The Politics of Myth in Euripides' Last Plays: *Iphigenia in Aulis* and *Bacchae*

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It is well known that *Iphigeneia in Aulis* and *Bacchae* are the last extant tragedies by Euripides that by all probability were performed at the Great Dionysia festival of 405 BC. It is a relatively rare occasion when we know exactly the dates when plays were written and performed, moreover here we have a practically unique case when two tragedies are known to be produced within one and the same trilogy. In these exceptional circumstances we have every right to pose two interrelated and rather significant questions. Firstly, did there exist any internal link, on the level of contents and motif structure, between the parts of dramatic trilogy when it was no more unified by one and the same plot? And secondly – if we accept the recent tendency to re-evaluate the relevance of the contemporary political context of the tragedy - could this link be somehow grounded in the possible allusions to this political agenda?

In addressing the first of the questions, I will show that, despite their mythological plots being quite different, both tragedies seem to be unified not only by the mythological notion of hereditary curse, not only by obvious narrative moves derived also from mythological tradition (sacrificial murder of one's own child being one of the most spectacular of them), but also by a set of tragic motifs, dominated by the idea of preserving/breaking of friendly or family ties and being (un)true to one's own descent. Moreover, the same motifs could be perceived in the scarce fragments of the third play of the same tragic trilogy, *Alcmaeon in Corinth.*

As for the second question, I will try to show that these motifs could bear allusions to the political discussions ongoing in Athens in the same years of 406-405 and focused upon the idea of returning from exile the expelled participants of the oligarchic coup of 411. I will try to argue my point that by contrasting Euripides' tragedies with Aristophanes' *Frogs*, the *parabasis* of which is famously dedicated to that specific political issue, and revealing some parallels existing both on the levels of lexis and motifs.