

Abstract: *Alkestis* is the first tragedy by Euripides, in which the final outcome of the play is revealed from the beginning. Confronting Thanatos, Apollo announces that Alkestis will be brought back to life by Heracles, after she has accepted to die to save her husband. One could expect that this dramatic device, which gives the spectators a prior knowledge of the events that are to come, allows them to wait with confidence for a happy ending. However, it will be argued that Euripides uses this device to manipulate the intellectual and emotional responses of the audience, which is sometimes included in, sometimes excluded from, the course of the action. From the opening of the play, the wording of Apollo's prophecy, as well as its incompleteness and its enunciative frame, arouse a tension regarding Alkestis' salvation. This tension increases through the course of the play, owing to a dramatic construction that suggests the final salvation, while bringing obstacles that threatens its realization. Through this playful and brilliant communication with the spectators, the dramatist raises a crucial doubt about the meaning of Alkestis' final return to the human world.

Keywords: Prologue, Prophecy, Dramaturgy, Irony, Happy ending.