RETHINKING CLEMENT'S EURIPIDES: SOURCE AND SPECTACLE*

ABSTRACT

Euripides is one of Clement of Alexandria's most frequently cited sources, and his enthusiastic borrowings have received fresh attention in recent years. This interest has proceeded under the assumption that Clement's theatrical engagement was primarily limited to the reading of dramatic texts instead of through performance. This article argues that a careful examination of Clement's Euripidean material in fact reflects the broader performance landscape of the ancient city in which this Christian author lived and wrote. Taken against the backdrop of contemporary Alexandrian performance, this reveals a fresh complexity to Clement's use of Euripides, and uncovers an author actively participating in and shaped by the cultural activities of this Graeco-Roman city.

1. INTRODUCTION: CLEMENT'S EURIPIDES

The sheer volume of Clement of Alexandria's literary borrowings stands out among early Christian authors of the first three centuries. Hardly a paragraph of his surviving prose omits a reference to Scripture, poetry or philosophy. Although embedded material was commonplace in antiquity, van den Hoek suggests that Clement 'is of almost emblematic significance for this aspect of ancient literary technique'.[1] The numbers speak for themselves: Osborn, for example, estimated over three thousand New Testament references alone.[2] Extracts from and allusions to the Euripidean corpus are prominent among these borrowings. By Stählin's count, the tragedian is Clement's third most cited Graeco-Roman author with 119 separate references, and fifth most popular even once Christian writers are also considered.[3] These dramas evidently appealed to this Alexandrian author.

This interest is in one sense unremarkable; Euripides was long celebrated as part of a 'poetic canon' popular throughout the Mediterranean world well into Late Antiquity.[4]

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[1] A. van den Hoek, 'Techniques of quotation in Clement of Alexandria. A view of ancient literary working methods', *VChr* 50 (1996), 223–43, at 223.

[2] E. Osborn, *Clement of Alexandria* (Cambridge, 2005), 68.

[3] O. Stählin, *Clemens Alexandrinus*, 3 vols. (Leipzig, 1905–9). Stählin explored these borrowings alongside his critical editions of Clement's texts. Plato accounts for 618 references, Homer for 243. See also van den Hoek (n. 1), 231.

[4] J. Stenger, *Education in Late Antiquity* (Oxford, 2022), especially 69–75. Sextus Empiricus summed up something of a 'poetic canon': 'the grammarian appears to interpret the writings of the poets, such as Homer and Hesiod, Pindar and Euripides, and Menander, and the rest' (*Math.* 1.58). See also R. Netz, *Scale, Space and Canon in Ancient Literary Culture* (Cambridge, 2020) and T. Morgan, *Literate Education in the Hellenistic and Roman Worlds* (Cambridge, 1998). Morgan ([this note],

None the less, Clement's enthusiasm is surprising. Clement is traditionally cast in a pattern of early Christian theatrical opposition, primarily due to a sharp attack on public spectacles in Book 3 of his *Paedagogus*, which culminates in a description of the theatre as 'a seat of pestilence'.[5] As Ferguson summarizes, Christian authors 'criticized three types of "spectacles" in the pagan world: those of the theatre, the arena (amphitheatre), and the circus'.[6] Ferguson counts Clement's *Paedagogus* as illustrative of this invective, alongside works by Tertullian, Novatian, John Chrysostom and Lactantius.[7] This wider narrative, however, disregards Clement's interest in the writings of figures such as Euripides. If Clement was truly such a theatrical opponent, then his Euripidean predilection seems out of character.

Historically, investigations into Clement's borrowings have focused on biblical or philosophical material.[8] Three recent studies, however, explicitly considered Euripidean citations. Karanasiou examined the 'interplay of authority between quoting author and cited author' in arguing that Clement 'Christianized' the playwright, a position Massa later developed.[9] Most extensively, Rogers explored Clement's broader exploitation of Euripidean themes.[10] Rogers was concerned with Clement's thematic borrowings, rather than explicit citations, exploring how Clement manipulated Euripidean themes to support his arguments. In many ways this laid a platform for the 'Christianization' presented by Karanasiou and Massa, who nevertheless omit reference to Rogers' work.

All three studies perpetuate the narrative of Clementine theatrical criticism; squaring the apparent contradiction of dramatic opposition and Euripidean fascination through an assumption that Clement primarily engaged with Euripides through scripts and anthologies. This textual engagement resolves this incompatibility, affirming Clement's reputation for theatrical abhorrence. Maintaining this perspective, however, overlooks the diverse consumption of theatrical material in antiquity. This article

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312–23) includes several tables surveying the presence of Euripides within ancient schooltexts, illustrating his position in this broader canon.

[5] Clem. Al. *Paed*. 3.11.76.3–77.1; he also rebukes sinful dramatic performances in his *Protrepticus* (1.2.2; 4.58.4). Quotations of Clement are from Stählin's critical editions; translations are mine.

[6] E. Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI, 1993), 88. Ferguson's summary illustrates a perspective found across contemporary scholarship: e.g. L. Lugaresi, *Il teatro di dio. Il problema degli spettacoli nel cristianesimo antico (ii–iv secolo)* (Brescia, 2008); A. Saggioro, *Dalla* pompa diaboli *allo* spirituale theatrum*. Cultura classica e cristianesimo nella polemica dei Padri della Chiesa contro gli spettacoli. Il terzo secolo* (Palermo, 1999).

[7] Ferguson (n. 6), 88 n. 45.

[8] For example C. Cosaert, *The Text of the Gospels in Clement* (Atlanta, 2008); V. Černušková, J. Kovacs and J. Plátová (edd.), *Clement's Biblical Exegesis* (Leiden, 2017); H.C. Ward, *Clement and Scriptural Exegesis* (Oxford, 2022); J.A. Brooks, 'Clement of Alexandria as a witness to the development of the New Testament canon', *The Second Century* 9 (1992), 41–55; M. Mees, *Die Zitate aus dem Neuen Testament bei Clemens von Alexandrien* (Rome, 1970); E. Osborn, *The Philosophy of Clement of Alexandria* (Cambridge, 1957); A. Outler, 'The "Platonism" of Clement of Alexandria', *JR* 20 (1940), 217–40.

[9] Similar to Justin's claim of a 'Christianized' Sophocles (e.g. *Cohort.* 18). See A. Karanasiou, 'A Euripidised Clement of Alexandria or a Christianised Euripides? The interplay of authority between quoting author and cited author', in E.P. Cueva and J. Martínez (edd.), Splendide Mendax*: Rethinking Fakes and Forgeries in Classical, Late Antique, and Early Christian Literature* (Groningen, 2016), 331–46; F. Massa, 'Reading and rewriting Euripides in Clement of Alexandria', in M. Schramm (ed.), *Euripides-Rezeption in Kaiserzeit und Spätantike* (Berlin, 2020), 335–50. Massa develops the Euripidean dimension of themes explored in his earlier study on Dionysus in early Christianity, *Tra la vigna e la croce. Dioniso nei discorsi letterari e figurativi cristiani (II–IV secolo)* (Stuttgart, 2014). See also F. Massa, 'La promotion des *Bacchantes* d'Euripide dans les textes chrétiens', *CCG* 21 (2010), 419–34.

[10] S.R. Rogers, 'Christian adaptations of Euripidean themes in Clement of Alexandria, *Protrepticus* and *Stromata*' (Diss., Catholic University of America, 1991).

therefore offers a twofold appreciation of the performative landscape of second-century Alexandria and Clement's participation therein to reveal a complexity to his relationship with Euripides and his dramas.

In their own recent effort to rehabilitate our understandings of theatrical performance in Late Antiquity, Easterling and Miles remarked on Clement's relationship with the stage.

The way Clement engages directly with the *dramatis personae* and offers them new action, new costumes or props and new self-definition, suggests a close imaginative engagement with the pagan text, engagement of a more complex kind than a rhetorician's typical deployment of quotation.[11]

Easterling and Miles' interests lie beyond Clement, but here they allude to his broader historical context. By the late second century, the afterlives of Athenian tragedies were as varied as they were significant. Alexandria's streets were saturated with drama: from full productions to public and private recitations of speeches and scenes, to pantomimes and dances; there was an incredible range of performance in the empire's second largest urban centre.[12] Within that diversity—which also included Roman material and localized productions such as the Egyptian farce *Charition*—Euripides' works remained popular.[13] Clement's opportunities for Euripidean engagement were not limited to private reading—or even to rhetorical contexts; theatrical performance was alive and well in the ancient city.

This article contends that Clement's varied Euripidean interactions challenge this narrative of theatrical opposition. His interest suggests he understood these works to be fundamentally performative, not solely literary. He appreciated, and exploited, the performance context of these plays, seeking to learn from the theatrical. When such efforts are examined against the diverse dramatic landscape of second-century Alexandria, Clement's Euripides appears as the product of a Christian author interacting with a performative environment that invited the innovation and creative reimagination of canonical works.

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[11] P. Easterling and R. Miles, 'Dramatic identities: tragedy in late antiquity', in R. Miles (ed.), *Constructing Identities in Late Antiquity* (London, 1999), 95–111, at 105.

[12] Philo's first-century report of theatrical productions points to their popularity, while only a century or so before Cicero had cynically lauded Alexandria as the source of all pantomime performance (*Pro Rabirio Postumo* 35). For more on the variety of performance in Roman Alexandria, see TP. Wiseman, '"Mime and "pantomime": some problematic texts', in E. Hall and R. Wyles (edd.), *New Directions in Ancient Pantomime* (Oxford, 2013) and R.W. Smith, *The Art of Rhetoric in Alexandria: Its Theory and Practice in the Ancient World* (The Hague, 1974). Alexandria boasted a significant population of around half a million at its peak: D. Delia, 'The population of Roman Alexandria', *TAPhA* 118 (1988), 275–92, at 284.

[13] Philo's writings illustrate ongoing Euripidean performance. He describes attending Euripidean productions (*Prob.* 141; *Ebr.* 177) and displays familiarity with the realities of theatrical performance: C.J. Friesen, *Acting Gods, Playing Heroes, and the Interaction between Judaism, Christianity and Greek Drama in the Early Common Era* (London, 2023), 75–8, and C.J. Friesen, 'Attending Euripides: Philo of Alexandria's dramatic appropriations', in M. Schramm (ed.), *Euripides-Rezeption in Kaiserzeit und Spätantike* (Berlin, 2020), 259–74. A new fragment of Euripides' *Ino* dating to the third century containing indications of performance further points to this ongoing popularity: P.J. Finglass, 'A new fragment of Euripides' *Ino*', *ZPE* 189 (2014), 65–82. M. Erasmo, *Roman Tragedy* (Austin, 2004) summarizes the debate around whether, for example, Seneca's plays were written to be read or performed. Tacitus (*Dial.* 3) describes Maternus planning a new tragedy called *Thyestes* that he will deliver at his next recitation. Hall labelled *Charition* 'the single most important piece of evidence for the style and performance of Greek mime in Egypt of the 2nd century A.D.' Cf. E. Hall, 'Iphigenia in Oxyrhynchus and India: Greek tragedy for everyone', *Heraklion* (2010), 393–417, at 393 n. 1.

2. ALEXANDRIA'S EURIPIDES

As Clement lived in Alexandria for several decades, we will first establish a sense of how he could have encountered Euripides there.[14] Clement experienced a flourishing metropolis, a melting pot of ethnicities, cultures and communities, positioned at the intersection between the trading routes of the Mediterranean and the Nile. The city was primarily composed of three *laoi*, Egyptian, Greek and Jewish, and there was widespread interaction between these groups.[15] The novelist Achilles Tatius described the impact of Alexandria on a visitor; a dazzling urban sprawl that felt 'larger than a continent' with a population who 'outnumbered a whole nation'.[16] This vibrant city offered a world of cultural and economic possibilities.

Theatrical spectacles commanded significant cultural capital in antiquity, and urban centres such as Alexandria illustrate their importance. Bagnall described the cities of Roman Egypt as 'endowed at last with the institutions that allowed them to act as the equals of Greek cities anywhere, express[ing] their identity through cultural as well as political forms'.[17] Clement's Alexandrian experience was shaped by this expression, with drama a part of that. Within the theatrical landscape, Euripides' elevated status generated an ongoing popularity. As shall be discussed below, Euripides' works were broadly represented across the diversity of Alexandrian spectacle. These tragedies were not the preserve solely of personal readers—or only sombre theatrical performances—but an integral part of a diverse performance culture.

2.1 Education

The papyrological record supports 'an absolute preference' among Roman Egyptian educators for Euripidean material over that of Aeschylus and Sophocles.[18] In presenting a broader model of imperial curricula, Morgan suggested that Euripides was in fact studied only second to Homer, with 'more texts' surviving from the tragedian than any other non-Homeric figure.[19] Copied and examined at all levels of ancient education, Euripides' importance is stressed by rhetoricians, who suggested that the poets (and particularly Euripides) set the orator up for further study and an inspiration to a greater command of

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[14] Clement's career in Alexandria spanned roughly 180–202. See D. Dawson, *Allegorical Readers and Cultural Revision in Ancient Alexandria* (Berkeley, 1992), 183; Osborn (n. 2), 1–27; L. Karuhije, *La Cité du Logos: L'ecclésiologie de Clément d'Alexandrie et son enracinement christologique* (Leiden, 2022), 33–47.

[15] E.J. Watts, *City and School in Late Antique Athens and Alexandria* (London / Los Angeles / Berkeley, 2006), 151. For Alexandria's population, see n. 12.

[16] Ach. Tat. 5.1.6.

[17] R. Bagnall, *Egypt in Late Antiquity* (Princeton, 1995), at 99. Bagnall speaks of the third-century landscape, with roots through the proceeding centuries (cf. pages 230–60.)

[18] R. Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind: Greek Education in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt* (Princeton, 2001), 198. This preference can be seen in Philo's prolific use of Euripides (cf. n. 13 and Friesen [n. 13 (2020)]) and in Clement's enthusiasm. The privileging of specific plays can also be identified; *Phoenician Women* is best represented among the papyri, and quotations from the play are included in a range of second-century writers including Plutarch, Lucian, Athenaeus and Clement. See further: Cribiore (this note), 198–9. See O. Bouquiaux-Simon and P. Mertens, 'Les témoignages papyrologiques d'Euripide: liste sommaire arrêtée au 1/6/1990', in M. Capasso (ed.), *Papiri letterari greci e latini* (Galatina, 1992), 97–107; J. Bremer, 'Papyri containing fragments of Eur. *Phoenissae*', *Mnemosyne* 36 (1983), 293–305; and W.C. Helmbold and E.N. O'Neil, *Plutarch's Quotations* (Baltimore, 1959). Clement quotes *Phoenissae* several times, for example throughout *Strom.* 2.8.

[19] Morgan (n. 4), 71.

language.[20] Euripides remained a staple of the curriculum; his 'canonical' importance reflected across pedagogical contexts.

2.2 Traditional performance

Pedagogy represents only a fraction of Alexandria's Euripidean interest; traditional performances such as those recorded by Philo remained popular.[21] Philo's *Probus* includes a specific reference to a performance of Euripides' *Auge*, and this first-century record accords with Easterling and Miles' conclusion that Greek tragedy remained alive both 'as a text and a performance medium' into the third century, a conclusion supported by a record of tragic reperformance across the ancient world from Hellenistic times into the Roman era.[22] Hall highlights throughout antiquity 'a continuous process of creative responses and shifting tastes in the treatment of an emerging canon, rather than a consistent process of decline after … Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides'.[23] As tastes developed, and the boundaries of tragic performance began to shift to incorporate new and emerging forms, full-scale productions and script recitations none the less endured.

   This persistence is well documented, and the Greek East proved a focal point for such entertainment.[24] Examples abound. Lucian offers a caricature of a *tragoedus* in his treatise *On Dancing*, describing contemporary costuming and movement.[25] Such *tragoedi* performed regularly at festivals across the eastern Mediterranean and beyond, with numerous authors attesting to such events.[26] As Webb remarks, these performances included 'both revivals of classical tragedy and … new compositions which continued to be written well into the second century A.D.'[27] Dio Chrysostom speaks of such tragic performances, with a preference for the separate performance of iambic elements, with the bulk of theatrical material being staged 'from ancient times (ἀρχαῖα)'.[28] As one second-century C.E. funerary epigram for an eastern *tragoedus* who died in Tomis reads: 'I learned to wear on my temples the garlands that the goddess Muse gave me in every land, for well did I pronounce the tragic line and well did I sing (it).'[29] Though shifting and so often reshaped, the art of performing tragedy was by no means extinct in the late second century, and the dramas of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides regularly graced stages in Alexandria and beyond.

[20] See Quint. *Inst.* 10.1.27–8. [Longinus] (*Subl.* 40.2–3) praises Euripides' quality. Dio (*Or.* 11) urges men active in public life to read Euripides.

[21] Philo confesses to attending the theatre twice: *Prob.* 141; *Ebr.* 177. Cf. Friesen (n. 13 [2020]), 259–74.

[22] Easterling and Miles (n. 11), 95. Easterling and Miles argue for a move away from a 'Gibbonesque narrative' of the decline and fall of performed tragedy. For a survey of Euripidean and tragic performance in Alexandria and beyond, see M. Hose, 'Die euripideische Tragödie auf der Bühne der Antike', in M. Schramm (ed.), *Euripides-Rezeption in Kaiserzeit und Spätantike* (Berlin, 2020), 13–42, especially 32–8.

[23] E. Hall, 'Pantomime: visualising myth in the Roman Empire', in G.V.M. Harrison and V. Liapis (edd.), *Performance in Greek and Roman Theatre* (Leiden, 2013), 451–75, at 456–7.

[24] See for example: H. Kelly, 'Tragedy and the performance of tragedy in late Roman antiquity', *Traditio* 35 (1979), 21–44, especially 21.

[25] Luc. *Salt.* 27.

[26] See e.g. Artemidorus, *Onirocriticon* 4.33; Philostr. *V A* 5.9.

[27] R. Webb, 'Attitudes towards tragedy from the Second Sophistic to Late Antiquity', in V. Liapis and A. Petrides (edd.), *Greek Tragedy After the Fifth Century* (Cambridge, 2018), 297–323, at 300.

[28] Dio *Or.* 19.5; see C. Jones, 'Greek drama in the Roman Empire', in R. Scodel (ed.), *Theatre and Society in the Classical World* (Ann Arbor, 1993), 39–52.

[29] C. Jones and A. Avram, 'An actor from Byzantium in a new epigram from Tomis', *ZPE* 178 (2011), 126–34. Translation of lines 4–6 by Jones and Avram.

2.3 Varied media

Hall's vision of a 'continuous process of creative responses' encompassed a breadth of tragic performance alongside traditional staging. Pantomime was one such development, becoming 'one of the most important media through which the inhabitants of the Roman Empire had access to the canonical stories which had first been dramatized at Athens in the fifth century BCE'.[30] From first century B.C.E. origins, these dancers relied on tragic material to create emotive and captivating performances.[31] Lucian preserves perhaps the most detailed description of Roman pantomime in *De saltatione*, articulating a popular media form thematically related most closely with tragedy itself.[32] Suetonius, for example, records how the day before he died the mime Mnester danced the very same tragedy that the famous ancient *tragoedus* Neoptolemus had performed at the games at which Philip of Macedon was killed.[33] In cities such as Alexandria, pantomime was readily accessible. Famous performers such as Bathyllus and Pylades would have commanded huge crowds in theatres and stadia, but less prominent artists would have entertained in markets, on street corners or in private settings.

The very nature of the medium leaves little by way of written or physical remains, but the fragmentary picture of ancient pantomime demonstrates the importance of Euripides within that tragic interaction. Athenaeus describes the pantomimes of Pylades. His style is branded 'exalted' (ὀγκώδης) and 'emotive' (παθητική), words which have 'long since been associated with the tragedy of Aeschylus and Euripides respectively'.[34] Beyond stylistic links, we hear of specific Euripidean performances. The fourth-century sophist Eunapius of Sardis records a pantomime performing Euripides' *Andromeda*. The untrained audience, Eunapius complains, were unable to recognize the grandeur of the language and style evoked by the skilled performer.[35] An anonymous epigram dating from the first few centuries C.E. records the dancer Xenophon of Smyrna offering such a convincing performance of Euripides' *Bacchae* that as he seamlessly switched between Bacchus, Tiresias, Cadmus, the bacchants and Agave 'we thought ourselves to be looking upon Bacchus himself'.[36] While no pantomime scripts survive, an example of pantomime's sister-genre mime from Oxyrhynchus points to the presence of Euripidean material within these new genres on the Egyptian stage.[37] Though much of ancient pantomime is lost, its well-documented popularity, spread and incorporation of tragic material makes it inconceivable that Alexandria escaped Euripidean material in this form.

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[30] Hall (n. 23), 451.

[31] See Kelly (n. 24), 21; see also E. Jory, 'The literary evidence for the beginning of imperial pantomime', *BICS* 28 (1981), 147–61; E. Jory, 'Pylades, pantomime and the preservation of tragedy', *MedArch* 17 (2004), 147–56; E. Hall and R. Wyles (edd.), *New Directions in Ancient Pantomime* (Oxford, 2008).

[32] Luc. *Salt*. 26; 31. Similarly the fourth-century Libanius wrote *On Behalf of the Dancers*, in defence of the genre. Slater makes clear that the primary performance of the pantomime was of 'tragic myths' (W. Slater, 'Pantomime riots', *Classical Antiquity* 13 [1994], 120–44, 121).

[33] Suet. *Calig*. 57.3.

[34] Hall (n. 23), 458. See also Jory (n. 31 [2004]), 154–5.

[35] *Historici Graeci Minores*, fr. 54, transl. Blockley (Liverpool, 1981–3).

[36] Anon. *Anth. Pal.* 16.289 αὐτὸν ὁρᾶν Ἰόβακχον ἐδόξαμεν.

[37] Mime demonstrates the embrace of Euripidean material on the Egyptian stage. The chief example of this form is the extant script of *Charition* (above, n. 13), which incorporates elements of Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris*. See further on this link with *IT* S. Santelia, *Charition Liberata (P. Oxy. 423)* (Rome, 1991), especially 12–34; E. Hall, *Adventures with Iphigenia in Tauris* (Oxford, 2013), especially 116–26.

Tragedy was also reimagined through song alone. Singing tragedy is well attested under empire, but the 'far more creative art' of the *citharoedus* was hugely popular.[38] The citharode offered 'a solo performance which consisted of a tragic aria accompanied by the lyre'.[39] Their performances could be public—such as Nero's showcases across the empire—or private.[40] Nero believed of his own performances that 'hidden music counts for nothing', but he gladly employed the citharode Terpnus to play privately after dinner in the imperial palace.[41] Clement himself displays an awareness of such performers, providing a lengthy description of the mythical citharode Eunomus in his *Protrepticus*.[42] Citharodic performance had been connected with tragedy, and Euripidean tragedy, since the fifth century B.C.E. (with Euripides supposedly influenced by the 'New Music' of the citharode Timotheus.[43]) Papyrological evidence illustrates the popularity of Euripidean inspiration, with several Euripidean settings discovered in Egypt.[44] Alexandria was well-known as a place of citharodic performance, so much so that Nero considered fleeing during his final hours to live in hiding as a citharode.[45] Such performances only further add to the multiplicity of spectacular media in which Euripides' works were represented.

The performance of extracts was not only musical. Tragic material featured, of course, in public oration (as Dio Chrysostom, who famously declaimed in the theatre of Alexandria, illustrates[46]), but recitation was a popular means of entertainment in more intimate contexts such as private dinner parties or symposia. Not all such speeches drew on tragedy (they also included—for example—new compositions, poetry, oratory and history[47]), but Suetonius illustrates the habit of sharing dramatic dialogues in such settings.[48] Plutarch affirms a Euripidean preference, arguing that a true gentleman ought to shun bawdy lyrics in favour of being led back 'to Euripides, and Pindar and Menander'.[49] Clement displays a familiarity with such environments, and his extensive comments on the etiquette for believers at dinner parties illustrates how he expected his followers to be acquainted with them also.[50] Recitation was an important part of the performance of elite dining, and represented yet another key space in which tragic material could be reworked.[51] These different performances could offer an audience (large or small[52]) a tragic extract which would be received differently from a full production with a focus on the isolated speech or dialogue.

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[38] E. Fantham, 'The performing prince', in E. Buckley and M. Dinter (edd.), *A Companion to the Neronian Age* (Oxford, 2013), 17–28, at 21.

[39] Kelly (n. 24), 21.

[40] Suet. *Ner.* 20.2.

[41] Gell. *NA* 13.31.3.

[42] Clem. Al. *Protr.* 1.2–3.

[43] E. Hall, 'The singing actors of antiquity', in P. Easterling and E. Hall (edd.), *Greek and Roman Actors* (Cambridge, 2002), 3–38, at 9.

[44] See E. Hall (n. 43), 13–14.

[45] C. Jones, *The Roman World of Dio Chrysostom* (Cambridge, MA, 1978), 39.

[46] Dio *Or.* 32.

[47] See Seneca, *Controv.* 4 pr.2; Suet. *Gram. et rhet.* 16; Tac. *Dial.* 11–13; Theon, *Prog.* 102.

[48] Suet. *Ter.* 3.

[49] Plut. *Quaest. conv.* 706D.

[50] Clem. Al. *Paed.* 2.7.58–60. Clement's lengthy instructions on appropriate Christian behaviour at dinner parties includes an admonishment for the reader to temper their desire to speak themselves at length, and to respond to after-dinner 'entertainment' with modest restraint.

[51] R. Scodel, 'Drama and rhetoric', in S. Porter (ed.), *Handbook of Classical Rhetoric in the Hellenistic Period 330 BC – AD 400* (Leiden, 2002), 489–504, especially 501, describes imperial declamation more as 'a dramatic and imaginative art' highlighting a preoccupation with tragic themes, particularly after developments by Seneca, who was himself heavily influenced by Euripides in his own writings.

[52] Ranging from a handful of guests at a private dinner to the huge public crowds described by Dio Chrysostom (*Or.* 32).

As this discussion has illustrated, whether on the traditional stage or through new media, Clement and his Alexandrian contemporaries could access an abundance of Euripidean material. Clement's home exposed him to a diversity of Euripidean performance, and he furnishes his reader with the sense that he in fact participated in several of its forms. We will therefore turn now to Clement's Euripides, to explore whether the impact of these different media can be felt in his own engagement with this Attic master.

3. CLEMENT'S EURIPIDES: ON SCRIPT OR ON STAGE?

This performance diversity rarely influences Clementine studies. Clement so often falls through the cracks in the arbitrary disciplinary division between Classics and Theology, with little appreciation of the impact of his historical context on his theological expression.[53] This allows his incendiary comments on the theatre to align with a broader narrative of early Christian theatrical opposition, but the actual impact of the theatrical on his *œuvre* goes unrecognized.[54] He may speak harshly about the theatre in Book 3 of the *Paedagogus*, yet in Book 2 he displays a familiarity with the dinner party, itself a performance space. Before turning to a specific case study of Clement's Euripidean material, we will therefore consider whether Clement demonstrates a broad engagement with theatrical performance and an understanding of Euripides' place within the dramatic landscape of the Roman city.

Clement certainly interacted with Euripides in a pedagogical setting, often utilizing *florilegia*.[55] Book 2 of his *Protrepticus* demonstrates such use, as a range of poets, historians and philosophers speak of the Graeco-Roman gods suffering from human emotions.[56] The *Stromateis* offers an even more obvious example as Clement rapidly lists a number of poets, declaring that they all spoke in support of his argument for the antiquity of the Judeo-Christian Scriptures.[57] Anthological collections do not, however, represent the sum total of Clement's poetic pedagogy. Clement often echoes contemporary scholarly behaviour and Friesen identified one particular Euripidean instance.[58] Clement quotes from *Iphigenia in Tauris*, as the eponymous heroine laments

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[53] See J. Heath, *Clement and the Shaping of Christian Literary Practice* (Oxford, 2020), 5–6.

[54] Rogers, Massa and Karanasiou (nn. 9–10) all evade the question of whether Clement engaged with Euripidean material in performance. Rogers (5) and Karanasiou (332) state they primarily focus on engagement with the text of these dramas, while Massa (337–40) is most explicit in privileging 'reading Euripides', such that performance is only mentioned once in his entire study, in his bibliography, within a reference to L. van Hoof and P. van Nuffelen (edd.), *Literature and Society in the Fourth Century AD: Performing* Paideia, *Constructing the Present, Presenting the Self* (Leiden, 2015). The theatre is not mentioned at all.

[55] H. Chadwick, *Early Christian Thought and the Classical Tradition* (Oxford, 1984), 36 suggests that it is 'beyond doubt' Clement utilized handbooks like that of Stobaeus. See more broadly D. Konstan, 'Excerpting as a reading practice', in G. Reydams-Schils and C. Lévy (edd.), *Deciding Culture: Stobaeus' Collection of Excerpts of Ancient Greek Authors* (Turnhout, 2010), 9–22.

[56] Clem. Al. *Protr.* 2.36.1–5.

[57] Clem. Al. *Strom.* 1.21.132.1–33.1. Clement lists Cometes of Crete, Cinyras of Cyprus, Demaenetus the Phocian, Epigenes the Thespian, Nicias the Carystian, Aristo the Thessalian, Dionysius the Carthaginian, Cleophon the Corinthian, Hippo the daughter of Chiro and several more. This list is probably sourced from a collection rather than laboriously constructed given its relative unimportance to his wider discussion.

[58] C.J. Friesen, *Reading Dionysus: Euripides'* Bacchae *and the Cultural Contestations of Greeks, Jews, Romans and Christians* (Tübingen, 2015), 121. Cf. N. Zeegers-Vander Vorst, *Les citations des poètes grecs chez les apologistes chrétiens du IIe s.* (Louvain, 1972), 265–85.

her dreams—'farewell, false dreams, you were then nothing (ψευδεῖς ὄνειροι, χαίρετ᾽· οὐδὲν ἦτ᾽ ἄρα).'[59] This line supports his teaching on the dangers of vain opinion—a striking echo of Plutarch's use in discussing the rejection of falsehood in the advancement of personal moral virtue.[60] This extract may well have been proverbial by Clement's time (as Friesen suggests) or simply part of a pedagogical exercise shared by the two men. Either way, it illustrates Clement's willingness to manipulate his Euripidean material.

Clement also displays knowledge of entire dramas. Zeegers-Vander Vorst interrogated Clement's corpus to suggest a good command of various Euripidean plays, and individual instances of his engagement push this further.[61] In the final chapter of his *Protrepticus*, Clement introduces the character of Pentheus from Euripides' *Bacchae* (who will be discussed further below.) Clement brings in Pentheus by quoting two Euripidean lines: 'And look! I think I see a pair of suns, and twin Thebes.'[62] Though unnamed, Clement identifies Pentheus as speaker through his description, before then introducing Tiresias to affirm the first character as the unfortunate Theban prince. In Book 2 of the *Paedagogus*, however, Clement cites these lines again: 'And look! I think I see two suns, says the old Theban man into his cups.'[63] Here Tiresias is the speaker, and Pentheus is not mentioned. Such a misattribution could be a simple error, but the quotation in the *Protrepticus* suggests it is deliberate.[64] In both quotations Clement manipulates contextual details, the character's qualities, actions and past errors. The one line then serves two ends: in the first instance the spiritual blindness of Pentheus ignoring the truth of Christ, in the second the physical blindness of one overcome by excessive drink. Clement shows a command of the material that allows him to reimagine the original text. Just as he adopts a malleable Euripides in his inherited pedagogical material, so he manipulates Euripides in his original usage. Thematic links are exploited—the blindness and drunkenness, spiritual or otherwise—even at the expense of dramatic reality. To make his case persuasive, he must have a thorough knowledge of the myth and the characters he is manipulating.[65] Clement demonstrates a comprehension of entire dramas alongside scattered fragments or quotations.

Clement's pedagogical interaction with Euripides is itself performative, and the twofold use of *Bacchae* 918–19 exemplifies the kind of 'imaginative engagement' recognized by Easterling and Miles with regards to Clement's dramatic interests.[66] Yet he also goes beyond this idea of simply a 'close imaginative engagement with the pagan

[59] Eur. *IT* 569. Clement cites the line at *Protr.* 10.101.3.

[60] Plut. *Quomodo quis suos in uirtute sentiat profectus* 75E. For the wider context of the relationship between these two authors consult: L. Roig Lanzillotta, 'Plutarch of Chaeronea, Clement of Alexandria and the bio- and technomorphic aspects of creation', in R. Hirsch-Luipold (ed.), *Plutarch and the New Testament in their Religio-Philosophical Contexts* (Leiden and Boston, 2022), 237–54.

[61] Zeegers-Vander Vorst (n. 58), 36–8.

[62] Eur. *Bacch*. 918–19, cited at Clem. Al. *Protr.* 12.118.5.

[63] Clem. Al. *Paed.* 2.24.2.

[64] At the very least, it demonstrates an understanding of the correct speaker that predates the use of the line in the *Paedagogus*. On the dating of Clement's writings see A. Méhat, *Études sur les 'Stromates' chez Clément d'Alexandrie* (Paris, 1966), 50–4.

[65] Rogers (n. 10), 36–64 discusses Clement's knowledge of initiation and sacrificial rites in this play, further suggesting a detailed knowledge of the work. The comfort Clement displays in creatively handling these dramas is itself indicative of an intellectual and performative environment that encourages the manipulation of this material in the first place.

[66] Cf. n. 11 above. G. Snyder, *Teachers and Texts in the Ancient World: Philosophers, Jews and Christians* (London and New York, 2002), 1–13 explores this performative dimension of ancient pedagogy.

text' and evidently engages theatrical performance as well. Clement encourages such a reading; quick to acknowledge that Euripides is not just any poet, but a poet of the stage. On several occasions he interacts with the ancient trope that Euripides was a philosopher.[67] In the *Stromateis* he openly describes him as the 'philosopher of the stage'.[68] This reproduction of this popular title follows a passage in the *Protrepticus* where Euripides is praised by Clement as 'a worthy disciple of the Socratic school, in regarding only the truth, and disregarding the audience'.[69] His Euripides is as much a teacher as he is a playwright. In these brief appreciative comments, the reader can recognize how the theatre is not a wholly lost cause for Clement; and Euripides can be found there conveying his pre-Christian wisdom.

Clement extends this understanding of playwrights as primarily 'of the stage' beyond Euripides, similarly couching Sophocles and Menander as visual poets.[70] These comments, scattered throughout his *œuvre*, display a sustained interest in the theatrical, including Euripidean drama. His extensive use of technical musical language—often tied closely with the theatrical realm—further suggests a broader familiarity with ancient performance.[71] But Clement also offers a sense of performative variety through the inclusion of several visual elements: a diversity of performers, theatrical masks and costuming more broadly. Each of these warrants brief reflection as they open up something of Clement's wider theatrical engagement in the ancient city.

The *Protrepticus* is Clement's most heavily poetic work and reaches its dramatic zenith in Book 7 as it invites readers not to be 'content with philosophy alone; let poetry also approach'.[72] Clement utilizes frequent theatrical metaphors and anecdotes, with several centred around different performers. The first such performers are ᾠδικοί, musicians or minstrels. This group includes Eunomus the cithardode, who Clement describes as singing a tragic ode over the beast in competition at the Pythian Games (ἐπιτάφιον ἑρπετοῦ ᾄδοντος Εὐνόμου).[73] Clement shares the language (and in particular the use of ᾠδικός) with his contemporary Longus, who speaks of ᾠδικοί performing in musical competitions.[74] The term is similarly found alongside ῥητορικός and ὀρχηστικός, indicating a variety of public performers.[75] ᾠδικός appears to be used as shorthand for a public musical performer, something Clement recognizes. In the opening paragraphs of the *Protrepticus*, where four ᾠδικοί are introduced, Clement also mentions a 'chorus [or dancing troop] of the Greeks' (χορῷ . . . Ἑλλήνων), who, he states, sing of

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[67] Euripides was also known even in his own times as 'the philosopher of the stage': G. Lloyd, *Providence Lost* (Cambridge, MA, 2008), 14. This is reflected in earlier traditions around Euripides that he studied philosophy with Archelaus in Macedon. See M. Lefkowitz, 'The Euripides *Vita*', *GRBS* 20 (1979), 187–210, especially 193.

[68] Clem. Al. *Strom.* 5.11.70.1.

[69] Clem. Al. *Protr.* 7.76.3.

[70] Clement (*Protr.* 7.74.1) makes a similar comment about Sophocles' presentation of the truth, but it lacks the broader context and language of a philosopher-poet in action on-stage. Menander (*Strom.* 5.14.130.3) 'exhibits [ἑρμηνεύω]' God for his audience.

[71] See T. Halton, 'Clement's lyre: a broken string, a new song', *SecCent* 3 (1983), 177–99; M. Raffa, 'Artificio retorico o sapere musicale? L'accordatura del cosmo in Clemente Alessandrino, *Protrettico*, 1, 5, 1–2', *RCCM* 59 (2017), 47–57; C. Cosgrove, 'Clement of Alexandria and early Christian music', *JECS* 14 (2006), 255–82. Much of this language comes in discussions that include descriptions of, for example, citharodic performance. Cf. nn. 43–5 and discussion.

[72] Clem. Al. *Protr.* 7.73.1.

[73] Ibid. 1.1.2.

[74] Longus 1.27.3.

[75] See Plut. *Quaest. conv.* 622A and Theopomp. *FGrHist* 115 F 111.

these ancient ᾠδικοί.[76] Within the first few lines of this exhortatory work a sense of public performance (and variety therein) has been created.

Others are soon introduced. A grasshopper coming to Eunomus' aid is described as an actor: 'it seemed to the Greeks as though he became an actor through [his part in] the poetic song (Ἕλλησι δὲ ἐδόκει ὑποκριτὴς γεγονέναι μουσικῆς)'.[77] Clement shortly after employs ὑποκριτής again, describing the appearance of tragic stage-actors as a heart-warming sight for the Greeks.[78] Both times the term is used to denote particular (but contextually different) performers: the grasshopper transformed into a lyric performer, while the second instance speaks of tragic actors on stage. Clement again applies the term to hypocritical actors, likening those who lead the Greeks astray to venomous vipers, and reinforcing the use of ὑποκριτής as performative, a sense sustained throughout the work.[79] Fire is described as 'not performing a part (τὸ πῦρ οὐχ ὑποκρίνεται)' while wild beasts 'do not pretend to play a part (οὐχ ὑποκρίνεται)'.[80] Clement invites his readers to imagine various *dramatis personae*, singing poetry, playing a role on stage. The term carried a contemporary attachment to tragic declamation and is found in that manner in (for example) Lucian, Pseudo-Lucian and Athenaeus.[81] Having introduced the musical performer, Clement also uses the language of the tragic actor—one playing a part in a wider production.

Clement then labels Christ an ἀγωνιστής, one who 'performs the drama of salvation for humanity (τὸ σωτήριον δρᾶμα τῆς ἀνθρωπότητος ὑπεκρίνετο)'.[82] Turning down the use of ὑποκριτής Clement stresses how Christ is the ἀγωνιστής who brings salvation, ultimately raising up humanity to become συναγωνιστής with him.[83] His choice of ἀγωνιστής adds a competitive sense that could include competing in declamation or pantomime. This sense is only further entrenched by the use of ἀγωνιζώμεθα earlier in the book, where readers are urged to enter the arena and 'contend for a prize on the stage (ἀγωνιζώμεθα)'.[84] As Clement dwells on Christ as a sole performer the sense of performance as competition invites the reader to recognize a contrast with the Graeco-Roman gods discussed in the first half of the work. Christ is presented as the champion performer in this contest.

Clement hints at pantomimic performers too. He displays a familiarity with the relationship between poetry and dancing in his *Stromateis*, remarking on the history of such activity.[85] In his *Protrepticus* he presents (and critiques) the mysteries, and wraps in a sense of pantomimic dance. In anticipation of a possible refutation, Clement states that he 'will not dance away with them (ἐξορχήσομαι)'.[86] This term—ὄρχησις—is tied to

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[76] Clem. Al. *Protr.* 1.1.1–2.
[77] Ibid. 1.1.3.
[78] Ibid. 1.2.2.
[79] Ibid. 1.4.3. Eustathius's sermon *On Hypocrisy* stressed the connection between the hypocrite and the actor (beyond the term ὑποκριτής itself), exploring how hypocrisy can be both good or bad (he charts a narrative of decline) and formulating what it was that actors in antiquity achieved through their performances: B. van den Berg, '"The excellent man lies sometimes": Eusathios of Thessalonike on good hypocrisy, praiseworthy falsehood, and rhetorical plausibility in ancient poetry', *The Scandinavian Journal of Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 3 (2017), 15–36.
[80] Clem. Al. *Protr.* 2.22.7, 10.108.1.
[81] Luc. *Tox.* 11; [Luc.] *Philopatr.* 18; Ath. *Deipn.* 9.403d.
[82] Clem. Al. *Protr.* 10.110.2.
[83] This, in turn, reflects his sense of deification espoused earlier in Book 1 (1.8.4).
[84] Clem. Al. *Protr.* 10.96.3.
[85] Clem. Al. *Strom.* 1.16.78.5.
[86] Ibid. 2.12.1.

both mystery cults *and* Roman pantomime.[87] Lucian demonstrates this connection in his defence of pantomime, that 'not a single ancient mystery-cult can be found that is without dancing (ὀρχήσεως)'.[88] Here Clement exploits that connection: he will not get caught up in the hedonism and enjoyment of the mysteries, and will instead expose them. This statement offers a quick defence of his intentions, but also suggests a broader awareness of the nuances and connections between pantomime dancing and wider ideas of mystery. Clement's refutation takes on an extra edge with this implicit connection.

Alongside this range of performers, Clement demonstrates an awareness of costuming and masking. In his instructions regarding proper social conduct in the *Paedagogus*, Clement addresses the godly attitude towards a case of the hiccups. The believer, he states, must act with decorum. 'The hiccup is to be quietly emitted with the expiration of the breath, the mouth being composed becomingly, and not gaping and yawning like the tragic masks.'[89] Likening the gaping mouth to theatrical masks, Clement's point is obvious. Similarly, in the *Stromateis*, the search for truth is likened to seeking 'the real face beneath masks'.[90] These references hint at an understanding of different mask forms. As Lucian commented, the masks of pantomime had closed mouths and covered the entire face as a result.[91] Tragic masks, famous for their gaping mouths, are explicitly named as such by Clement in the *Paedagogus*. Yet in the *Stromateis* Clement suggests an entirely hidden face, unseen behind the mask. In line with a variety of performers, it seems a range of masks also feature in Clement's theatrical understanding.

In describing Christ as an ἀγωνιστής Clement also uses the language of costuming. Christ 'put on the mask of humanity and having received fleshly form (τὸ ἀνθρώπου προσωπεῖον ἀναλαβὼν καὶ σαρκὶ ἀναπλασάμενος)' so that he can 'act the drama of salvation for humanity (τὸ σωτήριον δρᾶμα τῆς ἀνθρωπότητος)'.[92] Christ performs as he does because he is enrobed and masked; this language of dress transforms how he engages and creates an expectation that he is someone else ('he was unrecognized [ἀγνοηθείς]').[93] Clement draws on the sense that costuming creates a new figure who performs their own role. As with the differentiation in dramatic masking, such a nuanced presentation betrays an author with a clear understanding of the function and reality of the costumed performer on stage.

Clement consistently characterizes drama as a visual genre. From varied performers to costuming and masking, he is keen to emphasize that tragic (and comic) poetry is best understood (the 'truth' best seen) in performance. As such, his critique of the Graeco-Roman gods in the *Protrepticus* is introduced with the claim that he 'will display them [the gods] on the stage of life (ἐπὶ σκηνῆς τοῦ βίου) . . . for spectators of truth'.[94] Just as Christ becomes an ἀγωνιστής, the gods are described as theatrical performers, taking to the stage before humanity as audience.[95] This idea of staging is also linked explicitly to

[87] See Ath. *Deipn.* 1.20e, where the term is applied by Athenaeus to describe Pylades' art.

[88] Luc. *Salt.* 15.

[89] Clem. Al. *Paed.* 2.7.60.2.

[90] Clem. Al. *Strom.* 2.1.3.5. 6.10.80.1–2 also hints at tragic masks—describing children as terrified of them. Further references are made in several other passages, including *Paed.* 3.2.11.2 and 3.10.80.2–4.

[91] Lucian (*Salt.* 29) is explicit that 'the mask is not wide open, as with tragedy and comedy'. Cf. J. Jory, 'Some cases of mistaken identity? Pantomime masks and their context', *BICS* 45 (2001), 1–20, at 3.

[92] Clem. Al. *Protr.* 10.110.2.

[93] Ibid. Cf. E.J. Creedy, '"Assuming the mask of humanity". Clement of Alexandria's dramatic understanding of the two natures of Christ', *Journal of Theological Studies* 20 (2025), 1–19.

[94] Ibid. 2.12.1.

[95] For more on this characterization see E.J. Creedy, 'To open the eyes of the blind: the spectacle and performance of salvation in Clement of Alexandria's *Protrepticus*' (Diss., King's College London, 2024), especially 113–38.

the 'philosopher of the stage' throughout his œuvre. Clement makes this connection clear in his *Protrepticus*. 'Even upon the stage they expose the truth (καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς σκηνῆς παραγυμνοῦσι τὴν ἀλήθειαν). One of them, Euripides, after gazing at the upper air and heaven, says, "Consider this to be God."'[96] Euripides speaks the truth of monotheistic divinity, but his performances also expose the fragility of the Greek gods. Accusing the Greeks of sullying themselves through an embrace of human sacrifice, for example, Clement points to the theatre—'these are your sacrifices which Euripides represents on the stage through tragedy'.[97] The implication is that Euripides joins Clement in exposing the demonic nature of the gods.[98] Further Euripidean dialogue is offered from the theatrical stage in the second *Strôma* as Clement cites a well-known passage. 'Medea herself cries on the stage, "and I am aware of the evils I am to perpetuate, but passion is stronger than my resolutions."'[99] Throughout his œuvre, Clement locates Euripidean material within the context of the theatre and embraces the pedagogical and luminary value of these dramas.

Clement certainly studied Euripides in a pedagogical setting, but his Euripides was predominantly a poet of the stage. It was through performance that Euripides had and continued to display 'truth' as Clement understood it. The exact contours of the Euripidean stage had shifted by the late second century, and that variety is reflected across the Clementine œuvre. His familiarity with these different performance settings feeds into his broader thinking, and this allows him to consistently manipulate Euripidean material to promote his Christian philosophy and denigrate the erroneous customs of his unbelieving readers.

4. CLEMENT'S EURIPIDES: A BACCHIC CASE STUDY

In a survey of early Christian Euripidean quotations, Morlet argued that Clement (and later Eusebius) 'try to integrate Euripides in the history of philosophy, or, more precisely, to situate him between philosophy and poetry proper'.[100] Clement, however, made no effort to diminish Euripides' poetic qualities; he remained a poet of the stage. Clement's Euripides requires performance to display truth; his identity as a poet is not separated from his role as philosopher, the two work in tandem. This paper has thus far presented a Christian author in conversation with the diversity of literary expression and performance in the ancient city. Before concluding, therefore, we will position some of Clement's Euripidean material in direct conversation with this landscape. A focus on three Euripidean characters employed in the *Protrepticus*—Dionysus, Pentheus and Tiresias—will suggest that Clement's argumentation is in fact enriched by this broader performance context. A close analysis of these three characters displays the hallmarks of this diversity of ancient tragic performance shaping both

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[96] Ibid. 7.74.1. Clement cites a popular fragment of Euripides (fr. 941 *TrGF*) from an unidentified play, lifting this phrase from a lengthier fragment preserved in the *Stromateis* (5.14.114.1). In Book 7 of the *Protrepticus*, Clement reinforces this idea of truth on stage, affirming (7.74.2) that Sophocles 'brought forth the truth on stage for his spectators (ἐπὶ τῆς σκηνῆς τὴν ἀλήθειαν τοῖς θεαταῖς παρεισήγαγεν)'.

[97] Ibid. 3.42.3.

[98] Ibid. 7.65.6. For Clement Euripides quite literally 'displays with a bare head [i.e. without reserve or restraint] the gods for the spectators (γυμνῇ τῇ κεφαλῇ ἐκκυκλεῖ τῷ θεάτρῳ τοὺς θεούς)', in his *Ion*.

[99] Clem. Al. *Strom*. 2.15.63.3, citing Eur. *Med*. 1077–80.

[100] S. Morlet, 'Euripides in Greek Christian apologetics (2nd–5th c. AD)', in M. Schramm (ed.), *Euripides-Rezeption in Kaiserzeit und Spätantike* (Berlin, 2020), 351–66, at 358.

how Clement thought of Euripides, and how he brought him into his arguments for the superiority of the Christian faith.

Dionysus is first introduced at length in Book 2. Having declared that he 'will display them [the gods] on the stage of life (ἐπὶ σκηνῆς τοῦ βίου)', Clement turns specifically to Dionysus.[101] He reappears as a focal point time and again in this lengthy critique of the gods. Dionysus, Clement exposes, is worshipped by frenzied bacchants,[102] stained with pollution,[103] savage and childish,[104] brutally mutilated (and by inference, grotesque),[105] lustful and much more.[106] Clement has introduced Dionysus' appearances as staged, ἐπὶ σκηνῆς, and this allows him to focus on his actions and emotions. This highlights Dionysus' depravity, laying bare a savage and barbaric character before the readers.[107] The god is introduced as a theatrical character, and this is fundamental to Clement's case against him.

This unflattering description deliberately clashes with Euripides' own in his *Bacchae*. Dionysus opens the play with a lengthy divine prologue, developing the sense that he has been wronged, and explaining the implications for the wanton Theban royal house.[108] Clement, however, ignores Dionysus' divine power and provides instead a divine exposé as he 'strips these dreadful and terrifying masks from the crowd of the gods'.[109] Zeus, Apollo, Athena and many others are targeted for derision, all while Dionysus remains the main target. As the bacchic god performs in all his depraved glory, Clement's discussion is interspersed with anecdotes and descriptions of other gods. The shift in focus is repeated, and sequential. It is evocative of the stichomythic dimension of Euripidean (or other tragic) dialogue—rapid fire bursts between different characters.[110] This dramatic device is particularly present in *Bacchae*, and the sense of heightened drama and pace it provides is echoed by Clement in Book 2. These other gods suffer Clement's wrath in between Bacchic episodes. Their performances shame them in quick succession, and in their ultimate unmasking they will be revealed as demonic ὑποκριταί before this theatrical audience (θεαταῖς). The stichomythic rhythm of Clement's display centres Dionysus, and ensures the readership are left in no doubt about the failures of his performance.

The spectre of performance hovers even more closely behind two further Euripidean characters in the final exhortation of Book 12. Clement introduces another dramatic section focussed on Pentheus and Tiresias, initially focussing on the first of these two figures.

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[101] Clem. Al. *Protr.* 2.12.1. Cf. pages 12–13 above.

[102] Ibid. 2.12.2.

[103] Ibid. 2.13.1.

[104] Ibid. 2.17.2.

[105] Ibid. 2.19.3–4.

[106] Ibid. 2.34.3.

[107] Clement's presentation of Dionysus allows him to generate a dichotomy between Dionysian and Christian mysteries: F. Jourdan, 'Dionysos dans le *Protreptique* de Clément d'Alexandrie. Initiations dionysiaques et mystères chrétiens', *Revue de l'historie des religions* 3 (2006), 265–82.

[108] Eur. *Bacch*. 1–63. Euripides favours the 'divine prologue' and this often involves a divine figure asserting their power over the events to come. Dionysus' role is unusual in the centrality this divine being plays to the unfolding plot.

[109] Clem. Al. *Protr.* 2.27.5. See also the similarities in Clement's description of theatrical masks elsewhere. Cf. nn. 89–90.

[110] As L. Schuren, *Shared Storytelling in Euripidean Stichomythia* (Leiden, 2014), 2 highlights, Euripides employed stichomythia with 'increasing frequency'. E. Schwinge, *Die Verwendung der Stichomythie in den Dramen des Euripides* (Heidelberg, 1968) presents *Bacchae* as the culmination of Euripidean use of stichomythia.

And look! I think I see two suns, and twin Thebes, said this bacchic phantom, drunken with the unmixed wine of ignorance. I would pity him in his drunkenness and would appeal to him to turn back from this madness to the sobriety of salvation … Come (ἧκε), you frenzied one. Do not rest on your wand, nor remain wreathed in ivy. Cast off this headdress, cast off your fawnskin, return to sobriety![111]

Pentheus utters these lines in Euripides' drama, and he is dressed by the god in a fawn-skin and given a thyrsus.[112] He is the maddened one Clement speaks of—driven into such a state by the terrifying Dionysus introduced in Book 2. Clement presents his appeal and then immediately turns to Tiresias. Employing further imperatives that give his prose a sense of pace and urgency, Clement cries out:

Come (ἧκε) to me! O old man, and you—quit Thebes and throw off your prophecy and Bacchic frenzy, instead be led by the hand to truth. Look, I give to you the wood of the cross to lean upon. Hurry, Tiresias, have faith. You will have sight … You shall see Heaven, o old man, though you cannot see Thebes.[113]

There is no resolution for Pentheus (though Clement goes on to imply his destruction, evoking his bloody demise in the *Bacchae*), but Tiresias is offered salvation.[114] Both men are introduced separately, with a sense of urgency attributed to their appearances through both Clement's warnings and his repeated imperatives. Rather than addressing and resolving each character there is an inherent fluidity to their presentation. Attention abruptly moves from Pentheus to Tiresias. This switch in focus comes not from the traditional Euripidean stage, but from pantomime. As Jory says, 'rapid exchange of dialogue was ruled out by the structure of the solo dance form, where a series of characters were portrayed sequentially rather than being on stage together'.[115] Jumping between characters with a rhythmic motion that enthralled spectators throughout Roman Alexandria, the mechanics of the pantomime required a complete transition from one character to another. The movement here matches this sense. Pentheus swiftly becomes Tiresias, who in turn is quickly forgotten and moved beyond. The passage nowhere reflects the exact pattern of Euripides' original play, yet the moment is wholly Euripidean. As the two men flit briefly into the text—dressed in the trappings of drama, as well as the narrative and framing expected of their roles—the emphasis is on their movement. The rejection and then abandonment of Bacchic error and the grasping of Christian truth only reinforces this idea. This inherently visual presentation invites the reader to recognize the influence of Roman pantomime on Clement's writing.

The inclusion of Tiresias in the *Paedagogus* supports this pantomimic influence. As discussed above, Clement has the blind seer co-opt Pentheus' words; 'And look, I think I see two suns, says the old Theban man into his cups.'[116] While Massa suggested this misattribution was 'very unlikely a mistake' and instead down to the 'free-flowing style' of the *Paedagogus*, Clement's penchant for the manipulation of Euripidean material suggests this was a deliberate act.[117] This misattribution may preserve a further echo of

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[111] Clem. Al. *Protr.* 12.118.5–19.1.

[112] Eur. *Bacch.* 918–19; 830–8.

[113] Clem. Al. *Protr.* 12.119.3.

[114] Clement suggests that Tiresias is given new sight in the gracious mercy of the Christian God, that the offer to 'see heaven … though you cannot see Thebes' is taken up as Clement goes on to describe the joy of initiation into the Christian mysteries (*Protr.* 12.120.1–2).

[115] J. Jory, 'The pantomime dancer and his libretto', in E. Hall and R. Wyles (edd.), *New Directions in Ancient Pantomime* (Oxford, 2008), 157–68, especially 161–2.

[116] Clem. Al. *Paed.* 2.24.2.

[117] Cf. Massa (n. 9 [2020]), 345.

pantomime, for the pantomime communicates several distinct characters—both Pentheus and Tiresias—yet the watching audience knows they observe a performance where the same figure acts out every character. Through a mask covering the entire face (including the mouth) the same voice speaks (or sings) every line.[118] There is thus no issue in different lines slipping out from different speakers—for behind this quotation lies the mouth and the voice of a single performer. It could be that informing Clement's suggestion that this line has been spoken by both Tiresias and Pentheus lies the further influence of Roman pantomime on Clement's Euripidean excerpts.

Clement's borrowing of these Euripidean characters is enlivened by an experience of Roman performance. The stichomythic presentation of Dionysus highlights his error (πλάνη) and adds suspense to his ultimate defenestration alongside the 'crowd of gods' from which he is drawn. The rapid interchange between Pentheus and Tiresias encourages the reader to forget Pentheus and dwell on the example of Tiresias. The invitation then becomes that the reader submit to the same power that has overtaken Tiresias. This is strengthened by the sense that the performer could become a new character at the very next moment, and that role is left open ended for the audience to consider. The immediacy of Roman pantomime—of a single performer enacting their role in the informal setting of a street corner or small stage surrounded by their audience adds an intensity and intimacy to Clement's appeal. Clement encourages his readers to feel that they are right there, and thus with them 'rests the final act'—to choose between life or death.[119] The visual presentation of Euripidean characters throughout this exhortation opens up something of Clement's engagement with the theatrical realm. Clement did not simply read Euripides, he took part in the performative landscape of Roman Alexandria, and that had an observable impact on how he presents this tragedian and his writings.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Clement displays a thorough grasp of his Euripidean material, referring to thirty-one separate plays (twelve of which survive) in his extant writings.[120] The way in which he handles these dramas exemplifies knowledge beyond mere private reading. To explore a poet that Clement himself designates as 'of the stage' (τῆς σκηνῆς), one must recognize the expansive performative landscape in which Euripidean material would have been experienced in the late second century. This wider context opens up Clement's engagement with this figure.

This enables several conclusions. Most obviously, the demonstration of Clement's varied engagement with ancient performance nuances Clement's supposedly ardent opposition to the theatre. Clement sees theatre as a medium for the conveyance of truth—as delivered by the likes of Euripides or Sophocles—as well as one which his audience will themselves understand well enough to allow for a range of metaphors and anecdotes. Clement's negative comments in the *Paedagogus* by no means represent the whole story of his theatrical engagement. He is willing to speak openly against theatrical

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[118] In pantomime this was, unless in exceptional circumstances, not the mouth of the mime themselves, but that of a supporting herald. For the audience there was a sense in which the whole performance emanated from the single dancer. The supporting voice was not the centre of attention. See further Slater (n. 32), 121–2; Jory (n. 115), 158.

[119] Clem. Al. *Protr.* 12.123.2.

[120] van den Hoek (n. 1), 231.

licentiousness and a sense of sinful attitudes and actions enjoyed there.[121] Simultaneously, he engages with the language of the theatre, labelling it a place for the communication of portions of divine truth (albeit inferior to the likes of the prophets or evangelists.)[122] He is even willing to declare his approval for Euripidean tragedy in his *Stromateis*.[123] Rather than being a wholehearted opponent of the theatre, he is intensely pragmatic in his engagement with its diversity.

As for Clement's Euripides himself, we can recognize something more than Karanasiou's 'Christianized' Euripides. We find instead an 'Alexandrianized' Euripides, put to work for Clement's Christian ends. Clement fundamentally viewed these works as performative. They carried pedagogical weight, unsurprisingly in a city such as Alexandria, but they remain visual works. Clement's broader discussion of the theatrical points towards the variety of performance media with which he was acquainted, and his reworking of Euripidean material suggests personal interaction with these media. As shown in the examples of Dionysus, Pentheus and Tiresias, the influence of pantomime and other forms of the Roman stage deepen the force of Clement's appeal.

Clement's Euripides is a unique literary construct, created from the author's own engagement with Euripidean drama in his Alexandrian experience. Clement therefore offers a valuable source: a late second-century author who demonstrates an active participation in and awareness of the performance life of the Roman city. Clement's Euripides represents the confluence of Alexandrian influences, contemporary performance and a Christian philosophy that localizes all truth on Christ himself. Far from limiting Clement's engagement of Euripides to schoolbooks and citations, a recognition of his more nuanced theatrical interest opens up his works to new depths of inter-cultural Christian teaching.

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[121] As noted above (n. 5), Clement accuses the Greeks of working up 'evil' into dramas for the Roman stage (*Protr.* 1.2.2). His critique here and elsewhere, however, is connected to the erroneous use of theatrical space and performance.

[122] Cf. Clem. Al. *Protr.* 8.77.1; 9.82.1.

[123] Clement (*Strom.* 1.8.41.5) tells his reader that he 'gladly approves (ἀποδέχομαι)' of Euripides' *Antiope*.