

ΕΘΝΙΚΟ ΚΑΙ ΚΑΠΟΔΙΣΤΡΙΑΚΟ
ΠΑΝΕΠΙΣΤΗΜΙΟ ΑΘΗΝΩΝ
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ΤΜΗΜΑ ΦΙΛΟΛΟΓΙΑΣ
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ΠΡΟΣΚΛΗΣΗ

Την Τρίτη, 2 Ιουνίου 2015, ώρα 9.30 π.μ.*
στο Σπουδαστήριο Κλασικής Φιλολογίας (745),
θα γίνει στο πλαίσιο των «Επιστημονικών Συναντήσεων»
του Τομέα Κλασικής Φιλολογίας η ομιλία
του Καθηγητή **Franco Montanari**
(Università degli Studi di Genova)

με θέμα:

“Clytemnestra from the Odyssey to Aeschylus”

Σας προσκαλούμε να παραστείτε.

Ο διευθυντής του Τομέα Κλασικής Φιλολογίας

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* Επισημαίνεται ότι η ομιλία θα αρχίσει ακριβώς την καθορισμένη ώρα και παρακαλείσθε για την έγκαιρη προσέλευσή σας.

Clytemnestra from the *Odyssey* to Aeschylus

Abstract

The figure of Clytemnestra and her revenge crime dominate the development of the plot in the trilogy *Oresteia* by Aeschylus. In *Agamemnon*, Clytemnestra is the strong character, who sets up the deadly treachery enacted against her husband, controls the evolution of the events and murders both Agamemnon and Cassandra directly with her own hands.

Clytemnestra is unquestionably one of the great tragic figures created by Aeschylus. The interpretation of her role generally places emphasis on a crucial distinction: while in the ancient precedent of the *Odyssey* Agamemnon is slain by Aegisthus during a clash between factions that are seeking to gain the upper hand in a power struggle, in the *Oresteia* it is Clytemnestra who kills Agamemnon with her own hands.

The course of events as portrayed by Aeschylus thus differs from the story told in the *Odyssey*, and the change in the way the man who has returned victorious from Troy is murdered can be highlighted as the element in the structuring of the narrative that exerts a strong influence on the creation of the tragic character.

To illuminate the significance of the transition from the Homeric version to that of Aeschylus, it is necessary first and foremost to re-examine and analyse the considerable number of passages from the *Odyssey* that mention Agamemnon's return after the fall of Troy, and his murder.

In short, the episode of Agamemnon's return from Troy is presented in the *Odyssey* on the basis of two elements. The murder is perpetrated by Aegisthus during a fight, a veritable battle that pits the companions of the aged king, who comes back after a long absence to reclaim his throne, against the usurper who in the meantime has seized and intends to maintain power and has become the queen's new lover-partner. The actions and motives of Aegisthus are mingled with the role of the queen Clytemnestra, who is an active accomplice in preparing the deceitful treachery against her husband, in plotting his death and even in killing the concubine Cassandra with her own hands.

But is the change in the murderous hand an invention by Aeschylus or did it already exist and the tragic poet appropriated and developed it? For the moment, what remains unsolved (and I would say unsolvable, unless additional information somehow becomes available) is the problem of the priority between the *Oresteia* and Pindar's *Pythian 11*, which involves this aspect of the myth.

It is clear that the sacrifice of Iphigenia, with all its consequences, shifts the focus of attention towards the "private" sphere and highlights the profoundly personal aspect of Clytemnestra's motives. This is what we find in Pindar, where nothing is said about a political-military struggle for power: in Pindar, the murder of Agamemnon (and obviously of Cassandra) is perpetrated by Clytemnestra with her own hands on account of an intense hatred she harbours, that arises from the sacrifice of Iphigenia, carried out at Agamemnon's behest, and from her new relationship with Aegisthus, who is the rival of the previous king.

As a source for the innovation we find in Aeschylus and Pindar, the *Odyssey* supplied a good precedent in its emphasis on Clytemnestra's role as a ferocious active accomplice, which we have highlighted. This precedent is developed by presenting Clytemnestra as the direct and material murderer of Agamemnon as well. We pointed out that the choice of the murderous hand follows and accompanies the shift in the crux of the unfolding events, together with the greater focus on family passions and personal motives that we observe after Homer. This change of the murderous hand moves in parallel with the altered focus and also repositions the context and setting of the episode, which is transposed from the banquet and the public clash to the private sphere within the house. We do not know who first introduced this novelty, but Aeschylus certainly espoused it and staged it with great dramatic effectiveness and in particular consonance with the issues of justice and *genos* that stand at the centre of the *Oresteia*.