

Theatrical register

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Abstract: *Of the three great Greek tragedians, Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides, Euripides is the only one whose work was not deeply damaged by time. Of the 92 plays that belong to him, there have survived 18 tragedies, one satirical drama, and various fragments from other works. Most of the subjects Euripides approaches belong to the fabulous history of Athens, while also keeping themes from the epic cycles of the old epics, but without making them his preferred subject. When he tackles them, he practices almost total freedom.*

Keywords: *Euripides; Greek tragedians; history of Athens; the creation of legendary subjects; characters or situations;*

Introduction

The Greek tragedy was born through a song. At first it was a liturgical manifestation in the ceremonies of collective life and worship. The tragedy was part of the cult of Dionysus-Bacchus, the god of wine and debauchery. As Aristotle says, "Tragedy is the imitation of a chosen and whole action, of a certain extent, in words adorned with various varieties of ornaments peculiar to each of its parts, an imitation imagined by men in action, but not narrated, and which, arousing pity and fear, commits cleansing these passions"², and Nietzsche considers the Greek tragedy "the deepest manifestation of Greek genius".³

Depending on the dramatic interest pursued, Euripides adds in his plays other kinds of facts: local legends, short stories, happenings of secondary significance, narratives with no traditional background, etc. The author does not focus on building a system, since the trilogies rarely follow any structural unity. Euripides aimed to impose through his work the tragedy of the situations, with a preference for those subjects that can trigger on stage great and violent passions. His primary concern was not the creation of legendary subjects, characters or situations, but adorning them with stage effects: tears, suffering, profound disturbances.

Hecuba

The play *Hecuba* is recorded as being performed on stage in 424 BC, and it is one of Euripides' finest works, thanks to its subject inspired by the Trojan epic cycle. The victorious Greeks take captive Hecuba, the widow of the renegade Priam of Troy. On their way to their homeland, they stop in Thracian Chersonese, where Hecuba had sent before her son, Polydorus, to shelter him from the horrors of war. Little does she know, however, that Polymestor has meanwhile murdered her son to take his wealth? At night, in front of the tent where Hecuba was sleeping with other captives, the shadow of Polydorus appears. After

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² Eschil, în vol. *Tragicii greci*, București, Editura de Stat pentru Literatură și Artă, 1958, p 243.

³ Aristotel, *Poetica*, București, Editura Științifică, 1957, p.157.

telling her how he was killed by Polymestor, he informs her that his body now floats tearless and unburied on the waves of the sea. He also says that from his grave, Achilles has asked the Greeks that her daughter, Polyxena, is sacrificed to him as payment for services. Thus, the mother will soon have the bodies of both her children before her. Polyxena learns from her mother's own mouth the horror that awaits her, but she accepts the fact with resignation, considering that death can also be good. Soon, Ulysses arrives to tell Hecuba about the Greek army's inflexible decision. Hecuba's pleas, in which the poet paints a disturbingly beautiful picture of her grief, are in vain. Ulysses stands firm because, for the Greeks, honoring the memory of Achilles is above all else. Here, the mother asks to be sacrificed instead of the daughter. Polyxena, with the high-mindedness that her death will redeem her freedom, asks Ulysses to lead her to the fatal altar without delay. The scene of the parting between mother and daughter is of a shattering drama. It is Talthybius, Agamemnon's announcer, who tells Hecuba that the sacrifice has taken place and that she is free to perform her last duties for the victim. Hecuba sends a slave to fetch water from the sea to wash her daughter's body according to custom. He returns, carrying Polydorus's corpse hidden under a veil, washed ashore by the waves. Faced with this misfortune, the unfortunate mother can no longer contain her despair, suspecting Polymestor's crime and vows revenge.

For her revenge, Hecuba appeals to Agamemnon to allow her to stand up to the most dishonest host that ever existed. He hesitates for a moment, but Hecuba renews her plea, putting all her passionate power to please the victor. By the end, Hecuba takes her revenge, luring Polymestor into her tent and gouging out his eyes. He angrily, as if under the power of enlightenment, predicts Hecuba will be turned into a rabid bitch, and she will be thrown into the sea. In the end, Agamemnon sends Hecuba to see to the burial of her two children and makes promises to the gods for the happy return of the Greeks to their homeland.

In terms of content, the drama lacks sufficient unity, as the two actions are not linked enough, which contributes somewhat to the division of interest. However, the lack of logical unity is compensated by an aesthetic unity, resulting from the skillful gradation of effects. In the first part, the mother's pain is illustrated in all its heartbreaking potential, and in the second, we witness how excessive suffering can drag the human soul into savage cruelties. The actual action scenes are left to the end of the play, and until then, the unity of the story is sustained by the pathos-filled line of suffering, anxieties, moments of fear and pity. Through its intense drama, as well as the poetic beauty of the text, the play can be considered one of the most characteristic and intense dramatic works of Greek theater.

What remains representative, in addition to the accelerated development of the evolution of tragedy, from dithyrambos to the new heights of drama, is the huge triptych that stood out in a single century: Aeschylus-Sophocles-Euripides. If Aeschylus outlines his art in ancient Greek form, and Sophocles portrays Pericles as a free and harmonious nobility, Euripides represents the time of "the spiritual and critical effervescence of the Athenian Enlightenment, from which the new cultural dimensions of the Hellenistic world were formed".⁴ Euripides outlines characters who carry passions, sometimes violent, and not victims of destiny.

Orestes

The themes of Orestes are similar to those of Aeschylus' *Eumenides*. There is a link formed by the chain of bloody episodes of the Atrides. Orestes and Electra, who, after

⁴ Euripide, *Alcesta. Medeea. Bachantele. Ciclopul.*, traducere, prefață și note de Alexandru Pop, București, Editura pentru literatură, 1964, p. IV

committing their parricide, are condemned to death by the Argive men, prepare to take revenge against Menelaus, who has betrayed them, aided by Pilate, Orestes' faithful friend. There follows a series of adventures which, left to their own devices, would have led to more and crueller murders, but with the appearance of Apollo, the situation is calculated, and he manages to stop the fateful bloodshed. Finally, the long-awaited peace is restored in Argos and the family of Agamemnon.

In Aeschylus' similar play, *The Eumenides*, the Furies were depicted in the popular imagination: real, living creatures, cruel-looking, with violent movements, snakes entwined in their hair, evolving in sinister dances and tormenting their victim almost without interruption. Euripides, however, takes them out of the realm of fable and gives them instead a more psychological character: they are no longer concrete creatures, but ghosts conjured up by Orestes' mind in his hallucinatory delirium and the intimate torture of his guilty conscience.

Euripides, as a poet of passions, has a remarkable preference for illustrated delirium. It is also portrayed in Aeschylus' plays, in characters such as Io, Cassandra and Orestes, the conception of one and the other is different, with great differences. For Aeschylus, delirium originates in heaven, manifesting itself in the individual as a divine possession. For Euripides, on the other hand, delirium manifests itself as a hallucination, originating from an exaltation of the senses, from physical or moral pain, from nervous tension or fatigue. Aeschylus made delirium a sign of divine power, whereas Euripides showed us how far human infirmity can go. We find this in many of his heroes: in Hercules and Agave, as an expression of furious madness, in Cassandra, as a state of insanity. We find it also in this play, in Orestes, as an obsession resulting from a heavy physical and moral depression.

Phoenician Women

The subject of the play is similar to Aeschylus' *Seven against Thebes*, but there are more characters and episodes, and the action is more eventful, with longer expositions, which makes the play similar to our modern dramas. The peak of the plot is the feud between Oedipus' two sons, Eteocles and Polynices. By their appearance on stage, the opposition between their characters is intentionally highlighted. Eteocles is tough, aloof, unwavering in his ambition. He feels he holds the scepter of power in his hand and cannot conceive of abandoning it, even if it means violating the laws of justice. Polynices is of a calmer nature, demands respect for a treaty that his brother has willingly accepted. Jocasta, their mother, makes desperate efforts to reconcile them. This is in fact the new episode introduced by Euripides, and also the best supported from a dramatic perspective. The play contains many powerful moments of rare dramatic beauty: Jocasta's unsuccessful intervention, Tiresias' prophecies, the fratricidal struggle between Eteocles and Polynices, Jocasta's voluntary death etc. At times, the unity of the play is broken, because Euripides is invested too much in the process of composition and seeks too much the variety of situations. Thus, the scene in which Oedipus appears accompanied by Antigone to lament before the disembodied bodies of his two children, though it is moving in its pathos as well as its ominousness, it unnecessarily encumbers the action, robbing it of clarity and coherence.

The name Phoenicians comes from the choir of Egyptian women who stopped at Thebes on their way to Delphi to worship Apollo. The subject of this drama is one of the most frequently used in their creation by the universal tragic poets; before Euripides it was treated by Phrynicos and Aeschylus, and after them by Seneca, Racine and Alfieri.

The Suppliants

Taking the same name as Aeschylus' play, Euripides' *Suppliants* continues the idea and concerns of the Phoenicians. It is believed that in its composition certain circumstances played a major role, so that at a time of intense conflict between Athens and Thebes, it was meant to praise Athens as the true guardian of Greek values and traditions.

The mothers of the seven warriors dead at the gates of Thebes, led by Adrastus, King of Argos, beg Athens for help in recovering the unburied bodies of their sons. Theseus, moved by these pleas, becomes the defender of the sacred rights of the dead. He will forcibly obtain the earthly remains of the seven heroes, which Thebes had refused to give willingly.

In this play, as in many others in the Greek tragic repertoire, we discover the attention they put into the cult of the dead. Honoring the memory of the dead and piously fulfilling the rites of burial were deep moral duties, with the power of holy law. It was believed that the shadow of the unburied was doomed to wander endlessly on the banks of the Styx, unable to enter the Elysian Plains in peace. A dead man left unburied: this meant a curse, a moral calamity, a disgrace for both the family of the dead man and for the city where they lived.

The action of the play is limited, being built up from speeches rather than unfolding events. The multitude of laments and lyrical invocations found give it the character of an "elegy of great spectacle" and confirm once again Euripides' vocation as a poet of pain.

Medea

The play was one of Euripides' best constructed plays. The pathos-filled character reaches at times almost unparalleled heights. Its action, simple and grand, glides swiftly to its dénouement, without, however, losing any of the necessary gradation of feeling. It is counted among the masterpieces of Greek theater. Medea is left by Jason, who is to marry the daughter of Creon, King of Corinth. In a fit of desperation and jealousy, haunted by the thought of revenge against her unfaithful husband and of breaking his heart, she kills his two children and her rival.

Jason, learning first of the death of his betrothed and of King Creon, and then of his sons, orders Medea to be imprisoned in the palace in order to take revenge in turn. But it is too late. In an air chariot, pulled by winged dragons, Medea travels to Athens with the bodies of her children. Jason's pleas to leave him the children's bodies to bury are in vain. Medea, implacable, confronts him, taking her revenge to the end. Medea's furious jealousy, the dramatic way she disguises her plan for revenge and her distress when the time comes to strike at her children remain admirable. The monologue that precedes the murder is poignant.

In its dramatic construction, Medea is somewhat of an exception in Euripides' theater. He does not want the scenes that make up the tragedy to flow from one another, to be linked in a natural sequence, based on the intimate truth of the events in question. Euripides directs his attention to vivid, contrasting situations of surprise and thrilling effect than to sustained action, moving from step to step towards their necessary dénouement. In Medea, however, the viewer's spirit is kept focused at all times on the central character. As for the action, it has a pronounced architectural orderliness. Through a subtle and perfectly graded psychological analysis, Euripides reveals the complexity of the female character's motives, reactions, and tortures of the soul, which evolve from the tenderest maternal feelings to the jealousy that drives her to atrocity.

Medea is one of Euripides' characteristic dramas, since it shows us a fundamental side of the poet: his art of portraying the passion of love, with the storms it can arouse in the human soul. The heroes and heroines of Aeschylus and Sophocles (Clytemnestra, Agamemnon) proclaim their passion, even glorify it, but they do not describe it; they do not give us an analysis of the states and feelings that make it up. Euripides' heroes, on the contrary, live it, manifest it in its elements and articulations, and paint it for us in a whole range of manifestations. Their tragic substance is constituted precisely by the broad development of their passions.

Medea is par excellence a passionate creature. Love in her has died out, but it has given way to a great and proud passion for revenge. This impels her to action, lending her unexpected powers of dissimulation, just as her imagination incites her to terrible combinations. We witness a heart-rending, intense struggle, at the end of which this passion for revenge overcomes even the natural maternal instinct, transforming itself into selfishness, which is simultaneously moving and wild.

The subject of Medea has been widely used by tragic writers of different eras. In French literature we have tragedies with this title by Corneille (1635), de Longepierre (1694), Ernest Legouve (1854), Hippolyte Lucas (1855), Catulle Mendès (1898); in English literature we have Glover's play (1761), and in German the famous play by Grillparzer.

Hippolytus

Phaedra, wife of Theseus, falls in love with Hippolytus, her stepson. Hippolytus rejects her love, which leads her to suicide. But when she dies, she accuses Hippolytus of the very incest he had refused, in a lying document. Theseus, feeling deceived, becomes furious, decides to part with his son, chases him away and curses him, calling down the wrath of Poseidon on him. Hippolytus vainly pleads his innocence and is thus forced to leave, and the play features the chorus lamenting the misfortunes befalling the young man. Meanwhile, Theseus learns from an emissary that a monster out of the sea has frightened the horses of his son's carriage, and that the horribly disfigured son is dying. The king consents to see his dying son. Just as he is being carried away by servants, the goddess Artemis appears from the heavens, reveals Hippolytus' innocence, and reveals that he is the victim of a jealous and vengeful wrath of the goddess Aphrodite. Hippolytus, heeding the advice of Artemis, for whom he had a mythical feeling of love, forgives his father and gives his soul into his father's arms.

In the drama's prologue, Aphrodite announces she wants revenge on Theseus' son and that she wants to know in advance how she will take this revenge. It would seem, from this that all the events that follow are under the sign of an implacable will. In reality, however, Euripides continues here to put human passions before divine fatality. Love is seen in its natural foundations, as a law of the earthly world, capable therefore of bringing happiness as well as serious physical and moral disorders.

Physical suffering, as Euripides depicts it, is addressed to both the feelings and the senses. Hippolytus's torments, as he is brought bloodied to the stage, are noted with realistic precision. The words spoken on this occasion have in them both the bitter cries of the soul and the physical outburst of muscles and nerves tormented by pain, and sensation and feeling combine to form a unity.

In universal dramatic literature, the theme of Hippolytus has been repeated many times. The best known of the dramas on this theme is Racine's Phaedra, written in 1677. In

this one, however, the focus of the main character is no longer on Hippolytus, but on Phaedra, whom the poet considers “treacherous and unwittingly incestuous”.

Alcestis

Being of a varied character and able to be understood as a tragedy, a tragicomedy or a satirical drama, *Alcestis* falls into the satirical drama category, and the subject is borrowed from a legend highly appreciated in the Greek world.

In the prologue of the play, Apollo recounts the facts, that having been banished from heaven by Zeus; the god finds shelter with Admetus, the Thessalian king, to whom in return for this service he will protect his house. At his pleas, the Parthians agree that Admetus's death spell should be pushed forward, on condition that they will be given another person to die in his place. All in turn, friends, father, mother, refuse such a sacrifice. The only being who consents to die for him is Alcestis, his wife. The pain of separation is powerfully portrayed by Euripides, as Philip Vellacott also states:

Alcestis is one of the purest characters in the poet's creation. No shadow darkens the figure of the heroine who, overcoming her motherly feelings, sacrifices her life and youth to her husband. Although in her moments of agony she has visions (hallucinations?) of infernal spirits, she does not hope for a future life. Her total self-sacrifice, her almost superhuman, almost unbelievable devotion, makes her seem remote and cold to some.⁵

The end, however, is happy. The gods, won over and charmed by the young woman's devotion, call her back to life. “A noble and generous degradation”, says Plato, recounting this legend in the *Banquet*, “endues even the gods”. Hercules will snatch her from the clutches of death to bring her back to her home life.

The main beauty of this play lies in the delicacy and truth with which Euripides portrays feelings. Alcestis's tender and pitiful love rests on an admirable firmness of spirit. Admetus, though mediocre in nature, is capable of sincere and prolonged feeling, the affection of his servants being poignantly rendered with a warm and humane discretion. The character of Hercules, although there is something harsh and strident in him, is imposed to the end by his sure and generous devotion.

Iphigenia in Aulis

The subject is like that of Aeschylus and Sophocles, but Euripides gives it his own personal touch, both in the adventures he invents and in the struggle for feelings that must have ensued. The Greeks, gathered at Aulis, cannot weigh anchor to sail to Troy because of contrary winds or because the sea is too calm. An oracle predicts the situation will not end until Iphigenia, daughter of Agamemnon, is sacrificed on the altar of Artemis, the goddess of the city. What follows is a succession of episodes, moving in their pain and suffering. Agamemnon, the father, vacillates between his grief as a father and his duty to do the will of the gods. Menelaus, Agamemnon's brother, at first firm in his belief that the sacrifice must be made, is also swayed by the voice of the heart. No less striking are the other scenes: the meeting between daughter and father, the disclosure of the secret, Iphigenia's pleas for mercy, Clytemnestra's grief and her struggle to prevent herself from doing the deed, Achilles' efforts and, above all, the change of heart of the young girl, now ready to devote herself to the common good of the fatherland, crying out: “I give myself to Greece, sacrifice

⁵ Philip Vellacott, Euripides, *Alcestis and Other Plays*, Penguin Books, 1953, p.23.

me, ye warriors; and, wet still with my blood, run to conquer Troy; her ruins shall be the everlasting monument of my glory; they shall be my children, my wedding, and my triumph!"

"You, than all my children, hotter love / Have you always had ..." Ifigenia, though full of naivety, of freshness, "clear as light," nevertheless observes that her father is grieved: "Are you happy? how ...? ... when tears well up in your eyes?"⁶

The devotions of the Greeks had to be respected; to resist them, or to disturb them with tears, was almost to commit sacrilege. Faced with the young girl's so categorical decision, Achilles would have no choice but to remain at the altar with his soldiers, ready to intervene only if at the fatal moment Iphigenia should have any comeback. At the last moment, Artemis rescues her, leaving a little goat on the altar to be sacrificed in her place.

Remarkable in this play is the dramatic gradation of feelings. First, we witness the painful states of indecision in Agamemnon's mind. Then we are introduced to the sense of alarm and the prayers of Clytemnestra. The climax is given by Iphigenia's heroism, which makes the last scenes of the play a moving grandeur. Euripides was not guided in his conception and dramatic composition by any system, much less a rigid one. This gave him the possibility to vary his means, which is why his plays have in them movements and contingencies that are of life itself.

Euripides, as a dramatic poet, excels in depicting scenes of heroic devotion. What must be emphasized is that these scenes are not only made up of serious features but also of common feelings, sprung alive, unprepared, by the very spontaneity of feeling. Iphigenia, whom we meet at the beginning of the play, suspects nothing of the tragedy that awaits her: she is a creature full of freshness and naivety, clear as light, with the curiosity and the charming ignorance of her innocence. She rejoices in her father's glory, and she feels his greatness, without, however, any hint, however slight, of presumption creeping into these feelings. With the same natural grace, she will know how to accept the harsh necessity of her sacrifice.

Iphigenia's devotion is perhaps not as sublime as that of Antigone, Sophocles' heroine. But it is more moving, in its simplicity, its quietness and its human substance. The subject of Iphigenia has often been taken up by modern poets. It reached great poetic and dramatic heights in the works of Rotrou (1640) and Racine (1674).

The Trojan Women

By being more a succession of disturbing scenes than a drama in its own right, *The Trojan Women* play acquires a particular intrigue and dénouement. The plot depicts the sad fate of the women of Troy the day after the fall of the city. When Agamemnon's herald is about to take her prisoner, Cassandra bursts out in her grim prophecies, announcing all the woes that will bring down the house of Atrias. Andromache will have to follow Neoptolemus and Hecuba will have to follow Odysseus, the Greek she loathes the most. The power and beauty of the play lies in the communicative and moving force of the lyrical scenes. The mutual consolation that Andromache and Hecuba brings to each other at the moment of their separation, Cassandra's delirium, the death of Astyanax, Andromache's son, the funeral ceremony during which Hecuba laments over the disembodied body of her nephew, the scene in which Hecuba and the other captives of Troy witness the burning of the city and, by the light of the flames, bid farewell to their homeland, their temples, and their dead, all these

⁶ Euripide, *Teatru complet*, Chişinău, Editura Guvinas Arc, 2005, p. 301

make us witness, one by one, moments of pain, of fear, of grief, of despair, each of them capable of deeply disturbing us.

The play is particularly characteristic in portraying our poet's conception of drama. We are dealing, not so much with a subject in its own right, as with a series of epic fragments put into dramatic form. There is almost no intimate connection between them, the piece being united by the fact that all the fragments have an intense human content, that they can concentrate in a small space a series of pathetically painful events, and that by their convergence around the same character they reveal a certain gradation of effects.

Bacchae

The subject has been broached before, in plays that have not survived, by Thespis, Phrynicos, Aeschylus and Sophocles. Pentheus, king of Thebes, is opposed to the introduction of the cult of Bacchus into his city. In a debate between King Cadmus, the old founder of Thebes, and the old prophet Tiresias, the latter praises Bacchus, the god who will have a great fate in the Greek world, as one who has discovered the divine liquor capable of bringing people comfort, joy and happy exaltation or drowning their daily sufferings in oblivion. Until the end, Pentheus could no longer oppose the introduction into the city of a god who had made his presence felt through a whole chain of extraordinary deeds. The final scenes almost have a lugubrious note. Pentheus, sightless and absent-minded, is torn apart by the Bacchae in their vengeful fury. Agave, the mother of the unfortunate king, appears on stage holding her son's head and saying it is the head of a lion she has torn off with her own hands. The chorus of Bacchae rejoices cruelly, congratulating her on the deed.

Behind these episodes, the play hides a significant philosophical background. The conflict between Pentheus and Bacchus symbolizes, in fact, the struggle between human reason and divine exaltation, two conceptions of life that question true wisdom. Pentheus has good intentions, respects the data and rigors of reason, and has a high sense of his duty to the city. He feels no mysterious attraction to the unknown and refuses to believe in the validity of exaltations.

Herakles

The piece is constructed in two distinct parts. In the first part, Hercules rescues his family from the agonizing death ordered by Lycos, the tyrant of Thebes. The real dramatic crux of the action comes in the second part. Hera, Hercules' unrepentant enemy, irritated that all her attempts to lose him have failed, now resorts to a supreme one. On her orders, Fury breaks into the palace and wanders the hero's mind. The latter, in the grip of agitation, thinking he is striking at Eurystheus' family, directs his arrows at his wife and children, killing them. He is about to strike Amphitryon, his old father, when Athena stops his hand and puts him into a deep sleep. When he wakes up, Hercules, realizing what he has done, is overcome with grief and ready to end his life. But Amphitryon and Theseus, having shown him that the responsibility for the deed lies solely with Hera's vengeful will, restore his confidence and courage. In the final scene, we see him take a touching farewell from his father and entrust him with his wishes for the last honors due to his dead, before leaving for Athens to purify himself. Seneca, in one of his tragedies, re-enacted a similar view of the drama of Hercules.

Electra

"Receive me with you in this place of eternity!
 And two shadows, yours and mine, will meet
 Then. In life when you were, both of you
 One fate - one - has bound us and I want, I love it,
 To bind us in the grave. That only the dead
 Only they - I see - are forgotten by suffering".⁷

The play deals with the same theme that was found in Aeschylus' *Choepori* and Sophocles' *Electra*. It is about the murder of Clytemnestra by her children, Orestes and Electra, in revenge for the death of Agamemnon. What should be noted, however, is that Euripides has added a lot of new detail to this ancient theme. The setting of the play changes, we are no longer near Agamemnon's palace and tomb, but in the countryside, near the hut of a poor peasant from the outskirts of Mycenae. This somewhat disturbs the tragic line and sobriety of the legend, but adds to its lyricism through its rustic color and picturesqueness. Euripides, whether driven by his penchant for moving scenes or possessed by a desire to emphasize what might make the crime more condemnable, brings out the horrific passages of the action in deliberate emphasis.

This play, far from contributing substantially to Euripides' glory, on the contrary, attracted him criticism. Thus, from ancient times, it has been noted that the poet has diminished the tragic legend in which revenge for the crimes of Clytemnestra had a tragic grandeur, in order to put in place a vulgar unfolding of actions, like a family drama.

Conclusions

The tragedy managed to emerge from the embryonic stage to become a stable genus, crystallizing and becoming a public institution. "We are on the brink of great tragedy; its idea came about; the process has begun; the childhood of the genre now appears as a fulfilled fact. Lyric poetry will now remain even more so, with its well-defined status; from it, however, a new genre emerged, with its own personality, with its indisputable autonomy: tragedy. All the prerequisites are given for a great evolution to begin, leading to maturity one of the most substantial forms in which human consciousness has ever expressed its problems, struggles, and aspirations"⁸. He introduced into the composition of the tragedy the intrigue, the adventure, the recognition, the prologue and the so-called "deus ex machina", necessary for the untying of the knot of the action: "Euripides can be considered the first pioneer of a new dramatic form, of what we might call modern drama. This will open to the universal theater an endless perspective: the perspective of life, with the wide involvement of the human soul, of passionate turmoil".⁹

Unlike the simple and imposing construction typical of Aeschylus' plays, and the severe harmony that Sophocles knew how to concentrate in his scenes of moral heroism, Euripides proposes a perspective full of a variety of aspects so unusual that for the moment it leaves us with the impression that the classical line of tragedy has been severely shaken and regained: affairs, murders, incest, passionate outbursts, catastrophes that call to one another, unexpected situations, murders and miseries, facts that can astonish us. Thus, through

⁷ Sofocle, *Aias, Trahinicele, Electra, Filoctet*, București, Editura pentru literatură, 1965, p. 230

⁸ Ion Zamfirescu, *Panorama dramaturgiei universale*, București, Editura Enciclopedică Română, 1973, p. 22.

⁹ Ion Zamfirescu, *Istoria universală a teatrului*, vol. I, București, Editura de Stat pentru Literatură și Artă, 1958, p. 101.

Euripides, we are presented with a new world, a world unknown in the tradition of tragedy until then.

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