

# Euripides's Helena and Pentateuch traditions: The Septuagint from the perspective of Ancient Greek Tragedies

**Author:**Evangelia G. Dafni<sup>1,2</sup>**Affiliations:**

<sup>1</sup>Department of Ecclesiastical and Social Theology, Faculty of Theology, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece

<sup>2</sup>Department for Old Testament Studies, Faculty of Theology, University of Pretoria, South Africa

**Note:**

Professor Evangelia Dafni is a Research Associate of Professor Dirk Human in the Department of Old Testament Studies at the Faculty of Theology, University of Pretoria. In 2014 she was a Visiting Professor in the same department. This article was originally a public lecture given at the University of Pretoria on 14 October 2014.

**Correspondence to:**

Evangelia Dafni

**Email:**

edafni@past.auth.gr

**Postal address:**

Private Bag X20, Hatfield 0028, South Africa

**Dates:**

Received: 04 Apr. 2015

Accepted: 07 Apr. 2015

Published: 17 June 2015

**How to cite this article:**

Dafni, E.G., 2015, 'Euripides's Helena and Pentateuch traditions: The Septuagint from the perspective of Ancient Greek Tragedies', *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 71(1), Art. 2902, 11 pages. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts.v71i1.2902>

**Read online:**

Scan this QR code with your smart phone or mobile device to read online.

In some cases discussed below, the present form of the Septuagint is not representative of how Ancient Greek Tragedies were received by the LXX translators, but of how Old Testament traditions in Greek form were received by the tragedians.

## Introduction

In the Ancient Greek tragedy, a great number of linguistic and conceptual elements affecting gender relations in the context of marriage, family and society, remind of the language and thoughts of the Greek Old Testament, the so-called Septuagint. How did it come to such similarities, has been answered inadequately up to now. All too often the cultures of the Eastern Mediterranean point to common traits or to general human or cross-cultural language and ideas, dressed in similar or comparable structures and reasoning patterns, widely used among the nations. The Ancient Jewish and Christian apologetic literature presented the thesis that Greek poets and philosophers knew Moses or were inspired by him. A more modern view is that a cultural exchange between Hebrews and Greeks took place not first in the Hellenistic period but already in the classical age. This proposal is often regarded with some hostility. However, it seems for those who are inclined to go the difficult path to survey the original documents that the possibility opens up to seek traces of an exchange (Dafni 2006a; 2006b; 2007; 2009a; 2009b; 2010).

On the basis of Euripides's tragedy *Helena*<sup>1</sup>, performed for the first time in the year 412 BC in Athens, this article would like to address the question of the influence of biblical thinking on Greek literature and, based on the original texts of Euripides<sup>2</sup> and of the Old Testament in its Hebrew and Greek version, to gain insights into the cultural exchange between Hebrews and Greeks in the classical age. These could open paths to discussions about gender relations and gender equality.

## The myth of Helena

It is *opinio communis* that the Euripidean tragedy *Helena*<sup>3</sup> represents the most radical transformation of the well-known aetiological myth of the Greeks about the cause of the Trojan War. This myth also forms the basis of the Homeric poetry (Lange 2002:115–151), standing at the beginnings of Ancient Greek literature. Helena, whose beauty was a *stumbling block and rock of offence* under the Greeks and Phrygians,<sup>4</sup> provided for Euripides as well as for his predecessors Homer, Stesichorus and Herodotus narrative material to which they all referred back. But criticism and evaluation of this figure by each of these authors is different (Allan 2008:18–28; Kannicht 1969a:21–71).

In the form of a genealogy, well known not only from Ancient Greek mythology, but especially from the Ancient Near Eastern context and the context of the Old Testament, Homer describes the proud pedigree of a demigoddess of immortal beauty, who owes her good relationship to procreation and not to creation or adoption. Herein is reflected the most important distinction between the Ancient Greek and the Old Testament God-likeness and/or similarity-concept, which plays an important, albeit subtle, role in Euripides's tragedy to be discussed. In Ancient Greek mythology, from which Euripides borrowed motives, the physical kinship or the natural union of divine and human in the person of Helena is clearly emphasised. For this most beautiful

1. I quote the translation of *Helena* by Kovacs (2002); cf. Ebener ([1979] [2006] 2010); Kannicht (1969a, 1969b), Allan (2008).

2. Cf. Nestle ([1901] 1969), Decharme (1906); Lesky (1972:275–538); Hose (2008).

3. Text-history by Kannicht (1969a:78–129).

4. See for example, Homer, *Iliad* 2:177f.; 3:156–160; 7:357f.; 24:759–775; *Odyssey* 11:438; 14:68f.; 17:118f.; Hesiod, *Opera* 164f.



among women was the daughter of Zeus and Tyndareus' wife, Leda. It is noteworthy, that, in the Old Testament context, the term 'son' or 'sons of God' expresses neither genealogical attribution nor biological kinship between God and human, but it is connected, also with respect to a king or the Messiah and the chosen people, indelibly with the concepts of election and adoption.<sup>5</sup>

The plot of Euripides's tragedy presupposes the Homeric myth about the abduction of the beautiful Helena: In a beauty contest between Hera, Athena and Aphrodite on Mount Ida Aphrodite wins, and she promises Paris-Alexandros, the son of king Priam of Troy, Helena as prize, although Helena was already the wife of Menelaus, king of Sparta. Helena then cheats on her husband, marries Paris and follows him to Troy. So the Trojan War is kindled, for Menelaus, the betrayed and abandoned husband, will not permit or tolerate that his wife breaks the conjugal covenant with him, which brings shame and disgrace to him and destroys the social order and integrity in Greece. Claiming the collective sense of honour and awareness of the Greeks for solidarity and retaliation, Menelaus and his allies go to war against the Phrygians, to recover the most famous and most beautiful wooer of Greece, but this leads to mutual bloodshed and loss of life. In this unique way Homer connected the physical beauty and the spiritual wickedness of a woman, which has led to violent clashes.

For a better understanding of this Homeric evaluation of Helena's figure, one must, in my view, not start from a general contrast between nature and culture, but from the specific question of what is moral and gender equality, as it already occurs in the Odyssey and the counter example of the faithful and patient Penelope. This suggests that the Homeric ethics could probably have been inspired and guided by similar thoughts about moral behaviour and conjugal morality, as presented in the prohibition of adultery and desire in the Decalogue (Ex 20:14–17 with its parallel in Dt 5:18–21; cf. Hossfeld 1982; Noth 1961:134; Schmidt 1993; Veijola 2004:168), even if the everyday experience rather speaks of continuous violations of the Divine Law and human missteps. Even Homer's epic emphasises that one actually should not commit adultery and not covet another man's wife.

Noteworthy is that Helena is not viewed by Homer as the property of her husband, that can be quietly sacrificed to the family or to the country, but as his graceful counterpart in holy matrimony, whom he has lost and must necessarily regain. Despite her guilt, Menelaus does not call the Greeks to punish the adulterous woman, as, in the sense of Exodus 20:14–17 with its parallel in Deuteronomy 5:18–21 (prohibition of adultery) or Leviticus 20:10 and Deuteronomy 22:22ff., compared with Numbers 5:11–31 (death of both parties to the adultery) one would have expected, but to recover the seduced and to prosecute her seducer and his people, who

not only tolerates this moral failure, but also declares it to be legitimate and thus makes himself an accomplice.

Euripides knows the Homeric narrative perspective and Stesichorus's original damning judgement of Helena and his *a posteriori* withdrawal.<sup>6</sup> The price Stesichorus had paid for his allegations against Helena was to lose his eyesight. In the palinode, instead of reviling the adulteress, he has composed a hymn to the faithful wife, who was wrested by force from her husband and had just arrived with her kidnapper in Egypt, where the righteous king Proteus places her under protection for her rightful husband, and so Stesichorus got his sight back. Only a silhouette of Helena accompanied Paris to Troy and the murderous Trojan War had broken out in reality only for the sake of a mirage. Also Herodotus knows a similar version in the so-called Proteuslogos (Hist II. 112–120; Cf. Kannicht 1969a:41–48), which relates that Paris and Helena had fled to Egypt together.

Talking of an image or illusion of Helena in an ancient Egyptian context is probably no coincidence, because, as is well known, similar terminology was used in the context of royal ideology and theology of creation (Janowski 2004:183–214; Maag 1954:85–106; Maag 1955:15–44; Schmidt 1967:127–148). Already since the 18th Dynasty, the Pharaoh was considered and worshiped as 'the image resp. as the living image, in the place of the god Re on earth' (cf. Westermann 1974:210ff.). But this question exceeds the limit of the present investigation.

Euripides is even more radical than his predecessors, Stesichorus and Herodotus. His tragedy starts with a patrilineal genealogy of the royal house in the Nile Delta and on the island of Pharos, which granted Helena protection – a spatial condition, specifically reminiscent of the origin of the Septuagint. Egypt is not only the place of refuge for the beloved son of Jacob in the Old Testament (Gn 39ff.), but also the refuge for Helena. And the house of Proteus, the wisest of all men, gives *asylon*<sup>7</sup> to her conjugal covenant (Hel. 61), like Moses, once an Egyptian prince, who highlights in the Decalogue the holiness and the divine protection of marriage.

By determining the ratio of Helena's external appearance to her inner essence, Euripides emphasises that at the arrival of Paris, Helena had already been brought up from Sparta to Egypt by Hermes, the messenger of the gods and herald of Zeus. Paris had only stolen Helena's living silhouette which had been created by Hera, and which had no intellectual merits to show over the original. The Greek term here used is εἰδωλον ἔμπουν (Hel. 34.584). Thus, the Homeric myth is completely turned on its head. From the beautiful unscrupulous wooer a second Penelope is made, who is patiently waiting 17 years for her husband, so that the divine promise comes true and her marriage with

5. For example, Genesis 6:2–4; Exodus 4:22; Psalms 2:7; 81[82]:6; 88[89]:6; Isaiah 2:2; 45:11; Wisdom 2:18; 5:5.

6. Euripides, *Helena* 1278–1283. Plato, *Politeia* IX 586c; Phädrus 243a–b; Isokrates, *Helenes Enkomion* 64. POxyr 2506 Fragment 26 l 2–16; cf. Kannicht (1969a:30–33).

7. Cf. (1) ἀσυλία (2 Macc 3:12) and ἀσυλος (Pr 22:23; 2 Macc 4:33f.). (2) φυγαδευτήριον resp. πόλις φυγαδευτηρίων in Exodus 21:13ff.; Deuteronomy 4:41ff.; Joshua 20:1ff.

Menelaus, prearranged by Hera, can certainly exist until eternity.

Helena's replacement by a shadow image expresses not only the anger and vengeance of Hera, the jealous wife of Zeus, who was not Paris's first choice in the beauty contest, but it should be pointed out that Hera still may be considered the patron of the sacred matrimony because Helena, in reality, has been a pious and faithful wife after the example of Penelope. Thus, the idea – allegedly standing behind the Homeric Helena – that for beautiful women it is preordained, or that it characterises their true nature, not to belong to one man, but to be conquered by the most powerful should be strongly rejected (cf. Sophocles *Antigone* 61ff.).

In Euripides, Helena is again threatened after Proteus's death. Theoclymenus, his son and successor, wants to espouse her. Her fate is reminiscent of Penelope, who was besieged by suitors to marry one of them. But after the Euripidean view, Menelaus and Helena will find each other just like Odysseus and Penelope. It is noteworthy that the motif of a wife's risks for her beauty occurs also three times in the Old Testament, specifically in the so-called duplicates in Genesis 12:9–20; 20:1–18; 26:1–13. These three parallel stories could be traced back to longer orally transmitted legends, in which the main characters and the narrative perspectives visibly or invisibly converge (cf. Auerbach 1959:9–27; Koch 1989:149f.). In Genesis it is about the finessing or outwitting of (1) Pharaoh, (2) Abimelech, the king of Gerar, by Abraham and Sarah, and (3) Abimelech, the Philistine king, by Isaac and Rebekah. In all three cases, the beauty of the ancestress puts her husband's life in danger. By a trick of the ancestor, his wife's honour and his own life are protected and sealed by God through a promise of blessing. Noteworthy here is that the foreign-born kings unexpectedly hear God's voice, who reveals his will in their conscience in a mysterious way (Dafni 2001a:306ff.). In Euripides's tragedy, Theoclymenus is outwitted by Helena with the help of his sister. But, at last, he listens to the divine will, revealed to him by his sister and the Dioscuri, and did not die. Penelope's suitors, however, because of their arrogance, meet their death. Helena's rescue, compared to Penelope's, runs bloodless; because of her living silhouette the blood in her family and in Troy has already flowed in torrents (Hel. 273–309).

Euripides thus contemplates the figure regarded by the Greeks as the cause of the Trojan War from different points of view, apparently not discussed by Stesichorus and Herodotus. It is not the intention of this article to treat the perspectives of Stesichorus, Herodotus and Euripides in detail (Kannicht 1969a:21–71; cf. Hose 2008:141–151), but to respond to the question: What has Euripides – usually claimed to be a woman hater (Harder 1993; cf. Assael 1985:91–103; March 1990:32–75) – to do with the Old Testament? What does the Euripidean narrative and figural perspective (Schmid 2008) contribute to the understanding of Old Testament ethics or Aretology and to the modern conception of gender justice (cf. Foley 2001; Pomeroy 1984; Zelenak 1998)?

## The narrative principle of double naming and double nature

The most noticeable characteristic of Euripides's tragedy *Helena* is that the speeches of the individual figures do not purely imitate oral traditions, but they incorporate artfully sealed narratives referring to Helena in the context of the Trojan War and in the Egyptian context. The principle which determines the development and the interdependence of the tragedy is the difference between a true and a false Helena, between archetype and image or silhouette, illusion, delusion, cloud or aerial or murder-seducing imagination, between phenomenon and reality, form and content, external and internal nature. Euripides adopts from his predecessor Stesichorus the motif of a double Helena (Hose 2008:141f.). At the same time, he also invents a double theophoric name for the prophetic daughter of Proteus, a marine deity, who could change his shape and foresee the future. Thus Euripides combines the motives of (1) the double Helena, as the original and its copy, and (2) the double name of the prophetess Eido-Theonoe with the multifaceted deity, believed to have passed the hereditary prophetic gift, and indicates completely new paths of understanding and explanation of the relationship between divine will and human action.

As is apparent from the study of the figure-specific wording of Euripides, material and spiritual aspects of the double Helena are marked linguistically. Her name and appearance are quite separate from her mental or spiritual essence. With Eido or Theonoe, the daughter of Proteus, however, only the name that reveals her character plays a decisive role. With the help of the Euripidean language and narrative perspective, other thoughts subordinated to this principle (linguistic marking and revelation of nature) are already recognisable in the stories of the so-called Yahwist (Gn 2–3) and the priestly source (Gn 1) of the creation of man and woman, and have left echoes in the Old Testament understanding of prophecy (Dafni 2000). These are most clearly recognisable in the so-called Greek Bible, namely the Septuagint, specifically in qualitative differences from their Hebrew original which result from translation equivalents with interpretive character. In particular:

1. The basic aim of the tragedy *Helena* seems to be summarised in the second song (stasimon), where the Euripidean concept of God is clearly expressed (Hel. 1137–1150):

ὅ τι θεὸς ἢ μὴ θεὸς ἢ τὸ μέσον,	What mortal can search out and tell
τίς φησὶ ἔρευνήσας βροτῶν	what is god, what is not god, and what lies between?
μακρότατον πέρασ εὐρεῖν	The farthest bourne is reached by him who sees that what the gods send
ὃς τὰ θεῶν ἔσορᾷ	veers first this way,
δεῦρο καὶ αὐθις ἐκείσε	then that, and once more this way,
καὶ πάλιν ἀντιλόγοις	with outcomes wavering and unexpected.
πηδῶντ' ἀνελπίστοις τύχαις;	
σὺ Διὸς ἔφους, ὦ Ἑλένα,	You, Helena, are Zeus's
θυγάτηρ	daughter:
πατὸς γὰρ ἐν κόλποις σε Λή-	your father came on wing to Leda

δας ἐτέκνωσε πατήρ. κάτ' ἰαχήθης καθ' Ἑλληνίαν	And in her embrace sired you. Yet you are reviled throughout Greece
προδοτίς ἄπιστος ἄδικος ἄθεος· οὐδ' ἔχω τί τὸ σαφές ἐτι ποτ' ἐν βροτοῖς·	as traitor, faithless, lawless, and godless: and I do not know what reliable, what true word about the gods
τὸ τῶν θεῶν δ' ἔπος ἀλαθές ἠῦρον.	I can find among the mortals.

This text expresses not only the Euripidean scepticism confronting the values and belief crises of his time but also his own proposal for the interpretation of the present and future management due to his focus on knowledge of God, knowledgeability and distinctiveness. To some extent this reminds of the Old Testament exilic and post-exilic beliefs of priestly provenance, even if they are told from a different theological point of view.

In *Helena* 711f. it is said: 'how changeable and inscrutable is the divine!' (... θεὸς ... τι ποικίλον δυστέκμαρτον) with regard to the manifestations and the detectability of the divine. And in 1688f.: 'What heaven sends has many shapes and many things the gods accomplish against our expectation' (πολλαὶ μορφαὶ τῶν δαιμονίων / πολλὰ δ' ἀέλπως κραινοῦσι θεοί) which make clear the polymorphism, as well as the diversity and unpredictability of words and ethos of the Greek gods. But differently expressed is the will of the One and the sole God of Israel in the Decalogue, and clearly and memorably made known to the disposition and attitude of the chosen people (Ex 20:3f. with its parallel in Dt 5: 7f.):

3 οὐκ ἔσονται σοι θεοὶ ἕτεροι πλὴν ἐμοῦ (Dt 5:7 πρὸ προσώπου μου)	לֹא יִהְיֶה לְךָ אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים עַל-פְּנֵי
New English Translation of the Septuagint (NETS) You shall not have other gods besides me.	
4 οὐ ποιήσεις σεαυτῷ εἰδωλον οὐδὲ παντὸς ὁμοίωμα, ὅσα ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ ἄνω καὶ ὅσα ἐν τῇ γῇ κάτω καὶ ὅσα ἐν τοῖς ὕδασιν ὑποκάτω τῆς γῆς.	לֹא תַעֲשֶׂה לְךָ כְּלֵמָתוֹ אֱשֶׁר בְּשָׁמַיִם מִמֶּעַל וְאֲשֶׁר בָּאָרֶץ מִתַּחַת וְאֲשֶׁר בַּמַּיִם וּבַתְּחַת לְאָרֶץ
NETS You shall not make for yourself an idol or likeness of anything whatever is in heaven above and whatever is in the earth beneath and whatever is in the waters beneath the earth.	

It should be noted that the wordplay used by the Exodus translator in Exodus 20:3f. with its parallel in Deuteronomy 5:7f. is exactly equivalent to the terms (LXX εἰδωλον – ὁμοίωμα for כְּלֵמָתוֹ – תמונה) in Genesis 1:26 (LXX εἰκὼν – ὁμοίωσις for צֶלֶם – דְמוּת) to distinguish between the true and false god image and likeness. The Hebrew text, however, uses different vocabulary that does not indicate exactly the same content and calls up other latent ideological perspectives, which cannot be discussed in this context.

Euripides, influenced by a polytheistic concept of God, is in radical contrast to the Old Testament claim of Yahweh's exclusivity and the prohibition of images (Ex 20:3f. with its parallel in Dt 5:7f.), although this is expressed by similar or comparable linguistic means. This fact alone points out that the Greek Old Testament and Euripides' *Helena* cannot be strangers to each other, but that they should have come in touch in a general-intellectual historical as well as in literary-specific sense.

2. Euripides' understanding of God-man-relationship is revealed by the statement (560) θεὸς γὰρ καὶ τὸ γινώσκειν φίλους, literally: 'God is to recognize the friends'. Kovacs (2002:73) translated this: 'To recognize your own is also something divine.' Compare *Helena* 760: τοὺς θεοῦς ἔχων τις ἂν φίλους ἀρίστην μαντικὴν ἔχει δόμοις – 'If a man has the gods' friendship, that is the best prophecy his house can have' (Kovacs 2002: 97). According to Kannicht (1969b:158), here lies a 'conventional predicate', which became possible since the 5th century BC. It epitomises and emblematises 'overwhelming mental states or external circumstances' and stands out 'from the more or less conventional style of the other evidence by their clear internal credibility.' But the whole statement strongly reminds of an expression found in Exodus 33:11 and Deuteronomy 34:10, which briefly and succinctly summarise the meaning of the encounter of God and Moses in the Pentateuch narratives:

Exodus 33:11 ἐλάλησεν κύριος πρὸς Μωυσήν ἐνώπιος ἐνωπίω, ὡς εἰ τις λαλήσει πρὸς τὸν ἑαυτοῦ φίλον.	וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה פְּנִים אֶל-פְּנִים כַּאֲשֶׁר יְדַבֵּר אִישׁ אֶל-דֹּרְעוֹ
NETS And the Lord spoke to Moyses face to face, As if someone should speak to his own friend	
Deuteronomy 34:10 καὶ οὐκ ἀνέστη ἔτι προφήτης ἐν Ἰσραὴλ ὡς Μωυσῆς, ὃν ἔγνω κύριος αὐτὸν πρόσωπον κατὰ πρόσωπον.	וְלֹא-קָם אֲחֵרֵי מֹשֶׁה כַּמֹּשֶׁה אֲשֶׁר יָדָע יְהוָה פְּנִים אֶל-פְּנִים
NETS And there has not again arisen a prophet in Israel like Moyses whom the Lord knew face to face	

We encounter all these phrases (ἐνώπιος ἐνωπίω, πρόσωπος κατὰ πρόσωπον) in conjunction with the verbs λαλεῖν ['speak or talk'] and γινώσκειν ['know or recognise'], not only in the Septuagint, but also in the Hebrew original, probably due to redactional work of priestly circles, in the form פְּנִים אֶל-פְּנִים or פְּנִים בְּפְנִים ['face to face'] in connection with the verbs דַּבֵּר ['speak or talk'] and יָדָע ['know or recognise']. As elsewhere shown (Dafni 2001b; Dafni 2009a:475–490), similar and comparable linguistic constellations are found in the fragments of the Presocratics and Plato. In the Septuagint, they constitute, in my view, a semantic bundle which can lead to comparable language and thoughts about the God-man-relationship as expressed by the idiomatic phrase 'in



our image and after our likeness' (LXX-Gen 1:26 κατ' εικόνα ἡμετέραν καὶ καθ' ὁμοίωσιν) (see below). For the close proximity of God and man is depicted here in a unique way without the boundaries between the divine and human spheres being changed or moreover, abolished.

3. The question of God's knowledge, likeness and image is not first raised in the Hellenistic period, but it was already discussed in the Greek world since Homer. It is significant that in the prologue of the *Odyssey* (1.21) Odysseus is designated as ἀντίθεος (literally [Odysseus] as a god's mirror image or reflection, instead of a god, i.e. godsimilar or godlike), not because of his physical form or his external appearance, but because of his fear of the gods, his reason and his universal knowledge, which he owed due to his extensive intercultural learnability (1:3ff.). A comparable idea is pronounced in the anthropomorphism of LXX-Genesis 1:26a, which precisely at this point is formulated differently from the Masoretic Text:

καὶ εἶπεν ὁ θεός	וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים
Ποιήσωμεν ἄνθρωπον	נַעֲשֶׂה אָדָם
κατ' εικόνα ἡμετέραν καὶ καθ' ὁμοίωσιν,	בְּצַלְמֵנוּ כְּדְמוּתֵנוּ

NETS

Then God said,

'Let us make humankind

according to our image and according to likeness...'

The Masoretic Text speaks of צלם and דמות, while the Septuagint renders the Hebrew words into Greek as εἰκών and ὁμοίωσις (Bratsiotis 1964–1967:227–306; cf. Barr 1968:11–26; Westermann 1974:203–214).

The *verbal abstractum* דמות<sup>8</sup> occurs in priestly, exilic and post-exilic texts and is understood by the meaning of 'illustration, copy, reproduce, design, appearance' (Gesenius & Buhl 1962:165) or 'replica, form, likeness' (HAL I, 217), but the Septuagint renders it as ὁμοίωμα, ὁμοίωσις, εἰκών, ἰδέα and ὁμοίος. Preuß (1977:273–277) pointed out that the word in question is used in Ezekiel 1:10 for the sight of the form of God, while in Isaiah 40:18 it expresses Yahweh's incomparability. The uncertain derivation from a verb צלם ['cut off'] not occurring in the Hebrew Bible, as well as the derivation from the noun צל ['shadow'] suggested by Bordreuil (1966:389) and Schmidt (1967:133 n. 1.), let main and secondary meanings of צלם<sup>9</sup> as 'plastic image, males, idol' (Gesenius & Buhl 1962:684) or 'statue, statue, idol, image, figure, likeness' (HAL II 963f.) appear to be hypothetical (Stendebach 1989). Of particular importance is the connection in Gesenius and Buhl (1962) with Psalms 39:7 and 73:20 (only in these cases), which he suggested as examples for the meaning 'unsubstantial image, in contrast to reality.' The Septuagint translates that as εἰκών, εἶδωλον, ὁμοίωμα and τύπος and thus points beyond

the detection of the concept of representation ability of the divine reality. The Septuagint translation is especially meaningful for associations evoked by the Hebrew words in the Greek-Hellenistic readership. צלם and דמות in the meaning of 'image and likeness' are considered to be two objectively not different, but equally significant terms. Since Irenaeus they are understood as a hint 'to the double image of God in human beings, in a natural and a supernatural sense' (Westermann 1974:205). Preuß (1977) noted:

Was konkret in Gen 1,26 gemeint ist, ist aber dann auch hier nicht durch eine Untersuchung der verwendeten Begriffe allein zu erschließen, sondern wird erst durch den weiteren Kontext ausgeführt (1,28) und als partnerschaftliche Anteilgabe an Herrschaft expliziert. (p. 276)

It should be mentioned with Heinisch (1930:101), that the priestly author or editor, who uses the anthropomorphism in Genesis 1:26, is aware that Yahweh is not בשר ['flesh'], and his theological thought is led by the prohibition of images.<sup>10</sup> If he had represented God in a picture, as a statue, as it was the case in the environment of the Old Testament, then it would be as if he wanted to pull down 'God from the spiritual realm into the sensual.' Nevertheless, he dared to move the anthropomorphism by 'the similarity of man with God not in a physical but in a spiritual sense', because of human reason and will of freedom. Unlike the Masoretic Text, the Septuagint makes a distinction between εἰκών and ὁμοίωσις by addition of a καὶ that – even if it came originally from a mistake of the writer – gave rise to the later exegetes to see in εἰκών (θεοῦ) the starting point and in ὁμοίωσις (θεοῦ) the goal of human existence (Bratsiotis 1964–1967:227–306; cf. Kosmala 1963:38–85; 1964:65–110).

4. Why precisely has this expression become possible about 600–400 BC under Greek and Hebrew speaking peoples, if an intellectual and linguistic exchange had not taken place, the traces of which we find in the literary legacy of both nations? If the biblical formulations in question have been made very late, then it is most likely that the Old Testament Pentateuch redactors knew the works of the Presocratics, Euripides or Plato. In the case of an early exchange, they were more likely to be regarded as evidence of mutual loan translations in Greek and Hebrew literature. But the respective direction of influence would still have to be determined.

Euripides seems to have made a selection of Old Testament motives from improvised Greek translations circulated in the diaspora, so that he could provide fundamental questions of philosophy and come nearer to his central theological problem. He makes recourse to both already formed linguistic tools – with which one could render Old Testament statements into Greek, requiring precursor translations to the Septuagint – as well as newly formed linguistic forms. His theological and anthropological concern arises from the most

8. Genesis 1:26; 5:1–3; 2 Kings 16:10; 2 Chronicles 4:3; Psalms 58:5; Isaiah 13:4; 40:18; Ezekiel 1:5–6, 10, 13, 22, 26, 28; 8:2; 10:1–10, 21, 22; 23:15; Daniel 10:16.

9. Genesis 1:26–27; 5:3; 9:6; Numbers 33:52; 1 Samuel 6:5(K); 6:17; 2 Chronicles 23:17; Psalms 39:7; 73:20; Qumran-Ezekiel 23:14; Amos 5:26.

10. Jacob (2000:57f.) against Gunkel (1964:112). Christian reception: see Bratsiotis (1951–1952:289–297). Rabbinical perspective: see Rottzoll (1994:59ff.).

casual observations of the individual characters in the drama. For him, it is actually about the knowledge of God, which is linked insoluble with the question of God-man-likeness. A similar concern arises from the above-mentioned relevant exilic or post-exilic Old Testament passages.

## Theonoe's double name

The question: Who can distinguish between true and false, and how – that is really the most basic question of Old Testament prophecy. Euripides answers this by introducing the figure of the prophetess Theonoe and thus the weight of the narrative is shifted from the outside into the inner world of man.

He did not invent this figure but adopted it from Homer. Interesting is that he transforms the Homeric theophoric name of the seer in a special way. Homer speaks of *Εἰδοθέα* [‘she who looks like a goddess’]. But Euripides breaks the name up into its components and forms two theophoric names of one and the same person: *Εἰδῶ* and *Θεονόη*. While *Eido* refers to the sensory perception of the eye, *Theonoe* indicates first the mental perception, that is, ‘the mind of God or the mind of God-knowing’ (Kannicht 1969a:20). Noteworthy is that also in the LXX-Genesis 32:30f. the place where Jacob has seen God face to face and was rescued is called *εἶδος θεοῦ* [‘vision of God’]. The Masoretic Text speaks of *פְּנֵי יְהוָה* [‘face of God’]. Similar to *Theonoe* the name of her brother *Theoclymenus* is formed, referring to the senses of hearing and – with regard to his change of mind it means ‘he who hears god’. His name indicates the turn in the drama. Despite the hardening of his heart, which is reminiscent of the Pharaoh of Exodus, he repents, because he heard the voice of his sister and the Dioscuri telling him the divine will. The theophoric name *Theonoe* recalls LXX-Isaiah 40:13:

τίς ἔγνω νοῦν κυρίου,  
καὶ τίς αὐτοῦ σύμβουλος ἐγένετο,  
ὃς συμβιβᾷ αὐτόν;

NETS

Who has known the mind of the Lord,  
And who has been his counselor  
to instruct him?

The Euripidean statements presuppose a similar problem and imply a rational response.

1. Euripides’ Helena explains the double name *Eido-Theonoe* after the pattern of the Old Testament *Namengebungen* and *Namensätiologien* (Hel. 10–15):

εὐγενῆ τε παρθένον Εἰδῶ, τὸ μητρὸς ἀγλαΐσμ’, ὅτ’ ἦν βρέφος: ἐπεὶ δ’ ἐξ ἡβην ἤλθεν ὠραία γάμων,	and a fine maiden called <i>Eido</i> . When she was a babe she was her mother’s glory, but when she came to womanhood and was old enough to marry
καλοῦσιν αὐτὴν Θεονόην: τὰ θεῖα γὰρ τὰ τ’ ὄντα	they called her <i>Theonoe</i> : for she knew all that divination can tell,
καὶ μέλλοντα πάντα ἠπίστατο,	both present and future,

προγόνου λαβοῦσα Νηρέως τιμὰς πάρα.	Receiving this office from her ancestor Nereus.
--	--

Just as Jacob-Israel carries two different names, one before and one after the theophany or vision of God and the struggle with God at Jabbok, the daughter is called differently in youth and age of marriage. Literally taken her theophoric names indicate a process of development in the knowledge of divine things. The name *Εἰδῶ* on the one hand could be compared with *εἰκὼν* within the meaning or in the sense of God’s vision and *εἶδωλον* with idol. *Θεονόη* on the other hand could allude to the indwelling of God or the divine spirit in the inner man or in man’s heart, that the LXX-Genesis 1:26 calls to mind. It is interesting to note that the name *Θεονόη* receives two explanations in the above text. In the first explanation, *Θεονόη* is she who knows in advance and foretells the present and the future things (τὰ θεῖα γὰρ τὰ τ’ ὄντα καὶ μέλλοντα πάντα ἠπίστατο), in the manner of an Old Testament prophet who receives God’s revelation. The name of God ὁ ὢν in the LXX-Exodus 3:15f. calls this in our memory and flows into the New Testamental ὁ ὢν ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος (Rv 1:4–8; 4:8). In the second explanation, this fact is explained in more detail: This charisma, this gift was inherited from her ancestor Nereus, a god with mantic skills. In contrast to the extra-biblical divination, the Old Testament prophecy owes its interpretations of the past, present and future not to a hereditary property of the prophet, but to divine election, appointment and revelation. For in the tragedy *Helena* says ‘*Theonoe* realized the reason/mind of the gods, because she has inherited Nereus’ charisma of prophecy’; but in the Old Testament Moses and the prophets have been chosen and called by God, who revealed to them his will.

2. Euripides puts Menelaus an interpretation of the name *Theonoe* into the mouth (822):

χρηστήριον μὲν τοῦνομ	The name has a prophetic ring to it.
-----------------------	---

While the Greek text indicates the oracle, the German translations (‘Prophetic sounds like the name’) interpret the text according to the Bible and recognise *Theonoe* as a true prophetess. Kannicht (1969b:224) distinguishes between ‘a mysterious prophetic voice’ and ‘a Fama’, that is, a demonic helper of the power of *Φήμη* who since Kimon had been worshiped in Athens’, and opts for the second.

3. Euripides’ Helena paints the portrait of *Theonoe* as follows (819f.):

Ελ. ἔστ’ ἔνδον αὐτῶι ζύμμαχος θεοῖς ἴση.	He has indoors an ally powerful as the gods.
---	---

In Euripides, *Helena*’s and *Menelaus*’ appropriate helper or comrade-in-arms who seeks the restoration of their ancient, divinely ordained marriage, was a godlike being (*θεοῖς ἴση*). This must be understood as a response to people’s disparaging opinion that the exact match ally to the void target of the Greeks chasing the most beautiful woman of

Greece and for her sake shedding human blood, was an imagination as vain as the wind.

Although he did not say it explicitly, Euripides makes from the seer a female figure comparable to the Old Testament prophets, with a theophoric name.

4. In *Helena* [757], Euripides expresses very aptly what other people think of true visionaries and what Theonoe thinks of herself:

[... Θε. γνώμη δ' ἀρίστη μάντις ἢ τ' εὐβουλία.]

[... The best way to tell the future is to be intelligent and plan ahead.]

Reasonable opinion (γνώμη) precedes emotionally controlled will (εὐβουλία), which otherwise can fall to superstition with devastating consequences.

## The double Helena

Even Helena's statement σκέψαι· τί σοι δεῖ πίστεως σαφεστέρας (578 literally as: 'Think what credible evidence you should still like to have?', Kovacs [2002:75] 'Just look! Why do you need clearer proof than that?' –), raises the question: What is the relation of thinking and faith in connection with the possibility of differentiation between true and false, authentic and spurious, if the appearance is the same and the invisible nature differs? No other testimony than rationality, Helena stresses, may give a clearer answer. The problem is apparently that Helena's true essence has fallen victim to her bad reputation, so that even her beloved husband could not recognise her.

Euripides, who concludes his *Helena* tragedy with the words of the chorus leader that the gods can appear in many shapes and unexpected prophecies and predictions (πολλὰ μορφαὶ τῶν δαιμονίων/πολλὰ δ' ἀέλπως κραινοῦσι θεοί, 1688f.), opens it with the narrative of the twofold form of the demigoddess, Helena. Euripides takes the motif of the double shape or figure from Homer and redesigns it. Homer speaks namely of the sea god Proteus who could change his shape wonderfully (Od 4:384ff.). Euripides explains exactly how it came to the double figure, or to the simultaneous existence of a true and a false Helena. Exactly this state of affairs is also taken up by all acting or narrative characters of the drama and explicated in detail due to their positions and possibilities of perception for each given situation. In the wording of each figure and in the authenticity or inauthenticity of speaking can, in my opinion, be recognised the constant reference to the Old Testament pattern of image and likeness (Gn 1:26), not in its Hebrew form  $\text{וַיִּבְרָא אֱלֹהִים אֱנוֹשׁ וְדוֹבָר}$ , but in the Greek of the Septuagint  $\text{κατ' εἰκόνα ἡμετέραν καὶ καθ' ὁμοίωσιν}$ . By the addition of a *καί*, the Greek version distinguishes clearly between εἰκόν and ὁμοίωσις, and by the choice of the equivalents εἰδωλον and ὁμοίωμα for the idols as degenerate forms of εἰκόν and ὁμοίωσις in Exodus 20:4 with its parallel in Deuteronomy 5:8 it emblematises the sharp contrast between authentic (true) and inauthentic

(false). In this way, the Septuagint points to the divine prohibition of images in the Decalogue. Its transgression causes the death, in a moral-ethical sense, and in a physical sense as well. It is noteworthy that Euripides uses the same and comparable terminology to illustrate the relationship of the image to the original. Thereby, the image (the wrong Helena) is the total degeneracy of the original (the true Helena).

## Teucer's perspective

The words εικόν or εικό, -οῦς and ὄψις, μίμημα instead of ὁμοίωσις or ὁμοίωμα are used by Teucer, who gets completely shocked at the sight of the real Helena and totally confused; he holds the genuine for the fake. Therefore, he screams and curses her (72–77):

ὦ θεοί, τίν' εἶδον ὄψιν;  
ἐχθίστης ὀρῶ  
γυναικὸς εἰκὼ φόνιον,

Ah! O gods, what sight is this  
I see?

The deadly image of a  
woman most hateful,

ἢ μ' ἀπόλεσεν πάντας τ'  
Ἀχαιοῦς.  
Θεοὶ σ', ὅσον μίμημ' ἔχεις

Her who ruined me and all  
the Greeks!

The gods' hatred be yours for  
being Helena's double!

Ἐλένης, ἀποπτύσειαν· εἰ δὲ  
μὴ ἔξενι  
γαίαι πῶδ' εἶχον, τῶιδ' ἄν  
εὐστόχοι περῶν  
ἀπόλασιν εἰκοῦς ἔθανες ἄν  
Διὸς κόρης.

If I were not standing on

foreign soil,  
this unerring arrow would

have killed you

For looking like Zeus's

daughter!

Teucer seems to transfer the bad properties of the image, held to be genuine, on the original, and wishes its destruction. He defines the relationship between image and original (prototype) by using of the adjectives ὁμοίος versus διάφορος in the frame of thanksgiving and benediction (160f.):

Ἐλένη δ' ὅμοιον σῶμ' ἔχουσ'

Though you resemble Helena in  
body,

οὐ τὰς φρένας ἔχεις ὁμοίας  
ἀλλὰ διαφόρου πολύ.

your heart is not the same as hers  
but far different.

The choice of terminology here is to point out that the woman standing in front of Teucer, although she has the same appearance as Helena, whom he knew, is mentally completely different. However a further distinction is also made, namely between body and mind (σῶμα vs. φρένες) or interior and exterior elements, although it is not clear why beautiful appearance and bad attitude represent necessarily Helena's true nature.

## Menelaus's perspective

Menelaus brought from Troy to the Greek ships a Helena as a dishonourable slave, and finds in Egypt another, enslaved, but dignified and pleading protection, before the tomb of the honourable and righteous king Proteus. Now he wonders, upset, if he has not to do with a lookalike (doppelgänger), but he is in fact husband of two women, that is, he had entered into a bigamous marriage, not like Jacob in the Old Testament, involuntarily and unavoidably, but unknowingly (571–577):



Με. οὐ μὴν γυναικῶν γ' εἶς δυοῖν ἔφυν πόσις.	Με. But I am one man: I cannot have two wives.
Ελ. Ποίῳ δὲ λέκτρον δεσπότης ἄλλων ἔφη;	He. Of what other woman are you lord and master?
Με. ἦν ἄνδρα κεῦθει κάκ' Φρυγῶν κομίζομαι.	Με. Her in the cave, the one I brought from Troy.
Ελ. οὐκ ἔστιν ἄλλη σὴ τις ἀντ' ἔμοῦ γυνή.	He. You have no other wife but me.
Με. οὐ που φρονῶ μὲν εὔ, δ' ὄμμα μου νοσεῖ;	Με. Can it be that my mind is sound but my eyes are bad?
Ελ. Οὐ γάρ με λεύσσω σὴν δάμαρθ' ὄραν δοκεῖς;	He. In seeing me aren't you convinced you see your wife?
Με. τὸ σῶμ' ὅμοιον, τὸ δὲ σαφές γ' ἀποστατεῖ.	Με. You look like her, but certainly eludes me.

The theme of double marriage of a man or a woman seems to be Euripides' favourite theme corresponding to his own experience and knowledge of and engagement with the Old Testament Jacob narratives, as it has been discussed in detail elsewhere (Dafni 2010:105–136). The dilemma, whether he knowingly or unknowingly commits an offence, arises not only in the Genesis narratives of the ancestor's threat (see above), but also in Euripides, here, and especially in his tragedy *Hippolytus*.

## Helena's perspective

Due to her perception and attitude, two different aspects in the words of Helena can be recognised, one before and another after her encounter with Teucer: a sober on one hand and a self-reflective aspect on the other.

1. Εἶδωλον ἔμπουν (34,584) calls Helena the phantom, the shadow image, the living fallacy of her, which went to Troy with Paris. Euripides uses the determination ἔμπουν programmatically to distinguish the Homeric idea of εἶδωλον from his own conception connected with δέμας ['body'].<sup>11</sup> When Euripides speaks here of εἶδωλον he means certainly not a simple air structure. This is the reason why he used the adjective ἔμπουν <ἐμπνέω ['to breathe into it'] with the meaning of a figure with body and soul. LXX-Genesis 2:7 uses the cognate verb ἐνφυσάω, -ῶ ['blow in'] to express a comparable state.

καὶ ἔπλασεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν ἄνθρωπον χοῦν ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς  
καὶ ἐνεφύσησεν εἰς τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ πνοὴν ζωῆς,  
καὶ ἐγένετο ὁ ἄνθρωπος εἰς ψυχὴν ζῶσαν.

### NETS

And God formed man, dust from the earth,  
and breathed into his face a breath of life,  
and the man became a living being.

2. The spiritual and the material aspect of the true and the false Helena are characterised by Helena herself with the

11. For example *Odyssey* 4:796ff.: ἐνθ' αὐτ' ἄλλ' ἐνόησε θεὰ γλαυκῶπις Ἀθήνη / εἶδωλον ποίησε, δέμας δ' ἤκτο γυναῖκα, / Ἰφθίμη, κοῦρη μεγαλήτορος Ἰκαρίοιο, / τὴν Εὐμηλος ὄπιε, Φερῆσ' ἐνὶ οἰκίᾳ ναίων. / πέμπε δὲ μιν πρὸς δόματα Ὀδυσσεύος θείοιο, / εἰὸς Πηνελόπειαν ὀδυρομένην γοόωσαν / παύσειε κλαυθμοῖο γοοῖο τε δακρυρόντος.

following terms: αἰθήρ<sup>12</sup> ['ethereal material or air'] and σῶμα ['body']. For this purpose, Euripides juxtaposes the term ὄνομα ['name'] with the term σῶμα [body]. Unlike αἰθήρ and σῶμα that are material, ὄνομα expresses the insubstantiality, the immaterial, the ephemeral, the untouchable. The term may also mean reputation. Therefore Helena responds to the legitimate question of Menelaus, how it is possible that she was also in Egypt and Troy, as follows (588):

Ἐλ. τοῦνομα γένοιτ' ἂν πολλαχού, τὸ σῶμα δ' οὐ.	He. A name may be in many places, Though a body in only one.
---	--

This means that the name or reputation is omnipresent, but not the body. Hera had her name reviled everywhere among the barbarians, but not her body (1099f.):

ἄλλοι δὲ λύμης ἦν μ' ἐλυμήνω πάρος τοῦνομα παρασχούσ' οὐ τὸ σῶμ', ἐν βαρβάρους.	You have already treated me spitefully enough when you gave me the name, though not my person, to the barbarians
---	--

Because her body and her personality as a whole were caught up by Hermes at the request of Zeus, her rapture did not mean that she was transformed, that she had been transferred from the materiality to an immaterial state, but that she was simply replaced, such as the use of the word διαλλαγή shows (33–36):

Δίδωσι δ' οὐκ ἔμ' ἄλλ' ὁμοίωσας' ἐμοὶ εἶδωλον ἔμπουν οὐρανοῦ ζυυθεῖσ' ἄπο Πριάμου τυράννου παιδί: καὶ δοκεῖ μ' ἔχειν, κενὴν δόκησιν, οὐκ ἔχων.	she gave to king Priam's son not me but a breathing image she fashioned from the heavens to resemble me. He imagines-vain imagination- that he has me, though he does not.
---	---

The formulation ὁμοίωσας' ἐμοὶ εἶδωλον ἔμπουν and the associated thoughts remind of the LXX-Genesis 1:26 (κατ' εἰκόνα καὶ καθ' ὁμοίωσιν) and the LXX-Genesis 2:7 (καὶ ἔπλασεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν ἄνθρωπον χοῦν ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς καὶ ἐνεφύσησεν εἰς τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ πνοὴν ζωῆς, καὶ ἐγένετο ὁ ἄνθρωπος εἰς ψυχὴν ζῶσαν). Both Genesis verses about the creation of humankind seem to be compressed and linked in three words, now referring not to humankind as a whole or even to a single man, but to Helena's silhouette created by the goddess Hera to enter into a sham marriage with a predetermined man, Alexander-Paris (32). Thus, Genesis 2:23–24 comes into play.

23 καὶ εἶπεν Ἀδαμ Τοῦτο νῦν ὅστον ἐκ τῶν ὀστέων μου καὶ σὰρξ ἐκ τῆς σαρκός μου· αὕτη κληθήσεται γυνή, ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ ἀνδρός αὐτῆς ἐλήμφθη αὕτη.	
24 ἔνεκεν τούτου καταλείψει ἄνθρωπος τὸν πατέρα αὐτοῦ καὶ τὴν μητέρα αὐτοῦ καὶ προσκολληθήσεται πρὸς τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ καὶ ἔσονται οἱ δύο εἰς σάρκα μίαν.	

12. The word does not occur in the LXX but only in Symmachos Deuteronomy 33:26; Job 36:28; 37:18–21; Psalms 35(36):6; 76(77):18; 88(89):7; Proverbs 8:28; Jeremiah 51(28):9.



NETS

23 And Adam said,

'This now is bone of my bones  
and flesh of my flesh;  
this one shall be called Woman,  
for out of her husband she was taken.'

24 Therefore a man will leave his father and mother  
and will be joined to his wife,  
and the two will become one flesh.

But the fact is, even in the background, that the abduction of the true Helena wanted to change her predestination to belong to a single, very specific man, Menelaus of Sparta.

In the New Testament, the Old Testament statement *καὶ ἔσονται οἱ δύο εἰς σάρκα μίαν* is complemented by *ὁ οὖν ὁ Θεὸς συνέζευξε ἄνθρωπος μὴ χωριζέτω* (Mt 19:6 with its parallel in Mk 10:9). That is to say: 'And the people united by God in the covenant of marriage, may not be separated.' The New Testament *topos* seems to presuppose both the Old Testament and the Euripidean statement. In Euripides, Hera has destined Menelaus and Helena to be together forever. But Paris, who preferred Aphrodite over Hera, tried to separate them. Hera comes now to restore artificially the broken covenant. She creates a silhouette as due price for Paris, who ignored her. Two interpretive ideas are here formulated: (a) the silhouette is of etheric material, and (b) it is about a living entity as opposed to lifeless idols,<sup>13</sup> or a deceased person who appears to the bereaved.<sup>14</sup>

3. In the prologue of the tragedy, Helena says (44–48):

Λαβῶν δέ μ' Ἑρμῆς ἐν πτυχαῖσιν αἰθέρος νεφέλῃ καλύψας-οὐ γὰρ ἡμέλησέ μου Ζεὺς- τόνδ' ἐς οἶκον Πρωτέως ἰδρύσατο πάντων προκρίνας σωφρονέστατον βροτῶν ἀκέραιον ὡς σώσαιμι Μενέλεωι λέχος.	So Hermes took me up within the recesses of the sky, hiding me in a cloud (for Zeus had not forgotten me), and put me down at this house of Proteus, whom he judged the most virtuous man on earth, so that I might keep my bed unsullied for Menelaus.
---	--

The word *αἰθήρ* (44) describes not only the element from which the silhouette was created, but also the way in which Helena was raptured. Helena's rapture as a sudden and traceless disappearance recalls the eschatological descriptions of Enoch's and Elijah's rapture in Genesis 5:21–24 and 2 Kings 2:1–15 respectively (Schmitt 1982:34–49). This is a process limited in time, in this world, because Helena is only temporarily brought to a place, Egypt, which remains hidden from the Greeks and Phrygians, from which the return is possible and even divinely ordained.

The rapture motif was first combined with Iphigenia's fate. Homer lets the offering for the Trojan War be raptured. Euripides, who makes Helena the actual victim of the same war, speaks also of her rapture.

13.Cf. Isaiah 42–44 and Epistel Jeremias.

14.1 Samuel 28:11ff.

The Euripidean description of Helena's rapture to Egypt plays with the metaphorical, allegorical and literal meaning of air and mist, reminiscent of the theophany at Sinai and in the wilderness where God in the mist leads the people from the Egyptian house of bondage to the Promised Land.<sup>15</sup>

4. In the stichomythia between Helena and Theoclymenus, he asks where her mirage body went from Troy. She gives the answer (1219):

Ἐς αἰθέρ' ... οἴχεται. Gone up into the sky.

This statement (in its Greek form and not in German or English interpretive reproductions) is found in another stichomythia of Menelaus and Helena paired with statements about the creation of her silhouette (583ff.), reminiscent of LXX-Genesis 3:19:

ἔως τοῦ ἀποστρέψαι σε εἰς τὴν γῆν,  
ἐξ ἧς ἐλήμφθης·  
ὅτι γῆ εἶ  
καὶ εἰς γῆν ἀπελεύση.

NETS

until you return to the earth  
from which you were taken,  
For you are earth  
and to earth you will depart.

The air or cloud image returned to the element from which it was created, namely to the air. For it was from air and vanished into air. Helena, however, returns to him from whom she was torn: her predetermined husband. In particular, the statement about the creation of the false Helena by Hera from ether (thus heaven and not earth, from air and not the breath of life) implies a rather deliberate parody of the biblical narratives (Gn 2:7 and 3:19). Yahweh takes the woman from the rib of man. The Hebrew God created a man out of earth and breathed into his nostrils the divine breath of life. The Greek goddess creates a lively female figure alone from air. The Hebrew God is the creator of the woman who drags her husband into the transgression of the divine command and the expulsion from paradise. Hera's work, a murderous seducing image, which became the cause of war, is of air and vanished into the air.

While also the spiritual element of man in the Old Testament returns to him from whom it was taken, the Euripidean eschatology in the mouth of Theonoes is different (1013–1016):

[καὶ γὰρ τίσις τῶνδ' ἐστί τοῖς τε νερέροις καὶ τοῖς ἄνωθεν πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις· ὁ νοῦς τῶν κατθανόντων ζῆι μὲν οὐ, γνώμην δ' ἔχει ἀθάνατον εἰς ἀθάνατον αἰθέρ' ἐμπεσών.]	In fact punishment for these deeds comes to those below and to all men above. For though the mind of dead men does not live, it has eternal sensation once it has been hurled into the eternal upper air.
---	---

It remains a mystery, what the eternal ether 'upper air' is, if it is obviously not identical to the air from which comes the air

15.Exodus 13f.,16,19, 24, 33f, 40. Leviticus 16; Numbers 9–12, 14, 16 ; Deuteronomy 1:31.

shape of the false Helena. Is it to be understood in the sense of the Old Testament as divine breath of life from which the Deuteronomist and Ecclesiastes say that it is separated from man's body after physical death and returns to the well from which it was awarded, namely to Yahweh?

5. Given the renewed threat, the real Helena provides the basic existential question (56):

Τί οὖν ἔτι ζῶ;                      Why then do I still live?

She replies to herself (56–59):

θεοῦ τὸδ' εἰσήκουσας ἔπος	I have heard a prophecy from the
Ἑρμοῦ,	god Hermes
τὸ κλεινὸν ἔτι κατοικήσειν	that I shall one day live in
πέδον Σπάρτης	Sparta's plain
σὺν ἀνδρί,	with my husband,
γνόντος ὡς ἐς Ἴλιον οὐκ	who will learn that I did not go
ἦλθον,	to Ilium-
ἦν μὴ λέκτρ' ὑποστρώσω τι.	Provided I do not share my bed
	with anyone.

The Euripidean statement ἦν μὴ λέκτρ' ὑποστρώσω τι is made basically in line with LXX-Genesis 2:24 and the goal here is the reunification in life with the legitimate husband, from whom she was separated abruptly (and arbitrary).

Euripides' aim is certainly not simply to rehabilitate Helena's individual character, but rather to transfer to this ambiguous figure motif constellations beyond Homeric and Stesichorus' myth. His tragedy seems to mediate and reveal to the attentive reader covert references to Old Testament language and thoughts. Euripides presumably adopts the schema 'image and likeness' (Gn 1:26), taking into account the ban on images according to Exodus 20 with its parallel in Deuteronomy 5 and applies it in order to re-interpret Stesichorus' palinode. He plays with language and thoughts of Genesis 1–3 with reference to other relevant Old Testament motifs, especially from the Jacob narratives of Genesis in order to describe the marriage relationship. The tragic irony, Euripides highlights, is that all Greeks were willing to engage in a senseless war with Troy for the mirage of the harlot Helena. Their goal was pointless, their purpose bottomless, void. The idea that it was god's will that the legitimate husband would search the world to find his loyal Helena again, would make sense and be compatible with the Old Testament ethics.

## Conclusions

There is mystical conversation between Euripides and the Old Testament. Euripides does not emulate the Old Testament. Neither citation nor paraphrasing, known in the handling of the Jewish scribes with older biblical traditions, characterises Euripides' approach to the Old Testament, but *perspectivation* according to the way oral and/or written traditions were delivered to posterity and adapted in the Ancient World.

Euripides' use of Old Testament linguistic patterns and motifs – presumably in improvised Greek translations

circulated in the Jewish diaspora before the Septuagint – is eclectic. He picks up on essential components of the biblical traditions about gender relations and gender equality, viewed from the perspective of critically thinking Greeks of his time, who had received an important impetus from the Sophists. He transfers them to various figures of ancient Greek mythology, which he mostly restructured and reinterpreted. In this way, he makes here from the wretched wooed a victim, a suppliant. But on one point, Euripides remains faithful to the old myth: It was the divine will that Helena and Menelaus for all eternity belong together. Therefore, he changes everything else in myth and applies this Old Testament principle.

The present form of the Septuagint in the cases discussed above is in my opinion not representative of how Euripides was received by the LXX translators. It indicates that there were Greek translations of the Pentateuch going around prior to the Septuagint translation. Old Testament traditions in Greek form were received by Euripides as a means of expression, which the classical Greek world offered to the understanding of important Hebrew words and thoughts. If this basic assumption of our article is correct, then its importance for the Old Testament, Comparative Religious and Cultural Studies would be seen in the possibility that it allows an answer to the burning question of the tradition-historical horizon of the Septuagint, namely: The Septuagint presupposes other oral or written translations of the Hebrew Bible into Greek. These mostly improvised preliminary Greek translations of important Old Testament traditions were known to Greek philosophers and poets and enabled a unique dialogue between Hebrews and Greeks (Dafni 2008:85–95). Therefore, the decisive encounter of Greeks and Hebrews, who would change the world, would have taken place not only after Alexander the Great, but already very early would have inspired the thinking of poets and philosophers and fertilised their language, especially in matters of religious belief for man-woman-relations in marriage, family and society.

## Acknowledgements

### Competing interests

The author declares that she has no financial or personal relationship(s) that may have inappropriately influenced her in writing this article.

## References

- Allan, W., 2008, *Helena*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Assael, J., 1985, 'Misogynie et féminisme chez Aristophane et chez Euripide', *Pallas* 32, 91–103.
- Auerbach, E., 1959, *Mimesis: Dargestellte Wirklichkeit in der abendländischen Literatur*, 2. Ausg., Francke, Bern.
- Barr, J., 1968, 'The image of god in the book of genesis: A study of terminology', *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester (BJRL)* 51, 11–26.
- Bordreuil, P., 1966, 'À l'ombre d'Elohim. Le thème de l'ombre protectrice dans l'Ancient Orient et ses rapports avec "L'Imago Dei"', *Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses (RHPHR)* 46, 368–391.
- Bratsiotis, N.P., 1964–1967, *Ανθρωπολογία της Παλαιάς Διαθήκης, I. Ὁ ἄνθρωπος ὡς θεῖον δημιούργημα*, Apostoliki Diakonia tis Ekklesias tis Ellados, Athens.

- Bratsiotis, P.J., 1951/1952, 'Genesis 1,26 in der orthodoxen Theologie', *Evangelische Theologie* 11, 289–297. <http://dx.doi.org/10.14315/evth-1951-1-631>
- Dafni, E.G., 2000, 'משה וירושלם ודי פאלשע פּרױפּהעיע אין I Reg 22', *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 112, 365–385. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1515/zatw.2000.112.3.365>
- Dafni, E.G., 2001a, 'Natürliche Theologie im Lichte des hebräischen und griechischen Alten Testaments', *Theologische Zeitschrift (Basel)* 57, 295–310.
- Dafni, E.G., 2001b, 'Von Angesicht zu Angesicht. Prolegomena zum Thema "Gott schauen" im hebräischen und griechischen Exodusbuch, 1. Exodus 33, 11.12–23 übersetzungs- und wirkungskritisch, Etaireia ton Filon tou Laou, Athens. (Επιστημονικά Μελέται, 2).
- Dafni, E.G., 2006a, 'Genesis 1–11 und Platos Symposion. Überlegungen zum Austausch von hebräischem und griechischem Sprach- und Gedankengut in der Klassik und im Hellenismus', *Old Testament Essays* 19(2), 584–632.
- Dafni, E.G., 2006b, 'Platos Symposion und die Septuagintafassung von Genesis 2,23f. Methodische Überlegungen zum Austausch von hebräischem und griechischem Sprach- und Gedankengut in der Klassik und im Hellenismus', *Old Testament Essays* 19(3), 1139–1161.
- Dafni, E.G., 2007, 'Genesis and Euripides: Exchange in Virtue Ethics between Israel and Hellas in the Classical and Hellenistic Period', *Old Testament Essays* 20(3), 601–615.
- Dafni, E.G., 2008, 'Euripides und das Alte Testament. Zum Überlieferungsgeschichtlichen Horizont der Septuaginta', in M.H. Peeters (Hrsg.), *XIII Congress of the IOSCS: Ljubljana, 2007*, pp. 85–95, Society of Biblical Literature. Septuagint and Cognate Studies, Atlanta, GA.
- Dafni, E.G., 2009a, '1Korinther 13,12 und das Alte Testament', in K.I. Belezos (Hrsg.), *Απόστολος Παύλος και Κόρινθος. 1950 χρόνια από τη συγγραφή των επιστολών προς Κορινθίους. Ερμηνεία - Θεολογία - Ιστορία ερμηνείας - Φιλολογία - Φιλσοσοφία - Εποχή. Πρακτικά Διεθνούς Επιστημονικού Συνεδρίου (Κόρινθος, 23-25 Σεπτεμβρίου 2007)*, vol. 1, Psychogios, Athens, 475–490.
- Dafni, E.G., 2009b, 'Theologie der Sprache der Septuaginta im Horizont des Altgriechischen Schrifttums und Denkens', *Journal for Semitics* 18, 434–457.
- Dafni, E.G., 2010, *Genesis, Plato and Euripides. Drei Studien zum Austausch von griechischem und hebräischem Sprach- und Gedankengut in der Klassik und im Hellenismus*, Neukirchner Verlag, Neukirchen-Vluyn. (Biblich-theologische Studien, 108).
- Decharme, P., 1906, *Euripides and the Spirit of his Dramas*, transl. J. Loeb, s.n., New York, NY/London.
- Ebener, D., [1979] [2006] 2010, *Euripides' ausgewählte Tragödien*, in B. Zimmermann (Hrsg.), *Sammlung Tusculum*, Bd. II, pp. 838–973, Akademie-Verlag, Mannheim.
- Foley, H.P., 2001, *Female Acts in Greek Tragedy*, Princeton University Press, Princeton.
- Gesenius, W. & Buhl, F., 1962, *Hebräisches und Aramäisches Handwörterbuch*, 17. Aufl., Springer Verlag, Berlin/Göttingen/Heidelberg.
- Gunkel, H., 1964, *Genesis übersetzt und erklärt*, 6.Ausg., Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen.
- Harder, R.E., 1993, *Die Frauenrollen bei Euripides*, M & P, Stuttgart. (Drama Beiheft, 1).
- Heinisch, P., 1930, *Das Buch Genesis, übersetzt und erklärt*, Feldmann et Herkenne, Bonn.
- Hose, M., 2008, *Euripides. Der Dichter der Leidenschaften*, Beck, München.
- Hossfeld, F.-L., 1982, *Der Dekalog. Seine späten Fassungen, die originale Komposition und seine Vorstufen*, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen. (Orbis biblicus et orientalis, 45).
- Jacob, B., 2000, *Das Buch Genesis*, Leo Baeck Institut, Stuttgart.
- Janowski, B., 2004, 'Die lebendige Statue Gottes. Zur Anthropologie der priesterlichen Urgeschichte', in: M. Witte (Hrsg.), *Gott und Mensch im Dialog*, FS für Otto Kaiser zum 80. Geburtstag, pp. 183–214, de Gruyter, Berlin/New York. (Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, 345/1).
- Kannicht, R., 1969a, *Euripides. Helena*, Bd. 1: *Einleitung und Text*, Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, Heidelberg.
- Kannicht, R., 1969b, *Euripides. Helena*, Bd. 2, *Kommentar*, Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, Heidelberg.
- Koch, K., 1989, *Was ist Formgeschichte? Methodische Bibelexegese*, 5. Ausg., Neukirchener Verlag, Neukirchen-Vluyn.
- Kosmala, H., 1963, *Nachfolge und Nachahmung Gottes*, vol. 1, *Im Griechischen Denken*, Annual of the Swedish Theological Institute, 2, 38–85.
- Kosmala, H., 1964, *Im Jüdischen Denken*, vol 2., Annual of the Swedish Theological Institute 3, 65–110.
- Kovacs, D., (ed.), 2002, *Euripides, Helen, Phoenician Women, Orestes*, transl. D. Kovacs, Loeb Classical Library, Cambridge, MA/London.
- Lange, K., 2002, *Euripides und Homer: Untersuchungen zur Homernachwirkung in Elektra, Iphigenie im Taurerland, Helena, Orestes und Kyklops*, pp. 115–151, Franz Steiner Verlag, Stuttgart. (Hermes-Einzelschriften, 86).
- Lesky, A., 1972, *Die Tragische Dichtung der Hellenen*, 3. Ausg., pp. 275–538, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen.
- Maag, V., 1954, 'Sumerische und babylonische Mythen von der Erschaffung der Menschen', *Asiatische Studien* 8, 85–106.
- Maag, V., 1955, 'Alttestamentliche Anthropologie in ihrem Verhältnis zur orientalischen Mythologie', *Asiatische Studien* 9, 15–44.
- March, J., 1990, 'Euripides the misogynist?' in A. Powell (ed.), *Euripides, women, and sexuality*, pp. 32–75, Routledge, London/New York, NY. [http://dx.doi.org/10.4324/9780203402351\\_chapter\\_3](http://dx.doi.org/10.4324/9780203402351_chapter_3)
- Nestle, W., [1901] 1969, *Euripides. Der Dichter der Griechischen Aufklärung*, Kohlhammer, Stuttgart.
- Noth, M., 1961, *Das zweite Buch Mose: Exodus*, 2. Ausg., Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen. (Altes Testament Deutsch, 5).
- Pomeroy, S.B., 1984, *Goddesses, whores, wives, and slaves: Women in Classical Antiquity*, 9th edn., Random House, New York, NY.
- Preuß, H.D., 1977, s.v. 'דברה', in G.J. Botterweck, H. Ringgren & H.-J. Fabry (Hrsg.), *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament*, Kohlhammer, Stuttgart, Bd. II, pp. 273–277.
- Rottzoll, D.U., 1994, *Rabbinischer Kommentar zum Buch Genesis. Darstellung der Rezeption des Buches Genesis in Mischna und Talmud unter Angabe Targumischer und Midraschischer Paralleltexte zusammengestellt, übersetzt und kommentiert*, de Gruyter, Berlin/New York, NY. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1515/9783110887150>
- Schmid, W., 2008, *Elemente der Narratologie*, 2. Ausg., de Gruyter, Berlin/New York, NY.
- Schmid, W.H., 1993, *Die Zehn Gebote im Rahmen alttestamentlicher Ethik*, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, Darmstadt. (Erträge der Forschung, 281).
- Schmidt, W.-H., 1967, *Die Schöpfungsgeschichte der Priesterschrift. Zur Überlieferungsgeschichte von Genesis 1,1–2,4a und 2,4b–3,24*, 2. Ausg., Neukirchener Verlag, Neukirchen-Vluyn. (Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament, 17).
- Schmitt, A., 1982, 'Zum Thema "Entrückung" im Alten Testament', *Biblische Zeit* 26, 34–49.
- 'Septuagint' (New English Translation of the Septuagint [NETS]) n.d., Oxford University Press, electronic edition, viewed 1 September 2014, from <http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/nets/edition/>.
- Stendebach, F.J., 1989, s.v. 'צלים', in G.J. Botterweck, H. Ringgren & H. J. Fabry (Hrsg.), *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament*, Kohlhammer, Stuttgart, vol. 6, pp. 1046–1055.
- Veijola, T., 2004, *Das 5. Buch Mose: Deuteronomium Kapitel 1,1–16,17*, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen. (Altes Testament Deutsch, 8/1).
- Westermann, C., 1974, *Genesis 1-11*, Neukirchener Verlag, Neukirchen-Vluyn. (Biblicher Kommentar, I/1).
- Zelenak, M.X., 1998, *Gender and politics in Greek Tragedy, artists and issues in the theatre*, Peter Lang, New York, NY/Washington, DC.