The Language of Future Time in Greek Tragedy

THE LANGUAGE OF FUTURE TIME IN GREEK TRAGEDY: REMARKS ON THE USE OF *ΕΛΠΙΣ* AND *ΜΕΛΛΩ* IN EURIPIDEAN DRAMA

E. M. GRIFFITHS
*Universidad de Saint Andrews**

1. INTRODUCTION

Since De Romilly's 1968 work, *Le temps dans la tragédie grecque,* the concept of time in tragedy has received regular attention.[1] Whereas De Romilly was principally concerned with establishing dominant paradigms of time within the work of individual playwrights, later studies focussed on particular aspects of temporality in tragedy: Hutchinson's piece 'Sophocles and Time' discussed the ideas of perfective and imperfective; Chiasson's examination of time in the *Eumenides* suggested that the manipulation of terms for time contributes to the near-heroisation of the Athenian people; Bruit-Zaidman explored the idea of 'feminine time' within Athenian tragedy and comedy, while Grethlein analysed the particular temporal fluidity of the tragic chorus.[2] My argument in this paper fits into debate about the ways in which the concept of temporality is both reflected and constituted in the smallest details of vocabulary and syntax, which intersect with the wider thematic framework to create dramatic movement and characterisation.[3] The focus of this paper is the expression of future time, with particular attention to configurations in two plays, Euripides' *Andromache* and *Iphigeneia in Aulis.*

The traditional format of tragedy implies a particular attitude towards time on the part of the dramatists. While the action of the play is nominally in real time, the audience is expected to follow temporal elisions, sometimes in a circumscribed passage, as with the use of choral passages, but also occasionally on a larger scale, as with the shift of action from Delphi to Athens in Aeschylus' *Eumenides*. The

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* [Nota del editor: Esta dirección universitaria corresponde a las fechas de la reunión, en Madrid, del Programa intensivo mencionado en la Nota previa. Actualmente, la Dra. Emma M. Griffiths (Lecturer in Classics: Greek) es miembro de la Universidad de Manchester: School of Arts, Languages and Cultures].

[1] De Romilly 1968.

[2] Bruit-Zaidman 2000; Chiasson 1999; Grethlein 2013; Hutchinson 1999. See also Higgins 1984; Race 1981; Trédé 1992; van der Stockt 1999.

[3] Also relevant to this topic is work on the idea of closure. See, for example, Dunn 1996.

idea of the present moment creates dramatic tension, but the genre gains depth by the frequent reference to past events and their relationship to the current action. Thus the present is shown both as part of a continuum and as ὁ καιρός. The status of the future is more problematic, not least because of the idea of myth as a single contained body. When the story must continue in a particular way, then the final outcome of the dramatic present cannot be in doubt, and the audience's interest is engaged both by ironic anticipation and by a desire to see the mechanisms by which the situation is resolved. So, in Euripides' *Troades* Hekabe's hopes for her grandson Astyanax (701-5) are particularly painful for the audience armed with previous experience with the myth, knowing that the child will be killed,[4] yet the play contains multiple projections of possible futures.[5] Similarly, in *Iphigeneia in Aulis* the audience is aware that, for all the desperate attempts to save Iphigeneia, she must die for the next stage of the story, the fall of Troy, to be set in motion. Dramatic tension in tragedy is often heightened by the disjunction of knowledge of the future, the audience knowing how events must unfold, while individual characters believe that they may influence future events by their present actions. Even in cases where the dramatist is employing an unexpected twist, the change is frequently foreshadowed: in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* the fact that it will be Clytemnestra who kills her husband, rather than Aegisthus as in the Homeric version at *Odyssey* 11. 420-25 is flagged to the audience from the first characterisation of Clytemnestra as having a male heart.[6] Similarly, in Euripides' *Medea* that the danger to the children may come from Medea herself is a constant thought on stage from the Nurse's early remark that she hates the children. [7] Real uncertainty about the outcome can occur in tragedy only in the absence of a strong pre-existing tradition about the fate of a particular character, or where existing traditions are strongly divided. This is a problematic area for modern critics to explore, given the difficulties of establishing the level of awareness of any particular variant in any historical community. Figures who fall out of myth are very often the children of heroes, and two examples will indicate the range of possible dramatic manipulations. In Sophocles' *Ajax* considerable concern is expressed for the future of Ajax's son Eurysakes – Teucer is anxious that the child may be killed, his present position is insecure, being the child of a slave woman and named after the defensive weapon of a father who has now committed suicide. Furthermore, there is no strong tradition of an adult Eurysakes having an independent history in myth, which would provide narrative protection for the child in this play, other than the possible connections to the Eurysakeion of Melite.[8] In this play, therefore, it is difficult to judge the extent to which a coming

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[4] See Dyson & Lee 2000.

[5] See Easterling 1994 on the choral projections of the future.

[6] Aesch. *Agamemnon* 10 –11.

[7] Eur. *Medea* 36.

[8] Eurysakes as an adult character in Attic myth is known only in connection with the cult of the Eurysakeion at Melite. Plutarch, *Solon* 10, tells how Eurysakes and his brother Philaeus gave Salamis to the Athenians and were consequently honoured by them. Pausanias, Book 1.35, ascribes the gift to Philaeus, son of Eurysakes. In Plutarch's account, Solon tells the story to justify Athens' claim to Salamis in the war with Megara, so it sounds suspiciously like an invention. Kearns (1989)

threat presents a real focus for audience anxiety. The future of the child in Euripides' *Andromache* seems to be even more open to interpretation. The ominous parallels with the fate of Astyanax are explicitly drawn, and the link from this child to the house of Molossia seems unlikely to have been widely known in the Fifth Century.[9] Thus the status of the future is more fluid in this play, as we shall see in more detail below. The nature of the genre, therefore, and its relationship with myth as a whole indicates a general approach to temporality in terms of narrative structure. When we consider further the intrinsic complexity of Greek linguistic expressions of the future we see a powerful range of temporal tools for the dramatist to employ.

2. LANGUAGE EXPRESSING IDEAS OF THE FUTURE

The expression of futurity in language is complicated, given the degrees of uncertainty to be covered. Even across modern European languages there is a wide range of possible constructions expressing future time which do not always to correspond to each other.[10] For example, while English, French, Spanish and Italian all employ so-called proper future tenses, all four also allow the possibility of periphrastic constructions with a verb of motion followed by the infinitive, so in English 'I am going + infinitive'. However, although the construction appears the same, in English and French the construction functions primarily as a simple future tense, whereas in Spanish and Italian the idea of motion remains active, so that the construction implies *consecutive* action far more explicitly than the English or French versions.[11] Ancient Greek structures for referring to the future are even more complex, multiple and allusive in meaning, with ongoing debate about the original formation of the future tense as an expression of will, and the subsequent relationships to the subjunctive and optative moods.[12] Wekker has demonstrated how wide a range of possibilities can be expressed by Greek conditional sentences, using indicative, subjunctive or optative moods.[13] The syntactical structures of Greek from the use of the 'simple' future, which may express intention, to the intricacies of conditional sentences, and the possibilities offered by aspect, are complemented by the wide range of vocabulary which can be utilised for temporal expression, such as χρόνος or καιρός.[14] The future as an abstract term, is commonly expressed with one of two formulations, which imply different viewpoints: ὁ λοιπὸς χρόνος, with the idea of time remaining or being left, and ὁ μέλλων χρόνος implying a more active concept of time.[15] In this paper I shall be looking at two pieces of vocabulary and the ways in which they contribute ambiguity and dramatic tension to the overall

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suggests that the cult figure may originally have been an unnamed hero with a broad shield who became assimilated to Ajax' son.

[9] See Allan (2000) on the background of the mythological variants.

[10] See Fleischmann 1982; Novakova 1998.

[11] See further Champion 1978; Wekker 1976.

[12] See Hahn 1953.

[13] Wekker 1994. See also Casevitz 1996; McKay 1981.

[14] See Tatsi (2008) on Pindar; Widzisz (2012) on χρόνος in the *Oresteia*. Cf. Tredé (1992) on ὁ καιρός.

[15] E.g. Sophocles' *Phil*octetes 84; Sophocles' *Electra* 1226. See also Magni 1995; Vidal-Naquet 1960.

construction of the two plays in question. The terms for discussion are the noun ἐλπίς and the verb μέλλω.

The verb ἐλπίζω conveys a range of meanings which in English are expressed with different words: I hope (positive), I dread (negative), I expect (neutral). Similarly, the abstract noun ἐλπίς, can express a range of ideas from positive to negative. The noun is frequently qualified with an adjective which circumscribes the meaning in context, so the precise tone of the term depends on the content of the surrounding or following clause, as the following examples demonstrate:

2a. Sophocles, *Trachiniae* 125-6:

> φαμὶ γὰρ οὐκ ἀποτρύειν ἐλπίδα τὰν ἀγαθὰν
> χρῆναί σ᾽·

I tell you this, you must not erase hope (lit. 'the good 'elpis', qualified by the positive adjective)[16]

2b. Euripides, *Orestes* 859-60:

> οἴμοι· προσῆλθεν ἐλπίς, ἣν φοβουμένη
> πάλαι τὸ μέλλον ἐξετηκόμην γόοις.

Alas, the expectation has come to pass. I have feared this outcome
For a long time, wasting away in grief for what was to come ('elpis' qualified negatively)

In each passage these terms are difficult to translate, not least because of the poetic links with physical experience, such as destroying or being destroyed by 'elpis', or parallels with a concrete image.[17] The most striking passage in tragedy may be the image of the gods deciding the fate of Troy in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* (813-17) where hope is seen as potentially holding a voting pebble in her/his hand:

> […] δίκας γὰρ οὐκ ἀπὸ γλώσσης θεοὶ
> κλύοντες ἀνδροθνῆτας Ἰλίου φθορὰς
> ἐς αἱματηρὸν τεῦχος οὐ διχορρόπως
> ψήφους ἔθεντο· τῷ δ᾽ ἐναντίῳ κύτει
> ἐλπὶς προσῄει χειρὸς οὐ πληρουμένῳ.[18]

For the gods listened to no pleading speeches, but without exception,
into the bloody bronze bowl they cast their votes.
The other bowl lay empty with only Hope holding out a hand.

In other cases, the term is neutral, requiring a translation of 'anticipation' or 'forethought' which is then coloured by the wider dramatic setting, so in Sophocles, *Trachiniae* 950-2:

> τάδε μὲν ἔχομεν ὁρᾶν δόμοις,
> τάδε δὲ μένομεν ἐπ᾽ ἐλπίσιν·

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[16] Unless otherwise stated, Greek texts are taken from the latest *Oxford Classical Texts*, Aeschylus *OCT* by Page (1972), Sophocles *OCT* by Lloyd Jones and Wilson (1992, 2nd ed.) and the Euripides *OCT* by Diggle (1981-1994). All translations are my own.

[17] Cf. Bassi (2005) on the material features of time in Greek narrative.

[18] The text is debated here, see discussion in Raeburn and Thomas 2012: 152-4.

κοινὰ δ' ἔχειν τε καὶ μέλλειν.

These things are at hand to see in the house,
While others we wait for in our projections.
It is the same to have as to anticipate them.

The context colours τάδε (these things) as negative, sorrows or troubles because of the chorus' previous words, but the idea of ἐλπίσιν is neutral because it parallels the house δόμοις and thus becomes a mental space which then contains the sorrows and troubles rather than being qualified by them.

Ancient definitions offer little help in sorting through the range of meanings in this semantic field. Plato's 'Athenian' in the *Laws* defined ἐλπίς as δόξα μελλόντων, a definition which substitutes one set of problems for another, for both δόξα (opinion/ judgement/appearance) and μέλλω are difficult to define.[19] Modern critics have traced a development of the term's meaning across time, and Riedinger argues persuasively that there the term oscillates between positive and negative meanings, with a general shift towards the unqualified word having a positive meaning in fifth-century literature.[20] The problem of the Hesiodic ἐλπίς in Pandora's jar remains open to discussion.[21] By the mid Fifth Century, the dominant meaning of ἐλπίς may have become a positive one, but the literary tradition had created a multi-faceted term which could variously deployed.[22] It may be that the original 'meaning' was a vague expression of futurity which we cannot easily translate into Latinate forms, tied to a wide range of ideas about prophecy, language and the place of the speaker in his or her mental world.

3. ΕΛΠΙΣ AND *ANDROMACHE*

ἐλπίς is not an uncommon term in tragedy, and as the vocabulary is not exclusive to tragic language we should not assume that every use of the vocabulary is particularly pointed. In Euripides' *Andromache*, however, the idea of ἐλπίς forms a significant motif which contributes to dramatic characterisation and emotional tone. The dramatic tension of the play is created in part by the positioning of Andromache and her son at the intersection of different stories – the Trojan War, the curse on the House of Atreus, and the troubled House of Peleus.[23] Andromache's opening words indicate that her present situation is miserable, all advantage from her history is lost, and that her future, though uncertain, is the only possible positive.[24] Her focus is contained in the word ἐλπίς which has a central place in her speech, explaining why she persists in her present condition:

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[19] Plato, *Laws* 644C.
[20] Riedinger 1972. See also Van Menxel 1983.
[21] See Lauriola 2000.
[22]This discussion will confine itself to literary conceptions, as space does not allow comparison with literary-historical works, of which Momigliano has written: 'The future did not loom large in the works of the Greek historians' (1966: 17). Cf. Visvardi 2015 on parallels between Thucydides and tragedy.
[23] See Kyriakou 1997.
[24] On possible textual variants and discussion of the ambiguity of language in the passage generally, see Kovacs 1977.

καὶ πρὶν μὲν ἐν κακοῖσι κειμένην ὅμως
ἐλπίς μ᾽ ἀεὶ προσῆγε σωθέντος τέκνου
ἀλκήν τιν᾽ εὑρεῖν κἀπικούρησιν δόμον· (26-8)

In the past, although I was laid low in my suffering,
Elpis always led me forward, hope that if my child survived,
My home would find some strength and assistance.

In this first instance, despite the lack of an article, the term is almost personified as a force leading Andromache on, lifting her up from her supine position.[25] While the context creates a positive emphasis, the idea that the child would prove to be a strength and a support, the term is not explicitly qualified, and so Andromache's position is not strictly 'hopeful'. She does not say that the child himself will necessarily *be* the future strength, nor that Neoptolemos will be, but simply that the child's existence offers the possibility that there will be support.[26] Her focus is the idea that there will be another stage in the story, and that the very possibility of change is all that she can cling to. 'Hope' is too strong a word for this emotion, unless we qualify it ourselves as 'cautious hope'.

The alignment of the term within Andromache's thinking changes when she confronts Menelaus' threat to herself and the child, and explains why she will sacrifice her life for her son:

τί δῆτ᾽ ἐμοὶ ζῆν ἡδύ; πρὸς τί χρὴ βλέπειν;
πρὸς τὰς παρούσας ἢ παρελθούσας τύχας;
εἷς παῖς ὅδ᾽ ἦν μοι λοιπὸς ὀφθαλμὸς βίου·
τοῦτον κτενεῖν μέλλουσιν οἷς δοκεῖ τάδε.
οὐ δῆτα τοὐμοῦ γ᾽ εἵνεκ᾽ ἀθλίου βίου·
ἐν τῷδε μὲν γὰρ ἐλπίς, εἰ σωθήσεται,
ἐμοὶ δ᾽ ὄνειδος μὴ θανεῖν ὑπὲρ τέκνου. (404-10)

How can life be sweet for me? What should I focus on?
My present situation or what has already happened?
This child was the one remaining bright spot of my life,
And now those who make decisions are planning to kill him.
To save my miserable life cannot be.
In him there is hope, if he survives,
But on me would only be shame if I did not die on behalf of my child.

The ἐλπίς which initially referred to a future predicated on the child's survival, is now described as 'inside' the child: As in the first example, emphasis is laid on the idea of 'if he survives', but here the meaning is more specific, the construction changing from genitive absolute to a conditional clause. Furthermore, the idea Andromache here speaks of does not refer to herself – she is prepared to sacrifice her life for child because '*elpis* is in him'. This is no longer a hope for *her* future, but seems to be a far more general idea that the child has possibilities, or potential. While Andromache does continue to mention the specific wish that the child will

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[25] Cf. Aesch. *Agamemnon* 1434, ἐλπίς treading in the house of fear. See Stafford (2000) on Greek ideas of personification.
[26] *Contra* Kovacs (1980: 14) who interprets the hope specifically referring to Neoptolemos.

protect her good name, this is not the primary focus of the idea. We should also note that these first two usages of the term invoke the parent/child dynamic which will frequently recur in this play.

The idea of ἐλπίς leading Andromache places her in the theoretical position of child, as this language of leading is used of children in tragedy .[27] Thus the hope refers to a future time in which the duty of care between parent and child will be reversed in the accepted social order and the child will care for the parent, a common motif in Athenian ideas about children.[28] When that possibility is removed by Menelaus' threat, Andromache seems to take comfort in another aspect of family order, that children accede to their parent's primacy, and thus the term ἐλπίς can shift in focus and meaning. The next use of the term in the play shows how it can also be used to create opposing characterisation. After she agrees to give her life for the child's, Andromache soon realises that she has been tricked and that both she and the child are to die. When she laments the child's fate, the response from Menelaus is devastating brief and mocking: οὔκουν θρασεῖά γ' αὐτὸν ἐλπὶς ἀμμένει. (444) / So, the future that awaits him now is not a positive one, ('elpis' as a noun being qualified by the adjective θρασεῖα (cheerful/confident/positive). With an echo, quite possibly a conscious echo, of Andromache's earlier expressions, Menelaus now shifts the framework of the key term once more, hijacking Andromache's vocabulary. The idea is again semi-personified, but is now a force awaiting the child, closer in meaning to fate, or destiny. Further to this, the adjectival qualification has a particularly ironic twist through the use of litotes, and the placement of the verb at the end of the sentence.[29] This line contributes to the characterisation of Menelaus as cynical and mocking, as if he is making fun of Andromache's earlier desperately vague comments about what she might hope for.[30]

The term is given three different points of temporal reference, each indicating the state of mind of the speaker. In the first instance, Andromache's eyes are fixed on a *distant* future when the child will have matured and be able to support her. As the present situation worsens, she thinks of the child in terms of *any* future, but also his ability to speak to his father in the n*ear* future. For Menelaus, the ἐλπίς of the future is almost part of the present, as his threat to the child is immediate. This temporal movement is also reflected in the exchange between Menelaus and Andromache, where Menelaus uses several simple future tenses, indicating his control of the situation, (440, 442), while Andromache's only expression of power again returns to her hope that things may change, warning Menelaus of what may come, using the weaker construction with the optative, εἰ δ' ἐγὼ πράσσω κακῶς, / μηδὲν τόδ' αὔχει· καὶ σὺ γὰρ πράξειας ἄν. 'If I myself am going to fare badly, don't gloat over this, for you yourself may suffer the same fate' (462-63).

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[27] See, for example, Soph. *Ajax* 542, of Eurysakes; Eur. *Iphigeneia in Aulis* 118–19, of the infant Orestes.

[28] As discussed by Raepsaet 1971.

[29] Cf. Soph. *Trachiniae* 724, with Easterling (1982: 164) on the neutral use of ἐλπίς.

[30] See further Allan (2000:102) on the characterisation of Menelaus in this play, and Griffiths (2007: 280-1) on the linguistic battles in this scene.

These details of language are part of the play's overall exploration of time and the impact of family histories.[31] The child of Andromache and Neoptolemos does not have a significant presence in Greek mythology, and the parallels with Astyanax, Andromache's first child, create a definite sense of foreboding about his future from the start of the play. It is an ironic twist that none of the future scenarios envisaged by the main characters actually comes to fruition. Hermione fears that she will be ousted from Neoptolemos' home, and is rescued by Orestes; Menelaus expresses a general worry that the child of an enemy will be a threat, but the child will in fact move into a different geographical and narrative structure. Finally, Andromache's salvation will come only indirectly from the child, and more explicitly from the past history of which she despaired at the start of the play, as her Trojan relation Helenus provides her with a home, the past creating the future. Nevertheless, although as an individual Andromache seems to have no power, no potential in herself, her awareness of the uncertainty of the future ultimately saves her.[32] The malleability of the term ἐλπίς is a small, but central component in this dramatic nexus.

4. ΜΕΛΛΩ AND *IPHIGENEIA IN AULIS*

In the passages discussed above we have seen how ἐλπίς is frequently constructed with other spatio-temporal vocabulary, so this second part of the discussion explores related issues about vocabulary and dramatic narrative sequence. The word μέλλω has a range of uses – it can imply deliberate plan, as 'to intend to something', it can be used as part of a periphrastic future tense, not unlike the English 'I am going to do X", although without the explicit idea of motion, it can also imply immediate sequence, as 'I am on the point of doing something' or the reverse, to be delaying doing something. The range of meanings is particularly evident in a passage from Euripides' *Iphigeneia in Aulis* 864-883, where the ambiguity of the term is used to great effect to control the dramatic movement in this pivotal scene. As noted above, this play involves a story where the outcome is irrevocably fixed by mythological necessity. Whether we believe the absent Helen to be real or a phantom, whether or not Artemis intervenes to rescue Iphigeneia, the story is set up in this play so that the fleet must sail to Troy, and hence in some form or another the sacrifice of Iphigeneia must take place. Time and scale are repeated motifs, from the liminality of the young Iphigeneia on the verge of marriage, yet referring to her younger days, to the contrast between her brief life and the great name of Greece.[33] This episode forms a crucial part of the grand narrative sweep of the Trojan War, and yet Euripides gives it a dramatic momentum all of its own, structuring and then destabilising patterns of decision–making and recognition.[34] It is the moment when Clytemnestra realises the true situation which gives the play its first

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[31] Cf. Mossman 1996.

[32] I would therefore disagree with Chong-Gossard's contention that temporal focus distinguishes Hermione from Andromache in the play (2008: 91). Andromache herself moves between different chronological perspectives.

[33] On Iphigeneia's liminal status see Luschnig 1988.

[34] Cf. Sansone 1991.

major jolt, as we experience her disbelief of a reality which the audience already knows. This scene is also central to the plotting of the play as questions of activity and inaction come to the fore. I give the passage in full to highlight the positioning of the term μέλλω and the ways in which it interacts with the staging of the scene to heighten the dramatic tension (864 ff.):

Πρεσβύτης. ὦ Τύχη πρόνοιά θ᾽ ἡμή, σῴσαθ᾽ οὓς ἐγὼ θέλω.
Ἀχιλλεύς. ὁ λόγος ἐς μέλλοντ᾽ † ἂν ᾖ † χρόνον· ἔχει δ᾽ ὄγκον τινά.
Κλυταιμήστρα. δεξιᾶς ἕκατι μὴ μέλλ᾽, εἴ τί μοι χρῄζεις λέγειν.
Πρεσβύτης. οἶσθα δῆτ᾽ ἔμ᾽, ὅστις ὢν σοὶ καὶ τέκνοις εὔνους ἔφυν;
Κλυταιμήστρα. οἶδά σ᾽ ὄντ᾽ ἐγὼ παλαιὸν δωμάτων ἐμῶν λάτριν.
Πρεσβύτης. χὤτι μ᾽ ἐν ταῖς σαῖσι φερναῖς ἔλαβεν Ἀγαμέμνων ἄναξ;
Κλυταιμήστρα. ἦλθες εἰς Ἄργος μεθ᾽ ἡμῶν καὶ ἐμὸς ἦσθ᾽ ἀεί ποτε.
Πρεσβύτης. ὧδ᾽ ἔχει. καὶ σοὶ μὲν εὔνους εἰμί, σῷ δ᾽ ἧσσον πόσει.
Κλυταιμήστρα. ἐκκάλυπτε νῦν ποθ᾽ ἡμῖν οὕστινας λέγεις λόγους.
Πρεσβύτης. παῖδα σὴν πατὴρ ὁ φύσας αὐτόχειρ μέλλει κτενεῖν.
Κλυταιμήστρα. πῶς; ἀπέπτυσ᾽, ὦ γεραιέ, μῦθον: οὐ γὰρ εὖ φρονεῖς.
Πρεσβύτης. φασγάνῳ λευκὴν φονεύων τῆς ταλαιπώρου δέρην.
Κλυταιμήστρα. ὦ τάλαιν᾽ ἐγώ. μεμηνὼς ἆρα τυγχάνει πόσις;
Πρεσβύτης. ἀρτίφρων, πλὴν ἐς σὲ καὶ σὴν παῖδα· τοῦτο δ᾽ οὐ φρονεῖ.
Κλυταιμήστρα. ἐκ τίνος λόγου; τίς αὐτὸν οὑπάγων ἀλαστόρων;
Πρεσβύτης. θέσφαθ᾽, ὥς γέ φησι Κάλχας, ἵνα πορεύηται στρατός.
Κλυταιμήστρα. ποῖ; τάλαιν᾽ ἐγώ, τάλαινα δ᾽ ἣν πατὴρ μέλλει κτενεῖν.
Πρεσβύτης. Δαρδάνου πρὸς δώμαθ᾽, Ἑλένην Μενέλεως ὅπως λάβῃ.
Κλυταιμήστρα. εἰς ἄρ᾽ Ἰφιγένειαν Ἑλένης νόστος ἦν πεπρωμένος;
Πρεσβύτης. πάντ᾽ ἔχεις: Ἀρτέμιδι θύσειν παῖδα σὴν μέλλει πατήρ.

The term μέλλω is employed in a rising crescendo exploiting the ambiguities of the semantic field. Firstly, after the old man has hinted at bad news Achilles suggests that he is referring to the future (865 – the text is uncertain here, but the futurity seems central) In the very next line Clytemnestra urges the old man not to hold back, 'Do not hesitate (μὴ μέλλ᾽) on account of respect, if there's something you have to tell me'. Both uses of the word imply a sense of the future having an onward motion towards them, the one implying that time itself is an active force, the other that time is to some extent under human control, something that can be delayed. The most explosive use of the term, which exploits its ambiguity, comes at 873 when the old man reveals his information, leaving the central verb until last:

παῖδα σὴν πατὴρ ὁ φύσας αὐτόχειρ μέλλει κτενεῖν᾽

Your child the father who created her with his own hand *mellei* to kill.

Here we can see how the different meanings of the word come into play. If we hear μέλλει κτενεῖν as 'He *intends* to kill', it suggests that this action is still in the planning stage, and Clytemnestra may be able to dissuade him. If, however, we hear the verb with a stronger temporal aspect, as 'he is on the point of killing her', then there is no time to waste, and Clytemnestra must either act immediately or accept that it is too late. There is also the possibility that the word carries a sense of 'he is destined to kill her', which would take some of the blame away from Agamemnon. The phrase is repeated twice in the scene at the ends of lines as Clytemnestra echoes the words, and then the Old man repeats them. As this exchange is structured in

stichomythia the speed of the exchange reflects the turmoil on stage. The old man begins slowly, reluctantly, speaking the last two-line exchange, 855–6, before the stichomythia proper begins. The pace then develops rapidly, and we may envisage the scene dramatising the shock effect with alternating paralysis and moves to action. The fact that μέλλω can imply either that the future is almost on top of us, or that something is still in the planning, delaying stage, conveys both temporal perspectives. It is as if Clytemnestra is suddenly plunged into another current. She has up to this point been confidently making plans for Iphigeneia's wedding, making her own way to Aulis in disregard for Agamemnon's plans. Now suddenly she perceives herself to be caught in another's plan – she must both stop her previous trajectory and start afresh on a new one, creating the paradox of cessation and impetus.

The word μέλλω occurs frequently throughout the play as a whole.[35] There are more instances of this verb in this play than in any other extant tragedy. While statistics can be misleading, and the repetition in this scene may account for the anomaly, the use of the verb does add to the sense of expectation and frustration throughout the play. Everything is 'going to happen', but doesn't quite work out as planned: Agamemnon plans a quiet sacrifice, then changes his mind; Clytemnestra expects a wedding and faces a death; Achilles is prepared to fight for Iphigeneia, but she herself prevents him. If we accept the authenticity of the tradition contained in the final lines, even the sacrifice of Iphigeneia does not go as planned because of the intervention of Artemis.[36] Throughout the play the air of expectation is constantly manipulated by Euripides, enabling him to take a well-known story and reinvent it as a drama of psychological movement, the ambiguities of which are encapsulated in the term μέλλω

5. Conclusions

The previous sections have demonstrated how details of vocabulary can contribute to the overall dramatic conception of a play, but this is a rather limited reading, emphasising the philological. While full development of these ideas falls outside the scope of the current article, I close by suggesting some areas in which this work may nuance or refocus our study of tragedy from a twenty-first-century perspective, where our understanding of temporality is undergoing a radical shift due to challenges of quantum mechanics.[37] The modern of idea of the 'chronon', the 'quantum of time' is well named, for it is no easier to define than the underpinning Greek term χρόνος.[38]

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[35] Vv. 494, 680, 687, 719, 818, 865, 866, 873, 880, 883, 988, 1118, 1131, 1141, 1329, 1355, 1380, 1539.

[36] On the authenticity of the end of the play, see Weiss 2014.

[37] On the problems of time in quantum mechanics, see Anderson 2017.

[38] On the quantum theory of the 'chronon', see Leftow 1991: 141-43. Cf. Zajonc 2004: 69-71.

Some connections are readily apparent, such as the dangers of hope in a political setting linking *Andromache* to Thucydidean analyses of fifth-century democracy.[39] The physicality of the future should also be read in relation to the spatial dimensions of the play which, as Allan notes, are central to Andromache's own conception of her position.[40] Crucially, the play presents a discourse of hope dominated by female voices which returns us to the image in *Agamemnon* of the female hope approaching a voting urn. The importance of the female in Athenian democracy does not lie in immediate participation, but in the broader conception of time as those who will bring forth the future.[41] Thus this analysis provides support for recent studies, such as McClure's contention that the women in Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* are modelled not on hetaerae, but on domesticated young Athenian women.[42]

When we focus on the representation of time in *Iphigeneia in Aulis,* the role of the past is undoubtedly central in shaping the drama,[43] but the exploration of choice relies on subtleties of language (such as the difference between 'plan to X or 'be on the verge of doing X') as well as the mental conception of the future.[44] The issue of futurity has been brought into sharper focus with recent interdisciplinary and reception-orientated work, such as Haller's work on the motifs in Christopher Nolan's film *Inception,*[45] and further reflection may highlight new aspects of the play's spatio-temporal frames.[46] The myth of Iphigeneia provided the inspiration for one of Mark Rothko's early works, and his thoughts on myth and tragedy deserve some attention. Although his emphasis on universality may not accord with twenty-first-century analyses which prioritise cultural specificity, his engagement with issues of art and representation suggests a creative process not unlike those which Euripides may have explored – a sort of quantum entanglement.[47] In his notes on art, Rothko wrote: 'It is significant that the myth, or, rather, those places where the myth functions fully as it did in the world of antiquity, always employ the tactile kind of plasticity for its representation.'[48] He also included 'Hope' in his ironic list of seven crucial ingredients for art.[49] When looking at his 'Sacrifice of Iphigeneia (1942)', the apparent confusion of the figures corresponds to the temporal palimpsests created in Euripides' play, fusing Aeschylean and Euripidean images in one cohesive painting, as well as linking to the related painting 'The Omen of the Eagle'. Taking this line of thought further, we might also consider how Rothko's later work with blocks of colour can provide another way of viewing the temporal landscape of tragedy, with one time frame dominating but being shadowed or coloured

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[39] See Visvardi (2015: 62) on the hope for change
[40] Allan (2000: 48).
[41] On gender and futurity in tragedy, see Bruit-Zaidman 2000; Griffiths 2014.
[42] McClure 2015.
[43] Luschnig 1982.
[44] On choice in the play, see Torrance 2017.
[45] Haller 2014.
[46] On scholarly neglect of the future in narrative terms, see Currie 2007.
[47] On Rothko's engagement with Greek tragedy, see Roque 2002: 279.
[48] Rothko & Rothko 2006: 97.
[49] Breslin 1993: 390.

by other frames.[50] The idea of frames gives rise to Giesecke's 2005 discussion of Virgil in relation to Rothko, but this is only a prompt for the analysis of the Latin text. I would argue that Rothko's work on myth may be more than simply suggestive, and may ultimately give us new ways to view the cohesion of Euripidean drama. The role of colour can be viewed in connection to temporal focus, as different psychological frameworks distinguish past/present/future by spatial position or depth/extent of shading.[51] Colour terms in tragedy have resisted traditional attempts to define their symbolic function,[52] so this sort of structuralist analysis can be complemented by modern ideas from film and art which re-interpret tragedy in different media.[53] From philological comments on tense and syntax, we may move into a broader response to tragedy, viewing the colour terminology of tragedy more in Rothko-esque terms, and posing the koans of 'What colour is tomorrow', and 'When is yellow?', exploring the temporal ambiguities in which Greek tragic language delights.

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[50] Rothko & Rothko 2006: 49.

[51] See Gross (2012: 276-78) on cultural ways of framing time.

[52] See Stanford (1983: 130), and cf. Brekoulaki 2014; Cleland & Stears 2004.

[53] See MacKinnon (2013 (1986): 51-2) on cinematic responses to colour in the myth of Oedipus, and Doane (2002) on cinematic temporality. Cf. Wohl (2015: 139) on the relationship between different aspects of Euripides' dramas.

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