

Ritual and Reason: The Sacrificial Motif in Sophoclean Tragedy

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The Sacrificial Motif in Sophoclean Tragedy

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Introduction

The plays of Sophocles have been the object of such an immense amount of scholarship throughout the years, that it is difficult to imagine being able to say anything that has not already been said countless times before on the subject. However, that is exactly what this thesis hopes to achieve. The aim is most definitely not to rewrite the entire body of work that has ever been written concerning Sophocles, but merely to add to it. Numerous scholars who are considered experts in their field, have discussed and examined in detail nearly every aspect of Sophoclean drama, down to the most minute of details. The goal for this thesis is to consider one small facet of these plays and the role it occupies within them.

The aspect of Sophoclean drama that this thesis is concerned with is sacrifice and the forms it takes within the dramas. Sacrifice was not only an integral part of Greek religious life, but also held an important place in the make up of communal identity. Sacrifices acted as unifiers for the particular group that conducted or attended them. Not only was the group united by the act of sacrificing, but also by the meal that was made of the sacrificial victim afterwards. A sacrifice could take many different forms and have a variety of purposes within Greek society. A discussion of these various sacrifices makes up the first chapter of this thesis. The ways in which Sophocles may have utilised depictions of sacrifice in his plays, cannot be examined without first developing an understanding of how sacrifices functioned in Ancient Greek society. It is impossible to know whether or not Sophocles has created a sacrificial scene that differed from the norm, without first knowing what the usual procedure was. It is only then that an attempt can be made to decipher what purpose this change could

possibly have had, or the reason was for including a sacrificial scene at that particular point in the action. This is the reason for the catalogue of sacrifices that can be found in Chapter One of this thesis. The first chapter also attempts to answer a question that must be asked and answered before any other: What is a sacrifice? No other questions relating to sacrifice can be hypothesised on until some kind of answer to this question has first been given.

After discussing the ways in which sacrifice functioned within Greek society, it is then possible to focus on how it appears in Sophoclean drama. This is the focus of Chapter Two of this thesis. This chapter will not focus specifically on any particular play, but instead attempt to draw from all of the extant plays, in order to give a broader discussion of sacrifice within the surviving body of Sophocles' work. The purpose of each instance of sacrifice that will be examined will be sought, whether there has been a change from the usual sacrificial procedure or not. The intent behind the inclusion of these sacrificial scenes can only be surmised at, but nonetheless an interpretation can still be given to them.

The next two chapters of this thesis will focus on the *pharmakos* rituals, and how they relate to the character of Oedipus. Chapter Three will be similar in function to Chapter One in terms of explaining the historical instances of ritual, before proceeding to the dramatic instances. This chapter also needs to identify why this particular ritual is being considered a sacrifice for the purposes of this thesis. After the scapegoat ritual has been explained and its purpose in Greek society has been identified, Chapter Four will discuss how Oedipus can be associated with the figure of the *pharmakos*. *Oedipus Tyrannus* is possibly the most widely studied play by Sophocles, and Jean-Pierre Vernant in particular has devoted scholarship to this aspect

of Oedipus. It is from his theories that the foundation of Chapter Four was created, but the aim of the chapter is not only to discuss his work, but also to expand upon it and perhaps find features of the scapegoat in different aspects of Oedipus than have previously been identified.

As was stated in the opening paragraph of this thesis, it is difficult to imagine being able to say anything innovative in regard to Sophoclean drama. However, the aim of this thesis is to collate data from various sources, both secondary and primary to give an overview of sacrifice as it functioned in Greek society, and then use that information to come to some conclusions as to why Sophocles would have included sacrificial scenes in his plays. During this process, the goal is to not only convey historical accounts, anthropological theories and previous scholarship on the works of Sophocles, but also to provide even one new insight, on a single aspect, of a body of dramatic work.

Chapter One: What is a Sacrifice?

Before any kind of investigation into the ways in which Sophocles employs sacrificial imagery in his tragedies can be carried out, some fundamental questions must first be asked and answered. The first question to be asked is ‘What is a sacrifice?’ This may appear to be a basic and easily answered question, but without the answer it is impossible to draw any conclusions about any specific sacrifice, namely those depicted by Sophocles. Thus, this question becomes the foundation stone of this thesis.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines a sacrifice as “the killing of an animal or person or the giving up of a possession as an offering to a god or goddess” or “an animal, person, or object killed or offered in this way” or “an act of giving up something you value for the sake of something that is more important.”¹ The definition of the verb sacrifice is simply “give something as a sacrifice.”² The term sacrifice is itself derived from the Latin *sacrificium*, which in turn is related to *sacrum*. This neuter noun in its plural form *sacra* means sacrifice, but literally translated it means holy or sacred things.³ In his dialogue the *Euthyphro*, Plato is concerned with issues of holiness and piety, and thus the practise of sacrifice is discussed. From this discussion the following definition of sacrifice arises:

“Ὅκοῦν τὸ θύειν δωρεῖσθαι ἔστι τοῖς θεοῖς, τὸ δ’ εὐχεσθαι αἰτεῖν
τοὺς θεούς;”⁴

¹Soanes, Catherine (ed.). *Pocket Oxford English Dictionary*, 10th edition, (Oxford, 2005), p.798

²*Ibid*, p.798

³Littlejohn, Joyce (ed.). *Collins Latin Dictionary plus Grammar*, (Glasgow, 2003), p.191

⁴Plato, *Euthyphro*, 14c

“And sacrificing is making gifts to the gods and praying is asking from them?”⁵

This definition is not necessarily one that Plato agrees with, as he has made it part of the argument which Socrates is seeking to overturn. However, the character Euthyphro agrees with it readily and it is therefore perhaps a definition that would have been acceptable, or even one that was commonly used by the Greeks. But these definitions and etymologies seem inadequate for conveying what exactly a sacrifice is.

The Greek vocabulary surrounding sacrifice is much more diverse than our own, consisting of many different verbs, nouns and adjectives. According to Liddell and Scott, the Greeks even had the term *boōnēs* for a person who buys oxen to be sacrificed.⁶ Zaidman and Pantel state that *thuein* is the most generic verb in Greek meaning to sacrifice.⁷ They suggest that this verb could be used for all of the various types of sacrifices that the Greeks performed, regardless of the method of sacrifice, what the offering consisted of, or who the recipient was. It is their opinion that only context or a contrast with more specialised vocabulary would clarify what the exact type of sacrifice being discussed was.⁸

This view is not held by all scholars. In their entry for *thuein*, Liddell and Scott state that it was used for sacrifices that involved the killing of an animal, but do not mention any other specific rituals with which it could be associated.⁹ Lambert also stresses that there was a variety of vocabulary items in Greek concerning sacrifice.

⁵Translated by Harold North Fowler, *Vol.1*, (William Heinemann, Ltd, London, 1926)

⁶Liddell and Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon*, abridged edition, (Oxford, 2004), p.134

⁷Zaidman, Louise Bruit and Pantel, Pauline Schmitt, *Religion in the Ancient Greek City*, (Cambridge, 1992), p.32

⁸*Ibid*, p.32

⁹Liddell and Scott, p.324

His view also contradicts what Zaidman and Pantel said in regard to *thuein* in that he considers it to be a verb used only when a sacrifice was made to the Olympian gods.¹⁰ He contrasts the two verbs *hiereuein* and *thuein*, which are reserved for making sacrifices to the Olympians, with *enagizein* and *entemnein*, which were terms reserved for use when sacrifices were made to the dead and the chthonic deities.¹¹

The debate concerning definitions is not restricted to the Greek language. While there are accepted English dictionary definitions, as was shown above, these definitions have not been adequate for the purposes of studying religious rituals. As a result, various scholars have endeavoured to put forward all-encompassing definitions of their own, with the hope that they would be applicable in all situations concerning sacrifice and religious offerings. One such example of these definitions was put forward by Van Baal, who refers to an offering as “any act of presenting something to a supernatural being” and a sacrifice as “an offering accompanied by the ritual killing of the object of the offering.”¹² Firth’s definitions are similar to Van Baal’s. He refers to an offering as “a species of gift.”¹³ He continues on to also define a sacrifice as “a voluntary act whereby, through the slaughter of an animal, an offering of food or other substance is made to a spiritual being.”¹⁴ Both Van Baal and Firth distinguish between an offering and a sacrifice. For them, a sacrifice is only a sacrifice when the offering is killed.

This distinction between an offering and a sacrifice is not one that all scholars feel must be made. Zaidman and Pantel, as is discussed above, feel that even the most

¹⁰Lambert, Michael, “Ancient Greek and Zulu Sacrificial Ritual: A Comparative Analysis” in *Numen*, Vol. 40, (Leiden, 1993), p.301

¹¹*Ibid*, p.301

¹²Van Baal, J., “Offering, Sacrifice and Gift” in *Numen*, Vol. 23, (Leiden, 1976), p.161

¹³Firth, Raymond, “Offering and Sacrifice: Problems of Organization” in *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, Vol.93, (London, 1963), p.12

¹⁴*Ibid*, p.13

general verb in Greek meaning ‘to sacrifice’ encapsulates the ritual slaughter of animals as well as bloodless offerings such as libations and votive offerings, both of which will be discussed in more detail in the following discussion.¹⁵ This leads to the conclusion that while the original question of “What is a sacrifice?” may appear to be easily answered, it clearly does not have a simple answer, and certainly not one that scholars have been able to unanimously agree on and universally utilise. The Greek language itself is extremely complex and detailed in regard to the issue of sacrifice, and the evidence that it may provide is also not interpreted without disagreement. With this being the case, a simple definition cannot possibly capture what a sacrifice was to the Greeks and therefore, a more detailed inquiry must be undertaken.

Upon reaching the conclusion that there was not an adequate and universal definition of sacrifice to be found, van Baaren created his own set of parameters by which to better define sacrifice.¹⁶ His study was not primarily concerned with sacrifice in Greek culture specifically, but his work provides an excellent overview of sacrifice in general. His first endeavour was to attempt to categorise the different types of sacrifice based on the intent or meaning of each type. As a result, he was able to distinguish what he terms four ‘root forms’ of sacrifice.¹⁷ These ‘root forms’ are effectively classes, into which all types of sacrifice are able to be placed.

The first of van Baaren’s ‘root forms’ concerns what he calls the “sphere of reciprocity.”¹⁸ These types of sacrifice involve giving some kind of gift with the expectation of receiving something in return, whether it is an actual material object or something intangible such as a safe journey. The second form is also a type of giving,

¹⁵Zaidman and Pantel, p.32

¹⁶van Baaren, Th. P. “Theoretical Speculations on Sacrifice” in *Numen*, Vol.11, (Leiden, 1964), p.1

¹⁷*Ibid*, p.1

¹⁸*Ibid*, p.1

but in this case it is a giving up of something without expecting anything in return. This is usually done to benefit somebody else and with the belief that the act of giving up something is in itself a good thing.¹⁹ The third form of sacrifice is basically a re-enactment of creation or a “primordial event” through ritual.²⁰ The fourth and final ‘root form’ identified by van Baaren is when sacrifice is a “form of symbolic sanctification of the world.”²¹

The ‘root forms’ coined by van Baaren were by no means the first attempt to categorise the different types of sacrifices. The Greeks themselves were concerned with labelling and grouping together what at first appear to be many varied practises. According to the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, Theophrastus identified three types of sacrifices in Greek religion.²² These categories were sacrifices of praise, thanksgiving and supplication.²³

Returning to van Baaren’s analysis of sacrifice, he states that all sacrifices, regardless of which ‘root form’ they are derived from, are made up of six basic elements.²⁴ These are:

1. the active person, the sacrificer
2. the material of the sacrifice, the offering
3. place and time of the sacrifice
4. the manner of sacrificing, the sacrificial method
5. the recipient of the sacrifice
6. the motive and the intention of the sacrifice.²⁵

¹⁹*Ibid*, p.2

²⁰*Ibid*, p.2

²¹*Ibid*, p.2

²²Oxford Classical Press, *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, (London, 1949), p.787

²³*OCD*, p.787

²⁴van Baaren, p.3

²⁵*Ibid*, p.3

It is at this stage that data more specific to Greek sacrificial procedures can be examined. These theoretical elements of sacrifice are universal, but the actual instantiations of each element can vary from culture to culture, and even from sacrifice to sacrifice within the same culture. Therefore, because Greek sacrifice is what this thesis is concerned with, each element will be discussed in direct relation to Greek practises.

The Greeks performed both public and private sacrifices, and as Lambert has observed, they consisted of the same basic structure regardless of whether they were conducted in a private or public situation.²⁶ The Greek household or *oikos* was headed by its oldest free or citizen male.²⁷ It was this person who acted as the priest overseeing all the religious rites that took place in the home.²⁸ This means that whoever qualified as the head of the *oikos*, could perform sacrifices to any of the gods or to the dead on behalf of every member of his household. An example of this can be found in the following passage written by Isaeus:

“τῷ Δί τε θύων τῷ Κτησίῳ, περὶ ἣν
 μάλιστ’ ἐκεῖνος θυσίαν ἐσπούδαζε καὶ οὔτε δού-
 λους προσῆγέν οὔτε ἐλευθέρους ὀθνείους, ἀλλ’
 αὐτὸς δι’ ἑαυτοῦ πάντ’ ἐποίει,”²⁹

“and when he sacrificed to Zeus Ctesius — a festival
 to which he attached a special importance, to which
 he admitted neither slaves nor free men outside his
 own family, at which he personally performed all the rites”³⁰

²⁶Lambert, p.294

²⁷Garland, Robert, *Religion and the Greeks*, (London, 1994), p.29

²⁸*Ibid*, p.29

²⁹Isaeus, *On the Estate of Ciron*, 16.3-6

³⁰Translated by Edward Seymour Forster, (William Heinemann Ltd, London, 1927)

There were other organisations, for want of a more suitable term, that were larger than the *oikos* but smaller than the state. These were the *phulē*, the *genos*, the *phratrē*, the *thiasos*, the *orgeōnes*, the *eranos* and the *dēmos*.³¹ Each of these groups would observe religious customs together, which would presumably include sacrifices.³²

Male deities tended to have priests and female deities had priestesses who would supervise the conducting of religious rites in association with their specific deity.³³ According to Zaidman and Pantel, the most visible role of the priests was assisting with sacrifices, whether they were public or private.³⁴ However, the priest could delegate the actual act of killing the animal to one of the sacrificers and simply officiate.³⁵ Rather than rely on priests to conduct religious rituals for them, it was the responsibility of every citizen to undertake the proper actions so as to be considered pious, whether these actions were carried out in their home or at a public sanctuary.³⁶

The Greeks had yet another alternative to the head of the *oikos* or a priest for performing sacrifices. Sacrifices were such a large part of the Greek way of life, that it was possible to earn an income as a professional sacrificer or *mageiros*.³⁷ These people were specialists and would be hired to both sacrifice the animal and to cook the resulting meat.³⁸ If some kind of domestic feast was being provided due to a marriage within the *oikos* for example, then a *mageiros* would potentially be hired.³⁹

The second element, the offering, varied quite widely for the Greeks, but the materials sacrificed can be divided into two groups; blood offerings and bloodless

³¹Garland, pp.28-32 and Zaidman and Pantel pp.80-89

³²Garland, pp.28-31

³³*Ibid*, p.34

³⁴Zaidman and Pantel, p.50

³⁵*Ibid*, p.50

³⁶*Ibid*, p.46

³⁷*Ibid*, p.30

³⁸*Ibid*, p.30

³⁹*Ibid*, p.30

offerings.⁴⁰ Bloodless offerings consisted of fruit and grain, wine, milk, water or olive oil.⁴¹ Cheese, honey and incense could also be sacrificed.⁴² Votive offerings could also be considered to be a type of bloodless sacrifice. Examples of votive offerings range from a fisherman dedicating part of his catch to the gods, to a figurine or even a temple if the offering was made on behalf of the state.⁴³ Sacrifices made in the home were usually bloodless offerings.⁴⁴

Blood offerings were when an animal was ritually slaughtered. The type of animal sacrificed frequently depended on the fifth element, that being the recipient of the sacrifice. For all of the sacrifices the animals were to be unblemished, but male deities preferred male victims, and female deities preferred female ones. Further distinctions were applied based on the realm of the deity. Gods of the Underworld and the dead were offered black and according to Garland only female or castrated animals, while Olympian gods had light coloured victims sacrificed to them.⁴⁵ Blood offerings were thought to be the most effective because the smoke from the victim was believed to give both pleasure and sustenance to the gods.⁴⁶

Nevertheless, bloodless sacrifices were still viewed as being equally sacrosanct, as is exhibited by evidence found on Delos. Two altars dedicated to Apollo could be found on Delos. One was for performing a hecatomb upon, and the other was for bloodless offerings. It was strictly forbidden to light a fire or perform a blood sacrifice upon this second altar, which indicates that there was the notion that all things surrounding the bloodless sacrifices were seen to be as holy as those concerned

⁴⁰*OCD*, p.787

⁴¹Garland, p.17 and Joint Association of Classical Teachers (JACT), *The World of Athens: An Introduction to Classical Athenian Culture*, (Cambridge, 1984), P.107

⁴²*OCD*, p.787

⁴³Garland, p.16

⁴⁴Zaidman and Pantel, p.37

⁴⁵Garland, p.14 and *OCD*, p.787

⁴⁶Garland, p.12

with blood offerings.⁴⁷

Another example of the importance of bloodless sacrifices can be found in the *Iliad*. Achilles possesses a cup which he uses for pouring libations to Zeus only. The following lines from Book XVI show the respect with which Achilles treats this cup:

“ἔνθα δέ οἱ δέπας ἔσκε τετυγμένον, οὐδέ τις ἄλλος
οὔτ’ ἀνδρῶν πίνεσκεν ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ αἶθοπα οἶνον,
οὔτε τεῶ σπένδεσκε θεῶν, ὅτε μὴ Διὶ πατρί.
τό ῥα τότε’ ἐκ χηλοῖο λαβῶν ἐκάθηρε θεεῖω
πρῶτον, ἔπειτα δ’ ἔνιψ’ ὕδατος καλῆσι ῥοῆσι,
νίψατο δ’ αὐτὸς χεῖρας, ἀφύσσατο δ’ αἶθοπα οἶνον.”⁴⁸

“Therein had he a fair-fashioned cup, wherefrom neither was any other man wont to drink the flaming wine, nor was he wont to pour drink offerings to any of the other gods save only to father Zeus. This cup he then took from the chest and cleansed it first with sulphur, and thereafter washed it in fair streams of water; and himself he washed his hands, and drew flaming wine.”⁴⁹

These lines exhibit a mood bordering on solemn as Achilles tends to his cup before pouring the libation. His careful cleansing of both the cup and of himself both indicate that the act of making the libation is indeed a sacred one, and one to be done in the correct manner.

These offerings were prescribed as part of public festivals, processions and sacrifices, as well as private ones. Private sacrifices were made at the discretion of the head of the *oikos* at shrines within the home, or at shrines available for public

⁴⁷Zaidman and Pantel, p.38

⁴⁸Homer, *Iliad*, Book XVI, lines 225-230

⁴⁹Translated by A.T Murray, *Vol.2*, (William Heinemann Ltd, London, 1924)

worship.⁵⁰ Public sacrifices were made every month to the appropriate gods. One such example of this is that Apollo was sacrificed to on the seventh day of every month.⁵¹ Each *dēmos* and *phratrē* held festivals on different days of the year, and thus made their sacrifices in accordance with these.⁵² This meant that potentially there could be some kind of festival being held somewhere in the city on almost every day of the year, which is the subject of the complaint made by Sostratos in Menander’s play *Dyskolos*:

“μέλλουσα δ’ ἡ μήτηρ θεῶν θύειν τινί,
οὐκ οἶδ’ ὅτῳ — ποεῖ δὲ τοῦθ’ ὅσημέραι,
περιέρχεται θύουσα τὸν δῆμον κύκλῳ
ἅπαντ’ —”⁵³

“My mother's going to make an offering to
Some god, I don't know who—she does this every day,
Goes with her offerings all around the whole
District—”⁵⁴

In the fifth century, 130 festival days can be firmly dated for Athens.⁵⁵ However, this number only counted the ones which were held for the entire state to attend and did not include the festivals held by the smaller organisations.⁵⁶ The majority of these festivals would have culminated in a sacrifice of some kind.⁵⁷ The scale on which these sacrifices could be made was immense. One example which illustrates this is

⁵⁰Garland, p.29 and JACT pp.110-111

⁵¹JACT, p.118

⁵²*Ibid*, p.118

⁵³Menander, *Dyskolos*, lines 260-264

⁵⁴Translated by W.G. Arnott, *Vol.1*, (William Heinemann, London, 1979)

⁵⁵JACT, p.118

⁵⁶*Ibid*, pp118-119

⁵⁷*Ibid*, pp.118-119

from the Great Dionysia in 333 BC, when 240 bulls were sacrificed to Dionysos.⁵⁸ However, not all of the public sacrifices had to be blood offerings. Examples of bloodless offerings included different types of fruit in the procession for the Sun and the *Horai* in Athens, and a bean dish was offered at the Pyanopsia for Apollo.⁵⁹

The time of month or year at which a sacrifice would take place was not the only constraint based on time that was placed upon the performance of these rituals. The time of day at which a sacrifice was conducted was also an important factor, which was dependent upon the recipient of the sacrifice. It was appropriate for offerings to the Olympian gods to be sacrificed during the day, usually at dawn.⁶⁰ Sacrifices to the gods of the Underworld however, were carried out in the evening, generally at sunset.⁶¹

The sacrificial methods of the Greeks were as varied as their offerings. The bloodless offerings of food were generally left on altars, where it would decompose or be taken by animals. An example of this can be found in *The Plutus* by Aristophanes:

“ἐπεὶ δὲ βωμῶ πόπανα καὶ προθύματα
καθωσιώθη, πέλανος Ἡφαίστου φλογί,”⁶²

“There on the altar honey-cakes and bakemeats
Were offered, food for the Hephaestian flame.”⁶³

Incense was burned and wine, milk, honey, water and olive oil were all poured out onto the ground as libations.⁶⁴ The liquid that was being offered as a libation was poured into a vessel called a *phialē*, and from that vessel it was poured onto the

⁵⁸Garland, p.12

⁵⁹OCD, p.787

⁶⁰Garland, p.14 and OCD, p.788

⁶¹Garland, p.14 and OCD, p.788

⁶²Aristophanes, *The Plutus*, lines 659-660

⁶³Translated by Benjamin Bickley Rogers, *Vol.3*, (William Heinemann Ltd, 1924)

⁶⁴Garland, p.17 and OCD, p.787 and JACT, p.107

ground.⁶⁵ However, generally the entire amount of fluid was not poured out and there was a second stage to the libation, which was the remainder being drunk by the people present.⁶⁶ There were exceptions to this, such as when an oath was being sworn. For this procedure neat wine was used and none of it was imbibed by the present parties.⁶⁷ Depending on whom the libation was dedicated to, an Ancient Greek would either perform a *spondē* or a *choē*.⁶⁸ A *choē* was given to the chthonic deities and to the dead and would quite often not be an offering of wine, as is shown in the *Libation Bearers* by Aeschylus;

“κάγὼ χέουσα τάσδε χέρνιβας βροτοῖς”.⁶⁹

“And I the while, as I pour these lustral offerings to the dead,”⁷⁰

This offering made by Electra was of lustral water rather than of wine. In Book XI of the *Odyssey*, Odysseus describes the libation he performed for the dead, which was a triple libation:

“ἀμφ’ αὐτῶ δὲ χοῆν χεόμην πᾶσιν νεκύεσσι,
 πρῶτα μελικρήτῳ, μετέπειτα δὲ ἡδέϊ οἴνῳ,
 τὸ τρίτον αὖθ’ ὕδατι.”⁷¹

“and around it poured a libation to all the dead,
 first with milk and honey, thereafter with sweet wine,
 and in the third place with water,”⁷²

Here Odysseus offers a mixture of milk and honey, followed by wine and then lastly water. Another characteristic of a *choē* was that it was never drunk by the

⁶⁵Zaidman and Pantel, p.40

⁶⁶*Ibid*, p.40

⁶⁷*Ibid*, p.40

⁶⁸Garland, p.17

⁶⁹Aeschylus, *The Libation Bearers*, line 129

⁷⁰Translated by Herbert Weir Smyth, *Vol.2*, (William Heinemann Ltd, London, 1926)

⁷¹Homer, *Odyssey*, Book XI, lines 26-28

⁷²Translated by A.T Murray, *Vol.1*, (William Heinemann Ltd, London, 1924)

participants.⁷³

Before a blood offering or *thusia*⁷⁴ was made, the animal was ornamented with ribbons and if it had horns, then these were gilded as in the sacrifice from Book III of the *Odyssey*.⁷⁵ The animal was then led in a procession or *pompē* by the priest and the sacrificers, to the altar.⁷⁶ If the sacrifice was a public one, then the *pompē* was led by the officials who were offering the sacrifice on behalf of the city.⁷⁷ Also present were all of the people who would participate in the sacrifice, such as the woman who carried the holy water, and another woman who carried the basket of barley, within which the sacred knife for slitting the animal's throat was hidden.⁷⁸ The person performing the sacrifice as well as any assistants that they may have had would also be standing around the altar, as would the citizens on whose behalf the sacrifice was being performed.⁷⁹

Once the animal had reached the altar, a prayer was said, which placed the sacrifice under the protection of the god or gods to whom the sacrifice was being made to, and holy water was thrown onto the victim's head, so that it would nod its assent to being sacrificed.⁸⁰ This can be seen in the following line from Aristophanes'

Peace:

“σείου σὺ ταχέως.”⁸¹

“Hurry up, move your head!”⁸²

⁷³Zaidman and Pantel, p.41

⁷⁴*Ibid*, p.12

⁷⁵*Ibid*, p.12 and Homer, *Odyssey*, Book III, lines 436-438

⁷⁶Zaidman and Pantel, p.35

⁷⁷*Ibid*, p.35

⁷⁸*Ibid*, p.35

⁷⁹*Ibid*, p.35

⁸⁰Garland, pp.12-14 and Zaidman, p.41

⁸¹Aristophanes, *Peace*, line 960

⁸²Translated by Jeffrey Henderson, *Vol.2*, (William Heinemann Ltd, 1998)

Barley was then thrown on the altar the animal's forelock was cut off.⁸³ The women present at the sacrifice would perform the *ololugē*, or ritual scream while the animal was being stunned, and then its throat would be slit.⁸⁴ However, Lambert disagrees and states that the *ololugē* takes place after the animal is killed rather than when the animal was being stunned, citing the following from the *Odyssey* as evidence:⁸⁵

“Αὐτὰρ ἔπει ῥ’ εὔξαντο καὶ οὐλοχύτας προβάλοντο,

αὐτίκα Νέστορος υἱὸς ὑπέρθυμος Θρασυμήδης

ἤλασεν ἄγχι στάς· πέλεκυς δ’ ἀπέκοψε τένοντας

αὐχενίους, λῦσεν δὲ βοὸς μένος. αἱ δ’ ὀλόλυξαν

θυγατέρες τε νιοί τε καὶ αἰδοίη παράκοιτις

Νέστορος, Εὐρυδίκη, πρέσβα Κλυμένοιο θυγατρῶν.”⁸⁶

“Now when they had prayed, and had strewn the barley grains,

straightaway the son of Nestor, Thrasymedes, high of heart, came

near and dealt the blow; and the axe cut through the sinews of the

neck, and loosened the strength of the heifer. Then the women raised

the sacred cry, the daughters and the sons' wives and the revered

wife of Nestor, Eurydice, the eldest of the daughters of Clymenus,”⁸⁷

Lambert also attests that later sacrifices had the added component of a *euphēmia* or ‘holy silence’ that was observed before the animal was killed.⁸⁸ From this point in the sacrifice, differences begin to occur depending on to whom the sacrifice was being offered.

The sacrificial victim was generally killed at an altar, but sometimes the animal

⁸³Garland, p.14

⁸⁴*Ibid*, p.14

⁸⁵Lambert, p.296

⁸⁶Homer, *Odyssey*, Book III, lines 447-452

⁸⁷Translated by A.T Murray, *Vol.1*, (William Heinemann Ltd, London, 1924)

⁸⁸Lambert, p.296

was thrown into a chasm while still alive, as at the Athenian festival Skirophorion.⁸⁹ If the animal was being sacrificed on behalf of an Olympian, then it was done in such a way that the blood would spout into the air and flow over the altar.⁹⁰ Otherwise, a vessel called a *sphageion* was placed in a position so as to catch the blood from the wound, and then the blood would be poured out onto the altar.⁹¹ If the recipient was a chthonic deity then it was usually killed over a special, low altar called an *eschara*, as opposed to the more commonly used *bōmos*.⁹² Sacrifices made to the dead were also made in such a way that the blood would flow onto the ground, sometimes straight onto the grave of the recipient.⁹³ An example of a sacrifice to the dead can be found in the following lines from the *Odyssey*:

“τοὺς δ’ ἐπεὶ εὐχολῆσι λιτῆσί τε, ἔνθεα νεκρῶν,
 ἔλλισάμην, τὰ δὲ μῆλα λαβὼν ἀπεδειροτόμησα
 ἐς βόθρον, ῥέε δ’ αἶμα κελαινεφές.”⁹⁴

“But when with vows and prayers I had made supplication to the tribes of the dead, I took the sheep and cut their throats over the pit, and the dark blood ran forth.”⁹⁵

After the animal was slaughtered, it was usually treated in one of two ways, again, depending on which realm the recipient inhabited. If the deity was an Olympian, then the thigh bones were wrapped in fat and burned on the altar.⁹⁶ The origins of this aspect of the sacrifice can be found in Hesiod’s *Theogony*, in which he recounts the story of Prometheus and Zeus, and how they determined which portions the gods

⁸⁹JACT, p.107

⁹⁰Garland, p.14

⁹¹Zaidman and Pantel, p.35 and Liddell and Scott, p.684

⁹²Garland, p.14 and Zaidman and Pantel, p.37

⁹³Zaidman and Pantel, p.37

⁹⁴Homer, *Odyssey*, Book XI, lines 34-36

⁹⁵Translated by A.T Murray, *Vol.1*, (William Heinemann Ltd, London, 1924)

⁹⁶Garland, p.14

would receive of a sacrifice.⁹⁷ The rest of the animal was eaten by the sacrificers as a communal meal.⁹⁸ Many of the procedures carried out at this type of sacrifice are evident in the following passage from the *Iliad*:

“αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ ῥ’ εὐξάντο καὶ οὐλοχύτας προβάλοντο,
 αἰέρουσαν μὲν πρῶτα καὶ ἔσφαζαν καὶ ἔδειραν,
 μηρούς τ’ ἐτέταμον κατὰ τε κνίση ἐκάλυψαν
 δίπτυχα ποιήσαντες, ἐπ’ αὐτῶν δ’ ὠμοθέτησαν.
 καῖε δ’ ἐπὶ σχίζης ὁ γέρον, ἐπὶ δ’ αἴθοπα οἶνον
 λείβε· νέοι δὲ παρ’ αὐτὸν ἔχον πεμπώβολα χερσίν.
 αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ κατὰ μῆρ’ ἐκάη καὶ σπλάγχν’ ἐπάσαντο,
 μίστυλλον τ’ ἄρα τᾶλλα καὶ ἄμφ’ ὀβελοῖσιν ἔπειραν,
 ὄπτησάν τε περιφραδέως, ἐρύσαντό τε πάντα.
 αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ παύσαντο πόνου τετύκοντό τε δαῖτα,
 δαίνυντ’ οὐδέ τι θυμὸς ἐδεύετο δαιτὸς εἴσης.”⁹⁹

“Then, when they had prayed, and had sprinkled the barley grains, they first drew back the victims' heads, and cut their throats, and flayed them, and cut out the thighs and covered them with a double layer of fat, and laid raw flesh thereon. And the old man burned them on billets of woof, and made libations over them of flaming wine; and beside him the young men held in their hands the five-pronged forks. But when the thigh-pieces were wholly burned, and they had tasted of the inner parts, they cut up the rest and spitted it, and roasted it carefully, and drew all off the spits. Then, when they

⁹⁷Hesiod, *Theogony*, lines 535-557

⁹⁸Garland, p.14 and JACT, p.108

⁹⁹Homer, *Iliad*, Book I, lines 457-468

had ceased from their labour and had made ready the meal, they feasted, nor did their hearts lack aught of the equal feast.”¹⁰⁰

This passage shows the care with which the sacrificers treated the animal after it had been slaughtered, and how detailed the cooking process was.

In contrast to this, the entire animal was burned as a holocaust when it was sacrificed to a hero, a chthonic deity or to the dead.¹⁰¹ A holocaust was also used when a homicide was committed in the hope of propitiating the Erinyes.¹⁰² According to the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, both propitiatory and purificatory sacrifices were destroyed rather than consumed.¹⁰³ In the case of murder, not only did the Erinyes need to be appeased, but the city had to be purified because it was thought that a homicide infected the entire city with *miasma* or pollution.¹⁰⁴ A blood sacrifice was considered to be the most effective and powerful way to disperse this *miasma*.¹⁰⁵ Other rituals could be performed with the purpose of purification, which could also be considered a type of sacrifice, but these will be discussed in more detail in subsequent chapters. Another instance of a sacrifice not being consumed by the sacrificers, was when it was made to seal an oath, as can be seen in Book III of the *Iliad*, in much the same way as libations made for this purpose.¹⁰⁶

The fifth element or the recipient of the sacrifice has already been briefly discussed. The Greeks sacrificed to their pantheon of gods as well as to heroes and the dead.¹⁰⁷ It was believed that the dead continued to need sustenance after they had

¹⁰⁰Translated by A.T Murray, *Vol.1*, (William Heinemann Ltd, London, 1924)

¹⁰¹Garland, p.14 and JACT, p. 110

¹⁰²JACT, p.110

¹⁰³*OCD*, p.788

¹⁰⁴JACT, pp.106-107 and Garland, p.37

¹⁰⁵Garland, p.37

¹⁰⁶Lambert, p.309 and Homer, *Iliad*, Book III, lines 249-301

¹⁰⁷*OCD*, pp.787-788

passed from the realm of the living.¹⁰⁸ Because of this belief, the dead were recipients of sacrificial offerings, ranging from sheep and oxen in earlier times, to cake, wine and olive oil, which were the most common in fifth-century Athens.¹⁰⁹ An annual sacrifice of a black bull was performed in Athens to honour the soldiers who died fighting the Persians at Plataia in 479 BC.¹¹⁰

The final element possessed by all sacrifices is the motivating factor behind them. All of the other elements have concerned the parties involved, what was offered, and when, where and how it was offered. But it is this final component, the intention of the sacrifice, that will explain why the Greeks sacrificed. Based on the discussion of the previous elements of sacrifice, it can be seen that the Greeks followed very concrete procedures when making an offering, and as such, it can be accepted that a sacrifice is a type of ritual fitting Burkert's definition: "Ritual is a pattern, a sequence of actions that can be perceived, identified, and described as such, and that can be repeated in consequence."¹¹¹ Following on from this it seems a natural progression to apply one more of Burkert's defining characteristics of ritual to sacrifice. Burkert states that ritual was a type of communication,¹¹² which leads to the conclusion that when a sacrifice was carried out, a type of communication was being engaged in. This suggests that sacrifices are carried out in order to communicate to whomever the sacrifice is being offered.

Burkert's idea of communication is in keeping with one of the motives van Baaren identified for sacrifices. However, van Baaren concludes that there are three reasons why people sacrifice:

¹⁰⁸Garland, p.73

¹⁰⁹*Ibid*, p.73

¹¹⁰*Ibid*, p.14

¹¹¹Burkert, Walter, "The Problem of Ritual Killing" in *Violent Origins: Ritual Killing and Cultural Formation*, edited by Robert G. Hamteron-Kelly, pp.149-176, (Stanford, 1987), p.150

¹¹²*Ibid*, p.150

1. to make contact with the deity, to establish or maintain communion with the other world;
2. to keep the cosmic action of nature going upon its regular course, to support the cosmic order;
3. to obtain something from the deity, either in a positive or a negative sense; whether objects of a material kind such as food or children, or something of a spiritual nature such as peace of mind, forgiveness of trespasses committed, deliverance from guilt etc.¹¹³

These motives are again generic, rather than specific to Greek religion and so are not necessarily all relevant to Greek practises.

Robert Garland in his book *Religion and the Greeks* likens the Olympian deities to people who have the television on constantly but are not truly paying attention to what is being shown.¹¹⁴ It was therefore the task of the person wishing to make contact with a god to do something worthy of capturing their attention and one such thing was to carry out a sacrifice. As has already been demonstrated, the Greeks had a variety of sacrificial customs, but it seems on the surface that they were all carried out with the same basic intention or motivation on the part of the sacrificer, namely in order to gain something. The thing that was gained was not necessarily a tangible material object, but it could be the good will or protection of the gods to assure fertility or avert some kind of calamity. As Mikalson points out, sacrifice was the usual way of maintaining the goodwill of the gods, and failure to do so could result in severe punishment.¹¹⁵ The following is a brief selection of examples of the types of sacrifices discussed above, and the reasons why they were conducted.

¹¹³van Baaren, p.11

¹¹⁴Garland, p.11

¹¹⁵Mikalson, Jon D, *Honor Thy Gods: Popular Religion in Greek Tragedy*, (Chapel Hill, 1991), p.145

Votive offerings were given either in thanks for having received a divine favour, or in anticipation of receiving one.¹¹⁶ Making an offering after receiving the favour requested would make the deity more receptive to the thought of granting future favours to the suppliant. Sacrifices that were performed before the favour was granted were an incentive for the god to carry out the request.

Libations could also be made to gain something, but they were performed for specific purposes. A *spondē* was poured at every symposium so that the gods might prevent the behaviour of the people in attendance from getting out of control.¹¹⁷ Libations were made at more common occasions, such as when a soldier left home for war and the request was that this journey would be placed under the protection of the gods.¹¹⁸ An example of a libation being performed at an everyday type of occasion can be found in Antiphon's *Against the Stepmother* in the following lines:

“ἐπειδὴ γὰρ ἐδεδειπνήκεσαν,

οἶον εἰκός, ὁ μὲν θύων Διὶ Κτησίῳ κάκεϊνον ὑποδεχόμενος, ὁ δ’
ἐκπλεῖν τε μέλλων καὶ παρ’ ἀνδρὶ ἑταίρῳ αὐτοῦ δειπνῶν,
σπονδάς τε ἐποιοῦντο καὶ λιβανωτὸν ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν ἐπετίθεσαν.”¹¹⁹

“After supper was over, the two naturally set about pouring libations and sprinkling some frankincense to secure the favour of heaven, as the one was offering sacrifice to Zeus Ctesius and entertaining the other, and his companion was supping with a friend and on the point of putting out to sea.”¹²⁰

¹¹⁶Garland, p.16

¹¹⁷*Ibid*, p.17

¹¹⁸*Ibid*, p.17

¹¹⁹Antiphon, *Against the Stepmother*, 1.18.4-7

¹²⁰Translated by K. J. Maidment, *Vol.1*, (William Heinemann Ltd, London, 1941) as found at <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?doc=Perseus:text:1999.01.0020:speech=1:section=17> on June 3rd 2008

This is an example of the sacrificial procedures followed after dinner was completed. Sacrifices were dedicated to Zeus Ktesios, and then libations were made.

Sacrifices were customary before a battle. Libations were made before the Athenian fleet set sail, as is recounted by Thucydides:

“κρατῆράς τε κεράσαντες παρ’ ἅπαν τὸ
στράτευμα καὶ ἐκπώμασι χρυσοῖς τε καὶ ἀργυ-
ροῖς οἳ τε ἐπιβάται καὶ οἱ ἄρχοντες σπένδοντες.”¹²¹

“the mariners as well as the officers throughout
the whole army making libations with golden and silver
cups from wine they had mixed.”¹²²

As well as feasting before a battle, libations were part of the ceremony that signalled the cessation of hostilities.¹²³ Blood offerings were also made during times of war. Immediately before a battle was engaged in, *spagia* or sacrificial victims were slaughtered.¹²⁴ The Spartans are reported to have driven goats out onto the battlefield and ritually killed them.¹²⁵ These sacrifices would have been to gain the god’s favour and aid in securing a victory.

Sacrifices such as the ones mentioned above, for the purposes indicated, are in keeping with a theory that was put forward in 1871 by Edward Tylor. While his theory has been discounted by some, as will be discussed in more detail, it is worth examining his work as a starting point for gaining an understanding of the motivations of the Ancient Greeks for making sacrifices. Tylor bases his theory on the assumption

¹²¹Garland, p. 48 and Thucydides, VI.32.2

¹²²Translated by Charles Forster Smith, *Vol.3*, (William Heinemann Ltd, London, 1931)

¹²³Garland, p.48

¹²⁴*Ibid* p.48

¹²⁵*Ibid*, p.48

that the main idea behind animistic natural religion is correct.¹²⁶ His idea was that when deities were being envisioned by different cultures, the inspiration for them was in fact man himself.¹²⁷ The natural consequence of this idea is that when humans are engaging in dealings with their deities, they behave with the same intentions and motivations as if they were interacting with other people.¹²⁸ This behaviour extends to sacrificial procedures, which Tylor likens to making a request from a chief or other person of power with the ability to provide protection, and grant or deny requests as he sees fit.¹²⁹ Giving some kind of offering would be more likely to engender the desired outcome when beseeching a man in power, and thus, according to Tylor's theory, it was the same when making a request of a god.

According to Van Baal, Tylor's theory reduces the status of a sacrifice to that of a bribe which is given to convince a deity to grant whatever favour the suppliant may be requesting.¹³⁰ The term which is used for this practise is *do ut des*,¹³¹ which basically means that the person making the sacrifice, or giving the bribe or gift is doing so in order to get something in return.¹³² Van Baal is more inclined to view making an offering or performing a sacrifice as an "act of self-humiliation".¹³³ He is content to view a sacrifice as a means of making a request of a deity, and then continues on to say that it is making a request that is self-humiliating.¹³⁴ His reason for this is that if a person makes a request of someone, whether divine or mortal, then they are

¹²⁶Tylor, Edward Burnett. "Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Art, and Custom" Vol. 2 in *The Collected Works of Edward Burnett Tylor, Vol.4*, (London, 1994), p.356

¹²⁷*Ibid*, p.356

¹²⁸*Ibid*, p.356

¹²⁹*Ibid*, p.356

¹³⁰Van Baal, p.163

¹³¹Kirk, G.S. "Some Methodological Pitfalls in the Study of Ancient Greek Sacrifice (in particular)" in *Le Sacrifice Dans L'Antiquité*, (Genève, 1981), p.75

¹³²Van Baal, p.162

¹³³*Ibid*, p.170

¹³⁴*Ibid*, p.170

recognising their dependence and the superior power of the being they are supplicating, a sentiment echoed by Firth.¹³⁵ Van Baal is of the opinion that asking something of a god is “the most effective confession of man’s belief and worship.”¹³⁶ Based on this statement it would appear that in Van Baal’s opinion, a sacrifice was carried out as an affirmation of faith, which contrasts dramatically with Tylor’s more practical theory of giving so that one may receive. This contrast perhaps is the cause of Van Baal’s sweeping statement that Tylor’s theory has been rejected because it is incompatible with religion.¹³⁷ Perhaps Van Baal’s disregard for Tylor’s theory has been influenced by his own personal beliefs, or he was trying to base all religions on a model that seems to be much more Christian. His statement of incompatibility however, included all of the religions of the world, that exist currently and existed in the past. Clearly there have been, and still are some religions where aspects of Tylor’s theory are relevant.

While Tylor’s theory may not encompass every facet of the complex motivations behind the reasons for Greek sacrifice, it is definitely compatible in some respects with Greek religion. G.S. Kirk in his article “Pitfalls in the Study of Greek Sacrifice” is content to retain the idea that a sacrifice was a gift of some kind to the gods. As has already been mentioned, Plato defined a sacrifice in exactly these terms. Euripides also has Medea voice a similar sentiment:

“πείθειν δῶρα καὶ θεοῦς λόγος.”¹³⁸

“They say gifts win over even the gods;”¹³⁹

Kirk begins his argument with an approach not at all dissimilar to Tylor’s in that he

¹³⁵Van Baal, p.170 and Firth p.12

¹³⁶Van Baal, p.170

¹³⁷*Ibid*, p.163

¹³⁸Euripides, *Medea*, line 965

¹³⁹Translated by David Kovacs, *Vol.1*, (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1994) as found at <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?doc=Perseus:text:1999.01.0114:line=941> on April 24th 2008

stresses that there are a variety of motivations for gift giving between humans and that these motivations should be considered in relation to sacrifice.¹⁴⁰ It is his opinion that the range of motivations for gift giving between men is mostly similar to the motivations for making a sacrifice, but that there may have been additional motives that are beyond what occurs between ordinary mortals.¹⁴¹

Kirk's list of reasons for gift giving includes giving thanks, propitiation, either as an act of appeasement or persuasion and a way of showing respect.¹⁴² Respect could be shown in a religious context as either awe for the deity or by stressing the inferiority of the worshipper.¹⁴³ At this point Kirk points out that neither the awe nor the inferiority was extreme for the Ancient Greeks, citing Christian and Mesopotamian examples of what was considered to be the extreme versions of each.¹⁴⁴

The notion of sacrifice as gift giving in Greek religion is further expounded upon by Kirk when he uses the concept of *xenia* as an analogue for it. This relationship between host and guest was marked by the giving of gifts by the host with the expectation that when their roles would be reversed he would in turn be the recipient of such guest-friendship gifts.¹⁴⁵ Material gifts were not the only expectations and obligations to be found in this relationship. Protection and hospitality were also to be offered and then reciprocated upon at the next opportunity when the guest became the host.¹⁴⁶ For the Greeks, gift giving was a means to form ties and relationships to people who were not part of their immediate family or part of their community.¹⁴⁷ It is

¹⁴⁰Kirk, p.74

¹⁴¹*Ibid*, p.74

¹⁴²*Ibid*, p.74

¹⁴³*Ibid*, p.74

¹⁴⁴*Ibid*, p.74

¹⁴⁵*Ibid*, p.74

¹⁴⁶*Ibid*, p.74

¹⁴⁷*Ibid*, p.75

Kirk's opinion that one of the functions of performing a sacrifice for the Greeks was creating and reinforcing the relationship between the sacrificer and the god as that of *xenoi*.¹⁴⁸ This opinion seems to be a valid one when one considers the amount of respect, and without exaggeration one could say reverence, that the Greeks placed upon the institution of *xenia*, which was expressed by and based upon gift giving.

There is another aspect of *xenia* which Kirk draws attention to and invites comparison of with Greek sacrifices. As has already been mentioned, the gods were thought to derive sustenance from the smoke of the burnt sacrificial offerings. One of the responsibilities of the host, according to *xenia*, was to provide his guest with a meal or meals depending on the duration of their visit. In a similar fashion, the sacrificer was providing for the gods whenever he made an offering.¹⁴⁹ It is this belief that the gods were sustained by the smoke from sacrifices that features in Aristophanes' *Birds*. By building their city between the earth and the heavens, the birds could intercept the smoke from sacrifices made by men, and prevent the gods from receiving it. After weakening the gods in such a manner, the birds could then become gods themselves and have the supreme power.¹⁵⁰ While Aristophanes wrote a fantastical play, it does reinforce the idea of a sacrifice being nourishment for the recipient.

Unlike Van Baal, Kirk is not adverse to the notion that one of the many factors involved in sacrifice for the Greeks was indeed bribery. Making an offering as type of bribe or incentive was not necessarily the reason for performing sacrifices on every single occasion, but it can also not be excluded from every occasion.¹⁵¹ It seems fairly

¹⁴⁸*Ibid*, p.75

¹⁴⁹*Ibid*, pp.75-76

¹⁵⁰Aristophanes, *Birds*, lines 185-193 for the outlining of the plan to weaken the gods as found at <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0025&layout=&loc=185> on

July 16th 2008

¹⁵¹Kirk, p.75

evident in Book VI of the *Iliad*, that the Greeks themselves were content with the idea of promising some kind of offering to the gods if they would only fulfil some action for the sacrificer first.¹⁵² Euripides in his play *Heraclidae*, creates a scene that is the opposite of the norm that is being described here. After being spared by the Athenians, Eurystheus tells them that he will bring defeat to the Dorians in the future after his death, as they will house his tomb. He places a condition upon this however, which is that no offerings are to be made at his tomb, which is an inversion of what would normally be the case once this kind of hero cult was established.¹⁵³

The idea that acts of holiness can be equated to barter or some kind of mercantile venture is also discussed in Plato's *Euthyphro*.¹⁵⁴ It is Firth's opinion that it was not normally the case that the sacrificer would expect some kind of direct material reciprocation for his offering.¹⁵⁵ He does concede however, that it was things of the intangible variety, such as good health and a successful harvest that were often considered to be the outcome of the sacrifice by the people who made it.¹⁵⁶ Firth continues on to state that sacrifices have other functions besides being an incentive for a god to grant the requests of the sacrificers. One of these functions was to affirm the belief that the proper relationship between mortals and the gods had been formed via sacrifice.¹⁵⁷ According to Firth, this in itself was beneficial, but he fails to mention another important set of relationships that could be seen to be at the very least reinforced by sacrifice, and thus also be beneficial in some way.¹⁵⁸ This other set of relationships being referred to are those formed by the people involved in the

¹⁵²Homer, *Iliad*, Book VI, lines 305-310

¹⁵³Euripides, *Heraclidae*, lines 1026-1043 and Mikalson, pp.34-35

¹⁵⁴Plato, *Euthyphro*, 14e

¹⁵⁵Firth, p.13

¹⁵⁶*Ibid*, p.13

¹⁵⁷*Ibid*, p.13

¹⁵⁸*Ibid*, p.13

sacrifice, whether it is the members of a single *oikos* or the entire citizenry of the *polis*.

Immense public festivals were held throughout Greece by the city states. Two of the most spectacular examples of such festivals were the Panathenaia and the Hyakinthia in Athens and Sparta respectively.¹⁵⁹ These festivals were attended by all of the citizens in the city, all of whom participated in the sacrifice and the following public feast, which concluded the proceedings.¹⁶⁰ Zaidman and Pantel agree with Firth and Kirk concerning the idea of a bond or relationship being formed and solidified by the act of sacrifice between men and gods.¹⁶¹ However, they also recognise that these festivals provided the citizens with an opportunity to eat meat, and even more importantly how they strengthened the ties between them.¹⁶² The sacrifice and subsequent feast was a way for the citizens of the *polis* to be seen as one community or even entity by others as well as by themselves.¹⁶³

The importance of sacrifice, especially of animal sacrifice, in respect of community identity is perhaps best highlighted by the mention of some of those groups who existed on the borders of *polis* life, if not outside of it altogether. The reason for this is that one of the defining ways in which they announced their departure from the civic norm, and thus affirmed their identity was in their sacrificial procedures. Two of these groups were the Pythagoreans and the Orphics. The latter group, the Orphics, were the more extreme of the two in that they abstained from consuming meat in any fashion, both for sacrificial purposes and for eating themselves.¹⁶⁴ As has already been seen, participation in the civic feasts was a chance

¹⁵⁹Zaidman and Pantel, p.34

¹⁶⁰*Ibid*, p.34

¹⁶¹*Ibid*, p.34

¹⁶²*Ibid*, p.34

¹⁶³*Ibid*, pp.29-30 and 34

¹⁶⁴*Ibid*, p.38

to eat meat and to be an acknowledged member of the community, and therefore, the Orphics denied themselves any participation in these events. At these times they effectively ostracised themselves from the community that existed around them.¹⁶⁵

The Pythagoreans were split into two groups, one of which concurred with the Orphics in that they refrained from eating meat and making blood offerings entirely.¹⁶⁶ The second group would not eat or sacrifice sheep or cattle, but they were content to sacrifice goats and pigs.¹⁶⁷ According to Zaidman and Pantel they were thus able to achieve a compromise between their religious views and participation in civic or community life.¹⁶⁸ This contrasts with the followers of Dionysos who are at the other extreme to the Orphics and Pythagoreans. This group was renowned for eating raw flesh or *ōmophagia*.¹⁶⁹ This ritual was a complete reversal of everything that made up the usual civic sacrifice, both in terms of manner and value.¹⁷⁰ Whether it was by abstinence or performing almost bestial rites, these groups defined themselves as communities of a sort by their sacrificial procedures in the same way that the citizens of the *polis* did, and thus distinguished themselves from the community that they had separated from.

For the Greeks, participation in the religious activities of the *polis* was itself seen to be an act of piety. Impiety or *asebeia* was thought to be an “absence of respect for the beliefs and rituals shared by the inhabitants of a city.”¹⁷¹ Whereas piety was expressed in part by making offerings to the gods and to the dead, and by participating in public rituals both through financial contributions and a physical attendance at such

¹⁶⁵*Ibid*, p.38

¹⁶⁶*Ibid*, pp.38-39

¹⁶⁷*Ibid*, p.39

¹⁶⁸*Ibid*, p.39

¹⁶⁹*Ibid*, p.39

¹⁷⁰*Ibid*, p.39

¹⁷¹*Ibid*, p.11

events.¹⁷² These means of pious expression were also used as the proof of its existence and extent by those who might judge a citizen's level of piety.¹⁷³ While, as Zaidman and Pantel state, it is difficult to truly understand the personal feeling on the part of the individual performing these actions, it is clear that the community as a whole regarded piety as a very serious issue.¹⁷⁴ Such was the seriousness of this matter, that the community could bring people before the court who were thought to have displayed *asebeia* and condemn them if they were found guilty.¹⁷⁵

In the *Cyclops* by Euripides, Polyphemus is presented as an impious and unholy creature. Euripides emphasizes this fact by having him declare that he has no care for the gods, or for temples and that he makes sacrifices to nobody except himself and his belly, which he considers to be the greatest god of them all.¹⁷⁶ Polyphemus' lack of regard for the gods, and his refusal to conduct proper sacrifices, instead of the perverted versions he carries out when he is preparing a meal, are part of what separates him from the civilized men. To the Greeks, piety was an integral aspect of their lives. Based on not only this account by Euripides, but also on the fact that somebody who was seen to be impious could be charged in the lawcourts, it would seem that piety, and the demonstrations of piety were considered to be so important that it was part of what made up a civilized man.

Based on this short discourse, it is evident that the motivations for sacrifice among the Greeks were varied and complicated. It would appear that one over-riding motive did not automatically exclude any other underlying ones. It was possible to make offerings with a complex tangle of motivations that would not necessarily be possible

¹⁷²*Ibid*, p.13

¹⁷³*Ibid*, p.11

¹⁷⁴*Ibid*, p.11

¹⁷⁵*Ibid*, p.11

¹⁷⁶Euripides, *Cyclops*, lines 316-346 as found at <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0094;layout=:query=card%3D%2312;loc=273> on July 22nd 2008

to unravel. This leads us to return to van Baaren's six elements that are present in all sacrifices. As has been demonstrated, all six were present in all Greek sacrifices in a number of combinations. Therefore, an answer to the question 'What is a sacrifice?' should now be achievable. This apparently basic question has led to much scholarship, with many different answers. After this investigation, the only conclusion that can be reached is that there is no simple definition for sacrifice in regard to the Ancient Greeks alone, without trying to encompass the practises of all cultures. But out of necessity an answer must be given. To somewhat echo Plato, a sacrifice is a gift to the gods, or to the dead. For the Greeks it is a gift that may come in many forms and may be given by a variety of people on a number of occasions. The procedure by which this gift is given is structured and follows a set of rules that are dependent upon the occasion and the recipient. This gift can be given purely as an expression of piety or with the idea of nourishing those who are no longer living. A sacrifice to the Greeks was also an opportunity to strengthen the bonds within whichever group on whose behalf the sacrifice was being made. Perhaps most importantly, sacrifice was a means to initiate and reinforce the ties between the gods and the sacrificer, and place the person making the sacrifice in a position from which they could ask for something from the gods by offering an incentive. This seems to be the simplest answer possible to what is in actuality a complex issue.

Chapter Two: Sophoclean Sacrifice

The primary focus of this chapter is how sacrifice is represented in the surviving plays written by Sophocles. The plays *Oedipus Tyrannus* and *Oedipus at Colonus* will not be considered in great detail in this chapter as they are the main focus of the proceeding two chapters. Scenes from the remaining plays will be examined and hypotheses will be given as to the reasons why these sacrifices were depicted at that particular point in the play, and what they may emphasise or reinforce to the audience. Mikalson, in his book *Honor Thy Gods*, states that the interpretation of rituals in tragedy has become complicated by modern ideas about what response the depiction of certain rituals will elicit from the audience.¹⁷⁷ He carries on to explain that modern scholarship has placed reasonings behind sacrifice, such as an exhibition of “social solidarity” and “of the horror of violence”, which is substantiated by a meagre amount of evidence from the Greeks themselves.¹⁷⁸ It is his contention that there is scant evidence to suggest that the tragedians used ritualistic scenes to engender a specific response from the audience.¹⁷⁹

While it is true that without solid proof we cannot state with complete certainty that this is what the tragedians did, it is hard to believe that playwrights of such skill were not conscious of what they were writing, and how the audience was most likely to receive it, even if their audience was not aware of why they were reacting the way that they were. In direct contrast to Mikalson's opinion, Segal states that “it is easy to see why its [sacrifice] disruption should play so central a role in tragedy.”¹⁸⁰ The basis

¹⁷⁷Mikalson, p.12

¹⁷⁸*Ibid*, p.12

¹⁷⁹*Ibid*, p.12

¹⁸⁰Segal, Charles, *Tragedy and Civilization: An Interpretation of Sophocles*, (Cambridge, 1981), p.40

for Segal's opinion is that sacrifice indicates the relationship of humanity with the gods and with beasts; that is being beneath the gods, but above the savagery of beasts.¹⁸¹ It therefore follows, that disorder in sacrifice can be interpreted as disorder in society and the laws that man follows. It would seem that a Greek audience would be more appreciative of the role of sacrifice in tragedy than a modern one, because they would know in ways that we will never be able to, what exactly sacrifice meant to themselves, their family and their society, and thus what the disruption of this would then mean. However, Mikalson's statement that sacrificial scenes must be examined as they relate to the play they occur in, and caution must be used when trying to interpret one play based on another, has merit.¹⁸² With this in mind, the following discussion will discuss the scenes individually, but comment upon the similarities when they do occur.

The first play to be considered is the *Ajax*. After being denied possession of Achilles' arms by the sons of Atreus, who gave them instead to Odysseus, Ajax felt that he had been dishonoured to such an extent that he was driven to murder. Athena, however, caused a madness to come upon him so that instead of killing his intended victims, he was in actuality killing animals. As Segal points out, when Ajax first appears on stage, the scene is one of aberrant sacrifices.¹⁸³ When Ajax speaks to Athena he says the following:

“ὦ χαῖρ' Ἀθήνα, χαῖρε Διογενὲς τέκνον,
ὡς εὖ παρέστης· καί σε παγχρύσοις ἐγὼ
στέψω λαφύροις τῆσδε τῆς ἄγρας χάριν.”¹⁸⁴

¹⁸¹*Ibid*, pp.44-45

¹⁸²Mikalson, p.12

¹⁸³Segal, p.138

¹⁸⁴Sophocles, *Ajax*, lines 92-94

“Hail, Athena! Hail, daughter of Zeus! How loyally have you stood by me! Yes, I shall honour you with golden offerings from my booty to thank you for this catch.”¹⁸⁵

The beasts that Ajax has mistakenly killed would normally suffice as sacrificial offerings to the gods, so while he is telling the goddess that he will dedicate offerings to her, he has in fact destroyed a part of what could have been offered to the gods.¹⁸⁶

Shortly after this interaction between Athena and Ajax, the Chorus speculate upon the reason behind the madness that came upon the hero. The following lines show the possible explanations that the Chorus feel would be likely to bring such a punishment upon Ajax:

“ἢ ῥά σε Ταυροπόλα Διὸς Ἄρτεμις—
ὦ μεγάλα φάτις, ὦ
μᾶτερ αἰσχύνας ἐμᾶς—
ὄρμασε πανδάμους ἐπὶ βοῦς ἀγελαιίας,
ἢ ποῦ τινος νίκας ἀκαρπώτου χάριν,
ἦρα κλυτῶν ἐνάρων
ψευσθεῖς ἰσθμίοις, εἴτ’ ἐλαφαβολίαις”¹⁸⁷

“Was it Artemis Tauropola, daughter of Zeus,
O powerful rumour, you that are the mother
of the shame I feel, that sent him against the
cattle of the people's flocks, perhaps on
account of some victory for which he had
made no offering, cheated of glorious spoils,

¹⁸⁵Translated by Hugh Lloyd-Jones, *Vol.1*, (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1994)

¹⁸⁶Segal, p.138

¹⁸⁷*Ajax*, lines 172-181

or of her gift after the shooting of deer,”¹⁸⁸

The Chorus is correct in assuming that the madness of Ajax was the work of some god, but they fail to guess which god, and for what reason. The possibility which they discuss in these lines, is that Ajax offended Artemis Tauropola because he did not make the proper offerings to her after a victory or a successful hunt.

Segal makes an interesting link between the scene where Ajax promises offerings to Athena, and this speculation that perhaps he did not make the appropriate offerings to Artemis Tauropola. In the first instance, Ajax is promising offerings whilst in the process of destroying the beasts that would usually be considered victims in the highest form of sacrifice. It is not the promise of offerings that interests Segal, but rather the destruction of the animals which were likely to become gifts to the gods. The next instance concerns a failure to sacrifice to the gods and provide appropriate offerings when they ought to have been made. Segal states that in both of these circumstances, the actual interaction between Athena and Ajax and the killing of the beasts, and the surmised failure to sacrifice when appropriate, indicate that the “favorable reciprocity” that exists between men and the gods has been destroyed.¹⁸⁹

Sacrifice and the perversion of sacrificial ritual occurs a number of times during the *Ajax*. The vocabulary of the play is highly suggestive of sacrifice, and as Segal points out, the verb *sphazein* and its compounds are found in the *Ajax* more than in any other Sophoclean play.¹⁹⁰ The description of the killed and mutilated animals is given by Tecmessa in the following lines:

“τοιαῦτ’ ἄν ἴδοις σκηνῆς ἔνδον
χειροδάκτα σφάγι’ αἰμοβαφῆ,

¹⁸⁸Translated by Hugh Lloyd-Jones, *Vol.1*, (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1994)

¹⁸⁹Segal, p.138

¹⁹⁰*Ibid*, p.139 and note 106 for the citing of specific line numbers.

κείνου χρηστήρια τάνδρός.”¹⁹¹

“such are the sacrifices, slaughtered by his hand

and bathed in blood, that you will see within the

hut, sacrifices of that man, ominous of the future.”¹⁹²

Not only is the term *sphagia* used in these lines, but the word *chrēstēria* is also used. This word is used to describe a sacrificial offering made when approaching an oracle.¹⁹³ Tecmessa continues her description, and includes the detail of Ajax cutting out the tongues of the victims, which Segal describes as a “regular part of the sacrificial act.”¹⁹⁴ By describing the torture and deaths of these animals in terms of sacrifice, Sophocles emphasises how much chaos and disorder has crept into the situation.

Ajax' madness is, in a way, described by the fact that he would orchestrate such a perverse act. As can be seen in the previous chapter, a sacrifice was a highly structured event. There was a set procedure to be followed, no matter how small the sacrifice was, what kind of sacrifice it was or how many people could be considered the beneficiaries of the sacrifice. The sacred act of making a sacrifice was to be conducted in a certain way, with a specific order. The fact that Ajax has broken all of these conventions, and even used some of them in a ritualistic killing of what he thought were people, underscores the severity of his madness. Ajax' return to sanity and his realisation of the deeds he has committed are accompanied by more sacrifices. This next set of sacrificial imagery functions in the same way as the first, except that instead of indicating a loss of reason, it highlights the restoration of order that Ajax

¹⁹¹ *Ajax*, lines 218-220

¹⁹² Translated by Hugh Lloyd-Jones, *Vol.1*, (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1994)

¹⁹³ Segal, p.139 and Liddell and Scott, p.789

¹⁹⁴ *Ajax*, line 238 and Segal, p.139

accomplishes on his own terms.¹⁹⁵

After his sanity has returned to him, Ajax realises the extent of the deeds he committed whilst afflicted with Athena's madness. The course of action he then decides upon is to commit suicide so as to avoid dishonour or being thought of as a coward.¹⁹⁶ In the two hundred or so lines that follow on from Ajax reaching this decision, he appears to calm himself considerably, so much so that the Chorus are under the mistaken impression that he leaves their company simply to make reparation with the gods in the form of a sacrifice. The Chorus' suppositions about Ajax' intentions can be seen in the following lines:

“νῦν, ὦ Ζεῦ, πάρα λευκὸν εὐ-

ήμερον πελάσαι φάος

θοᾶν ὠκυάλων νεῶν, ὅτ' Αἴας

λαθίπονος πάλιν, θεῶν δ' αὖ

πάνθ' ἑσμι' ἔξ-

ἦνυσ' εὐνομία σέβων μεγίστα.”¹⁹⁷

“now, O Zeus, can the bright light of day

shine upon the swift ships that glide over

the sea, now that Ajax once more forgets

his pain, and has fulfilled the ordinances

of the gods with all their sacrifices,

doing them reverence with all obedience.”¹⁹⁸

In these lines the Chorus are correct in a sense; Ajax is indeed restoring order to the

¹⁹⁵Segal, p.139

¹⁹⁶*Ajax*, lines 457-480

¹⁹⁷*Ibid*, lines 708-713

¹⁹⁸Translated by Hugh Lloyd-Jones, *Vol.1*, (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1994)

situation by sacrificing to the gods, but he is offering himself as the victim.

The death of Ajax and the sacrificial imagery that accompanies it, “answers” the killing or sacrifice of the beasts that set these events in motion according to Segal.¹⁹⁹ As with the earlier scene, vocabulary associated with sacrifice, and aspects of the sacrificial ritual are incorporated into Ajax' suicide. Ajax refers to his sword as the *sphageus* or “sacrificer” and has plans to bury his sword, which Segal states is a parody of sacrificial procedure.²⁰⁰ Through another act of sacrifice Ajax restores order and makes peace with the gods.²⁰¹ This act does not however, repair his relationship with the community of the Achaean army as a whole. His suicide takes place in a secluded place with no witnesses. His sacrifice is for himself and the gods, the community is completely excluded from the whole process, whereas it would often be the beneficiary of such a sacrifice.²⁰² At the beginning of the play Ajax is killing animals in a way that verges upon becoming a twisted kind of sacrifice. At the end of the action for Ajax, he becomes himself, the sacrificial victim like a beast away from the rest of society.²⁰³ The extent to which the sacrificial procedures are restored to their usual state mirrors how much order has been re-established in all other spheres.

The next play to be considered for the purposes of this chapter is the *Electra*. This play features many scenes involving sacrifice, and like the *Ajax*, these scenes are indicative of some kind of disorder, in particular within the family and household. It is appropriate then, that the entire situation of the play was instigated by a sacrifice. This sacrifice is of course the sacrifice of Iphigeneia by her father Agamemnon. As Segal points out, it is surprising that the recounting of this event is made by Electra,

¹⁹⁹Segal, p.139

²⁰⁰*Ajax*, lines 815 and 658-659 respectively and Segal, p.139

²⁰¹Segal, p.139

²⁰²*Ibid*, p.139

²⁰³*Ibid*, p.139

and not by somebody hostile towards Agamemnon.²⁰⁴ Clytemnestra first mentions the sacrifice of her daughter during a confrontation with Electra, using Iphigeneia's death as her reasoning for killing Agamemnon.²⁰⁵ However, instead of instilling in Electra a sense of horror at what was done to her sister, Electra's reply defends the action, as can be seen in the following text:

“πατήρ ποθ’ οὐμός, ὡς ἐγὼ κλύω, θεᾶς
παίζων κατ’ ἄλσος ἐξεκίνησεν ποδοῖν
στικτὸν κεράστην ἔλαφον, οὗ κατὰ σφαγὰς
ἐκκομπάσας ἔπος τι τυγχάνει βαλῶν.
κάκ τοῦδε μηνίσασα Λητώα κόρη
κατεῖχ’ Ἀχαιοῦς, ἕως πατήρ ἀντίσταθμον
τοῦ θηρὸς ἐκθύσειε τὴν αὐτοῦ κόρην.
ᾧδ’ ἦν τὰ κείνης θύματ’· οὐ γὰρ ἦν λύσις
ἄλλη στρατῶ πρὸς οἶκον οὐδ’ εἰς Ἴλιον.
ἀνθ’ ᾧν, βιασθεῖς πολλὰ τ’ ἀντιβὰς, μόλις
ἔθυσεν αὐτήν, οὐχὶ Μενέλεω χάριν.”²⁰⁶

“My father, as I have been told, was sporting in the sacred grove of the goddess and by his footfall started up a dappled, horned stag, and when he killed it chanced to let fall a boastful word. In her anger at this Leto's daughter detained the Achaeans, until in requital for the beast my father sacrificed his own daughter. That was how she came to be sacrificed;

²⁰⁴*Ibid*, p.271

²⁰⁵Sophocles, *Electra*, lines 530-551

²⁰⁶*Ibid*, lines 566-576

for there was no other means of releasing the
 army to go home or to go to Troy. It was for this
 that he sacrificed her, against his will and after much
 resistance, not for the sake of Menelaus.”²⁰⁷

The sacrifice of Iphigeneia does not seem to disturb Electra in anyway, or seem to her to be wrong in any sense. As Segal points out, the sacrifice goes against the social and familial order.²⁰⁸ This does not seem to occur to Electra, or it simply does not matter to her because to her the ultimate cause of the current familial disorder is the murder of her father.

Agamemnon's murder was carried out by Clytemnestra and Aegisthus upon his return home from Troy. Some years later, Electra is still mourning him as if he was newly dead and a sense of wrongness permeates the household and the rituals conducted within it. Instead of mourning Agamemnon and commemorating his death as would be proper for a wife, Clytemnestra celebrates the day of his murder, according to Electra's account:

“ἀλλ’ ὥσπερ ἐγγελῶσα τοῖς ποιουμένοις,
 εὐροῦσ’ ἐκείνην ἡμέραν, ἐν ἧ’ τότε
 πατέρα τὸν ἄμὸν ἐκ δόλου κατέκτανεν,
 ταύτη χοροὺς ἴστησι καὶ μηλοσφαγεῖ
 θεοῖσιν ἔμμην’ ἱερὰ τοῖς σωτηρίοις.”²⁰⁹

“but as though she is gloating over what she
 has done, she observes the day on which she
 treacherously killed my father and on it sets up

²⁰⁷Translated by Hugh Lloyd-Jones, *Vol.1*, (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1994)

²⁰⁸Segal, p.271

²⁰⁹*El.*, lines 277-281

dances and slaughters cattle, sacrificing monthly
victims to the gods that have preserved her.”²¹⁰

Instead of making offerings to the dead man, which, as was seen in the previous chapter, was a common type of sacrifice, Clytemnestra marks the anniversary with sacrifices that are instead reminiscent of the festival days. It is not a time when the family provides for their dead kin as it should be, but is instead a celebration. The difference between what this sacrifice should be, and what it actually is, is one of the ways in which Sophocles illustrates how much wrongness has pervaded this family.

The disturbance to the familial order continues when Electra tells Chrysothemis not to make offerings at Agamemnon's tomb on behalf of their mother. Clytemnestra sent Chrysothemis to make the offerings in her stead to try to placate the dead due to a dream she had, which instilled in her a fear that she was about to have vengeance taken upon her.²¹¹ When Electra learns of this, her reply to Chrysothemis is as follows:

“ἀλλ’, ὦ φίλη, τούτων μὲν ὧν ἔχεις χεροῖν
τύμβῳ προσάψης μηδέν· οὐ γάρ σοι θέμις
οὐδ’ ὄσιον ἐχθρᾶς ἀπὸ γυναικὸς ἰστάναι
κτερίσματ’ οὐδὲ λουτρὰ προσφέρειν πατρί.”²¹²

“My dear, do not place on the tomb any of the things
you are carrying! It is not right in the eyes of the
gods or men that you should place burial offerings or
bring libations from a hateful woman to our father.”²¹³

²¹⁰Translated by Hugh Lloyd-Jones, *Vol.1*, (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1994)

²¹¹*El.*, lines 406-430

²¹²*Ibid*, lines 431-434

²¹³Translated by Hugh Lloyd-Jones, *Vol.1*, (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1994)

Electra does appear to have a valid argument concerning Clytemnestra making offerings to Agamemnon. At the very least, it would seem highly hypocritical to make offerings to a man that she had murdered and against whom she harboured such a strong hatred. By making the offerings, Clytemnestra is hoping that they will in some way placate the angry spirits, as she seems to think that Agamemnon is the driving force behind the coming vengeance. There is no trace of a wife doing her duties by her deceased husband whatsoever. Segal however, states that when Electra prevents her sister from making these offerings to the dead on behalf of their mother, she reinforces the warped familial order.²¹⁴ He carries on to say that if the offerings had been made as intended, then it would be the beginning of a restoration to the proper order of things.²¹⁵

After her initial plan to make offerings to Agamemnon's tomb failed, Clytemnestra beseeched Apollo to ward off her downfall. The following excerpt details Clytemnestra's sacrifice and the beginning of her accompanying prayers:

“ἔπαιρε δὴ σὺ θύμαθ’ ἢ παροῦσά μοι
πάγκαρπ’, ἄνακτι τῶδ’ ὅπως λυτηρίους
εὐχὰς ἀνάσχω δειμάτων, ἃ νῦν ἔχω.
κλύοις ἂν ἤδη, Φοῖβε προστατήριε,
κεκρυμμένην μου βάζιν. οὐ γὰρ ἐν φίλοις
ὁ μῦθος, οὐδὲ πᾶν ἀναπτύξαι πρέπει
πρὸς φῶς παρούσης τῆσδε πλησίας ἐμοί,
μὴ σὺν φθόνῳ τε καὶ πολυγλώσσῳ βοῆ
σπεῖρη ματαίαν βάζιν εἰς πᾶσαν πόλιν.”²¹⁶

²¹⁴Segal, p.274

²¹⁵Segal, p.274

²¹⁶*El.*, lines 634-642

“Raise up the offerings of many fruits, you
 who are with me, so that I may lift up to the
 lord here prayers for release from the fears I
 now suffer. Listen, Phoebus our protector, to
 my secret words; for I do not speak among friends,
 nor is it proper for me to unfold all to the light
 while she stands near me, in case in her hatred
 and with her shouting of much verbiage she should
 spread vain rumours through the whole city.”²¹⁷

Clytemnestra's sacrifice and prayers are again tainted with an air of wrongness. As has already been discussed in this chapter, the fact that sacrifice for the Greeks followed a very structured pattern, means that it is the perfect vehicle for showing disorder in a situation. In the previous chapter, the 'holy silence' was discussed as one of the steps involved in a successful sacrifice. In the above excerpt, Electra is in close proximity to Clytemnestra while she is making her sacrifice, and Electra is preventing the 'holy silence' from being executed.²¹⁸ Not only is the ritual disrupted in this way, but Clytemnestra's prayers are not able to be voiced aloud due to the hostility between the parties present. According to Segal, this inability to openly communicate with the gods adds to the ways in which this ritual has gone awry.²¹⁹

All of the above examples of sacrifices being twisted in some way, demonstrate the fractured family unit within the house of Atreus. There is an example within the play of a sacrifice being carried out accordingly, and that was conducted by Orestes, who will, at least in the eyes of Electra, restore order to her family. In the prologue,

²¹⁷Translated by Hugh Lloyd-Jones, *Vol.1*, (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1994)

²¹⁸Segal, p.272

²¹⁹*Ibid*, p.272

Orestes says the following to the Paidagogos:

“ἡμεῖς δὲ πατρὸς τύμβον, ὡς ἐφίετο,
λοιβαῖσι πρῶτον καὶ κατατόμοις χλιδαῖς
στέψαντες,”²²⁰

“And we will first honour my father's tomb,
as the god commanded, with libations and with
a tribute of luxuriant hair,”²²¹

This is the proper behaviour for Orestes, not only because the god ordered him to do so, but also because it is his filial duty to honour his deceased father.

However, the sacrifice which Orestes carries out in his father's honour does not stop at the normal offerings to the dead. He too, continues the theme of perverted sacrifices when he kills his mother. Immediately after the death of Clytemnestra, when Orestes and Electra come back out of the house, the Chorus makes the following comment:

“καὶ μὴν πάρεισιν οἶδε· φοινία δὲ χεῖρ
στάζει θυγηλῆς Ἄρεος, οὐδ' ἔχω ψέγειν.”²²²

“Look, they are here! And a bloody hand drips
with sacrifice to Ares, nor can I find fault with it!”²²³

In these lines the Chorus have described the murder of Clytemnestra, which was carried out by her own children, as a sacrifice. The sacrifice is named as being one to Ares, but as Segal notes, it is also a blood offering made to Agamemnon by his children.²²⁴ As Richard Seaford notes, in tragedy the killing of family members is

²²⁰*El.*, lines 51-53

²²¹Translated by Hugh Lloyd-Jones, *Vol.1*, (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1994)

²²²*El.*, lines 1422-1423

²²³Translated by Hugh Lloyd-Jones, *Vol.1*, (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1994)

²²⁴Segal, p.277

almost always described as a kind of twisted sacrifice.²²⁵ This fits with the idea that the structured nature of sacrifice, and the importance of each individual step within the sacrificial process, make sacrificial imagery ideal for depicting disorder. Family members killing each other completely defies the natural order of things. The disorder and chaos that afflicted this family began with the disturbing sacrifice of Iphigeneia, and for Orestes and Electra, the hope is that it will end with the sacrificial death of their mother.

After examining the disorder illustrated by sacrifice in the *Ajax* and then in the *Electra*, there is one more scene from Sophoclean tragedy that is worth mentioning as a continuation of this discussion. The episode in question occurs in the *Antigone* when Teiresias is informing Creon that his sacrifices have gone awry. The following lines are Teiresias' description of the failed sacrifices:

“εὐθὺς δὲ δείσας ἐμπύρων ἐγευόμην
 βομοῖσιν παμφλέκτοισιν· ἐκ δὲ θυμάτων
 Ἥφαιστος οὐκ ἔλαμπεν, ἀλλ’ ἐπὶ σποδῶ
 μυδῶσα κηκίς μηρίων ἐτήκετο
 κάτυφε κἀνέπτυε, καὶ μετάρσιοι
 χολαὶ διεσπείροντο, καὶ καταρρυεῖς
 μηροὶ καλυπτῆς ἐξέκειντο πιμελῆς.
 τοιαῦτα παιδὸς τοῦδ’ ἐμάνθανον πάρα
 φθίνοντ’ ἀσήμων ὀργίων μαντεύματα.
 ἐμοὶ γὰρ οὗτος ἡγεμῶν, ἄλλοις δ’ ἐγώ.
 καὶ ταῦτα τῆς σῆς ἐκ φρενὸς νοσεῖ πόλις.

²²⁵Seaford, Richard, “Homeric and Tragic Sacrifice” in *Transactions of the American Philological Association*, Vol.119, pp.87-95, (Baltimore, 1989), pp.87-88

βωμοὶ γὰρ ἡμῖν ἐσχάροι τε παντελεῖς
 πλήρεις ὑπ' οἰωνῶν τε καὶ κυνῶν βορᾶς
 τοῦ δυσμόρου πεπτῶτος Οἰδίπου γόνου.
 κᾶτ' οὐ δέχονται θυστάδας λιτὰς ἔτι
 θεοὶ παρ' ἡμῶν οὐδὲ μηρίων φλόγα,
 οὐδ' ὄρνις εὐσήμους ἀπορροιβδεῖ βοάς,
 ἀνδροφθόρου βεβρῶτες αἵματος λίπος.”²²⁶

“At once I was alarmed, and attempted burnt
 sacrifice at the altar where I kindled fire; but the
 fire god raised no flame from my offerings.
 Over the ashes a dank slime oozed from the thigh
 bones, smoked and sputtered; the gall was sprayed
 high into the air, and the thighs, streaming with liquid,
 lay bare of the fat that had concealed them. Such was
 the ruin of the prophetic rites by which I vainly sought
 a sign, as I learned from this boy; for he guides me,
 as I guide others. And it is your will that has put this
 plague upon the city; for our altars and our braziers,
 one and all, are filled with carrion brought by birds
 and dogs from the unhappy son of Oedipus who fell.
 And the gods are no longer accepting the prayers that
 accompany sacrifice or the flame that consumes the
 thigh bones, and the cries screamed out by the birds
 no longer give me signs...for they have eaten fat

²²⁶Sophocles, *Antigone*, lines 1005-1022

compounded with a dead man's blood."²²⁷

This is quite a lengthy passage, but it is a highly descriptive one and as such is worth keeping it intact for the purposes of this discussion. The language used to describe the ruined sacrifice is highly evocative. Even to a modern day audience, which may be made up of people not highly versed in Greek sacrificial procedures, the images of oozing slime, spraying gall and a dead fire would be understood to mean that something was seriously wrong.

Teiresias is explaining that not only did that one particular sacrifice fail, but that nobody in Thebes is able to sacrifice properly. Worse still, the gods are no longer accepting the sacrifices. The reciprocity system that operates between the gods and men will not function if the sacrifices offered from men are tainted. The gods will not answer prayers when their incentive to do so is polluted. The reason for the pollution is that Creon has violated divine law by refusing burial to Polyneices. The corpse has been left out in the open and is the source of the carrion that Teiresias refers to. The decision made by Creon to leave Polyneices disrupts the natural order because he has placed his own wishes, or the laws of men, above the laws of the gods. There is an order to the universe that sees the gods above men, who are in turn above beasts. It is this order that Creon has tried to ignore and as a result his city is suffering.

Disorder is something that the three of these plays have in common. In the *Ajax*, the disorder exists within the man. It is his madness that is illustrated by the aberrant sacrifices which he carries out. Only a madman could kill the beasts in such a way. His return to sanity sees him attempt to restore order to himself by his suicide, which he enacts as if it was a sacrifice. In the *Electra*, the disorder exists within the family unit. A father has killed a daughter, causing his wife to kill him in turn and then

²²⁷Translated by Hugh Lloyd-Jones, *Vol.2*, (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1994)

finally the remaining children avenge their father's death by killing their mother. Family bonds and duties have been completely destroyed and ignored. A chain of events was started with the sacrifice of a daughter, and from that point onwards, sacrifice could only be a twisted affair for this family. Even the attempt to bring order back to the family is relayed as the sacrifice of Clytemnestra to Ares. From disorder within an individual, to within a familial unit, the episode from the *Antigone* is illustrative of disorder on a cosmic scale. A mortal ruler has tried to place his edicts above those of the gods and as a result proper, successful sacrifices cannot be carried out. These three plays show that no matter the scale of extent to which disorder exists in a situation, its presence can be shown and emphasised by the depiction of perverted sacrificial ritual.

Chapter Three: The Historical Scapegoat

In the previous chapters, what could be described as ‘normal’ or ‘usual’ sacrificial procedures were described, and then discussed in relation to the plays of Sophocles. This chapter will be concerned with a ritual which falls outside of these parameters. The ritual in question is that which we may commonly call the ‘scapegoat’ ritual, but which was known to the Greeks as the *pharmakos* ritual. It was previously thought that the reason behind the scapegoat rituals was connected to fertility.²²⁸ These rituals have since been examined in terms of a community sacrificing one of its own in order to save itself by performing these rites for the purposes of communal purification.²²⁹ The following discussion will cover the details of the *pharmakos* ritual as it occurred in Ancient Greek society and then the proceeding chapter will move on to encompass the most famous scapegoat from Greek mythology and literature: Oedipus.

The scapegoat ritual was not unique to Ancient Greece. The term ‘scapegoat’ is itself derived from the description of a purification ritual in the Old Testament.²³⁰ This account appears as follows in Leviticus:

“He shall put both his hands on the goat's head and confess over it all the evils, sins, and rebellions of the people of Israel, and so transfer them to the goat's head. Then the goat is to be driven off into the desert by a man appointed to do it. The goat will carry all their sins away with him into some uninhabited land.”²³¹

²²⁸Bremmer, Jan N, “Scapegoat Rituals in Ancient Greece” in *Oxford Readings in Greek Religion*, edited by Richard Buxton, (Oxford, 2000), p.272 and Hughes, Dennis D, *Human Sacrifice in Ancient Greece*, (London, 1991), p.139

²²⁹Bremmer, p.272 and Parker, Robert, *Miasma: Pollution and Purification in Early Greek Religion*, (Oxford, 1983),

²³⁰Bremmer, p.271

²³¹Leviticus, 16:21-22

Rituals of a similar nature can also be found among the Romans and Hittites and in India and Tibet.²³²

Walter Burkert dedicated a chapter of his book *Structure and History in Greek Mythology and Ritual* to the Ancient Greek scapegoat. His examination of this subject matter links patterns and rituals which on the surface may appear to be completely different, but do in fact share features with the *pharmakos* ritual. Some of the rituals he uses as examples may fall outside of the boundaries of a strict scapegoat ritual, but the facets of them which can be found in the scapegoat rituals, render them worthy of discussion in this thesis. One of these examples is the following tale recorded by Polyaeus in A.D. 161, which tells of the foundation of Ionian Erythrae.²³³

“The god gave him [Knopus] an oracle that he should get the priestess of Enodia from Thessaly as his general. And he sent an embassy to Thessaly and informed them about the oracle; they sent him to Chrysame, the priestess of the goddess; she was an expert in drugs. She took the biggest and finest bull from the herd, had his horns gilded and his body adorned with fillets and purple clothes stitched with gold; and she mixed into his food a drug which provokes madness, and made him eat it. The drug drove the bull mad, and would drive mad also whoever ate from him. Now the enemy was encamped on the opposite side. The priestess set up an altar and implements for sacrifice in full view of the enemy, and gave order to lead the bull along. But the bull, driven mad by the drug and filled with frenzy, made a sally and fled

²³²Bremmer, pp.271-272

²³³Burkert, Walter, *Structure and History in Greek Mythology and Ritual*, (Berkeley, 1979), p.59

toward the enemy, bellowing loudly.²³⁴

The tale ends with the enemy capturing the bull because they thought that what they had witnessed was a failed sacrifice, and thus a good omen for themselves.²³⁵ They then proceeded to eat the bull and were driven mad, leaving them vulnerable to attack and then defeat at the hands of Knopus' army.²³⁶ This tale does not conform to the exact guidelines of the other scapegoat rituals, which will be discussed in detail below. It does, however, share the feature of an animal or person leaving a community of sorts and thus bringing some kind of salvation or victory to it.

The story of Polykrite of Naxos is also discussed by Burkert in relation to the scapegoat ritual. Naxos was being invaded and was suffering badly so it was decided to leave a girl, Polykrite, outside the city walls at a sanctuary of Apollo.²³⁷ The enemy captured her at the shrine and the commander decided to keep her for himself.²³⁸ Polykrite used her position to gather information and pass it along to her countrymen, information which they used to defeat the invading army.²³⁹ When Polykrite tried to return to the city however, she had girdles, wreaths and shawls thrown at her until she died outside the city.²⁴⁰ The pelting she endured is like the stoning undergone by the *pharmakos*²⁴¹, which will be examined further in the proceeding discussion. The fact that she could not return home and become part of the community again puts her in the same kind of category as a scapegoat.²⁴²

Another practice which Burkert considers to be possibly linked to the scapegoat

²³⁴ *Ibid*, pp.59-60

²³⁵ *Ibid*, p.60

²³⁶ *Ibid*, p.60 and p.61 where the tale of the Trojan Horse is linked to this idea of transference to the enemy via some form of offering that is left behind.

²³⁷ *Ibid*, p.72

²³⁸ *Ibid*, p.72

²³⁹ *Ibid*, p.72

²⁴⁰ *Ibid*, p.72

²⁴¹ *Ibid*, p.72

²⁴² *Ibid*, p.72

ritual is not found in mythology, but rather in classical Athens. The practice being referred to here is *ostrakismos*. Banishment was a common way of ridding the community of people who were perceived to be some kind of threat by the people in power.²⁴³ As is stated by Lysias, this method was employed by the Thirty Tyrants of Athens in 403 B.C.²⁴⁴ Burkert quotes Louis Gernet who stated that *ostrakismos* is “in a way a rationalized form of the *pharmakos* ritual”.²⁴⁵ According to Parker the expulsion of high-ranking individuals was prolific in the fifth and fourth centuries.²⁴⁶ Generals were blamed if they failed to lead their armies to victory, and they would bear this blame alone, as can be seen in the following lines from Aeschylus:

“εἰ μὲν γὰρ εὖ πράξαιμεν, αἰτία θεοῦ·
 εἰ δ’ αὖθ’ ὅ μὴ γένοιτο, συμφορὰ τύχοι,
 Ἐτεοκλέης ἄν εἷς πολὺς κατὰ πτόλιν
 ὕμνοϊθ’ ὑπ’ ἀστῶν φροϊμίοις πολυρρόθοις
 οἰμώγμασίν θ’, ”²⁴⁷

“For if we succeed, the responsibility is heaven's; but if
 —may it not happen—disaster is our lot, Eteocles would be
 the one name shouted many times throughout the city in the citizens'
 resounding uproars and laments.”²⁴⁸

Parker believes that in these lines Aeschylus was commenting upon this irrational placement of blame that was emerging in Athenian society.²⁴⁹

According to Parker, the transgressions of one member of a community could

²⁴³*Ibid*, p.70

²⁴⁴Lysias, 12.5 and Burkert, p.70

²⁴⁵Burkert, 1979, p.71

²⁴⁶Parker, p.267

²⁴⁷*Ibid*, p.267 and Aeschylus, *Seven Against Thebes*, lines 4-8

²⁴⁸Translated by Herbert Weir Smyth, *Vol.1*, (William Heinemann Ltd, London, 1926) as found at <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?doc=Perseus:text:1999.01.0014:line=1> on November 14th 2008

²⁴⁹Parker, p.267

endanger the community as a whole.²⁵⁰ This principle was true of the leaders of the community as well, and was used by some politicians as the foundation for their attacks on others. Terminology linked with polluting the city and necessary purification can be found in Lysias' speech *Against Andocides*:

“νῦν οὖν

χρῆ νομίζειν τιμωρουμένους καὶ ἀπαλλαττομένους

Ἀνδοκίδου τὴν πόλιν καθαίρειν καὶ ἀποδιοπομ-

πεῖσθαι καὶ φαρμακὸν ἀποπέμπειν καὶ ἀλιτηρίου

ἀπαλλάττεσθαι, ὡς ἔν τούτων οὗτός ἐστι.”²⁵¹

“You should, therefore,

consider that to-day, in punishing Andocides and in ridding yourselves of him, you are cleansing the city, you are solemnly purifying it from pollution, you are dispatching a foul scapegoat, you are getting rid of a reprobate; for this man is all of them in one.”²⁵²

Here the language is overtly likening Andocides to a *pharmakos* that needs to be dispatched so that the city might be cleansed. Similar references can be found in Aeschines' denunciations of Demosthenes.²⁵³ It is Parker's opinion that ostracism had a purely practical function and cannot be clearly linked to the scapegoat ritual.²⁵⁴ It seems likely that the scapegoat ritual was well-established before ostracism became a popular way of removing unwanted members of the community. For politicians, couching their speeches in religious language seems to have been a rhetorical device designed to highlight the danger posed by certain individuals to the community, and

²⁵⁰*Ibid*, p.257

²⁵¹Lysias, 6.53

²⁵²Translated by W.R.M Lamb, (William Heinemann Ltd, London, 1930)

²⁵³Aeschines, 3.157, 3.244 and 3.259

²⁵⁴Parker, p.269

to strengthen their claims that they should be disposed of.

For Burkert, this pattern of one or more members of the community being sacrificed in some fashion, so that the majority might be saved, is like a herd surrounded by predators.²⁵⁵ The group will not be safe until the predators are satisfied, which will only occur when they are able to claim a member of the herd.²⁵⁶ Once a weaker individual falls prey to the predators, they will stop chasing the herd.²⁵⁷ The loss of one member creates a safe environment for the rest because once the predators are satiated there is no need for them to continue to chase and terrorise the group.²⁵⁸ However, this safety is only temporary, lasting until the predators need to feed again.²⁵⁹ If one equates circumstances such as war or plague to the hungry predators and a community with the herd, then it is easy to see how Burkert can relate scapegoat rituals and their like to the animal kingdom.

After examining rituals from other cultures, as well as rituals similar to the scapegoat one, and even the animal kingdom, it is now time to focus on the Ancient Greek scapegoat. The fullest remaining description of the *pharmakos* ritual comes from the poet Hipponax of Kolophon, who was writing in the sixth century.²⁶⁰ According to Hipponax' account the *pharmakos* was fed with figs, barley cakes and cheese, after which they were struck on the genitals with squill and twigs from the fig tree and other plants, which was done at a time of unpleasant weather.²⁶¹ Tzetzes is the source for Hipponax' account and he continues on to add that the *pharmakos* was then burned and his ashes were cast into the sea.²⁶²

²⁵⁵Burkert, 1979, p.71

²⁵⁶*Ibid*, p.71

²⁵⁷*Ibid*, p.71

²⁵⁸*Ibid*, p.71

²⁵⁹*Ibid*, p.71

²⁶⁰Bremmer, p.272

²⁶¹*Ibid*, p.272 quoting Tzetzes, *Chil.5.732*

²⁶²*Ibid*, p.272 quoting Tzetzes, *Chil.5.732*

Though Hipponax' account is detailed, as Bremmer rightly suggests, it should not be read as wholly accurate depiction of the *pharmakos* ritual.²⁶³ The reason for this is that it was typical in ancient poetry for exaggerations to be used freely and with disregard for the actual practices found in everyday life.²⁶⁴ In his account of the *pharmakos* ritual it was Hipponax' wish for his enemies to be treated as *pharmakoi*, which suggests that it very likely contains the abovementioned forms of exaggeration in order to render the fate of his enemies that much more terrible.²⁶⁵ This claim is substantiated by the fact that the *pharmakos* ritual took place during the Thargelia in early summer and thus the weather being inclement was not a condition upon the ritual being performed.²⁶⁶ According to Bremmer it also seems improbable that the scapegoat was beaten on the genitals because this is not mentioned in any of the other sources for such rituals.²⁶⁷ There is accuracy in Hipponax' account in regard to the squill and twigs of the wild fig tree being used as a tool for expulsion, but it is the manner in which they were used which can be considered dubious.²⁶⁸

Accounts other than Hipponax' give insights into the *pharmakos* rituals in different areas of Greece. The Aenianes from northern Greece had a ritual very similar to the *pharmakos* ritual, but theirs was different in that they did not require a human to be their scapegoat. Their ritual saw a bull driven across the borders while the human participants sang to it, telling it to never return.²⁶⁹ The Aenianes were not unfamiliar with the concept of a human scapegoat however, as they had a myth that during a severe drought their king was stoned to death.²⁷⁰

²⁶³ *Ibid*, pp.271-272

²⁶⁴ *Ibid*, p.272

²⁶⁵ *Ibid*, pp.271-272

²⁶⁶ *Ibid*, p.272

²⁶⁷ *Ibid*, p.272

²⁶⁸ *Ibid*, p.272

²⁶⁹ Burkert, 1979, pp.65-66

²⁷⁰ *Ibid*, p.66

Bremmer states that the sources for Athens are “divided”.²⁷¹ It is suggested by one group of sources that in times of extreme circumstance, such as during a drought, ugly people were selected to be *pharmakoi* and were thus sacrificed in this manner.²⁷² Another set of sources explain that the *pharmakos* ritual was conducted during the Thargelia, which was a festival to Apollo.²⁷³ This ritual consisted of the expulsion of two men from the city, one of whom wore white figs around his neck, and the other wore black figs. The difference in colour represented men and women respectively and the expulsion of these two men purified all of the men and women within the city, and thus the city itself.²⁷⁴

Other instances include a poor man being chased across the borders in Abdera. This was done by casting stones at him after he had been given a feast.²⁷⁵ In Massilia, the provision of meals lasted for a year before the volunteer was expelled from the city.²⁷⁶ In Chaeronea a slave, who was supposed to represent *boulimos* or hunger, was driven “out of doors”.²⁷⁷ Rather than a volunteer or a poor man, a criminal was the scapegoat in Leukas.²⁷⁸ He was said to be thrown from a rock into the sea during a festival to Apollo.²⁷⁹ Yet another source states that a young man was cast into the sea on an annual basis. This was done while words “Be thou our offscouring” were said.²⁸⁰

Based on the above evidence Bremmer concludes that the *pharmakos* ritual was

²⁷¹Bremmer, p.273

²⁷²*Ibid*, p.273

²⁷³*Ibid*, p.273

²⁷⁴*Ibid*, p.273

²⁷⁵*Ibid*, p.273 and Hughes p.157 quoting *Diegeseis* II.29-40 on Callimachus, where the scapegoat is said to be a bought slave rather than a poor man.

²⁷⁶Bremmer, p.273 and Hughes, p.157

²⁷⁷Burkert, 1979, p.65 and Hughes, p.163

²⁷⁸Bremmer, p.273

²⁷⁹*Ibid*, p.273

²⁸⁰*Ibid*, p.273

performed during the Thargelia, a festival held only by the Ionians.²⁸¹ This conclusion is one which Burkert concurs with.²⁸² It is Burkert's opinion that the nature of the Thargelia, that being the festival of "first fruits," was the reason why the *pharmakos* ritual was conducted as part of it.²⁸³ The crops which were celebrated by the Thargelia could not enter the city unless it was first cleansed.²⁸⁴ The scapegoat was the means by which this cleansing was carried out.²⁸⁵ The Thargelia and thus the need for cleansing took place on an annual basis. However, the ritual could be held more often due to extraordinary circumstances. It seems likely that if a plague or famine dictated that a *pharmakos* be sacrificed then the ritual would have been carried out, regardless of the time of year.²⁸⁶ Hughes quotes Helladius who stated that the Athenian scapegoat ritual was "a means of averting pestilential diseases".²⁸⁷ The Greek word for scapegoat, *pharmakos*, is of uncertain origin but according to Hughes the most likely etymology for it is that it is the masculine form of *pharmakon*, which means 'drug' or 'medicine'.²⁸⁸ The theory is that the *pharmakos* ritual acts as a kind of preventive medicine for the entire city.²⁸⁹ Another term commonly used for the scapegoat was *katharma*, which means 'offscouring'.²⁹⁰

The motif of one or a few people sacrificing themselves in order to save their city or community is a common one in Greek mythology. Examples include two Theban girls who sacrificed themselves so that Thebes might win the war against

²⁸¹ *Ibid*, p.273

²⁸² Burkert, 1979, p.65

²⁸³ *Ibid*, p.65

²⁸⁴ *Ibid*, p.65

²⁸⁵ *Ibid*, p.65

²⁸⁶ Bremmer, pp.273-274

²⁸⁷ Hughes, p.140

²⁸⁸ *Ibid*, p.140

²⁸⁹ *Ibid*, p.140

²⁹⁰ Parker, p.258

Orchomenos.²⁹¹ The daughters of Orion also sacrificed themselves when Orchomenos was suffering a plague.²⁹² Erectheus' daughters sacrificed themselves in order to save Athens when Eumolpos could potentially have conquered the city.²⁹³ A sacrifice was again on behalf of Athens by the daughters of Leos, but in this instance it was to halt a plague or famine.²⁹⁴ Euripides' play *Phoenissae* recounts how it was Menoeceus, the son of Creon, who saved the city by voluntarily sacrificing himself.²⁹⁵ There is even a case of a king sacrificing himself to save his community. An oracle declared that Athens would not be conquered by the Dorians if King Kodros was killed. In order to save his people, Kodros dressed up as a woodworker, made his way into the enemy camp and then let himself be killed in a brawl with soldiers.²⁹⁶

After examining the accounts of actual *pharmakoi* rituals that took place in Greece and then comparing them to the mythological instances, Bremmer has put forward a theory to explain who was chosen to be a scapegoat and why. It should be noted here that for the sake of this argument it would appear that Bremmer has labelled all of the abovementioned mythological figures as scapegoats. They all sacrificed themselves in order to save their community and could be categorised as the type of *pharmakos* that was sacrificed in times of extreme circumstance. In the historical accounts it was people of lower class who were chosen to be scapegoats such as in the accounts of the rituals that took place in Abdera and Massilia.²⁹⁷ The *pharmakoi* of Athens were deemed to be “of low origin and useless”²⁹⁸ and “common and maltreated by

²⁹¹Bremmer, p.274 and Pausanias 9.17.1

²⁹²Bremmer, p.274 and Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 13.685-699

²⁹³Bremmer, p.274

²⁹⁴*Ibid*, p.274

²⁹⁵*Ibid*, p.274

²⁹⁶*Ibid*, p.276 and Burkert, 1979, p.62

²⁹⁷Bremmer, p.275

²⁹⁸Bremmer, p.275 quoting schol.Ar.Eq.1136

nature”.²⁹⁹ Tzetzes also stated that it was the ugliest people who were selected to be *pharmakoi*.³⁰⁰ The descriptions of these people are not however, appropriate for the mythological figures, who are all people of importance and value.

At first it may appear that the mythological and historical scapegoats have nothing in common, but as Bremmer points out, they all exist on the margins of, or outside of the community in question.³⁰¹ Criminals exist outside of the community due to their actions and members of the lower classes, including slaves and poor people, were not considered to have any worth in ancient Greek society.³⁰² People who were not considered attractive were also thought to be of lesser worth.³⁰³ The mythological scapegoats include young men and women, who were quite often the children of a king or other man of importance and then a king himself.³⁰⁴ The young women from mythology can be classed as marginals because this group of people did not exist within the boundaries of society but rather on the outskirts.³⁰⁵ The king then too, was placed on the margins of the community because he alone governed and could claim contact with the divine.³⁰⁶

Bremmer believes that the mythological examples of self-sacrifice provide the reasoning behind some aspects of the scapegoat ritual. These persons were all of importance, which seems logical when one life is being sacrificed to save many. The life being forfeited must possess a great value in order to be worth sparing the community and all the rest of its inhabitants.³⁰⁷ In practice, as has already been

²⁹⁹Bremmer, p.275 quoting schol.Ar.Ra.733

³⁰⁰Bremmer, p.275 quoting Tzetzes, *Chil*.5.732 and schol.Aesch.*Sept*.680

³⁰¹Bremmer, p.275

³⁰²*Ibid*, p.275

³⁰³*Ibid*, p.275

³⁰⁴*Ibid*, pp.274-275

³⁰⁵*Ibid*, p.275

³⁰⁶*Ibid*, p.275

³⁰⁷*Ibid*, pp.276-277

illustrated, the *pharmakoi* were not considered to be valuable members of society. This is thought to be a common feature of the *pharmakoi* because the various terms used to label the scapegoat became insults.³⁰⁸ In the following passage from *The Frogs*, the disdain for scapegoats can be seen:

“τοῖς δὲ χαλκοῖς καὶ ξένοις καὶ πυρρῖαις
καὶ πονηροῖς κάκ πονηρῶν εἰς ἅπαντα χρώμεθα
ὑστάτοις ἀφιγμένοισιν, οἷσιν ἢ πόλις πρὸ τοῦ
οὐδὲ φαρμακοῖσιν εἰκῆ ῥαδίως ἐχρήσατ’ ἄν.”³⁰⁹

“but the brazen foreigners and redheads worthless
sons of worthless fathers, these we use for everything,
these latest parvenus, whom the city before this wouldn't
have lightly used even for random scapegoats.”³¹⁰

The Chorus is commenting upon the fact that good men are no longer being used for things that they previously were. Instead, people have come to prominence, who were, at one stage, considered too lowly to even be scapegoats.

Because the scapegoats may have been poor, ugly or criminals, it was realised that these people would not be considered to be a worthy sacrifice. As they existed they would not be valuable enough to save an entire community. Bremmer posits that this is why they were treated in a lavish manner.³¹¹ In Massilia, the *pharmakos* was supported at the state's expense for one year, but this type of practice was normally held in reserve for important people only.³¹² Abdera and Athens both also spent

³⁰⁸*Ibid*, p.277

³⁰⁹Aristophanes, *The Frogs*, lines 731-734

³¹⁰Translation by Matthew Dillon as found at <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?doc=Perseus:text:1999.01.0032:line=718> on February 22nd 2009

³¹¹Bremmer, p.277

³¹²*Ibid*, p.277

money on their *pharmakoi*.³¹³ Massilia and Athens also shared the practice of dressing their scapegoats in holy or high quality garments.³¹⁴

Bremmer finds similar features in a Hittite scapegoat ritual and in one from Israel.

The Hittite ritual proceeds as follows:

“When evening comes, whoever the army commanders are, each of them prepares a ram — whether it is a white ram or a black ram does not matter at all. Then I twine a cord of white wool, red wool, and green wool, and the officer twists it together, and I bring a necklace, a ring, and a chalcedony stone and I hang them on the ram’s neck and horns...”³¹⁵

There are at least two other Hittite scapegoat rituals which involve the adornment of an animal in some manner, either with a crown or an earring, before it is sent away.³¹⁶

The goat of the Israelite scapegoat ritual was also decorated before being sent into the desert. The adornment in this ritual took the form of a crimson thread on the horns of the goat.³¹⁷

It is not only the ornamentation of the scapegoats that is relevant to the Greek practices. Bremmer points out that in all of these rituals the animal concerned is “cheap or relatively superfluous”.³¹⁸ These animals are made to appear more valuable than they really are because of the adornments.³¹⁹ For Bremmer this provides a validation of the theory that the Greek *pharmakoi* were made to appear more

³¹³*Ibid*, p.277

³¹⁴*Ibid*, p.277

³¹⁵*Ibid*, p.277

³¹⁶*Ibid*, p.278 and Burkert, 1979, pp.60-61 where two Hittite rituals used in cases of pestilence are described.

³¹⁷Bremmer, p.278

³¹⁸*Ibid*, p.278

³¹⁹*Ibid*, p.278

important than they truly were.³²⁰ In the mythical examples there is no reason to make the scapegoats appear to be more than they are because it is possible for royal children, or the king himself to be sacrificed in this manner.³²¹ However, regardless of importance and reality or mythology, all of the Greek *pharmakoi* lived on the margins of society.³²²

For Burkert the selection of the scapegoat is based on an “ambivalent distinction”.³²³ He does not try to link the slaves, criminals and ugly people with the kings and women who can all function as a scapegoat. For Burkert, whether it is a human of any class that is chosen to be the scapegoat, or an animal, this is not the most important feature of the scapegoat ritual.³²⁴ Bremmer's conclusions concerning the marginalised nature of the scapegoat do however, seem to have merit and are worth consideration. While Burkert may consider the purpose of the scapegoats to be of primary importance, and their identity to be almost irrelevant, this seems to create an incomplete picture of the Ancient Greek *pharmakos*. Burkert does however, make a comment that complements Bremmer's theory quite well. In Burkert's discussion of the scapegoat he posits the idea that the people left behind who were not sacrificed, must suffer some kind of survivor's guilt.³²⁵ Because of this guilt, the community will view the scapegoat in one of two ways; either they will be thought of as the lowest of the low, such as the figure from Greek mythology named Pharmakos. He was a temple robber, who was stoned to death by the companions of Achilles upon being caught in his sacreligious act.³²⁶ For Parker this means that the *pharmakos* could then

³²⁰*Ibid*, p.278

³²¹*Ibid*, p.278

³²²*Ibid*, p.278

³²³Burkert, 1979, p.67

³²⁴*Ibid*, p.67

³²⁵*Ibid*, p.72

³²⁶*Ibid*, p.72, and Hughes, p.152 where Harpocration is quoted as the source for the myth of Pharmakos

be seen to be the actual cause of whatever affliction has befallen the community, rather than simply the means by which to be rid of it.³²⁷ The second possibility is that they will be raised to the level of the divine.³²⁸

Now that the scapegoats have been identified, the manner in which they were sacrificed must be discussed. On the appointed day of the sacrifice, the *pharmakos* was led through the city in a procession and then taken to the border.³²⁹ The scapegoat was then sent across the border, and in the cases Athens and Massilia this was accomplished by stoning.³³⁰ Everybody present at the ritual took part in the stoning, which was thought to demonstrate that the entire group was in agreement with the exile of the *pharmakos*.³³¹ This universal participation also helped to reunify the group or community as a cohesive whole after it had lost one of its members.³³² The remaining citizens most probably left the site of the expulsion without looking back.³³³ This act is thought to have severed any lasting connections that the citizens may have had with the scapegoat.³³⁴ This process, by which the scapegoat was expelled from the community, emphasises that the *pharmakos* is no longer safe as part of that particular societal unit.³³⁵

It was at one time thought that the *pharmakoi* were killed, but this is not a theory that Bremmer agrees with.³³⁶ It was thought that in Abdera, where the *pharmakoi* were stoned, that the stoning was to the death. This changed in 1934 when a fragment written by Callimachus was published. In this fragment, Callimachus states

³²⁷Parker, pp.258-259

³²⁸Burkert, 1979, p.72

³²⁹Bremmer, pp.286-287

³³⁰*Ibid*, p.287

³³¹*Ibid*, p.287

³³²*Ibid*, p.287

³³³*Ibid*, p.287

³³⁴*Ibid*, p.288

³³⁵Burkert, 1979, p.69

³³⁶Bremmer, pp.288-290

clearly that the *pharmakoi* did have stones thrown at them as they crossed the border, but the scapegoat was not killed.³³⁷ There are conflicting accounts for the fate of the scapegoats in Massilia. Petronius' account is as follows:

“Hic postea ornatus verbenis et vestibus sacris circumducebatur per totam civitatem cum execrationibus, ut in ipsum reciderent mala totius civitatis, et sic proiciebatur.”³³⁸

“After this period he would be decked with sacred herbs and sacred robes, and would be led through the whole state while people cursed him, in order that the sufferings of the whole state might fall upon him, and so he would be cast out.”³³⁹

A later account claims that the Massilian scapegoats were stoned to death.³⁴⁰ In Athens also, the scapegoat was sent across the border but not killed.³⁴¹ In the example of Leukas, the *pharmakos* was thrown from a rock into the sea. However, birds and feathers were attached to him in an attempt to lessen his fall, and boats were waiting to pull him from the water and then take him over the border.³⁴²

Based on these accounts it seems likely that Bremmer's reckoning is accurate and the *pharmakoi* were exiled but left alive. At this point it should be made explicit that not all scholars are of this opinion. Nigel Davies, in his book *Human Sacrifice in History and Today*, seems to believe that the *pharmakoi* were in fact killed.³⁴³ However, this does not seem to be the only point of contention that Davies has with

³³⁷*Ibid*, p.288 and Callimachus, fragment 90

³³⁸Petronius, fragment I

³³⁹Translated by Michael Heseltine, (William Heinemann Ltd, London, 1925)

³⁴⁰Bremmer, p.288

³⁴¹*Ibid*, p.288

³⁴²*Ibid*, p.288 and Strabo 10.2.9

³⁴³Davies, *Human Sacrifice in History and Today*, (London, 1981), p.55

what seems to be the majority viewpoint concerning scapegoats in Ancient Greece.

The following illustrates where Davies' opinions differ from other scholarship:

“Victims were thus held in constant readiness for use in an emergency that called for an offering. The *Pharmakoi* were equally useful for annual sacrifices such as the Thargelia, celebrated in Athens in the middle of summer, when two men were led out and stoned to death as scapegoats for the wrongs of others.”³⁴⁴

It would seem that Davies believes that cities would have a ready supply of scapegoats so that they would always be prepared for some kind of calamity. He also does not seem to place enough emphasis on their function at the Thargelia, but almost seems to think that this was of secondary importance. After considering the evidence and the opinions of scholars such as Burkert and Bremmer, Davies' opinions seem to be somewhat misguided.

Since the discovery of the fragment written by Callimachus, the majority of scholars seem to believe that the *pharmakoi* were not killed, from Classical times onwards at least. It may then be asked why this particular ritual is considered to be a sacrifice. The previous chapter was concluded with the notion that a sacrifice was essentially a gift to the gods, and a gift that was given for a variety of purposes and that could take a number of forms. These rites can be viewed as ones of appeasement as by performing them regularly the community is hoping to prevent any future anger the gods may feel towards them, which may be expressed as a famine or plague. The scapegoat rituals can also be for appeasement after the fact when extreme circumstance has already come upon the state then this ritual can be conducted. In this way the scapegoat ritual meets the criteria to be considered a

³⁴⁴*Ibid*, p.55

sacrifice.

While the *pharmakos* was most probably not killed, at least not at the time we have evidence for, there is a similarity that can be drawn between the scapegoat ritual and a blood sacrifice. Despite their being no physical death resulting from the *pharmakos* ritual, a metaphorical or symbolic death does occur. As Bremmer points out, the banishment from the community means that the scapegoat can never return to exist among the citizens, which would have been the same effect if the *pharmakos* had been killed.³⁴⁵ Essentially the life that the scapegoat had previously had was ended by this ritual, but it was not a final death, only the death of the life that had been lived as a member of their community. The option was left for the scapegoats to start a new life in a different community, an option which would obviously not have been available if the *pharmakoi* were killed.

³⁴⁵Bremmer, p.290

Chapter Four: Oedipus – The Tragic Scapegoat

Now that the role of the *pharmakos* in Greek society has been examined, it is time for the discussion to move onto the scapegoat in tragedy. The focus of this chapter will be the figure of Oedipus as he appears in *Oedipus Tyrannus* and *Oedipus at Colonus*. The situation of Thebes is an important aspect of the play, as it opens the need for somebody to act as a scapegoat. Therefore, the beginning of this chapter will discuss this feature of the play, before moving onto the figure of Oedipus himself. Throughout *Oedipus Tyrannus*, Sophocles has Oedipus speaking unknowingly about his fate. The ways in which Sophocles reveals that Oedipus will become the scapegoat will be examined, as will the ways in which he correlates with a *pharmakos*. The discussion will then proceed to Jean-Pierre Vernant's theories regarding ostracism and the *pharmakos* ritual. The polarity that he sees between these two he also sees in the character of Oedipus. At this point in the chapter, the focus will shift to *Oedipus at Colonus*. In this play, Oedipus has spent years wandering, without a community to call his own. The way in which the conditions of the scapegoat still apply to him, and the way the pollution is still not expunged will be examined.

From the opening scene of *Oedipus Tyrannus*, the need for a scapegoat begins to be established. As was discussed in detail in the previous chapter, outside of the Thargelia, the *pharmakos* ritual was conducted in times of extreme circumstance. Sophocles begins his play with a group of suppliants sitting at the altars of Zeus outside of Oedipus' palace in Thebes. Through Oedipus' questioning of these suppliants, the audience learns what has befallen Thebes, as can be seen in the

following lines:

“πόλις γάρ, ὥσπερ καὐτὸς εἰσορᾷς, ἄγαν
 ἤδη σαλεύει κἀνακουφίσαι κἀρα
 βυθῶν ἔτ’ οὐχ οἶα τε φοινίου σάλου,
 φθίνουσα μὲν κάλυξιν ἐγκάρποις χθονός,
 φθίνουσα δ’ ἀγέλαις βουνόμοις, τόκοισί τε
 ἀγόνους γυναικῶν· ἐν δ’ ὁ πυρφόρος θεὸς
 σκήψας ἐλαύνει, λοιμὸς ἔχθιστος, πόλιν,
 ὑφ’ οὔ κενοῦται δῶμα Καδμεῖον· μέλας δ’
 Ἄιδης στεναγμοῖς καὶ γόοις πλουτίζεται.”³⁴⁶

“For the city, as you see yourself, is grievously
 tossed by storms, and still cannot lift its head from
 beneath the depths of the killing angry sea. A blight
 is on the buds that enclose the fruit, a blight is on
 the flocks of grazing cattle and on the women giving birth,
 killing their offspring; the fire-bearing god, hateful
 Pestilence, has swooped upon the city and harries it,
 emptying the house of Cadmus, and black Hades is a
 plutocrat in groans and weeping.”³⁴⁷

The crops and cattle have become diseased, the women of Thebes have become unable to give birth to live children, and a plague is decimating the population. This kind of *loimos* is the perfect example of the circumstances which would have caused the Ancient Greeks to purify their city, as it was thought that the purification would

³⁴⁶Sophocles, *Oedipus Tyrannus*, lines 22-30

³⁴⁷Translated by Hugh Lloyd-Jones, *Vol.1*, (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1994)

free the city from its troubles. According to Vernant, this is a traditional form of *loimos*.³⁴⁸ He goes on to state that these afflictions are all thought to be symptoms of the same *loimos*, rather than separate instances of plague.³⁴⁹

Sophocles emphasises the suffering occurring throughout the city by providing more details about the plague in the following Choral passage:

“ὦ πόποι, ἀνάριθμα γὰρ φέρω
 πήματα· νοσεῖ δέ μοι πρόπας
 στόλος, οὐδ’ ἔνι φροντίδος ἔγχος
 ᾧ τις ἀλέξεται· οὔτε γὰρ ἔκγονα
 κλυτᾶς χθονὸς αὖξεται οὔτε τόκοισιν
 ἰηίων καμάτων ἀνέχουσι γυναῖκες.
 ἄλλον δ’ ἂν ἄλλα προσίδοις ἄπερ εὔπτερον ὄρνιν
 κρεῖσσον ἀμαιμακέτου πυρὸς ὄρμενον
 ἀκτὰν πρὸς ἐσπέρου θεοῦ·
 ᾧν πόλις ἀνάριθμος ὄλλυται·
 νηλέα δὲ γένεθλα πρὸς πέδῳ
 θαναταφόρα κεῖται ἀνοίκτως·
 ἐν δ’ ἄλοχοι πολιαί τ’ ἐπι ματέρες
 ἀκτὰν πάρα βώμιον ἄλλοθεν ἄλλαι
 λυγρῶν πόνων ἰκετῆρες ἐπιστενάχουσιν.
 παιῶν δὲ λάμπει στονόεσσά τε γῆρυς ὄμαυλος
 τῶν ὑπερ, ᾧ χρυσέα θύγατερ Διός,

³⁴⁸Vernant, Jean-Pierre, “Ambiguity and Reversal. On the enigmatic structure of *Oedipus Rex*” in *Tragedy and Myth in Ancient Greece*, (Sussex, 1981), p.100

³⁴⁹*Ibid*, p.100

εὐὼπα πέμψον ἀλκάν.”³⁵⁰

“Ah, countless are the troubles that I bear!
Sickness lies on all our company, and
thought can find no weapon to repel it. The
fruits of the glorious earth do not increase,
and no births come to let women surmount
the pains in which they cry out. You can see one
here and one there, swifter than destroying fire,
speed like a winged bird to the shore of the god
whose home is in the West. Countless are their
deaths, and the city is perishing; unpitied her
children lie on the ground, carried off by death,
with none to lament; and by the row of altars
wives and white-haired mothers on this side and
on that groan as suppliants on account of their
sad troubles. Loud rings out the hymn to
the Healer and the sound of lamentation with it!
For these things, golden daughter of Zeus, send
the bright face of protection!”³⁵¹

This somewhat lengthy description of the happenings throughout the city leaves no doubt as to how dire the circumstances are in Thebes. From this description, it appears that everybody in the city has been affected in some way by the plague, and there is no end in sight. Rather than a simple factual account of the situation, this

³⁵⁰*OT*, lines 167-189

³⁵¹Translated by Hugh Lloyd-Jones, *Vol.1*, (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1994)

emotional outpouring of woe and grief by the Chorus creates a much more poignant scene. There can be no doubt that something has to be done to alleviate the suffering throughout the city. A course of action will be taken, and already it can be seen that purification via a scapegoat could be the remedy needed by the city.

The above passages can be easily linked with the extreme circumstances that could require a scapegoat, but according to Vernant, there are also links to the Thargelia in the opening scene. These links may be harder to recognise for the modern reader, but Vernant appears confident that the Athenian audience would have recognised them. In fact, he believes that they would not only have recognised them, but also interpreted them as details that stress the need for somebody to act as a *pharmakos* for the city's well-being.³⁵² During the Thargelia in Athens, objects called *eiresiōne* were paraded around the city.³⁵³ The *eiresiōne* were made of olive or laurel branches, which had been decorated with wool, fruit, cakes and small phials of wine and oil.³⁵⁴ After being carried through the city in a procession, some of them were left at the temple of Apollo, and the remainder were left outside of homes to guard against famine.³⁵⁵ These branches were supposed to symbolise renewal as the seasons turned to Spring, but this renewal could not take place until any kind of pollution within the city had been banished.³⁵⁶

In the opening lines of *Oedipus Tyrannus*, Oedipus greets his people in the following way:

“ὦ τέκνα, Κάδμου τοῦ πάλαι νέα τροφή,
τίνας ποθ’ ἔδρας τάσδε μοι θοάζετε

³⁵²Vernant, p.103

³⁵³*Ibid*, p.101

³⁵⁴*Ibid*, p.101

³⁵⁵*Ibid*, p.101

³⁵⁶*Ibid*, p.102

ἰκτηρίοις κλάδοισιν ἐξεστεμμένοι;”³⁵⁷

“Children, latest to be reared from the stock of Cadmus,

why do you sit like this before me, with boughs of

supplication wreathed with chaplets?”³⁵⁸

Oedipus is asking the crowd why they have 'wreathed boughs fit for suppliants.' It is these boughs, called *hiketeriai*, that Vernant links to the *eiresiōne*. According to Vernant, the two types of branches are the same “in form and function”.³⁵⁹ The *hiketeriai* were also carried in a procession and then left at altars of Apollo, in exactly the same way as the *eiresiōne*. The role of the *hiketeriai* was to banish the plague from the city after it was afflicted, whereas the *eiresiōne* were for the purpose of guarding against famine and other evils that could befall the city as a kind of preventative measure.³⁶⁰ These similarities between the *eiresiōne* and the *hiketeriai* are what Vernant believes the Athenian audience would have seen, and been able to interpret as a subtle reference to the Thargelia and its accompanying scapegoat ritual.³⁶¹

It is not only the branches carried by the suppliants that Vernant links to the Thargelia. The other detail that he is concerned with is the occurrence of paeans. In the first two hundred lines of *Oedipus Tyrannus*, the fact that the sounds of paeans can be heard is mentioned in the following two excerpts:

“πόλις δ’ ὁμοῦ μὲν θυμιαμάτων γέμει,

ὁμοῦ δὲ παιάων τε καὶ στεναγμάτων.”³⁶²

“and why is the city filled with at the same time with

³⁵⁷*OT*, lines 1-3

³⁵⁸Translated by Hugh Lloyd-Jones, *Vol.1*, (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1994)

³⁵⁹Vernant, p.102

³⁶⁰*Ibid*, p.102

³⁶¹*Ibid*, p.102

³⁶²*OT*, line 4-5

incense, and with the sound of paeans and lamentations?”³⁶³

“παιὼν δὲ λάμπει στονόεσσά τε γῆρυς ὀμαυλος.”³⁶⁴

“Loud rings out the hymn to the Healer, and the
sound of lamentation with it!”³⁶⁵

It should be pointed out at this stage that the above translation offers “hymn to the Healer” as the translation for *paiōn*, which is slightly different from the paean as discussed by Vernant. Vernant notes that the paean was a song that was normally sung for joyous reasons such as victory, and was the contrast to mourning chants and dirges.³⁶⁶ However, he continues on to state that due to a scholiast to the *Iliad*, we know that there was also a different kind of paean.³⁶⁷ This other type of paean was sung as either a way to avert 'evils', or to bring about their end.³⁶⁸ These songs were also sung at festivals held during the Spring only, which included the Thargelia.³⁶⁹ The paeans, as well as the suppliant branches, are details which reinforce the need for a *pharmakos* because Sophocles not only overtly sets the scene for extreme circumstances, but he also alludes to the Thargelia, which was the only other time a scapegoat ritual was performed.

Sophocles continues to explicitly make references to the scapegoat ritual when Creon arrives back from Delphi. After being sent to Delphi to consult the oracle in regard to the troubles in Thebes, he returns with the following report:

“λέγοιμ’ ἄν οἷ’ ἤκουσα τοῦ θεοῦ πάρα.

ἄνωγεν ἡμᾶς Φοῖβος ἐμφανῶς, ἄναξ,

³⁶³Translated by Hugh Lloyd-Jones, *Vol.1*, (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1994)

³⁶⁴*OT*, line 186

³⁶⁵Translated by Hugh Lloyd-Jones, *Vol.1*, (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1994)

³⁶⁶Vernant, p.102

³⁶⁷*Ibid*, p.102

³⁶⁸*Ibid*, p.102

³⁶⁹*Ibid*, pp.102-103

μίασμα χώρας, ὡς τεθραμμένον χθονὶ

ἐν τῆδ', ἐλαύνειν μηδ' ἀνήκεστον τρέφειν."³⁷⁰

“I will tell you what I heard from the god. The

lord Phoebus orders us plainly to drive out from the

land a pollution, one that has been nourished in

this country, and not to nourish it till it cannot be cured.”³⁷¹

The oracle reveals that there is a pollution in Thebes that must be expelled in order for the *loimos* to be cured. This kind of *miasma* is exactly what the Greeks tried to cleanse their communities of with the *pharmakos* rituals. The vocabulary associated with scapegoats and their purificatory function continues in Oedipus' reply to Creon's announcement, as follows:

“ποιῶ καθαριῶ; τίς ὁ τρόπος τῆς ξυμφορᾶς;”³⁷²

“With what means of purifying? what is the nature of the trouble?”³⁷³

Oedipus is asking Creon how the city is supposed to be purified. As was discussed in the previous chapter, another term for the scapegoat was *katharma*, which according to Liddell and Scott means “that which is thrown away in cleansing”.³⁷⁴ This word is obviously closely linked to *katharmos*, meaning “a cleansing, purifying”³⁷⁵. It is this word that Sophocles puts into the mouth of Oedipus, and this word that would have created inferences and associations in the minds of the audience with the *pharmakos*. These associations would have continued even further when in the next lines, Creon explains that the city can only be purified when the murderer of Laius is either

³⁷⁰*OT*, lines 95-98

³⁷¹Translated by Hugh Lloyd-Jones, *Vol.1*, (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1994)

³⁷²*OT*, line 99

³⁷³Translated by Hugh Lloyd-Jones, *Vol.1*, (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1994)

³⁷⁴Liddell and Scott, p.338

³⁷⁵*Ibid*, p.338

banished, or killed.³⁷⁶ The mention of banishment can obviously be linked to the scapegoat, as the idea behind the ritual was that all of the community's pollution was driven out at the same time that the individual in that role was banished from the city.

The setting of *Oedipus Tyrannus* creates the perfect situation that would require a scapegoat. Sophocles incorporates many features of the *pharmakos* ritual within the first two hundred lines of the play, leaving the audience no room for doubt that the situation can only be resolved once a scapegoat has been banished from Thebes. After establishing that there is a need for a scapegoat, Sophocles only has to reveal who it will be. As with the way in which the *pharmakos* is hinted at from the very beginning of the play, Oedipus is portrayed in such a way that his fate can be inferred from the start. In the opening scene, after being addressed by the priest, Oedipus responds in the following way:

“ὦ παῖδες οἰκτροί, γνωτὰ κοῦκ ἄγνωτά μοι
 προσήλθεθ' ἰμείροντες, εὖ γὰρ οἶδ' ὅτι
 νοσεῖτε πάντες· καὶ νοσοῦντες, ὡς ἐγὼ
 οὐκ ἔστιν ὑμῶν ὅστις ἐξ ἴσου νοσεῖ.
 τὸ μὲν γὰρ ὑμῶν ἄλγος εἰς ἓν ἔρχεται
 μόνον καθ' αὐτόν, κοῦδέν' ἄλλον, ἢ δ' ἐμὴ
 ψυχὴ πόλιν τε κάμει καὶ σ' ὁμοῦ στένει.”³⁷⁷

“Children, I pity you! I know, I am not ignorant of the desires with which you have come; yes, I know that you are all sick, and, sick as you are, none of you is as sick as I.

³⁷⁶*OT*, lines 100-101

³⁷⁷*Ibid*, lines 58-64

Your pain comes upon each by himself and
 upon no other; but my soul mourns equally
 for the city and for myself and for you.”³⁷⁸

As noted by Vernant, these words do bring to mind the notion of the scapegoat.³⁷⁹ Oedipus is conveying to the suppliants that he feels the weight of the troubles of the entire city, not just his own as they do. This sentiment exactly matches the role of the *pharmakos* in terms of one individual taking upon himself all of the evils of an entire city. Therefore, from the opening of the play, Oedipus is likened in some respects to a scapegoat.

Throughout the play Oedipus reveals his fate without intending to. After he has learned what the oracle at Delphi proclaimed, he makes the following declaration to the citizens of Thebes:

“τὸν ἄνδρ’ ἀπαυδῶ τοῦτον, ὅστις ἐστί, γῆς
 τῆσ’, ἣς ἐγὼ κράτη τε καὶ θρόνους νέμω,
 μήτ’ εἰσδέχεσθαι μήτε προσφωνεῖν τινά,
 μήτ’ ἐν θεῶν εὐχαῖσι μήτε θύμασιν
 κοινὸν ποεῖσθαι, μήτε χέρνιβος νέμειν·
 ὠθεῖν δ’ ἀπ’ οἴκων πάντας, ὡς μιάσματος
 τοῦδ’ ἡμῖν ὄντος, ὡς τὸ Πυθικὸν θεοῦ
 μαντεῖον ἐξέφηεν ἀρτίως ἐμοί.”³⁸⁰

“I forbid all belonging to this land, over
 which I rule and sit upon the throne, to
 receive him or to speak to him, or to let

³⁷⁸Translated by Hugh Lloyd-Jones, *Vol.1*, (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1994)

³⁷⁹Vernant, p.103

³⁸⁰*OT*, lines 236-243

him share in prayers and sacrifices to the gods, or to touch holy water; but all must drive him from their homes, since we are polluted, as the Pythian oracle of the god has just now revealed to me.”³⁸¹

As the ruler of Thebes, it was Oedipus' responsibility to keep the citizenry safe. After receiving the oracle, Oedipus knew that whoever had polluted the land in such a way, must be driven from it. The above sentence to be passed upon the guilty party not only sends the culprit into exile, but also excludes them from participating in community activities. The edict forbidding the murderer from partaking of prayers and sacrifices isolates them from rituals that, as was previously discussed in Chapter One, act as unifiers in the community. Sacrificial rituals unified smaller groups throughout the city, or when conducted on a grand scale, the whole city itself. Being banned from such rituals means that the murderer is not only driven out of the physical space that the community occupies, but also from the intangible and unseen aspects that form a cohesive society, such as shared religious expressions. By speaking this declaration, Oedipus is unknowingly describing the isolation from society that he is soon to suffer.

Oedipus again predicts his fate during his confrontation with Creon. When Oedipus has convinced himself that Creon conspired to kill Laius, the Chorus persuade him to let Creon speak in his defence, and to believe what he has to say. It is at this stage that Oedipus says the following:

“εὖ νυν ἐπίστω, ταῦθ' ὅταν ζητῆς, ἐμοὶ

³⁸¹Translated by Hugh Lloyd-Jones, *Vol.1*, (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1994)

ζητῶν ὄλεθρον ἢ φυγὴν ἐκ τῆσδε γῆς.³⁸²

“Know well that when you ask for this, you are
asking for death or exile from this land for me!”³⁸³

In these lines Oedipus is unknowingly predicting that he will become an exile from Thebes. At this stage of the play Oedipus believes that being asked to curtail his suspicions and his anger at Creon, is undermining his absolute authority as king. The role of ruler of Thebes is the position which he occupies within his society, and being asked to not proceed in the exact manner in which he sees fit, creates some slight uncertainty for him in that position. Again, a few lines later he tells the Chorus:

“ὁ δ' οὖν ἴτω, κεί χριή με παντελῶς θανεῖν
ἢ γῆς ἄτιμον τῆσδ' ἀπωσθῆναι βία
τὸ γὰρ σόν, οὐ τὸ τοῦδ', ἐποικτίρω στόμα
ἐλεινόν· οὗτος δ' ἔνθ' ἄν ἧ στυγήσεται.”³⁸⁴

“Well, let him go, even if I must altogether
perish, or be driven from this land, deprived of
honour. It is your pathetic words, not his, that
rouse my pity; he wherever he is, shall be loathed!”³⁸⁵

In the above lines, Oedipus extends his unwitting predictions even further. Here he speaks of being banished without any of his honour intact. Furthermore, being an object of loathing that he foresees for Creon, will actually come to pass for himself. The suspicions that form in Oedipus' head, and the attempts others make to calm him and guide him, create a sense of instability for Oedipus. The situation and the

³⁸²*OT*, lines 658-659

³⁸³Translated by Hugh Lloyd-Jones, *Vol.1*, (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1994)

³⁸⁴*OT*, lines 669-672

³⁸⁵Translated by Hugh Lloyd-Jones, *Vol.1*, (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1994)

unknowing hints are preparation for Oedipus to be cast down from his position within Thebes, as well as cast out from the community as a whole to assume the role of exiled scapegoat.

After Oedipus learns that he is actually the killer of Laius, his father, and that he has married and had children by his mother, he is determined to carry out the banishment. After learning these things and of the death of Jocasta, Oedipus blinds himself, which is recounted by a messenger speech. The messenger then informs the Chorus of Oedipus' wishes, as follows:

“βοᾷ διοίγειν κλῆθρα καὶ δηλοῦν τινα
τοῖς πᾶσι Καδμείοισι τὸν πατροκτόνον,
τὸν μητέρος, αὐδῶν ἀνόσι’ οὐδὲ ῥητά μοι,
ὡς ἐκ χθονὸς ῥίψων ἑαυτὸν οὐδ’ ἔτι
μενῶν δόμοις ἀραῖος, ὡς ἠράσατο.”³⁸⁶

“He is crying for someone to unbar the gates and show to all the Cadmeians his father's killer, his mother's—he spoke unholy words, which I cannot utter—meaning to cast himself out of this land, and not to longer in the house under the curse, that curse that was his own.”³⁸⁷

Oedipus is aware of the pollution that contaminates his person, and the entire city. The cure for the city was to cast out the pollutant, which as it transpires, is Oedipus. However, as can be seen in the following lines, Oedipus has lost his position as king, and even the execution of his previous edicts has to be corroborated by Creon:

“ῥῆψόν με γῆς ἐκ τῆσδ’ ὅσον τάχισθ’, ὅπου

³⁸⁶*OT*, lines 1287-1291

³⁸⁷Translated by Hugh Lloyd-Jones, *Vol.1*, (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1994)

θνητῶν φανοῦμαι μηδενὸς προσήγορος.”³⁸⁸

“Cast me out of this land as soon as possible, to a

place where I cannot be addressed by any mortal being!”³⁸⁹

The uncertainty that began to appear earlier in the play, in regard to his position as king, has now become a reality. His role in society no longer exists, and even decisions he had made which were sound, now have to be made again by the new ruler of Thebes.

Despite the fact that Oedipus' exile is exactly what the oracle demanded, Oedipus cannot order it, or enact it on his own. Instead he has to ask for it, as can be seen in the following line:

“γῆς μ’ ὅπως πέμψεις ἄποικον.”³⁹⁰

“That you shall send me out of the country.”³⁹¹

The decisiveness with which Oedipus would act, is not exhibited by Creon. Instead as has been said, Oedipus has asked him twice to be exiled, and yet when the play ends, Oedipus still remains in Thebes. The final act of banishment is not conducted during the course of the play. The repeated need to ask for his exile, and the fact that his demands bring no result, emphasise the fact that Oedipus has lost his role in the community. Like a scapegoat, Oedipus can bring no benefit to the city except by leaving and taking his pollution with him. He is still physically within the city when the play comes to a close, but he has no power to act as a member of it. Without physically leaving his community, Oedipus' exile as a *pharmakos* has already begun.

Vernant links the *pharmakos* ritual with ostracism, and sees symmetry between the

³⁸⁸OT, lines 1436-1437

³⁸⁹Translated by Hugh Lloyd-Jones, *Vol.1*, (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1994)

³⁹⁰OT, line 1518

³⁹¹Translated by Hugh Lloyd-Jones, *Vol.1*, (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1994)

two. This same symmetry can be applied to Oedipus and the ways in which he exhibits the characteristics of a scapegoat. The following discussion examines Vernant's theories on this subject and begins with the institution of ostracism. Ostracism as it occurred in Athens, was mentioned in the previous chapter, with varying viewpoints about its link to the scapegoat ritual discussed. Vernant, however, examined the institution of ostracism in a slightly different manner, and links it specifically with Oedipus, hence being discussed at this point of the thesis. Ostracism entered the Athenian political repertoire at the end of the sixth century, with the main purpose of removing anybody from the community who might be aspiring to tyranny.³⁹² Anybody who was banished through ostracism was exiled for a period of ten years from the city.³⁹³ While this seems to be a fairly uncomplicated procedure, there were some features of ostracism that seem to be quite irregular.³⁹⁴ The first of these somewhat unusual features was that every year the Assembly took a vote as to whether there was a need to employ ostracism for the year.³⁹⁵ This vote was carried out without any names being mentioned and there was no debate, it was simply a show of hands.³⁹⁶

If the majority of the vote called for ostracism to be used for the year, then another meeting was called at a later time, specifically for the purpose of deciding who was to be ostracised.³⁹⁷ This meeting was held in the agora instead of on the Pnyx, as was the usual practise.³⁹⁸ Another vote was taken, again without any form of debate.³⁹⁹

This vote was carried out by each member of the Assembly writing his choice for

³⁹²Vernant, p.106

³⁹³*Ibid*, p.106

³⁹⁴*Ibid*, p.106

³⁹⁵*Ibid* p.106

³⁹⁶*Ibid*, p.106

³⁹⁷*Ibid*, pp.106-107

³⁹⁸*Ibid*, pp.106-107

³⁹⁹*Ibid*, p.107

ostracism on a potsherd.⁴⁰⁰ One of the highly irregular features of this vote was that no names were publicly denounced and there was no opportunity for accusations, or more importantly perhaps, defence.⁴⁰¹ According to Vernant, everything was arranged so that *phthonos* could be exercised without any heed of the laws or rationality.⁴⁰² Liddell and Scott define *phthonos* as “ill-will, envy, jealousy, at the good fortune of another”⁴⁰³, but Vernant adds that it is not only envy, but a “religious distrust of anyone who rose too high or was too successful” was mixed with it.⁴⁰⁴

Vernant argues that the people ostracised at this time exhibited superior qualities, which set them apart from their peers.⁴⁰⁵ They were perceived to have an amount of good luck that became unseemly and could potentially offend the gods in some way.⁴⁰⁶ In the *Politics*, Aristotle also explains that a man who is superior to the rest of his community, cannot really be a part of that community because of his outstanding qualities, as can be seen in the following text:

“εἰ δέ τις ἔστιν εἷς τοσοῦτον διαφέρων κατ' ἀρετῆς ὑπερβολήν, ἢ πλείους μὲν ἑνὸς μὴ μέντοι δυνατοὶ πλήρωμα παρασχέσθαι πόλεως, ὥστε μὴ συμβλητὴν εἶναι τὴν τῶν ἄλλων ἀρετὴν πάντων μηδὲ τὴν δύναμιν αὐτῶν τὴν πολιτικὴν πρὸς τὴν ἐκείνων, εἰ πλείους, εἰ δ' εἷς, τὴν ἐκείνου μόνον, οὐκέτι θετέον τούτους μέρος πόλεως: ἀδικήσονται γὰρ ἀξιούμενοι τῶν ἴσων, ἄνισοι τοσοῦτον κατ' ἀρετὴν ὄντες καὶ τὴν πολιτικὴν δύναμιν: ὥσπερ γὰρ θεὸν ἐν ἀνθρώποις εἰκὸς εἶναι τὸν τοιοῦτον.”⁴⁰⁷

⁴⁰⁰*Ibid*, p.107

⁴⁰¹*Ibid*, p.107

⁴⁰²*Ibid*, p.107

⁴⁰³Liddell and Scott, p.757

⁴⁰⁴Vernant, p.107

⁴⁰⁵*Ibid*, p.107

⁴⁰⁶*Ibid*, p.107

⁴⁰⁷Aristotle, *Politics*, 3.1284a3-11

“But if there is any one man so greatly distinguished in outstanding virtue, or more than one but not enough to be able to make up a complete state, so that the virtue of all the rest and their political ability is not comparable with that of the men mentioned, if they are several, or if one, with his alone, it is no longer proper to count these exceptional men a part of the state; for they will be treated unjustly if deemed worthy of equal status, being so widely unequal in virtue and in their political ability: since such a man will naturally be as a god among men.”⁴⁰⁸

Aristotle then carries on to explain that this is why ostracism was introduced, as can be read in the following passage:

“διὸ καὶ τίθενται τὸν ὄστρακισμὸν αἱ δημοκρατούμεναι πόλεις, διὰ τὴν τοιαύτην αἰτίαν: αὗται γὰρ δὴ δοκοῦσι διώκειν τὴν ἰσότητα μάλιστα πάντων, ὥστε τοὺς δοκοῦντας ὑπερέχειν δυνάμει διὰ πλοῦτον ἢ πολυφιλίαν ἢ τινα ἄλλην πολιτικὴν ἰσχὺν ὡστράκιζον καὶ μεθίστασαν ἐκ τῆς πόλεως χρόνους ὠρισμένους.”⁴⁰⁹

“This is why democratically governed states institute the system of ostracism, because of a reason of this nature; for these are the states considered to pursue equality most of all things, so that they used to ostracize men thought to be outstandingly powerful on account of wealth or popularity or some other form of political strength, and used to banish them out of the city for fixed periods of time.”⁴¹⁰

⁴⁰⁸Translated by H. Rackham, *Vol.21*, (William Heinemann Ltd, London, 1944) as found at <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0058&layout=&loc=3.1284a3-11> on December 11th 2008

⁴⁰⁹Aristotle, *Politics*, 3.1284a17-23

⁴¹⁰Translated by H. Rackham, *Vol.21*, (William Heinemann Ltd, London, 1944) as found at <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?doc=Perseus%3Atext>

Aristotle is essentially saying that democratic states were supposed to engender equality, which meant that people who were not equal to others, but were in fact superior in some respect would be banished from the city.

It is these ideas of Aristotle's that Vernant then applies to Oedipus. In the opening address of the priest to Oedipus, the idea of Oedipus being superior to the rest of the city is expressed more than once. The priest tells Oedipus that he is:

“ἀνδρῶν δὲ πρῶτον ἔν τε συμφοραῖς βίου

κρίνοντες ἔν τε δαιμόνων συναλλαγαῖς.”⁴¹¹

“the first of men, both in the incidents of

life and in dealing with the higher powers.”⁴¹²

He also refers to him as “ὦ κράτιστον πᾶσιν Οἰδίπου κάρα” and “ὦ βροτῶν ἄριστ’”, which mean “Oedipus, mightiest man in the sight of all” and “best of living men” respectively, in a single speech consisting of only forty three lines.⁴¹³ While it is true that Oedipus is the king of Thebes, and this position automatically elevates him above the rest of the population, the degree to which Oedipus is praised could be seen to be slightly excessive. The repeated emphasis of the greatness of Oedipus seems to create a polarity between what Oedipus is, and what he becomes during the course of the play. It is this polarity that Vernant discusses in relation to Aristotle's explanation of ostracism.

According to Vernant, the institution of ostracism is “symmetrical to” and “the reverse of” the scapegoat ritual.⁴¹⁴ A person sent into exile due to ostracism, is seen to have surpassed the rest of the city in some respect, and represents 'evil' that can come

[%3A1999.01.0058&layout=&loc=3.1284a3-11](#) on December 11th 2008

⁴¹¹*OT*, lines 33-34

⁴¹²Translated by Hugh Lloyd-Jones, *Vol.1*, (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1994)

⁴¹³*OT*, lines 40 and 46 and translated by Hugh Lloyd-Jones, *Vol.1*, (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1994)

⁴¹⁴Vernant, p.106

upon the city from above.⁴¹⁵ The *pharmakos* is seen to represent the 'evil' that comes from below, as the person or persons expelled from the city in that role represent what is base and inferior.⁴¹⁶ Both of these frameworks within the city place limits upon what is acceptable as a norm for humanity.⁴¹⁷ Anything that exists outside of these norms, needs to be banished from the community.

When both ostracism and the *pharmakos* ritual are considered together, then it is possible to see how they both represent Oedipus simultaneously.⁴¹⁸ Segal agrees with Vernant in this regard, that Oedipus is both the highest and lowest member of the community, but he does not think that this interpretation of the play is adequate.⁴¹⁹ While this interpretation of the figure of Oedipus may not comprehensively account for every facet of a very complex character and intricate play, it is nonetheless an important aspect of Oedipus that needs to be considered. Vernant's treatise on the subject still appears to be the most insightful and enlightening on this subject, and as such is an invaluable source for this thesis, and for an understanding of Oedipus.

Oedipus placed himself above the rest of the community when he solved the riddle of the Sphinx, and thus saved the city and became its ruler. This feat of Oedipus' is mentioned very early in the play, in the following lines:

“ὄς γ’ ἐξέλυσας ἄστῃ Καδμεῖον μολῶν
σκληρᾶς ἀοιδοῦ δασμὸν ὃν παρείχομεν,”⁴²⁰

“For it was you who came to the city of Cadmus and released
us from the tribute we were paying, the tribute of the cruel singer,”⁴²¹

⁴¹⁵*Ibid*, p.106

⁴¹⁶*Ibid*, pp.106-107

⁴¹⁷*Ibid*, p.107

⁴¹⁸*Ibid*, p.107

⁴¹⁹Segal, p.208

⁴²⁰*OT*, lines 35-36

⁴²¹Translated by Hugh Lloyd-Jones, *Vol.1*, (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1994)

Then again Oedipus' role as saviour is mentioned towards the end of the play, after all of the events have unfolded and all has been revealed:

“ὄστις καθ’ ὑπερβολὰν
τοξεύσας ἐκράτησας οὐ
πάντ’ εὐδαίμονος ὄλβου,
ὦ Ζεῦ, κατὰ μὲν φθίσας
τὰν γαμψώνυχα παρθένον
χρησμοδόν, θανάτων δ’ ἐμᾶ
χώρᾳ πύργος ἀνέστας.”⁴²²

“You it was whose arrow unbelievably
found its mark and you won a success
not in all ways sanctioned by the
gods—O Zeus—when you destroyed
the prophesying maiden with hooked
talons, and for my country stood
like a wall keeping off death.”⁴²³

In this passage the Chorus explicitly states that Oedipus “shot his arrow further than anybody else” when he solved the riddle of the Sphinx. The citizens of Thebes were not the only ones to hold this act in high regard; Oedipus himself mentions it during his confrontation with Teiresias, stating that it was he who saved the city, and not the prophet.⁴²⁴

Oedipus is isolated in his role as saviour and king. As was discussed in the previous chapter, Bremmer put forth that scapegoats in mythology were usually

⁴²²*OT*, lines 1197-1201

⁴²³Translated by Hugh Lloyd-Jones, *Vol.1*, (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1994)

⁴²⁴*OT*, lines 390-398

people who existed on the fringes of society, including kings. Oedipus can then be compared to figures such as Kodros, who was also a king who needed to leave his community in order to save it. As king, Oedipus alone rules Thebes, creating isolation out of status and responsibility. His isolation is extended however, because he is not only king, but king due to his role as saviour. He alone solved the riddle of the Sphinx, placing him above everybody else in Thebes from the mere fact that no other could solve it. This matches Bremmer's theory regarding mythological scapegoats who existed on the margins of society. However, emphasis is repeatedly placed on Oedipus' greatness, making him the perfect candidate for ostracism due to his far superior qualities.

The very last lines of the play call for the citizens of Thebes to see what has come upon Oedipus, despite the fact that he was a great man, as can be seen in the following passage:

“ὦ πάτρας Θήβης ἔνοικοι, λεύσσει, Οἰδίπους ὄδε,
 ὃς τὰ κλείν' αἰνίγματ' ἤδει καὶ κράτιστος ἦν ἀνὴρ,
 οὗ τίς οὐ ζήλω πολιτῶν ταῖς τύχαις ἐπέβλεπεν,
 εἰς ὅσον κλύδωνα δεινῆς συμφορᾶς ἐλήλυθεν.
 ὥστε θνητὸν ὄντ' ἐκείνην τὴν τελευταίαν ἔδει
 ἡμέραν ἐπισκοποῦντα μηδέν' ὀλβίζειν, πρὶν ἂν
 τέρμα τοῦ βίου περάσει μηδὲν ἀλγεινὸν παθῶν.”⁴²⁵

“Dwellers in our native land of Thebes, see to what a storm of cruel disaster has come Oedipus here, who knew the answer to the famous riddle and was a mighty man, on whose fortune every one among the citizens

⁴²⁵*Ibid*, lines 1524-1530

used to look with envy! So that one should wait to see the
 final day and should call none among mortals fortunate, till
 he has crossed the bourne of life without suffering grief.”⁴²⁶

It is interesting to note that in this passage, at line 1526, Sophocles used the term *zēlos*, which according to Liddell and Scott means the opposite of *phthonos*.⁴²⁷ The sense in which it is the opposite, is that it is not a negative form of envy, as is the case with *phthonos*, but instead it is “eager rivalry” or “emulation”.⁴²⁸ The next part of the entry for *zēlos* however, is “any strong passion, esp. jealousy: zeal or emulous desire for a thing”.⁴²⁹ If Sophocles had used *phthonos* in this passage instead, then it would perhaps be too overt a reference to ostracism. Regardless of the sense of *zēlos* that Sophocles intended, a sense of Oedipus having a status above others that they could aspire to and try to emulate, or wish to possess for themselves, can be read in this term.

This final passage of the play ends with what basically amounts to a warning from the Chorus. Essentially what is being said is that people should not consider themselves, or others, to be fortunate until they have come to the end of their life without any grief. No matter how fortunate or great a person may appear to be, or how much their life is envied by others, it is highly unlikely that anybody will live their whole life without pain of some kind. A person who manages to do this can be called truly fortunate and be envied. In the case of Oedipus, he was deemed to be fortunate and a great man, but despite this the most unimaginable pain and horrors befell him. His greatness did not save him from his grief. In fact, the repeated

⁴²⁶Translated by Hugh Lloyd-Jones, *Vol.1*, (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1994)

⁴²⁷Liddell and Scott, p.298

⁴²⁸*Ibid*, p.298

⁴²⁹*Ibid*, p.298

emphasis on the greatness of Oedipus gives the situation the feel of him becoming so great, and so elevated over everybody else so that he can fall further. Fitting in with Vernant's notion of polarity, Oedipus reaches the very pinnacle and towers over the rest of the population, only to be brought down so low that nobody can be considered less than he is. This lends itself to the idea that his greatness was going to be part of his downfall, or that his downfall would occur regardless of it. If indeed this interpretation is accurate, then it would seem that Sophocles shares the sentiment of Aristotle that being too great can cause as much tragedy as being too base. This then fits with Vernant's idea of the symmetry between the *pharmakos* and the ostracised. Both of these figures basically had the same function; to avert evil from the community. The direction from which that evil would potentially come from in each case, was the main difference between the two.

Now that Oedipus as an ostracised figure has been examined, the opposite, or Oedipus as a *pharmakos*, needs to be discussed in further detail. As was stated in the previous chapter, the *pharmakos* was, in the historical context, usually a person who was considered to exist at the lower levels of society. The examples that were examined included criminals, slaves, the poor and those considered to be ugly. By the end of *Oedipus Tyrannus*, Oedipus has discovered that he is a parricide and the son of the woman he is married to. As a committer of incest and the killer of his father, Oedipus is revealed to be the lowest of the low, in a complete reversal of the way in which he was the highest member of the community. The killing of a parent was considered by the Greeks to be one of the most heinous crimes possible. In the *Laws*, Plato states that if the parent acquits their killer before they die, then the murderer will have to be purified in the same way as somebody who commits an involuntary

murder. After this, the parricide or matricide will be pure again.⁴³⁰ Proceeding this is the following passage from Plato's *Laws*, which gives an indication of how abhorrent this crime was considered to be:

“ἐὰν δὲ μὴ ἀφῆ, πολλοῖς ἔνοχος ἔστω νόμοις ὁ δράσας τι τοιοῦτον· καὶ γὰρ αἰκίας δίκαις ταῖς ἐσχάταις ἔνοχος ἂν γίγνοιτο καὶ ἀσεβείας ὡσαύτως καὶ ἱεροσυλίας, τὴν τοῦ γεννήτου ψυχὴν συλήσας, ὥστ’ εἶπερ οἷόν τ’ ἦν τὸ πολλάκις ἀποθνήσκειν τὸν αὐτόν, καὶ τὸν πατροφόνον ἢ μητροκτόνον, ἐξεργασάμενον θυμῷ τοῦτο, δικαιοτάτων θανάτων πολλῶν ἦν τυγχάνειν. ὃ γὰρ μόνῳ οὐδ’ ἀμυνομένῳ θάνατον, [μέλλοντι ὑπὸ τῶν γονέων τελευτήσεσθαι], παρέξει νόμος οὐδεὶς κτεῖναι τὸν πατέρα ἢ μητέρα, τοὺς εἰς φῶς τὴν ἐκείνου φύσιν ἀγαγόντας, ἀλλ’ ὑπομείναντα τὰ πάντα πάσχειν πρὶν τι δρᾶν τοιοῦτον νομοθετήσῃ, πῶς τούτῳ δίκης γε ἄλλως προσῆκον τυγχάνειν ἂν γίγνοιτο ἐν νόμῳ; κείσθω δὴ τῷ πατέρα ἢ μητέρα ἀποκτείναντι θυμῷ θάνατος ἢ ζημία.”⁴³¹

“but in case the dead person does not so acquit him, then he that has done such a deed is liable to a number of laws: for outrage he will be liable to most heavy penalties, and likewise for impiety and temple-robbing, since he has robbed his parent of life; so that if “to die a hundred deaths” were possible for any one man, that a parricide or a matricide, who did the deed in rage, should undergo a hundred deaths would be a fate most just. Since every law will forbid the man to kill father or mother, the very authors of his existence, even for the sake

⁴³⁰Plato, *Laws*, IX.869.a-b

⁴³¹*Ibid*, IX.869.b-c

of saving his own life, and will ordain that he must suffer and endure everything rather than commit such an act,—in what other way than this can such a man be fittingly dealt with by the law, and receive his due reward? Be it enacted, therefore, that for the man who in rage slays father or mother the penalty is death.”⁴³²

In this excerpt, Plato expresses the idea that a person who commits patricide or matricide should not only be liable for the murder, but should also face the penalties for impiety and temple robbing. The reason for the temple robbing is that killing a parent robs them of life. Furthermore, Plato states that if it was possible for a person to undergo the punishment of dying a hundred deaths, then that would be a just and fitting punishment for this crime. This indicates how abhorrent the Greeks found this crime to be, and how base they considered its perpetrator to be.

For Oedipus, this means that he has become one of the worst possible criminals, without any forethought or intent. As Vernant notes, this makes him innocent from the point of human law, as he killed Laius in defence of himself, and he married Jocasta as an honour for saving Thebes.⁴³³ Oedipus had no knowledge of the crimes he was committing. However, while this may make him innocent in terms of human law, Vernant continues on to state that he is nonetheless guilty in terms of religion, as he has performed actions that are contrary to the “sacred order that governs human life.”⁴³⁴ This is why at the end of the play, Creon tells Oedipus the following:

“οὐχ ὡς γελαστής, Οἰδίπους, ἐλήλυθα,
οὐδ’ ὡς ὄνειδιῶν τι τῶν πάρος κακῶν.
ἀλλ’ εἰ τὰ θνητῶν μὴ καταισχύνεσθ’ ἔτι

⁴³²Translated by R.G Bury, *Vol.2*, (William Heinemann Ltd, London, 1952)

⁴³³Vernant, p.94

⁴³⁴*Ibid*, p.94

γένεθλα, τὴν γοῦν πάντα βόσκουσιν φλόγα

αἰδεῖσθ' ἄνακτος Ἡλίου, τοιόνδ' ἄγος

ἀκάλυπτον οὕτω δεικνύουσι, τὸ μήτε γῆ

μήτ' ὄμβρος ἱερὸς μήτε φῶς προσδέξεται.

ἀλλ' ὡς τάχιστα ἐς οἶκον ἐσκομίζετε·

τοῖς ἐν γένει γὰρ τὰ γενεῆ μόνους θ' ὄραν

μόνοις τ' ἀκούειν εὐσεβῶς ἔχει κακά.⁴³⁵

“I have not come to mock you, Oedipus,

or to reproach you with any wrong that lies

in the past. But if you have no shame before

the face of men, revere at least the fire of the

Sun that feeds all things, and do not expose

openly such a pollution, one which neither the

earth nor the sacred rain nor the light shall

welcome! Take him at once into the house!

Piety demands that kinsmen alone should see

and alone should hear the sorrows of their kin.⁴³⁶

Here Creon is urging Oedipus to go back inside because his pollution is such that it should not be exposed openly. Oedipus has not tried to hide his fate from the citizens, in fact he wanted to be able to show them all what had become of him before he was cast out.⁴³⁷ Creon, however, is telling him that he should have a sense of shame before the light of the sun and that even the earth, rain and light would shun him because of the nature of his pollution. Oedipus' pollution is so great that not only people will

⁴³⁵*OT*, lines 1422-1431

⁴³⁶Translated by Hugh Lloyd-Jones, *Vol.1*, (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1994)

⁴³⁷*OT*, lines 1287-1291

shun him, but everything in nature will.

At this point it is interesting to note that the nature of Oedipus' pollution seems to have been different in Aeschylus' version of this tragedy, which was the second play in Aeschylus' Theban trilogy, called *Oedipus*.⁴³⁸ According to Schwartz, the pollution was caused when Laius violated the curse placed upon him by Pelops, which was endorsed by Apollo.⁴³⁹ This curse stated that the events would only unfold if Laius had a son, and Schwartz stresses the fact that in Aeschylus' version this curse was conditional.⁴⁴⁰ It was after Laius had a son despite this that the curse came into effect, and Oedipus was doomed from the moment of his conception.⁴⁴¹ His pollution was not his own, but that of the earlier generations of his house.⁴⁴² This curse plays an important role in Aeschylus' version of the story of Oedipus, but in the Sophoclean play, everything has already occurred before the play begins, it is simply a matter of everybody finding out what has transpired.⁴⁴³ In Sophocles' play the pollution belongs to Oedipus. By taking his *miasma* with him when he leaves Thebes, he takes the pollution from the city as well. When he carries the weight of the city's pollution with him, he acts as a *pharmakos*, and in effect saves the city from the plight that had befallen it, in much the same way that he did when he solved the riddle of the Sphinx. In both of his roles as a man who is the highest in the city, and then again as the lowest person in the city, Oedipus saves Thebes.

While it may have been Oedipus' intention to save Thebes by becoming the scapegoat, Ahl has a different interpretation of how the city was affected by him

⁴³⁸Schwartz, Joel, "Human Action and Political Action in *Oedipus Tyrannos*" in *Greek Tragedy and Political Theory*, (Berkeley, 1986), p.189

⁴³⁹*Ibid*, p.189

⁴⁴⁰*Ibid*, p.189

⁴⁴¹*Ibid*, p.189

⁴⁴²*Ibid*, p.189

⁴⁴³*Ibid*, pp.189-190

becoming a *pharmakos*. It is Ahl's opinion that during the course of the play Oedipus begins to see himself in the role of scapegoat more and more, until that is the only role he can see himself occupying.⁴⁴⁴ Ahl moves outside of the action of the play to point out that the troubles in Thebes only intensify after Oedipus has gone into exile.⁴⁴⁵ He puts forward that if Oedipus had remained the king of Thebes, then the war between his sons and the various acts committed by Creon, would not have occurred.⁴⁴⁶ Unfortunately, this kind of speculation does not provide much insight into the character of Oedipus as he appears in *Oedipus Tyrannus*. It is only what occurs within the play that can truly be taken into consideration. Ahl does however, concur that by assuming the role of scapegoat, and taking upon himself the pollution of the entire πόλις, Oedipus is attempting to save the city once again, as he had done previously by solving the riddle of the Sphinx.⁴⁴⁷

After discovering that he was a parricide and a committer of incest, Oedipus asks more than once to be sent away from the city, as was discussed in more detail above. After leaving the city in exile, Oedipus would not only assume the role of the *pharmakos*, that being a purifying agent, but he would also utilise the same manner by which this purification was carried out by leaving the city behind free from pollution. This was not the first time that Oedipus utilised the method of leaving behind a city to avoid pollution, in the same way as a scapegoat. Oedipus had come upon Thebes during his wanderings after he had voluntarily left Corinth. The reason he left Corinth was because he had learned of the prophecy that he would kill his father and marry his mother, but at that stage he was still under the mistaken impression that Polybus and

⁴⁴⁴Ahl, Frederick, *Sophocles' Oedipus: Evidence and Self-Conviction*, (Ithaca, 1991), p.262

⁴⁴⁵*Ibid*, p.262

⁴⁴⁶*Ibid*, p.262

⁴⁴⁷*Ibid*, p.262

Merope from Corinth were his parents. Therefore, in an attempt to avoid fulfilling the prophecy, Oedipus left Corinth. The messenger, who has brought Oedipus the news of Polybus' death, asks him the following:

“ἢ μὴ μίᾱσμα τῶν φυτευσάντων λάβῃς;”⁴⁴⁸

“Is it so that you will not acquire pollution through your parents?”⁴⁴⁹

The messenger here has even used the word *miasma*, which was associated with scapegoats, as has been discussed previously. Oedipus' reply to this question from the messenger is an affirmative, that he did leave Corinth, and has stayed away in order to avoid this horrid pollution.⁴⁵⁰

Oedipus was acting like a preventative scapegoat for Corinth by sending himself into exile. This is reminiscent of the *pharmakoi* from the Thargelia, who were banished from the city annually, in order to prevent the city from being afflicted by disasters such as plague. By removing the city's pollution in the form of a scapegoat, the *polis* was thought to be safeguarded. It was with these kinds of intentions that Oedipus left Corinth, so as not to bring about a pollution caused catastrophe to the city. Again, Oedipus in his role as a scapegoat for Corinth is similar to the *pharmakoi* from the Thargelia, in that he had been raised to a higher level and then cast down again. Unbeknownst to Oedipus, he was found as a baby and taken to Corinth to be raised by the royal family. Oedipus was assumed to be an orphan, from an unknown family of unknown status, but he was raised as the son of the royal family. This seeming elevation in status or circumstance can be likened to the way in which the *pharmakoi* were dressed in fine clothes and fed by the state, sometimes even kept by the state for a year. This facet of the scapegoat was discussed in the previous chapter

⁴⁴⁸*OT*, line 1012

⁴⁴⁹Translated by Hugh Lloyd-Jones, *Vol.1*, (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1994)

⁴⁵⁰*OT*, line 1013

in greater detail, along with Bremmer's theories regarding why this was the case. This facet of the character of Oedipus likens him to both the historical scapegoats, as well as the ones from mythology, who were usually people with a high position within society. After being built up to this higher level, Oedipus, like the scapegoats from the Thargelia, becomes an exile from his city in order to protect it from pollution.

Oedipus then repeats this pattern of seeming to be of a lower status before being heightened, when he arrives at Thebes. He is a wanderer, with no home because of his self-imposed exile when he solves the riddle of the Sphinx. Then because of that victory, he was raised to the highest position of them all; to that of king. His elevation was even higher in Thebes than it had been in Corinth, but the result was that he was cast down even lower when he assumed the role of the *pharmakos* for Thebes. Both as the Prince of Corinth and then again as the King of Thebes, Oedipus is like the stock scapegoat figure from mythology because he is currently in a high position, and therefore a marginal position, within society before becoming the *pharmakos*. However, Oedipus differs from these other characters in mythology in that he did not always occupy these high positions. It is true that he was born as the Prince of Thebes, and therefore born into one of these high, marginal positions. However, his adoptive parents were not aware of this when they made him Prince of Corinth and nearly everybody was born to a station lower than that. Then again, nobody knew that Oedipus had in fact returned home and assumed his hereditary title when he became king in Thebes. So while he did in fact always occupy these positions, nobody knew that for a fact until the end, and thus there was always the underlying notion of his status change. Therefore, like the historical scapegoats, he became more than what he really was, or in his case what he was thought to be. But unlike the historical

scapegoats, he had to become less than what he was first.

The focus of this chapter continues to remain on the character of Oedipus, but will from this point onwards be concerned with how he appears in *Oedipus at Colonus*. The play *Oedipus at Colonus* is considered by some to be in effect a sequel to *Oedipus Tyrannus*. Winnington-Ingram states that it is a sequel because knowledge of the events from *Oedipus Tyrannus* are assumed during the action of the later play, and because in some ways a prior knowledge of the character of Oedipus is also presupposed.⁴⁵¹ Whitman agrees that the Oedipus in *Oedipus at Colonus* is indeed the same Oedipus that we encounter in *Oedipus Tyrannus*.⁴⁵² His character is still the same, the years in exile have not taken their toll on the essential nature of his being.⁴⁵³ As Whitman states, we are reminded not only of Oedipus the man, but also of the fact that he is the carrier of pollution.⁴⁵⁴

Sophocles reintroduces the notion of a polluted Oedipus very early in the play, when Oedipus rests on a seat in a grove of the Eumenides. When a stranger encounters Oedipus in this position, he says the following:

“πρὶν νῦν τὰ πλείον’ ἱστορεῖν, ἐκ τῆσδ’ ἔδρας

ἔξελεθ’· ἔχεις γὰρ χῶρον οὐχ ἄγνόν πατεῖν.”⁴⁵⁵

“Before you ask me anymore questions, leave this seat!

The ground you occupy cannot be trodden without pollution!”⁴⁵⁶

As Whitman suggests, by making Oedipus unwittingly bring about more pollution to himself, Sophocles reinforces and symbolises the pollution that had previously been

⁴⁵¹Winnington-Ingram, R.P, *Sophocles: An Interpretation*, (Cambridge, 1980), p.256

⁴⁵²Whitman, Cedric H, “Apocalypse: *Oedipus at Colonus*” in *Oxford Readings in Greek Tragedy*, (Oxford, 1983), p.231

⁴⁵³*Ibid*, p.231

⁴⁵⁴*Ibid*, p.231

⁴⁵⁵Sophocles, *Oedipus at Colonus*, lines 36-37

⁴⁵⁶Translated by Hugh Lloyd-Jones, *Vol.2*, (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1994)

conjured.⁴⁵⁷ It would seem that Oedipus cannot avoid pollution, a notion which causes Whitman to offer up a comparison of Oedipus to Philoctetes. He states that as Philoctetes cannot be separated from his disease, neither can Oedipus be separated from his pollution.⁴⁵⁸ Sophocles also brings to light Oedipus' status as a wandering exile from the very opening of the play. The action of the play begins with Oedipus addressing his daughter and companion, Antigone, when he asks her where they have arrived. Oedipus refers to himself as a *planētēn* in this opening address, which gives the audience an insight into how he has spent the intervening time between the two plays; as a wanderer.⁴⁵⁹

In the beginning of the play, the Chorus is unaware of Oedipus' identity and see him as a blind, old man. The figure he presents is one to be pitied, rather than feared. The chorus offers him assurances that once he has left the sacred grove of the Eumenides, then he can rest safely, as can be seen in the following passage:

“οὐ τοι μήποτε σ’ ἐκ τῶνδ’ ἐδράνων, ὦ γέρον,

ἄκοντά τις ἄξει.”⁴⁶⁰

“Never shall anyone take you from this place of rest, old man,

against your will!”⁴⁶¹

These assurances, however, soon turn into fearful urgings for him to leave once Oedipus' identity is revealed, as follows:

“ἔξω πόρσω βαίνετε χώρας.”⁴⁶²

“Go far away, out of the country!”⁴⁶³

⁴⁵⁷Whitman, p.231

⁴⁵⁸*Ibid*, p.236

⁴⁵⁹*OC*, lines 1-4, line 3 specifically for *πλανήτην*

⁴⁶⁰*Ibid*, lines 176-177

⁴⁶¹Translated by Hugh Lloyd-Jones, *Vol.2*, (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1994)

⁴⁶²*OC*, line 226

⁴⁶³Translated by Hugh Lloyd-Jones, *Vol.2*, (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1994)

The Chorus fear that the pollution Oedipus carries with him will bring about some kind of calamity for their city:

“σὺ δὲ τῶνδ’ ἐδράνων πάλιν ἔκτοπος

αὔθις ἄφορμος ἐμᾶς χθονὸς ἔκθορε,

μή τι πέρα χρέος

ἐμᾶ πόλει προσάψης.”⁴⁶⁴

“and do you leave this seat and

hasten away from my country, for

fear you may fasten some heavier

burden on my city!”⁴⁶⁵

Slatkin explains these lines by attributing to the Chorus a belief that Oedipus deserved his fate.⁴⁶⁶ They view the previous events in Oedipus' life as punishment from the gods, and thus it must be their intention that they are conducting themselves in accordance with what the gods will for Oedipus.⁴⁶⁷ Later in the text they express a fear of what the gods may do and use this as an explanation for not helping Oedipus and Antigone further.⁴⁶⁸ With this belief, they act on behalf of the whole *polis* when they attempt to make him leave.

The text does certainly show the Chorus trying to get Oedipus to leave due to their fear of his pollution. There does however, appear to be some difference of opinion as to what exactly it is that the Chorus fears will befall the city. Slatkin has translated “χρέος ἐμᾶ πόλει προσάψης” as “attach some heavier burden to my city”, but it is

⁴⁶⁴*OC*, lines 233-236

⁴⁶⁵Translated by Hugh Lloyd-Jones, *Vol.2*, (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1994)

⁴⁶⁶Slatkin, Laura, “*Oedipus at Colonus: Exile and Integration*” in *Greek Tragedy and Political Theory*, (Berkeley, 1986), p.213

⁴⁶⁷*Ibid*, p.213-214

⁴⁶⁸*OC*, lines 256-257

unclear what type of burden this may mean.⁴⁶⁹ There is doubt in her translation as to whether this burden would be some kind of disaster such as the plague which infected Thebes, or if it is a burden of responsibility. In his commentary, Jebb explains that this section of the text is inferring that the Chorus does not want the city to be obligated to expiate the pollution.⁴⁷⁰ Regardless of the magnitude of the potential consequences that the Chorus foresees for aiding Oedipus, it is clear that they do not want themselves, nor their city to be associated with his pollution.

The Chorus are not the only group unwilling to accept Oedipus within their city. During the play it is revealed that there is another prophecy concerning Oedipus. Whichever city is the home to his tomb will be at an advantage over their enemies. The Thebans learn of this oracle and so are determined to bring Oedipus back and possess his tomb, however, they do not wish to have the tomb within the city itself. Ismene reports the prophecy to her father in the following way:

“ὥς σ’ ἄγχι γῆς στήσωσι Καδμείας, ὅπως
κρατῶσι μὲν σοῦ, γῆς δὲ μὴ ἴμβαινης ὄρων.”⁴⁷¹

“So that they can establish you near the Cadmean land,
where they can control you without your entering its bounds.”⁴⁷²

The Thebans are not prepared to have Oedipus buried within their borders, but want to have his tomb as close as possible without crossing into Theban territory. Even after his death, they still do not want him to return with his pollution. When Oedipus learns of this, he asks if they will at least bury him in Theban soil, to which Ismene

⁴⁶⁹Slatkin, p.213

⁴⁷⁰Jebb, Sir Richard. *Sophocles: The Plays and Fragments, with critical notes, commentary, and translation in English prose*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1899) as found at <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?doc=Perseus%3atext%3a1999.04.0018&query=commline%3d%23173> on December 30th 2008

⁴⁷¹OC, lines 399-400

⁴⁷²Translated by Hugh Lloyd-Jones, *Vol.2*, (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1994)

replies;

“ἀλλ’ οὐκ ἐᾷ τοῦμφυλον αἷμά γ’, ὃ πάτερ.”⁴⁷³

“But the shedding of kindred blood does not allow it, father!”⁴⁷⁴

The basis for Oedipus being refused burial in Theban soil, is that it is not permitted for people who have killed their kin. This polluting factor is their excuse for not allowing Oedipus home, even in death. As Segal explains, Oedipus is still a curse to Thebes and his pollution is still a danger, which means that he must be kept at the boundaries.⁴⁷⁵ Like in the story of Polykrates of Naxos, Oedipus cannot return home, ever. As a scapegoat, Oedipus has carried the pollution out of Thebes, but he can never return and bring it back.

Despite the pollution still surrounding Oedipus, there are a lot of questions raised in this play about his guilt. As was discussed earlier in this chapter, Oedipus may have been legally and morally innocent from the perspective of human law, but despite his ignorance of the facts and no intention or premeditation on his part, he was still considered to be guilty from the point of view of religion. Whitman notes that *Oedipus Tyrannus* must have caused some debate amongst the citizenry of Athens in regard to the guilt or innocence of Oedipus.⁴⁷⁶ He then suggests that perhaps Sophocles wanted to answer the question of his guilt, because there is a strong emphasis on Oedipus' innocence in *Oedipus at Colonus*.⁴⁷⁷ As Vernant points out, Oedipus himself did nothing to warrant his guilt.⁴⁷⁸ During the course of the play Oedipus protests his innocence in regard to both the parricide and the incest. After the Chorus learns Oedipus' identity and they urge him to leave, he challenges them and

⁴⁷³*OC*, line 406 for burial in Theban soil and line 407 for Ismene's reply

⁴⁷⁴Translated by Hugh Lloyd-Jones, *Vol.2*, (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1994)

⁴⁷⁵Segal, p.366

⁴⁷⁶Whitman, p.233

⁴⁷⁷*Ibid*, p.233

⁴⁷⁸Vernant, p.94

defends himself in the following way:

“οὐ γὰρ δὴ τό γε
 σῶμ’ οὐδὲ τάργα τᾶμ’· ἐπεὶ τά γ’ ἔργα με
 πεπονθότ’ ἴσθι μᾶλλον ἢ δεδρακότα,
 εἴ σοι τὰ μητρὸς καὶ πατρὸς χρεῖη λέγειν,
 ὧν οὔνεκ’ ἐκφοβῆ με· τοῦτ’ ἐγὼ καλῶς
 ἔξοιδα. καίτοι πῶς ἐγὼ κακὸς φύσιν,
 ὅστις παθῶν μὲν ἀντέδρων, ὥστ’ εἰ φρονῶν
 ἔπρασσον, οὐδ’ ἂν ὧδ’ ἐγιγνόμην κακός.”⁴⁷⁹

“For it is not my person or my actions that you fear;
 why, know that my actions consisted of suffering
 rather than in doing, if I must speak of the matter
 of my mother and my father, on account of which
 you are afraid of me! This I know for sure! Yet in
 my nature how am I evil, I who struck back when I
 had been struck, so that if I had acted knowingly, not
 even then would I have been evil?”⁴⁸⁰

Oedipus understands why they fear him and the pollution that he carries with him, but he contends that it is not his actions, nor his person that the Chorus actually fear. He claims that the actions were carried out in ignorance, and that because there was no intent, the deeds that transpired cannot make him evil by nature.

This steadfast denial of being evil by nature occurs again, some seven hundred lines later:

⁴⁷⁹*OC*, lines 265-272

⁴⁸⁰Translated by Hugh Lloyd-Jones, *Vol.2*, (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1994)

“ἀλλ’ οὐ γὰρ οὔτ’ ἐν τοῖσδ’ ἀκούσομαι κακὸς
 γάμοισιν οὔθ’ οὐς αἰὲν ἐμφορεῖς σύ μοι
 φόνους πατρώους ἐξονειδίζων πικρῶς.”⁴⁸¹

“No, neither this marriage nor the killing of my
 father, which you never cease to cast in my teeth
 with bitter reproaches, shall prove me to be evil.”⁴⁸²

This excerpt occurs during his confrontation with Creon, and again, Oedipus is asserting the fact that committing deeds in ignorance does not make him evil. He is not the abomination who would knowingly enter into an incestuous marriage with his mother, nor is he the abhorrent parricide. The revulsion which is associated with these deeds should not be associated with him as he is not an evil and willing perpetrator of these actions.

Oedipus is called to defend himself numerous times during the course of the play. As the Chorus begin to change their opinion of Oedipus, they ask him more and more questions about what happened to him in Thebes. In response to the questioning conducted by the Chorus, Oedipus responds in the following way concerning the charge of incest:

“ἐδεξάμην
 δῶρον, ὃ μήποτ’ ἐγὼ ταλακάρδιος
 ἐπωφέλησας ὄφελον ἐξελέσθαι.”⁴⁸³

“I received a special gift after the service
 I had rendered that I, miserable one, should

⁴⁸¹ *OC*, lines 988-990

⁴⁸² Translated by Hugh Lloyd-Jones, *Vol.2*, (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1994)

⁴⁸³ *OC*, lines 539-541

never have accepted.”⁴⁸⁴

In these lines Oedipus explains that he chose to accept a gift for solving the riddle of the Sphinx, that being marriage to Jocasta. Prior to this he had also stated that the city bound him with the marriage.⁴⁸⁵ But whether it was due to pressure from the city, or wanting to accept an honour and become king, it is as Oedipus explains:

“τούτων δ’ ἀυθαίρετον οὐδέν.”⁴⁸⁶

“But none of these things was my own choice!”⁴⁸⁷

As he was without the facts, Oedipus did not knowingly choose to commit incest with his mother.

As can be seen from all of the above examples concerning Oedipus' guilt, his ignorance of the facts is his basis for his defence. Oedipus was innocent from a legal standpoint as he struck Laius in self-defence after being struck himself. He was also unaware of the fact that Laius was his father, just as he was unaware of his relationship to Jocasta when he married her. Oedipus had paid his dues to Thebes in order to free the city from the pollution, but that does not affirm his guilt, and it certainly does not make him evil. In fact, by the time Oedipus was actually exiled from Thebes, he had ceased to think that what he had done warranted such a sentence. When he learns of the quarrel between his two sons, Oedipus reveals what had befallen him since the closing scene of *Oedipus Tyrannus*:

“οἷ γε τὸν φύσαντ’ ἐμὲ

οὕτως ἀτίμως πατρίδος ἐξωθούμενον

οὐκ ἔσχον οὐδ’ ἤμυναν, ἀλλ’ ἀνάστατος

⁴⁸⁴Translated by Hugh Lloyd-Jones, *Vol.2*, (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1994)

⁴⁸⁵*OC*, lines 525-526

⁴⁸⁶*Ibid*, line 523

⁴⁸⁷Translated by Hugh Lloyd-Jones, *Vol.2*, (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1994)

αὐτοῖν ἐπέμφθην κάζεκηρύχθην φυγάς.
 εἴποις ἂν ὡς θέλοντι τοῦτ' ἐμοὶ τότε
 πόλις τὸ δῶρον εἰκότως κατήνεσεν;
 οὐ δῆτ', ἐπεὶ τοι τὴν μὲν αὐτίχ' ἡμέραν,
 ὀπηνίκ' ἔξει θυμός, ἦδιστον δέ μοι
 τὸ κατθανεῖν ἦν καὶ τὸ λευσθῆναι πέτροις,
 οὐδεὶς ἔρωτ' ἐς τόνδ' ἐφαίνετ' ὠφελῶν·
 χρόνῳ δ', ὅτ' ἦδη πᾶς ὁ μόχθος ἦν πέπων,
 κάμάνθανον τὸν θυμὸν ἐκδραμόντα μοι
 μεῖζω κολαστὴν τῶν πρὶν ἡμαρτημένων,
 τὸ τηνίκ' ἦδη τοῦτο μὲν πόλις βία
 ἤλαυνέ μ' ἐκ γῆς χρόνιον, οἱ δ' ἐπωφελεῖν,
 οἱ τοῦ πατρός, τῷ πατρὶ δυνάμενοι, τὸ δρᾶν
 οὐκ ἠθέλησαν, ἀλλ' ἔπους σμικροῦ χάριν
 φυγάς σφιν ἔξω πτωχὸς ἠλώμην ἀεὶ.⁴⁸⁸
 “seeing that when I their father was so
 shamefully extruded from the land they
 did not prevent it or defend me, but I was
 uprooted and sent away by them and was
 proclaimed an exile! Would you say that
 the city granted this gift to me properly,
 according to my wish? No, since on that
 very day, when my passion was still blazing,
 and it was my dearest wish to be stoned to death

⁴⁸⁸OC, lines 427-444

with rocks, no one came forward to help me
 realise that desire; but after a time, when
 my suffering had grown milder, and I had
 come to realise that my anger had gone too
 far in punishing my former errors, at that
 time the city drove me out by force, after many
 years, and my sons, who could have helped
 their father, refused to act, but for the want of a
 brief word I went off into exile, wandering for ever.”⁴⁸⁹

As can be seen from this passage, Oedipus was not sent into exile immediately after *Oedipus Tyrannus* ended. Oedipus describes the day on which he learns what he had done unwittingly, and a reference can be found in these lines to the scapegoat. He states that he wishes to be stoned to death, which was a feature of many of the scapegoat rituals, as can be seen from the discussion in the previous chapter. However, nobody did anything on that day, and it would seem that he remained in Thebes for quite some time afterwards.

This fact leads one to ask the question, as Whitman rightly does, how was it possible for Oedipus to remain in Thebes for any amount of time when it was his presence that was causing such hardship?⁴⁹⁰ According to Whitman, pollution such as Oedipus possesses was open to flexible treatment.⁴⁹¹ In Euripides' *Phoenissae*, Oedipus was not banished from Thebes until after the expedition of the Seven had been conducted. The decree for his exile was passed by Creon, in the following way:

“ἀρχὰς τῆσδε γῆς ἔδωκέ μοι

⁴⁸⁹Translated by Hugh Lloyd-Jones, *Vol.2*, (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1994)

⁴⁹⁰Whitman, p.237

⁴⁹¹*Ibid*, p.237

Ἐτεοκλέης παῖς σός, γάμων φερνάς διδοὺς
 Αἴμονι κόρης τε λέκτρον Ἀντιγόνης σέθεν.
 οὐκ οὖν σ' ἐάσω τήνδε γῆν οἰκεῖν ἔτι·
 σαφῶς γὰρ εἶπε Τειρεσίας οὐ μή ποτε
 σοῦ τήνδε γῆν οἰκοῦντος εὖ πράξειν πόλιν.
 ἀλλ' ἐκκομίζου. καὶ τάδ' οὐχ ὕβρει λέγω
 οὐδ' ἐχθρὸς ὢν σός, διὰ δὲ τοὺς ἀλάστορας
 τοὺς σοὺς δεδοικῶς μή τι γῆ πάθη κακόν.⁴⁹²

“thy son Eteocles gave me rule
 O'er this land, making it a marriage-dower
 To Haemon with thy child Antigone.
 Therefore though mayest dwell therein no more;
 For plainly spake Teiresias—never Thebes
 Shall prosper while thou dwellest in the land.
 Then get thee forth: this not despiteously
 I speak, nor as thy foe, but fearing hurt
 To Thebes by reason of thy vengeance-fiends.”⁴⁹³

This ruling of Creon's was made after both of Oedipus' sons were dead, and he had assumed the kingship of Thebes. It was only at this stage that Creon decided that Teiresias' prediction concerning Oedipus should be heeded. Based on these lines it can be inferred that Thebes was left to suffer, or at least to not prosper, for the intervening years that he remained in the city. Whitman suggests that, in Euripides' version at least, the exile of Oedipus may actually have been a way for Creon to

⁴⁹²Euripides, *Phoenissae*, lines 1586-1594

⁴⁹³Translated by A.S. Way, *Vol.3*, (William Heinemann Ltd, London, 1919)

consolidate his power.⁴⁹⁴ In the Sophoclean play, the exile takes place before Creon becomes king, but as Whitman notes, there is no firm evidence that the banishment affected any claims upon the throne.⁴⁹⁵ He does however, make the case for there being political motivations behind the exile, with the pollution being a justifiable excuse for it.⁴⁹⁶

Whatever the reasons behind it, and regardless of Oedipus' innocence or guilt, his status as an exile is without question at the beginning of *Oedipus at Colonus*. He is a wanderer without a permanent home and he still carries around the stain of his pollution, so much so that upon introduction, his name alone is enough to engender fear in the Chorus. He has been the scapegoat for Thebes and as a result has lived apart from society. The *pharmakos* is a figure that was regarded with disdain in historical accounts, being a member of the lowest echelons of the community. Whoever was to become the scapegoat had lived on the fringes of their community originally, and then progressed into a person who had been sent away from their home, in order to benefit their city. *Oedipus at Colonus* presents Oedipus after he had become this figure, but deals with his next progression. Segal compares the Oedipus of this play with Philoctetes, but states that while the concern for Philoctetes is whether he can be reintegrated into society, for Oedipus it is what community could accept him as one of its members.⁴⁹⁷

Sophocles depicts Oedipus falling from the highest position in Thebes down to the very lowest in *Oedipus Tyrannus*, but in *Oedipus at Colonus*, he shows the reverse of this journey. After Oedipus has been made an Athenian citizen by Theseus, he begins

⁴⁹⁴Whitman, p.236

⁴⁹⁵*Ibid*, p.237

⁴⁹⁶*Ibid*, p.237

⁴⁹⁷Segal, p.362

to become much more than he was, more even than he was when he was king. As Segal states, Oedipus moves from the realm of the purely human into a state where the human can touch the divine.⁴⁹⁸ When Polyneices meets with Oedipus to beseech him, Oedipus is returned to a position of power, he can grant a favour or not as he deems to be suitable.⁴⁹⁹ According to Segal, the encounter with Polyneices is vital to Oedipus' change in status to a person of power within a community again.⁵⁰⁰ Oedipus relishes the power that will return to him again, even if he can only gain it upon his death, as illustrated by the following line:

“ἐν ᾧ κρατήσω τῶν ἔμ' ἐκβεβληκότων.”⁵⁰¹

“In which I shall overcome those who threw me out.”⁵⁰²

According to Segal, from the very beginning of the play, Oedipus begins to undergo a kind of purification.⁵⁰³

The more the play progresses, the more powerful Oedipus becomes in a slow reversal of his scapegoat status, but also the more purified he becomes. This is a vastly different fate from the one which Sophocles had already described for Oedipus in the *Antigone* as can be seen in the following lines:

“οἴμοι· φρόνησον, ᾧ κασιγνήτη, πατήρ
ὡς νῶν ἀπεχθῆς δυσκλεῆς τ' ἀπώλετο
πρὸς αὐτοφώρων ἀμπλακημάτων, διπλᾶς
ὄψεις ἀράξας αὐτὸς αὐτουργῶ χερί·”⁵⁰⁴

“Woe! Think, sister, of how our father

⁴⁹⁸*Ibid*, p.381

⁴⁹⁹*Ibid*, p.382

⁵⁰⁰*Ibid*, p.384

⁵⁰¹*OC*, line 646

⁵⁰²Translated by Hugh Lloyd-Jones, *Vol.2*, (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1994)

⁵⁰³Segal, p.385

⁵⁰⁴*Ant.*, lines 49-52

perished hated and ill-famed, through the
crimes he had himself detected, after striking
both his eyes himself, with his own hand!”⁵⁰⁵

In this earlier play, Antigone is describing her father as being hated until his death because of the crimes that he committed. The situation she is relating does not seem to have any kind of purification or regaining of strength for Oedipus. At the end of *Oedipus at Colonus*, however, he goes to his death possessing powers beyond human and he is no longer the wandering exile. He has a final place of rest from which he can protect his new city, rather than being rejected due to the potential harm his pollution could do. He moves from a threat to a saviour, as he once was for Thebes. Oedipus is allowed entry into the sacred grove as a powerful, purified man and no longer a *pharmakos*.

⁵⁰⁵Translated by Hugh Lloyd-Jones, *Vol.2*, (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1994)

Conclusion

Ritual and Reason is the title for this thesis, and the aim for this body of work was to examine the actual sacrificial rituals conducted by the Greeks, and then to discuss how sacrifice is depicted in Sophoclean drama, and the reasons behind it. Not all of the plays written by Sophocles have been discussed, and the ones that have been examined have not been given equal treatment. The reason for any excluded plays or texts receiving less attention than other plays, is that either those plays did not feature vast amounts of sacrificial imagery, or because they raised other weighty issues, such as the role of women in sacrifice. As with any piece of work, not all issues could be discussed in great detail, and rather than gloss over important topics, they were instead left outside of the focus of this particular thesis so as not to do them a disservice.

The sacrifices that occur within the Sophoclean drama could not be studied in complete isolation. It is rare to find something inside a Sophoclean tragedy that is superfluous. It is all there for a reason, and as sacrifice reoccurs time and time again within the Sophoclean *corpus* of work, and even within a single play, there must be a reason why he used these images. In order to take even an educated guess at his motivations for using the sacrificial motif repeatedly, the ways in which he used it had to be examined first. Was Sophocles illustrating perfectly executed sacrifices, or did something go wrong in each separate instance? If something was wrong with each sacrifice then surely that must be significant.

This conclusion leads to the fact that it is impossible to know if something was wrong with the Sophoclean sacrifices, unless it is known how a sacrifice was

conducted correctly. This is the reason why each chapter that discusses sacrifice, as it occurs within the tragedies, is immediately preceded by a chapter explaining how the Greeks themselves carried out the very same rituals. Based on literary evidence, as well as a large amount of secondary literature, it soon became evident that for the Greeks, a sacrifice was in actuality a very complex thing.

One of the key features of a Greek sacrifice that related most to the Sophoclean sacrifices, was the fixed structure. There are very specific steps involved in the sacrificial process, with a number of participants. Greek sacrifice was governed by a set of rules. Olympian deities had certain animals sacrificed to them at a specific time of day on a particular type of altar. Chthonic deities had the exact same set of restrictions, and then the dead also had theirs. Anthropologists have been in agreement that whether it is a blood sacrifice or a bloodless one that is offered, the intent is the same, which means that for the purpose of this thesis libations and votive offerings also had to be discussed. These types of offerings also had sets of rules that had to be followed.

Once the process was understood, the motivations behind the process needed to be interpreted. It would seem that there is quite a lot of disagreement among scholars as to why people conduct sacrifices. The reasons posited in Chapter One may not be accurate for all cultures, but they develop a broad sense of why sacrifice was so important to the Greeks. Sacrifice was an opportunity for the Greeks to eat meat, but maybe even more importantly, they do so in a way that emphasised and strengthened community ties. People who did not sacrifice in the same way, or did not attend the huge festival sacrifices, were seen to exist outside of the community. Groups who wished to define themselves as separate communities did so in part by varying their

sacrificial practices from those of their previous community.

Sacrifice was obviously not only about the bonds it forged between men, but also about men and their relationship with the gods. The Greeks believed that their sacrifices provided sustenance to the gods in the form of the smoke from the burnt offerings. The offerings that the Greeks would make to the gods was their part of a type of reciprocity that existed between them. Sacrifices would be made in order to get something, or to avert something, or to say thank you for having received something. Offerings kept the gods happy and more inclined to grant requests. This relationship was also based on the notion that there was a set order in the universe, with gods being above men, and men being above beasts. This order is perfectly illustrated by a blood sacrifice, when man has dominion over a beast and kills it, but man is making this offering to the gods who are at the top of the chain.

With these ideas in mind, it is possible to examine the sacrifices as they occur in Sophoclean drama. The focus of Chapter Two is how distorted sacrificial imagery is indicative of some kind of disorder. In the *Ajax*, the slaughter of the animals at the beginning of the play is described as being a sacrifice. The man who conducts this perverted sacrifice, Ajax, is insane at the time during which he commits these deeds. The twisted sacrifice is the act of a madman, a sane person could not accomplish such deeds, especially with the delight that Ajax expresses. His insanity places him outside of the community and when the madness is lifted he comes to the conclusion that the only solution for him is to commit suicide.

Ajax executes his own death away from the army. His death is not supposed to reintegrate him into the community. He chooses an area that is secluded and makes preparations such as planting his sword in the ground so that he may fall upon it.

Ajax refers to his sword as the “sacrificer” and it appears in many respects, as if he is sacrificing himself. This sacrifice finalises the restoration of the order that exists within Ajax. His mind has returned and he is in sole command of his faculties again. He realises that to maintain the man that he is and not to be branded a coward, he has to die. He makes peace with the gods and with himself, but not with the community. Ajax restores his own sense of order.

The *Electra* is also concerned with a disruption to the natural order of things. In this case it is the disorder that exists within the household and family. Sacrifice plays a significant role in this play, especially since the reason cited for the beginning of the chaos within the family is the sacrifice of one of the children. Iphigeneia's death at Aulis was at the hand of her father, who sacrificed her to appease a god. This was unbearable to Clytemnestra and so she killed her husband upon his return home from Troy. This murder was in turn unforgivable to her children and so they avenged their father through her death. Her death too was described in terms of a sacrifice to Ares. The disharmony that existed in the familial unit was completely at odds with what should have been. Throughout the play there are thwarted sacrifices and perverse celebratory sacrifices, all of which are illustrative of the unnatural situation that exists within the household.

Sacrifice can also be used to demonstrate that there is disorder on a grand scale. In the passage from the *Antigone*, Creon's disregard for divine law has led to devastating consequences for his people. They can no longer sacrifice as the gods are not accepting them. His attempt to go against the natural order by superceding a divine law with one of his own edicts resulted in failed sacrifices throughout the city. The sacrifice described by Teiresias was done so in grotesque terms. Oozing slime and the

like are highly evocative images, which leave no doubt that something is seriously wrong. Based on the three plays examined in Chapter Two, it seems clear that one of the reasons behind Sophocles' use of sacrifice in his plays was that it was a perfect tool for demonstrating that disorder exists. Because order and structure play such a large role in sacrifice, twisting the sacrificial procedure would indicate to an audience that lives with sacrifice on an almost daily basis, that order has been violated in some way within the play.

The discussion then moves on from this point to Oedipus and scapegoats. The Greeks were highly concerned with pollution. As a result some of the sacrificial rituals that were specifically designed to dispel pollution were different to the usual sacrifices. The *pharmakos* rituals were held in different parts of Greece, especially in the Ionian states and Athens. The people who were usually chosen to be the *pharmakos*, either at the annual festival, or in times of extreme circumstance, were those who existed at the bottom of society, such as criminals, ugly people and beggars. These people would be ritually expelled from their community with all of the pollution from within the city placed upon them. When they were banished, the pollution was banished with them, leaving the community cleansed and pure again.

Many examples of scapegoats from mythology were discussed. These mythological figures were all people of importance such as kings or royal children. While not evident at first, it can be seen that these figures do have something in common with the actual scapegoats from the lower echelons of society. Both groups exist on the fringes of society and not completely integrated into the community. Oedipus falls into this category of a mythological scapegoat, but in the Sophoclean treatment of the tale of Oedipus, there are quite a few features from actual scapegoat

rituals that are incorporated.

The scene is set in *Oedipus Tyrannus* for a scapegoat. Extreme circumstance has come upon Thebes in the form of plague. If Vernant is correct, then Sophocles even hints at the Thargelia during the play and he discusses paeans that are sung, suggesting that they also add to the notion that purification is needed. There is no doubt that cleansing needs to be done in Thebes, and that it will take the form of a scapegoat ritual. This can be deduced from the very opening of the play. It is also clear that it will be Oedipus who is the scapegoat, it is the process by which this outcome occurs that is left for the audience to witness.

The action unfolds as expected. Oedipus discovers that he did in fact kill his father and marry his mother. While he committed these deeds unknowingly, the fact that they were committed at all again, goes against the natural order. The stain that they leave upon him mean that he can no longer live within the community. Sophocles makes mention of the fact that he was new to the community and acted as their saviour on more than one occasion. By assuming the role of king, Oedipus never really became a part of the community that is Thebes. Instead of gradually becoming accepted, he went straight to the top and lived above the rest.

Oedipus had been exiled from Thebes before, when he was exposed on the mountain as a baby. He then left Corinth in self-imposed exile so as to avoid the prophecy, which he thought referred to his adoptive family in Corinth. He is finally banished from Thebes again after the truth is revealed. The scapegoat motif allows Sophocles to illustrate how Oedipus has never truly belonged to a community. Even in Corinth, he was not a true member of that community. As the scapegoats are driven out of a city, so Oedipus was repeatedly sent away.

The scapegoat imagery is perfect for illustrating Oedipus' isolation. By the time he is an old man in *Oedipus at Colonus*, he has spent years wandering and has never again settled in one place. The pollution that accompanies him as a *pharmakos* has prevented him from finding a community to belong to. During the play there is much debate about his guilt or innocence, but the fact remains that he is still polluted. It is in this play that Sophocles is finally able to rectify this situation for Oedipus. In the sacred grove Oedipus is finally purified and given a home. Theseus had already made him a citizen of Athens before Oedipus' death. Oedipus enters the sacred grove to find his final resting place, cleansed and at the end of his life, finally belonging to a community.

In all of the plays that have been discussed in this thesis, Sophocles has employed some kind of sacrificial imagery. Each instance in which he has done so is slightly different from the others. Even within a single play, the imagery is not all the same, and it may emphasise a slightly different point. Between plays even more differences can be found. However, one fact is consistent throughout. None of the examples of sacrificial imagery are superfluous. They all illustrate something and heighten the audience's sense of what is happening and the mood in which it is happening. Sacrifice was something that all of the Greeks knew well as it was part of their daily lives. This means that any Greek would be able to detect something wrong with a sacrifice depicted in a play. This being the case, an air of wrongness surrounding a sacrifice would automatically indicate to the audience that something was seriously wrong elsewhere. The imagery was not necessarily about the sacrifices themselves, but about what they pointed to elsewhere in the play. Sophocles employed sacrificial imagery to perfection, and every time he did so, he did so with a reason.

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