoins similar feelings in lines 967-969. Such is the kind of man Euripides claims is his disciple.

Contrary to his argument, Aeschylus alleges that Euripides has encouraged people to babble and prate in the city and this has led to the emptiness of the wrestling schools. All the youth have joined these 'infamous establishments' where they practice the art of debating. Aeschylus postulates that Euripides has: "shown us pimps and profligates, women giving birth in temples and sleeping with their brothers and saying that life is not life?" (1082-1086). This, according to Aeschylus, is the reason why the city is so full of lawyers' clerks and scrounging mountebanks, swindling the community right and left. Because of Euripides teachings, there are no better athletes and fighters left in the city and now, even sailors argue with their masters and officers. Here too, Dionysus remarks that nowadays, an Athenian comes home and starts asking questions about everything in and around the house, but before Euripides, 'they sat and stared idiotically' (978-979). Things have changed even in the domestic places and Aristophanes shows his worry about the situation through Dionysus.

According to MacDowell, it is true that Euripides' plays contain more rhetorical argument than Aeschylus' and the irony in Euripides' boast is that those who regard Theramenes as a slippery turncoat will not be impressed at all. The chorus shows this in their praises of Aeschylus at the end of the contest for his accurate understanding, good sense, and intelligence and contrasts him with Euripides, whom it associates with idle sophist, verbal quibbling, and pretentious

diction. The chorus claims: "they sit at the feet of Socrates till they can't distinguish the wood from the trees, and tragedy goes to pot…destroying our patience as well as our morals and making us all talk ROT" (1491-1498).

However, Rosen maintains that it is dangerous to assume that the words of a comic chorus necessarily reflect the views of Aristophanes.[55] I disagree with Rosen because there are pieces of evidences in Euripides' plays that show that his plays contain rhetorical skills and cleaver argumentation. In the *Hippolytus*, Phaedra's nurse argues convincingly that Phaedra's love desire for her stepson is not unusual. She applies the method of rhetoric to convince her mistress that adultery is not wrong because even the gods fall in love. She comes across as someone whose motive is to defend the weaker argument and make it stronger. Though Aristophanes' attack on Euripides is sometimes excessively unfair, in this case, he is substantially right when viewed from the Athenians perspective. Euripides, in pursuing new refinements, abandoned the greatest things of the tragic art as Athens had known it.[56] And I agree with Dover that perhaps, Aristophanes believes that the intrusion of intellectual scrutiny and neatly organized arguments into tragedy is inimical to drama.[57] Consequently, the attack on Euripides that he does not adhere to the popular values of the tragic art.

At this point, Aeschylus opens a new phase of the argument; he asks Euripides in lines 1003 that: "what are the qualities that you look for in a good poet?" Euripides responds that the qualities of a good poet are technical skill, teach a lesson, and make people into better citizens. Aeschylus points out that

[55]Ralph M. Rosen, op. cit., p. 262
[56]Richard C. Jebb, op. cit., p. 232
[57]Kenneth Dover, op. cit., p. 186

Euripides has failed to present good and noble men as well as good moral and ethical values since he builds his plots round unsavoury topics like incest and he represents harlots like Phaedra or Stheneboea on his stage. According to Aeschylus, no one can say he ever puts an erotic female into any of his plays. He builds his plots on good moral and instructive values and one can see imprints of Homer in his works. But now, because of the indecent and immoral attitude of Euripides' characters such as Phaedra and Stheneboea: "every decent woman or decent man's wife was shocked by the plays like *Bellerophon* that she went straight off and took poison" (1071-1072). Also, because Euripides dresses his noble characters in rags, it is now difficult to get the wealthier classes to pay their naval-contributions. They also dress up in rags like Euripides' characters and tell the people how poor they are. To Aeschylus, noble themes and noble sentiments must be couched in suitable and dignified language.

Euripides intervenes and he asks Aeschylus if he invents the story of Phaedra and other mythical stories. Aeschylus admits that he does not invent those stories but as a teacher of the people and a good poet, he has a duty to hide and keep silent on things that will distort the serenity and morality of the community. "Schoolboys have a master to teach them, grown-ups have the poets. We have a duty to see that what we teach them is right and proper" (1076-1078). Euripides asks Aeschylus if the proper thing to do is to teach the people only the good things and hide the bad ones. Aeschylus responds that "Orpheus gave us the Mysteries and taught people that it was wrong to kill…and why is Homer himself held in such high esteem, if not for the valuable military instruction embodied in

his work? Organization, training, equipment, it's all there" (1032-1038). This is the kind of thing a poet should portray in his work because from the very earliest times, the really great poet has always been the one who has a useful lesson to teach. This is why he depicts men of valor and lion-hearted like Patroclus and Teucer as well as excellent Athenians such as Lamachus, an Athenian general who is known for his fiery disposition, courage and military skills.

MacDowell argues that Aeschylus, Euripides, and Dionysus agree that poetry ought to improve people's lives and what they look for in a good poet is technical skill, but the instructive purpose of tragedy overshadowed their arguments. On his part, MacDowell asserts that perhaps Aristophanes thought everyone in Athens would agree to it or if not, at any rate, he did not wish the alternative view to be heard. It is not clear, according to MacDowell, whether Euripides' *Stheneboea* encouraged wives who heard or saw it to commit adultery, repent afterwards and kill themselves or that the realization that a woman could behave as Stheneboea made them commit suicide for shame at being women. But whichever way he means, this is just a comic exaggeration.[58] Furthermore, Dover opines that it is very doubtful whether a burning sincerity on Aristophanes' part inspired Aeschylus' claims that Euripides' portrayal of kings in rags encourages avoidance of liturgies or that the deterioration in the character of minor officials and politicians are attributable to sexual improprieties in tragedy. After all, the Phaedra that Aeschylus condemns is presumably the Phaedra of the earlier *Hippolytus* which is lost.[59]

[58]Douglas MacDowell, op. cit., p. 291
[59]Kenneth Dover, op. cit., p. 17-18

As for Dover, the idea that presentation of adultery or a coward in fiction increases the incidence of such characters in real life is widely held in modern times by people whose perception of literary and theatrical technique is undeveloped and by people whose intellect and emotions are strongly engaged by aspects of life to which the arts have no relevance. It is likely that the same belief was held in antiquity by the same categories of people. This is why, according to Dover, Aeschylus' characters such as Clytemnestra is not regarded as inspiring women to murder their husbands, if Euripides' character such as Stheneboea and Phaedra are held to induce respectable women to commit adultery. In Dover's opinion, Aeschylus is made by Aristophanes to boast that he never portrayed a woman in love in his plays because it is easy to treat Clytemnestra as a woman with a man's heart who cannot be imitated, unlike a woman like Stheneboea, who is perceived naturally by the Greeks as feeble in resistance to sexual temptation.[60]

I think that Dover has a point in his analysis that fictitious characters do not necessarily influence real life character but, my reservation is that if this is the case, then why did Aeschylus edge Euripides to hide the bad and immoral things from the people? Is it true as Dover argues that we are not affected by what we see in movie, film or a play? I am not saying that it is always the case that fiction influences and affects our lives and thinking, but I think that we cannot ignore it totally that it does not at all. Aristophanes may have exaggerated some of these issues, but it is very important to apprehend the grounds on which this accusation is based. Dover is right about how modern scholars interpret Aeschylus' Clytemnestra in the *Agamemnon* and Euripides' Stheneboea in *Stheneboea*, but

[60]Kenneth Dover, op. cit., p. 185

the issue here is how the Greeks conceived the two women against their cultural background and tradition. I think that the argument rests on Athenian society and how they perceive women and sex and Aristophanes is not wrong if he makes Aeschylus argue that he never portrays women in love in his plays. It is indeed a comic exaggeration but not untrue.

The chorus intervenes with a musical interlude after which Euripides asks Aeschylus to turn to each other's prologue since Euripides still maintains that Aeschylus' prologue fails to give a clear picture of the situation, whereas, his (Euripides) serves as a background to his play. Euripides chooses Aeschylus' *Libation-bearers* for him to recite the prologue. Euripides checks for inaccuracy of wording and repetition. This part of the agon is purposely for comic relief and it goes back to support Aeschylus' claim that Euripides worries too much about verbal juggling as well as Euripides' claim that Aeschylus uses clumsy and difficult expressions. Both Aeschylus and Euripides assess each other's lyrics. Aeschylus uses his bottle of oil to destroy Euripides' lyrics, and I think that Aristophanes intends to create humour as Dionysus occasionally interjects and makes mockery of the recitations. He ridicules old-fashioned and new-fangled music as well.

Dionysus steps in and puts a stop to the recitation of lyrics; he claims they have had enough of them. Now, Aeschylus proposes that they bring the scale so that Dionysus can judge and settle this contest once and for all based on the weight of each other's verse. Both poets speak their verses into the scale but every time they do, Aeschylus' verse weighs more. MacDowell asserts that the

weighing seems to be entirely absurd and modern scholars have wondered whether it is supposed to mean that Aeschylus' poetry is weightier in a stylistic sense than Euripides'. But the lines with which Aeschylus wins this round of the contest are not stylistically heavy; he only wins because he mentions heavy things such as river, chariots and others. MacDowell avers that although they mention some serious points, the contest seems less substantial to the whole of this comedy.[61] I agree with MacDowell on this and I think that Aristophanes' aim here is to lighten the heat of the argument and create some fun. After all, it is comedy and the very first aim of comic ridicule is to create humor.

Dionysus is indecisive; he claims that it is difficult for him to choose a winner because he likes both poets. It has often been suggested in modern times that the audience can guess Euripides will lose based on the assertion that bad people support him and good people support Aeschylus at the beginning of the contest. On the contrary, MacDowell posits that it is doubtful if the audience at this point of the contest can predict the result because in Aristophanic comedy, the bad sometimes win contests for comic effect and an example can be seen in his *Horsemen* and the first agon of the *Clouds*. MacDowell argues that any expert of Aristophanes' comedies can predict reliably by observing that the second speaker in his contest usually defeats the first speaker and in the case of the *Frogs*, Euripides speaks first.[62] So it makes sense that he loses not because bad people support him. Now, Dionysus proposes two questions for both poets to answer so that he can come up with his verdict. First, he asks: "what should be done about

[61] Douglas MacDowell, op. cit., p. 292
[62] ibid

Alcibiades? Athens is in a very tricky situation, you know" (1428-9). This question is very political and some modern scholars have argued that the *Frogs* is a political play based on Dionysus' questions and the parabasis in the first section of the play. As usual, Euripides answers first.

He asks Dionysus what the Athenians think about Alcibiades and the answer is "they love him. But then again they hate him. And then again, they want him back" (1431-1432). Euripides then concedes that: "Quickness and brains are what we seek, I know: he's quick-to harm, but when we need him, slow; brilliant enough to plan his own escape, but useless when the City's in a scrape" (1434-1437). Aeschylus also advises that: "it is not very vice for city states to rear a lion's whelp within their gates: but should they do so, they will find it pays to learn to tolerate its little ways" (1440-1443). MacDowell contends that Euripides clearly rejects Alcibiades because he is selfish and unpatriotic but Aeschylus advises the Athenians to accept Alcibiades even if they do not like his lifestyle. Basically, there is nothing comic in either the question or the answers because this question is a serious one of the utmost urgency, and each of the answers given by the poets expresses a view that was undoubtedly or fervently held by many Athenians. Yet, what is important to note, according to MacDowell, is that these answers are Aristophanes' not really Euripides' and Aeschylus'.[63]

Dionysus asks his second question which seems more of a general question: "…I want each of you to tell me how you think the City can be saved" (1447). Euripides maintains: "believe the unsafe safe, the safe unsure, mistrust what now you trust, and fear no more" (1450-1); while Aeschylus advices that:

[63]Douglas MacDowell, op. cit., p. 294

"treat enemy soil as yours, your own let go: your ships are wealth, all other wealth is woe" (1463-4). Both MacDowell and Griffith assert that there is some kind of confusion with the answers the poets give in our manuscript tradition. MacDowell claims that the manuscript contains three distinct answers to the question and also one refusal to answer, but they do not seem to proceed in a logical or sensible sequence and at some point, we run into the challenge of uncertainty as to which character speaks which lines. Yet, MacDowell establishes that the first answer which is generally attributed to Euripides is hardly a joke and it recommends a change of political leadership. He claims that the message here is similar to the last part of the parabasis but more briefly. The second that is also attributed generally to Aeschylus is a serious strategic advice and in part, it is a revival of Pericles' policy at the beginning of the Peloponnesian War.[64]

From this interpretation, MacDowell postulates that, the problem which gets attention in the answers of the poets is the choice of political or military leaders.[65] Dionysus avers that the city uses bad leaders and not noble ones because 'she has no choice'. This is in connection with the advice of the chorus in the parabasis. He urges the Athenian to go back and recall its noble and traditionally educated men whom they have discarded. MacDowell argues that though Aristophanes does not mention Alcibiades in his advice to the city, he maintains that it is impossible to avoid the conclusion that the comic poet is urging the Athenians to recall Alcibiades. And this is the exact advice he puts in the mouth of Aeschylus. Dionysus chooses Aeschylus as the winner of the contest

[64]Mark Griffiths, op. cit., p. 78
[65]Douglas MacDowell, op. cit., p. 296

and as for MacDowell, "Aristophanes, through Dionysus, declares his own preference for Aeschylus and leaves us to consider for ourselves whether we share his preference".[66] Aside the problems with the answers in the manuscripts that have survived, both Aeschylus' and Euripides' answer to Dionysus' questions have political implications since it is said that some changes happened years after the production of the *Frogs*.

2.3 Conclusion

To conclude, Aristophanes' *Frogs* informs us of the critical moment in which the Athenians find themselves before and during the time of its production. This comedy partly comes across as a kind of literary criticism of both Aeschylus' and Euripides' style, but mostly on the negative influence of the moral effects of Euripides' plays. Some of the attacks and accusation against Euripides are justly argued and others are excessively unfair to him. Foivos Karachalios argues that Euripides is consistently depicted as a disruptive force in the life of the community in both cultural and political terms, so that his eventual rejection signifies concern for communal cohesion in a time of crisis. This means that Euripides' *epirrhema* constitutes a rhetorical display (*epideixis*), whereas Aeschylus involves a question- and-answer approach with elements that resemble the Socratic elenchus.[67] Although the comparison between Aeschylus and Euripides is mostly to the disadvantage of Euripides and at the same time literal

[66]Douglas MacDowell, op. cit., p. 297
[67]Foivos Karachalios, "The Epirrhematic agon and the Politics of Aristophanes' *Frogs"* Stanford University, Version 1.0

and moral; the moral part seems to be of great consequence to Aristophanes in the *Frogs.*

Loeb avers that for a very long time, Aristophanes had shown himself an emphatic opponent of Euripides. He makes fun of him in his *Acharnians*, in his *Clouds*, the *Peace*, and the *Thesmophoriasuzae*, aside the lost plays that we do not know of.[68] But in all the above plays, Aristophanes barely refers to Euripides' moral influence; much of the ridicule is about his dramatic effects and his art. The case of the *Frogs* is different, so far as moral influence is concerned; the comparison is in favor of Aeschylus. It is true that Aristophanes mocks Euripides' moral values because there are signs of immoral attitudinal display in his works. However I still maintain that considering the whole issues in the *Frogs*, Aristophanes uses Aeschylus as the mouthpiece to lambast the deteriorating state of Athenian cultural values, religious and political situation, especially his hatred for the demagogue. Most of the immoral attitudinal attacks one way or the other has something to do with the political leaders of the time in Athens.

Both Aeschylus and Euripides are the perfect representation of the generation gap between the age of the Athenian empire and the age of science and scepticism, political and intellectual ferment. This is why I think that we cannot consider this comedy as substantive literary criticisms against Euripides and his works. If indeed, it is true that Euripides did all the things that Aristophanes accuses him of in the *Frogs*, it is surprising how he survived the theater the whole time. It is impossible for the state to grant Euripides a chorus to produce plays that

[68]Maurice Croiset, *Aristophanes and the Political Parties at Athens*, (Trans.) James Loeb, A.B., London, Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1909, p. 151

will disrupt and corrupt the serenity of the city. Hence, I argue that Euripides is only used by Aristophanes as a tool to send a message to the fifth century Athenians since he lived in this time and Aeschylus is used as the mouthpiece to present Aristophanes' frustration and nostalgic feeling for the good old days. I agree with Dover that just as one careless phrase can wreck the career of a politician, so one disturbing or horrifying moment in a play or a novel or film is always remembered and remains available for exploitation by hostile critics when the rest of the work is forgotten.[69]

[69]Kenneth Dover, op. cit., p.18

CHAPTER THREE

EURIPIDES' *HIPPOLYTUS*

3.0 Introduction

Some ancient and modern scholars have cited passages and statements from Euripides' drama to support the charges that he presents immoral, indecent and excessive passion in his female characters, cruel and evil gods, misogynistic tirades, philosophical, and sophistic passages, among others on his stage. Among such plays is the *Hippolytus* which is often portrayed as an offspring of jealousy and disappointment because Euripides wrote it to gratify his hatred for women on discovering his wife's infidelity.[70] But, according to A. E. Haigh, the purpose of this play is to exemplify the disastrous results of intellectual pride and contempt for ordinary convictions of mankind.[71]

My focus in this chapter is to re-examine and analyze critically passages in the *Hippolytus* that have been interpreted as reflections of an attitude of nonconformism in Euripides. This play will be contextually and textually analyzed in order to show and evaluate the passages that have called for diverse views and disagreements among scholars. All my quotations are taken from James Morwood's translation.

The *Hippolytus* is considered as one of Euripides' greatest and most penetrating plays that have survived. It won the first prize and it has become one

[70]A. E. Haigh, *The Tragic Drama of the Greeks*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1896, p.210
[71]A. E. Haigh, op. cit., p. 266

of the most studied plays among his works. According to scholars like Ruth Scodel, Edith Hall, Ian C. Storey and Arlene Allan, W. S. Barrett, and Justina Gregory, Euripides produced two plays of the same title *Hippolytus*; but it is the revised version of the first, that has come down to modern times.[72] The survived play which some scholars refer to as *Hippolytus-with-a-Garland*[73] was performed in the early stage of the Peloponnesian War around 428 B.C at the Dionysian festival. Kovacs asserts that whenever any critical essay on the *Hippolytus* is opened, it is almost certain to find one or two points of view. Either Hippolytus is intolerant puritan, smugly convinced of his own superior virtue and therefore deserves his fate, or Phaedra as vacillating, superficial and betrayed by the love of appearance into criminal revenge; hence, few admiring words can be spared for Hippolytus' devotion and untutored noble savagery.[74]

3.1 Synopsis

In a brief synopsis, Aphrodite, goddess of love and sexuality, proclaims at the beginning of the play that she is determined to take revenge on Hippolytus for dishonoring and ignoring her worship. Aphrodite narrates to the audience how she intends to carry out her revenge. She informs the audience how she designs to instill love desires in Phaedra, for her stepson, Hippolytus which will lead to his

[72]Ruth Scodel, *An Introduction to Greek Tragedy*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2011, p. 133; Edith Hall, *Greek Tragedy: Suffering Under the Sun*, New York, Oxford university press, 2010, p. 248; Ian C. Storey and Arlene Allan, *A Guide to Ancient Drama*, U.S.A., Blackwell Publishing, 2005, p. 261; W. S. Barrett, *Euripides Hippolytos*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2001, pp. 11-13; ; Justina Gregory, *Euripides and the Instruction of the Athenians*, U.S.A., University of Michigan Press, 1997, p.51.
[73]Ruth Scodel, op. cit., p. 133
[74]David Kovacs, *The Heroic Muse: Studies in the Hippolytus and Hecuba of Euripides*, London, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987, p. 23

death. Phaedra is brought on stage after the exit of Aphrodite, sick and weak. The queen is starving herself to death as her nurse reveals. The old nurse is worried about the situation so, she manages to extort what is troubling her mistress. Phaedra is in love with Hippolytus, her stepson, but she is vehemently struggling to resist her love desires for her husband's son.

In desperation to help the queen, the nurse imparts Phaedra's love desire for Hippolytus without Phaedra's consent. Not only does Hippolytus denounce Phaedra's malicious desire, he also pronounces insults on the whole of womanhood. Hippolytus threatens to inform his father, Phaedra's husband, when he returns from exile. With fear and anger that Hippolytus will eventually tell his father about this abominable desire, Phaedra commits suicide but leaves a note in her hand accusing Hippolytus of rape. When Theseus returns home to meet the wife's corpse and discovers the note in her hand, he believes what is written in it. Theseus furiously calls on one of the three wishes that Poseidon, his divine father, gave him instantly on his son.

Later, Theseus amends his judgment on Hippolytus to exile after further arguments between father and son. After this, Hippolytus embarks on his journey of exile, but around the shores, a monstrous bull appears from the sea as a result of Theseus' curse to scare Hippolytus' horses. Terrified by the sight of this unnatural creature from the sea, the horses run off in fear. Hippolytus loses balance and control of the horses and his body is dragged along the shore on the rocks as the horses run away. He is brutally wounded to the point of dying as the servant reports to the king in the palace. The virgin goddess, Artemis, appears and

reveals the whole truth about the accusation of Phaedra against Hippolytus to Theseus before the servants bring Hippolytus back to the palace at the king's request. Theseus and Hippolytus reconcile their differences and ask for forgiveness from each other before Hippolytus passes on. But before he dies, Artemis promises to avenge Hippolytus' death. Artemis also orders for an establishment of a new cult in honor of Hippolytus.

3.2 Reassessment of Passages in the *Hippolytus* that are Reflective of Euripides' Nonconformism Charges

The goddess of love and sexuality, Aphrodite, pronounces that among all men, Hippolytus, the son of Theseus and the queen of Amazon, has refused to honour and worship her:

> Alone of all the citizens of this land of Trozen, Hippolytus, the son of Theseus, the child of the Amazon and pupil of revered Pittheus, says that I am the vilest of the gods. He spurns sex and keeps clear of marriage…But for his offences against me I shall in the course of this day take revenge on Hippolytus (9-13; 21-22).

Hippolytus' reason for ignoring and showing disdain towards Aphrodite's worship is that he is *sōphrōn* (chaste/modest) and because Aphrodite is base among all the deities, he does not reverend such a goddess. It is for this same reason, according to Aphrodite, that she is determined to take vengeance on Hippolytus. Scholars such as A.W. Schlegel, F. Schlegel and Schmid have argued that Euripides intentionally represents Aphrodite as wicked and evil in order to denigrate the popular belief in her worship since, he does not believe in the

traditional gods and goddesses of the Athenian religion. R. B. Appleton, on the other hand, contends that it is rather because Euripides attempts to raise religion to a higher plane than that on which his contemporary Athenians viewed it, that is why he receives the charges of an atheist and attacker of the national religion.[75]

But, Kovacs and Barrett disagree with the above interpretation. Both argue that Euripides' portrayal of Aphrodite in this play is not different from the representation of the gods and goddesses in the works of Homer, Aeschylus or Sophocles. Kovacs indicates that "gods of this kind far from being an embarrassing relic of antiquate thinking which any man of sensitivity must inevitably reject; they are the indispensable center to a view of the world that however alien it may seem to twentieth-century scholars is morally and aesthetically satisfying".[76] Barrett is also of the view that Euripides' representation of Aphrodite is very significant and inevitable. The audience needs to understand the early scenes before Phaedra finally reveals whatever she is concealing. And because the Greek gods know and see everything, the goddess Aphrodite who causes the secret love desire of Phaedra for Hippolytus is the best choice to represent.[77]

Considering these diverse interpretations, I think that Euripides portrayal of Aphrodite is neither adventive to the Athenian religion nor unfamiliar with Homer, Aeschylus or Sophocles. In Aeschylus' *Libation Bearers*, for instance, Apollo instigates Orestes to kill his mother for murdering his father. Athena tricks

[75]R. B. Appleton, *Euripides the Idealist*, London and Toronto, J. M. Dent and Sons Ltd., 1927, p. 37
[76] Kovacs, op. cit. p. 72
[77] W. S. Barrett, op.cit., p. 154

Ajax into believing that the sheep and cattle he slaughtered the previous night were the Greek leaders and Odysseus, his rival in Sophocles' *Ajax*. If Euripides' Aphrodite instills love desire in Phaedra to accomplish her vengeance on Hippolytus because he scorns her worship, Athena tricks Ajax to believe that he killed his rivals, and Apollo instigates Orestes to avenge the murder of his father; is the portrayal of Aphrodite in the *Hippolytus* different from Apollo in the *Libation Bearers* or Athena in Sophocles' *Ajax* or the anthropomorphic deities of Athenian religion? At the end of the day, the dramatists manipulate words artistically to achieve their intended educational and entertaining motives. Instead, I think that Euripides aims at strengthening the religious belief in the worship and honour of all the deities without exceptions.

To emphasize the point that Euripides' portrayal of Aphrodite in the above passage is to strengthen the religious belief in worshiping all the deities in Greek religion without exception; Hippolytus comes on stage carrying a garland of flowers he has made for Artemis. Beside the altar of Artemis where he presents his gift to her is the altar of Aphrodite. Hippolytus ignores and refuses to recognize the goddess of love and sexuality. He argues that since he is pure, he greets Aphrodite from a distance (102) when one of the servants cautions him to honour all the gods. Although Hippolytus agrees that the proud and anti-social attitude should not be tolerated because: "proud men give annoyance to their fellows" (94), he asserts that "no god who uses the night to work her wonders finds favour with me" (104). Hippolytus sees himself pure and virtuous than Aphrodite and he professes this in his defense in *lines 995-6*. This extreme self-

confidence and overbearing pride of chastity that Hippolytus exhibits is considered as *ὕβρις* (hubris –excessive pride) in Greek religion and is punishable by the gods. Like Walter Burkert indicates, piety in the ordinary Greek religious person's mind consists in the performance of the traditional rites and giving the gods what they deserve.[78] Hippolytus refuses to honour and give Aphrodite what she deserves; hence, her determination to seek vengeance. And I think Euripides' portrayal of Aphrodite has nothing to do with disbelief or doubt of Aphrodite or any other deity, instead; he informs the audience the power of the goddess as well as the consequence of Hippolytus' action.

In spite of this, Kovacs contends that the cautious words of the servant to Hippolytus have another pattern in which he rejects prudential advice from a sensible underling. Kovacs argues that because Hippolytus is a hero and cares for some things more than prudence, the underling's objections serve to throw into relief Hippolytus' choice and in some measure to show its rightness. Hence, Euripides intends to show that Hippolytus' choice is both conscious and right. Kovacs claims that Euripides is suggesting Hippolytus' closeness to divinity and the gulf that separated him from ordinary mortal.[79] But, I disagree with this interpretation of Kovacs because, worshipping all the divinities in Greek religion guarantee an integration of the individual into the larger community. And neglecting one god/goddess is considered as neglecting one area of human experience. Hippolytus refuses to acknowledge Aphrodite and I think that it will

[78]Walter Burkert, *Greek Religion* trans. John Raffan, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1985, p. 276
[79]David Kovacs, op. cit., p. 36

be incorrect to accept Kovacs' view that Euripides tends to show that the hero's choice is conscious and right.

Moreover, it is absurd to assume that Euripides portrays Hippolytus as some kind of divine being, pure and virtuous than the goddess Aphrodite. If this is the case, Euripides would not have cautioned Hippolytus through the old servant in lines 91$_{ff}$of the danger one incurs by honoring one god and living the other in Greek religion. Kovacs, in addition, argues that instead of the servant emphasizing the difference between men and the gods which will signify the worthiness of their worship, he rather points out similarities between them. But I contend that these similarities are important because, it goes back to highlight what Aphrodite said about the characteristics of gods and mortals. Aphrodite mentioned explicitly that her determination to punish Hippolytus lies in his attitude of dishonoring her worship when even men take pleasure in receiving honor: "For this is a characteristic of the gods as well as mortals—they take pleasure in receiving honour from men." (6-7). Hence, I cannot see any form of absurdity in the servant's argument as Kovacs contends. Neglecting a proud goddess like Aphrodite because of Hippolytus' heroism or belief in chastity is contrary to the religious beliefs of the Greeks.

In his prayer to Artemis, Hippolytus expresses pride in his chastity and self-control by comparing it to the virgin field where no one can trespass or has ever trespassed. He also prides himself as the only man among mortals, who qualifies to pick flowers from the sacred garden reserved for Artemis.

> My mistress Artemis, I bring you this woven garland which I have made for you from the virgin meadow where no shepherd thinks it right to graze his flock, where no scythe has ever come, but in the spring the bee flies through its virgin greenery… (71-86).

Douglas Laidlaw Cairns posits that the symbolic representation of the meadow characterizes Hippolytus as chaste and pure and it is with these qualities that the personified *aidos* (reverence/ respect) and the innate *sôphrosunê* (self-control/chaste) in his above prayer belong. Cairns asserts that Hippolytus regards *aidos* and *sôphrosunê* as particularly his own and he subsumes them under his worship of Artemis.[80]

However, Kovacs argues that modern scholars talk about Hippolytus' opinion of his privilege and favored position with Artemis as if it is a mere conceit or as if he is an ordinary worshipper of the goddess who came to enjoy extraordinary favour from her because of his extraordinary devotion to her worship. Kovacs continues that what Hippolytus says about his exclusive relation with Artemis in *lines 82-3* is confirmed by Aphrodite in *lines 9-13*. To find irony in this, according to Kovacs, means to ignore the difference between the Greeks and ourselves in terms of speaking of self-praise because, speaking of one's merits involving self-praise is significant in Athenian culture; especially, by heroes and warriors.[81] Hence, if Hippolytus speaks about his privilege as the only mortal who can keep company with Artemis; there is nothing ironic in respect of Greek culture. Kovacs avers that the world that Hippolytus inhibits is the direct

[80]Douglas L. Cairns, *Aidos: The Psychology and Ethics of Honour and Shame in Ancient Greek Literature*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 2002, p. 314; cf. Conacher, op. cit., p. 33; Gregory, op. cit., p. 73

[81]Kovacs, op. cit., p. 35

opposite of the world of Aphrodite. He described Hippolytus' seclusion metaphorically using the reserved meadow where no human being or shepherd grazes his flock. This separation from all things "under the sun" according to Kovacs, links Hippolytus closely to the divine.[82]

But, I think that the issue here is not about Hippolytus' self-praises, rather, it is about the confirmation of what Aphrodite said before about Hippolytus' scornful attitude towards her worship. The quotation Kovacs cites above affirms Aphrodite's determination to take revenge on Hippolytus and also how fulfilling his own utterances justify the goddesses' revenge. Hence, I agree with Barrett that Hippolytus' prayer to Artemis gives us the first hint of his intolerance and contemptuous rejection of Aphrodite.[83] Again, I think that Hippolytus is rather placing himself too high above mortals because it is this segregation from sex, marriage and other erotic desires that makes him scorn and dishonor Aphrodite. Yet, Hippolytus often calls upon the sun and earth to be his witness, so how can he live outside this universe and still call upon the gods of the universe? I agree with Barrett's opinion that for Hippolytus, chastity or self control is exaggerated in the sphere of sex into abnegation. His requirement of extreme moral purity is alien to the ordinary Greek cult and that his insistence that purity must be innate would be extraordinary even then. Though the Athenian audience will feel the beauty and ideals of Hippolytus' strange and exclusive Puritanism of his own; they will at the same time feel their narrowness, and will find it excessive and

[82]David Kovacs, op. cit., p. 36
[83]W. S. Barrett, op.cit., p. 180

unnatural.[84] Hippolytus lives under the sun where Aphrodite rules; therefore his exaggerated virtue is perceived as senseless in my opinion and this reaffirms Euripides' concern for showing the consequence of dishonoring Aphrodite.

Concerning the charge that Euripides is a philosopher and sophist on stage, Conacher discusses a few topical sophistic terms that Euripides adapts into dramatic themes in the *Hippolytus*. Conacher posits that the ethical sophistic terms *aidôs* (shame/respect/reverence) and *sôphrosunê* (self-control/modesty) or their cognates frequently used in this play are mainly for dramatic significance. He discusses what Socrates says about the question of the teachability of virtue; whether it is acquired by nature or some other means in Plato's *Protagoras* and *Meno.* In the *Protagoras,* Conacher asserts that after Socrates subsumes all the virtues (temperance, courage, justice and piety) as 'knowledge', he reaches the conclusion that 'virtue viewed from the fact that it is knowledge is teachable. And in the *Meno,* no conclusive answer is given to this question.[85] In Hippolytus' prayer, he claims that:

> …those for whom virtue in all things has not had its everlasting place assigned by teaching but by nature can pick the flowers there—but it is not proper for base men to do so (75-80)

He asserts that men who can enter the sacred garden of the deities are men who are born with virtue but not men who acquired it through learning. Yet, Conacher barely comments on how virtue is acquired in Hippolytus' prayer cited above.

[84]W. S. Barrett, op. cit., pp. 172-3
[85]Desmond Conacher, op. cit., p. 27

Barrett, on the other hand, argues that Euripides is not concerned to pass any allusive judgment on any particular beliefs of his own days. According to Barrett, the belief in *φύσις* (nature) as the sole of *ἀρετή* (virtue/excellence) is a commonplace of old aristocratic thought and although men like Socrates are now maintaining that virtue could be taught, Euripides is not concerned to exemplify any view concerning this. His theme is not contemporary, but timeless and his purpose is simply to delineate in its beauty and inadequacy alike the puritan austerity of which Hippolytus is the type. And this inadequacy which lies in Hippolytus' divorce from common life with its consequent danger of a self-centered arrogance and contempt for ordinary fallible mankind, is no piece of contemporary polemic, but a dramatist's characterization of a type that belong to every age.[86]

For me, I think that if Euripides is concerned of depicting the inadequacies of Hippolytus' puritan austerity which lies in his divorce from common life with its consequent danger of a self-centered arrogance and contempt for ordinary fallible mankind, then, the poet is of the view that inherent virtue is not sufficient. Euripides seems to be advocating Socrates' view that virtue could be taught because in *lines 1034-5*, Hippolytus avers that he has innate virtue, yet, he did not use it but Phaedra, who is not virtuous, acted virtuously. Euripides argues against the reclusive and solitude life of Hippolytus. This means that having innate virtue is not enough for one to be called virtuous and Euripides expresses this through Hippolytus' attitude and utterances. Perhaps, this is why Conacher kept silent on this issue after discussing what Socrates said about it in the *Protagoras* and *Meno*.

[86]W. S. Barrett, op. cit., p. 173

Though, Wilhelm Nestle, Decharme and the Schlegel brother may have exaggerated the point that Euripides portrays Socrates' ideas on stage, it does not means that if Euripides lived before the age of Socrates, he would have had these same ideas. Hence, his age and perhaps encounter with Socrates influence some of his views and thoughts and the way he sees nature and the universe. As W. S. Hadley indicates, Euripides "was a philosopher: not in the sense of the teacher of a system, but as being in sympathy with all that tended to knowledge and a friend of the 'new learning'.[87] It seems that the efforts of Conacher, Barrett and others who have tried to exonerate Euripides completely from the charge that he presents popular philosophic topics and views on his stage have more or less failed to do so.

Aphrodite has successfully cast a love spell on Phaedra for her stepson, Hippolytus. In *lines 239- 249*, Phaedra proclaims that she feels ashamed of her sudden desires to partake in the activities that Hippolytus does such as riding horses or hunting in the woods for beasts. Phaedra asks the nurse to hide her face from the public because of what people will say about her. According to Cairns, the sense of shame' (*aidos)* at one's own conduct and shyness of being seen by others in Phaedra's case is more prominent here than any thought of pollution.[88] Phaedra is more concern with what people will say and her statement in *lines 405-6* that men will take advantage of her situation and hate her because she is a woman, an object of loathing confirms this. It is this same fear of shame and what

[87]W. S. Hadley, *Euripides Hippolytus*, Britain, Cambridge University Press, 1949, p. x
[88]Douglas Laidlaw Cairns, *The Concept of Aidos in Greek Literature from Homer to 404 B.C.*, Faculty of Arts, April 1987, p. 306

people will say which Adkins refers to as *δήμος φατις* in Greek culture[89] that makes Phaedra wish to die with her secret concealed. Because, for men and women of noble birth, it is not what has been done that matters, but what people say has been done.[90] Euripides exemplifies this shame culture and the fear of public criticisms beautifully in Phaedra's attitude.

In the following scene, Euripides demonstrates the value of the act of supplication in Greek culture. The nurse supplicates to Phaedra; she kneels before her, clasps her hand and touches her right hand. Because she places herself under the protection of Zeus as the Greeks believe, Phaedra reveals that she is in love with Hippolytus out of her sense of respect for religious convention. An example of the act of supplication is identified in book I of Homer's *Iliad*. Thetis, the mother of Achilles, supplicates to Zeus to grant her the wish of honoring Achilles when Agamemnon, the king arrogantly seized his rightful prize from him. Hence, I do not support the accusation that Euripides' intention is to disrespects religious conventions in Athenian culture. After revealing that she desires her stepson, Phaedra delivers a speech to the women of Trozen.

> Women of Trozen …even before now I have at times pondered in the long hours of the night to no avail upon the wreck of our mortal lives. If the appropriate moment for each were clearly different, these two concepts would not be spelt with the same letters… (Lines 373-432)

This speech has been described as one of Euripides' unusual passages that provide several interpretative difficulties and ambiguities. Kovacs concedes that this

[89]A. W. Adkins, *Moral Values and Political Behavior in Ancient Greece- From Homer to the end of the Fifth Century*, London, Chatto and Windus, 1972, p. 48
[90]A. W. Adkins, op. cit., p. 48

speech has badly been misunderstood because some segments have been treated in isolation due to the bearing it is thought to have on the history of philosophy. He argues that the unity of the speech has been obscured and its part interpreted with insufficient regard for the information purpose of the whole. According to Kovacs, the whole speech is about why Phaedra has reached the conclusion to end her life. Nothing in this speech shows that she has any other motive in spite of her forced confession. Nor does the speech contain any word of self-excuse or self-accusation, it is Phaedra's defense or apology of her death (*apologia pro morte sua)* that she presents to the Chorus and nothing more than that.[91]

Barrett is also of the view that although it is a characteristic of Euripides to make his characters express themselves in the language of philosophical discussion; it is important to stress that the disquisition in the above passage is by Phaedra and not by Euripides. To Barrett, we have no business to assume without more ado that Euripides subscribes to the views Phaedra or any of his characters express, neither should we conceive that when he makes his characters moralize; he is using them as a mouthpiece to express his own beliefs. Euripides is not concerned (as has often been maintained by some scholars) to polemize against the Socratic view that all wrongdoing stems from ignorance of the good. Barrett asserts that in no instance does he see any reason to scent philosophical polemic in Phaedra's speech above.[92]

In addition, Conacher argues that Phaedra's discussion of the relation (or lack of it) between judgment, or understanding and good conduct reminds us of

[91]David Kovacs, op. cit., p. 46
[92]W. S. Barrett, op. cit., pp. 227-230

the contrasting Socratic doctrine equating virtue and knowledge; particularly, Socrates' discussions of the issue of the teachability of virtue in the *Protagoras* ($352B_{ff}$). To Conacher, the fact that one of Phaedra's explanations of wrong-doing despite understanding is through the distractions of pleasure coincides with the rejection of this very explanation in the view attributed to Socrates, should not be regard as arguing against the Socratic view or as expressing Euripides' own contribution to the debate on these matters. All there is to this connection is that Euripides is exploiting for his own dramatic purposes an ethical theme of intense contemporary interest.[93]

However, when Phaedra's argument above is critically observed, she seems to be arguing against Socrates' dictum: 'Nobody errs willingly or knowingly'. Socrates claims that if anybody errs, it must be out of ignorance of what is good. He dismisses the part play by emotions in determining human behavior.[94] But Phaedra dispute Socrates' claim that knowledge is capable of ruling a man and if he can distinguish between good and evil, nothing will force him to act otherwise than knowledge dictates since wisdom is all the reinforcement he needs. For Phaedra, many people have this knowledge, yet, they are overcome by pleasure or pain or something else. Whether Euripides had Socrates in mind when he wrote this plays is unknown, but I share E. R. Dodds view that a conscious rejection of this Socratic theory has been identified in the speech above.[95] Although Dodds postulates that he does not maintain that a

[93]Desmond Conacher, op. cit., pp. 35-36
[94]Eric R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973, p. 185
[95]E. R. Dodds, op. cit., p. 186

consistent philosophy of life can be extracted from such Euripidean plays, certain characters in Euripides' plays provide human weakness with a fashionable excuse by declaring that passions are natural and therefore right.

Furthermore, the use of the second *aidos* which brings trouble to the house in Phaedra's passage above looks as if it has a controversial point because, it goes beyond what the dramatic situation requires or even suggests according to Dodds. And to judge from his extant plays, what chiefly preoccupies Euripides in his later works such as the *Medea* or the *Hippolytus* is not so much the importance of reason in man as the wider doubt whether any rational purpose could be seen in the ordering of human life and the governance of the world. Euripides reflects not only the Enlightenment, but also the reaction against the Enlightenment and at any rate; he reacted against the rationalist psychology of some of its exponents and the slick immoralism of others.[96] I think that Conacher's effort in trying to dislodge the charge that Euripides is neither a sophist nor a philosopher is invalid.

Phaedra continues her address to the women of Trozen by illuminating the three ways she has dealt with her desire for Hippolytus. The first is silence because she does not trust the tongue; the second is self-control and the last is death since, she stands exposed to the hatred of men in a patriarchal society like Athens should they find out about her desire for Hippolytus. They will never pass up an opportunity to speak ill of her.[97] Phaedra condemns and curses the woman who first committed adultery and asserts that she does not wish to be classified among such women.

[96]E. R. Dodds, op. cit., pp. 187-8
[97]David Kovacs, op. cit., p. 48

> May the most baleful of deaths fall on that woman who first set about shaming her marriage bed with men who were not her husband! I hate those women who lay claim to virtue but in secret dare to commit shameful deeds… It is this very thing that which is driving me to death, my friends—never may I be found guilty of bringing disgrace upon mu husband or the children I have borne. May I never be seen in their number (333- 426).

Phaedra's speech has been counted among the misogynistic tirades in Euripides plays. Some scholars such as Schmid and the Schlegel brothers perceive this speech as reflective of Euripides' hatred for women. But according to Kovacs, misogyny in itself is not evidence in antiquity for imbalance but, an attitude that though not universal, is widely shared. Kovacs gives examples in Euripides' other works such as the *Hecuba* (*Hec*. 254ff.) and *Andromache* (*Andr*. 445ff.) to support his claim that such generalizations are normal and conventional means of expression in Euripides' works and not intended as a form of characterization. According to Kovacs, "the purpose of this speech is to make dramatic to the audience not the warped self-righteousness of Hippolytus' character but the extreme gravity of Phaedra's situation…"[98]

I agree with Kovacs that such insults are commonly expressed in Euripides' works but, I disagree with scholars who maintain that Euripides is bitter because his wife committed adultery and that such utterances from Phaedra are all about his experiences in failed marriages. I think that perhaps, Euripides is a misogynist like other Athenian men as Kovacs maintains that such attitude is normal and conventional in Athenian culture. Phaedra asserts that men will not

[98]David Kovacs, op. cit., p.58

hesitate to criticize and hate her if her secret desire for Hippolytus is reveled. If Kovac argued that misogyny in itself is not evidence in antiquity for imbalance, then living in a patriarchal society like Athens does not make Euripides a woman-hater but rather a true Athenian male since he conforms to the accepted norm.

Despite the above interpretation, I think that Phaedra's speech above also exhibit the devastating effect of adultery on both the children involve and the entire family. Phaedra expresses the consequences that committing adultery will have on her children and family: "for even if a man has courage in his heart, he becomes a slave when he is aware of rottenness in his mother or father" (424-6). Her children will be denied freedom and her reputation will affect their life and growth. Phaedra curses the first woman who committed adultery and destroyed her home and she wishes never to be counted among them. She rather chooses to die and save her home. I think that Euripides exemplifies a mother's love and concern for the wellbeing of her children and the determination to protect her home if it means losing hers.

Though Phaedra's words appear misogynistic in nature as some scholars have explained, I maintain that Euripides is using Phaedra to communicate to the audience what happens when adultery happens in marriages. Observing from a patriarchal cultural perspective and the consequence of adultery in the Athenian society, especially, on the reputation of Phaedra and her children from her speech, Euripides shows his disgust for such attitude in marriages and that is why he sounds misogynistic.

In *lines 617-668*, Hippolytus also expresses similar disgust for women. He lunches insults against Phaedra, her nurse, and the rest of womanhood. Hippolytus question why the gods created women who are evil in the world. He sees all women as 'counterfeit coinage for mankind'. Hippolytus asserts that because "it is clear that a woman is a great evil" (627), the father who gives her life and brought her up attaches dowry to her when he sends her away from home. Hippolytus expresses that a father is happy to send his daughter (this evil creature) away so if it means paying her off, then, so be it. The words that Hippolytus speaks are bitter and hateful and he talks as if he had a bad experience with a woman before, especially in *lines 630-640*. Yet, I think that scholars cannot argue that this is as a result of Euripides failed marriages. He can also be misogynistic like any Athenian male in a patriarchal society by exposing the inherent adulterous nature of women in general during his time and this does not make him a nonconformist but rather a conformist of Athenian culture.

In her own way to sympathize with Phaedra, the nurse defends Phaedra's action immorally. The old nurse edges Phaedra to succumb to her love desire for Hippolytus; after all, she is not the first to have fallen in love. The nurse argues that even the gods/goddesses fall in love and a typical example is Zeus love affair with Semele. This according to her does not change the status of the gods from being gods. Besides, Aphrodite is a powerful goddess and she destroys all those who resist her, therefore; Phaedra should embrace what she feels because it is normal.

> What you have suffered is nothing extraordinary, nothing unaccountable… you are in love—what is

> so surprising about that? So are many mortals…, know that Zeus once desired to bed Semele, they know that radiant Dawn once snatched up Cephalus to join the god—and all for love. Yet they still dwell in heaven and do not go into exile to avoid their fellow-gods…Men would take overlong to discover the means unless we women find them (433-80).

Kovacs posits that the nurse's solution to Phaedra's plight is the direct opposite of how she wants to deal with her problem. Like Gregory, Kovacs avers that while Phaedra declines the value of intellectual virtue in her speech discussed above, the nurse sees learning and experience as pre-eminent in this situation. Kovacs claims that the nurse thinks that Phaedra should admit to her feelings for Hippolytus and forgets about dying because, what she feels for her stepson is not unusual.[99]

Furthermore, Gregory maintains that the nurse's eloquence consists of making shameful proposals attractive and I think that this reminds us of the sophistic theory of making the weaker argument the stronger. She justifies this odious desire by referring to what happened between Zeus and Semele as an example. She edges Phaedra to be submissive to the power of Aphrodite because even the gods cannot stand her powers. To Gregory, "the nurse is characterized by a fluctuating of moral sense".[100] Thus, she is too cunning, too cynical and debased and she constitutes "another of the play's cautionary examples; for her amoral realism suggests the kind of value system that might take hold of the new relativism popularized by the sophists were not tempered with old-fashioned

[99]Ibid., p. 50
[100]Justina Gregory, op. cit., p. 68

ethics, if there were no transmission of aristocratic ideals into the modern context"[101].

From all indications, I see the nurse, trying to convince Phaedra that there is nothing wrong if she desire her stepson. But, this attitude is against the moral values in the Athenian culture. Dodds posits that he does not imply that the poet followed the extreme physis school that provided human weakness with fashionable excuse by declaring that passions are natural and therefore right, morality a convention and therefore a shackle to be cast off, yet, certain characters in Euripides' plays follow this counsel.[102] I contend that even though the nurse exhibits immoral and debased attitude, the chorus condemns the nurse's behavior in the following *lines 82-3*. There is a sign of immorality in this context, nevertheless, there is also evidence to prove that Euripides intention is not to portray immoral attitude in the play, but to represent the danger in the sophistic theory of making the weaker argument the stronger one through his representation of the nurse.

Against the charge that Euripides disrespects and shows constant contempt for conventional morality and convention; Hippolytus' words in *line 612* have been one of the famous lines cited in this play. Aristophanes quotes it three times in his comedies: once in the *Thesmophoriazusae* lines, 275-76 and twice in the *Frogs*, *lines 101-2* and *1471*. However, Harry C. Avery argues that this line is not really essential for the action of the play; but, this line is familiar to everyone because Aristophanes uses the lines as part of his indictment of Euripides' new

[101]ibid
[102]E. R. Dodds, op. cit., p. 186-7

morality or lack of any morality. For Avery, this raises a problem, because, the real attitude of Aristophanes towards Euripides is that he is fascinated by his works. Moreover, Aristophanes' involvement with Euripides and his works is not primarily moral, and this being the case, the usual reason given for Aristophanes' use of Hippolytus' line seems less cogent.[103]

As Avery has noted, I also think that the important point here is that Hippolytus knew the consequence of disrespecting his own oath and so he kept it even at the point of death. Hence, I disagree with W. Schlegel and Schmid that Euripides shows contempt for conventional morality. If this is the case, Hippolytus would not have kept the secret when he had the chance to defend and save himself before his father. And his subsequent lines affirm this point:

> Be sure of one thing—it is only my piety that protects you, woman. For if I had not been caught of my guard when I swore my oath by the gods, I would never have held back from telling my father this. (656-660).

I support Kovacs claim that Hippolytus' line is expressed out of anger and fury and it is not abnormal for him to do so. It is explicable for Hippolytus to say that and this has nothing to do with disrespect in the belief of oath.[104] Even the Nurse could not hide her terror when she heard that Phaedra is in love with her stepson the first time in *lines 354-62*. Moreover, Hippolytus swears an oath in his defense before his father in *lines 1025-8.* I think that if the poet disrespects this religious convention, Hippolytus would not have swore again later in the play.

[103]Harry C. Avery, "My Tongue Swore, but My Mind is Unsworn", *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association*, Vol. 99, 1968, p. 20
[104]David Kovacs, op. cit., p. 56

Euripides is accused of applying the art of rhetoric in some of his characters' arguments in this play. Typical examples of such characters are Phaedra's nurse and Hippolytus. In *lines 44-80*, the nurse skillfully argues to justify Phaedra's feelings for her stepson. Some scholars maintain that this art of rhetoric, Euripides adopted from the sophists. In Hippolytus' defense before his father, he uses this same art when he realizes that his chastity argument could not convince Theseus. Hippolytus argues that Phaedra is not the most beautiful woman in this world, neither does he has any intention of possessing his father's throne. Therefore, nothing will encourage him to go in for his stepmother because he will be a fool if he does that.

Hippolytus denies earlier in his speech that he lacks the art of glib speech for addressing a crowd, yet, he uses every word possible to persuade his father that he is innocent. Both the nurse and Hippolytus exhibit the art of rhetoric in their respective arguments and according to Mastronarde, within Euripides' plays, the condemnation of the dangers of skillfully constructed speeches used in support of immoral or disapproved positions frequently find expression. But, I agree with Mastronarde's point that "Euripides builds up the moral stature of Phaedra's resistance to her desire by making the nurse speak for a contrasting ethic, and it is clear from the internal reactions of the chorus and Phaedra herself that the external audience is invited to disapprove of the nurse's cleaver but immoral argumentation".[105]

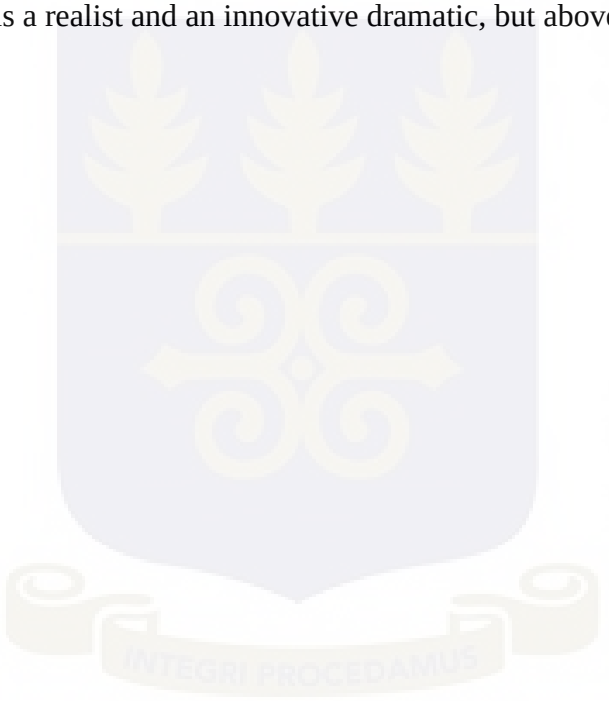
[105]Donald Mastronarde, *The Art of Euripides: Dramatic Technique and Social Context*, U. K., Cambridge University Press, 2011, p. 214-5

3.3 Conclusion

In sum, Euripides is accused of intentionally representing Aphrodite as wicked and vile in order to downplay on the belief systems of the deity as a way of showing his disapproval in the worship of Athenian religion. However, I think Euripides is only being significant and inevitable in his portrayal of Aphrodite. For his representation of the goddess is not new to the Athenian religion neither is it to the playwrights, Homer, Aeschylus or Sophocles. He strengthens the religious beliefs in the worship and respect of all the deities without any exemption. Moreover, Euripides exposes the immoral conduct of Phaedra, but it is uncertain that he does so because of his failed marriage because he seems to be sympathizing with the plights of women during her time as well.

Scholars like Conacher and Barrett have tried to exonerate Euripides of the charge that Euripides is not a thinker or a philosopher but, I think that, they have been unsuccessful in this context. Phaedra argues against some of Socrates' ideals. I agree with Kovacs that some of the things that critics say about characters like Hippolytus and Phaedra rest on beliefs and values that are either Christian or Platonic, but, it does not mean that some of the charges against Euripides in this play are valid. Phaedra's nurse uses the art of rhetoric to convince her mistress to have an affair with her stepson but, Phaedra rejects her views. Even though there are evidence in the play to disclaim the fact that Euripides does not intent to philosophize on stage, there are signs of either agreeing with Socrates' teachings or opting for a contrary view.

Notwithstanding, I think that one thing that is common in this play from the beginning to the end is the exemplification of traditional values. I admit that the poet sometimes go beyond the dramatic relevance of some sophistic and rhetorical argument that he portrays in the play; Euripides still maintains the basic traditional values of the Athenian culture and society. And I argue that the charges that Euripides refuses to abide by the traditions, customs and values of the Athenian society and the tragic genre are exaggeration and misconstrued. Euripides is a realist and an innovative dramatic, but above all he is a pragmatic.



CHAPTER FOUR

EURIPIDES' *HECUBA*

4.0 Introduction

The frequent supposition among some scholars is that Hecabe degenerates morally and abandons her principles and believe in law and justice. Thus, she kills the two sons of Polymestor in an atrocious manner. Odysseus displays an in-depth knowledge in oratory in his argument to defend the claim that killing the innocent slave girl, Polyxena, is the best course for all the Achaeans. Moreover, Polymestor pronounces insults on the whole of womanhood. These, among others, are some of the criticisms that some commentators have outlines against the interpretation of the *Hecuba*.

Continuing my discussion on the interpretation of Euripides' drama that have been interpreted as reflections of his attitude of nonconformism the purpose of this chapter, however, is not to wade into the pros and cons about the themes but to examine and evaluate passages in the *Hecuba* that may have also been considered among the bases of the nonconformist charges leveled against Euripides. I seek to re-examine the play in order to clarify some of the passages and statements that have called for different views and interpretations among scholars. I will use Philip Vellacott's translation.

The *Hecuba* is among Euripides' surviving plays that has gained a lot of attention over the years among scholars. According to Kenneth Reckford, Euripides' *Hecuba* is less known but it has remained a perennial favorite; "it was revived on the Greek stage, adapted by the Roman audience and read in Byzantine

schools and Renaissance libraries".[106] Edith Hall is also of the view that no Greek tragedy concentrates on the psychology of revenge or rather on the psychological process by which a victim turns into an avenger; a process that some psychoanalysts would call 'internalization of the oppressors' to such a degree as the *Hecuba*.[107] But Schlegel's adverse view is that the second half of the play destroys the soft impressions of the first in a highly repulsive manner and it is not very suitable that Hecabe should display such presence of mind in her revenge.[108] There are different views and interpretations as far as the behahviours of the characters in this play are concern. The action of the play takes place soon after the end of the Trojan War just as the Greeks are about to sail back home; but, the precise date of production is still an ongoing debate among scholars.

4.1 Synopsis

In a brief synopsis, Troy has fallen into ashes and the women and children including Hecabe, queen of Troy, Cassandra and Polyxena, princesses of Troy, have been taken as captives by the victorious Greeks. The play begins with a prologue speech by the ghost of Polydorus, the youngest son of Hecabe and Priam. Polydorus describes his murder at the hands of Polymestor, his father's guest-friend, whom he is entrusted for protection during the Trojan War with

[106]Kenneth Reckford, "Pity and Terror in Euripides' *Hecuba*", *Arion*, Third Series, Vol. 1, No. 2, (1991), pp. 24-43; cf. Gilbert Norwood, *Greek Tragedy*, London, Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1920, p. 215

[107]Edith Hall, *Greek Tragedy: Suffering Under the Sun*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2010, p. 256

[108]J. A. Spranger, op. cit., p. 155; M. A. Grube, *The Drama of Euripides*, London, Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1961, p. 82-84; H. D. F. Kitto, *Greek Tragedy: A Literary Study*, London, Routledge-Taylor & Francis Group, 2003, p. 216

quantities of gold by his father. Polydorus claims that after the king of Thrace has killed him for his gold, Polymestor thrown his body into the sea. He has come to hover over his mother's head for three days now, seeking for burial. Polydorus prophesizes that Polyxena, his sister will be sacrificed upon the demands of the ghost of Achilles. On this same day, his body will be found and Hecabe will bury two of her children together on the same pyre.

A chorus of captive Trojan women appears on stage with the news that the Greek army have met in an assembly and decides that Polyxena must be sacrificed upon Achilles' request. Odysseus is sent by the army to deliver the news to Hecabe. After Odysseus' delivery, Hecabe appeals to Odysseus to pity her daughter and return the kindness she once showed him when he came to Troy as a spy. But Odysseus replies that it will be shameful for the Greeks to dishonour the best of their warriors like Achilles. Polyxena is taken to Achilles' grave and Neoptolemus, Achilles' son, sacrifices her to his father. A Greek herald, Talthybius, is sent to inform Hecabe to come and bury her daughter as she requested. Hecabe asks some of the women to go and fetch water from the sea for the cleansing of Polyxena's corpse. But the women return from the shore with Polydorus' body.

Hecabe pleads with Agamemnon to aid her take revenge on Polymestor for betraying the friendship that exists between him and Priam's family. Hecabe manages to invites Polymestor and his two sons using the trick that there is a hidden treasure at Troy and she wishes Polydorus will know about. Hecabe, with the help of the captive Trojan women, kill the two sons of Polymestor and gauged

out his eyes afterwards. Agamemnon intervenes as the adjudicator between Polymestor and Hecabe to settle the conflict. Agamemnon convicts Polymestor on the account that the Greeks consider the killing of guest a sacrilegious crime. In order to gain some satisfaction or pay back, Polymestor predicts that Hecabe will become a dog with glaring tawny eyes and die later and her tomb will bear the name Cynossema, the Dog's Grave; a sign for sailors. Both Cassandra and Agamemnon will be murdered by Clytaemnestra, Agamemnon's wife when they return back to Argos. Enraged by this prophesy, Agamemnon asks his men to send Polymestor to a deserted island. He then asks Hecabe to go and bury her two children and the rest of the slave women to prepare for their imminent passage to Greece since the wind has started blowing.

4.2 A Reassessment of the Nonconformist Charges against Euripides in the *Hecuba*

Generally, Euripides is accused of not adhering to the popular traditional values and beliefs of the Athenians. He is perceived by Aristophanes and some modern scholars as someone who attacks and destroys the popular traditions of the Athenian society, but, I think that to some extent, that this charge is unfair on the part of the poet, considering the play under study. Polymestor, a friend of Priam, whom he entrusted the safety of Polydorus turns out to be his murderer. After killing him, Polymestor dumps Polydorus' body into the sea. Now, the poor prince's body is moving from one place to another, seeking for burial.

> Now I lie there stretched on the shingle, floating in the salty foam, by racing currents rolled endlessly to and fro, unwept, unburied (26-29)

For this reason, Polydorus has come to hover over his mother for three days now, hoping to be found and given a proper burial.

According to John Harrison, the Greeks felt it important to honour the dead and this means that the body of the deceased is washed and dressed by the women of the person's family. The body of the decease is either burnt or buried with appropriate libations and formal lament which is sung by the women.[109] This is what Polydorus wishes for and I think that his desperation and the permission granted him by the gods of the underworld shows that Euripides advocates for proper burial and funeral rites which are importance aspect of Athenian culture and tradition.

In *lines 609-618,* Euripides demonstrates how the living mourns the dead through Hecabe. She asks some old attendants to go and fetch fresh sea water for the cleansing of Polyxena's body. "I must go to wash my daughter's body and compose her limbs; and to a wedded virgin, an unwedded bride, pay the last honours" (610-612). Hecabe also claims that she will ask other slave women if some of them have jewellery so that she can use it to adorn her daughter's corpse. Though it will vary from one culture to another, considering the respect and honour we pay to the dead in modern times and what Hecabe does to the body of her deceased daughter, I disagree with the interpretation that Euripides does not adheres to Athenian culture and tradition. We can see that Euripides enlightens us

[109]John Harrison, op.cit., P. 4

on the things that Athenians do as well as the duty that the living owe to the dead which is not different from what is done in our contemporary times in respect of tradition.

Euripides is accused of impiety; thus, he lacks respect and reverence for the gods and goddesses as well as religious beliefs of the Athenian society. After the chorus has come to inform Hecabe that the Greek army has decided to sacrifice Polyxena, her daughter, the Trojan women caution Hecabe to supplicate to Agamemnon.

> So come, kneel at the altar, fall as a suppliant at Agamemnon's knees, cry aloud to the gods of heaven and to gods below the earth. It may be, prayers can save you from losing your daughter so cruelly (143-148).

The chorus asks Hecabe to go to the altar and pray to the gods because it is only the gods who can save Polyxena. Also, they ask Hecabe to supplicate to Agamemnon who is also the only one on her side. Here, Euripides attaches so much importance to prayer, the altar and the gods. If he does not believe in the god, prayer or anything religious, he would not have paid attention to these things in the chorus' passage. Besides, the act of supplication is also a religious act on its own. The Greeks believed that when someone entreats another with gestures such as touching the right hand, kneeling and touching of the beard, it means that the suppliant is putting himself under the protection of Zeus. It is therefore dangerous to refuse the request of the suppliant because such rejection incurs Zeus' anger. This custom, according to Harrison, is based on the principle that the strong

should show respect and compassion to the weak.[110] And I assume that it is because of this that the women ask Hecabe to supplicate to Agamemnon for him to have pity on her daughter. Even though the Trojan women recommend that Hecabe supplicates to Agamemnon, it is important to note that Trojans and Thracians feature extensively in this play, Greek values underpin the play.[111] Euripides shows the value attached to the act of supplication, the altar of the gods and prayer and this shows that he is not someone who can be considered as irreligious or impious in the Athenian society.

In another instance, after the Greeks have sacrificed Polyxena, Talthybius, the herald, is sent by Agamemnon to come and call Hecabe for the preparation of her daughter's burial. When the herald sees Hecabe lying on the ground, he feels sorry for her and wishes he never experience anything close to the formal queen's misfortune. He wonders if Zeus cares for human life at all or if there is even any god called Zeus. Interestingly, some scholars have taken statements such as this out of the context in which they are used and accuse Euripides of impiety. But, from Harrison, this question of conventional religious belief in the face of suffering is natural in the ancient Greek world as it is today.[112] Talthybius expresses his sentiments based on the misfortunes that Hecabe finds herself; this has nothing to do with doubting Zeus' existence or not. I agree with Harrison and I also think that such expressions are common among us. When we find ourselves in certain situations, we turn to question the existence of the supernatural or

[110]John Harrison, op. cit., p. 22
[111]G. R. Stanton, "Aristocratic Obligation in Euripides' *Hekabe*", *Mnemosyne*, Fourth Series, Vol. 48, Fasc. 1, (1995), pp. 11-33
[112]John Harrison, op. cit., p. 42

supreme power depending on what one believes in. This kind of talk does not make someone an unbeliever or impious and so is it in Euripides' case.

Furthermore, Hecabe advises Polyxena to make a humble and pitiful appeal to Odysseus when the army sends him to come for Polyxena so that he may spare her life. "Speak to him. Let your voice use all the sweetness of the nightingale, to win your life. Stir him to pity. Fall and clasp his knees" (335-337). Odysseus attempts to hide his right hand, cheek and beard from being touched by Polyxena because he cannot change the decision already made at the assembly. This means that he believes if Polyxena touches him and he refuses her request, he will not be spared from the wrath of Zeus. From this, I think that Odysseus' reaction shows the power of this religious act in Greek culture. Euripides will not portray the relevance of such religious values and beliefs if he is impious or an unbeliever.

In addition, the Greeks believed in the act of reciprocity and which is also considered as another religious act in the Athenian society. When Odysseus approaches Hecabe with the news that her daughter is to be sacrificed to the shade of Achilles, Hecabe reminds Odysseus of a favour she once did for him when he entered Troy as a spy. She beseeches Odysseus to return that favour to her daughter by saving her life:

> As you admit, you clasped my hand, knelt before me, and touched my cheek. I kneel to you, touch your hand, your cheek. I beg in turn what you begged then (372-374).

As Alan Kirk claims, Lionel Pearson notes that "the whole ancient theory of friendship is based on the assumption that favors will be returned: a man who

helps his friend usually does so with the expectation that some return for his favour will be made.[113] And here, Euripides shows the religious significance of this principle in the Greek society. Hecabe has done Odysseus a favour once and now she expects him to return the favour he owes her. This is an old religious convention among the Athenians.

In book 1 of Homer's *Iliad*, for instance Chryses reminds Apollo of the sacrifices he has done for him before when he prays for revenge on the Achaeans after Agamemnon refuses to take his ransom in exchange for chrysies, his daughter. Thetis, Achilles' mother, also reminds Zeus of the favour he owes her when she goes to intercedes for her son. These examples in the *Iliad* emphasize the power of the act of reciprocity in Greek religion and for Euripides to employ this act, I disagree with the criticism and attack that he does not believe in the gods or he is impious. He exemplifies, in various circumstances, an act of religiosity in this play.

Moreover, Euripides is accused of using rhetorical ploy in Odysseus' response to Hecabe plead. Odysseus argues that Achilles is a patriotic warrior and a friend to the Greeks; therefore, it will be shameful for them to be ungrateful to a friend and dishonour a patriot after his death. He continues that this decision that the Greek army has taken to sacrifice Polyxena to Achilles will strengthen the power of their army and also encourage individuals to come and join the army at their own free will. Odysseus clearly states that he seeks for little as he lives, but

[113]Alan Kirk, "Love your Enemies, "the Golden Rule, and Ancient Reciprocity (Luke 6: 27-35)", *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 122, No. 4, (2003), pp. 667-686

when he dies, he wants his grave yard to be gazed at reverently; 'for that is the gift that lasts'.

> The first man of our army, Achilles, must be given your daughter, as the victim he demands of us. Most cities suffer from this very thing, that men who are brave and patriotic reap no more reward than shirkers…so that Hellas may grow great, while you will reap the fruits of your ingratitude (303-330).

Reckford maintains that Odysseus replies to Hecabe's plead as a sophist-trained orator might do in 420 B.C., with high-sounding phrases and arguments, very much like Hecabe's yet somehow ringing hollow.[114]Abrahamson also contends that the Greeks are swayed away by Odysseus' demagogic oratory and the reason for his interest in the sacrifice of Polyxena is probably out of 'militarist psychological expediency'. According to Abrahamson, Odysseus is a master at specious reasoning and ad hoc argumentation, and one cannot be sure of his real motive even though Euripides has made it clear that no religious necessity is involved in the sacrifice of Polyxena. Yet, he asserts that this is a sign of Euripides' profound human insight as well as of his poetic power that he has shown in great detail.[115] In the view of A. W. Adkins, Odysseus can demand the life of Polyxena who is a slave and the Greek audience will waste no sympathy on her at any rate, not so much as to affect any judgment. This is because Odysseus' justification of the sacrifice of Polyxena accord with the fifth-century Greek commitment to 'competitive virtue'.[116]

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[114]Kenneth Reckford, op. cit., p. 29
[115]Ernst L. Abrahamson, "Euripides' Tragedy of *Hecuba"*, *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association*, Vol. 83, (1952), pp. 122-3
[116]Arthur W. H. Adkins, *Merit and Responsibility: A Study in Greek Values*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1960, pp. 153-186

But, James L. Kastely is of the view that Adkins omits what Odysseus cannot see, thus, Euripides' criticism of Odysseus' speech. Kastely opines that Odysseus' loyalty and concern for the strength of the Greek army makes him accept unquestioningly, the ethics of competition so, he is blind to the injury that he brings to his friends. According to Kastely, it is Odysseus' exclusive commitment to the army that makes him terrifying because his speech embodies the unreflective security that follows from the ethic of power.[117] In addition, James C. Hogan disagrees with Adkins' view that though the sacrifice of Polyxena is pitiable, he does not think that this emotion would affect the audience's judgment. Hogan claims that Adkins ignores the crucial report of the chorus that at the assembly, the army split into two. Agamemnon's opposition indicates that half of the soldiers do not feel compelled to offer Polyxena as sacrifice, despite the appearance of Achilles above his tomb. And it is obvious that it is not divine necessity that moved the army to acquiesce in Achilles' demand but Odysseus' eloquence in Hogan's opinion. Consequently, it cannot be said that Euripides has in anyway stressed on the efficacy of the sacrifice because Odysseus' arguments are political, not religious or moral.[118]

Eloquence and the use of oratorical skills in the fifth century is no news to the Athenian audience. It is true that Odysseus outlines his defends skillfully in his argument, but I disagree with Abrahamson that Odysseus' true motive is not known. He clearly declares that he wants very little now that he is alive, but when he dies, he wants his grave yard to be gazed at with reverence. Craving for honour

[117]James L. Kastely, "Violence and Rhetoric in Euripides' *Hecuba*", *PMLA*, Vol. 108, No. 5, (1993), p. 1037
[118]James C. Hogan, "Thucydides 3. 52-68 and Euripides' *Hecuba*", *Phoenix*, 26, (1972), p. 250-2

is one of the marks of nobility and eloquence and effective delivery is important for the leaders and aristocrats during Euripides' time.

I think that Odysseus is much concern with honour, glory and fame. It is true that Odysseus can demand the life of a slave girl as long as it does not cause any harm or affect the group he belong, nevertheless, I agree with Kastely and Hogan on their view that, the whole idea is not about the rhetorical approach that Odysseus employ but the effects of his action on his friends. I think that Euripides exemplifies the effect of obsession with power by some leaders. All that matters to Odysseus is the power of the army and honour and glory after death. He refuses to recognize the kind of friendship he develops with Hecabe when he supplicates to her then at Troy. Like Hecabe mentions, Odysseus does not care about hurting his friends if at the end he is able to gratify the mob. He seeks for popular honour from the people without a thought of betraying his friends. I think that we are familiar with this behaviour of Odysseus in our contemporary political lives and daily decision making process. After all, the end justifies the means as the idiom goes. Euripides probably allows Odysseus such eloquence in order to draw attention and criticize such behaviour of the aristocrats and the politician in Athens. I do not think that Euripides is interested in the rhetorical skills of Odysseus because that is not new to the audience.

Concerning the charge that Euripides is in opposition to the conventional morality of the Athenian, the attitude of Hecabe is not exempted. After Hecabe discovers the brutally murdered body of Polydorus, she beseeches Agamemnon to help her take revenge on Polymestor, the killer of her son. When she realizes that

Agamemnon is not willing to help, she uses Cassandra, one of her daughter's affairs with Agamemnon to influence her argument:

> Agamemnon, by your side in bed my daughter lies, Cassandra, whom the Trojans call Apollo's mouth piece. Your nights are sweetly spent, Agamemnon are they not? Shall not my daughter for her warm embraces earn some thanks from you? And shall not she have thanks from me? (827-831).

Hecabe expects Agamemnon to show gratitude or return a favour to the mother whose daughter he is having an affair with. Hecabe recognizes the importance of Cassandra's affair with Agamemnon in this situation when the operative moral axiom in Greek reciprocity ethics is to help friends and harm enemies[119], so she uses it.

According to Reckford, Hecabe's request is shocking and nothing could contrast more strongly with the modesty of Polyxena's life and death.[120] However, I think that Gregory is right when she argues that Hecabe's argument here does not signal any radical change as it is sometimes assumed. This is because the notion that sexual relations constitute a favour has good precedent among the Greek audience and an incident can be recalled in Sophocles' *Antigone, Ajax* or Aeschylus' *Suppliant.*[121] Besides, this notion that sexual relations constitute a favour is not limited to only the Athenians, it is common among us in contemporary times. I think that Hecuba is only trying to seek justice and vengeance for her son who has been brutally murdered and dehumanized; if she uses something that is culturally recognized, it does not means that she has

[119] Alan Kirk, op. cit., p. 680
[120] Kenneth Reckford, op. cit., 35
[121] Justina Gregory, op. cit., p. 106

deteriorated morally or Euripides is against the conventional moral values of the Athenian society. But, the purpose of drama is to educate and make people better and I think that to some extent, Reckford is right because even if the notion that sexual relation constitute a favour has good precedent among the Greek audience; Euripides is suppose to teach the people good morals as a dramatist and a teacher in the theater. Exposing this on stage means that he wants the people to practice it and that is not accepted morally.

Agamemnon finally consents to help Hecabe with her plot although he does not want the soldiers to criticize him that he is helping Hecabe because of his affair with her daughter as the sons of Theseus argued at the assembly before. Hecabe invites Polymestor and his two sons to the women's tent, tricking him that there is a hidden treasure at Troy and she wants Polydorus to know about. Hecabe and the captive Trojan women kill the two sons of Polymestor and remove his eyes out. She has finally accomplished her revenge: "You'll never put the sight back in your darkened eyes, nor see your sons again alive, whom I have killed" (1047-8). According to Reckford, the killing of Polymestor's two sons in revenge for Polydorus' death is a spectacle not of justice as Hecabe claims but of human atrocity.[122] Reckford perceives Hecabe's act as an act of violence and inhuman because her action has nothing to do with the justice she seeks for.

On the contrary, Gregory thinks otherwise. She contends that two circumstances are generally adduced by some scholars to support the thesis that Hecabe degenerates morally from her previous principles; thus, appeal to law and

[122]Kenneth Reckford, op. cit., 36

justice. The first is Hecabe's claim for favour from Agamemnon on the basis of his sexual affair with Cassandra, and the second is Hecabe's metamorphosis which is often taken as a kind of moral judgment on her act of vengeance or a commentary on the inhuman qualities she manifests. However, Gregory maintains that the play posits a link between Hecabe's vengeance and her transformation, and to understand the connection we need to consider some of the connotations of the dogs in Greek literature.

In Hecabe's dream, her children are evoked through animal imagery-as fawn, colt, cub, calf, and nightingale, and this encourages us to think of them as the young of any species, and Hecabe as universal mother. Like every mother will do anything to protect her children, I agree with Gregory that the protective fury of mothers for their vulnerable offspring is a trait no less human being shared with animal. Also, by assimilating Hecabe to godlike Fury who has an implacable thirst for vengeance; her metamorphosis offers her an escape from her degraded status and endows her with a fierce grandeur.[123] Hecabe offers herself to replace Polyxena earlier on; she exhibits motherly qualities. Again, in Polydorus' case, she exhibits the act of retributive justice in order to avenge her son's dead by killing Polymestor's two sons and removing his eyes on top of it.

I argue that the whole message that Euripides intends to present here is not about the change in Hecabe's attitude but to question the justice system. Let us consider the whole tragedy of Hecabe from the killing of her daughter to that death of her son. Hecabe appeals to Odysseus who acts as the appointed priest for the sacrifice of Polyxena and Agamemnon who is the commander-in-chief of the

[123]Justina Gregory, op. cit., p. 110

Achaeans to pity someone who has already been spared at the altar. But none of them listen to her. She suggests a bull in place of human sacrifice but she fails to convince Odysseus. Hecabe asks if the decision to sacrifice Polyxena is about retribution where a life is taken for another life or a sense of duty (lines 262-272).

Harrison postulates that a law introduced by Draco, the Athenian law-giver, in 620 B.C, enacts that murderer of a slave is no less guilty than if he kills a free man.[124] Hecabe appeals to this law and justice of the Greeks as well as the law of the gods that protects a suppliant but neither of them save Polyxena nor grant her justice for her son's death. Then she results to retribution. Observing Hecabe's situation, I think that Euripides is interested in the problem of this kind of justice and the jury system of the Athenians. In Aeschylus' *Oresteia,* Athena establishes the Areopagus to sit on Orestes' case after murdering his mother for killing his father. Like Aeschylus, Euripides shows the limitations of retributive justice and the need to look again at the jury system.

After the murder of Polymestor's sons and his own eyes removed, Agamemnon sets out a court to adjudicate the battle between Hecabe and Polymestor. He admits that he killed Polydorus for right and prudent reasons. First he kills Polydorus to avoid Agamemnon's enemy from gathering the survivors of Troy to rebuild the city one day and secondly, if the Achaeans find out that he (Polymestor) gave the boy protection, they will come back and destroy Thrace. But Hecabe argues that Polymestor has killed her son out of greed for his gold. If this is not the case, he could have handed Polydorus to Agamemnon alive

[124]John Harrison, *Euripides Hecuba* in Cambridge Translations from Greek Drama, ed. John Harrison and Judith Affleck, U. K., Cambridge University Press, 2008, p. 26

if he claims his action is a favour for the Greeks. Moreover, he could have given the gold to Agamemnon and the army since they needed money to survive at the war front for many years. Whatever he does, according to Hecabe, is for his own greed and selfish interest. At this point, Polymestor pronounces insult and abuses on all women:

> all the abuse that men have heaped on women in time past, all they are saying now or ever will say, I can sum it all in one phrase: no monster like a woman breed in land or sea; and those who have most to do with women know it best (1175-1179).

In the view of some scholars, this and other reproaches in Euripides' works exemplify his hatred for womanhood. Polymestor claims that women are all monsters. But, as I have discussed in my literature review, I disagree to such interpretations because, Polymestor insults Hecabe and women in general out of shame: "my fate, indeed! Trampled on, outraged by a woman, a king- submitting to the vengeance of a slave! (1248-50). It is disgraceful for a 'good' man or a king to be defeated by a commoner. Moreover, if someone is a monster, that person is Polymestor who killed the son of the man he admits as his dearest friend in an atrocious manner and throw his body in the sea without given him proper burial. Just as it is expected of a patriarchal society, Polymestor sees Hecabe and all women as monsters all because he is defeated. This is why the chorus asks Polymestor if he arrogantly reproaches all women because he suffered. He insults women out of shame and because he has been defeated by a woman and a slave for that matter. I think that Euripides is rather advocating for the women in such a

patriarchal society like Athens; he appears more like a feminist instead of a misogynist.

In Hecabe's defense, she argues that it is awful how men do one thing and say another.

> It is deplorable, Agamemnon, that men's words should ever seem to speak more loudly than their deeds. Good deeds alone should make the doer eloquent, not gloze their foulness with fair colours (1183-87).

Polymestor claims that he killed his friend's son for the Greeks but Hecabe asserts that he does so for his selfish interest and greed. In Conacher's opinion, Hecabe's clever use of rhetoric and the sometimes sophistic arguments that she employs in her defense do little to restore the moral stature and dignity which she had shown earlier in her appeals to both Odysseus and Agamemnon respectively. For Conacher, Hecabe's vengeance which she justifies involves a slaughter of innocents more terrible than the sacrifice of Polyxena.[125]

But I disagree with Conacher because Hecabe defends the law and allows justice to prevail. As the chorus mentioned, when crime is atrocious, punishment will be heavy. Hecabe has not degenerated morally as Conacher assumed. I think that she has rather stabilize the society by representing herself as an advocate of justice. Like Agamemnon said, if it is a light matter to kill a guest in Thrace, it is a serious crime in Greek culture and it will be injustice and shameful on his part if he pronounces Polymestor as innocent. Justice is what she seeks for and at the end; it is what she has achieved and I think that Euripides' aim is not to exemplify

[125]Desmond Conacher, op. cit., p. 65

the use of oratory in Hecabe's argument; he is rather concern with the corrupt nature of the justice system and that is what he criticises through Hecabe.

4.3 Conclusion

In conclusion, Stanton argues that the *Hecuba* is laced with irony or constitutes a pacifist plea or portrays the decline of good character or reaffirms the heroic.[126] Reckford conceives that the *Hecuba* appears to be a mockery of justice and order; it lucks amoral gods, and behind the scene there is only chance and blind necessity.[127] There have been diverse views and discussions of the play. By observing these diverse interpretations, I think that most of the arguments revolve around characterization or the unity of the play.

Both defenders and detractors severally start their interpretation by discussing the unity of the actions in the play or the degenerated moral values and principles of Hecabe. But I think that Euripides' intention is not to present an immoral character or disjointed plot; but, the need to consider some of the basic values upon which culture, custom and tradition is built on. Because of honour, Odysseus acts without regards for his friends. Polymestor disregards the value of friendship out of greed and selfishness. Most of the leaders ignore the basic law and justice and the principle that protect the sanity of the Greek society in this play. Though Euripides has been accused of using rhetorical and persuasive skills in various arguments, I think that this persuasive skill is not new to the Athenian

[126]G. R. Stanton, op. cit., p. 13
[127]Kenneth Reckford, op. cit., p. 39

audience as it is to modern scholars and the idea behind its use is not to exhibits his interest in oratory but to criticizes some of it limitations.

I agree with Reckford that Euripides is a cosmopolitan, but he is no less patriotic on that account. His sense of the beauty and fragility of things, which the citizens of all nations experience equally since they are all human beings, made him love his own Athenian homeland all the more passionately, not for its glory, or even for its advanced civilization, but because (as Scipio perceived at Carthage) that glory and that advanced civilization could so easily be destroyed.[128]I think that scholars cannot base their arguments on charges such as misogyny, immorality, impiety anti-traditionalist on the issues addressed in the play because Euripides seems to address the deficiency of these charges against him in the *Hecuba*. Obviously, some of such interpretations are incomplete and exaggeration of the incidences in the play.

[128]Kenneth Reckford, op. cit., p. 42

CONCLUSION

This study set out to reassess the nonconformist charges such as misogynism, anti-traditionalism, impiety, skepticism, immorality, the use of rhetoric, among others, leveled against Euripides by ancient and modern scholars. I discovered that there are excesses on the side of defenders and detractors in their interpretation of Euripides' drama. I noticed that Aristophanes' *Frogs* from which some of these charges have their roots is a misrepresentation of the whole subject of the comedy. It is evident in my reassessment that the most significant message in the *Frogs* is directed towards the deteriorating nature of Athenian politics, as well as the politicians' attitude which was leading to the city's destruction. The *Frogs* actually expressed Aristophanes' nostalgic feeling for the good old days when Athens was an empire, and that both Aeschylus and Euripides are used because they represent the generation gap in Athenian culture and tradition. I agree to the fact that there are few literary gibes, especially on the moral values of Aeschylus and Euripides, but they cannot be considered as attacks on Euripides and his works since Aeschylus was attacked as well. Moreover, some of these moral attacks reflected in the attitude of some generals and politician during the time.

This study also sought to examine some of the passages and statements in Euripides' plays; particularly, the *Hippolytus,* and *Hecuba* which have been cited by some scholars to support the claims that the poet exhibits reflections of nonconformist attitude in his works. First of all, I discussed the charge of misogyny, presentation of immoral, indecent and excessive passion in his female

characters, attitude of impiety, and the use of philosophical and sophistic approaches in his characters' arguments in the *Hippolytus*. I argued that Euripides is accused of portraying Aphrodite as cruel and vile in order to make the worship of the goddess less significant but, I maintained that the poet's portrayal of Aphrodite is not different from that of Homer, Aeschylus or Sophocles. Neither is the representation of Aphrodite different from the anthropomorphic gods and goddess that the Athenians worshipped. Euripides rather strengthens the religious belief in worshiping all the divine beings without exception.

Again, I observed that Euripides may have exposed the immoral conduct of Phaedra through her desire for her stepson, but that does not necessarily justifies the assumption that this stems from his failed marriages in the past as a poet. He can be a misogynist like an Athenian male without necessarily doing so because he is bitter as some scholars have argued. Euripides also seems to be interested in showing the consequences of adultery on children and families involve. And showing his disgust towards women who commits adultery can make him a misogynist but not necessarily because he experienced failed marriages as it is said. After all, Euripides portrayed the plights of the underprivileged like women in a patriarchal society in his *Medea* and other plays. And he also created courageous female sacrificial victims like Polyxena in his *Hecuba*. As John Ferguson has observed, Euripides is charges with misogyny when he gives prominence to the tragic women in his play by sometimes portraying them as criminals. Scholars like Schlegel and Mommsen have misinterpreted such character depiction by Euripides as a woman- hater.

It is also true that Euripides, in some of his plays, frequently uses the art of oratory in his characters' arguments concerning ethical and moral issues. But what is clear in most of such arguments is that the chorus or another character turns out to rebuke such act. The arguments between Phaedra and her nurse serve as evidence to this effect. Schlegel and other conservatives may have a point but the most important point to note is that isolating statements out of context without observing the next speech or the whole subject surely leads to incomplete interpretation or misunderstanding of the play. It is true that Euripides' characters philosophize on stage but this is not an invention. It is an innovative way of adopting the new culture during the fifth century into drama just like Aeschylus introduced one character in addition to the chorus and Sophocles also added another character to Aeschylus' when it was necessary and significant to do so in the theater. Scholars have not attacked these innovations as inventions contrary to the accepted conventions of the theater even when they are new additions. That notwithstanding, Euripides was caught up in the age of ideas, a period when oratory has become part of everyday language. Hence, the use of eloquent delivery skills which was part of the culture in the fifth century should not be considered as something evil as it is assumed by modern commentators like Schlegel. It is noteworthy that the exhibition of tradition and cultural values is evident in the *Hippolytus* from the beginning to the end of the play even though some arguments go beyond the dramatic relevance of the play.

I sought to re-examine and evaluate passages in Euripides' *Hecuba* that may have also been considered among the bases of the nonconformist charges

leveled against Euripides. I aimed to clarify some of the disagreements about the criticism and interpretations of the play. Euripides is accused by Aristophanes and some modern scholars as someone who destroys the popular traditional values of Athenian culture. But I argued that the *Hecuba* is among Euripides' plays which exemplify most of Athenian values even though the play is set outside Athens. For instance, I looked at the relevance of burial and funeral rites to both barbarians and the Athenians and the act of reciprocity or the culture of returning favours. These practices were part of the Athenian culture and looking at the use of these values and other beliefs in the play, I concluded that it is difficult to assume that Euripides is a destroyer of tradition or anti-traditionalist.

Concerning the charge of impiety in the *Hecuba*, I maintained that it is impossible for an atheist to recommend prayer or anything that has religious implication in Hecabe's situation. The chorus asked Hecabe to go to the altar and pray to the gods. Euripides accepts the fact that only the gods can help Hecabe out of her misery as well saving her daughter. It is unusual for someone who is attacked as an atheist to talk about religion or religious beliefs. Regarding the use of rhetorical skill in Odysseus' and Hecabe' arguments, I observed that eloquent delivery was not new to the Athenian audience, especially in fifth century Athens; and as Mastronarde has mentioned, it was not new on stage because oratorical skills was identified in Epic long before Euripides wrote.

I think that the brilliance of the rhetorical debates in Euripides works should be viewed from a cultural perspective where such skill is admired by the people who practiced it. I argued that the communicative intention here is to

expose some of the harmful effects of this skill. And as Hogan and Kastely rightly argue, Euripides' aim is to exhibit the effects of such eloquence at the expense of friendship and other relations. The obsession and quest for power and fame made Odysseus hurt his friends without thinking about the effects of his actions. I think that Euripides allows Odysseus the skills of eloquent delivery to call on the attention of the Athenians to the effect of this skill.

Hecabe is accused of deteriorating morally in the play and Euripides is accused of allowing her such presence of mind in her revenge. I agree with Gregory that there is nothing wrong with the use of sexual relation to ask or seek for favours. But a poet is expected to teach good morals and not immoral tricks even when it is practiced in the society. Exposing such immorality on stage is not what a good poet exhibits. Furthermore, Polymestor maliciously murdered his friend's son. He committed a crime and a sacrilegious act against the gods and humanity; hence, a mother's wrath. I maintained that Euripides' intention is not to present a tooth for a tooth or an eye for an eye episode or what we call retributive justice; but to criticize the corrupt nature of the Athenian jury system. The focus of the play lies in Hecabe's plea for law and justice to prevail. But that is not what she gets because in the fifth century, justice can be bought as long as one is able to deliver eloquently to defend his case. Justice is about how convincing one sound in the court and since Odysseus is a good speaker, Hecabe failed to attained justice for her son. Then when all her efforts failed, she resulted to revenge. I maintained that Euripides is not interested in the changing phases of Hecabe as it is often argued, but to expose and express the impact of the ignorance of both

Agamemnon and Odysseus as leaders of the army. I am of the opinion that if scholars look more critically into the subjects of the play and the theme that Euripides intended, and avoid focusing on one character or the unity of the play, they can escape some of these charges that are apparently the result of misunderstanding.

To conclude this dissertation, I will acknowledge that severally, both conservatives and liberals who have attempted to interpret Euripides' plays start by either accusing him of some of the above mentioned presuppositions or defending him. Some scholars have perceived Aristophanes' comedies, especially, the *Frogs* as the baseline for Euripides charges and attacks. However, that is not the case as I have discussed. Jebb, for instance, argues that a true literary critic or student of literature must not overlook the truth in Aristophanes' charges against Euripides, both artistically and morally. Because Euripides, the author of a dazzling compromise, the precursor of the romantic drama, is not a sound Hellenic artist but a herald of death to the art around which he throws these novel splendours.[129] Nevertheless, he asserts somewhere in his book that "Euripides would have found a freer scope for his peculiar gifts, and would have worked with more complete success, if he could have broken away from the trammels of tradition; if he could have multiplied the actors at will, chosen his subject-matter where he would, altered the style of the costumes, and abolished

[129]Richard Jebb, op. cit., p. 239

the chorus. But he could not thus emancipate himself, because tragedy was a part of the Dionysiac worship".[130]

From Jebb, it is evident that Euripides accepted the traditional myths, principles, values, and culture of the people and the theatrical genre. Jebb contradicts himself by averring that we should consider the charges of Aristophanes as the truth, however, he acknowledge that Euripides could not break away from the Athenian culture and tradition much as the conventions of the theater that Aristophanes accuses him of. From my discussions, I think that the difficulty that some scholars face in the interpretation of Euripides drama is the clear distinction between the form and content especially, in the time of Aeschylus and Sophocles. There are some basic conventions such as the use of the chorus in the plays, the use of the traditional myths as the source and some things that both Aeschylus and Sophocles employed which Euripides also did not escape using them. There is a governing diction and tone that defines a Greek tragedy but the style of each poet is different.

Literary, Euripides is considered as a nonconformist because he appears different in his style of presentation even though there are evidences of the accepted conventions of a play in Euripidean plays. In terms of diction, Euripides appears to be different from his predecessors because both the noble character and the commoner speak the same language and sometimes the slave speaks more rhetorical than the noble. The tone in Euripides' writings varies depending on the communicative intention. Euripides adopts the conventions in his plays but add

[130]Ibid., p. 244

his innovation to make his different to suit his age. For instance, Euripides wrote both the *Hippolytus* and *Hecuba* under the shadow of the great wars with Sparta. He loathed the wars and I think that this play exhibits some form of protest against wars. The *Hecuba* shows the ill and effect of war on mothers, wives, siblings, children, husbands and the city as a whole. Though Euripides chooses the same myths that Aeschylus and Sophocles used in their plays, his style of telling the story is different. This is not an invention because the period that each poet lived had its own traditional and cultural difficulties. So the means to deal with each may be different. Euripides wrote around the time that Athenians were seeking for answers to so many things that they did not understand about their religion, the gods, and other aspects of their day to day activities. The period was the peak of science and skepticism, intellectual and political ferment and it is probable that he may have been influenced by the new phase of Athenian culture and tradition.

Nevertheless, I think that Scholars like Mastronarde, Conacher, and Grube, who sympathizes with Euripides should not refuse to acknowledge the fact that the poet is influence by some of the new teachings and values during his time. He is a nonconformist in terms of his innovations in the theater. What is significant to note is the fact that such innovations were not radical or inventions outside the Athenian culture and tradition during his time. He was just being contemporaneous, showing that he was aware of the changes in the Athenian culture and tradition and the city as a whole. He only tried to let people know that there are trends and phases in Athenian society. I maintain that Euripides does not

deserve the extreme attacks from some modern scholars like Schmid, Schlegel, Michelini and others; neither should scholars such as Mastronarde, Grube and other exonerate the poet in everything even when it is necessary to recognize and admit to alterations. Hence, I think that Euripides can be considered as a conformist with innovative skills and by so doing avoid extreme criticisms but also recognize his innovations.

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