

Emotion and narrative in Sophocles' *Electra* and *Tyro*: compassion and the rescue pattern

Scholars have suggested that the plot of Sophocles' *Tyro* could have been similar to *Electra* (Lucas de Dios, 1983). They base their claim on elements shared by both myths, and they transfer the narrative structure of *Electra* to the lost play. This paper proposes an additional similarity between the two plays: the influence of emotions in the narrative, especially the role of pity or compassion (*oiktos*) in the recognition and rescue sequence.

Ancient sources record that Sophocles wrote two tragedies about Tyro's story, but their plots are lost. In the myth, Tyro gave birth to and abandoned Poseidon's twin sons, Pelias and Neleus. She was then physically abused by her stepmother Sidero until her sons returned and avenged her; Pelias killed Sidero at Hera's altar, committing sacrilege.

Scholars suspect that the latter part of this myth inspired one of Sophocles' plays about Tyro. Therefore, both *Tyro* and *Electra* would feature a woman suffering unjustly at the hands of a mother figure, later rescued by a returning male relative who commits an act of *hybris* in the process. An overlooked aspect of the resolution of the plot in *Electra* is the role of *oiktos* in Orestes' motivation for revenge. Orestes' acknowledgement of his sister's state led him to identify with her as children of Agamemnon and victims of Clytemnestra (ll. 1175-1200), which could explain why he does not pity his mother afterward.

Fr. 659 of *Tyro* suggests that strong *oiktos* inspired by appearance played a similar role in the plot. In this fragment, Tyro compares herself to a mare whose hair has been violently cut off and expresses shame about her appearance. The names of the characters (Tyro means "cheese"; Pelias, "scar"), along with fr. 648 suggest that the characters' looks received attention. Moreover, Tyro's tragic mask might have borne traces of the violence she suffered (Lucas de Dios, 1983;

Cardinalli, 2022). A strong identification with his mother could have led Pelias to commit hybris, as in Orestes' case.

De Bakker et al. (2022) recently argued convincingly for the importance of emotions in creating and responding to narratives. The role of *oiktos* in *Electra* and possibly in *Tyro*, provides a strong confirmation of this importance and excellent case studies for how emotions can shape narrative in tragedy.

Bibliography

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