

## The Olive in Greek Tragedy through War and Peace (CAMWS 2022)

Kristin O. Lord (klord@wlu.ca)

Wilfrid Laurier University

### I.A. Aeschylus, *Persae* 616-18 (spoken by Atossa)

τῆς τ' αἰὲν ἐν φύλλοισι θαλλούσης βίον  
ξανθῆς **ἐλαίας** καρπὸς εὐώδης πάρα,  
ἄνθη τε πλεκτά, παμφόρου γαίας τέκνα.

And here is the fragrant fruit of the yellow **olive** which flourishes all its life long in its leaves, and garlanded flowers, produce of the bounteous earth.

### I.B. Aeschylus, *Persae* 879-887 (sung by the chorus)

νᾶσοι θ' αἶ κατὰ πρῶν' ἄλιον περὶ κλυστοί  
τᾶδε γὰρ προσήμεναι,  
οἶα Λέσβος **ἐλαιόφυτός** τε Σάμος, Χίος ἠδὲ Πάρος,  
Νάξος, Μύκονος, Τήνω τε συνάπτουσ' Ἄνδρος ἀγγιγείτων·

The sea-washed islands off the headland, lying close to the sea, such as **olive-planted** Lesbos and Samos, Chios and Paros, Naxos, Mykonos, and Andros which lies adjacent to Tenos.

### II. Herodotus 8.55.1

ταύτην ὣν τὴν **ἐλαίην** ἅμα τῷ ἄλλῳ ἱρῷ κατέλαβε ἐμπρησθῆναι ὑπὸ τῶν βαρβάρων· δευτέρῃ δὲ ἡμέρῃ ἀπὸ τῆς ἐμπρήσιος Ἀθηναίων οἱ θύειν ὑπὸ βασιλέος κελευόμενοι ὡς ἀνέβησαν ἐς τὸ ἱρόν, ὤρων βλαστὸν ἐκ τοῦ στελέχεος ὅσον τε πηχυαῖον ἀναδεδραμηκότα. οὗτοι μὲν νυν ταῦτα ἔφρασαν.

It happened that this **olive tree** was burnt by the barbarians with the rest of the sacred precinct, but on the day after its burning, when the Athenians ordered by the king to sacrifice went up to the sacred precinct, they saw a shoot about a cubit long sprung from the stump. They then reported this.

### III.A. Homer, *Od.* vii.114-116

ἔνθα δὲ δένδρεα μακρὰ πεφύκασι τηλεθόωντα,  
ὄγχναι καὶ ροιαὶ καὶ μηλέαι ἀγλαόκαρποι  
συκέαι τε γλυκεραὶ καὶ **ἐλαῖαι** τηλεθόωσαι.

Tall luxuriant trees have grown there, pears and pomegranate trees and bright-fruited apples and sweet figs and luxuriant **olive trees**.

### III. B. Homer, *Od.* xxiv.244-247

ὦ γέρον, οὐκ ἀδαημονίη σ' ἔχει ἀμφιπολεύειν  
ὄρχατον, ἀλλ' εὖ τοι κομιδὴ ἔχει, οὐδέ τι πάμπαν,  
οὐ φυτόν, οὐ συκὴν, οὐκ ἄμπελος, οὐ μὲν **ἐλαίη**,  
οὐκ ὄγχνη, οὐ πρασιή τοι ἄνευ κομιδῆς κατὰ κῆπον.

Aged sir, you have no lack of still in caring for a garden, but indeed your care is good, and there is nothing at all, neither plant, nor fig, nor vine, nor **olive** in fact, nor pear, nor garden-plot that is lacking care in your garden.

### III. C. Homer, *Od.* v. 474-477

ὥς ἄρα οἱ φρονέοντι δοάσσατο κέρδιον εἶναι·  
βῆ ῥ' ἴμεν εἰς ὕλην· τὴν δὲ σχεδὸν ὕδατος εὗρεν  
ἐν περιφαινομένῳ· δοιοὺς δ' ἄρ' ὑπήλυθε θάμνους,  
ἐξ ὁμόθεν πεφυῶτας· **ὁ μὲν φυλῆς, ὁ δ' ἐλαίης.**

This thing seemed the better to him as he pondered. He went into the wood and found it near the water in a visible location. He crept under two bushes growing from the same spot, **one thorn/wild olive, the other an olive tree.**

### IV.A. Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* 493-502 (likely spoken by Clytemnestra)

κήρυκ' ἀπ' ἀκτῆς τόνδ' ὀρῶ κατὰσκιον  
κλάδοις **ἐλαίας**· μαρτυρεῖ δέ μοι κάσις  
495 πηλοῦ ξύνουρος διψία κόνις τάδε,  
ὥς οὔτ' ἄναυδος οὔτε σοι δαίων φλόγα  
ἕλης ὀρείας σημανεῖ καπνῶ πυρός,  
ἀλλ' ἢ τὸ χαίρειν μᾶλλον ἐκβάξει λέγων·  
τὸν ἀντίον δὲ τοῖσδ' ἀποστέργω λόγον·  
500 εὔ γὰρ πρὸς εὔ φανεῖσι προσθήκη πέλοι.  
ὅστις τάδ' ἄλλως τῆδ' ἐπεύχεται πόλει,  
αὐτὸς φρενῶν καρποῖτο τὴν ἀμαρτίαν.

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Some mss. attribute this passage to the chorus.

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I see a herald covered with **olive boughs** coming from the shore. The thirsty dust, a sister kindred to mud, testifies to me about these things, that neither voiceless nor kindling a flame of mountain wood does he signal with the smoke of fire— but either he will call out bidding us to rejoice the more; but I loathe the words opposite to this. May there be a good addition to the good that has appeared. Whoever prays these things otherwise for the city, may he reap the fruit of the error of his mind.

### IV.B. Aeschylus, *Eumenides* 39-45 (spoken by the Pythia)

ἐγὼ μὲν ἔρπω πρὸς πολυστεφῆ μυχόν,  
40 ὀρῶ δ' ἐπ' ὀμφαλῶ μὲν ἄνδρα θεομουσῆ  
ἔδραν ἔχοντα προστρόπαιον, αἶματι  
στάζοντα χεῖρας, καὶ νεοσπαδῆς ξίφος  
ἔχοντ', **ἐλαίας** θ' ὑψιγέννητον κλάδον  
λήνει μεγίστῳ σωφρόνως ἐστεμμένον,  
45 ἀργῆτι μαλλῶ· τῆδε γὰρ τρανῶς ἐρῶ.

I walk into the innermost shrine, garlanded with wreaths; and I see a man, defiled in the eyes of the gods, occupying the seat of suppliants on the center-stone, his hands dripping with blood, and holding a freshly drawn sword, and an **olive branch** grown high, decorously wreathed with an enormous tuft of wool, a shining fleece (of the type used on a suppliant's branch); for I will speak clearly of this.

**IV.C. Aeschylus, *Eumenides* 804-807 (spoken by Athena)**

ἐγὼ γὰρ ὑμῖν πανδίκως ὑπίσχομαι  
ἔδρας τε καὶ κευθμῶνας †ένδικου† χθονὸς  
**λιπαροθρόνοι**σιν ἡμένας ἐπ' ἐσχάραις  
ἔξιν ὑπ' ἀστῶν τῶνδε τιμαλφουμένας.

For I undertake to offer you unreservedly an underground abode of a just land, which you will have sitting on hearths **with shining thrones**, worshipped by these citizens.

**V.A. Euripides, *Iphigenia in Tauris* 630-635 (spoken by Iphigenia)**

οὐ μὴν, ἐπειδὴ τυγχάνεις Ἀργεῖος ὦν,  
ἀλλ' ὦν γε δυνατὸν οὐδ' ἐγὼ λείψω χάριν.  
πολὺν τε γὰρ σοι κόσμον ἐνθήσω τάφῳ,  
ξανθῶ τ' **ἐλαίῳ** σῶμα σὸν †κατασβέσω†  
καὶ τῆς ὀρείας ἀνθεμόρρυτον γάνος  
ξουθῆς μελίσης ἐς πυρὰν βαλῶ σέθεν.

Since you happen to be an Argive, I will definitely not leave out any favor I can do; for I will set much ornament on your tomb, and I will quench your body with golden **olive oil**, and I will throw onto your pyre a sheen, flowing from flowers, of the tawny mountain bee.

**V.B. Euripides, *Iphigenia in Tauris* 1094-1115 (sung by chorus)**

ἐγὼ σοι παραβάλλομαι  
θρήνου, ἄπτερος ὄρνις,  
ποθοῦσ' Ἑλλάνων ἀγόρους,  
ποθοῦσ' Ἄρτεμιν λοχίαν,  
ἃ παρὰ Κύνθιον ὄχθον οἰ-  
κεῖ φοίνικά θ' ἀβροκόμαν  
1100 δάφναν τ' εὐερνέα καὶ  
γλαυκᾶς θαλλὸν ἱερὸν **ἐλαί-**  
**ας**, Λατοῦς ὠδῖνα φίλαν,  
λίμναν θ' εἰλίσσουσαν ὕδωρ  
κύκλιον, ἔνθα κύκνος μελω-  
δὸς Μούσας θεραπεύει.

I, a wingless bird, compare laments with you, longing for the festivals of Greeks, longing for Artemis of childbirth, who lives by the Cynthian mountain and the palm with delicate leaves and the well-grown laurel and the sacred shoot of the gray-green **olive**, Leto's dear child, and the lake turning in a circle around its water, where the melodious swan serves the Muses.

**V.C. Euripides, *Iphigenia in Tauris* 1123-1131 (sung by chorus to Iphigenia)**

καὶ σὲ μὲν, πότνι', Ἀργεῖα  
πεντηκόντορος οἴκον ἄξει·  
1125 συρίζων θ' ὁ κηρόδετος  
Πανὸς οὐρείου κάλαμος  
κώπαις ἐπιθωῦξει,  
ὁ Φοῖβός θ' ὁ μάντις ἔχων  
κέλαδον ἑπτατόνου λύρας  
1130 ἀείδων ἄξει **λιπαρὰν**  
εὔσ' **Ἀθηναίων ἐπὶ γᾶν.**

And you, lady, the Argive penteconter (old-fashioned battleship) will bear you home; the wax-bound reed of the mountain-god Pan, piping, will give loud commands to the oars, and Phoebus the prophet, having the sound of his seven-stringed lyre, singing, will lead you well to the **sleek** land of the Athenians.

**VI. Herodotus 4.99.2-3**

[2] τὸ δὲ ἀπὸ Ἰστροῦ ἔρχομαι σημανέων τὸ πρὸς θάλασσαν αὐτῆς τῆς Σκυθικῆς χώρας ἐς μέτρησιν. ἀπὸ Ἰστροῦ αὕτη ἤδη ἡ ἀρχαίη Σκυθίη ἐστί, πρὸς μεσαμβρίην τε καὶ νότον ἄνεμον κειμένη, μέχρι πόλιος Καρκινίτιδος καλεομένης.

[3] τὸ δὲ ἀπὸ ταύτης τὴν μὲν ἐπὶ θάλασσαν τὴν αὐτὴν φέρουσαν, ἐοῦσαν ὀρεινὴν τε χώραν καὶ προκειμένην τὸ ἐς Πόντον, νέμεται τὸ **Ταυρικὸν ἔθνος** μέχρι χερσονήσου τῆς τρηχέης καλεομένης· αὕτη δὲ ἐς θάλασσαν τὴν πρὸς ἀπηλιώτην ἄνεμον κατήκει.

[2] Now I am going to describe the coast of the true Scythia from the Ister, and give its measurements. The ancient Scythian land begins at the Ister and faces south and the south wind, as far as the city called Carcinitis.

[3] Beyond this place, the country fronting the same sea is hilly and projects into the Pontus; it is inhabited by the **Tauric nation** as far as what is called the Rough Peninsula; and this ends in the eastern sea (the Sea of Azov). (A.D. Godley, trans., adapted)

**VII. Euripides, *Ion* 1433-6 (Creusa is speaking)**

στέφανον **ἐλαίας** ἀμφέθηκά σοι τότε,  
ἦν πρῶτ' Ἀθᾶνα σκόπελον εἰσηνέγκατο,  
1435 ὃς, εἴπερ ἔστιν, οὐποτ' ἐκλείπει χλόην,  
θάλλει δ', **ἐλαίας** ἐξ ἀκηράτου γεγώς.

I placed a crown of an **olive tree** around you at that time, which first Athena brought out of the rock, which, if it still exists, has not lost its green, but flourishes, born from an immortal **olive tree**.

**VIII. Sophocles, *Philoctetes* 15-21 (Odysseus is speaking to Neoptolemus)**

ἀλλ' ἔργον ἤδη σὸν τὰ λοιφ' ὑπηρετεῖν,  
σκοπεῖν θ' ὅπου 'στ' ἐνταῦθα δίστομος πέτρα  
τοιάδ', ἴν' ἐν ψύχει μὲν ἡλίου διπλῆ  
πάρεστιν ἐνθάκησις, ἐν θέρει δ' ὕπνον

δί' ἀμφιτρῆτος αὐλίου πέμπει πνοή,  
20 βαιὸν δ' ἔνερθεν ἐξ ἀριστερᾶς τάχ' ἄν  
ἴδοις ποτὸν κρηναῖον, εἴπερ ἐστὶ σῶν.

But now it is your job to assist me in the rest and to see where there is in this place a double-mouthed rock cave, so that in winter a two-fold seat faces the sun, but in summer a breeze sends sleep through both entrances; and a little below, on the left you would quickly see a spring for drinking if it still exists.

**IX.A. Homer, *Odyssey* XIII.102-104**

αὐτὰρ ἐπὶ κρατὸς λιμένος τανύφυλλος ἔλαιή,  
ἀγχόθι δ' αὐτῆς ἄντρον ἐπήρατον ἠεροειδέες,  
ἱρὸν νυμφάων αἰ νηϊάδες καλέονται.

At the head of the harbor is a long-leaved **olive** tree, and next to it is a lovely dark cave, sacred to the nymphs who are called Naiads.

**IX.B. Homer, *Odyssey* XIII.122-125**

καὶ τὰ μὲν οὖν παρὰ πυθμὲν ἔλαιῆς ἀθρόα θῆκαν  
ἐκτὸς ὁδοῦ, μὴ πῶς τις ὀδιτάων ἀνθρώπων,  
πρὶν γ' Ὀδυσῆ' ἔγρεσθαι, ἐπελθὼν δηλήσαιο·  
αὐτοὶ δ' αὖτ' οἴκονδε πάλιν κίον.

They (the Phaeacians) put these (gifts) all together out of the way next to the trunk of an **olive tree**, lest any passer-by come upon them and spoil them. They themselves went away again homeward.

**X.A. Sophocles. *Oedipus Coloneus* 14-20 (Antigone is speaking)**

πάτερ ταλαίπωρ' Οἰδίπους, πύργοι μὲν, οἳ  
πόλιν στέγουσιν, ὡς ἀπ' ὀμμάτων, πρόσω·  
χῶρος δ' ὄδ' ἱερός, ὡς ἀπεικάσαι, βρύων  
δάφνης, ἔλαιας, ἀμπέλου· πυκνόπτεροι δ'  
εἴσω κατ' αὐτὸν εὐστομοῦσ' ἀηδόνες·  
οἳ κῶλα κάμψον τοῦδ' ἐπ' ἀξέστου πέτρου·  
μακρὰν γὰρ ὡς γέροντι προὔσταλης ὁδόν.

Father, wretched Oedipus, the towers which protect the city are far off according to my sight. This place is sacred, as one may guess, teeming with laurel, **olive**, vine; and a rather thick crowd of nightingales sings sweetly within. Sit down here on this unpolished stone; for you have traveled a long road for an old man.

**X.B. Sophocles, *Oedipus Coloneus* 483-489 (dialogue between chorus and Oedipus)**

**Χορός**

τρὶς ἐννέ' αὐτῇ κλῶνας ἐξ ἀμφοῖν χεροῖν  
τιθεῖς ἔλαιας τάσδ' ἐπεύχεσθαι λιτάς.

**Οἰδίπους**

485 τούτων ἀκοῦσαι βούλομαι· μέγιστα γάρ.

### Χορός

ὥς σφας καλοῦμεν **Εὐμενίδας**, ἐξ εὐμενῶν  
στέρνων δέχεσθαι τὸν ἰκέτην σωτηρίους,  
αἰτοῦ σύ τ' αὐτὸς κεῖ τις ἄλλος ἀντὶ σοῦ,  
ἄπυστα φωνῶν μηδὲ μηκύνων βοήν·

Chorus: Three times lay (the drink-offering) on nine branches **of olive** with both your hands and make these prayers.

Oedipus: I want to hear them; for they are the most important part.

Chorus: We call them **Eumenides** so that from well-wishing hearts they may receive the suppliant as those bringing safety. And may you yourself pray and if someone else (prays) instead of you, speaking inaudibly and not spinning out your voice.

### X.C. Sophocles, *Oedipus Coloneus* 695-706 (part of third stasimon of the chorus)

ἔστιν δ' οἷον ἐγὼ γὰς  
Ἄσιας οὐκ ἐπακούω,  
οὐδ' ἐν τᾷ μεγάλῃ Δωρίδι νάσῃ  
Πέλοπος πώποτε βλαστόν,  
φύτευμ' ἀχείρωτον αὐτόποιον,  
ἐγχέων φόβημα δαΐων,  
700 ὃ τᾷδε θάλλει μέγιστα χώρα,  
γλαυκᾶς παιδοτρόφου φύλλον **ἐλαίας**·  
τὸ μὲν τις οὐ νεαρὸς οὐδὲ γήρᾳ  
συνναίων ἀλιώσει χερὶ πέρσας·  
ὁ γὰρ αἰὲν ὄρων κύκλος  
705 λεύσσει νιν μορίου Διὸς  
χὰ γλαυκῶπις Ἀθάνα.

There is a thing such as I have not heard about on Asian ground, nor as ever yet born on the great island of Pelops, a plant not planted by human hands, self-renewing, a thing of fear for destructive enemies, which flourishes greatly in this land, the gleaming foliage of the **olive tree**, nurturer of children. Neither a youth nor someone living with old age can harm it by ravaging with his hand; for the sleepless eye of Zeus Morios and bright-eyed Athena watch over it.

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