

*Allusion as Exemplum: Niobe in Euripides' Andromache**

Abstract

This article examines the role of the mythical allusion to Niobe in the final verse of Andromache's monody (Eur. *Andr.* 116). Despite the fact that there is no explicit reference to the name of this symbolic woman at this point, this study attempts, primarily through a text-centered approach, to determine whether this allusion functions as a mythical *exemplum* in *Andromache*, reflecting characters, themes, or motifs of the play. Since Niobe symbolizes lamentation and serves as a reminder of human *hybris*, as well as the relentless attitude of the gods, the allusion to her myth, which is repeated (*Andr.* 532-34), potentially harmonizes with a tragedy where Andromache is not the only one engaging in lament, and where the harsh punishment of Neoptolemus by Apollo is not the only act of violence directly or indirectly condemned in the play.

Questo articolo esamina il ruolo dell'allusione mitica a Niobe nell'ultimo verso della monodia di Andromaca (Eur. *Andr.* 116). Nonostante non vi sia alcun riferimento esplicito al nome di questa figura simbolica in questo punto, il presente studio tenta, principalmente attraverso un approccio incentrato sul testo, di determinare se tale allusione funzioni come *exemplum* mitico nell'*Andromaca*, riflettendo personaggi, temi o motivi del dramma. Poiché Niobe simboleggia il lamento e funge da monito della *hybris* umana, nonché dell'atteggiamento implacabile degli dei, l'allusione al suo mito, che viene ripetuta (*Andr.* 532-34), si armonizza potenzialmente con una tragedia in cui Andromaca non è l'unica a dedicarsi al pianto, e dove la dura punizione di Neottolema da parte di Apollo non è l'unico atto di violenza direttamente o indirettamente condannato nell'opera.

In the ancient Greek literary tradition, a mythical *exemplum* serves as a narrative miniature that condenses thematic meaning and provides a parallel to a character's situation, as illustrated by Achilles' reference to Niobe in *Iliad* XXIV 599-620 when addressing Priam, who, like Niobe, had lost numerous children¹. Euripides frequently employs explicit named paradigms to mirror a character's fate, such as Ino as an infanticide in *Medea*, or Actaeon's death in *Bacchae* which parallels Pentheus' punishment². This study argues that verse 116 of Euripides' *Andromache* functions as an equally vital mythical *exemplum* for the play. However, in this verse, Niobe is not

* I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Professor Angela Andrisano, Professor Giusto Picone, and Dr. Virginia Mastellari for their invaluable support, as well as to the Editorial Board of *Dionysus ex Machina* and the anonymous reviewers for their highly constructive comments.

¹ For Niobe as a mythic example in the *Iliad*, see BIERL (2024).

² Regarding mythical paradigms in Euripides, see NICOLAI (2012); for Niobe as an *exemplum* in Sophocles' *Antigone*, see KORNAROU (2010). For Ino in *Medea*, see e.g. NEWTON (1985); for Actaeon in the *Bacchae*, see e.g. SEGAL (1982, 112, 166, etc.).

explicitly named, but rather implied. While the allusion is widely accepted³, this study focuses on the significance of her myth within the dramatic structure of the play. I will therefore attempt to demonstrate that, even as an implicit allusion, line 116 operates as a powerful mythical paradigm that reflects key characters, themes, and motifs of the drama.

To this end, it is crucial to investigate why the poet deliberately emphasizes the final verse (116) of Andromache's elegiac monody, exploring its relationship to the rest of the tragedy. As various scholars have observed, this drama is dominated by a complex game of role reversals and shifting masks⁴; consequently, the mask of Niobe might appear to fit multiple characters in the play.

While Neoptolemus is absent in Delphi seeking atonement from Apollo, his wife, Hermione, seizes the opportunity to rid herself of his Trojan concubine, Andromache, and her illegitimate child. Hermione is deeply jealous that Andromache has managed to bear a child while she herself remains childless. Will she, then, act as another Leto – who had fewer children than Niobe – and destroy the child of Andromache, who functions as another Niobe? Not quite, because Euripides' multiple reflections operate through a distorting mirror. At the beginning of the play, Hermione recalls Clytemnestra from the *Oresteia* trying to eliminate Andromache, who in turn evokes Cassandra. Yet, as the play progresses, Hermione will transform from perpetrator into victim and begin to lament as another Niobe.

Thus, we realize that the mask of Niobe is borrowed by other characters in the play besides the mourning Andromache. Even Peleus, who initially gives the impression of a very harsh and short-tempered old man, will wear the mask of Niobe when he breaks into a deeply moving lament over the loss of his grandson. Let us begin, however, with Andromache's monody. The heroine, who has fled as a suppliant to the altar of Thetis, seeing both her own life and that of her child under threat, breaks into an elegiac lament, unique in extant Ancient Greek tragedy⁵ (*Andr.* 103-16):

Ἰλίῳ αἰπείνῃ Πάρις οὐ γάμον ἀλλὰ τιν' ἄταν
ἠγάγετ' εὐναίαν ἐς θαλάμους Ἑλέναν.
ἅς ἔνεκ', ὦ Τροία, δορὶ καὶ πυρὶ δηϊάλωτον

³ HYSLOP (1900, 65) observes that line 116 «recalls the legend of Niobe». See also STEVENS (1971, 110); *ibid.*, 161; PUCCI (1977, 194, n. 20); GOLDER (1983, 132); DUÉ (2006, 160f.); OLSEN (2022, 79-83); On the theoretical capacity of a mythical *exemplum* to operate either explicitly or implicitly within a poetic context, see BETINI (2023, 2).

⁴ BELFIORE (2000, 92) aligns Orestes with Aegisthus, effectively casting Neoptolemus as Agamemnon, Hermione as Clytemnestra, and Andromache as Cassandra – an analogy also supported by MCCLURE (1999, 201). For BURNETT (1971, 130), this fluidity of roles is key to the play's experimental structure and the multifaceted nature of its characters.

⁵ See PAGE (1936, 206-30). ROSENMEYER (1968, 225f.) characterizes Andromache's elegiac lament as an experimentation by Euripides that influenced the Alexandrian poets. See also NAGY (2010, 21ff.).

εἰλέσ' ὁ χιλιόναυς Ἑλλάδος ὠκύς Ἴρης
καὶ τὸν ἐμὸν μελέας πόσιν Ἴκτορα, τὸν περὶ τείχη
εἵλκυσε διφρεῦων παῖς ἀλίας Θέτιδος·
αὐτὰ δ' ἐκ θαλάμων ἀγόμεν ἐπὶ θῖνα θαλάσσης,
δουλοσύναν στυγερὰν ἀμφιβαλοῦσα κάρη.
πολλὰ δὲ δάκρυά μοι κατέβα χροός, ἀνίκ' ἔλειπον
ἄστυ τε καὶ θαλάμους καὶ πόσιν ἐν κονίαις.
ὦμοι ἐγὼ μελέα, τί μ' ἐχρῆν ἔτι φέγγος ὀρᾶσθαι
Ἑρμιόνας δούλαν; ἄς ὕπο τειρομένα
πρὸς τόδ' ἄγαλμα θεᾶς ἰκέτις περὶ χεῖρε βαλοῦσα
τάκομαι ὡς πετρίνα πιδακόεσσα λιβάς.

It was not as a bride that Paris brought Helen to lofty Troy into his chamber to lie with but rather as mad ruin. For her sake, the sharp warcraft of Greece in its thousand ships captured you, O Troy, sacked you with fire and sword, and killed Hector, husband to luckless me. The son of the sea-goddess Thetis dragged him, as he rode his chariot, about the walls of Troy. I myself was led off from my chamber to the sea-shore, putting hateful slavery as a covering about my head. Many were the tears that rolled down my cheeks when I left my city and my home and my husband lying in the dust. Oh, unhappy me, why should I still look on the light as Hermione's slave? Oppressed by her I have come as suppliant to this statue of the goddess and cast my arms about it, and I melt in tears like some gushing spring high up on a cliff⁶.

This lament of Andromache not only marks the shift in the protagonist's emotional state, which changes alongside the rhythm of the meter, but also indicates, through striking elements such as alliterations⁷, that Euripides intended to emphasize these specific verses. A first reading of these verses gives the sense that the violence of war and its consequences are strictly condemned. The brutality with which Achilles dragged Hector's corpse around the walls, the annihilation of Troy, and the humiliation of slavery provoke a pain so unbearable, escalating from the «many tears» of line 111 (πολλὰ δὲ δάκρυά μοι κατέβα χροός) to the image of Niobe, whose name is implied in the final verse of the monody, melting like a rock-spring that weeps eternally: τάκομαι ὡς πετρίνα πιδακόεσσα λιβάς, *Andr.* 116.

Moreover, in Andromache's view, the slavery into which she has fallen is not only hateful, but also has nothing in common with φέγγος ('the light of day'). Castellaneta, analyzing line 110, where hateful slavery metaphorically veils Andromache's face, demonstrates how this functions as a loss of her personality⁸. Thus, the heroine

⁶ All translations of *Andromache* are by KOVACS (1995); Hom. *Il.* by MURRAY (1924); Soph. *Ant.* by JEBB (1891); Quint. Smyrn. *Posth.* by WAY (1913); Nic. *Ther.* by GOW – SCHOLFIELD (1953).

⁷ See PAGE (1936, 219). FRADE (2022, 331, n. 22), comparing Andromache's elegiac monody with Hecuba's change of meter in the *Trojan Women* (122ff.), points out: «It is not unusual for Euripides to give epic undertones to Homeric characters in tragedy».

⁸ CASTELLANETA (2012, 65, n. 17) also comments on parallel passages where Niobe appears with her face covered: Ar. *Ran.* 911-13; Vit. *Aesch* 6; cf. Aesch. fr. 154a 6s. R. I find particularly interesting the

ironically alludes to the dialogue she had with Hector in the sixth book of the *Iliad*, where the phrase δούλιον ἡμᾶρ («day of bondage», *Il.* VI 463) was expressed as a fearful premonition, whereas in *Andromache* it has been fulfilled (δούλειον ἡμᾶρ ἐσπεσοῦσ' ἀναξίως, «when I fell undeservedly into slavery», *Andr.* 99)⁹. At this moment, Andromache's only refuge is the altar of the sea-goddess Thetis¹⁰. Although this goddess is the mother of the killer of Hector, her first husband (cf. *Andr.* 107f.), Andromache tightly embraces her stone altar, and the weight of her pain transforms her too – even if metaphorically – into stone, into a new Niobe.

The final verse of this elegiac lament alludes to the relentless punishment of the mortal Niobe by Apollo and Artemis, inflicted because she had boasted of having more children than the goddess Leto. Apollo and Artemis slaughtered her children with their arrows, while Niobe was turned to stone on Mount Sipylus in Asia Minor, shedding eternal tears. We will subsequently examine which characters of the play are mirrored by Niobe – not only those acting onstage but also offstage figures, such as Priam, who is frequently mentioned, and Neoptolemus. We will begin with Andromache and the art of lament.

Initially, it should be noted that Andromache herself allusively attempts, within a mournful monody, to identify with the eternally grieving Niobe. This attempt at identification renders Andromache's song self-referential, as once again in a play by Euripides, poetry speaks about poetry. Andromache has already previously emphasized both her own skill and that of women in general in the art of lamentation (ἡμεῖς δ' οἷσπερ ἐγκείμεσθ' ἀεὶ / θρήνοισι καὶ γόοισι καὶ δακρύμασιν πρὸς αἰθέρ' ἐκτενοῦμεν· ἐμπέφυκε γὰρ / γυναιξὶ τέρψις τῶν παρεστώτων κακῶν/ ἀνὰ στόμ' αἰεὶ καὶ διὰ γλώσσης ἔχειν, «For my part I shall draw out at length to the upper air the laments and groans and tears to which my whole life is devoted. There is in women an inborn pleasure in having their present misfortunes always on their tongues», *Andr.* 90-95).

Just as Niobe's tears never dry upon Mount Sipylus, so too does Andromache use the temporal adverb αἰεὶ ('forever') in line 90, indicating not only that her pain is endless, but also that her art is eternal, as it perpetuates and immortalizes those she mourns¹¹. Besides, the mythical example of Niobe's inexhaustible tears fits *Andromache*, a tragedy with such abundant and elaborate laments. Andromache's

comparison Castellaneta makes at the end of her article with Frederic Leighton's painting "Captive Andromache", where the heroine is depicted veiled (*ibid.*, 69): «isolata nel suo velo di dolore, Andromaca pare morta prima di morire».

⁹ Cassandra's slavery in the *Agamemnon* (1084) provides a model for Andromache, an analogy explored by DUÉ (2006, 151ff) and TORRANCE (2005, 54). The rare Aeschylean adjective δηϊάλωτον (cf. Aesch. *Sept.* 72) further links Andromache to the collective agony of the captive city. On the Iliadic allusions in *Andromache*, see DAVIDSON (2020, 510).

¹⁰ Regarding the Thetideion and the local cult of Thetis near ancient Pharsalus, see MARIANI (2018).

¹¹ See Eur. *Tro.* 119: ἐπὶ τοῦς αἰεὶ δακρύων ἐλέγους.

elegiac monody inaugurates a series of lamenting songs: in lines 501-36, Andromache laments along with her child the fate Menelaus holds for them; later, Hermione breaks into a lament (*Andr.* 829-78) as she realizes Neoptolemus will punish her for her attempt against Andromache; while towards the end of the play (*Andr.* 1173-1225), Peleus and the women of the Chorus mourn his grandson Neoptolemus, a victim of Orestes and Apollo at Delphi.

Furthermore, the connection between Andromache and Niobe recalls the close relationship Hector's wife had with dirges in the *Iliad*¹². This specific relationship is highlighted in *Iliad*'s sixth book, where Andromache is depicted mourning Hector together with her attendants while he is still alive (αἶ μὲν ἔτι ζῶν γόον Ἑκτορα ὃ ἐνὶ οἴκῳ, «So in his own house they made lament for Hector while yet he lived», *Il.* VI 500); furthermore, shortly before her lament for Hector's death begins in the final book, the epic emphasizes the art of poetry and the role of the poets (παρὰ δ' εἶσαν ἀοιδούς / θρήνων ἐξάρχους, οἳ τε στονόεσσαν ἀοιδὴν, «and by his side set singers, leaders of the dirge, who led the song of lamentation», *Il.* XXIV 720f.). Concerning the elegiac monody of Euripides' Andromache, Aldrich remarks:

«Andromache is not content to mourn the fall of Troy and the slaughter of her family, but goes further back to the causes of the war, to Paris and Helen, thereby illustrating a tendency on the part of Euripides' characters and choruses to sound at times like rhapsodists»¹³.

The very first thing Andromache refers to upon appearing on stage is her origin from Thebe in Asia Minor (Ἀσιάτιδος γῆς σχῆμα, Θηβαία πόλις, «Glory of Asia, city of Thebe!», *Andr.* 1). Thus, Andromache alludes to the crimes Achilles committed against her family, as recounted by the homonymous heroine in the *Iliad* (VI 413-24). Achilles not only killed her father but also her seven brothers (many, just like the children of Niobe). Her wretched mother was eventually killed by the arrows of Artemis (*Il.* VI 428). Immediately after, in the Prologue of *Andromache*, the heroine refers to Hector and Astyanax, indicating that Achilles murdered her husband while his son, Neoptolemus, slaughtered her child, thus implying that the role of the mourner suits her perfectly. After all, she defines herself as δυστυχεστάτη γυνή («I am, if any woman ever was, the paragon of misery», *Andr.* 6) and, in verse 67, self-identifies as the 'woman most wretched' (τὴν παναθλίαν ἐμέ) – descriptions that would certainly apply to Niobe as well.

Furthermore, Andromache's mention of Astyanax demonstrates her inability to

¹² MUICH (2010, 148) maintains that «Andromache's monodic lament in *Andromache* recalls her laments in the *Iliad*, and creates a point of continuity between the Homeric Andromache and the Euripidean Andromache».

¹³ ALDRICH (1961, 27).

overcome the loss of her firstborn. This traumatic memory is directly reflected in her current fear for the life of her other son, Molossus, who is threatened by Hermione and Menelaus. Her profound grief over her children and the devastation of her family indirectly mirrors Niobe's incurable pain. Furthermore, another utterance by Andromache – *πάσι δ' ἀνθρώποις ἄρ' ἦν ψυχὴ τέκν'* («all mankind, it seems, find that children are their very souls», *Andr.* 418f.) – could easily have been spoken by any parent grieving for their offspring, let alone Niobe, who stands as the symbol of parental bereavement.

Of course, the spring on Mount Sipylus that symbolizes Niobe's eternal tears evokes not only divine cruelty but also the punishment of human *hybris*¹⁴. It was hybristic for Niobe, a mortal, to boast of having more children than Leto, a goddess, momentarily forgetting her position in the hierarchy. Similarly, mirroring this exact preoccupation with status and hierarchy, Hermione and Menelaus constantly attempt to remind Andromache of her subordinate position as a slave. Does Andromache boast about her illegitimate child and disparage the childless Hermione? While this is not the case, Hermione and Menelaus certainly perceive it that way. Hermione confronts Andromache, asking why she speaks so arrogantly (*τί σεμνομυθεῖς*, *Andr.* 234), while Menelaus considers her guilty of *hybris* (*δούλη γεγῶσα μήποθ' ὕβριζειν μάθης*, «you may learn, slave that you are, to commit no further outrages against the free», *Andr.* 434).

Could Hermione's perspective, then, be compared to that of Leto? Not entirely, yet both Leto and Hermione occupy a higher position in their respective hierarchies (Leto as a goddess vs. Niobe as a mortal; Hermione as a queen vs. Andromache as a slave). Crucially, in both cases, the dispute centers on the existence or absence of offspring¹⁵. Just as Niobe committed the fatal error of boasting that she bore more children than Leto, Andromache committed the fatal error of bearing an illegitimate son at a time when the mistress of the house remained childless.

If Andromache, traditionally established as a figure of lament, reflects Niobe – one of the preeminent symbols of grief – this does not mean that Hermione cannot lay claim to the mask of this tragic archetype. When Hermione first appears onstage as a perpetrator, she vainly boasts of her golden luxury (*κόσμον μὲν ἀμφὶ κρατὶ χρυσέας χλιδῆς*; «the finery of luxurious gold I have about my head», *Andr.* 147)¹⁶. Yet later in

¹⁴ As LESHEM (2020, 281) notes, Niobe is «one of the many *hybristai* characters in Greek mythology, since boasting of superiority over a goddess is considered an act of *hybris*».

¹⁵ In a characteristic passage (*Andr.* 711-14), Andromache ironically mocks Hermione, arguing that simply because she herself is barren, she cannot demand that other women remain childless as well. Regarding the rivalry between the two women over offspring, verse 638 is equally characteristic: *νόθοι τε πολλοὶ γνησίων ἀμείνονες*.

¹⁶ For Hermione's onstage presence and her similarities to Aeschylus' Clytemnestra, see STAVRINOU

the play, she transitions into the role of the victim and breaks into a desperate lament, effectively exchanging masks with the Andromache of the play's first half. In a similar way, Niobe's eternal weeping was the direct consequence of her own vainglorious arrogance. From this perspective, the mask of Niobe fits Hermione as well. Intriguingly, in verses 462f., Andromache warns Menelaus not to boast, since he too might one day suffer misfortune (εἰ δ' ἐγὼ πράσσω κακῶς, / μηδὲν τόδ' αὔχει· καὶ σὺ γὰρ πράξειας ἄν; «and if my fortune now is evil, do not make this your boast: yours may be so as well»), a warning that encapsulates the very fate of Niobe.

After Peleus rescues Andromache from Menelaus' threats, Hermione breaks into a frantic lament (825ff.), effectively assuming Andromache's former mask. Through this striking role reversal, Hermione increasingly approaches the figure of Niobe – most notably when she insistently proclaims that she is cursed (ὦ κατάρατος ἐγὼ κατάρατος ἄνθρωποις; «I accursed, accursed in the eyes of mortals!», *Andr.* 839), but also through her use of the word πέτρας ('rock'). Indeed, both times Andromache likens herself to Niobe in the play, she relies on this very imagery, evoking the cliff of Mount Sipylus (τάκομαι ὡς πετρίνα πιδακόεσσα λιβάς, *Andr.* 116; στάζω λισσάδος ὡς πέτρας, *Andr.* 533).

If despair and remorse constitute fundamental elements not only of Hermione but of the play as a whole¹⁷, then a similar argument could be made regarding Niobe's psyche: Apollo and Artemis did not simply reduce her to despair, but forced her to feel bitter remorse for her boasting. However, Hermione's lament is characterized by deep irony; her tears are easily dried the moment Orestes arrives in Phthia as her savior. This marks a sharp contrast with Niobe, whose weeping, unlike Hermione's, remains eternally unceasing. Furthermore, in her subsequent misogynistic outburst, Hermione condemns women as 'teachers of evil' (αὗται γὰρ διδάσκαλοι κακῶν, *Andr.* 946). In a broader sense, Niobe's myth functions as a teacher of what to avoid; yet Hermione blindly forgets her own gender, effectively implicating herself in her own accusations. Even more ironically, Orestes, who is soon to treacherously orchestrate Neoptolemus' murder at Delphi, also temporarily adopts the mask of a tragic victim when reflecting on his own past suffering (ἤλγουν μὲν ἤλγουν, *Andr.* 978-80).

Both Andromache at the beginning of the play (49-55) and Peleus during his lament (1194-96) point out Neoptolemus' recklessness in demanding that Apollo account for the death of his father, Achilles. According to Andromache, this audacity was irrational (μανίας, *Andr.* 52). Indeed, as Allan argues¹⁸, «only in comedy can a mortal successfully call the gods to task for their unwelcome actions. In tragedy, this

(2016, 13ff.).

¹⁷ See STEVENS 1971, 9, referencing Garzya.

¹⁸ ALLAN (2000, 248, n. 67).

leads invariably to destruction».

One of the messages conveyed by the myth of Niobe is the condemnation of the harsh brutality and vengefulness of Apollo and Artemis. Similarly, the murder of Neoptolemus, with Apollo as the instigator, is severely condemned in the play. The Messenger who brings the news of Neoptolemus' murder to Peleus accuses the god of Delphi of not being so worthy of being called σοφός ('wise'), as he acts 'like a base mortal' (ὥσπερ ἄνθρωπος κακός, *Andr.* 1164). On the other hand, Niobe's myth serves not only as a denunciation of the gods' relentless vengefulness but also as a condemnation of mortal arrogance.

Just as the tomb of Neoptolemus was to stand at Delphi as a monument to deter mortals prone to *hybris* from exceeding their limits, so too did the rock of Niobe on Mount Sipylus function in ancient religion, serving as a reminder that the woman's reckless audacity in boasting of having borne more children than Leto carried a most painful price. The concept of the Delphic γνῶθι σαυτόν is thus a matter of self-awareness: it means «know that you are a mortal»¹⁹. Just as Achilles, despite his semi-divine nature, was bound by mortality, so too was his son mortal, however much his arrogance prevented him from realizing it. Throughout the play, the name of the setting, Phthia, is frequently invoked, a name associated with decay and mortality²⁰; it is also worth noting that one of Niobe's daughters was also named Phthia²¹.

Neoptolemus learned that he is a mortal, albeit in this brutal manner. The expression Νεοπτολέμειος τίσις ('Neoptolemic retribution') became proverbial²², yet Euripides deliberately leaves it unclear whether this was a morally just or unjust punishment. The mythical *exemplum* of Niobe could be said to reflect the fate of Neoptolemus, who is considered by many to be the essential protagonist of *Andromache*, albeit from behind the scenes²³. Beyond the fact that the punishment of their *hybris* was both harsh and exemplary, it was also immortalized like a monument built for eternity. Just as the rock of Niobe on Mount Sipylus is destined to eternally shed tears, Thetis confirms that Neoptolemus' tomb will forever stand as a permanent

¹⁹ See BURKERT (1985, 148).

²⁰ As MACKIE (2002, 163) emphasizes, «in later books of the *Iliad*, a play on words takes place that associates Phthia with the land of the dead. This association of Phthia with Hades accompanies Achilles' sudden determination to kill Hector».

²¹ [Apollod.] *Bibl.* III 5, 6.

²² According to Pausanias (IV 17, 4), περιῆλθε μέντοι καὶ αὐτοὺς Λακεδαιμονίους ἀνὰ χρόνον ἡ Νεοπτολέμειος καλουμένη τίσις.

²³ Although Neoptolemus appears only as a corpse, he remains the central "web" of the play's relationships: BELFIORE (2000, 85); cf. FRIEDLÄNDER (1926, 101); DE JONG (1990, 10-14). Scholars have called him the protagonist (PERROTTA 1931, 200) or the drama's "common denominator" (DES BOUVRIE 2018, 127), even paralleling his absence to Godot (LLOYD 1994, 3; MOSSMAN 1996, 145). ROISMAN (2023, 48) adds that his *nostos* and Delphic journey are the essential prerequisites for the dramatic action (cf. RINGER 2016, 103).

landmark in Delphi. Though branded a ‘disgrace to Delphi’ (Δελφοῖς ὄνειδος, *Andr.* 1241), the tomb secures her grandson’s cultic veneration within the sanctuary, mirroring the immortal glory of his father, Achilles, on the island of Leuke²⁴. We could add that the rock of Sipylus grants Niobe eternal glory, even though she would have preferred to have her children rather than such supposed “fame”.

Δελφοῖς ὄνειδος should not be interpreted as an indication of Euripides’ impiety toward Apollo, since the term ὄνειδος is also used by Aeschylus regarding Orestes’ supplication at Delphi²⁵. This phrase certainly suits her, as she is speaking of the murder of her grandson; thus, she is entitled not to be objective²⁶. But if killings are ὄνειδος, then perhaps Thetis should not forget that not only did Neoptolemus killed many in tradition, but so did his father, Achilles. If, in Thetis’ opinion, the tomb of Neoptolemus is an ὄνειδος, Apollo can boast of it, just as he boasted of the grave of the monster he slew – the one that gave Delphi the name Πυθώ (Pythō; cf. *Hymn. Hom. Ap.* 370-74)²⁷. Those who should not have boasted or uttered grand words were Achilles, Neoptolemus, and Niobe. One of the greatest errors mortals can commit, according to Aeschylus’ *Niobe*, is θρασυστομεῖν (‘to say impudent words’)²⁸.

In any case, Achilles’ words are characterized as ‘reproaches’ (ὀνειδέα) by Agamemnon (*Il.* I 291), and Neoptolemus’ murder of Priam could not fail to be linked to ὄνειδος (οὐ γὰρ δὴν ἐπὶ κῦδος ἀέξεται ἀνθρώποισιν, / ἀλλ’ ἄρα που καὶ ὄνειδος ἐπέσσυται ἀπροτίοπτον, «Ah me, not long abides the honour of man, but shame from unseen ambush leaps on him», Quint. Smyrn. *Posth.* XIII 248f.)²⁹. Moreover, as the ancient *Scholia* on *Iliad* XIV 602 show, Niobe’s irreverence toward Leto could also be called an ὄνειδος: ὀνειδίξε τῇ Λητοῖ ὅτι δύο μόνους ἐγέννησεν, Ἀπόλλωνα καὶ Ἄρτεμιν, καὶ ὅτι εὐτεκνωτέρα αὐτῆς ἐστίν, «she reproached Leto for bearing only two children, Apollo and Artemis, claiming she was more blessed with children than her».

²⁴ See Paus. X 24, 6 (ἐξελθόντι δὲ τοῦ ναοῦ καὶ τραπέντι ἐς ἀριστερὰ περίβολός ἐστι καὶ Νεοπτολέμου τοῦ Ἀχιλλέως ἐν αὐτῷ τάφος· καὶ οἱ κατὰ ἔτος ἐναγίζουσιν οἱ Δελφοί). Regarding the cult of Neoptolemus in Delphi, see FONTENROSE (1960), LLOYD (1994, 2f.), and SUÁREZ DE LA TORRE (1997). On the Panhellenic character of this cult, see NAGY (1979, 120). In Pindar’s VI *Paeon* (62-122), the deaths of Achilles and Neoptolemus appear to glorify Apollo. See MICHELAKIS (2002, 153) with bibliography. On the worship of Helen and Achilles by sailors in the Black Sea, see e.g. HIND (1996); ZEITLIN (2019).

²⁵ In the *Eumenides*, the Erinyes accuse Apollo of protecting a matricide as a suppliant (τὸν ἱκέταν σέβων, ἄθεον ἄνδρα, *Eum.* 151) and characterize their experience as an ὄνειδος (ἐμοὶ δ’ ὄνειδος ἐξ ὀνειράτων μολὼν, *Eum.* 155). The ghost of Clytemnestra also underlines this word (ὄνειδος ἐν φθιτοῖσιν οὐκ ἐκλείπεται, *Eum.* 97).

²⁶ It is interesting that in the play, it is not only Apollo who is accused, albeit suggestively, of ὄνειδος, but mortals as well. For example: ἡμῖν δ’ ὀνειδὴ διὰ γυναῖκα βάρβαρον, *Andr.* 649.

²⁷ For the parallel between the murder of Python and that of Neoptolemus by Apollo, see e.g. FONTENROSE (1959); WOODBURY (1979, 98).

²⁸ See KALAMARA (2019, 8).

²⁹ On these verses, see RENKER (2020, 176); TANOZZI (2023, 437, especially n. 52). On Neoptolemus as a second Achilles in *Posthomerica*, see MACIVER (2012, 171-92).

Within the sanctuary of Delphi, Neoptolemus is bombarded from all sides by sharp objects ('all their missiles together', πόλλ' ὁμοῦ βέλη, *Andr.* 1150), mirroring the fate of Niobe's children, who were struck from all directions by the arrows of Apollo and Artemis (τοὺς μὲν Ἀπόλλων πέφνεν ἀπ' ἀργυρέοιο βιοῖο / χωόμενος Νιόβη, τὰς δ' Ἄρτεμις ἰοχέαιρα «The sons Apollo slew with shafts from his silver bow, being wroth against Niobe, and the daughters the archer Artemis», *Il.* XXIV 605f.). Moreover, the word πέτρα accompanies Neoptolemus (1128, 1145, 1153), as happened with Andromache and Hermione who reflected Niobe.

Niobe is a fitting example for the story of Neoptolemus, even if we accept that her name is etymologically linked to snow³⁰. According to this theory, her children – the snowflakes – are killed every year by the spring sun. In line 1129 of *Andromache*, the blows Neoptolemus receives from all sides are likened to a dense blizzard (πυκνῇ δὲ νιφάδι πάντοθεν σποδούμενος, «battered by a thick snow-fall of missiles from all sides»)³¹. Let us also take into account that Sophocles' *Antigone* says that snow never leaves the peak of Sipylus (χιών τ' οὐδαμὰ λείπει; «nor does the snow», *Ant.* 830).

Andromache employs the mythical exemplar of Niobe – the ultimate symbol of tears – within an elegy that laments the misfortunes wrought by war. If we accept that the name Neoptolemus etymologically signifies 'new war' (νέος πόλεμος), then we must not forget that a new war will invariably engender new tears. Throughout the play, Neoptolemus is frequently addressed as the son of Achilles. This patronymic serves as a poignant reminder that his father, too, fell victim to Apollo. Furthermore, Neoptolemus' reckless words, which insulted the god of Delphi, evoke the insults that the Homeric Achilles hurled at the very same deity³². It appears that just as Achilles bequeathed his immoderate speech to his son, Neoptolemus, so too did Tantalus pass down his own unbridled tongue to his daughter, Niobe³³. Just as Achilles' name is etymologically

³⁰ For this etymology, see DAVIDSON (1875, 146).

³¹ The snowstorm metaphor for the attack on Neoptolemus (*Andr.* 1129) echoes Homeric imagery, specifically the scenes in *Il.* XII 154-60 and XII 278-89; cf. GARNER (1990, 133). Furthermore, according to *ibid.*, 133, the Delphians' abuse of Neoptolemus's body mirrors the mistreatment of Hector's corpse in *Il.* XXII 367-74; cf. ALLAN (2000, 112). PHILLIPPO (1995, 370) points out: «Neoptolemos is never, I think, quite free of the shadow of Hector's death and of his father's role in it, in the audience's mind».

³² See Achilles' outburst against Apollo in the *Iliad* (XXII 15-20). ROBERTSON (1955, 82) argues that «Achilles also is not entirely guiltless of *hybris*», citing Agamemnon's charges, Scamander's reaction, and Zeus's condemnation of his treatment of Hector. Conversely, DANEK (2014, 150) disputes this, claiming that «Achilles will have to die because it was predestined right from his birth», and that the hero ultimately achieves reconciliation. These opposing views highlight Achilles' controversial nature. As DOMINIK (2023, 310) underlines, «the late antique poetic perspective on Achilles, characterized by a general ambivalence with regard to his representation as a hero, was shaped not only by the long Greek tradition but also by the Roman poets».

³³ At the beginning of *Orestes*, Electra does not accuse Tantalus of cooking his son and serving him to the gods (two of whom were Apollo and Artemis), but rather of immoderate speech (ἀκόλαστον ἔσχε γλῶσσαν, αἰσχίστην νόσον, *Or.* 10).

linked to ἄχος ('inmost, intense grief'), Tantalus' name is cognate with τάλας ('wretched/suffering')³⁴. These etymologies of their fathers' names foreshadow the symbolism of lamentation emitted by both Neoptolemus' tomb and Niobe's rock on Mount Sipylus.

The lack of verbal restraint constitutes a broader motif in *Andromache*. It is not only Neoptolemus who fails to hold his tongue before a god; Peleus, too, is accused of prattling (γλωσσαλγία, *Andr.* 689) by Menelaus. The quick-tempered Peleus, however, takes up the mantle from the play's other characters, transforming into a mourner himself following the death of Neoptolemus. By repeating the heartbreaking exclamation ὀττοτοτοτοῖ (*Andr.* 1198ff.), he heavily evokes the delirium of Aeschylus' Cassandra. He laments that Apollo has deprived him of two children (διπλῶν τέκνων μ' ἐστέρησε Φοῖβος, *Andr.* 1212) and that he has been left childless and desolate (ἄτεκνος ἔρημος, *Andr.* 1216). At this point, one could argue that Peleus brings Niobe to mind, as both lost their offspring; yet, in my view, lines 1219f. imply this connection even more profoundly: ἀμπτάμενα φροῦδα πάντα κεῖται / κόμπων μεταρσίων πρόσω, «all that blessedness is flown, sped beyond the reach of high-flying boasts». Niobe, too, lost everything she once boasted about.

Peleus' lament also contains irony. Just as Hermione's lamentation is abruptly interrupted by the arrival of Orestes, his own is suddenly halted by the arrival of the *dea ex machina*, Thetis. She makes him realize that there is no longer any purpose in mourning, since she will render him immortal, and thus his tears instantly cease to flow: yet another antithesis to Niobe's eternal tears. The "happy end" that Thetis arrives to impose shortly before the curtain falls highlights Euripides' bitter irony, especially if one recalls the lamentations that preceded it, such as Andromache's monody. This "happy end" is another factor reminding us that Andromache's lament is not merely a mourning song, but also a denunciation.

In a way, a denunciation is also constituted by the murder of Neoptolemus, as presented by the Messenger in *Andromache*, as well as by the slaughter of the Niobids as it appeared in tradition (even Achilles' detached narration of the Niobe myth in the *Iliad* contains a measure of pity for her). Like the spring of Sipylus, the tomb of Neoptolemus in Delphi will eternally condemn human *hybris* and immoderate speech, while simultaneously highlighting the controversial character of the gods. Besides, just as Niobe appears to have paid the price because her father Tantalus was one who defied the gods³⁵ so too was Neoptolemus slain in the sanctuary of the very god who had put

³⁴ For the etymology of Achilles' name, see, e.g., NAGY (1976); NAGY (1979, 69-82). Regarding the connection of Achilles with lamentation, see MUELLNER (2012). On the etymology of Tantalus' name, see TSITSIBAKOU-VASALOS (2007, 185-98).

³⁵ See KALAMARA (2019, 15).

his father to death as well.

However, Thetis was also a symbol of lamentation in the *Iliad*³⁶. Hence the role she undertakes in *Andromache* to put an end to the laments underscores Euripides' innovation. While one would expect Thetis to be mourning and Peleus to be offering her comfort, the reverse occurs. Peleus adopts the guise of a mourner, and she intervenes to put an end to his anguish (παῦσαι δὲ λύπης τῶν τεθνηκότων ὕπερ, «Cease from your grieving for the dead», *Andr.* 1270). In contrast to Peleus, for Niobe there was no cessation of sorrow. As Thetis prophesies, Andromache will also stop lamenting, since she is going to live happily with a new husband in Epirus. Nevertheless, even Thetis cannot help but evoke Niobe's grief, particularly when she expresses her pain (καὶ γὰρ ἦν ἄκλαυτα χρῆν τίκτειν τέκνα, «for even I, who ought not to have born children to make me weep», *Andr.* 1235).

In tradition, the chasm between mortals and immortals, as well as the ordeals of slavery, also evoked tears. Yet Euripides' *Andromache*, the former princess of Troy, emphasizes in her monody that slavery is hateful (δουλοσύναν στυγερὰν, *Andr.* 110). When Euripides presents slavery as something that is not imposed by nature but by society, he underlines once again his innovations³⁷. The tears of Euripides' *Andromache*, although presented as a continuation of those of the Homeric *Andromache*, place a deeper emphasis – more so than her predecessor – on the suffering wrought by slavery. Her tears convey the sense that the innovative poet, influenced by the radical theories of the sophists, reshapes tradition to condemn, with the utmost intensity, the injustice stemming from violently imposed inequalities. *Andromache* was not a slave before the war³⁸; thus, the condemnation of the war and of war criminals, such as Neoptolemus, becomes even more stringent.

Andromache says that she cannot endure being Hermione's slave and indirectly likens the altar of Thetis to the rock of Sipylus. To demonstrate the magnitude of the grief caused by these terrible inequalities, Euripides enlists even the symbol of Niobe to intensify the pain inflicted by slavery and thus denounce its inhumanity even more severely. To slavery, only laments are befitting-laments like those that flow eternally from the peaks of Mount Sipylus. A modern Greek demotic poem, "The Slaves of Barbaréssos", possesses a similar expressive power:

Sun, you come out speedily, giving light to the whole world
-rise on the whole world, on all the inhabited earth,
but on the courtyards of Barbaréssos, sun, do not rise.

³⁶ Thetis acted as the leader of the Nereids' lamentation (Θέτις δ' ἐξῆρχε γόοιο, *Il.* XVIII 51). For the connection of Thetis with lamentation, see KELLY (2012).

³⁷ Regarding Euripides' negative stance against slavery, see SYNODINOU (1977).

³⁸ See the oxymoron in *Andr.* 12: αὐτὴ δὲ δούλη τῶν ἐλευθερωτάτων («I myself, who belonged to a house most free, became a slave»).

And if you do rise, my sun, hasten to set again quickly,
Because they have handsome slaves, much aggrieved
-and your rays will be dampened by the tears of a slave³⁹.

The image of the Sun sharing «the tears of a slave» is profoundly intense like the tears of Niobe that transform Andromache's monody into streams or rivers of sorrow; One could argue that one of the passages functioning as an echo of Andromache's monody is the final antistrophe of the First Stasimon (*Andr.* 301-308):

οὐτ' ἂν ἐπ' Ἰλιάσι ζυγὸν ἦλυθε
δούλιον, σύ τ' ἂν, γύναι,
τυράννων ἔσχες ἂν δόμων ἔδρας·
παρέλυσεν δ' ἂν Ἑλλάδος ἀλγεινοῦς
πόνους ὅτ' ἀμφὶ Τρωΐαν
δεκέτεις ἀλάληντο νέοι λόγχαις·
λέχη τ' ἔρημ' ἂν οὐποτ' ἐξελείπετο
καὶ τεκέων ὀρφανοὶ γέροντες.

Slavery's yoke would not have come upon the women of Troy and you, woman, would have come to possess the throne of royalty. She could have loosed Hellas from the grievous toils of ten years' exile the young men with their spears suffered about Troy. And marriage-beds would not now be left desolate and old men bereft of their children.

In the preceding stanza, the Chorus emphasized that had the world listened to Cassandra's cries to put Paris to death, the Trojan War – which left only ruins in its wake – would never have occurred. In this particular stanza, as in Andromache's monody, the yoke of slavery is presented as one of the direst afflictions wrought by war. The phrase λέχη τ' ἔρημ' ('desolate marriage-beds') recalls Andromache's grief for Hector. The final verse, with the oxymoron of the "orphanhood" of the elderly who have lost their children (τεκέων ὀρφανοὶ γέροντες), perhaps constitutes one of the most trenchant denunciations of war; a force that reverses the natural flow of life, sending children to the Underworld before their parents. Undoubtedly, this poignant verse alludes to the myth of Niobe (another "orphan parent", like Andromache, Peleus or Thetis).

Before concluding, I would like to focus on two other important characters in *Andromache* who act from behind the scenes: Priam and Apollo. Neoptolemus was traditionally presented as killing Priam at an altar and casting young Astyanax, the son of Andromache and Hector, down from the walls of Troy⁴⁰. In this version, Euripides

³⁹ Translation by John A. Porter: see POLITIS (2024).

⁴⁰ For the killing of Priam, see *Il. P.* (Procl., *Chrest.* 23, 258f.): καὶ Νεοπτόλεμος μὲν ἀποκτείνει Πρίαμον ἐπὶ τὸν τοῦ Διὸς τοῦ ἑρκείου βωμὸν καταφυγόντα. For the killing of Astyanax, see *LI* (*EGF*, fr. 18).

avoids presenting Neoptolemus as the perpetrator of these killings⁴¹. However, the mere mentions of the names of Priam and Astyanax may suffice as allusions to remind the audience of Neoptolemus's dark past.

The name of Priam is repeatedly mentioned in *Andromache* (Πριάμου τύραννον ἔστιαν ἀφικόμην, 3; οὐ Πρίαμος οὐδὲ χρυσός, ἀλλ' Ἑλλὰς πόλις, 169; ἔβαν δὲ Πριαμίδαν, 287; μεγάλην Πριάμου πόλεως λώβαν, 298; Τροίαν ἀφείλου Πρίαμον, ὧδε φαῦλος ὢν, 325; κτησαίμαν, Πριάμου παῖ, 525). Why this repetition? First of all, we can realize through Euripides' allusions that Neoptolemus' death in the sacred place of Delphi might have been a revenge for Priam's murder at the Trojan altar⁴². Yet, we also realize that Euripides may repeat Priam's name to remind us that he, too, was a famous "orphan parent" like Niobe.

Apollo despite being the god of light, is also associated with laments⁴³, much like Pyrrhus (Neoptolemus' alternative name, which likewise evokes light) is associated with his tomb in Delphi. Mythical tradition offers various reasons for Apollo's intense hatred of Achilles – a vengeance that ultimately extended even to his child. Achilles had once killed the youngest of Priam's sons, Troilus, and he did so within the sanctuary of Thymbraean Apollo⁴⁴. Apollo's wrath was furious, not only because his sanctuary was desecrated or because the murder of a juvenile was no mark of heroism, but primarily because Troilus was, in fact, his own son and not Priam's⁴⁵. Thus, even Apollo reflects Niobe, since he was another "orphan parent"⁴⁶.

⁴¹ See STEVENS (1971, 89). According to POHLENZ (1954, ii, 119), line 9 of *Andromache* indicates that the play did not intend for the audience to view Neoptolemus as Astyanax's killer. Furthermore, as KYRIAKOU (1997, 9) observes, *Andromache* does not mention in the Prologue that Achilles had eliminated her family in Thebe of Asia Minor.

⁴² See Paus. IV 17, 4: περιῆλθε μέντοι καὶ αὐτοὺς Λακεδαιμονίους ἀνὰ χρόνον ἡ Νεοπτολέμειος καλουμένη τίσις. Νεοπτολέμῳ γὰρ τῷ Ἀχιλλέως, ἀποκτείναντι Πρίαμον ἐπὶ τῇ ἐσχάρᾳ τοῦ Ἑρκείου, συνέπεσε καὶ αὐτὸν ἐν Δελφοῖς πρὸς τῷ βωμῷ τοῦ Ἀπόλλωνος ἀποσφαγῆναι: καὶ ἀπὸ τούτου τὸ παθεῖν ὁποῖόν τις καὶ ἔδρασε Νεοπτολέμειον τίσιν ὀνομάζουσι.

⁴³ Aeschylus employs the swan song simile for Cassandra's lament (*Ag.* 1444-46), «well aware of the swan's role as Apollo's bird»: see HARRIS (2012, 556). Linus, who personifies threnody, was, according to one account, the son of the Delphic god. Furthermore, in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Apollo is portrayed mourning, for instance, Cyparissus – who was transformed into the symbol of mourning, the cypress tree – and Hyacinthus, in whose honor the Hyacinthia were celebrated, a festival that included funerary rites. NTANOU (2025, 154) emphasizes Apollo's role as a mourner: «The most substantial differentiation as regards the mourners of pseudo-Moschus' *Lament for Bion* and Ovid's Marsyas is the presence and the role of Apollo. In the *Lament for Bion*, Apollo partakes in the pastoral lament and grieves for the deceased poet, σεῖο, Βίων, ἐκλαυσε ταχὺν μόρον αὐτὸς Ἀπόλλων (*EA* 26)».

⁴⁴ Ἀχιλλεὺς ἐνεδρεύσας Τρωΐλον ἐν τῷ τοῦ Θυμβραίου Ἀπόλλωνος ἱερῷ φονεύει ([Apollod.] *Epit.* 3, 32).

⁴⁵ Τρωΐλον· τοῦτον ἐξ Ἀπόλλωνος λέγεται γεγεννηκέναι, [Apollod.] *Bibl.* III 12, 5.

⁴⁶ Besides Troilus, Apollo lost several other children, such as Asclepius and Linus (the personification of the ritual lament). Since most of his love affairs were with mortal women, his offspring did not possess the privilege of immortality.

Conclusions

Suffering in this play touches almost everyone. Even the villainous Orestes admits that he suffers; even the *dea ex machina*, Thetis, acknowledges her pain, despite arriving detached to ostensibly impose a “happy end”. Those in Euripides’ audience who were familiar with the *Iliad* were well aware that the goddess had been established there as yet another mourner, even before losing Achilles. Niobe, who stands as a symbol of an “orphan mother” in verse 116, implicitly mirrors many of the play’s “orphan parents”: Andromache herself, who lost Astyanax and now faced the risk of losing Molossus; Hermione, who has likely lost the title of parent permanently and would desperately wish to be in Andromache’s position; Peleus and Thetis, who lost both child and grandchild; the orphan elders of Troy; Priam, who had even more children than Niobe, only to be deprived of them by war; and even Apollo, who also lost many children, such as Troilus. All these figures, having tasted Niobe’s unbearable grief, were orphaned of their children mainly because of the war. It is very important that the word τέκνον (‘child’) and its cognates appear very frequently in *Andromache*⁴⁷. So, Euripides seizes the opportunity to condemn the hateful war in yet another of his plays.

Andromache, who delivers verse 116, weeps not only for Astyanax but also for her enslavement, which constitutes another unbearable consequence of war. In Euripides’ new universe, Neoptolemus is guilty of *hybris*, not only because he questioned Apollo and committed killings in the Trojan war, but also because he enslaved Andromache. In her elegiac lament, the presence of Helen, Thetis, and Niobe – three mythical figures famous in tradition for their laments (as was Andromache) – gives her song a strange glamour of poetic awareness. Line 116, with its allusion to the myth of Niobe, escalates the passion of Andromache’s elegiac monody, while simultaneously encapsulating the play’s core ideas and motifs – mirroring its protagonists (both in the foreground and the background), as well as the art (of the lament and beyond) in a polysemous miniature. Niobe was not only a victim. She should have avoided boasting, arrogance and verbosity, just as Neoptolemus, his father and other characters of the play should have.

Thus, Niobe in Euripides’ *Andromache*, even as an allusion, serves a multifaceted role; she functions not merely as a condensation of the play’s central themes and motifs, a symbol of lament poetry, a mirror of human *hybris*, or a critique of divine cruelty, but also as a potent vehicle for Euripides’ anti-war, anti-slavery and anti-violence rhetoric. To articulate the experience of slavery through the metaphor of a weeping rock is to define it as a fundamental violation of the natural law: like the rays of the Sun

⁴⁷ Striking examples are those in which this concept is emphasized through alliteration: e.g., ἄκλιντα χρῆν τίκτειν τέκνα (*Andr.* 1235); ὦ τέκνον, ἡ τεκοῦσά σ’ (*Andr.* 413).

«dampened by the tears of a slave»⁴⁸. After all, Andromache in verse 534 underlines that she is weeping like a «sunless spring» (λιβὰς ἀνήλιος). With the term ἀνήλιος Andromache confirms that slavery has nothing in common with φέγγος.

This term is articulated by the heroine while lamenting with her child in a tragedy that condemns violence and its consequences, such as slavery and infanticide. Strikingly, while Hermione and Menelaus plot the murder of a child within the play's immediate action, it is revealed that yet someone else had instigated a similar killing in the past: Cassandra, who demanded the death of her own brother, Paris, when he was a child (*Andr.* 299f.). It should not be overlooked, however, that Cassandra incites such a killing precisely because she wishes to avert the war, and consequently, the slaughter of the civilian population, including children. Yet, it is equally important to remember that Cassandra constitutes another reflection of Niobe as a victim of Apollo and as a *par excellence* mourner⁴⁹. The suffering brought by war feels unbearable. Somehow, Euripides leaves the impression that Astyanax, a child victim of war, deserves rivers of tears, like those of Niobe.

Euripides' allusion to Niobe is embedded within a broader framework of allusions to the suffering of war, achieved through successive evocations of the *Iliad*. Verse 116 implies that Niobe's endless tears flow as if welling up from a spring (πιδακόεσσα). In verse 285, the term πιδάκων ('spring') is employed to describe the bath of Hera, Athena, and Aphrodite before their encounter with Paris. Crucially, tears seem to stream within this very spring as well, insofar as it constitutes the fountainhead of the war. Within this context, Paris is not addressed by his proper name, but rather as the son of Priam (Πριαμίδαν, 287) – the exact figure who perhaps reflects Niobe more profoundly than anyone else. In the waters of these springs, the symbols of Niobe and Priam intertwine, delivering a resonant condemnation of the suffering begotten by violence. War is nothing else but tears. As Priam asserts in the *Iliad* (III 165), war is 'tearful' (πολύδακρυς).

⁴⁸ Similarly, in Euripides' *Orestes* (1001f.), the laws of nature are overturned by the intra-family strifes of the Atreidae: Eris changes the course of the Sun!

⁴⁹ LORAUX (2002, 75) calls Cassandra «Apollo's crying woman».

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