Thersites

My Thespian friend Thersites has been much admiring the work of the RSC (Reduced Shakespeare Company) in boiling down the works of Shakespeare to a crisp one-and-a-half hours. Thersites, reckoning Greek tragedy was susceptible to similar treatment, consulted his old chums Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides before producing the following Compact Greek Tragedy, invaluable for unseens, essays and general blurring.

It also occurred to him that modern literary theorists would approve. For reasons Thersites has yet to fathom, they love proving *either* that everything is equal to everything else by a process of analogy, contrast, equivalent, burlesque, allusion or transportation, or that everything is 'other' than everything else (talk about "otherness" without laughing out loud at your University interview, e.g. 'there is a powerful sense of 'otherness' about women in the ancient world, wouldn't you say, sir?' and you will be offered a place immediately). Consequently, he is confident they will find his little *jeu d'esprit* Deeply Significant.

Thersites is delighted to be able to make yet another involuntary contribution to Great Scholarship, and while as grateful as ever to be able to publish his little insights first of all in *Omnibus*, generally acknowledged to have the most brilliant readership in the world, he may well republish the piece in the Journal of Un-re-post-de-con-structuralist and Normative Concerns (JUNC) so that the wider world can negotiate with it, poised though it is between ambiguously mediated competing polarities. No, Thersites tells me he has no idea what that means, but it seems to be the sort of thing everybody says these days.

Heliphelectrigone at Aulis

The Greek king Laigamemseus prepares to set off for Troy but is granted the wind to sail there on condition that he kills his only daughter Heliphelectrigone. He is about to do so when Paris, a handsome Trojan being entertained in Greece at the time, nicks her off the altar at the last moment and takes her back to Troy. The Greeks find a scapegoat and kill that instead. Meanwhile the seven champions from each side who daily face up to each other at Troy's seven gates get married and their wives kill all but two of them on their wedding night (whence their nickname, the Trojan Whores). The two survivors are Polyhectorax and Achilleoclæs: Polyhectorax had spent the fatal night away doing extraordinary things to a flock of sheep which made him temporarily blind, Achilleoclæs was sulking in his tent because he did not think his wife was up to scratch. The two finally come face to face, Achilleoclæs wins and strips Polyhectorax of his armour. Polyhectorax commits suicide out of shame. Eventually the Greek army under Laigamemseus beats the Trojans and returns.
In Laigamemseus' absence, however, his sex-crazed wife Phaedromedecastemnestrave has fallen in love with her son Philopenthejasonedolytus and persuades him to kill his father Laigamemseus in his carriage at the place where the three roads meet. This is not as easy as it sounds, because Philopenthejasonedolytus got a terrible wound in his foot' during the war at Troy, and still limps badly. But he manages to accomplish his mission, kills his father, marries his mother, and forbids his father's body burial. But Heliphelectrigone, who has now returned from Troy with the victorious Greeks, ignores the decree and buries the body. She is caught, however, and threatened with death, but she takes refuge at an altar and is saved by the intervention of Athena.

The happy couple have several children, but Philopenthejasonedolytus, deciding that he must negotiate a more respectable relationship, chucks her in favour of a younger woman. Furious, Phaedromedecastemnestrave decides to slaughter their children, kill Philopenthejasonedolytus with the gift of a special shirt impregnated with centaur’s blood and escapes to a place of safety. But she finds her friend Deianeira has nicked the shirt to use for similar purposes on Heracles, so she tracks Philopenthejasonedolytus down to his cave on the island of Lemnos where he strengthens his poorly foot by regular jogging and tears him apart instead, bearing his head off as a trophy. Headless though he now is, he gropes his way back to Colonus in Attica where he is fated to die.

But his son Odysseusrestoptolemus is determined to take revenge and returns bringing with him the sacred bow with which Troy had been taken. He links up with Heliphelectrigone, disguises himself as a traveller, and prepares to kill his mother with his unerring bow. But he finds her protected by 108 suitors. Disguising himself as a beggar, he shoots an arrow through a golden apple before killing them all. He now falls violently in love with her. The outraged Furies chase him to Athens, where he is put on trial for incest, but is acquitted, and they walk off into the sunset to LIVE HAPPILY EVER AFTER. Heliphelectrigone (at last) commits suicide.

Thersites admitted that neither Aeschylus nor Sophocles was happy with the ending, but Euripides thought it was a stormer.

Team pool