CRUELTY TOWARDS CHILDREN IN THEBAN TRADITIONAL TALES

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by

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ABSTRACT

Children frequently appear as characters in Greek traditional tales, usually as the objects of cruel treatment. The purpose of this thesis is to identify some of the more important tales which involve cruelty towards children, to examine the role of children in these tales, and to consider the relationship between adults and children in them. The ultimate goal is to identify the main function or functions of children in the tales.

This thesis concentrates on those stories which center around Thebes, a place rich in traditional tales. Stories from other places are discussed where appropriate and which demonstrate that the acts of cruelty towards children were common throughout Greek traditional tales.

The introductory chapter outlines the purpose of the thesis, and the scope of the investigation is set out through a classification of various types of cruelty towards children that occur in the tales. The tale of Niobe, who is portrayed by several authors as suffering endlessly, is used as an example to demonstrate cruelty towards children.

The tales which are discussed in this thesis have been divided into three classifications, to each of which a chapter is devoted: 1) the abduction of children; 2) the abandonment and exposure of children; and 3) the murder of children. The analysis identifies different kinds of sources for each tale (e.g. tragedy, comedy, epic, drama, philosophy, mythography, the visual arts). Variations within the same tale that are important for this study are also considered. Conclusions which the evidence reveals concerning the role of children in Theban traditional tales are then drawn.

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ΧΟΡΟΣ

δεινὸν τὸ τίκτειν καὶ φέρει φίλτρον μέγα,
πᾶσίν τε κοινὸν ὥσθ᾽ ὑπερκάμνειν τέκνων.

E. *IA* 917-18

Chapter One

Introduction

Children frequently appear as characters in Greek traditional tales, usually as the objects of cruel treatment.[1] The purpose of this thesis is to identify some of the more important tales which involve cruelty towards children, to examine the role of children in these tales, and to consider the relationship between adults and children in them. The ultimate goal will be to identify the main function or functions of children in the tales. Why are the children more often than not the victims of cruelty? Were the acts which we consider to be cruel carried out with a cruel intent? Are there purposes for these particular tales other than to arouse the listeners' emotions? And do the perpetrators of these acts of cruelty incur punishment in any form?

Although the theme of cruelty towards children appears to be a common one throughout Greek traditional tales, this thesis will concentrate on those stories which center around Thebes, a place rich in traditional tales. However, this is not intended to imply that the acts of cruelty towards children are particularly associated with Thebes more than any other place. Discussion of tales associated with other places will show that the acts were widespread and consistent with the acts of cruelty towards children at Thebes.

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[1]Having discussed the difficulties in defining the various types of stories (e.g. myth, legend, saga, folktale, fairytale), each of which has its own special characteristics, Kirk (1974) 13-37 suggests that the term "traditional tales" may be used to represent all the categories collectively. This general term is helpful since some of the stories to be examined in this thesis may be classified under more than one type of traditional tale.

When children are included in a tale, either as active or passive participants, they tend to be involved in situations in which an act of cruelty is directed towards them.[2] These forms of cruelty, which are often violent in nature, tend to fall into one of three classifications: 1) the abduction of children (e.g. Chrysippus); 2) the abandonment and exposure of children (e.g. Oedipus); and 3) the murder of children (e.g. the children of Niobe). Each of the following chapters will be concerned specifically with one of these classifications of cruelty.

For the purpose of this thesis the term "child" will be used to designate not only an infant or young person but also a character whose role in a tale has been determined by his relationship to his parents (e.g. Pentheus). This broad definition of child is necessary to enable us to examine the categories of cruelty which have been developed here; exposure is associated generally with infants, abduction tends to include adolescent males and females, while murder is associated with children of any age.

The term cruelty tends to imply a sort of satisfaction or pleasure for the one performing the act against his "victim."[3] At first glance pleasure may not be an immediately obvious or appropriate result of the cruelty in the tales involving children. One could ask, for example, how murdering one's children could bring any satisfaction or pleasure. However, it will be shown that this gratification is indeed more often than not present when cruelty is inflicted, and where this satisfaction might not

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[2]Sifakis (1979) 68-69 notes that all children in tragedy (which is always based on traditional tales) suffer misfortune; they are defenceless and naive. Garland (1990) 148 notes that most Greek mythology contains violence and destruction whenever children and adults are characters.

[3]*The Oxford English Dictionary*, prep. J.A. Simpson and E.S.C. Weiner, vol. 4 (Oxford[2] 1989) 79 gives the following definition of cruelty: "The quality of being cruel; disposition to inflict suffering; delight in or indifference to the pain or misery of others; *esp.* as exhibited in action; mercilessness, hard-heartedness."

be immediately obvious or relevant, other meanings of the word cruelty emerge, such as indifference, hardness of heart, bloodthirstiness or frantic rage on the part of the one carrying out the act.

This thesis will attempt to determine whether children played a necessary role in the tales in which they are included. In other words, are the children, who do not tend to exercise free choice, essential for some purpose. For example, the city of Thebes was founded because of an abduction. Agenor, whose daughter Europa was abducted, sent his son Cadmus to search for her, warning him not to return without his sister. When Cadmus could not find Europa he established Thebes as a new place to live (Hdt. 4.147; Apollod. 3.1.1). Her abduction is a fundamental component in the story about Cadmus and the founding of Thebes.

In order to show the potential challenges surrounding the interpretation of a tale an example of the murder of children will be considered here. The Theban tale of Niobe is told or referred to by many authors[4]; the essential details are usually as follows. Niobe, a foreigner, and her husband Amphion, king of Thebes, have seven sons and seven daughters (the most common number, though it varies in the ancient sources). Niobe, a proud woman, boasts that she is more blessed than Leto who has only two children, Apollo and Artemis. Leto is angered by this insult and incites her two children to shoot down all the children of Niobe; the result is a massacre. Amphion takes his own life in despair,[5] and Niobe goes to Sipylus in Lydia, where she is transformed into stone. As for her

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[4]E.g. Hom. *Il.* 24.602-620; Hes. fr. 183 M-W; Sapph. fr. 142, 205 LP; S. *Ant.* 823-838, *El.* 150-152, fr. 446 Radt; Alcm. fr. 75 *PMG*; Arist. *EN* 1148a29; Mosch. *Megara* 82-84; Q.S. 1.294-306; Juv. *Sat.* 6.172-177; A. fr. 154 Nauck; Ar. fr. 294 K-A; Ov. *Met.* 6.146-312 (the longest extant version of the story); Apollod. 3.5.6; Paus. 1.21.3, 2.21.9-10, 5.11.2, 5.16.4, 8.2.5-7; Hyg. *Fab.* 9, 11; Stat. *Theb.* 3.191, 4.575-578, 6.122-125, 9.680-682.

[5]Pausanias says that Amphion is punished in Hades because he mocked Leto and her children; he goes on to say that Amphion's house was destroyed by a plague (9.5.8-9).

children, they are buried near the Proetidian gate of Thebes, the boys buried separately from the girls (Paus. 9.16.7). The *oikos* of Amphion and Niobe and their children is permanently obliterated.

Two variations of the tale demonstrate that the tale at times had an unusual twist. First, Timagoras (Hellenistic period, dates uncertain[6]) writes that the Thebans are the ones who murder Niobe's children (*FGrHist* 381F1). One of the most significant details in most accounts of the tale of Niobe is that a god and a goddess murder all of Niobe's children, and the massacre is Niobe's punishment for her impiety towards the gods. The version of the tale by Timagoras may therefore have been an attempt to rationalize the deaths.[7] Secondly, Xanthus the Lydian (whose version is used by Parthenius in the first century BCE) writes that Niobe and Leto quarrel, and that Niobe is punished in the following way. Her husband (who is Philottus in this version) is killed while hunting, and then Niobe's own father Assaon (not Tantalus) makes overtures towards her, but she rejects him. In retaliation Assaon summons Niobe's sons to a feast and burns them to death (reminiscent of the tale about Tantalus [Ov. *Met.* 6.403-411]). Niobe, grief-stricken, jumps off a high rock, and her father, realizing the error of his actions, kills himself (*FGrHist* 765F20; Parth. 33). This story of the perversion of the sacrificial ritual at which the invited guests, here the perpetrator's own grandchildren, become the sacrifice, existed in the Classical period. Since Xanthus himself was from Lydia and the character of Niobe is supposed to come from Lydia as well (at the very least, her father lives there), it is possible that Xanthus either used a Lydian version of this story, or created a new

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[6]See R. Laqueur, *RE* 6, 1073, *s.v.* "Timagoras" 3.

[7]Gantz (1993) 539; Barrett (1974) 229 n. 139. Cook (1964) 28-29 suggests that Apollo and Artemis are the principal characters of paintings and sculptural groups originally, while Niobe is absent, but by the fourth century BCE, Niobe becomes the main character, along with her pedagogue, in paintings, and later, in the third century BCE, in sculpture, and the gods have become optional. Thus, Timagoras' version parallels the character changes in art forms in the Hellenistic period.

version of the tale for the basis of his interpretation. That Niobe returns to Sipylus and remains there, in the form of a stone, also suggests that the roots of the tale may be Lydian.[8] Agamemnon performs a similar perversion of ritual sacrifice when he sacrifices his own daughter Iphigeneia, the invited guest who believes that she is going to her wedding and not her death.[9] That Iphigeneia is saved by Artemis implies the grimness and unacceptability of human sacrifice.[10] In the versions of the tale of Niobe by both Timagoras and Xanthus the underlying theme remains the same as in the more common versions: a cruel act of aggression is directed towards children who were innocent in so far as they did not participate in any crime themselves, and the family unit is destroyed.

Although many ancient authors incorporated the tale of Niobe into their works they were not all in agreement concerning the number of Niobe's children (see Appendix A). Homer (*Il.* 24.603-604) claimed that she had six boys and six girls, as did Pherecydes (*FGrHist* 3F126), Propertius (2.20), and Statius (*Theb.* 6.124). Apollodorus (3.5.6), Diodorus Siculus (4.74.3), Lasos (fr. 706 *PMG*), Ovid (*Met.* 6.182-83, 192), Seneca (*Her. O.* 1849), the First Vatican Mythographer (153[156]) and the Second Vatican Mythographer (89[71]),[11] Hyginus (*Fab.* 9), Aeschylus in his lost play *Niobe* (fr. 154 Nauck), Sophocles in his lost play *Niobe* (fr. 446 Radt), Euripides in his lost play

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[8]Forbes Irving (1990) 295.

[9]A. *A.* 146-155, 205-247; E. *IA* 89-104, 358-362, 884, 1211-1252; Apollod. *Epit.* 3.22; Paus. 9.19.6.

[10]Dowden (1989) 17 notes that a substitution of a deer or some other animal occurs in each of the different existing versions, but that, according to F. Solmsen, the original version may have involved the gruesome sacrifice of the girl. See Foley (1985) 65-105 for a discussion of this sacrifice, especially 77 where she notes Agamemnon's cruel deception and sacrifice of his daughter.

[11]*Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina, XCIc, Mythographi Vaticani I et II,* cura et studio Péter Kulcsár (Turnholti 1987).

Kresphontes (fr. 455 Nauck), and Aristophanes in his lost play *Niobus* (fr. 294 K-A),[12] all claimed that Niobe had seven sons and seven daughters.[13] Hesiod (fr. 183 M-W) claimed that there were ten (or nine) boys and ten girls,[14] the same number which Xanthus the Lydian (*FGrHist* 756F20c), Mimnermos (fr. 19 W), Pindar (sch. *ad O.* 6.23a), and Bacchylides (fr. 7 [20D] Irigoin) reckoned. Sappho (205 L-P) claimed nine children of each sex. Herodorus (*FGrHist* 31F56) suggested that there were only two sons and three daughters. Hellanicus (*FGrHist* 4F21) claimed that Niobe had four boys and three girls, Alcman (fr. 75 *PMG*) stated that there were five sons and five daughters, and, according to Aulus Gellius (20.7), some authors claimed that there were three children of each sex.

The differences of opinion concerning the number of Niobe's children reveal three things: 1) that the discrepancy was widespread, with no one appearing to have any interest in settling the matter; 2) that Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides and Aristophanes all agreed on seven boys and seven girls (in keeping with the numbers given by the Athenian Lasos, sixth century BCE, which suggests that these writers probably followed the same tradition of the tale as the basis for their own works

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[12]All ancient references to this play identify it by the title *Niobus* (cf. fr. 290, 291, 292, 293, 296, 297, 298 K-A), except fr. 294 K-A (sch. *ad* E. *Ph.* 159), where Kassel-Austin read Ἀριστοφάνης ἐν Δράμασιν ἢ Νιόβῳ for Ἀριστοφάνης ἐν Δράμασιν [or Δράματι] Νιόβης of our mss.

[13]The scholiast on Euripides' *Phoenissae* 159 mentions the variations for the numbers of children by Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Aristophanes, Pherecydes, Hellanicus, and Xanthus. Gantz (1993) 537 notes that several writers mention the names of authors who gave varying numbers of Niobe's children and that these lists of authors are surprisingly large; he does not offer any explanation for the variation, but he does note that the number of boys and girls is usually equal.

[14]Apollodorus (3.5.6) states Ἡσίοδος δὲ δέκα μὲν υἱοὺς δέκα δὲ θυγατέρας ... φησί. Aelian (*VH* 12.36) writes Ἡσίοδος δὲ ἐννέα καὶ δέκα [sc. λέγει] (fr. 34 Rzach). Barrett (1974) 235 n. 157 suggests that Aelian's numbers were a scrambling of Σαπφὼ δὲ δὶς ἐννέα, Ἡσίοδος δὲ δὶς δέκα.

and that this tradition was the one which was most familiar to the Athenian populace); and 3) that the largest group of writers determined that there were seven sons and seven daughters, in contrast with the two oldest sources for this point, Homer (six boys and six girls) and Hesiod (ten sons and ten daughters). It is likely, however, that the variations represent different traditions of this specific detail, as can be readily seen from an examination of Appendix A. For the most part, three traditions prevailed for the number of children. Perhaps the issue was not hotly debated; different authors either simply followed the tradition known to them or perhaps made a conscious choice when claiming the number of children, particularly later authors who were probably aware of more than one tradition. Hence Aulus Gellius (CE 123-*ca.* 165) writes *mira et prope adeo ridicula diversitas fabulae apud Graecos poetas deprenditur super numero Niobae filiorum* (20.7). As for the number of children of Leto, there is, of course, never any question. Niobe only had to have more children than Leto; the actual number of children was insignificant to the story. Quantity was the only way that Niobe could surpass the gods.

Ancient writers were as inconsistent in their naming of Niobe's children as they were in their numbering of her children. For a list of the different names see Appendix B. The nine authors listed in this Appendix give some names in common with one another, but no two authors produce exactly the same catalogue of names for Niobe's children. Further, there is not one name for any child, male or female, which is held in agreement by all writers. Those who identify seven sons give three names in common: Tantalus, Sipylus, and Phaedimus (although there are some variants in the spelling of these names). This discrepancy in the names of Niobe's children demonstrates another inconsistency in the details of this tale. More importantly, the difference suggests that since the names of the children were not established, their names were not very important. The discrepancies in the names

and numbers of children are the two most noticeable inconsistencies in the tale of Niobe and suggest that the children themselves were not important as individuals.

The theme of the survival of children also exists in some versions of this tale, and these surviving children are named. The naming of Niobe's children, either as victims or as survivors, was incorporated in the tale at least by the sixth century BCE. Telesilla identifies two surviving children, a son and a daughter (721 *PMG*), Pherecydes identifies the names of six sons and six daughters of Niobe (*FGrHist* 3F126), and Hellanicus names four sons and three daughters (*FGrHist* 4F21). The naming of Niobe's children was clearly an early mythographical elaboration. Additionally, Telesilla, Apollodorus, and Pausanias indicate that two of Niobe's children survived; Hyginus writes that a daughter, Chloris, survived (*Fab.* 9, 10, 14.14). However, Apollodorus (3.5.6) identifies the survivors as Amphion and Chloris, two names which are not among the seven male names and seven female names which he has just identified; either we have an inconsistency of names within one author, or the surviving children have been added later from a different source, as Barrett suggests.[15]

Telesilla's identification of two children who do not die also indicates that the theme of the survival of children existed in the tale at least in the fifth century BCE, and is therefore also not a Hellenistic (or later) elaboration. The naming of children and the identification of surviving children by these authors, the earlier ones in particular, indicate that details have been added to the tale, both of which have managed to survive. The survival of some of Niobe's children, as well as the naming of them, is not mentioned in the works of Homer, Hesiod or Sappho, the three oldest witnesses to this tale. This fact suggests that there was manipulation of the tale during the Classical period, and while the survival of children represents hope, it also represents a new direction in thought since it

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[15]Barrett (1974) 231 n. 147.

appears that either the gods are not in complete control here or they simply choose not to kill all the children. Additionally, the survival of two of Niobe's children places her on a parallel with Leto, since now both mothers have two living children, a male and a female, who perform obligations on behalf of their mothers. To change the detail in which all the children are murdered, and instead have two children survive, suggests that the cruelty has been alleviated yet still allows for the lesson to be understood. The tale has been changed; the cruelty towards the children has been reduced a little.

The naming of children gives them an identity, making them appear more real to the listener, and intensifying their tragic ending. The theme of the survival of named children indicates a possible desire to alleviate the severity of the cruelty towards the children. Pausanias mentions that the Argives claim that the survivors Chloris and Amyclas built the temple to Leto at Argos, but goes on to say that he does not believe that any of Niobe's children survived (2.21.9).[16] From this it can be deduced that if any children survived they had a purpose to fulfill; they atoned for their mother's guilt.

The various sources for the tale of Niobe which identify names or numbers of her children contain a number of discrepancies: 1) the number of children changes (see Appendix A); 2) the names of the children vary (see Appendix B); 3) the sons are named but the daughters are not (see Appendix B); 4) no children survive, one child survives, two children survive (see Appendix B), or only the sons die, burned to death by their grandfather[17]; 5) all the children die simultaneously,[18] or

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[16]The tale of Demeter and Persephone contains a similar feature since Demeter, who has been nursing the baby Demophoön, is angered by Metaneira, casts the baby aside and demands that the people of Eleusis build a temple in her honour (*h.Cer.* 248-300).

[17]Xanth. *FGrHist* 765F20; Parth. 33.

[18]Apollod. 3.5.6.

the boys die first and the girls die afterwards[19]; and 6) Apollo and Artemis murder the children (the most common version), the grandfather murders his grandsons,[20] or the Thebans murder the children.[21] All these differences indicate that several traditions for the tale of Niobe existed and that no known effort was made to standardize the details. The lack of effort to establish a consistent model for the children in this tale demonstrates the children's lack of importance as characters. However, the graves of these children at the Proetidian gate of Thebes, a detail noted by Pausanias (9.16.7; and mentioned in Euripides' *Phoenissae*, 159-161), demonstrates a curiosity on the part of the Greeks since this was a tourist attraction which was apparently worthy of note. Similarly, Pausanias points out the Theban graves of the children of Herakles (9.11.2). The graves suggest an ambivalence on the part of the Greeks, since the graves are a tourist attraction and provide a link with children of the real world who die and have burial sites, and yet in the tales these children were of no importance as individuals when they were alive.

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[19]S. fr. 446 Radt; Ov. *Met.* 218-266, 286-301.

[20]Xanth. *FGrHist* 765F20; Parth. 33.

[21]Timagoras, *FGrHist* 381F1. Similarly, although Medea murders her own children (the most well-known version of her tale) in Euripides' *Medea*, and in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* 7.396, in another version of her tale, the Corinthians are responsible for her children's deaths (Apollod. 1.9.28; Ael. 5.21; Paus. 2.3.6-7). According to Diodorus Siculus (4.54.7), Medea murders all but one of her and Jason's sons, and then flees to Herakles in Thebes (the murderer of his own children there) who had been the mediator when Medea and Jason had declared their relationship as a lifelong commitment at Colchis, and who had vowed to come to Medea's aid if Jason ever broke his promise to her. Elliott (1969) 98 (on *Med.* lines 1271-1274) notes the contrast between the detailed death of Glauce with the bleak briefness of the description of the children's deaths. He suggests (104) that in the version of Medea's tale in which the Corinthians murder her children, the reason is either that Medea has murdered a member of the royal house or that Medea was generally barbaric.

Just as the literary references tend to include the massacre, so the cruel death of the children of Niobe is the usual scene depicted on amphorae, sculpture, and other art forms.[22] The number of children depicted varies in the visual portrayals as well.[23] Representations on five Italiote vases (fourth century BCE) have been accepted as portraying the character of Niobe on them and as representing Aeschylus' lost play *Niobe*.[24] These five vases do not represent the murder scene but rather the metamorphosis of Niobe in various stages at the conclusion of the play. Keuls suggests that final scenes of this sort in general represent "pictorial consolation literature," that the events chosen for this type of depiction usually occur at the end of the play where the plot's complications are resolved, and that the scenes which depict Niobe in particular were created in such a way that she "became symbolic for the peace of the afterlife."[25] However, literary references to the tale of Niobe almost always imply that Niobe did not gain any peace (the one exception seems to be Ov. *Pont.* 1.2.29-30). Ovid, when comparing his own plight to that of Niobe, did include the word peace. However, Ovid clearly does not suggest that Niobe is in a peaceful state of mind (*Tr.* 5.1.57-58). When Ovid responds to the suggestion that he should write verses in order to overcome his despair, he asks if Niobe should also lead the dance at a festival. To write verses requires *pax mentis*

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[22]Gantz (1993) 538 suggests that after the Niobid painter (ca. 450 BCE) the tale becomes popular particularly in sculpture, but the massacre is the scene which is always portrayed. For a comprehensive catalogue of the sculpture which portrays Niobe see M. Schmidt, *LIMC* 6.1 (1992) 908-914, 6.2, 609-612; and for the Niobids see W. Geominy, *LIMC* 6.1 (1992) 914-929, 6.2, 612-618.

[23]Cook (1964) 42-53 provides an extensive list of visual portrayals of the Niobids.

[24]Keuls (1978) 42-43.

[25]Keuls (1978) 42-44.

according to Ovid, a state of mind which neither he nor Niobe possesses (*Tr.* 5.12.8). There is of course irony in Ovid's words.

Many of the variations in the tale of Niobe do have characteristics in common, including one feature in particular: the mother boasted that she was greater than a goddess, and her children died for this blasphemy.[26] The mythological system demands retribution, and in this case, the punishment fits the crime; the children who are the subject of their mother's boast are also the subject of the goddess' divine vengeance. In chapter four of this thesis, where the topic of the murder of children is discussed, certain aspects of this tale will be considered again. The tale of Niobe contains features which are similar to those in other tales which will be examined in this thesis: the interference of the gods, the destructive actions of adults, and the cruel treatment of children. Although there are many discrepancies between versions of the tale of Niobe, a problem which exists in the other tales to be discussed, the underlying theme of cruelty towards children is always apparent, and this theme requires further investigation into the role of children in this and other tales.

This thesis will explore topics which arise again and again: the importance of children to their parents or their unimportance; the significance of children to other adults or their insignificance; and the powerlessness of children. Those who want a child out of the way often order someone else to do the "dirty work." Is anyone ever held accountable for an act of cruelty towards a child? Curses can be called down upon the one who inflicts a cruel act and upon his descendants. In effect, children of the victimizer can be punished for the deeds of their parent, which implies that the "delays of divine vengeance" are at work here. All this suggests that cruelty was inflicted upon

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[26]Dowden (1989) 15 notes that "the boast" is a motif in many tales (e.g. Niobe's boast that she is greater than Leto because she has more children than the goddess, and Agamemnon's boast that he is a better hunter than Artemis).

children with no concern whatsoever for them as individuals. In the following chapters Theban tales, along with non-Theban tales where applicable, will be examined according to the three classifications of cruelty which have been established (abduction, abandonment and exposure, murder); conclusions which the evidence reveals will then be drawn.

Chapter Two

The Abduction of Children in Theban Tales

Abduction is a common motif in Greek traditional tales, an act of cruelty upon which the founding of Thebes is based. This act of aggression, which induces fear in the victim, can occur for several different reasons: aetiology (e.g. the founding of Thebes); jealousy of a goddess (e.g. Hera and Epaphus)[1]; the withholding of a competition's exclusive reward (e.g. Iole); political manipulation (e.g. Antigone and Ismene); and sexual desire (e.g. Melia). Usually the abduction is a sexual pursuit of one kind or another,[2] which very often includes gods chasing young girls, ravishing them and abandoning them immediately, and the one pursued being metamorphosed into a new form such as a tree or spring.[3] Sometimes the victim of this violent act is a male.

Abduction is the immediate act of aggression in which the victim is removed from his or her home or other familiar place and is brought somewhere else (e.g. Chrysippus), the result of which is supposed ideally to last for the duration of the abductor's desire. Herodotus opens his *Histories*

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[1]Hera is jealous of her husband's affair with Io, and so orders the abduction of the child, Epaphus, who resulted from the affair (Apollod. 2.1.3). Fantham (1986) 45 suggests that the theme of jealousy is, in part, associated with the unstable world outside the *oikos*, and is especially exhibited in physical violence, since the risk of jealousy within the family was not great because of the custom of contracted bourgeois and upperclass marriages in classical Athens.

[2]Sourvinou-Inwood (1991) 67 suggests that the theme of "erotic pursuit" in iconographical representations intimates sexual violence, an act of aggression and domination over women.

[3]Ovid's *Metamorphoses* contains numerous examples of pursuit of this kind (e.g. 1.452-566, 1.588-667, 2.834-3.138 and 9.346-8).

with four cases of this deliberate act of aggression, involving Io of Argos, Europa of Tyre, Medea of Colchis, and Helen of Sparta. He claims that the Persians assume that these females are historical figures, and that they claim that these abductions are the reason for the conflict between the Greeks and other peoples (1.1-5). These females are the subjects of several traditional tales. And, along with their stories, many other stories of abduction exist in Greek traditional tales. These acts of violence were geographically widespread throughout the ancient world, acts which, according to Herodotus, were given no importance by the Asiatics, but which were considered unlawful by the Greeks who went in pursuit of Helen. Herodotus also gives his opinion on abduction, claiming that if a female did not want to be abducted she would not allow herself to be in the position whereby she could be captured (1.4). The naïveté of young girls is not an acceptable excuse.

The locations of the abductions are often similar, being isolated places such as a meadow (which suggests fertility) or a wood, and these sites are outside the safety of civilization and the city. Many abductions take place when the victim is the least protected.[4] The abductee has wandered off from the rest of the group, and the abduction tends to take place far from the victim's home. For example, Europa, who has a golden basket, and her girlfriends, who bring baskets of flowers, go off to meadows beside the sea where Europa (unknowingly) is about to be seized. The abduction of Persephone is similar. She too is playing with her girlfriends and gathering flowers in a meadow from which she is abducted.[5] In another abduction, Daphne, alone, separated from her friends, is

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[4]Dover (1978) 6 notes that many portrayals of youths on the interior surface of shallow vessels include the typical isolated youth who is often nude and sometimes dressing or undressing. This may suggest that, in part, the erotic appeal of this type of art is directed towards the vulnerability of the unprotected youth.

[5]Foley (1994) 33 notes that meadows are threshold places with sexual and fertile associations, and abductions from such locations with a group of maidens present suggest the

pursued like an animal by Apollo through a wooded region (Ov. *Met.* 1.510). These pursuits are very animalistic in nature, with the abductors plotting to catch their prey.[6] Like animals hunting for food, they wait for the moment when the objects of their desire separate from the pack so that they can make their move. The victim may run but escape is not possible. In the cases of the pursuits of the young girls, the hunger for food is replaced with lust, the meal is replaced with sexual gratification. Thus the act of abduction also reveals the juxtaposition of violence and sex.[7]

The Theban traditional tales contain several acts of abduction: Zeus' abduction of Europa[8]; Apollo's abduction of Melia, sister of Caänthus[9]; Epopeus' abduction of Antiope[10]; Herakles' abduction of Iole, daughter of Eurytus, king of Oechalia[11]; Tyrrhenian pirates' abduction of the youth Dionysus[12]; Laius' abduction of Chrysippus, son of Pelops[13]; and Creon's abduction of Ismene and

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readiness of the girl for marriage.

[6]Sourvinou-Inwood (1991) 66 says that although there are strong connections between hunting and Greek initiations, the capture is not a hunt. Dover (1978) 87 suggests that homosexual pursuit and hunting are closely connected.

[7]Burkert (1983) 59 claims that hunting is partially motivated by the powers of aggression which initially were a component of mating fights. Therefore male sexuality and male aggression are closely connected to each other, incited at the same time and, for the most part, suppressed together.

[8]Hdt. 4.147; sch. *ad* Hom. *Il.* E 629 (D); Apollod. 3.1.1, 3.4.1; Hyg. *Fab.* 178; Mosch. *Europa* 1-166; Stat. *Theb.* 1.7-9, 180; Ov. *Met.* 2.834-3.138, 6.103-107; D.S. 5.78.4.

[9]Paus. 9.10.5-6.

[10]Paus. 2.6.1-4.

[11]S. *Tr.* 351-382; Apollod. 2.7.7; Ov. *Met*. 9.134-140; Sen. *Her. O.* 185-186.

[12]*h.Bacch.*; Ov. *Met.* 3.572-691; Apollod. 3.5.3.

[13] Hellanic. *FGrHist* 4F157; sch. *ad* E. *Ph.* 1760; Apollod. 3.5.5; Hyg. *Fab.* 85.

Antigone, the daughters of Oedipus.[14] These abductions occur for different reasons, although for the most part they are of a sexual nature.

First, the tale concerning the abduction of Europa will be examined, beginning with a brief summary of the story. Zeus transforms himself into a bull (another symbol of fertility), coaxes Europa, daughter of the king, onto his back and flees over the sea with his victim, who is never returned to her homeland. Her father, Agenor (or Phoenix[15]), sends her brothers, one of whom is Cadmus, to search for their sister, warning them not to come back until they have found her. The brothers are joined on this search by their mother and Thasus, the son of Poseidon or of Cilix, all of whom are unable to find Europa. Cadmus and his mother then live in Thrace. After his mother dies Cadmus consults the oracle at Delphi concerning Europa but is told to forget about her, to follow a cow, and when it falls down from exhaustion to build a city there.[16] The founding of Thebes is therefore based upon the abduction of the daughter of a king from another land, an act of violence which permanently destroys the family of Agenor.

The search for Europa takes place over a lengthy period of time, and since the initial search for her is fruitless, her mother and brother settle in a new place (since they have not returned home, they have, in effect, been banished by Agenor, husband and father). When Europa's mother dies, Cadmus resumes his search, which indicates that his desire to find his sister was strong. That the oracle told Cadmus to give up his search for his sister implies that the abduction was a necessary part in the development of Thebes; without the deed the city would not have been established (or re-

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[14]S. *OC* 818-847, 939-950.

[15]Hom. *Il.* 14.321; sch. *ad* Hom. *Il.* E 629 (D); Mosch. *Europa* 7.

[16]For a list of sources for the tale of Europa's abduction see above ch. 2, n. 8.

established, cf. Paus. 9.5.1). This places great importance upon the abduction, an act about which Europa has no choice; nor is there any concern for her from the gods. Zeus' immediate concern was for himself and his own desire, but he had another reason for the abduction: he assures the establishment of a divinely sanctioned city. Agenor has sentenced his own sons to permanent exile if they do not complete their task. As a result, Cadmus and his brothers are, in a sense, all failures (a point which is never stressed by the creators of this story) who found and rule new cities. The founding of cities is more important than the recovery of a young girl. Similarly, it is more important to set sail and fight at Troy than to spare the life of Iphigeneia (though paradoxically that war is over an abducted woman). The establishing of Thebes justifies the cruel deed if one accepts that the gods were responsible. Clearly, then, this abduction has a purpose beyond that of the immediate act of aggression. Europa herself is not given any importance in this story other than as a device to accomplish an event, although she does receive attention from many ancient authors. In essence, Europa is a young female from the East whose abduction is a part of an explanation for the founding of a city (Thebes) in particular and the West (Europe) in general. Therefore the tale justifies the cruelty against Europa.

Just as the abduction of Europa had a purpose beyond that of personal gratification of the abductor so too did the abduction of Persephone. The *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* immediately opens with the abduction of Persephone; a violent act sets the stage for the tale. The description of the pursuit and capture is filled with the fear of Persephone. She cries and calls out to her father for help as she is borne away against her will, ἀεκαζομένη (*h.Cer.* 19-32, 417-433). Demeter's torment over her daughter is portrayed vividly. She is desperate to get her daughter back and defies both the human race and the gods; drought and famine lead to starvation and to a failure to sacrifice to the

gods.[17] Zeus, recognizing the seriousness of the situation, submits to Demeter's stubbornness and sends Hermes to bring Persephone back to her mother (*h.Cer.* 329-356).[18] Zeus becomes unwilling to sacrifice the human race for the sake of his brother's desire for one girl. This Zeus is quite different from the Zeus from whom Prometheus saves the human race (A. *Pr.* 28-32, 107-111, esp. 228-236). Hades is motivated by sexual desire, and although he allows Persephone to return to her mother, he tricks her a second time to ensure that she must go back to him for a portion of each year (*h.Cer.* 371-374). Persephone has no chance of outwitting her abductor who in turn has no concern for his victim.

Persephone's story is complex and encompasses both the human race and the race of the gods, focussing on the mother/daughter relationship, as well as providing an explanation for the seasons and for the establishment of the Eleusinian Mysteries.[19] While the tales of Europa and Persephone initially appear to involve acts of aggression for the purpose of sexual gratification of gods, these acts produce positive results which occur because of the cruel act of violence inflicted

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[17]Richardson (1974) 56 identifies Demeter's sorrow along with her anger against the gods and the human race as the central theme throughout the main part of the *Hymn*, and her pain is directly constrasted with the eagerness to please and merriment of the daughters of Celeus. This contrast is also demonstrated by Persephone who on the one hand suffers at the abduction while on the other is a happy, carefree young girl picking flowers.

[18]Nagy (1981) 197 claims that Demeter retaliates against male aggression with an act of her own, withdrawing from the divine male hierarchy and depriving society of its means for survival, as well as terminating sacrifices to the gods; this woman holds an important position in society and has been wronged. Although Persephone is returned to Demeter, the girl cannot stay permanently since the agricultural cycle is dependent upon her return to the underworld.

[19]Parker (1991) 1-17; Richardson (1974) 12-30. Burkert (1983) 260-261 suggests that, given the necessary elements of Persephone's flower-picking and the wanderings of Demeter in search of her daughter, the myth is not dictated by natural phenomena but rather by purely human themes: marriage and death, grief and anger, and final reconciliation, and therefore preserves a human drama.

upon the two females: negative actions have positive results; a city is founded and the Eleusinian Mysteries are established. The trauma experienced by the girls goes unremarked for the most part, although we know of Demeter's sorrow and anger at the violation of her daughter who is a younger and naive version of the "ripe" Demeter. Abductions of the sort which Europa experienced have been explained as acts in which the mortal has been filled with delight and pleasure by a divine presence in the form of a ἱερὸς γάμος, a divine marriage,[20] but the juxtaposition of violence and sex is nevertheless clear.

The abductions of Europa and Persephone have several points in common. Europa and her girlfriends pick flowers (an abduction motif[21]) in meadows by the sea.[22] Breathing a crocus from his mouth,[23] Zeus the bull, who is more fragrant than all the flowers in the meadows, coaxes her up onto his back, and they are off (Mosch. *Europa* 28-124). Persephone and her girlfriends are also in a meadow when a flower, which smelled so fragrant, grew out of the earth to be a snare for the girl. When she reached to take the flower the earth opened up and Hades came out upon her and whisked her away (*h.Cer.* 4-18). Both victims reach in an accepting gesture for a flower; the trap is an

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[20]Keuls (1974) 143.

[21]Sourvinou-Inwood (1991) 65, and (1978) 104-105. Richardson (1974) 71, 140-144 suggests that Moschus was influenced by the *Hymn to Demeter*, but that both poems may have still obtained the catalogue of flowers from an even earlier poem. Moschus' catalogue contains the same five flowers which are listed in the *Cypria* fr. 4.3, and these five flowers are mentioned in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* (which contains an additional flower). These lists suggest an early traditional epic list. Forbes Irving (1990) 133-134 points out that flowers have erotic associations.

[22]Foley (1994) 32 notes that the location of a meadow is associated with fertility and sexuality, and that Europa, among others who are abducted in similar situations, i.e., Persephone and Oreithyia, is ready for marriage. See also above ch. 2, n. 5.

[23]Sch. *ad* Hom. *Il.* E 629 (D).

appealing object which has an alluring fragrance, one which overpowers everything else. Persephone attempts to pick the flower with her hands while Europa caresses and wipes foam from the bull's mouth with her hands; the girls become mesmerized, Europa in a desire to approach and stroke this fragrant bull, and Persephone in amazement at the beautiful toy. These flowers are devices which cause the girls to let down their defences, revealing their naïveté and trust in a beautiful object, an enticement.[24]

A number of abductions in the traditional tales are precursors to marriage,[25] as for example the abductions of Europa (a mortal) and Persephone (a goddess) which lead to betrothal. This act of capturing the bride and carrying her off by force in order to obtain a wife suggests that the bride is quite unwilling. Zeus aids in his brother Hades' plot to abduct Persephone,[26] which is central to the first half of this *Hymn*. Her father approves of a marriage for his daughter which is based on trickery and violence.[27] On the other hand, another father takes a completely different view of abduction: the return of Europa means enough to Agenor that he sends out his sons and orders them never to return without their sister.

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[24]Burkert (1985) 128-129 notes that Zeus is as famous for his disguises when he abducts his victims as he is for the number of his victims; Zeus represents the wish fulfilment of inexhaustible sexual potency and the absolute patriarch who has complete male freedom.

[25]Jenkins (1983) 140 discusses the relation of abduction to marriage, claiming that a bride and an abductee were alike in that neither had control over their own destiny.

[26]Garland (1990) 222 notes that the young bride's transfer from her natal *oikos* to her marital *oikos* and a husband who was possibly a stranger was a traumatic experience for the young girl, and that this type of ordeal is parallelled in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*.

[27]Nagy (1981) 195-197 claims that this tale is based on a process beginning with theft, followed by exchange and gift-giving which establishes recognized relationships and cultural institutions. Persephone represents a female who is a gift herself, a gift which her father gives to his brother Hades, linking the celestial and chthonic realms.

Another abduction and subsequent marriage reveals another violent association with the beginning of Thebes which is briefly related in Ephorus' account of Cadmus and Harmonia (*FGrHist* F120). The first ruler of Thebes begins his rule with a wife whom he has taken by force. The act of abducting a wife is also referred to by Sophocles in *Oedipus at Colonus.* He implies through the character Creon—who says that Antigone is wasting her life caring for her father since she is of the age for marriage—that a part of the marriage ceremony is the seizing of a bride, τοὐπιόντος ἁρπάσαι (750-752). Similarly, Clytemnestra laments how Agamemnon murdered her first husband, threw her baby against the rocks and killed him, and then, without her consent but rather by force, married her (E. *IA* 1149-1152). The practice of abduction or mock-abduction leading to marriage was also prominent in marriages at Sparta, Locri and elsewhere in ancient Greece.[28]

The abductions of Europa and Persephone are parts of explanations for other events. Apollo is responsible for an aetiological abduction, one which takes place near Thebes. By a fountain sacred to Ares, located a little higher than the Ismenian sanctuary, lies the grave of Caänthus who is ordered by his father, Ocean, to rescue his sister Melia whom Apollo has abducted. Caänthus is not able to rescue her and dares to set fire to the precinct of Apollo. The Thebans say that Apollo shot Caänthus down as punishment. Melia has two children by Apollo, Tenerus and Ismenus. It is from this latter son that the river Ismenus derives its name, having been previously called Ladon (Paus. 9.10.5-6). Again, we have a father who demands that his son recover his sister, just as Agenor orders his son Cadmus. And Caänthus, like Cadmus, is unsuccessful in this recovery.[29]

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[28]Sourvinou-Inwood (1973) 17-21; Jenkins (1983) 137-142.

[29]Additionally, Pherecydes identifies one of the daughters of Niobe as Melia (*FGrHist* 3F126). Here we have two Theban females with the same name who suffer from cruelty; one is abducted for sexual purposes and deserted, and the other is murdered. Apollo is the abductor and

The tale of the abduction of the Theban Antiope, the unmarried daughter of Nycteus, contains parallels with the abduction of Helen by Paris.[30] According to Pausanias, Epopeus, who was king of Sicyon, carried off Antiope, thus destroying this Theban family unit. Epopeus' desire for Antiope, who had a reputation for beauty among the Greeks, ultimately brings disaster upon Epopeus and his land (Paus. 2.6.1-4). This is similar to Paris' abduction of Helen which subsequently brings disaster upon his homeland.[31] And, like the family of Nycteus, the family of Helen and Menelaus disintegrates.[32] The Thebans led by Lycus, Nycteus' brother, like the Greeks who go to recover Helen from Troy, come to reclaim Antiope, whom Lamedon, who becomes king after Epopeus, hands over. On her way back to Thebes she gives birth to twins who are exposed along the way. Antiope is then imprisoned by her uncle Lycus and step-mother Dirce. Dirce is tossed to her death by Antiope's exposed babies when they become adults.[33] Epopeus, meanwhile, dies from a wound which he incurred in the battle with the Thebans. This battle is supposedly the first occurrence of hostilities for Sicyon, which had previously enjoyed continuous peace (Paus. 2.6.1-4). These tales of Antiope

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murderer of his victim's brother in one tale and a murderer of all of Melia's brothers in the tale of Niobe, while his sister Artemis murders Niobe's daughter Melia, along with all her sisters. The fates of these two girls are held in the hands of two gods, a brother and a sister. And, as a result of cruel circumstances at the discretion of the gods, two families are destroyed.

[30]Helen, at the age of ten, was abducted by Theseus, but was recovered, untouched, by her brothers (Hellanic. 4F134 and 4F168b; Hdt. 9.73.2; Hyg. *Fab.* 79; Ov. *Met.* 15.233; D.S. 4.63.1-3).

[31]Priam, warned that Hecuba's baby would destroy his country, had the child (Paris) exposed (E. *IA* 1284-1290; Apollod. 3.12.5; Hyg. *Fab.* 91).

[32]The abduction of Helen was the cause of the dissolution or partial dissolution of numerous families throughout the Greek world since fathers, sons and brothers went off to Troy and remained there for ten years.

[33]Watson (1995) 33 notes that stories in which children are saved usually include the downfall of the stepmother.

and of Helen involve punishments of the severest nature for the abductors; both die, and their cities are destroyed in battle. On the one hand, the abductions lead to the disruption of families, on the other, they also lead to the destruction of cities.[34]

Another abduction, this time of a foreign girl, occurs at the hands of a Theban, although he is an exiled one: Herakles.[35] He abducts Iole, the daughter of Eurytus, king of Oechalia.[36] Sophocles in *Trachiniae* portrays this victim of lust as a beautiful girl for whom Herakles overthrows Eurytus and his city of Oechalia (351-358). Deianeira (whose name means Husband-Destroyer[37]), the wife of Herakles, realizing that competition has entered her household (351-433), remembers a magic potion that the centaur Nessus once gave her to use if Herakles began to stray from his marriage. She smears it on a cloak which is sent to Herakles (531-587, 600-619), who wraps himself in his death sentence (756-812). Deianeira also recognizes that it is Iole's beauty which is both the girl's downfall and that of her homeland (464-467), and will be Deianeira's and Herakles' downfall also.

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[34]Helen, in another version of her tale, goes to Egypt to the temple of Aphrodite the Stranger in the "Tyrian Camp" at Memphis instead of to Troy (Hdt. 2.112). This version makes Helen's situation similar to that of several girls who suffer from cruel acts: Europa, Persephone and Iphigeneia. These four females are associated with fertility. Herodotus identifies the Helen at Egypt with Aphrodite and the Phoenician goddess of vegetation Astarte. Europa supposedly has a temple at Phoenicia, which the Sidonians care for, and which is the temple of Astarte (Luc. *Syr.D.* 4.453). Iphigeneia, who is brought through the air to the Taurians after her slaughter (E. *IT* 28-30; Apollod. *Ep.* 3.21-22), is a close relative of Artemis who in turn is also related to Astarte. Persephone and her mother Demeter, the goddess of grain, are also directly associated with fertility. The abductions of these females (the sacrifice in the case of Iphigeneia) are secondary to the importance of assuring fertility; cruelty towards individuals is subordinate to the necessity of crops for everyone, the gods included who demand that sacrifices be made in their honour.

[35]Austin (1990) 132 suggests that Herakles communicates with all females, including Iole, through the language of violence.

[36]S. *Tr.* 351-382; Apollod. 2.7.7; Ov. *Met* .9.134-140; Sen. *Her.O* 185-186.

[37]Austin (1990) 117.

In this tale, Herakles has completed his labours, but instead of a celebration, he becomes the sacrifice.[38] (Similarly in Euripides' *Madness of Herakles*, Herakles comes home to celebrate the completion of his labours, but instead performs a perverted sacrifice, murdering his children and wife [922-976]). In another context (Sen. *Her. O.* 185-186), Iole, lamenting her plight, compares her grief with several other characters; she begins with the wish to be a weeping rock on Sipylus. Although Iole is not a mother, she equates her own grief and plight in having lost family and homeland, with those of Niobe; the *oikos* and *polis* of Iole have been destroyed. Apollodorus generally agrees with Sophocles' version of the tale but mentions that Eurytus had promised his daughter Iole as the prize to whoever could defeat him and his sons in an archery competition. Herakles defeats the family of Eurytus but Eurytus does not hold up his end of the bargain (2.6.1). Later, upon arriving at Trachis, Herakles gathers an army with the intention of punishing Eurytus. Herakles destroys the city of Oechalia along with her ruler and abducts Iole (2.7.7). Iole is unable to escape from her dreadful fate of abduction and permanent loss of her family.[39] This abduction results in the disruption of two families; Iole's family has been destroyed (as well as her city) and so has the family of Herakles. In both cases the *oikos* is destroyed through violence of a sexual nature.

Females are not the only victims of abduction. The god Dionysus, born of a mortal woman, is a native of Thebes. The *Homeric Hymn to Dionysus* (VII), which claims that Semele is the mother of Dionysus, relates the tale concerning Dionysus' abduction by Tyrrhenian pirates. Dionysus is

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[38]Austin (1990) 117-118 notes that the abduction of Iole leads not to the celebration of the completion of the labours but instead to the sacrifice of Herakles himself.

[39]Padilla (1994) 294 notes that Herakles performs a double violence in this tale, since along with the abduction of Iole, he demands that his son Hyllus burn his father alive and marry Iole who is indirectly responsible for the death of Hyllus' mother.

described as a boy in the bloom of youth whom the pirates spot alone on a jutting headland. They capture him and bring him on their ship. Bonds cannot hold him; the helmsman recognizes that the youth must be a god and attempts to convince the crew to release their captive. The captain ignores the helmsman's words and sets sail. The ship begins to fill with fragrant wine and a vine (an element of fertility) spreads over the sails. Then the rest of the crew also tries to persuade the captain to release their prisoner. By then it is too late; Dionysus turns himself into a lion and creates a shaggy bear which stands upon the deck. The lion seizes the captain and the crew jump overboard and are turned into dolphins. Dionysus, revealing himself, frees the helmsman who has found favour in Dionysus' heart. Ovid also relates this story through the character Acoetes who has been captured by Pentheus' slaves who are supposed to capture Dionysus instead. Acoetes describes the abduction by Opheltes of a little boy with a form as beautiful as a girl's. The sailors are punished, turned into dolphins, but Acoetes is spared and becomes a follower of the mysteries of Dionysus (*Met.* 3.572-691). In this tale, the youth who is captured in a deserted location is the one who is in control of the entire situation and whose purpose here is to convert people to his religion. Humans are no match for the gods. The crew act cruelly against the youth, but he quickly reverses the situation. In this tale there is no chance for the abductors to win since they have dared to abduct a divine youth who will not accept such behaviour towards him. He changes from what appears to be a helpless youth to a recognizable god and takes complete control of the situation. In fact, in the Theban tales discussed in this thesis, this is the only case where the victim becomes the victimizer while the act of cruelty is in progress. And this victim/victimizer is a god, who quickly shows his abductors that their cruel treatment of a god neccesitates an act of divine justice; punishment is swift for the pirates.

Not all abductions produced positive results. When Laius was expelled from Thebes by Amphion and Zethus, he went to the Peloponnese and stayed with Pelops. While he was there he taught Pelops' son Chrysippus how to drive a chariot (indicative of a relationship between an *erastes* and an *eromenos* in which the *erastes* is a teacher to the youth); he became enamoured with the boy and abducted him (Apollod. 3.5.5),[40] an act for which Laius earned the reputation as the first to love noble boys (Ael. *VH* 13.5). This was in direct violation of *xenia* (guest/host relationship), and Pelops placed a curse upon Laius and his descendants. Hera later sent the Sphinx to be a grievous menace to the Thebans since they did not punish Laius for his unacceptable behaviour (sch. *ad* E. *Ph.* 1760). Chrysippus himself met with one of at least three possible fates: 1) he committed suicide out of shame (sch. *ad* E. *Ph.* 1760)[41]; 2) he was carried off at the Nemean games, was recovered by Pelops, and then killed by Pelops' wife Hippodamia and her two sons Thyestes and Atreus (Hyg. *Fab.* 85)[42]; or 3) he was killed by Atreus along with his brother Thyestes, encouraged by their mother Hippodamia who thought that Chrysippus rather than her sons might inherit the kingdom of their father (Hellanic. *FGrHist* 4F157; Pl. *Cra.* 395b1-5).[43] Here we have an example of a mother who

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[40]Dover (1978) 199-200 notes that Laius is the first person in myth to have a homosexual relationship. See also Dover (1988) 116-117, 126-127 concerning the *erastes/eromenos* relationship, and 128-129 where he suggests that the homosexual element of this tale may be an invention of the late sixth or early fifth century BCE. Plato *(Lg.* 836c1-6) says that the law against having a sexual relationship with someone of the same sex used to be upheld before the time of Laius.

[41]Similarly, Scedasus' daughters Molpia and Hippo, who, in the bloom of their youth, were abducted by two Lacedaemonians, Phrurarchidas and Parthenius, hanged themselves since they were not able to bear the shame of their violation (Paus. 9.13.5).

[42]Pausanias notes the story that Hippodamia went to live at Midea in Argolis because Pelops was very angry with her over the death of Chrysippus (6.20.7).

[43]Watson (1995) 27 notes the theme of jealousy of a stepmother who fears that another woman's son, instead of her own children, will become the heir to her husband. It is for this reason

manipulates her own children to commit murder,[44] just as Leto uses her own children to murder the children of Niobe. Chrysippus was a threat to other people's futures. His crime is that he was born. Although his father places a curse upon the family of Laius, the reason is not likely to be the abduction of his son. Rather, the violation of *xenia* is probably the cause; the abduction was the way in which the guest/host relationship was violated. However, this story also suggests that the guest/host relationship is not to be mixed with the *erastes/eromenos* relationship. This situation is similar to that in which Menelaus' wife Helen is abducted. Again, the guest/host relationship is violated, and this violation also has sexual connotations. The recovery of Helen is mandatory to appease the insulted Menelaus just as the insult to Pelops was more significant than the act of aggression towards a young boy.[45] In both cases the families have been disrupted and these disruptions will in turn destroy other families.

The curse which Pelops called down upon Laius and his descendants results in great violence and cruelty for Laius' Theban family. Disaster upon disaster then falls upon this household, not from outside enemies but from within the family. However, Laius will live for many years before he meets with his untimely yet oracle-ordained demise (S. *OT* 711-714). As for Chrysippus, his story is kept brief—he is not a main player in the tale pertaining to Laius and his family. The version of his tale in which he commits suicide out of shame does suggest that to be abducted was a great insult.[46] That

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that Hippodamia encourages her sons Atreus and Thyestes to murder her stepson Chrysippus.

[44]Watson (1995) 30, 38 notes that stepmothers often use other family members to eliminate a stepchild, who is always seen as innocent.

[45]See Lloyd-Jones (1971) 120-123 for a discussion of this point.

[46]The suicide suggests that, since Chrysippus killed himself in shame, which is contrary to the usual response of youths in *erastes/eromenos* relationships, he was not as young as might be

Pelops should call a curse down upon his son's abductor and descendants with future griefs and horrors reinforces his condemnation of the violation of *xenia*, here in the form of a cruel act performed against his son.[47] One must not forget, however, that Chrysippus was not rescued in order to live a long and happy life. Even when he is rescued, he still dies, either by his own hand or by another's.

The victims of abduction who have been examined so far all reflect a common theme: the abductors desire their victims for sexual purposes. Clearly all the victims were attractive to their abductors. Zeus desired Europa, Hades desired Persephone, Apollo desired Melia, Epopeus desired Antiope, Herakles desired Iole, the Tyrrhenian pirates desired Dionysus, and Laius desired Chrysippus. All the victims were victims of their own beauty. The abductors often plan out the abduction, waiting for the right moment to strike. This is a violent relationship not based on trust. These abductors are like predators who hunt their prey; animal instincts overcome self-control. Ovid sums up this animalistic ritual of the hunt effectively when Apollo, who is pursuing Daphne, says

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generally thought. Dover (1988) 118 notes that, in Classical Greek society, a relationship between an older man and that of a youth who had grown a beard incurred ridicule and contempt. Additionally, in another version in which he is murdered by Atreus and Thyestes (the sons of Pelops and Hippodamia), questions arise since Chrysippus is a potential successor to his father's kingship. If Chrysippus is simply a younger brother, why would he be a threat? And since Hippodamia is the wife of Pelops, is the mother of Chrysippus someone else? And if so, is Hippodamia no longer the wife of Pelops? Pindar says that Pelops and Hippodamia have six sons, but he does not name them (*O.* 1.89). There are confusing elements in this tale, but in all of them Chrysippus dies one way or another. See Gantz (1993) 488-492, 543-545 for a summary of the sources for the various details in this tale.

[47]On the other hand, in the case of Ganymedes, who struggles to get away, it seems that abduction by a god may be a privilege. However, Ganymedes' father Tros was filled with a deep grief for his son—just as Demeter was so distressed when her daughter was abducted—and was eventually compensated by Zeus with a gift of horses like those which carry the immortals (*h.Ven.* 5.202-217; D.S. 4.75.5; Hom. *Il.* 5.265, 638-651, 20.232, 21.441-457; Apollod. 1.5.9, 3.5.5, 3.12.2; Ov. *Met.* 10.155-161; D.S. 4.75.5; Paus. 5.24.5).

nympha, precor, Penei, mane! Non insequor hostis; nympha, mane! Sic agna lupum, sic cerva leonem, sic aquilam penna fugiunt trepidante columbae, hostes quaeque suos: amor est mihi causa sequendi (*Met.* 1.504-507). Apollo becomes more enraptured by her since *auctaque forma fuga est* (*Met.* 1.530).[48] The vividness of the association between violence and the chase intensifies with the words *ut canis in vacuo leporem cum Gallicus arvo vidit, et hic praedam pedibus petit, ille salutem; alter inhaesuro similis iam iamque tenere sperat et extento stringit vestigia rostro, alter in ambiguo est, an sit conprensus, et ipsis morsibus eripitur tangentiaque ora relinquit* (*Met.* 1.533-538). The relationship between the abductor and abductee is further defined when Ovid, describing Apollo's pursuit of Daphne, says *sic deus et virgo est hic spe celer, illa timore* (*Met.* 1.539).

Zeus deserts Europa since he has many other victims to pursue, nor does Apollo remain with Melia. Cadmus and Harmonia remain together, a union based on a violent beginning. Laius loses his conquest and will be severely punished later in life for his transgression against *xenia*. The Tyrrhenian pirates are transformed into dolphins for their abduction of Dionysus. Epopeus dies for his actions against Antiope, and Herakles also dies for his transgression against Iole (and Deianeira). Divine predators survive, while mortals, more often than not, die. This suggests that the crime of abduction is not acceptable among mortals.

But abduction does not always have a sexual motive; the victims are not always captured for their beauty but rather for some other reason. A case of abduction which is not of a sexual nature concerns Ismene and Antigone, the Theban daughters of Oedipus, both of whom experience abduction, although only for a short duration. In Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus*, Ismene tells

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[48]Sourvinou-Inwood (1991) 65-66 identifies running as a component of male and female initiations, and this initiatory aspect is fundamental to the "erotic pursuit." This pursuit and capture of the girl is similar to the hunt and capture of an animal.

Oedipus that the city of Thebes needs him to return in order to ensure its survival, although Oedipus is to remain outside its boundaries because he murdered his father (389-407). Because Thebes needs Oedipus to return, Creon devises a plot to ensure that this return takes place. At Colonus Creon tells Oedipus that Ismene has been taken captive (818-819), and then he captures Oedipus' other daughter, Antigone (820-847). Father and daughter speak but Oedipus is of no help to Antigone. Then Creon says that there is a more valuable prize for Thebes, namely Oedipus (858-859). Even here, the abducted girls are not the true goal of Creon, who is rather dispassionate concerning Antigone and Ismene; the intended purpose of their abduction is to provide Creon with a means to secure Oedipus for Thebes.[49]

When Theseus arrives upon the scene, Oedipus says Κρέων ὅδ', ὃν δέδορκας, οἴχεται τέκνων ἀποσπάσας μου τὴν μόνην ξυνωρίδα (894-895). Theseus orders his attendants to rescue the girls as quickly as possible before the abductors pass a certain location, after which he will be rendered helpless and reduced to mockery (896-903). Further, he orders Creon twice to return the girls if he intends to leave Athens (909-910, 932-936). Theseus promises that he will rescue Oedipus' children or die trying (1039-1041). Shortly after, the girls are returned untouched to their father (1097-1103, 1146-1147).[50] This abduction failed in so far as Oedipus remains where he is; the fact that the girls are unharmed, and therefore have not been violated sexually, indicates that Creon's

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[49]Bowra (1944) 307-9, 331 suggests that Sophocles, in order to transform Oedipus into a hero, employs a series of episodes, which are violent and emotional, to attain his intended purpose. These episodes reveal the characteristics which Oedipus requires to become a hero, just as they reveal the characteristics of Creon who acts out of concern for the state.

[50]Blundell (1989) 227 notes that Sophocles balances the scenes in which Oedipus curses his enemies, his sons included, with scenes in which Oedipus expresses his love for his daughters, especially when they have been rescued.

motives are strictly political, containing no personal satisfaction beyond that hoped-for political goal. This instance indicates that Creon is strictly concerned about the future of his *polis*,[51] rather than the *oikos*, and therefore has no interest in the girls for sexual purposes.

Each case of an abduction which has an association with Thebes contains a unique characteristic. Europa, a young foreign girl, is never found by her brother, but the city of Thebes is founded. Cadmus rules Thebes, living to see the next two generations of his family disintegrate. Melia, sister of Caänthus, is not rescued (but most likely deserted since Apollo has other interests), but a famous river near Thebes receives her daughter's name. The abduction of Antiope brings disaster to the otherwise trouble-free city, Sicyon. Herakles, through abduction of a girl, brings destruction upon the city of Oechalia and ultimately death to himself and his wife. Antigone and Ismene are meant to ensure greatness for Thebes since Creon believes that their abduction will force Oedipus to return to Thebes to die. Instead, the honours go to Athens, and Creon's actions lead to failure. The abduction of Dionysus is a part of a process to bring his mysteries to the Greeks. Lastly, an expelled king, Laius, who abducts a boy from another place, brings doom to his family and its future generations. As for Laius' victim Chrysippus, he dies shortly after his abduction by his own hand or another's, the only victim of abduction among these Theban examples who dies as a result of his abduction. The abduction of Chrysippus, a minor character, occurs before the story of Oedipus and his family, a tale which is among the best known of all ancient stories. Was this abduction necessary to produce the disasters which befall the family of Laius? Although this is a possibility, the question has yet to be answered with any certainty.[52] However, the severity of the Oedipus tale

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[51]Bowra (1944) 309, 331.

[52]See Lloyd-Jones (1971) 120-123 for a discussion of this point.

overshadows any story leading up to it, and there is no definite reference to the abduction and violation of *xenia* in *Oedipus Rex*. Instead, the focus is placed on the violation of the oracle of Apollo. Nevertheless, in all these cases of abduction there is one characteristic held in common: the family suffers destruction, the *oikos* is placed in jeopardy (the abduction of Dionysus is an exception, since his family is not destroyed, not even temporarily. However, his family has already experienced disintegration since his mother died before she gave birth to him, and his father did not raise him). The violence directed at the children is also directed at the very core of the family unit, threatening its existence and, more importantly, its survival. This breakdown of the family unit in these Theban tales reflects the fragility of the family in the mythical world. And children, who are without question necessary to assure the continuation of any *oikos*, are therefore an easy target and reveal this fragility in those tales in which the family is placed in jeopardy.

Victims of abduction are children themselves who, in many cases, give birth to children who are often unwanted. As a result, children born as a result of abductions (e.g. Amphion and Zethus) often suffer exposure. They are not born into a "normal" family unit, one which consists of both parents who are living together and raising their own children. Their *oikos* is not an established one into which a child is deliberately brought. These children who are exposed have a cruel introduction to life. Those who give birth to them have been subjected to cruelty as well. This violent beginning from conception indicates that relationships outside the *oikos* usually include acts of cruelty.[53] Amphion and Zethus, the twin sons of Antiope, who suffer from this traumatic introduction into their world, grow up to become the rulers of Thebes. They also avenge the cruelty inflicted upon their mother. The relationship between abduction and exposure is a close one here. The abductees'

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[53]Fantham (1986) 5.

introduction into the adult world is one which consists of violence. The cruelty which exists in the world of traditional tales in many forms, including abduction, was a common motif, and as such was performed against children by adults with little concern for their victims. Clearly these tales of abduction, for the most part, demonstrate children's lack of power and control in a self-centered adult world (Dionysus' tale of abduction is an exception).

Chapter Three

The Abandonment and Exposure of Children in Theban Tales

Several characters in Greek traditional tales suffer exposure or abandonment as a baby, and these acts of cruelty usually involve at least one adult who is directly related to the child. The main purpose of exposure is the death of the infant. The child however is abandoned while still alive, and so the element of chance exists since the child might be rescued. This form of infanticide supposedly removes from the perpetrator(s) the responsibility for the direct act of killing the child, since the person carrying out the deed is often someone other than a parent who has been ordered to expose the infant, as in the case of Oedipus whose parents order a shepherd to perform the cruel task (Apollod. 3.5.7). Exposure also removes any threat of incurring a blood guilt since the child is not actually put to death.[1]

There are several cases of exposure in the Theban tales: Dionysus, along with his mother Semele, is exposed by his grandfather Cadmus[2]; Herakles is exposed by his mother Alcmena[3]; Amphion and Zethus are exposed by Antiope[4]; Oedipus is exposed at the order of his father,[5] or by

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[1]Cameron (1932) 107; Garland (1990) 84, 90; Demand (1994) 6.

[2]Paus. 3.24.3-4.

[3]D.S. 4.9.4-9.

[4]Apollod. 3.5.5; Paus. 1.38.9, 2.6.1-4.

[5]S. *OT* 717-719; E. *Ph.* 12-62, 1600-1604; Apollod. 3.5.7-9; D.S. 4.64.1-4; Paus. 9.5.10.

his mother[6]; Theban youths are exposed for the Cadmean vixen[7]; and Antigone is abandoned on the order of Creon.[8]

The act of exposure, in which an infant is left to die at the mercy of the wind, rain, sun, snow, heat and cold, as well as of wild animals and birds, with no one to come to its aid, arouses pity. Is this pity only felt by someone who is far removed from the situation and time, or did ancient Greeks think that exposure of babies was horrific too? The *oikos* was the basic familial unit in ancient Greece during the archaic, classical, and Hellenistic periods, and it employed exposure as a means of eliminating unwanted babies.[9] But at the same time it should be realized that exposure differed from "child-murder," because the exposed child was not yet recognized as a household member.[10] And that household may already have other children, and more children might be born to those parents in the future. There are clues in the Theban tales which shed light on the attitude of the Greeks towards exposure and also reveal in the world of the traditional tales the instability of the *oikos* which is continuously filled with destructive crises, including deliberate acts of exposure of a child, who is often the family's only child.

In the tales there are two main locations for exposing a baby, and both places are outside the city. In one type of area, the child is placed in a basket/chest and thrown into water,[11] as in the story

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[6]S. *OT* 1173-77.

[7]Apollod. 2.4.6-7; Paus. 9.19.1; Ov. *Met.* 7.763-793.

[8]S. *Ant.* 773-780; Apollod. 3.7.1.

[9]Demand (1994) 1-5; Toynbee (1981) 210, 237; Humphreys (1983) 1, 76.

[10]Demand (1994) 6; Patterson (1985) 104 n. 3.

[11]Redford (1967) 226. Rank (1990) 63-64 suggests that exposure in water is equivalent to rebirth.

of Semele and her son Dionysus, a tale found, according to Pausanias, only in the town of Brasiae. The townspeople claim that Cadmus, having discovered his daughter and her son by Zeus, placed them in a chest, which eventually washed up on the shore of Oreiatae. Since Semele had died she was given a splendid funeral, and the people of the town raised the baby. The town also changed its name to Brasiae, taking its name from the word given to objects which come onto the shore from the waves (3.24.3-4). In the other location commonly used for acts of exposure, the child is left in a wooded area, usually a hillside,[12] as in the tale of Oedipus. Placing of the child (alive) into an object before casting it into the sea or putting the child in a deserted wooded area is an important aspect—it ensures that the child has a chance of survival. This characteristic in the method of exposure has a religious motive; it prevents any threat of pollution for the exposer since he has not actually killed the child. Equally importantly, the one exposing the child does not actually kill the child because the child must live. The irony of the situation is clear—although exposure is performed in order to kill a child, the very methods of executing this exposure permit the victim a chance of survival.

Exposure consists of a cruel and slow death, yet the babies who are exposed in the tales generally do not die. In other tales children are murdered, so there is nothing to prevent exposed children from dying. This raises the question of why exposed children do not die. Exposure represents a "rite of passage" for the victims, who all grow up and perform deeds of importance. Their first challenge in life is to undermine the goal of their victimizers who want the children out of the way; in other words, adults want the children to die in order to fulfill their own goals. The children are not important as children; it is only when they become adults that their importance emerges. However, in order to attain adulthood, many victims of exposure must first spend a portion

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[12]Redford (1967) 226.

of their lives away from their homeland, as in the cases of Oedipus, Amphion and Zethus, Dionysus, and Herakles.[13]

Although the babies who are exposed in the tales are mortal, their survival invests them with a touch or sense of immortality which mortal babies do not possess.[14] Herakles, who is exposed by his mother because she fears the jealous wrath of Hera,[15] is touched by immortality in two ways. First, he is, like Dionysus, the son of Zeus. Secondly, he was nursed by Hera who is unaware of the child's identity. The exposed child who is found and raised by a stranger is called a *threptos*, and the new parent can be a poor person or one of royalty.[16] In either case, the new parents are often childless, such as King Polybus and Queen Merope who raised Oedipus as if he were their own,[17] and the shepherd who raised Amphion and Zethus.[18] The inability of parents to have their own children occurs often in the tales, which indicates that in the tales the establishment of a stable *oikos* is difficult, for both the rich and the poor, who choose to adopt foundlings and raise them as their own children. Although these children who undergo the cruel act of exposure in the tales do not die,

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[13]Loraux (1993) 185 notes that it is necessary in the tragedy *Ion* for Creusa, who has exposed her son Ion, to move away from her homeland in order to ensure that Ion returns to Athens when he grows up. Rank (1990) 58-59, 62 notes that in the case of heroes, family relationships must be severed, and therefore exposure is an essential component in the hero myth.

[14]Vernant (1988) 115 claims that the motif of the exposed child occurs in the majority of legends about heroes, since it adds the possibility that the child is the child of an immortal. The child then undergoes the process of exposure, followed by rescue, rejection and a triumphant return.

[15]Diodorus Siculus tells the tale, noting the irony that Alcmena, who is supposed to love her child, attempts to destroy the baby, while Hera, who is filled with a stepmother's hatred for the infant of Zeus and Alcmena, saves it (4.9.6-7).

[16]Patterson (1985) 121-122.

[17]S. *OT* 1016-1023.

[18]Apollod. 3.5.5; Paus. 1.38.9.

it is not to say that no child ever suffered. Oedipus is a character in a tale and his situation is therefore fictitious, but the detail that his feet were pinned suggests that the infant suffered pain. Oedipus' name "swell-foot" comes from the result of this act.[19] The act of exposure could therefore include additional cruelties towards the victim.

There are several reasons why children are exposed in tales in general: 1) shame surrounding the circumstances of the child's birth; 2) a powerful person, such as a king, who is either influenced by an oracle or simply sees the child as a threat, orders the child to be put to death[20]; 3) the child's life is threatened by a general massacre[21]; 4) parental manipulation[22]; 5) a parent wants a son instead of a daughter or vice versa; 6) the destiny of the child when he becomes an adult can only be fulfilled if he is separated from his family at birth; 7) jealousy of a goddess; and 8) fear of what might happen if the child is allowed to become an adult. In contrast to the real world in which there could be too many mouths for a family to feed,[23] the expense of raising a child is never an issue in the tales. The adult is driven by self-interest and indifference to the well-being of the child, as in the case of Oedipus. The victimizers are dominated by fear of the children becoming adults. In the tales, the children are a threat which must be eliminated. The shame of the birth of a child can cause fear too. In fact, fear of the child dominates the majority of the cases of exposure in the traditional tales.

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[19]S. *OT* 1036; E. *Ph.* 26-27.

[20]Rank (1990) 57.

[21]Redford (1967) 211, who identifies fourteen Near Eastern tales for the first category, thirteen tales for the second, and five tales for the third, claims that two Mesopotamian stories and two Levantine stories are the oldest for the motif of exposure of children. The Mesopotamian stories represent mountainous regions and the Levantine stories represent water regions.

[22]Scrimshaw (1984) 444.

[23]Patterson (1985) 116-119.

The destiny of the child determines whether he must be exposed or murdered when he is an infant since, as a child, he is a threat to certain adults who want him eliminated. These adults opt to expose the child who in turn is rescued. The Theban twins Amphion and Zethus are destined to perform great deeds, but also to experience great suffering. When they become adults they are responsible for the fortification of Thebes (Hom. *Od.* 11.260-265), but when they are born they experience a cruel introduction to life. Zeus and their mother Antiope, the daughter of Nycteus, have intercourse. She becomes pregnant and, threatened by her father, flees to Epopeus at Sicyon, whom she marries. Nycteus takes his own life in despair after he has ordered his brother Lycus to punish Epopeus and Antiope (Apollod. 3.5.5). (Pausanias writes that Epopeus abducted Antiope because of her beauty [2.6.1-3].) Lycus marches against Sicyon, which he suppresses, and kills Epopeus.[24] He takes Antiope captive, and along the way she gives birth to twin boys in a small cave at Eleutherae in Boeotia. The babies are exposed rather than murdered. A shepherd finds and raises them, calling them Amphion and Zethus, who eventually rule Thebes together.

After the babies are exposed, their mother Antiope is brought back to Thebes and imprisoned by Lycus and his wife Dirce. Antiope suffers for many years but one day escapes her captors. She finds her sons who recognize her; they kill Lycus and, tying Dirce to a bull which kills her, throw her dead body into the spring which is named after her.[25] The twins then claim the kingship and

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[24]Burkert (1983) 187 notes that Epopeus, who is unassisted by any divine power, seals his own fate once he has seized the girl.

[25]Burkert (1983) 187-188 suggests that Antiope falls into "wolvish" hands, and the cruel actions of her wicked stepmother can be viewed as equivalent to an initiation. The nocturnal powers rule (Nycteus, "the nocturnal one," and Lycus, " the wolf"). However, when Dirce and Lycus are killed, the daytime rulers are re-established.

fortify Thebes, the stones coming around the city summoned by the music from Amphion's lyre.[26] In this tale, the children suffer a cruel introduction into the world but grow up to perform a notable deed. The act of exposure (along with the flight/abduction of their mother) was performed in order to ensure that Zethus, who grows up to become a cattle breeder, and Amphion, who grows up to become a minstrel, survive to adulthood and fulfill their destiny, namely the fortification of Thebes, after they avenge their mother.[27]

Antiope's flight (or abduction) begins the disintegration of the family of Nycteus. The next generation, namely that of Antiope and her babies, has no father to support this new family. The babies are exposed causing further disruption of an already splintered family unit, and Antiope is held prisoner by an aunt and uncle for years, suffering cruelly. The babies are found and cared for by a stranger. Some semblance of a family occurs for these twin babies, in this case because a shepherd came along at the critical moment, rescued them and brought them to his home. The shepherd did not care to leave the children to die (cf. the herdsman who cannot expose Oedipus [S. *OT* 1178-1179; Apollod. 3.5.7]). However, their original *oikos* has collapsed because of violence.

The life of Oedipus, one of the most famous Theban characters, begins with exposure. Laius, the king of Thebes, is warned by the oracle that if he has a son he will die at the hands of this son, and the child will marry his own mother.[28] When he and his wife Jocasta have a baby boy, Laius,

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[26]E. *Ph.* 823-827; Apollod. 3.5.5; Hyg. *Fab.* 7 and 8; Paus. 2.6.1-4.

[27]Apollod. 3.5.5; Paus. 1.38.9, 2.6.1-4 .

[28]The word "if" does not occur in the context of the oracle to Laius in Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, and in Aeschylus' *Seven Against Thebes* 745-749 refer to the transgression of Laius, but again the word "if" is not a part of the oracle: ' Απόλλωνος εὖτε Λάιος βίᾳ, τρὶς εἰπόντος ἐν μεσομφάλοις Πυθικοῖς χρηστηρίοις θνᾴσκοντα γέννας ἄτερ σῴζειν πόλιν.

having pinned the baby's feet, orders the herdsman to expose the baby on Mt. Cithaeron (an isolated place which should have ensured the hoped-for result) at the tender age of three days. The herdsman gives the baby to a shepherd from Corinth, who brings the baby to the king, Polybus and queen, Periboea (Apollod. 3.5.7) or Merope (S. *OT* 775, 990). They raise him, but upon reaching adulthood, Oedipus sets out to ask the Delphic oracle about his parentage, doubt having been placed in his mind. Warned that he will kill his father and marry his mother, Oedipus seeks a different route and heads in the direction of Thebes. Along the way he encounters Laius, and not realizing the relationship between the two of them, Oedipus kills his father. He proceeds to Thebes, solves the riddle of the Sphinx and marries his mother Jocasta (Epikaste, according to Homer, *Od.* 11.271-280[29]), who is the reward for ridding Thebes of the monster. Together they have four children, Polynices, Eteocles, Ismene and Antigone. Upon learning his true identity Oedipus blinds himself, and his mother/wife commits suicide.[30] Oedipus calls a curse of death down upon his sons, since they mistreat him, and

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[29]Pausanias says that the real mother of Oedipus' children was Euryganeia whose story was told both by the author of the poem *Oedipodia* and by Onasias, a painter who captured the picture of her bowed with grief over the fight of her children, a portrait which is reminiscent of Niobe, whose stone figure is bowed in grief on the top of Mount Sipylus (9.10-12). Both mothers, whose grief is visible to viewers, are consumed with anguish for their children.

[30]Golden (1990) 105 notes that, in contrast to the friction between fathers and sons competing in a sexual rivalry, the combination of parricide and mother-incest in this tale is unique, and that father and son are not involved in a rivalry over Jocasta. Vernant (1988) 113 notes that when Oedipus discovers that he is a native Theban who had been exposed, he realizes that this connection does not aid in establishing him as the rightful ruler of this city. Instead, this knowledge transforms him into a monster which must be exiled from Thebes, and any connection with humans must be severed.

then he leaves Thebes with his daughter Antigone.[31] Oedipus follows in his father's footsteps in so far as neither one wishes to have his sons survive.[32] Ironically, Laius had initially desired a child.[33]

Exposure allowed the element of chance (τύχη) to come into play, but the references to chance in *Oedipus Rex* are filled with irony, since Oedipus plunges ahead to fulfill his destiny, which his murder would have brought to a halt.[34] And Oedipus only discovers what his true identity is when the story of his ordered but unsuccessful exposure is revealed. This makes exposure a key element in the plot whereby the oracle is fulfilled. The message from the oracle influences Laius so that he exposes his son in order to defeat the oracular response, but prophecy cannot be denied, according to Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex.*[35] Laius wishes to survive; he fears the threat of death at the hands of his

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[31]Apollod. 3.5.7-9; S. *OC* 1-80, 1348-1396; E. *Ph.* 17-76; D.S. 4.64.1; Paus. 10.5.3; Hyg. *Fab.* 66 and 67; Sen. *Oed.* 800-880, 915-1061.

[32]Roisman (1988) 83.

[33]Rank (1990) 65 notes the irony in the desire to have a child and the hostility towards that child who will be a successor.

[34]References to τύχη in *Oedipus Rex* tend to be associated with Oedipus: 52: the priest is talking about the τύχη (good fortune) brought to Thebes in the form of Oedipus when he solved the riddle of the Sphinx; 263: Oedipus says that it was τύχη which struck down Laius; 442: Tiresias says that Oedipus' τύχη (his ability to solve riddles) is also his ruin; 773: Oedipus says that he is living through τύχη; 776: Oedipus says that a certain but unimportant τύχη struck him when his paternity was questioned by a drunk man at a dinner in Corinth; 977: Jocasta says, in an attempt to dismiss Oedipus' mounting fear, that τύχη rules, and so no one can see the future; 1025: Oedipus asks if the herdsman found him by chance; 1036: the attendant says that the piercing of Oedipus' feet was the τύχη from which he got his name; 1080: Oedipus says that he is a child of Τύχη, and he will not be dishonoured; 1526: the Chorus says that everyone had looked with envy upon the τύχη of Oedipus when he solved the riddle and gained great wealth, but it is better to wait until a person's life is over before determining whether or not he is fortunate.

[35]Knox (1966) 40, 43.

son, but a mortal cannot change what the gods ordain. And Oedipus must go back to Thebes; his destiny must also be fulfilled.[36]

Exposure was performed with little thought for the child. And yet in Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, Oedipus wishes that the herdsman who was ordered to expose him had done so, for the pain of exposure in no way compares to what Oedipus is suffering now (S. *OT* 1349-1355).[37] The Chorus agrees with Oedipus (S. *OT* 1367-1368), and therefore Sophocles, through his play, touches on the issue of exposure which was well-known to his audience.[38] Of course, one must not forget that Oedipus has not actually suffered from exposure since he was handed over to another; he is only speaking hypothetically and not from actual experience. But Oedipus does acknowledge that exposure is painful, just not as painful as his present plight (S. *OT* 1349-1355). In Euripides'

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[36]Dodds (1973) 65, 67, 70 claims that this is not a tragedy of destiny but rather it is a tragedy about a character, Oedipus, who commits an offence in ignorance, and because of this ignorance we are able to feel sympathy which would have been impossible otherwise. Although Dodds admits that fate did determine certain actions of Oedipus, he also claims that Oedipus acts as a free agent from the beginning to the end of the play.

[37]Oedipus expresses a similar wish to Antigone in Seneca's *Phoenissae* where he, blind, wishes to return to "his" Cithaeron, the place where Actaeon met his fate at the teeth of his own hounds, where Agave and her sisters murdered her son, Pentheus, and where Ino, atop a cliff which juts out, jumped into the sea with her son (1-37). Frank (1995) 76, 81 (on lines 13-25) notes that Seneca's style of piling example upon example effectively points to the violent history of Laius' family at Thebes; he (85, on line 27) notes that this Oedipus, unlike the Oedipus in *Oedipus at Colonus*, has not begun the process of self-forgiveness for his crimes, although both plays take place after he and Antigone have departed Thebes.

[38]Dowden (1989) 11 suggests that there is a lack of embellishment and therefore a greater possibility of accuracy in Apollodorus' works because his intention is only to compile and record the different tales, while the tragedians, who created their plots loosely based upon the tales, invented many aspects which were unlikely to be in the original tales. Dawe (1982) 15, 19, esp. 22-23, 199-201 (on lines 1031-1037) suggests that the inconsistencies concerning various references to the pinning of Oedipus' feet and Oedipus' realization of this detail and its direct association with himself is a deliberate Sophoclean innovation, developed for dramatic purposes.

Phoenissae the Chorus does say that it wishes that Cithaeron had never received the baby (801-805). It does not however say that it wished that the baby had lived or died.

When Oedipus murders Laius, he is murdering his own would-be executioner.[39] And Jocasta's suicide can be interpreted as punishment for giving birth to a child, disregarding the warning of the oracle and then exposing her baby.[40] Oedipus looks for a sword and intends to punish her with death, but upon discovering her body hanging from a noose, he takes her down and, with the brooches from her attire, blinds himself as punishment for his own crimes (S. *OT* 1251-1285). Both are punished for their actions, old and new: the Chorus sums up the situation: νῦν δὲ τῇδε θἠμέρᾳ στεναγμός, ἄτη, θάνατος, αἰσχύνη, κακῶν ὅσ' ἐστὶ πάντων ὀνόματ', οὐδέν ἐστ' ἀπόν (S. *OT* 1283-1285). Oedipus confirms the seriousness of the situation when he says that these acts are the most atrocious among men (S. *OT* 1407-1408). And just as Oedipus' blinding is a self-punishment for his actions, although they were performed out of ignorance, so too is Jocasta's suicide her punishment, although she too, like Oedipus, was unaware of the wrongs that she had committed when Oedipus was an adult. Yet the fact that Jocasta committed suicide indicates that she thought she had transgressed (even if it was unknowingly) and this was her only method of atonement. However, she is guilty of knowingly defying the oracle of Apollo, giving birth to Laius' child and exposing the baby, a son who returns bringing death and destruction to their family.[41] This

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[39]Rank (1990) 63 notes that the child eliminates the father who had attempted to rid himself of his child. The tale demands that rescue and revenge occur.

[40]Griffith (1992) 208.

[41]Garland (1990) 90 suggests that Jocasta and Creusa, mothers who exposed their children, suffer bitterness and self-recrimination which might last for the rest of their lives. Griffith (1992) 208 notes that although Jocasta's suicide occurs because she realizes that she has been involved in an incestuous marriage, the earlier crime of Laius and Jocasta, namely the exposure of the baby, could

act of cruelty is the first step in an attempt to defeat the fulfilment of the oracle which ordained that a male child would destroy his father; the victim is a baby who is helpless at birth and yet is the direct cause of death in his family. Laius defied the oracle of Apollo, which had warned against the birth of a son. Both the punishment inflicted by Apollo and the oracle's original response are centred on children; therefore, as in the tale of Niobe, the punishment fits the crime, and divine justice prevails. The family was corrupted in *Oedipus Rex* with acts of "regicide, parricide, suicide, fratricide, laced with pestilence, immurement and incest,"[42] all of which began with the birth and exposure of a defenceless baby. The *oikos* was set on a path of destruction, and this collapse was deliberately begun by parents whose thoughts were only for themselves and their own future.

There is a tale of exposure which does not follow the usual theme of the survival of its victims: boys are exposed for the vixen which ravages the Cadmea and is fated never to be caught. Once a month a son of one of the citizens is exposed for the vixen in order to avoid many more from being carried off by the monster. Because of the anger of Dionysus, the monster called the Teumessian Fox was reared to destroy the Thebans. This beast was disposed of in the following way. Alcmena agrees to marry Amphitryon after her brothers' deaths are avenged. Amphitryon then asks Creon to assist him in an expedition against the Teleboans. Creon in turn says that he will help, provided that Amphitryon destroys the vixen, which is a dire menace to the Thebans. Amphitryon then obtains the dog, a gift from Minos to Procris, which is fated to catch whatever it pursues. While the dog is chasing the vixen, Zeus turns both animals to stone.[43]

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also be the reason that they suffer punishment later.

[42]Dawe (1982) 22.

[43]Apollod. 2.4.6-7; Paus. 9.19.1; Ov. *Met.* 7.763-793 .

The monster which was terrorizing the Thebans is a punishment placed upon these people by a god. Their temporary solution is to expose a youth once a month in order to keep the vixen at bay. The people of Thebes exposed these youths out of fear of the vixen, although it meant that many families then had to deal with the loss of a young person's life, a son selected by his own parents (at least by his own father) to die. The youths are not named since their identities are of no real importance. The vixen is a challenge for a man who is of some significance in traditional tales, and the catching of this monster represents a labour, one which must be completed, before Amphitryon can win the hand of Alcmena. Zeus comes to the aid of Amphitryon, turning the dog and the vixen to stone; god and mortal thus save any youths from being exposed in the future. However, the goal does not seem to demonstrate any real concern for these unnamed youths and the cruelty from which they have suffered; the marriage of Amphitryon and Alcmena takes precedence, an event which Zeus ensures takes place. And even though Zeus does interfere and put an end to the problem that the vixen was causing, the Thebans had suffered losses within their families for some time beforehand.

The Theban tales raise a question about the character of Antigone who is best known from Sophocles' *Antigone*. Is the entombment of Antigone an example of abandonment which was supposed to have the same result as exposure, namely, her death? She is, in effect, buried alive. The fact that she commits suicide is incidental to Creon's order since he does not accept responsibility for her death (S. *Ant.* 773-780; Apollod. 3.7.1), and he gave the order because he feared how he would be viewed if he gave in to a woman (S. *Ant.* 677-680). Further, Creon uses the word ἄφετε when he orders his men to abandon Antigone (S. *Ant.* 887). In this play, Creon is also Antigone's only living male relative, who is now equivalent to a father figure, and one who would be in a position to expose a child of his own if he chose to do so (Oedipus entrusted the well-being of his

two daughters to Creon [S. *OT* 1462-1464]). In effect, although Creon represents the *polis* throughout the play, he chooses a method of ending Antigone's life which is appropriate to his familial responsibility with regard to his niece and the *oikos*.[44] Antigone is not executed and no one sheds her blood. Instead, she is separated from society, just as an exposed baby would be: Antigone is deserted by her family.

The Chorus of Sophocles' play recognizes Antigone's situation as one of exposure when she is led away to her doom. It compares her situation with that of Danae, who was imprisoned by her father (S. *Ant.* 944-951), and put into a chest with her baby and cast into the sea.[45] Teiresias also notes that the method of punishment which Creon has meted out for Antigone, the placing of a living soul into a grave, is a crime against the gods (most cases of exposure in the mythological world do not actually end in death so that this crime that Creon has perpetrated does not follow the usual pattern of exposure and subsequent survival of the victim [S. *Ant.* 1068-1076]). Creon, it appears, cannot tell the difference between actions which are appropriate to a *polis*, on the one hand, and those which are appropriate to an *oikos*, on the other. Antigone herself recognizes the nature of her sentence and equates her situation with that of Niobe, since both are encased in and subdued by stone

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[44]Humphreys (1983) 1, 68 suggests that Sophocles' *Antigone* is about the conflict between the values of the city and those of the family, and that Creon is only concerned with the good of the *polis* and ignores any personal ties and loyalties.

[45]Sourvinou-Inwood (1988) 167-171 discusses Sophocles' use of the Danae and Perseus tale as a mythological paradigm, comparing Danae's role as a female with Antigone's role as equivalent to that of a male. Jebb (1902) 185 (on *Ant.* lines 944-987) notes that three other royal people suffered a fate similar to that of Antigone, i.e., Danae, Lycurgus and Cleopatra, who only have their noble birth and their cruel imprisonment in common with each other.

(S. *Ant.* 823-838).[46] Further, Antigone refers to the rocky prison as her new type of τάφος (S. *Ant.* 849),[47] the same word which Oedipus uses when he says that his parents appointed Cithaeron to be his τάφος (S. *OT* 1452-1454). Creon also equates the entombment of Antigone with exposure rather than with murder when he orders those who enclose the tomb to leave her alone; never is she to see the light of day, and Antigone herself can choose to die or live a "buried" life (S. *Ant.* 885-890 [Antigone's only real choices are to die slowly, starving to death, or to die quickly, committing suicide; living is not an option for anyone in her plight, though she would have lived if she had chosen the option to die slowly since Creon returns to free her from her fate]).[48] Her impulsive behaviour is reminiscent of her father's; both are important mythical figures whose similar impetuous actions lead to tragic results. Creon, who orders his men to abandon Antigone, assures all that they are not polluted by their actions against Antigone since her death is not on their hands but her own; μίασμα will not fall upon Thebes if Antigone dies (S. *Ant.* 773-780).[49] Similarly anyone who exposes a child is also free from μίασμα. The exposed child however is not in control of its own

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[46]Jebb (1902) 174 (on lines 834-838) suggests that Antigone, like Niobe, was at the height of her vitality when she met her ruin.

[47]Jebb (1902) 176 (on lines 848-849) suggests that Antigone's rocky mound is rather more like a prison which is a tomb of a new sort, since it is meant to receive the dead but will instead receive one of the living.

[48]Lloyd-Jones (1971) 115-119 suggests that Antigone, who is another victim of the family curse, acts impulsively and imprudently up to and including the moment when she hangs herself.

[49]Throughout the play there is no indication that the original punishment of death by stoning within the city walls (S. *Ant.* 35-36) would have caused pollution for the Thebans, although their participation in her death would have been a direct one. That Creon changes the type of death sentence and then says that the city and those who abandon Antigone are free from μίασμα indicates that Creon senses his error and is attempting to absolve his own guilt more than anyone else's for Antigone's death. Parker (1983) 133 claims that this is a legal move on the part of Creon in order to avoid any possibility of incurring pollution for Antigone's expected death.

death (unlike Antigone). In the cases of exposure, death, if it occurs, is not due to direct physical violence on the part of the perpetrator, but rather is due to outside forces (e.g. nature, monsters, gods).[50]

The *oikos* was disrupted in the generation before Antigone when Oedipus was exposed by his father, Laius. If Laius had murdered Oedipus immediately when he was born, the prophecies of the oracle would have been foiled. Instead, the exposure is the first act, though one of cruelty (and violence, since Laius pins the baby's feet), which inadvertently leads to the final result in Oedipus' life; he becomes a hero. Laius was not interested in his son reaching manhood, but rather was filled with self-interest. Then Antigone suffers the same fate as her father; she too is exposed and ultimately attains distinction in her own right. Creon's position is similar to Laius', since he too is filled with self-interest for himself and his position.

Whenever a tale was told which included a story about an exposure one could count on the fact that the child would live. This makes Antigone's case special. Her situation is a departure from the usual pattern of exposure of males in traditional tales, and Antigone is placed, since she is a female, in a closer parallel with the real world where females were exposed more often than males.[51] The story of Antigone takes this parallel a step further since she also dies, as we would expect to happen to babies in the real world. But Antigone's situation is paradoxical since, in the tales, the helpless infants live, while it is Antigone who dies. The age of Antigone is not important, except for the fact that she has to be placed in something from which she cannot escape and therefore be reduced to a state of helplessness, like the infants who are exposed. Clearly Antigone does not expect

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[50]Demand (1994) 6 suggests that the gods took over the responsibility for the child's fate.

[51]Golden (1990) 94.

to survive, and rather than die a long suffering death she quickly takes her own life; in so doing, she reveals herself as a formidable adversary for Creon. Antigone is the one in control, acting with the courage of a male, while Creon is shown as a weak character who lacks judgement and cannot avoid committing a dreadful mistake[52]; the decree which forbids the burial of Polynices and proclaims a death sentence by stoning to anyone who defies the decree (S. *Ant.* 35-36) is proved by the end of the play to be an error in judgment of the gravest sort on Creon's part.[53]

The equation of Antigone's situation with exposure makes hers unusual for several reasons. First, Antigone is much older than the usual victims of exposure (similarly Andromeda, who is exposed by her father Cepheus, is also no longer a baby [Apollod. 2.4.3; Ov. *Met.* 4.670-739][54]). Secondly, she is not willing simply to wait for death to occur. Instead she retaliates in the only way that she thinks she can by committing suicide. She has no desire to suffer a slow death, a situation over which a baby would have no control. To leave Antigone in a place such as a mountainside would have been futile. By entombing her, Antigone becomes infant-like, since she is rendered helpless. Antigone cannot prevent her own death but she can choose how to die and in so doing

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[52]Bowra (1944) 78-79 notes Creon's weakness and suggests that Sophocles may have shocked his audience by making Antigone such a strong male-like figure.

[53]Blundell (1989) 128 suggests that Creon orders a "one man law," while Antigone upholds divine laws which the *polis* also sanctions as traditional, and which Creon comes to acknowledge (1113). Therefore the play, although about the conflict between divine and human law, is also about the struggle between *polis* and autocrat.

[54]Andromeda's mother Cassiope boasts that she is more beautiful than the Nereids. The punishment for this impiety is Andromeda's exposure. The child is used as the means of punishment for the crime of the parent. The plot is similar to the Niobe story in which Niobe's boast leads to punishment in the form of the death of her children. However, the tales differ in that Niobe's boast centered around her own children who, in turn, are the focus of the punishment, while Cassiope's boast centered around herself, but her punishment is focussed on her daughter; in Niobe's case the punishment fits the crime, while in Cassiope's case the punishment does not.

demonstrates her strength and power in her final act. Thirdly, her ability to choose to die is not an option available to an infant. Fourthly, Antigone commits a crime in the eyes of the king, although she feels that she is justified in her act of burying her brother and paying due tribute to the gods,[55] and being entombed is her punishment. Babies who are exposed have not actually committed any crime. Creon however will be punished by the gods for his actions.[56]

When Creon learns that Antigone is the one who has defied his decree, he changes the method of punishment (S. *Ant.*773-780). He has confused the *polis* with the *oikos*, since it is the *oikos* which utilizes the act of exposure. However, Antigone is a girl who, far from being either confused or a helpless baby, is more powerful than the king. Her understanding of the divine laws places her above Creon who in his concern for the *polis* is blinded by his ignorance of what Antigone represents.[57] And Sophocles' placing of Antigone in a situation parallel with the exposure of a baby reinforces Creon's confusion between *polis* and *oikos*. Creon, demonstrating his paternalistic ways, treats the *polis* as if it is an *oikos*. It is in this dual capacity, that of father of the *polis* and father-figure to Antigone, that Creon orders the act of exposure. The concept of a parent exposing a baby has been replaced by a city's ruler exposing a young girl, whose crime is the upholding of divine laws which even the *polis* acknowledges as traditionally sanctioned (S. *Ant.* 692-700). Tiresias'

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[55]Foley (1996) 54-55.

[56]Blundell (1989) 130 notes that Creon's crime is his uncontrollable passion for power which caused him to violate the laws of the gods. Nussbaum (1986) 57, 81, 128-129 says that Creon completely separates his family obligations from civic interest in the beginning of the play. However, Creon goes through a transition since he undergoes a painful learning process, in which he becomes brutally uncivilized, moving from his false beliefs to an understanding of his deepest, truest beliefs. Bowra (1944) 66 claims that Creon falls because of his lack of wisdom and has therefore been impious towards the gods since he refused to bury Polynices.

[57]Humphreys (1983) 72 notes that Antigone represents the values of private life.

words confirm that Creon was wrong (S. *Ant.* 1068-1076), just as the final words of the Chorus, which assert that reverence for the gods is not to be questioned or forgotten, echo Creon's impiety (1347-1353). And these divine laws are in place for the *oikos*; a sister buries a brother. Antigone, because she performed burial rites for her brother in defence of her responsibility to the *oikos* and its divine laws, becomes a heroine; Creon, in an attempt to raise the power of the *polis* and, in particular, of himself above the gods by trying to eradicate a divine law of the *oikos*, becomes a defeated tyrant.

While the debate among modern scholars about how many babies were exposed in the ancient world is ongoing,[58] the tales provide patterns which help us to determine whether the ancient Greeks recognized that the act of exposure was an act of cruelty. Exposed babies usually die, and it is this point which makes exposure in reality fundamentally different from exposure in the tales. Children who are exposed in the tales usually survive, which suggests the element of wish-fulfilment on the part of parents.[59] Further, the exposed babies in the tales are mostly males rather than females who, according to modern day scholars, tended to be the victims in the real world, though males were exposed too. The motif of exposure probably became a part of tales since it was an act

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[58]For the issue of exposure of babies in antiquity see Demand (1994) 6-8; Golden (1990) 86-87, 94,135, 173; (1988) 152-163; and (1981) 316-331 (in which Golden claims that females were exposed about ten percent more often than males); Oldenziel (1987) 87-107; Patterson (1985) 103-123; Scrimshaw (1984) 439-462; Pomeroy (1983) 207-219 (who writes that exposure is another form of abortion, and that family planning which employed the method of exposure did so under the orders of the father who determined whether or not an infant joined his family [207]); Harris (1982) 114-116; Engels (1980) 112-120 (who claims that a high rate of female infanticide was demographically impossible); Preus (1975) 237-263; Cameron (1932) 105-114.

[59]Garland (1990) 90.

performed in real life.[60] This act of cruelty was performed with the expectation that the child would die. However, in real life no family, particularly a royal one, would expose its first and possibly only male heir unless extraordinary circumstances forced it to do so.[61] Oedipus would have remained alive and at home. A Theban law recorded by Aelian (quoted without context and possibly Hellenistic[62]), does indicate an opinion concerning the exposure of infants; Aelian suggests that the law is most just and humane since it forbids a Theban from exposing a child. The wealth of a parent is immaterial since even the poorest Theban cannot dispose of a baby in this way.

> Νόμος οὗτος Θηβαϊκὸς ὀρθῶς ἅμα καὶ φιλανθρώπως κείμενος ἐν τοῖς μάλιστα ὅτι οὐκ ἔξεστιν ἀνδρὶ Θηβαίῳ ἐκθεῖναι παιδίον οὐδὲ εἰς ἐρημίαν αὐτὸ ῥῖψαι θάνατον αὐτοῦ καταψηφισάμενον, ἀλλ᾽ ἐὰν ᾖ πένης εἰς τὰ ἔσχατα ὁ τοῦ παιδὸς πατήρ, εἴτε ἄρρεν τοῦτο εἴτε θῆλύ ἐστιν, ἐπὶ τὰς ἀρχὰς κομίζειν ἐξ ὠδίνων τῶν μητρῴων σὺν τοῖς σπαργάνοις αὐτό· αἱ δὲ παραλαβοῦσαι ἀποδίδονται τὸ βρέφος τῷ τιμὴν ἐλαχίστην δόντι. ῥήτρα τε πρὸς αὐτὸν καὶ ὁμολογία γίνεται ᾗ μὴν τρέφειν τὸ βρέφος καὶ αὐξηθὲν ἔχειν δοῦλον ἢ δούλην, θρεπτήρια αὐτοῦ τὴν ὑπηρεσίαν λαμβάνοντα (*VH* 2.7).

Polybius comments on the decline of the population in Greece, suggesting that those who were enjoying luxuries in life were no longer interested in raising large families. One solution to the problem would be to make and enforce laws whereby it would be compulsory to raise their children (36.17.5-10).[63] This does suggest that exposure was a common occurrence.

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[60]Redford (1967) 211.

[61]Hogan (1991) 49. Cameron (1932) 106 points out that Plato's *Theaetetus* (160e) indicates that, while any child may suffer the fate of exposure, the first child would be exempt, and public opinion did not necessarily support the exposure of babies.

[62]Patterson (1985) 122.

[63]Garland (1990) 99 suggests that, while Polybius may have identified one cause of the decline of the population in Greece, economic and political conditions under Roman rule were more

In essence, exposure in Greek traditional tales is part of a process which leads to fulfilment of disasters or successes. The one who is exposed tends to have a destiny which must be fulfilled. Death would have prohibited this fulfilment; exposure made its completion possible. Exposure is a way to ensure the future although the intentions often are different from the results. When exposed children return, having grown into adults, such as Oedipus, Amphion and Zethus, and Herakles, they often perform acts of violence in order to claim what they think is rightfully theirs. They also may become heroes.[64] As for the question of whether or not the Greeks thought that exposure was an act of cruelty, one character in the tales evidently considers the situation in which Ion is exposed to be a cruel one. When Creusa tells the servant that she exposed her own child, the servant, who is in a state of disbelief that Creusa could have committed such an act, responds τίς γάρ νιν ἐξέθηκεν ; οὐ γὰρ δὴ σύ γε (E. *Ion* 954) and then goes on to ask καὶ πῶς ἐν ἄντρῳ παῖδα σὸν λιπεῖν ἔτλης (E. *Ion* 958). And one must not forget the shepherd of Laius who disobeys a direct order from his king and saves a baby, who has not committed any crime, from a cruel death. Not all have the heart to carry out a death sentence. More often than not, those in the tales who express horror at such an act or cannot fulfill the order to expose a child are those who are from the general populace, οἱ πολλοί, and not from the upper class.

Generally in these tales, the exposed babies live to become great individuals, some of whom acquire the status of hero, and these exposed children are the offspring of parents who are themselves distinguished.[65] Success as an adult, even if temporary, requires a severing of the familial

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predominant factors.

[64]Redford (1967) 211.

[65]Rank (1990) 57.

relationship,[66] with a reconciliation later in life: cruelty, suffering and success exist side by side in an unpredictable world. In the tales the *oikos* in the mythological world reflects an unstable society, which frequently jeopardizes future generations in order to ensure its own personal goals. When the integrity of the *oikos* is disrupted, dire consequences are the result. The motif of exposure of children in the tales (unlike child-murder) ensures the future, good or bad, of the one exposed since those children tend to live. They represent suffering and survival.

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[66]Rank (1990) 59.

Chapter Four

The Murder of Children in Theban Tales

Murder is a dominant theme in Greek traditional tales, an act of cruelty from which characters of all ages suffer, including children. The murderers of children in the tales are parents, relatives, other adults, or gods, all of whom are in a position to make rational decisions and yet perform this act: emotions rule for some of the murderers, self-control dominates in others. The murder of children occurs in the traditional tales for many reasons: greed, power, fear, revenge, jealousy, hatred, pride, victory in battle, insanity, betrayal, and impiety. Murder, unlike exposure in the tales, ensures the murderer's hoped-for result, and there are several cases in the Theban tales in which children suffer this cruel fate. Moreover, several of the gods play a role in many of the murders in these tales.

The following is a list of the more common cases of child-murder in Theban tales (although some of these people are not young children, they are still considered children in the context of the tale which centers on their relationship to their parents): Artemis changes Actaeon, the son of Autonoe, into a stag, and he is then mauled to death by his own dogs[1]; Agave, along with her sisters, murders her son Pentheus[2]; Athamas murders his son Learchus, and his wife Ino murders their other

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[1]E. *Ba.* 337-342; Apollod. 3.4.4; Hyg. *Fab.* 180, 181; Nonn. *D.* 5.287-496; D.S. 4.81.3-5; Ov. *Met.* 3.138-252.

[2]E. *Ba.* 1106-1147, 1238-1242; Nonn. *D.* 44.15-83, 46.176-319; Apollod. 3.5.2; Ov. *Met.* 3.701-733; Hyg. *Fab.* 184.

son Melicerta[3]; Oedipus calls a curse of death down upon his sons[4]; Herakles murders his own children[5]; and Apollo and Artemis murder the children of Niobe and Amphion.[6] In all the above cases in which children are killed, there is involvement from several gods: Zeus and Artemis in the case of Actaeon; Hera in the case of Athamas and Ino, and in the case of Herakles; Dionysus in the case of Agave; possibly Apollo in the case of Oedipus; and Apollo, Artemis and Leto in the case of Niobe's children. In these most common of Theban tales in which child-murder occurs, goddesses are more often involved in the murder of children than are gods. Artemis and Apollo are the only immortals who actually commit the act of child-murder. Four of the six tales also involve people who are descendants of a foreigner, Cadmus, who is responsible for the founding of Thebes: Autonoe and her son Actaeon; Ino and her son Melicerta; Agave and her son Pentheus; and Oedipus and his sons. That Cadmus is a foreigner suggests that problems associated with a place often involve outsiders, and this involvement also tends to be reflected in the disruption of the *oikos*, which is often caused by those who are outside the family. And of these four tales, only the one about Oedipus contains no direct involvement from a god, unless of course Apollo, who warned Laius three times through his oracle, is also controlling Oedipus' destiny and that of his sons (A. *Th.* 743-749). The Chorus in Aeschylus' *Seven Against Thebes* says that the cause of all the problems in this family was Laius' disobedience (842). In five of the tales the victims are only males, but in

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[3]E. *Med.* 1282-1289; Apollod. 3.4.4; Ov. *Met.* 4.512-542; Paus. 1.44.7-8.

[4]A. *Th.* 655, 695-697, 785-791, 818-821, 885-886; S. *OC* 1-80, 1348-1396; E. *Ph.* 63-76; Apollod. 3.5.7-9; Hyg. *Fab.* 66 and 67; Paus. 10.5.3; D.S. 4.64.1; Sen. *Oed.* 800-880, 915-1061.

[5]E. *HF* 967-1015; Mosch. *Megara* 13-35; Apollod. 2.4.12; D.S. 4.11.1-2; Hyg. *Fab.* 32; Paus. 9.11.2.

[6]Apollod. 3.5.6; Ov. *Met.* 6.146-312; Paus. 1.21.3, 2.21.9-10.

the tale of Niobe there is an equal number of daughters and sons who are killed. In fact, what we have are six tales of child-murder, in which women are more often involved as perpetrators and the victims are mostly male children.

Many disasters befall the family of Cadmus, who, with his wife Harmonia and their daughters, are eventually exiled from Thebes. They have four daughters, Autonoe, Semele, Ino, and Agave, and one son, Polydorus, who all experience tragedy in one form or another. Nor are Cadmus' grandchildren, Actaeon, Pentheus, Learchus and Melicerta (Dionysus, another grandson, also suffered since he was abducted by pirates and exposed by his mother and grandfather[7]), spared from acts of violent cruelty. Actaeon, the son of Autonoe and her husband Aristaeus, is mauled to death by his own dogs. His tale tells how he suffers this cruel death because of a transgression against Artemis or Zeus. Either he sees Artemis bathing or claims that he is a better hunter than she,[8] or he attempts to win Semele, with whom Zeus is enamoured, and Zeus, in anger, sends Artemis to punish him (Apollod. 3.4.4; Paus. 9.2.3-4). Whichever is the reason, Artemis transforms him into a stag (or casts a deer-skin around him [Paus. 9.2.3-4]), and his fifty dogs, which Artemis has driven mad, devour him. The hunter, who is apart from the civilized world and who is in the violent domain of the wild, has become the hunted. Actaeon has been punished for his transgression against the gods. The death of Actaeon and the subsequent departure of his father (D.S. 4.82.1-3) assures the permanent breakup of this family.[9] We have a situation here in which the murderers who are driven

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[7]For my discussion of the abduction of Dionysus see above ch. 2, 25-26, and of his exposure see above ch. 3, 36-37.

[8]E. *Ba.* 337-340; Apollod. 3.4.4; Hyg. *Fab.* 180, 181; Nonn. *D.* 287-496; Ov. *Met.* 3.138-252.

[9]Forbes Irving (1990) 61 states that the thrill of Actaeon's tale is derived from the combination of the curiosity about hidden and forbidden women, and the hunt, the kill and nature.

mad by a goddess are not people but a pack of animals. This tale is strangely similar to that of Pentheus, Actaeon's cousin, whose doom at the hands of a "pack" of women will be considered next.

The tale which concerns the death of Pentheus at the hands of his mother, aunts, and other women is one of the most famous and most gruesome of the Theban stories.[10] The relationship between Pentheus and Dionysus is a close one: they are first cousins who hate each other since Pentheus has chosen not to worship Dionysus. Cadmus' grandson Dionysus, who is responsible for the madness of Agave and her sisters, was created from the union of Zeus and Semele, another daughter of Cadmus, and was sewn up in Zeus' leg until his birth occurred.[11] Dionysus proves to be a bane to the family of Cadmus; he treats the family of his mother so horrifically, in part, because of their treatment of his mother Semele.[12] Semele herself is avenged by her son, though she does not

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This tale is a transformation tale. Since there are at least three reasons why Actaeon is transformed the emphasis of the tale lies in the metamorphosis. Additionally, Forbes Irving notes that this tale has a direct connection with women (80-81), and that the female, Artemis, is outside the regular domain of her sex, adopting a man's life and living in the wild (83). Forbes Irving suggests that, in a sense, the death of Actaeon is, like the gruesome death of Pentheus, a family crime (80).

[10]E. *Ba.* 1106-1147, 1238-1242; Nonn. *D.* 44.15-83, 46.176-319; Apollod. 3.5.2; Ov. *Met.* 3.701-733; Hyg. *Fab.* 184. Euripides' *Bacchae* is the first extant source which names Agave and her sisters, and specifically identifies them as the perpetrators of the murder.

[11]E. *Ba.* 1-12; Apollod. 3.4.3; Ov. *Met.* 3.259-315 .

[12]Euripides is aware of this crime committed by Semele's sisters. He has Dionysus say that Thebes is the first city in Hellas in which he is setting up his mysteries and that, since his mother's sisters should have known better than to doubt Semele and say that she had lied, he has arrayed them in Bacchic attire. Now, along with all the women of Thebes, he has driven them out of the city and out of their minds: his mother and father will be avenged (E. *Ba.* 20-42). Dodds (1960) xi, xiv, xxvi, 162 (on line 680) claims that this play is based on the historical event of the introduction of the religion of Dionysus into Greece. The play is a battle between the ruling family who represent law and order, and a new religion and its fanatical followers. Further, since ritual is usually older than myth, it is probable that at one time the Βάκχαι became what their name suggests—wild females who have undergone a temporary personality change. Dionysus drives the three daughters of the king mad, and they kill a son, characteristics which occur in other tales concerning Dionysus, such as

live to see the punishment inflicted upon her sisters.[13] This punishment is central to Pentheus' tale, which may be briefly summarized as follows. Dionysus has come to Thebes to establish his mysteries and to punish the sisters of his mother because they doubted her when she said that Zeus was the father of her child. Instead, they say that Semele was with a mortal man and was punished for making this claim about Zeus (Apollod. 3.4.3). The sisters, along with all the females of Thebes, have gone to Mt. Cithaeron (outside the boundary of the city and civilization) and are in a state of Bacchic revelry. Dionysus convinces Pentheus, whom Dionysus intends to punish as well, to spy on the women and sends him off. The women spot him up in a tree which they uproot. Believing Pentheus to be a wild animal they proceed to tear him to pieces, with his mother Agave taking the lead. Then Agave, with her son's head on her thyrsus, returns to the royal home of Cadmus, to whom she brags of her kill, believing that her victim is a lion. As Agave comes out of her trance with the aid of her father she realizes, in horror, what has happened (similarly, Amphitryon helps Herakles become aware that he has murdered his family [E. *HF* 1111-1145]).[14] The act of murdering Pentheus was the punishment for Agave and her sisters, while death was Pentheus' punishment (similarly, Polydorus died in the same way that Pentheus did, since his attitude towards Dionysus was similar

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when he drives mad the three daughters of Minyas at Orchomenos, as well as Proetus' three daughters at Argos.

[13]Dodds (1960) xlii notes that Dionysus' vengeance is as cruel and as indiscriminate as the vengeance displayed by Aphrodite in the *Hippolytus*.

[14]Watson (1995) 24 claims that the act of a mother murdering her own child is so unnatural that an explanation must identify an external cause, and the tale of Agave who murders her son while she is in a state of Bacchic madness follows this paradigm.

to that of Pentheus [Apollod. 3.5.1]).[15] Cadmus, his wife Harmonia, Agave and her sisters go into exile.[16]

The similarity between Actaeon's death and that of Pentheus is evident; they are both ripped to pieces,[17] and bizarrely, these acts are performed by loved ones; Agave loves her son just as the hounds love their master. The two males are not alike in that Actaeon is a hunter while Pentheus is a king. Yet they are similar since both look down upon women and both become the victims of women.[18] The death of Pentheus is a perverted sacrifice which Agave could only perform in a state of madness.[19] The death of Actaeon can be seen in the same way; he is sacrificed for his indiscretion towards Artemis who drives his hounds mad in order to ensure the death of the metamorphosed

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[15]Pausanias says that Pentheus was punished by Dionysus for his insolence and impiety towards the god (9.5.4).

[16]E. *Ba.*; Ov. *Met.* 3.511-733; Apollod. 3.5.2; Hyg. *Fab.* 184; Second Vatican Mythographer 105 (83). Dodds (1960) xix notes that Agave has become polluted since she murdered her son. Similarly at Tenedos, the one who killed the calf at the sacrifice has to pretend to leave the country as if in exile since he is polluted by the sacrifice which he has performed (Ael. *NA* 12.34).

[17]Dionysus, a cousin of Actaeon and Pentheus, also suffers the same fate as Pentheus and Actaeon in the version of the tale where Dionysus, born from the union of Zeus and Persephone (or Demeter, according to Diodorus Siculus, who claims to be relying upon the Orphic poems [3.62.6-8]), is torn apart and boiled by the Titans (frr. 34, 35, 214 Kern). The perversion in the ripping apart and eating of human flesh occurs elsewhere in traditional tales, as when the children of Thyestes are murdered by their uncle Atreus who serves them for dinner to their father (A. *A.* 1090-1097; Apollod. *Ep.* 2.13; Hyg. *Fab.* 88; Sen. *Thy.* 682-788, 973-1029, 1052-1068).

[18]Forbes Irving (1990) 87.

[19]Foley (1985) 206-207 identifies this ritual as a crisis which indicates a basic disruption of the association between man and god; Pentheus and the city of Thebes have rejected the worship of Dionysus, and the god will exact vengeance with a "sacrificial crisis." Seaford (1989) 95 claims that, in myth, parents who are in a Bacchic frenzy tend to murder their children, and in Pentheus' case, his murder is both a hunt and a sacrifice.

youth. The gods control the murderers in both cases and determine the fate of two people who insult the gods. Impiety is not acceptable in these or any tales, and leads to the destruction of the family.

Tragedy continues for the family of Cadmus, whose other grandchildren Learchus and Melicerta also meet with destruction at the hands of a goddess, in this instance Hera. Ino's sister Semele, whose death Hera arranges, is pregnant with the baby Dionysus. Zeus rescues the unborn child, and when the baby is born, Zeus gives him to Hermes who brings him to Ino and her husband Athamas, with the instructions that they are to raise him as a girl. Hera is not to be outwitted and punishes those who are aiding in the upbringing of an illegitimate son of her husband; she drives Athamas mad and causes him to hunt and murder his elder son Learchus. She also drives Ino insane so that she throws their other son Melicerta into a boiling cauldron, and then jumps into the sea along with the cauldron and dead child (Apollod. 3.4.4; Ov. *Met.* 4.512-542; Paus. 1.44.7-8).[20] (According to Euripides, Ino, driven mad by Hera, murders both her children and then jumps off a cliff to die with them [*Med.* 1284-1289], and Pausanias mentions another version in which Athamas is enraged with Ino and her children, since Ino, the step-mother, was responsible for a famine and the death of his son Phrixus [1.44.7-8].) The deaths of Learchus and Melicerta are gruesome. The image of a child running from his father who is hunting his son like an animal conjures up a horrific sight. And the death of Melicerta, who is tossed into a pot of boiling water with no means of escape, demonstrates cruelty at its worst. This tale is meant to be horrible and it succeeds in its message; the divine vengeance of Hera is justified in a mythological justice system. She punishes a couple through

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[20]Watson (1995) 25 suggests that the maternal instinct becomes perverted only when the mother has been wronged by a male relative or when she has been driven mad (internal motivation), unlike stepmothers who commit child-murder because of jealousy, greed and resentment (external motivation).

their children because they had protected an illegitimate son of her husband; children are the focus of both the crime and the judgement. Again, the punishment fits the crime. The gods are in control, and rather than spare children, they use those children in extremely violent and cruel ways to demonstrate their power when they believe that they have been insulted. Without exception these four daughters and four grandsons of Cadmus have their destinies held in the hands of the gods.

We now turn to the family of Oedipus which also suffered great misfortunes at Thebes. In the stories about Cadmus' family various weapons were used to perform the murders: hounds, bare hands, boiling water, an axe, and a bolt of lightning. The weapon that Oedipus uses which results in the deaths of his two sons is different from the others; he uses a curse to ensure the deaths of his own sons, whom he hates more than he loves his daughters.[21]

Laius, who has been in exile for a number of years, returns to rule Thebes, and in so doing continues the ruling House of Cadmus.[22] He has been told by an oracle not to have a son with his wife Jocasta because he will die at the hands of this child. Laius disobeys, and he and Jocasta have a baby whose exposure they order (though the order is not carried out), but who is rescued and raised by the king and queen of Corinth who name the baby Oedipus. Eventually Oedipus leaves his home in Corinth only to murder his father and marry his mother. Upon learning what he has done, Oedipus is in a state of unbearable anguish. Oedipus' sons do not treat him properly while he is suffering from his miserable plight, and so, in response to their negligence, he calls a curse of death down

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[21]Lloyd-Jones (1971) 118-119.

[22]Tales about Laius are discussed in ch. 2, 27-29, and ch. 3, 41-46.

upon them.[23] Did Oedipus not think that his family had suffered enough? The question is immaterial to Oedipus: the father figure is all-important and Polyneices and Eteocles have forgotten their place. He places a curse upon his sons ἵν' ἀξιῶτον τοὺς φυτεύσαντας σέβειν (S. *OC* 1377). The structure of authority must be observed.[24] Similarly, Theseus calls a curse down upon his son Hippolytus for an act that he supposedly committed against his father and stepmother.[25] In both tales the integrity of the *oikos* has been violated. Plato contends that no god or mortal would recommend the neglect of a parent and makes it clear that respect for the parents is essential. He identifies the cases of Oedipus and Theseus, both of whom called curses down upon their sons, and he claims that these fathers were justified and that the gods allowed the fulfilment of these curses (*Lg.* 930e3-931c1).

Various reasons are given for Oedipus' curse against his sons, but all have the same cause, the mistreatment of their father. Apollodorus says that Oedipus places a curse upon his sons because they do nothing to help him when the Thebans expel him from the city, while Antigone assists her father (3.5.9). Exile is expected in the case of Oedipus, who himself even begs to be driven from Thebes after he has discovered that it was he who killed Laius (S. *OT* 1337-1346). The crime of murder necessitated the exile. Aeschylus has the Chorus explain Oedipus' curse, saying that the sons begrudged their father his rightful place in the home (*Th.* 785). In Euripides' *Phoenissae*, Jocasta is still alive and tells of the curse of Oedipus, referring to it as impious; she adds that their sons, in

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[23]S. *OC* 1-80, 1348-1396; E. *Ph.* 63-76; Apollod. 3.5.7-9; Hyg. *Fab.* 66 and 67; Paus. 10.5.3; D.S. 4.64.1; Sen. *Oed.* 800-880, 915-1061.

[24]Parker (1983) 196-197.

[25]E. *Hipp.* 887-890, 936-942, 1038-1040, 1049-1050, 1171-1172, 1322-1324; Ov. *Met.* 15.497-546 where he is nursed back to life. Barrett (1964) 334 (on lines 887-889) notes that Theseus deliberately refrains from mentioning the curse to his son, and concentrates on exile as punishment for the crime instead.

terror that the curse will be fulfilled, decide to rule one year each at a time (63-76). Athenaeus writes that Oedipus is reminded of his great misery when his sons place the treasures of Laius on the table, and so he calls down bitter curses in the presence of his sons (11.465e). Statius has Oedipus say that his sons do not help him with comforting words or deeds but rather mock and abhor the sight and sound of their father (*Theb.* 1.74-87). Sophocles' Oedipus realizes that his sons know that Thebes requires the body of Oedipus in order to attain glory, but he thinks that they prefer the kingship to having their father back (*OC* 389-390; 417-19). Oedipus says that neither of his sons shall rule since they did not help him when the city drove him out (*OC* 421-430, 440-444). Then he places a curse of death upon his sons as a punishment for their actions against him (*OC* 787-790). Polyneices comes to Oedipus and begs for his help; he claims that Eteocles rules at home and mocks both his brother and his father, who are exiles (*OC* 1333-1339). Oedipus responds by reiterating the curse, and expands further the reasons for his anger towards his sons (*OC* 1348-1396).The severity of the curse of Oedipus against his sons, if fulfilled, is clear: it is a pollution that cannot be removed with time (A. *Th.* 681-682).

Oedipus deliberately places a curse of death upon his sons. In the next tale to be considered the father unwittingly commits a horrendous crime. Herakles, the greatest of all hunters, murders his own family with his own weapons,[26] another victim of madness instilled by Hera. The following summary of the tale in which he murders his own children is based on Euripides' *Madness of Herakles*. Herakles returns home, having completed his labours (according to Diodorus Siculus,

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[26]E. *HF* 922-976; Mosch. *Megara* 13-16; Hyg. *Fab.* 31 and 32; D.S. 4.11.1-2; or he throws his children, along with two children of Iphicles, into a fire (Apollod. 2.4.12). Shelton (1979) 108 notes that Herakles' very weapons which receive praise from Amphitryon are ironically the instruments which bring death to his family.

Herakles performs his labours after committing the murders, 4.11.2). He enters his house, saying how important his children are to him, and finishes with πᾶν δὲ φιλότεκνον γένος (636). When Lycus, who has taken over the city of Thebes in Herakles' absence, arrives to murder Herakles' family, Amphitryon sends him inside where he meets his death at the hands of Herakles (749, 753). Iris then appears on the scene and says that Hera will now stain Herakles with the blood of family, for he will murder his own children (831-832). After Iris and Rage (Λύσσα) depart, a servant comes from within the house of Herakles, announcing that the children are dead (913). He then goes on to describe the dreadful deed in graphic terminology (922-976). Herakles is mortified when he comes out of his trance, and tears fall; he wishes to be turned to stone in order to forget his woes (1353-1356, 1397).[27] He recognizes the grotesqueness of his actions; his children were victims of the worst act: murder. Herakles indirectly equates his suffering with that of Niobe who is a stone at Sipylus; both have lost the most important people in their lives.

Herakles fulfills the cruel desires of Lycus and in so doing takes upon himself the blood-guilt which would have fallen upon his enemy; by murdering the most defenceless of all, his own kin, Herakles is as much a perpetrator of evil towards his family and friends as he is towards his enemies.[28] The children were destined to undergo cruelty; only the perpetrator had to be determined. In the first part of the play Lycus, demonstrating human cruelty, is determined deliberately to

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[27]Bond (1981) 230 (on *HF* lines 650-654), 360 (on line 1157) and 409 (on line 1397) notes that Euripides employs the technique of escapist prayers, the wish for flight in some form or another, such as Niobe's situation. Barrett (1964) 299 (on *Hipp.* lines 732-734) and 397 (on lines 1290-1293) notes that wishes to escape from the present intolerable situation are a common theme of tragic lyric, and Euripides employed this technique several times in his plays. Dodds (1960) 122 (on *Ba.* lines 402-416) suggests that Euripides uses the "escape-prayer," in part, because they are wartime lyrics.

[28]Austin (1990) 116; Kaimio (1992) 39.

slaughter the children, but it is Herakles, under the spell of divine cruelty, who performs the deed, one exactly like the deed from which he has just rescued his children.[29] It is likely that Herakles, who up to this point has escaped Hera's wrath, is himself an innocent victim of her jealousy.[30] Hera is Herakles' greatest foe; the victims are his children who die cruelly at his hands. This is the height of divine vengeance. Hera is still not truly victorious since Herakles believes that he could not perform this atrocious act if he had been in his right mind; the only way he could perform this slaughter was under Hera's spell of madness.[31] By accepting that Hera caused his madness, just as Theseus believes (1191), Herakles removes from himself a part of the responsibility for his violent actions against his own children and casts a part of the blame onto Hera (E. *HF* 1127-28, 1303-1310).[32]

Although the violent and gruesome deaths of these children cannot be minimized, they are justified in Euripides' *Madness of Herakles*, since the city of Athens will provide Herakles with a permanent place in which to dwell and will lead to the establishment of a hero cult. Herakles' violent

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[29]Shelton (1979) 103, 105.

[30]Hartigan (1987) 126-127 takes the position that Herakles, like Oedipus, is innocent.

[31]Medea, on the other hand, deliberately murdered her own children in a tale of revenge directed against her husband, who is marrying the king's daughter; Medea's *oikos* has been threatened with a new bride, and Medea, a strong and wilful woman, refuses to tolerate the intrusion. She murders the bride-to-be, using her own children as instruments to deliver the deadly gown, and then punishes her husband by killing their children. She holds her own honour and family (husband and children) above all else. Jason has defiled the marriage, taking a new bride, thus robbing Medea of her honour; the destruction of her family, according to Medea, necessarily follows.

[32]Bond (1981) 392 (on lines 1307-1310) notes that Herakles' words are powerfully critical of Hera. See Foley (1985) 147-204, esp.190-192 where she notes that Hera's wrath will lead to the separation of Herakles from his father and his homeland, which will be accomplished through the deaths of Herakles' own family members.

nature has been somewhat subdued and he can now be a part of a democratic *polis*.[33] This process begins when Herakles himself believes that Hera is the one who is responsible for his actions. Herakles is more human than god since Hera would not have been able to inflict her madness upon him otherwise,[34] and as such, Herakles can be worshipped as a hero. The irony is clear though; in order to become a hero Herakles falls from his height of glory to the depths of despair[35] (similarly Oedipus, who calls a curse of death down upon his own sons, is brought to a state of the deepest despair before he too becomes a hero). Herakles, revealing his paradoxical nature, becomes a monster and murders the most important thing in his life, his family; the crime is performed inside the home, the place where Herakles' family would have expected to be safest with him.[36] As a god-like figure Herakles can perform his labours and Hera cannot interfere; as a man defending his family Herakles can be driven mad at the whim of his step-mother. The children were the instruments which Hera, in a state of jealousy, used to punish Herakles, who perverts the ethical principle of "help your

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[33]Foley (1985) 195-197.

[34]Shelton (1979) 110 notes that because of his disaster Herakles realizes just how human he is and how vulnerable.

[35]Hartigan (1987) 126.

[36]Kirk (1974) 181,197, 203-210 notes the paradoxical nature of Herakles' character, and madness is an essential feature in his personality, though in the case where he murders his children, the madness comes from an outside source. However, the madness of Herakles could be a reflection of a potentially dire supernatural strength and stamina. Thus, Herakles, when he murders his own family, is revealing his bestial side.

friends and harm your enemies" when he murders his own children.[37] Herakles' House in Thebes has been utterly destroyed.

The last Theban tale to be taken into consideration will be that of Niobe, which was examined in the Introduction of this thesis.[38] The main traditions for the tale of Niobe all contain several characteristics which, for the most part, remain consistent. Forceful women dominate in this tale in which mortal children are helpless, and immortals demonstrate their power over these victims. Amphion can do nothing to alter the destiny of his children and the subsequent fall of his House. Why nothing and no one can come to the aid of Niobe's children is fundamental to the purpose of the tale: Niobe's story is a moral lesson with theological repercussions. Niobe steps over the boundary between the gods and mortals, placing herself above the immortals.[39] This act necessitates punishment. In order to understand the position to which Niobe is subsequently relegated by the gods, it will be useful to examine the ways in which Niobe's story is incorporated into various works.

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[37]Padilla (1994) 292 notes that the principle to help one's friends and to hurt one's enemies collapses in this tale even though Herakles attempts to abide by this basic Greek ethic. Dover (1974) 180-181 notes that those who excelled in both harming their enemies and helping their friends could be highly looked upon, and a prayer could include both thanks for one's own blessings and hope for an enemy to have ill fortune.

[38]For a list of sources for the tale of Niobe see above ch. 1, n. 4.

[39]Just as the deaths of Niobe's children are the punishments meted out against a woman who dared to boast against the gods, so too the death of Atys, another victim, is the punishment for the boast of his father Croesus. Herodotus suggests that Zeus punishes Croesus because he boasted that he is the happiest of men (1.34.1). Croesus was not impressed with Solon's choice of who was the happiest man that he had ever seen and ignored Solon's warning that the gods do not appreciate human prosperity (1.32.1). Croesus has a dream in which one of his sons, Atys, is killed. This dream is realized, although Croesus attempts to stop the disaster (1.34.2; 1.43.2-44.1). The decisions of the gods are not reversible, which Croesus now realizes (1.45.2).

Individual authors emphasized particular aspects for specific reasons. Throughout antiquity Niobe is associated with several important mythical characters, all of whom, except one, experience intense suffering: 1) Homer, through the character Achilles, equates Priam's loss of his son with Niobe's loss of her children (*Il.* 24.602-620); 2) Seneca's Iole, who has lost her family and homeland, compares her miserable situation with that of Niobe (*Her. O* 185-186); 3) Ovid likewise associates his own personal grief over his exile from his homeland with that of Niobe (*Tr.* 5.1.57-58); 4) in Moschus' *Megara*, Alcmena, Herakles' mother, speaking to Megara, Herakles' wife, compares her suffering with that of Niobe (82-84); 5) Antigone, in Sophocles' play, compares herself with Niobe when she is about to die (*Ant.* 823-838); and 6) in Juvenal the attitude towards Niobe shifts and, instead of demonstrating any pity for Niobe, he compares her to haughty Cornelia, the mother of the famous Gracchi, and says nothing positive about either of these two women (*Sat.* 6.172-177). Juvenal appears to be exceptional in his treatment of the tale of Niobe since his opinion of her is unsympathetic and condescending.

Although none of the ancient writers seem to dispute that Niobe's insult of Leto is wrong, nevertheless she is pitied generally for the extreme nature of her plight. In the *Iliad*, which contains the first extant reference to the tale of Niobe, the reference is through a comparison between two adults, Priam and Niobe, a man and a woman, who have both lost their children. While the plight of the children is described in the *Iliad*, here and elsewhere the pity is always felt for Niobe. All these authors were aware of Niobe's transgression against Leto and of the subsequent death of her children at the hands of Leto's children. Yet no one hesitates to identify their own or their character's suffering with that of Niobe. Even though Niobe acts impiously, she still has the sympathy of her fellow human beings. Nevertheless, that sympathy is always directed at her fate after the deaths of

her children and her loss of those children, never at Niobe's impiety nor towards the act of cruelty directed against her children.

Although they do not explicitly say so, all authors who mention the murder of the children of Niobe include an unusual twist: children murder children. This is a tale in which mothers are the dominant controlling characters, but the actual cruel act is performed by children against children. It is in this capacity that Apollo and Artemis perform this horrific deed; Artemis murders the girls inside the city at the palace, while Apollo murders the boys outside the city boundary. The gods are in both and control both domains. They act on behalf of their insulted mother who demands retribution and personal satisfaction for her injuries. Apollo and Artemis, as willing instruments, defend Leto's honour and reputation as a mother and a goddess. Niobe's children, as unwilling victims, were only guilty of being the children of Niobe. Leto demands that her own children perform the "dirty work" (Apollod. 3.5.6). Leto's role in this tale is similar to that of those who order others to expose children; they do not perform the deed themselves, but rather fulfill their desire through others. In this tale parental manipulation controls the situation. Although Apollo and Artemis do not hesitate to shoot down the children of Niobe, they do so because their mother demands this act.

Even though a goddess' jealousy is the cause of the murder of Niobe's children, it is obvious that Niobe herself is equally responsible because it is her insistence that she is better and happier than Leto that results in the loss of her entire family. Niobe does not think to hold her tongue. Leto chooses Niobe's children to be the immediate victims; Niobe unwittingly provides a reason for the deaths of her own children. This is evident from the fact that Niobe never recovers from the loss of her children. The punishment directed towards Niobe is of the most extreme nature; the numerous

children cannot be allowed to live and Leto intentionally orders their death. The children are the victims of a cruel form of justice, one in which the punishment is designed to fit the crime. Niobe must not be permitted any opportunity to boast again that she has more children than Leto. The fact that Amphion pleads on behalf of his children (Juv. *Sat.* 6.172-174) and Niobe weeps permanently (accepted by the sources who mention her fate) indicates that their children are among the most important people in their lives; the children are the object of Niobe's boasts as well as her most vulnerable point of attack. The death of their children is the most difficult loss for Niobe and Amphion. However, in the longest version of Niobe's tale Niobe brags that after the deaths of her sons she still has her daughters left (Ov. *Met.* 6.284-285). Here, Niobe consciously lets some of her children die since she continues to boast, knowing that it is because of her boasting that all of her sons are now dead.

Another mother, Aedon the wife of Zethus, the twin brother of Amphion, is jealous over the number of Niobe's children. In this lesser known version, Aedon, in a state of jealousy or madness, attempts to murder one of the children of Niobe but kills her own child by mistake (Hom. *Od.* 19.518-523; Paus. 9.5.9). The word ἀφραδία (*Od.* 19.523) leaves a certain ambiguity since it is not clear whether Aedon was in a state of madness or had committed a folly. Without going into any detail, Pausanias says that Aedon's crime was a mistake, ἁμαρτία. Pausanias does mention that disaster falls on both the families of Amphion and his twin brother Zethus, which, because there are no heirs, ends this ruling House (9.5.9). The senseless and violently cruel deaths of children ensure this end.

The tale of Niobe continued to survive throughout antiquity as a strong example of what can happen to one who is impious. The Niobe tale illustrates that piety towards the gods is a requirement:

the gods punish without mercy. As Forbes Irving points out, Niobe's situation is unique, since the murder of her children is Niobe's punishment; her turning to stone is the result of her punishment. The stone symbolizes human mourning, since it represents Niobe as an isolated and lifeless figure in contrast to the person that she had been before, when she was happy and a mother of a large family.[40] Pity is felt for Niobe, who is permanently in a state of anguish,[41] and who represents what one must not do in order to ensure the survival of the human race, for the gods demand respect. Homer knew this tale, and Pausanias, about a thousand years later, identified a rock which was supposed to be Niobe (1.21.3). It is clearly Niobe, not her children, who is the focus of the tale. The impact of the tale remained, for the most part, unaltered throughout antiquity. The Lydian rock weeps: Niobe, whose actions towards the gods left her permanently immobile, caught as an immortal stone between the land of the living and the land of the dead, and immersed with grief brought on by ὕβρις,[42] is a tragic mythical figure.

Many of the children in the Theban tales are murdered. Murder within the family appears to be an act which is the most difficult to contend with and the most damaging to the integrity of the *oikos*. The murders can take place in the home, as in the case of the children of Herakles (father), outside the home and city, as in the case of the son of Agave (mother), and on the boundary of the city itself, as in the case of the sons of Oedipus (father). The gods, who initiate the majority of these acts of murder either directly or indirectly in these more common Theban tales, show no concern for children, not even when they themselves are innocent of any wrongdoing. Only one god or goddess

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[40]Forbes Irving (1990) 146-147.

[41]Pucci (1980) 195, n. 33.

[42]Jebb (1902) 172 (on *Ant.* line 825).

(Hera or Artemis or Dionysus) is involved when those who commit the murders are overtaken by a fit of madness, a state which is only temporary; divine wrath and punishment are combined through horrific murders.[43] The extent of the cruelty against these victims reflects the lack of importance that children possessed as individuals in the Theban tales, while at the same time they played a necessary role in revealing the purpose of the tales in which they are characters.

[43]Padel (1995) 41.

Chapter Five

Conclusion

Greek traditional tales, filled with a diverse repertoire of topics, played an important role in the ancient world, existing in a society rich in oral tradition. This cultural aspect of the Greeks was explored by tragedians, poets and other writers. It would appear that the tales, which had a deep-rooted hold throughout antiquity, were intrinsic to the ancient way of life. The tales explored many facets of life in a mythical world, a world in which children played a role.

The tales encompass people of all ages, including children. Whenever children are involved, these tales tend to direct cruelty towards those children, the Theban tales being no exception. Most of the tales in which children play a part involve acts of abduction, exposure, and murder, acts which are directed towards the children. The acts of exposure and murder are intended or actual death sentences imposed by adults upon their victims, the majority of whom are voiceless, powerless and defenceless. Abduction too demonstrates the helplessness of the abductee who, on her own, has no means of escape. There is an exception; when the god Dionysus is abducted, there is a complete reversal, and the abductors become the victims. However, Dionysus also changes from a youth to a full-grown god, who is in complete control.

Greek tragedy, one of the main sources for these tales, is filled with the theme of violence, developed in plots which are built around traditional tales. The violence in the tragedies is also

usually intensified and even twisted, such as in Euripides *Medea.*[1] Although violence abounds everywhere in Greek literature, in the plays all acts of violence tend to take place offstage and are later related by a messenger.[2] However, the graphic descriptions which are related on stage, such as the murder of Herakles' children, leave little to the imagination. Children themselves tend to be young and helpless, in a state of dire misfortune, and *mutae personae* in the tragedies.[3] This helps to support the impression that the children are, for the most part, unimportant as individuals in the tales.

The dominant emotions of tragedy include terror and grief, which are usually passive, and anger, passionate desire, and hate, which are dynamic and active in nature. Grief is the most introverted of the emotions yet can have symptoms and gestures in tragedy as violent as any other emotion.[4] The emotion of grief may have been well-portrayed in Aeschylus' lost play *Niobe*, since Aristophanes' character Euripides in *The Frogs* complains of Aeschylus' silent grieving characters in his plays, giving Niobe as an example (911-920). The emotions of the audience are elicited through many themes, such as abduction, exile and death. The intensity of sorrow at the death of Antigone is heightened since she is young and unmarried,[5] just as the young Hippolytus' situation evokes a profound sympathy for his undeserved plight. The terror instilled by the murder of Herakles' children is inescapable. Equally perceivable is the horror of Pentheus' murder, which is

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[1]Kaimio (1992) 28, 35-36.

[2]Kaimio (1992) 30; Elliott (1969) 95 (on *Med.* lines 1136-1230).

[3]Sifakis (1979) 67-68 notes the typecasting of children and their lack of speaking parts in tragedy.

[4]Stanford (1983) 45.

[5]Stanford (1983) 25.

heightened by his being ripped apart by his own mother. In each of these tales, the children are the victims of extreme cruelty, which is a dominant theme in these tragedies.

Although the importance of the familial relationship is central in the tales,[6] the *oikos* is not without its troubles. These families tend to be royal families, which indicates a pre-*polis* or an early *polis* period, and the tales about these families reveal the difficulties of both kingship and kinship (providing a secure home life). In many cases, the tales involve the gods. Abduction of a child causes chaos for the victim's family. For example, in the case of the abduction of Europa, the household of Agenor is destroyed as a family unit: Europa never returns home, and her brothers who are sent out in search of her never accomplish their task, nor do they return to their homeland.

In the tales of abduction which were examined in this thesis, it is clear that the destruction of the family is, for the most part, a certainty; the extent of the destruction (whether temporary or permanent) is determined by the purpose of the abduction itself. A god abducts Europa; her brother subsequently founds the city of Thebes. The family of Agenor is never reunited; the founding of cities, at least in this case, is more important than the *oikos*. The abduction can be seen as cruel but the result can be considered in a positive light. On the other hand, the abductions of Iole and Antiope have devastating results; Iole's family and her city is destroyed, and the city of Antiope's abductor is destroyed when the Thebans recover their princess. In these two tales both cities and families are permanently destroyed. However, in these two cases, the abductors also meet with their own doom, which indicates that unlawful sexual pursuits could end badly for the perpetrators. Abduction can therefore lead to the founding of new cities or to the destruction of established ones.

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[6]Sifakis (1979) 72 notes that the tales tend to cover more than one generation and that the children are the links that unite the generations.

The destruction of the family of Laius after he has abducted Chrysippus indicates that if the violation of *xenia* (guest/host relationship) is the basis for its evils, this type of violation is a crime of the worst nature. Although interaction between royal families appears to have been a common occurrence,[7] and one could certainly go to the palace of another in times of trouble, this interaction was tenuous at times, since the results of the visit were not always positive. Antiope's beauty was known to Epopeus, and Laius is visiting Pelops; however, this interaction between people and places did not always carry a guarantee of security for everyone. The abduction of Antigone and Ismene by Creon indicates that, in order to attain political aspirations, one may resort to whatever means are available. Creon used these daughters of Oedipus as part of a political strategy; the scheme failed and the violation of the girls was short-lived. Destructive actions, such as those employed by Laius, Epopeus, and Creon, do not guarantee success, and in each case this violation was not tolerated.

However, most cases of abduction are based on lust for the victim, and indicate that beauty was a curse more than a blessing. All of these Theban tales of abduction, except that of Antigone and Ismeme, occurred because of the abductors' desire for the victims. These victims are, in a sense, victims of their own beauty. The abductors, who in these cases are all male, show little concern for their victims and their families. The disruption of the *oikos* is incidental to the perpetrators' goal. Zeus and Apollo, who are both gods, justify their acts with the founding of a city and the naming of a river. However, mortals who commit these acts of aggression all bring destruction upon themselves and others, and there is no positive result. The victims all suffer violence at a time when they are in the prime of their youth. In these tales, beauty is like a plague; both destroy families and cities.

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[7]Humphreys (1983) 26 suggests that in the Homeric days the *oikos* was a political centre in which personal ties, i.e., guest/host relationships, reached their greatest height.

Just as abduction is instrumental in the breakup of the family, so too exposure of children clearly demonstrates that home life can be filled with disruption and grief. In the Theban cases of exposure the perpetrators are all mortals (which reflects a fact of real life), who choose to perform this act because of a fear, either of the child or of someone else. Additionally, many children who are exposed at birth are a part of an unstable family, since the father and mother generally are not a married couple (though this is not the case with Laius and Jocasta). Hera, a deceived wife, also takes it upon herself to inflict severe atrocities upon the offspring of her husband's infidelities, destroying their family life. One only has to think of the tragedy which befalls the family of Herakles (whose life begins with exposure) at the instigation of Hera. Vulnerable because of a lack of security in the tales, children are the victims of adult actions. Furthermore, many parents, concerned only with themselves, do not hesitate to consider the act of eliminating their children. Some of these parents who place little importance on their children are concerned only about the destruction that their children could cause them, as in the case of Laius who exposes Oedipus. Other parents deliberately expose their sons in order to save themselves, as in the tale of the Theban parents who exposed a Theban youth once a month to the Teumessian Fox. There are parents who do care about their children, but fall under the power of the gods, as in the case of Alcmena, who, fearing the wrath of Hera, exposes Herakles. These actions of the parents who expose their children indicate a general under-valuing of children.[8]

However, any role played by a member of the general populace (which is the counterpart to the primary audience for the tales) tends to be one that is sympathetic towards the children. Since

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[8]For a discussion of the underrating and overrating of blood relations in the Oedipus tale see Lévi-Strauss (1963) 213-215.

the victims are of royal or of divine birth and are not from among the common people, the threat of these forms of violence against children of the general populace appears to be remote in the mythological world; the tales place the cruelty within a small segment of society. This sympathy is most evident in the tales which involve exposure, where the majority of the children are rescued by shepherds, as in the cases of Oedipus and of Amphion and Zethus.

The children in the tales generally do not step outside the "normal" role of simply being children. Antigone, who is not a young child, on the other hand, is different since she acts against the state, claiming that the gods' rules take precedence. Antigone arouses sympathy in people. She has acted in such a way as to gain respect and honour after death. Her actions towards the gods in general and her brother in particular are definitive and represent her moral position. When Creon exposed Antigone he failed in his objective because exposure is not a function of the *polis*, which he was trying to represent. Instead he confused the *oikos* and the *polis*, not realizing that these are two basic units which exist side by side, and are not merged as one. Antigone saw her function in the *oikos* as being the most important, since it is the unit with the oldest divinely sanctioned laws.

Throughout these Theban tales which involve the abduction, exposure and murder of children there are many themes which are used repeatedly. One of these themes is that of punishment for actions against the gods and children often suffer as a part of the punishment. Niobe, who has acted impiously, is indispensable for the lesson which is the purpose of her tragedy. Impiety is simply not tolerated. Pious behaviour towards the gods must be upheld or religious consequences are enforced. Niobe, daring to cross Leto, is punished with the deaths of her own children. Actaeon, Agave, Autonoe, and Pentheus all suffer punishment for the same reason: impiety towards the gods. Actaeon and Pentheus both act impiously towards the gods and therefore are punished, both dying for their

transgression. Agave, along with her sisters, murders her own son, violently ripping him limb from limb. Pentheus' death was orchestrated by the will of the god Dionysus towards whom Pentheus had acted irreverently. Niobe loses all her children, victims who are not themselves guilty of performing any impious act in the tale. In this case it is their mother who has transgressed against the gods, but her children are the instruments for meting out punishment, an execution which is performed by the children of Leto. When the one who is punished is passed over and his children, who have not actually committed a crime, receive the sentence, the depth of the cruelty, instigated by the gods or mortals, is intensified. Gods and men alike inflict such cruelty. There is no option for the children who are used as the tools for carrying out the sentence. The results are clear; transgress against the gods, and punishment is the consequence. And sometimes, such as in the tales of Niobe and her children, of Laius and his descendants, and of Cadmus' grandsons Learchus and Melicerta, the punishment fits the crime since both the impiety and the judgement involve children. Zeus dominates a pantheon of gods who demand respect from the human race.

Jealousy over someone else's children is another theme which emerges in these tales. Leto and Aedon are jealous of Niobe who boasts that she has more children, and Hera is jealous of Herakles, Semele, Athamas and Ino. All these cases of jealousy end with the murder of children, all of whom are innocent of wrongdoing. Thebes does seem to have been a particularly problematic place for Hera. When Actaeon dies Hera rejoices silently since he is a descendant of Europa's family (Ov. *Met.* 3.256-272). Angered with all the future generations of Europa's family, Hera punishes Semele for her liaison with Zeus. Hera/Juno hates Thebes itself, the place where her husband has shamed her with his liaison with Semele (Stat. *Theb.* 1.259-282). Hera's hatred for Herakles is also based on Zeus' infidelity. While the process which occurs in Euripides' *Herakles* "is a systematic

god-arranged destruction of justice,"[9] this can be said for the majority of the more important Theban tales even when crimes have been committed, and the gods do not exempt children from their system of divine justice: θεῶν διδόντων οὐκ ἂν ἐκφύγοις κακά (A. *Th.* 719).

Madness on the part of the murderer occurs in several of these tales. Damage to oneself becomes the most severe when, under the spell of madness, one commits the most unthinkable of acts: child-murder. Trickery or error, usually in the form of madness, destroys one's hope and one's future: madness causes Herakles to murder his family; it causes Agave to tear her son to pieces; it causes Ino and Athamas to murder their children; and it drives a pack of dogs to consume their master. Madness is the most satisfactory tragic explanation for appalling damage.[10] And it is the gods who perpetrate this madness upon humans. Children die, and families dissolve.

Exile is another theme of several of these tales. Murders in general caused the murderer to be sent into exile, since the murderer is somehow polluted by performing this act.[11] This pollution or stain is removed through the act of washing in a purificatory sacrifice.[12] In the Theban tales, those who murder or are responsible for the deaths of their children must leave their homeland. These departures, whether self-imposed or ordered by others, demonstrate that a form of pollution has occurred, and this pollution attained through murder, particularly murder within the family, is self-

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[9]Motto and Clark (1988) 268.

[10]Padel (1995) 208-209.

[11]Blickman (1986) 193-194. See also Parker (1983)104-143, especially 109 where he claims that the pollution incurred by Herakles for the murder of his children is not due to the wrong done to the victims, but rather because of the violation of the order of the family. Instead of the anger of the victims and their family, universal shock permeates throughout the tale.

[12]Vernant ([1974] 1980) 112; Parker (1983) 135.

destructive for the family. Niobe, Athamas and Ino, Oedipus, and Agave are punished because of their crime of impiety towards the gods. However, they subsequently depart from Thebes since they are responsible for the deaths of their children, offspring innocent of any wrongdoing in the cases of Niobe and of Ino, and guilty sons in the cases of Agave and of Oedipus. Herakles, on the other hand, is not guilty of impiety against the gods when he murders his children: he is the victim of a most vengeful goddess. Yet the murder of Herakles' family also leads to his exile; this exile suggests that regardless of the reason for the murder of children, exile is a necessary process.[13] This places an importance upon the children's lives; at the very least murder of any family member, young and old alike, is unacceptable. When people commit the murders, the victims are family members; the relationship between victim and perpetrator cannot be any closer: parents murder their children. When the king's family is soiled with violence and death they are sent away; there is no security at the top, and this could indicate a change from a system of ruling families to the more egalitarian rule of the *polis*. The placing of family rule above the law, divine or otherwise, was unacceptable. All members of the family, including children, played a role in this evolution of the method of ruling and governing a people in the form of the city-state.

Mt. Cithaeron is a central feature of many of the Theban tales. The mountain, which is outside the boundary of the city and civilization, represents the wild, uncivilized domain. Oedipus is exposed there; Pentheus is torn apart there by his mother and aunts; Actaeon is mauled to death there by his hounds; and Ino, with her child Melicerta, jumps off an overhanging cliff on Mt. Cithaeron into the sea. The element of violence is a reality in nature, and the hunt, which occurs in

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[13]Parker (1983) 109 notes that Herakles is polluted because he has violated the order of the family, and that Oedipus, when he murdered his father, suffered pollution for the same reason.

the wild and not within the confines of a city, takes place on this mountain in the cases of Actaeon and Pentheus. When Agave returns to the city, she returns both to her senses and to civilization; the savage world is left behind.

However, the tales often contain a perversion of this violence, and remove it from the wild and bring it into the supposed civilized world. Herakles hunts his own children within the boundaries of both city and home; the brute force of nature takes over and makes what should be the most secure place—the home—become the most vulnerable.[14] In the tale of Oedipus, destruction within the home also occurs. He has already experienced the violence of exposure in the wild, but survives to suffer the deepest grief within the city and home; it is at home that the cruelty is at its worst for Oedipus. The tale of Niobe encompasses both the civilized and uncivilized worlds; her daughters are hunted down within the palace and her sons are hunted down on the plain of Cithaeron. The tale of Niobe demonstrates that the gods are in both domains and are in control.

The actions towards children are performed by people who act cruelly, either knowingly (e.g. Apollo and Artemis who murder the children of Niobe) or driven mad under the spell of a god (e.g. Herakles when he murders his own children). Curses take place; a father can even call a curse of death upon his own children, as in the case of Oedipus. Children are powerless characters who, for the most part, are victimized through the theme of violence and cruelty in these Theban tales. It is only if they become adults that they are likely to become famous. The ferocity of the actions of the individuals in the tales even has a frightening quality since it is abundantly clear that no one is safe from horrific acts of cruelty. Violence and death are commonplace in the "history" of legendary Thebes, a history which did not discriminate between victims, whatever their ages.

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[14]See above ch. 4, n. 35.

The relationship between children and the gods is also at best a tenuous one in the tales. "The ancient myths are as pessimistic about the possibility of reconciliations between the two orders, the human and the divine, as modern psychoanalysis is about the reconciliation between the conscious and the unconscious."[15] This is evident in the attitude of the gods towards children in the tales. It is generally one-sided: the gods determine a punishment for the impious actions of adults, and if it involves children it usually includes cruelty in one form or another towards those children. The children of Niobe, who began the whole affair with her boast, exemplify this sort of relationship with the gods. Their path is set, they must experience a cruel death; the will of Leto, Apollo and Artemis will not be denied. They are, for the most part, helpless victims in adult situations in an adult mythological world, where children tend to have no say. In many cases the children are merely instruments which adults, mortal and immortal, use for personal reasons, such as self-preservation. Young children are weak, vulnerable and unimportant as individuals, tending not to have any personality, making no choices, and rarely speaking. A hierarchy is in place in the tales with the gods at the top, adults next, and children at the bottom. Yet they have a purpose in the tales; children are the instruments of the gods and of adults, to fulfill their desires. These desires may be selfish and contain no other purpose than the immediate and obvious goal, as when Laius abducts Chrysippus. In some of the tales the children are essential in order to teach a lesson, as in the case of Niobe's boast against the gods. The role of children is concisely orchestrated in this and all other tales: children are not in any position to change the decision of an adult, mortal or immortal. Even Antigone, who was in a position to try and change Creon's decision, was unsuccessful in her attempt.

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[15]Austin (1990) 23.

While cruelty towards children occurs often in the Theban tales it can be concluded that the general attitude towards children in the tales is mixed. The gods, for the most part, demonstrate an attitude of insensibility towards mortal children in these tales. However, many parents, such as Herakles, Agave, and Niobe, certainly did care for their children, and are filled with grief when they die. Niobe is the epitome of a tragic figure in antiquity when she loses all of her children because of the wrath of the gods; she never recovers from the loss of her family. Many people who are suffering either equate their own situation with Niobe's or others do so for them: Priam, Iole, Antigone and Alcmena can all relate to Niobe's grief. Yet the attention focuses on Niobe and not her children. There is little security for anyone's children in the unstable mythical world in which they live, since the threats of abduction, exposure and murder are often close at hand.

The main function of children in Greek traditional tales is one which is passive in nature. However, there are no unnecessary characters in any tale; all have a purpose of some sort or another. The children who are abducted, exposed, or murdered are necessary but often die and are never in control of any situation while they are children. They are subjected to cruelty through ritual, sexual and familial violations. The juxtaposition of sex and violence, fear and exposure, hatred and murder, are all negative features. When rational thought is permitted for the child, as in the cases of Antigone and of Pentheus, the results are still tragic.

The early mythical history of Thebes is built upon acts of cruelty against characters, including children, such as abduction, exposure and murder. These acts threaten the stability of the *oikos*, which is only complete and can only continue if there are children. The disruption of the *oikos* of Herakles occurs in all three categories of cruelty; he is exposed at birth, abducts Iole, and murders his own family. The ruling family of Cadmus has seven generations of kings: 1) Cadmus, 2) Polydorus, 3) Pentheus and Labdacus, 4) Laius, 5) Oedipus, and 6) Eteocles and Polyneices, and 7)

Laodamas, all of whom (excepting Laodamas who was not discussed in this thesis, since his tale does not involve children) were involved with cruelty towards children in some capacity. The number seven is also associated directly with children: Niobe and Amphion have seven sons and seven daughters, all of whom are massacred by the gods. Seven generations should have resulted in an established family lineage just as seven sons and seven daughters should have guaranteed the continuation of the family of Niobe and Amphion: instead, in both cases, the number seven represents disaster and the *oikos* is obliterated. The Theban tales in no way typify a secure *oikos*. Children are only instruments or a means to an end for others to manipulate at will. Their plight of abduction, exposure or murder is a part of their mythical history. Cruelty is the main theme which unifies the role of children in Theban traditional tales.

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Appendix A **Variations in the number of children of Niobe**

NAME	DATE (Century)	LOCATION	SOURCE	NUMBER of CHILDREN
Homer	8/7 BCE	Chios/Smyrna	Gellius/Ael./Apollod.	6 + 6
Pherecydes	6 BCE	Syros	Schol.159[1]	6 + 6
Propertius	1 BCE	Assisi, Italy	Propertius	6 + 6
Statius	1 CE	Naples, Italy	Statius	6 + 6
Apollodorus	1 CE	Athens, Greece	Apollodorus	7 + 7
Diodorus Siculus	1 BCE	Agyrium, Sicily	Diodorus Siculus	7 + 7
Lasos	6 BCE	Athens, Greece	Aelian	7 + 7
Ovid	1 BCE-1 CE	Sulmo, Italy/Rome	Ovid	7 + 7
Seneca	1 CE	Cordova, Spain/Rome	Seneca	7 + 7
Hyginus	1 CE	Italy?	Hyginus	7 + 7
Aeschylus	6/5 BCE	Eleusis, Greece	Schol. 159	7 + 7
Sophocles	5 BCE	Colonus, Greece	Schol. 159	7 + 7
Euripides	5 BCE	Phlya, Greece	Gellius/ Schol. 159	7 + 7
Aristophanes	5/4 BCE	Athens, Greece	Schol. 159	7 + 7
1st Vatican Mythographer	9 - 11 CE			7 + 7
2nd Vatican Mythographer	11 CE			7 + 7
Hesiod	8/7 BCE	Cyme, Euboea	Ael./Apollod.	10 + 10
Xanthus	5 BCE	Lydia	Schol. 159	10 + 10
Mimnermus	6 BCE	Colophon/Smyrna	Aelian	10 + 10
Pindar	5 BCE	Cynoscephalae, Boeotia/Athens	Ael./Gellius	10 + 10
Bacchylides	5 BCE	Iulis, Ceos	Gellius	10 + 10
Sappho	7/6 BCE	Eresus & Mytilene, Lesbos	Gellius	9 + 9
Alcman	7 BCE	Sparta, Greece	Aelian	5 + 5
Hellanicus	5 BCE	Mytilene, Lesbos	Schol. 159	4 (m) + 3 (f)
Herodorus	5/4 BCE	Heraclea Pontica	Apollod.	2 (m) + 3 (f)
unidentified	-		Gellius	3 + 3

[1]Scholiast on Euripides' *Phoenissae* 159.

Appendix B **Variations in the names of the children of Niobe**

Telesilla 5 BCE	Pausanias 3 CE	1stVatican Mythographer	2nd Vatican Mythographer	Apollodorus 1 CE	Hyginus 1 CE	Ovid 1BCE/1CE	Pherecydes 6 BCE	Hellanicus 5 BCE
Sons	*Sons*	*Sons*	*Sons*	*Sons*	*Sons*	*Sons*	*Sons*	*Sons*
		1)Sipilus	1)Sipulos	1)Sipylus	1)Sipulus	1)Sipylus	1)Alalcomenea	1)Archenor
		2)Epinitus	2)Apinitos	2)Eupinytus	2)Eupinus	2)Ilioneus	2)Pherea	2)Menestratos
		3)Antagorus	3)Antogorus	3)Ismenus	3)Ismenus	3)Ismenus	3)Eudor	3)Archagor
		4)Archemorus	4)Archemorus	4)Damasichthon	4)Lerta	4)Damasichthon	4)Lysippos	4) ?
		5)Xenarcus	5)Xenarcus	5)Agenor	5)Chiade	5)Alphenor	5)Xanthos	
		6)Phadimus	6)Phedimus	6)Phaedimus	6)Phaedimus	6)Phaedimus	6)Argeios	
		7)Tantulus	7)Tantalus	7)Tantalus	7)Tantalus	7)Tantalus		
Daughter	*Daughter*	*Daughters*	*Daughters*	*Daughters*	*Daughters*	*Daughters*	*Daughters*	*Daughters*
		1)Ogime	1)Ogime	1)Ogygia	1)Ogygia		1)Melia	1)Ogygia
		2)Pelopia	2)Pelopia	2)Pelopia	2)Archenor		2)Pelopia	2)Pelopia
		3)Asticratia	3)Asticratia	3)Astycratia	3)Astygratia		3)Xione	3)Astycrateia
		4)Cheloris	4)Cheloris	4)Ethodaia or Neaera	4)Chloris		4)Neaira	
		5)Neera	5)Neera	5)Astyoche	5)Siboe		5)Klutia	
		6)Phegia	6)Etia	6)Phthia	6)Sictothius		6)Damasippe	
		7)Chleodoxe	7)Cleodoxe	7)Cleodoxa	7)Eudoxa			
Survivors	*Survivors*	*Survivors*	*Survivors*	*Survivors*	*Survivors*	*Survivors*	*Survivors*	*Survivors*
1)Amyclas	1)Amyclas			1)Amphion				
2)Meliboea	2)Chloris (originally Meliboea)			2)Chloris	1) Chloris			