

ALL IS WELL THAT ENDS TRAGICALLY: FILMING GREEK TRAGEDY IN MODERN GREECE

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The king's a beggar now the play is done:
All is well ended, if this suit be won,
That you express content; which we will pay
With strife to please you, day exceeding day.
Ours be your patience, then, and yours our parts:
Your gentle hands lend us, and take our hearts.

William Shakespeare, *All's Well that Ends Well*

What does it take to adapt Greek tragedy successfully for the cinema?¹ The debate centres on the issue of authenticity² as well as the question of the successful integration of tragedy into the cinematic medium. The problematic nature of any attempt to adapt Greek tragedy for the cinema makes it a particularly challenging enterprise for filmmakers.³ In comparison with the cinematic reception of other aspects of ancient Greece and Rome, attempts to film Greek tragedy offer us fewer examples to work with,⁴ but they do attract the talents of some of the world's best independent film directors,⁵ who have created some remarkable cinematic receptions.

¹ This is an exciting and ongoing debate and one article cannot hope to encompass all the issues concerned. The present article will focus on one aspect of this debate and is indebted to the pioneering work of Professor Marianne McDonald and Dr Pantelis Michelakis in the field of the reception of Greek Drama on film. The author is also greatly indebted to Professor Mike Edwards and Professor Charles Chiasson for their many helpful suggestions. I am also indebted to Mr. Andrew Kampiziones for obtaining a copy of the Region 1 DVD of *Antigone* for me. Many thanks also to the wonderful staff of the Institute of Classical Studies Library.

² For a general perspective on the issue of fidelity and the adaptation of works of literature for the screen see B. McFarlane, 'Reading film and literature', in *The Cambridge companion to literature on screen*, ed. D. Cartmell and I. Whelehan (Cambridge 2007) 15-20.

³ K. MacKinnon, *Greek tragedy into film* (London 1986) 4-41. MacKinnon identifies both the general problems facing any cinematic adaptation of a work of literature (pp. 13-21) and the ones that are particular to the adaptation of Greek tragedy (pp. 25-28). Some of these problems will be discussed further in this article as they relate to the two films under discussion.

⁴ For a catalogue of the films with a brief commentary see D. Elley, *The epic film. Myth and history* (London 1984) 53-55 and particularly J. Solomon, *The ancient world in the cinema* (New Haven and London 2001) 259-74. See also www.rhul.ac.uk/Classics/NJL/films.html, 2, accessed 14/12/2007.

⁵ Some of the most famous of these include Jules Dassin's *Phaedra* (1962) and Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Edipo re* (1967) and *Medea* (1970) with Maria Callas. Adapting Greek tragedy in the medium of film has attracted independent directors rather than those working in Hollywood. This is partly because of the dramas' privileged status as canonical, foundational texts for Western culture. They present an important creative challenge for

This article will attempt to offer some suggestions regarding these thorny issues by examining two examples of the reception of Greek tragedy in modern Greece. In the period of 1961-62 two films based on Greek tragedies were produced in Greece. One was George Tzavellas' *Antigone* (1961), based on Sophocles' play, and the other Michael Cacoyannis' *Electra* (1962), inspired by Euripides' version of the story.

George Tzavellas (1916-1976) was a key figure in Greek cinema after World War Two. He studied law, but became a director in the late 1940s. He made a name for himself on the theatre stage. As a film director he is best known for his mainstream comedies and melodramas.⁶ Some of his best known films are *Ο Μεθύστακας* (*The drunk*) of 1950, *Η κάρπικη Λύρα* (*The fake pound*) of 1955 and *Η δε γυνή να φοβήται τον άνδρα* (*Woman should fear man*) of 1965. His films examine contemporary life in Greece and its hardships, and they continue to be popular on Greek television. *Antigone* was his only attempt to film a Greek tragedy. He remains better known within the borders of Greece, whereas Cacoyannis has acquired an international reputation as a film director.⁷

Michael Cacoyannis (1922-), a Greek Cypriot, studied law in London and could not return to Greece because of the outbreak of World War Two. While in London he was drawn to the theatre. He did return in 1953⁸ and contributed to the renaissance of the Greek Film industry. His first film after his return was *Windfall in Athens* (*Κυριακάτικο ζύπνημα*) in 1954 with Elli Lambeti and Dimitris Horn.⁹ The film was the highest grossing film of that year,¹⁰ and critics praised it for its high technical standards.¹¹ Cacoyannis, who had spent some time working as an actor and singer in British theatres¹² while trying to break into the British Film Industry, had gained valuable technical expertise. His next film

independent directors, but are less attractive for directors who wish to make commercially successful, popular films. For the perceived differences between high and low culture see M. Wyke, *Projecting the past. Ancient Rome, cinema and history* (New York 1997) 3-8. The issue of commercial viability and artistic vision will be discussed further with reference to Tzavellas' and Cacoyannis' films.

⁶ Tzavellas' films as well as those of other directors of the Greek Film Industry of the 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s continue to be received by the Greek public today via the medium of television. They regularly fill the afternoon and early evening slots in television schedules. His *Antigone*, however, as well as Cacoyannis' Euripidean trilogy, is not part of this culture of repeats perhaps because they are considered too high brow.

⁷ His work continues to be presented in art-house film festivals like the 1981 National Film Theatre. For the negative reaction of Professor Oliver Taplin to Cacoyannis' trilogy presented at this festival see K. Mackinnon's e-article 'Film adaptation and the myth of textual fidelity', at <http://www2.open.ac.uk/ClassicalStudies/GreekPlays/Colq99/mackinnon99.html>, (1999) 6-7, accessed 14/12/2007. Cacoyannis' Euripidean trilogy was screened on 12 and 13 May 2001 at the Barbican to complement Peter Hall's production of *Tantalus* at the Barbican Theatre. *Barbican screen film guide* (May 2001) 27-29. In Greece earlier in the same month (4-16 May 2001) there was an exhibition dedicated to Cacoyannis' work and a screening of most of his films organized by the *demos* of Athens to celebrate his life's work. Κινηματογραφικό Αφιέρωμα, *Ο Διεθνής Κακογιάννης*. Τεχνόπολις του Δήμου Αθηναίων. (4-16 Μαΐου 2001).

⁸ M. Cacoyannis, 'Αντοπαρουσίαση', in *Μιχάλης Κακογιάννης*, 36^ο Φεστιβάλ Κινηματογράφου Θεσσαλονίκης, Οργανισμός Πολιτιστικής Προτετεύουσας της Ευρώπης Θεσσαλονίκη (Αθήνα 1995) 12-14.

⁹ Γ. Σολδάτος, *Ιστορία του Ελληνικού Κινηματογράφου*, 4ος Τόμος, Ντοκουμέντα 1900-1970 (Αθήνα 2004) 250.

¹⁰ Σολδάτος, *Ιστορία* (n. 9, above) 202.

¹¹ Σολδάτος, *Ιστορία* (n. 9, above) 251.

¹² He studied law while he was in London and worked for the BBC. Later he became an actor, but he was eventually attracted to directing. M. McDonald, *Euripides in cinema. The heart made visible* (Philadelphia 1983) 129.

Stella (Στέλλα) (1955)¹³ was an even bigger success,¹⁴ but it divided critics because of its portrayal of the lower classes. Many accused Cacoyannis of corrupting public morality.¹⁵ Throughout the 1950s Cacoyannis continued to direct films set in contemporary Greece with strong female leads that problematized the position of women in Greek society. His film *The Girl in Black* (Το κορίτσι με τα μαύρα) (1956) has Lambeti playing the role of Marina, a young woman scorned by the men of her island home of Hydra for her aloofness.¹⁶ In *A Matter of Dignity* (Το τελευταίο ψέμμα) (1958) Lambeti is Chloe, a woman who has to choose between two suitors: Niko, a wealthy Greek-American who can help her family financially, and Galanos, the poor man she loves.¹⁷ Cacoyannis' interest in tragic stories with female protagonists seems to have attracted him to Euripides who was famous since antiquity for his portrayal of women.

The appearance of two films so close together is of particular interest, especially as one is considered a 'failure' and the other a 'success'. Of the two films Cacoyannis' *Electra* was slightly better received at the time of its release but it became very successful in terms of its subsequent reception. The film was the sixth highest grossing film of the 1962/63 period in Greece.¹⁸ It won the award for best screen adaptation at the 1962 Cannes Festival, the Best Picture award at the 1962 Thessalonica Film Festival and even an Oscar nomination for Best Foreign Film.¹⁹ Tzavellas' *Antigone* was not as successful in the box office and it was ranked twelfth in the charts for the year 1961/62.²⁰ It was entered and won awards in several film festivals in 1961 in Berlin, San Francisco, London and Thessalonica,²¹ but it has been less well received subsequently.²² Solomon criticised the film for its 'lack of respect for the film medium', while Steiner found the film full of

¹³ *Stella*, written and directed by Michael Cacoyannis, A Milas Films Production (Greece 1955).

¹⁴ *Stella* was the highest grossing film of the 1955/56 period, earning 134.142 drachmas. Σολδάτος, *Ιστορία* (n. 9, above) 203.

¹⁵ Σολδάτος, *Ιστορία* (n. 9, above) 272-74.

¹⁶ Σολδάτος, *Ιστορία* (n. 9, above) 275-76.

¹⁷ Σολδάτος, *Ιστορία* (n. 9, above) 303.

¹⁸ Its box office take was 76,846 drachmas. Σολδάτος, *Ιστορία* (n. 9, above) 400.

¹⁹ MacKinnon, *Greek tragedy* (n. 3, above) 80 and Γ. Κ. Πηλιχός 'Ηλέκτρα', in *Μιχάλης Κακογιάννης*, 36^ο Φεστιβάλ Κινηματογράφου Θεσσαλονίκης, Οργανισμός Πολιτιστικής Πρωτεύουσας της Ευρώπης Θεσσαλονίκη (Αθήνα 1995) 144. This article appeared the Greek newspaper Τα Νέα on 2 August 1961.

²⁰ Its box office take was 48,705 drachmas. Σολδάτος, *Ιστορία* (n. 9, above) 339.

²¹ Critics' prize (London), leading actor (San Francisco), music, leading actor and actress (Thessalonica). Σολδάτος, *Ιστορία* (n. 9, above) 283, and www.filmfestival.gr/tributes/2003-2004/cinemythology/uk/film29.html, accessed 03/04/2008.

²² G. Tzavellas, *Antigone*, Norma Film Productions Inc. (Greece 1961). It is harder to obtain a copy of this film as it has not received the exposure Cacoyannis' Euripidean trilogy has had in art-houses and film festivals. A Region 1 American DVD of the film became available in 2004 from Kino International Corp. M. Cacoyannis, *Electra*, Finos Films (Greece 1962). Until recently Cacoyannis' *Electra* was unavailable in VHS or DVD format. As Michael Cacoyannis told me himself, when I spoke to him on 13 May 2001, he was still in negotiations with the United Artists/MGM studio that held the copyright in order to obtain permission for the film to be released. As a result until recently *Electra* could only be seen periodically in small art-house theatres. An American DVD of *Electra* is available from World Films. www.mgm.com/dvd A Greek Collectors' Deluxe DVD collection of his Euripidean trilogy became available by Audio Visual Enterprises in 2006. His films can also be downloaded. For *Electra* see: <http://uk.imdb.com/title/tt0055950/>.

'sound and fury'.²³ Irene Papas' interpretation of the title role was 'a noble attempt' according to Solomon, while Steiner found it 'traditional'.²⁴

Although there is some truth in these negative appraisals, it is still worth examining the film more closely,²⁵ especially as a useful comparison with Cacoyannis' *Electra*, the first in his Euripidean trilogy.²⁶ Both films share certain elements in common: they were both products of the modern Greek Film Industry and both were indebted to modern Greek theatrical productions of Greek tragedy. In terms of their approach to adapting the plays for the cinematic medium both Tzavellas and Cacoyannis decided to modernise the story and to use modern Greek translations of the source texts. Both also chose to preserve the chorus in their films,²⁷ although each did so to a different degree. In the films *Antigone* and *Electra* are portrayed as heroines without any of the ambiguities of character that characterize them in the source plays. The same is true of Cacoyannis' *Orestes*. Aegisthus and Clytemnestra are the villains in *Electra*, but Tzavellas' Kreon²⁸ does redeem himself at the end of the film.

The ending of both films is highly tragic, even in the case of Cacoyannis' *Electra* where Euripides' source text calls for a *deus ex machina* resolution to the action; an unsettling and unsatisfactory ending that does nonetheless promise Orestes and Electra a happy ending. Cacoyannis' decision to change his source in order to make the ending of his film more tragic is significant in terms of what an audience expects from a cinematic adaptation of a Greek tragedy. A tragic ending fulfils these expectations even in the case of Cacoyannis' *Electra* where the original source offers a different type of resolution.

The focus of this article will be the strategies Tzavellas and Cacoyannis utilized to adapt Sophocles' *Antigone* and Euripides' *Electra* to the medium of film and how their reception of the source material was formulated within a modern Greek context. Particular attention will be placed on the way in which each director builds up to the tragic ending of their film and to exploring some of the reasons why Cacoyannis was more successful in engaging his audience. Tzavellas and Cacoyannis' reading of their source material should first of all be examined within its modern Greek context.²⁹ This article will focus on the historical and political context, followed by an examination of the Greek Film Industry in antithesis with Hollywood. The crucial role played by the revival of ancient Greek drama in modern Greece will also be discussed. Tzavellas and Cacoyannis' positioning within this context will be of particular interest, and it will be followed by a close analysis of

²³ Solomon, *The ancient world* (n. 4, above) 262, and G. Steiner, *Antigones* (Oxford 1984) 150.

²⁴ Steiner, *Antigones* (n. 23, above) 150.

²⁵ For the importance of moving on from cataloguing films with classical themes to a close examination of how and why they differ from the source material see J. Paul, 'Working with film: theories and methodologies', in *A companion to classical receptions*, ed. L. Hardwick and C. Stray (Oxford 2008) 303-14, at 306.

²⁶ The other two films in the trilogy are *The Trojan Women* (1970-1) and *Iphigenia* (1976-77), so in terms of the mythological chronology *Electra* comes last.

²⁷ The chorus is one of the main difficulties that filmmakers have to contend with when they attempt to film Greek tragedy: MacKinnon, *Greek tragedy* (n. 3, above) 23-25. The chorus in Cacoyannis' *Electra* still retains an element of theatricality. It is in his *Iphigenia* that Cacoyannis fully integrates the chorus into the action of the film: MacKinnon, 'Greek tragedy' (n. 3, above) 92.

²⁸ Creon will be spelled with a 'K' when Tzavellas' portrayal of him in his film is referred to in this article.

²⁹ A lack of awareness of the context can lead to a misreading of the films.

their films always in comparison with the source texts. As Lorna Hardwick observed, receptions do not only provide insights into the receiving society:

'they also focus critical attention back towards the ancient source and sometimes frame new questions or retrieve aspects of the source which have been marginalised'.³⁰

Tzavellas' portrayal of Kreon and Cacoyannis' portrayal of the Atreidae can be better appreciated within the historical context of how Greece was affected by World War Two and the divisions it created that continued to affect the life of the nation for decades afterwards. For Greece the war started in 1941 with Mussolini's ultimatum, amounting to a loss of sovereignty, that was refused and the Albanian war broke out. Britain sent troops to help Greece when German troops reinforced the Italians, but eventually Greece was defeated and occupied.³¹ It was during this occupation that a division developed in Greece that was to have disastrous consequences for the future stability of the country. Churchill sent British agents to Greece to organize pro-British resistance groups that would support the return of King George II of Greece but the biggest, most active resistance group was a communist organisation called ELAS³² (Ελληνικός Λαϊκός Απελευθερωτικός Στρατός),³³ and they opposed the return of the king. Many Greeks sympathised with this view, as there was a growing disenchantment with the monarchy and the government that had abandoned the country and gone into exile.³⁴

During the occupation ELAS at first co-operated with the other resistance groups, most notably in the Gorgopotamos operation,³⁵ but mostly the groups fought each other as well as the Germans. The rift between the occupied Greeks and those in exile also grew. After the liberation of Greece all these tensions led to the outbreak of civil war in the winter of 1946-47.³⁶ The divisions within Greek society were further exacerbated during the Greek Civil War when Greece became a 'key battleground in the Cold War'.³⁷ The United States³⁸ took over from Britain the role of supporting the right-wing

³⁰ L. Hardwick, *Reception studies*, in *Greece and Rome. New Surveys in the Classics* 33 (Oxford 2003) 4.

³¹ The last stronghold of the free Greek government was the island of Crete: C. M., Woodhouse, *Modern Greece. A short history* (London 1984) 239-42.

³² The group was founded in 1942: Woodhouse, *Modern Greece* (n. 31, above) 244.

³³ They were the military arm of EAM, the National Liberation Front (Εθνικό Απελευθερωτικό Μέτωπο) and they were both controlled by the KKE, Greece's communist party: J. S. Koliopoulos and T. M. Veremis, *Greece. The modern sequel. From 1821 to the present* (London 2002) 70.

³⁴ Woodhouse, *Modern Greece* (n. 31, above) 243, and Koliopoulos and Veremis, *Greece* (n. 33, above) 77. Cacoyannis might be referencing this conflict in his *Electra* when he shows the peasants' discontent with Aegisthus' rule.

³⁵ R. Clogg, *A concise history of Greece*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge 1986) 143.

³⁶ Clogg, *A concise history* (n. 35, above) 134-41. Koliopoulos and Veremis date the start of the Civil War to 1943, when the communists attempted to suppress all the other resistance groups: Koliopoulos and Veremis, *Greece* (n. 33, above) 68-98.

³⁷ Clogg, *A concise history* (n. 35, above) 162.

³⁸ The Marshall Plan was a major source of economic aid for Greece after World War Two. In the years 1945 to 1950 Greece received 2.1 billion US dollars in aid from the United States. Koliopoulos and Veremis, *Greece* (n. 33, above) 172.

monarchist and the republican forces that had laid aside their differences because of their common hatred for the communists. Stalin less consistently supported the communist party because in the percentage agreement with Churchill he had agreed that Greece would belong to the Western Bloc.³⁹ Eventually the communists lost, but the Civil War left a ‘legacy of bitterness’ and division.⁴⁰

It was during this time that another issue further complicated Greece’s development and her relationship with her allies, the United States and Britain, and that was the question of Cyprus. As a native of Cyprus, Cacoyannis was affected by this long-protracted dispute. After the end of World War Two expectations were high that Britain would cede the island of Cyprus to Greece, as the Italians did with the Dodecanese islands that were returned to Greece in 1948, but in the case of Cyprus this expectation was frustrated. The four-fifths of the Cypriot population that spoke Greek and belonged to the Greek Orthodox Church shared the desire for *enosis* (union) of Cyprus with Greece.⁴¹ The Turkish minority and the British who governed the island were opposed to *enosis*. The Greek government led by Alexandros Papagos (Prime Minister from 1952 to 1955) was embarrassed by this desire for *enosis* because Britain and the United States were their allies and a source of financial help. Popular opinion, however, forced the government to oppose these allies over the matter of Cyprus. There were riots in both Greece and Cyprus throughout the 1950s and in Cyprus itself there was armed resistance against the British.⁴² Konstandinos Karamanlis, who became Prime Minister after the death of Papagos in 1955, tried to reach a settlement.⁴³ In August 1960 a compromise was indeed reached and Cyprus became an independent republic.⁴⁴ Tzavellas and Cacoyannis, in particular, in their receptions of Greek tragedy addressed contemporary historical and political issues in Greece and Cyprus.⁴⁵

Another important aspect of the Greek context of Tzavellas’ and Cacoyannis’ cinematic receptions is the Greek Film Industry. The industry took its first tentative steps in the early decades of the twentieth century and was heavily influenced by Western cinema. Short movies were first shown in 1897. The first films at the beginning of the century were short movies known as journals that were records of events like the 1907 celebrations for King George filmed by the brothers Manakis.⁴⁶ A 1917 attempt to film a religious picture *The Ascent to Golgotha* (*Ο ανήφορος του Γολγοθά*) was never completed.⁴⁷ Films set in Greece like *The Weavers* (*Υφάντρες*) in 1905, *Golfo* (*Γκόλφω*) in

³⁹ Clogg, *A concise history* (n. 35, above) 150.

⁴⁰ Clogg, *A concise history* (n. 35, above) 165. See also Koliopoulos and Veremis, *Greece* (n. 33, above) 98.

⁴¹ Woodhouse, *Modern Greece* (n. 31, above) 269.

⁴² *Ιστορία του Ελληνικού Έθνους*. Τόμος ΙΣΤ΄, Σύγχρονος Ελληνισμός απο το 1941 εως το τέλος του αιώνα (Αθήνα 2000) 183-94.

⁴³ *Ιστορία του Ελληνικού Έθνους* (n. 42, above) 194-200.

⁴⁴ Woodhouse, *Modern Greece* (n. 31, above) 278-80.

⁴⁵ How he did so in *Electra* will be discussed below.

⁴⁶ Σολδάτος, *Ιστορία* (n. 9, above) 10.

⁴⁷ Financial difficulties and the arrest of the technical director of the company that was producing the film meant it was never finished: Σολδάτος, *Ιστορία* (n. 9, above) 24 and 74.

1914, and *The Wax Doll* (*Κερένια κούκλα*) in 1915 started to appear quite early on in the history of Greek cinema.⁴⁸

It was only in the 1920s and 1930s, however, that the industry experienced its first significant period of production, and the reception of ancient Greece had a significant role to play in this first flourishing of the Greek Film Industry. The Delphic Festival organized by Angelos Sikelianos and his wife Eva Palmer in 1927 was filmed by Dimitris Gaziadis,⁴⁹ while Dimos Bratsanos filmed the performance of *Prometheus Bound* that was the highlight of the festival.⁵⁰ The festival was repeated in 1929 when a young Tzavellas was amongst the audience.⁵¹ An early reception of antiquity is the 1931 film *Daphnis and Chloe* by Orestis Laskos,⁵² based on the 2nd-century AD novel by Longus. Mostly, however, the Greek Film industry specialized in melodramas and slapstick comedies. The growing population of the big cities led to growing audiences for cinema. The introduction of sound and the influx of foreign movies that were technologically superior to Greek ones, however, led to the first decline of the Greek Film Industry in the middle 1930s.⁵³ Production was resumed in 1943, but it was only in the 1950s after Greece returned to a state of relative stability that production flourished, and it was during this second renaissance of the industry that Tzavellas and Cacoyannis produced their receptions of Sophocles and Euripides.⁵⁴

The Greek Film Industry was a national expression of the growing dominance of film as the dominant form of entertainment. During the twentieth century cinema became a 'mass entertainer',⁵⁵ replacing other forms of popular entertainment like the theatre. In his wish to convey the 'timeless appeal' of Greek tragedy Cacoyannis chose film as the best means of reaching a large audience.⁵⁶ Tzavellas had similar aims, and both their films should be placed within a long tradition of films about antiquity in the history of cinema itself. From the beginnings of cinema, ancient Greece and Rome provided filmmakers with suitable subject material with which to entertain their public and to show off their

⁴⁸ Σολδάτος, *Ιστορία* (n. 9, above) 10-11 and 76.

⁴⁹ Σολδάτος, *Ιστορία* (n. 9, above) 16.

⁵⁰ Σολδάτος, *Ιστορία* (n. 9, above) 13.

⁵¹ Tzavellas attributes his desire to film *Antigone* to his experience as a young boy attending the festival and watching Greek tragedy performed live: Σολδάτος, *Ιστορία* (n. 9, above) 473.

⁵² Σολδάτος, *Ιστορία* (n. 9, above) 82.

⁵³ Σολδάτος, *Ιστορία* (n. 9, above) 14.

⁵⁴ Σολδάτος, *Ιστορία* (n. 9, above) 215.

⁵⁵ Elley, *The epic film* (n. 4, above) 1.

⁵⁶ Cacoyannis also directed theatrical productions of tragedy both in Greece and abroad. For example, of interest in terms of his cinematic Euripidean trilogy, he directed a production of Euripides' *Troades* in New York in 1963 and in Paris in 1965. He directed this play again for the Festival at Epidauros in 1995 and in 1997. He also directed *Iphigenia in Aulis* in New York in 1967. Interestingly he also directed Sophocles' version of *Electra* for Epidauros in 1983 but he never directed Euripides' *Electra* for the theatre. For these details see Κινηματογραφικό Αφιέρωμα 'Ο Διεθνής Κακογιάννης' programme (2001). As Hardwick points out, to stage a Greek play has become an 'integral' part of a theatre director's career, Hardwick, *Reception studies* (n. 30, above). For a discussion of theatre productions of ancient Greek plays since 1969 see E. Hall, 'Why Greek tragedy in the late twentieth century?', in *Dionysus since 69. Greek tragedy at the dawn of the third millennium*, ed. E. Hall, F. Macintosh and A. Wrigley (Oxford 2004) 1-46. Tzavellas also started his career in the theatre.

technical abilities.⁵⁷ Films about antiquity formed a large part of what is known as the epic film genre,⁵⁸ a genre characterized by spectacle. Epic films used antiquity as a source of inspiration, but they reinterpreted the old stories to suit the tastes of their contemporary audiences.⁵⁹

After World War One Hollywood emerged as 'the dominant industrial force in world film production'.⁶⁰ It catered for a primarily American and Western-world audience. The influence of Hollywood on Tzavellas and Cacoyannis, however, should not be entirely discounted. Both follow its practice of privileging narrative⁶¹ and realism in film.⁶² On the whole independent filmmakers such as Cacoyannis, Federico Fellini and Pier Paolo Pasolini set themselves up in opposition to the commercialised vision of antiquity that Hollywood offered.⁶³ Cacoyannis and Tzavellas, however, in their desire for their cinematic versions of Euripides' plays to continue the process of the transmission of Greek tragedy,⁶⁴ chose not to discount all of Hollywood's techniques, but instead used a mixture of realism and stylisation that they hoped would appeal to their audience.⁶⁵

Historical and/or literary authenticity was not a major concern for Hollywood. Most Hollywood filmmakers were more interested in making a narrative film that would appeal to a mass audience. This was particularly the case with epic films of the 1950s and 1960s that were so expensive to make because of their reliance on special effects⁶⁶ and elaborate costumes.⁶⁷ An example of just such an epic film that also illustrates how Hollywood

⁵⁷ M. M. Winkler (ed.), *Classics and cinema*, Bucknell Review (London 1991) 9. This book was reissued in 2001: Winkler (ed.), *Classical myth and culture in the cinema* (New York 2001) (see pp. 21-22), but in an abridged form with additions. Wherever pertinent both volumes will be referred to, as the more recent volume is now more accessible than its predecessor.

⁵⁸ Wyke, *Projecting* (n. 5, above) 13.

⁵⁹ Wyke, *Projecting* (n. 5, above) 5, on how Hollywood caters to the public's taste for spectacle, sex and violence.

⁶⁰ D. Bordwell and K. Thompson, *Film art. An introduction*, 4th ed. (New York 1993) 455.

⁶¹ A narrative film is one 'that tells a story', Bordwell and Thompson, *Film art* (n. 60, above) 64.

⁶² Although realism is a problematic concept Hollywood tends to privilege films that appear realistic. See Bordwell and Thompson, *Film art* (n. 60, above) 146. See also MacKinnon, *Greek tragedy* (n. 3, above) 74, where he classes Cacoyannis' Euripidean trilogy as belonging to the 'realistic mode' category of films based on Greek tragedy.

⁶³ Wyke, *Projecting* (n. 5, above) 188.

⁶⁴ M. McDonald, and M. M. Winkler, 'Interviews with Michael Cacoyannis and Irene Papas (conducted over the telephone in November and December 1988)', in *Classics and the cinema*, ed. M. M. Winkler, Bucknell Review, (London 1991) 170, where Cacoyannis discusses his approach to filming Greek tragedy. See also the updated version of this article in Winkler, *Classical myth and culture* (n. 57, above) 81-82.

⁶⁵ Cacoyannis was more successful in achieving the correct balance of the two elements than Tzavellas, whose film is at times too stylised and theatrical.

⁶⁶ For a discussion of some of the techniques used by special effects artists see Bordwell and Thompson, *Film art* (n. 60, above) 197-201. The technology involved in producing spectacular scenes has evolved from the rather primitive efforts of films like the 1907 *Ben-Hur* to the computer generated digital imagery used by films like *Gladiator* (2000), and it is still evolving. Wolfgang Petersen's *Troy* was released in May 2004. Christie Lemire remarked on how realistic its CGI effects were. See <http://film.guardian.co.uk/apnews/story/0,1276,-4090287,00.html>, 1-2, accessed 15/05/2004.

⁶⁷ Bordwell and Thompson, *Film art* (n. 60, above) 150-52, for a discussion of costumes.

popularised antiquity is *Ben-Hur*, filmed three times; the most successful and best-known version was the 1959 one.⁶⁸ Like many of the plots of Hollywood epic films based on antiquity, the story of *Ben-Hur* comes from the nineteenth-century.⁶⁹ Hollywood exploited the public's continuing fascination with such stories set in antiquity by filming them in a spectacular manner.⁷⁰ Other famous earlier examples of Hollywood's drawing on antiquity include *Quo Vadis* (1951),⁷¹ *The Robe* (1953),⁷² *Spartacus* (1960),⁷³ *Cleopatra* (1963),⁷⁴ and *The Fall of the Roman Empire* (1964),⁷⁵ to name but a few of the better known examples of films of this type. Spectacle was the main selling point of these films,⁷⁶ but American filmmakers and the American public alike were attracted to them because they saw parallels between ancient Rome and the United States of the twentieth century.⁷⁷ There was a negative side to such portrayals as well, as the United States could also be seen as possessing some of the negative aspects of Imperial Rome,⁷⁸ and in the

⁶⁸ Sidney Olcott first filmed *Ben-Hur* in 1907. See Elley, *The epic film* (n. 4, above) 130, for details. Fred Niblo directed the second version in 1925 and William Wyler directed the third. For an analysis of the 1959 version see M. S. Cyrino, *Big screen Rome* (Oxford 2005) 59-88.

⁶⁹ The story of *Ben-Hur* is based on the nineteenth-century novel by Lew Wallace published in 1880. For the popularity of such stories and how Hollywood reinvented them see Wyke, *Projecting* (n. 5, above) 3.

⁷⁰ It was the 1925 version that fully utilized the technical abilities of the new medium to entertain its audience with spectacular scenes such as that of the chariot race. The film also made the fortunes of the emerging new studio Metro-Goldwyn-Meyer (MGM). Cyrino, *Big screen* (n. 68, above) 70. In 1959, when the studio's fortunes were flagging because of competition from the new medium of television, MGM decided to invest in an updated version of the film. The studio's strategy to combat the popularity of TV was twofold. They gave their financial backing to huge spectacles like *Ben-Hur*, designed to appeal to the whole family, but they also started to produce films that dealt with contemporary issues such as sexual behaviour and teenage rebellion. Two famous examples of such films were *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (1958) directed by Richard Brooks and starring Elizabeth Taylor and Paul Newman and *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955) with James Dean and Natalie Wood. In the 1970s as the average age of cinema audiences decreased, most cinema audiences being in their twenties and thirties, Hollywood chose to increase the ratio of violence and sex in their films to appeal to this new audience.

⁷¹ Cyrino, *Big screen* (n. 68, above) 7-33.

⁷² Cyrino, *Big screen* (n. 68, above) 34-58.

⁷³ Cyrino, *Big screen* (n. 68, above) 89-120. See also Solomon, *The ancient world* (n. 4, above) 50-56.

⁷⁴ Cyrino, *Big screen* (n. 68, above) 121-158. For the history of the films based on the story of Cleopatra as well as the 1963 version see also Solomon, *The ancient world* (n. 4, above) 62-79. For a more in depth analysis see Wyke, *Projecting* (n. 5, above) 73-109.

⁷⁵ Solomon, *The ancient world* (n. 4, above) 83-87.

⁷⁶ Although the term spectacle is often used in a derogatory sense by classical scholars to describe these films, it should be remembered that the Great Dionysia was also designed as a spectacle to celebrate the city of Athens: R. Bagg and M. Bagg, 'Introduction: Greek theatre in the time of Sophocles', in *The Oedipus plays of Sophocles: Oedipus the King, Oedipus at Kolonos, Antigone*, trans. R. Bagg (Amherst and Boston 2004) 4.

⁷⁷ M. M. Winkler, 'The Roman Empire in American cinema after 1945', in *Imperial projections. Ancient Rome in modern popular culture*, ed. S. R. Joshel, M. Malamud and D. T. McGuire, Jr. (Baltimore and London 2001) 50-76, Cyrino, *Big screen* (n. 68, above) 3, and Wyke, *Projecting* (n. 5, above) 4-5. This trend of associating the Roman Empire with America dates back to the nineteenth century and the toga novels: Cyrino, *Big screen* (n. 68, above) 69.

⁷⁸ Wyke, *Projecting* (n. 5, above) 5.

1960s some films like *The Fall of the Roman Empire* (1964) explored this negative side more closely.⁷⁹

Hollywood studios could afford big budgets for their Roman epics because their mass-audience appeal made them profitable and also helped cinema to combat the appeal of television. Cacoyannis and Tzavellas were in a very different financial position as they did not work for Hollywood. The Greek Film Industry of the 1950s and 1960s operated on a much smaller scale, producing modestly budgeted films for the domestic market. Cacoyannis' *Electra*, for example, cost only \$60,000 to make. Tzavellas helped to raise the funds for his *Antigone*,⁸⁰ as well as writing and directing the movie.⁸¹ Cacoyannis has complained that there is 'commercial censorship'⁸² in the West that makes it very hard for a filmmaker who does not enjoy a large following to make a film. 'Cinema is an unashamedly commercial medium'⁸³ though, and filmmakers who are deemed to be less commercially viable have difficulties finding finance for their films. Even Hollywood ceased to be able to afford to make Roman epics once their popularity waned.⁸⁴ *The Fall of the Roman Empire* was less successful than previous epics, partly because of its darker subject material,⁸⁵ and so it became the last Roman epic until Ridley Scott's *Gladiator* (2000).⁸⁶

The much smaller scale Greek Film Industry could ill afford to produce films that the Greek cinema going public did not want to see. The term 'εμπορικός' (profit making) describes the type of films that the industry wished to produce: ones that were successful

⁷⁹ This bleaker outlook was not well received by contemporary film audiences. Competition from the flourishing new medium of television for the public's attention was another contributing factor to the decline of the sword and sandals genre.

⁸⁰ Σολδάτος, *Ιστορία* (n. 9, above) 34.

⁸¹ Σολδάτος, *Ιστορία* (n. 9, above) 472.

⁸² Symposium International à Delphes 18-22 Août 1981, *le théâtre antique de nos jours*, Centre Culturel Européen de Delphes Athènes (Athens 1984) 219.

⁸³ Elley, *The epic film* (n. 4, above) 1.

⁸⁴ Wyke, *Projecting* (n. 5, above) 184-85.

⁸⁵ Wyke, *Projecting* (n. 5, above) 188.

⁸⁶ For a discussion of the film from an academic standpoint see M. M. Winkler (ed.), *Gladiator: film and history* (Oxford, 2004). Interestingly *Gladiator* covers the same chronological period as *The Fall of the Roman Empire*, but technological advances like computer generated images made the film financially viable. For a comparison of the two films see Solomon, *The ancient world* (n. 4, above) 87-95. Still it was a big risk for emerging studio Dreamworks SKG to take, and they collaborated with Universal in order to reduce the financial risk the film represented. Its success encouraged the productions of more epic films. *Troy* was Warner Brothers' blockbuster offering for the summer of 2004. Its budget was \$170million. It was only moderately successful at the box office: G. Nisbet, *Ancient Greece in film and popular culture* (Exeter 2006) 81. Oliver Stone's *Alexander* (2004), on the other hand, was a flop in critical and financial terms: Nisbet, *Ancient Greece* 127. Since *Gladiator* there has been a renaissance of the epic genre with *Troy* (2004), *Alexander* (2004), *King Arthur* (2004) re-imagined as a Late Roman epic for the big screen, and on television *Helen of Troy* (2003), the British-Italian co-productions *Julius Caesar* (2002), *Imperium: Augustus* (2003), *Imperium: Nero* (2004), and the series *Empire* (2005) and *Rome* (2005-07). *Imperium*, a six-part mini series produced by ABC, focuses on the events following the murder of Julius Caesar and the rise of Augustus: app.abc.go.com/movies/empire.html, accessed 18/10/2007. *Rome*, an HBO/BBC/RAI co-production, had two seasons, but the high production costs led to its cancellation: www.hbo.com/rome/, accessed 18/10/2007. In Britain Bettany Hughes has produced several documentaries on aspects of the ancient world including *Helen of Troy*, screened on Channel 4 in 2005. The BBC produced a docu-drama *Ancient Rome: The Rise and Fall of An Empire* the following year.

in the box-office and turned a good profit.⁸⁷ The Industry avoided films like *Antigone* and *Electra*, ‘συνεμά ποιότητας’ (quality/worthy films) because they tended to be unpopular.⁸⁸ Tzavellas and Cacoyannis were therefore taking a risk when they decided to raise the standards of the industry by directing these films.

As Greek filmmakers, Tzavellas and Cacoyannis did not share the American filmmakers’ interest in ancient Rome. They did, however, share their privileging of the narrative form of film that tells a story, and many of the changes they made to the source texts concern the rationalizing of the ancient playwrights’ more ambiguous characters.⁸⁹ The films’ narrative tells a more straightforward story that is more accessible to the audience, which might not be familiar with the original play. Cacoyannis and Tzavellas, like Hollywood directors, also saw parallels between fifth-century BC Athens and twentieth-century events, but their perspective was that of two directors working outside Hollywood for a small national industry and within a modern Greek context. *Electra* and *Antigone*, released during the early sixties in the heyday of the Hollywood epics, would have invited comparison with these huge spectacles, but they were also perceived as more thoughtful representations of antiquity.

Another aspect of the Greek context of the film is the revival of ancient Greek tragedy in twentieth-century Greek theatre. Both Tzavellas and Cacoyannis worked as theatrical directors, and when it came to choosing a location for their films they took into account the long theatrical tradition of staging plays in open-air theatres in Greece, which of course dates back to antiquity. This tradition was revived in Greece in the nineteenth⁹⁰ and particularly in the twentieth century.⁹¹ The theatre of Epidaurus is one of the most famous outdoor theatre venues in Greece. Excavations on the site begun in 1881 by a Greek team led by Panagiotis Kavadias.⁹² Epidaurus now plays host to a summer programme of Greek tragedy and comedy. This revival of the open-air theatre festival begun in 1954 with a

⁸⁷ Γ. Σολδάτος, *Ιστορία του Ελληνικού Κινηματογράφου*, 1ος Τόμος, 1900-1967 (Αθήνα 2002) 173.

⁸⁸ Σολδάτος, *Ιστορία* (n. 87, above) 282. This will be discussed further below.

⁸⁹ This will be discussed more extensively below.

⁹⁰ The first performance of an ancient tragedy in Greece in modern times dates back to the 16th century. In Zakynthos a revival of Aeschylus’ *Persians* was staged by the Venetian overlords of the island in honour of the naval victory of Lepanto when a Christian League comprised of Venice, the Papacy and Spain defeated the Turkish navy in 1571. This performance did not, however, inspire a revival of the practice of staging ancient Greek tragedy in Greece. Moreover it was performed in Italian. P. Mavroumoustakos, ‘Το Αρχαίο Ελληνικό Δράμα στη Νεοελληνική Σκηνή: Από τους Πέρσες του 1571 στις Προσεγγίσεις του 20ου Αιώνα’, in *Productions of ancient Greek drama in Europe during modern times*, Επτανησιακή Γραμματεία Ελληνιστών, Γ’ Διεθνής Επιστημονική Συνάντηση/ Κέρκυρα 4, 5, 6 Απριλίου 1997 (Αθήνα 1999) 77-79. In the nineteenth century the first important performance of ancient Greek tragedy is *Philoctetes* in 1818. Mavroumoustakos, *Το Αρχαίο Ελληνικό* (n. 90, above) 78. Many of these early productions stressed the link between ancient and modern Greece. As this was the century in which the new emerging Greek nation fought for and gained its independence, this emphasis is understandable. For an analysis of the general state of theatre in Greece and the East Mediterranean in the nineteenth century see Θ. Χατζηπανταζής, *Από τον Νείλο μέχρι τον Δουναβίως. Το χρονικό της ανάπτυξης του ελληνικού επαγγελματικού θεάτρου, στο ευρύτερο πλαίσιο της Ανατολικής Μεσογείου, από την ίδρυση του ανεξάρτητου κράτους ως τη Μικρασιατική καταστροφή*. Τόμος Α1: Ως φοινίξ εκ της τέφρας του... (1828-1875), Ινστιτούτο Μεσογειακών Σπουδών (Ηράκλειο 2002) in two volumes that examine the period 1828-1875. Forthcoming volumes in this series will cover later periods.

⁹¹ Mavroumoustakos, *Το Αρχαίο Ελληνικό* (n. 90, above) 79-87.

⁹² Κ. Γεωργουσόπουλος, και Γ. Σαββάς, *Επίδαυρος. Το Αρχαίο Θέατρο, οι Παραστάσεις* (Αθήνα 2002) 26-29.

performance of Euripides' *Hippolytus* and continues to the present day.⁹³ In the period between 1954 and 2001, for example, Sophocles' *Electra* was staged 13 times and Euripides' *Electra* was staged 5 times. Cacoyannis himself was the theatrical director of one of these productions of Sophocles' *Electra* in 1983.⁹⁴

This continuing tradition of performing in outdoor theatres in Greece shaped Cacoyannis' and Tzavellas' views of ancient Greek tragedy.⁹⁵ Two landmark performances of the plays in the 1930s were the student production of *Antigone* in 1937 at the Herodeion theatre under the Acropolis and the 1938 performance of Sophocles' *Electra*, the first performance of an ancient play at Epidaurus in modern times.⁹⁶ The staging of Greek tragedy in the ancient theatres was meant to establish the unique suitability of modern Greeks to perform the ancient plays in the physical spaces where they were first performed.⁹⁷ Theatre critics believed that these performances were championing the continuation of the theatrical tradition from ancient to modern Greece.⁹⁸ This rhetoric of a 'live' tradition of the open-air performance of Greek tragedy makes Cacoyannis' choice of the Greek countryside between Athens and Sounio as the setting of his film seem entirely natural and fitting. In 1961 when filming took place this area was a lot less heavily built up than it is currently. It could thus represent an ideal rural setting that contrasts with the claustrophobic space of the palace set in the ruins of Mycenae. Tzavellas also used the Attic landscape around Athens as the backdrop of his film.⁹⁹ His use of landscape is particularly effective in the scenes where Haemon mourns the fate of Antigone, her entombment in the cave, and the tragic climax of the film.¹⁰⁰ Cacoyannis and Tzavellas thus made the Greek landscape an essential element of their directorial vision for their cinematic receptions of Euripides and Sophocles' plays.

Both Cacoyannis and Tzavellas chose to film in the realistic mode, but there is a crucial difference in their approach. Tzavellas' debt to theatrical conventions is much more apparent in his film. Despite his emphasis on spectacle and group scenes his film is

⁹³ Γεωργουσόπουλος, *Επίδαυρος* (n. 92, above) 103-14.

⁹⁴ Source: Γεωργουσόπουλος, *Επίδαυρος* (n. 92, above) 247-452. For Cacoyannis see Γεωργουσόπουλος, *Επίδαυρος* (n. 92, above) 339.

⁹⁵ P. Michelakis, 'The past as a foreign country? Greek tragedy, cinema and the politics of space', in *Homer, tragedy and beyond*. Essays in honour of P. E. Easterling, ed. F. Budelmann and P. Michelakis (London 2001) 241-46.

⁹⁶ Α. Βασιλείου, *Εκσυγχρονισμός ή παράδοση; Το θέατρο πρόζας στην Αθήνα του Μεσοπολέμου*, (Αθήνα 2004) 296. In 1939 the Royal Theatre of Greece went on tour in Europe with another production of Sophocles' *Electra* that enjoyed great success.

⁹⁷ The Metaxas dictatorship (1936-1941) encouraged the veneration of the past and the idea of the continuation of a tradition stretching back to ancient Greece and mediated by Byzantium. They utilized archaeology as the visible link of this tradition, but their relationship with the past was not always straightforward. Y. Hamilakis, *The nation and its ruins. Antiquity, archaeology and the national imagination in Greece* (Oxford 2007) 201-04. The performance of Greek drama was one of these problematic areas. *Antigone* was one play that caused the authorities a great deal of anxiety. Hamilakis, *The nation* 178. After all, its plot deals with a woman who defies the king of her city.

⁹⁸ Βασιλείου, *Εκσυγχρονισμός ή παράδοση* (n. 96, above) 293-99.

⁹⁹ MacKinnon, *Greek tragedy* (n. 3, above) 73.

¹⁰⁰ These scenes will be discussed further below.

still bound by theatrical conventions. The camera often stays static while the actors declaim their speeches. Tzavellas also partly modelled his *Antigone* on Hollywood sword and sandal epics.¹⁰¹ His film opens with the image of a tragic mask that reminds the audience of the theatrical origins of the story. In the opening titles Tzavellas also utilises the image of curtains, a device used by Cecil B. DeMille in his film the *Ten Commandments* to introduce the spectacle.¹⁰² The titles of *Antigone* also boast that the film utilised the talents of five hundred soldiers and actors. DeMille was also famous for making such boasts both at the beginning of films and in the promotional material he produced to advertise them. Additionally, *Antigone*'s soundtrack is reminiscent of the type of music that Hollywood sword and sandal films employed to suggest the large scope of their narratives. This mixture of Hollywood elements and Greek tragedy is not always successful.

Cacoyannis, on the other hand, chose to make a realistic film that more successfully camouflaged its theatrical origins, while at the same time maintaining its credentials as a Greek product. Cacoyannis' use of spectacle is limited to the presentation of the ruins of Mycenae in the prologue. The ruins also serve as a visible link between modern and ancient Greece. He preferred to use Mikis Theodorakis' soundtrack with its folk instruments stressing the Greek credentials of his film. His more simple approach fits the material of tragedy better. He disguises his debt to theatre better and this contributed to the favourable reception of his film in comparison with Tzavellas' *Antigone*.

Tzavellas' presentation of Kreon also owes a debt to filmic presentations of Roman emperors on the big screen.¹⁰³ He first appears descending through the columns of the palace into the courtyard and addressing a crowd of soldiers, the chorus and Theban citizens from a plinth. He is often positioned higher than other characters, for example when he faces the guard and then Antigone. He is also positioned on top of a horse when he sends Antigone to the cave as well as when he confronts Teiresias, and he sits on his throne with the statue of Zeus behind him when Haemon tries to reason with him. By placing him in this way the camera often looks up at him and down on his opponents, thus signalling his power and authority which becomes progressively more oppressive.

Kreon is also always surrounded and accompanied by a detachment of soldiers presumably some of the five hundred members of the Royal Guard the film boasted in its opening titles. This is another signifier of his oppressive power. Before he hears of the burial of Polynices' body he is also shown as taking part in a feast, drinking and eating while an aulos player entertains him and his guest. The Roman orgy was an important aspect of any sword and sandal epic of the '50s and '60s. His power in action is demonstrated by his dispatching his soldiers to search homes, drag people away and flog them in his search to find the culprit who buried the body. This presentation of Kreon utilising many of the elements familiar to audiences from Hollywood epics creates an unfavourable

¹⁰¹ One 1960s film critic compared Tzavellas's film to John Ford's westerns in his use of the landscape. See Gordon Gow's article on *Antigone* in *Film & Filming* 9 (May 1963) www.filmfestival.gr/tributes/2003-2004/cinemathology/uk/film29.html, accessed 03/04/2008.

¹⁰² For Cecil B. DeMille as narrator see Solomon, *The ancient world* (n. 4, above) 155.

¹⁰³ In the 1960s Greek film directors consciously tried to imitate the scope and spectacle of foreign films. Σολδάτος, *Ιστορία* (n. 87, above) 255.

perception of him as a tyrannical ruler in the vein of bad emperors such as Nero in *Quo Vadis*.

It is hoped that this discussion of the contemporary context of Tzavellas' and Cacoyannis' films emphasises the importance of examining the surviving evidence of the contemporary background of Sophocles' play.¹⁰⁴ Any examination of the receiving cultures cannot be complete without a close 'reading' of the cinematic adaptations themselves in conjunction with a comparative analysis of the source texts.

The date of *Antigone*, the first of the Theban plays, is 442-441 BC.¹⁰⁵ At the time Athens was still a prosperous city, but the play mediates certain contemporary tensions¹⁰⁶ such as those surrounding funeral customs,¹⁰⁷ inheritance laws, and the proper behaviour of the *polis* and its citizens. Sophocles' treatment of these issues did not provide his audience with straightforward solutions, but it did raise these important issues within the context of a religious and civic festival that allowed for a variety of voices to be heard.

The main dilemma of *Antigone* concerns the question of whether Polynices should be buried. Funerals in ancient Athens were originally private affairs in which women had a crucial role to play as mourners of the dead. As the democracy emerged in the sixth and fifth century BC, however, the state became more involved in how funerals were conducted. Solon (Plutarch, *Solon*, 21.5) passed laws to restrict excessive displays at funerals, fearing the use powerful aristocratic families could make of such occasions.¹⁰⁸ Under Pericles the *polis* took over the burial of its war dead by organising big public funerals (Thuc. 2.34).¹⁰⁹ This reinforced the idea that the citizens' first duty was to the

¹⁰⁴ For the importance of the contemporary context in our efforts to evaluate the play in terms of its contemporary audience see W. B. Tyrrell and L. J. Bennett, *Recapturing Sophocles' Antigone* (Lanham, Maryland 1988) 99. See also C. B. Patterson, 'Antigone's answer: essays on death and burial, family and state in classical Athens', *Helios* 33S (2006) 9-48, at 9-10, and J. Beer, *Sophocles and the tragedy of Athenian democracy* (Westport, Connecticut 2004) 68.

¹⁰⁵ M. Griffith, *Sophocles, Antigone*, Cambridge Greek and Latin Classics (Cambridge 1999) 1. See also Bagg and Bagg, 'Introduction: Greek theatre' (n. 76, above) 15. Knox dates the play to just before 441 BC: B. Knox, 'Introduction', in *Sophocles, The Three Theban Plays: Antigone, Oedipus the King, Oedipus at Colonus*, trans. Robert Fagles (London 1982) 21. Carter dates it to 442 BC: D. M. Carter, *The politics of Greek tragedy* (Bristol 2007) 103.

¹⁰⁶ For the role of drama as mediator of contemporary anxieties and conflicts see Griffin, *Sophocles* (n. 105, above) 43. See also C. P. Segal, *Tragedy and civilization. An interpretation of Sophocles* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London 1981) 206.

¹⁰⁷ S. B. Ferrario, 'Replaying *Antigone*: changing patterns of public and private commemoration at Athens c. 440-350', *Helios* 33S (2006) 79-117, at 104-05.

¹⁰⁸ Beer, *Sophocles* (n. 104, above) 68. See also Patterson, 'Antigone's answer' (n. 104, above) 23-24. Roman aristocratic families in the time of the Republic also utilized the occasion of the funerals of members of their family to curry favour with the people by staging shows and gladiatorial contests. Under the emperors this practice was discontinued.

¹⁰⁹ Beer, *Sophocles* (n. 104, above) 68, and C. Segal, 'Introduction', in *Sophocles Antigone*, trans. R. Gibbons and C. Segal, (Oxford 2003) 5. See also Patterson, 'Antigone's answer' (n. 104, above) 21-31 on public burials.

polis and not to their *oikos*.¹¹⁰ In his film Tzavellas portrays Eteocles' funeral as a big public event as befits a warrior who fell in battle in defence of his *polis*.¹¹¹

The *polis* could also refuse burial (*exorismos*) to traitors and criminals in extreme cases, although it could not prevent their burial outside the boundaries of the city-state or indeed even their secret burial by *philo*i (loved ones)¹¹² within the state limits.¹¹³ Patterson makes the important point that although traitors were indeed left unburied they were not left so *within* the boundaries of the *polis*.¹¹⁴ The audience would have been shocked at the thought of the *miasma* the state would incur by Creon's decision to leave the body of Polynices unburied within the boundaries of the *polis*.

An interesting point of similarity between the two plays is that the desecration of the body of Polynices is reminiscent of the fate of Agamemnon's body. Both are exposed and are prayed upon by scavengers. In his decree Creon wants Polynices' body to become food for vultures,¹¹⁵ and that is also how Antigone had imagined the scene of her brother's unburied body in the prologue.¹¹⁶ The desecration of the body of Agamemnon alluded to by Electra in Euripides' version¹¹⁷ is followed later in the play by the scene in which she rants over the body of Aegisthus.¹¹⁸ In this play we thus have one reported desecration and the actual presence of a body on the stage, whereas in *Antigone* we have the desecration of the body of Polynices and two bodies on the stage, those of Haemon and Eurydice. Both of those will receive the full funeral rites as Eteocles had and belatedly Polynices. The desecration and the issue of the proper funeral rites for the dead are important concerns not only for *Antigone*, but for Euripides' *Electra* as well. In terms of the portrayal of the dead in the films under discussion Tzavellas only gives his audience glimpses of the corpse of Polynices, while Cacoyannis adds a scene in which Agamemnon's tomb is defiled and Electra's offerings are scattered by Aegisthus and his soldiers.

¹¹⁰ Tyrrell and Bennett, *Recapturing* (n. 104, above) 114-118. See also R. Bagg and M. Bagg 'Antigone. From what kind of parents was I born', in *The Oedipus plays of Sophocles: Oedipus the King, Oedipus at Kolonos, Antigone*, trans. Robert Bagg (Amherst and Boston, 2004) 163.

¹¹¹ This will be discussed more extensively below.

¹¹² The term could refer to relatives and/or friends. The correct definition of the term is seen as problematic in the play. Bagg and Bagg, *Antigone* (n. 110, above) 162, and Griffith, *Sophocles* (n. 105, above) 40-41. As her uncle Creon is Antigone's *philos*, but he becomes her *echthros* (enemy) by his decree and the sentence of death he imposed upon her. Polynices was also both a *philos* and an *echthros*, because although a member of the royal family of Thebes he attacked his city. The term is thus problematized in the play, and the complication of human relationships is explored.

¹¹³ Tyrrell and Bennett, *Recapturing* (n. 104, above) 131-32; Griffin, *Sophocles* (n. 105, above) 30.

¹¹⁴ Patterson, 'Antigone's answer' (n. 104, above) 33-35.

¹¹⁵ Sophocles, *Antigone* 203-06. Sky burials were a Persian funerary custom, so this would have counted against Creon with the ancient Greek audience. S. West, 'Sophocles' *Antigone* and Herodotus Book Three', in *Sophocles revisited. Essays presented to Sir Hugh Lloyd-Jones*, ed. J. Griffin (Oxford 1999) 109-36, at 118 n. 41.

¹¹⁶ Sophocles, *Antigone* 28-30.

¹¹⁷ Euripides, *Electra* 327-30. This will be discussed further below. Cf. Sophocles, *Electra* 444-46. Electra talks of the dishonourable killing of her father and the mutilation of his body. In the deception scene she also laments that she did not have the opportunity to mourn and bury her brother properly: Sophocles, *Electra* 1131-42, 1209-10.

¹¹⁸ This will be discussed in greater detail below.

The issue of inheritance is another important aspect of the play. Creon after all became ruler of Thebes by default as the line of Oedipus's male heirs was disrupted when both Eteocles and Polynices perished.¹¹⁹ Creon's claim on the throne is based on matrilineal descent as he is the brother of Jocasta.¹²⁰ This also makes Antigone an *epikleros* like Electra.¹²¹ Her intended marriage to Haemon, her closest male relative,¹²² would have been in accordance with customs governing inheritance in ancient Greece that stipulated that when a woman was the only survivor of an *oikos* she had to pass on her inheritance to the closest male relative. It was considered her duty to continue the bloodline, but Antigone and her intended bridegroom Haemon choose instead to die, a decision that is disastrous for the continuation of her family.¹²³ Names are important in Greek tragedy, and the names of the two heroines are indicative of their transgressive nature. Electra's name alludes to her continued state of virginity. In ancient Greek ἄλεκτρος means unwedded.¹²⁴ Antigone's name suggests that she is opposed to offspring, γόνος.¹²⁵ Her decision to bury her brother leads to death and sterility.¹²⁶

In *Antigone* the gods are more remote.¹²⁷ There is no *deus ex machina* as at the end of Euripides' *Electra*. There is in fact no epiphany at all in *Antigone*. The gods do not intervene to save Antigone,¹²⁸ whereas in Euripides the Dioscuri aid Orestes and Electra. Antigone invokes the chthonic powers, but when she is buried alive all she can do is choose her own method of dying. She hangs herself and becomes the bride of Hades.¹²⁹ Both Creon and Antigone claim to be upholding divine laws and acting in accordance with the will of the gods,¹³⁰ but in the end neither receives divine aid. It is Teiresias who is the mouthpiece of the gods, and he talks of the *miasma* that Creon has brought onto the city that has disrupted communication with the gods.¹³¹ In Tzavellas' film because of its pro-Antigone bias the gods, like the citizens of Thebes, are portrayed as being on her side.¹³²

¹¹⁹ Creon will also lose his last surviving son, thus leaving him without male heirs like Oedipus before him. It can then be argued that he inherits Oedipus' curse: Segal, 'Introduction' (n. 109, above) 11.

¹²⁰ Carter, *The politics of Greek tragedy* (n. 105, above) 105, and K. Ormand, *Exchange and the maiden. Marriage in Sophoclean tragedy* (Austin 1999) 85-86.

¹²¹ Ormand, *Exchange* (n. 120, above) 92.

¹²² They are first cousins. Marriage between first cousins is forbidden by law in modern Greece.

¹²³ Ormand, *Exchange* (n. 120, above) 96-98.

¹²⁴ See LSJ s.v. Antigone uses the same word to describe her status in l. 917 of the play.

¹²⁵ See LSJ s.v.; Tyrrell and Bennett, *Recapturing* (n. 104, above) 116. Griffith suggests that her name was invented to fit her role: Griffith, *Sophocles* (n. 105, above) 10 n. 36. See also Bagg and Bagg, *Antigone* (n. 110, above) 172 n. 14.

¹²⁶ Segal, *Tragedy and civilization* (n. 106, above) 181.

¹²⁷ Teiresias acts as their spokesperson, and it can be argued that Antigone becomes the tool they use to destroy Creon. For Antigone as the agent of the gods see Segal, 'Introduction' (n. 109, above) 31 n. 55.

¹²⁸ Segal, 'Introduction' (n. 109, above) 11-12.

¹²⁹ Segal, *Tragedy and civilization* (n. 106, above) 156.

¹³⁰ Segal, *Tragedy and civilization* (n. 106, above) 64 for Antigone and 67 for Creon.

¹³¹ Griffith, *Sophocles* (n. 105, above) 10.

¹³² They do not appear in the film but they are often referred to.

Antigone is a play that lends itself to political interpretation. For modern Western audiences Antigone the individual is clearly in the right. Modern ideas about personal freedom in a democratic state make Creon's attempt to stop Antigone burying her brother seem like the worst type of tyranny.¹³³ Many modern receptions of the play take this line. In the seventeenth and eighteenth century *Antigone* was not popular on the Western stage,¹³⁴ but that changed in the nineteenth century. The play was much lauded by the German Romantics and Hegel in particular.¹³⁵ It is his view that Antigone is undoubtedly the heroine of the play that held general sway.¹³⁶ This view was also generally held within academia¹³⁷ until the late 1950s,¹³⁸ shortly before Tzavellas created his cinematic reception of the play. Twentieth-century theatrical receptions of the play have also tended to read the play in this way. In Jean Anouilh's *Antigone* staged in February of 1944, Antigone is associated with the French resistance and Creon with the Nazi occupiers.¹³⁹ Bertolt Brecht's 1948 production is even more violently pro-Antigone as he associated Creon with Hitler.¹⁴⁰ As McDonald writes, Tzavellas' *Antigone* is 'a politically charged film'.¹⁴¹ Such a clear-cut identification of Antigone with the rights of the individual and Creon with an oppressive state is, however, anachronistic.

Both Tzavellas and Cacoyannis were concerned with the quality of the films that the Greek Film Industry produced. In an interview Tzavellas talks of the low brow fare available to the Greek cinema public.¹⁴² His *Antigone* was meant to raise the standards of the industry. Tzavellas' decision to take a serious, theatrical approach in his film is more

¹³³ It will be interesting to see how current fears of terrorism and the greater security measures they have inspired will affect the reception of *Antigone* in the future.

¹³⁴ E. Hall and F. Macintosh, *Greek tragedy and the British theatre, 1660-1914* (Oxford, 2005) 317.

¹³⁵ Hall and Macintosh, *Greek tragedy* (n. 134, above) 318. The Potsdam production of *Antigone* started a trend for staging the play that continues to this day. For more information on this production, as well as the Covent Garden and Dublin productions, see Hall and Macintosh, *Greek tragedy* (n. 134, above) 318-27.

¹³⁶ Segal, 'Introduction' (n. 109, above) 3-4.

¹³⁷ Segal, 'Introduction' (n. 109, above) 12-13. For an example of this view see R. C. Jebb, *Sophocles: Antigone*, reprint of Jebb's 1900 text with an introduction by Ruby Blondell (London 2004) xxii. An early modern Greek scholar Βαμβουδάκης in his 1928 critical commentary of the play views Antigone as an extreme character, impatient and under severe stress, but ultimately heroic and altruistic in her desire to give her brother a proper burial. Ε. Γ. Βαμβουδάκης, *Κριτικά και Ερμηνευτικά Μελετά επί τής Αντιγόνης του Σοφοκλέους* (Αθήνα 1928) 3-6.

¹³⁸ Kirkwood found Antigone admirable but harsh: G. M. Kirkwood, *A study of Sophoclean drama* (New York 1958) 121. Knox in his monumental study of Sophoclean drama *The heroic temper* is another scholar who rebelled against Hegel's view of Antigone. He focuses on her intransigence, the very quality that makes her, in his opinion, a characteristically Sophoclean heroine: B. M. W. Knox, *The heroic temper. Studies in Sophoclean tragedy* (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1964). Both these scholars still viewed Antigone as largely heroic. Recent criticism, however, has tended to focus more on the darker aspects of her character: Segal, 'Introduction' (n. 109, above) 12-13.

¹³⁹ Knox, 'Introduction' (n. 105, above) 22. It is testament to the source's ambiguity that Anouilh's version was greeted enthusiastically by both the French and the German sections of the audience. It also an example of how classics can be used to mask subversive political agendas.

¹⁴⁰ Knox, 'Introduction' (n. 105, above) 22-23.

¹⁴¹ M. McDonald, *The living art of Greek tragedy* (Bloomington 2003) 94.

¹⁴² Σολδάτος, *Ιστορία* (n. 9, above) 344.

understandable when viewed in this light. A film based on a Greek tragedy conferred the glamour and *kudos* of the ancient past on the modern medium of cinema. Unfortunately, the experiment failed and was not repeated.¹⁴³ Cacoyannis in his *Electra* took special care to disguise the film's theatrical origins better and to capitalize on the new medium's capabilities. Although *Electra* still has some theatrical elements, it is better suited to the medium of cinema. Its continued reception demonstrates the strengths of Cacoyannis' film. Tzavellas' more theatrical reception on the other hand has been well less received. Both films were considered commercial failures when they were released,¹⁴⁴ but Cacoyannis went on to complete his Euripidean trilogy, and his films have enjoyed a better reception than Tzavellas' *Antigone*.

Tzavellas' film rather less successfully attempted to do the same with the issues that he saw as important for his audience in 1960s Greece. His main concerns were quality cinema and the role of Greek tragedy in improving the standard of films available to the cinema-going public of the time, as well as commenting on the importance of good leadership after more than half a century of great turbulence for the Greek nation. Tzavellas pared down the complexities of the original *Antigone*¹⁴⁵ so that his reception could address these issues.

The action of Tzavellas' film starts with a prologue that sets the scene as Cacoyannis does with his *Electra*. The camera tracks across wall paintings that tell the story of the royal house of Thebes in visual terms, while the narrator gives the audience the background they need in order to follow the story. Unlike the ancient dramatists Tzavellas and Cacoyannis could not assume that their audience would be familiar with the story. This tableau is more static than Cacoyannis' scenes of the return of Agamemnon. His prologue is more cinematic and fluid because it is further removed from theatrical devices such as backdrops and sets used in the medium of theatre.

The film then rejoins the world of the play (prologue). Antigone and Ismene (played by Maro Kodou) meet in the darkness of pre-dawn,¹⁴⁶ while around them soldiers gather the arms of those who fell in the battle. It is a dark and sinister scene. Antigone's character is established at the outset as intransigent and unbending, as in the source text. Ismene is her foil, the weaker loving sister.¹⁴⁷ In the film the sisters are not alone as in Sophocles' play, and Antigone has to draw Ismene away from the Theban soldiers to impart to her the news of Kreon's decree. Tzavellas wanted to establish his film's epic scope by the use of crowd scenes added onto the action of the play, but this scene is also a

¹⁴³ This was Tzavellas' one and only attempt to film Greek tragedy, and no director has attempted a major film based on Sophocles' *Antigone* since: Solomon, *The ancient world* (n. 4, above) 262.

¹⁴⁴ Σολδάτος, *Ιστορία* (n. 87, above) 282.

¹⁴⁵ For a reading of the play and the issues it presents as complex and not in terms of direct opposites see Segal, 'Introduction' (n. 109, above) 3; Griffith, *Sophocles* (n. 105, above) 45; K. Reinhardt, *Sophocles*, trans. H. and D. Harvey, intro. Hugh Lloyd-Jones (Oxford 1979) 69; and Knox, *The heroic temper* (n. 138, above) 75. Scodel also views the play in terms of its moral complexity: R. Scodel, *Sophocles* (Boston 1984) 57.

¹⁴⁶ The play's prologue is also set at dawn. Scodel, *Sophocles* (n. 145, above) 43.

¹⁴⁷ Griffith, *Sophocles* (n. 105, above) 10; Kirkwood, *Study* (n. 138, above) 119-21.

visible reminder that the royal sisters are members of a larger city and not just individuals.¹⁴⁸

The action of the film moves forward to later in the day and shows the soldiers still engaged in their duty of gathering up the arms of the fallen and disposing of the corpses. It is then that the chorus makes its first appearance in the film. They are dressed in antique costumes¹⁴⁹ with curly wigs and beards, and they all carry shepherds' staffs (κλίτσες). Their costumes were inspired by contemporary theatrical productions of Greek drama,¹⁵⁰ but would have appeared faintly ridiculous on the silver screen.¹⁵¹ The chorus proceeds to interact with the soldiers and the crowd as talk focuses on the recent victory. This replaces the chorus' rejoicing in the source text,¹⁵² and allows Tzavellas to add another crowd scene and a display of soldiers clashing their swords.¹⁵³ This chorus does not sing or dance, and most of their commentary is delivered by the chorus leader (Theodoros Moridis) and the off-screen voice of the narrator.¹⁵⁴ Tzavellas edited all of the chorus' choral passages in an attempt to integrate the chorus into the medium of film.¹⁵⁵

All these additional scenes frame Kreon's first appearance. The camera angle shifts to a high angle looking down from the perspective of a lion statue, and it is at this point in the film that Kreon makes his first appearance as he descends the steps of the palace and addresses the crowd from a plinth, an orator secure of his audience. This majestic first entrance is enhanced by the association of a high camera angle with Kreon as a tangible sign of his authority.¹⁵⁶

Demosthenes praised Creon's first speech as that of a wise statesman,¹⁵⁷ but since then scholarly opinion has varied about the merits of his speech.¹⁵⁸ His language becomes

¹⁴⁸ In Greek tragedy there is always tension between the world of the play ruled over by kings and the democratic city of Athens.

¹⁴⁹ MacKinnon, *Greek tragedy* (n. 3, above) 72.

¹⁵⁰ For photographic evidence from the performance history of the play in modern Greece see Y. Andreadis, *In the tracks of Dionysus. Ancient tragedy performances in Greece, 1867-2000* (Athens 2005) 240 (1905 performance of *Antigone*) and 242 (1940 performance). Costumes for the Theban chorus of *Oedipus Tyrannus* are similar: see 271-72 (1919 performance), 274-76 (1951 performance).

¹⁵¹ As one reviewer put it, 'why festoon the Chorus of elders in crêpe hair which makes them look like Spirits of Christmas Present in summer moult?': MacKinnon, *Greek tragedy* (n. 3, above) 72. Tzavellas himself was happy with the wigs which he had made in Italy: Σολδάτος, *Ιστορία* (n. 9, above) 473.

¹⁵² Sophocles, *Antigone* 100-61.

¹⁵³ There is a similar scene in Cacoyannis' *Electra*, where a group of masked soldiers dance and clash swords as Orestes kills Aegisthus. This will be discussed further below, but it is a more effective scene than the one in Tzavellas' *Antigone*.

¹⁵⁴ MacKinnon, *Greek tragedy* (n. 3, above) 72.

¹⁵⁵ MacKinnon, *Greek tragedy* (n. 3, above) 72-73.

¹⁵⁶ This placement of Kreon on a high vantage point is important for the presentation of his character in the film. It is a visual sign of his authority over the city of Thebes and all its inhabitants. This will be discussed further below.

¹⁵⁷ Demosthenes, *On the false embassy* 247. Ferrario argues that Demosthenes' judgement of Creon was influenced by a change of attitudes towards the issue of the burial and commemoration of the dead in the fourth century BC. This change made Demosthenes more sympathetic to Creon's position: Ferrario, 'Replaying *Antigone*' (n. 107, above) 105-06. Pericles' funeral speech (delivered in 431/30 BC) contains similar rhetoric: Knox, 'Introduction' (n. 105, above) 23.

increasingly authoritarian and tyrannical. In the play Creon is associated with oriental rulers.¹⁵⁹ His violation of burial customs is reminiscent of Cambyses and other oriental rulers described in Book 3 of Herodotus,¹⁶⁰ and there is evidence to suggest that he was dressed as one as well.¹⁶¹ His arrogance and paranoia about a secret conspiracy against him facilitated by bribes¹⁶² become increasingly apparent as the play progresses. He accuses both the guard¹⁶³ and Teiresias¹⁶⁴ of plotting against him and accepting bribes. His continued use of words like κέρδος (profit)¹⁶⁵ and bad *phrenes*¹⁶⁶ is indicative of his obsession and his belief in the rightness of his own judgment. His use of *logos* in the play becomes increasingly tyrannical,¹⁶⁷ and he tries to stifle free expression like an oriental despot.¹⁶⁸ In the film he is portrayed in this way from the start, and his ferocity only escalates when he is opposed.

By associating Kreon with military symbols reminiscent of the stereotypical bad Hollywood emperor and by making him act in an arrogant manner, Tzavellas undermines his authority and firmly places his film in the pro-Antigone camp. Kreon appears surrounded by a guard of honour, and he is hailed as a victorious general.¹⁶⁹ The crowd surrounds him, and the soldiers carry Eteocles' body on a stretcher and place it in front of Kreon. In the next scene he is shown on his chariot presiding over Eteocles' funeral pyre, again surrounded by a crowd. It is then that Kreon makes his pronouncement regarding the fate of Polynices' body.¹⁷⁰ A tracking shot of the faces of the chorus makes their disapproval plain.

¹⁵⁸ Segal believes that Creon is initially presented sympathetically: Segal, 'Introduction' (n. 109, above) 8. Winnington-Ingram agrees, but sees warning signs of what will follow, as does Kirkwood. See R. P. Winnington-Ingram, *Sophocles. An interpretation* (Cambridge, 1980) 122-24, and Kirkwood, *Study* (n. 138, above) 121. Seale, on the other hand, finds Creon's speech 'authoritarian' but 'impersonal': D. Seale, *Vision and stagecraft in Sophocles* (London, Canberra 1982) 86.

¹⁵⁹ West, 'Sophocles' *Antigone* and Herodotus' (n. 115, above) 119.

¹⁶⁰ West, 'Sophocles' *Antigone* and Herodotus' (n. 115, above) 117-19 and 130-32.

¹⁶¹ West, 'Sophocles' *Antigone* and Herodotus' (n. 115, above) 124.

¹⁶² Sophocles, *Antigone* 289-303.

¹⁶³ Sophocles, *Antigone* 310-14.

¹⁶⁴ Sophocles, *Antigone*, 1034-47.

¹⁶⁵ Sophocles, *Antigone* 310 (κέρδος) and 1037 (κερδαίνει).

¹⁶⁶ S. D. Sullivan, *Sophocles' use of psychological terminology: old and new* (Richmond, Ont. 1999) 266-71.

¹⁶⁷ Griffith, *Sophocles* (n. 105, above) 36, and R. W. Bushnell, *Prophesying tragedy. Sign and voice in Sophocles' Theban plays* (Ithaca and London 1988) 54.

¹⁶⁸ West, 'Sophocles' *Antigone* and Herodotus' (n. 115, above) 126.

¹⁶⁹ This scene is reminiscent of Hollywood's portrayals of Roman triumphs such as Marcus Vinicius (played by Robert Taylor) returning from the wars in *Quo Vadis* (1951) and Quintus Arrius (Jack Hawkins) accompanied by Judah Ben-Hur on his chariot in *Ben Hur* (1959). Tzavellas' spectacle is on a more modest scale, but it does set up Kreon as a misguided military ruler in the mould of the Roman models perpetuated by Hollywood.

¹⁷⁰ There are interesting Homeric parallels between Creon's refusal to bury Polynices and Achilles' treatment of the body of Hector. For a discussion of this see H. A. Shapiro, 'The wrath of Creon: withholding burial in Homer and Sophocles', *Helios* 33S (2006) 119-34, at 119-20.

Kreon's association with Roman emperors as portrayed by Hollywood continues in the scene of the Roman-style feast¹⁷¹ he holds that is interrupted by the arrival of the guardsman (Ioannis Arghyris).¹⁷² The guardsman is a comic character in the film, a modern translation of Sophocles' low character that cringes and tries to excuse his dereliction of duty. Kreon explodes in fury when he hears of Polynices' burial. His response to the elder who suggests that the burial might have been divinely accomplished is to call him 'ξυμοπαμένοσ' (someone who makes bad decisions due to advanced age).

Kreon's bullying of the chorus is followed by scenes added by Tzavellas showing his soldiers terrorising the town, flogging citizens, arresting them and dragging them out of their homes. One particularly poignant scene shows a father being dragged away as his daughter begs the soldiers to spare him. These additions help to establish Kreon as a tyrant who uses fear to rule his people. Even the house of the chorus leader is searched and he mutters that Kreon is 'ανάξιοσ' (unworthy) to rule. Through his window the elder sees Antigone being escorted by the guardsmen towards the palace.

Tzavellas has the guardsman narrate his story. His words are also represented visually on the screen, so the audience sees his narrative as it unfolds.¹⁷³ The guardsmen are shown arguing with each other as the dust storm sweeps the landscape, and then Antigone is revealed embracing the body of Polynices and the guardsmen seize her. The thorny issue of the second burial¹⁷⁴ is solved by Tzavellas by the addition of a scene showing the guards sweeping away the light covering of dust that Antigone had placed on the body of Polynices and scattering her funeral offerings. She must therefore return to cover him again.

This scene, where the guardsmen surround Antigone and seize her, bears many similarities with the scene where Cacoyannis shows Aegisthus bullying Electra at the tomb of her father. His soldiers seize the heroine as the guardsmen do Antigone. For the audience these scenes emphasize the victimization of the heroines by bad rulers. Cacoyannis' decision to have Aegisthus strike Electra serves to increase sympathy for his heroine.

Kreon's first *agon* (verbal battle) with Antigone is fraught with conflict as she calmly opposes his will. During the argument he places himself on a higher level than her, trying to intimidate her physically as well as verbally, but the impression he gives of looming over Antigone further establishes his unfair treatment of her. Ismene tries to share the blame for the burial, but Antigone refuses to let her do so. She is not portrayed as

¹⁷¹ Interestingly Eurydice (played by Iliia Livikou) joins Kreon for the feast so her first appearance does not come at the end as it does in the source play.

¹⁷² Tzavellas makes a point of showing the guardsman having to gain entry into the palace, which is guarded by soldiers. Access to Kreon is strictly monitored and he is surrounded by his guards throughout the film, another sign of his temporary power. Only in the end is he alone when he loses his status as king.

¹⁷³ MacKinnon, *Greek Tragedy* (n. 3, above) 73.

¹⁷⁴ Sophocles, *Antigone* 255-60 for the first burial and 429-32 for the second. For a discussion of the problem of the second burial see Scodel, *Sophocles* (n. 145, above) 55-56. Some critics have suggested that the problem can be solved if the first burial was accomplished by the agency of the gods: Segal, 'Introduction' (n. 109, above) 31-32, id., *Tragedy and civilization* (n. 106, above) 159-60, and Knox, 'Introduction' (n. 105, above) 64.

unloving and cold in the film though, as she appears in the source play.¹⁷⁵ She embraces Ismene and her eyes soften. Tzavellas makes it clear that her motive for refusing to implicate Ismene is to save her sister.¹⁷⁶ Once again her character is softened and made more acceptable to a modern audience than the Maenad of Sophocles' play.¹⁷⁷

The second confrontation between Antigone and Kreon takes place in front of the cave as he disrupts her lament and forces her into the cave, thus sealing her fate. In the film Antigone is escorted to the cave where she is to be buried alive by a whole procession of soldiers and citizens, as well as the chorus and Kreon.¹⁷⁸ Tzavellas creates sympathy for his Antigone by focusing on her grief as she laments her fate, while Kreon sits unmoved on his horse and watches her coldly. He then orders his soldiers to force her bodily into the cave. Tzavellas further humanizes his Antigone by showing her anguish at her impending doom. She is still heroic and does not change her mind, but she is genuinely reluctant to die. She has to be dragged by two soldiers. Sophocles' Antigone on the other hand seems to long for death.¹⁷⁹

Tzavellas also added scenes to emphasise Antigone's suffering in the cave. These scenes are the ones praised by Solomon because they reveal her despair over her living burial. Tzavellas' Antigone stumbles about the cave and there is a sense of vertigo and claustrophobia as the camera bounces off the walls of the cave. Antigone's eyes fall on her headscarf. A look of horror fills her eyes. Tzavellas suggests that it is at this moment that thoughts of suicide enter her mind. This is a very effective scene indeed, and one in which Tzavellas' presents his audience with Antigone's point of view. The audience is meant to sympathize with her predicament and the terrible choice she is forced to make.

In the play Antigone's decision to commit suicide is portrayed as less straightforwardly heroic. There is a disconcerting similarity between her death and the rituals of marriage.¹⁸⁰ Antigone herself brings up this association in her *kommos*:

καὶ νῦν ἄγει με διὰ χερῶν οὔτω λαβῶν
 ἄλεκτρον, ἀνυμέναιον, οὔτε του γάμου
 μέρος λαχοῦσαν οὔτε παιδείου τροφῆς,
 ἀλλ' ὧδ' ἐρήμος πρὸς φίλων ἢ δῶσμορος
 ζῶσ' ἐς θανόντων ἔρχομαι κατασκαφάς.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁵ Griffith, *Sophocles* (n. 105, above) 54. Cf. Knox, who also believes that Antigone's motivation is to safeguard her sister by convincing him of the fact that it was she alone who defied his orders: Knox, *The heroic temper* (n. 138, above) 65.

¹⁷⁶ Scodel believes that Ismene's role in the play is to show a more human side of Antigone's character: Scodel, *Sophocles* (n. 145, above) 49-50.

¹⁷⁷ For Antigone as Maenad see Segal, 'Introduction' (n. 109, above) 28.

¹⁷⁸ Another chance for Tzavellas to show off the number of actors he had at his disposal.

¹⁷⁹ Sophocles, *Antigone* 516-18. See also Knox, 'Introduction' (n. 105, above) 29. In Lacan's opinion Antigone wants to die (*The ethics of psychoanalysis*, 1959) See P. A. Miller, 'Lacan's Antigone: the sublime object and the ethics of interpretation', *Phoenix* 61, 1-2, Spring/Summer. Classical Association of Canada (2007) 1-14, at 1-4.

¹⁸⁰ This aspect of the play was explored by Ormand in his *Exchange and the maiden* (n. 120, above) and by Tyrrell and Bennett in their *Recapturing Sophocles' Antigone* (n. 104, above).

¹⁸¹ Sophocles, *Antigone* 916-20.

... I have
 No share of marriage
 Rites, nor did
 Any hymn of marriage
 Sing me to
 My wedding.
 Instead my marriage will be to Acheron.

Death and marriage were linked in Greek thought as they were both important transitions.¹⁸² There is also evidence to suggest that Antigone was dressed in a violet costume, traditionally the colour of brides.¹⁸³ She also uncovers her head and asks the chorus to look upon her ὄρατέ μ',¹⁸⁴ (see me),¹⁸⁵ as a bride would do after the wedding feast. The rite of *anakalypteria* (the unveiling) marked the bride's consent and the official beginning of the marriage.¹⁸⁶ In the film Antigone is dressed in white in accordance with the theatrical conventions of the time,¹⁸⁷ and her head is uncovered for most of the scene. She does however carry her shawl out of which she will fashion a noose with which to hang herself.

In ancient Greek thought a virgin who died was described as being married to Hades.¹⁸⁸ Antigone is led into the cave that is also her bridal chamber as she herself describes it,¹⁸⁹ a perversion of the tradition where the groom takes his bride by the wrist and leads her to the chariot that will conduct her to her new *oikos*.¹⁹⁰ Antigone is instead forcibly led by Creon's men into the cave and sealed in her tomb while still alive. Once there she chooses to hang herself rather than starve to death. She thus retains control over her body and access to it.¹⁹¹ As a result of her actions though she becomes *apolis* (without a city), the transgressive other forever outside the city and the laws that govern it.¹⁹²

¹⁸² Tyrrell and Bennett, *Recapturing* (n. 104, above) 98.

¹⁸³ Tyrrell and Bennett, *Recapturing* (n. 104, above) 99-100. Bagg and Bagg, *Antigone* (n. 110, above) 172 n. 15 and commentary p. 259.

¹⁸⁴ Sophocles, *Antigone* 806.

¹⁸⁵ Griffith, *Sophocles* (n. 105, above) 266. Before she is taken away Antigone asks the chorus to look upon her for the last time: λείψετε (*Antigone* 940).

¹⁸⁶ Tyrrell and Bennett, *Recapturing* (n. 104, above) 100-01.

¹⁸⁷ In the theatrical productions of the first half of the twentieth century Antigone was dressed in white or black or a combination of the two colours. Andreadis, *In the tracks of Dionysus* (n. 150, above) 240 (1905 performance of *Antigone*) and 243 (1956 performance of *Antigone* in which the heroine's dress is white but she carries a black shawl). Cf. 241 (1910 performance of *Antigone* in which the heroine is dressed entirely in black). Cacoyannis dressed his heroine primarily in black to emphasize the fact that she is mourning for her murdered father.

¹⁸⁸ Ormand, *Exchange* (n. 120, above) 93.

¹⁸⁹ Sophocles, *Antigone* 891.

¹⁹⁰ Tyrrell and Bennett, *Recapturing* (n. 104, above) 118.

¹⁹¹ In ancient Greek thought the neck was associated with the cervix. Tyrrell and Bennett, *Recapturing* (n. 104, above) 143-44.

¹⁹² Tyrrell and Bennett, *Recapturing* (n. 104, above) 94-95.

For Antigone her birth family is more important than any other consideration, as is the case for Electra.¹⁹³ This endogamy leads Antigone to sacrifice the chance to marry and have children in order to serve the family of her birth.¹⁹⁴ The lines that Goethe so objected to stress Antigone's attachment to her family:¹⁹⁵

πόσις μὲν ἄν μοι καθανόντος ἄλλος ἦν,
καὶ παῖς ἀπ' ἄλλου φωτός, εἰ τοῦδ' ἤμπλακον·
μητρὸς δ' ἐν Ἄιδου καὶ πατρὸς κεκευθότοι
οὐκ ἔστ' ἀδελφὸς ὅστις ἂν βλάστοι ποτέ.¹⁹⁶

Were my husband dead, there could be another,
And by that man, another child, if one
Were lost. But since my mother and my father
Are hidden now in Hades, no more brothers
Could ever be born.

She can have no more brothers, so she is motivated by both a sense of duty and personal loyalty.¹⁹⁷ There is also a disturbing hint of incest in Antigone's feelings towards her dead brother Polynices.¹⁹⁸ After all she is the daughter of Oedipus. In the play Creon might be punished for his *hubris*, but Antigone is not saved¹⁹⁹ and Teiresias does not mention her at all.²⁰⁰ Tzavellas, on the other hand, portrays Antigone's loyalty to her family as heroic and her death as an act of rebellion against a bad ruler. An act that starts a chain reaction that leads to Kreon's loss of power.

Antigone's relationship with Haemon (Nikos Kazis) is romanticised in the film. In the play Antigone never mentions Haemon.²⁰¹ In the film they meet at the steps of the palace as she is taken away to prison after her first confrontation with Creon. They do not speak but their eyes linger on each other.²⁰² Antigone is then shown languishing in prison while

¹⁹³ This is particularly the case with Sophocles' *Electra*. In this play Sophocles stresses Electra's attachment to her father and brother to the detriment of all other considerations, including that of her own wellbeing.

¹⁹⁴ Griffith, *Sophocles* (n. 105, above) 50.

¹⁹⁵ Tyrrell and Bennett, *Recapturing* (n. 104, above) 112-13.

¹⁹⁶ Sophocles, *Antigone* 909-12.

¹⁹⁷ Knox, 'Introduction' (n. 105, above) 32. According to Lacan, in psychoanalytic terms Antigone's devotion to her family is 'a highly individualized desire'. It goes beyond ethics and morality into the realm of deep seated desires: Miller, 'Lacan's Antigone' (n. 179, above) 1.

¹⁹⁸ Antigone herself refers to the incest of her parents (*Antigone* 859-65). See also Bagg and Bagg, *Antigone* (n. 110, above) 166 and 170.

¹⁹⁹ Segal, 'Introduction' (n. 109, above) 11, and Griffith, *Sophocles* (n. 105, above) 40.

²⁰⁰ Griffith, *Sophocles* (n. 105, above) 32, and Knox, 'Introduction' (n. 105, above) 36.

²⁰¹ Segal, 'Introduction' (n. 109, above) 16. See also Ormand, *Exchange* (n. 120, above) 98, and Scale, *Vision and stagecraft* (n. 158, above) 95.

²⁰² This scene sets up a parallel with Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. Tzavellas' Antigone and Haemon are portrayed as two tragic lovers who choose to die together in the tradition of the tragic Shakespearean couple. In Sophocles, though, the death of Antigone and Haemon is not presented as a Liebestod as his Antigone never mentions or even meets Haemon in the play. Tzavellas' attempt to romanticize the story and to soften Antigone's character by portraying her as one half of a tragic couple is a concession to contemporary cinema audiences, who

women sing outside to encourage her just as the countrywomen sing in Cacoyannis' film to encourage Electra during her cart ride to the peasant's hut. Another added scene shows Haemon in despair with his head in his hands in the countryside as the sun sets on the first day of the action.²⁰³ This treatment of the Antigone-Haemon relationship is another instance of Tzavellas' use of Hollywood's techniques for narrative build-up. They are portrayed as a pair of doomed lovers and the scene in the cave where Haemon embraces her dead body becomes more poignantly romantic because of the addition of these scenes. It also serves further to soften Antigone's character in the film.

In the play Haemon's actions are disturbing because he defies his father and chooses death, thus depriving his father of his only heir. In a perversion of the proper order of ancient Greek gender roles within marriage he is the one who spills his blood and embraces Antigone in death.²⁰⁴ He takes on the role of the woman.²⁰⁵ He also takes Antigone's side instead of supporting his father, the very thing Creon had feared would happen.²⁰⁶ Creon had warned his son against the allure of bad women like Antigone.²⁰⁷ During his first meeting with his father Haemon had diplomatically tried to change Creon's mind,²⁰⁸ but his father's anger sparked his own and they quarrelled bitterly.²⁰⁹ As Creon's son he was supposed to obey his *kurios*,²¹⁰ but Creon's insults and his threat to have Antigone killed in front of him to punish him for his attachment to her²¹¹ turn his son against him. Creon, by wishing to have Haemon's absolute and unquestioning support, ends up alienating his son and turning him against himself.²¹² It is interesting to note, however, that after the quarrel and the chorus' advice he changes his mind. He decides to spare Ismene and changes the means by which Antigone is to die. Perhaps he realises that a public stoning might not be advisable, because Antigone did indeed enjoy some support in Thebes.²¹³

would have been familiar with Hollywood romances as well as contemporary Greek melodramas of tragic couples dying for love.

²⁰³ The play's action takes place in one day. Tzavellas chose instead to stretch it chronologically over two days starting with Antigone and Ismene's dawn meeting and ending with Kreon's disappearance into the night on the second day of the action. This provided him with the opportunity to display cinema's technical advantages by adding several dramatic set pieces to the action of the play that would have been impossible to portray on a theatrical stage.

²⁰⁴ Tyrrell and Bennett, *Recapturing* (n. 104, above) 140-43.

²⁰⁵ For Tzavellas' audience this was not a consideration, as the director took care to romanticize the relationship.

²⁰⁶ For his warning against evil women in general and Antigone in particular see Sophocles, *Antigone* 648-54.

²⁰⁷ Bagg and Bagg, *Antigone* (n. 110, above) 170.

²⁰⁸ Sophocles, *Antigone* 684-723.

²⁰⁹ Sophocles *Antigone* 724-65.

²¹⁰ Ormand, *Exchange* (n. 120, above) 83.

²¹¹ Sophocles, *Antigone* 760-61; Seale, *Vision and stagecraft* (n. 158, above) 97.

²¹² Creon's treatment of Haemon makes him act in a bestial manner. Haemon loses his self control and attacks his father: Segal, *Tragedy and civilization* (n. 106, above) 159. In the film Kreon's harangue makes the audience sympathize with Haemon. He is portrayed as a dignified young man in the beginning, and it is Kreon's unreasonable behaviour that makes him turn against his father.

²¹³ Seale, *Vision and stagecraft* (n. 158, above) 98.

In terms of Cacoyannis' film it is also interesting to consider the parallels between Haemon and Orestes. They are the two male supporting characters whose actions sustain the heroines, although Orestes is the more successful of the two. In Tzavellas' film Haemon is presented as a heroic and noble young man, but ultimately he fails to help Antigone and his only resource is to join her in death. This is a romantic idealised love that is tragically cut short. Cacoyannis' Orestes, on the other hand, is portrayed as the young and inexperienced brother of Electra, who succeeds in avenging his father's murder. Orestes grows in stature as the action of the film progresses, and by the end he achieves true heroic status by choosing to sacrifice his own interests in favour of his *polis*.

The scene between Kreon and Teiresias (played by Tzavalas Karoussos) further reinforces the anti-Kreon stance the film takes. The prophet is dressed similarly to the chorus, and he approaches led by his young guide. Kreon remains on horseback throughout their *agon* looking down on the old man. Teiresias' words of warning regarding the lack of communication with the gods are made visible (and therefore it can be argued more convincing for a modern audience more accustomed to visual signals). The audience sees him sitting on his throne as the sacrifices fail and the birds refuse to communicate the gods' will.²¹⁴ Karoussos' acting is rather theatrical, but Tzavellas clearly wants to imbue his Teiresias with great authority. When he makes his pronouncement of Kreon's doom the camera is looking up towards his face, lending authority to his pronouncements. His blindness, which is also stressed, contributes to his air of authority as his 'sight' is clearer than that of those who can physically see the world. At this point an interesting parallel can be made with Katrakis' blind old tutor in Cacoyannis' *Electra*. During the *anagnorisis* scene and the planning of the murders both siblings rely on the advice of Katrakis' character. He facilitates the *anagnorisis* by recognizing Orestes' sword by touch, and both Orestes and Electra defer to him as a wise elder. His blindness enhances his wisdom because he can 'see' more clearly.²¹⁵

Tzavellas changes the location of the scene where Kreon changes his mind. The audience see Kreon on his throne with his head in his hands clenching his fists, a visual metaphor of his struggle to subdue his pride, but subdue it he does. On the advice of the chorus he changes his mind and rides off with his soldiers in an effort to stave off his doom. The guard of honour that accompanies him, though, is a visual metaphor of his unchanged status. At this point Kreon is or still thinks he is in control. His change of heart is, however, presented sympathetically by Tzavellas.²¹⁶ A good leader should admit that he is wrong and change his policies. This also prepares the ground for his more sympathetic portrayal at the end of the film.

The messenger (Vyron Pallis) arrives at night to inform the anxious chorus and the waiting citizens of the terrible news. He quotes the proverb 'Μηδένα προ του τέλους μακάριζε' (Praise no one before the end)²¹⁷ and returns to the world of the play, although

²¹⁴ Cacoyannis uses birds as a bad omen in the scene of Clytemnestra's murder.

²¹⁵ There might be an association here not only with the blind prophets of antiquity but also with the famous blind bard, Homer.

²¹⁶ Knox finds that this diminishes his status as tragic hero, as Sophocles' heroes and heroines are intransigent and never change their minds: Knox, *The heroic temper* (n. 138, above) 66-68.

²¹⁷ This proverb is still much in use in Greece today.

the narrative is once again presented visually. The audience sees Antigone hanging and Haemon embracing her body. Haemon refuses to respond to Kreon's pleas and spits on his father. He follows this with a sword thrust that glances off the cave wall and thus misses Kreon, who flees. Tzavellas' Haemon seems motivated by anger in this scene and he kills himself out of grief for Antigone, not out of shame for attacking his father as Scodel suggests.²¹⁸ The audience sees him committing suicide contrary to ancient Greek dramatic conventions,²¹⁹ and his blood stains her face. These added scenes increase sympathy for the doomed couple.

The father-son quarrel and its consequences also cost Kreon his wife Eurydice. Eurydice's doom is prefigured in the film by her shadow being cast and coming to block the audience's view of the messenger. In the play her name itself associates her with the underworld.²²⁰ Close-ups of her face reveal her grief as she hears of her son's tragic death. At the end of his narrative she silently leaves, nearly stumbling, and the doors close behind her. Even where Tzavellas follows the original very closely he uses the camera to direct the audience's perception of the story. Tzavellas' use of the close-up resembles Cacoyannis', in that he uses the camera as narrator to reveal the characters' inner emotions and to direct the audience's sympathies. Eurydice's silent grief is a very potent reminder of the tragic fate of the young couple and a further condemnation of Kreon's actions.

The chorus of elders clearly supports Antigone in the film, whereas their gender and their age only serve to distance them from Antigone in the play.²²¹ In Sophocles they represent the community,²²² obedient to Creon's rules²²³ even if not always agreeing with him.²²⁴ Haemon suggests that the people secretly support Antigone and that they fear Creon.²²⁵ Antigone herself says in the *agon* that they secretly agree with her but they are too afraid of him to confront him openly.²²⁶ In the play they certainly disapprove of her actions because she threatens the state²²⁷ and because of her unyielding nature,²²⁸ but in

²¹⁸ Scodel, *Sophocles* (n. 145, above) 51. Bagg puts forward a convincing case for the idea that Haemon killed himself out of shame for failing to prevent Antigone's death and for his failure to avenge her: Bagg and Bagg, *Antigone* (n. 110, above) 178.

²¹⁹ Cacoyannis took a similar approach in that he partially shows his audience the murder of Clytemnestra to stress the horror of the crime her children are committing, whereas Aegisthus' murder is not portrayed.

²²⁰ Segal, 'Introduction' (n. 109, above) 32.

²²¹ Griffith, *Sophocles* (n. 105, above) 11.

²²² Seale, *Vision and stagecraft* (n. 158, above) 85; R. W. B. Burton, *The chorus in Sophocles' tragedies* (Oxford 1980) 85.

²²³ Carter, *The politics of Greek tragedy* (n. 105, above) 106; Burton, 'The chorus' (n. 221, above) 87.

²²⁴ Cf. Tyrrell and Bennett, *Recapturing* (n. 104, above) 103.

²²⁵ Sophocles, *Antigone* 691-95.

²²⁶ Bushnell, *Prophesying tragedy* (n. 167, above) 52-53. Burton believes that Antigone is mistaken about the chorus' support: Burton, 'The chorus' (n. 221, above) 88. Griffith also believes that the chorus disapproves of Antigone, but does detect a hint of pity for her and signs that they are inhibited in their responses by Creon's presence: Griffith, *Sophocles* (n. 105, above) 18-19 and 24 respectively.

²²⁷ Bushnell, *Prophesying Tragedy* (n. 167, above) 47. For Antigone as a threat to the state see also Ormand, *Exchange* (n. 120, above) 90 and 98.

the film they admire her and the leader of the chorus clearly takes her side. Tzavellas' chorus might try to be diplomatic towards Kreon, but their allegiance is with Antigone.

Tzavellas' supportive chorus with their truncated odes²²⁹ thus serves to highlight the ambiguity of the original chorus. The chorus of Antigone has a limited vision, they do not fully understand what is going on, but their odes often reveal more than they realise.²³⁰ In the play Antigone is isolated because she does not have the support of the chorus, unlike Euripides' *Electra*.²³¹ A supportive chorus only lends further validity to Antigone's cause. An interesting point of comparison with Cacoyannis' *Electra* is that when the siblings lose the support of the chorus and the peasants they go into exile.

In Sophocles' play Creon is punished by the loss of his family. Most critics believe that he also loses his position as ruler of Thebes.²³² Sophocles' Creon suffers the fate he imposed on Antigone by burying her alive. He becomes ἔμψυχον ... νεκρόν (a living corpse) as the messenger says.²³³ In his *kommos* Creon calls himself μηδέν (nothing)²³⁴ and prays for death:

ἔμοι τερμίαν ἄγων ἀμέραν
 ὕπατος ἴτω ἴτω,
 ὅπως μηκέτ' ἄμαρ ἄλλ' εἰσίδω.²³⁵

That best of fates
 That brings my
 Final day,
 The most perfect!
 Let it come! Let it come!
 So that I will not
 See another day!

He is then led away by his attendants, while the chorus praise wisdom and condemn *hubris*.²³⁶ He exits a miserable shadow of his former self in a rather pathetic manner, in ironic contrast to his grand entrance.

²²⁸ Sophocles, *Antigone* 471-72; Griffith, *Sophocles* (n. 105, above) 33; and J. C. Opstelten, *Sophocles and Greek pessimism*, trans. J. A. Ross (Amsterdam 1952) 85.

²²⁹ The famous Ode to Man is spoken in the film by the chorus leader addressing his family just before his house is invaded by the soldiers searching the town for the one who buried Polynices' body. This positioning of the ode removes the ambiguity of the original and turns it into a speech in support of Antigone's cause.

²³⁰ Griffith, *Sophocles* (n. 105, above) 11, 18 and 21.

²³¹ This is rather unusual in Greek tragedy. The chorus is often of the same gender as the protagonist and if not supportive at least sympathetic. The other example of a hostile chorus is in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, where the elders have an antagonistic relationship with Clytemnestra. They know she is behaving badly, but they are also intimidated by her.

²³² Segal, *Tragedy and civilization* (n. 106, above) 154. Reinhardt sees signs of revolt brewing: Reinhardt, *Sophocles* (n. 145, above) 92-93. Cf. Griffith, *Sophocles* (n. 105, above) 64.

²³³ Sophocles, *Antigone* 1167; Segal, *Tragedy and civilization* (n. 106, above) 178; and Bushnell, *Prophesying tragedy* (n. 167, above) 65.

²³⁴ Sophocles, *Antigone* 1325.

²³⁵ Sophocles, *Antigone* 1330-33.

Tzavellas, on the other hand, takes care to portray Kreon as sincerely repentant and tragic. He is a more sympathetic character than in the source text because he is made more tragic by Tzavellas, as Electra and Orestes are in Cacoyannis' reception of Euripides' play. This is partly because Katrakis was a major star who expected a dramatic curtain,²³⁷ but mainly because of the need for a tragic ending. Tzavellas' film presents us with a genuinely repentant Kreon who is a sympathetic figure despite Katrakis' theatrical acting. He carries his son in his arms and lays him down on the altar.²³⁸ He laments his stubbornness that was the cause of all his present suffering. He accuses himself of acting without thought ('άμιαλος') as he embraces the body of his son and blames himself for his bad decisions that led to the tragedy ('τυφλομένη μου απόφαση': my blind decision). He picks the body up again as the messenger arrives with the news of Eurydice's suicide. Her body is also brought out and Kreon's collapse is complete. He talks of his fear ('τρέμω': I tremble, 'φοβάμε': I am afraid) and wishes someone would stab him.²³⁹ The soldiers then bring stretchers and carry out the bodies; Kreon once again embraces the body of his son as it is taken out. This creates sympathy for him as a father and husband. He begs to be taken away because he cannot gaze at their bodies any longer. He takes his crown off and lets it fall through his hands to the ground, a visible symbol of his voluntary relinquishing of power.

Like Cacoyannis' heroic siblings²⁴⁰ he chooses to go into exile for the good of his city. He has proved himself an unfit ruler, so he has to leave. He walks out of the palace and the gates of Thebes into the darkness.²⁴¹ The citizens of Thebes gaze on him but do not offer any comfort. It is a highly tragic ending and one that is visually effective as Kreon is consumed by the darkness he has brought about. Tzavellas seems to be implying that a leader that has lost the people's confidence no longer deserves to rule. This can be interpreted as a veiled reference to contemporary Greek politics. The Greek economy was in crisis in the late 1950s and early 1960s, and the levels of emigration skyrocketed.²⁴² In the early 1960s there was also much discussion about who truly held the reins of power:

²³⁶ Sophocles, *Antigone* 1347-53.

²³⁷ Although the Greek Film Industry did not have the rigid and powerful star system that Hollywood had created, its stars could and did exert their influence to make changes to a film in order to enhance their role. Alike Vougiouklaki, probably the biggest female star of the Greek Film Industry, was notorious for the power she had to tailor scripts to enhance her roles. Irene Papas also talked in an interview about how Cacoyannis encouraged her to contribute to the creation of her roles in his films: M. McDonald and M. M. Winkler, 'Interviews with Michael Cacoyannis' (n. 64, above) 178. See also Winkler, *Classical myth and culture* (n. 57, above) 87.

²³⁸ Physical contact was very rare in Greek drama, but it is likely that Kreon does come into contact with the bodies of his son and wife: Griffith, *Sophocles* (n. 105, above) 23. Tzavellas has his Kreon carry the body of his son twice in the film to increase the audience's sympathy for the character.

²³⁹ Perhaps at this point he is wishing that Haemon had succeeded in stabbing him with his sword in the cave.

²⁴⁰ This will be discussed further in the Cacoyannis section.

²⁴¹ The darkness is a visible symbol of the terrible fate that has befallen the family of Kreon. The action of the film thus comes full circle: it starts in darkness and ends in darkness, adding to the tragic tone of Tzavellas' reception.

²⁴² Σολδάτος, *Ιστορία* (n. 87, above) 174-75. For an estimate of the numbers of Greeks who emigrated during this period see Koliopoulos and Veremis, *Greece* (n. 33, above) 211.

Ποιος κυβερνά αυτόν τον τόπο (*Who rules this nation?*),²⁴³ as the political parties, the monarchy, and secret organizations fought over power rather than trying to solve the acute problems facing the nation. According to both Cacoyannis' and Tzavellas' narrative a bad ruler should resign his office as Kreon, Electra and Orestes do in these modern cinematic receptions of Greek tragedy. A good case can therefore be made for these two films as critiques of the state of affairs in contemporary Greek politics.²⁴⁴

Cacoyannis also set himself up in opposition to the mainstream cinematic representations of antiquity as envisaged by Hollywood. He is instead famous as an independent director and his films are shown in 'art-houses', small cinemas that cater to a small but dedicated audience in big cities and college towns.²⁴⁵ With the rise of the multiplex, however, many cinemas, even those that show mainstream films, now show a combination of art-house and commercial films.²⁴⁶ Mainstream films try to appeal to a mass audience, but art-house films can afford to be more experimental precisely because they are not aimed at a mass audience. Cacoyannis, however, also wanted to make films of Greek plays that would touch the emotions of his viewers and reach a wider public,²⁴⁷ and that is why he used some of Hollywood's mainstream cinematic techniques. As he put it, he did not want to bore his audience; his aim was to retain the 'emotional impact' of the originals.²⁴⁸ The independent films he made could not hope to equal the mass appeal of Hollywood's sword and sandal epics, but they do appeal to art-house audiences, and this is how Cacoyannis' oeuvre has continued to be received to this day.

One of Cacoyannis' other main concerns was to remain faithful to Euripides' *Electra*,²⁴⁹ but the way he interpreted the play was actually very personal. Cacoyannis' *Electra* is not just a record of a theatrical production of Euripides' *Electra* caught on camera, or a theatrical film with extras like Tzavellas' *Antigone*, but a reworking in the medium of film of the story of Electra. At times Cacoyannis' interpretation of the play differs from the original in quite radical ways. However Euripides' version is less well known

²⁴³ Σολδάτος, *Ιστορία* (n. 87, above) 175 and 255. The issue of nationality was one of crucial importance to the public dialogue regarding the role the Greek Film Industry should play within Greek society. The industry had to be seen to be producing Greek films. Using plots from ancient Greek tragedy satisfied this demand.

²⁴⁴ Cacoyannis' subsequent receptions of Greek tragedy were much more obviously political as he criticized the junta (*The Trojan Women*) and the invasion of his native Cyprus (*Iphigenia*).

²⁴⁵ Bordwell and Thompson, *Film art* (n. 60, above) 25.

²⁴⁶ For example the cinema in the Barbican complex at which Cacoyannis' Euripidean trilogy was screened was also showing the more mainstream *Captain Corelli's Mandolin* (2000), whose plot is set in the Greek island of Zakynthos during the occupation (1941-44).

²⁴⁷ McDonald and Winkler, 'Interviews with Michael Cacoyannis' (n. 64, above) 170; Winkler, *Classical myth and culture* (n. 57, above), 81.

²⁴⁸ Symposium International à Delphes (n. 82, above) 225.

²⁴⁹ J. Ardagh, 'Αρχαίοι μύθοι για ζωντανό κοινό', in Μιχάλης Κακογιάννης, 36^ο Φεστιβάλ Κινηματογράφου Θεσσαλονίκης, Οργανισμός Πολιτιστικής Πρωτεύουσας της Ευρώπης Θεσσαλονίκη (Αθήνα 1995) 81.

than Sophocles',²⁵⁰ and this perhaps allowed Cacoyannis to be freer with his source, especially as most of the changes he made rationalize the ambiguity of Euripides' text.²⁵¹

Cacoyannis chose Euripides, because he viewed him as a playwright who explored ideas and issues that are still relevant in the modern world:

And I feel that in terms of what we are going through today, all of the relevant messages are to be found in his work.²⁵²

Thus, for Cacoyannis, of the three Greek tragedians Euripides is the one that can appeal the most to modern audiences. Cacoyannis' opinion that Euripides is the most 'modern' of the three tragedians seems to be shared by scholars.²⁵³ One of the themes that Euripides explored in many of his plays is that of war and its consequences, both public and private.²⁵⁴ This is one of the main attractions for Cacoyannis, who saw Euripides as a 'pacifist'.²⁵⁵ Euripides' *Electra* is a play about a familial drama, but in his film Cacoyannis stresses the importance of the Trojan War to the drama of revenge that is about to unfold. He does so by changing the opening of the play. Instead of the peasant's prologue that sets the scene in Euripides,²⁵⁶ Cacoyannis' film opens with Agamemnon's triumphal return from the war, a part of the story that in the extant tragedies is dramatised only by Aeschylus in his *Agamemnon*. Cacoyannis' opening shot is that of Agamemnon in his chariot being greeted with joy by his people. On his arrival at his palace he gives a young Orestes his sword, a sign of his inheritance as a prince of the realm. Thus the shadow of the Trojan War falls upon Cacoyannis' *Electra* in a manner that differs from Euripides' source play, which concentrates on the drama within the family and the personal motivation of the characters.

Cacoyannis' interest in Euripides' handling of the theme of war is more openly explored in the other two films he made based on Euripides: *The Trojan Women* (1970-71),²⁵⁷ based upon Euripides' eponymous play, and *Iphigenia* (1976-77),²⁵⁸ based

²⁵⁰ Cacoyannis himself commented on this fact when I told him I was interested in Euripides' version of the *Electra* story as well as the more famous Sophoclean version. He told the story of how he got Euripides' play by mistake at a bookshop and how ever since then he has been interested in Euripides' version.

²⁵¹ This will be discussed below.

²⁵² Symposium International à Delphes (n. 82, above) 214-16.

²⁵³ M. McDonald, 'Cacoyannis's and Euripides' *Iphigenia*: the dialectic of power', in *Classics and the cinema*, ed. M. M. Winkler (London 1991) 127-41, for her discussion of Euripides and Cacoyannis' *Iphigenia* in which she stresses the similarity of the aims of these two artists. See also updated version of this article in Winkler, *Classical myth and culture* (n. 57, above) 92-94. Arnott believes that Euripides challenged the values of his time: G. W. Arnott, 'Double the vision: a reading of Euripides' *Electra*', in *Greek tragedy, Greece and Rome Studies* 2, ed. I. McAuslan and P. Walcot (Oxford 1993) 204-17, at 204. See also S. Goldhill, *Reading Greek tragedy* (Cambridge 1986) 238, and his views on the modernity of Euripides' attitudes.

²⁵⁴ McDonald, 'Cacoyannis's and Euripides' *Iphigenia*' (n. 253, above) 127.

²⁵⁵ McDonald, 'Cacoyannis's and Euripides' *Iphigenia*' (n. 253, above) 160. It is also important to note that Cacoyannis was by no means the first artist to stress the importance of the theme of war in Greek tragedy and to emphasize this element in his adaptation. Many twentieth-century receptions of Greek tragedy share this view of the tragic corpus and Euripides in particular.

²⁵⁶ Euripides, *Electra* 1-53.

²⁵⁷ For a synopsis of *The Trojan Women* see McDonald, *Euripides in cinema* (n. 12, above) 193-213.

upon *Iphigenia in Aulis*. When *Electra* was released in 1962 Cacoyannis had no definite plans to make a Euripidean trilogy.²⁵⁹ Originally he considered adapting for film Euripides' *Orestes*, but he chose the *Troades* instead. This substitution reveals Cacoyannis' interest in the theme of war, as the *Troades* focuses on the plight of the Trojan prisoners after the Greeks' victory. *Orestes*, on the other hand, focuses on the familial drama within the House of Atreus. Cacoyannis' *Iphigenia* also deals with the Trojan War, describing the events before the Greeks sailed to Troy. Cacoyannis stresses that it is the pressure of the Greek armies and their desire for war that led to Iphigenia's sacrifice.

Thus Cacoyannis' interest in the theme of war informs his view of ancient tragedy as a whole. For Cacoyannis:

the creators of Greek tragedy...deal with death, with birth and with the introduction of death into our lives...and they deal with oppression.²⁶⁰

At the end of his *Trojan Women* he dedicated the film to all those who suffer from oppression, which reinforces the anti-war stance that runs through his adaptation. Cacoyannis' view of Euripides as a playwright who condemned war was informed by his own experiences as a Greek Cypriot living in London during World War Two.

Euripides did explore the theme of war in his work. Of his seventeen surviving plays the *Troades*, *Hecuba* and *Andromache* deal with the aftermath of the Trojan War,²⁶¹ while *Iphigenia in Aulis* deals with events prior to the Greeks' sailing to Troy. The *Phoenissae* is set during the siege of Thebes by Polynices, *The Suppliant Women* and *The Children of Heracles* deal with religious obligations during and after a war, the former with the recovery and burial of the dead and the latter with the question of refugees and prisoners of war. War is the background against which family dramas such as *Electra* and *Orestes* are played out. Euripides' exploration of the theme of war in these plays is much more complex and ambiguous than Cacoyannis' reading of it.

Cacoyannis was not alone, however, in his belief that Euripides is an anti-war poet. This is a view shared by many scholars and theatre practitioners.²⁶² Some scholars tried to find contemporary allusions in Euripides' play that would 'prove' his anti-war stance.

²⁵⁸ For a synopsis of *Iphigenia* see McDonald, *Euripides in cinema* (n. 12, above) 132-53.

²⁵⁹ Cacoyannis officially announced his intention of making a trilogy of films based upon Euripides in 1963. See MacKinnon, *Greek tragedy* (n. 3, above) 74. Cacoyannis himself, however, in his interview with David Robinson that followed the screening of *Iphigenia* on 13 May 2001, said that he scripted *Iphigenia* first, and so the idea of a trilogy seems to have been on his mind and the success of *Electra* encouraged him to pursue it. See McDonald and Winkler, 'Interviews with Michael Cacoyannis' (n. 64, above) 161, on this issue. See also the updated version of this article in Winkler, *Classical myth and culture* (n. 57, above) 74. Moreover, in terms of the chronology of the story *Iphigenia* comes first. When the National Film Theatre screened the three films in 1981, they did so in reverse order to the one in which they were filmed: MacKinnon, *Greek Tragedy* (n. 3, above) 74.

²⁶⁰ Symposium International à Delphes (n. 82, above) 213-14.

²⁶¹ Euripides' *Helen* also deals with the events of the aftermath of the Trojan War, but it does so in a more light-hearted way.

²⁶² Two recent high profile examples of theatre productions of Euripidean tragedies as indictments of war are Katie Mitchell's *Iphigenia at Aulis* (2004) and *The Trojan Women* (2007) for the National Theatre in London.

There was a trend in Euripidean scholarship particularly in the 1960s, but also more recently, to see Euripides' preoccupation with the theme of war as a sign of his absolute condemnation of the institution of war. This view of Euripides is one of the main reasons why he is often considered the most modern of the three tragedians. One influential scholar who held this view of Euripides was Philip Vellacott. In his introductions to his popular translations of Euripides' plays, published in four volumes by Penguin Classics in the 1960s and 1970s,²⁶³ Vellacott emphasises the importance of the theme of war in Euripides and he also links it to the twentieth-century:

One experience which we have in common with that world is the suffering and the guilt of war.²⁶⁴

McDonald is a more recent scholar who shares this view and who praises Cacoyannis' Euripidean trilogy for having a similar agenda to that of Euripides:

Both Euripides and Cacoyannis make political statements in their works. With their experience of war and exile, they wish to show war's implications and consequences.²⁶⁵

The academic discussion surrounding the dating of *Electra* is another argument that is used to politicize Euripides in this way. It is thought that the *exodos* of *Electra* contains a reference to the Sicilian expedition,²⁶⁶ and so according to this view the date of the play is established as 413 BC. Zuntz opposed this traditional dating,²⁶⁷ but in the 1960s and 1970s 413 BC was again the favoured date for the play.

On this reading of the play, Euripides criticizes the failed Sicilian expedition that was a crushing blow to Athenian ambitions. His treatment of war, however, is more ironical

²⁶³ Vellacott first translated Euripides' works in the 1950s, but it is his revised editions, published in the next two decades, that have become the textbooks of Euripides' oeuvre for the wider public who cannot read Euripides in the original ancient Greek. Vellacott produced these editions in the following order: *Euripides. Medea and other plays: Medea, Electra and Heracles* in 1963, *Euripides. Orestes and other plays: The Children of Heracles, Andromache, The Suppliant Women, The Phoenician Women, Orestes and Iphigenia in Aulis* in 1972, *Euripides. Bacchae and other plays: Ion, The Women of Troy, Helen and The Bacchae* in 1973, and *Euripides. Alcestis, Hippolytus, Iphigenia in Tauris* in 1974.

²⁶⁴ P. Vellacott, *Euripides. Bacchae and other plays* (London 1973) 10.

²⁶⁵ McDonald, 'Cacoyannis' and Euripides' *Iphigenia*' (n. 252, above) 127.

²⁶⁶ Euripides, *Electra* 1347. In 414 BC the siege of Syracuse failed because of the arrival of Spartan reinforcements who forced the Athenians to retreat in disarray. It is estimated that around 7,000 men were captured: K-W. Welwei, 'The Peloponnesian War and its aftermath', in *A companion to the Classical Greek world*, ed. K. H. Kinzl (Oxford 2006) 532.

²⁶⁷ G. Zuntz, *The political plays of Euripides* (Manchester 1955) 64-67. For an example of the traditional dating of the play see J. D. Denniston, 'Introduction', in *Euripides, Electra* (Oxford 1939) xxxiv. For a more recent defence of 413 BC as the correct date see Arnott, 'Double the vision' (n. 252, above) 204, 215 n. 4.

and ambiguous.²⁶⁸ The frequency with which he returned to this theme testifies to its importance, but as in the *agon* between Electra and Clytemnestra in *Electra*, for example, Euripides presents both sides of the argument and seems to favour neither conclusively. As Irene Papas herself admits in the film: ‘we gave Electra all the rights’.²⁶⁹ Cacoyannis’ view of Euripides as a pacifist informs his characterization of the characters he found in the plays he adapted for the screen. There is some justice to MacKinnon’s assertion that Cacoyannis’ *Electra* has more in common with Sophocles’ heroic heroine than with Euripides’ more ambiguous one.²⁷⁰ This tendency of Cacoyannis’ to make Euripides’ characters more straightforwardly heroic or villainous is a feature of his whole Euripidean trilogy.

The films’ concern with condemning war and oppression has, however, made them popular with many of the critics and art-house audiences.²⁷¹ Moreover, from the beginning cinema has ‘privileged realism’,²⁷² or to be more precise the appearance of realism, so that films that appear to follow a logical narrative sequence and have straightforward characters tend to be more successful with the public. Cacoyannis followed this policy favoured by Hollywood: he pared down some of the ambiguities in Euripides’ plays and used the camera to clarify certain others. Cacoyannis simplified Euripides’ ‘unusual’²⁷³ and very ambiguous tragedy as Tzavellas had done with Sophocles’ complex *Antigone*.

Cacoyannis’ first alteration to Euripides’ original was to add a prologue to his *Electra* that sets the scene.²⁷⁴ In contrast to Euripides’ unusual prologue,²⁷⁵ in which the peasant explains how Electra came to be his wife, Cacoyannis’ film opens with Agamemnon’s triumphant return home. This part of the film was shot among the imposing ruins of

²⁶⁸ In *Electra* 432–86 Euripides has the chorus sing of Achilles and the divinely crafted armour given to him by his mother Thetis. At the end of the choral song he undermines the heroic tone of the passage by mentioning Clytemnestra’s murder of Agamemnon, the leader of all the Greeks. Electra’s previous complaints about her loss of status following the murder of her father combine to undermine further the heroism of this passage, while at the same time contextualizing the sufferings of the family of Agamemnon within the wider perspective of the Trojan War.

²⁶⁹ McDonald and Winkler, ‘Interviews with Michael Cacoyannis’ (n. 64, above) 183. See also the updated version of this article in Winkler, *Classical myth and culture* (n. 57, above) 89. This will be discussed further below.

²⁷⁰ MacKinnon, *Greek Tragedy* (n. 3, above) 80.

²⁷¹ The war in Vietnam also helped change American attitudes towards war, a change that was gradually picked up by Hollywood. The John Wayne vehicle *The Green Berets* (1968) presented audiences with a very unrealistic portrait of the war in Vietnam. In the seventies there was a change of attitude with *Coming Home* (1978) starring Jane Fonda and Jon Voight. The film was considered very daring for its time, as it portrayed the struggle of a returning Vietnam veteran to adjust back into life in America. In the 1980s the critique of the war became more stringent with Oliver Stone’s *Platoon* (1986) and Stanley Kubrick’s *Full Metal Jacket* (1987).

²⁷² MacKinnon, *Greek tragedy* (n. 3, above) 1.

²⁷³ D. J. Conacher, *Euripidean drama. Myth, theme and structure* (Toronto 1967) 199. In the 1960s scholarship on *Electra* tended either to categorize the play, along with *Orestes*, as a melodrama similar to Euripides’ *Ion* and *Helen*, or to dismiss it as an altogether inferior effort, especially when compared with Sophocles’ eponymous play. For an example of this view see H. D. F. Kitto, *Greek tragedy*, 3rd ed. (London 1966) 330.

²⁷⁴ He did the same in *Iphigenia*, only much more extensively. The first half-hour of the film consists of additions to Euripides’ play.

²⁷⁵ In Aeschylus’ *Choephoroi* and in Sophocles’ *Electra* the scene is set in the environs of the palace.

Mycenae, which lends the film an authentic Greek look.²⁷⁶ In contrast to this heroic prologue in Euripides' *Electra* the *skene* façade of the original production is likely to have represented the peasant's hut.²⁷⁷ Thus from its opening shots the film is reinterpreting Euripides' source play. However, it must be noted that whereas Euripides' play was performed in front of an audience familiar with the story of *Electra* and Aeschylus' famous dramatization of it,²⁷⁸ Cacoyannis could not count upon his audience's having such foreknowledge. Thus he proceeded to set the scene as he saw it in his prologue.

In the film *Agamemnon*, after his triumphant return, enters the courtyard of his palace where a young *Electra* and *Orestes* await him. He enters the palace itself, stopping to give *Orestes* his sword. Cacoyannis then chose to show his murder in contrast to ancient Greek theatrical practice. Nets are thrown over him and *Aegisthus* strikes him with an axe assisted by *Clytemnestra*, who holds her husband prisoner in the nets so that *Aegisthus* can kill him. These scenes are interspaced with scenes of *Electra's* suffering alongside her father's death agonies. It is as if she empathically senses what is happening to her father, thus stressing her emotional link to him. After *Agamemnon* dies the camera then cuts to *Electra*, who realises that her father is dead. A scene in which the old tutor spirits *Orestes* away follows this. Cacoyannis then cuts back to *Electra* who falls on the ground as the title appears in big capital letters that fill the screen. This wordless montage of scenes is Cacoyannis' prologue to the main action of the film.²⁷⁹ This part of *Electra's* story was dramatised by Aeschylus in his *Agamemnon*, but neither *Electra* nor *Orestes* appears on stage in that play. Cacoyannis' opening gives the film a tone of high tragedy that Euripides' original lacks.

After this prologue Cacoyannis' film moves forward in time to the timeline of the play, but once again Cacoyannis adds scenes, only this time these scenes are not even loosely based upon any of the extant versions of the story from the ancient sources. Cacoyannis chose instead to show the discontent of the people, who are muttering against the current leadership. In this scene it appears that Cacoyannis' contemporary concerns over the leadership of Greece led him to change the emphasis of his source by showing the people of *Argos*' discontent with *Aegisthus* and *Clytemnestra*. The people are portrayed as afraid to criticize *Aegisthus* openly because of his use of military force to keep them in line. This is very similar to the way *Kreon* is portrayed in *Tzavellas*'

²⁷⁶ Cacoyannis chose to film in Mycenae and in the Greek countryside between Athens and Sounion. See MacKinnon, *Greek tragedy* (n. 3, above) 75-76. He did not use studio film sets. This adds both to the realism and the 'Greek' feel of the film: Hardwick, *Reception Studies* (n. 30, above) 81. This will be discussed further below.

²⁷⁷ MacKinnon, *Greek Tragedy* (n. 3, above) 77.

²⁷⁸ The debate over whether Sophocles' *Electra* or Euripides' *Electra* was performed first has not been conclusively settled, although many critics favour Sophocles' version. See J. M. Walton and K. McLeish, 'Introduction', in *Euripides, Elektra, Orestes, Iphigenia in Tauris, Plays IV*, trans. K. McLeish, (London 1997) vii, on the difficulty of dating Sophocles' and Euripides' versions. The general consensus in the earlier part of the twentieth century was that Sophocles' *Electra* was performed first. For examples of this view see Denniston, 'Introduction' (n. 266, above) xxxix; Kitto, *Greek tragedy* (n. 273, above) 332; and Conacher, *Euripidean drama* (n. 273, above) 202. Murray, however, disagreed; he saw Sophocles' *Electra* as a response to Euripides' play: G. Murray, 'Introduction', in *Euripides, Elektra*, trans. G. Murray (London 1965) 5. For a more recent example of the view of Sophocles' priority see M. J. Cropp, 'Introduction', in *Euripides, Elektra*, trans. M. J. Cropp (Warminster 1988) xlix.

²⁷⁹ This prologue lasts for six minutes: McDonald, *Euripides in cinema* (n. 12, above) 264.

Antigone. He also inspires fear in his people. This is one way in which Cacoyannis and Tzavellas incorporated contemporary concerns into the background of their films.

It is then that the adult Electra played by Irene Papas first appears. In the claustrophobic scene shot inside the ruins of Mycenae, Clytemnestra and Aegisthus plot her marriage to the peasant.²⁸⁰ Cacoyannis employs one of his favourite techniques, the close-up shot,²⁸¹ to reveal Clytemnestra's malice and Electra's fierce resistance.²⁸² Electra in an act of defiance cuts her hair and throws a black mantle over her dress. What is extraordinary in this scene is that no words are exchanged, instead the camera acts as a commentator,²⁸³ particularly in the close-ups of the actors' faces. This is one of the significant differences between film and theatre. The former can direct the viewers' attention more directly than is possible in theatrical productions, and it can thus alter the audience's perception of the drama.²⁸⁴

Cacoyannis' characterisation of Electra is thus, from the very start, different from Euripides' more ambiguous portrayal of his heroine. In Euripides' play Electra first appears carrying a water jug and complaining of her ill treatment. She says that it is not out of necessity that she works,

ἀλλ' ὡς ὕβριν δειξωμεν Αἰγίσθου θεοῖς,
 γόους τ' ἀφίτημ' αἰθέρ' ἐς μέγαν πατρί.
 ἢ γὰρ πανώλης Τυνδαρίς, μήτηρ ἐμή,
 ἐξέβαλέ μ' οἴκων, χάριτα τιθεμένη πόσει.²⁸⁵

but to exhibit to the gods Aegisthus' hybris. For
 the fiendish child of Tyndareus, my mother, cast me from
 home, as a favour to her husband.²⁸⁶

²⁸⁰ The use of the ruins of Mycenae as a prison for the fierce spirit of Electra instead of a film set adds to both the realism and the impact of the film. See Roger Manvell's article on *Electra* in *Film & Filming* 9 (May 1963), www.filmfestival.gr/tributes/2003-2004/cinemythology/uk/film30.html, accessed 03/04/2008. Tzavellas' sets of the palace and the city of Thebes, on the other hand, are theatrical and therefore less believable on the silver screen. Cf. Hardwick, *Reception studies* (n. 30, above) 81.

²⁸¹ At times of emotional intensity Cacoyannis often focuses his camera on the eyes of his actors. One of his most memorable uses of this technique comes at the end of his *Iphigenia*, when Clytemnestra after having lost her daughter watches the Greek army sail away. A close-up of her face reveals her hatred and desire for revenge: McDonald, *Euripides in cinema* (n. 12, above) 153 and 174.

²⁸² In ancient Greek theatre the faces of the actors were not visible as they wore masks, and so emotions were not made visible by facial expressions but by their words.

²⁸³ In Greek tragedy that is one of the functions of the chorus.

²⁸⁴ MacKinnon, *Greek tragedy*' (n. 3, above) 49. Note also MacKinnon's example of how filmed theatrical productions can be undermined by the camera. In the National Theatre of Greece's production of Sophocles' *Electra* at Epidaurus in 1961 an old actor played the role of Orestes. The tragic grandeur of Electra's complaints about Orestes' long-delayed vengeance were thus turned to bathos when the camera focused on the 'old' Orestes. Cacoyannis, on the other hand, chose a young actor, Giannis Fertis, for the role of Orestes, so that the appearance of realism required by filmic conventions is preserved and because he wanted to stress his youth and inexperience.

²⁸⁵ Euripides, *Electra* 58-61.

²⁸⁶ All translations of Euripides' *Electra* are from M. J. Cropp's edition of the play: *Euripides, Electra*, trans. M. J. Cropp (Warminster 1988).

The emphasis Euripides' *Electra* places upon her own personal sufferings has led critics to see her as a 'bitter, self-pitying, sharp-tongued virago',²⁸⁷ who wants to avenge the wrongs done to her own person more than she wants to avenge her father's murder. Sophocles' *Electra* too is concerned with her own position,²⁸⁸ but in her case, her desire for vengeance is based primarily on her desire to avenge her father's murder. The restitution of her patrimony is based upon her claim as his loyal daughter and is a subordinate concern for Sophocles' heroine. In contrast Euripides' *Electra* seems more concerned about her own position, and she is bitter over her expulsion from the palace. This is one of the reasons why she is perceived as less heroic than Sophocles' *Electra*, who like that other famous Sophoclean heroine Antigone resolutely defies the king's authority because she believes him to be in the wrong. Both of Sophocles' heroines have an intense 'inward life',²⁸⁹ and personal considerations of status are secondary for them. Euripides' *Electra* on the other hand seems primarily concerned with status and her lost patrimony. From the very beginning of the play she draws attention to Aegisthus' and Clytemnestra's maltreatment of her.

This is another of the reasons why critics view Euripides as the most modern of the three ancient Greek tragedians. His characterization of *Electra* as being motivated by her bitterness over the loss of her patrimony seems more realistic. The continued popularity of Sophocles' version shows that in the case of *Electra* at least, her more sordid but pragmatic characterization has contributed to the play's unpopularity with modern audiences. Euripides' *Electra* is one of his least often revived plays. Another factor is the popularity of Freudian readings of *Electra*'s character as excessively attached to the memory of her father, to which Sophocles' version lends itself more easily than Euripides's heroine with her more openly materialistic motives.

In terms of his characterization of *Electra* Cacoyannis does preserve the scene where she carries the water jug, but what comes before it alters the emphasis of the source.²⁹⁰ He shows his audience the peasant transporting *Electra* to his hut in a cart, while the countryside people sing a song to offer her hope. After the claustrophobic scenes inside the palace the open countryside offers *Electra* a more supportive environment. The marked contrast between the city and the countryside in the film is another way in which Cacoyannis utilises in an effective manner the tradition of open-air theatrical productions in Greece. When the pair arrive at their destination,²⁹¹ *Electra* is introduced to the chorus comprised of women of the surrounding countryside. They are dressed simply in black and they support and comfort *Electra*, thus ranging themselves openly against the rule of Aegisthus and Clytemnestra. The chorus in Tzavellas' *Antigone* also supports Antigone, but at times

²⁸⁷ Conacher, *Euripidean drama* (n. 273, above) 205.

²⁸⁸ Sophocles, *Electra* 164-67. This is the first time that *Electra* mentions that she is forcibly restrained from marrying and having children, but this complaint about her own position comes only after a long lamentation over her father's fate.

²⁸⁹ Opstelten, *Sophocles and Greek pessimism* (n. 227, above) 89-90.

²⁹⁰ MacKinnon criticizes Cacoyannis for destroying 'the sense of shock' produced by the opening of Euripides' play: MacKinnon, *Greek Tragedy* (n. 3, above) 77.

²⁹¹ Cacoyannis chose a very primitive-looking hut to represent the peasant's home, perhaps to increase the contrast with the majestic ruins of Mycenae that represent the palace of Argos in the film. The dramatic change in *Electra*'s status is thus emphasized and it increases the viewers' sympathy for the character.

they are intimidated by Kreon and pretend to agree with him, as in the case of his first *agon* with the heroine.

The women are sympathetic to Electra's plight, as was the chorus in the source, and they comply with her wish to see her father's grave. In the film Agamemnon's grave is a simple slab of rock on the ground.²⁹² Electra makes an offering from the surrounding bushes, but her devotions are disturbed by the appearance of Aegisthus and his soldiers. He strikes Electra and taunts her when she predicts that Orestes will return.²⁹³ **When Electra is thrown to the ground Cacoyannis reveals her pain by using the camera in a series of rapidly whirling movements that give the viewer a sense of vertigo. Interposing scenes of the sky and the horses that encircle her encourages the viewers to sympathize with Electra as the victim of Aegisthus' cruelty.**

This defilement of Agamemnon's grave is only suggested in Euripides' original. When Orestes asks Electra about the state of their father's grave she tells him:

ὁ κλεινός, ὡς λέγουσιν, ἐνθρόσκει τάφῳ
 πέτροις τε λεύει μνήμα λάινον πατρός,
 καὶ τοῦτο τολμᾷ τοῦπος εἰς ἡμᾶς λέγειν·
 Ποῦ παῖς Ὀρέστης;²⁹⁴

This glorious man, they say, leaps on the grave and pelts with stones our father's stone memorial, and dares to make this utterance against us: "Where is your son Orestes?"

Electra is not aware at this point in the play that she is speaking to her brother; she thinks she is speaking to a messenger sent by Orestes. The story of the defilement might therefore not be altogether correct, but meant to rouse Orestes' anger, so that he will return to avenge this insult and prove his courage. **By filming the scene at the grave Cacoyannis presents a sympathetic picture of Electra, while Aegisthus is cast in the role of villain.** In Aeschylus' and Sophocles' versions Aegisthus is a weaker character, subordinate to Clytemnestra, but Cacoyannis restores him to a more active role consistent with his portrayal elsewhere in mythology.

Cacoyannis does follow Euripides more closely with regard to the characterization of Orestes. **After Electra's ordeal Orestes is shown visiting his father's grave at night.** Once again Cacoyannis creates a scene that is only reported in Euripides,²⁹⁵ but he does not change the emphasis of the source text. In the film Orestes is portrayed as young and uncertain, as he is in Euripides' play.²⁹⁶ Cacoyannis' added scene is another example of the physical limitations of theatrical productions that rely more on reported speech to describe actions that take place offstage compared with film that can 'show' its audience these

²⁹² Compare this with descriptions in Aeschylus and Sophocles of Agamemnon' tomb.

²⁹³ McDonald, *Euripides in cinema* (n. 12, above) 286.

²⁹⁴ Euripides, *Electra* 327-30.

²⁹⁵ Euripides, *Electra* 90-93.

²⁹⁶ For an analysis of Orestes' role in *Electra* that predates Cacoyannis' film see E. M. Blaiklock, *The male characters of Euripides. A study in realism* (Wellington 1952) 163-75.

actions. However, as was shown with the added scene of Electra at the grave, such interpolations can narrow and shape the audience's perception of the story.

Orestes relies on Pylades at this point,²⁹⁷ but he will increasingly come to rely upon Electra. Cacoyannis follows Euripides' text fairly closely here. Orestes accosts Electra, and after her initial fear she accepts him as a messenger sent by her brother. There is one important difference, however. In Cacoyannis' film Orestes realizes Electra's identity because she recounts the story of her troubles directly to him, whereas in the play he overhears her talking to the chorus.²⁹⁸ By having her tell her brother directly about her troubles and her grief Cacoyannis makes this scene more intimate. Close-ups of Orestes' face reveal his sympathy for his sister and his struggle to conceal his emotions.

The old tutor facilitates the *anagnorisis* scene, as in the original play. In the film he is played by Manos Katrakis (the same actor who played Kreon in *Antigone*). He is brought to the hut by the peasant acting on Electra's suggestion. Many academics, including Kitto²⁹⁹ and Conacher,³⁰⁰ have commented that the *anagnorisis* is rather joyless in Euripides' version, particularly when compared with Aeschylus' complicated *anagnorisis* scene that deliberately delays the moment of revelation. This is the scene that Euripides parodies in his version. His Electra is also not overcome by emotion. In Sophocles Electra is genuinely greatly moved to discover that her brother is alive,³⁰¹ although the *anagnorisis* is delayed in this play too, so that Electra can take centre stage. Euripides presented his audience with an Electra that is less emotional and more pragmatic. MacKinnon criticizes Cacoyannis for undermining this aspect of Euripides' original:

the most perfunctory and joyless *anagnorisis* (recognition) ever penned, is dispelled by the length of time and the sense of release created for the *anagnorisis* by the film.³⁰²

In his film Cacoyannis does stress the joy of Electra and Orestes at being reunited³⁰³ and, after the long scene in which Electra spoke of her troubles, the audience's anticipation has been heightened.

Cacoyannis also alters the tokens by which Orestes is recognized. In Euripides' play there is an ironic allusion to Aeschylus' complicated tokens of recognition. The old man saw Orestes' offerings at his father's grave, his lock of hair and his footprints, and he

²⁹⁷ In Euripides' original Pylades is a silent role: Cacoyannis chose to have him speak in the film. His role, as in Aeschylus' *Choephoroi*, is to support and comfort Orestes.

²⁹⁸ In *Electra* Orestes enters with Pylades and delivers his first monologue (Euripides, *Electra* 82-111). When he sees Electra approaching he decides to hide. At first he mistakes her for a slave, but then he overhears her conversation with the chorus and comes to realize her true identity. In the film too Orestes mistakes Electra for a slave at first and hides from her.

²⁹⁹ Kitto, *Greek tragedy* (n. 273, above) 338.

³⁰⁰ Conacher, *Euripidean drama* (n. 273, above) 206.

³⁰¹ Both brother and sister reveal a softer side in this scene in what is otherwise a rather grim play. Foley thinks that Orestes is genuinely moved by his sister's grief but manages to detach himself: H. P. Foley, *Female acts in Greek tragedy* (Princeton, N. J. 2001) 165-66. Cf Ormand, *Exchange* (n. 120, above) 75-78. Orestes is not an emotional character and he stifles his sister's outbursts of happiness over his return.

³⁰² MacKinnon, *Greek Tragedy* (n. 3, above) 78.

³⁰³ McDonald, *Euripides in cinema* (n. 12, above) 271 and 289.

became convinced that Orestes had returned. Electra however mocks these tokens and uses logic to disprove all three of them. Only when the old man points out the scar does she finally believe.³⁰⁴ Cacoyannis omits this ironic allusion to Aeschylus' *anagnorisis* scene and has the old tutor who is blind recognize Orestes' sword given to him by his father in the prologue.³⁰⁵ Only then does he feel behind Orestes' left ear for the scar. Electra is ecstatic when he reveals the truth to her, and brother and sister fall into each other's arms weeping with joy. Close-ups of Electra's eyes reveal her great joy. As McDonald put it, 'close-ups allow intimate awareness of the players' reactions',³⁰⁶ and in this scene Cacoyannis employs them to great effect.

There is a marked change of mood, however, when the three start planning the downfall of Aegisthus and Clytemnestra. Orestes appears unsure in this scene, and he asks the old tutor and Electra for advice. This is in keeping with Euripides' original in which Orestes asks the old man:

λέξον, τί δρῶν ἂν φονέα τεισαίμην πατρός;
μητέρα τε κοινωνὸν ἀνοσίων γάμων;³⁰⁷

Tell me, what should I do to repay my father's murderer,
and my mother, his partner in this unholy marriage?

It is the old man who proposes the plan of killing Aegisthus at the feast of the nymphs, while Electra is the author of the plan to lure their mother to the hut so that Orestes can kill her. In the play she tells Orestes:

ἐγὼ φόνον γε μητρὸς ἐξαρτύσομαι.³⁰⁸

I shall myself arrange our mother's murder.

Critics in the 1950s and 1960s saw Orestes as weak and hold Electra responsible for the matricide:

while her brother's silence during her unfolding of the appalling plot ... is appropriate to the weakness which can neither withdraw nor take control.³⁰⁹

³⁰⁴ Euripides, *Electra* 573-77.

³⁰⁵ McDonald, *Euripides in cinema* (n. 12, above) 270, on the significance of the sword as 'a recurrent symbol' in *Electra*.

³⁰⁶ McDonald, 'Cacoyannis's and Euripides' *Iphigenia*' (n. 253, above) 128. McDonald also raises another interesting point when she compares the rigidity of ancient Greek masks, seen from a distance in the ancient Greek theatre, to the intimacy of a close-up shot. See also the updated version of this article in Winkler, *Classical myth and culture* (n. 57, above) 99-100.

³⁰⁷ Euripides, *Electra* 599-600.

³⁰⁸ Euripides, *Electra* 647.

³⁰⁹ Blaiklock, *The male characters of Euripides* (n. 296, above) 172. See also Conacher, who goes even further and suggests that in this play Aegisthus and Clytemnestra are presented more sympathetically than Electra and Orestes: 'It is recognised that the ways in which Aegisthus and Clytemnestra are brought to their doom place these victims, at least for the moment, in a better light than the avengers' (*Euripidean drama* (n. 273, above) 206).

Euripides' characterization of Orestes is more negative than this would suggest. He does ask for advice, but when told by the old man that to regain his inheritance he will have to kill both Aegisthus and Clytemnestra, he answers:

ἦκω 'πὶ τόνδε στέφανον· ἀλλὰ πῶς λάβω;³¹⁰

This is the crown I have come for – but how can I win it?

He seems to have already realised that he will have to kill both Aegisthus and his mother, even before the old tutor and Electra suggest the means of doing so. Cacoyannis has overcome this ambiguity by casting a young actor in the role of Orestes. His need of advice from the old man and his older sister Electra seems entirely natural.

Cacoyannis further consolidates the viewer's support for the avenging siblings by portraying Aegisthus' feast as a debauched revelry. In Cacoyannis' film the feast is held not in honour of the Nymphs but to celebrate Bacchus.³¹¹ There are also several scenes of the revellers pressing grapes, drinking and dancing. Cacoyannis added a symbolic scene of a group of masked men, dressed in black, dancing. There is a sense of menace and impending doom about this group, which is enhanced by Mikis Theodorakis' music of wildly clashing cymbals.³¹² Apart from that the film follows Euripides' version of events, given in the form of a messenger speech, of how Aegisthus invited Orestes and Pylades to carve the meat.³¹³ In the case of the murder of Aegisthus, Cacoyannis chose not to show it, but interposes instead scenes of the masked figures clashing swords in a stylised battle. This is reminiscent of the scene in Tzavellas' *Antigone*, where Kreon's soldiers are shown practising with their swords on the morning after the battle. Cacoyannis, however, makes much more effective use of his group of swordfighters. They are a visible sign of the clash between Orestes and Aegisthus, and they mask the murder of the latter. Thus Cacoyannis has incorporated the symbol of the clashing swords into the action of his plot, making it an integral element of his film and not just a plot filler as in Tzavellas.

At this point the film returns to the world of the play, where Electra is awaiting news of her brother. When she hears the distant cries she believes the worst at first, but then the messenger arrives with the news of Aegisthus' death. By interposing the scenes of Aegisthus' licentiousness, however, Cacoyannis has destroyed any last remaining possibility of redeeming his character. Coupled with the earlier scene of his defilement of Agamemnon's grave his murder appears fully justified because of his evil and tyrannical nature. Even Electra's rant over his corpse that follows appears justified, after his terrible treatment of her. In Euripides, however, the scene is more ambiguous as Electra's bitterness comes across very strongly, especially as it is addressed to a corpse who can no longer harm her. MacKinnon also suggests that in Euripides' play Electra addressed

³¹⁰ Euripides, *Electra* 614.

³¹¹ McDonald, *Euripides in cinema* (n. 12, above) 289. Cacoyannis politicises this scene by introducing scuffles between Aegisthus' bodyguards and some of the revellers. The people are once again seen as opposing Aegisthus' rule because he is a bad king like Kreon is in Tzavellas' *Antigone*.

³¹² M. Theodorakis, *Electra*, original soundtrack music for the film by M. Cacoyannis, Sakkaris Records (Greece 1998).

³¹³ MacKinnon, *Greek tragedy* (n. 3, above) 80. MacKinnon believes that Aegisthus' attendance at the feast is a mark of piety.

Aegisthus' severed head and not his body. Cacoyannis shows his viewers the body of Aegisthus in the film.³¹⁴ The ancient Greek text, as it survives, does not seem to bear this out:

... ὡς δὲ τῷ σάφ' εἰδέναι τάδε
προσθῶμεν, αὐτὸν τὸν θανάοντα σοι φέρω³¹⁵

... I bring you the man him-
self who has died.

What is more important, however, is the context in which Electra delivers her speech over the corpse. In Euripides' play Aegisthus does not appear on stage, and so the audience hears only Electra's side of the story; and as she is presented in a rather unsympathetic light at times, the audience is not sure whether to trust in her veracity. In Cacoyannis' film, however, she has been consistently presented sympathetically and Aegisthus is portrayed as the blackest of villains, so the viewer accepts Electra's outpouring of rage as justified. Similarly Kreon's paranoia and anger in Tzavellas' *Antigone* alienate his people and make the case for the justice of Antigone's cause.

In Sophocles' version Electra tricks Aegisthus into entering the palace where Orestes waits to kill him, but in this version she is mainly represented as an heroic character consumed by her desire to avenge her father. Euripides' representation of Electra's motives is more ambiguous. In her rant over Aegisthus' remains Electra accuses him of being unlawfully married to her mother,³¹⁶ of being subordinate to Clytemnestra,³¹⁷ and she stresses his arrogance founded upon his acquisition of Agamemnon's wealth.³¹⁸ She also accuses him of effeminacy.³¹⁹ All these accusations conform to Aeschylus' and Sophocles' representation of Aegisthus, but in the less heroic setting of the peasant's hut their meaning is less clear. Cacoyannis, however, chose to subvert the ambiguity of this scene even though he followed Euripides' text fairly closely at this point. His Electra is as heroic as Sophocles' heroine, but also more sympathetically portrayed than in Sophocles' version.

Even the scene of the matricide is presented by Cacoyannis in such a way as to make it seem more justifiable than in Euripides' original. In the prologue the viewer sees Clytemnestra helping Aegisthus murder her husband. Next we see her enforcing Aegisthus' edict that Electra must marry the peasant. Only the scene of the *agon* between mother and daughter is taken from Euripides' play, and in the film Clytemnestra is

³¹⁴ MacKinnon, *Greek tragedy* (n. 3, above) 78.

³¹⁵ Euripides, *Electra* 894-95. Critical opinion on this issue is divided. In his translation Vellacott has Orestes return with Aegisthus' body but Electra addresses his head: P. Vellacott (trans), *Euripides, Medea and other plays* (London 1963) 135-36. Cropp in his translation has Electra address his corpse; McDonald and Walton in their translation of the play agree: Cropp, *Euripides, Electra* (n. 286, above) 65; M. McDonald and J. M. Walton (trans.), *Euripides, Electra* (London 2004) 44. McLeish, on the other hand, has Orestes return with Aegisthus' head only: McLeish, *Euripides, Elektra* (n. 278, above) 36.

³¹⁶ Euripides, *Electra* 926.

³¹⁷ Euripides, *Electra* 931.

³¹⁸ Euripides, *Electra* 948-50.

³¹⁹ Euripides, *Electra* 948-50.

presented in a particularly negative light. Summoned by Electra's false story of having given birth to a son, Clytemnestra appears in a chariot attended by three female slaves. Mother and daughter then proceed to state their respective positions. Cacoyannis follows Euripides' text closely at this point, as he did with the *agon* in *The Trojan Women*, but once again he changes the emphasis by using his camera. Close-ups of Clytemnestra's eyes reveal her deceit, even when she invokes Iphigenia's name to justify her actions. The pomp of Clytemnestra's arrival, her rich garments and heavy make-up reinforce this negative impression of her,³²⁰ particularly when contrasted with Electra's severe black clothes and her humble surroundings.

Cacoyannis does follow Euripides in that when Orestes sees Clytemnestra arriving he is struck by the enormity of what he is about to do and Electra has to spur him on. Electra's own unmerciful stance, however, changes in the film after she wins the *agon*. Twice she restrains her mother from entering the hut, where Orestes awaits. Her excuses are that a queen should not enter such a humble dwelling and that she will dirty her clothes. In Euripides Electra's holding back of her mother comes across as malicious irony:

χώρει πένητας ἐς δόμους· φρούρει δέ μοι
μὴ σ' αἰθαλώσῃ πολύκαπνον στέγος πέπλους.
θύσεις γὰρ οἶα χρεὶ σε δαίμοσιν θύῃ.³²¹

Go on into this poor house; take care, I pray you,
that the soot that smoothes the building does not soil your
clothes. You will be making the sacrifice you should to the gods.

By the use of close-ups Cacoyannis shows that his Electra does truly hesitate before she condemns her mother to death, despite all her mother's cruelty to her. This makes Electra more humane than she is in Euripides' source play.

Cacoyannis does not seek, however, to reduce the horror of the matricide. The scene in which Clytemnestra enters the hut and is set upon by both Electra and Orestes is menacing and horrifying, a mood once again reinforced by Theodorakis' discordant music. Clytemnestra begs for mercy as she does in Euripides,³²² but to no avail. The chorus of women outside scatter, and Cacoyannis again employs whirling camera-work to emphasize the horror of the actions taking place inside the hut. The viewers are not allowed to see clearly what is happening. The scenes of the siblings' attack on their mother are intercut with scenes of black birds flying overhead³²³ and the women of the chorus running in a panic.³²⁴ The chorus seems empathically to know what is happening inside the hut in the same way the young Electra knew what was happening to her father inside the palace.

In Cacoyannis' *Electra*, as in the source, Electra and Orestes are horrified by their actions. They stare at Clytemnestra's corpse sprawled on the ground inside the hut and

³²⁰ McDonald, *Euripides in cinema* (n. 12, above) 290.

³²¹ Euripides, *Electra* 1139-41.

³²² Euripides, *Electra* 1165 and 1167.

³²³ See McDonald, *Euripides in cinema* (n. 12, above) 305, on the significance of the birds.

³²⁴ McDonald, *Euripides in cinema* (n. 12, above) 275-76.

agonize over their crime. Orestes talks of how he averted his face when Clytemnestra pleadingly touched his cheek, and he comes to realise that after this he will have to go into exile again. Electra shares his guilt because as she herself admits she held the sword too, and urged Orestes on.³²⁵ This accords with Euripides' text in which Electra says:

ξίφους τ' ἐφηψάμαν ἅμα.³²⁶

and grasped the sword with you.

She comes to realize too that no man will ever marry her now. Orestes then tells Electra to cover up their mother out of respect and so that they will not have to look at their handiwork. Cacoyannis follows Euripides here, except that he chose to film this scene between brother and sister inside the hut.³²⁷ In Euripides' original Electra and Orestes confront the chorus when they speak of their guilt. The chorus, although appalled by the gravity of their crime, is still sympathetic to their predicament:

ὦ τύχας, σᾶς τύχας, μᾶτερ τεκοῦσ'
ἄλαστα μέλεα καὶ πέρα
παθοῦσα σῶν τέκνων ὑπαί.
πατρὸς δ' ἔτεισας φόνον δικαίως.³²⁸

Alas for the fortune, your fortune,
mother who bore ...
suffering grievous miseries
and more from your own children.
But justly have you atoned for their father's murder.

Cacoyannis' ending, however, is much bleaker than Euripides' because no such sympathy is forthcoming from either the women or the peasants. Pylades, who has silently supported Orestes and Electra, leaves the hut followed Orestes and Electra themselves. No more words are exchanged between brother and sister and they are met with a stony silence, while the peasants of the countryside and the women of the chorus stare at them accusingly. Without a word Electra and Orestes go off in opposite directions. Orestes goes up a hill followed by Pylades, but with his arm Orestes silently commands him to follow Electra instead. The women of the countryside, who had been so supportive of Electra throughout the rest of the film, silently make way for her as she disappears down the road menaced by dark clouds overhead. The shot of her lonely dark-glad figure disappearing down the road is the last shot of the film before the credits.³²⁹ This is reminiscent of Kreon's silent exit into darkness in *Antigone*.

³²⁵ Cacoyannis' Electra is sensitive to the enormity of the crime she has committed: McDonald, *Euripides in cinema* (n. 12, above) 294.

³²⁶ Euripides, *Electra* 1225.

³²⁷ In Greek tragedy murders took place offstage and were then reported by messengers. It would not have been possible to see inside the hut represented by the *skene* during a performance of Euripides' *Electra*.

³²⁸ Euripides, *Electra* 1186-89.

³²⁹ It is interesting to note that silences were also used in ancient Greek theatre for dramatic effect: O. Taplin, *The stagecraft of Aeschylus. The dramatic use of exits and entrances in Greek tragedy* (Oxford 1977) Chapter 7.

After Cacoyannis' more sympathetic portrayal of Electra and Orestes in his film such a tragic ending in which there is no divine intervention to save Electra and Orestes has puzzled some critics like MacKinnon, who asks: 'why the guilty end?'³³⁰ Cacoyannis explained his decision to omit the *deus ex machina* ending of the original in terms of his belief in Euripides' rationality. Cacoyannis is convinced that Euripides did not truly believe in the Olympian gods and his *deus ex machina* endings were ironic.³³¹ Many critics, especially in the 1950s and 1960s, shared this view of Euripides' use of the *deus ex machina*. Blaiklock for example finds 'a touch of the rationalist's cynicism in the solution he adopts.'³³² Conacher writes 'the epilogue, that ironical mythological 'tidying-up' of which Euripides was so fond.'³³³ More recent criticism, however, cautions against this outright dismissal of the role of the gods in Euripides' plays.³³⁴

In Euripides' *Electra* the Dioscuri appear and offer Orestes hope. They command him to go to Athens where Athena will absolve him of his crime. This part of the story was dramatized by Aeschylus in his *Eumenides*. Orestes has also given Electra to Pylades as his bride, so the ending of Euripides' *Electra* is less bleak than it is presented as being in Cacoyannis' film. Euripides' portrayal of Electra and Orestes is not as sympathetic as Cacoyannis', so Euripides' ending which offers them hope is even more disconcerting for modern audiences. In Cacoyannis' *Electra*, Electra and her brother are more heroic and humane. This latter trait is what brings about their self-exile; they do not try to evade responsibility. Instead they embrace it, in one final act of heroism as Kreon does in Tzavellas' *Antigone*. In this respect Cacoyannis is closer in spirit to Sophocles than Euripides.³³⁵ Sophoclean heroes and heroines accept such reversals of fate because they are brought about by *hamartia*, a failing.³³⁶ In the case of the Sophoclean Electra her tragic flaw is her excessive desire for revenge. Sophocles' *Electra* differs from his earlier plays, however, in that it ends without any clear resolution.

Euripides' *deus ex machina* ending is also very hard to portray on film, as Cacoyannis was well aware:

³³⁰ MacKinnon, *Greek tragedy* (n. 3, above) 80.

³³¹ I questioned Cacoyannis closely on this point, and he reasserted his belief that Euripides did not believe in the gods. See also McDonald and Winkler, 'Interviews with Michael Cacoyannis' (n. 64, above) 167, for Cacoyannis' similar answer to a question posed by Professor McDonald in her telephone interview with the director. See also the updated version of this article in Winkler, *Classical myth and culture* (n. 57, above) 79.

³³² Blaiklock, *The male characters of Euripides* (n. 296, above) 174.

³³³ Conacher, *Euripidean drama* (n. 273, above) 210.

³³⁴ M. Heath, *The poetics of Greek tragedy* (London 1987) 51.

³³⁵ MacKinnon, *Greek tragedy* (n. 3, above) 80. See also Aristotle on what he saw as the essential difference between Sophocles and Euripides: the former presented people as they ought to be, while the latter presented them as they were (*Poetics*, xxv.11).

³³⁶ For the translation of *hamartia* as a failing and the reasons for this see S. Halliwell, *Aristotle's Poetics* (London 1998) 222. See also N. Sherman, 'Hamartia and Virtue', in *Essays on Aristotle's Poetics* ed. Amélie Oksenberg Rorty (Oxford 1992) 177-96. Aristotle admired Sophocles' tragedies, particularly *Oedipus Tyrannus*, because in his opinion it best represented a characteristic that he thought essential for any tragedy, the tragic flaw (*Poetics*, xiii.5-10).

I felt I was being honest in terms of today's sensibilities in setting up the action of the play in that way, so as not to bog down the audience with the religious aspects of the past.³³⁷

The appearance of the Dioscuri in the film would shatter the sense of realism that Cacoyannis wanted to preserve. Cacoyannis believed that in cutting out this scene from the play he was being faithful to Euripides' spirit, and the same is true of all the changes he made to the original text. As he said:

Where I sacrifice text in making a film is when I feel the medium itself can speak more eloquently than the words of the text, which after all, was bound by the conventions of the stage.³³⁸

His film of Euripides' original tragedy, however, is informed by the contemporary view of Euripides as a pacifist and a rationalist who did not believe in the Olympian gods. He was also concerned with opening up Greek tragedy to a wider cinematic audience. Cacoyannis' *Electra* therefore is a mixture of conventional filmic techniques adopted from Hollywood and art-house elements.³³⁹

One of the factors that made Cacoyannis' *Electra* popular abroad was that it was received as a 'Greek' cinematic adaptation of the story. The French critic Jean de Baroncelli commented in *Le Monde* (23 May 1962), after seeing the film at the 1962 Cannes Festival, that he thought that the locations and the whole atmosphere of the film conveyed an ideal of a timeless Greece.³⁴⁰ The film was not only shot in Greece but also acted by Greek actors in the modern Greek language. Mikis Theodorakis in his soundtrack for the movie employed traditional Greek folk instruments such as the bouzouki, the traditional mountain flute and the sedfi.³⁴¹ His minimalist approach for the music of the film using mostly traditional instruments reinforces the film's 'Greek' feel.³⁴² This 'Greek

³³⁷ Symposium International à Delphes (n. 82, above) 224. See further McDonald, 'Interviews with Cacoyannis' (n. 64, above) 167, where Cacoyannis talks of his desire not to alienate modern audiences by having the gods appear in his films. See also the updated version of this article in Winkler, *Classical myth and culture* (n. 57, above) 79.

³³⁸ Symposium International à Delphes (n. 82, above) 224.

³³⁹ A recipe he followed in his other two Euripidean adaptations.

³⁴⁰ J. de Baroncelli, 'Μια πολύ ωραία Ελληνική ταινία' (trans. Μ. Κράλη), *Μιχάλης Κακογιάννης*, 36^ο Φεστιβάλ Κινηματογράφου Θεσσαλονίκης, Οργανισμός Πολιτιστικής Πρωτεύουσας της Ευρώπης Θεσσαλονίκη (Αθήνα 1995) 146. See also Claude Mauriac's article in *Le Figaro Littéraire*, dated 3 November 1962, where he makes the same point. C. Mauriac, 'Άρθρο' (trans. Μ. Κράλη), in *Μιχάλης Κακογιάννης*, 36^ο Φεστιβάλ Κινηματογράφου Θεσσαλονίκης, Οργανισμός Πολιτιστικής Πρωτεύουσας της Ευρώπης Θεσσαλονίκη (Αθήνα 1995) 148.

³⁴¹ Theodorakis' collaboration with Cacoyannis in *Electra* is what first inspired him to create an opera based on Sophocles' *Electra* (1991-94). It is interesting to note that in his opera *Electra* Theodorakis again utilized Greek musical traditions to enhance the Greek 'feel' of his opera. For example *Electra*'s appeal to the gods in the first act is based on a traditional lament for the dead from Mani. See P. Brown, 'Greek tragedy in the opera house and concert hall of the late twentieth century', in Hall, Macintosh and Wrigley (eds), *Dionysus Since 69* (n. 56, above) 285-309, at 295. Using such traditional Greek musical instruments and melodies allows Theodorakis to celebrate the musical traditions of his country.

³⁴² Music can indicate 'the geography, culture, or era in which a scene is set': A. Davison, 'High fidelity? Music in screen adaptations', in *The Cambridge companion to literature on screen*, ed. D. Cartmell and I. Whelehan (Cambridge 2007) 212-25, at 213.

colour' is one of the reasons why most film critics received the film warmly. The 'Greek' touches that Cacoyannis added gives *Electra* the appearance of being closer to ancient Greek tragedy. Academic criticism of the film at the time was also warm. Hugh Lloyd-Jones praised the movie for improving Euripides' original.³⁴³

Like Cacoyannis, Tzavellas also wanted to bring quality cinema to the Greek filmgoing public,³⁴⁴ that is why he employed some of Hollywood's techniques to make his film more appealing to his target audience. His use of Roman motifs was part of this strategy, but the film's Greek plotline does not mix well with the Hollywood motifs of Roman autocracy, as it presents us with a Kreon that is a less complex character than in the source text.

The promotional material for *Antigone*, like the contemporary reviews of Cacoyannis' film, stresses its fidelity and authenticity. The Kino website describes the film as 'a foundational tale in Western civilization' and 'a unique chance to become familiar with Sophocles' original text'.³⁴⁵ Words such as 'faithful', 'intimate', and 'relevant' are used to promote the film.³⁴⁶ Another website describes the film as a 'faithful adaptation' of Sophocles' tragedy.³⁴⁷ The perception of modern Greece as an inheritor of ancient Greece is one that is shared by people outside the country. Modern Greek films based on ancient Greek tragedy are presented as somehow more authentic than other attempts to film Greek tragedy. The description of the film on Amazon's website claims it was 'one of the best Greek productions of the 1960s' and one that is highly recommended for students of classical Greek tragedy on film'.³⁴⁸ This brings up the important pedagogical aspect of these receptions of Greek tragedy on film and their value as teaching tools.³⁴⁹

The main weakness of Tzavellas' film, however, is that he relied too much on theatrical techniques that made his *Antigone* more like the recording of a theatrical performance with extras. The heavy, ostentatious acting feels stagy and stiff when captured on film, and both Minos Katrakis' Kreon and Irene Papa's Antigone are guilty of this. Ultimately, though, Tzavellas' *Antigone* fails because it does not meet the expectations of a cinema audience. The cinematic medium is meant to be 'by nature vivid

³⁴³ J. Ardagh, 'Ευριπίδης σε βελτιωμένη έκδοση' (trans. Άρης Μαραγκόπουλος), in *Μιχάλης Κακογιάννης*, 36^ο Φεστιβάλ Κινηματογράφου Θεσσαλονίκης, Οργανισμός Πολιτιστικής Πρωτεύουσας της Ευρώπης Θεσσαλονίκη (Αθήνα 1995) 150. This article first appeared in *The Observer* on 14 April 1963.

³⁴⁴ Σολδάτος, *Ιστορία* (n. 9, above) 344.

³⁴⁵ http://www.kino.com/video/news.php?news_id'17, 2 accessed 14/12/2007. This despite the fact that the text was drastically cut, modernized and delivered in modern Greek.

³⁴⁶ http://www.kino.com/video/news.php?news_id'17, 4.

³⁴⁷ <http://www.1worldfilms.com/Greece/antigone.htm>, accessed 14/12/2007. The date of the film is also wrongly given as 1962.

³⁴⁸ <http://www.amazon.ca/Antigone-George-Tzavellas/dp/Booo2T2QAOQ>, 2 accessed 04/02/2008. The Amazon Website for the film also provides three favourable customer reviews that praise the film despite its subtitles (review 1 on 3) and admire Pappas' acting (review 2 and 3 on 3-6).

³⁴⁹ McDonald, 'A new hope: film as a teaching tool for the classics', in *A companion to classical receptions*, ed. Lorna Hardwick and Christopher Stray (n. 25, above) 327-41, at 327-30. Having successfully utilized Tzavellas and Cacoyannis' films for courses and workshops, this aspect is, I believe, of the highest importance in today's highly visual culture. I was therefore greatly interested to read one reviewer's comments about using Cacoyannis' *Electra* as a teaching tool in the forum of an American high school. See the American version of the Amazon website: www.amazon.com/Electra-Irene-Papas/dp/B00005UJY8, accessed 04/04/2008.

and often exciting', 'able to engage the spectator' as well as claiming to offer its viewers 'a window onto the ancient world'.³⁵⁰ Cacoyannis was more successful with his *Electra* as well as with *The Trojan Women* and *Iphigenia* because he adapted the tragedies to fit better into the medium of film.

Tzavellas' and Cacoyannis' films are in 'the realistic mode'.³⁵¹ Their political message is 'masked',³⁵² behind a more realistic portrayal of the story. Tzavellas and Cacoyannis were both trying to convey a political message in their films. Both show bad rulers being punished. It is the thesis of this article that they were responding to the turbulent politics of Greece in the twentieth century. **Cacoyannis in particular used his reception of Euripidean tragedy to condemn war and bad government.**

Both Tzavellas and Cacoyannis exhibit a tendency in their cinematic receptions of Greek tragedy towards a less ambiguous presentation of the source material. Multiplicity of viewpoints is sacrificed in favour of narrative often expressed in visual terms. Both directors act as advocates for their heroines, unlike Sophocles and Euripides. The camera is used as a commentator (usurping the role of the chorus) to make Antigone and Electra both more sympathetic characters and in the case of Electra more tragic than they are in the plays.

The decision to portray Electra and Antigone more sympathetically works well on film. Cacoyannis' sombre, black and white *Electra* confirms the notion of the *gravitas* of ancient Greek tragedy, even if it does not adopt the original's more ambiguous tone. Tzavellas also shot his *Antigone* in black and white³⁵³ and made the story more politically explicit than it is in the source play. In terms of cinematic adaptations of Greek tragedy Tzavellas' *Antigone* was a valiant effort especially in the climate of the early 1960s Greek Film Industry. His film suffers, however, from being a pastiche of Hollywood and the theatrical presentation of Greek tragedy on the modern Greek stage. His *Antigone* is positioned uncomfortably between the theatre and film mediums instead of being 'a cinematic re-expression of it'.³⁵⁴ **Cacoyannis' *Electra*, on the other hand, deserves its continued favourable reception because it more successfully incorporates Greek tragedy into the cinematic medium.** Cacoyannis went on in his *The Trojan Women* (1971) and *Iphigenia* (1977) to integrate the two mediums even more closely.³⁵⁵

Cacoyannis' *Electra* and Tzavellas' *Antigone* are cinematic modern Greek examples of how adaptations of classical stories have been informed not only by the source texts,

³⁵⁰ Paul, 'Working with film' (n. 25, above) 304. The pedagogical importance of this engagement with the medium in today's visual culture is also mentioned by Paul. Personal experience of teaching Tzavellas' and Cacoyannis' cinematic receptions of the plays has been that the students tend to prefer Cacoyannis' film.

³⁵¹ MacKinnon, *Greek Tragedy* (n. 3, above) 66.

³⁵² MacKinnon, *Greek Tragedy* (n. 3, above) 74.

³⁵³ The use of black and white film does add to the tragic atmosphere Cacoyannis and Tzavellas wanted to create for their films, but one also wonders if it was not partially motivated by budgetary concerns. Colour film would have been considerably more expensive for Greek directors in the early sixties than it was in the seventies when Cacoyannis produced his *Iphigenia*, which was shot in Greece like his *Electra*.

³⁵⁴ Catania Savour's article 'Cinematizing the Euripidean and Sophoclean spatial dialectics: on the 'skene-self' in Pasolini's *Medea* and *Edipo Re*' in http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3768/is_200001/ai_n8889884/print, accessed 03/04/2008.

³⁵⁵ This will be the subject of a later article.

but also by contemporary ideas and expectations. The Cacoyannis films have continued to enjoy great popularity with art-house audiences,³⁵⁶ but academic critics are divided in their opinion of their merit. For example, MacKinnon is not particularly complimentary, while McDonald is enthusiastic about Cacoyannis' contribution to cinematic versions of Greek tragedy.³⁵⁷

What all these critics have in common, however, is their belief that cinematic versions of antiquity are worth considering for what they add to our understanding of the classics. Film is one area of reception theory that has attracted intense debate as to its academic value because it is classed as an example of popular culture. Adaptations of classical stories found in theatre, literature, art and poetry are deemed more acceptable. One of the reasons why the study of films based upon antiquity is not taken seriously is the impermanent nature of film, but mainly it is the distaste of many critics for Hollywood's sword and sandal epics. Art-house adaptations like Cacoyannis' and Tzavellas' films are deemed more acceptable because they are judged to be high culture rather than popular culture. The discussion over the validity of studying even those films is ongoing,³⁵⁸ but as Hardwick rightly points out modern film resembles ancient drama in its potential to 'appeal to a large and socially diverse audience'.³⁵⁹ Film is therefore a valuable tool in the reception of fifth-century BC Athenian drama.

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³⁵⁶ As evinced by *Electra*'s playing to a full house at the Barbican, when I was privileged to see Cacoyannis' Euripidean trilogy on a cinema screen.

³⁵⁷ Cacoyannis' films demonstrate the 'timeless appeal' of Euripides' tragedies. Winkler, *Classical myth and culture* (n. 57, above) 72.

³⁵⁸ See Winkler, *Classical myth and culture* (n. 57, above) 3-9, for a spirited defence of the value of film in interdisciplinary studies. See Peter W. Rose, 'Teaching Greek myth and confronting contemporary myths', in Winkler (ed.), *Classics and cinema* (n. 57, above) 17-39, on the importance of film as a teaching tool; also P. Michelakis, 'Greek tragedy in cinema. Theatre, politics, history', in Hall, Macintosh and Wrigley (eds), *Dionysus Since 69* (n. 56, above) 199-217, for a recent study of the growth of cinematic and TV adaptations of the Greek classics and their value.

³⁵⁹ Hardwick, *Reception studies* (n. 30, above) 76.