

Orestes in Olympia

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This paper reconstructs Orestes' possible route from Athens to Olympia in Euripides' *Electra*, if he had been, as he falsely claims, a pilgrim to Zeus. Orestes' references to landmarks on the journey from Athens to Olympia indicate detailed knowledge of the route followed by most travelers during the classical period. The natural and artistic monuments mentioned in the play raise the question whether the poet himself had visited Olympia at some point in his life, especially since the play features the path which would be chosen by most of athletes, visitors or pilgrims who traveled to Olympia. Furthermore, this paper offers a potential *terminus post quem* for Euripides' *Electra* and sheds new light on Euripides' use of toponyms and geographical locations.¹

In the messenger's speech in *Electra*'s third episode (774–858), Euripides narrates Aegisthus' murder by Orestes and Pylades. Posing as Thessalians on pilgrimage to Olympia, the two young men gain access to the usurper of the throne of Argos and punish him for Agamemnon's murder. On the contrary, in Sophocles' *Electra* it is falsely reported that Orestes met his death during the Pythian Games (48–50), a *mythos* probably inspired by his visit to the oracle of Delphi (32–33).² This discrepancy between the athletic competitions among Euripidean and Sophoclean drama caused the initial thought about the places which are mentioned in the text.

¹ I would like to express my gratitude to my CHS supervisor, Professor Stamatia Dova, for her support and guidance. All translations are my own.

² In Sophocles' *Electra* Orestes also presents himself as an athlete (48–50) and the Messenger narrates the way the hero is killed during chariot-racing at Delphi (680–756). During the archaic and early classical period, Orestes was generally thought of as a victorious athlete returning home in triumph (Golden 1998:98).

The toponyms, geographical locations, and artistic monuments mentioned in Euripides' *Electra* cover part of the dramatic area of Argos, some places on the route from Thessaly to Olympia, the final destination of the two young men.³ Briefly, the geographical marking the journey from Thessaly to Athens are Mt. Ossa (446), Mt. Pelion (445), Phthia (836) the coastline opposite northern Euboea (442), Aulis (1022) and finally Athens (1254, 1258–1260, 1319–1320). This is half the route, which would be followed by “Thessalian” Orestes. The part of the route from Athens, and especially from Corinth, to Argos, is that which Orestes would possibly have followed during his journey from Phocis (18) to Argos, as soon as is described in more detail by Euripides. Additionally, there is a third group of toponyms that are part of the journey from Argos to Oresteion, the city prophesized by Castor as the destination Orestes should seek after Clytemnestra’s death (1249–1291). Possibly the most interesting clue is that in *Electra* Euripides mentions cities that are one day-walk from each other on the route from Thessaly to Olympia. The rest of the geographical references are outside Greece, at a triangle from East (Troy)⁴ to West (Sicily, 1347) and South (Egypt, 1281).

The duration of the journey from Athens to Olympia depended on the means of transport, number and duration of stops, weather conditions, current events, such as wars and hostilities between cities,⁵ as well as the travelers’ age and physical condition and, of course, on the route chosen by the travelers. Xenophon in the *Memorabilia* mentions that it took six days to reach Olympia from Athens.⁶ The distance was over 300 km, and person traveling by foot could cover

³ Euripides indicates another travel route through Achaia and Phokis: “take her [Electra] to your home via Achaean land” (1285). It is a usual choice for many travelers even nowadays for a pilgrimage to the Peloponnese.

⁴ Trojan land (γῆν Τρωιάδ’): 3, 998, 1001, 1279, land of Ilion (Ἰλιιάδι χθονί): 4, 881, 1283, Dardanus’ town (Δαρδάνου πόλιν): 5, Troy (Τροίαν): 14, 162, 188, 432, 440, 1077, 1079, Idean textiles (Ἰδαῖα φάρη): 317, Phrygians (Φρύγας): 336, 457, 681, 917, 1001, 1281, coasts of River Simoeis (Σιμουντίδας ἀκτάς): 441

⁵ Crowther 2001:42.

⁶ Xenophon *Memorabilia* 3.13.5; see also Crowther 2001.

an average of 30 km per day. Corinth was a main stop for the caravans of pilgrims, athletes, and spectators from almost all of Eastern mainland Greece and the Aegean islands.⁷ The town of Argos, where *Electra* takes place, is located half-way through the route from Athens to Olympia. The travelers most likely made a stop there, as Orestes and Pylades do, before continuing through the mountainous paths of Arcadia. The same path through Arcadia was probably chosen by the travelers who arrived at the ports of Epidaurus and Nafplia (453, 1278). For this reason, the presence of the two young men does not surprise Aegisthus, who invites them without any hesitation to participate in the sacrifice of the ox (784–789).

I suggest as starting point of this trip the Areopagus in Athens, which Castor mentions in his prophesy of the trial and acquittal of Orestes (1254–1272). Any traveler who started from there would have to take the Sacred Way (Ἱερά Ὀδός) to Eleusis and by the end of the day would have reached the town of Megara, where he would have to spend the night.⁸ Megara was the first city on the way to Olympia, but it is difficult to find any reference or allusion to it in *Electra*, except the characterization Δωρίδα (819) and δωρικῆς (836), which could also denote many other Peloponnesian cities. We may attribute this lack of reference to the traditionally hostile relations between Athens and Megara. Furthermore, there was another option, to travel by boat from Piraeus to modern-day Nafplia or Epidaurus, or to sail directly to Corinth and then continue by land to Argos.⁹

⁷ Crowther 2001:39.

⁸ Night travel was avoided as, in addition to its inherent risks (inability to use the sun as compass, attacks by robbers or wild animals), travelers and pack animals needed their rest in order to keep going (Crowther 2001:41–42).

⁹ Ancient routes remained in use for millennia, and travelers followed itineraries similar to the one described in *Electra* up until the late 19th century, when infrastructure changed. Similarly, means of transport in Greece remained the same on account of the mountainous terrain in both mainland and islands. Here I would like to mention a modern parallel: in 1891, Spyridon Paganelis travelled as a tourist from Athens to the Peloponnese. He took the boat from Piraeus to Kalamaki, next to ancient Kenchreai, one of the two Corinthian harbors. I believe that the travel through Megara was more difficult, especially when the traveler had to pass Scironides Petres (see also Pausanias *Description of Greece* 1.44), which ran along the top of the precipitous mountains that skirt the shore of the Saronic Gulf (Casson

Corinth was the gate to the Peloponnese and Euripides makes an extended reference to this city. The phrase “well-wrought Dorian knife put in his hand” (821) may well be an allusion to this city.¹⁰ The adjective Δωρίς occurs five more times in Euripides, modifying clothes of heroes,¹¹ an unspecified Peloponnesian city (*Ion* 1590) or in general the Peloponnese.¹² In Herodotus, the adjective Δωρίς also modifies the Corinthian *chiton*, which was in use in Athens probably before 488–487.¹³ Moreover, very interesting is the adjective εὐκρότητον, “well-hammered” or “well-wrought” of which there is only one more attestation in Sophocles’ *Antigone* (430); in both cases it denotes a well-made metal object. Corinth was famous in the Roman era for its copper and especially for bronze metalwork,¹⁴ and εὐκρότητος has this meaning here. Additionally, there is a connection between εὐκρότητος and εὐπρεπῆ πορπάματα (fine clothes) in the next line (820), because the Dorian *chiton* requires a metal brooch or pin and additionally the adjective εὐκρότητον possibly refers to the sound of the knock of the warp (of the loom).

The circuitous, but clear reference to Corinth in the first choral song (451–475), seems to glorify the beauty of that major city of the Peloponnesian League. In this song, the Chorus

1974:68). Of course, as it was a round trip, travelers could always choose to return through a different route.

¹⁰ A messenger or runner from Athens could reach Corinth the same day, like Ageus, Pheidippides and Philonides (Crowther 2001:40), maybe also by vehicle, such as Clytemnestra’s *apēnē* (998) or *ochon* (999 and 1135), although it is a long distance even for horses (Crowther 2001:39) or foot-travelers.

¹¹ *Hypsipyle fragmentum* I.iv.12, *Hecuba* 934

¹² *Troïades* 234, *Hecuba* 450. In Euripides’ *Ion*, the verse “a Dorian city in Peloponnesian land” (1590) could be a reference to Corinth, although some scholars believe that is an allusion to Sparta (Martin 2018, 540; for Δωρίς as distinct to Corinthian see Sophocles’ *Oedipus Rex* 775).

¹³ The Dorian *chiton* was a square woolen cloth. It was simply folded round the body and fastened at the shoulder with a pin (How & Wells 1928); on the replacement of the Dorian *chiton* by the Ionian one, see Herodotus *Historiae* 5.87.17 and 88.4; cf. also Scholia in Euripides’ *Hecuba* 934.

¹⁴ Although that tradition stated that Corinthian bronze was created from the accidental melting together of several statues of bronze, gold, and silver during Mummius’ sack of the city in 146 BCE (Jacobson & Weitzman 1992:237–240, Engels 1990:33–37), probably the practice had a long tradition in the city before that. Pausanias (2.3.3) mentions that Corinthian bronze was made elegant by being tempered by Peirene’s water while still hot.

describes Achilles' shield, which had at the center Medusa's head. From Medusa's head, severed by Perseus, jumped the winged horse Pegasus, also named Peirenean horse (475) because it was captured at the famous spring of Peirene by Bellerophon.¹⁵ In Euripides' time the spring was turned into a fountain adorning the center of the Corinthian market.¹⁶ According to Pausanias (2.3.2–3) and to evidence from archeological excavations, the spring was located next to the Roman Gate (πρόπυλον) of Lechaion Street, which was leading to the main port of the city. Pausanias mentions that the *Propylon* was decorated with a golden statue of Phaethon and the Sun leading his chariot. During the 5th century, the city probably was very different and the *Propylon* was not there.¹⁷ Unfortunately, we have no information about the statue of the Sun, but it was possibly made before or during Euripides' era and moved on the πρόπυλον after the Roman reconstruction of the city.¹⁸ Passing the *Propylon*, the traveler would face the Shepherd Hermes's statue (Κριόν Ἐρμῆ), which we know only from Pausanias' mention above. In my opinion, the 'country child' (ἀγροτῆρι κούρωι, 462) refers to the god's sculpture in the street of Lechaion, near Peirene's fountain.¹⁹

¹⁵ Peirene was a very well-known landmark and its name helped to identify the city (Hill 1964:2). In Euripides, there are three references to Peirene's spring (*Medea* 68–69, *Trojan Women* 205–206 and *Electra* 476). Strabo (*Geography* 8.6.21) and Pausanias (2.5.1) mention that the fountain in the city was fed from a spring on the Acrocorinth, where was another spring also known as Peirene. Strabo notes that 'below the summit is the fountain of Peirene' (8.6.21; see also Herodotus *Historiae* 5.92.2: "Corinthians who dwell round fair Peirene and frowning Korinthos"). The references above made many researchers to believe that the spring in the town was not the famous Peirene. On the problem of the location of the spring, see Hill 1964:7–11 and Robinson 2011:20–23.

¹⁶ Sanders 2010:99–109.

¹⁷ As Cavan Concannon writes "Peirene and Pegasos became metonyms for Corinth itself, beginning with Pindar's Thirteenth *Olympian Oration*, in which the poet can speak of something that occurs ἐν ἄστει Πειράνας" (in the city of Peirene [61] Concannon 2014:121).

¹⁸ Edwards (1994:264) describes the Lechaion Gate and claims that the statues on top of the arch were dedicated to the gods of Acrocorinth, as we learn from Pausanias.

¹⁹ Fowler 1932:85.

In the first strophe of *Electra* we see a similar image with Pegasus, the chariot of the Sun, and Hermes:

περιδρόμωι μὲν ἵτυος ἔδραι
 Περσέα λαιμοτόμαν ὑπὲρ ἄλός
 ποτανοῖσι πεδίλοις κορυφὰν Γοργόνης ἴσχειν,
 Διὸς ἀγγέλωι σὺν Ἑρμᾶι,
 τῶι Μαΐας ἀγροτῆρι κούρωι
 ἐν δὲ μέσωι κατέλαμπε σάκει φαέθων
 κύκλος ἀλίιοιο
 ἵπποισι ἄμ πτεροέσσαις.

The shield [of Achilles] was decorated all-around with winged sandals, Perseus flying over the sea and holding Gorgon's head, and next to him Hermes, messenger of Zeus, Maia's country child. In the middle of the shield shone the bright and shining cycle of the sun, on a chariot drawn by winged horses.

Euripides *Electra* 458–467

The reference to Pegasus is clear, and it is very interesting that the Chorus places his image to the sides (περίπλευρος) of the shield, as Peirene's spring stood at the side of the Sun's statue:

Περιπλεύρωι δὲ κύτει πύρπνοος ἔσπευ-
 δε δρόμωι λέαινα χαλαῖς
 Πειρηναῖον ὀρῶσα πῶλον.

And around the hollow [of the shield], the lioness breathing fire sped running with her claws ready as she saw Peirene's colt.

Euripides *Electra* 472–475

Next morning the traveler would have to take the road to Argos. As Pausanias mentions,²⁰ from Cleonae to Argos there were two roads; one was direct but more difficult, the other winding along the pass called Tretus (modern-day Dervenakia) was also narrow²¹ and surrounded by mountains, but more suitable for carriages. Half-way from Corinth to Argos, Orestes, like any traveler, would meet the abandoned Mycenae.²² The road through Mycenae to Argos and then to Tegea through Hysiae was the only carriage-road, the main road, which was used mostly for transporting goods from mainland Greece and from the port of Myloi.²³

Leaving Argos, a traveler had two choices, to go Northwest to Mantinea or Southwest to Tegea; Euripides' description seems to imply the second option. The significant clue is that the drama takes place somewhere outside Argos, far from the town (246), near to fields (623), and next to a two-tracked wagon path (775). Moreover, the garden of the Nymphs and the house of Electra are located close to each other, outside the city of Argos (623). In fact, near Argos and probably even closer to the garden of the Nymphs was Amymone's spring, mentioned in verse 734. According to Antonios Meliarakis,²⁴ the distance from Argos to Amymone was about 10 km, near the modern-day village of Myloi, in the famous springs and lake Lerna.

The manuscripts (*Laurentianus* 32.2 and *Palatinus* 287) give the phrase ξηραὶ τ' Ἀμμωνίδες ἔδραι in line 734, instead of which I suggest the correction to Ξηρὰν τ' Ἀμμωνίαν ἔδραν, restoring the meaning and the metrical correlation with verse 744 in the second antistrophe. It is possible that due to a scribal error Ἀμμωνίαν ἔδραν was changed to Ἀμμωνίδες ἔδραι, a

²⁰ *Description of Greece* 2.15.2.

²¹ Pikoulas 1995:57.

²² *Electra* 35, 170, 248, 674, 709, 761, 776, 963.

²³ Meliarakis 1886:13.

²⁴ Meliarakis 1886:42, Pausanias *Description of Greece* 2.37.1–4 & 4.17.4, Strabo *Geography* 8.371, Apollodorus *Library* 51.29.

mistake that could have been made easily, especially by an Alexandrian copyist to whom the Egyptian god Ammon was far more familiar than Amymone.²⁵

Nevertheless, Amymone was the daughter of Danaus and had been loved by Poseidon. After the Argolid was placed under the protection of Hera, Poseidon had dried up all the springs in the land. Then he met Amymone and rescued her from a satyr, who was about to rape her. In order to win Amymone's affection, the god revealed the springs of Lerna as a gift to her and to "very thirsty Argos" (πολυδίψιον Ἄργος, Homer *Iliad* 4.11). Amymone bore Nauplius to Poseidon, who gave his name to the port city of Argos, Nauplia. Amymone was finally given in marriage to Lynceus, with whom she founded a royal line that led to Danae, the mother of Perseus, founder of Mycenae.

The Chorus' song narrates Thyestes' theft of the golden sheep and the adultery with his brother's wife Aerope, which, according to most sources, were punished by Zeus with the reversal of the course of the sun and a terrible drought that struck Argos. However, instead of this drought, the manuscripts have the Chorus sing about the drought in the oracle of Ammon. In fact, the plain of "thirsty Argos" was irrigated by the Pontinos River, whose waters flowed from Amymone's springs and were inexhaustible. Additionally, Amymone's spring was also a cult place for the Nymphs to whom Aegisthus sacrifices an ox in *Electra* (805).²⁶

The road from Argos to Tegea is described as a main wagon road,²⁷ even though, according to the practice of that era, most roads would be narrow.²⁸ It was also smoother, as it was a

²⁵ Although it fits the meaning of line 734, the writing Ἄμυμώνης ἔδραι does not work on account of the meter of line 744. I suggest the correction of the entire line to Ξηρὰν τ' Ἄμυμώνιαν ἔδραν. The adjective ἄμυμώνιος is found in Euripides' *Phoenician Women* 188.

²⁶ Larson 2007:150.

²⁷ Via modern-day village Achladokambos, about 35 km from Argos via Myloi (Meliarakis 1886:59).

²⁸ As in the narrative of Laius' murder by Oedipus on a road outside of Thebes, which was so narrow that it could only hold one carriage, leaving no space for pedestrians (Sophocles *Oedipus King* 734, 800 ff.; Crowther 2001:40; Casson 1974:70–72; Pikoulas 1999:251).

carriageway.²⁹ Meliarakis mentions that this path was shorter and easier for travelers. Hysiae was 25 km from Lerna (Amymon) or 5 hours on foot from Argos.³⁰ Euripides seems to choose that way, as shown in *Electra*'s reference to the river Tanaos, which flows across the lands of Argolis and marks the border between Argos and Sparta (410–411). In *Electra*, Tanaos' headwaters are located near Tegea and Agamemnon's old servant with his flock is obviously located on the slope of a hill near Argos (10). Mount Parthenion, located between Tegea and Hysiae, was known to Euripides according to a fragment from *Telephos*.³¹ According to the myth, this was the birthplace of the shepherd-god Pan, who is also mentioned in *Electra*'s second choral song (699–706).³² Tegea was one of the most important Arcadian towns, but it is not mentioned in the play. Nevertheless, a traveler could spend the night in Hysiae, the town near the springs of Tanaos River (410).

Next day the traveler would have to continue his western route until Oresteion, a town which, according to *Electra*, was named after the hero himself:

σὲ δ' Ἀρκάδων χρῆ πόλιν ἐπ' Ἀλφειοῦ ῥοαῖς

οἰκεῖν Λυκαίου πλησίον σηκώματος

ἐπώνυμος δὲ σοῦ πόλις κεκλήσεται.

'You must settle an Arcadian city by Alpheus' streams, near the Lykaian temple, and that city will get its name from you'.

Euripides *Electra* 1273–1275

²⁹ Pausanias *Description of Greece* 8.54.5; see also Kendrick 1982, Pikoulas 1999:258–260.

³⁰ Meliarakis 1886:58.

³¹ Eur. *Fragmentum* 936 (= 17 = 102). As Pausanias mentions, in the village Parthenion there was a sanctuary of Telephus (*Description of Greece* 8.54.6).

³² Pausanias *Description of Greece* 8.54. As Pausanias notes, there were sanctuaries of Pan at all the entrances of Arcadia: Pan Sinoeis (8.30.3), near Lycaeon Mountain (8.38.5), near Tegea (8.53.11), and on Parthenion Mountain (8.54.6).

The city was strategically located on the highway that connected Sparta with the rest of the Peloponnese.³³ Indeed, that area is mentioned by many writers because of its importance, especially as a thoroughfare for Spartan troops.

The river Alpheus flowed next to the Oresteion but the descent along the riverbank would be difficult, due to its precipitous morphology.³⁴ Thus, Euripides leaves marks on the path again, choosing the road next to Mount Lykaion in Arcadia, where there was the forbidden to visitors (ἄβατον) temple of Lykaios Zeus (1274).³⁵ Ioannis Pikoulas has identified the ancient road, which Kourouniotis found during the excavations at Lykaion in 1909.³⁶ In this road, the passages through the mountains of Phigalia would be easier to cross and would possibly constitute the main pathway to Olympia.³⁷

Halfway from Oresteion to Olympia, the traveler would arrive at the newly built temple of Epicurius Apollo at Bassai. I would venture to suggest that the presence of such a majestic temple in so mountainous an area reveals the location's importance, also suggesting that it would be a thoroughfare, probably the most important for travelers to Olympia. Although there is no reference to Epicurius Apollo in Euripides' *Electra*, two passages may shed further light. The first is Electra's invocation when she sees Orestes and Pylades approaching her:

Φοῖβ' Ἄπολλον, προσπίτνω σε μὴ θανεῖν.

'O Phoebus Apollo, I beseech you – don't let me die!'

Euripides *Electra* 221

³³ Roisman & Luschnig 2011. For the topography of that area and the passages to Tegea see Kendrick Pitchett 1982. Pikoulas 1999:272–273.

³⁴ Pausanias describes with the opposite direction the route from Oresteion to Tegea and gives in more details the around towns and monuments (*Description of Greece* 8.44.2–8).

³⁵ Pausanias *Description of Greece* 8.38.6.2: There is in that place the Lykaios Zeus' temple, in which the entrance is prohibited for humans.

³⁶ Pikoulas 1999:293–294.

³⁷ More fairly easy routes connected Arkadia and Elis north and south of the river Alpheios (Roy 2000).

This invocation is not expected here and perhaps is not even appropriate for Electra, because just in the entrance song an extensive reference was made by the Chorus and Electra to the three-day festival in honor of Hera (167–212); also, earlier on Electra invoked Zeus as helper or revenger (Ἐπίκουρον 137–138). We would expect Electra to invoke Hera or Zeus, but in line 221 she prays to Apollo. Her choice of divinity may be connected with the recently constructed temple of Apollo *Epikourios* at Bassai, built from 420 BCE through the last decade of the century.³⁸ My hypothesis is supported by the fact that the adjective ἐπίκουρος, attested only 16 times in Euripides, occurs mostly in plays after 420 BCE and especially in *Orestes*.³⁹ Although the adjective does not modify Apollo in any case, it must be underlined that before 420 BCE the only dramas in which occurs is *Andromacha* (508) and *Heraclidae* (921). Additionally, the real helper, revenger and healer for the heroes is Apollo, the ἐπίκουρος θεός, although that Electra call Zeus as ἐπίκουρον. Moreover, it is worth to be mention the dubious tone that have Electra’s words with the meaning that she kneels forward Orestes, like to be the Apollo himself:

ΟΡ. μέν', ὦ τάλαινα· μὴ τρέσηις ἐμὴν χέρα.

ΗΛ. ὦ Φοῖβ' Ἄπολλον, προσπίτνω σε μὴ θανεῖν.

Or. Stay, poor girl; don't afraid (that you will be harmed by) my hand!

El. O, Phoebus Apollo, I kneel to you, as to no die.

Euripides *Electra* 220–221

³⁸ Pausanias *Description of Greece* 8.41.7–9

³⁹ *Orestes* belongs to the last decade of 5th century (408 BCE) according to the scholium in line 371. In Euripides ἐπίκουρος means “ally at the battle” (*Rhesus* 753, *Ion* 297, 1299, *TrGF* 351.2), “helper” or “protector” (*Iphigenia in Aulis* 1027, 1241, *Bacchae*. 1367, *Heraclidae*. 921, *Andromacha* 508, *Electra* 138 as “revenger” to Agamemnon’s death) *Orestes* 1226, 1300, as in *Electra* above). Also, it may mean “healer against a disease” (*Orestes* 211, 266, 300, 306).

The route climbing down from mountainous Bassai would enable the traveler to pick up speed. The remaining distance was about 45 km, but the trek was easier, and by the end of the day Olympia, the final destination, would be visible. In the play's *Exodos*, Castor and Pollux indicate an alternative road, the route via Achaia (1285) to Phocis (1287), which Pylades has to follow with his new wife, Electra.

The first reference to Olympia, one of few in Euripides, is found in verses 781–782.⁴⁰ Euripides represents Orestes and Pylades as young athletes, an image that is completed in the third episode with Electra and the Chorus singing a hymn for Orestes as a victor (860–889). Their achievement is major than an Olympic victory, as Chorus claims (862–864) and Electra compares it with an Olympian victory in chariot races (866 & 883–884), as so as she crowns his head with wreath as an Olympic champion (870–872 & 887–889). The initial image of the victorious athlete Orestes is given by the Messenger during his narration for the Aegisthus' murder, comparing the speed of the animal skinning with the double racing of the charioteers:

θαῦσσον δὲ βύρσαν ἐξέδειρεν ἢ δρομεὺς
 δισσοὺς διαύλους ἵππίους διήνυσεν.⁴¹

He stripped off the fleece faster than a runner could run around double horse races.

Euripides *Electra* 824–825

Orestes' victorious itinerary ends with Aegisthus' murder and a triumphant return to his hometown, Argos.

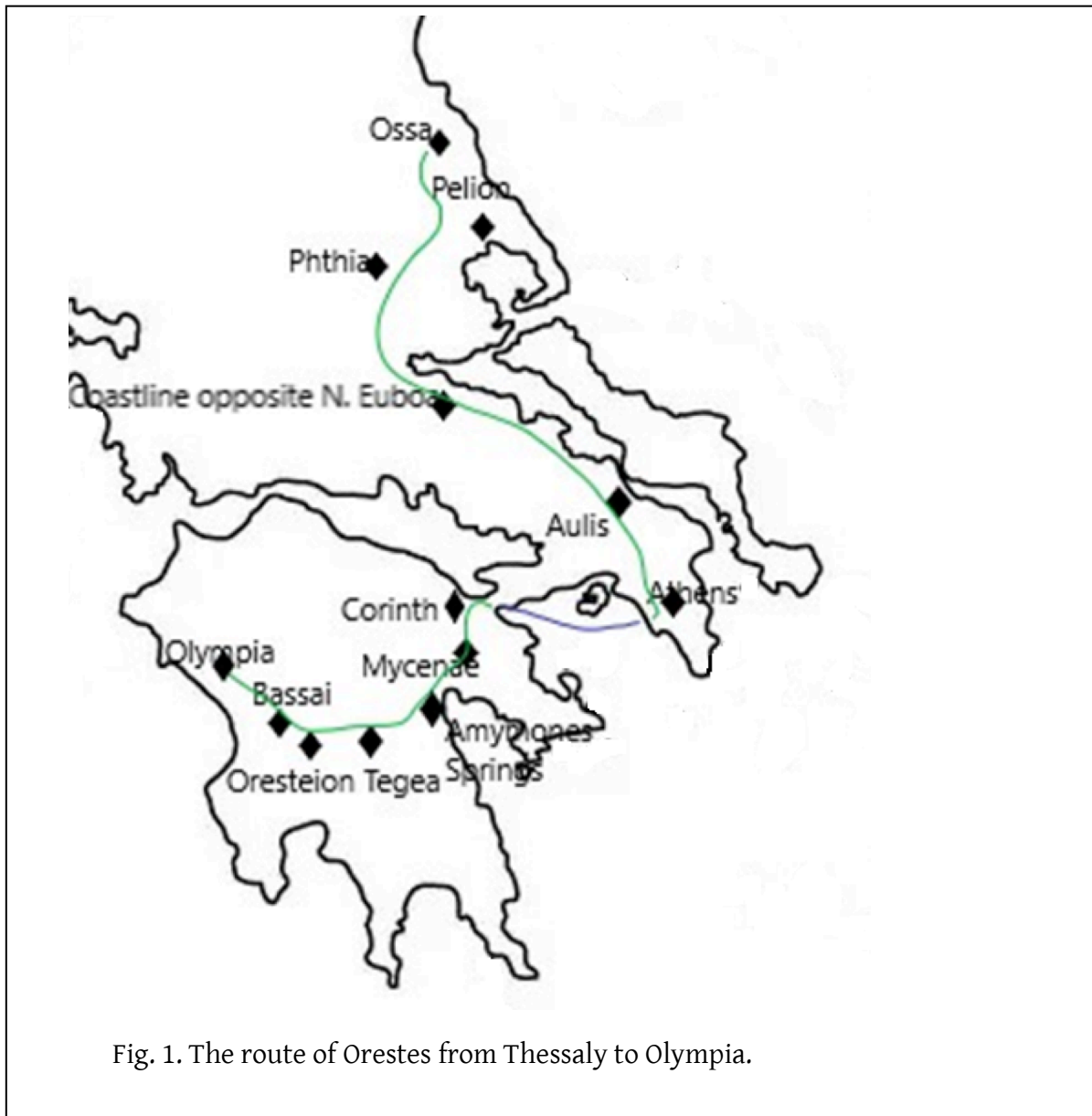
⁴⁰ Euripides *Hercules* 1304; there are also some references to river Alpheus, which refers also to Olympia: *TrGF* 14.3 (*Aeolus*), *Ion* 175, *Electra* 862 & 1273.

⁴¹ A horse-chariot race (ἵππιος δίαυλος) was four στάδια long, because it was twice racing and his arena double as long as the regular (Denniston 2010:257, Roisman & Lushnig 2011:194). A similar expression of the running a chariot race is used and in doubtful euripidean *Epinician* for Alcibiades completed with a comparison “there is no other among the Greek, who gain first, second and third award in chariot races” (Euripides *Epinician for Alcibiades* 3–4 = Plutarch *Alcibiades* 11).

According to *Parium Marble* (IG XII.5.444.63) Euripides was born in 485 BCE; this means that he was born during the 73rd and died at 93rd Olympiad as referred in *Suda Lexicon*. I would argue that Euripides visited Olympia during the Games at least once. It is possible that he visited Olympia in 416 BCE, when Alcibiades won first, third and fourth place at the chariot race. As we know, Euripides composed an epinician for Alcibiades' victory although we don't know when and where it was first performed.⁴² He must have also heard many accounts of the Olympics from other visitors.

But even if he never went to Olympia himself, the route he refers to in *Electra* was the one a traveler from Athens to Olympia would choose. It was not the only route to Olympia from Athens, but it is the route Euripides chooses to describe in his play through toponyms, geographical areas, and artistic and natural monuments.

⁴² Gribble 2012; Bowra 1960:68–71. Athenaeus suggest that the place of performance was in Olympia, and probably this means that Euripides had traveled there (*Deipnosophistae* 1.5).



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