

Dorian Dress in Greek Tragedy*

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I. Introduction

Every ethnic group uses representations of clothing as a means of constructing its identity, and fifth-century Athenians were no exception. They were remarkably conscious of the fact that they were adopting styles and items of clothing from different parts of the world. This mixture of styles was remarked upon by the Old Oligarch (whose contempt for multiculturalism we do not need to share), writing that

where the Greeks tend to use their own manner of speech, lifestyle and dress (*phone, diaita, schema*) the Athenians use a mixture from all Greeks and *barbaroi*.¹

The complexity of Athenian discourse about clothing derives from the fact that Athenians considered some foreign elements as positive. They also reconstructed their past so as to create a foil for their present fashion and that of their neighbors (Spartans, Ionians, barbarians).

Scholars of classical antiquity often approached the study of Greek dress with the aim of reconstructing the appearance of clothes and artifacts.² Recent works, however, besides offering a more in-depth examination of particular features of style, have focused more and more on ideology.³

Many studies of tragic costume focus on *Realien*. The primary question is: “What did the actors wear?” (“Thick-soled or flat shoes? Sleeved or sleeveless dresses? A mask with tall or flat hairdo?”)⁴ A

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¹ [X.] *Ath.* 2. 8, transl. M. C. Miller 1997a: 243.

² See Studniczka 1886 (still useful); Helbig 1887: 161–236; Amelung 1899; Bieber 1928 and 1934; Lorimer 1950: 336–405 (often correcting Studniczka and other earlier studies); Brooke 1962; Abrahams and Evans in M. Johnson 1964; S. Marinatos 1967; Losfeld 1991. Many of these works focus on Homer. Pekridou-Gorecki 1989 is the best short introduction, Ridgway 1984 the best discussion of female costume as depicted in art.

³ See e.g. Rössler 1974; Bonfante 1975 and 1989; Geddes 1987; David 1989; M. C. Miller 1989 and 1997a: 153–87; E. B. Harrison 1989 and 1991. For earlier periods, see Thiersch 1936 and Alföldi 1955.

⁴ See respectively Pickard-Cambridge 1988: 204–08; 198–202 (and M. C. Miller 1997a: 162–65); 189–90.

number of reliable works have collected and assessed the available evidence for answering these and other similar questions⁵ and some recent finds have offered invaluable information on the costume used in specific comic plays.⁶ As for the ideological significance of costume in tragedy, interpreters often considered only unusual features of dress: extreme poverty or wealth, for instance, or the presentation of barbarians.⁷ I would argue that the “unmarked term” of the opposition, the “standard” dress and its ideology, must be mentioned as well. Fashion, just like every other “language,” can be interpreted only if we study the system as a whole. Moreover, ethnic differences among the Greeks have escaped attention, because Greeks have been considered only in opposition to barbarians.⁸ Yet ethnic differences among the Greeks themselves were the principal criteria for distinctions of clothing according to our fifth-century Greek sources. The interplay between mythic past and present-day ideology opened up a number of opportunities for tragic writers, who mix ethnic characterizations of the two eras.

Section II of my paper discusses the adoption of *male* Dorian costume in Athens, and its characterization in Thucydides and Euripides. Fifth-century Athenians saw a moderate adoption of men’s Dorian costume as manly and democratic. But the male tragic costume was an elaborate long dress, perhaps reminiscent of Persian- or Ionian-style luxury; in tragedy, the male “Dorian” costume was exceptional, and ideologically charged. Athenian women, on the other hand, were said to have abandoned the Dorian costume on a specific occasion, when the masculine aggressiveness associated with it was revealed in its shocking brutality (Section III). The female Dorian costume was also linked with the stereotypes of lack of decorum and, in tragedy, with luxury. Euripides in particular connected it with the corrupting influence of barbarian (or, more specifically, Trojan) wealth. This net of negative images and values is important for interpreting sections of the *Trojan Women*, *Andromache*, *Electra* and *Hecuba* (Section IV).

This nexus of connotations, however, was presumably formed or given sharper focus only in the second part of the fifth century, at the peak of the ideological and political opposition between Athens and Sparta. Aeschylus

⁵ Pickard-Cambridge 1988 (1st ed. 1953): 177–209 and 362–63; Webster 1956: 35–55; Brooke 1962; Webster 1967b; Dingel 1971; Green 1991: 33–44; Taplin 1993: 21–27 and 59–60; Di Benedetto and Medda 1997: 176–91. For comedy, see Stone 1984 and Taplin 1993.

⁶ Cf. Taplin 1993.

⁷ *Ar. Ach.* 407 ff. and *Ran.* 842 and 1061–64; Gow 1928: 137 and 142–52; Bacon 1961: 26–31, 74–75 and 121–27; Taplin 1977a, esp. 121–22 and 412–13; Muecke 1982 (on disguise); E. Hall 1989a: 84–86 and 136–38. Alföldi 1955 (arguing that the tragic costume for kings was modeled on that of the Persian King; contra M. C. Miller 1989: 318) and Jenkins 1983 (on Dorian dress) are more interested in the ideological implications of dress.

⁸ For discussions of Spartans in Euripides, cf. W. Poole 1994, with bibliography. Recent scholarship has rejected previous attempts at finding references to specific historical events, and has focused on the aspects of characterization which reveal ethnic stereotyping. On ethnic identity in Greece, see now J. M. Hall 1997.

notably introduced a woman in Dorian dress to represent Greece in contrast to the Persian clothes of the personification of Asia (*Pers.* 181–83). No negative stereotypes were associated with Dorian female dress there.⁹ In confronting the enemy, Hellas as a whole could be presented as wearing the Dorian dress, which was the oldest and most common female Greek dress (Hdt. 5. 88. 1).¹⁰

II. The Male Dorian Dress

1. Thucydides

Thucydides (1. 6. 3–4) writes that “in the past”

the Athenians were the first to put weapons aside and make their lives more sumptuous as well as more relaxed, and *the elder of their rich men* only recently gave up the indulgence of wearing linen tunics (χιτῶνάς τε λινοῦς) and tying up their hair in a knot fastened with gold cicadas; from the influence of kinship, *the same fashion lasted for a long time among Ionian elders*.¹¹ By contrast, it was the Lacedaemonians who first dressed simply in *the present style*, and in general their wealthy men *began to live most like common people*.¹²

Thucydides compresses in a dense passage a complex discussion of dress according to the categories of time, social class and place. He talks about the fashion of upper-class Athenian men and points out that they wanted to appear to be similar to the “common people.” He also notes something else: that the past is a foreign country. In the same paragraph, he tells us that Spartans invented athletic nudity, an innovation that has not been adopted by barbarians. He goes on to comment that “one might point to many other ways in which *early Hellenic life resembled that of barbarians today*.”

⁹ On the Athenian pro-Spartan stance and the political situation of the time, see Corsaro 1991: 47 and 50.

¹⁰ The Dorian dress differentiates “sharply” (Gow 1928: 137) the Greek woman from the other one.

¹¹ Thucydides claims that this more “sumptuous” costume for men was first introduced by the Athenians, whereas other sources more plausibly credit the Ionians with this innovation. The Ionians presumably took inspiration from the East: Studniczka 1886: 19–20 and 29; Lorimer 1950: 348; Geddes 1987: 315–16; Bonfante 1975: 36–39. On luxury in the Thucydides passage, cf. Nenci 1983: 1023. On the ambivalent attitude to Persia, see Griffith 1998: 46–47.

¹² Transl. S. Lattimore 1998, slightly adapted. On this passage, see in general Gomme 1945: 100–06. On athletic nudity, cf. also Pl. *Rsp.* 452c; Paus. 1. 44. 1; Bonfante 1989: 547–48; McDonnell 1991; Percy 1996: 84 and 114–16; cf. also Athenaeus 512a = Heraclides Ponticus fr. 55 Wehrli. This is in contrast with Homeric practice (*Il.* 23. 683 and 710, *Od.* 18. 67) and the usage of barbarians (Pl. *Smp.* 182b–c; also Hdt. 1. 10. 3).



Figure 1

A woman wearing an Ionian *chiton*. Antikensammlung, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin–Preussischer Kulturbesitz, F 2588, from Tarquinia, about 440 BC. ARV 1300, 1.

(Photo Staatliche Museen zu Berlin)

The elsewhere of the present (that is, the barbarians) is comparable to the past of Greece. On the other hand, Athenians, in the narrative given by Thucydides, saw their dress as a way of differentiating themselves not only from the barbarians and from other Greeks, but also from their own past.¹³

II 2. Men's and Women's Clothes in Real Life

Iconographic and literary sources confirm that linen *chitones* were introduced in Athens in the sixth century and stayed in fashion until the beginning of the fifth century, when Athenian men changed their dress style again.¹⁴ A *chiton* was a long tunic worn by both men and women. The material used was generally linen, not wool, and artists attempted to reproduce the folds and crumples characteristic of this fabric (see Figure 1).¹⁵ "For the *chiton*, folded linen cloth was sewn on the long open side and often buttoned rather than sewn across the top edge, leaving an opening for the head."¹⁶ The cloth could be arranged in such a way as to cover part of the arm, so that the dress looked as if it had short sleeves.¹⁷ In Homer only men and Athena (*Il.* 5. 734–37) wear *chitones*.¹⁸ The Greeks also had a garment with tailored sleeves that was considered related to the basic pattern of the *chiton*: the *cheirototos chiton* (sleeved *chiton*).¹⁹

The Dorian-style dress of Athenian men is generally identified in opposition to the ankle-length *chiton*. In fifth-century tombstone sculptures, the long *chiton* "seems to be worn exclusively by priests," whereas adult males (warriors) are shown wearing a knee-length *chiton* (Clairmont 1993: 30; see also Geddes 1987: 312 and 319–20).

The female Dorian dress "consists of a rectangle of heavy material, presumably wool, folded over for about a third of its length to create an overfold or *apoptygma*. The garment thus prepared is draped around the body below the armpits, with enough looseness to allow the wearer to gather it and fasten it over both shoulders by means of long pins or brooches" (Ridgway 1970: 9; see Helen in Figure 2). It could be worn loose or belted. This dress is conventionally called *peplos* by many modern scholars.²⁰ Classical writers use *peplos* and *chiton* differently: *Peplos*,

¹³ Georges 1994: 136–37 discusses the different strategies of Herodotus and Thucydides in "barbarizing" the past and/or present of parts of Greece.

¹⁴ See above, note 11; R. M. Cook 1978: 86; *Ar. Eq.* 1331 (with Stone 1984: 271, 403 and 431 n. 10); *Nu.* 987–88.

¹⁵ In *Hdt.* 7. 91 the Cilicians wear κίθωνας εἰρηνέους, woolen tunics.

¹⁶ Cohen 1997: 67–68.

¹⁷ Cf. Pekridou-Gorecki 1989: 73–74.

¹⁸ Lorimer 1950: 359, 370–72, 377–84, 403–05; S. Marinatos 1967: A 7 and 42–45; Geddes 1987: 316. On *chitones* in Homer and archaic art, see also Helbig 1887: 173–83.

¹⁹ See Amelung 1899; M. C. Miller 1997a: 156–65.

²⁰ Cf. Ridgway 1984: 33; Pekridou-Gorecki 1989: 79.



Figure 2

Helen wearing a Dorian *peplos*. Oinochoe connected with the Heimarmene Painter. Museo Gregoriano Etrusco, inv. 16535, from Vulci, 430–425 BC. ARV 1173.

(Photo Musei Vaticani)

especially in tragedy, means generically “dress” (for both men and women), and *chiton* is a generic term for tunic (as opposed to cloak/coat/mantle).²¹

There is another point to make about terminology. Ancient writers often equate Spartan and Dorian characteristics. I take it that, in the second half of the fifth century, the polarity Sparta/Athens made distinctions in the Dorian side less pertinent.

II 3. Ideology of the Male Dorian Dress

The Athenian discourse about the change of style in men’s clothes put emphasis on egalitarianism and self-restraint.²² This ideological construction did not rest on precise reproduction of the items of clothing of this or that ethnic group: The Athenians adopted symbolic pieces of clothing that suggested a Spartan connotation.

We can detect a similar symbolic selectivity in colonial India. British clothes were adopted by westernized upper-class Indians in the nineteenth century as a means of associating themselves with the colonial power and displaying their higher status. However, they generally preferred to adopt a “mixture of Indian and European clothes,” so as not to appear to be deserting local tradition (Tarlo 1996: 48–61, esp. 48).

In the very different political situation of Athens, the adoption of elements of the Spartan costume was rather limited. The real Spartan costume was considered excessively austere. Aristotle observed (*EN* 1127b, transl. Rackham 1934):

Mock humility seems to be real boastfulness, like the dress of the Spartans, for extreme negligence in dress, as well as excessive attention to it, has a touch of ostentation.

Upper-class Athenians did not usually adopt the most characteristic items of Spartan dress. For instance, the style of Spartan mantles (*tribones*), the Spartan hairstyle and the dress of Spartan soldiers was not usually taken up by upper-class adult men.²³ They had the choice to adopt some of these distinctive features of fashion to show a more radical (and more aristocratic) version of the Spartan look.²⁴ Finally, some items of clothing

²¹ Studniczka 1886: 134–35; Amelung 1899: 2310. On Herodotean usage, see below, note 44.

²² Cf. Geddes 1987: 323–27; M. C. Miller 1997a: 155.

²³ The mantles called *tribones* were typical of Sparta, and were considered exceptional for upper-class Athenian men: Geddes 1987: 320; David 1989: 5 and 11. Achaean farmers and poor Athenian men wear *tribones*; see e.g. *Ar. Ach.* 184; *Vesp.* 116; *Pl.* 842, 882; *Lys.* 32. 16; Stone 1984: 286. *Tribones* were also the distinctive costume of some ascetic philosophers: Socrates (*Pl. Smp.* 219b, *Prt.* 335d) and Antisthenes (*D.L.* 6. 13 and 22).

²⁴ Plato the comic poet mocks the ostentatious austerity of a Laconizing Athenian by calling him *σπαρτιοχαίτην ῥυποκόκδυλον ἑλκετρίβωνα* (fr. 132. 2 K–A), roughly a man “with Spartan-style ropy hair, dirty knuckles and trailing cloak.” Other habits of Laconizing Athenians are listed in *Pl. Prt.* 342. M. C. Miller 1997a: 256 explains the fad for Spartan fashion as a reaction against the vulgarization of Persian fashion.

adopted from Sparta were extravagant, and not at all austere.²⁵ Aristophanes pokes fun at costly Spartan slippers, which have upper-class as well as unpatriotic connotations.²⁶ Following too closely a foreign style of dress can lead to one of two opposite extremes: luxury or excessive negligence. Fifth-century Athenians thought they found the right balance.

However, even in a democratic and uniform system of fashion, such as that described by Thucydides, it was easy to find a slight variation to display social superiority; we do not need to know all the details of these distinctive traits to understand the social implication. An instance of the search for distinction within an egalitarian fashion-system can be found in pre-independence, twentieth-century India. During the struggle against the British, the Indian upper classes adopted a very simple hand-woven cotton costume (*khadi* dress), which was meant to eliminate visual distinctions between rich and poor (Tarlo 1996: 101). However, social inequality was quick to reappear. “When wealthy townsmen adopted *khadi*, they may have appeared to be choosing the clothes of the masses but very often they found a means of stressing their own superior refinement by sporting expensive fine *khadi* . . . ; fineness of cloth denoted not only wealth but also social and ritual superiority” (Tarlo 1996: 105).

What matters is not a precise reconstruction of the fashion, but the way Indians, Athenians or other ethnic groups see themselves, and the ways they interpret the narratives about their past in order to play their ethnic and sexual roles. As M. C. Miller 1997a: 186–87 notes, Thucydides’ description of the “moderate dress” of Athenian upper-class men is an ideologically charged interpretation of a very complex reality, and obscures the fact that the Athenian élite also resorted to Spartan and Persian models for acquiring special distinction. However, in Thucydides’ text at least, these traits are suppressed from public discourse. The Athenians’ ethnic role of choice was that of “not-too-soft” Ionians.²⁷ Athenians are different from Ionians, and take the “best” of Spartan fashion, without its excessive austerity. Their appearance makes them democratic and free; and it makes them democratic in a way that is advertised by part of the Athenian society as a development of and improvement on the Spartan “equality.”²⁸

²⁵ J. N. Davidson 1997: 61–62 notes that “connotations of luxury hover around” many items of Spartan fashion, and that the aura of austerity and moderation was part of “the self-conscious forging of a myth.”

²⁶ Cf. Ar. *Vesp.* 1122–71 (Bdelycleon is made to wear Persian dress and *Lakonikai*, “Spartan slippers”; see Stone 1984: 271–72); see also M. C. Miller 1997a: 153–54: “the *persikai*, a kind of women’s shoe. . . Aristophanic contexts show that they were considered luxurious (*Lys.* 229; *Th.* 734; *Clouds* 149 ff.)”

²⁷ The Athenians stress their distance from the Ionian *ethos* just as the relationship with their Ionian partners in the Delian League becomes more strained: Corsaro 1991: 53.

²⁸ Geddes 1987 has shown that this role presented them as leisurely, free from manual work and athletically fit; it also declared that they were equal. In a famous passage, the Old Oligarch ([X.] *Ath.* 1. 10–11) criticizes the lack of a distinction in the dress code between free men and slaves. This is probably an exaggeration, but it is significant that it could be made.

II 4. The Male Tragic Costume and the *Hypsipyle*

On stage, this connotation of men's Dorian attire can be made relevant by contrast. The tragic costume seems to have been quite traditional. Our scanty sources seem to agree that the costume of the actors was codified by Aeschylus, at the beginning of the fifth century, and that it had not changed much ever since.

Of course some characters in tragedy (barbarians in particular) were identified by special costume, and occasional innovations were introduced (Euripides is notorious for dressing his *Greek* kings and heroes in rags). Still, we can be confident that the costume for upper-class Greek heroes and heroines in tragedy did not change in its essentials in the fifth century. The dress of *auletai*, for which we have clearer and more abundant evidence, shows a similar conservatism.²⁹

Some sources indicate a similarity between tragic costume and that of the priests of Eleusis³⁰ and again between Eleusinian costume and the dress of the Persian king.³¹ Margaret Miller has shown that there was no specifically priestly attire in Athens.³² Long *chitones* had to do for special occasions. This might be all the similarity that there was between theatrical costume and priestly attire.³³ Whether or not fifth-century Athenians associated tragic costume with priestly attire, Persian royal garments, or the luxury of Ionian *chitones*, it is clear that the elaborate costume of tragic actors (with sleeves) was at the opposite extreme of the spectrum from the (allegedly) democratic "Dorian/Spartan" sleeveless dress of the male audience.

Just as the festive occasion allowed priests to don the elegant dress of a bygone era (the long *chitones*), the costume of male actors in tragedy was perceived as something from the past or from an exotic land. The conservatism in matters of costume distances what happens on the stage from the *hic et nunc* of Athenian life. This distancing strategy is inherent to

²⁹ They retain their long, expensive (Dem. 21. 156) dress with sleeves, even if in the fifth century they abandon the more clearly oriental *ependytes* (a long tunic with sleeves, used by priests and kings in Persia) for a sleeved *chiton* (M. C. Miller 1989: 315; 1997a: 161 f. and 175; Geddes 1987: 313).

³⁰ Chamaeleon (?) apud Athenaeus 21d (transl. Gulick 1927): "Aeschylus, too, besides inventing that comeliness and dignity of dress which Hierophants and Torchbearers emulate when they put on their vestments, also originated many dance-figures and assigned them to the members of his choruses" (= Aesch. T 103 Radt; see Radt's comments ad loc.).

³¹ From the story in Plut. *Arist.* 5. 6–8 it appears that the Eleusinian torch-bearer was similar in his κόμη and στέφανον (= "hair(style)" and "headband") to the King of Persia. Alföldi 1955: 53 links this passage with the so called ὄγκος of theatrical masks, but the ὄγκος is post-classical: Pickard-Cambridge 1988: 189–90. Cf. M. C. Miller 1989: 317–19.

³² See M. C. Miller 1989 *passim*, refuting Thiersch 1936: 37–38 and Alföldi 1955. Thiersch thought this dress was the so-called *ependytes* (see above, note 29).

³³ Long *chitones* were considered elegant and gave distinction. The *archon basileus* on the Parthenon East Frieze is wearing one such *chiton*: M. C. Miller 1989: 321. On the costume of priests, see also Stone 1984: 278. Goetsch 1995, on the basis of her personal experience, maintains that *chitones* would prove very impractical for chorus members to dance in.

the genre, just like the convention that keeps contemporary Greek characters away from the classical tragic stage while admitting contemporary or near-contemporary Eastern characters (Darius, Xerxes, Gyges [in a post-classical play?]).³⁴

These considerations can help us to understand better a passage from the *Hypsipyle* of Euripides. The chorus of women from Nemea announces the arrival of Amphiaraus on stage (*Hyps.* fr. I iv 10–14 Bond = 112–16 Diggle, transl. Page 1941):

ὦ Ζεῦ Νεμέας τῆσδ' ἄλσος ἔχων
 τίνος ἐμπορίαί τούσδ' ἐγγύς ὄρω
 πελάτας ξείνους Δωριδί πέπλων
 ἐσθῆτι σαφεῖς πρὸς τούσδε δόμους
 στεῖχοντας ἔρημον ἀν' ἄλσος;

Zeus, lord of our Nemean grove, for what business are they come, these strangers?—I see them close, in Dorian raiment, plainly, approaching: toward the palace they stride through the lonely grove.

Bond 1963, on lines 12 ff., comments that “Doric πέπλοι should not be strange in heroic Nemea. The emphasis on Dorian dress is odd, and may be intended primarily for the Athenian audience.”³⁵ Amphiaraus complains about the distance and the annoyance of traveling, but Mycenae is not far from Nemea, and he is glad to have come at last to a site he knows, the meadows of Zeus at Nemea.³⁶ What is needed here is the reason the Dorian aspect of Amphiaraus and his attendants is stressed, and with what it is contrasted.³⁷

The “unmarked” tragic costume for a Greek character was an elaborate, heavily decorated affair. This explains why Amphiaraus is “illogically” conspicuous for his simple Dorian dress. The tragic dress code was stuck at the beginning of the century.³⁸ When the *Hypsipyle* was produced, between

³⁴ On “historical” tragedies, see Kannicht’s list in his first apparatus to *TrGF* adesp. 664; V. Martin 1952: 5–7. Greek characters from classical times appear on the tragic stage only in post-classical times (cf. Moschion *TrGF* 97 F 1), so as to preserve the distancing effect. Phrynichos was fined for showing the suffering of contemporary Ionians on stage (*TrGF* 3 T 4).

³⁵ Bond 1963: ad loc. adds that “dress is commented on elsewhere as an indication of origin, e.g. Aesch. *Suppl.* 236 f., *Hec.* 734 f.”

³⁶ See I iv 15–21 Bond = 117–23 Diggle (1998). Amphiaraus admits that he is a foreigner in Nemea (fr. I iv 34–36 Bond = 136–38 Diggle): “We are Argives by birth, and come from Mycenae; crossing our frontiers to another land, we wish to make sacrifice for the Danaid army” (transl. Page 1941, adapted). “Danaid” is equivalent to “Argive” (cf. also fr. 60. 34 Bond = 207 Diggle). This rules out the conjectures advanced by Wilamowitz for fr. 64. 87 Bond = 272 Diggle.

³⁷ For “Dorian Argos,” cf. e.g. Soph. *OC* 1301. The only other male characters that appear in the play are Hypsipyle’s sons Thoas and Euneos, from Lemnos.

³⁸ Similar claims are made for the tragic language (a point I owe to David Sansone): W. G. Rutherford 1881: 3 argues that “the basis of the language of Tragedy is the Attic of the time when Tragedy sprang into life” (cf. pp. 4–31; for qualifications, see Björck 1950: 365–68). Late fifth-century tragic language was certainly archaizing, but old Attic was not the only dialect that played an important role. See Horrocks 1997: 20–21 for a very concise survey.

412 and 407,³⁹ that dress looked extravagant and Ionian or oriental. Amphiaraus was famous in Greek myth and cult for his justice and self-discipline, and is very much unlike the other six attackers of Thebes.⁴⁰ The Dorian dress on a man suggested exactly the qualities of moderation and temperance that Amphiaraus is keen to boast about when he gets a chance:

Far goes the tale through Hellas, that my gaze is modest (*sophron*). And this, lady, is my nature—self-discipline, and a discerning eye.⁴¹

His Dorian dress is the visual counterpart of his moral qualities. He and his companions wear a (relatively) simple, Dorian-style dress, just like the “moderate” contemporary Athenians: He acts as a prefiguration of the “modern” generations, the generations to come, that is the Athenians that watch the *Hypsipyle* and that visit the sanctuary of Amphiaraus at Oropos.

III. Dorian Dress for Women

The sexual roles required Athenian wives to be visibly different from the men. Spartan women were not a good role model: They were beautiful,⁴² yes, but too “athletic,” too strong and far too powerful in Spartan society. The Dorian costume, Herodotus tells us, was the default dress for women all over Greece from time immemorial, but was clearly unsuitable for Athenian ladies, and had to be abandoned after a particularly horrific event. His is the only account of the change, but is endorsed by other historians (Douris). The story he narrates is fanciful history; it is however a very impressive metaphor of the disturbing qualities of the Dorian dress when worn by the “wrong sex.”

In his fifth book, Herodotus narrates the vicissitudes of Aegina in the archaic age, and her wars with Athens. At an unspecified point in the sixth century BC, Aegina defeated an invading Athenian army.⁴³ Only one Athenian soldier managed to escape death (5. 87. 2–88. 1, transl. De Sélincourt 1996):

When he reached Athens with a report of the disaster, the wives of the other men who had gone with him to Aegina, in grief and anger that he

³⁹ Cropp and Fick 1985: 76 and 81; Cockle 1987: 41.

⁴⁰ He is visibly different from the others as his shield does not have a sign (Aesch. *Sept.* 591; Eur. *Pho.* 1111 f.). Praise is lavished on him at Eur. *Suppl.* 925–27. He appeared in a number of plays at Athens; cf. Kannicht’s apparatus to *TrGF* adesp. 3a. He is dressed in a “Dorian” dress in *LIMC* “Amphiaraos” 54, 61, 63–67 (Krauskopf 1981: 701–02). The sanctuary of Amphiaraus at Oropos (in disputed territory between Attica and Boeotia) was especially popular with Athenians during the Peloponnesian War: Schachter 1981: 23–24; Hubbard 1992: 101–07, esp. 106 n. 80. I do not think it probable that in the *Hypsipyle* Amphiaraus wore the *phoinikis*, that is the fifth-century dress of Spartan soldiers (on which see David 1989: 6).

⁴¹ *Hyps.* fr. 60. 44–46 Bond = 213–15 Diggle, transl. Page 1941.

⁴² *Od.* 13. 412 Σπάρτην καλλιγόναικα, Ar. *Lys.* 79–84; see also Thgn. 1002; Theocr. 18 passim; Cartledge 1981: 93 and n. 58.

⁴³ On the chronology, see Morris 1984: 107–15 and Figueira 1985.

alone should have escaped, crowded round him and thrust the brooches, which they used for fastening their dresses (κεντεύσας τῆισι περόνησι τῶν ἱματίων),⁴⁴ into his flesh, each one, as she struck, asking him where her husband was. So he perished, and the Athenians were more horrified at his fate than at the defeat of their troops in Aegina. The only way they could punish their women for the dreadful thing they had done was to make them adopt Ionian dress (ἔσθητα . . . ἐς τὴν Ἰάδα); previously Athenian women had worn Dorian dress (ἔσθητα Δωρίδα), very similar to the fashion at Corinth; now they were made to change to linen tunics (ἐς τὸν λίνεον κιθῶνα), to prevent them from wearing brooches. Actually this kind of dress is not originally Ionian, but Carian; for in ancient times all women in Greece wore the costume now known as Dorian.⁴⁵

Herodotus' account is only partially vindicated by iconographic sources. It appears that the change in dress style was less sharp and noticeable than for men's clothes. In particular, Dorian *peploi* were commonly worn by Athenian women in the fifth century along with *chitones*.⁴⁶

Moreover, Herodotus' contention that the female Dorian dress was the default dress in seventh-century Greece is difficult to prove. The archaic female costume, as represented in seventh-century iconographic sources (the so-called "Daedalic dress") only bears partial resemblance to the *peplos* (Ridgway 1984: 36). By the sixth century BC, *peploi* of a kind did make their appearance in iconographic sources, and this probably reflected everyday usage;⁴⁷ Herodotus (or his sources) probably represented as Dorian *peploi* the archaic pinned dress required by the story about Aegina and Athens, and merged (or did not perceive a discontinuity) between Daedalic dress, sixth-century *peploi* and the Dorian dress of classical times. In one point the account is accurate: Figurative evidence supports Herodotus' claim that *chitones* were adopted by Attic women in the sixth century.⁴⁸

Other accounts of female Dorian costume focus on the eroticism of Spartan athletic nudity⁴⁹ and of the skimpiness of Dorian *peploi*.⁵⁰ Greek

⁴⁴ *Himation* does not mean here specifically "upper garment for outdoor wear" (so Macan 1895: ad loc.). Herodotus uses this word also for clothes in general: cf. 1. 9. 2; 2. 47. 1–2.

⁴⁵ Herodotus goes on to discuss the size of pins at Argos and Aegina, and dedication of pins at Aegina. His statements on these matters are only partially supported by the archaeological evidence: Dunbabin 1936–37: 83–85; Lorimer 1950: 359 and 395; Jacobsthal 1956: 90 and 100 n. 2; Morris 1984: 111; Figueira 1985: 55–56.

⁴⁶ Dorian *peploi* are predominant in the sculpture of the severe style (circa 480–450 BC), and still common in the period 450–400 BC, when *chitones* prevail: Ridgway 1984: 41. Cf. Thiersch 1936: 32–33 and M. C. Miller 1989: 315, on the *peplos* of Athena.

⁴⁷ Ridgway 1984: 40: "The archaic 'peplos,' in its tunic-like, short-sleeved form without overfold, comes closest to a contemporary dress"; Ridgway emphasizes the differences from the classical *peplos* with overfold.

⁴⁸ See Morris 1984: 110; E. B. Harrison 1977: 47–48; 1989: 44; 1991: 217–19; Ridgway 1977: 50; Jenkins 1983: 29–31; Geddes 1987: 316 n. 85.

⁴⁹ Ibycus fr. 339 *PMG*; Soph. fr. 872 Radt (both mentioned by Plut. *Comp. Lyc. Num.* 3); Propertius 3. 13 *passim* and Fedeli 1985: ad loc.; Manfredi and Piccirilli 1980 on Plut. *Lyc.* 14, lines 28–29; Cartledge 1981: 91–92. Athenian writers are less critical of ritual nudity at

sculptors dressed their female figures with loose *peploi* when they wanted to represent partial female nudity, and contrasted them with other female figures wearing more modest *chitones* (Ridgway 1984: 45 f., 49). Female athletic nudity, partial or total, was practiced by a small age-class only, that is adolescent girls. Many non-Spartan writers extended this connotation to Spartan women of a more mature age.⁵¹

In conclusion, the social pressure to differentiate the female and the male costume was so strong that Athenian ideology (as represented in Herodotus' story) exaggerated a change in women's fashion that was in fact not so sharp and neat. The two stories narrated about the Dorian style of clothing of the two sexes are obviously symmetrical, and reveal that the discourse about gender was essential to the self-definition of Athenian identity,⁵² and to the ideal of the democratic city. Only Athens has found the right mixture of Dorian and Ionian, assigning to each gender its place.

The Dorian attire, in its various forms, is thus presented as at the same time too masculine and too feminine for women. It is too masculine because it reveals them as athletically fit and (on one occasion) gives them weapons to kill a man. It is too feminine because it makes women too sexy and too prone to lust and luxury. We will see how Euripides strengthens the anti-Spartan discourse with these *topoi*. Other writers, such as Callimachus and Xenophon, show a different approach to the problem, and find their own ways to reconcile "Spartan" athleticism with modesty, decorum and "proper" eroticism.⁵³ Euripides adds another point against Spartan women's dress: He associates it with orientalism and excessive luxury.

Athens: Young girls performed part of the *arkteia* rite naked (cf. Ar. *Lys.* 645 and Sommerstein 1990: ad loc., with bibliography; Thommen 1999: 138).

⁵⁰ Cf. Anacr. fr. 399 *PMG*; Pythaeetus *FGrHist* 299 F 3 (= Athenaeus 589f); Plut. *Lyc.* 15. 1; Plut. *Dicta Lac.* 232c.

⁵¹ In the *Lysistrata* Lampito is a married woman but she does gymnastics and jumps "heel-to-buttocks" (*Lys.* 82; see Sommerstein 1990: ad loc.). Her dress is open at the side, in the Doric fashion, and reveals the impressive forms of her "robust frame."

⁵² Herodotus mentions the Athenians along with Argives and Aeginetans as his sources for various details of these events (Hdt. 5. 87. 1–2). Figueira 1985: 57 claims that "the brutal killing of the survivor and the change in dress at Athens" are part of the story as told by the Aeginetans. However, the last source mentioned before the passage quoted above is "the Athenians" (cf. 5. 85. 1 and 86. 1 for the Athenian account). It is unlikely that the Aeginetans would invent an *aition* for the change of costume at Athens. The dedication of pins (5. 88. 2–3) is certainly part of an Argive and/or Aeginetan account, but the change of dress for Athenian women was not necessary for the Argive/Aeginetan aitiological myth to work. Besides, the Athenian account and the Argive and Aeginetan sources are not always in disagreement (5. 87. 1).

⁵³ In Xenophon's liberal opinion, a bit of housework will provide the necessary workout for the chaste but attractive wife; no need to go to a Spartan-style gym (*Oec.* 10. 10–13). See also *Mem.* 2. 1. 22 and Geddes 1987: 319. Callimachus presents a "positive" example of "Doric" femininity in *Lav. Pall.* 13–32, where Athena is described as a Dorian/Spartan maiden who rejects ornaments and perfumes (cf. Bulloch 1985: on line 16), but exercises, and wears a pinned *peplos* (line 70).

What did the female Dorian costume look like in the theatre? The standard dress for actors playing women probably was a fancy ankle-length sleeved dress that recalled the *chiton*, similar to the costume worn by the actors that played men's parts. Some women who appear on stage (such as the chorus of *Hecuba*) are presented as wearing a dress that recalls the skimpy female Dorian costume. This costume was not necessarily identical with a real-life Dorian dress, but was meant to remind the audience of that dress. It probably left most of the arm bare (or made them look so), and was kept in place by pins.⁵⁴ Other Dorian female characters, such as Hermione in the *Andromache*, probably wore an exceptionally luxurious dress. It is impossible to be sure about the exact appearance of these costumes. They might have looked like Dorian *peploi*, with added extra decorations and jewelry, such as fancy pins. Otherwise the actors could have worn Dorian *peploi* over the standard stage dress (for *peploi* worn over *chitones*, cf. Ridgway 1984: 40 n. 42, 45 and n. 64), or could have had an exceptionally decorated version of the standard stage costume. Some of the Dorian costumes probably had oriental connotations, especially in the case of Helen (*Trojan Women*). In the complete absence of direct figurative evidence for these plays, we can only guess. What is clear is that the dress was perceptibly different from the standard theatrical costume, that it had foreign connotations (Dorian and/or oriental), and that the text drew attention to these features. Dorian connotations seem to be given to all that deviates from the standard costume in the direction of audacious skimpiness, masculine athleticism, or extravagant luxury.

IV. Euripides

1. Helen

The figure of Helen substantiates the association of Dorian dress code with orientalism, luxury and immodesty. She appropriated (*Tro.* 991–97) and brought to Greece (*Or.* 1113) the Trojan τρυφή. In the world of myth, she is the bridge between the two continents of fashion. Passages from the *Cyclops*, the *Trojan Women* and the *Orestes* present her as fascinated with Asian luxury.⁵⁵

At *Trojan Women* 991–97 Hecuba argues that the riches of Phrygia attracted Helen just as much as the beauty of Paris (transl. Kovacs 1999):

⁵⁴ The parts of the body that had to appear naked were not necessarily so. Tights were used in comedy and satyr-play to represent stage nudity: Pickard-Cambridge 1988: 213 n. 2, 217, 221, 363.

⁵⁵ Cf. *Cycl.* 182 f., *Tro.* 993, *Or.* 1110 f., also *Hel.* 926 f. and W. Poole 1994: 19–21. The first extant figurative representations of Paris in oriental dress date to the 440s–420s (pace Seaford 1984: on *Cycl.* 182–84: “after 400 BC”); see Kossatz-Deissman 1994: 180, 183, 187, esp. no. 40 (ca. 430–420 BC: trousers), 49, 103 (ca. 440 BC: Phrygian cap); Clairmont 1951: 52 and 105.

You saw him resplendent in the golden raiment of the East, and your mind became utterly wanton. For in Argos you lived with small means, but you thought that by being quit of Sparta you would be able to flood the city of Troy, which is awash in gold, with your extravagance. Menelaus' palace was not grand enough for your luxurious tastes to run riot in.

The text overtly disapproves of barbarian wealth, and a condemnation of Spartan greed is probably implied as well.

However, Margaret Miller has shown that at the end of the fifth century the Athenian upper class was in fact just as fascinated by Persian clothes as Helen had been before them.⁵⁶ In that context, the figure of Helen becomes also a projection of "censored" desires, a means of condemning the orientaling fashion while at the same time representing it on stage and glamorizing it. Helen, just like Clytemestra or Hermione, is a non-Athenian woman, a human being twice removed from the Athenian male citizens. Displacing the luxury onto stigmatized non-Athenian mythical characters was a way of allowing them on stage.⁵⁷ In this way the public discourse defined the realm of what was possible for ordinary citizens, and constructed a net of conventions for regulating the appearance of Athenian women.

IV 2. Andromache

The *Andromache* offers a complex and elaborate presentation of the ideological construction we have discussed. The most remarkable attribute of Hermione is her dress. As she arrives on stage, she boasts about the fancy apparel she is wearing (147–53, transl. Kovacs 1995):

The luxurious gold that adorns my head and neck and the spangled gown that graces my body—I did not bring these here as the first fruits of the house of Achilles or of Peleus: my father Menelaus gave them to me from the city of Sparta together with a large dowry, and therefore I may speak my mind.

Hermione stresses the wealth of her family of origin (Sparta), claiming that her large dowry makes her financially independent. Her wealth allows her to speak her mind freely. Sparta was pictured as poor in the passage from the *Trojan Women* that we have just seen and Spartan wealth is certainly not proverbial. However, a very different tradition was also known in antiquity. Tantalus had the reputation of being very rich indeed and his

⁵⁶ Here Euripides is quite vague about what exactly was felt to be exotic and fascinating in Paris's attire; in the *Cyclops* passage the Phrygian trousers of Paris are singled out as especially ludicrous.

⁵⁷ Semipornographic descriptions of half-naked women appear in Greek tragedy only if there is some sort of excuse in the plot (Polyxena in the *Hecuba*), or if the women are somewhat removed from the ideal standard of an Athenian lady (Hermione in Soph. fr. 872; bacchants (?) in Chaeremon *TrGF* 71 F 14). Similarly, the display of wealth was not censored if the text disapproved of it.

name was proverbially associated with *τάλαντα* since Anacreon's time.⁵⁸ The wealth of Menelaus is referred to by Euripides in the *Orestes* (348–51), just as it is here in the *Andromache*. As for real life, the myth of Spartan poverty in the fifth century has been effectively revised by modern historians.⁵⁹

Andromache's claims are "historically" credible: Spartan wives were financially independent from their husbands, at least by the standards of ancient Greece.⁶⁰ Aristotle claims that the Spartan constitution had the defect of letting women control too much wealth ("two fifths of the whole country," *Pol.* 1270a),⁶¹ and he accuses Spartan women of "giving free rein to every form of intemperance and luxury" (ζῶσι γὰρ ἀκολάστως πρὸς ἅπασαν ἀκολασίαν καὶ τρυφερῶς, *Pol.* 1269b24).

There is another dimension to the affluence of Hermione. Her words echo the prologue, spoken by Andromache (1–6, transl. Kovacs 1995):

Glory of Asia, city of Thebe! It was from you that I once came, dowered with golden luxury, to the royal house of Priam, given to Hector as lawful wife for the bearing of his children.

Both women narrate how they married into a famous family. Both stress the extraordinary wealth of their dowry. Hermione is thus assimilated to Asian luxury; she ousts Andromache from the unenviable position of the extravagant queen.

Hermione fulfills the worst stereotype of the Spartan woman. She ends up leaving her husband and eloping with another man, just as her mother did before her.⁶² Peleus claims that her behavior, just like her mother's, is nothing but the expected product of a Spartan education—and of Spartan dress. The unchaste behavior is simplistically but powerfully explained by Peleus with reference to the immodest clothes Spartan women wear when they exercise in the *gymnasia* (595–601, transl. Kovacs 1995):

No Spartan girl could be chaste even if she wanted to be: they desert their homes with bare thighs and loose robes and (intolerably to me) share the running-tracks and wrestling-schools with the boys. Should one wonder, then, that you do not educate your women to be chaste?⁶³

⁵⁸ Cf. *Or.* 340 and 807; Willink 1986: on *Or.* 4.

⁵⁹ Hodkinson 1994 and 1997 (with bibliography for the opposite view); also Nafissi 1991: 227–76.

⁶⁰ See Cartledge 1981: 96–98; Foxhall 1989.

⁶¹ See Powell 1988: 260 nn. 267 and 268; Cartledge 1981: 97–99.

⁶² Incidentally, her new man, Orestes, has just had her first husband killed—a nice touch, given that Hermione accused Andromache of sleeping with the murderer of her former husband (170–72).

⁶³ On the characterization of Spartan women in the *Andromache*, see Citti 1979: 148–49. Peleus argues that Hermione is "the daughter (literally, "the filly") of a bad woman" and daughters "export (sc. to their husbands' homes) the faults of their mothers" (621 f.). Hermione too exercises. Andromache seems to be alluding to this when she claims that it cannot be her "young and firm body" (196) that gives her the boldness to challenge Hermione:

Hermione is presented as the opposite of a "proper" woman, in both senses of the word. She is not a *decent* woman, as she does not respect the social conventions about dress or self-expression that an Athenian woman is bound to observe.⁶⁴ She even appears on stage half naked (829–35) when distressed because her plot against Andromache has failed. On the other hand, Hermione is not a "genuine" woman: She is sterile. Andromache said in her speech that she went to Hector's house as a wife παιδοποιός, to bear children. And bear children she did. Hermione did not. The dress she is wearing on stage was part of her dowry, and, being connected with her wedding, highlights her failure as a παιδοποιός.⁶⁵ Lycurgus ordered women to keep fit through exercise so that they would give birth to strong and healthy offspring,⁶⁶ but Hermione shows that the Spartan education had exactly the opposite effects.

IV 3. *Electra*

In the *Electra* the association between Asian and Spartan luxury is stressed again. This time it is embodied by another Helen-like figure: not her daughter, but her sister Clytemestra. Electra points out that Clytemestra resembles Helen (1062–64) and accuses her of caring too much about her appearance, especially when Agamemnon was at Troy (1069–73).⁶⁷ Clytemestra rejoiced in the defeat of the Greeks (1076–79) just as Helen was accused of doing in a similar passage from the *Trojan Women* (1007).⁶⁸ Dorian luxury is again associated with Trojan wealth. When Agamemnon came back Clytemestra characteristically seized the Trojan spoils and used them to adorn her palace. She did not adopt an Asiatic dress, which is shifted onto her slave women (314–18, transl. Cropp 1988):⁶⁹

My mother, meanwhile, sits upon her throne amid Phrygian spoils, and by her place are stationed women from Asia, slaves my father plundered, with Idean robes and brooches made of gold to fasten them.

The "young and firm body" must be Hermione's. The line implies that Andromache is older and has a less firm and less attractive physique.

⁶⁴ She wants to run her household just like the "masculine" (ἀνδρώδεις) Spartan women of Plut. *Comp. Lyc. Num.* 3. 9.

⁶⁵ I owe this point to Melissa Mueller.

⁶⁶ X. *Lac.* 1. 3–4; Plut. *Lyc.* 14. 3, *Comp. Lyc. Num.* 4. 1 and 3; Cartledge 1981: 93–94. Note that Menelaus too is accused of falling short of the ideal of his sex: "What, do you belong with the men, then, you utter coward?" (*Andr.* 590, transl. Kovacs 1995).

⁶⁷ The prejudice against make-up and every sort of artificial means of enhancing female beauty is very strong in Greek ideology (probably less so in real life: Pomeroy 1994: on X. *Oec.* 10. 2). Already in the *Odyssey* Penelope had shown the proper attitude towards cosmetics (18. 169–96).

⁶⁸ Helen used the successes of the Greeks to tease Paris: *Tro.* 1004–06.

⁶⁹ The Trojan slaves are a compensation for her lost child, Iphigenia (*El.* 1000–03), that is for the child that was the price of the Trojan War.

Here we find again the usual connection of Asian dress, luxury and fancy golden brooches. Clytemestra's dress is not explicitly oriental, but is expensive and exceptional, as Electra points out (1139–40, transl. Cropp 1988):

Go on into this poor house; take care, I pray you, that the soot that smothers the building does not soil your clothes.

Clytemestra is contrasted with the virginal daughter Electra, who wears the tattered rags that she weaves herself⁷⁰ and says (303–13, transl. Cropp 1988):

Report to Orestes . . . : first, the clothing I wear while I am stabled here, the squalor that burdens me, the shelter I dwell in cast from those royal halls, myself toiling at the shuttle to make my clothing. . . Missing the festive rites, deprived of dances, I shun the women, since I am a maiden, and feel shame before Castor.⁷¹

Weaving everyday clothes, if demeaning for a princess, was a traditional duty of the Greek woman, but here Euripides makes it symbolic of Electra's isolation. Electra is in a no-woman land: She does not belong any more to the dances of virgin girls than she does to the celebrations of married women. Her refusal to borrow clothes from the chorus and to participate in the festival of Hera with either virgins (174) or wives (179) is symbolic of her will to stay in that liminal condition. The lack of proper dress puts her in a category of her own (neither virgin nor married woman). This is contrasted with the dress of her mother, who usurps someone else's wealth to pay for her own clothes, and is an adulterous wife who has killed her husband and married her lover (again an irregular situation).

In this play, however, the Helen-like figure is different from the stereotype: Clytemestra has changed and repented (1105–10). The play is also different from *Andromache* in its explicit stress on patrilinearity:⁷² Electra is her father's child (1102–05), just as Athena proclaims herself to be in the *Eumenides*.⁷³ So the *Electra* reuses some of the Dorian stereotypes with a twist: The father-like woman who complains of being excluded from the luxury of the Trojan wealth (186–90) turns out to inherit

⁷⁰ The "old man" assumes that she used to weave some for her baby brother. The passage (Eur. *El.* 538–44) includes a complex allusion to the *Choephoroi* (Goldhill 1986a: 247–50; Battezzato 1995: 126 f.).

⁷¹ Just as Clytemestra should do; cf. 1064.

⁷² In this play the theme of childbirth is again prominent, but the female stereotypes are different. Clytemestra is fertile, whereas Electra only pretends to have had a male child (652; she is also a mother-figure to Orestes: "I nurtured you," 962; cf. *Cho.* 908).

⁷³ *El.* 1102–05 (transl. Cropp 1988): "My child, affection for your father is in your nature. This is something that happens—some belong to their fathers, while others are more devoted to their mothers (οἱ μὲν εἰσιν ἀρσένων, / οἱ δ' αὖ φιλοῦσι μητέρας μᾶλλον πατρός); cf. *Eum.* 738: κάρτα δ' εἰμὶ τοῦ πατρός, "I am very much my father's child."

some of the aggressiveness of her mother—and, like her mother, repents in the end (1190–1205).

IV 4. *Hecuba*

We can now see how the stereotype of the woman in Dorian dress works in the *Hecuba*. In the third stasimon, the chorus narrates the fall of Troy. The Trojans thought the Greeks had left, and celebrated the event. The women were making themselves up and preparing to go to bed with their husbands. Then the Greeks attacked (933–34): “I left the marriage-bed I loved” says the chorus, wearing only “a single mantle (*peplos*) like a Dorian girl” (λέχη δὲ φίλια μονόπεπλος λιποῦσα, Δωρίς ὡς κόρα, transl. Collard 1991). The connotation of eroticism is explicitly relevant to the stasimon: The women of the chorus were in the preliminaries of love-making, and would not have dared to appear in public wearing only one *peplos* under normal circumstances. It is nothing less than the sack of the city that forces them to this unseemly behavior.

It is probable that the chorus is wearing on stage the “Dorian” dress it describes. The women were forcibly taken from Troy at the time of the attack (937 ff.), put on a boat and taken to the Chersonese, where they have been for the past three days (32–34). They were definitely not allowed time to change clothes, and even without the mention of the “single-mantle” dress we would have assumed that their costume was such as to show their condition as captives. The “scandalous” Dorian attire would have made them look more pitiable.⁷⁴

When Polymestor enters Hecuba’s tent he is greeted by a group of Trojan captives (1150–59). They are not part of the chorus, but are to be imagined dressed like their fellow prisoners. They cast themselves as “decent” women, moved by motherly feelings towards Polymestor’s children. They also display a properly feminine interest in weaving (cf. already 466–74) when they examine and praise Polymestor’s fine clothes (1151–59). The idyll is suddenly interrupted by the killing of the children. The women (1161–62) “suddenly take swords from somewhere inside their dress⁷⁵ and stab the boys,” and (1168–71, transl. Collard 1991)

finally—cruelty worse than cruel—they perpetrated horror: my eyes—
seizing brooches (πόρπας) they stabbed the pupils of my poor eyes, made
them into gore.

This scene is the most vivid depiction of the aggressiveness implied by the Dorian robe: They blind Polymestor just as the Athenian women killed the

⁷⁴ Mossman 1995: 90 speaks of “bitter irony”: “the sheltered eastern matron is having to run like a tough Spartan girl.”

⁷⁵ Polymestor had asked earlier whether Hecuba and the Trojan women were hiding money or gold in their robes (1012 f.).

poor survivor in the story narrated by Herodotus.⁷⁶ The Trojan women prefer the brooches to the sword as a weapon for blinding, thus following mythical and pseudo-historical examples. Polymestor is a sort of inverted Oedipus, who kills his foster-son and is blinded in retaliation. Oedipus used the pins of Jocasta's dress to blind himself, according to both Sophocles and Euripides.⁷⁷ The picture of Jocasta half naked after the pins of her dress have been taken by Oedipus is left undescribed, but a similar image is fully exploited in a passage of *Trachiniae* (923–32), where Deianeira removes the pins of her dress to bare her breast before killing herself with a sword. The Trojan women in the *Hecuba* probably used the pins of their own dress to blind Polymestor, loosening their dress. Earlier in the play, the messenger narrated how Polyxena tore her dress open and exposed herself to the crowd (557–65), offering her torso to the sacrificial sword of Neoptolemus.⁷⁸ The Trojan women are not described as half naked like Polyxena or Deianeira, but their act of violence summarizes the disturbing associations of the Dorian dress.

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⁷⁶ Cf. Jenkins 1983 and Nenci 1994: 282. The scholiast, when commenting on the third stasimon and explaining the reference to the Dorian dress, reports the story about the killing of the Athenian soldier that we have read from Herodotus. The scholiast gives the version of Douris (*FGrHist* 76 F 24; see Jacoby's comments and Landucci-Gattinoni 1997: 251–53). He probably realized the similarity of Polymestor's punishment to the fate of the Athenian soldier.

⁷⁷ See Soph. *OT* 1268–69 and Eur. *Pho.* 60–62. The wording of *Pho.* 61–62, ἐς ὄμμαθ' αὐτοῦ δεινὸν ἐμβάλλει φόνον / χρυσηλάτοις πόρπαισιν αἰμάξας κόρας, is similar to that of *Hec.* 1117, where Agamemnon asks Polymestor, τίς ὄμμ' ἔθηκε τυφλὸν αἰμάξας κόρας; See also *Hec.* 1170–71 κόρας / κεντοῦσιν αἰμάσσουσιν.

⁷⁸ Studniczka 1886: 28 argues that Polyxena must be wearing an Ionian dress, rather than the Doric peplos, which would have been easier to unfasten (as Deianeira does) than to tear (as Polyxena does). Bacon 1961: 125 concurs.