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TYRANNOI AND TYRANTS ON THE TRAGIC STAGE

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SUMMARY: The paper analyses the terms tyrannos and basileus in both Greek politics and Greek drama, taking under special scrutiny various connotations and associations of the terms tyrannos and tyrannis in the language of Attic tragedy.

‘Why is it titled *Tyrannos*?’ asks the anonymous author of one of the later hypotheses to the *Oedipus Rex*. One of those, one might add, usually laid to rest in old dusty editions of the play[1]. ‘In order to distinguish it from the other [Oedipus]’ follows the answer, to which an explanation of the particular choice of words is appended: ‘For the poets after Homer have adopted a peculiar habit of calling the kings who ruled before the Trojan war *tyrannoi*’[2].

[1] Among the more ‘recent’ ones it may be found in the Budé edition of Dain – Mazon (1958) and that of Colonna (Torino: Paravia, 1978) as well as in the recently (Cambridge, 2010) reprinted annotated edition by Jebb (1914).

[2] διὰ τί Τύραννος ἐπιγέγραπται. ὁ Τύραννος Οἰδιπους ἐπὶ διακρίσει θατέρου ἐπιγέγραπται. (…) ἴδιον δέ τι πεπόνθασιν οἱ μεθ᾽ Ὅμηρον ποιηταὶ τοὺς πρὸ τῶν Τρωϊκῶν βασιλεῖς τυράννους προσαγορεύοντες (Arg. II *OT*).

In the centuries to come this became orthodoxy, in fact, common knowledge[3]. Not that it has always gone unquestioned[4], but there are seemingly good reasons to take it as it is. Leaving aside for the moment the tragedians and the idiosyncrasies of their language, it may be pointed out that the picture of the *tyrannos*, indeed a tyrant, as a violent usurper on the one hand, and a cruel and wicked despot on the other clearly emerges only in the fourth century, in the political philosophy of Plato and Aristotle[5]. That the first explicit differentiation between *tyrannis* and *basileia* is found no earlier than Thucydides[6]. That tragedy's contemporary, Herodotus living and composing most of his *Histories* in Athens, *apparently* uses the terms *tyrannos*, *basileus* and *mounarkhos* with little or no distinction[7]. That the poets of choral lyric, performed next to tragedy during the Great Dionysia, unashamedly praised the historical tyrants, their rule and tyranny in general.[8]

[3] 'τύραννος hat nicht den geringsten gehässigen Beigeschmack […] wir stehen in Banne der späteren Entwicklung, der Platon die Wege gewiesen hat' (Wilamowitz--Moellendorff 1895: 2, 13)'τύραννος, τυραννίς, τυραννικός never have in themselves a bad sense in the fifth century' (Page 1962: 98, ad E. *Med*. 348); Andrewes 1956: 22f.; Winnington-Ingram 1980: 192; most recently Parker 1998: 158f.; Berve 1967: 1, 193f applies this indifference more restrictively to Sophocles; cf. the definitions in the lexica of the tragedians: Italie s.v. τύραννος; τυραννικός; and τυραννίς – *rex*, *dominus*; *regius*; and *regnum*, dominatio (respectively); Allen, Italie 1954: s.v. τύραννος – *princeps*, *principalis*; Ellendt 1872: s.v. τυραννεύω, τυραννέω; τυραννίς; τύραννος – *dominor*; *regnum*, *dominatio*; *rex* (respectively).

[4] Berve (1967: 1, 193f.) finds a 'terminologische Unterscheidung zwischen legitimem Königtum und usurpierter Tyrannis' in Aeschylus and Euripides; cf. also the useful overview of the dissenting opinions in O'Neil 1986: 26.

[5] Pl. *Resp*. 562a-80c; Ar. *Pol*. 1313a-15b; Andrewes 1956: 20-30.

[6] τυραννίδες ἐν ταῖς πόλεσι καθίσταντο, τῶν προσόδων μειζόνων γιγνομένων (πρότερον δὲ ἦσαν ἐπὶ ῥητοῖς γέρασι πατρικαὶ βασιλεῖαι) (Th. 1, 13, 1) 'Along with the increase of their [i.e. of the Hellenes] revenue tyrannies began to be established in most of their cities, whereas before that there had been hereditary kingships based on fixed prerogatives (tr. Forster Smith)'; the historicity of the illegitimacy-criterion in relation to the archaic tyrannos' rule has been plausibly questioned by Anderson 2005: 198f.; the same has been done for its allegedly non-hereditary nature by Parker 1998: 168f.: 'tyranny was, in essence, hereditary'.

[7] Thus Andrewes 1956: 27; Berve 1967: 1, 195; Hall 1989: 155, n. 183; Parker 1998: 161f.; contra: Ferrill 1978; more nuanced assessments may be found in White1955: 3f; Dewald 2003.

[8] Pindar O1, P1, 2, 3 (Hieron of Syracuse); O2, O3 (Theron of Acragas); Bacchylides 3, 4 and 5 (Hieron); for odes in honor of other Sicilians connected to the tyrants

However, neither the poets of the Greek lyric nor Herodotus can be taken as representative for the 'Athenian' views, considering their dialectal differences and their generic conventions, which draw their origins from very different, un-Athenian *milieux*. For the attitudes on the Attic soil seem to have been far from indifferent[9]. The Athenian democracy began with the expulsion of tyrants, an event subsequently reshaped into the more violent form of the primordial, founding tyrannicide[10]. A would-be *tyrannos* was subject to ostracism, expulsion and exile from Athens under the pain of death. A would-be *tyrannos* was set outside the law, literally rendered an outlaw (*atimos*), in an old legislation traditionally attributed to Solon[11]. Every Assembly meeting was preceded by a solemn curse against anyone conspiring 'to introduce a *tyrannos* or to become one himself'; perhaps the same was true of the proceedings of the Council[12]. The oath sworn every year by the entire body of six thousand jurymen contained similar anti-tyrannical clauses[13]. The *tyrannos* was therefore literally and symbolically banished from Athenian democracy, its laws, its institutions and its discourses.

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cf. McGlew 1993: 35; on Pindar,s alleged criticism of tyrants in P11, 52f. see below.

[9] For the following in general cf. Rosivach 1988 (esp. 45f.) and Raaflaub 2003.

[10] On the competing traditions of the overthrow of tyranny – 'Alcmaeonid', stressing the role of Sparta and Delphi (instigated by the clan) in the expulsion of Hippias vs. the official tyrannicide cult – cf. Podlecki 1966, esp. 130f.; on the ideology of tyrannicide cf. Raaflaub 2003: 63-68.

[11] 'θέσμια τάδε Ἀθηναίων ἐστὶ καὶ πάτρια· ἐάν τινες {τυραννεῖν} ἐπανιστῶνται ἐπὶ τυραννίδι ἢ συγκαθιστῆι τὴν τυραννίδα, ἄτιμον εἶναι καὶ αὐτὸν καὶ γένος.' (Ar. *Ath. Pol*. 16, 10 (Chambers 1986) = fr. 37a Ruschenbusch 1966); on the archaic meaning of ἄτιμος here – not 'disenfranchised', but 'outlawed' – cf. Ostwald 1955: 106f.; Gagarin 1981: 76; its attribution to Solon (based on *Ath. Pol.* 8, 4) is, however, debated; both Ostwald (1955: 106f.) and Gagarin (1981) argue that it predates the Solonian legislation.

[12] Parodied in Aristophanes: εἴ τις ἐπιβουλεύει τι τῶι δήμωι κακὸν | τῶι τῶν γυναικῶν, ἢ 'πικηρυκεύεται | Εὐριπίδηι Μήδοις τ' ἐπὶ βλάβηι τινὶ | τῆι τῶν γυναικῶν ἢ τυραννεῖν ἐπινοεῖ, | ἢ τὸν τύραννον συγκατάγειν (Ar. *Th*. 335-9); cf. Rhodes 1972: 36f.; for other Aristophanic jokes about *tyrannis* (e.g. Vesp. 417, 464, 486-502) cf. Henderson 2003; on other manifestations of the Athenians' fear of tyranny in the 5th century cf. Romilly 1969: 176.f; Raaflaub 2003.

[13] Quoted at length in Dem. 24, 149-151; καὶ τύραννον οὐ ψηφιοῦμαι εἶναι οὐδ' ὀλιγαρχίαν (149); cf. also the oath imposed on all citizens mentioned in the Demophantos-decree (410), preserved in And. 1, 96f. (at 1, 97).

Now it may well have been that the language of tragedy, though inherently bound with the political and juridical discourse of fifth-century Athens[14], remained somehow impervious to its tyrannical preoccupations. After all its archaic coloring, dialectal variations and many other semantic and syntactic oddities firmly set it apart from the literary specimens of other Athenian discursive formations. The language of tragedy, as Aristotle postulated, should differ from that of everyday business[15]. Perhaps therefore the peculiar, deeply unfamiliar to the contemporary political discourse use of the notions *tyrannos*/*tyrannis* in tragedy, may be counted among these differences…

TYRANNICAL HYBRIDS

This, however, is at the best only half of the truth. For it is not difficult to find in tragedy the concepts of *tyrannis* and *tyrannos* explicitly rejected and condemned. And that by no-one else but tragic kings. More than once do we also see an arguably ‘good’ ruler, whose very personal or sovereignty is clearly opposed to whatever there may be lurking behind the notion *tyrannos* or *tyrannis*. ‘Who is the *tyrannos* of this land?’ asks the obnoxious Herald Euripides’ *Suppliant Women*; ‘you have started on false note’, corrects him astutely Theseus, ‘asking for a *tyrannos* of this land. For this polis is not ruled by one man, but, remains free (*eleuthera*)’[16]. ’I do not hold a *tyrannis*, as if over barbarians’ – or – ‘as that of the barbarians’ (the Greek syntax is quite ambiguous here)[17] – says another Athenian hero-king, Demophon, Theseus’ son, in the *Children of Heracles*. In two other Euripidean tragedies, the *Orestes* and the *Helen* respectively, Agamemnon, the High King of the Greeks, is described as ‘not *tyrannos*, nor leading his army by

[14] For which see e.g. Vernant, Vidal-Naquet 1988: 23-48; Lanza 1997: 19-46, esp. 30f.; Goldhill 1986, esp. 57-78; 1990; 2000; Euben 1990: esp. 38-59; Longo 1990; Ober, Strauss 1990.

[15] λέξεως δὲ ἀρετὴ σαφῆ καὶ μὴ ταπεινὴν εἶναι (Ar. *Po* 1458a18); on the stylistic and syntactic distinctiveness of tragedy cf. Bers 1984: esp. 1-21.

[16] ΚΗ· τίς γῆς τύραννος; πρὸς τίν᾿ ἀγγεῖλαί με χρὴ | λόγους Κρέοντος […]; | ΘΗ· πρῶτον μὲν ἤρξω τοῦ λόγου ψευδῶς ξένε, | ζητῶν τύραννον ἐνθάδ᾿· οὐ γὰρ ἄρχεται | ἑνὸς πρὸς ἀνδρὸς ἀλλ ἐλευθέρα πόλις. (E. *Supp*. 399-404).

[17] οὐ γὰρ τυραννίδ᾿ ὥστε βαρβάρων ἔχω (E. *Hcld*. 423).

force'[18]. His rule of Argos is already in Aeschylus implicitly, but clearly enough opposed to *tyrannis*, introduced upon his death by Aegisthus and Clytemnestra[19].

All these non-tyrannical hero-kings, however, have one thing in common: they are no real kings, but strange, anachronistic political hybrids[20]. Kings, whose monarchy is, in fact, thinly disguised democracy, of which, furthermore, they are sometimes seen to be fervent champions, as Theseus and to a lesser extent Demophon. The former explicitly acknowledges the peoples' sovereignty – in fact 'monarchy' (*monarchia*)[21] – while the latter speaks of assemblies debating the validity of the decisions he makes, during which he is accused of folly.[22] Even Aeschylus' Agamemnon is seen to recognize the prerogatives of democratic institutions[23], whereas his Euripidean namesakes in the Orestes and Electra are revealingly said to have been 'deemed worthy to rule', and 'followed by soldiers of their own free will'[24].

The conceptual opposition emerging here is, therefore, not that between monarchy against tyranny, but between democracy and one-man rule in general[25]. Theseus, the most verbose among the democratic 'kings' in his invective against monarchs uses the terms *tyrannos* and

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[18] ὃς Ἑλλάδος | ἦρξ᾽ ἀξιωθείς, οὐ τύραννος (Or. 1167f.); τύραννος οὐδὲ πρὸς βίαν στρατηλατῶν (*Hel*. 395); on the syntax of the negation οὐδὲ cf. Kannicht 1969: 2, 125.

[19] The chorus commenting the killing of Agamemnon: ὁρᾶν πάρεστι· φροιμιάζονται γὰρ ὡς | τυραννίδος σημεῖα πράσσοντες πόληι (A. *Ag*. 1354f.; cf. 1365); cf. *Cho*. 1046f.; see also Podlecki 1986: 94f.; Barceló 1993: 134f.

[20] Podlecki 1986: 77f., 85f.

[21] δόξαι δὲ χρήιζω καὶ πόλει πάσηι τόδε, δόξει δ᾽ ἐμοῦ θέλοντος· ἀλλὰ τοῦ λόγου προσδοὺς ἔχοιμ᾽ ἂν δῆμον εὐμενέστερον. Καὶ γὰρ κατέστησ᾽ αὐτὸν ἐς μοναρχίαν ἐλευθερώσας τήνδ᾽ ἰσοψηφον πόλιν (E. *Supp*. 349-353); 'I want the city too to ratify this decision, and ratify it they will since that is what I wish. But if I add my reasons I will have more of the people's good will. And in fact I have made the people sovereign (*katestēs' es monarchian*) by freeing this city and giving them equal votes' (Kovacs 1998).

[22] καὶ νῦν πυκνὰς ἂν συστάσεις ἄν εἰσίδοις | τῶν μὲν λεγόντων ὡς δίκαιος ἦ ξένοις | ἱκέταις ἀρήγειν, τῶν δὲ μωρίαν ἐμοῦ | κατηγορούντων (*Hcld* 415-418); cf. Barcelò 1993: 142.

[23] Ag. 844f.; cf. Podlecki 1986: 86-93, esp. 92.

[24] ἀξιωθείς, οὐ τύραννος (*Or*. 1168); στρατηλατῶν | ἑκοῦσι δ᾽ ἄρξας Ἑλλάδος νεανίαις (*Hel*. 935f.); cf. E. *El*. 1082 (ὅν Ἑλλὰς αὑτῆς εἵλετο στρατηλάτην); *IA* 84f. (κἀμὲ στρατηγεῖν… εἵλοντο).

[25] Romilly 1969: 179; Ober 2003: 224f.

basileus with no distinction whatsoever[26]. A revealing parallel may be found in Herodotus' celebrated 'constitutional debate', where Otanes, the detractor of monarchy and champion of democracy inveighs against sole-rulership using *mounarchos* and *tyrannos* indifferently[27]. Perhaps therefore it is right to conclude with Tuplin that:

> legitimate monarchs were not a class towards which Athenian democratic sentiment need have felt particularly protective […]. [T]he occasional apparent indifference in the use of τύραννος as against βασιλεύς or other designations in Attic tragedy does not mean that tyranny is being intermittently divested of its opprobrious overtones […] but rather reflects an increasing feeling that all monarchs, whatever one might call them *technically* [ChT], in the end represent an ideologically unacceptable phenomenon[28].

In other words, it is not the 'tyrant' promoted to 'king', but the 'king' degraded to 'tyrant'. Neither could be accommodated in the discourse of Athenian democracy and therefore no notional distinction between them was required. Given that tragedy, by generic definition, deals with mythical kings, such negative indifference may be seen to reflect no longer on the particular, tyrannical individuals but on the tragic hero in general. As Seaford in his study of tragic tyranny puts it:

> In tragedy […] [t]he autonomous hero of the myth, when imagined in the polis, can retain his autonomy only by becoming its *tyrannos*. And so the tragic hero embodies the Athenian experience of tyranny[29].

[26] βασιλεύς: 444; τύραννος / τυραννίς: 429, 446, 451, 453; cf. Parker 1998: 160.

[27] Hdt 3, 80; noted by Parker 1998: 164 and Dewald 2003: 35.

[28] Tuplin 1985: 374; cf. Rosivach 1988: 46 'the tyrant is an ideological figure, a symbol of the Athenian community's axiomatic belief that monarchy is an unacceptable form of government in Athens'; O'Neil (1986: 40) argues that there was a considerable overlap between *tyrannos* and other words for one man rule, but adds in a footnote (84) that '*monarchos* was normally a harsh word'; see also Nagy 1990: 182f.

[29] Seaford 2003: 102; cf. also Hall 1989: 155 on the 'ambivalent status of the tragic king'; on 'generic definition' cf. Else's (1957: 386f.) discussion on the assessments of ancient grammarians: 'in tragoedia publicarum regiarumque [domuum fortunae conprehendentur] […] introducuntur heroes duces, reges' (Diomedes), ' non in aulis regiis, ut sunt personae tragicae' (Donatus).

This is a welcome twist to the by now traditional way of dealing with the uneasy understanding of *tyrannos*-related words in tragedy, according to which, as White has already argued more than half a century ago, 'there can be seen an effective *double entendre* between the conventional meaning of king and the derogatory meaning of despot'[30]. Not that there is anything essentially wrong with this observation, especially when compared to the even more traditional assumption that in tragedy these terms bear no opprobrium whatsoever. The problem lies elsewhere: in the fact that it places tragedy in a social vacuum, focusing exclusively on what is found in and demanded by the text itself, and disregarding its relationship with the political discourse of democratic Athens.

That tragedy indeed presents us with a negative indifference to the terminology and conceptualization of one-man rule, is, surprisingly enough, corroborated by one of the few instances where an actual monarchy (and not thinly disguised democracy) is sincerely (and not cynically) praised. Such is the speech of the obnoxious Herald in Euripides' *Suppliant Women*. Such is also, incidentally, the speech of the Herodotean Darius in the 'constitutional debate'. Both speakers share one apparent peculiarity. While their adversaries use *tyrannos* and *basileus* indiscriminately, they themselves seem quite careful to avoid the 't' word[31]. A meticulously constructed image of 'good' monarchy, therefore, appears to presuppose a precise terminological distinction; in every other case both 'king' and 'tyrant' are viewed with the same distrustful eye.

Now it is true that there are many instances of the term *tyrannos* in tragedy where neither the semantic nor pragmatic context demands any opprobrious connotation; where it does indeed seem to refer to nothing else but a monarch, a sole-ruler – or his sovereignty. The most conspicuous examples here are Demophon in the *Heraclidae* and Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*. Of the former we hear from the chorus, who indignantly reproaches the Mycenean Herald for abusing the rights of suppliants:

[30] White 1955: 3; acknowledged also by Andrewes (1956: 23) with particular relation to Euripides; concession to this view is also made by Winnington-Ingram (1980: 192); cf. also Jebb 1914: 118 (ad *OT* 873); Cerri 1982: 146.

[31] Noted by Ferrill 1978: 393; Parker 1998: 164.

> Should you not have respected the freedom of this land by telling its king (*tyrannōi*) before showing this boldness rather than forcibly dragging these strangers from the gods' sanctuary?[32]

The choice of words seems particularly striking here. In the above quotation from the (later) *Suppliant Women* Theseus explicitly opposes the existence of a *tyrannos* with the freedom of the *polis*. To be sure, in the *Children of Heracles* this must be taken in the first place in the sense of independence, of Athens' sovereignty embodied in the persona of its ruler. Demophon must act here in the capacity of a king, to whom – whoever may he be – the Herald should have addressed his business first. Such is the tragic convention, voiced out by Theseus in Sophocles' *Oedipus in Colonus*, yet another figure of a democratic king[33]. Incidentally, when observing it, tragic heralds, messengers and generally foreigners are usually seen to arrive on stage asking for no-one else but the *tyrannos*[34]. Like the Theban Herald in the *Suppliant Women*… Demophon however, soon enough turns out to be a true 'democrat', and quite explicitly denies having anything to do with *tyrannis*. Why then does the chorus use the dangerous 't' word at all? Because Demophon is not a 'good' king, as the one portrayed by the Theban Herald; a true monarch, only efficient and just. He is at once a king (and only that!) and non-king, a tragic chimaera, combining two mutually exclusive concepts – royal authority and a democratic respect towards his fellow-citizens. Once again therefore we are dealing here not with an opposition between 'good' and 'bad' monarchy, which may have required such careful terminological distinction, but with an opposition between monarchy and democracy, which could – and did – afford to be indifferent to it. Insofar as a monarch Demophon has every right to be called *tyrannos*. Which is in no way to suggest that he was a tyrant.

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[32] οὔκουν τυράννωι τῆσδε γῆς φράσαντά σε | χρῆν ταῦτα τολμᾶν ἀλλὰ μὴ βίαι ξένους | θεῶν ἀφέλκειν, γῆν σέβοντ ἐλευθέραν; (*Hcld* 111f.); Hall (1989: 155, n. 184) cryptically suggests 'ironic overtones' in these words.

[33] *OC* 924-928; as a monarch he is seen at 66f.; whereas at 947f. he recognizes the authority of the Areopagus.

[34] Cf. S. *OT* 924f.; *El*. 660f.; E. *Andr*. 882.

The case of the Aeschylean Agamemnon or, to be more precise, of his son's peculiar choice of words opens the door to yet another apparent oddity of the tragic discourse. According to Orestes his father 'did not die in a manner which befits a *tyrannos*'[35]. A properly 'tyrannical' death therefore is meant to provide a sharp, biting contrast with Agamemnon's ignominious end. This, in turn presupposes that a *tyrannos* is someone to whom particular respect is due. Now for the tragic standards this is still quite a modest positive appraisal, closer perhaps to the apparently 'neutral' uses of the term in the sense of 'monarch'. Aeschylus' successors were far more explicit and exuberant in this respect.

Among the many misgivings Plato had about tragedy, owing to which he deemed it unfit for his ideal polis, was the fact that it 'glorified' tyranny[36]. Perhaps, for the sake of consistency, the word *tyrannis* would be a better choice here, but for Plato *tyrannis* and tyranny were already the same thing. The main culprit is precisely pinpointed: Euripides who once happened to call tyranny 'godlike' (*isotheos*). This is no empty accusation. Indeed *tyrannis* – and here I would insist on the Greek notion – is called 'godlike' in his *Trojan Women*. And that not in a sophistical 'lesser argument', say of a tyrant giving a cynical eulogy of his tyranny, but in a lament of the Trojan queen over the broken body of her young grandson, Astyanax, to whom the 'godlike *tyrannis*' of his forefathers, along with other joys of life, has thus been cruelly denied[37].

This is, of course, no exception, no rare subversive oddity of the notorious Euripides, studiously picked out by a great connoisseur of tragedy; on the contrary, as he himself is keen to stress, this was a standard practice of the tragic poets. Plato can usually be trusted on

[35] πάτερ, τρόποισιν οὐ τυραννικοῖς θανών (A. *Cho*. 479); one of the earliest instances of this adjective (Garvie 1986: 175, *ad loc.*); cf. the scholiast's explication: οὐχ ὡς βασιλεῖ πρέπει, ἀλλ᾽ ἀδόξως.

[36] καὶ ὡς ἰσόθεον γ᾽, ἔφη, τὴν τυραννίδα ἐγκωμιάζει, καὶ ἕτερα πολλά, καὶ οὗτος [scil. Euripides] καὶ οἱ ἄλλοι ποιηταί. τοιγάρτοι (…) αὐτοὺς εἰς τὴν πολιτείαν οὐ παραδεξόμεθα ἅτε τυραννίδος ὑμνητάς. (Pl. *Resp*. 568b).

[37] εἰ μὲν γὰρ ἔθανες πρὸ πόλεως ἥβης τυχὼν | γάμων τε καὶ τῆς ἰσοθέου τυραννίδος, | μακάριος ἦσθ᾽ ἄν, εἴ τι τῶνδε μακάριον (E. *Tro*. 1168ff); Harder (1985: 245), however, presents opinions referring Plato's criticism to E. fr. 250 Kn (below).

such matters, and despite the rather modest selection of the tragedians at our disposal we do have a rare opportunity to verify his misgivings. For *tyrannis* in Greek tragedy is seen not only to be 'godlike', but also the 'greatest among the gods', as in its eulogy given by Eteocles in Euripides' *Phoenician Women*[38]; elsewhere, somewhat more modestly, it is ranked second, for the *tyrannos*, unlike the gods, is not immortal, though in every other respect he is their peer[39].

The *tyrannos* is 'happy' (*eudaimōn*), 'blessed' (*makarios*), 'splendid' or 'radiant' (*lampros*)[40]. He is *olbios* – an almost formulaic epithet associated with *tyrannos* and *tyrannis*[41]. *Olbios* is more than just 'prosperous', more than just 'blessed', more than just 'rich', and more than just 'happy'. *Olbios* is all that – and still much more[42]. *Tyrannis* is therefore 'aimed at from all sides with dreadful lust', and it has 'many lovers '[43]. It is a fantastic state of absolute joy, and at the same time an object of a erotically colored fantasy, an almost carnal craving.

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[38] ἐγὼ γὰρ οὐδέν, μῆτερ, ἀποκρύψας ἐρῶ· | ἄστρων ἂν ἔλθοιμ' ἡλίου πρὸς ἀντολὰς | καὶ γῆς ἔνερθε, δυνατὸς ὢν δρᾶσαι τάδε, | τὴν θεῶν μεγίστην ὥστ' ἔχειν Τυραννίδα. (E. *Phoe*. 503-506); according to Mastronarde (1994: 292f., *ad loc*.) the word here has 'negative associations' (fit for a clearly 'lesser argument'), but the whole utterance is nonetheless located within 'the tradition that views it [i.e. *tyrannis*] as a god-like licence to do with impunity whatever one wishes' (Mastronarde (1994: 292); on the 'tradition' cf. Edmunds 2002: 74.

[39] τυραννίδ' ἣ θεῶν δευτέρα νομίζεται· | τὸ μὴ θανεῖν γὰρ οὐκ ἔχει, τὰ δ' ἄλλ' ἔχει. (E. fr. 250 Kn; *Archelaus*); cf. also Harder 1985: 244f.

[40] *Eudaimōn*: S. Ant. 506f.; E. *Alc*. 653f; *Phoe*. 549 (ambiguous); *makarios*: E. *El*. 708-11; *lampros*: E. fr. 626 Kn (*Pleisthenes*); cf. O'Neil 1986: 28.

[41] E.g E. *HF* 64f.; 642f.; *Med*. 740; *Alc*. 286; fr. 332 Kn (*Dictys*); cf. the Herodotean logos of Croesus (the *tyrannos*) and Solon (the 'sage'), where *olbios* is the keyword of their discussion (Hdt. 1, 30-34); surprisingly enough neither *olbios* nor any of the above epithets are found in Lanza's list of notional associations of the term *tyrannos* (Lanza 1997: 242f.), where the only words remotely related to this sphere are: πλοῦτος, χρήματα ἔρωτες (δεινοί).

[42] Cf. Nagy 1990: 276-282; Crane 1996: 61f., 80f. (according to whom the term has a distinctly more shallow meaning – 'wealth' – when applied by the Herodotean Croesus to his own *tyrannis*); Kurke 1999: 247; Wohl 2002: 231.

[43] ἡ γὰρ τυραννὶς πάντοθεν τοξεύεται | δεινοῖς ἔρωσιν (E. fr. 850 Kn); τυραννίς χρῆμα σφαλερόν, πολλοὶ δὲ αὐτῆς ἐρασταί εἰσι (*Hdt* 3, 53); on the erotic associations of the verb τοξεύω see LSJ s.v. II.2; cf. also Nagy's remark (1990: 289f.): 'the word *erōs* is used in the *Histories* of Herodotus only in two senses: sexual desire and the desire for tyranny'.

In order to flesh out the ideological underworks of this uneasy relationship Wohl turns to the Lacanian concept of *jouissance*[44]. *Jouissance*, to put it briefly, perhaps drastically impoverishing Lacan, is a state of constant fulfillment; a state unattainable, and therefore projected into the realm of the Other; a state of fantasy, therefore, and, obviously, of quasi-sexual desire[45]. Such is, according to Wohl, the democratic appreciation of the *tyrannos*-figure himself, who:

> stands not only outside of the political economy of classical Athens – above law or constitution – but also outside its physic economy of desire and deffered satisfaction, *ekstatic* [WV] to the pleasure principle and its logic of lack (Wohl 2002: 237).

The 'pleasure principle' is based on the alternation of pleasure and displeasure (or at least the cessation of the former, which in itself, is obviously unpleasant), of happiness and unhappiness[46]. Just like the human life, as it was envisaged by the Greeks, is 'an inevitable mixture of blessings and evils'; the *tyrannos* stands above it, outside of it (*ekstasis*), for in his case 'every loss is his gain, every lack a surfeit' – a phenomenon revealingly illustrated in the Herodotean story of Polycrates' ring[47]. *Tyrannis* is therefore the antithesis of absolute lack and as such it is frequently placed in a polar opposition to such state of misery, in which the tragic hero frequently finds himself:

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44 Wohl 2002: 224-249 at 237f.; on jouissance in general see Braunstein 2003.

45 'Jouissance is the dimension discovered by the analytic experience that confronts desire at its opposite pole. If desire is fundamentally lack, lack in being, jouissance is positivity, it is a «something» lived by a body when pleasure stops being pleasure. It is a plus, a sensation that is beyond pleasure' (Braunstein 2003: 104); one of its particular meanings, 'orgasm', gives the Lacanian jouissance a strong sexual overtone (hence it is always left untranslated, becoming thus a concept on its own).

46 This is what sets apart the Lacanian jouissance from 'ordinary' satisfaction, the later being subject to the 'pleasure principle'; as observed by Braunstein (2003: 107) 'the orgasm, obedient to the pleasure principle, is the paragon of «satisifaction» and not so much jouissance since it represents its interruption; the orgasm demands the capitulation of jouissance to the commandments of a natural law'.

47 Hdt 3, 43, 1; cf. Wohl 2002: 240f.

> see what misery is mine: I was a queen (*tyrannos*) but now I am your slave, I was blessed with children once, but now I am both old and childless, without city, bereft of friends the most unfortunate of mortals[48].

All this is, of course, no wanton, perverse cynicism on the part of the democratic tragedians. On the contrary, the desire, the joy and the charms – indeed *jouissance* – of *tyrannis* was a motive firmly inscribed into the poetic heritage of Athenian tragedy. Even the scrapes of archaic lyric (both choral and monodic) we have now, present us with the 'charms of tyranny' in their full bloom. A thorough study of these phenomena is far beyond the modest scope of this paper[49]. Suffice to point out the pieces, in which a very different sentiment is – apparently – expressed. Alcaeus, the implacable enemy of the Mitylenian tyrants, nonetheless calls the *tyrannis* bestowed upon Pittacus a 'charming glory'[50]. Solon, the great lawgiver and the patriarch of Athenian democracy, to whom the severe legislation against tyranny is traditionally ascribed, and who reportedly turned it down, when it was offered to him, voices out its charms through his imaginary critic:

> Solon is by nature a man of shallow mind and a fool. When the god offered him good things, he did not accept them. He cast a great net round his quarry but stood in wonderment and did not draw it tight, bereft of courage and sense alike. If I had gained power, obtained vast wealth, and become tyrant of Athens for only a single day, I'd be willing to be flayed into a wineskin afterwards and to have my line wiped out[51].

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[48] ἰδοῦ με κἀνάθρησον οἷ' ἔχω κακά. | τύραννος ἦ ποτ' ἀλλὰ νῦν δούλη σέθεν, | εὔπαις ποτ' οὖσα, νῦν δὲ γραῦς ἄπαις θ' ἅμα, | ἄπολις ἔρημος ἀθλιωτάτη βροτῶν. (E. *Hec*. 806-811; tr. Kovacs 1995); cf. E. *Hec*. 55f.; *Tro*. 472f.; *Andr*. 301f.

[49] For this see Nagy 1990: 275-313; cf. Young 1968: 10f.; McGlew 1993: 30-42; Parker 1998: 150-154; Anderson 2005: 203-210.

[50] Φιττάκωι δὲ δίδοις κῦδος ἐπήρ[ατ]ον (Alc. fr. 70 W).

[51] οὐκ ἔφυ Σόλων βαθύφρων οὐδὲ βουλήεις ἀνήρ· | ἐσθλὰ γὰρ θεοῦ διδόντος αὐτός οὐκ ἐδέξατο· | περιβαλὼν δ' ἄγραν ἀγασθεὶς οὐκ ἐπέσπασεν μέγα | δίκτυον, θυμοῦ θ' ἁμαρτῆι καὶ φρενῶν ἀποσφαλείς· | ἤθελον γάρ κεν κρατήσας, πλοῦτον ἄφθονον λαβὼν | καὶ τυραννεύσας Ἀθηνέων μοῦνον ἡμέραν μίαν, | ἀσκὸς ὕστερον δεδάρθαι κἀπιτετρῖφθαι γένος (Sol. fr. 33 W = Plu., Sol. 14, 9); cf. the story reported by Plu. (*Sol*. 14.8) πρὸς μὲν τοὺς φίλους εἶπεν [scil. Solon], ὡς λέγεται, καλὸν μὲν εἶναι τὴν τυραννίδα χωρίον, οὐκ ἔχειν δ' ἀπόβασιν.

Is this in any way meant to be taken that Solon and Alcaeus considered *tyrannis* a good form of government? An admirable polity benefiting the state and its citizens? The invectives of Alcaeus – or rather 'Alcaeus', the lyrical subject of the poetic fragments – may well be resonating with personal resentment, which seems all the more conspicuous in his obsession with Pittacus' alleged low birth: not a good candidate for a *tyrannos*; not as good as 'Alcaeus' himself, perhaps, who thus turns out, to use Plutarch's *bon mot*, not so much *misotyrannos* as *misopittakos*[52]. Solon, however, rejects *tyrannis* on principle[53]. And even in his political elegies, it appears as a charming object of desire.

The reasons for this apparent contradiction may seem obvious enough, articulated most clearly and simply by Leo Strauss: 'tyranny is bad for the city but good for the tyrant, for the tyrannical life is the most enjoyable and desirable way of life'[54]. The city, however, does not frequently come into the picture in archaic poetry. But on the rare occasions, when it does, the joyful and blissful *tyrannos* indeed turns out to be its devourer[55]. Not until Solon, however, does anyone seem to mind…

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[52] Plu. *Brut*. 8, 5 (of Cassius): μᾶλλον ἰδίαι μισοκαῖσαρ ἢ κοινῆι μισοτύραννος; on the 'personal animus' of Alcaeus' antityrannical poetry cf. Anderson 2005: 205: 'the historical Alcaeus had very probably struggled hard to establish a *turannis* for himself'.

[53] οὐδέ μοι τυραννίδος | ἁνδάνει βίηι τι[. .].ε[ι]ν (fr. 34 W; [ῥέζ]ειν Kenyon); τυραννίδος δὲ καὶ βίης ἀμειλίχου | οὐ καθηψάμην μιάνας καὶ καταισχύνας κλέος, οὐδὲν αἰδέομαι (fr. 32 W); the sense of μιάνας καὶ καταισχύνας κλέος is, however, disputed: are the participles circumstancially linked with the hypothetically positive καθηψάμην giving the sense of 'staining and disgracing my reputation by grasping tyranny' (e.g. Gerber's Loeb translation; McGlew 1993: 102f.) or – with its negation, giving the sense 'staining etc. by not grasping' (recently Anderson 2005: 206, n. 82); obviously the latter reading stems from the tradition of seeing *tyrannis* as a glorious object of desire; cf. Noussia-Fantuzzi 2010: 430f. for an overview of the discussion (arguing for the former interpretation).

[54] Strauss 2000: 40; cf. Connor 1977: 98. '[t]he average Greek was frimly enough convinced that he did not want to be the subject of a tyrant, but he was not so firmly convinced that he would not like to be a tyrant himself, nor could he withhold his admiration from a man who had succeeded in making such a position for himself' and ibid 102: ‚to the tyrant his rule is a blessing, to the city it is a curse' ; see also Andrewes 1956: 25; this may be seen to go a little too far, projecting to the 'average' Athenian demesman the dream of mighty aristocrats from the archaic age; cf. Raaflaub 2003: 78.

[55] κῆνος δὲ παώθεις Ατρεΐδα | δαπτέτω πόλιν, 'but let him married into the family of the Atridae devour the city' (Alc. fr. 70 W); cf. Thgn. 1181 (δημόφαγος τύρανος);

Blessed *tyrannis*, the object of aristocratic desire (for it was the archaic aristocracy that both 'produced' and 'consumed' its praises) was therefore unacceptable to Solon on political grounds – but not only that. Not only on account of the 'other side' of tyrannical bliss – that of the polis and its citizens – but also of the very bliss itself. Enter Croesus, the blessed (*olbiōtatos*) ruler of Lydia, the fifth and the last in the dynasty of Mermnads, in a somewhat awkward choice of words continuously referred to as *tyrannos* by Herodotus[56]. The choice, of course, may already appear far less awkward, seeing that Croesus like hardly anyone else is the embodiment of exuberant luxuriance, bliss and happiness. And yet precisely this bliss and happiness of his are exposed here as empty, and that by no-one else but Solon. To be sure, the historical Solon, the lawgiver and author political elegies, gives way here to what Stehle calls, a 'construction' or 'configuration' of 'Solon' based an essentially democratic 'social memory', and projected thus into the persona of its founding father[57].

'It is impossible for a man to have everything' – time aided by divine envy vindicates the truthfulness of 'Solon's' words, which in the end Croesus himself, already on the pyre, is forced to acknowledge. However, it is not only the 'cosmic inscrutability' and the mutability of man's fate – of which Croesus himself turns out to be the paradigm[58] – but also the 'egalitarian ideology of the city' founded on the abovementioned pleasure-principle, the principle of moderation: 'many

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the figure of the tyrant, however, may also sometimes appear as the 'straightener' of social ills as in Thgn 39f. (εὐθύντηρ – of the hypothetical *tyrannos* of Megara); Hdt 1, 92 (δικαιώσει – of Cypselus), cf. Nagy 1990: 184; McGlew 1993: 65-74.

[56] It is sometimes suggested that the use of *tyrannos* for Croesus points to the overall 'illegitimacy' of the Mermnads' rule (Dewald 2003: 32f. – as a possibility), founded with the usurpation of Gyges, for which in his turn Croesus is to pay (Hdt. 1, 13); the dangers of placing too much weight on such strict 'semantic' distinctions appear quite clearly upon observing that Candaules too – the 'legitimate', 'hereditary' ruler of Lydia – is referred to as *tyrannos* (Hdt. 1, 7).

[57] Stehle 2006: 104f.; Crane (1996: 80f.) points out that the concept of *olbos* presented by the Herodotean Solon (overall prosperity, to be ascertained only retrospectively) differs significantly from that presented by the author of the elegies ('something that one can have at a particular time and then lose', Crane 1996: 81).

[58] An extreme one, according to Crane 1996: 57f. and 81 ('«straw man» who endorses an unsophisticated and unacceptable view of olbos').

among those of moderate means are fortunate'[59]. The *tyrannos*, with his *jouissance*, is in this context an impossibility. His exuberant fulfillment must be therefore exposed as its essential, dialectical negation: utter lack[60].

In Herodotus this revelation follows a diachronic pattern of the fall of a *tyrannos*. In Xenophon's *Hiero* tyrannical fulfillment and lack co-exist, the former turned into a beautiful façade concealing the latter. In Plato finally tyrannical *jouissance* itself is deformed into a monstrosity, with the *tyrannos* – indeed the tyrant – utterly consumed by the passions he feeds. His life is an utter misery not in spite, but because of it. Small wonder that Euripides' 'godlike *tyrannis*' – or should one say 'tyranny' – fits ill into this political, ethical and psychological pattern.

OEDIPUS – TYRANT OR *TYRANNOS*?

Plato's tyrant appears thus as a monstrous, ogrish Doppelganger of the archaic *tyrannos*. Not only has the focus shifted to the political dimension of his rule, only intimated in archaic poetry, but his very persona is seen to have been structurally remodeled, shifting from one pole of 'otherness' into another. Instead of the blessed superhuman, we now see an animal, a cannibal, a lycanthrope and parricide sleeping with his own mother; an ogre[61]. Plato's tyrant is therefore the embodiment of

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[59] πολλοὶ δὲ μετρίως ἔχοντες βίου εὐτυχέες (Hdt 1, 32); 'cosmic inscrutability' and 'egalitarian ideology', cf. Kurke 1999: 148; cf. Kurke 1999: 149f. and Wohl 2002: 234f. for the argument in general.

[60] Wohl 2002: 260-269.

[61] Animal: τὸ δὲ θηριῶδές τε καὶ ἄγριον (*Resp*. 571c); cannibal (related to the subsequent): γευσάμενος τοῦ ἀνθρωπίνου σπλάγχνου (565e; comparison); βρώματός τε ἀπέχεσθαι μηδενός (571c); lycanthrope: τυραννεῖν καὶ λύκωι ἐξ ἀνθρώπου γενέσθαι (566a; figuratively); parricide: πατραλοίαν… λέγεις τύραννον (569b; figuratively); incest: μητρί τε γὰρ ἐπιχειρεῖν μείγνυσθαι, ὡς οἴεται οὐδὲν ὀκνεῖ (571c-d); ogre: 'turning the tyrant into a pantomime ogre' (Andrewes 1956: 29); Zeitlin (1990: 149) takes incest and parricide as 'typical tyrannical crimes'; followed by Wohl 2002: 221, 250f.; extending them to Sophocles' Oedipus may seem, however, somewhat too adventurous.

utter misery; his lot is the most unhappy and wretched, even though he himself may not be aware of it[62].

Between Plato and archaic poetry there is Attic tragedy. Now in the tragic discourse, in the theatre of the democratic polis, the unseemly political features of the tyrant (indeed!) quite understandably come to the fore. The blessed *tyrannos* on the other hand, retaining the semblance of his *jouissance*, acquires the tragic dimension, which may well have served as a model for Herodotus' Croesus and Xenophon's Hiero[63]. Despite his exuberant bliss, every now and then he is shown to be deeply unhappy[64]; or he is lead down the path of a truly tragic fall. Tragedy in other words presents the two sides of the same phenomenon, of the same idea, though, hardly ever fully combined in one dramatic persona. The individual *tyrannoi* and tyrants appearing on the tragic stage tend to display its one or another side far more vividly. There is little charm and luxuriance in Lycus from Euripides' *Heracles* or in Aegisthus of all three tragedians – beastly villains, the standard-bearers of Plato's moral and political depravity, and most importantly, usurpers and despots; tyrants in every respect[65].

On the other end there are tragic *tyrannoi* whose tyranny may appear questionable, to say the least, if seen only through the narrowly political eye of Plato or Aristotle (along with Thucydides). Enter the Sophoclean Oedipus, the eponymous hero of the play upon which the notion *tyrannos* impressed itself strongly enough to find its way

[62] μάλιστα μὲν αὐτῶι δυστυχεῖ εἶναι (*Resp*. 580a); τὸν δε᾽ κάκιστόν τε καὶ ἀδικώτατον ἀθλώτατον (580c).

[63] A very different, non-tragic account of Croesus' fate is seen in Bacch. 3, 23-62; cf. Crane 1996: 63-71; Maehler 2004: 81f.; on the possible tragedy on the fall of Croesus (or of the Lydian house) cf. Page 1962.

[64] Most straightforwardly given in E. *Ion* 621-632; *Hipp*. 1013-1020; fr. 605 Kn (*Peliads*); cf. Romilly 1969: 180f.

[65] See most recently Seaford (2003) for a systematic exposition of 'three tyrannical traits': distrusts his *philoi* (usually kills them); abuses the sacred (impiety, abuse of ritual); (ab)uses money in order to gain and maintain power (instead of e.g. relationships of reciprocity); this template is applied to Zeus in *PV*; Aegisthus in the *Oresteia*; Creon in *Ant*.; Pentheus in *Ba*. and Oedipus in *OT*; the last of these seems more problematic (see below); on the tyrannical traits of Aegisthus cf. also Knox 1998: 60, 214, n. 20; Lanza 1997: 131f.; on Lycus – Lanza 1997: 121f.

(in the subsequent generations; perhaps in Alexandria) into its title[66]. As a monarch, Oedipus can hardly be accommodated into the discourse of Athenian democracy – on general grounds, as outlined by Tuplin (above). This, however, is not so much due to him being a 'tyrant', but a *tyrannos*[67], for only the most devout critics are willing to seek and find the former in his persona[68]. Few others concede that his rule may be showing some signs of tyranny[69], more frequently, however, his *tyrannis* – especially when compared to the complex political analyses of Plato and Aristotle – is seen to be highly unusual at the best[70].

Failing to find the tyrant in Oedipus the *tyrannos* himself many have sought him elsewhere: in political allegory. Ehrenberg's proposition was to see in the persona of Oedipus a veiled allusion to the 'tyranny' of Pericles, who, according to Plutarch, as a democratic leader became 'more powerful than kings and tyrants'[71]. Vickers has recently attempted to resuscitate a theory laid to rest more than two centuries ago by linking the unusual tyranny of Oedipus Rex with *enfant terrible*

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[66] In the frequency of tyrannos-words the *OT* (15) is second only to *Med*. (22); cf. Knox 1998: 53; Wohl 2002: 250, n. 75.

[67] *OT* 408f. and 872 are the only two instances of the term in this play which may suggest a straightforward *opprobrium*; the former opposing Oedipus' *tyrannis* (εἰ καὶ τυραννεῖς) to freedom of speech (ἴσ' ἀντιλέξαι), which, in turn, is opposed to slavery (οὐ γάρ τί σοι ζῶ δοῦλος); cf. Dawe 1982: 134, ad loc. ('Tiresias evidently intends to tap the well of opprobrium'); the latter juxtaposing *tyrannis* in general with *hybris* (ὕβρις φυτεύει τύραννον); Blaydes' emendation (ὕβριν φυτεύει τυραννίς), accepted by Dawe in his Teubner edition (1996), and endorsed (among others) by Winnington-Ingram (1980: 188-194) as saving the neutral sense of the term *tyrannos* (in fact, *tyrannis*); see however Lloyd-Jones, Wilson 1990: 100 (who in their OCT edition print the MSS reading).

[68] Lanza 1997: 154-159; Seaford 2003: 107-111; Edmunds 2002 and id. 2006: 49f.; Henderson 2007: 188.

[69] E.g. Bowra 1944: 186-196; conceded also by Ehrenberg (1954: 66; but see below): 'on the verge of tyrany'.

[70] 'A very unusual *tyrannos*' (Knox 1998: 24); 'strange *tyrannos*' (Knox 1998: 25); 'he does not defy ancestral laws, outrage women , put men to death without trial' (Knox 1998: 59); 'it is not that he rules harshly or against the people's will: indeed Sofophocles emphasizes the justice of his reign, which was a gift of the people (*OT* 383-84) and is shared with Creon and Jocasta (579-81)' (Wohl 2002: 250); cf. Ehrenberg 1954: 65f.; even Lanza (despite n. 67) acknowledges his uniqueness in this respect (Lanza 1997: 152f.).

[71] Plu *Per*. 15, 3; cf. Ehrenberg 1954: 84-104, esp. 94-104.

of late fifth-century Athens, Pericles' notorious protégé, the flamboyant genius, Alcibiades[72]. A much more subtle and sophisticated political allegory has been read into the persona of Oedipus the *tyrannos* by Knox. According to him he and his *tyrannis* do not necessarily stand for one particular democratic politician – however powerful, and tyrannical may he have been – but symbolizes the entire city-state in general. The imperial Athens of the age of Pericles. The *polis tyrannos*[73].

A more promising, to my mind, approach is to seek the explanation of Oedipus' 'unusual tyranny' or, should one say, *tyrannis* outside the realm of its political connotations. The Sophoclean hero is 'prosperous' (*olbios*), 'the most powerful' (*kratistos*) and 'best' (*aristos*) of men, and even, in a way, likened to the gods[74]; his *tyrannis* is an object of desire[75], acquired through the support masses, influential friends, and even greater expenses[76]. Creon, whom Oedipus suspects of plotting

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[72] Vickers 2008: 41, concerning esp. the choral ode ὕβρις φυτεύει τύραννον (872), taken to reflect 'on Alcibiades' youthful *hubrismata* […] and […] intimating where they all might lead to'.

[73] Thus Knox 1998: 61f.; despite his rather unconvincing attempts (53-57) to force the working of the term *tyrannos* in this play into a rigid, Thucydidean pattern of hereditary vs acquired rule, which requires him to resort to very unfortunate special pleading from psychology in order to explain the fact that Laius (i.e. the legitimate king; 128 799, 1043) is also referred to as *tyrannos*: 'the reason why he calls him *tyrannos* instead of *basileus* in these lines is all too clear. By this time he suspects that Laius may have been the man he killed so many years ago where the three roads meet, and it is only natural that in these circumstances he should avoid the use of a word which would invest his violent action with a darker guilt. The psychological nuance of his use of the word tyrannos here emerges clearly' (55); for a similar misconception see Barcelò 1993: 137.

[74] *olbios*: *OT* 929; 1529 (cf. O'Neil 1986: 34); κράτιστον πᾶσιν κάρα (40); βροτῶν ἄριστος (460); likened to gods – suggested through negation: θεοῖσι μέν νῦν οὐκ ἰσούμενος σ᾽ ἐγώ (31); cf. Ehrenberg 1954: 66 ('the suppliant people approach him almost as a god'); on that latter issue and its dialectic with Oedipus' subsequent fall beneath the level humanity see also Vernant, Vidal-Naquet 1988:113-140.

[75] Cf. Creon's revealing choice of words in his denial: ἐγὼ μὲν οὖν οὔτ᾽ αὐτὸς ἱὐὸςςea ἔφυν | τύραννος εἶναι μᾶλλον ἢ τύραννα δρᾶν […] πῶς δῆτ᾽ ἐμοὶ τυραννὶς ἡδίων ἔχειν | ἀρχῆς ἀλύπου καὶ δυναστείας ἔφυ; (*OT* 587-592); Well, I am not to wish to be king (*tyrannos einai*) rahter than to have royal power (*tyranna dran*) […] How indeed is it more pleasant for me to be a king (*tyrannis*) than to hold power (*archēs*) and influence without grief (*alypou*)? (Lloyd-Jones 1994).

[76] ἆρ᾽ οὐχὶ μῶρον ἐστι τοὐγχείρημά σου, | ἄνευ τε πλήθους καὶ φίλων τυραννίδα | θηρᾶν, ὃ πλήθει χρήμασιν θ᾽ ἁλίσκεται (OT 540f.); the choice of words 'tu hunt'

against him, is not just a conspirator or usurper; he is a 'flagrant robber of his *tyrannis*'[77].

Not the despotic tyrant but the blessed *tyrannos*. Neither, of course, can be accommodated in the democratic discourse and society; the society of men. Both find themselves beyond it, the former – beastlike, a flesh-eating lycanthrope, the latter – equal to gods in his fulfillment and power. Both represent the two faces of the tyrannical Other. Just like the tyrant must be killed to physically deliver the polis from oppression, so must the *tyrannos* fall to save its symbolic order: the ideology of the mean. As Wohl puts it:

> Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus* stages the transformation of the tyrant from the bearer of impossible potency to the bearer of utter lack (a lack that, as with Hieron and Croesus, will turn out to have been there all along) (Wohl 2002: 249).

To be sure, there is a moral to be learned from this, though not necessarily the one tailored to the simplistic pattern of poetic justice. Instead of looking in Oedipus for the vile despot, duly punished, it is, perhaps, more fruitful to appreciate in him the godlike, superhuman figure, whose necessary fall becomes thus all the more moving and tragic.

(θηρᾶν) may strike a familiar note here, given the frequent use of hunting as an metaphor for erotic courtship, cf. Barringer 2001: 86f.

77 ληιστής τ᾽ ἐναργὴς τῆς ἐμῆς τυραννίδος (*OT* 535).

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