

Introduction

Plays with pollution

For structural anthropologists, who after neurotics are those most obsessed with purity and impurity, pollution may have to do with ‘matter out of place’.¹ In the Athenian tragedies of the fifth century BC, staged each year within the framework of the City Dionysia and in a theatre purified for these purposes by city officials called *peristiarchoi*,² pollution is anything but ‘out of place’. In Greek tragedy, pollution is ubiquitous and central. Even the most casual reader of tragedy – or theatregoer – will readily remember, perhaps with a sense of unease, some of the plays’ haunting images: the spectacularly visual blood and gore of Aeschylus’ *Oresteia*, with its blood-dripping, polluted protagonists, from Agamemnon, sacrificer of his daughter, to Clytemnestra, husband-slayer, to Orestes, the matricide pursued by Erinyes (so horrid in the original performance that, as legend has it, terrified women miscarried in the theatre)³ and seeking refuge and purification at Apollo’s shrine in Delphi; the plague of Sophocles’ *Oedipus tyrannus* and its apparent cause, wretched Oedipus, ‘pollution of the land’, murderer of his father and bedfellow of his mother; or the pollution exuding from Polyneices’ corpse in *Antigone*. Hardly less prominent is pollution in some of the most beloved of Euripides’ plays, from *Medea* and *Heracles*, with their child-slaying protagonists, to *Hippolytus*, in which we encounter, besides well-known types of murder- and death-pollution, the curious notion of a mind (Phaedra’s) ‘polluted’ as the result of errant erotic desire. Notions of purity and attempts at purification are paramount, too. Indeed,

¹ Douglas (1966) 35 speaks of dirt as matter out of place (following Lord Chesterfield’s dictum); this definition of dirt is central to her understanding of pollution.

² On these *peristiarchoi*, see Σ Aeschin. 1.23; *Suda* s.v. καθάρσιον; Pollux 8.104; see also Cole (2004) 48.

³ So the *Life of Aeschylus* tells us: see Page’s OCT of Aeschylus, 332.10–13.

the concepts of pollution and purity are absent only from [Aeschylus'] *Prometheus* and Sophocles' *Philoctetes*.⁴

The ubiquity of pollution (but also of purity and purification) is a distinctive feature of tragedy. No other genre, neither in the fifth century nor before, displays a similar obsession with this thematic nexus. Should this baffle us and make us wonder why? One is tempted to answer, flatly, in the negative. Tragedy, after all, regularly deals in murder and death, and pollution is closely connected with both: the prominence of pollution in tragedy, we may conclude, is simply the result of its preferred subject matter.⁵ And yet: it may well be that the ubiquity of pollution in tragedy has much to do with the ubiquity of murder and death in tragedy. But is there perhaps more to it than simply being the by-product of the preferred subject matter?

We may proceed from this avowal of wonder and curiosity by doing a bit of matter-of-fact history. It has often been noted that Homer is silent on murder- and death-pollution.⁶ Even though the idea of pollution, to us, as children of the Enlightenment, would seem to represent something very ancient, a sign perhaps of 'primitive thought', historical evidence suggests that pollution became a real issue only after Homer (assuming the traditional dating of Homer to the eighth century BC). The first recorded purification from murder-pollution occurs in the *Aethiopsis* of Arctinus of Miletus, dating roughly from the middle of the seventh century BC.⁷ Incidentally, lustral basins begin to appear in the archaeological record around the same time, marking an important step in the organisation of civic space.⁸ The first written laws likewise date from this period, around 650 BC.⁹

One way to interpret this evidence would be to postulate that the increasing importance of pollution, suggested *ex negativo* by the increasing

⁴ In all but these two plays as well as Sophocles' *Ajax*, the presence of the concepts of pollution and purity is reflected in the presence of *μία-* and *καθαρ-* words. In Sophocles' *Ajax*, the protagonist speaks, more vaguely, of *λύματα*, which require *ἀγνίζειν* (*λύμαθ' ἀγνίσας ἐμάς*, 655). On this purification and its overtones of Orphic-Eleusinian eschatology, see Krummen (1998) 301–16.

⁵ This is the conclusion reached by Parker (1983) 16 in the case of tragic murder-pollution.

⁶ Dodds (1951) 35–50 (part of the chapter in which Dodds formulates his famous view of the development from a 'shame culture' to a 'guilt culture'); Moulinier (1952) 58–61; Lloyd-Jones (1983²) 70–8; Parker (1983) 66–70, 130–43; Hoessly (2001) 56–81; Osborne (2011) 167–8; Eck (2012) 89–129. Already the scholiast on Homer *Il.* 11.690 remarked that there was no murder-purification in Homer. Parker (1983) 66–70 warns against overemphasising the gulf between Homer and later attitudes to death-pollution. Eck (2012) 106–29 suggests that the notion of pollution resulting from killing (in battle) is not entirely absent from Homer.

⁷ Proclus' summary informs us that the *Aethiopsis* involves Achilles being purified by Odysseus for the murder of Thersites: see T. W. Allen, *Homeri Opera Vol. V*, Oxford 1912, 105–6.

⁸ Cole (1988) 162. ⁹ Gagarin (2008) 39; see also Osborne (2011) 170.

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importance of purification, has to do with the rise of the *polis*; that pollution, like law, is somehow important to the developing city-state; that pollution, perhaps, negotiates the kind of questions which arise in a community as social organisation advances. An insight of this sort is an incitement to further reflection. Pollution as a 'medium for the negotiation of questions important to the community' sounds very much like tragedy itself and the sorts of interests tragedy is often said to have. We may infer that the ubiquity of pollution in tragedy is perhaps not a by-product of tragedy's subject matter but the index of its aptness in the negotiation of the kind of concerns tragedy has.

The present study suggests that this is indeed the case. Taking this position as a starting point, it then considers whether pollution (and the ritual nexus of which it forms part) may not have a pointed function in tragedy as a kind of murmuring undercurrent or, rather, a compositional reference point. The result you hold in your hands: an account, by no means comprehensive but, I hope, informative and suggestive, of the kind of functions pollution and its ritual counterparts may have as 'murmuring undercurrent' or compositional reference point in the tragic plays staged in the theatre of Dionysus in fifth-century BC Athens. It argues that the ensemble of pollution, purity and purification (and in particular pollution) constitutes a convenient tool in the negotiation of tragic crises.

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One may be sure that the importance of pollution in tragedy is not the arcane knowledge of the initiated few. To take but one notable example, the teaser on the paperback edition of Robert Parker's magisterial and widely read account of pollution and purification in early Greek religion promptly draws attention to it: 'Anyone who has sampled even a few of the most commonly read Greek texts will have encountered pollution. The pollution of bloodshed is a frequent theme of tragedy: Orestes is driven mad; Oedipus brings plague upon all Thebes.'¹⁰

It is curious, therefore, that no study exists exploring the above questions. Aristotle's influential theory of tragic catharsis, it seems, has drawn attention away from the tragedies themselves (and I should say straight away that this book is not concerned with Aristotle). In comparison with the extensive body of literature on what is but a single sentence in the *Poetics*

¹⁰ Parker (1983).

(1449b24–8),¹¹ treatments of the role of pollution, purity and purification in the actual plays are practically non-existent.

Certainly, there are exceptions. The *Oresteia* in particular has invited comment, traditionally to the effect that the trilogy moves from (rigid) ritual to law, homing in on the last play, the *Eumenides*, in which complex purifications from pollution turn out to be insufficient for the matricide Orestes and are supplanted (or supplemented) by legal procedure.¹² Other plays, too, have prompted the occasional foray, within wider discussions, into matters of pollution, purity and purification. Aeschylus' *Suppliants*, in particular, with its pollution threat resulting from the arrival in Argos of the virginal Danaids, has provoked insightful comments on the theme from an anthropological perspective;¹³ so, too, has Euripides' *Hippolytus* with its purity-obsessed eponymous hero.¹⁴ And the odd purification ritual has occasionally attracted attention. Eveline Krummen, for instance, has examined the eschatological overtones of the purification Ajax intends to undertake in Sophocles' play of the same name;¹⁵ Walter Burkert has provided a powerful reading of the symbolic force of the purification ritual so minutely described in Sophocles' late play *Oedipus at Colonus*.¹⁶

But very few studies indeed have made pollution and its counterparts a central reading paradigm. Robert Parker offers the barest of sketches (aptly entitled 'Some scenes from tragedy') as an afterthought to his study of pollution and purification in ancient Greece.¹⁷ Beyond this, Charles Segal's examination of the transformation of purity concepts in the dramatic denouement of Euripides' *Hippolytus* in an article published in 1970 ploughs a rather lonely furrow (and even that furrow is subject to bifurcation).¹⁸ Since then, no major contribution has been made in the form of a focused study of the ritual nexus of pollution, purity and purification in tragedy, with the exception perhaps of Robin Mitchell-Boyask's Girardian reading of the latter play, which, however, very quickly moves

¹¹ Important contributions include Bernays (1880), Schadewaldt (1955), Else (1957), Golden (1962), id. (1976), id. (1992) 5–39; Belfiore (1992); for a recent summary, see LaCourse Munteanu (2012) 238–50. See also Flashar (2007). For largely non-Aristotelian views of what tragic catharsis may be, see Segal (1996); see also Dubois (2002).

¹² E.g. Lesky (1931) esp. 211, Meier (1980) 160, Pörtlus (2006). The question of purification in *Eumenides* is examined in detail by Sidwell (1996); see also the remarks on pollution and purification in Zeitlin (1965).

¹³ Zeitlin (1996d), Gödde (2000a) 238–44.

¹⁴ Zeitlin (1996d). Evidently, the list of studies which include remarks on pollution and purification is not exhaustive; further literature will be cited *in situ* and as appropriate.

¹⁵ Krummen (1998). ¹⁶ Burkert (1985b) 8–14.

¹⁷ Parker (1983) 308–21. ¹⁸ Segal (1970).

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from the issue of pollution to the play's presentation of violence and mimetic rivalry.¹⁹

The lacuna is welcome because the moment to fill it is opportune. Scholarship, not only but especially on Greek tragedy, has shown an abiding interest in the interrelation of literature and religion. This interest is by no means novel – its pedigree stretches back considerably in time to include such eminent exponents as Friedrich Nietzsche and his influential answer to the vexing question of what tragedy has to do with Dionysus in the *Birth of Tragedy*; or the Cambridge ritualists and their diagnosis, inspired by James Frazer's *Golden Bough*, of a pattern involving the death and rebirth of a year-spirit, the *eniautos daimōn*, which underlies all tragedy.²⁰ Although studies interested in 'tragedy and religion' were unfashionable for some time, partly due to the perceived excesses of the Cambridge ritualists, partly due to the advent in Classical Studies of New Criticism and its paradigm of text-immanent close readings, the field has been flourishing, in various guises, at least since the mid-1960s.²¹ With the continued appeal of culturally contextualising approaches to classical literature and the publication, within the last decade, of two important surveys of the state of the subdiscipline's art,²² the field is now, if anything, more vigorous and rigorous than ever.

There has also recently been renewed interest in pollution and purification and their place in ancient Greek society. For a long time, Robert

¹⁹ Mitchell(-Boyask) (1991). To this, one may add Scullion (1998) on *Antigone*; this is not a comprehensive interpretation of the wider function of pollution and purification in the play, however, but a hermeneutic exercise in determining the exact meaning of the chorus' famous appeal to Dionysus, in the final stasimon of the play, to 'come with purifying foot' (*Ant.* 1144) to heal the 'violent sickness' from which Thebes suffers.

²⁰ See Murray (1912).

²¹ The mid-1960s saw the publication of two influential studies with very different methodological affiliations: Froma Zeitlin's study of ritual imagery in the *Oresteia* (Zeitlin (1965)) and Walter Burkert's reconstruction of tragedy as developing from a performance associated with a goat-sacrifice (Burkert (1966)). Both 'schools', the one looking at the function of ritual/religious forms and language in tragedy (or comedy), the other interested in origins (and what these may tell us about fifth-century tragedy and the rituals in it), have had many followers. The former includes e.g. Else (1977), Foley (1985), Easterling (1988), Krummen (1998), Gödde (2000a), ead. (2000b), and Henrichs (2004); see e.g. Bowie (1993a) on comedy. The latter includes e.g. Guépin (1968). Origins figure large also in Sourvinou-Inwood (2003) with ead. (1994), Csapo and Miller (2007), Seaford (1994) esp. 328–67 on the supposed Dionysiac pattern underlying all tragedy and deriving from its Dionysiac origins. The literature on Dionysus and the Dionysiac in Greek drama is vast: see e.g. Bierl (1991), Des Bouvrie (1993), Schlesier (1993), (2007) and (2010); Scullion (2002) argues against the Dionysiac nature of Greek tragedy.

²² Yatromanolakis and Roilos (2004a), Bierl et al. (2007). Both include useful introductions: Yatromanolakis and Roilos (2004b) on the concept of 'ritual poetics' (on which see also Grethlein [2007]); Bierl (2007) surveying approaches to 'literature and religion'. For comparable publications on the topic in Latin literature, see Barchiesi et al. (2004) and Augoustakis (2013). Outside of Classics, see Braungart (1996). Short surveys include Graf (2007a) and (on Sophocles) Rehm (2012).

Parker's seminal study, published in 1983, seemed to have been the last word on the topic.²³ In recent years, however, it has attracted fresh attention. On the one hand, the parameters of discussion have broadened. Ritual pollution and purification have been studied alongside, for instance, medical, philosophical or poetic concepts.²⁴ Outside of Classics, political uses of concepts of purity have received thorough treatment.²⁵ On the other hand, Parker's understanding of pollution, which owes much to structural anthropology and in particular to Mary Douglas' influential *Purity and Danger*,²⁶ has come under attack, along with Douglas' work and indeed much of structural anthropology. In a recent publication, Robin Osborne reviews the literature on pollution and comes to the conclusion that '[i]t is time to think more radically about dirty bodies.'²⁷

This book is primarily a (literary) study of the function of the thematic nexus of pollution, purity and purification in tragic drama and not a historical account of pollution in ancient Greece. Nonetheless, by thinking about pollution and its counterparts as compositional reference points that are anchored in Greek life and by determining the nature of these compositional reference points, certain lines of inquiry and ways of looking at pollution in ancient Greek culture have crystallised which I hope will contribute to 'thinking more radically' about pollution in the context of classical Greece.

Tragedy and crisis

The principal answer this study comes up with to the central question it poses – 'what is the *function* of...?' – is that the ensemble of pollution, purity and purification (and in particular pollution) constitutes a convenient tool in the negotiation of tragic crises. This answer, to be sure, only begs further questions: *What crises? What negotiations? Why this ensemble? Why pollution... and crisis? Why convenient?* It is self-evident that this study's particular take is just that: particular. It involves a number of assumptions: about the kind of thing pollution is; about the kind of thing

²³ Parker (1983). Moulinier (1952) is still interesting, as comprehensive sourcebook and because of the thorough analyses of the terminology of pollution, purity and purification offered; see also Ginouvès (1962).

²⁴ Hoessly (2001), Seidensticker and Vöhler (2007). See Molinar and Vöhler (2009), Bradley (2012b) and Lennon (2013) for recent perspectives on pollution beyond classical Greece.

²⁵ Sémelin (2005).

²⁶ Douglas (1966). On Douglas's influence, see e.g. Fardon (1999) 80, Bradley (2012a).

²⁷ Osborne (2011) 163.

tragedy is; about the kind of thing a tragic crisis is. It is time for a few self-reflective confessions and explanations.

Let us tackle the last two items of the above triad first: what kind of thing is tragedy? And, what kind of thing is a tragic crisis? The answer to the last question is intrinsically bound up with the first. What one considers a tragic crisis depends to a large extent on one's assumptions about what tragedy is. In view of the centuries-long controversy over the definition of 'tragedy and the tragic',²⁸ a quick dispatch of the question of the nature of tragedy will seem presumptuous; the wise and circumspect will be relieved to learn, therefore, that no claim is made here to the discovery of 'essence'. The most famous as well as influential attempt to come to terms with tragedy (and indeed the 'essence' of tragedy) is that of Aristotle in the *Poetics*. At *Poetics* 1449b24–8, Aristotle famously defines tragedy as the mimesis of an action (μίμησις πράξεως) which, by inspiring pity and fear, achieves a cathartic effect. The achievement of this effect depends, for Aristotle, largely on plot (μῦθος) and character (τὰ ἥθη; 1450a37). With this, the protagonists' 'thought' becomes important (διάνοια, 1449b35–1450a9); as does plot-construction, proceeding in accordance with the tripartite structure of δέσις, which we may translate as 'knotting' ('knotting into' catastrophe or near-catastrophe), περιπέτεια, 'reversal', and λύσις, 'denouement' (or 'knotting-out-of'; 1455b24–1456a2). If we consider tragedy to be such 'in essence', the questions we will ask about it will necessarily turn on plot-construction and characterisation. And the crises we will diagnose will necessarily occur on the level of the plot and as the result of a particular character constellation and these characters' aspirations, moral choices, strengths and weaknesses. Crisis will mean the conflict of characters and the point where this conflict comes to a head.²⁹

The starting point of the present study is that tragedy is not just plot and character. It shares the assumption of much of recent writing on drama that tragedy, because it was produced within a specific historical context, reflects and refracts the concerns and cultural patterns of this context.³⁰ As a result, it considers tragedy as a complex socio-cultural

²⁸ Silk (1996); Bohrer (2009) (foregrounding the idea of 'epiphany', see id. (1991)); Judet de la Combe (2010). For reflections on 'the tragic' in Virgil, see Hardie (1997).

²⁹ For a defence of Aristotelian approaches to tragedy, see Radke(-Uhlmann) (2003). In the English-speaking world, defenders of Aristotle are even rarer. An exception is, for instance, Heath (1987).

³⁰ One may cite Froma Zeitlin and Simon Goldhill (see bibliography), among many others. These scholars are indebted to the Parisian school of historical anthropology around Jean-Pierre Vernant, Pierre Vidal-Naquet and (earlier) Louis Gernet: see especially Vernant and Vidal-Naquet (1972) and (1986); Vidal-Naquet (1986a); Gernet (1968) and (1982). For a discussion of anthropological approaches to Greek tragedy, see Goldhill (1997) 331–6 and Sourvinou-Inwood (2005); Segal (1983).

phenomenon, negotiating complex problems which need not necessarily be invoked explicitly, nor result from specific characters' strengths and weaknesses, but may be implicit, and recognisable in particular against the backdrop of fifth-century BC Greek culture, and its concerns and patterns of thought and expression.

If we consider tragedy to be such, the range of questions we will ask about it will be much broader. We can still take the Aristotelian level of character encounters, characterisation, moral dilemmas and plot-development seriously.³¹ But we can also examine underlying problems and implicit concerns. Such implicit concerns are sometimes of a more abstract and philosophical nature: *Oedipus tyrannus*, for instance, has been viewed as a comment on the question of the conditions and limits of human knowledge.³² Very frequently, they are of a concrete, socio-cultural nature: Aeschylus' *Suppliants*, for example, has been understood to be greatly interested, beneath its surface-plot revolving around the encounter between the Argive king Pelasgus and the unwed, virginal daughters of Danaus, in the relation to society of maidens on the threshold of adulthood.³³ From this non-Aristotelian perspective, the crises likely to attract interest are therefore not only those battled out on the level of plot-development, character encounters and characterisation, but also the crises associated with these underlying concerns. A central assumption of this study is, then, that each tragedy discusses, along with surface conflicts of the type Aristotle is interested in, a number of embedded crises. The acknowledgement of the existence of such embedded crises and the belief that these deserve and need to be analysed are central to this study.

Pollution, crisis, tragedy

The principal argument of this book is that it is such embedded crises which the concept of pollution in particular – but also its counterparts, purity and (to some extent) purification – negotiate. This specification

See Goldhill (1990) more specifically on tragedy as historically specific 'civic discourse' with the response by Griffin (1998) on the timeless quality of tragic conflict; Goldhill responds to Griffin in Goldhill (2000). Goldhill's claim that Attic tragedy was specifically democratic has also been contested: see Rhodes (2003); Carter (2004) and now Burian (2011). For theoretical reflections on the relation of tragedy to its historical contexts, see Goff (1995b).

³¹ But we should also situate characterisation and moral dilemmas in the historical context of classical Athens, as Sourvinou-Inwood has demanded: see ead. (1989), (2005). Especially in her 1989 article on *Antigone*, though, she privileges historical context to the point of insensitivity to the subversive potential of drama. A sensitive account of 'character' in tragedy and its cultural conditions is Goldhill's essay in Pelling (1990) 100–27.

³² E.g. Goldhill (1986) 205–21. ³³ Zeitlin (1996c), Göttsche (2000a).

brings us to the heart of the present study. It requires that we take a closer look at pollution and its relation to crises. The two are closely connected.

It seems that wherever there is pollution, there is some sort of crisis, in the most general sense of ‘difficult situation’, so that pollution can be understood as a marker of such ‘crises’ (‘difficult situations’). The scenarios most commonly associated with pollution, and which require purification, include birth, death and murder. Theophrastus’ ‘Superstitious Man’ (*Characters* 16) will not go anywhere near a dead body or a woman in childbed (οὐτ’ ἐπὶ νεκρὸν οὐτ’ ἐπὶ λεχῶ ἐλθεῖν ἐθέλησαι, 16.9) for fear of pollution (μιαίνεσθαι, 16.9). Clearly, the man is eccentric, but a number of the so-called ‘sacred laws’ suggest that he is not entirely wrong-headed. The well-known ‘cathartic law’ from late fourth-century Cyrene includes detailed specifications on the extent of the spread of pollution in the case of birth (*SEG* IX 72 A §4);³⁴ and a law ‘concerning the dead’ (οἷδε νόμοι περὶ τῶν καταφθιμ[έ]νων[ν . . .]) from late fifth-century Iulis (on Keos) gives equally detailed information on pollution and its spread in the case of death.³⁵ The pollution of the murderer, finally, is a frequent theme not only in tragedy, but is the earliest concrete type of pollution we encounter in the literary and historical record. The purification of Achilles from murder-pollution in Arctinus’ *Aethiopis* from the seventh century BC has already been mentioned. In addition, it is likely that an early inscriptional reference to pollution, a lacunose sacred law from (early?) sixth-century Kleonai refers to murder-pollution.³⁶ In all these cases, pollution marks a situation fraught with tensions. A woman in childbed is in a precarious and perilous state; death disrupts everyday life, especially for those closely involved; and so does the murderer ‘with blood on his hands’. The insight that pollution is regularly connected with critical states and difficult situations is basic. It justifies thinking the two together.

The ‘crises’ most obviously connected with pollution (birth, death, murder) do not, however, *by themselves* constitute complex problems so much as isolated ‘critical’ or ‘difficult’ events. Why this study presents, and can present, the argument sketched above, that the ritual concept of pollution and its ritual counterparts serve the function of negotiating complex ‘embedded crises’, instead has to do with the specific interactions in the tragedies between literary texture and the ritual nexus analysed. Partly, that is, it is a matter of the playful literary artifice that is tragedy; partly, it is

³⁴ *SEG* IX 72 = *LSS* 115 = *RO* 97. See *RO* 97 for a text with translation and commentary; see also Parker (1983) 332–51.

³⁵ *LSCG* 97; on birth- and death-pollution, see Parker (1983) 32–73.

³⁶ *LSCG* 56, with Parker (1983) 112.

a matter of the specific nature of pollution as referent with *Sitz im Leben*, which makes it a particularly apt reference point in the negotiation of complex ‘embedded crises’.

I take the second point first. What is pollution’s nature, then? There are two ways to proceed. One would be to inquire about the essence of pollution and therefore about the common essence also of the various difficult states pollution marks. The other would be to disregard such essentialism and to inquire instead about the qualities, functions and associations of pollution.

The first direction, the ‘essentialist’ approach, has frequently been taken in the past. Anthropologists have devoted considerable attention to distilling the one intrinsic ‘meaning’ of pollution, among them structural anthropologists in particular.³⁷ The influential study of Mary Douglas, *Purity and danger*, published in 1966, is a case in point.³⁸ Her interest lies precisely in isolating a common essence of all the different phenomena which pollution marks. For her, this essence would be, with some qualification, ‘category violation’, the confusion of boundaries and (the threat of) disorder. She suggests that the idea of pollution is particularly strongly present in societies in which ‘lines of structure, cosmic or social, are clearly defined’, claiming ‘a polluting person’ is one who ‘has developed some wrong condition or simply crossed some line which should not have been crossed’³⁹ and concluding that ‘our pollution behaviour is the reaction which condemns any object or idea likely to confuse or contradict cherished classifications.’⁴⁰

Douglas’ view has had a profound impact upon the modern understanding of pollution;⁴¹ and, by extension, on a number of modern readings of pollution in Greek tragedy (such as they are). Among the latter, a good example is Thalia Papadopoulou’s 2005 study of Euripides’ *Heracles*. For Papadopoulou, Douglas’ tenet is simply established fact. When she sets out to examine the role of pollution and purification in the play, she declares: ‘Pollution is associated with the confusion of boundaries, and ritual with a process of re-establishing the collapsed boundaries.’⁴² End of story.

Although it is not my aim here to provide a detailed critique of Douglas’ theory, its impact and influence are such that a few words are in order

³⁷ For an introductory overview, see Fornaro (2007).

³⁸ On Douglas in general, see Fardon (1999), *ibid.* 75–101 on *Purity and danger*.

³⁹ Douglas (1966) 113. ⁴⁰ *Ibid.* 36.

⁴¹ See Fardon (1999) 80 and Bradley (2012a and 2012b) on the book’s wide influence.

⁴² Papadopoulou (2005b) 23. We shall encounter another such example in chapter 2, Oudemans’s and Lardinois’s study of Sophocles’ *Antigone*. Oudemans and Lardinois (1987).