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'A Tragedie Written in Greeke': How *Jocasta* was Made 'Classical'

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Critics often take for granted that Dolce's Italian translation of a Latin version of Euripides's Phoenician Women *provided Gascoigne and Kinwelmersh with a ready example for composing a 'classical' drama for an English Renaissance audience. However, the choice of an Italian play with a Greek story for the performance of the first Greek tragedy in England at Gray's Inn in 1566 remains a sidelined question. This article argues that one reason for their choice of Dolce's play resides in his treatment of the Euripidean material in ways that attuned it to contemporary dramaturgical as well as cultural and political circumstances while scattering signposts throughout, suggesting belongingness to classical antiquity. One of these features was the female lament shared by the chorus and Antigone in the last act, which, while absent from Euripides, was a model that could be recognized as Euripidean and, more broadly, Greek.*

The Christmas Revels of 1566 at Gray's Inn saw a surprising production coming alive from antiquity on the indoor stage of the Inn's Great Hall. We do not know much about the staging of this extraordinary play advertised in the manuscript presentation copy as *Jocasta*. *A tragedie written in Greeke by Euripides. Translated and digested into Acte, by George Gascoigne and Francis Kinwelmersh of Gray's Inn, and there by them presented. 1566*. Going by the play-text we have,[1] *Jocasta* included a great number of characters,[2] and the scenery probably comprised 'three painted stage-mansions grouped behind an open playing space in the manner of medieval morality plays and the Tudor interludes'.[3] The wooden structure with arches and several openings which could be found at the lower end of the hall, similar to other structures often in use in Italy as well, would have offered a viable alternative.[4] The play presented interact dumb shows, which involved the use of a trapdoor for the grave in the first one and a gulf in the third.[5] It required three main entrances. The one at the centre led into and out of the palace while the

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two lateral ones were used for the gates called 'Electrae' and 'Homoloides', for arrival into the city and exit toward the camp, respectively, suggesting physical contiguity between the palace and the walls and ignoring the other five celebrated gates.[6] As is now well known, despite the subtitle claiming derivation from the Greek text, the play is an English translation of Lodovico Dolce's 1549 *Giocasta*, which, in turn, was a rewriting of Euripides's *Phoenician Women*, probably based on the 1541 Latin version of Collinus.[7] Dolce receives no mention by Gascoigne and Kinwelmersh, just as Euripides is not mentioned as the author of the play Dolce translated while appearing as the distant forefather of his drama, 'formerly the work of Euripides', says the Italian writer, 'and now birthed anew by me' ('già di Euripide invenzione, et ora parto mio').[8] And yet, between Gascoigne and Kinwelmersh and Dolce there was a substantial difference: while Dolce took the story from Euripides and rewrote it in his own style, competing with Euripides creatively as a writer, Gascoigne and Kinwelmersh did not; they did not claim any paternity other than that, implied in their subtitle, of being Euripides's translators — a right claim, except that they translated the Italian play instead, reproducing it with a few expansions, albeit fewer than often contended,[9] and with the interspersion of dumb shows, an autochthonous device somewhat comparable to the Italian intermedii.[10]

One question that naturally arises is why Gascoigne and Kinwelmersh made Dolce's subtext entirely invisible. Was this meant to make the play 'classical' in ways that it would not have been through explicit mention of the Italian writer? After all, Dolce was a fairly popular writer in England and might have been received as an acceptable model.[11] On the other hand, Greek was considered to be very appropriate to important occasions and possibly more so than Italian. Felicity Dulworth has argued that 'Euripides may have been a canny choice for a royal show', given that Elizabeth's former tutor, Roger Ascham, believed that Greek dramatists were superior to 'our Seneca' in tragedies, offering 'the goodliest argument of all … for the vse either of a learned preacher, or a civill Ientleman', and citing the ideal combination of 'the trewe touch of Aristotles precepts and Euripides examples'.[12] If Italian and Greek writers were possibly competing authorities, one wonders whether an audience possibly acquainted with Euripides like the one at Gray's Inn may have received this very much neoclassical and neo-Senecan play as a truly Englished Euripides 'digested into acts'. Emrys Jones has argued that we should not mistake what could have been Senecan for them with what could be for us, and that perhaps what was simply unfamiliar for them — ie un-Senecan — could have been taken for Greek.[13] But were Italian Renaissance

dramas so unfamiliar that they could qualify as 'Greek' in Jones's sense, rather than as neoclassical in an Italian style?

Apart from the dumb shows, which were an innovation of Gascoigne and Kinwelmersh, the changes introduced by Dolce and retained by them include the erasure of the teichoscopy, or 'viewing from the walls', scene (a recurrent narrative strategy made famous in *Iliad* 3 where Helen observes the battlefield from afar); the replacement of the Phoenician chorus with one of court gentlewomen; as well as references to contemporary military culture and an overall Christian veneer. Regarding this last aspect, it could be argued, with Micha Lazarus, that almost 'the entire corpus of classical literature available today — and certainly all that was available in the Renaissance — survives as the result of copying by Christian writers'.[14] Nonetheless, the strongly Christian ethics added by Dolce, and received by Gascoigne and Kinwelmersh, changed the conceptual framework radically in ways that cannot be ignored. This effect is precisely what Dolce had in mind when he claimed that he had given birth to a new tragedy, *formerly* by Euripides, *now* his own offspring, both dramaturgically and conceptually.

And yet, *Jocasta* is still considered the earliest 'Greek play' to have been performed in English and an important contribution to the construction of ideas of what a 'classical' play was deemed to be. In the following pages, I will discuss a single, but revealing, example of the kind of transformations this play underwent in the hands of Dolce and his English translators. This example shows the extent to which Euripides's play was turned into a neoclassical drama while bearing a Euripidean trademark that made it recognizably 'classical' for the authors and the audience alike. I will move from the assumption that what we are dealing with is 'Euripidean' in so far as it takes the narrative from Euripides through a number of mediations — in Robert Miola's words, the play is 'three hands and three tongues removed from the original Greek'.[15] I will then consider one instance of how female passion — what Tanya Pollard identifies as part of the Greek core of the play — undergoes an intriguing change in the ways the female collective and the young Antigone relate to each other. In my view, this instance raises a number of implications about the play's allusiveness to ideas of antiquity and how Euripides could still stand for Greek drama in general after having been contaminated with other ancient models.

The passage I will examine concerns Antigone and is related to the play's focus on Jocasta and Antigone as the Greek nexus of pathetic and political stances usually regarded by critics as typically Euripidean. Pollard sees the Jocasta-Antigone dyad as a central concern, while Dulworth's political reading sees the Theban queen as 'a material embodiment of the nation' compatible with its English reception.[16]

For Dulworth, Jocasta's 'physical person [is] a microcosmic version of the nation that is threatened'.[17] But while these political implications account for the play's relevance to contemporary threats of English political instability,[18] Pollard's discussion of motherhood and female concerns as crucial issues of Euripidean drama addresses directly what a contemporary audience was able to perceive as Greek, which is also my argument here. My contention is that those female concerns also involve coming to terms with another aspect of ancient drama, the female chorus, and this aspect, while being attributable to Euripides, was also a feature received through other non-Greek authors, such as Seneca, who reinforced the sense of antiquity of a female chorus by way of tacit contaminations.

Colin Burrow has recently contended that the copiously abundant ornamentation and expansion that can be found in the circumstantial articulations of 'facts' in early modern drama often make their 'authorities' invisible.[19] I will argue that the explicit mention of Euripides in the subtitle of *Jocasta* made intentionally visible his 'authority' over a play where Dolce had made it invisible, in Burrow's sense, claiming his own authority as a writer instead. Following Pollard's comment on the crucial role of Antigone, I will offer a few considerations on how Gascoigne's reworking of her character and function through Dolce in act 5, corresponding to the *exodos* of Euripides's play (a portion often considered manipulated or spurious), contributed to the construction of a 'classical' drama of a Greek type in English by making its direct source invisible. I will suggest that enhancing the Euripidean attention to women and passion[20] in these two early modern versions of the Theban story produces a deep restructuring of a female chorus vis-à-vis individual female heroism typical of a period when the ancient idea of a collective chorus was difficult to understand and could hardly supply tractable tragic material. Making Euripides 'classical' for a Renaissance audience meant adjusting Euripides to such individual concerns.

As will be seen, the final act foregrounds this process within a single short passage where a stratification of classical memories reconfigures the sense of classical antiquity while at the same time alluding to the Euripidean female lament and cutting it short. The result is a sort of cameo piece recalling a Greek model as appropriated by later classical writers such as Seneca. Dolce, Gascoigne, and Kinwelmersh amplify Euripides's emphasis on communal female wailing at that point of the drama, something that the authors and the audience may have recognized as particularly 'classical'. But the sense of communality was no longer understandable within the Renaissance context in the ways those of this period thought it had been in ancient times, and the specific circumstances of the Inns of Court's Christmas celebrations as a royal occasion made it even more foreign.

Back to Euripides: Antigone and the Chorus

Critics have often considered the two portions of Euripides's *Phoenician Women*, where Antigone is the protagonist, to be not fully integrated into the drama.[21] The first instance concerns the part of the prologue where an old servant and Antigone look at the battlefield from the higher part of the house. As we can read in an argument in Collinus's 1541 Latin version translating a part of the original Greek hypothesis, that scene (teichoscopy) was not thought to be part of the story, meaning not belonging to this play or being inappropriate to the action: 'Ac Antigone speculans a moenibus, non est pars fabulae'.[22] Dolce could not have consulted Stiblinus's 1562 rehabilitation of the passage in his Greek-Latin edition of the play, as it postdated his 1549 *Giocasta*, while Gascoigne and Kinwelmersh might have. But even if they happened to consult it, they followed Dolce closely, who deeply revised this passage by making it more integral to the action and replacing the observation from the walls with a report given by the Bailo (the Venetian name he uses for the Latin *paedagogus* he could find in Collinus, and later retained by Gascoigne and Kinwelmersh).[23]

In her second appearance, Antigone sings a monody where she expresses her despair at the loss of her brothers and mother, before facing Creon and dialoguing with Oedipus in the *exodos*. This part of the drama has also been long debated because of its unusual length and apparent inconsistencies in Antigone's behavior: she first insistently claims the body of Polyneices to bury it within Thebes, then rejects Creon's offer of Haemon as a husband, and finally engages in an elaborate duet with Oedipus before deciding to follow him in exile. Critics have perceived her oscillation between different stances as an indication of flawed character,[24] but her central role remains undisputed: Jocasta dead, Antigone is the one entrusted with the final mobilization of the action and she claims individual agency in ways that even Jocasta had not.

Miola has reminded us that the early modern reception of her figure, especially through Sophocles, remained controversial. Her 'ethical ambivalences, the paradoxical character of Antigone herself, her being fierce and pathetic, defiant and obedient, uncompromising protagonist and innocent victim' remained difficult to reconcile into a unified convincing figure.[25] No surprise, therefore, that Gascoigne and Kinwelmersh (but in fact, Dolce first) turned her into 'a conventionally pious young girl',[26] 'the good sister and dutiful daughter', toning down her ferocity,[27] in line with contemporary interpretations of Antigone as an example of constancy, rather than boldness.[28] That she retained some of her original ferociousness — a point that Pollard strongly makes in qualifying her filial and sisterly

devotion in keeping with 'other approaches to Greek plays in the period'[29] — is no surprise either, as her defiance is part of the story. But what we sense in Dolce's play and its English rendition is a recurrent adaptation to the cultural context ranging from minor to macro restructuring. The addition of the vividly pathetic detail of her murderous hand in place of the sword mentioned at 5.5.130 (Collinus 1694) is a tiny detail, yet one that melodramatically enhances the sense of her physical agency. Her qualification of the original Danaids as 'worthy women' (translating Dolce's 'lo stil d'alcune accorte' [the style of some shrewd women]) whom she wants to follow in their avenging fury, offers an ethical justification that grounds her resolution in a value system challenging patriarchal autarchy, kept tacit in Euripides and here foregrounded:

Collinus, 1692–6	Dolce, 5.5.128–34	Gascoigne and Kinwelmersh, 5.5.128–34
ANTIGONA[30] Nox utique illa ex Danaidis me habutura est una.	ANTIGONE Io seguirò lo stil d'alcune accorte.	ANTIGONE I will ensue some worthy woman's steps.
CREON Audisti facinus quale exprobrarit?	CREONTE T'intenderò se tu più chiaro parli.	CREON Speak out, Antigone, that I may hear.
ANTIGONA Sciat ferrum, et per quem iuro gladius.	ANTIGONE L'ucciderò con questa mano ardita.	ANTIGONE This hardy hand shall soon dispatch his life.
CREON Cur vero expetis ab hisce libera esse nuptiis?	CREONTE Temeraria crudel, ardisci questo?	CREON O simple fool! And darst thou be so bold?
ANTIGONA Exulabo una cum hoc miserrimo patre.	ANTIGONE Perché non debbo ardir sì bella impresa?	ANTIGONE Why should I dread to do so doughty deed?
CREON Generositas tibi inest, sed tamen et stultitia quaedam inest.	CREONTE A che fin, pazza, queste nozze sprezzi?	CREON And wherefore dost thou wedlock so despise?
ANTIGONA Et commoriar etiam, ut amplius scias.	ANTIGONE Per seguir nel'esilio il padre mio.	ANTIGONE In cruel exile for to follow him. *Pointing to* OEDIPUS.

The 1566 manuscript of *Jocasta* has 'dispatch my life' rather than 'his life' here, which is incongruous with the Danaids' example but consistent with another detail in her previous lines suggesting an inclination to suicide, to which I will return. This is just one example of revisions that, although often minor, contribute to articulating her figure in a more sentimental way overall.

For sure, what Dolce toned down, and with him Gascoigne and Kinwelmersh, is Antigone's tension toward the outside where the battlefield is, and where in the Greek original she beautifully imagines flying like a swift cloud to reach Polyneices (163–7) as a prefiguration of her precipitous movement to the camp with Jocasta in the final act. No wonder that Dolce reworked both portions of Euripides's drama accordingly, revising the relation between the foreign female collective and Antigone's individual female agency, which is central to the overall conception of Euripides's *Phoenician Women*.

The Greek play divides neatly into a first part leading up to the fulfillment of the mythical curse of Apollo against Laius (up to the fifth episode) and a second and final part which has Antigone as the protagonist (*exodos*). The first part is inscribed within the destiny of the Cadmeans and originates before the beginning of the play: Oedipus's curse of his two sons has already taken place before Jocasta's entrance and Antigone's looking out at the camp with the *paedagogus* in the prologue, and Polyneices has already been exiled. The second part is not inscribed in that mythical destiny but derives from Antigone's resistance to Creon's will. The female chorus of Phoenician women has a role in the first part because they are compassionate spectators to the present events and, at the same time, provide a memorial link with both the ancient past and the recent history of Thebes. In the *exodos*, they fall silent, giving way to Antigone, who comes centre stage. They do not exchange a single word with her, as if they belong to a different time and space and are no longer functional to the action. When they arrive after the prologue, Antigone withdraws to the maidens' chamber; when she challenges Creon in the *exodos* they are mute spectators. They do not join Antigone and Oedipus's lyrical duet after the death of Eteocles, Polyneices, and Jocasta, and when Creon urges that the lament be stopped as the time has come for the burial to be carried out, we cannot assume that he addresses the chorus, whose lines at that point are incongruous with the action.[31] Creon's address is clearly to Antigone and Oedipus: 'Cease now your lamentations; it is time we thought of their burial' (1582–3).

This peculiar dramatic construction — which at the same time concludes a tragic story initiated before the play's beginning and triggers a new tragic plot that will be concluded not with the play's end but in the sequel of that myth as

dramatized by Sophocles in *Antigone* and *Oedipus at Colonus* — crucially pivots on the relation between the chorus and Antigone. When the chorus arrives, Antigone withdraws; when Antigone becomes proactive, the chorus falls silent. The tragedy of Oedipus's house and of the city of Thebes is choral and collective up to the point when Antigone inaugurates a new idea of the tragic through her dynamism.[32] This is why the relationship between the chorus and Antigone is especially interesting and why Antigone is a figure that, for all her contradictions, bears this new sense of a female tragedy as an individual and solitary experience: one which goes beyond the kind of female collective suffering we find in other ancient tragedies, typically in the model of the *Trojan Women* in both its Euripidian and Senecan versions.

When Dolce came to deal with this part of the drama, he had to find a way to reconcile the new choral group of Theban gentlewomen with Antigone's sudden growth to maturity in a space where she is no longer alone as she was in Euripides. The new domesticated group of gentlewomen from Jocasta's train, like Antigone, bear a family memory which is totally different from that of the Phoenician women. This implies the erasure of the neat divide between the choral role of the foreign women in the previous episodes of Euripides and their absence in the *exodos*, and this posed a problem for Dolce in so far as the female chorus could not ignore Antigone's suffering at that point as they apparently did in Euripides. Given the new context, Dolce had to make a radical, if symbolic, choice.

Female Tensions

Differently from what happens in Euripides, in Dolce's play Antigone defines herself in contrast to two female collectives who are drastically different from the original Phoenician women: the chorus of gentlewomen onstage and a group of women proceeding to the temples, who are mentioned by the Bailo but are not seen by the audience. As in Euripides, Antigone is given license to leave 'her secret lodge' (1.3.9) to see Polyneices from afar, but instead of climbing to the tower, as in the Greek play, she remains in front of the palace, presumably in a place not distant from where the chorus of the Theban court women are. The Bailo informs her about the Argive's plans of attacking the seven gates, and also mentions a second group of 'wretched dames throughout the woeful town / Together clust'ring to the temples go, / Beseeching Jove by way of humble plaint, / With tender ruth to pity their distress' (1.3.18–21; 'e le misere donne or vanno insieme / per la mesta città, cercando tutti / i templi, e a' dii porgendo

umilemente / onesti voti e affettuosi preghi': 1.2.18–21). This second group of women is apparently free to go abroad for the purpose of devotional offerings in times of war. Their going 'together', probably in procession, legitimizes their appearance in the public streets. Antigone remains unconnected with both groups and, above all, indifferent to them. She is not interested in the enemy's camp, as in Euripides, which suggests preoccupation about the city besides her affection for Polyneices. She is entirely moved by personal motives (her sisterly love for Polyneices, her fundamental dislike, and fear, of Eteocles and Creon) that have little to do with the women's concern for Thebes and dread of the war that drives them to the temples or to invoke Bacchus. This indifference and fundamental separateness mark a dividing line that replicates the silent tension Euripides establishes between Antigone and the female collective, yet for reasons which reveal different concerns. The stage business is telling in this respect. In Dolce, and in Gascoigne and Kinwelmersh, Antigone is not invited by the Bailo to withdraw because he sees the Phoenician women arrive. In Euripides, he is worried that they could slander her because 'Women by nature love to critize' (198: φιλόψογον δὲ χρῆμα θηλειῶν ἔφυ; Amans enim obtrectationem res mulierum genus existit). In the Italian and English plays, on the contrary, the Bailo fears the 'volgo' will do the same, a word which generically refers to people and translates the Latin *turba* of Collinus (Turba enim … ingressa est civitatem / Abi mulierum ad aedem regiam), which in turn translates the Greek *ochlos*, multitude (196–7: ὄχλος γὰρ … / χωρεῖ γυναικῶν πρὸς δόμους τυραννικούς). Kinwelmersh (who translated act 1) derogatorily emphasizes Dolce's reinterpretation of Euripides's gendered remark as a social comment contrasting the 'volgo' and the royal family ('Reale altezza') through a semantic shift to the even more generic 'vulgar tongues':

> It standeth not with the honour of your state
> Thus to be seen suspiciously abroad.
> ,, For vulgar tongues are armèd evermore
> ,, With slanderous bruit to blemish the renown
> ,, Of virtuous dames: which though at first it spring
> ,, Of slender cause, yet doth it swell so fast
> ,, As in short space it filleth every ear
> ,, With swift report of undeservèd blame. (1.3.173–80)

Typically, the gloss in the margin in the 1575 edition of Gascoigne's *Posies* reads: 'A glasse for young women' (81v). The original contrast between the female individual and the choral collective turns into one between the royal family and the

common people. The women in procession to the temples remain off stage, and the Theban women of the chorus are visible on stage, yet neither group affects the presence and/or role of Antigone. Not coincidentally, the choral song immediately following this piece, dividing the first and the second act, is entirely disengaged from the scene (1.3), both thematically and dramatically, providing general comments on ambition, fortune, and the effects of princes' faults upon their subjects, before invoking Bacchus as protector of Thebes.

Thus, when Antigone mobilizes the action in Euripides's *exodos* and in 5.5 of *Giocasta/Jocasta* by assuming a tragic role, her divide from the chorus of women does not need to be foregrounded as it is in Euripides, where their unresponsiveness to the events signals the beginning of a different tragic action with Antigone at its centre. As already recalled, the chorus's final lines in Euripides incongruously claim that this day has inaugurated the misfortunes of the house of Oedipus (1582–3). Then they fall silent. In Euripides, Antigone is entirely alone; she calls herself 'a bacchant of the dead' (1492), and her sense of loneliness is voiced in her awareness that she will have to lead an entirely solitary life (1519–22). Her appearance on stage is that of a disheveled girl, possibly dancing as a maenad after abandoning all self-restraint.

This is where Dolce's manipulation of the tension between the chorus and Antigone takes on a new accent that Gascoigne retains in ways that help us understand the process of reception itself *as* an eclectic re-articulation of the classical past. The model that both present here is that of the ancient *kommos*, or a collective ritual shaped as a responsive wailing between the chorus and a character, a device that can be found in Euripides's *The Trojan Women*, and that Seneca also uses in his own version of that play. Dolce and Gascoigne transfer the Euripidean sense of bacchic frenzy of a girl suddenly growing into a woman who is entirely cut away from her past, except that she still has a father, and has no support from the female foreigners, to a collective ritual of grief performed as a funeral lament. Dolce knew Seneca's *Trojan Women* quite well — he translated Seneca's tragedies and published them in 1560 — and followed Seneca, instead of Euripides, in his own adaptation of *Le troiane*, 1567 (performed in Venice in 1566), which suggests his Senecan proclivity. Sophocles's *Antigone*, too, has two *kommoi*, but the first one between Antigone and the chorus of old Thebans is not a funeral one, and the second one between Creon and the chorus is not a female collective lament. Alemanni's *Antigone* (1527) was a one act play and could hardly have inspired Dolce in any respect. For sure, Dolce did not write an *Antigone* derived from Sophocles. The model of Seneca's Trojan *kommos* was also quite popular at the time: Giraldi Cinthio referred to it as an example of the Greek *kommos*,[33] and, on English soil,

Jasper Heywood translated the play into English in 1559, only a few years before Gascoigne and Kinwelemersh translated Dolce. Could Euripides be read through Seneca, and did this make any difference with regard to the perception of what being 'Greek' meant? Cinthio's reference is a case in point as a telling answer to both questions. Whether genuinely Euripidean or Senecan, Dolce's transformation of Antigone's original monody into a *kommos* appears like an embryonic attempt, a cameo gesture to evoke and reinvent that ancient model. But if this was sufficient to increase the sense of the play's classical antiquity, it bore important implications.

Choral Female Wailing

The traditionally long and violent performance of communal wailing, with dance and tearing of hair and clothes, has no space in either *Giocasta* or *Jocasta*. The ritual introduced in both is reduced to a short exchange where Antigone reminds the Theban women of their filial love for the queen and voices her desperate desire to take her own life. In the following lines (26–79), she despairs for losing Polyneices and her mother and laments the day when Oedipus was born and the sequel of misfortunes culminating in the present catastrophe began. This is how it opens:

5.3.1–23
Amarissimo pianto
donne, donne conviene:
convien che ciascaduna
non pur pianga e si dolga,
ma squarzi i crini e si percota il volto.
Ecco fra due figliuoli
qui la reina morta:
quella che amaste tanto,
quella ch'ad una ad una
voi tutte, come figlie,
nudrir e amar solea
or v'ha lasciate, ahi sorte,
con troppo cruda morte,
sconsolate, dolenti e senza aita.

5.3.1–20
Most bitter plaint, O ladies, us behoves,
Behoveth eke not only bitter plaint,
But that our hairs dishevelled from our heads
About our shoulders hang, and that our breasts
With bouncing blows be all to-batterèd,
Our ghastly faces with our nails defaced.
Behold, your queen twixt both her sons lies slain,
The queen whom you did love and honour both,
The queen, that did so tenderly bring up,
And nourish you each one like to her own.
Now hath she left you all, O cruel hap,
With her too cruel death in dying dread,
Pining with pensiveness without all help.

Ahi dolorosa vita, perché ancor resti in me, dunque ho potuto veder morir colei che mi diè questa vita, ed io rimaner viva? Ohimè, chi porgerà sì largo umore a queste luci afflitte ch'i basti a lagrimar quanto i' vorrei, l'interno mio dolore?	O weary life, why bidest thou in my breast? And I contented be that these mine eyes Should see her die, that gave to me this life, And I not venge her death by loss of life? Who can me give a fountain made of moan, That I may weep as much as is my will o souse this sorrow up in swelling tears?
5.3.24–5 CORO Ben crudo è chi non piange, o misera fanciulla.	5.3.21 CHORUS What stony heart could leave for to lament?
5.3.46–8 CORO Deh, non voler fanciulla, infelice e dolente, accrescer danno a danno.	5.3.36–7 CHORUS Alas, dear dame: let not this raging grief Heap one mishap upon another's head.

This piece is worth comparing with Antigone's monody in Euripides:

> Not covering up
> the delicate skin of my cheek adorned with curls
> nor concealing from maiden modesty
> the crimson below my eyes, my face's blush,
> I rush forth a bacchant of the dead,
> hurling my mantilla from my tresses
> and loosening my luxuriant saffron-colored robe,
> a mournful escorter of the dead: alas, ah me!
> O Polynices, how true your name has proved: ah ah, Thebes!
> Your strife — no strife but bloodshed upon bloodshed —
> destroyed the house of Oedipus,
> being brought to fulfillment in murder dread,
> in murder grim.
> What tuneful,
> what muse-inspired groan amidst
> weeping weeping, O house, O house,
> shall I summon to my aid
> as I bear these three slain bodies of kinsmen,
> mother and sons, to gladden the Erinys?

She destroyed Oedipus' house long before
when he solved the intelligible song
of the fierce and baffling creature
and slew the singer Sphinx's body.
Ah me, ah me,
what woman Greek or foreign or
what other scion of ancient nobility
has endured of mortal bloodshed's
woes so many,
such manifest pains?
Poor woman, what keening you raise!
What bird then on oak's or
fir tree's lofty mane of leaves
will <come> to sing with lonely mother's plaint
in concert with my woes?
These my dead I mourn here with woeful cries of 'Sing sorrow',
I who am doomed to live a life bereft
with streaming tears for all time to come.
She tears out some of her hair.
Ah me!
On whom first shall I cast
first fruits of the tearing of my hair,
on my mother's two
milkless breasts
or on my brothers'
poor ravaged bodies? (1485–1529)

Antigone's lyrical lament focuses on three main topics: her sudden transformation into a bacchant of the dead, the final ruin of her family begun the moment of Oedipus's victory over the Sphinx, and her exceptional condition of solitary sufferance. Euripides's Antigone is the most unfortunate woman among all Greeks and barbarians alike, finally deprived of her feminine modesty and self-control.

Dolce transforms this 'frantic mourner of the dead'[34] into a wailing girl seeking female sympathy from the chorus of Theban women. The collective lament aims to provide a consoling perspective for the sharing of one and the same grief, which Dolce's Antigone underlines by evoking memories of motherly affection for the chorus of women (7–14). The female community she summons here is

not found in the Greek text, which depicts Antigone as helplessly alone. This inconsolable solitude is part of her tragic predicament.

Miola is right in pointing out how deeply Gascoigne, following Dolce, modifies this passage, underlining her sisterly and filial pain, but also, it can be added, melodramatically replacing the sense of Antigone's bleak endurance of a catastrophe caused by Oedipus's ἀλάστωρ (a demon personifying family conflicts as well as hereditary guilt and ancestral curses, 1556), into what Dolce calls his 'sorte' (fate, 5.4.29) and Jocasta's and Oedipus's 'peccati' (59). Dolce's strongly Christian veneer is only slightly diluted in the 'luckless lot' (29) and 'foul offence' (45) of Gascoigne's Oedipus. This detail confirms the Christianizing process undergone by this story, often pointed out by critics, one that can be read as an example of the confluence of traditions in Bruce Smith's sense as 'the marks that modern drama has left on ancient'.[35] This confluence underscores how this Renaissance play based on the facts dramatized by Euripides could not accommodate the estranging features of Euripides's play: the tension between a foreign female collective paradoxically embodying the prehistory of the drama, and the sudden coming forth of the individual young woman, bearing her grief alone and ferociously asserting her presence as a subject claiming recognition. Euripides's innovative divide between the one (Antigone) and the many (the Phoenician women) did not have room in a play that replaced the foreign women with a domestic group. What served then to retain a sense of classical tragedy was a brief inset, bringing them together, layered with Senecan memories and gesturing at one substantial aspect of Greek tragedy (and Euripidean drama): the female *kommos*. It did not matter that this scene conflated traces of a different play — *The Trojan Women*.

This new piece was to convey a sense of Christian consolation before the women disappear. It could not take too much space: an embryonic ritual would suffice while providing a good opportunity to heighten the emotional temperature. Called on by Antigone, the women respond to her invitation to tear their hair and beat their breasts (1–6; 21); but when Antigone says that she wants to die (*Giocasta*, 43–5; *Jocasta* 34–5), they chastise her, toning down the collective wailing with a plea for stopping the series of 'mishaps' ('Deh, non voler fanciulla, / infelice e dolente, / accrescer danno a danno', 46–8; 'Alas, dear dame, let not thy raging grief / Heap one mishap upon another's head', 36–7). This is a failed collective performance, and its failure is evidence of Dolce and Gascoigne's attempt to accommodate the innovative frame of Euripides's treatment of the chorus and Antigone to a structure that had no space for the Phoenician women but needed to justify the role of a new chorus vis-à-vis the peculiar position of Antigone. Yet rather than bringing the women together, this cameo of collective

complaint highlights the women's impossible integration into the action. It also shows that the dual tragic structure of Euripides's model was lost the moment the female chorus was called on to dialogue with the tragic heroine and could not. Why they failed to do so unveils the deep and subtle reasons why that ancient tragic model pivoting on a dialectic between the female collective and the individual heroine was no longer tenable.

The Ritual is Broken

It is always quite difficult to tell what could be sensed as 'Greek' at a time which is not ours, as if we could grasp the essence or spirit of an author, a corpus of texts, and/or a culture.[36] Jones mentions the 'Senecan' quality of *Jocasta* underlining the variable implications of this word for different readers and audiences. In this case, 'Senecan' may perhaps refer to an emphasis on Fortune as well as on scenes reminding us of similar episodes present in Senecan dramas but not in Euripides, such as the sacrifice of the goat recalling that of the ox in Seneca's *Oedipus*.[37] But the *kommos* introduced in 5.3 is a model which stands for something that is and is not Senecan or Euripidean, but a device which may be taken as a metonym of 'classical' tragedy tout court.

Talking about Shakespeare, Marjorie Garber has revived the idea of a ghostly presence of Rome always 'in a quotation', where 'tradition and authority are simultaneously instated and put in question', and where Rome is 'the real thing' but also 'a memorial reconstruction in the present plane of discourse'.[38] Garber's language recalling Derrida's notion of hauntology is both evocative and evanescent as 'essences' and 'spirits' are, but in a way, it could be said that *Jocasta* is 'in a Euripidean quotation' in Garber's sense; what could be perceived as memorially 'Greek' also constituted its being 'classical' and this consisted in the amplification of female tensions.

Critics have often been intrigued by the change of title. As Miola has argued, 'Dolce's titular substitution indicates a refocussing of the tragic interest',[39] a choice probably inspired by Giocasta's presence in Boccaccio's *De Claris mulieribus* and in *De Casibus*.[40] Gascoigne and Kinwelmersh appropriated Jocasta's name topically by insistently referring to Jocasta as the queen of Thebes to suggest a parallel with Elizabeth. 'Reina' is the title she bears in Dolce, yet not in the list of speakers, and in the Greek original she is never called 'basileia'. Within a context of diffused 'anxieties about the Elizabethan succession', this play testified to a renewed interest in 'Classical narratives, which so often detailed the collapse of royal families and the wreck of dynasties', offering 'useful models for persuading the queen

of the need for a secure future'.[41] G.W. Pigman III has noticed Kinwelmersh's significant change to Dolce's text in the choral ode 4, where he offers an idealization of marriage in an ode to peace: replacing Dolce's 'our hearts' ('nostri cori', 30) with a reference to 'princely peeres' (29), Kinwelmersh hints at Elizabeth's need to marry and beget an heir.[42] The shift of attention from the female collective to the tragedy of a woman, as indicated by the new title, not only grounds the play in the powerful icon of suffering motherhood but also allows for the transformation of Antigone into a 'bold political actor', a powerful substitute for her mother endowed with agency by grief.[43] This is a crucial shift from the original focus on the female collective of the *Phoenician Women*, where the foreign group on their way to Delphi both offers an external perspective on the action and is the bearer of the memory of an ancient past that they share with the Thebans. This occurs specifically in this portion of drama re-elaborated by Gascoigne after Dolce, as we have just seen.

What has not been explored so far is the role of the female collective in shaping Antigone's character in the last act. As we have seen, Dolce's and Gascoigne's treatment of that part responds to the new domestic status of these women, who are the bearers of a Christian morality in different places of their choral songs. This Christian morality forbids despair and suicide, an inclination that Antigone shows in this play as a new feature, for which she is rebuked by the chorus of Theban women, as quoted and commented on above. In that particular moment, the sense of a female group engaging in communal suffering in the ancient style is both invoked dramaturgically and revised deeply. The ritual is broken, and Antigone comes forth as a young female individual who has appealed for a consolatory response in ways foreign to Euripides's conception of her character. In this sense, Miola's remark on the Christian domestication of the play is reinforced by this piece, evoking the model of communal female suffering as could be found in plays other than *The Phoenician Women*, and, at the same time, doing away with it through the Theban ladies' interruption of the ritual. This moment, when collectivity fails, also signals a moment when that model, which is both Euripidean in a general sense and Senecan, as well as a signature of ancient tragedy, fails to be fully incorporated into a Renaissance framework.

Notes

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1 The manuscript presentation copy dates from 1568 and Gascoigne subsequently included the text in his *A Hundreth Sundrie Flowres Bounde up in One Small Poesie* (London, 1573; USTC: 507655) and again in his *The Posies of George Gascoigne, Corrected, Perfected, and Augmented by the Author* (London, 1575; USTC: 508011, 508012). It was reprinted after Gascoigne's death in *The Whole Woorkes of George Gascoigne Esquire*, alternatively titled *The Pleasauntest Workes of George Gascoigne Esquire* (London, 1587; USTC: 510738). The 1575 edition also contains a final note for the reader, elucidating that a few sententious explanations in the margin had been written 'at request of a gentlewoman who understode not poetycall words or terms'. All texts contain commonplace marks and, starting from the earliest printed edition of 1573, also have stage directions.

2 Gillian Austen, *George Gascoigne* (Cambridge, 2008), 53, https://doi.org/10.1515/9781846156434.

3 Bruce Smith, *Ancient Scripts and Modern Experience on the English Stage 1500–1700.* (Princeton, 1988), 82, https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400859399.

4 Ibid.

5 John W. Cunliffe, *Early English Classical Tragedies* (Oxford, 1912), lxxxv–vi.

6 For a discussion of the relevance of the gates' names, see Sarah Dewar-Watson, '*Jocasta*: "A Tragedie Written in Greeke"', *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 17.1 (2010), 22–32, 30–1. For comments on this position, see Silvia Bigliazzi and Carla Suthren, eds, *George Gascoigne and Francis Kinwelmersh's* Jocasta. (Cambridge, forthcoming).

7 On Dolce's and Gascoigne and Kinwelmersh's use of Dorotheus Collinus's 1541 translation, see Dewar-Watson. '*Jocasta*'; Yves Peyré, 'Eclectism and Syncretism in Gascoigne and Kinwelmersh's *Jocasta*', *Translation and Literature* 29.1 (2020), 44–58, https://doi.org/10.3366/tal.2020.0408; and, more recently, Bigliazzi and Suthren, *George Gascoigne and Francis Kinwelmersh's* Jocasta.

8 See Dolce's dedication letter to Giovanni de Morvile. All quotations from Dolce's *Giocasta* and Gascoigne and Kinwelmersh's *Jocasta* are from the Latin, Italian, English parallel edition contained in ClaRE (Classical Receptions in Early Modern English Drama), edited by Silvia Bigliazzi and Carla Suthern, https://clare.dlls.univr.it/gestionale/document/view-gems?id=59. References to the Latin edition of Euripides

are to *Euripidis … Tragoediae XVIII … per Dorotheum Camillum et Latio donatae, et in lucem editae* (Basileae, 151; USTC: 654885).

9 In fact, the English play's overall line number is 2,738 while the Italian one is 2,741. Gascoigne and Kinwelmersh's expansions concern individual passages and a recasting of the verse. See Bigliazzi and Suthren, 'Introduction', in *George Gascoigne and Francis Kinwelmersh's* Jocasta.

10 For a discussion of the relation between dumb shows and intermedia, see John W. Cunliffe, 'Italian Prototypes of the Masque and Dumb Show', *PMLA* 22.1 (1907), 140–56, 140, 156, 150–6 https://doi.org/10.2307/456663; Dieter Mehl, *The Elizabethan Dumb Show: The History of a Dramatic Convention* (London and New York, 1965; rpt 2010), https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203831861; Stephen Orgel, 'The Poetics of Spectacle', *New Literary History* 2.3 (Spring 1971), 367–89, 372.

11 Dolce's *Didone* (1547) apparently inspired the prologue to the first English tragedy based on an Italian novella, *Gismond of Salerne* (on which see John W. Cunliffe, 'Gismond of Salerne', *PMLA* 21.2 (1906), 435–61, https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203831861) and possibly influenced Christopher Marlowe and Thomas Nashe's *Dido, Queen of Carthage*; see for example Renzo Cremante, 'Appunti sulla gramatica tragica di Ludovico Dolce', *Cuadernos de Filología Italiana* 5 (1998), 279–90, 279.

12 Felicity Dulworth, *Mothers and Meaning on the Early Modern English Stage* (Manchester, 2010), 57, https://doi.org/10.7228/manchester/9780719076329.001.0001.

13 Emrys Jones, *The Origins of Shakespeare* (Oxford, 1977), 105–6.

14 Micha Lazarus, 'Tragedy at Wittenberg: Sophocles in Reformation Europe', *Renaissance Quarterly* 73 (2020), 33-77, 69, https://doi.org/10.1017/rqx.2019.494.

15 Robert Miola, 'Euripides at Gray's Inn: Gascoigne and Kinwelmersh's *Jocasta*', in *The Female Tragic Hero in English Renaissance Drama*, ed. Naomi Conn Liebler (New York and Houndmills, Basingstoke, 2002), 31–50, 33, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-137-04957-5_2.

16 Dulworth, *Mothers and Meaning*, 58.

17 Ibid.

18 Mary Axton, *The Queen's Two Bodies: Drama and the Elizabethan Succession* (London, 1977), 54–6. Interestingly, Axton (54) claims that George Gascoigne 'translated Lodovico Dolce's version of the *Thebaid* and set this contention between Eteocles and Polyneices for the throne of Oedipus within his own framework'. Axton makes no mention of Euripides.

19 Colin Burrow, 'Invisible Books: Shakespeare and Narrative Sources,' in *What is a Greek Source on the Early English Stage? Fifteen New Essays,* ed. Silvia Bigliazzi and

Tania Demetriou (Pisa, 2024), 47–69, https://doi.org/10.13136/knnr2f44. Burrows is referencing Shakespeare's reliance on the European novella tradition.

20 Miola, 'Euripides at Grays' Inn', 35.

21 See Donald J. Mastronarde, ed., *Euripides: Phoenissae* (Cambridge, 1994), which includes relevant bibliography.

22 James Diggle, ed., *Euripidis Fabulae*, tomus III (Oxford, 1994; online 2017), C h8v, 78, https://doi.org/10.1093/actrade/9780198145950.book.1): 'ἥ τε ἀπὸ τῶν τειχέων Ἀντιγόνη θεωροῦσα μέρος οὐκ ἔστι δράματος'. In recent times, its authenticity has been confirmed: see Mastronarde, ed., *Euripides: Phoenissae*, 168–73.

23 A choice suggesting the Aeschylean style of the messenger's report in the *Seven Against Thebes*, which Dolce could not have accessed directly as he did not know Greek and the first Latin translation is Sanravius's, first published in 1556.

24 See for instance Robert S. Miola's articulate discussion of the ambivalent receptions of Antigone in the early modern period, in his article 'Early Modern Antigones: Receptions, Refractions, Replays', *Classical Receptions Journal* 6.2 (2014), 221–44, https://doi.org/10.1093/crj/clt015.

25 Ibid, 222.

26 Ibid, 232.

27 Miola, 'Euripides at Gray's Inn?', 47.

28 'The constancy of Antigone, described by Antimachus and Euripides, is of such merite, as all men together cannot boast of any thing to come neere in her piety is of such commendation, as the most religious Atheistical age haue iust cause to complaine, that Christianity as yet neuer conceiued the like'. Anthony Gibson, *A Woomans Woorth, Defended Against All the Men in the World* (London, 1599; USTC: 514054), 13. Tanya Pollard mentions this detail in *Greek Tragic Women on Shakespearean Stages* (Oxford 2017), 66, https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198793113.001.0001). Pollard does not mention that her constancy is equated to that of Griselda, Virginia, Portia, and Sophonisba as part of a mythical collective of female figures famous for patience and endurance across cultures.

29 Pollard, *Greek Tragic Women on Shakespearean Stages*, 85.

30 'ANTIGONE: My marriage night will make me one of the Danaids. / CREON: Do you see the effrontery of her insults? / antigone: Iron be my witness and the sword of oath! / creon: Why do you take care to be quit of this marriage? / antigone: I will join this poor father of mine in exile. / CREON: That is noble of you but a bit foolish. / antigone: Yes, and what's more I will die with'. *Euripides. Helen. Phoenician Women. Orestes*, ed. and trans. David Kovacs (Loeb; Cambridge, MA, 2002), https://doi.org/10.4159/dlcl.euripides-phoenician_women.2002. For the Greek text see also Mastronarde ed., *Euripides: Phoenissae*.

31 'CHORUS LEADER: This day has been the beginning of many woes for the house of / Oedipus. May our life be more fortunate!' (1582–3): surprisingly they claim this day has inaugurated the misfortunes of the house of Oedipus, while of course it marks their climax.

32 Anna A. Lamari, *Narrative, Intertext, and Space in Euripides' Phoenissae* (Berlin and New York, 2010), 111, https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110245936.

33 'And the choruses among the Greeks were of two kinds, the first, that with singing together people moved according to the measure of the singing, and it was what we have said above to be called Commi, that is, weeping that was expressed with lamentable Melody. And I believe that those movements were like those of Moorish dances which are done following the rhythms of the sound, as can be evidently seen in the first chorus of Seneca's *Trojan Women*'. Giovambattista Giraldi Cinzio, *Discorsi intorno al comporre de i romanzi, delle commedie, e delle tragedie …* (Vinegia, 1554), 229–30; my translation.

34 Mastronarde ed., *Euripides: Phoenissae*, 1489: αἰδομένα φέρομαι βάκχα νεκύ; Collinus m8*r*: procuratrix mortuorum.

35 Smith, *Ancient Scripts and Modern Experience on the English Stage*, 6.

36 See Silvia Bigliazzi, 'Introduction', in *What is a Greek Source on the Early English Stage?*, ed. Bigliazzi and Demetriou, 17–43, https://doi.org/10.13136/knnr2f44.

37 For a discussion of this point see Bigliazzi and Suthren, 'Introduction'.

38 Marjorie Garber, *Shakespeare's Ghost Writers* (New York and London, 1986), 69, https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203857113.

39 Miola, 'Euripides at Grays' Inn', 35.

40 Peyré, 'Eclectism and Syncretism', 47–8.

41 Dunworth, *Mothers and Meaning*, 52.

42 G.W. Pigman III, ed., *George Gascoigne, A Hundreth Sundry Flowres* (Oxford, 2000), 542.

43 Pollard, G*reek Tragic Women on Shakespearean Stages*, 67.