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Autor: Pàmias, Jordi

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Bronze Mythology and Prophecy: χαλκαίνω (Sophocles, Euripides, Lycophron)

Jordi Pàmias, Barcelona

Abstract: Le sens de χαλκαίνω pose un problème pour les philologues, qui tentent d'expliquer ce verbe en lui attribuant un emploi métaphorique dans chacun des passages où il apparaît (Sophocle, Euripide, Lycophron). Or les manuscrits fournissent dans tous les cas une variante, χαλκαίνω. Nous soutenons que ce verbe avait le sens spécialisé de 'prononcer ou élucider une prophétie', un sens que l'on peut attribuer aux trois passages discutés.

Keywords: χαλκαίνω, χαλκαίνω, lexicographie grecque, bronze, prophétie.

1. The significance of χαλκαίνω, a rare verb in Greek, poses a problem for scholars. Except for a passage of Nicander (in which the verb is reduced to its basic meaning 'to be purple-coloured'), the meaning is not transparent in the other three occurrences of this term (Sophocles, Euripides, Lycophron).¹ Translations and commentaries attempt to account for its metaphorical use within the context of each of these passages.

i) *S. Ant.* 15–20:

[Ισμήνη] ἐπεὶ δὲ φροῦδός ἐστιν Ἀργείων στρατός
ἐν νυκτὶ τῇ νῦν, οὐδὲν οἶδ' ὑπέρτερον,
οὔτ' εὐτυχοῦσα μᾶλλον οὔτ' ἄτωμένη.
[Ἀντιγόνη] ἦδη καλῶς, καὶ σ' ἐκτὸς αὐλείων πυλῶν
τοῦδ' οὐνεκ' ἐξέπεμπον, ὡς μόνη κλύοις.
[Ισμήνη] τί δ' ἔστι; δηλοῖς γάρ τι χαλκαίνουσ' ἔπος.

[Ismene] But since the Argive army has departed, in this night now, I know nothing further, that makes me either fortunate or ruined.

[Antigone] Well did I know it! And here, outside the gates of the courtyard, I drew you for this very reason, so that you alone might hear.

[Ismene] What is it? For obviously you are darkly brooding over some message!

(Trans. Ahrensdorf/Pangle, adapted)

Ismene's words in line 20 are a response to her sister Antigone, who confidentially refers to the rumours of Creon's fateful edict. In interpreting and translating the participle χαλκαίνουσα modern scholars have merely followed their ancient counterparts (see section 2, below).² As a derivative of κάλχη, murex, the purple limpet

* I am warmly grateful to Prof. Lowell Edmunds for correcting this text.

1 Nic. *Th.* 641 (with the commentary of Overduin 2015: 417); *S. Ant.* 20; *E. Heracl.* 40; *Lyc.* 1457.

2 I am citing the translation by Ahrensdorf/Pangle 2014: 154. Griffith (1999: 124–125) reads "you are obviously growing dark over some pieces of news". See also footnote 15. Remarkably, Friedrich Hölderlin produced a literal (and scorned by his contemporaries) translation of the passage in 1804,

used as a dye, the verb *καλχαίνω* ‘to search for *κάλχη*’ or ‘to make dark and troublous like a stormy sea’ is metaphorically understood as ‘ponder deeply, brooding over something’. Accordingly, etymological dictionaries point to this etymon (*κάλχη*) and struggle to explain the semantic evolution, or metaphorical deviance, of *καλχαίνω*: the word would have analogically assumed the same figurative sense as *πορφύρω* (from *πορφύρα*, a synonym of *κάλχη*), which means ‘brood, ponder on many things’ in Homer.³ The (internal) accusative *ἔπος*, however, is not easily explained in the Sophoclean context.

ii) E. *Heracl.* 37–43 (Iolaus is speaking):

ὦν ἑκατὶ τέρμονας
κλεινῶν Ἀθηνῶν τόνδ’ ἀφικόμεσθ’ ὄρον.⁴
δυοῖν γερόντοιν δὲ στρατηγεῖται φυγῇ·
ἐγὼ μὲν ἀμφὶ τοῖσδε καλχαίνων τέκνοις,
ἢ δ’ αὖ τὸ θῆλυ παιδὸς Ἀλκμήνη γένος
ἔσωθε ναοῦ τοῦδ’ ὑπηγκαλισμένη
σώζει.

This is the reason we have come to this sacred precinct, to the borders of glorious Athens. Our flight is generated by a pair of grey-heads, with me giving anxious thought for these boys while Alcmenē guards the daughters of her son within the temple, clasping them in her embrace.

(Trans. Kovacs, adapted)

From the meaning of ‘pondering’ we move now to ‘growing dark, being darkly troubled in mind’.⁵ Again, the analogy with *πορφύρειν* comes to assistance. And as *πορφύρα* is used for any dark colour, as of the sea in a storm, the verb is also applied to a ‘stormy’ or anxious state of mind.⁶

iii) Lyc. 1454–1457 (Cassandra is speaking):

πίστιν γὰρ ἡμῶν Λεψιεύς ἐνόσφισε,
ψευδηγόροις φήμαisin ἐγχρίσας ἔπη
καὶ θεσφάτων πρόμαντιν ἀψευδῇ φρόνιν,
λέκτρων στερηθεῖς ὦν ἐκάλχαιεν τυχεῖν.

which proves that he made use the scholia (see section 2, below): “Was ist’s, du scheinst ein rothes Wort zu färben?” (see Fornaro 2018: 95). Cf. below footnote 67.

³ Cf. *Il.* 21.551: πολλὰ δέ οἱ κραδίη πόρφυρε (“much was his heart troubled”). See Frisk (1960: 769), s. u. *κάλχη*: “Denominatives Verb *καλχαίνω* [...] Die Bedeutung ‘grübeln, aufgeregt sein’, die sich nur in der Sprache der Dichter findet, entstand offenbar nach dem Vorbild von *πορφύρα* : *πορφύρω*”. Chantraine (1968: 488), s. u. *κάλχη*: “... On pense que ce sens est dû au rapprochement de *πορφύρω* qui a été relié, par étymologie populaire à *πορφύρα*”.

⁴ On the ms. reading τόνδ’ ἀφικόμεσθ’ ὄρον instead of Stephanus’ conjecture τήνδ’ ... ὁδόν, see section 5 below.

⁵ See Wilkins 1993: 54.

⁶ See Jerram 1888: 5. Cf. Jebb 1891: 12.

The Lepsian [Apollo, *scil.*] robbed me of my credibility,
smearing with untrue libels my utterances
and the true prophetic skill of my oracles,
because he was deprived of my bed which he so desired.

(Trans. Hornblower)

In Lycophron the use of the verb ἐκάλχαιεν is explained by the scholiasts as ἥς ἐπεθύμει, ἐμερίμνα λαβεῖν and ἥς τυχεῖν ἐπεθύμει (see Schol. Lyc. 1457, ed. Leone, p. 378 and 444).⁷ And modern commentaries and translations are in keeping with this interpretation.⁸ Again the word is used figuratively, although the metaphorical notion has changed and now is understood as ‘to have a strong desire, to long for’ and applied to Apollo’s passion for Cassandra. In other words: according to the context, the word is interpreted in different ways in each of the three occurrences under consideration: ‘to ponder deeply’, ‘to be unquiet, excited’, ‘to long for’, as modern lexicographers have it and as it is to be found in Frisk’s or Beekes’ etymological dictionaries.⁹

2. In coping with the word καλχαίνω modern scholarship follows in the steps of ancient grammarians and scholars. The scholiast of Sophocles’ *Antigone* explains the word in these terms:

καλχαίνουσ’: ἀντὶ τοῦ πορφύρουσα καὶ τεταραγμένως φροντίζουσα· κάλχη γὰρ ἔστιν ὁ κόχλος τῆς πορφύρας ἥτις ἐκ τοῦ βυθοῦ τῆς θαλάσσης ἀνιοῦσα βάπτει τὴν καλλίστην πορφύραν [...] ἐκ βάθους τι μεριμνῶσα ὡς τὸ βυσσοδομεύων.

(Sch. S. *Ant.* 20, ed. Papageorgiou)

καλχαίνουσ’ instead of πορφύρουσα ‘pondering’ and anxiously reflecting upon. Because the κάλχη ‘limpet’ is the shellfish of the purple which comes up from the depth of the sea and dyes the most beautiful purple [...] Reflecting in-depth on something as if brooding over a thing in the depth of one’s soul.

According to this exegetic account, the underlying idea is that Antigone’s mind is deeply concerned and “darkly” anxious as the purple limpet which comes from turbid eddying waters and the darkest depths of the sea.¹⁰ Such a methodological approach is strongly embedded in ancient scholarly traditions of allegorical inter-

⁷ Cf. Scheer 1881: 115.

⁸ See Ciani (1975: 137), s. u. καλχαίνω: “cupio (metaph.)”. Cf. Holzinger 1895: 163 (“getäuscht um meinen Kuss, den er so heiss ersehnt”); Hurst 2008: 83 (“car je lui refusai la couche qu’il convoitait”); Pillinger 2019: 142 (“since he was deprived of the bed for which he was flushed with desire”), as well as Hornblower’s (2015: 499) translation cited above.

⁹ See Beekes 2010: 629; Frisk 1960: 769 (s. u. κάλχη): “übertr. trans. ‘über etw. grübeln’ (ἔπος, S. *Ant.* 20), intr. ‘unruhig, aufgeregt sein’ (E. *Herakl.* 40), ‘sich sehnen’ (Lyk. 1457)”. The *LSJ*⁹ entry, s. u. καλχαίνω, abbreviates: “ponder deeply [...] c. inf., long, desire”.

¹⁰ On synaesthetic or ‘intersensal’ metaphors in ancient Greek as this one, see Stanford 1936: 47–62.

pretation. With its similes, Homeric poetry encourages such procedures.¹¹ When Homer (*Il.* 14.16–22) compares Nestor’s brooding over a pending decision with the heaving ocean (ὡς δ’ ὅτε πορφύρη πέλαγος ...),¹² Aristonicus of Alexandria, an ancient grammarian, explains the verb πορφύρη in the following terms (Sch. Hom. *Il.* 14.16 [A], p. 564, ed. Erbse):

ὅτι πορφύρη μελανίζει. εἶωθεν δέ, ὅταν ἀρχὴν λαμβάνῃ κινήματος ἢ θάλασσα, μελανίζει· διὸ μεταφέρει ἐπὶ τοὺς κατὰ ψυχὴν μεριμνώντας καὶ ταρασσομένους.

πορφύρη means ‘growing dark’. As a rule, the sea becomes dark when it starts to move. Hence it is transferred to those who are anxious and disturbed in their soul.

The ancient grammarian attempts to rationalize the metaphor by transferring a natural phenomenon to the psychological domain (μεταφέρει ἐπὶ τοὺς κατὰ ψυχὴν μεριμνώντας). From its early stages, etymological speculation is a powerful hermeneutical tool to be used by the allegorist when he seeks to specify the underlying logic in a poetic word or account.¹³ In modern scholarship again, analogy and allegoresis have also been the procedures put into practice to make sense of the word καλχαίνειν. The definition to be found in the *LSJ* entry (s.u. καλχαίνω), in its second sense (labelled “metaph.”), is revealing: “make dark and troublous *like a stormy sea*” (with my emphasis). Linguists have tried to explain as a ‘poetic’ phenomenon the tralatitious meaning of the word πορφύρειν and thence, analogically, of καλχαίνειν: “The poetic meaning ‘to ponder, be excited’ [of καλχαίνειν, *scil.*] may have arisen after > πορφύρα : > πορφύρω, which were secondarily connected with each other”.¹⁴ A modern scholar goes as far as to include Ismene’s metaphorical use of καλχαίνω within the nautical and maritime imagery that plays a major role in Sophocles’ *Antigone*.¹⁵

¹¹ Although the word ‘allegory’ (not attested before the first century BCE) was probably coined by rhetoricians, the concept itself derives from the practice of ancient poets. It implies the exegetical interpretation by philosophers who aimed at providing a scientific or ethical logic behind texts that appeared to ‘say something else’. Although a famous scholium to Homer (*Il.* 20.67) sees Theagenes of Rhegium as the first practitioner of allegorical interpretation (see Biondi 2015: 57–105), some scholars have traced this practice back to earlier times (as far as Homer himself, according to Most 1993).

¹² Some modern lexicographers and commentators have attempted to rationalize the Homeric simile on its own terms. See Fränkel (1921: 19): “Die Dünung, von der es handelt, ist jedem Seekundigen vertraut: die Wogen eines fernen Sturmes rollen in die windstille Umgebung hinaus, und die sonderbare Erscheinung der Wellen ohne Wind mag das Nahen des Unwetters voraus verkünden, das langsam weiterziehend seinem Vorboten folgt”.

¹³ On the close relationship between etymology and allegorical interpretation, see Most 2016 (and cf. below, section 6). On the changing status of metaphor in modern criticism, see Boys-Stones 2003, 1.

¹⁴ Beekes 2010: 629. The word πορφύρα is taken as a synonym of κάλχη (see section 1 above).

¹⁵ See Goheen 1951: 45. His translation of *S. Ant.* 20: “What is it? Clearly your words are dark and stormy”.

Such analogical procedures were well known in antiquity. The scholium on Sophocles quoted above assembles lexicographical data in order to account for the meaning of the word *καλχαίνειν*, as the parallel entries of Hesychius and Zonaras show:

Hsch. *s. u.* *καλχαίνειν*· ταρασσει. πορφύρει. στένει. φροντίζει. ἄχθεται. κυκᾷ. ἐκ βυθοῦ ταρασσεται (ed. Latte).

He is disturbed; swirls; bewails; ponders; is in grief, in confusion; he is disturbed from the bottom.

Zonar. *s. u.* *καλχαίνειν*· κατὰ βάθος μεριμνᾷν, καὶ κάλχη ἢ πορφύρα, ὅθεν καὶ πορφύρειν τὸ μεριμνᾷν (p. 1171, ed. Tittmann).¹⁶

To be disturbed from the bottom; and κάλχη is the murex. Hence πορφύρειν means to be anxious about something.

An invaluable lexicographical testimony is to be recovered from a Homeric papyrus which goes back to Apollonius Sophista (*P.Mich. inv.* 5451a, fr. 2, col. ii):¹⁷

πορφυρει πορφυριζε|ται ταρασσεται οθεν | και καλχαινειν λεγ[ε|τ]αι το ταρασσειν.

πορφύρει, πορφυρίζεται is to be in trouble. That is why *καλχαίνειν* too is to be in trouble.

As previous scholars have pointed out, there is a structural parallelism between Zonaras, who uses the Homeric gloss to illustrate the metaphorical usage of *καλχαίνειν* in Sophocles, and the papyrus, which cites the Sophoclean word as a parallel to the Homeric usage.¹⁸ In other words, for ancient scholarship too, the verb *καλχαίνειν* is figuratively used after the analogy with πορφύρω – as long as πορφύρα is a synonym of κάλχη. However, the same semantic relationship can be, and has been, established the other way around. Therefore, it is my suspicion that we are facing a circular argument. In order to step aside from this lexicographical trap, I will put forward an alternative interpretation of the reading *καλχαίνειν*, which may help to recover a common meaning in the three occurrences of this word in the corpus of Greek texts.

3. A thorough analysis of the variants of the three relevant passages in the manuscripts leads to a striking result. Along with the reading *καλχαίνω* (*καλχαίνουσα*, *ἐκάλχαιεν*, *καλχαίνων*), a number of manuscripts of Sophocles, Euripides and Ly-

¹⁶ Nearly identical is the lexicographer Orion, *s. u.* Κάλχας, p. 79, ed. Sturz: παρὰ τὸ καλχαίνειν, ὃ ἐστὶ κατὰ βάθος μεριμνᾷν· καὶ κάλχη, ἢ πορφύρα· ὅθεν παρ' αὐτὴν τὸ πορφύρειν τὸ μεριμνᾷν; Phot. *s. u.* *καλχαίνειν*· ἐκ βάθους ταρασσεται.

¹⁷ Renner 1979: 326; Haslam 1994: 112.

¹⁸ Renner 1979: 328.

cophon yield a *uaria lectio*: χαλκαίνω.¹⁹ Editors reject this form as a misspelling of medieval scribes which can be easily explained away as a metathesis of aspiration. As a matter of fact, a connection between the Greek words χαλκός ‘bronze’ (Cretan καυχός) and κάλχη ‘purple murex’ (but also χάλκη and χάλχη in inscriptions),²⁰ has long been stressed. It is not my purpose to assess the etymological link connecting both terms. Uncertainty and fluctuation in ancient evidence point, in fact, to *Hauchversetzung*.²¹ And this can also apply to medieval manuscripts. Be as it may, as no modern edition accepts the scribal reading χαλκαίνω, this entry is absent from any modern dictionary of ancient Greek. As derivatives of χαλκός, the following verbs are attested: χαλκεύω, χαλκόω, and χαλκίζω. But, as Kamerbeek noted *en passant*, χαλκαίνω could also be seen as a variant form of χαλκεύω.²² Both parallel forms are built as regular denominative ἱ presents: -αίνω (< *-an-je/o-) / -εύω (< *-eμ-je/o-).²³

It is my aim to consider seriously the verbal form χαλκαίνω. I refrain from placing an asterisk before this word, as χαλκαίνω is not unattested in medieval manuscripts and, therefore, is not a theoretically reconstructed form.²⁴ In fact, I would go as far as to put forward the variant reading χαλκαίνω at the expenses of καλχαίνω in the three passages under consideration. The verb καλχαίνω in Sophocles’ *Antigone* (καλχαίνουσ’, although, to repeat, the A manuscript reads χαλκαίνουσ’) that ancient critics and lexicographers attempted to rationalize as analogical with the metaphorical sense of πορφύρω has loomed large in textual criticism ever since.²⁵ In fact, editors of Euripides and Lycophron have heavily relied on Sophocles’ καλχαίνουσ’ in establishing their critical readings and have selected καλχαίνων and ἐκάλχαινε instead of χαλκαίνων and ἐχάλκαινε. As a result, the verbal form χαλκαίνω has completely disappeared from our textual evidence.

¹⁹ Sophocles’ codex A (*Parisinus* 2712) reads χαλκαίνουσα (and accordingly the scholium on *Ant.* 20 in this manuscript says: χαλκαίνουσα. πορφύρουσα, φροντίζουσα, χάλκη γὰρ ὁ κόχλος τῆς πορφύρας), whereas the codex L (the famous *Laurentianus* 32.2) has καλχαίνουσα. The text of Euripides’ *Heraclidae*, on the other hand, depends precisely on this single *Laurentianus*, which gives *manu prima* the reading χαλκαίνων. This *lectio* has reached its *descriptus* P (preserved now in two sections: *Laurentianus conv. soppr.* 172 and *Vaticanus Palatinus gr.* 287). As is known, Demetrius Triclinius corrected the *Laurentianus* 32.2 in subsequent stages. Triclinius’ emendation καλχαίνων for χαλκαίνων may hence go back to Sophocles’ reading καλχαίνουσ’ in *Ant.* 20 – some 45 pages above in the same manuscript. As for Lycophron, the variant reading ἐχάλκαινε is to be found in secondary manuscripts, two of the *Parisini*, one *Vindobonensis*, and one *Vitebergensis* manuscript, as cited by Bachman (1830: 291–292). See also ἐχάλκαινε in the codex *Harley* 6319 and in the *Vaticanus Barb. gr.* 249.

²⁰ Meisterhans 1885: 36.

²¹ Frisk 1960: 769; Chantraine 1968: 488. See also the alternate forms Καλχηδών, Χαλκηδών, and Χαλχηδών (and Χάλκας for Κάλχας).

²² Kamerbeek 1978: 40: “χαλκαίνω as a variant form of χαλκεύω ...”.

²³ See Willi 2018: 422–423.

²⁴ See above footnote 19.

²⁵ As it has become clear (see section 2), the reading καλχαίνουσα in *Ant.* 20 was common in Imperial and Byzantine times, as it is a form well known by lexicographers and scholiasts.

The question now is under which conditions the *uaria* and *difficilior lectio* χαλκαίνω should be retained. What would be the meaning of such a verb? How could it contribute to a better understanding of the three passages in discussion? As mentioned above, the word χαλκαίνω is a derivative form of χαλκός ‘bronze’ and hence the term would appear to be rooted in ancient Greek conceptions of bronze and metalworking. In order to fully comprehend these conceptions it is crucial to recast them in their proper cultural context, which entails unveiling the complex significance of bronze and its manipulation and technology in Ancient Greece.

A number of scholars have tried to disentangle the mythology of bronze and the underlying ideology of metal manipulation and craftsmanship. Connections of smiths and wizards in Greek traditions have been pointed out and ethnographic parallels have been stressed.²⁶ Besides the eccentric role in the social position of blacksmiths in antiquity, anthropologists and historians of religion have insisted on the fact that they are seen as marginal beings who nevertheless retain a specialist wisdom which is precluded to outsiders. The power of the metalworker is awe-inspiring, as Forbes put it in *Metallurgy in Antiquity*: “Because of his relations with the spirit world he can see into the future and he often prophesies from the slags of his furnace or the charcoal”.²⁷ More specifically on bronze craftsmanship, Giorgio Camassa described, back in the early 1980s, the close connections between bronze manipulation and sharp-sightedness and mantic capacities.²⁸ In heroic times, the bronze smith acquires an exceptional status and reaches the level of divinatory wisdom. Within the Greek tradition, the relationship of metallurgy and mantic clairvoyance can be found in Lynceus, the hero provided with sharp eyesight and at the same time a prominent miner; or the monophthalmic lawgiver Lycurgus, whose close connections with metals have also been pointed out.²⁹ Needless to say, however, the clearest example is the seer Calchas (Κάλχας, although Χάλκας ‘Chalcas’ is also attested) and the related figures of Calchedon (Chalcedon is attested, too), Chalcodon, and Chalcon.³⁰

4. I propose to postulate an ancient Greek verbal form χαλκαίνω originally used in the specific context of prophetic performances. The specialized divinatory meaning of ‘utter or elucidate a prophecy’ can be read into the three passages under consideration. As the metallurgical *côté* of this term faded away over the centuries

²⁶ See Graf 1999 for an overview.

²⁷ Forbes 1950: 82.

²⁸ See notably Camassa 1980a. Cf. also Camassa 1983. On Acusilaus’ bronze tablets and the divinatory wisdom they are purported to convey, see Pàmias 2015.

²⁹ On sharp-sighted Lynceus and his connection to metalwork, see Sch. Lyc. 553; Palaeph. 9; Hyg. *Fab.* 14.12–13 (cf. Macri 2009: 102–104). On Lycurgus, see Piccirilli 1978: 917–936.

³⁰ Byzantine lexicographers related Κάλχας to καλχαίνω (see footnote 16). On the connections between Calchas, Chalcodon, and Chalcon (“eroe del bronzo miceneo”) with bronze craftsmanship, see Camassa 1980b.

in post-Mycenaean Greece, the original etymology of this verb was not understood any longer by Classical or Hellenistic Greek speakers. Phonetic contiguity of χαλκαίνω with καλχαίνω, as well as spelling fluctuation in ancient Greek, contributed to the replacing, or confusion, of one term with the other.

If seen against this background, the passages at issue take on a new significance. A unitary and simple meaning of this verb emerges from the three of them. In Ismene's address to her sister (*Ant.* 20: δηλοῖς γάρ τι χαλκαίνουσ' ἔπος), the word ἔπος (which as a direct complement of καλχαίνω needs otherwise to be explained away as an 'internal' accusative) has now the value of 'oracular word' in this context (see *LSJ*³¹, s. u. ἔπος: A.I.4 "word of a deity, oracle").³¹ From the point of view of Ismene, her sister is "obviously uttering a prophetic word". Indeed, in the whispering dialogue at dawn, in utmost concealment and confidentiality, Antigone is set to explain to Ismene for what purpose she took her outside the gates during the night. And the reason why is that she is willing to disclose, and share with, Ismene alone the meaning of the rumour which haunts the city (line 7: φασὶ πανδήμῳ πόλει). This common report confirms that the last of the sins bequeathed by Oedipus is about to be accomplished (see lines 2–3), namely, that Polyneices' corpse shall remain unburied and unlamented. To these rumours Antigone again refers in the following speech (lines 23, 27, and 31: λέγουσι, φασιν, and φασι). An "anonymous, ill-defined public voice",³² rumour calls for elucidation. Interpreting *phēmai* – talks, gossips, rumours – is widely held to be a form of divination in antiquity.³³ Aeschines defines *phēmē* as something which spreads through the city, making private affairs public, "often prophesying what will happen in the future".³⁴ And this rumoured public decree is what Antigone is expected by Ismene to reveal and unravel.³⁵

As for the passage in Lycophron (I leave Euripides' *Heraclidae* for later discussion), Cassandra's last words in the *Alexandra* make it clear that Apollo set up

31 See for instance A. A. 1162: τί τόδε τορὸν ἄγαν ἔπος ἐφημίσω; A. Pr. 1032–1033: ψευδηγορεῖν γὰρ οὐκ ἐπίσταται στόμα / τὸ Δῖον, ἀλλὰ πᾶν ἔπος τελεῖ. Cf. also ἔπη in the passage of Lycophron (1455) under discussion.

32 Segal [1981] 1999: 161; Fletcher 2008.

33 See Bouché-Leclercq 1879: 154–160; Crippa 2012; Dillon 2017: 198–202. The practice of cleidomancy is already attested in Homer (Ready 2014); as for Aeschylus, see Peradotto 1969. Note that this sort of divination could easily be practiced without a professional *mantis*. See Johnston 2008: 131.

34 See Aeschin. 1.127 (and note the verb *μαντεύεται*): περὶ δὲ τὸν τῶν ἀνθρώπων βίον καὶ τὰς πράξεις ἀψευδὴς τις ἀπὸ ταῦτομάτου πλανᾶται φήμη κατὰ τὴν πόλιν, καὶ διαγγέλλει τοῖς πολλοῖς τὰς ἰδίας πράξεις, πολλὰ δὲ καὶ μαντεύεται περὶ τῶν μελλόντων ἔσεσθαι ("But in the case of the lives of men and their activities, an unerring report of its own accord spreads throughout the city. This reports private activities to the general public, and in many cases it actually gives a prediction about what is likely to happen"; trans. Fisher). Cf. Serafim 2020: 33–36.

35 On the importance of gossip and rumours in a "society that lacked organized news media", as Classical Athens did, and the forms of social intercourse that helped to spread news across the city, see Ober 1989: 148–151. Needless to say, this hypersensitivity to the spoken word is characteristic of the orally oriented community that Athens was in Sophocles' day (see Peradotto 1969: 8).

her failure to communicate true knowledge (Lyc. 1454). And the reason why is that the god was deprived of sexual intercourse with her (λέκτρων στερηθείς). If we accept the arguments developed so far, the second part of line 1457, ὧν ἐχάλκαιεν τυχεῖν, will point to Apollo's foreknowledge and mantic capacities. In fact, contrary to the traditional interpretation, the relative clause (introduced by ὧν) does not concern λέκτρων 'bed, sexual intercourse', but θεσφάτων 'the prophecies' of the preceding line. A slight change of punctuation (a comma after στερηθείς) is required (Lyc. 1454–1458):

πίστιν γὰρ ἡμῶν Λεψιεὺς ἐνόσφισε,
 ψευδηγόροις φήμαισιν ἐγχρίσας ἔπη
 καὶ θεσφάτων πρόμαντιν ἀψευδῆ φρόνιν,
 λέκτρων στερηθείς, ὧν ἐχάλκαιεν τυχεῖν.
 θήσει δ' ἀληθῆ.

The Lepsian [Apollo, *scil.*] robbed me of my credibility,
 smearing with untrue libels my utterances
 and the true prophetic skill of my oracles,
 which he had foreseen would occur, as he was deprived of my bed.
 But he will make it all true.

And the following words in line 1458 (θήσει δ' ἀληθῆ) are in complete consistency with the prophecies that Apollo had anticipated in 1457 and that he will 'un-conceal' (ἀ-ληθῆ). Cassandra's prophecy is not defective. Apollo will merely make her words true, or else will leave 'concealment' of her truths behind, after discrediting Cassandra by means of empty rumours.³⁶

5. Euripides (*Heracl.* 40) remains to be addressed. The passage under discussion belongs to the prologue of the play, spoken by Iolaus. Driven by Eurystheus, king of Argos, the children of Heracles flee as fugitives throughout Greece until they reach Attica. Iolaus appeals for protection on behalf of them as suppliants and they seek refuge in Marathon. Although reference is made to Athens and the Athenians throughout the play, the action is located in Marathon, and more precisely at the altar of Zeus Agoraios.³⁷ The plain of this land is inhabited by the two sons of Theseus, Demophon and Acamas: πεδία γὰρ τῆσδε χθονὸς / δισσοὺς κατοικεῖν Θησέως παῖδας λόγος (lines 34–35). Theseus' sons are said to have acquired it by lot (line 36: κλήρῳ λαχόντας) – in other words, not by violence. The legitimacy of power is, hence, attributed to the casting of lots (κλήρος), that is to say, an allotment by sortition among the descendants of Pandion. (Note that one of the ten

³⁶ See the discussion of this passage in Pillinger 2019: 143–144.

³⁷ Mendelsohn 2002: 50–65.

Cleisthenic tribes of Attica, Pandionis, takes its name from this eponymous hero.)³⁸ Although sortition was instrumental for the functioning of Athenian democracy, its ritual origins reach far into the past.³⁹ Cross-cultural studies insist on the universality of this practice.⁴⁰

Although Iolaus' speech, and his strong emphasis on allegiance to kin, is strongly embedded in an archaic and aristocratic mentality, there is an anachronistic allusion to a democratic practice. Or, to put it better, clan-oriented values are realigned with democratic and political discourse.⁴¹ As a matter of fact, a concern among Euripidean scholars is to account for the oddity of Zeus Agoraios as the object of Iolaus' and the Heraclids' supplication: "Why is the appeal not to Zeus Hikesios, Aidoios, or Soter?", wonders a modern commentator of this tragedy.⁴² Later mythographic accounts, attempting to regularize the myth in order to rationalize the event, report that the supplication of the Heraclids took place at the Altar of Pity (ἐλέου βωμός).⁴³ No evidence of a cult of Zeus Agoraios at Marathon survives, but an altar of Zeus Agoraios in Athens seems to have been removed to the agora after the Pnyx ceased to be the main place of assembly.⁴⁴ "A symbol of Athenian democratic debate",⁴⁵ Euripides might have invented the existence of such an altar in Marathon. In this context, it needs to be remembered that it is hardly a coincidence that sortition procedures in Athens used to take place at a single location in the agora – namely in the Theseion.⁴⁶

A particular remark on the Greek text is in order. The *Laurentianus* reads τὸνδ' ... ὄρον in line 38, and this is the *lectio* that must prevail, as some modern scholars argue.⁴⁷ As it was misunderstood as 'border', a correction was introduced

³⁸ Within the tribe of Pandionis one of the demes was Probalinthos, which originally belonged to the Tetrapolis (along with Marathon, Oinoe, and Trikorinthos). See Roussel 1976: 281. On the site of this deme, see Humphreys 2018: 895–898.

³⁹ See, for instance, Demont (2003) for its role in Athenian democracy. Cf. Demont 2019: 101: "Le sort semble [...] se laïciser peu à peu, et son usage décrire peu à peu de façon presque exclusive une pratique politique de type démocratique". See also Reggiani (2016: 125), on the "originaria religiosità della procedura, [che] non [è] espressione di estrema democraticità ma metodo di rivelazione di una volontà suprema".

⁴⁰ For a comparison of Chinese and Greek uses of cleromancy, see Raphals 2013. For Near Eastern parallels, see West 1997: 110 ("Myths reflect actual use of the lot in the Near East to allocate shares of a man's estate to his sons ..."). Cf. footnote 56 below.

⁴¹ Mendelsohn 2002: 64. The positive presentation of Athens in this play is that it is governed along democratic lines (Allan 2001: 135).

⁴² Wilkins 1993: 60. See also Rosivach (1978: 32), who adds Zeus Xenios to the list.

⁴³ Apollod. 2.8.1 [167]; Schol. Ar. *Eq.* 1151.

⁴⁴ Thompson/Wycherley 1972: 161. A scholium on Aristophanes' *Knights* (410) may contain a reference to this transfer.

⁴⁵ Wiles 1997: 193.

⁴⁶ The precise location of this temple remains an enigma. See Aeschin. 3.13; Arist. *Ath.* 62.1. Cf. Rhodes [1981] 1985: 689–690; Jones 1995: 514.

⁴⁷ See the editions of Garzya (1972), Calderón (2007), and Almirall (2016). On Euripides' manuscript *Laurentianus*, see footnote 19.

by Stephanus (τήνδ' ... ὁδόν) and followed by some subsequent editors. In fact, in Attic terminology of land tenure, the word ὅρος is well attested for a marker indicating an estate which had been set apart as a τέμενος and it belongs to a special, sacral category.⁴⁸ It is in this sacred precinct that Iolaus, Alcmene, and the Heraclids take refuge at the altar of Zeus Agoraios.

The background of the *Heraclidae* represents in its first part a *hikesia* tableau and Iolaus' rhetorical words point, indeed, to a suppliant discourse.⁴⁹ However, the setting at the altar of Zeus Agoraios and the reference to lot drawing (κλήρω λαχόντας) and to land inheritance at this point suggest other avenues for interpretation – namely, political division and allotment and ownership of territory. At the core of the Heraclids' misfortunes lies not only the question as to whether the refugees will be protected by the Athenians, but also which territory they will eventually inhabit and whether a piece of land will be allotted to them. A few lines above Iolaus has made it clear that the children of Heracles have been “bereft from a plot of land all over Greece” (line 31): πάσης δὲ χώρας Ἑλλάδος τητῶμενοι.⁵⁰ The mythology of Heracles' children concerns their difficulties in finding a proper location to establish. In fact, some literary accounts show that, before their arrival to Marathon, oracular prophecies had signalled the failure of the Heraclids to settle down in other parts of Greece, like the Peloponnese; and afterwards, a subsequent oracular response would be requested from Delphi.⁵¹

At this point in the plot, this is precisely what Iolaus is engaged in. It is on account of their mutual kinship (line 37: τοῖσδ' ἐγγὺς ὄντας) that Iolaus and Alcmene expect from Theseus' sons to share their allotted territory – and it is because of them that, Iolaus affirms, they have reached Marathon (line 38: ὧν ἕκατι ... ἀφικόμεσθ'): Demophon and Acamas, Theseus' sons, are related to the Heraclids through Theseus' mother Aethra – Alcmene's cousin (see lines 207–213).⁵² Iolaus is trying to discern which is the location to be allotted to Heracles' children. The verb χαλκαίνω (line 40) appears again in a context of a mantic performance: ἐγὼ μὲν ἀμφὶ τοῖσδε χαλκαίνων τέκνοις can be translated as “I am asking for a divinatory decision regarding these children”. This might help explain why Eurystheus' herald, when he first appears, scornfully addresses Iolaus as a diviner: μάντις δ' ἦσθ' ἄρ' οὐ καλὸς τάδε (line 65), which can be an echo of Agamemnon's rebuke of Calchas at the beginning of the *Iliad* (1.106): μάντι κακῶν οὐ πῶ ποτέ μοι τὸ κρή-

⁴⁸ Oliver 1963. Cf. Lalonde 1991: 5 and Wade-Gery 1932: 878–882.

⁴⁹ See Mendelsohn 2002: 58–62; Bernek 2004: 221–263. Notably, in the first 350 lines a small-scale suppliant play is performed (Burnett 1976: 15).

⁵⁰ And not: “since we have been banished from all the rest of Greece”, as Kovacs has it. On the archaic meaning of χώρα as a defined, limited space and its continuity in the Classical period, see Casevitz 1998.

⁵¹ See Apollod. 2.8.2 [169 and 171]. Cf. Isoc. 6.17–20.

⁵² On kinship as a basis for alliance through the recorded history in the ancient world, see Jones 1999.

γυον εἵπας. A recurrent feature of *manteis* in tragedy is their opposition to the authority of autocratic kings.⁵³ And Iolaus speaks and behaves as such.

Cleromantic divination was practiced by singular diviners but also at some oracular centres – like Dodona, Didyma, and maybe also Delphi. Objects used as lots included pebbles, beans, rods, dices, knucklebones. They could be shaken in an urn, thrown on a table, or thrown into water. As Bundrick has shown, Athenian vase painting may provide iconographic evidence of this practice.⁵⁴ Textual evidence is not absent. In Pindar's fourth *Pythian Ode* (4.189–191), the seer Mopsus is said to prophesy by means of sacred lots. Commenting on this Pindaric passage, the scholiast provides evidence for their use at sacred tables in the sanctuaries (Sch. Pi. P. 4.338):

κλάροισιν: ἰστέον ὅτι κλήροις τοπρὶν ἐμαντεύοντο, καὶ ἦσαν ἐπὶ τῶν ἱερῶν τραπέζων ἀστράγαλοι, οἷς ῥίπτοντες ἐμαντεύοντο.

It should to be noted that lots were formerly used for divination purposes. And there were knucklebones on the sacred tables with which they used to take oracles by throwing them.

The scholiast is probably overgeneralizing this practice, being superficially acquainted with it. And he does not give indications concerning the sortition mechanism. However, Pausanias explains the function of one of them in Bura (Achaia).⁵⁵ Greek myth provides a number of examples of these practices. Casting lots appears in Homer as a means of dividing an inheritance between brothers (*Od.* 14.208) or the universe among Cronos' sons (*Il.* 15.187). It constitutes the mechanism used to avert – without much success – the brothers' quarrel between Eteocles and Polynices upon Oedipus' death, both in Stesichorus and Aeschylus.⁵⁶ Ultimately, we are facing the crucial problem of the division of inheritance: how the family portion of land would descend was understandably a matter of utmost importance.

⁵³ Dillery 2005: 172.

⁵⁴ Bundrick 2017.

⁵⁵ See Paus. 7.25.10: καταβάντων δὲ ἐκ Βούρας ὡς ἐπὶ θάλασσαν ποταμός τε Βουραϊκὸς ὀνομαζόμενος καὶ Ἡρακλῆς οὐ μέγας ἐστὶν ἐν σπηλαίῳ· ἐπὶ κλησὶς μὲν καὶ τούτου Βουραϊκός, μαντείας δὲ ἐπὶ πίνακι τε καὶ ἀστράγαλοις ἔστι <λαβεῖν>. εὐχεται μὲν γὰρ πρὸ τοῦ ἀγάλματος ὁ τῷ θεῷ χρώμενος, ἐπὶ δὲ τῇ εὐχῇ λαβὼν ἀστράγαλους – οἱ δὲ ἄφθονοι παρὰ τῷ Ἡρακλεῖ κεῖνται – τέσσαρας ἀφίησιν ἐπὶ τῇ τραπέζῃ· ἐπὶ δὲ παντὶ ἀστράγαλου σχήματι γεγραμμένα ἐν πίνακι ἐπίτηδες ἐξήγησιν ἔχει τοῦ σχήματος (“When one descends from Bura towards the sea, there is the Buraikos river and a not large image of Herakles in a grotto; he too is called Buraikos, and he offers an oracle from a list and from astragaloi. Whoever intends to consult the divinity, prays in front of the image, and after the prayer, he takes up four astragaloi (plenty of them are lying around Herakles) and rolls them on the table. For any combination of the astragaloi, the inscription in the list gives an easily accessible explanation of the combination”; trans. Graf 2005: 62).

⁵⁶ Burnett 1988; Demont 2000; Wick 2003.

Mythology is not our only source for evidence of allotment and distribution of land by mantic resolution. In Athens, each tribe possessed, or rather administered, one or more pieces of a sacred real estate.⁵⁷ Problems concerning the demarcation of sacred land did eventually arise. And historical disputes show how divination could be used in cases of doubt. Less than one century after the premiere of the *Heraclidae*, the Athenian assembly decided to divide the recently acquired territory of Oropus in northern Attica (335 BCE). It was broken up into five roughly equal lots and the five mountains were subsequently allotted to the ten Athenian tribes. After the tribes had been paired so that two shared each mountain, it became clear that Akamantis and Hippothoontis had mistakenly been allocated land belonging to the god Amphiaraus. In order to obtain a signal from the god in this question, the popular assembly appointed three men. They went to the sanctuary of Amphiaraus at Oropus and spend the night there in order to learn what Amphiaraus would let them dream. Indeed, this particular incubation sanctuary was an oracle of dreams.⁵⁸ A *lex sacra*, coming from this Amphiareion and dated to the early fourth century BCE (ca. 386–374 BCE), may provide a parallel to the religious, and divinatory, setting of the Euripidean passage. It states the following prescription (CGRN 75, lines 43–47):⁵⁹

ἐν δὲ τοῖ κοιμητηρίο-
ι καθεύδειν χωρὶς μὲν τὸς ἄνδρας, χωρὶς
δὲ τὰς γυναῖκας, τοὺς μὲν ἄνδρας ἐν τοῖ πρὸ ἡ-
[δ]ς τοῦ βωμοῦ, τὰς δὲ γυναῖκας ἐν τοῖ πρὸ ἡσπέ-
ρης

In the dormitory, men and women should sleep separately from one another, the men in the part to the east of the altar and the women in the part to the west.

A screen or a barrier might have been employed in the Amphiareion to separate sexes – or else an invisible line was observed between the altar and the back wall of the stoa.⁶⁰ Although necessary for reasons of purity and other practical factors, the segregation of men and women in a sanctuary is not directly paralleled to our knowledge. Now it is precisely to a strict gender segregation that Iolaus refers at this point (39–43): “Our flight is generated by a pair of grey-heads, with me giving anxious thought for these boys while Alcmene guards the daughters of her son

⁵⁷ Papazarkadas 2011: 99–111. By the end of the Classical period, the Attic tribes ended up possessing as extensive areas as they ever had.

⁵⁸ One of these men was a certain Euxenippos. Upon their return, Polyuktos denounced Euxenippos for subversive activity. For the use of one of those who supported Euxenippos, Hyperides (*Eux.*) wrote the speech that is our source for the whole matter. See Isager/Skydsgaard 1992: 186; Papazarkadas 2011: 102–106; Bowden 2019; Van Hove 2019.

⁵⁹ See *I.Oropos* 277 = *GHI* 27 (Rhodes/Osborne 2003: 128–134).

⁶⁰ See Renberg 2016: 279–281 and 628–633. According to Hyperides (*Eux.* 14; see footnote 58), the incubants slept in the *hieron*.

within the temple, clasping them in her embrace. For shame prevents us from putting young girls before the crowd and standing them at the altar”.⁶¹

6. As in the case of Antigone and Apollo above, the divinatory performance by Iolaus at the beginning of the *Heraclidae* is expressed through the verbal form χαλκαίνω. For a Classical and Post-Classical Greek speaker the original etymology of this word was completely obscure as its metallurgical *côté* had vanished long ago. Therefore, it could be easily confused with the phonetically contiguous καλχαίνω by a copyist at any moment of the history of textual transmission of the *Antigone*, the *Heraclidae*, and the *Alexandra*. And yet a number of manuscripts from separate textual traditions bear witness of the original χαλκαίνω.⁶²

If our proposal holds true, the postulated verbal form χαλκαίνω would provide an economic, comprehensive interpretation of the three passages at issue. Its meaning ‘utter or elucidate a prophecy’ may be read into the three of them, without any need to adjust a figurative use in order to meet the requirements of each context: ‘to ponder deeply’; ‘to be unquiet, excited’, ‘to long for’.⁶³ Ancient scholars strove to account for a metaphorical meaning of καλχαίνω, its primary meaning being ‘to be purple-coloured’, as Nicander (*Th.* 641) shows.⁶⁴ Therefore they resorted to figurative and allegorizing interpretations related to κάλχη ‘purple limpet’ and its synonym πορφύρα. And their rationalizing efforts have loomed large over

⁶¹ Iolaus’ concern about Heracles’ daughters being seen in public would hence not be a retrojection of a fifth-century Athenian convention into the world of heroic myth, as Allan (2001: 136) assumes. Rather, if a reference to the Amphiareion iatromantic cult is relevant here, this motif can be seen as a secondary element of dislocation in the *Heraclidae*, along with the Marathonian Tetrapolis, vis-à-vis the Athenian centrality of the altar of Zeus Agoraios, as Mendelsohn (2002: 62–65) has delineated. A conflation of locations and a blurring of boundaries is at work here (Athens, Marathon, Oropus). In fact, the word τέρμονας (line 37) may refer to the bordering location of the Amphiareion at the geographical limits between Attica (Ἀθηνῶν in line 38 refers to Attica) and Boeotia. Besides, the term πέραθεν (line 82) ‘from across the water’ (cf. Hdt. 6.33: Βυζάντιοι μὲν νυν καὶ οἱ πέρηθε Καλχηδόνιοι) suits a location on the coastal region of Attica opposite Euboea (line 83: Εὐβοῖδ’ ἄκταν) better than Marathon itself: “la posizione geografica di Oropo, sul mare [...] ne fa un’importante testa di ponte, sul continente, del traffico con Eretria in Eubea” (Musti/Beschi 1982: 396). The establishment of the Amphiareion at Oropus is dated to the last quarter of the fifth century BCE, which roughly fits the date of performance of the *Heraclidae* (dating oscillates between 430 and 420 BCE).

⁶² The only manuscript including two of these texts (the *Antigone* and the *Heraclidae*), the *Laurentianus* 32.2 (*codex unicus* for the *Heraclidae*), has suffered corrections. The original reading, *manu prima*, χαλκαίνων (*Heracl.* 40) was probably emended to καλχαίνων to meet the reading καλχαίνουσα in the text of the *Antigone* in the same manuscript (see footnote 19).

⁶³ See footnote 9.

⁶⁴ See footnote 1. Classical theory assumes that a term has a single primal meaning, and that all other uses are in some sense metaphorical (Innes 2003: 11). Literary, and specifically poetic, language is based on the (controversial) opposition between normal and deviant uses of a word (see Silk 2019). At the end, we are facing the crucial problem of the incommensurability of semantic structures in the language studied and the lexicographer’s mother tongue. On the way in which the range of meaning of an ancient word is sectioned and arranged in keeping with the thought associations of the age and time of the dictionary writer, see Clarke 2019: 252.

the centuries.⁶⁵ A powerful exegetical tool, allegorical interpretation has long been instrumental in coping with ancient texts. And the scholarly procedure combining allegoresis and etymology is “one of the features particularly characteristic of the Western classical tradition”.⁶⁶ As a matter of fact, it comes as no surprise that Friedrich Hölderlin was scorned by his contemporaries for his failure to resort to a metaphorical translation of Ismene’s καλχαίνουσα in the *Antigone*: “Was ist’s, du scheinst ein rothes Wort zu färben?”.⁶⁷

Jordi Pàmias, Departament de Ciències de l’Antiguitat i de l’Edat Mitjana,
Facultat de Filosofia i Lletres, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona,
ES-08193 Bellaterra, Jordi.Pamias@uab.cat

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⁶⁵ Besides the survey to ancient and modern scholarship concerning καλχαίνω in the preceding pages, an example from sixteenth century humanism will be cited. Camerarius’ (1534: 66) commentary on line 20 of *Antigone* may be seen as a connecting bond between ancient scholarship (as it can be recovered from medieval scholia) and modern criticism: “καλχαίνουσα significat turbans, aut animo perturbato versans. Nam καλχαίνειν est purpura tingere, cuius concham κάλχην dictam uolunt. Sed translatus est vel a tinctoribus, ut similiter cogitationes animi inter curas confundi intelligamus, aut quod purpura e profundo pelago emergens pulcherrimum colorem attribuat vestibis, et eodem modo singularia esse soleant alta consilia animi” (“καλχαίνουσα means ‘disturbed’ or ‘brooding over with anxious mind’. For καλχαίνειν is to dye with purple, whose shell they call κάλχη. However, it has been transferred from dyers so that we may understand that thoughts of the soul are likewise confused amidst cares, or because purple, emerging from the deep sea, gives the most beautiful color to garments, and in the same way the deep thoughts of the mind are wont to be extraordinary”).

⁶⁶ Most 2016: 52. For a history of the Western interaction between etymology and allegoresis, see Del Bello 2007.

⁶⁷ See Fornaro 2018: 95 (cf. footnote 2): “deriso dai contemporanei per la sua esasperata aderenza alla lettera” (cf. Seebass 1921: 421). Bernofsky 2005: 121: “It has already been pointed out that this line is a mistranslation [...]. What is striking about the line in German is Hölderlin’s willingness to adhere to the literal phrase rather than taking refuge in a metaphor that would have offered a rationalization for the image” (my emphasis).

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