Beneath the Root of Memory-Forgetfulness and Recollection in *Oresteia*

 Our paper will deal the function of memory within the story of Electra and Orestes, as presented by Aeschylus (*The Libation Bearers, The Eumenides*), Sophocles (*Electra*) and Euripides (*Electra* and *Orestes*). According to Baudrillard (1993), memory is a process that normalizes the exchanges between life and death. The absence of memory is not only an abnormality, but also a morbid state, because it curtails the necessary link between the two. Apparently, in these plays death and the dead are permanently tossed aside, but they keep coming back under "diseased" or violent forms: sterility (death of *genos*) (Segal, 1981), voluntary exile/imposed banishment (social death), speech, and ultimately homicide (assassination/execution). Our paper, therefore, begins with how forgetfulness, personal or political, turns into a fearful agent of annihilation. Then, we analyze the paradoxical relationship of memory with death and forgetfulness, especially when inducing depression, morbidity and dangerous self-negligence.

 Our analysis incorporates also the relationship between the human and the extra-human environment. We investigate the healthy vs. the unhealthy mnemonic contact between the living and the deceased, between sacred and profane, and the consequences of these relationships. Is memory a shield, a tool of contact between entities at different ontological levels? Can we speak of a mnemonic limbo in which characters are stuck (Segal, 1981)? There is also a specific relationship between the humans who could not forget and the world of fiends. It is Electra's case (Sophocles): she is so integrated in the funeral world of her defunct father that she ends by being herself non-human in appearance and behavior (Segal, 1981-world of inversions?). She is associated with the Furies (Reinhardt, 1979). Margaret Llewellyn-Jones admits a general transcendental potential to memory (1998) while A. Wicher speaks of the ability of memory to plunge someone into a reality outside one's condition (1998). In several other instances memory has an immortal and demonic nature that goes beyond the human ability to keep grudge. Aeschylus in this case is famous for turning the Furies, from abstract forces of guilt into monomaniacs of forensics, which need to suffer a complete mutation and redefinition of function in order to forget about their dire pursuit. Euripides (*Orestes*) turns memory into a state of delirium on the borders of nihilism and dementia. Unconsciousness and sleep are the only escape from the mnemonic prison. Since trial and acquittal by arguments bring escape from this tormenting remembrance, apparently memory is a morbid state of mind opposed to reason and rationale.

 Finally our work deals with the relationship between memory and forgetfulness, seen as annihilation. We easily notice how characters who stand on the side of forgetfulness continuously endure aggression of their neglected subconscious: oblivion, even intentional, is done by passing the test of complete remembrance, by summoning the past and accepting to be vulnerable during this act of recollection (Prower, 1998). Clytemnestra's desperate attempts to turn the anniversary of her murder into a celebration (Sophocles), Aegisthus wish to erase Electra's social class by marrying her down (Euripides) are all doomed to failure. Every act of forgetfulness triggers an act of memory. In opposition with this, any recollection is a tribute to forgetfulness. Sophocles' Electra, in her attempt to integrate herself in a world of perpetual grief, lives a life which is artificial, self-insensitive and therefore blocked in a stage of forgetfulness: so much, that she is incapable of *anagnorisis*. In Sophocles, it takes the "forgetful" Chrysothemis to recognize Orestes' lock, while Electra is consumed with over-remembering the past. In Euripides and Aeschylus she faces various forms of alienation. Memory and forgetfulness are triggered by the same engine; they both involve loss, death as well as invention and reconstruction.

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