

À TRAVERS LE VORTEX: AN EXPLORATION OF SWIRLS AND WHIRLS

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Many thanks to Mr. Mark Gallop, whose generous donation made this research project possible.

VORTEXES

The ancient world held many representations of vortexes. From the swirls on a conch shell horn to the mythical whirlpools of Scylla and Charybdis in the *Odyssey*, twisting and turning movements appear in a vast and diverse array in material culture, literature, and the dramatic performances derived from the latter. Other instances include dancing in circles, thoughts revolving through the mind, and a body's organs and mind twisting in torment. Themes such as madness and serpents have emerged as more often than not containing vortex terms. The *À travers le vortex* project studies these vortexes and their context, attempting to understand the significance that the cultures of the ancient world assigned them.

Indeed, their abundance and significant placement in texts indicate a meaning that we have yet to fully decipher. Multiple theories have arisen as to the implications of vortexes, such as their denoting a change of state either in certain cases or a broader sense. However, they have yet to be thoroughly explored as it requires a large amount of data, which researchers involved in the project have been working on compiling and analyzing over the past few years.

DATA WORKSHEETS

The data worksheets have been invaluable to the project and in comparing large amounts of instances of vortex terms in Classical literature. They allow researchers to see exactly which terms are more frequent and the contexts in which they were used. The worksheets also involve the exact form of the term, listing its linguist root, morphology, and dictionary form.

The fluid format, already divided by authors, allows for sorting by specific texts, vortex terms, key words, and more. This will help researchers form conclusions more easily in the future by facilitating comparisons between aforementioned categories in order to form theories about vortexes and their meaning.

τοῦντεῦθεν ἤδη τοῦ ξένου θαυμάσθ' ὀρώ·
λαβὼν γὰρ ἐλάτης οὐράνιον ἄκρον κλάδον
κατήγεν ἦγεν ἦγεν ἐς μέλαν πέδον·
κυκλοῦτο δ' ὥστε τόξον ἢ κυρτὸς τροχὸς
τόρνῳ γραφόμενος περιφορὰν ἐλικοδρόμον·
ὥς κλῶν' ὄρειον ὁ ξένος χεροῖν ἄγων
ἔκαμπτεν ἐς γῆν, ἔργματ' οὐχὶ θνητὰ δρῶν.
Πενθέα δ' ἰδρύσας ἐλατίνων ὄζων ἔπι,
ὄρθου μεθιεῖς διὰ χερῶν βλάστημ' ἄνω
ἀτρέμα, φυλάσσων μὴ ἀναχαιτίσειέ νιν,

VORTEX EXAMPLES

Vortexes occur frequently in some texts while disappearing almost completely in others. Context is often key, as some words may simply be descriptive terms used in a meaningless manner, while others hold a wealth of significance for their audience. For instance, in Euripides' *Iphigenia in Aulis*, the chorus describes the Achaean camp in Aulis, stating that the twelve ships under the command of Ajax are the most easily turned (Eur. *IA* 288-293). Though εὔστροφος, the term used, is a vortex word, it holds no particular significance in this specific context.

However, in Euripides' *Bacchae*, vortex words abound and hold tremendous meaning. Dionysus' hair is described as curls, possibly implying he is a vortex himself, and the description of Dionysus' bending of a tree for Pentheus to perch on while spying on the maenads is full of vortex terms, as is the messenger's account of queen Agave's eyes swirling in madness as she advances into Thebes with her son's decapitated head, which she describes as a twisted seedling. Vortexes seem to have an extremely important place in this text, as they do in many others, and further research will hopefully indicate why.

Root	In Text Form	Morphology	Greek Line	Context/Commentary	Key Word
καμπ-	κάμπει	Aor opt act 3 sg	μόλοι δὲ νοσιόλῃραι καὶ στρατιᾶς Ἑλλάδας θύεσσιν ἱκόντο καὶ κάμψαι πάλιν θυμέλας οἴκων πατρός, Τυδίδος.	The chorus of Trojan sentries and sentinels are singing. Returning home	
κυκλ-	κυκλοῦνται	Pres ind mp 3 pl	οἴοντο γὰρ καὶ πόνοιον ἀνάγκη κρείσσονες, κυκλοῦνται .	The chorus of captive Trojan women cry that fate led t Course of life (???)	
κυκλ-	κυκλεῖ	Pres ind mp 3 sg	ΟΡΕΣΤΗΣ φύλον γὰρ φυτὸς, τί δὲ κυκλεῖ πέριξ πόδας; ΗΛΕΚΤΡΑ	As Orestes and Pylades arrive in disguise to visit Elect Circling around someone	
κυκλ-	κυκλῶν	Part pres act ind	καὶ αὐτὴ τὸδ' εἰσπορεύσθαι θυγατέρα, ζέην. οἷμα δ' ἐπάρβητ' ἐς φόνον τ' ἀπακόμην μὴ τις δόλος με πρὸς κωπηρόντων κτήσῃ. ὅσπερ χερσὶν χεῖρ' ἔχον δ' ἄστεως	Polynceikes returns to Thebes, stating that it was his turn Keeping watch, being vi	
κυκλ-	κυκλοῦμεναι	Pres inf act	ὁ οὐκ δὲ Κρηνησίαισι Πολυνείκεϊ πύλας ἄρη προήγῃσι Πωτονιάδας δ' ἐπ' ἀπείλῃ ἐπίσημα πάλιν δρομάδας ἐκείντων φόνου, εἰ πως στρόφοισιν ἐνδοθεν κυκλοῦμεναι πύργου' ὅτ' αὐτόν, ὅσπερ μινεσθαι δοκεῖν.	A messenger relates to Jocasta the state of the war between her two younger sons, describing Polynceikes' shield in a short ekphrasis, mentioning that the flesh-eating horses of Potniae are dancing and revolving around the shield in a clever mechanism so as to appear enraged, mad.]	
κυκλ-	κυκλεῖς	Pres ind act 2 sg	ΟΡΕΣΤΗΣ στέλ', ὅς ἀπορῆβας οἰσάνων ἡμῶν λόγος πρὸς τόνδ' ἔκτειναι, γῆρας ἀποσφύγῃν τὸ σὸν. Μενέλαε, ποῖ σὸν ποδ' ἐπὶ σπονδαῖς κυκλεῖς , ἀλλὰ μινεσθαι διατρέχοντες ἰὼν ὁδοῖς, αἰετ' ἐπ' σφύρα, ζέην, πολὺν αἰ- θρ' ἀμαρτήματος ἢ πόντον, Ἰκαριόος δὲ τυφλοκρῆνος ἐγκύβλητος ἐλάσσων κυκλεῖ φόνου, εἰ δὲ ποῖ τὸν πέριξ ἑλῆες <> εἰλῶ' ὁμοῦ λαβὼν	Tyndareus has just refused to protect Orestes from the : Pacing back and forth	
κυκλ-	κυκλοῖ	Pres ind act 3 sg	ἑλῶν κυκλεῖ φόνου, εἰ δὲ ποῖ τὸν πέριξ ἑλῆες <> εἰλῶ' ὁμοῦ λαβὼν	A Phrygian slave, who is leaving the palace, runs into t Encircling	
(φ)ελ-	ἐλῆας	Part aor act masc	γοναῖκα πέτρην ὄρνι μετολλάσσων ἀεὶ.	Fragment: a bull twisting around something	Twisting



“bague” 300 – 200 BCE.
Italy. Louvre. Bj 1140

“amulette ; applique” Louvre. Br 950