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THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

GRADUATE SCHOOL

Report
of
Committee on Thesis

The undersigned, acting as a Committee of the Graduate School, have read the accompanying thesis submitted by Ruth Elinor Underwood for the degree of Master of Arts.

They approve it as a thesis meeting the requirements of the Graduate School of the University of Minnesota, and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Colbert Secorles

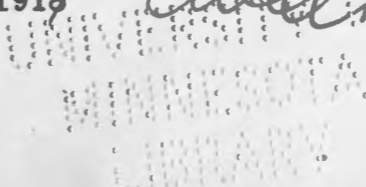
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THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

GRADUATE SCHOOL

Report

of

Committee on Examination

This is to certify that we the undersigned, as a committee of the Graduate School, have given Ruth Elinor Underwood final oral examination for the degree of Master of Arts . We recommend that the degree of Master of Arts be conferred upon the candidate.

Minneapolis, Minnesota

May 31 1919

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Voltaire's "Oreste" and Racine.

A Thesis submitted to the
Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Minnesota

by

Ruth Elinor Underwood

In partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Master of Arts

June

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Voltaire in writing "Oreste" claimed to have followed as closely as possible the two Greek tragedies, "Électre". In this connection he says in a letter to the Duchesse du Maine⁽¹⁾ "je n'ai point copié l'Électre de Sophocles, il s'en faut beaucoup; j'en ai pris autant que je l'ai pu, tout l'esprit et toute la substance. Les fêtes que célébraient Égisthe et Clytemnestre et qu'ils appelaient les festins d'Agamemnon, l'arrivée d'Oreste et de Pylade, l'urne dans laquelle on croit que sont renfermées les cendres d'Oreste, l'anneau d'Agamemnon, le carrosse d'Électre, celui d'Sophocle, et surtout le remords de Clytemnestre --". On this point the editors of the "Oeuvres Complètes de Voltaire" say:⁽²⁾ "Cette pièce est une imitation de Sophocle aussi exacte que la différence des moeurs et les progrès de l'art ont pu le permettre."

The legend in question was popular among the Greeks and Sophocles and Euripides had written two tragedies based upon it. According to the story two brothers, Atreus and Thyestes, or Atrée and Thyeste as the French has it, quarreled and Thyeste cursed the house of Atrée. Now Atrée had a son, Agamemnon, and Thyeste also had a son called Égisthe. In complete ignorance of the treachery of his wife, Clytemnestre, who had hated him since the sacrifice of their daughter Iphigénie, Agamemnon returned victorious from Troy. Scarcely had he landed when Égisthe, the base paramour of Clytemnestre, aided by the treacherous queen, slaughtered Agamemnon and all his comrades. However Oreste, the only

1. "Oeuvres Complètes de Voltaire" V.4 p.17

2. Ibid. avertissement p.3

son of Agamemnon, was saved by his nurse and placed in security with the Phocian Strophius. When Oreste had grown to manhood he returned and slew Égisthe and his mother, thus fulfilling the retribution which the gods had announced.

From this legend Sophocles worked out the plot for "Électre". The time is several years after the murder of Agamemnon. Égisthe has enslaved Électre, daughter of the dead king of Mycenae, because of her defiance of him. Oreste, urged by an oracle, comes to Mycenae intent upon avenging his father. He brings with him a funeral urn and spreads the tale that there are the ashes of Oreste who has been killed in a chariot race. After Électre has heard the tale and bewailed her brother's fate, Oreste declares his identity, enters the palace and kills Clytemnestre. Égisthe coming to hear the good news confirmed is forced by Oreste to enter the palace where he is quickly dispatched.

Euripides has a different version of "Électre." Égisthe fearing Électre's right to the throne has married her to a noble but very poor old man. Oreste comes to her cottage, makes himself known and plots the death of Égisthe whom he slays while sacrificing to the gods, and Clytemnestre whom he decoys to the house of her daughter. As a punishment for the murder of his mother, the Dioscuri come to drive Oreste forth to wander until he expiates his crime.

Voltaire takes for the theme of his tragedy, "Oreste", the avenging of the murdered King Agamemnon. The action takes place in the outskirts of Argos, near the tomb of Agamemnon. Clytemnestre, seized with remorse at the thought of her daughter's slavery intercedes for her, and obtains from Égisthe the promise to marry Électre to Plistène, Égisthe's only son who is

in Epidaure, sent there to kill Oreste. Electre taking this scheme as a sign that her brother is dead, indignantly refuses to marry the son of her father's murderer. Oreste now appears bringing the urn containing the ashes of Plistène which he presents to Égisthe as those of Oreste. Égisthe discovers the deception and imprisons Oreste and Pylade, his friend. Électre to whom Oreste has revealed his identity when she was upon the point of killing him, pleads with her mother to protect them. Clytemnestre promises to do so although she fears her son, but in spite of his wife's demands Égisthe orders the two to be executed; the people rise, free Oreste and Pylade, and take Égisthe himself prisoner. Clytemnestre, who attempts to protect Égisthe, is accidentally stabbed by Oreste thus fulfilling the oracle. As a punishment Oreste is condemned to wander pursued by the Furies until he atones for his crime.

Thus we see that the main modification which Voltaire made in "Oreste" is in the ending. The editors⁽¹⁾ write concerning this: "L'auteur fut seulement obligé de changer le dénouement." Voltaire himself in a note in several of his editions says "Quoique cette catastrophe, imitée de Sophocle, soit sans aucune comparaison plus théâtrale et plus tragique que l'autre manière dont on a joué la fin de la pièce, cependant j'ai été obligé de préférer sur le théâtre cette seconde leçon, toute faible qu'elle est, à la première. Rien n'est plus aisé et plus commun parmi nous, que de jeter du ridicule sur une action théâtrale à laquelle on n'est pas accoutumé. Les cris de Clytemnestre, qui faisaient frémir les Athéniens, auraient pu, sur un théâtre mal construit et confusément rempli de jeunes gens, faire rire des

1. Œuvres Complètes de Voltaire* V.4 avertissement des Éditeurs-p.3

Français."

In the main, as Voltaire said, he has taken the "substance" of Sophocles' "Électre", but in order to modernize it and to remove the objection which he felt to the "Dénouement" he made some slight changes even in the plot. In the Greek tragedy Oreste intentionally and remorselessly kills his mother, in the French he fulfills his destiny by accidentally killing her. Furthermore Sophocles ends his tragedy with Égisthe's death. Voltaire goes a little further and adds another final scene presenting the departure of Oreste upon his flight from the furies.

While Voltaire took the theme, the main situations in plot and some few lines from Sophocles he had in mind to make certain transformations for reasons already stated. In view of his great admiration for Racine it was natural that the latter's tragedies should have influenced Voltaire in minor situations, in diction, and in the development of motive and reaction in the characters.

Two tragedies of Racine in fact contained some of the principal characters which Voltaire was to use in his play. The former's "Iphigénie" has for one of its main personnages Clytemnestre, represented at an earlier period than in the Sophoclean tragedy, at a time when Agamemnon is on the point of sailing for Troy. Racine depicts Clytemnestre as the haughty queen of the legends, proud of her position as wife of the great Agamemnon and as future mother-in-law of the mighty Achilles, as an adoring mother and, until danger threatens her beloved daughter Iphigénie, as dutiful wife. During this crisis she vents upon Agamemnon all the bitterness and temper of an outraged mother.

Voltaire, however, represents her as loving her children as she does in Racine, but as separated from them by her crime

and her blind love for their oppressor. Thus she carries out the idea which Voltaire expresses: "Rien ⁽¹⁾ n'est en effet plus dans la nature qu'une femme criminelle envers son époux, et qui se laisse attendrir par ses enfants, qui reçoit le pitié dans son coeur altier et farouche, qui s'irrite, qui reprend la dureté de son caractère quand on lui fait des reproches trop violents, et qui s'apaise ensuite par les soumissions et par les larmes: le germe de ce personnage étoit dans Sophocle et dans Euripide, et je l'ai développé, -- "

Clytemnestre, as Voltaire developed her, retains the characteristic which she has in Sophocles, of being easily roused to anger, and acquires a softer side which appears in Racine - that of being stirred by the tears and pleadings of her daughters even to the point of protecting her son whom she mortally fears because of the oracle's prophecy. The long tirades which are characteristic of Clytemnestre in both "Iphigénie" and "Oreste", although worked out in the Voltarian way, seem to have much in common. The Racinian is spoken to Agamemnon when Iphigénie's life is at stake. The Voltarian tirade is an outburst against Égisthe at the time when he has condemned Oreste to death. In both cases Clytemnestre faces a sacrifice, rebels against it, reproaches her husband with thirst for power, with cruelty, and ends with violent threats.

"Iphigénie" (IV-4)⁽²⁾

"Oreste" (V-3)

Clytemnestre!

Égisthe, c'en est trop; c'est trop
braver, peut-être,

Et la veuve et le sang du roi qui

(1) Épître à la Duchesse du Maine, "Oeuvres complètes de Voltaire" p. 175

(2) Voltaire has changed the order in "Oreste", therefore the passage of the source has been transposed for the convenience of the reader.

fut ton maître,

Je défendrai mon fils; et malgré
tes fureurs,

Tu trouveras sa mère encor plus
que ses soeurs.

Que veux-tu? ta grandeur que rien
ne peut détruire

Oreste en ta puissance, et que ne
peut te nuire,

Électre enfin soumise, et prête
à te servir,

Iphise à tes genoux, rien ne peut
te fléchir!

Va, de tes ~~causés~~ cautions je fus assez
complice;

Je t'ai fait en ces lieux un trop
grand sacrifice.

Faut-il pour t'affermir dans ce
funeste rang,

T'abandonner encor le plus pur
de mon sang?

N'aurai-je donc jamais qu'un
époux parricide?

L'un massacre ma fille aux cam-
pagnes d'Aulide,

L'autre m'arrache un fils et
l'égorge à mes yeux,

Sur la cendre d'un père, à
l'aspect de ses dieux;

Cette soif de régner, que rien
ne peut éteindre,

L'orgueil de voir vingt rois
vous servir et vous
craindre,

Tous les droits de l'empire
en vos mains confiés,

Cruel! c'est à ces dieux que
vous sacrifiez;

Et loin de repousser le coup
qu'on vous prépare,

Vous voulez vous en faire un
mérite barbare:

Trop jaloux d'un pouvoir
qu'on peut vous envier,

De votre propre sang vous
coutez le payer;

Et voulez par ce prix, é-
pouvanter l'audace

De quiconque vous peut dis-
puter votre place.

Bourreau de votre fille, il
ne vous reste enfin

Que d'en faire à sa mère un

horrible festin.

Tombe avec moi plutôt, ce fatal
diadème,

Odieux à la Grèce et pesant à
moi-même!

Je t'aimai, tu le sais; c'est
un de mes forfaits.

Et le crime subsiste ainsi que
mes bienfaits.

Mais enfin de mon sang mes mains
seront avares:

Je l'ai trop prodigué pour des
époux barbares:

J'arrêterai ton bras levé pour
le verser.

Est-ce donc être père! Ah!

toute ma raison

Cède à la cruauté de cette
trahison.

(8 verses)

Non, je ne l'aurai point
amenée au supplice,

Où vous ferez aux Grecs un
double sacrifice

Ni crainte ni respect ne m'en
peut détacher:

De mes bras tout sanglants il
faudra l'arracher.

Aussi barbare époux qu'im-

Tremble, tu me connais ----
tremble de m'offenser.

Nos noeuds me sont sacrés, et
ta grandeur m'est chère,

Mais Oreste est mon fils, arrête,

pitoyable père,

et crains sa mère."

Venez, si vous l'osez, la ra-
vir à sa mère."

To this may be added a hemistich which occurs in this same speech of Racine's Clytemnestre but which has not been quoted -

"Pourquoi nous imposer la peine de son crime?
Pourquoi moi-même enfin me déchirant le flanc
Payer sa folle amour du plus pur de mon sang?"

Voltaire placed it changed in thought in "Clytemnestre's" speech to Écriste in the corresponding scene above:

"Peut-il pour t'affermir dans ce funeste rang,
T'abandonner encor le plus pur de mon sang?"

Inasmuch as a decree of the gods causes Clytemnestre's hatred and forms the basis for these tragedies, these plays are alike in commencing with a divine decree. In "Oreste" Racine, the old servant comforts Iphise and Électre with the prophecy of Oreste's return and the death of Écriste by his hand. Agamemnon in "Iphigénie" tells his servant Arca, that Calchas, the priest, has demanded the sacrifice of Iphigénie his daughter, else the gods will not grant wind for the sailing of the fleet to Troy. Aside from this decree, Racine has made such more of the religious element than did Voltaire inasmuch as the plot of "Iphigénie" hangs upon it. He draws a vivid picture of religious fanaticism, a fanaticism which took possession of the whole army to such a degree that even the great Agamemnon, leader of all the kings assembled there, could not counteract it in favor of his daughter. Voltaire portrayed merely a great fear of the gods. Perhaps he did not

dare to go as far as did Racine when he presents Achilles as in out and out defiance of the gods and the priest. However he does take the little hints of irritation which Racine employed elsewhere and convert them into real questioning of the deities. Thus Agamemnon says: (IV - 5)

"Hélas! en m'imposant une loi si sévère,
Grands dieux, ne deviez-vous laisser un cœur de père!"

Oreste exclaims: (IV-6)

-----"Si le ciel veut se faire obéir,
Qu'il me donne des lois que je puisse accomplir."

Voltaire counteracts this note of rebellion by having Oreste add after an outburst of this sort,

"N'importe, est-ce à l'esclave à condamner son maître?"

Racine makes clear this power of the gods over the innocent by Iphigénie's speech when she first hears of her fate. (III-6)

"Ciel! pour tant de rigueur, de quoi suis-je coupable?"

Voltaire uses that exact hemistich as expressed by Oreste in a like moment of questioning his fate. (IV-5)

"De quoi suis-je puni? de qui suis-je coupable,"

The main interest in a play centers however in the conflict. In Sophocles, according to the modern idea, little is made of the moral struggle, so it may be expected that for outside inspiration Voltaire should turn to Racine. In "Oreste" this conflict is developed in Clytemnestre and wavers between her mother-love and her

passion for Égléthe. This is strikingly like the situation in "Iphigénie" where Agamemnon is torn between his deep love for his daughter on one side and his love of glory, conquest and fear of Ulysses on the other. Thus in point of conflict Clytemnestre is reminiscent of Agamemnon, but in emotions, speech, and character of Racine's heroine.

Aside from Clytemnestre, another character in "Oreste" seems to have been created under the Racinian influence, that of Électre. Voltaire claims to have patterned her after the Électre of Sophocles, but she has undergone a transformation. She has a softened nature, she is willing to forgive her mother if the latter will only show some remorse. In the Greek tragedies she underwent no temptation, no lapses in her pride or "ferocity", no pity, and no love for her mother, merely the dominating idea of avenging her father's death. Iphigénie may have influenced Voltaire in forming Électre. Both Princesses display high courage and sense of duty. Iphigénie is of a milder disposition than Électre, having known little trouble and having been loved all her life. Électre, on the other hand, has suffered much - the loss of her sister, Iphigénie, the death of her father, the danger and exile of her brother, her mother's crime, her own slavery. All of these events would force Voltaire to represent Électre as does Sophocles, but her willingness to forgive, to love her mother and to respond to the least token of affection, is plainly Racinian.

At the first meeting between Électre and Clytemnestre (I-3) we have an evidence of this resemblance in the use of the word "trahir" which is reminiscent of Iphigénie's words to her father (IV-4)

Iphigénie.

"Cessez de vous troubler,
vous n'êtes point trahi:
Quand vous commanderez, vous
serez obéi.

Ma vie est votre bien; -----

Je saurai s'il le faut, vic-
time obéissante,

Vous rendre tout le sang que
vous m'avez donné."

Électre:

"Ce sang que je vous dois ne
saurait se trahir;
J'ai pleuré sur ma mère, et n'ai
pu vous haïr."

Arcine brings out the strength of Iphigénie's character by contrast with the weakness and vacillation of Agamemnon. He yields to Clytemnestra and to his paternal love and plans their escape. Much against her will Iphigénie leaves camp with her mother, but when she meets with opposition from the soldiers she decides that the Gods are unwilling for her to escape and asks Achilles to take her back to Calchas.

This temptation and the rejection of it seems to have had its influence on Voltaire in his portrayal of the character of Électre. In Sophocles there is no such temptation as in Act II scene 5 of "Oreste". In both of these scenes of the French poets where the temptation was first presented the two sisters react in the same manner. Iphigénie, saddened by her mother's wild grief, and thus carried away by this chance for deliverance exclaims simply and in accordance with her character: "Ah mon père!" In Voltaire Électre not knowing that her release from slavery depends upon her marriage with Égisthe's son, responds gratefully and more theatrically than does Iphigénie: "Ah madame,

à vos pieds --"

Later when Iphigénie decides to return to her father she begs her mother not to blame Agamemnon for her death with the words, "Pour me rendre à vos pleurs, que n'a-t-il point tenté!" Voltaire takes this hemistich, but instead of it being used by Électre, Clytemnestre, angered at her daughter's haughty refusal of her kind intentions exclaims:

"Que n'ai je point tenté? Que pourrai-je plus faire,
Pour fléchir, pour briser ton cruel caractère."

The climax of both these plays, Act V scene 5 of Iphigénie, and Act V scene 7 of "Oreste", the description of the scene at the altar in the one, and of the freeing of Oreste in the other, have much of the same movement. No narration is necessary in the Greek as the audience learned of the death by the cries of the victim, and it was to obviate this dénouement ^{that} Voltaire was forced to write this narration.

Électre:

"Quel miracle a produit un des-
tin si prospère?"

Arcas:

Pylade:

"Son courage, son nom, le nom de
votre père,

Le votre, vos vertus, l'exces de
vos malheurs,

N'en doutez point, madame,

un dieu combat pour

vous.

La pitié, la justice, un dieu

qui parle aux coeurs.

Par les ordres d'Égisthe on

Achille, en ce moment exauce

amansit à peine

vos prières,
 Il a brisé des grecs les
 trop faibles barri-
 ères;
Achille cest à l'autel -
 Calchas est éperdu:
 Le fatal sacrifice est en-
 cor suspendu.
 On se menace, on court,
 l'air gémit, le fer
 brille.
 Achille fait rengar, aut-
 our de votre fille
 Tous ses amis, pour lui
 prêts à se dévorer.
 Le triste Agamemnon, qui n'ose
 l'avouer
 Pour détourner ses yeux des
 meurtres qu'il présage,
 Ou pour cacher ses pleurs,
 s'est voilé le visage.

Pour mourir avec nous, le fidèle
 Pammène;
Tout un peuple suivait, morne,
 glacé d'horreur;
 J'antrevoyais sa rage à travers
 sa terreur;
 Le garde retenait leurs fureurs
 interdite .
 Cruste se tournant vers les fiars
 satellites,
 Imoles, a-t-il dit, le dernier
 de vos rois:
 L'osez-vous? A ces mots, au son
 de cette voix,
 A ce front où brillait le majes-
 té suprême,
 Nous avons tous cru voir Aga-
 memnon lui-même,

 Des soldats avançaient pour nous
 envelopper
 Ils ont levé le bras, et n'ont
 osé frapper:
 Nous sommes entourés d'une foule
 attendrie
 Le zèle s'enhardit, l'amour de-
 vient furie.

In this passage there is one striking similarity, Voltaire has

substituted the people for Achilles as the liberator.

In addition there are certain isolated traits which Voltaire seems to have taken from this tragedy of Racine. In the final scene of "Iphigénie" and the next to the last scene of "Oreste" we find a passage of four lines each, which though not similar in thought have the supernatural in common.

Ulysse:

"Le soldat étonné dit que dans
une nue
Jusque sur le bûcher Diane est
descendue,
Et croit que, s'élevant au tra-
vers de ses feux,
Elle portait au ciel notre en-
cens et nos vœux."

Faméne.

"On dit que dans ce trouble on
voit les Euménides
Sourdes à la prière, et de meur-
tres avides,
Ministres des arrêts prononcés
par le sort,
Marcher autour d'Oreste en appel-
ant la mort."

In just one other Racinian play do we find anything like this passage. In "Phèdre" there occurs a couplet beginning with the words Voltaire uses:

"On dit qu'on a vu même en ce désordre affreux,
Un dieu qui d'aiguillons pressait leur flanc poudreux."

He may have had both passages in mind when he brought in this touch of the supernatural.

Voltaire seems to have taken also part of one of Clytemnestra's speeches from "Iphigénie". When she discovers Agamemnon's duplicity she says (IV-4)

"Ah! toute ma raison
Cède à la crainte de cette trahison."

Voltaire expresses this idea a little differently. At the time when Électre has scorned Clytemnestre's efforts to restore her to her proper position Clytemnestre exclaims!

" - - - - - toute ma pitié
Cède enfin dans mon coeur à ton inimitié."

The other lines which have a Racinian turn are chance ones. From the following couplet which in Iphigénie is spoken to Clytemnestre Voltaire worked out a single line using the same figure, and rhyme.

"Iphigénie" (V-4)

"Savez-vous quel serpent inhumaine
Iphigénie avait retiré dans son sein?"

"Oreste" (II-5)

Clytemnestre:

"C'est trop flatter la tienne et de ma faible main,
Carresser le serpent qui déchire son sein."

A line from one of Agamemnon's speeches is incorporated in "Oreste", being given to Clytemnestre. In Racine Agamemnon's lines were uttered in an outburst against Achilles; in Voltaire Clytemnestre's against Électre:

(IV-8) "Fuyez, je ne crains point votre impuissant courroux;

Et je romps tous les noeuds qui s'attachent à vous."

(II-5) "Je ne suis plus ta mère, et toi seule es rompu

Ces noeuds infortunés de ce coeur combattu."

While the lines are not identical the thought is the same. Agamemnon wrathfully breaks off Achilles's and Iphigénie's marriage,

Clytemnestre blames Électre for bringing an end to their relationship.

Another example of the same kind of borrowing occurs where a simple statement of Agamemnon.

(I-1) "Si ma fille une fois met le pied dans Aulide
Elle est morte."

becomes in Voltaire a menace and a warning to Électre about Oreste in the mouth of Clytemnestre.

(I-3) "Si d'Épisthe jamais il affronte la vue,
Vous hazarder sa vie, et vous êtes perdue."

The other lines in "Oreste" which are reminiscent of Racine in "Iphigénie" are merely haphazard ones. We have a complete phrase used to complete a line, taken from Act I scene I from a speech of Agamemnon's :

"J'offris sur ses autels un secret sacrifice."

Voltaire gives it to Oreste in speaking of Agamemnon, (II-2):

"Je dois à un grand ombre un secret sacrifice."

Another little Racinian expression which seemed to have struck Voltaire is "qui m'arrête." Eriphile, Achille's captive, wishing to hasten the death of Iphigénie uses it in the lines (IV-1)

"Je ne sais qui m'arrête et retient mon courroux,
Que par un prompt avis de tout ce qui se passe
Je ne cours des dieux divulger la menace."

Électre, at the time when she is on the point of stabbing Oreste, asks (IV-5)

"Qui m'arrête et d'où vient que je crains de frapper?"

Again we have a chance expression which Euryphrate uses to show the helplessness and weakness of Iphigénie's condition (V-3).

"Mais de nos faibles mains que pouvez-vous attendre?
Contre tant d' ennemis qui vous pourra défendre?"

Voltaire in depicting the weak and timid Iphise at the beginning of "Oreste" expresses much the same thought in the following couplet (I-2).

"Contre nos ennemis nous n'avons que des larmes:
Qui peut nous secourir? Comment trouver des armes?"

While not at all similar in diction, a single line taken from one of Iphigénie's speeches which defended her father.

"Quel père de son sang se plût à se priver?"

may have given Voltaire the idea for a couplet which Oreste in a moment of philosophizing gives parenthetically:

"Si pourtant une mère a pu porter jamais
Sur la cendre d'un fils des regards satisfaits!"

Voltaire makes use of a hemistich found in "Iphigénie", a very common expression but the employment of it reminds one of the parallel Racinian passage.

Eriphile: (II-8) (consoling herself)

"Mais Doris, ou j'aime à me flatter
Ou sur eux quelque orage est tout prêt d'éclater.
J'ai de ses yeux, leur bonheur n'est pas encore tranquille.
On trompe Iphigénie, on se cache d'Achille,
Agamemnon gémit."

The Volterrian passage starts out much the same way. It is spoken by Iphise who seeks to console Électre at the time of Oreste's reported death (IV-3).

"Électre, ou je m'abuse, ou l'on s'obstine à taire,
à cacher à nos yeux un important mystère.

- - - - -
On se cache de vous; Fammene vous évite."

One transition couplet in Voltaire has the very same rhyme words as one in "Iphigénie". The fact that it is a transition passage makes the influence less probable. The Lucianic couplet is (IV-1)

"On vient: Clytemnestre s'avance.
Remettez-vous, Madame, ou fuyez sa présence."

The couplet in "Oreste" is (II-2)

"Égisthe ici s'avance.
Clytemnestre le suit, évitez leur présence".

In two passages in "Oreste" Act IV scene 8, and Act V scene 9, Voltaire seems to have been thinking of a single one in "Iphigénie", scene 2 of Act V. The lines in question are those spoken by Achilles to Iphigénie:

"Vous allez à l'autel, et moi j'y cours, madame.
Si du sang, et de morts le ciel est offensé
Jamais de plus de sang ses autels n'ont fumé.
À mon aveugle amour tout sera légitime.
Le prêtre deviendra la première victime."

Upon this Voltaire models Électre's pleading for the life of Oreste.

"Sommes-nous dans Argos, ou bien dans la Tauride,
(IV-8) où de meurtres sacrés une prêtresse avide
Du sang des étrangers fait fumer son autel?
Et bien, pour les ravir tous deux au coup mortel,
Que faut-il? Ordonnez, j'épouserai Filistène."

In Act V scene 8 Voltaire uses this same idea for the scene in which Oreste is condemned to go to the Tauride. In it we have an expression which occurs in the first verse of the Racinian passage.

"J'y cours, j'y vais trouver la prêtresse homicide
Qui n'offre que du sang à ses dieux en courroux,
À des dieux moins cruels, moins barbares que vous."

The benediction "à ses lois moins soumise" which is found Act IV scene 8 in the following speech of Agamemnon:

"Achille nous menace, Achille nous méprise,
Mais une fille en est-elle à ses lois moins soumise?"

evidently lingered in Voltaire's mind. In "Oreste" Égisthe speaks it to Clytemnestre. It is changed slightly "ses" being replaced by "vsa" and "moins" by "plus". But in the manner in which it is employed the original idea is retained.

(I-8) "Vous savez pour unir sa famille et la vôtre,
Qu'Électre eût pu prétendre à l'hymen de mon fils,
Si son cœur à vos lois eût été plus soumis."

The final passage which shows the influence of "Iphigénie" upon "Oreste" is found in Act V scene 9, the last scene of the

tragedy. Voltaire evidently had in mind a passage (V-4) in which Clytemnestra at the time of the sacrifice invoked the Sun thus:

"Et toi, soleil, et toi, que dans cette contrée,
Reconnais l'héritier et le vrai fils d'Atrée,
Toi, qui n'oses du père éclairer le festin,
Recule, ils t'ont appris ce funeste chemin."

Voltaire condensed these four lines into two used in Oreste's invocation of the god's and here of the sun:

"Soleil qu'epouvante cette affreuse contrée,
Soleil qui recule pour le festin d'Atrée."

In "Andromaque" in which Oreste plays a prominent role, the subject-matter is entirely different. The final scene of Voltaire's tragedy nevertheless recalls the final scene of "Andromaque", not in diction but in general tone and content. These corresponding parts are of about the same length, both end with a speech by Fylade and the tirade of Oreste against fate, his philosophical acceptance of his destiny are very similar in spirit and expression. Voltaire made use of a hemistich found in the Eschylus passage, "dans l'éternelle nuit" and the similarity of the verse introducing the soliloquy is very striking.

"Andromaque"(V-4)

"Oreste"(V-9)

Oreste:

Oreste:

"Est-ce Pyrrhus qui meurt, et
suis-je Oreste enfin?

"Non, ce n'est pas moi, non, ce
est pas Oreste.

Quoi? J'étouffe en mon coeur

le raison qui s'éclairc;

J'assassine à regret un roi

que je révère;

Je viole en un jour les droits

des souverains,

Ceux des ambassadeurs, et tous

ceux des humains,

Ceux même des autels où me

furor l'assiege:

Je deviens parricide, assassin,

sacrilege.

-Scene 5-

Grâce aux Dieux mon malheur

passa mon espérance.

Cui, je te loue ô ciel de ta

persévérance

Appliqué sans relâche au soin

de me punir,

Au comble des douleurs tu m'as

fait parvenir.

Tu meine a pris plaisir à

former ma misère;

J'étais né pour servir

d'exemple à ta colère:

Hé bien! Je meurs content, et

mon sort est rempli.

Banni de mon pays par le meurtre

de mon père,

Banni du monde entier par celui

de ma mère,

Patrie, États, parents, que je

remplis d'effroi,

Innocence, amitié, tout est per-

du pour moi!

Un⁽¹⁾ pouvoir effroyable a seul con-
duit mes coups.

Exécrable instrument d'un éter-
nel courroux,

Dieux qui me punissez, qui m'avez
fait coupable

En bien! quel est l'œil que
vous me destinez?

Quel est le nouveau crime où vous
me condamnez?

Soleil⁽²⁾ qui reculâs pour le fes-
tin d'Atrée,

(1) Some of the Voltarian verses have been transposed to bring out more clearly the similarity.

(2) This couplet in diction has been compared with a passage in "Iphigénie".

He bien filles d'enfer, vos
mains sont-elles prêtes?

Pour qui sont ces serpents qui
sifflent sur vos têtes?

À qui destinez-vous l'appareil
qui vous suit?

Venez-vous m'enlever dans -
l'éternelle nuit?

Venez, à vos fureurs Oreste
s'abandonne."

Tu lui es enor pour moi, tu lui es
pour ces diables!

Dans l'éternelle nuit tu ne nous
plonges pas!

Dieux tyfars éternels, puissance
impitoyable,

Dieux qui me punissez, etc.

Aside from Oreste and Pylade we find an entirely different set of characters in these two tragedies, although there are some resemblances in situation and many in diction which occur in rather haphazard fashion. For example in "Andromaque" Act I scene 1, Pylade upon meeting Oreste says

"Mais je vous vois, seigneur, et si j'ose le dire,
Un destin plus heureux vous conduit en Epire."

In "Oreste", Act I scene 2, Iphise upon seeing Electre after a rather long separation says:

"Un destin moins affreux permet que je vous vois."

Thus here, as in the case of a line borrowed from "Iphigénie," Voltaire substitutes the opposite adverb, here "moins" for "plus", and by changing the adjective retains the same idea which Racine expressed.

In both these plays there is a son in danger. In Racine's tragedy it is the young child Astyanax, son of the captive Androm-

aque and of Hector, the dead hero of Troy. The Greeks send Oreste to demand the child's life of Pyrrhus. However Pyrrhus who loves Andromaque will refuse to yield provided she consent to become his wife.

In "Oreste" we have a young man whose life is endangered twice - first by Plistène and later when he is arrested and condemned to death. The Greek tragedians do not represent Oreste as in any real danger, his identity is not even suspected. Thus it follows that there must be some other source of influence. Of course the difficulty is to know whether Voltaire was influenced in this by the characters of Atyanax or Iphigénie.

As has been stated before the mother - conflict in Voltaire's tragedy seems parallel to the father - struggle in Racine's "Iphigénie", but there is similarity in thought between the following speech by Andromaque to Céphise, her confidante.

"Mais⁽¹⁾ aussitôt ma main à moi seule funeste,
D'une infidèle vie abrigera la reste,
Et sauvent ma vertu, rendre ce que je dois
À Pyrrhus, à mon fils, à mon époux, à moi"

and Clytemnestre's lines to Électre

"Je⁽²⁾ suis épouse et mère; et je veux à la fois
Si j'en puis être digne, en remplir tous les droits."

The similarity ends in the intention to fulfill both the motherly

(1) "Andromaque" Act IV scene 1

(2) "Oreste" Act V scene 5

and wifely duties. In Racine Andromaque marries Pyrrhus, and saves her son, but before she can carry out her fatal resolution, Crete brings about the death of Pyrrhus. In Voltaire, Clytemnestre in trying to fulfill all her duties saves her son but in attempting to protect her husband meets her end.

Voltaire, although he obtained his idea of Électre mostly from the Greek and fashioned her somewhat after Iphigénie, seems to be indebted a bit to Racine's Andromaque at least for a few lines in picturing Électre's sorrow. Thus Andromaque asks Pyrrhus who is pressing her to accept his hand:

"Captive, ⁽¹⁾ toujours triste, importune à moi-même,

 Quels charmes ont pour vous des yeux infatigués,
 Qu'à des pleurs éternels vous avez condamnés!"

Voltaire makes this complaint more bitter and better suited to Électre.

"Je ⁽²⁾ pleure Agamemnon, je tremble pour un frère.
 Mes mains portent des fers; et mes yeux pleins de pleurs
 N'ont vu que de forfaits et des persécuteurs."

We have again a similarity in plot which is not accompanied by any likeness in diction. Act I scene 4 of "Andromaque" Pyrrhus offers to his captive not only her son's life, but promises also to raise him as a prince worthy of his father, Hector, promises him

(1) "Andromaque" Act I scene 4.

(2) "Oreste" Act I scene 3

a glorious future if she will become his queen. In the same act and the following scene of the Voltarian tragedy practically the same opportunity is given to Électre. If she will marry Flicète, the son of her father's murderer, she may regain her position as a member of the royal family and aspire to the throne. As has been pointed out before in connection with "Iphigénie" there is no influence from the Greek tragedians on this scene. It seems likely that Voltaire received much of his inspiration from both of these Racinian plays. The exact nature of the temptation is more like the one depicted in "Andromaque". Électre herself as has been shown reacts at first such as does Iphigénie but later in her reproaches she resembles Andromaque more closely.

"Il m'aurait tenu lieu d'un père et d'un époux;
 Mais il ne faut tout perdre et toujours par vos coups.

 Et quel époux encore! Ah! souvenir cruel!
 Sa mort seule a rendu votre père immortel!
 Il doit au sang d'Hector tout l'éclat de ses armes;
 Et vous n'êtes tous deux connus que par ses larmes.

 Hélas! il mourra donc! Il n'a pour sa défense
 Que les pleurs de sa mère, et que son innocence --

 Mais enfin sur ses pas j'irai revoir son père.
 Ainsi tous trois, seigneur, par vos soins réunis,
 Nous vous -----"

Although more abusive in her language to Égisthe than is Andromaque

to Pyrrhus, there is a similarity in idea between the above lines and the outburst of Électre against Égisthe when he forces the urn from her:

"Barbare, arrache-moi le seul bien qui me reste;
Tigre, avec cette cendre, arrache-moi le coeur,
Joins le père aux enfants, joins le frère à la soeur,
Monstre heureux, à tes pieds vois toutes les victimes."

In Sophocles the scene of the urn does not culminate in its being forced from Électre. Oreste reveals his identity before she becomes violent and abusive. Obviously then Voltaire obtained this little touch from some other source.

He incorporates in Électre not only some characteristics taken from Racine's character of Iphigénie, but also some things which remind one of Hermione. Électre's violence was not modelled upon Racine as in that respect Voltaire follows the Greek representation of Électre. However both are willing themselves to kill the man they hate.

Hermione. (1241)

"Je m'en vais seule au temple
où leur hymen s'apprête,
Où vous n'osez aller m'interrompre ma
conquête.
Là de mon ennemi je saurai m'
approcher;
Je percerais le coeur que je n'
ai pu toucher;
Et mes sanglantes mains, - - -"

Électre. (I-2)

"C'est parmi les apprêts de ces
indignes jeux,
Dans ce cruel triomphe où mon
tyran s'entraîne,
Que venant par force et soulevé
par la haine,
Mon bras, mon faible bras osera
l'égorger
Au tombeau que sa rage ose en-
core outrager."

Hermione incites Oreste against Pyrrhus in this, while Électre urges her sister to aid her against Égisthe, as also in Sophocles.

Voltaire has unmistakably made use of a line from the following scene in "Andromaque" and has employed it in Act II scene 7. The Racinian passage is spoken to Hermione by her confidante, whereas the Voltairian was Iphise uttered in warning to Électre.

Cleone(1255)

Iphise:

"Vous vous perdez, Madame, et
vous devez songer - "

"Vous vous perdez, songez qu'un
maître impitoyable
sous obsède, - - - - -"

Another line from this same scene is developed into two in Act III scene 4. The Racinian verse is spoken by Oreste to Hermione when she denounces the death of Pyrrhus at his hands.

"Souvenez-vous qu'il règne, et qu'un front couronné--"

The Voltairian passage is also spoken by Oreste but to Électre when she is raging against her oppressor:

"Il règne; doit assez, et le ciel nous ordonne
Que, sans peser ses droits nous respections son trône."

Pylade, Oreste's friend, another character which these two tragedies have in common, is more like Racine's interpretation of him than the Greek. In Euripides and Sophocles Pylade has a silent part, for that reason Voltaire undoubtedly looked to Racine in depicting him. There is a great resemblance in the following passages, in which one sees the true friend and counselor.

Pylade:"Andromaque",Act III
scene 1

Pylade:"Oreste",Act III scene 7

"Mais songez cependant où vous
 êtes
 Que croira-t-on de vous, à
 voir ce que vous faites,
 Dissimulez, calmez ce trans-
 port inquiète;
 Commandez à vos yeux de gar-
 der le secret.
 Ses gardes, cette cour, l'air
 qui vous environne
 Tout dépend de Pyrrhus, et
 surtout Hermione."

Dans tous ces entretiens que je
 tremble pour vous!
 Je crains votre tendresse, et
 plus votre courroux;
 Apaise de tes sens le trouble
 involontaire,
 Renferme dans ton cœur un se-
 cret nécessaire
 Cher Oreste, crois-moi des fem-
 mes et des pleurs.
 Du sang d'Agamemnon sont de
 faibles vengeurs."

Voltaire follows Sophocles in representing Pylades as Oreste's
 social equal whereas Racine relegated him merely to the role of
 confidant.

In a very similar situation to one of Racine's, Voltaire
 employs a hemistich which Racine used. In both of these scenes
 the mothers are reminded of the danger threatening their sons.

Céplise (III-8)

"Hé bien! Allons donc voir
 expirer votre fils!
 On n'attend plus que vous.
Vous frémissez madame!"

Égisthe (I-8)

"Fistère ne s'occupe, en un mot
 il vous sert.
 Notre ennemi commun sans doute
 est découvert.
Vous frémissez, madame?"

Although there is little resemblance in diction Voltaire
 uses the idea which Racine so admirably developed - that of the
 horror which the person who has served you in your evil work in-
 (1) Act III scene 8.

spires in the guilty conscience. Thus Hermione, after Oreste has killed Pyrrhus, abhors him. Voltaire to add another human touch to Clytemnestre's character gives her the same dread of the murderer of her son.

Hermione.(V-3)

"Va je la désavoue, et tu me
fais horreur."

Clytemnestre:(III-VI)

- - - - "Qu'il s'écarte seigneur,
Son aspect ne remplit d'épouvante
et d'horreur."

The exclamation which Hermione utters when Oreste comes to announce Pyrrhus' death

"Barbare qu'as-tu fait?"

is found slightly changed to fit the innocence of Oreste in Voltaire's play - Électre exclaims,

"Qu'avez-vous fait, cruel?" when Oreste appears after he has stabbed his mother.

The hemistich "je ne balance point" which is found in Racine in a speech made by Pyrrhus to Andronaque Act I scene 4,

"Je ne balance point, je vole à son secours,
Je défendrai sa vie aux dépens de mes jours,"

appears in "Oreste" Act IV scene 8 when Clytemnestre promises to protect Oreste:

"Je ne balance point:

Je le prends sous ma garde; il pourra m'en punir."

The second half of the last Voltairian line gives the same idea as that in the second verse in the Racinian passage.

"Although in the final scene of "Oreste" there is but little mention of the Furies, in Act III scene 1 we have a longer passage where Oreste speaks of seeing his mother at the tomb of Agamemnon. In this scene Voltaire has made use of the same onomatopoeia which Racine employs in the final scene of "Andromaque" that of imitating the hissing of serpents, enlarging upon it in characteristic fashion.

Oreste. "Andromaque"

"Dieux! quels affreux regards elle jette sur moi?
Quels démons, quels serpents
traîne-t-elle après soi?
Hé bien! filles d'enfer, vos
mains sont-elles prêtes?
Pour qui sont ces serpents
qui sifflent sur vos
têtes?
A qui destinez-vous l'épée
pareil qui vous suit?

Oreste.

J'ai vu soudain, j'ai vu les
filles d'enfer
Sortir entre elle et moi de
l'abyme entr'ouvert.
Leurs serpens, leurs flammes,
leur voix sombre et terrible
M'inspirait un transport inconce-
vable, horrible,
Une fureur atroce; et je sen-
tais ma main
se lever malgré moi; prête à
percer son sein."

Voltaire has painted the same fatalism in Oreste's character as did Racine. This is distinctly a Macinian influence - Sophocles making no use of such sentiments.

Oreste: (V-1)

"J'étais né pour savoir d'exem-
ple à te colere,
Pour être du malheur un modè-
le accompli."

Oreste: (III-1)

"C'est le destin d'Oreste, il
est né pour l'horreur."

Most of the influence as to situation seems to have come from "Iphigénie" and "Andromaque". However we find a few slight similarities in minor situations and some lines taken here and there from the rest of Racine's tragedies. Three of these offer merely a few lines.

There are only a couple of verses which are at all reminiscent of "Esther". For some reason the expression "tout mon sang" seems to have lingered in Voltaire's mind. It occurs in a speech of Assuérus Act III scene 4.

"Quel jour mêlé d'horreur vient effrayer mon âme?
Tout mon sang de colère et de honte s'enflamme."

Voltaire in the same act and scene of "Oreste" starts a verse with the same expression using however a different verb with practically the same meaning.

"Tout mon sang se soulève."

The other passage of the "Esther" which seems to have left a trace on "Oreste" is:

Asaph:(II-3)

"Assis le plus souvent aux portes du palais,
 Sera se plaindre de vous, ni de sa destinée,
 Il y traîne, seigneur, sa vie infortunée -"

Voltaire seems to have remembered the phrase "trainar sa vie" and employs it in a passage which is similar in thought.

Famène:(III-8)

"C'est ce que j'apprends d'un serviteur fidèle

Qui, pour le sang des rois comme moi plein de zèle,
Gémissant et caché, traîne encor ses vieux ans
Dans un service ingrat à la cour des tyrans."

An expression which Étéocle in the "Thébaïde" used Act III scene 4, when urging his uncle to drastic action,

"Vengez-la, vengez-vous"

furnished Voltaire with a splendid line for Électre when urging Oreste to kill Égisthe. He turned it around, put it into the familiar form as more becoming a sister, and replaced "vous" by "nous" thus:

"venge-nous, venge-la" (1)

Another catchy little phrase which is found in "La Thébaïde" occurs in the line of Créon - Act III scene 4.

"Et ce serait se perdre au lieu de se venger."

Voltaire employs it (III-2), as a warning to Oreste concerning Électre:

"Son caractère ardent- - - - -

Servirait à vous perdre au lieu de vous venger."

From "Alexandre le grand" Voltaire took a heuristical, "achevez votre ouvrage." In the Racinian tragedy Cleopâtre says to Ephestion, Alexandre's ambassador:

"Seigneur, achevez votre ouvrage." (2)

(1) "Oreste" Act V scene 5.

(2) "Alexandre le grand" Act II scene 1.

Voltaire gives the half-line to Electre who urges her mother to protect Oreste further.

"au nom de la nature, achevez votre ouvrage."

"Le fer à la main" is another complete hemistich which seems to have lingered in Voltaire's memory, found in the same play. With Racine it occurs in a prophecy, with Voltaire Électre calls up a picture of the past.

Forus (I-2):

"Hé quoi! nous l'aurons vu, par tant d'horribles
guerres,
Troubler le calme heureux dont jouissent nos
terres.
Et, le fer à la main, entrer dans nos états
Pour attaquer des rois qui ne l'offensaient pas;"

Électre (I-2)

"Vos yeux ne virent point ce parricide impie,
Ces vêtements de la mort, ces apprêts, ce festin,
Ce festin détestable, où le fer à la main,
Clytemnestre - ma mère - - - - -"

From "Britannicus" Voltaire evidently obtained one suggestion for the diction of a similar scene. In Act II scene 3 Nero is trying to persuade Junia to become his wife. In his argument he says

"C'est à vous de passer du côté de l'empire.
Du sang dont vous sortez rappelez la mémoire."

Act II scene 3, Clytemnestre who attempts to induce Électre to

consider marriage with Flistène, Égisthe's son, says:

"C'est à vous de passer des fers que vous portez
A ce supreme/rang des rois dont vous sortez,"

thus using one identical hemistich and almost another, supplying "rang des rois" for "sang".

Nero's further argument with slight changes fits into a speech of Égisthe concerning this marriage, which is found in the previous scene of "Oreste".

Nero:

"Et ne préférez point à la solide gloire
Des honneurs dont César prétend vous revêtir,
La gloire d'un refus sujet au repentir."

This speech of Nero's is a polite but veiled threat. Voltaire takes the idea and the phrase "d'un refus" and in giving it to the brutal Égisthe gives it a slightly different turn, substituting "honte" for "gloire" with the result of an outright threat.

Égisthe (to Clytemnestre):

"Mais craignons tous deux de partager
Le honte d'un refus qu'il nous faudrait venger."

Voltaire plainly used two lines of one of Nero's speeches and expanded them into five in "Oreste". Nero, speaking of his mother says:(IV-3)

"Et je ne prétends pas que sa coupe de audace
Une seconde fois lui permette sa place."

Voltaire took out bodily the hemistich "et je ne prétends pas" and the principal words of the rest of the couplet, incorporating it into a speech of Égisthe concerning Électre. (1)

"Je la traîne enchaînée, et je ne prétends pas
Que de ses cris plaintifs alarmant nos États,
 Dans Argos désormais sa dangereuse audace
 Ose des dieux sur moi rappeler la menace,
 D'Oreste aux mécontents promettre le retour."

The use of the verb "régner" and the expression "c'est assez" also recalls "Britannicus" Act IV scene 2. In Racine it is spoken by Agrippine who tries to placate Nero thus:

"vous réglez, c'est assez."

In Voltaire Oreste makes use of it in speaking of Égisthe.

"il régle, c'est assez."

Similarly the combination of the verb exciter and the noun "amis" which is part of a speech of Britannicus Act I scene 4:

"Va donc voir si le bruit de ce nouvel orage
 Aura de nos amis excité le courage."

is recalled Act V scene 2 of "Oreste" by Iphise.

"Il parle à nos amis, il excite leur zèle;"

Almost a complete verse of "Britannicus" and "Oreste" are

- (1) "Oreste" Act IV scene 3
 (2) "Britannicus" Act III scene 8.

alike - strikingly so. Nero⁽¹⁾ says to Britannicus speaking of Junie:

"Souhaitez-la! c'est tout ce que je puis vous dire."

The Voltarian line is found in a speech of Pylade who attempts to calm Électre (IV-2)

"Soumettez-vous; c'est tout ce que je puis vous dire."

Several words of another couplet in Britannicus (I-4) changed around slightly form three lines for Voltaire (I-3).

Britannicus:

"Et qui, si je t'en crois, à de ses derniers jours,
Trop lent pour ses devoirs, précipité le cours?"

Voltaire changes the thought. In a moment of remorse Clytemnestre says to her daughters:

"Et les chagrins secrets dont je fus poursuivie,
Dont toujours à vos yeux j'ai dérobé le cours,
Pourront précipiter le terme de mes jours."

The "Bérénice" of Racine according to Voltaire "Une pastoral entre un empereur, une reine et un roi"⁽²⁾ is nothing but a farewell carried through five acts, so its influence upon "Oreste" is in dictation, with very slight resemblances in situation. Titus, Act IV scene 5, defends the decision he has taken to send Bérénice back to Palestine and recounts the harshness and self-sacrifice of former Roman emperors. Voltaire uses much this idea in one of Clytemnestre's speeches where she pleads for Oreste's life and condemns her murderous husbands.

(1) "Britannicus" Act III scene 8

(2) "Oeuvres Complètes de Voltaire" V4 p.13

Titus:

"L'un jaloux de sa foi, va
chez les ennemis
Chercher avec la mort la
peine tout prête;
D'un fils victorieux l'autre
préscrit la tête;
L'autre avec des yeux secs
et presque indifférents,
Vait mourir ses deux fils,
par son ordre expirent."

Olympeastre:(V-3)

"L'un massacre ma fille aux cam-
pagnes d'Aulide,
L'autre m'arrache un fils et l'é-
gorge à mes yeux,
Sur la cendre du père, à l'aspect
de ses dieux."

In the scene where Oreste is overwhelmed by Électre's sorrow at the report of his death, Voltaire makes use of a part of a line which Racine employed for the scene in which Titus yields to Bérénice's pleading to remain at Rome even if she cannot marry him. The similarity in situation lends color to the similarity of the phrases which in themselves are quite commonplace.

Titus:

"Je n'y résiste point,
mais je sens ma
faiblesse."

Oreste:

"Je n'y résiste plus. Dieux in-
humains, tonnez."

Titus in his mental struggle is filled with remorse for the trouble he will bring to Bérénice. Voltaire represents Oreste as also regretting the sorrow his silence is causing Électre.

Titus:(IV-4)

Je viens percer un coeur que j'adore, qui m'aime."

Oreste: (IV-1)

"Ma rigueur assassine un coeur qui vit pour moi."

Voltaire in characteristic fashion emphasizes Racine's expression.

In the scene where Bérénice has sent Phénice to find out the meaning of her lover's unaccountable behavior, while she waits in an agony of expectancy for the worst, we have some lines which unquestionably furnished Voltaire with the idea and an exclamation for a like scene. In "Oreste" Électre momentarily expects news of her brother's death.

Bérénice: (1)

"Phénice ne vient point!

Je m'écrite, je cours, languissante, abattue:

La force m'abandonne, et
le repos me tue.

Phénice ne vient point!"

Électre: (2)

"Je cours, j'attends, Je me meurs
dans la crainte.

Iphise ne vient point."

A graphic phrase employed by Racine Act V scene 7, was picked up by Voltaire for the lines of Iphise, Act V scene 2.

Bérénice:

"Partout du désespoir je ren-
contre l'image,

Je ne vois que des pleurs, et je
n'entends parler

Que de trouble, d'horreur, de
sang prêt à couler."

Électre:

"Ce sang prêt à couler parle à
ses sens surpris."

(1) "Bérénice" IV-1

(2) "Oreste" V-1

What makes this more plausible is that in Act I scene 2, Voltaire gives Électre the same sentiment as the first part of the Racinian passage.

"Mes mains portent des fers, et mes yeux pleins de
 pleurs
 S'ont vu que des forfaits et des paracouteurs."

The line "laisse-moi respirer" which in Bérénice (III-2) is uttered by Antiochus when under great emotional strain occurs in "Oreste" under similar circumstances. Clytemnestre overcome by remorse and other conflicting emotions uses the same expression to her daughters, Act I scene 3.

Antiochus:

"Arsace, laisse-moi le temps
 de respirer."

Clytemnestre:

"Laissez-moi respirer."

Another expression which Voltaire employs much as does Racine is "tous les coups."

Antiochus:(I-4)

"Il semblait à lui seul appeler tous les coups."

Pyllade:(V-)

"La seule Clytemnestre- - - -
 Le tient entre ses bras, s'ex-
 pose à tous les coups."

Again we find a poetic little phrase in Racine which seems to have pleased Voltaire. Titus, reviewing the deeds which he has done in service of Bérénice exclaims:(line511)

"Que ne fait point un cœur
 Pour plaire à ce qu'il aime -----"

20

Je prodiguai mon sang;"

Clytemnestra, describing how she had sanctioned her husband's death uses the same expression emphasized.

"Je t'aimai, tu le sais; - - - - -

Mais enfin de mon sang vos mains seront avares;
Je l'ai trop prodigué- - - - -"

Another hemistich which in Racine is part of the argument of Titus against betraying the Romans in marrying a queen:

"A quoi m'exposez-vous!"(1)

gives Voltaire the idea for an exclamation uttered by Électre who has come near committing a crime against her brother.

"A quoi m'exposais-tu, cruel?"(2)

Another part of a verse,

"Et que de vos vertus il goûta les prémices", line 1487,

becomes in Voltaire's hands:

"De la vengeance au moins j'ai goûté les prémices."(3)

The verses spoken by Antiochus beginning with line 199,

"Bientôt de son malheur interprète sévère,
Votre bouche à la mienne- - - - -"

gave Voltaire the following verse:

Clytemnestre: (IV-8)

- (1) "Bérénice" Act IV scene 5
- (2) "Oreste" Act IV scene 5
- (3) Ibid Act III scene 8

"Ta bouche est de mon sort l'interprète funeste."

An exhortation by Titus in the line 1010:

"Non, non, encore un coup, ne précipitons rien",

has apparently furnished Voltaire with a similar exhortation by Iphise: (IV-3)

"Ma soeur, au nom des dieux, ne précipitez rien."

From *Athalie*, Racine's last play, Voltaire received few ideas for situation. *Athalie* is the story of the boy Joas, rightful heir to the throne, who has been brought up in the temple at Jerusalem. The plot is the struggle between the high priest Joad and Athalie, grandmother of Joas, who supposes the latter has been dead many years.

The story of the saving of Joas from *Athalie* resembles, though not in diction, the story of the saving of Crete. ^{But} both are recounted Act I scene 2.

Josabeth:

"Hélas! l'état horrible où

le ciel me l'offrit

Revient à tout moment ef-

frayer mon esprit

De princesses égorgées la cham-

bre était remplie;

Un poignard à la main,

l'implacable Athalie

Au carnage animait ses bar-

bares soldats,

Vos yeux ne virent point ce par-

ricide impie,

Ces vêtements de mort, ces ap-

prêts, ce festin,

Ce festin détestable, ou le fer

à la main

Clytemnestre, --ma mère -- Ah! cette

horrible image

Et poursuivait le cours de ses
assassinats.

Joue, laissé pour mort, frappa
soudain sa vue:

Je me figure encor sa nourrice
éperdue,

Qui devant les bourreaux
s'était jetée en vain-

Et, faible, le retenait ren-
versé sur son sein.

Je le pris tout sanglant en
baignant son visage

Mes pleurs du sentiment lui
rendirent l'usage;

Et suit frayeur encore, ou
pour me caresser,

De ses bras innocents je me
sentis presser."

Est présente à mes yeux, prés-
ente à mon courage.

Tu vis mon cher Oreste enlevé
dans ses bras.

Entouré des dangers qu'il ne
connaissait pas,

Près du corps tout sanglant de
son malheureux père;

À son secours encore il appelait
sa mère.

Clytemnestre, appuyant ses soins
officiels,

Sur ma tendre pitié daigna fer-
mer les yeux,

Et s'arrêtant du moins au mi-
lieu de son crime,

Nous laisse loin d'Égiste em-
porter la victime.

In one of these passages the grandmother, in the other the mother, are at the head of the carnage in such a way as to suggest the parallel. But Voltaire ascribed to Clytemnestre humane senti-ments even then.

Électre's recognition of Oreste, ⁽¹⁾ is reminiscent of what Athalie says when she recognises her grandson. ⁽²⁾ But Électre is overcome with joy, Athalie speaks in fear.

"Oui, c'est Joue, je cherche
en vain à me tromper.

"Oui, je crois
Voir les traits de mon père, en-

(1)"Oreste"Act IV scene 5
(2)"Athalie"Act V scene 8

Je reconnais l'endroit où je
te fis frapper;
Je vois d'Okosias et le port
et le geste."

tendre encor sa voix,

Oui, vous êtes mon frère."

In Sophocles there is also the scene of recognition but Électre
merely says

"Quoi? c'est vous? c'est votre voix que j'entends?"

Another little similarity between "Oreste" and "Athalie" is
one of diction. Voltaire uses a hemistich which in the Racinean
tragedy is found in one of Abner's speeches. Abner promises to
protect both Joas and Zacharie, son of the High Priest. Voltaire
gives the hemistich to Clytemnestre.

Abner:(II-7)

Clytemnestre:(IV-8)

"Princesse, assurez-vous, je
les prend sous ma garde."

"Je le prend sous ma garde."

From a verse of Athalie's speech, Act II scene 5.

"Je ne prends point pour jeu un peuple téméraire.
Quoique son insolence ait osé oublier,
le ciel même a pris soin de se justifier."

Voltaire formed a half-line.

Égisthe:(III-VI)

Elle en sera punie.

"Quelle se plaint au ciel; ce ciel se justifie."

The poetic phrase "de l'abyme entr'ouvert" and the verb sor-
tir which Racine employs in a speech by Joas, Act III scene 5,

evidently appealed to Voltaire for his description of Clytemnestre and the furies. The two are used as follows:

Joas.

"Et vous ne craignez pas
Que du fond de l'abyme entr'ou-
vert sous ses pas
Il ne sorte à l'instant de
feux qui vous embras-
ent,"

Oréste:(III-1)

"J'ai vu les filles d'enfer
Sortir entre elle et moi de
l'abyme entr'ouvert."

Again we find Voltaire changing very slightly a hecatich in the following:

Abner. "Dans l'horreur d'un cachot par son ordre enfermé,"(V-5)

He gives it as an order instead of a statement.

Églathe: "Dans l'horreur des cachots de plonger ces deux traîtres."
(IV-7)

The sentiment expressed by Églade in regard to Oreste, is very similar to that of Zacharie for Joas.

Zacharie:(V-1)

"S'il faut aujourd'hui que
notre roi périsse
Allons, qu'un même sort avec
lui nous unisse."

Eylade:(II-B)

"S'il faut qu' Oreste meure en
ces lieux abhorrés
Nous périrons unis,"

The use by Voltaire of the verb "venger" and "sur qui" in a conversation between Oreste and Electre after she has attempted to

kill him, is distinctly reminiscent of "Athalie", Act V scene 5, alas a dialogue between Athalie and Abner.

Athalie: "Et venge-moi
Abner: Sur qui? Sur Joas? Sur
mon maître!"

Électre: "J'allais venger mon
frère.
Ore te: Le venger! et sur qui?"

It may be merely poetic diction but there is a passage in Voltaire, Act I scene 1 which recalls one in Act V scene 5 of "Athalie."

"Rends-lui compte du sang
dont tu t'es enivré"

"Où ce monstre enivré du sang
du roi des rois."

There is no doubt but what Voltaire had in mind
Joad: (1) "Tes yeux cherchent en vain, tu ne peux échapper.
Et Dieu de toutes parts te su t'envelopper."

when he wrote speaking of Oreste,

Égisthe: (2) "Lui-même à sa poursuite il ne peut échapper.
Déjà de toutes parts j'ai eu l'envelopper."

Another similarity in diction which is probably due to the poetic vocabulary of the day is found in "Athalie" Act I scene 1 and "Oreste" Act IV scene 3.

Joad:
Une impie étrangère
Du sceptre de David usurpe
tous les droits,
Se baigne impunément dans le
sang de nos rois."

Électre:
"Les coupables mortels
Se baignent dans le sang,"

This same expression is found in "Britannicus."

Except for two words Voltaire has taken a complete line from "Athalie" (IV-5)

Un Léviite: "J'ignore contre Dieu quel projet on médite."
Iphise. (IV-3) J'ignore comme vous quel projet on médite."

To "Bajazet" a tragedy of the Orient, Voltaire owes little in the matter of suggestions for situation and diction. This tragedy in plot is like "Oreste" only in the one respect that the lives of Bajazet and Oreste are continually endangered - Roxane threatening Bajazet, and Égisthe constantly pursuing Oreste. But the scene in which Atalide, Bajazet's sweet-heart, hears that his life is threatened has contributed something to the scene in which Électre hears of Oreste's death. Both heroines react similarly - both faint, Atalide exclaiming simply "Je me cours." Voltaire however, to increase the dramatic effect has Électre exclaim:

"Oreste, ah Dieux! il est mort; je me cours!"

The half-line, Act IV scene 8, "Tout vous devient contraire" with which Femene warns Oreste, is identical to the one in a speech of Roxane to Bajazet.

(II-1) "Songez-vous que sans moi, tout vous devient contraire!"

In "Bajazet" as in "Andromaque" we have the expression "Vous vous perdez" at the beginning of a line, but Voltaire's line

"Vous vous perdez, songez qu'un maître impitoyable"

Probably came from "Andromaque" as the verb "songer" also occurs in that line as stated before.

While not very similar in diction the speech of Roxane to Bajazet, and that of Pammène to Oreste are similar in idea.

Roxane:(III-5)

"Venez, seigneur, venez: il
est temps de paraître,
Et que tout le sérait redonnait
son maître."

Pammène:(III-6)

"Eh bien, il faut paraître, il
faut vous découvrir
À ceux qui pour leur roi sauront
du même mourir."

Quite similar indiction also are the lines of Pylade to those of Atalide:

Atalide:(V-8)

"L'as-tu vu? Pour ces jours n'ai-je encor à craindre?"

Pylade:(III-8)

Quoi, pour Oreste surai-je à craindre encor?"

Voltaire seems to have obtained two lines for one of Électre's speeches from five of Bajazet's.

Bajazet:(II-3)

"La mort n'est point pour moi
le comble des disgrâces
J'essai tout jeune encor, la
chercher sur vos traces
Et l'indigne prison où je suis
renfermé

À la voir de plus près m'a
même accoutumé;

Amurat à mes yeux l'a vingt
fois présentée."

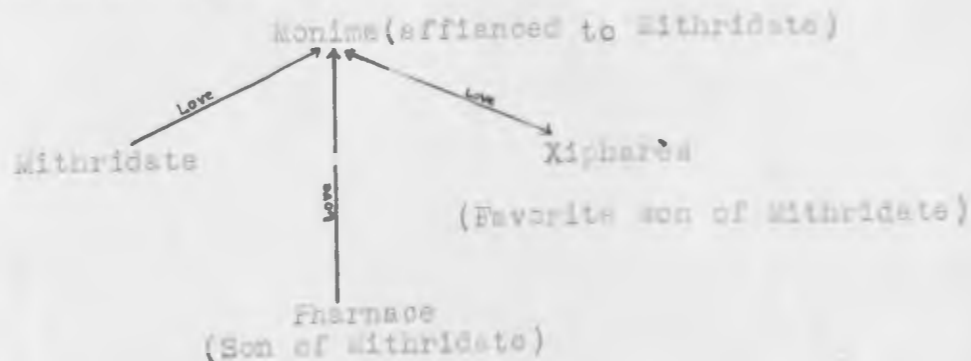
Électre:(II-5)

J'ai supporté la honte et vu de
près la mort

Votre Égiste cent fois m'en
avait menacée."

Aside from "Iphigénie" and "Andromaque" there is comparatively little material found in "Oreste" which recalls the Racinian tragedies investigated up to this point. From "Mithridate" and "Phèdre", the last two to be considered, however, Voltaire obtained considerable more in suggestions for diction.

"Mithridate" is the dramatization of the problem which may be visualized in this diagram.



After the reported death of Mithridate Monime, speaking to Xipharès of his brother's desire to marry her says:

"C'est lui dont la coupable audace
Vient la force à la main, s'attacher à son sort
Par un hymen pour moi plus cruel que la mort."

Électre gives expression to this same feeling toward Plistène. (1)

"Cette mort à ses sens inspire moins d'affroi
Que les horribles vœux qu'on exige de moi."

In the fourth act scene 2 Monime refuses to marry Mithridate her lover's would-be murderer with the following lines.

"Eh! connaissais-je alors toute sa barbarie?" (2)

(1) "Oreste" Act II scene 5

(2) "Mithridate" Act IV scene 2

Ne voudriez-vous point qu'approuvant sa furie,
Après vous avoir vu tout parcé de ses coups,
Je suivisse à l'autel un tyrannique époux;
Et que, dans une main de votre sang fumante
J'allasse mettre, hélas! la main de votre amante?"

Although Voltaire does not use the form and wording of this passage in the following speech by Électre he represents her as expressing the same loathing for her suitor as does Monime, making her words, however more, declamatory and theatrical.

"Oh sort! Ô derniers coups tombés sur sa famille!
Songez-vous au héros dont Électre est la fille!
Madame, cessez-vous, bien, par un crime nouveau,
Abandonner Électre au fils de son bourreau?
Le sang d'Agamemnon! Quittez-Moi? la sœur d'Oreste,
Électre au fils d'Égisthe, au neveu de Thieste?"

The suspicious character of Égisthe, which is not taken from the Greek somewhat resembles the suspicious nature of Mithridate. While the following quotations have little resemblance in diction they show a very similar psychology.

Mithridate (II-3)

"Mais encor quel dessein les
conduisait ici?"

Égisthe (II-3)

"Sachez surtout quel dessein
Les guide sur ces mers dont je
suis ~~seigneur~~ souverain."

With the exception of the substitution of a name we find Voltaire employing a hesitation spoken by Monime, in part of a verse

(1) "Oreste", Act II scene 5 .

of Clytemnestre.

"Ah! trop cruel Arbste,"

"Ah! trop cruel Égisthe,"

An unconscious reminiscence of "Mithridate" is found in the second act, seventh scene of "Oreste". In act five scene four of the Racinian tragedy there occur the following verses spoken by Monime when she first hears that her lover is still alive.

"Je n'ose qu'en tremblant en croire mon oreille
Xipharès vit encore"

The Volterrian/verses run thus:

Iphise:

Ah! si j'en en crois mes yeux,
Oreste vit encore.

In the variants to Act III scene 4 of Oreste we find a Racinian hemistich.

Arbste:

"Le Roi touché à son heure dernière."⁽¹⁾

Oreste:

"Elle semble toucher à son heure dernière."

Again Égisthe expresses himself much like Mithridate. When the latter tricks Monime into betraying herself and Xipharès he says.⁽²⁾

(1) "Mithridate" Act V scene 4

(2) Ibid Act III scene 5

"Xiphérès, en un mot, devant votre époux,
Me venge de Pharnace et m'acquiesce envers vous."

When Égisthe gives Électre to Oreste as a reward he uses lines similar to those used by Mithridate whose ruse however Voltaire condemned. (1)

"Je le mets dans vos fers, elle va vous servir.
C'est m'acquiescer vers vous bien moins que la punir."

In these two characters we find another similarity in sentiment.

Mithridate:(IV-4)

"Quoi? pour un fils ingrat toujours préoccupé,
Vous croiriez - - - - -"

Doubtless Voltaire was thinking of this verse when he wrote the following couplet:

Égisthe:(I-5)

"Écoutez-vous du sang le dangereux murmure,
Pour des enfants ingrats qui bravent la nature."

The expression "perdez-en la mémoire" another verse of Mithridate which Voltaire seems to have remembered, furnished him with a hemistich for a line spoken by Clytemnestre.

Mithridate:(IV-4)

"Pour un fils insolent, que vous ne verriez plus

(1) "Mais que le vieux Mithridate se serve d'une ruse comique pour se voir le secret d'une jeune personne aimée par ses deux enfants, tout cela est petit et puérile, il le faut dire hardiment"
"Oeuvres Complètes", Vol.4. pp.11,12.

Perdez-en la mémoire,"

Voltaire uses this expression in a scene in which the marriage question is uppermost, but the plots of the two tragedies being so radically different, the situation cannot be exactly the same. The phrase therefore shows an unconscious use on Voltaire's part.

Clytemnestre. (to Électre) (II-5)

"Le passé n'est plus rien, perdez-en la mémoire."

Words found in the last verse of a speech of Xipharès are also found in a couplet in Voltaire.

Xipharès. (I-3)

"Qui sait si - - - - -
 - - - - -
 Ce roi, - - - - -
 N'accuse point le ciel qui le laisse outrager,
 Et des indignes fils qui n'osent le venger?"

Électre: (I-2)

"Qu'ils reveillent cent rois indignes de ce nom
Qui n'ont osé venger le sang d'Agamemnon."

No explanation or comment needs to be made as to the two following passages, in which the idea line for line is parallel.

Mithridate: (II-4)

"Je vous entends ici mieux que vous ne pensez.
 Je vois qu'on m'a dit vrai. Ma juste jalousie
 Par vos propres discours est trop bien éclaircie."

Clytemnestre: (IV-7)

"Va, je t'entends trop bien; tu m'es trop confirmé

Les soupçons dont Églarthe était tant alarmé.
Tu n'en a que trop dit,"

A variant of "Mithridate", Act I scene 3 gave Voltaire the rhyme word and a hemistich for "Oreste". Monime's speech as it appears in the play is quoted first.

"Puis-je laissant la feinte et les déguisements,
Vous découvrir ici mes secrets sentiments?"

(Variant)

"Puis-je, en vous proposant mes plus chers intérêts
Vous découvrir ici mes sentiments secrets?"

Clytemnestre. (1)

"J'ai voulu sur mon sort et sur vos intérêts
Vous dévoiler enfin mes sentiments secrets."

In the final case of resemblance between "Oreste" and "Mithridate" we find another example of Voltaire's substitution of the opposing adverb and achieving the same idea as expressed by Racine.

Monime: (1-2)

"Peut-être je devrais, plus humble en sa prière,
Me souvenir du moins que je parle à son frère."

Pamène: (speaking of Electre) (2)

"Peut-être votre sœur, avec moins de fierté,
Devait de son tyran braver l'autorité."

(1) "Oreste" Act I scene 3
(2) "Ibid" Act I scene 1

"Phèdre", a struggle between love and conscience, has little influence upon the plot of "Oreste", but Voltaire's great admiration for this tragedy would make one expect to discover many decided reminiscences of it in his works. These reminiscences however are not very numerous though quite important. His attempt to characterize Oreste in a phrase when he makes Égisthe describe him as :

"Digne du sang d'Atrée, il en a la fureur"(1)

is very clearly, since it has no counterpart in the Greek, an imitation of the phrase by which Phèdre characterizes her stepson Hippolyte: (2)

"Nourri dans les forêts, il en a la rudesse."

The lines with which Égisthe reproaches the queen when she absents herself from the "festin d'Agamemnon" are very evidently a reminiscence of a couplet in "Phèdre" where Thémène reproaches Hippolyte for avoiding the court. The method of appropriation is very characteristic.

Thémène: (I-1)

"Hé! depuis quand, Seigneur,
craignez-vous la prés-
ence
De ces paisibles lieux, si
chers à votre enfance,"

Égisthe: (I-5)

"Quoi, ces solennités qui vous
étaient si chères,
Ces gages rivaux de nos
destins prospères
Devientraient à vos yeux des ob-
jets de terreur!"

(1) "Oreste" Act I scene 5

(2) "Phèdre" Act III scene 3

Clytemnestre:

"Non; mais ce lieu, peut-être
est pour nous redoutable."

The expression "S'obstine à taire", part of a line spoken to Hippolyte, was picked up by Voltaire and employed to complete a line, using the rhyme as does Racine. The fact that Voltaire employed other expressions in this same way shows that the phrases and especially the rhyme lingered in his memory.

"Phèdre" Act I scene 1.

Théramène:

"Qui sait même, qui sait si le Roi votre père
Veut que de son absence on sache le mystère?
Phèdre atteinte d'un mal qu'elle s'obstine à taire."

Iphise: Act IV scene 3.

Électre ou je m'abuse, ou l'on s'obstine à taire,
À cacher à nos yeux un important mystère."

Unquestionably the following couplet furnished Voltaire with a verse for Clytemnestre, Act I scene 3.

Aricie: (II-1)

"Je rendais souvent grâce à l'injuste Thésée,
Dont l'heureuse rigueur secondaît mes mépris."

Clytemnestre:

"Je rends grâce au destin, dont la rigueur utile
De mon second époux rendit l'hymen stérile."

Thésée when he begins to question the guilt of his son or-

ders. (1)

"Qu'on rappelle mon fils, qu'il vienne se défendre!
Qu'il vienne me parler, je suis prêt de l'entendre."

But it is too late. Voltaire obtains a fine dramatic effect when Égisthe, not knowing, as does the audience, that Plistène is dead and that the ashes which he has received are those of his son, gives the following order:

"Et vous - dans Épidéure allez chercher mon fils;
Qu'il vienne me confirmer tout ce qu'ils m'ont ap-
pris."

The influence in diction of "Phèdre" on "Oreste" is again seen in the use Voltaire made of a hemistich.

Cenone: (after Phèdre has blamed her for Hippolyte's plight)

"Et j'en réçois ce prix? Je l'ai bien mérité."

Clytemnestre also in a moment of remorse and humility exclaims to Électre:

"Vous frappez une mère, et je l'ai mérité."

What especially appealed to Voltaire in "Phèdre" is shown by the following quotation from his letter to the Duchesse du Maine. (2) "Qu'une Phèdre dont le caractère est le plus théâtral qu'on ait jamais vu, et qui est presque la seule que l'antiquité ait représentée amoureuse; qu'une Phèdre, dis-je, étoit les fur -

(1) "Phèdre" Act V scene 5.

(2) En tête d'"Oreste" "Oeuvres Complètes", V.4, p.11

eurs de cette passion funeste - - - -; tout cela est vraiment tragique. L'amour furieux, criminel, malheureux, suivi de remords, arrache de nobles larmes." The character of Clytemnestra afforded him opportunities for imitating some of the theatrical qualities which he admired in the Racinian heroines.

When Hippolyte's name is first mentioned to Phèdre, she exclaims to Oenone:

"Malheureuse, quel nom est sorti de ta bouche?"

Oenone: "J'aime à vous voir frémir à ce funeste nom."

Similarly Clytemnestra when her son's name is first mentioned reacts as does Phèdre.

"Quel nom prononcez-vous? Tout mon cœur en frémit."

But Voltaire gives a different reason for this fear than does Racine. Phèdre fears and loaths herself because she knows her love is unlawful. Clytemnestra fears for her own life, knowing what the oracle had predicted.

In thought the two following passages are much alike. Voltaire employs the same figure as does Racine, but in one case Phèdre refers to herself by "monstre" and Électre refers to Égisthe.

Phèdre: (II-5)

"Délivre l'univers d'un monstre qui l'irrite.

La veuve de Thésée ose aimer Hippolyte!

Crois-moi, ce monstre affreux ne doit point échapper.

Voilà mon cœur. C'est là que ta main doit frapper."

Électre: (I-2)

"C'est aux monstres d'Argos, aux tyrans de la terre,

Aux meurtrières des rois que tu dois t'adresser.

Viens, qu'Electre te guide au sein qu'il faut percevoir

It is very natural that the above Racinian verses should have remained in Voltaire's mind. It is one of the most dramatic moments in the tragedy and would especially appeal to Voltaire's love of the theatrical.

A last similarity, one of situation more especially, occurs in the last act of these tragedies. Phèdre is described by Racine as acting in a manner entirely consistent with the struggle through which she has been passing. In Act V scene 6 the following description of her actions is given to Thésée by a character of little importance who does not understand or attempt to interpret Phèdre's actions.

"Le trouble semble croître dans son âme incertaine.
 Quelquefois, pour flatter ses secrètes douleurs,
 Elle prend ses enfants et les baigne de pleurs;
 Et soudain, renonçant à l'amour maternelle,
 Se main avec horreur les repousse loins d'elle;
 Elle porte au hasard ses pas irresolus;
Son oeil tout égaré ne nous reconnoit plus;
Elle a trois fois écrit; et changeant de pensée,
Trois fois elle a rompu sa lettre commencée."

Voltaire did not imitate this scene but, wishing to show the strength of remorse in which the note of pity and awakened love for Oreste is strongly felt he brings in a scene, Act V scene 8, in which the effect of Oreste's danger upon Clytemnestre is described

by Iphise. The description thus is made by a person who, though also a minor character as is the case in the Racinian scene, understands and interprets Clytemnestre's emotions.

"Elle le voit, l'entends, ce moment la rappelle
Aux premiers sentiments d'une âme maternelle;
Ce sang prêt à couler parle à ses sens surpris,
Epouvantés d'horreur, et d'amour attendris.

J'observais sur son front tout l'effort d'une mère,
Qui tremble de parler, et qui craint de se taire."

Thus in view of all the evidence presented, it is to be seen that while Voltaire in writing his tragedy, "Oreste" may have taken "toute la substance de l'Électre de Sophocles", he modified and embellished it to suit his eighteenth century audiences and the contemporary idea of what was tragic, and therein he followed Racine. In fact Clytemnestre, Oreste and Électre are less Greek than Racinian. Clytemnestre herself is what the Clytemnestre of Racine might naturally have developed into, given the experiences through which she passed. Little touches from Racine's *héroïnes*, more especially Iphigénie, Hermione and Bérénice seem to have colored the portrait of Électre.

As far as diction is concerned there are some eighty *hexamètres* which beyond doubt are reminiscent of Racine. Moreover we find fourteen important situations in "Oreste" whose parallelism to Racinian ones is striking. These appropriations in diction and situation in almost every case have been made either in the interest of theatrical effect as in the scene where Clytemnestre utters the tirade against her husband, or to develop pathos.

as in the scene of the urn. This borrowing may well be, not a case of copying, but rather of a man whose mind was saturated with Racinian lines and situations.

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