

THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE D.PHIL IN
CLASSICAL LANGUAGES AND LITERATURE:

THE POWER OF TIME: OLD AGE AND OLD
MEN IN ANCIENT GREEK DRAMA



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parentibus et familiae;
Ango, Adriano, aliisque magistris;
puellae meae Corinnae;
amicis meis (sciunt qui sint);
Maecenatibus patronisque benignis –
gratias maximas ago.

Правду сказал я, шотландцы,
От сына я ждал беды.
Не верю я в стойкость юных,
Не бреющих бороды.
А мне костер не страшен.
Пусть со мной умрет
Моя святая тайна -
Мой вересковый мед!

(Extract from Marshak, S. Ya., *Vereskovyy Myod*, Moscow, 1947; tr. of R. L. Stevenson's *Heather Ale*.)

ABSTRACT

The study of old age in the humanities has developed significantly in the last few decades, but there is still much scope for progress. This thesis, therefore, seeks to contribute to the growing academic discourse in this area by considering ageing as it is represented in ancient Greek theatre. At the same time, it seeks to take its place within Classical Studies by developing new readings of the plays. To develop a context for its analysis, this study begins with consideration of the contemporary demographics, social position, and stage portrayal of old age, and following this dedicates a chapter to each of the four surviving fifth century dramatists. In Aiskhylos' *Agamemnon*, old age emerges as a crucial element in choral self-identity, and an important component of the authority that they display. Following this, the thesis considers the chorus of Euripides' *Herakles*, in particular its use of metadramatic language, and the impact this has on plot-development and the representation of their age. The next chapter, on *Oidipous Koloneus*, shifts to consideration of the protagonist. The old age of Oidipous emerges as a powerful driver of his mental and spiritual power, and forms a striking background to the exploration of his character. The final chapter of the thesis examines how mechanisms of renewal that old men undergo in Aristophanes' comedies (*Knights*, *Akharnians*, *Peace*, *Wasps*, *Birds*) differ across the dramas, and the impact this difference has on their interpretations. Such reassessments of ancient dramatic texts through the lens of old age can provide significant insight into the complexity of old men's characterisations and of their involvement in the dramas. At the same time (from a gerontological perspective), this thesis' analysis contributes to the developing discussion of the history of ageing, and highlights the differences between the ancient and modern worlds in this respect.

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INTRODUCTORY OUTLINE

This thesis aims to define and analyse the concepts and meaning of age and ageing in ancient drama. Its basic arguments are that old age is treated as a powerful dramatic concept, and that old characters are shown to be individuated and interesting personae in the play, when assessed specifically from the point of view of their age. By selecting a number of texts and themes for consideration, this thesis will create an analysis of old age that emphasises the sympathy, variety, subtlety and perhaps even hope with which old age is treated across Greek drama. This thesis focuses on old men rather than old women firstly for reasons of time and space, but also because looking at old men permits an analysis of choruses as well as protagonists, and of the theme of renewal of old age.

It is intended that the present research be of use both for the study of Classics, and for modern gerontological studies. Firstly, the thesis seeks to develop new approaches to the plays under discussion based on focusing on the phenomenon of old age. By adopting the interpretative lens of old age, it will consider such issues as the various types of authority that old age is said to possess; from where that authority is shown to stem, and to what extent it is problematised; and, in the context of comedy, the ways in which the process of renewal occurs in different plays, and the roles it can play in different contexts. Secondly, from the point of view of modern gerontology, by discussing various dramatic portrayals of ageing in Classical Athens, this thesis contributes to the modern discussion of the history of ageing; and to the process of

exploring continuities and differences in the position of the aged and attitudes to them between modern and historical societies.

The first two chapters set the background for the work on ancient Greek drama. They define the present study's place in Classical and gerontological scholarship; discuss the demographics of old age, and how old age should be defined for the purposes of this investigation; consider evidence on contemporary Greek attitudes to old age; and review the evidence for the 'staging' of old age in tragedy and comedy.

The following literary analysis aims to examine a range of presentations of old age, including works by all of the four surviving fifth century dramatists, and both in choruses and as actors. In all instances, old age is shown to be treated as a complicated and interesting aspect of the characters. Chapter III is a consideration of the chorus of Aiskhylos' *Agamemnon*. Old age emerges as a crucial element in the chorus' self-identity, and an important component of the various kinds of authority that they display. Chapter IV discusses a Euripidean chorus, the old men in the *Herakles*. The discussion begins with a consideration of the chorus' identity. The chapter then traces their use of metadramatic language, first of its foreboding aspect, and then of its use to mourn the final misfortune of Herakles. The chapter also traces the impact this language has on plot-development and the representation of the chorus' age. Chapter V, on the *Oidipous Koloneus*, changes focus from the chorus to look at the protagonist. The old age of Oidipous emerges as a powerful driver of his mental and spiritual power, and forms a striking background to the exploration of his character.

The final chapter of the thesis turns to Aristophanic comedy, specifically the theme of renewal that old men undergo in the *Knights*, the *Akharnians*, the *Peace*, the *Wasps*, and the *Birds*. This chapter is different from the three preceding, in that it treats a range of dramas. This difference of approach, however, allows it to establish the differences that exist between the plays in the way that the mechanisms of renewal function for old men. These differences are important for understanding the character development of the old men, and the part they play in the plays' comic resolutions.

CHAPTER I. OLD AGE AND AGEING:

THE MODERN SCHOLARLY CONTEXT

Old age and ageing are inevitable destinations of any life, if it should last long enough, and should theoretically be phenomena of interest to all people. Certainly, in the ancient world, old age generated significant interest, as the tradition of philosophical treatises on it testifies;¹ and in the modern world, too, it has lost none of its significance. If anything, old age and ageing have become increasingly important parts of contemporary life in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries in most countries around the globe. Yet, they are concepts about which modern ‘global’ society is relatively uninformed. This section begins by outlining the development of modern studies of ageing and their interaction with the humanities, and discusses the importance of these studies to today’s society. It also considers the progress that the study of Classics has made in this area, and the importance of the contributions that ageing-centred research in Classics can make both to the discipline itself, and to contemporary gerontology. These considerations, taken together, will position the present research in the academic context both of Classics and of gerontology.

¹ The most famous surviving work is Cicero’s *de Senectute*. For list of others, both surviving and lost, cf. Cokayne (2003) 182 n. 13.

a. Old Age in the Modern Academy

Gerontology as a discipline is a product of the twentieth century – the term was coined in 1903 by Metchnikoff, a biologist and winner of the 1908 Nobel Prize for Medicine.² Since that time, gerontology has been developing rapidly, and moving outside of the medical sphere, spurred primarily by the demographic outlook of contemporary society.³ The first leap took place in the 1920s and the 1930s when, in the period between the two World Wars, the population of Europe began to age rapidly.⁴ The increased interest in the study of ageing reflected the growing concern at the number of older people in society, and its development as a discipline was formalised from the 1930s onwards, when an “institutional matrix” of organisations and societies with an interest in the study of ageing was established.⁵ The second major leap began in the 1970s and the 1980s, and again coincided with wide-spread concern about a fall in fertility in the West following the baby boom,⁶ and the projected growth of the elderly population that was predicted to continue in both developed and developing countries.⁷

While within the course of the twentieth century, especially up until its last few decades, gerontology developed into three main ‘traditions’ (the biological, the psychological and the social),⁸ more recently it has become increasingly interdisciplinary. Especially since the mid 1980s, the humanities have been able to

² Birren (2006) 271, Ferraro (2007) 25.

³ Cf. Birren (2006) 271.

⁴ Thane (2005a) 264. Cf. Thane (2000b) 16.

⁵ Ferraro (2007) 18. The 1920s and the 1930s also saw a great increase in interest in demography, as was noted by Prof Thane in conversation.

⁶ Thane (2005a) 264.

⁷ World Bank (1994). Cf. p. 2 for figures showing the proportion of growth of the world population over 60 by region.

⁸ Victor (1994) 22.

provide new perspectives to the more traditional work on ageing that was the domain of the social, behavioural, and biomedical sciences:⁹ in that period scholars in the humanities began more and more to approach questions of ageing, and were at the same time taken increasingly seriously by their traditionally established gerontological colleagues.¹⁰

Many humanistic subjects have taken an interest in ageing. For example, whereas in 1977, there was allegedly only “one article by a professional historian ... on any aspect of the history of ageing”,¹¹ since then a number of studies have been published either on the history of old age, or that included contributions from historians.¹² Old age has been studied by philosophers, both conceptually and in the applied fields of medical and bio-ethics.¹³ A philosophical and political approach to the sociology of old age was also taken by de Beauvoir in her book in 1970 – a book that had a significant influence, but that was perhaps prevented from reaching its potential by the fact that it pre-empted by some years the trend of humanities’ interest in gerontology.¹⁴ Similarly, literature scholars increasingly began to turn their attention to old age, and prominent contributions in this area have been made by such authors as Woodward.¹⁵ Other areas of the humanities in which contributions have been made

⁹ Achenbaum (2000) 421-2.

¹⁰ Achenbaum (2000) 421.

¹¹ Stearns (1977) 13.

¹² Minois (1989), Jefferys and Thane (1989), Johnson and Thane (1998), Thane (2000a) (with references – all from the 1980s and 1990s), Thane (2000b), Thane (2005b), Gilleard (2007), and Krötzl and Mustakallio (2011).

¹³ Cf. for example Manheimer (2000), Holstein and Waymack (2006); and McCullough (2000) on bioethics.

¹⁴ de Beauvoir (1970), translated into English either as de Beauvoir (1972a) (in the USA) or de Beauvoir (1972b) (in the UK). Achenbaum (2006) 208 calls Beauvoir’s work “[i]mmensely influential upon publication”. However, Small (2007) 2 disagrees, writing that her influence has not been universally pervasive.

¹⁵ Spicker, Woodward and Van Tassel (1978); cf. also, for instance, Woodward (1991), Woodward (2002), and Small (2007).

to the study of ageing include film studies,¹⁶ studies in old age creativity,¹⁷ and studies in late style (this line of inquiry considers the changes in the style of an artist that occur in the later years of life).¹⁸ In an attempt to position this thesis within a wider academic context, the rest of this section will outline the main findings and directions of development of modern gerontology, with a specific focus on the position of the humanities within these.

One important area in which gerontology co-operated with the humanities was in the study of the life course, which concomitantly lead to a change in the definitional understanding of old age itself. The intellectual grounding for the modern process of examination of the life-course can be traced back to Ariès' influential book on childhood and its social construction, *L'Enfant et la Vie Familiale (Centuries of Childhood* in English tr.).¹⁹ Taking the cue from Ariès' findings that "the chronological boundaries of the life course were malleable, subject to historically grounded values, interventions, and exigencies",²⁰ it has been noted that since the late 1970s "more flexible patterns of work, along with the impact of globalization on patterns of employment" have resulted in the "identification of a 'third age' between the period of work and employment (the 'second age') and that of a period of mental and physical decline (the 'fourth age')".²¹ The realities of life in modern society, in other words, have created the need to subdivide the life course into further stages, creating the distinction between 'young' old and 'old' old, and hence formalising the idea that people in these stages of life might have different needs and profiles from

¹⁶ Yahnke (2000).

¹⁷ Kastenbaum (2000).

¹⁸ Adorno (1964) 13-7, Said (2006).

¹⁹ Ariès (1960) and Ariès (1962). Worth noting, however, is the persistence with which the life-course was the subject of theorising and reflection throughout history. Cf. Cole (1992) 3-31.

²⁰ Achenbaum (2006) 209.

²¹ Phillipson (2006) 139.

one another. An example of the influence of the new understanding of the life-course and its position and subdivision in contemporary society can be seen in the work of Jacoby, who seems to treat only the ‘fourth age’ as truly old age.²² This is, given the historic context of what age has meant over the centuries, a very post-modern way of viewing old age – but perhaps a not unrealistic one, given the USA-centric approach of the author.

Another important way in which humanities interacted with gerontology is in assessing the theories of ageing. It was primarily through historical and anthropological research that one of the main theories of ageing, the ‘modernisation’ theory, was undermined. In the modernisation theory, developed initially by Cowgill and Holmes,²³ “the social and economic changes associated with modernization produce a relative decline in the status and welfare of older people”.²⁴ However, historians have argued that in past Western societies, the elderly were not always looked after by their kin, and so the marginalisation of the elderly cannot be attributed to modernisation; anthropologists have similarly demonstrated both that in certain “small-scale societies” today the old are not accorded a high status, and that in some modernised non-Western societies, “urbanization has not undercut heavy reliance on extended kin relations”.²⁵

A further, and perhaps the most important, area in which the humanities have collaborated with the wider study of gerontology is in working to change public attitudes towards ageing and the elderly, and to prevent prejudice and discrimination

²² Jacoby (2011).

²³ Cowgill and Holmes (1972).

²⁴ Kertzer (1995) 368.

²⁵ Kertzer (1995) 368, cf. Victor (1994) 72. Also Thane (1998) on misunderstanding of the modern family nexuses and the misapplication of modernisation theory to them by social sciences.

on the basis of age (the term for this kind of discrimination is ‘ageism’, coined by Butler in 1969).²⁶ That ageism is rife in today’s society has been pointed out by numerous authors, such as Jefferys and Thane, who highlighted the results of a study outlining the detrimental emotional effect that the attitude of younger people in seeing the aged as a burden on society can have on older people: “[u]nfortunately, the reported effect on some of the older generation is to make them regret having lived so long and apologize for their need to call on more services than do younger people”.²⁷ More recently, Sheets, Bradley and Hendricks argued that ageism is a “propensity woven into the very fabric of our morality that is then internalized by individual actors”.²⁸

This prejudice is also institutionalised, to some extent. Only recently, the UK government was accused by a leading British gerontologist of conducting a “negative debate” over age, and presenting the elderly as a “burden” on the rest of the society.²⁹ Thane has also argued that the prevailing paradigms in public debate on the elderly present them as a burden: “The dominant paradigm about Britain’s demographic future focuses on the rapid ageing of the population combined with shrinking numbers of younger people of working age due to falling fertility in the recent past. It assumes this trend imposes an unprecedented economic burden on health and social services, and pensions, and suggests solutions such as increasing the state pension age.”³⁰ Moreover, while the active old, being a politically engaged segment of the population

²⁶ Butler (1969).

²⁷ Jefferys and Thane (1989) 12, citing Norman (1987). Jacoby (2011) 290 has also pointed out that, while studies do show that people can become happier as they age, these studies generally do not distinguish between the ‘young’ old and the ‘old’ old: the ‘young’ old are often happier, whereas the ‘old’ old are generally more unhappy than adults. For an example of such a study, cf. *Economist* (The) (2010).

²⁸ Hendricks, Sheets and Bradley (2006) 22.

²⁹ Fletcher (2010), reporting on an interview with Prof Kirkwood of Newcastle University, and its Institute for Ageing and Health.

³⁰ Thane (2012) 9.

and a powerful (generally Conservative) voting bloc,³¹ are thereby able to protect their interests, it is the less politically active poorer, sicker, and older old people – in other words those who have the greatest need of public support – who have been exposed to recently announced cuts in the protection afforded by Local Authority Services.

However, ageism is something that can be challenged successfully, based, as it often is, on a fundamental misunderstanding of the role that the aged play in society and family, and on a misunderstanding of society's capability to support the retired population. Gerontology has been arguing that there needs to be a shift in thinking about old age towards an appreciation of what older members and families contribute to society,³² and humanists and professional gerontologists can cooperate effectively in delivering that message to a wider audience. For instance, Thane (who is an historian by profession) has co-authored the introduction to a book, edited by the medical sociologist Jefferys, the central thesis of which is that ideology rather than fact causes the younger generations to see the aged as a burden.³³ More recently, this point of view has been echoed by Victor and Mullan.³⁴ Similarly, as part of broader arguments for seeing a continuity in the experience of old age throughout the centuries, Thane has used sociological arguments that the current population structure puts no more economic pressure on the working generation than at any previous time, since, although there are more old people today, at the same time (in the Western world at least) many fewer children need to be supported by the earning segments of the population: despite the growing number of old people, the dependency ratio has

³¹ Prof Thane commented in conversation regarding the general political leanings of this segment of voters.

³² Cf. Thane (2000b) 493.

³³ Jefferys and Thane (1989).

³⁴ Victor (1994) 248, Mullan (2000).

remained consistent.³⁵ Thane argues instead that economic problems could be solved much more effectively by addressing such factors as unemployment,³⁶ rather than by viewing older people as a burden on society, and taking away society's care for them. In a recent publication, Thane has provided some data to back up these assertions: "The over 65s are estimated to make a net contribution to the UK economy, after deduction of the costs of pensions, welfare and health care costs, of £40 billion through tax payments, spending power, donations to charities (£10 million per annum) and volunteering."³⁷

Gerontologists and humanities scholars have also worked together to change attitudes to old age and the aged by fostering the recognition of the variety of capabilities and characteristics that can be found in the aged population, and by arguing that the aged are not by any means a homogenous group. Gerontologists are adamant on this issue. In fact, far from becoming more alike with age, it is possible that people become more varied as they age,³⁸ and scholars have also pointed out that the experience of ageing, and the capacities of an aged person, vary by social class, race, and sex.³⁹ Furthermore, it has been shown that the experience of old age varies significantly from nation to nation, region to region, and even from one district in the same city to another.⁴⁰ The findings of gerontologists have been contextualised within the larger scope of history by humanities scholars. Parkin, for instance, emphasised the extent to which in the ancient world a person's capabilities rather than his chronological age

³⁵ Thane (2000b) 482.

³⁶ Thane (2000b) 483.

³⁷ Thane (2012) 13.

³⁸ Hendricks (2003) 63. Cf. Victor (1994) 11.

³⁹ Bond and Coleman (1990) 285-6, citing Norman (1985); Victor (1994) 248.

⁴⁰ On the differences and similarities between different nations' perception of old age and retirement, cf. Leeson and Harper (2006). Regarding more local differences, cf. for example Hetherington (2012) (interview with Prof Kirkwood), who notes as an example of divergent experiences of old age that the average age at which people get a long-term illness differs by 11 years between poorer and richer areas of Newcastle.

were important for the way he was regarded and for the tasks that he was given; and similar analysis has been performed for the medieval world by Shahar.⁴¹ In these societies, it has been argued, the differences between aged people were recognised. By contrast to other historical societies, in the modern world old age is increasingly treated as a homogenous phenomenon, and is associated (perhaps causally) with the chronological age of retirement, which is set at the same level for huge swathes of society. As Victor wrote in 1994, “[s]ince 1931 the fraction of men over 65 classed as wholly retired has increased from less than one-half to 88%. In a comparatively short space of time, the onset of old age has come to be practically defined as retirement age.”⁴² In this context, the World Health Organisation has seen fit to contribute specifically to the effort of demystifying the ‘myths’ that the aged are inevitably dependent and useless.⁴³

The assumption of the homogeneity of the aged, however, is detrimental to the welfare of the aged not only because it carries implications of their incapacity, but conversely because it can set unrealistically high expectations of the old: the assumption of homogeneity can put excessive pressure on them to age ‘successfully’. This is a phenomenon, as Jacoby has argued, specifically associated with the baby-boomer generation, at least in the USA. To summarise her central argument: this generation has grown up with the mentality that nothing is impossible, if only one tries hard enough; consequently, it believes that if one person can achieve something (i.e. age ‘successfully’, by some external standard), everyone should be able to rival that achievement; and if some people are not able to do this, they are to blame for it.

⁴¹ Cf. the summary of Johnson (1998) 6, and Parkin (1998) and Shahar (1998).

⁴² Victor (1994) 10.

⁴³ World Health Organisation (2008).

The result of this is that extraordinary pressure is put on the aged.⁴⁴ Similarly, Coleman and Bond have argued that unreal expectations are placed on the aged because of younger people's memories of their grandparents, which set up an impossible ideal to which all old people are subsequently expected to attain.⁴⁵ These expectations could be managed if people realised that old age is a complicated and varied period of life, and that not to treat it as such is damaging to the elderly population.

As partial vindication of these efforts, there is some evidence that policy makers are now taking a more complex approach to the phenomenon of ageing, and that perhaps even popular attitudes towards ageing have begun to shift. The Cumberland Lodge think tank, for instance, has recently conducted two conferences, entitled *Changing Expectations of Life* (2010) and *Changing Expectations of Death* (2012). The first conference was dedicated to ageing more generally, while the second considered different assessments and understanding of the end of one's life. Both conferences featured prominent professional gerontologists and academics with research interests in old age, and many of the issues raised at these conferences had a much broader scope than the traditional demographic, medical and economic based approaches to gerontology. These issues included the introduction of historical approaches, approaches through religion and spirituality, and attempts to evaluate what 'dying well' or 'living well' actually means.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Jacoby (2011) *passim*, but especially pp. 66-79. Cf. also Holstein and Waymack (2006), and Cumberland Lodge (2010) 16: "We have lost ways of thinking about ageing which respects the fact that in some ways we become 'different selves' as we age. Our expectations of life certainly change as we get older, and yet it seems that we are judged against the expectations of youth even in old age."

⁴⁵ Coleman and Bond (1990) 13.

⁴⁶ Cf. Cumberland Lodge (2010) and Cumberland Lodge (2012). For influence of the humanities on this question, cf. the formulation of Small (2007) 2: "My main premise is that, when we think about old age, our thinking rests on larger, but usually tacit, assumptions about what a life is, what a person is, what a *good* life is, what social justice is, and much else besides". This approach builds on de

Old age is also developing as a pertinent issue within the institutional frameworks of higher education, and recent decades have seen British universities open a series of departments of gerontology. For instance, the Oxford Institute of Population Ageing was established in 1998, and the Newcastle Institute for Ageing and Health in 1994. Globally, as of the year 2000, there were over 1000 gerontological courses worldwide, offered in more than 500 institutions of higher education.⁴⁷ This suggests that there is a growing academic interest from younger researchers in the study of ageing, and such an interest is a prerequisite for according old age the complexity and the respectability that the topic deserves. Of course, this is not to say that gerontology is universally popular: according to Achenbaum, for instance, although the achievements of historians studying old age have been significant, the dissertations on the topic of old age remain somewhat unpopular among PhD students, who tend to find the topic “depressing and alien” – or at least less exciting than topics of race, gender, or sexuality.⁴⁸ Gerontology still has significant room for promulgation in higher education.

Old age has also begun to receive attention from the popular media that is generally more deeply engaged and positive, and suggests a greater appreciation of the complexities of old age. One influential branch of the media in which this is becoming apparent is film. In an article on ‘The Meaning of Old Age in Films and Videos’, Yahnke analyses a number of films in which old age is a central topic, most

Beauvoir: cf. de Beauvoir (1970) 569: “La vieillesse dénonce l’échec de toute notre civilisation. C’est l’homme tout entier qu’il faut refaire, toutes les relations entre les hommes qu’il faut recréer si on veut que la condition du vieillard soit acceptable”.

⁴⁷ Ferraro (2007) 26, relying on Stepp (2000).

⁴⁸ Achenbaum (2006) 221.

of which date to the 80s and the 90s.⁴⁹ More recently, modern audiences have been offered a number of films in which old characters and old age feature prominently, such as *Quartet*, *The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel*, *Amour*, *The Iron Lady*, *The Queen*, and even *Skyfall* – the latest James Bond film, in which significant place is given to the theme of intergenerational relations and change, and the value of older people and traditions.⁵⁰

Of course, this positive representation of age must be counter-balanced with numerous negative representations of age in the media. For instance, Martin, Williams, and O'Neill have recently performed an analysis of the way that old age has been presented in the *Economist* between January 1997 and April 2008. The authors argue that the presentation of age in that publication is overwhelmingly negative, and the elderly are often presented as a burden on society: “64% [of the *Economist* articles reviewed] portrayed population ageing as a burden and 12% as a benefit; 24% had a balanced view. Most articles therefore showed a predominantly ageist view of older people as a burden on society, often portraying them as frail non-contributors. Recurrent themes included pension and demographic ‘time bombs’ and future unsustainable costs of health care for older people”.⁵¹ This is to a large extent not surprising in a magazine such as the *Economist*, given its specific interest in (neo-liberal) economic and financial analysis, which as a discipline is inclined to view the aged population negatively. This attitude is nevertheless disappointing, especially given the strides that have been made in recent years in understanding the social

⁴⁹ Yahnke (2000) 322-3 for a list of titles.

⁵⁰ *Quartet* (2012), *Best Exotic Marigold Hotel (The)* (2012), *Amour* (2012), *Iron Lady (The)* (2011), *Queen (The)* (2006), *Skyfall* (2012). Additionally, one of the films that competed for the Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival in 2013 was *Nebraska* (2013), which tells the story of a road-trip undertaken by a son and his old father.

⁵¹ Martin, Williams and O'Neill (2009).

contribution of the elderly; and given the political and social importance of a publication such as the *Economist*.

Moreover, it is unlikely that the increased positivity in attitudes towards old age that is currently emerging can be attributed solely to the influence of gerontology. The reason for the change could be much more universal than the development of a new intellectual current: it could be based in demography. Since the start of the last decade, Britain, for instance, has experienced an increase in birth rates. In fact, births have gone up almost as high as the replacement rate in the population: there are now nearly enough births per year in the UK to balance out mortality figures for the same year. Partly, this is due to the increased significance of immigrant families in the UK's demographic profile, who tend to have more children. However, another important source of this demographic shift comes from women who, despite marrying later than has been historically prevalent – in their 30s – are having multiple children in later years.⁵² This shift in the demographic profile might be playing a significant role in transforming attitudes to age, by weakening the sense that society as a whole is in decline. Moreover, this trend might have a wider basis than just the UK, as, according to Thane, the increase in birth rates has also been noted in France, Sweden, and Belgium.⁵³ As was noted above, previous periods of history in which the attitude to age has been the harshest all coincided with an ageing in the demographic profile of the population; and attitudes to old age improved when that profile showed increased fertility.

⁵² Thane (2012) 12, 30. On p. 30, Thane writes that the total fertility rate climbed as high as 1.96 in 2008, “still below the replacement rate (i.e. the rate necessary for total births to compensate for total deaths) of 2.07, but much closer”. In 2009, the total fertility rate was 1.94.

⁵³ Thane (2012) 30.

However, it is clear that gerontology is having some positive impact on society's understanding of ageing, and of issues connected with it, by providing a much needed platform for discussion of these issues, and for developing new, informed approaches to them. This sentiment has been formulated powerfully by Taylor-Gooby, the chair of the British Academy's *New Paradigms in Public Policy* project, in the foreword to Thane's research paper on ageing and demography: "The series reviews current understanding of the issues, situated within academic theory-building, and discusses possible ways forward. ... Some problems benefit from being approached in new and different ways. The guiding assumption is that analysing and re-framing is what academics do best, and is the most helpful contribution they can make in the policy making process."⁵⁴

The humanities especially serve as an important corrective, aimed as they are at making people consider their own rhetorical procedures and assumptions about old age, for instance considering how they have been influenced in their thinking by such emotional factors as the fear rhetoric of the 'demographic time bomb', or by personal and familial narratives of ageing. Gerontology, therefore, is valuable for breaking 'the conspiracy of silence' about old age, and bringing discussion of it out into the open, so that it should not become "distorted by unspoken fears and unchallenged stereotypes."⁵⁵ Research in the humanities, moreover, helps the scholarly community to contextualise findings in reference to the broader historical and cultural context; and to ascertain the extent to which and the way in which the current demographic and economic situation really is unique and unprecedented. Humanities in gerontology, in other words, can help solve the problem, as it is conceived by Furedi,

⁵⁴ Thane (2012) 6.

⁵⁵ Cumberland Lodge (2010) 3.

that “[o]n the one hand people are living longer and longer but at the same time society is less and less certain about what role it ought to assign to the elderly”.⁵⁶ Research into old age in classical antiquity has a part to play in this development. Understanding that (relatively well-documented) period of ancient Western history, its society, culture, literature, and religion, is an important step towards contextualising the issues of modern society, and outlining their place in human history in general, and in the history of old age in particular. Some work has already been done in this direction, and the next section will explore this body of scholarship, the history of its development, and hence also the place of the present thesis in that scholarly context.

b. Old Age in Classical Scholarship

Old age was a phenomenon with which the ancients were fascinated,⁵⁷ and both old characters and references to old age pervade the literary corpus. However, up until about 40 years ago, old age had rarely been the focus of specific study in Classics. The most notable contribution from the first half of the twentieth century was made by Richardson in her book on old age in ancient Greece.⁵⁸ At the time, it met with a mixed reception.⁵⁹ Her work has many merits, and is perhaps the fullest existing general treatment of old age in the Greek world to date. However, it also has numerous shortfalls, specifically in its methodology. One important and frequent criticism is that Richardson used sources from different time periods with little

⁵⁶ In the Foreword to Mullan (2000) xiv.

⁵⁷ Falkner (1995) xii: “the treatment of old age, *gêras*, is so extensive in Greek poetry as to suggest a cultural obsession”.

⁵⁸ Richardson (1933).

⁵⁹ Dobson (1934) gives a positive review; however, cf. the criticisms of Schmid (1934).

distinction between them, and did not provide sufficient analysis of their context.⁶⁰ As Parkin wrote in 1998: “[h]er uncritical and subjective approach enabled her to convey the impression that the elderly in Ancient Greece enjoyed something of a golden age”.⁶¹

However, in the second half of the twentieth century, humanities scholars’ growing interest in the concept of ageing also spread into Classics. The series of articles published by Simon Byl over the last 40 years show one of the earliest and longest-standing engagements between a classical scholar and the topic.⁶² However, Byl’s work was often positivistic, consisting of lists of passages without significant analysis, and offering relatively brief and generalised treatments of large topics. By contrast, in recent decades scholarly discussions of old age have undergone a qualitative change. They have become more focused, and as a result also more methodologically developed. One example of this is the conference proceedings, edited by Bakhouche, from the CERCAM colloquium on old age.⁶³ Each paper treats a specific topic connected to old age, and is thus able to provide a more detailed methodology and analysis of that topic, such as, for instance, the relationship between old age and medicine, the place of old soldiers in the army, and a consideration of the demographics of old age.⁶⁴ The same can be said of some stand-alone articles that focus on specific aspects of the old age and its presentation, such as for instance the ‘stylistics’ of the speech of older men, explored for Greek literature by Silk, and for

⁶⁰ Parkin (2003) 5.

⁶¹ Parkin (1998) 39 n. 2.

⁶² Some examples of his works are: Byl (1975), Byl (1976), Byl (1977), Byl (1981), Byl (1996), Byl (2003). This is not an exhaustive list.

⁶³ Bakhouche (2003).

⁶⁴ Magdelaine (2003), Couvenhes (2003), Corvisier (2003).

the works of Terence by Maltby.⁶⁵ Additionally, longer and more methodologically self-aware cultural historic treatments of old age have also appeared: for the Greek world, the work of Garland is important; and Parkin's and Cokayne's full-scale studies treat this topic from the Roman perspective.⁶⁶ Garland presents a more theoretically complex and thematically better organised collection of evidence than Richardson, and Parkin and Cokayne successfully focus on the social history of old age in Roman society. In addition, Parkin has also written a book on the demography of the ancient world, which is central to the study of that aspect of ancient old age.⁶⁷

A similar development occurred in the scholarship on Greek tragedy. It has gone from cursory treatments of old age in general studies, to making old age the subject of articles,⁶⁸ to including studies on tragic ageing in anthologies, to making it a prominent feature of monographs. The first such anthology was edited by Falkner and de Luce in 1989,⁶⁹ and included articles on the *Herakleidai* and the *Oidipous Koloneus*.⁷⁰ Following its publication, interest in old age in tragedy continued to develop with a monograph on *The Poetics of Old Age in Greek Epic, Lyric, and Tragedy*, published in 1995.⁷¹ Two chapters of this work are dedicated to tragedy: one looking at the Euripidean *Herakleidai* and *Phoenissai*, and the other focussing on Sophokles' *Oidipous Koloneus*. In the same year, an Italian anthology on old age in literature, edited by Mattioli, was also published, with chapters both on Greek tragedy

⁶⁵ Silk (1995), Maltby (1979).

⁶⁶ Garland (1990) 242-87, Parkin (2003), Cokayne (2003). For antiquity generally, cf. Finley (1981).

⁶⁷ Parkin (1992). On ancient demography cf. also Bagnall and Frier (1994), Woods (2007), and the collection of Holleran and Pudsey (2011a).

⁶⁸ Cf. Knox (1964) 145 for cursory treatment of old age in a broader study of Greek tragedy; and Byl (1975) as an example of early and briefer research that took old age as the angle of approach.

⁶⁹ Falkner and de Luce (1989). Bertman (1976) could be in the running for that title, though in that book the interest in old age is not as obvious as in Falkner and de Luce's volume, his focus being on the generation gap rather than old age per se.

⁷⁰ Falkner (1989a) on the *Herakleidai*; Van Nortwick (1989) on the *Oidipous Koloneus*.

⁷¹ Falkner (1995).

and comedy.⁷² Subsequently, in 2004, Wilson published a book on old age and ‘tragic overliving’, three out of eight chapters of which dealt with Greek tragedy, though the book’s scope relates to literature more broadly: as well as Greek drama, the book discusses Seneca, Shakespeare, and Milton, and its focus is as much on English as Classical literature.⁷³ The most recent detailed study of old age in Greek drama, by Dhuga, appeared in 2011.⁷⁴ In similar vein to Falkner’s and Wilson’s research, this book discusses its select group of plays, dedicating separate chapters and sections to each one. It has a specific approach, focusing primarily on the political authority and marginalisation of old men. Dhuga argues, against the current orthodoxy, that the marginalisation of the chorus of old men in Greek tragedy has less to do with their age, but is based, rather, on the political outlook of their community:⁷⁵ an important statement, given that the old in modern society are often treated as a homogenous and marginalised group.

Less work has been done on old age in comedy, though as a rule this work has been influential. The anthology by Falkner and de Luce contained an article by Hubbard on old men in Aristophanes’ earlier plays.⁷⁶ Similarly, Handley has written on the generation gap in Aristophanes, and a significant part of that article deals with the concept of old age in that author’s comedies.⁷⁷ Henderson has also written an important and methodologically advanced work on old women in comedy.⁷⁸ Finally, MacCary dedicated one article from his series on stock characterisation in Menander

⁷² Mattioli (1995), with Paganelli (1995) on tragedy and Tammaro (1995) on comedy.

⁷³ Wilson (2004).

⁷⁴ Dhuga (2011).

⁷⁵ Dhuga (2011) 2.

⁷⁶ Hubbard (1989).

⁷⁷ Handley (1993).

⁷⁸ Henderson (1987).

to old men.⁷⁹ Although Chapter VI will give a more detailed outline of scholarship on old age (and renewal of old age) in comedy, it is worth pointing out at this stage that no full-scale books on comic old age have so far been published. This can be explained, perhaps, by the fact that studies of ancient comedy, especially Aristophanes, tend to focus more on the political, ritualistic, and the more broadly sociological contexts of the plays than comparable studies of tragedy. In these studies, old age in and of itself is rarely the point of focus; and these studies are therefore less likely to be influenced by the modern interest in old age.

The development among Classical scholars of interest in old age has had a number of important outcomes. The first is that the increased prominence of old age in Classical scholarship has begun to influence positively the quality of research into ancient views of old age by non-Classicists, which is often performed as part of a larger project. As a result, modern scholars are less likely to make the same mistakes as (to pick an important example) de Beauvoir, who in her presentation of the history of old age was apt to use historical evidence in a highly selective fashion, a tendency that has since been noted and criticised.⁸⁰ Moreover, studies of old age in antiquity by experts in that field have begun to make their way into general gerontological anthologies.⁸¹ This makes for a generally improved standard of scholarship on old age. However, there is still a lot of work to be done on this, as synoptic treatments of old age in antiquity in the context of larger studies conducted by non-Classicists can

⁷⁹ MacCary (1971).

⁸⁰ Cf. Achenbaum (2006) 208. Another example of the tendency to use historical evidence uncritically can be found in Minois (1989), who is often inaccurate in his assessment of the position of old age in antiquity (as well as other periods), and tends towards over-generalisation. Cf. the reviews by Stearns (1991) and Wiedemann (1991).

⁸¹ Cf. e.g. Parkin (1998), Parkin (2005).

still be relatively weak – probably because there does not yet exist a detailed enough or accessible enough body of secondary literature to which they can refer.

The second positive outcome of the increased interest of Classical researchers in old age is the opportunity this provides for modern researchers to make important cultural comparisons. As Fry has written, “[n]ot only is it increasingly difficult to study alien worlds, but those worlds have become increasingly familiar and homogenized with globalization. Age is doubly familiar, especially when we study it at home, simply because everyone has experience with it either in self or others.”⁸² Studying history, and perhaps especially ancient history, therefore, is likely to play an ever increasing role in forming modern understanding of what is unique about the contemporary period. For instance, such analysis can emphasise the historical uniqueness of society-wide retirement based on chronological age. While in the past there have been particular roles that have might have had upper age limits – military roles in particular – there was no homogenised age across the board, upon reaching which a man was no longer deemed capable of meaningful employment. This perspective is apt to highlight the need, stated by some scholars and policy makers, for retirement to become more flexible.

The last significant aspect of the growth of gerontological scholarship in Classics is the impact it will have on the development of Classics itself, as many of the techniques developed and discoveries gleaned in connection with gerontology can be applied more broadly. For instance, the methodologically self-aware treatment of the style of speech of old men performed by Silk (cf. n. 65) is a highly significant

⁸² Fry (2006) 159.

contribution to the larger scholarly discussion of individualisation of style within literature for portrayal of specific characters.⁸³ Similarly, Parkin's research on ancient demography, originally motivated by trying to answer the question "What proportion of the population of the Roman world did the elderly represent?",⁸⁴ has contributed to ancient history more generally, as that discipline has increasingly recognised the significance of methodologically up-to-date demographic approaches for understanding the full dynamics of ancient political and societal processes.⁸⁵ Classics as a discipline has benefitted significantly and continually from the application of modern theoretical stances and research interests to ancient evidence. It is not unlikely that modern understanding of antiquity could similarly benefit from research inspired by interest in old age.

⁸³ For an example not connected with old age, cf. Arnott (1995).

⁸⁴ Parkin (1992) xi.

⁸⁵ Cf. the recent work of Holleran and Pudsey (2011b) 2 on the significance of demography for ancient history. For an early work that takes a demographic approach to the study of Athenian politics, cf. Hansen (1985).

CHAPTER II. THE CONTEMPORARY CONTEXT OF OLD

AGE: DEMOGRAPHY, SOCIOLOGY, STAGING

i) Demographics

Before embarking on an analysis of the texts of the plays, however, it is first necessary to consider the context within which they were written and performed. A significant part in the creation of that context is played by the demographic positioning of old age. As has emerged from the discussion in the previous section, demography is liable to have a powerful effect upon public consciousness. Examples have been noted in the previous section for when a falling birth rate led to a panic regarding the ageing of the population in the twentieth century, bringing with it a change in the attitude towards old age. It is not an unreasonable hypothesis to say that demographics could have had a powerful effect on the way that old age was perceived in the ancient world as well. For example, the demographic prominence of old age could function, on a basic level, as a major determinant of whether old age was seen as a relatively alien phenomenon to most people, or whether old age was something to which the audience could easily relate.

Demographic analysis is, therefore, a natural starting point when trying to ascertain what part old men played in society, and so an important investigation to undertake for this study. For the purposes of this section, three basic questions are explored under the rubric of demographic analysis: how old age was defined; what proportion

of the population was old; and how noticeable and prominent the elderly were as a segment of society. The answers to these questions will begin to determine the social background to the creation, performance, and perception of old men in the dramas of Classical Athens.

a. The boundary of old age

Part of the difficulty in answering the question of what age was considered old in Classical Athens lies with the fact that the answer to it is likely to be at least to some extent subjective: even in the modern context, about which there is infinitely more information, there is no consensus on what age should be considered as old. Although various organisations have adopted working definitions for old age,⁸⁶ there is no universally understood chronological point at which old age is said to begin, even within contemporary European understanding.⁸⁷ While the age of retirement is an important boundary in the life-course, and is a prominent candidate for the starting boundary of old age, the now-common distinction between ‘young’ old age and ‘old’ old age makes the search for a modern definition of old age significantly more complicated. This is all the more so, since there is no set chronological boundary at which ‘young’ old age turns into ‘old’ old age: “[a] characteristic feature of this new period of life is the ambiguity and flexibility of its boundaries, at both the lower and

⁸⁶ Cf. e.g. World Health Organisation (2013).

⁸⁷ According to the Department of Work and Pensions (Department for Work and Pensions (2009) 39), the range of ages commonly labelled in Britain as the start of old age is highly variable, with 60-4, 65-9 and 70-4 being the most, and close to equally, popular. A similar breadth can be observed in surveys conducted in Russia. According to a national survey carried out in 2004-5, similar proportions of people thought that old age commenced in the 50-4, 55-9, and 60-4: cf. Presnyakova (2005). The lower ranges reported in Russia reflect its lower life expectancy in comparison to Britain.

upper ends”.⁸⁸ Moreover, each individual ages in a unique way, and it is often the level of activity that a person is capable of that defines whether a person is seen (or sees himself) as elderly or not.⁸⁹ Stating that old age begins at a particular chronological point is (at best) an oversimplification of a complex phenomenon of modern life.

There is some evidence that modern experience in this area is similar to the way that the demarcation of old age was understood in ancient societies. For instance, Parkin thinks that “classical authors typically used the terms for different age-classes ... in general literary and historical contexts without implying a precise age in years or wishing the reader to associate such terms with anything more than a general sense of a stage of life”.⁹⁰ Finley too accepts the premise that, while there is a “vague biological boundary-line” for old age, the concept remains only a statistical one.⁹¹ Moreover, in ancient Greece people aged, as they do today, at different speeds. Notable is Aiskhines’ description of Misgolas (Aiskh. i. 49), a man allegedly of the same age as Aiskhines, but who looks almost a generation younger. In fact, the demarcation of old age might have been even more vague in ancient and historic societies than in modern society, given that people might not have known their exact numerical age;⁹² and in addition, in the classical world there was no overarching and, to some extent, normalising concept of the retirement age.⁹³

⁸⁸ Phillipson (2006) 139, referring to Moen (2003).

⁸⁹ Cf. Mullan (2000) 19: “You can always find 65 year olds, and even 75 year olds who deny they are ‘old’. And by the active lives they lead that is a fair statement”.

⁹⁰ Parkin (2003) 20. Note also Magdelaine (2003) 66: “le passage d’un âge à l’autre se fait graduellement, sans rupture nette.”

⁹¹ Finley (1981) 156.

⁹² That Athenian laws could refer to precise chronological ages (more on this later) suggests that most people knew their ages closely enough, as has been argued by Thane (2000b) 3-4. Gray and Wilcock (1981), referred to in Victor (1994) 8, disagree, as does Cole (1992) 5: “[s]ince numerical age had virtually no social significance, few people knew exactly how old they were”. However, whether people did or did not know their exact ages or birthdays is less important for the sake of this analysis

However, without selecting a specific chronological age as a boundary, further demographic investigation is impossible, as this investigation is based on a statistical analysis of possible population structures for antiquity. Statistical investigation must operate, at least on a formal level, with precise age-boundaries. Therefore, a ‘rule of thumb’ chronological definition of old age must be chosen for this investigation to proceed. While there is some guidance regarding what this boundary *could* be, the actual numerical value seems to vary depending on circumstances or point of reference.⁹⁴ For instance, 59/60 was the age when men became eligible to take on certain functions (e.g. become *diatetai* in Athens, a position that suggests the use of old men’s ‘wisdom’ and ‘authority’ in settling disputes), and were no longer obliged to fight for the city. 60 is, therefore, one possible candidate for such a value, and is in fact frequently chosen by scholars to delineate old age.⁹⁵ However, 50 is another possibility: Aiskhines records a formula by which men over 50 were invited to speak in the Assembly first, which he explains by saying that older men were considered to be wise.⁹⁶ This formulation equates older men with men over 50. Likewise, at 50 men were excused from military service on active campaign.⁹⁷ At both ages 50 and 60, therefore, military expectations were scaled down, and expectations based on some version of the traditional concept of ‘old age wisdom’ were increased, suggesting that

than the prevalence of the opinion in Antiquity, codified in laws and social norms, that old age started at a particular point in one’s life. As will emerge presently, in comparison with modern Western societies, this point was located earlier in the life-course (an earlier onset of old age is also an unfortunate reality for many people in poorer areas of the world today, cf. World Health Organisation (2013)).

⁹³ Cf. pp. 11-2.

⁹⁴ Cf. Corvisier (2003) 19-20.

⁹⁵ E.g. Garland (1990) 243. Cf. also Men. *Mis.* 620-1: γέρων οὗτός γε πολιὸς φαίνε[ται, / ἐτῶν τις ἐξήκονθ’. As a historic parallel, it is notable that in the Middle Ages legislative texts almost always described old age as setting in between 60 and 70. Cf. Johnson (1998) 3-4, summarising Shahar (1998).

⁹⁶ Aiskh. i. 23-4, iii. 4.

⁹⁷ Cf. Corvisier (2003) 19.

these stages in a man's life might have been perceived as heralding the onset and the entrenchment of old age.⁹⁸

In this situation, to choose a single value for the start of old age would be necessarily arbitrary. A better approach would be to select a range of values. This would correlate more closely with the idea that old age was understood to be a 'stage of life' that comes to each individual person at a different time. The range 50-60 years would be appropriate, since it is based on ancient perceptions of when a man should become excluded from military service, and at the same time given priority in matters of judgement and policy, traditionally appropriate to old men due to their ascribed wisdom.⁹⁹ The adoption of such a range would give the working definition of old age flexibility by moving away from defining old age as starting at a misleadingly precise moment within the chronological continuum of the life course.

b. The proportion of the aged in the population of ancient Athens

The second question follows naturally on the first: how large a part of the population was made up of the elderly, that is, of people over 50 and over 60? Clearly, the structure of an ancient, pre-industrial and pre-healthcare population is likely to be different from the modern, both in its higher mortality and higher fertility rates (though it will not necessarily have a lower maximum life span than the modern

⁹⁸ Corvisier (2003) 19: "On commence donc à être vieux à 50 ans. À 60, on atteint le seuil maximal de la vieillesse."

⁹⁹ Note, for instance, the elderly Trojan councillors in *Il.* iii. 146-52, or the image of the elderly judges on the shield of Akhilleus (*Il.* xviii. 497-508). The *gerousia* is also mentioned in *Il.* iv. 259, iv. 344, ix. 70, and xxii. 119.

populations of the developed world).¹⁰⁰ To ascertain the shape of this population structure, various methodologies have been developed, and the main ones are discussed below.

The oldest and the most straightforward method focuses on analysis of funerary inscriptions. Since funerary inscriptions often mention the age at which the person being commemorated died, scholars have compiled lists of tombstones that mention these ages in an attempt to recreate mortality patterns of antiquity.¹⁰¹ Unfortunately, studies based on inscriptions do not provide convincing population structures. Since inscriptions and commemorated graves were not constructed randomly, it is impossible to control the randomness of the sample that such a collection generates. It is likely that only the wealthier strata of the population could afford memorials, and this tendency would make inscriptions unrepresentative of the population as a whole. It is also important that inscription-based evidence seems to under-represent infant deaths, judging by a comparison with mortality figures from modern developing countries.¹⁰² At the same time, inscriptions are liable to inflate the ages of the elder deceased, as Parkin, for instance, has argued.¹⁰³ Moreover, most tombstones come from urban areas, and so their evidence does not represent the entirety of ancient populations.¹⁰⁴ As a result, epigraphic evidence shows a population structure for antiquity that is inconsistent with population structures in modern pre-industrial populations (as recorded in various model life tables, which will be discussed below)

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Parkin (1992) 71, 106.

¹⁰¹ For an early, and methodologically crude example, cf. Richardson (1933) 277-360. For a more methodologically developed study, cf. Burn (1953).

¹⁰² Parkin (1992) 6. A modern historical example of the systematic implausibility of the mortality patterns that emerge from inscriptions is recorded by Henry (1959) in an analysis of a graveyard in France from 1833-4. Henry found that only 10% of tombstones recorded deaths of children under 15, whereas in the population as a whole infant and childhood mortality made up 40% of all deaths.

¹⁰³ Parkin (1992) 6-7.

¹⁰⁴ Parkin (1992) 12.

that most scholars take to be suitable comparative cases for ancient populations. The argument is not that ancient populations should have exactly the same structure as modern pre-industrial populations, but rather, as Hopkins wrote, that “[i]t is inconceivable that the *pattern* of Roman mortality should be so unlike that of all other known populations”.¹⁰⁵

Another ancient source of information about mortality figures is the skeletal evidence, collected from ancient cemeteries. Given a large enough random sample, one should be able to reconstruct a population pattern by approximating the age at death suggested by the skeletal remains. At least in theory, skeletal evidence should be more accurate than epigraphic evidence, because the age of the skeletons can be estimated independently by modern researchers, unlike the epigraphic evidence, where there is no way to check the accuracy of age-statements. In practice, however, skeletal evidence is a difficult information source. Firstly, determining the sex and age of often incomplete and damaged skeletons is highly subjective and inexact.¹⁰⁶ In addition, Parkin has argued that skeletal data is open to distortions similar to the ones in the epigraphic data, since it is impossible to ascertain on what principle certain people were given burial, and others were not: local burial customs would undoubtedly have played an important role in this selection.¹⁰⁷ For instance, just as with epigraphic data, skeletal remains under-represent infant mortality, and children “appear ... to have been comparatively rarely given proper burial, or at least burial in

¹⁰⁵ Hopkins (1966) 255. Cf. the comparative graphs in Hopkins (1966), in particular figs. 2, 3 and 4. Also Ery (1969).

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Parkin (1992) 43-9, 58. Also Sallares (1991) 111: “[i]t is a very common feature of skeletal series that they seem to contain hardly any old people. This is a consequence of the methodological problems of relating biological age to chronological age, as humans cease growth in their late teens today (perhaps in the mid twenties in less well nourished historical populations), after which time it becomes harder to differentiate them”.

¹⁰⁷ Parkin (1992) 42-3.

adult cemetery sites”.¹⁰⁸ Finally, the survival of skeletal evidence is likely to privilege adults over both the children and the elderly, as their skeletons are more durable; and the wealthier segment of the population over the poorer, because the wealthy would have been given better burial.¹⁰⁹ Thus, in any sample of skeletal evidence there will most likely persist a number of selection biases that will severely influence the outcome of the investigation.¹¹⁰

The third, and most modern, method of building an assessment of ancient population structures is the use of model life tables. These life tables are statistical models designed to represent possible populations. These models are based on empirical evidence from historical periods for which reliable data exist, mathematically analysed to give population structures that vary according to such factors as mortality schedules, birth rates, and different age patterns within different populations. These model life tables have been used as approximations for the likely population structures of ancient and historical populations, for which comparable empirical evidence does not survive.

The first model life tables that were used to reconstruct ancient populations were the UN tables published in 1955-6. These tables were first applied to ancient demography by Hopkins.¹¹¹ However, they were relatively rudimentary, and of limited usefulness, partly because they were later found to be based on highly problematic data, and

¹⁰⁸ Parkin (1992) 43.

¹⁰⁹ Parkin (1992) 50.

¹¹⁰ Where studies of specifically ancient Greek mortality through paleodemography are concerned, further case-specific problems arise. For instance, in one such study (Angel (1969)), the sample collected for ancient Greece was extremely small and lacked temporal and geographical consistency (only 82 skeletons, from the period 650-350 B.C., taken from Athens and Corinth for adults, and Olynthos for infants and juveniles).

¹¹¹ Cf. e.g. Hopkins (1966).

partly because these tables only allowed for variation in mortality levels, and did not make allowances for differentiation of age patterns in the populations. They were thus highly inflexible in application.¹¹²

Following the development of the UN life tables, Coale and Demeny developed at Princeton a different and more advanced set of tables that took into account not just the mortality and fertility levels of the population, but also created four distinct variations in age patterns of the populations that were based on regional differences in population structures.¹¹³ These four variations are entitled North, South, East and West. The first three are regionally based, showing varying levels of infant, adult, and old age mortalities: roughly speaking, North is Scandinavian, East is Central European, and South is Mediterranean. Model West is the average pattern of mortality, based on globally accrued data, and recommended when allocation to one of the three specific models is uncertain.¹¹⁴ The models for all four regions are differentiated according to their 'level', and their 'r' value. Level 1 is defined as life expectancy at birth of 20 years (for females; the corresponding value is slightly lower for males), and each level above that represents an incremental increase of life expectancy at birth by 2.5 years. 'r' is the intrinsic growth rate of the population, with 5.00 representing 0.5% per year, 10.00 being 1.0% per year, and so on.

However, although Coale-Demeny model tables are more useful than the UN tables, and are the usual model life tables that demographers use even today, they do have certain problems. Firstly, it is a potential difficulty that these tables are based on data from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries "where average life expectancy at birth

¹¹² Parkin (1992) 79.

¹¹³ First edition: Coale and Demeny (1966); second edition: Coale, Demeny and Vaughan (1983).

¹¹⁴ Parkin (1992) 80.

never fell below 35 years”.¹¹⁵ This means that the iterations of the Coale and Demeny models that are used to approximate to ancient populations, and which have a life expectancy in the region of 25 years, were developed through regression from populations with lower mortalities. Another reservation regarding the use of model life tables is put forward by Sallares: the process of deciding which ‘settings’ to use depends too much on *a priori* assumptions, the life expectancy at birth and the population growth rate, that cannot be reliably verified.¹¹⁶ The resulting difference in population predictions can be vast: while at level 5, $r = 0.00$, the chance of surviving to 60 is 18.26%, at level 3, $r = 10.00$, the chance of surviving to 60 is 7.89%. Most important, however, is the fact that the model life tables assume a closed population, and one insulated from short-term demographic shocks.

The first two criticisms are not overly problematic, as long as the models are used appropriately. So Parkin: “it needs to be understood, [that] the tables illustrate probabilities for hypothetical stable populations, probabilities that suggest approximate dimensions rather than strict limits”.¹¹⁷ If employed with this proviso, the fact that these models are produced by regression (for higher mortality levels) becomes less important, and research has shown that the regression-based models can correspond well to real populations.¹¹⁸ Similarly, when choosing the ‘settings’ for the model, one might rely to a certain extent on such data sets as the Egyptian census figures (to be discussed in due course), which might suggest the range of models that would provide a satisfactory outcome. While Sallares’ criticism remains valid to some

¹¹⁵ Parkin (1992) 81.

¹¹⁶ Sallares (1991) 108.

¹¹⁷ Parkin (1992) 83.

¹¹⁸ Parkin (1992) 81-2.

extent, the process of selection of the model life-table does not have to be as random as he envisages.

However, the last reservation, that models can only approximate intrinsic and long-term population trends, is a real limitation. Models do not give a realistic ‘snap-shot’ picture of a population as it might have existed at a given historic moment, since at any given time a ‘real’ population would have been influenced not only by its long-term trends, but also by short term shocks and migration.¹¹⁹ The modelled populations, however, vary only according to internally occurring, consistent and predictable birth and mortality schedules, since the models that describe them can only function on the assumption that these populations are closed and insulated from external factors: they discount the influence of epidemics, wars, famines and migration (to name only some of them). This is clearly a restriction on the potential accuracy of the models in showing what the ‘real’ historical populations might have looked like at a particular time.

One solution to this problem would be to use ancient evidence to produce a snapshot picture of an ancient population at a given moment. Only one piece of evidence of this kind survives for Athens. This is the inscription from 325/4 BC that lists the names of arbitrators appointed in Athens for a particular year, *IG II² 1926*. Arbitrators were appointed from men from the ephebic registers who reached their sixtieth year. Arbitration was a compulsory duty, with exemption being granted only to those men who were in office, or who were abroad.¹²⁰ This inscription lists 103 names and seems

¹¹⁹ It is worth noting that none of the methods discussed above can recover ‘real’ population structures as these existed at any given moment. The reason for this is that data gathered by the epigraphic and paleodemographic methods comes from disparate places and spans significant time periods.

¹²⁰ Cf. Aristotle *Ath. Pol.* 53. 4-5.

to be complete, and Jones has argued that it shows the extent of adult mortality in Athens: “of 500 young men of 20 not many more than 100 survived to be 60”.¹²¹ These figures could be used to correct the models, or even replace them altogether. At the very least, if this approach is accepted, it will disprove the validity of many of the models used to estimate ancient populations: for instance, out of the three models that Akrigg compares (Hansen’s, Woods’, and his own ‘spliced’ model – these will be discussed individually in due course), only the latter comes close, with the survival ratio of 4.6:1, to the “5:1 ephebe:arbitrator ratio accepted by Jones as the basis of the inscriptions from Euonymon”.¹²²

The evidence from the inscription, however, does not stand up to closer inspection, as it provides results that are riddled with uncertainties, and are in fact far less usable than the ones that are generated through model life tables. Firstly, to be usable this inscription would need to be accompanied by reliable data on the number of ephebes in 365/4 BC. These numbers are not available, and the best manageable approximation must be based on three reconstructed lists of ephebic recruits from the 330s onwards. This undermines much of the plausibility of the inscription as a real snapshot of Athenian demographic patterns: it is impossible to verify whether in the 360s BC the Athenian ephebic population partook of the same short-term demographic dynamics than in the 330s and 320s; and yet it is precisely these short-term dynamics that this method is meant to investigate.

Furthermore, even if it is assumed that the number of men in the ‘ephebic’ age group remained constant throughout the middle two quarters of the fourth century, it

¹²¹ Jones (1957) 83.

¹²² Akrigg (2011) 56. 5:1, because of the 500 ephebes only 100 reached the age of arbitratorship.

remains questionable what precisely that number might have been, since reconstructions of it are based on scant and fragmentary evidence. Gomme has discussed the inscriptions from which scholars have sought to estimate the numbers of ephebes: (1) *IG II² 1156*; (2) *Ephemeris Archaïologike*, 1918, pp. 73ff.; and (3) *IG II² 478*.¹²³ The first inscription, detailing ephebes from the Kekropis tribe in 334/3 BC, is incomplete, and gives 30 names in total. However, it leaves out recruits from two large and three very small demes. Gomme estimates the total numbers of ephebes from this tribe at 43-5. The second inscription, from Leontis in 327/6 BC, gives 63 names, though it has been suggested that these figures represent two years of ephebic recruits, not one (the suggestion is opposed by Gomme). The final inscription, also incomplete, gives figures for seven tribes from 305/4 BC, but only the data from the Erekhtheis tribe is sufficiently complete.¹²⁴ Gomme reconstructs the Erekhtheis register to contain around 33 names.

Taken together, these inscriptions suggest that a degree of scepticism should be employed when reconstructing ephebe numbers in the fourth century. Not only is it inherently unlikely that ephebe numbers remained stable year to year, but the total numbers, as they can be reconstructed from the available evidence, fluctuate within a considerable range, between about 400 (33 multiplied by twelve rather than ten tribes, as there were at that time in Athens)¹²⁵ and potentially as many as 600. Though Gomme suggests reasons for the fluctuating numbers of ephebes, neither he nor anyone else are able to provide a reliable methodology to attain a standardised number of ephebes from these inscriptions, aside from simply taking a number that

¹²³ Gomme (1933) 67-70

¹²⁴ Gomme (1933) 67.

¹²⁵ Cf. Gomme (1933) 9, Jones (1957) 150 n. 28.

seems to be in the right range.¹²⁶ This, however, is an unreliable process, and requires a lot of faith to be put in what is extremely sporadic and uncontrollable data.

These data pose two further problems. Firstly, the use of these inscriptions in calculations of ancient Athenian mortality patterns is liable to introduce a social bias into the results, since there is a possibility that only young men of hoplite class were enrolled as ephebes, and hence these inscriptions might have described only the wealthier class of Athenian society.¹²⁷ If this was the case, expansion of the results from these inscriptions to encompass the entire Athenian population could only be done on the assumption that the rest of the population had the same long-term and short-term demographic profiles as the hoplite population. There is no guarantee that this was so, and therefore the chances of attaining a reliable historic picture of the Athenian population from these inscriptions are again reduced.

More importantly, however, it is unclear to what extent a snap-shot picture of the Athenian population that can be achieved by using the ‘arbitrator’ inscription *IG II² 1926* is actually desirable, and to what extent it is going to be simply misleading. Another ‘arbitrator’ inscription published by Lewis in 1955 and dated to 330/29 BC provides a warning on this issue. This inscription gives “not less than fifty-four names for the first five tribes”.¹²⁸ However, Lewis himself suggested that “the number of *diaitetai* in this year lay between 100 and 150”,¹²⁹ potentially giving a much larger figure than the one preserved in the complete inscription. Thus, it is not clear how typical the number of arbitrators provided by *IG II² 1926* was. It could be that 325/4

¹²⁶ Gomme (1933) 9-10.

¹²⁷ Cf. Rhodes (1981) *ad* 53. 4 and 42. 2.

¹²⁸ Jones (1957) 150 n. 29. Cf. Lewis (1955) 27-36.

¹²⁹ Lewis (1955) 28.

was an unusually low year for arbitrator numbers. At any rate, the potential range of values is striking, and suggests sporadic and uncontrollable data.

The use of *IG II²* 1926 as evidence for population patterns and proportions of old men in ancient populations is riddled with difficulties. This inscription shows only one small, possibly unrepresentative, sample of the population, in a year that itself might have been unrepresentative. Furthermore, to make sense of it, a large number of assumptions, not all of them justifiable or straightforward, must be made. In comparison to this, model-based ancient demography provides a more methodologically sound, evidence-driven, and controllable approach to understanding the patterns of ancient populations. It should, of course, be used within appropriate bounds, and with an understanding of its limitations, the main one being that models can only estimate general trends of closed and ‘insulated’ populations. The misleadingly precise life tables that models generate show populations that most likely never existed in that specific form, since any real population would be affected by migration and external shocks. However, in the absence of reliable and systematic empirical data for the period, models are a very promising method for assessing ancient population trends.

The last important ancient source of evidence for assessing ancient population structures that should be considered is Roman Egyptian census returns. These censuses were conducted every 14 years, perhaps for the purposes of organising taxation, or controlling the Egyptian population.¹³⁰ Surviving returns date to the first three centuries AD. They give information on separate households, and often the ages

¹³⁰ Bagnall and Frier (1994) 26-30.

of the members of the households also survive. The information included in them seems generally to be of good quality (especially in comparison with the epigraphic or skeletal evidence), and can thus be used to reconstruct the population structure of Roman Egypt. This had been done originally by Hombert and Préaux, who considered some 200 returns.¹³¹ More recently, Bagnall and Frier were able to access as many as 300 returns, due to new finds made in the intervening years, and they have analysed them with a high level of methodological sophistication.¹³² Their analysis has yielded plausible results, and, although these results come from a different time and location than Classical Athens, it can be argued that they might be applicable in a general sense to the Mediterranean region as a whole: especially as concerns family formation, “the basic demographic attributes of Roman Egypt are, at the least, thoroughly at home in the Mediterranean”.¹³³ Moreover, the reconstruction of the Egyptian (male) population structure is heavily based on standardised model life tables, as will be discussed below, and is therefore unlikely to be unique to that specific region. However, as with all sources of evidence on a topic as difficult to reach as ancient demographics, certain problems exist in this collection of data as well.¹³⁴

Firstly, the most promising way to go about using this data is to put all the returns together to create a single population structure. However, this requires the assumption that the demographic situation remained the same throughout the period in question, and this is unlikely, considering the period’s length; and the data as it has survived is

¹³¹ Hombert and Préaux (1952).

¹³² Bagnall and Frier (1994); cf. the review by Parkin (1995).

¹³³ Bagnall and Frier (1994) 173. Initially this was met with scepticism by Parkin (1995), but more recently his scepticism has weakened significantly: cf. Parkin (2011) 184.

¹³⁴ The discussion of these follows, but for a general survey, cf. Parkin (1995).

too exiguous to trace changes in demographic parameters over the three centuries.¹³⁵

This is, then, a potential source of distortion embedded in the data. Secondly, the provenance of the returns is geographically restricted: “about three-quarters of the returns are from the Arsinoite and Oxyrhynchite nomes, with other nomes represented sporadically except for spectacular chance discoveries ... There are no returns at all from the great city of Alexandria; on the other hand, the single metropolis of Arsinoe contributes nearly a third of our data”.¹³⁶ This puts the representativeness of the sample in question.

There is a chance that the representativeness of the sample is compromised in another way, as about half of the returns come from cities, whereas in fact only about a third of the Egyptian population would have been urban.¹³⁷ This distinction is significant, since a number of demographic distinctions between urban and rural populations emerged in the course of the study: for instance, village families tended to be larger than metropolitan, and metropolitan women tended to marry a few years later than rural women.¹³⁸ However, Bagnall and Frier deal with this difficulty by weighting their results in favour of the rural census returns, in order to represent more accurately the population distribution of ancient Egypt. This solution to the urban bias of the evidence is strongly approved by Parkin as a significant methodological advance developed by Bagnall and Frier.¹³⁹

Furthermore, the censuses, accurate by ancient standards, nevertheless have important gaps. One such is the apparent misrepresentation in them of infant mortality. This

¹³⁵ Cf. Bagnall and Frier (1994) 41.

¹³⁶ Bagnall and Frier (1994) 40-1.

¹³⁷ Bagnall and Frier (1994) 49, 57.

¹³⁸ Bagnall and Frier (1994) 49.

¹³⁹ Parkin (1995).

problem is overcome by Bagnall and Frier by employing model life tables (more on the specifics in due course) to reconstruct the younger segments of their population structure.¹⁴⁰ Another difficulty is the possibility that older adults would misrepresent their ages.¹⁴¹ Highly significant too is the widespread failure of respondents to report members of their families when they fall into a particular demographic group. One example of this under-reporting concerns “some girls, especially those less than 5 years old” in metropolitan areas.¹⁴² It is not clear why this under-reporting should have been taken place. An even more significant distortion is created by the apparent tendency of respondents to conceal young males, or list them as being younger than they were in actual fact. The motivation for this is likely to have been the avoidance of the poll tax, levied on males aged 14 to 62. This failure “may be the single most significant source of undercounting in surviving returns”.¹⁴³

These tendencies create important problems when the age-specific sex ratios are considered. Generally, at birth the sex ratio, measured as number of males to 100 females, is around 105.¹⁴⁴ However, in the Egyptian data, the sex ratio is too low from post-infancy until old age, and too high in old age.¹⁴⁵ Bagnall and Frier hypothesise various explanations for this: under-reporting of males of taxable age (mentioned above); distortion of female statistics (the least likely explanation); and exaggeration of male ages following the age of sixty.¹⁴⁶ These explanations suggest that the restoration of the male life-table must be tentative. For that reason, Bagnall and Frier place more emphasis on the sex-specific mortality schedules derived from the census

¹⁴⁰ Bagnall and Frier (1994) 34 n. 10.

¹⁴¹ Parkin (1995).

¹⁴² Bagnall and Frier (1994) 42, and cf. 99.

¹⁴³ Bagnall and Frier (1994) 42, and cf. 97.

¹⁴⁴ Parkin (1992) 98.

¹⁴⁵ Cf. fig. 5.6 in Bagnall and Frier (1994) 107.

¹⁴⁶ Bagnall and Frier (1994) 107.

returns for females when reconstructing the female life table and fitting a model to it,¹⁴⁷ than they do when estimating the male population structure. The male population structure is approximated in turn by adopting a minimal likely life expectancy at birth, and building a model life table using the same population growth rate as was used for the female population.¹⁴⁸ This is based on the reasonable assumption that male population grew at the same rate as the female.¹⁴⁹

Although the Egyptian data present a number of important difficulties, especially as concerns the male part of the population, the analysis of these returns provided by Bagnall and Frier is highly methodologically developed, and self-reflective. For these reasons, the Egyptian data will be used as one comparative ancient population structure, and as a method of control for other assessments of ancient population structures. These other assessments will employ the model-based approach, a number of different adaptations of which will be presented. That several different models are going to be used in this investigation is important because, given the uncertainties inherent in running this assessment, a range of models and of 'settings' is more likely to provide an informative and acceptable result than a single model. Moreover, this methodology is more likely to capture the ambiguity and the approximation that are inherent in the investigation. Finally, a range of models is required because some of the models that will be presented are based on different mortality patterns from the one developed by Coale and Demeny, and there is some evidence to suggest that the mortality patterns that Coale and Demeny adopt might not be the most representative for antiquity. The analysis of inscriptions and skeletal remains will not be taken

¹⁴⁷ Bagnall and Frier (1994) 84-90.

¹⁴⁸ Bagnall and Frier (1994) 100.

¹⁴⁹ Cf. Keyfitz (1985) 115.

further, as these are less promising methods for understanding ancient population structures.

The first model that will be discussed here is Coale-Demeny West Level 1, $r = 5.00$ for males. This can be treated as the population with the highest possible mortality for antiquity: as Akrigg has noted, a population “where life expectancy at birth was below 20 years over the long term would have had difficulty reproducing itself, and would rapidly have declined in numbers”.¹⁵⁰ In this population, the life expectancy for females at birth is 20, and is just over 18 for males. As regards the intrinsic growth rate, the growth rate of the population should not be set higher than 0.5% (the minimal value that the Coale and Demeny tables permit), as even that value implies very fast natural growth. This rate would lead to a doubling of the population every 140 years, and also implies a crude birth rate of almost 60 per year per 1000 of the population¹⁵¹ – an impossibly high birth rate to maintain over the long term.¹⁵² This model, therefore, will give the lowest bound numbers of old men, though it should be stressed that it is unlikely that the real population structure had a mortality or fertility rates nearly as high as this model posits.

The next model in the range is Coale-Demeny West Level 4, $r = 5.00$ for males. This was the setting used by Hansen, and correlates to male life expectancy of 25.26 years. While it was selected by Hansen with a degree of arbitrariness,¹⁵³ it was not an illogical choice. Life expectancy at birth in ancient societies could not have been less

¹⁵⁰ Akrigg (2011) 50.

¹⁵¹ Calculated on the basis of the “Percent 15-44” and “Brths / pop 15-44” values, and “Deaths up to age (x)” series given in Coale, Demeny and Vaughan (1983). A sex ratio at birth of 105 was assumed.

¹⁵² Parkin (1992) 78 comments: “A figure in the high 40s for antiquity is not impossible but it is improbable for the long term”.

¹⁵³ Hansen (1985) 11.

than 20, yet it also cannot have been more than 30, as this would suggest a different population profile: “an e_0 [life expectancy at birth] in excess of 30 years would imply a quite different demographic regime, with infant mortality in particular far lower than might be anticipated with medical care and environmental conditions being what they were”.¹⁵⁴ Life expectancy of 25 is “the mid-point in this plausible range of figures”.¹⁵⁵ At the same time, this setting of the Coale and Demeny tables gives the crude birth rate in the low 40s, which is an achievable rate for historical populations. This model should therefore lie somewhere in the middle of the possible population trends for antiquity insofar as numbers of elderly men are concerned. Interestingly, Bagnall and Frier’s model lies close to Hansen’s parameters. For males, it adopts Coale and Demeny West Level 4, but alters the growth rate of the population of 0.2% per year, which decreases the number of children that the population produces, and therefore increases the proportional number of adults in the population.

A slightly different approach was taken by Akrigg in developing his model for the ancient Athenian population. He proposes to use the Coale-Demeny tables “in a more flexible way”, because “what is known about age-specific impacts of diseases such as tuberculosis, suggests that they [demographic models] underestimate adult mortality and overstate child mortality”.¹⁵⁶ Akrigg suggests, therefore, that Coale-Demeny tables be spliced together (this general approach is warmly welcomed by Parkin),¹⁵⁷ and offers an example of how this could be done: he uses Coale-Demeny Model West, males, Level 8 ($e_0 = 34.89$), $r = 5.00$ for individuals under the age of 15, and for those over 15 he uses Coale-Demeny Model West, males, Level 2 ($e_0 = 20.44$), $r =$

¹⁵⁴ Parkin (1992) 84.

¹⁵⁵ Akrigg (2011) 50.

¹⁵⁶ Akrigg (2011) 53.

¹⁵⁷ Parkin (2011) 185.

5.00. The life expectancy of the population derived from the combined table is 29.76. The choice of these life tables at these precise ages seems to be motivated by the fact that similar settings can be used to model the English population of the 1680s.¹⁵⁸ Because of its high mortality rate for adults, however, this model gives a low reading for the numbers of surviving elders, and is one of the lower-yielding models in that respect.

The final model that is considered in this section is the one developed by Woods in 2007.¹⁵⁹ This model, like the one developed by Akrigg, attempts to explore a different age pattern of mortality from the ones used in the Coale and Demeny models. It is markedly different from Coale-Demeny because it is based on new sets of empirical data derived from documented modern populations with life expectancy of less than 30 years; and because it focuses on the causes of death and epidemiology of the modern populations, especially as these vary by age.¹⁶⁰ At higher rates of mortality, its results are similar to Akrigg's 'spliced' model: Woods' data, like Akrigg's, give a lower rate of infant mortality, and higher rates of adult mortality. However, at lower mortalities, Woods' data (especially the South European model, cf. n. 159) show a higher rate of infant mortality, and a lower rate of adult mortality than the comparable Coale-Demeny models.¹⁶¹ From the various settings of the Woods model, Akrigg chooses the $e_0 = 30$, $r = 5.00$ in his article to compare with his 'spliced' model,¹⁶² perhaps because this is the closest life expectancy setting to the overall life

¹⁵⁸ Akrigg (2011) 53; the original work on that English population is Wrigley (1997) 284.

¹⁵⁹ Woods (2007). Woods develops two versions of these series: the South European version and the East Asian version. The former is more relevant to the current analysis. Woods' South European figures have been processed to represent the proportion of the population within given age ranges by Akrigg (2011) 54.

¹⁶⁰ In this, Woods' research follows on from the work of Preston, Keyfitz and Schoen (1972) and Preston, McDaniel and Grushka (1993). Cf. Woods (2007) 376, 382.

¹⁶¹ See the graphs in Woods (2007) 381, and explanation on pages 379-82.

¹⁶² Akrigg (2011) 54-5.

expectancy of the model that Akrigg builds. In fact, however, Akrigg's model and Woods' model at $e_0 = 30$ show quite different age-specific mortality patterns, and balance each other out in a productive fashion. By contrast to the dire adult mortality rates of the Akrigg model, this setting of Woods' model provides a very mild mortality schedule for adults, and thus can usefully serve as the upper boundary for credible survivorship rates in antiquity: it is based on the maximum likely life expectancy at birth of 30, but on a lower adult mortality than Akrigg's 'spliced' model, giving the highest likely proportion of elders overall.¹⁶³

In sum, the range of models presented gives a broad overview of the various possible population structures of antiquity. It is important to stress that all of the models above, including the Hansen setting and Level 1, $r = 5.00$ setting, are based on empirical data, processed and adjusted to create model life-tables. Although most of the models are based on Coale-Demeny tables, Akrigg develops an insight from English history to produce a model that uses these tables in a creative way to blend two patterns of mortality and thus to build an altogether different population pattern; and Woods' model is based on entirely independent sets of data. This variety is valuable, as it broadens the range of patterns within which we can analyse ancient populations, and captures the fact that different historic populations have exhibited different age-specific mortality patterns. This is a good reason for employing a range of models while investigating the numbers of elders in the ancient populations, since there is no real way (yet) for scholars to identify which mortality pattern would fit one particular ancient population, and which pattern would fit another.

¹⁶³ Although Woods' model uses females as the 'standard population', this should not automatically disqualify it from being used in this survey. As Parkin (1992) 83 has written, "when we refer to Level 3 'female' or 'male' these tables need not be related to a single, specific sex". He refers in particular to Newell (1988) 138 on this point.

The results generated by these models are demonstrated below, and the first graph (fig. 1) shows the structures of the populations that are implied by them. The structure is given as a percentage of the total population contained in the five year age range preceding the x-axis value. For that reason the x-axis starts at 5, as this implies the range of 0 to 5 years. The next reading, at 10, refers to the age range of 5 to 10 years, and so on. For the sake of comparison, the structure of the modern (2011) UK population is also included.

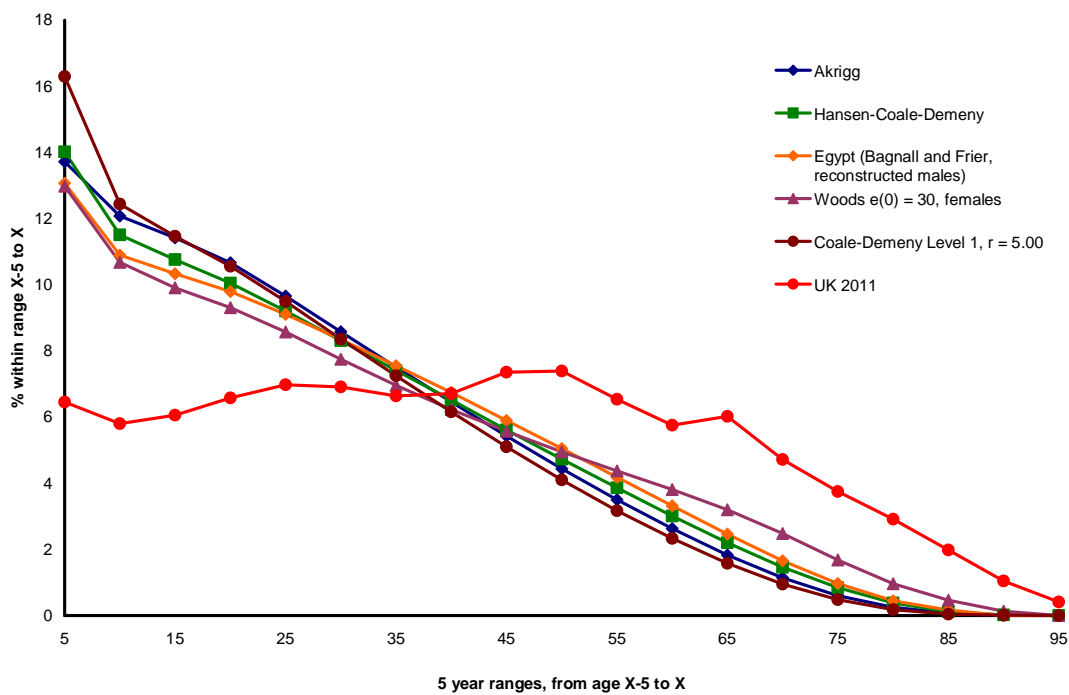


Figure 1: population structure, from birth

The percentages of the population over 50 and 60 as implied by the various models are given in the following table (table 1).

Over age	Coale-Demeny Level 1, $r = 5.00$	Akriigg	Hansen / Coale-Demeny	Egypt (Bagnall and Frier, reconstructed males)	Woods $e(0) = 30$, females	UK 2011
50	8.7	10.0	11.9	13.2	17.1	33.1
60	3.2	3.9	5.0	5.7	8.9	20.8

Table 1: the percentages of total population over 50 and 60

The potential range for the proportion of the elderly in the population estimates based on these models emerges, therefore, as being between 3.2% and 8.9% for the group over 60, and between 8.7% and 17.1% over the age of 50. It is encouraging that the ‘Egyptian’ model, the only set of data directly referable to ancient (though of course not strictly Greek) evidence, lies roughly in the centre of this range – this placement makes it more likely that the collection of models is in the right range to estimate the various possible ancient population structures. It is also encouraging that the Egyptian model lies towards half way between Akriigg’s model and Woods’ model, which present different mortality patterns for infants and adults: Akriigg has low infant mortality and high adult mortality, and Woods has high infant mortality and low adult mortality within the framework of a generally elevated overall life expectancy of the two models. This suggests that the reconstructions of the different mortality patterns for antiquity are not only providing a suitably broad range of possibilities, but are also set in a range consistent with each other and with what ancient data has survived.

Although these results are already significant, in order to estimate how prominent a segment of society old men might have been, and hence what the social context was in which the dramas were presented, these results must be analysed further. The proportion of old men must be considered in relation to the adolescent and adult male population: if a large proportion of males died in infancy, this does not mean that old men were less noticeable within society. The following graph, therefore, presents the

population structures implied by the models from fig. 1, but cuts out the first two 5 year ranges, and rebases the rest of the data. It shows, in other words, the proportion of the male population that was over 50 or 60 in relation to all males in post-infancy, taking that as ending (perhaps a little arbitrarily) at 10 years (fig. 2).¹⁶⁴

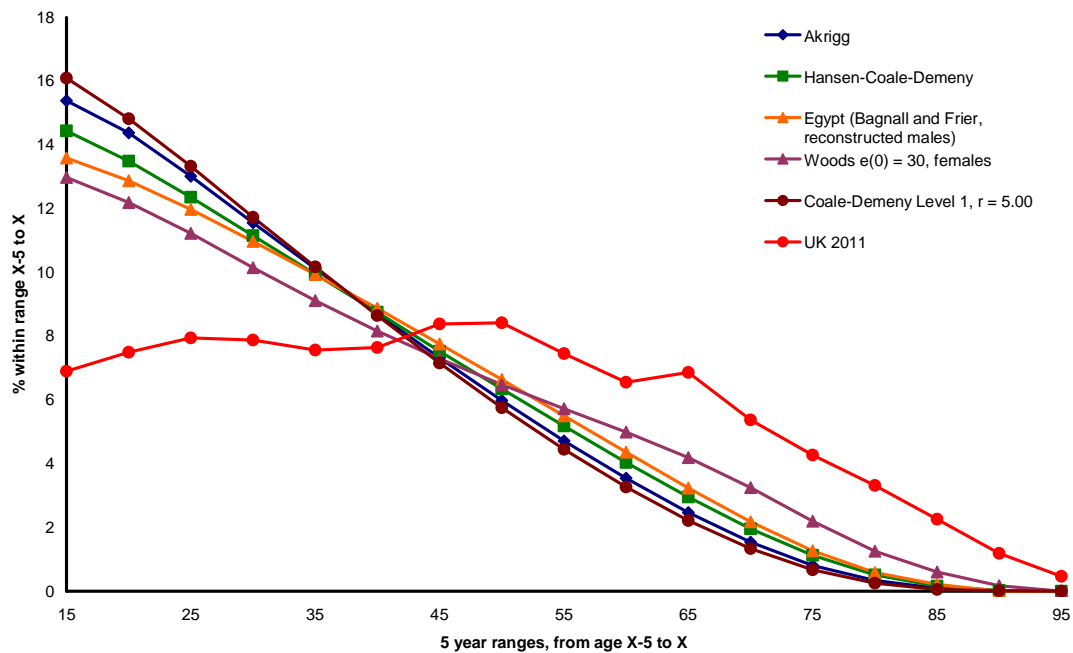


Figure 2: population structure, rebased at age 10

The following table gives the percentages of the post-infancy population over 50 and 60 years as implied by this recalculation (table 2).

¹⁶⁴ Age 10 is selected, for instance, by Morris (1987) 58 as the start of post-infancy.

Over age	Coale-Demeny Level 1, $r = 5.00$	Akriigg	Hansen / Coale-Demeny	Egypt (Bagnall and Frier, reconstructed males)	Woods $e(0) = 30$, females	UK 2011
50	12.3	13.5	16.0	17.4	22.4	37.8
60	4.5	5.3	6.7	7.5	11.7	23.7

Table 2: the percentages of post-infancy population over 50 and 60

The range of values for the proportion of old men in this part of the population is from 4.5% to 11.7% for 60 year olds, and 12.3% to 22.4% for over 50s. It is worth bearing in mind that the lower value of the range is highly unlikely to be an accurate representation of the population structure: as has been noted already, the low life expectancy (20 for females, just over 18 for males) implied by this model is extremely improbable. By contrast, while the upper value of the percentage range of the population over 60 is likely to be somewhat too high, it is not far above what is empirically plausible. In a number of historical European societies of the post-renaissance period the percentage of the population over 60 (male and female) was often around 8%, and sometimes as high as 9% (though in the Kievan Governorate of the Russian Empire at the start of the eighteenth century this number was low, at 6%).¹⁶⁵ 8.9%, the highest estimate for the percentage of over-60s in the total male population, is not improbably far above these rates.

Since the percentage ranges for old men in the population that emerge as a result of this investigation are likely not to have reached as low as the lower limit, and perhaps not as high as the upper limit, they can be plausibly summarised as follows: men over 50 are likely to have made up between 10% and 15% of the male population in the

¹⁶⁵ Cf. Denisenko (2005). The oldest complete historical census-based series comes from England, and goes back to the sixteenth century. The figures relating to old age derived from it are given by Laslett (1995) 19.

long-term; and somewhere in the region of 15% to 20% of the male population over the age of 10. Men over 60 are likely to have made up between 4% and 8% of the total male population in the long-term; and between 5% and 10% of males over 10 years of age (to follow this trend a further 10 years down the line, to 70, the respective numbers would be in the region of 3-4% and 4-5%). It is not advisable to seek greater precision than this.

It is possible to conclude, however, that the numbers of old men in the population were likely to have been quite significant, especially if one considers the lower boundary for old age, 50 years; and all the more so if the numbers of old men are calculated for the post-infant male population. This proportion of old men in the population is in line with other historically relevant estimates, though not, of course, with the demographic structures of modern Western societies. As such, old men are likely to have made up a larger part of the population than is often assumed by Classical scholars. Moreover, although external shocks would have had a deflating effect on the percentage figures given above, and on occasion this effect could have been significant, not every external shock need have reduced the proportion of old men in the population at a given moment. For instance, while wars fought in the decades preceding the point of measurement are likely to have reduced the proportion of men surviving to old age at that point in time, wars fought at the point of measurement would have reduced numbers of adult men, and hence temporarily increased the proportion of old men in the population.

However, to enquire further into the effects of external shocks on population structure goes beyond the remit and the requirements of the present thesis. It is enough to

hypothesise that the numbers of old men in the long-term would have tended towards the ranges given above, since the normative background for understanding the presentation of old age in drama is likely to have been set by long-term patterns, which are captured sufficiently accurately by these results. These patterns suggest that old age was likely to be a phenomenon to which the audience could relate, since old men were a significant demographic segment of society. While not as common as it is in the modern Western society, old age was by no means an alien, rarely seen stage of life (especially given the unquantifiable effects of faster ageing because of harsher ancient life-styles); and in their presentation of old age, the plays could refer to the experience of it that Athenian society of the fifth century would have had. Since this experience, at least as far as it is possible to judge from the demographic data, was far from slight, a complex treatment of old age in the dramas is to be expected.

ii) Sociology of Old Age

This point of view is substantiated through consideration of the social standing of old men in Athenian society. Old men were a group that seems to have had a prominent (though not an overwhelming) position in public life. As such, they would have been not only demographically (numerically), but also politically, noticeable.

The elderly were a group that had its own identity within the highly visible bounds of the law. One prominent piece of legislation, aside from the laws already mentioned (such as, for instance, on assembly speaking and military service), protected the rights

of parents.¹⁶⁶ Except in special circumstances (such as if the father had not taught his son a trade, or had prostituted him), children were required to provide for their parents. If they failed to do this, they were liable to be charged with *graphe goneon kakoseos*. In this case, unusually for a *graphe*, the accuser was not required to secure a fifth of the votes to avoid punishment himself. This fact, together with the heavy penalty for those adjudged guilty (the penalty was *atimia*), suggests that this charge was considered particularly serious, and that it was expected that the elderly be treated with respect. However, the law also viewed the old with a degree of caution and recognised the natural limitations of old age, since a son could bring against his father a charge of dementia (*paranoia*). If proven, this allowed the son to take control of the *oikos*.¹⁶⁷ This suggests that the old were imagined as guardians of the *oikos*, who could be removed when they were no longer adequate in that role, and whose duty was to bring up sons to take over from them. The standing of the elderly in the eyes of the law, therefore, was contingent on their performance in both of these spheres.¹⁶⁸

As well as bringing mental detriment, however, there was public belief that age could bring wisdom through experience. This seems to have been commemorated in the institution of arbitration, officially set up (perhaps) at the end of the fifth century.¹⁶⁹ In addition, the court of the Areopagos, often treated in the orators as the most revered and scrupulous court in Athens,¹⁷⁰ was filled up by annual admission of the outgoing

¹⁶⁶ Cf. Garland (1990) 261, Lacey (1968) 116-7.

¹⁶⁷ MacDowell (1978) 92, Garland (1990) 261-2. The only known instance of this law being put into practice, however, is reputedly when Sophokles was taken to court by his sons (cf. *Testimonia* 81-4a Radt), though Kelly (2009) 12-4 has argued against the reliability of the biographical tradition on this point. Cf. also the law quoted at Dem. xlvi. 14, which refers to mental deficiency that can be brought about by old age. Lacey (1968) 117-8 suggests that old fathers willingly handed over affairs to their younger children.

¹⁶⁸ In this they differ significantly from the ultimate authority that the Roman *paterfamilias* had in his house.

¹⁶⁹ Harrell (1936) 5, MacDowell (1978) 207.

¹⁷⁰ E.g. Aiskh. i. 84, 92.

archons. This means that the youngest members were 31 years old, which on Coale-Demeny West Level 1, $r=5.00$ (the model that gives far lower numbers of old men than is likely to have been the case), and assuming that all outgoing archons were chosen *suis annis*,¹⁷¹ would give the number of men over 60 at about 10%, and above 50 at about 25%. Even on this counting, the last figure is an impressive proportion; and on more probable (lower) mortality models, the figures would have been higher still, perhaps somewhere in the region of 15% and 40% respectively.¹⁷² Similar demographic considerations could also be true for the popular juries, if people were selected into them proportionally to the general structure of the over-30 population, as they had the same lower age limit as the archonship (though more on the juries below).

Finally, powerful evidence for the high regard towards at least certain aged individuals can be found in the Athenians' actions following the failure of the Sicilian Expedition in 413. At that time, the Athenians had set up a council of older *probouloi* to look after the affairs of state in the crisis. Although Aristotle *Ath. Pol.* 29. 2 records that these men were meant to be over 40, Thucydides describes them as older men (πρεσβυτέρων ἀνδρῶν, viii. 1. 3), and the two we know to have been included on the board, Sophocles and Hagnon, were quite old at the time of appointment: they were aged 84 and 57 respectively.¹⁷³ All this suggests that the role of old men in

¹⁷¹ This assumption would give us the lowest possible number of 'old' Areopagites, but is extremely unlikely to have held in actual fact.

¹⁷² Cf. Hansen (1991) 89, 289, who postulated that the median age in the Areopagus was 55, and two fifths were over 60.

¹⁷³ Strauss (1993) 184-5.

public life was significant; as Aristotle summarises (*Pol.* 1329a15): ἡ μὲν δύναμις ἐν νεωτέροις, ἡ δὲ φρόνησις ἐν πρεσβυτέροις εἶναι.¹⁷⁴

This does not need to mean, however, that Athens was a gerontocracy. In fact, that the real emphasis in Athenian public life lay on adult males more generally, rather than specifically old men, has been powerfully argued by Crichton.¹⁷⁵ While Crichton does not deny that old men had a role to play in the city, he notes that few magistracies had an elevated age limit (the arbitratorship, mentioned above, is one example; envoys and other public figures were sometimes required to be 50 at least),¹⁷⁶ with most having the moderate lower limit of 30. Moreover, he interprets Aristotle *Pol.* 1275a14-8 as implying that the old were less than full citizens because they no longer fought for the city: ἀλλὰ καθάπερ καὶ παῖδας τοὺς μήπω δι' ἡλικίαν ἐγγεγραμμένους καὶ τοὺς γέροντας τοὺς ἀφειμένους φατέον εἶναι μὲν πως πολίτας, οὐχ ἀπλῶς δὲ λίαν ἀλλὰ προστιθέντας τοὺς μὲν ἀτελεῖς τοὺς δὲ παρηκμακότας ἢ τι τοιοῦτον ἕτερον.¹⁷⁷ Thus, Crichton believes that “the exclusion from military service ... must have meant for the elderly a resulting loss in status”.¹⁷⁸ Additionally, the veracity of the image, prevalent in Attic comedy, of the jury being made up primarily of old men has been called into question, and Todd has

¹⁷⁴ For examples of old men being involved in public affairs outside of historical Athens, note the Spartan council of the *Gerousia*, filled by men over 60: cf. Michell (1952) 135-40, Jones (1967) 17-9. The Cretan and Carthaginian Elders were also selected from those over 60 (cf. Corvisier (2003) 19). Additionally, Plato imagined his *Philosopher Kings* as being 50 years of age, having undergone a long and rigorous period of preparation for this role (*Rep.* 540a): γενομένων δὲ πεντηκοντουτῶν τοὺς διασωθέντας καὶ ἀριστεύσαντας πάντα πάντη ἐν ἔργοις τε καὶ ἐπιστήμαις πρὸς τέλος ἤδη ἀκτέον.

¹⁷⁵ Crichton (1991-3) 70-4.

¹⁷⁶ Cf. Crichton (1991-3) 71 n. 124: ML 65. 16-8 (envoys sent to Perdikkas), ML 23. 22 (trierarchs in the Decree of Themistokles), Plut. *Per.* 17. 2 (heralds sent out to proclaim Perikles' Congress decree).

¹⁷⁷ For a denigrating presentation of old men in plastic art as physically incapable and grotesque, see the Attic Red-figure *pelike* by the Geras painter (Louvre G 234), showing the combat between Heracles and *Geras*. *Geras* is drawn as stooping, short, scrawny, and with swollen flaccid genitals – in contrast to the manly Herakles. Note also the Attic Red-figure *pelike* by the Matsch painter, Museo Nazionale Etrusco di Villa Giulia, 48238, from c. 500-450 BC.

¹⁷⁸ Crichton (1991-3) 73.

argued that even younger and able-bodied farmers would have profited from jury service, not just the old:¹⁷⁹ they would, therefore, have competed with the elder men for places on the juries. Moreover, it is notable that by the time of the plays discussed in this thesis, the Areopagos, a political body in which old men are likely to have held a significant share, had lost many of its powers (cf. Aristotle *Ath. Pol.* 25. 1-2, with Rhodes' discussion).¹⁸⁰

Of these arguments against the prevalence of the old in the structure of Athenian public life, perhaps the strongest is that jurors, magistrates, and lawgivers had to be only over 30. Hansen suggests that the lower age limit was instituted because of the "idea that wisdom and experience grow with age".¹⁸¹ To an extent, this is likely to be true. However, thirty years is not old enough to enter the ranks of the wise: illustrative are the ages of three of the seven sages, Solon, Thales and Pittakos, who were allegedly over 100 years old;¹⁸² and Solon wrote that a man reaches the age of wisdom only in his sixth hebdomad, and is in his prime intellectually in the seventh and eighth (Solon fr. 27. 11-4 West). In sum, therefore, while the old made up a significant proportion of politically empowered citizens, the low age limit of 30 meant that the old were only one constituent of the empowered group. They could protect their rights, they could freely participate, and they were respected, but Athens was not

¹⁷⁹ Todd (1990) 168-9. Cf. also Markle (1985), who argues that jury pay was useful to working men. Additionally, it is possible to argue from the demographic figures given in the preceding section that a board of 6,000 jurors could only with some difficulty be filled by old men alone. Even taking the highest suggested age distribution percentage from the previous section, from a total adult citizen population of 30,000 (cf. Hansen (1985) 5 and 68-9; though this is in reference to the fourth century, it is not unlikely that a similar figure held true in the fifth century, and for this calculation only a ballpark figure is required), the number of males over 60 would not exceed 4,700 (counting the proportion of over 60 year olds from the population of all males over 20). If old age is taken to begin at 50, the juries could have been filled by old men; but even this would most likely have been difficult, as the number of citizens over 50 was still only about 9,000, spread across the whole of Attica.

¹⁸⁰ Rhodes (1981) 309-19.

¹⁸¹ Hansen (1991) 89-90.

¹⁸² Lukianos *Makrobioi* 18.

a gerontocracy. It was a city steered by the mature adult population, that part of the Athenian citizenry who were of an age where they might already be married, and might already have fathered children.

iii) Representations of the Elderly on the Stage

Having considered the demographic and sociological aspects of the context for the performance of Greek drama, it is important to consider the physical reality of that performance. This section, therefore, will explore the stage-presentation of old men in comedy and tragedy. The understanding of how this was done will be important for unravelling fully the context of the presentation of old men in the plays.

a. Staging comic old age

South Italian *phlyax* vases are the most complete source of evidence, as they show both precise portraits of old men, and also old men in action, allowing a contrast to be created between them and other characters in the scene. While these vases are potentially problematic as a source of evidence for Attic theatre, being geographically (and the bulk of them also temporally) removed from fifth-century Athens, they are now widely believed to represent scenes from Attic Old Comedy.¹⁸³

¹⁸³ On the relevance of *phlyax* vases to Attic comedy, cf. Taplin (1993) *passim*, but esp. 89-99. For a recent summary of scholarship, cf. Storey (2003) 283. The clinching piece of evidence for taking the *phlyax* vases as representing Old Comedy is the “Würzburg Telephos” vase: cf. Csapo (1986) and Csapo and Slater (1995) 54.

One such vase is the “*Khoregoi*” vase (New York, Fleischman coll. F93; fig. 3), an Apulian bell-crater dated to 400-380 BC.¹⁸⁴ It shows three figures dressed up as comic actors, and one in garb that recalls tragedy.¹⁸⁵ The Attic origin for the inspiration of the vase is clear from the labels in Attic Greek above two of the four figures depicted (*XOPHTOΣ* instead of *XOPATOΣ*).¹⁸⁶ Of particular interest is the fact that the two figures labelled *khoregos* seem to be of different ages, the one on the left old, the one on the right much younger. This comes across most strikingly through the colour of the characters’ hair: the old man’s wig and beard are entirely white, while the younger man’s are black. Additionally, there is some difference in posture between them, with the (fatter) older man standing more stooped over.

Two more vases are considered to explore the trend. The “Milan Cake-eaters” vase (Milan, Museo Civico Archeologico, AO 9. 284; fig. 4), dated to 400-380 BC,¹⁸⁷ shows a scene with a greedy old man and the traditional filching slave of comedy (cf. *Wealth* 1139-40). The Attic form of the name Philotimides seems to confirm the Athenian connection of the play, as does to an extent the typical Old Comedy slave name Xanthias. As before, in this vase it is possible to recognise the typical and expected features of the old man: receding white hair, scraggly white moustache and beard, and wrinkles. The “Kheiron” vase (London, British Museum F151; close-up detail of the vase presented in fig. 5, full vase in fig. 6), dated to about 380 BC,¹⁸⁸ shows an old man pushing the aged Kheiron up onto the stage. Although the ‘ordinary’ old man seems to have less head-hair than the old men so far encountered, his age is again easily identified through his prominent white beard. Additionally, the

¹⁸⁴ Taplin (1993) 111.

¹⁸⁵ Cf. Taplin (1993) 55-63 for an analysis of this vase.

¹⁸⁶ Cf. Taplin (2007) 13-4.

¹⁸⁷ Taplin (1993) 112.

¹⁸⁸ Taplin (1993) 112.

figure of Kheiron himself seems to be one of deep senility. His hair is scraggly and white; his mask wrinkled; and he leans heavily on his stick.

This evidence so far suggests that the most obvious physical sign of age in comedy was white hair, normally present both as a white (perhaps balding) wig and as white facial hair. Wrinkles, greater corpulence, and posture could also give an impression of senility, though these are perhaps more subjective indicators.

b. Staging tragic old age

The evidence for tragic staging and costuming is less straightforward than the evidence for comedy,¹⁸⁹ since the tragic vases, unlike the comic ones, tend to portray their scenes in a ‘naturalistic’ fashion, normally without any unequivocal visual reference to the stage.¹⁹⁰ This makes it harder to identify vases which show tragedy; and even if it is possible to identify them, it makes the evidence regarding dramatic staging that can be gleaned from these vases more open to question. The material used, therefore, needs to be selective.

Some evidence originates in fifth century Athens. An important example is the Pronomos vase, an Attic volute-krater dated to about 400 BC (Naples, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, 81673 (H 3240); fig. 7 shows a detail of this vase).¹⁹¹ This vase shows the cast of a satyr play in the company of the god Dionysos, and one of

¹⁸⁹ Cf. Hughes (2012) 5 and n. 14 on that page.

¹⁹⁰ Cf. Green (1991) 40-1 on the way that, like tragedy itself, the vases representing tragedy do not break the dramatic (and mythological) illusion of their subject matter.

¹⁹¹ Taplin (2007) 31. For the Pronomos vase in general, cf. Taplin and Wyles (2010).

the characters represented is the old Papposilenos. His mask and costume are covered with white hair in an extremely distinctive fashion, and his mask also shows numerous wrinkles. It is not a significant problem that this vase shows satyric drama rather than tragic drama, as it is more than plausible that the conventions of masking from the satyr-plays were also in place for tragedy, given the close relation between the two genres.¹⁹² A complementary piece of evidence is the Attic red-figure hydria presenting what appears to be a chorus of elderly satyrs (or satyrs posing as elders), all of whom carry staffs and have white hair (Tokyo, coll. Fujita; fig. 8); this vase has been connected with the *Sphinx* of Aiskhylos, and dated circa 467 BC.¹⁹³

Attic evidence from the fifth century, therefore, suggests that elderly characters on the stage were physically identifiable as such, even early on in the century. The same conclusion is borne out through the analysis of the vase paintings from fourth century Magna Graecia, some of which Taplin (amongst others) has argued are related to reperformance of Athenian plays from the fifth century.¹⁹⁴ While the 'tragic' connection of the bulk of this evidence is problematic, in a few cases the theatrical provenance of a vase showing a figure of an old man is certain. One such is the Sicilian calyx-krater from c. 330 BC (Caltanissetta, Museo Civico 1301bis; fig. 9),¹⁹⁵ which shows a theatrical tragic performance presented on a wooden stage.¹⁹⁶ An old man stands on the right side of the stage, and seems to be interacting with one of the three females portrayed in the painting. He is presented as shorter and more stooped than them, and has what is clearly meant to be a white beard, in contrast to their black

¹⁹² Taplin (2007) 32.

¹⁹³ Green (1994) 42; cf. Simon (1981) and Simon (1982) 141-2.

¹⁹⁴ Cf. Csapo and Slater (1995) 54-5; and Taplin (2007) in general on the connection between these vases and Attic tragedies, and pp. 5-15 on arguments for the popularity of Attic tragedy outside of Athens and in the Greek West.

¹⁹⁵ Dated by Taplin (2007) 261.

¹⁹⁶ Taplin (2007) 261.

hair. Another similar ‘tragic’ vase, dated to the same period, is also a Sicilian calyx-krater, currently in the Syracusan Museo Archeologico Regionale “Paolo Orsi”, 66557 (fig. 10).¹⁹⁷ It shows what appears to be a scene from Sophocles’ *Oidipous Tyrannos*, in which the truth of Oidipous’ past begins to be revealed.¹⁹⁸ Here too the old man is presented in line with the same pattern: by white hair and stooped posture.

Taking the evidence for tragedy and comedy as a whole, it appears that old men were identifiable on stage primarily by white hair, and also by the more subjective signs of wrinkles and corpulence in comedy, and stooping postures and staves in tragedy. For tragedy as well as for comedy the age of the old men would have been visually identifiable on the stage immediately upon their entrance, with no need for concurrent verbal identification. This has a significant impact on how old age should be read in the plays.

iv) Conclusion

This chapter sought to place the following exploration of the dramatic roles and characters of old men in a number of relevant contexts. The findings from the sections on demography and sociology of age suggested that the number of old men in ancient societies was large enough for old age to have been a familiar phenomenon; and that the public involvement of old men would have ensured their prominence in daily life. As such, old men would have been a social group that many, if not most, members of the audience would have had significant contact with, either in the familial or public

¹⁹⁷ Taplin (2007) 90.

¹⁹⁸ Taplin (2007) 91-2, Trendall (1991) 170. Csapo and Slater (1995) 63 agree that in this vase “‘theatre’ may safely be designated the primary frame”.

contexts, or both. This suggests the contextual validity of the thesis' approach in seeing Greek drama's portrayal of old age as a complex phenomenon. The final section argued that the age of old men would have been immediately recognisable upon their entry on stage, prior to any verbal confirmation, and this is important for constructing the methodological framework for the literary analysis that is to follow, and for seeing old age within its context of contemporary performance.

VASES REPRESENTING COMEDY:



Figure 3, The *Khoregoi* Vase, New York, Fleischman coll. F93



Figure 4, The Milan Cake-eaters, Museo Civico Archeologico, AO 9. 284



**Figure 5, Close-up detail from the *Kheiron*
Vase, London, British Museum F151**



**Figure 6, the *Kheiron* Vase, London,
British Museum F151**

VASES REPRESENTING TRAGEDY:

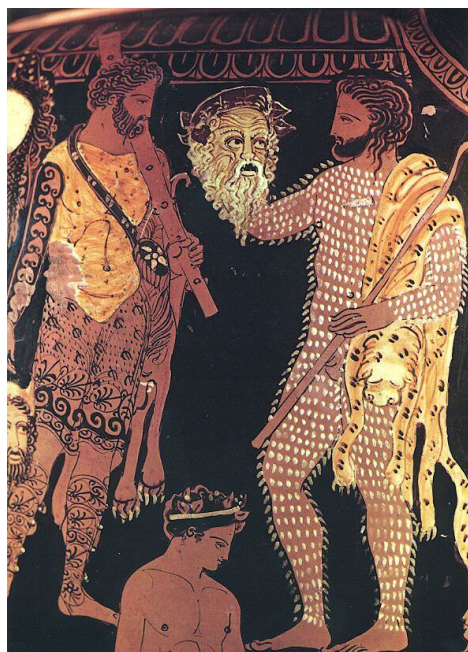


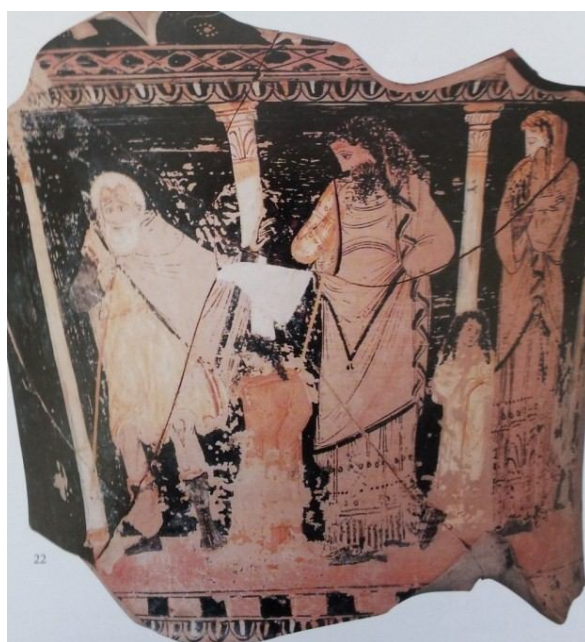
Figure 7, Detail from the Pronomos vase, Naples, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, 81673 (H 3240)



Figure 8, The *Sphinx* vase, Tokyo, coll. Fujita



**Figure 9, Vase representing an unidentified tragedy,
Caltanissetta, Museo Civico 1301bis**



**Figure 10, The *Oidipous Tyrannos* vase,
Syracuse, Museo Archeologico Regionale
“Paolo Orsi” (66557)**

CHAPTER III. THE CHORUS IN THE *AGAMEMNON*:

IDENTITY AND AUTHORITY

i) The Chorus and their Old Age

a. The choral entry: significance and character before identification

Immediately upon entering, the chorus' masks and costume would have provided clues as to their identity, before their self-identification as old men in lines 72-82. These visual symbols would have created an impression of the chorus, an outline of their character.¹⁹⁹ Their age would have been observable from the white hair on the masks, and perhaps from their posture.²⁰⁰ The costumes might have added to their identification, for instance by letting the audience know that they were free men rather than slaves. Additionally, since a chorus is normally from the place where the play is set unless specified otherwise, the audience might have been able to surmise that the

¹⁹⁹ That ancient drama permits of characterisation is now broadly accepted. Cf. for tragedy Garton (1957), Easterling (1973), Gould (1978), Gill (1986), Easterling (1990), and Goldhill (1990), though the last is more restrained regarding what makes character in tragedy; and Silk (1990) and Silk (2000) 207-55 for comedy. While characterisation of the chorus is a more complicated issue, recent scholarship has argued for the presence of distinct character in the choruses (cf. Müller (1967) 217), rather than a generic 'choral' identity that does not change from play to play; or that the chorus express the views of the author (cf. e.g. Kitto (1961) 68, Dodds (1951) 39). For the chorus as a character, cf. Kirkwood (1958), Smith (1973), Gardiner (1987), and to some extent Burton (1980), though he downplays the degree of consistency that choral characters possess (cf. p. 3). Against the view that the chorus express the views of the author, cf. Rosenmeyer (1982) 166-7.

²⁰⁰ It is also possible that an impression of age would have been created by the metre and (eventually) by the length of their entry-song. According to Brown (1977) 54, the long passage of anapaests in this choral song is used "to cover the slow processions of very old, broken men into the orchestra". A similar effect might be conveyed by the dactylic part of the song. Webster (1970) 129 writes that dactyls are used for stately choruses in the *Oresteia*, and within the trilogy "[t]he *Agamemnon* with its chorus of aged councillors has more stately songs than any other play" (cf. also p. 125 for a closer metrical evaluation of the *parodos*). The *parodos* is also "the longest ode in surviving tragedy" (Goward (2005) 59), and on length as typical feature of the 'language' of old age, cf. Silk (1995).

chorus were old citizens of Argos, as the Watchman had already identified the location in the prologue (ἐν Ἀργεῖ, 24).²⁰¹

In respect of this generic identification as old men, the chorus are not unusual: there are numerous plays which also pick this category of people for their choruses.²⁰² However, what is distinctive about their initial appearance is the amount of time it takes them to identify themselves. Taplin has noted this abnormality: “[o]n entry the Old Men go straight into an account of the past; they do not motivate their entry, they do not even identify themselves”.²⁰³ These are the things that a chorus normally does straight away. Taplin draws from this the conclusion that the chorus “have more important things to communicate”;²⁰⁴ and the fact that the chorus prioritise narrative over self-identification associates them in the mind of the reader or the audience with a concern for and narration of past events. Furthermore, there is a sense of a subordination of the importance of their identity to the events that they describe, in that their narrative is portrayed as being more important than they, its conveyors. Their narrative function becomes especially relevant due to the Watchman’s preceding refusal to tell his story (36-9); and in these circumstances, the narrative of the past becomes a loaded and structurally crucial method for the construction of the privileged choral position.

When the chorus do get around to introducing themselves (72-82), there develops a strong sense of contrast between the narrative authority inherent in the chorus’ concentration heretofore on the narrative of the past, and their self-identification as

²⁰¹ The text of Aiskhylos is taken from Sommerstein (2008), unless otherwise specified.

²⁰² In addition to the *Agamemnon*, cf. the *Persai*, the *Antigone*, the *OT*, the *OK*, the *Alkestis*, the *Herakleidai*, and the *Herakles*. For list of fragmentary plays, cf. Foley (2003) 27.

²⁰³ Taplin (1977) 279.

²⁰⁴ Taplin (1977) 279.

extremely old and powerless men. The contrast is underlined by a strong shift of emphasis to themselves in line 72: ἡμεῖς δ'. Choral identity, therefore, becomes highlighted as something of significance within the framework of the *parodos*, and more broadly for the play as a whole, through the sense that it is insistently at odds with their privileged position as speakers of the *parodos*. This contrast of the age and frailty of the chorus and their authoritative position soon becomes a key defining feature of their capacity and authority to become narrators of past events.

b. Choral identity: old men in the community

While confirming that the chorus are natives of Argos, the primary aspect of choral identity stressed in lines 72-82 is their age:

ἡμεῖς δ' ἀτίται σαρκὶ παλαιᾷ τῆς τότε ἄρωγῆς ὑπολειφθέντες μίμνομεν ἰσχὺν ἰσόπαιδα νέμοντες ἐπὶ σκήπτροις·	75
ὄ τε γὰρ νεαρός μυελὸς στέρνων ἐντὸς ἀνάσσων ἰσόπρεσβυς, Ἄρης δ' οὐκ ἔνι χώραι· τό θ' ὑπεργήρων φυλλάδος ἤδη κατακαρφομένης τρίποδας μὲν ὁδοῦς	80
στείχει, παιδὸς δ' οὐδὲν ἀρείων ὄναρ ἡμερόφαντον ἀλαίνει. ²⁰⁵	

But we were left behind by the expedition, unable to pay our due with aged flesh, and remain distributing strength equal to a child upon staves; for the youthful marrow that rules inside the breast is equal to an old man, but Ares is not at his post; and the extreme old age with foliage already withering on the one hand walks on three-footed paths, and on the other, in no wise stronger than a child, wanders about, a dream appearing by day.

²⁰⁵ The interpretation of this passage is complex, and the following translation will make clear how it is understood in this section.

All three of the most common root words for old age are used here to describe the chorus, giving a sustained emphasis on old age, and an impression that from whatever angle the chorus are approached, their nature is conditioned by this concept: παλαιῶν in line 72, ἰσόπρεσβυς in 78, and ὑπεργήρων in 79. Furthermore, the passage is replete with paradoxical descriptions of old age, which emphasise its importance. For example, in lines 74-5 there is juxtaposition (across the line-break) between ἰσχύν and ἰσόπαιδα in describing the old men's condition. There is a similar contrast of sense in using both νεαρός μυελός (76) and ἰσόπρεσβυς (78), and τό θ' ὑπεργήρων (79) and παιδός δ' (81) to apply to the same entity, the aged chorus; and the contrast is taken further through the metrical arrangement of these lines, where ἰσόπαιδα (75) and ἰσόπρεσβυς (78) are placed isometrically after the resolved anapaest in lines 74 and 77, resuming the anapaestic rhythm.

This sustained focus on the chorus' age has been interpreted as explaining such traits as fearfulness and impotence to intervene later in the play, especially during the murder of Agamemnon.²⁰⁶ However, these observations, although reasonable, arise out of generic considerations of old age, and not considerations of the old age of this particular group; the analysis of the chorus' age can be taken further if it is made more specific. This section will argue that one might identify and characterise the chorus with a greater degree of accuracy than simply 'old men' by considering the sort of old men they are presented as, and how this reflects on the development of their character in the play as a whole. It will emerge that, in interplay with their advanced age, the character of the chorus is informed by a self-association with the ethos of the community and of the Argive fighting-men.

²⁰⁶ Cf. Byl (1975) 131-2, Rosenmeyer (1982) 176, Gantz (1983) 83.

Important to making this interpretation is a correct understanding of ἀτίται (72). Although Chantraine and Beekes both argue that ἀτίται derives from τίνω,²⁰⁷ to understand the meaning of the word in the play the etymologically correct derivation is less relevant than the derivation that would have been thought most natural by Aiskhylos' original audience. This 'perceived' derivation, unfortunately, is contested.²⁰⁸ Fraenkel, for instance, argued that the word must mean something like "he that does not pay" the duty of serving on the expedition.²⁰⁹ However, for Denniston and Page this use is not supported by other meanings of the root verb τίνω, and it is moreover too obscure to have been understood. Instead, they reverted to the meaning proposed by Pauw and Wellauer: "unhonoured".²¹⁰ The most recent commentators, Raeburn and Thomas, have opted for yet another interpretation: "not involved in vengeance".²¹¹ This question, therefore, needs to be revisited: the three possible 'perceived' roots of ἀτίται – τίω, τίνομαι and τίνω – will be discussed in turn below. (Although τίνω and τίνομαι are active and middle forms of the same verb, the difference in their meanings justifies considering them separately.)

Two passages provide evidence for derivation of ἀτίται from τίω, giving the meaning 'unhonoured', 'not involved in honour'. In Menekrates Xanthios (769 fr. 3 Jacoby), a historical writer of the 4th century BC, the word ἄτιτος (related to ἀτίτης) is used of the insult done to Aineas by Paris: Αἰνεΐης γὰρ ἄτιτος ἔων ὑπὸ Ἀλεξάνδρου καὶ ἀπὸ γερέων [ἱερῶν] ἐξαιργόμενος ἀνέτρεψε Πρίαμον ('for

²⁰⁷ Chantraine (1999) 1121, Beekes (2010) 1486.

²⁰⁸ Cf. the summary of the different positions in Bollack and Judet de La Combe (1981) vol. I. 1, 84-5.

²⁰⁹ Fraenkel (1950) *ad* 72.

²¹⁰ Denniston and Page (1957) *ad* 72; for references to and discussion of Pauw and Wellauer, cf. Fraenkel (1950) *ad* 72.

²¹¹ Raeburn and Thomas (2011) *ad* 72.

Aineas, being dishonoured by Alexandros, and debarred from the [sacred] privileges, overturned Priam’). Similarly, the verb ἀτιπέω is used by the second century AD writer Dionysios Periegetes in *Orbis Descriptio* 1158 to describe the dishonour done to Dionysus: ἤμος ὅτ’ ἀφραδίησι θεοῦ ἀτίτησαν ἑορτήν (‘when in folly they dishonoured the banquet of the god’). However, these two passages exhaust the evidence for this derivation; and it is notable that Dionysios wrote significantly later than Aiskhylos. Additionally, this meaning is problematic on morphological grounds, as Fraenkel notes that a passive meaning for an agent noun is not probable.²¹² Thus, τίω is most unlikely to be the source of the image.

The evidence for the other two derivations is stronger, as it comes from the *Oresteia* itself. On the one hand, a link with τίνομαι, giving the meaning ‘unable to avenge’ or ‘not involved in exacting vengeance’, can be paralleled from *Khoe*. 66-7, where the connected τίτας is used to mean “vengeful”.²¹³ This is the most natural meaning of the word in that passage:²¹⁴

τὰ δ’ αἵματ’ ἐκποθένθ’ ὑπὸ Χθονὸς τροφοῦ
τίτας φόνος πέπηγεν οὐ διαρρύδαν.

This can be paralleled in the use of τίτας in an inscription from Gortyn to mean something like ‘public prosecutor’ (cf. Schwyzer nos. 175 and 183;²¹⁵ and Hesychios (*s.v.* τίται): εὐποροὶ. ἢ κατήγοροι τῶν ἀρχόντων).

²¹² Cf. Fraenkel (1950) *ad* 72 and Kühner and Blass (1892) vol. I.2 270, *pace* Fraenkel (1910) vol. I 185.

²¹³ In the translation of Sommerstein (2008) 219.

²¹⁴ Cf. Fraenkel (1950) *ad* 72.

²¹⁵ Schwyzer and Cauer (1923) 80, 93: inscriptions 175 (pl.) and 183 (sg.). Inscr. 175: αἱ δὲ [μὲ λ|έ]οιεν, ἑκατὸν στατέρανς φέκαστον τὸνς τίτανς [ἔστεισα(θ)θ|αι, καὶ τὰν διπλείαν τῶν κρεμάτων ἔστεισαντανς ἀποδόμ[ε|ν]. αἱ δ’ οἱ τίται μὲ φέρκσιεν αἱ ἔγρα(τ)ται, τὰν διπλείαν ἄ[ταν φέκαστο|ν αὐτῶν τῶι μ]εμπομένοι ἀποδόμεν καὶ τῶι πόλι θέμεν. Inscr. 183: ἀποτει|σάτω παρ τὸν τίταν ἀργυρίω διακοσίος στατήρας.

On the other hand, the derivation of ἀτίται from τίνω is supported by *Eum.* 256-7. There, ἀτίτης is used with the meaning, again made certain by the context, of ‘he who does not pay the penalty’, ‘not involved in paying the price’: μὴ λάθῃ φύγδα βὰς ματροφόνος ἀτίτας.²¹⁶ This interpretation is not contradicted by the scholia (ἀτιμώρητος, Schol. Vet. 256a M), and is repeated in the gloss of Hesychios (s.v. ἀτίτην): ἀτιμώρητον. ἄπορον. ἄτιμον. τὸν μὴ ἔχοντα ἀποτίσαι (though, unfortunately, Hesychios’ range of meanings is too broad to be instructive beyond confirmation of possibility: cf. his inclusion of ἄτιμον, a meaning that derives from τίω, rejected above). When taken in the broader sense of ‘not being involved in paying the price that one owes’, ‘not being involved in paying one’s dues’, a natural extension of nuance given the derivation from τίνω, this interpretation provides a meaning that would make sense in the *Agamemnon*. It is accepted by Fraenkel, who follows Ahrens in interpreting ἀτίται as ‘they who do not pay’, but in the context specifically applied to the sphere of military service, so that the word comes to mean ἀδύνατος σώματι instead of ἀδύνατος χρήμασι:²¹⁷ “insolvent (i.e. unable to serve as soldiers)”, in Fraenkel’s translation.²¹⁸

However, both derivations, from τίνομαι and τίνω, run into some difficulties. The problem with the τίνομαι option is that the resulting meaning of ἀτίται would conflict with the sentiments the chorus express elsewhere, namely their disapproval of the expedition’s *purpose* of bringing back Helen and taking vengeance on her Trojan

²¹⁶ Cf. Fraenkel (1950) *ad* 72, quoting Weil, “qui poenas non luit”.

²¹⁷ Cf. Ahrens (1860) 249.

²¹⁸ Fraenkel (1950) vol. I, 95. Against the argument that the semantics of this translation introduce the sense of ability into the meaning of ἀτίται (“unable to serve as soldiers”) which is impossible in *Eum.* 256-7, it should be noted that Hesychios’ gloss also allows for this extension of meaning (cf. τὸν μὴ ἔχοντα ἀποτίσαι), which is at any rate rather natural.

abductors at such great cost both to the Greeks and to Agamemnon personally through the loss of his daughter. In the lines immediately preceding their self-portrayal, the chorus dwell on the sufferings of both armies, prefacing them with a description of Helen as a “woman of many men”. This implies strong distaste both for the war and for Helen, who is considered an unworthy reason for war (62-7):

πολύανορος ἀμφὶ γυναικὸς
πολλὰ παλαίσματα καὶ γυιοβαρῆ,
γόνατος κονίαισιν ἐρειδομένου
διακναιομένης τ' ἐν προτελείοις 65
κάμακος, θήσων Δαναοῖσιν
Τρωσὶ θ' ὁμοίως.

A similar sentiment is expressed in lines 222-7. Here, the chorus stress the impiety of Agamemnon's actions of sacrificing Iphigeneia, made worse by the terrible irony of the fact that an innocent and chaste girl was killed by her father to bring back an unchaste wife. Throughout, the chorus' disapproval is strongly implied:²¹⁹

βροτοὺς θρασύνει γὰρ αἰσχρόμητις
τάλαινα παρακοπὰ πρωτοπήμων.
ἔτλα δ' οὖν θυτῆρ γενέσ-
θαι θυγατρός, γυναικοποιί- 225
νων πολέμων ἄρωγὰν
καὶ προτέλεια ναῶν.

Finally, the chorus' disapproval is stated openly in 799-804. This passage, like the previous two, describes the chorus' attitude to the expedition before they knew of its success. In it, the chorus say to Agamemnon that they were distraught when he led the army to Troy for the sake of Helen:

²¹⁹ For instance, by such words as αἰσχρόμητις, παρακοπὰ, ἔτλα, and θυτῆρ. Similarly, the phrase ὑστερόποινον ... Ἐρινύν (58-9), recalled by γυναικοποιῶν, should not be taken as expressing the chorus' eagerness for the expedition, only the inevitability of vengeance.

οὐ δ' ἔμοι τότε μὲν στέλλων στρατιὰν
 Ἑλένης ἔνεκ', οὐ γάρ σ' ἐπικεύσω,
 κάρτ' ἀπομούσως ἦσθα γεγραμμένος
 οὐδ' εὖ πραπίδων οἶακα νέμων,
 < ... > θάρσος ἐκούσιον²²⁰
 ἀνδράσι θνήσκουσι κομίζων.

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These sentiments pose problems for understanding ἀτίται as meaning 'uninvolved in exacting vengeance'. In lines 72-82, the implication of the focus on age is that the chorus are made unhappy by it; and this unhappiness is expressed specifically through the fact that they cannot go on the expedition, as emerges from the phrase Ἄρης δ' οὐκ ἔνι χώραι, 78: these lines create a feeling of regret that the chorus could not go to Troy. However, as appears from considering the chorus' attitude in a wider context, it is unlikely that they could express regret specifically at not being able to *avenge* the theft of Helen, whom they consider an unworthy cause of the suffering and war. Yet this is the meaning that ἀτίται would have to have if it were derived from τίνομαι, and so an inconsistency arises.

By contrast, the main difficulty in the derivation from τίνω is that this sense of ἀτίται requires military service to be understood as a kind of 'debt'; and a debt that can, moreover, be referred to simply by a verb of payment. However, this is not an insurmountable difficulty, as the connection between military service and debt is facilitated by the overriding context of the Trojan War and the mention of the Greek expedition (τῆς ἀρωγῆς) in the following line. Moreover, Fraenkel collects parallels for this phrasing, and also for the idea of military service as a duty or debt.²²¹ The clearest is Dem. xxi. 165-6 (cf. especially οὗ δὲ ὁ νόμος προσέταπτεν, ἐνταῦθα τοῖς σώμασιν αὐτοὶ λειτουργεῖν ἠξίουσιν, 165; and οὐδένα γὰρ τρόπον ἄλλον

²²⁰ Line according to West (1990a); cf. West (1990b) 202-3.

²²¹ Though cf. the objections of Denniston and Page (1957) *ad* 72, recorded on p. 72 above.

ἐν τοῖς ἰππεῦσιν αὐτὸν ἀτελῆ ποιῆσαι στρατείας δυνάμενος ταύτην εὔρηκε Μειδίας καινὴν ἰππικῆς τινα πεντηκοστήν, 166). Also important are Ais. *Sept.* 19-20 (ἐθρέψατ' οἰκητῆρας ἀσπιδηφόρους / πιστοὺς ὅπως γένοισθε πρὸς χρέος τόδε), though it is possible that χρέος might have a more general meaning in that passage; and Hdt. iii. 67. 3 (ἀτελείην εἶναι στρατηίης καὶ φόρου), where the choice of wording might, however, have been influenced by the second genitive.²²² To this one may add that in Athens by the turn of the fifth century (and perhaps earlier) serving in the army was seen as a legal requirement when the State demanded it, and evasion of service was punishable by the loss of citizen rights, *atimia* (cf. Andok. i. 74: ὅπόσοι λίποιν τὴν τάξιν ἢ ἀστρατείας ἢ δειλίας ἢ ἀναυμαχίου ὄφλοιν ἢ τὴν ἀσπίδα ἀποβάλοιν ... οὔτοι πάντες ἄτιμοι ἦσαν τὰ σώματα).²²³ This suggests that military service was seen as an important aspect of having a share in the state, and, as such, as being the sort of thing one may 'owe' to the community of one's fellow citizens.

Although neither of the main two interpretations discussed above is devoid of problems, it seems least problematic to understand the 'perceived' meaning of ἀτίται as deriving from τίνω and meaning 'not being involved in paying (our due) [with aged flesh]': linguistically the derivation from τίνω is marginally better, and moreover the derivation from τίνομαι is made less likely by the context. The derivation from τίω is altogether too obscure.

If this interpretation is accepted, a more nuanced character of the chorus emerges both in this passage, and elsewhere in the play. In the description of their age in lines 72-82

²²² Cf. Fraenkel (1950) *ad* 72.

²²³ Cf. Christ (2006) 59-62 for further discussion.

the chorus express ‘communal’ emotions: a desire to help their fellow-citizens in war, to pay a debt to their State; and the significance of these emotions is brought out by the length of the explanation of why they could not do this (cf. γάρ, 76). Similarly, the character of the old men is coloured by the fact that their staying behind did not (and still does not, since they focus on it) coincide with what they would ideally have liked to have happened, as their infirmity due to advanced age, stressed by the use of the passive ὑπολειφθέντες (73), is presented as the only reason for their being left in Argos. This impression is strengthened by the old men’s rather visceral reference to themselves in the phrase σαρκὶ παλαιᾷ (72), suggestive almost of self-disgust. The old men are thus presented as expressing unhappiness at their useless state, an unhappiness caused by the frustration of their communal feeling, and specifically the frustration by their old age of their wish to alleviate the sufferings of their fellow citizens in war.²²⁴

This understanding of the communal aspect of the chorus’ character, of their willingness to fight on behalf of the community in order to alleviate its sufferings (even if in reality they cannot do this), also enables the integration of their subsequent actions into their character, especially in the moments after the death of Agamemnon, a time when, just as during the Trojan War, the community again is put at risk. For instance, they express their readiness to fight against the stay-at-home coward Aigisthos (cf. οἰκουρός, 1626), whom they have specific reason to despise as an anti-communal, tyrannical man, someone in direct contrast to themselves. They even express their willingness to die defending their community from his tyranny (cf.

²²⁴ The chorus’ ‘communality’ exists also on a different level, and is expressed in passages where they report or appropriate the opinions of the community, e.g. in the first stasimon (cf. Fletcher (1999)); though this sort of connection with the community is more usual for a chorus.

ἀλλὰ κάγω μὴν πρόκωπος, κούκ ἀναίνομαι θανεῖν, 1652; ὡς δὴ σύ μοι τύραννος Ἀργείων ἔση, 1633; cf. also 1354-5, 1362-5).²²⁵ Thus, although the chorus throughout the play are often coloured by such traits as indecisiveness, fearfulness, and desire to avoid action,²²⁶ their negative and passive presentation becomes balanced out by the suggestions that, were it not for their age, they would have gone to Troy; that, presumably, they were previously involved in fighting for their city; and that, when the need arises, they wish they could do so again. The old men are vulnerable, and therefore fearful, but in the days of their youth they were courageous and useful citizens, a position they try to regain in the moment of crisis. Their presentation should be made more sympathetic by this realisation, and the chorus be given a more authoritative position as men who have long lives of civic service behind them.

c. Thematic implications: children at war

Further understanding of the thematic significance of the chorus' old age can be gained by considering the imagistic expansion of the choral identity in lines 72-82. This passage gives a sense of a development of a train of thought, and is articulated by a paratactic sequence of present indicative active verbs and participles (μίμνομεν, νέμοντες, ἀνάσσων, ἔνι,²²⁷ στείχει, ἀλαίνει). Moreover, the second and third 'movements' of the passage, which are the two comparisons in 76-8 and 79-82, are

²²⁵ Cf. n. 294 for the assignment of lines in the passage containing line 1652.

²²⁶ For this last, cf. Winnington-Ingram (1954a).

²²⁷ Whether ἔνι is a contracted form of ἔνεστι (Fraenkel (1950) *ad* 78), or the longer form of ἐν with ἐστί supplied (Denniston and Page (1957) *ad* 78), the sequence of indicative active verbs continues unbroken.

articulated with τε ... θ', another non-subordinating, connective construction. The impression created is of an unfolding sense of identity.

The development of the choral thought in this passage is as follows:

1. We, the old men, were left behind by the expedition, since we were as weak as children (72-5);
2. Children are weak and unwarlike, like old men (76-8);
3. Old men are no stronger than children, and therefore also unwarlike (79-82).

Although this development of thought is understandable, the phraseology of the passage is unexpectedly expansive, and seems to emphasise two ideas: that the old chorus is unwarlike; and that children are (like the chorus, who are like children) also unwarlike. While neither idea is surprising, the second, auxiliary though it may be, is expressed in a highly emphatic way, and forms important thematic connections with other parts of the *parodos* by contributing to the narrative of the theme of weakness and vulnerability of children at war.

This theme is developed initially in lines 72-82 through focus on the weakness of old men, the resemblance of their state to that of children, and on the fact that war is not an environment to which either old men or children are naturally suited. This is brought out especially by such phrases as νεαρός μυελός ... ισόπρεσβυς, Ἄρης δ' οὐκ ἔνι χώραι, 76-8; παιδὸς δ' οὐδὲν ἀρείων, 81; and also by such paradoxical reflections on the condition of the old men as ισχύν / ισόπαιδα, 74-5, which give the reason for the chorus' unsuitability for war: their childlike weakness. In the

context of this lengthy, multi-faceted description, the connection between weak and vulnerable children and war begins to sound deeply inappropriate, almost perverse.

Following this, the theme of the vulnerability of the young is made manifest and further developed in the rest of the *parodos* in connection with the terrible wastefulness of the death of the young in war. In particular, the description of the sacrifice of Iphigeneia is presented as a perversion of nature not only because her father is the one sacrificing,²²⁸ but also through the focus on her age, innocence, vulnerability, and unfulfilled life (cf. τεκνόποινος, 155; τέκνον, 207; παρθενοσφάγοισιν, 209; παρθενίου, 215; παρθένειον, 229; ἀταύρωτος, 245).²²⁹ The emotional effect of the sacrifice is sharpened through and expands upon the earlier development of this theme in 72-82, where the inappropriateness, the perversion of the connection between children and war is the focus.²³⁰ The theme of children's vulnerability (and innocence) is again at play in the description of the killing of the unborn young of the hare in the omen of the eagles (119-20), the import of which seems to be to predict the destruction of the Trojans,²³¹ both grown and young (cf. 358-61), born and unborn. Through its age-thematic connection with the choral self-description (72-82), the troubling nature of the omen becomes further enhanced: it deglamourises war and evokes pity for its victims.²³²

²²⁸ On the theme of the corrupted sacrifice, cf. Zeitlin (1965).

²²⁹ Although there is a difference between the inappropriateness of the chorus' and Iphigeneia's involvement in war, in that while for the chorus the inappropriateness is a function of age, Iphigeneia could never rightly join in the fighting because of her gender, the emotional effect of her sacrifice is strongly dependent on her young age.

²³⁰ This from the point of view of age. From the perspective of gender (cf. Winnington-Ingram (1948) 130-7, Gagarin (1976) 87-97), the frail and unconfident chorus is 'feminised' by the connection with Iphigeneia (and the later contrast with Klytaimestra). However, 'feminisation' of the chorus should not be pushed too far, as their character is more complex than that, both as described above, and as pertains to their narrative authority, treated in subsequent parts of this chapter (and cf. Mastrorarde (2010) 296-7).

²³¹ Cf. Lloyd-Jones (1962) 189.

²³² For discussion of Aiskhylos' deglamourisation of war, cf. Leahy (1974).

One more passage, the vulture-simile in lines 49-59, should be considered in this context. Although the primary referent of the simile is the loss of Helen, it is possible that in retrospect, from the point of view of the whole *parodos*, there also exists a secondary referent, the loss of Iphigeneia.²³³ This reading is backed up by the inconcinnity between Menelaos' loss of his wife and the vultures' loss of their children.²³⁴ This observation is substantiated by the semantic nuance of *παίδων* (50), which applies almost exclusively to the human sphere,²³⁵ and so naturally recalls Iphigeneia; and of *γόον* (57), which refers primarily to lament for the dead,²³⁶ and so is more suitably applied to Iphigeneia than to Helen. Finally, one of the two Homeric models for this simile, *Od.* xvi. 216-8, describes the reunification of Odysseus and Telemakhos, and thus provides a children-parents background to Aiskhylos' simile.²³⁷

The description of the chorus' old age, therefore, plays an important role in the development of the emotional reaction to the events described in the *parodos*: lines 72-82 imagistically develop the theme of the vulnerability of youth, which plays a part in creating the emotional effect in the description of the sacrifice of Iphigeneia and the omen of the eagles and the hare. Taken in retrospect from the point of view of the *parodos* as whole, the emotional impact of the sacrifice of Iphigeneia is, moreover, sharpened through the irony of Iphigeneia being a secondary referent of the simile of the vultures, which refers primarily to the theft of Helen, the cause of

²³³ Cf. Owen (1952) 65-6, Peradotto (1969a) 13, Lebeck (1971) 8-9, Schenker (1999) 650. Edwards (1977) 23-4 suggests other possible referents.

²³⁴ Cf. Knox (1952) 18.

²³⁵ Heath (1999a) 23 notes that the only previous application of *παίδων* to non-human children is in a fable of Arkhilokhos (179 West).

²³⁶ Fraenkel (1950) *ad* 57.

²³⁷ Cf. Fraenkel (1950) *ad* 48ff. The other model that Fraenkel mentions, *Il.* xvi. 428-9, may also contribute to this atmosphere: it describes the combat between Patroklos and Sarpedon, but is immediately followed by Zeus' lamentation for his son's imminent death.

Iphigeneia's death. This reading of the simile provides another portrayal of the vulnerability of the young, and of the grief that accompanies their death (cf. ἄλγεσι παίδων, 50). This theme emerges as both being omnipresent in the *parodos*, and as being closely linked in its development to the presentation of the chorus' old age.

d. Choral self-identification and the mood of the *parodos*

The old age of the chorus also informs the emotional development of the ode more generally.²³⁸ The start of the *parodos* is marked by confidence, although the language used for its expression may be ominous (cf. the preceding discussion of the dual referents of the vulture simile, Helen and Iphigeneia). The confidence is expressed in the chorus' ability to state through the simile of 49–59 their opinion that Zeus is on the side of the Atreidai, and suggest with significant plausibility that it is Zeus Xenios (61-2) who is the specific manifestation of the helping god, thereby strengthening the impression that Agamemnon should succeed in the war.²³⁹

However, after this their thoughts turn to the war and its practicalities, what it means for the Greeks and the Trojans to fight each other for the unworthy Helen (62-7). Naturally, during this description of the hardships of the armies in combat, their mood begins to shift from confidence to a sense of greater foreboding, pity, and even some concern (67-71). At this point of increased anxiety, marked by descriptions of the

²³⁸ Oscillation between emotions can also be observed in other figures in this play, for instance the Watchman; cf. Schenker (1999) 649-57. However, this does not mean that these emotional dynamics cease to be individually fitted to each character: this section argues that in the case of the chorus, they become integrated into and explored by their character as old men.

²³⁹ Cf. Jones (1962) 78-9: "by repeatedly applying to Zeus the adjective *xenios* ... Aeschylus renders Paris's offence precise and impossible to ignore".

physicality of war (cf. for instance the wrestling term παλαίσματα, 63), it is natural for the chorus to remember their age and its weakness, especially as this was also the reason for which they were not involved in the expedition. This becomes particularly relevant in the context of the ethical connection between the chorus and the Argive community (cf. above): the chorus' age takes on significance as it becomes a means of justifying their remaining in Argos, even against their natural inclinations. The shift to self-description follows logically upon the changes in the chorus' mood, which passes from confidence to foreboding and a sense of inevitability (cf. ἔστι δ' ὄπιρ νῦν / ἔστι, τελεῖται δ' ἔς τὸ πεπρωμένον, 67-8), and culminates in the descriptive manifestation of this in the account of their vulnerable, useless, and unhappy aged state (72-82).

The development of the choral mood proceeds from this point of low confidence by taking on a highly anxious register in the following lines (83-91), which are full of short, agitated, anaphoric questions and expressions; and which convey a sense of imprecation, almost of pleading with Klytaimestra to reveal to them why she sets the sacrifices burning. Note, for instance, the string of questioning words, and clauses growing in length, focus and intensity, in lines 85-7 (τί χρέος; τί νέον; τί δ' ἐπαισθομένη, / τίνος ἀγγελίας / πειθοῖ περίπεμπτα θυοσκεῖς;). A similar effect is created by the unusually sustained sequence of genitive plural endings, arranged in responsive rhythmical patterns, in the lines immediately following (88-91): πάντων δὲ θεῶν τῶν ἀστυνόμων, / ὑπάτων, χθονίων, τῶν τε θυραίων / τῶν τ' ἀγοραίων / βωμοὶ δάφροισι φλέγονται.

However, after considering the possible significance of the sacrifices, the chorus dare to hope that the reason for them is good rather than bad (100-3):

ἢ [sc. μέριμνα] νῦν τοτὲ μὲν κακόφρων τελέθει, 100
τοτὲ δ' ἐκ θυσιῶν ἀγανὴ φανθεῖσ'
ἐλπίς ἀμύνει φροντίδ' ἄπληστον
καὶ θυμοβόρον φρενὶ λύπην.

These lines state that the mood of the chorus is unstable, and the (delayed) anaphoric parallel construction of τοτὲ μὲν ... τοτὲ δ' underlines this changeability. However, these are not random fluctuations, and the progression of the choral mood is presented skilfully in the text. The resurgence of hope (ἐλπίς) is introduced through the imagery of healing in φαρμασσομένη (94), παρηγορίαις (95), and λέξασ' ... / ... παιῶν τε γενοῦ / τῆσδε μερίμνης (97-9),²⁴⁰ which eloquently combines the chorus' sense of anxiety and desire for relief, and presents a transition between their two moods. Subsequently, following lines 100-3, the elevation of mood leads into a statement of choral authority, based on a discussion of a different, positive aspect of old age (104-6) – its narrative authority (these lines pass without specific comment for the moment, as they are discussed later in the chapter). Ironically, however, it is through the narrative of the sacrifice of Iphigeneia that the rest of the *parodos* uncovers the roots of the chorus' uncertainty; and thus concludes on a note of foreboding, with the only subsequent break in the narrative and potential shift in mood being the Hymn to Zeus (160-83). (However, the extent to which this really is a shift in the mood is questionable, as in this passage the chorus seek to justify to themselves by appeal to Zeus the rationale for the terrible events that they are describing.²⁴¹)

²⁴⁰ Cf. Lebeck (1971) 20-1.

²⁴¹ Cf. Smith (1980) 41: "They [the chorus] can find no likely ground or explanation for what happened at Aulis unless, reluctantly and as it were under compulsion to end a fruitless search, they are to refer it to Zeus".

Notably, both in 72-82, which develop and make manifest the chorus' point of low confidence,²⁴² and in 104-6, where the chorus experience a peak of hopes, the expression of their emotional state is connected to (and to some extent depends on) the different aspects of their self-evaluation as old men. In this respect, the self-identification and the self-characterisation of the chorus as old in lines 72-82 (and 104-6) of the *parodos* is not an abrupt digression, but integral to the emotional development of the ode.

The presentation of the chorus' old age in lines 72-82 emerges as a significant element for understanding the *Agamemnon*. It characterises the chorus in a subtle and balanced way, presenting both its negative and positive aspects: the chorus are old and weak, yet at the same time civically minded in their regret that they could not help the expedition. Furthermore, old age plays an important part in the thematic construction of the ode, as the choral self-description picks up and amplifies the themes of the horror of war, especially in relation to the weak and vulnerable. Finally, the chorus' self-evaluations on the basis of their old age appear as key elements for understanding the emotional outline and progression of the *parodos*.

ii) Choral Authority

Another important area of the play's thematic development in which the old age of the choristers plays a part is the development of the chorus' knowledge and authority.

²⁴² Cf. Rosenmeyer (1982) 176.

Although in reconstructions of the epistemological frameworks of the *Agamemnon* scholars have connected the idea of the chorus' experience with their authority, they have not assessed fully some of the implications that their identity, including that of old men, has for this conception. This section will attempt to bridge the gap by suggesting a link between the old age of the chorus and their authority. It will argue that the authority of the old men is built on a broad basis of interaction between the human and the divine. Due to its position, the chorus is powerless to negotiate the terms of this interaction, though in the end this interaction substantially informs and empowers their insight into events.

a. The aged chorus' inspiration

The lines which represent most explicitly the process of the creation of choral authority, and its connection with old age, are 104-6:²⁴³

κύριός εἰμι θροεῖν ὄδιον κράτος αἴσιον ἀνδρῶν
ἐντελέων· ἔτι γὰρ θεόθεν καταπνεΐει 105
πειθῶ, μολπᾶν ἀλκᾶν, σύμφυτος αἰῶν.²⁴⁴

*I have the authority to utter aloud the auspicious, expeditionary power
of the leading men – for still the life that was born with me breathes
down from the gods persuasion, the strength of songs.*

These lines follow upon a passage of greater confidence in the happy outcome of events, as was noted above. However, the passage also reacts against the description

²⁴³ The reading of these lacunose lines is taken from Sommerstein (2008). The text is given without discussion at this stage, although in later parts of this chapter important variants are discussed. These lines are also discussed specifically from the point of view of choral authority by Smethurst (1972) 92-3. However, Smethurst's approach is limited, and indeed invalid: cf. the criticism of it in Leahy (1973).

²⁴⁴ The translation is appended here for the reader's convenience in following the argument of this section.

of the choral self-identity in lines 72-82, in that the present lines redefine the place of the chorus in society, which was earlier undercut by reference to their frailty. The chorus begin to carve for themselves a position of authority, and find a function to perform within the communal setting: whereas before they lacked martial strength and could not join the expedition, here they describe themselves as being in a position to access a kind of ἀλκή – the ἀλκή of song. This suggests that the chorus are not incapacitated by their old age: the weight of the second, explanatory clause (ἔτι γάρ etc.) is that the old men *still* possess power even in their age to relate the past. Thus, the descriptive emphasis falls on the fact that the chorus possess narrative authority, and this is also suggested by the highly emphatic κύριός εἰμι (104), and the almost visionary, prophetic implications of the present tense πέμπει (111).²⁴⁵

Additionally, however, this new and somewhat unexpected statement of authority by the chorus becomes implicitly connected with their age, since the explanatory clause ἔτι γάρ θεόθεν καταπνεΐει / πειθῶ μολπᾶν ἀλκᾶν, σύμφυτος αἰῶν emphasises the significance of time in the life of the chorus: the clause begins with a temporal marker (ἔτι), and concludes with a temporally-oriented statement regarding the life-course of the chorus (σύμφυτος αἰῶν). All this suggests the importance of (the passage of) time in their acquisition of authority. The phrase σύμφυτος αἰῶν is particularly informative in this regard, since it states outright the connection between old age and authority. The scholiast interpreted the phrase as meaning the old age of the chorus (ὁ γὰρ σύμφυτός μοι αἰῶν, ὃ ἔστι τὸ γῆρας),²⁴⁶ and this interpretation was accepted by Fraenkel, who defines αἰῶν as the lifetime of a man: “the idea that a man’s lifetime is born, grows up, and ages with him” is familiar from other plays of

²⁴⁵ Discussed further below, p. 94.

²⁴⁶ Cf. the *Scholia Vetera in Aeschylum, ad 105-7 M.*

Aiskhylos and from Sophokles. Fraenkel refers to Ais. *Prom.* 981: ἐκδιδάσκει πάνθ' ὁ γηράσκων χρόνος; Ais. fr. 362. 1-2 Sommerstein: ἀλλ' οὔτε πολλὰ τραύματ' ἐν στέρνοις λαβῶν / θνήσκει τις, εἰ μὴ τέρμα ξυντρέχοι βίου; Soph. *OT.* 1082-3: συγγενεῖς / μῆνες; Soph. *Aj.* 623: παλαιᾶ μὲν σύντροφος ἀμέραι; and Soph. *OK.* 7: χρόνος ξυνών.²⁴⁷ In all of these passages, the idea persists that the time of life is a measure that is superimposed on life itself. Just as in the case of Iphigeneia, whose αἰών is that of a maiden (αἰῶν τε παρθένειον, 229), so for the old men their αἰών is commensurate with their old age. Thereby, the suggestion is (naturally) made that authoritative narration of past events is the prerogative of old age: the authority of the chorus seems to exist not merely alongside its age, but specifically as a function of it.

Moreover, as the *parodos* unfolds, the chorus' knowledge and authority are revealed as being increasingly impressive. They are able to describe the events at Aulis with superlative detail, even recording emotion of the participants (βέλει / φιλοίκτωι, 240-1); quoting directly the words of the primary actors of the sacrifice that takes place (cf. 126-38, 140-155, quoting Kalkhas; and 206-17, quoting Agamemnon); and describing the sacrifice of Iphigeneia in striking visual terms (cf. κρόκου βαφὰς δ' ἐς πέδον χέουσα, 239; τῶς / ἐν γραφαῖς, 241-2).

Since it is likely that the chorus should be understood as not having been present at the sacrifice in Aulis,²⁴⁸ they show remarkable capacity both to describe what

²⁴⁷ Fraenkel (1950) *ad* 105f. Cf. Raeburn and Thomas (2011) *ad* 105-7.

²⁴⁸ The question of the chorus' absence or presence at Aulis is seldom tackled explicitly in critical literature. The usual view, often taken as an assumption or with minimal argument, that the chorus must have been present at Aulis, is unlikely to be correct (for this view, cf. e.g. Fraenkel (1950) *ad* 247, Denniston and Page (1957) *ad* 247, Gagarin (1976) 146). In the simplest terms, it is implausible that the chorus of old men would have gone with the expedition as far as Aulis, or that they would have

happened, and to weave the facts into a powerful narration. The source for this authority seems to be divine inspiration, described in lines 104-6, and directly referred to with the portentous verb *καταπνεΐει*, and the explicit *θεόθεν* (105).²⁴⁹ This impression is substantiated by the fact that within the lines in question the chorus also begin to use elevated language, and change metre from anapaests to dactyls, a metre that recalls the inspired heroic narrative and prophetic hexameters.²⁵⁰ In fact, line 104 is a complete hexameter and contains two poetic words, *θροεῖν* and *αἴσιον*, which may be taken as a further indication of the affinity of the language here with inspired poetic song.²⁵¹ At the same time, lines 104-6 make it clear that the inspiration for the authority of the chorus is a function of the chorus' old age: it is their age which, as the subject of the explanatory clause (105-6, starting with *ἔτι*), 'breathes persuasion down from the gods'.

stayed there even when the delay caused provisions to dwindle. Furthermore, if the chorus had performed an action as unusual and inexplicable as this, it is surprising that they say nothing explicit about it in the whole of the *parodos*.

As it is, the only evidence for their presence in Aulis is the inconclusive statement in line 248: *τὰ δ' ἔνθεν οὐτ' εἶδον οὐτ' ἐννέπω*. While this line has been read to imply that what was described previously to it was seen by the chorus (cf. Denniston and Page (1957) *ad* 247), this interpretation is not secure. The line does not *have* to have any backward reference to the chorus' preceding narrative of events, and could instead be read as a simple statement of fact that the chorus made in order to avoid describing the sacrifice and its aftermath, since they find these disturbing and frightening. Moreover, the chorus need not have been witness to the events at Aulis in order to narrate them (cf. Ferrari (1997) 41), as their narration is inspired by the gods – as will be discussed forthwith.

Thus, in light of the dramatic implausibility of the chorus making their way to Aulis and a lack of any explicit confirmation of this journey, the ambiguity of line 248 is more productively interpreted as a *play* on the idea that the chorus were in Aulis, before the realisation that this is an unlikely possibility. This play would also be testament to the force and authority of the chorus' narrative: because it is so convincing, the audience might for a second think that they are saying that they were at Aulis, before dismissing this possibility as unjustified. The line itself, therefore, should be taken to mean: "I neither saw what came after [because I was not there], nor do I speak about it [despite my prophetic powers, because I do not want to]".

²⁴⁹ Cf. Pucci (1992) 516, Ferrari (1997) 41. An interesting parallel is the chorus' song in Soph. *OK*. 1044-95, where the chorus describe the battle between Theseus' men and Kreon's army, all the while remaining on stage. The detail with which the chorus elaborate their narration is significant, as it arises partly from inspiration (cf. *προμνᾶται τί μοι / γνώμα*, 1075-6, with Jebb (1885) *ad* 1075f.; *μάντις εἶμ'*, 1080; note also 1096-7). However, the presupposition of that choral ode is not identical to the *parodos* of the *Agamemnon*, since it is emphasised that what it presents is the chorus' conjecture of what is likely to be taking place: cf. *οἴμαι*, 1054; *ἢ που*, 1059; and *ἔρδουσιν ἢ μέλλουσιν*; (1074).

²⁵⁰ Raeburn and Thomas (2011) *ad* 104-59.

²⁵¹ Cf. Ferrari (1997) 41.

b. Double-determination, and the example of the epic narrator

Divine inspiration and old age, therefore, are mixed together to produce the narrative authority that the chorus enjoys in the *parodos*. These separate causes of authority, with old age implying authority through wisdom, and divine inspiration implying authority that is based on revelations that come from outside of the human experience, are difficult to integrate into a single concept. This can be done, however, by recognising the similarities between the situation of the chorus, and the complex motivations that can be traced for other characters in this play – for instance, Agamemnon.

The motivation of Agamemnon to sacrifice his daughter is based to some extent on the divine backing for the expedition that he is given, and by the fact that he must avenge the affront to Zeus. However, this is not the only motivation for it, as strictly speaking the sequence of events that generates the expedition commences with the Atreidai, as is shown in the simile of the vultures, where the birds' cry stirs divine vengeance, not the other way around (49-62).²⁵² Moreover, it is worth noting that the omen of the eagles and the hare is not prescriptive, but descriptive, in that it does not necessitate the expedition, but only predicts its outcome if it were to go ahead.²⁵³ Finally, it has been argued that the word *συμπνέων* (187) suggests Agamemnon's active willingness to go along with the expedition even at the cost of the life of his own daughter.²⁵⁴ Thus, although the expedition went ahead both because of the curse of the house of Atreus, and because of the presence of divine encouragement (though

²⁵² Cf. Smith (1973) 4-5.

²⁵³ Cf. the discussion of Gantz (1983) 74-5.

²⁵⁴ Cf. Scott (1966) 463-4.

these are not two completely separate issues), a part of the motivation for the sacrifice of Iphigeneia remains internal to Agamemnon's character, and can be seen to stem from his personality.²⁵⁵

This sort of interplay of motivation and causation in the play can be described as 'double-determination', an idea applicable to discussion of a number of genres and authors.²⁵⁶ The concept as it is employed here means that a character performs his role both because of who he is (i.e. what sort of character he is), and because he is influenced by the gods. This interpretation of choral authority and knowledge has a significant impact on the understanding of the chorus' role and position in the play, especially as a function of their age. That role here is to be narrators of past events, and they are aided in this by being the sort of people that they are (i.e. old men). The personalities of the chorus, delineated by a traditional characteristic of age, the fact that they already possess wisdom and knowledge, are suitable vessels for divine inspiration – since a crucial aspect of the process of double-determination is precisely the fact that the godhead interacts with personalities that are suitable and receptive to its interventions.

²⁵⁵ Although there is significant debate regarding the extent of the effect of Agamemnon's personality on the events, there is general agreement that his character played a role in them. Cf. the moderate position of Lesky (1966) 81: "It is still the king's personal decision springing from his will, but the freedom of will is overshadowed by the overwhelming force of the situation which clearly influences the decision." Lloyd-Jones (1962) 192 puts it in stronger terms: "Zeus is indeed determined that the fleet must sail; Agamemnon has indeed no choice. But how has Zeus chosen to enforce his will? Not by charging Calchas or some other accredited mouthpiece to inform the king of his decision; but by sending Ate to take away his judgement so that he cannot do otherwise." An even stronger position is expressed by Peradotto (1969b) 250: "The result depends less upon the goddess than upon the kind of man Agamemnon is." It is perhaps telling that Agamemnon uses Iphigeneia for the entertainment of his guests, allowing her to sing in front of them (243-7). This would not have been usual practice in Athenian households, and might be emblematic of an inappropriate tendency in Agamemnon's usage of family. Cf. Fraenkel (1950) *ad* 245ff., Raeburn and Thomas (2011) *ad* 244.

²⁵⁶ On double motivation in Homer and tragedy cf. Dodds (1951) 7, 16, 31, 51 n. 10; and Dodds (1973) 56 n. 5 (specifically in the *Oresteia*).

This phenomenon can be illustrated by the way that the chorus is constructed in the *parodos* as playing the role of the epic, divinely inspired narrator, a narrator like Demodokos in *Od.* viii, who, though absent from Troy, can describe the events and the aftermath of the conflict as if he had been there (487-91).²⁵⁷ Firstly, the chorus is placed in the role of the narrator in lines 104-6 by a number of epic motifs that occur there. As was mentioned above, θεόθεν in line 105 recalls the divine inspiration of the epic poet, albeit in an anonymous way, whereas the epic poet most often calls specifically on the Muse (e.g. *Il.* i. 1).²⁵⁸ Additionally, on the reading ἀνδρῶν / ἐντελέων (104-5), adopted for instance by Sommerstein in his edition of the play,²⁵⁹ the chorus announce that they are about to embark on singing about the deeds of famous men, which is also the special prerogative of epic, often stated explicitly in epic proems: consider the well-known openings of the *Iliad* (Μῆνιν ἄειδε, θεὰ, Πηληϊάδεω Ἀχιλῆος, i. 1), the *Odyssey* (Ἄνδρα μοι ἔννεπε, Μοῦσα, πολύτροπον, i. 1), and also of less well known epics, such as the *Thebais* (Ἄργος ἄειδε, θεὰ, πολυδίψιον, ἔνθεν ἄνακτες, fr. 1 West). Also illustrative is Akhilleus' song of the famous deeds of men in *Il.* ix. 189 (ἄειδε δ' ἄρα κλέα ἀνδρῶν).

²⁵⁷ Cf. Graziosi and Haubold (2010) 1-4 for discussion.

²⁵⁸ For the connection between ἀλκή of poetry and the Muse specifically, cf. Pindar *Ol.* i. 111-2: ἐμοὶ μὲν ὦν / Μοῖσα καρτερώτατον βέλος ἀλκῆι τρέφει. Relevant also is Hesiod's *Theogony* 29-34, where the Muses breathe into Hesiod the power of song: ἐνέπνευσαν δέ μοι αὐδήν (31) – cf. καταπνέει in *Ag.* 105. Fraenkel (1950) *ad* 106 also gives parallels for the phrase θεόθεν καταπνέει taken together: μή σοι νέμεσις θεόθεν καταπνεύσει, Plato *Comicus* fr. 189. 15 Kassel-Austin; ποιητῆς δὲ ἄσσα μὲν ἂν γράφηι μετ' ἐνθουσιασμοῦ καὶ ἱεροῦ πνεύματος, καλὰ κάρτα ἐστίν, Demokritos fr. 18 Diels-Kranz; and also Plato *Philosophus Meno* 99d, *Phaedr.* 262d.

²⁵⁹ Sommerstein (2008). The manuscript reading ἐκτελέων, which would mean something like “ripe” in the present context, makes obscure sense and seems to add little dramatic effectiveness to these lines. Cf. Fraenkel (1950) *ad* 105. However, ἐκτελέων is accepted by West (1990a) and Raeburn and Thomas (2011).

Additionally, line 104 is a complete dactylic hexameter (as was mentioned above) which, as well as being the metre of prophecy, is the metre of epic,²⁶⁰ and this substantiates – together with the proem-like, first person singular diction of the chorus in these lines – the creation of the epic ‘narratorial’ persona. Furthermore, specifically epic diction has occurred in the *parodos* before this point. Most strikingly, in the chorus’ description of the expedition, the Greek army is referred to by its epic name in line 66 (Δαναοῖσιν).²⁶¹ Furthermore, an epic flavour is given to the narrative through the ‘visionary’ sense of the present tense πέμπει (111, noted above), as it recalls the separation between participation and representation that exists in the stance taken by the epic poet regarding his material: that distance has been forced on the chorus by their age, since because of it they could not participate in the expedition. Their age, therefore, becomes a source of their narrative strength in this respect.

Furthermore, there are a number of epically inspired dramatic elements in the *parodos*, such as the omen of the eagles and the hare, which Heath, amongst others, relates to the Iliadic omen at ii. 308-19.²⁶² Similarly, there are epic echoes in the way that the simile of the vultures is employed in the *parodos*. Most simply, the simile

²⁶⁰ A further metrical mark that creates a connection between this song and epic is the enjambment of ἐντελέων in line 105, which mirrors metrically the enjambment of οὐλομένην in *Il.* i. 2. The mirrored enjambment deepens the connection between the persona of the chorus and the epic narrator. However, the iambic intrusion of ὅπως Ἀχαι- in line 108 (as well as the shortening of the dactylic lines from a full hexameter in 104 to 5da in 105 and 106 each) suggests a tension between the Aiskhylean presentation of this chorus and the epic theme: this is epic, brought to the more variegated world of Athenian drama, and done in a new, Aiskhylean way.

²⁶¹ In the surviving Aiskhylos, the name ‘Danaans’ seems to occur only in contexts of the Trojan War. Aside from the present instance, the word occurs in *Ag.* 148 and 1466, and also in fr. 131. 2 Sommerstein (from the *Myrmidons*): [τὰδε μὲν λεύσσεις, φαίδιμ’ Ἀχιλλεῦ,] / δοριλιυμάντους Δαναῶν μόχθους]. In this context, cf. also Ἀργείων, 45: although calling the Greeks Argives makes sense independently within the play insofar as the dramatic location is actually Argos, it is also one of the ways that the Greeks are commonly referred to in Homer.

²⁶² Heath (2001). Though it has also been argued that this omen was influenced by Arkhilokhos’ fable of the fox and the eagle (fr. 172-81 West): cf. Heath (1999b) 396, and West (1979), Janko (1980), and Davies (1981).

recalls epic in terms of its subject matter, the animal world,²⁶³ and commentators have in the past even suggested specific Homeric models for it.²⁶⁴ Looking at the simile in more detail, it emerges that its structure also has similarities with the extended Homeric simile, as it has been analysed by Ben-Porat.²⁶⁵ He notes that the extended Homeric simile frequently portrays changes in grammatical subjects, and often includes extensive description of (especially) the vehicle with multiple phrases and even clauses or sentences. In effect, the epic simile goes far beyond the simple “X is like Y”, and instead can take the form of “X is like Y, which does Z, and which has A done to it by B”. It is also introduced by a simile marker, and is likewise closed by one. The second marker is normally followed by an expanded description of the tenor.²⁶⁶ These elements are all evident in the present simile (49-62):

τρόπον αἰγυπιῶν οἷτ' ἐκπατίοις	
ἄλγεσι παίδων ὕπατοι λεχέων	50
στροφοδινοῦνται	
πτερύγων ἐρετμοῖσιν ἐρεσσόμενοι,	
δεμνιοτήρη	
πόνον ὀρταλίχων ὀλέσαντες·	
ὑπατος δ' αἴων ἢ τις Ἀπόλλων	55
ἢ Πᾶν ἢ Ζεὺς οἰωνόθροον	
γόνον ὄξυβόαν τῶνδε μετοίκων	
ὑστερόποινον	
πέμπει παραβᾶσιν Ἐρινύν.	
οὕτω δ' Ἀτρέως παῖδας ὁ κρείσσων	60
ἐπ' Ἀλεξάνδρωι πέμπει ξένιος	
Ζεὺς.	

The simile is introduced with the marker *τρόπον*, and closed with the marker *οὕτω*.

Moreover, there is a change of subject in the middle of the simile, with the vultures as

²⁶³ Indeed, there are a number of similes in Homer that use specifically the image of the vulture: cf. e.g. *Il.* xvi. 428-30, xvii. 460.

²⁶⁴ These are *Od.* xvi. 216-9 and *Il.* xvi. 428-30, though Heath (1999b) 397-8 also suggests *Il.* xi. 113-4 and *Il.* xviii. 316-23. Heath (2001) also discusses the connection between the simile and the omen from *Il.* ii. 308-19.

²⁶⁵ Ben-Porat (1992).

²⁶⁶ Ben-Porat (1992) 740-1.

the subjects of lines 49-54 (main verb: στροφοδινοῦνται); and the gods Apollo, Pan and Zeus the subjects of 55-9 (main verb: πέμπει). Following the end of the simile, and after the closing marker, the tenor is expanded, and is made to relate to it analytically through the narrowing of focus in its presentation of causality: instead of the three possible gods responsible, Zeus alone is said to be the divinity sending the expedition. Furthermore, as in Homeric similes the different ‘movements’ of the simile are presented paratactically, and are joined by the particle δε.²⁶⁷

There are, in addition, other ways in which the present example resembles the extended Homeric simile. For instance, like many Homeric cases, the relationship between the tenor and the vehicle becomes complicated by the movement of the imagery.²⁶⁸ While at the start the Atreidai are compared to the vultures that are bereaved of their children (Helen), by the end they are said to be the Furies who are sent against Troy, and the verbal echo between the simile and the context, provided both by the name of Zeus and by the verb πέμπει, emphasises this arrangement.²⁶⁹ Furthermore, the context of the tenor invades the simile, and the simile thereby becomes part of the dramatic narrative.²⁷⁰ So here, the vultures are described as rowing with oars through the air (ἔρετμοῖσιν ἔρεσσόμενοι, 52), with the birds’ wings being described metaphorically as oars; and furthermore the punishment of the thieves of the bird-children is said to be delayed (ὑστερόποινον, 58). These details mirror the sailing of the ships and the long duration of the siege of Troy, which the old men

²⁶⁷ For a Homeric example, see *Il.* xx. 164-73.

²⁶⁸ Cf. e.g. *Il.* xi. 556-65, xvii. 520-4.

²⁶⁹ For verbal echoes between simile and its surrounding narrative, cf. e.g. *Il.* iii. 1-7.

²⁷⁰ For this idea, cf. Lyne (1989) 68-70, who discusses *Il.* xv. 263-9. Lyne calls this technique narrative substitution. ‘Narrative substitution’ develops the idea put forward by Silk (1974) 139-40, who talks about ‘enactment’ by the simile of real (narrative) events.

still believe to be going on (cf. 83-103). The expedition and the lengthy siege are thus narrated through imagery: the kind of narration that happens in Homer.

In light of the above, the chorus emerge as a body invested with significant and privileged knowledge based on divine inspiration akin to that of the epic narrator. However, it is important to note that the connection between the chorus and the divinely inspired persona of the epic poet is not perfect, as the knowledge of the chorus is subject to some limitations. The epic poet, who does not have personal experience of, or a personal stake in, the events he is describing, but has been told of them by the Muse, is therefore omniscient as regards both the affairs of mortals and the affairs of the gods. By contrast, the chorus' function in the play is not that of an external, omniscient narrator: although their old age – and the fact that because of it they were not involved in the expedition – creates narrative distance between them and the past events that recalls the narrative distance between the Homeric poet and the events he is describing, the chorus necessarily remain cast members of an unfolding tragedy, and so are on the most basic level still dramatic participants, not external narrators.²⁷¹

The combined presence of θεόθεν and σύμφυτος αἰών in the programmatic lines 104-6, therefore, forms the basis of the complex way in which choral knowledge is formed in the play, as the chorus is led towards the full extent of their knowledge both by their wisdom and experience and by the inspiration and insight that come from the divine. The divine inspiration of the chorus brings into sharper focus their

²⁷¹ The metrical structure of the ode suggests the same: the ode moves from opening dactyls into more lyric and mixed dactyls, and then into purely lyric metres (cf. the metrical scheme described in Raeburn and Thomas (2011) 253-7). It is as if epic (and its omniscient narrator) have been 'recast' into the world of Athenian tragedy and its characters. Cf. n. 260.

characterisation as old men, since divine inspiration that is created as a result of ‘double-determination’ settles on the chorus because of their suitability to bear it. As a result, old age is inextricably tied to the idea of the chorus as authoritative and knowledgeable speakers. However, that is not to say that they have perfect knowledge of what is going on. The chorus is not a prophetic entity, and the next section will describe the limitations of their knowledge.

c. Choral insight and the world of prophecy

The complex relationship between the chorus’ human and ‘inspired’ knowledge that emerges as a result of the process of ‘double-determination’ can be used to explain certain passages of the ode that contain multiple layers of meaning and reference. One example is the occasion of the first naming of Klytaimestra, which suggests her affinity with her woe-bringing sister, Helen, even though the similarity of the two women in this regard has not yet been revealed onstage. Klytaimestra is addressed initially by the chorus as the daughter of Tyndareus (σὺ δέ, Τυνδάρεω / θύγατερ, 83-4), which blurs her identity with her sister’s. Although it has been frequently pointed out that both sisters share a number of traits, such as their infidelity and perversion of the role of wife, the chorus as dramatic characters are at that time not in a position fully to appreciate these similarities: Klytaimestra has not yet killed her husband, nor has she as yet revealed the extent of her involvement with Aigisthos. While the chorus might suspect foul play (cf. 783-809, the chorus’ welcoming speech to Agamemnon), their exchange with Cassandra reveals that they know nothing for certain: even when Cassandra talks of some stay-at-home (οἰκουρόν, 1225) roaming

in Agamemnon's bed (ἐν λέχει στρωφώμενον, 1224), the chorus cannot make out what or who she is referring to (1242-5). Thus, as dramatic characters the chorus cannot appreciate the full significance of their reference to Klytaimestra as the daughter of Tyndareus. Their speech, therefore, by carrying more significance than can be meant by the speakers, emerges as 'inspired'.

Another example consists of the fact that it is the chorus who begin using the imagery of the net that develops so significantly in the trilogy. Immediately after their first dialogue with Klytaimestra, they sing that a net now covers all the Trojans, and none can escape it (355-61):

ὦ Ζεῦ βασιλεῦ καὶ Νύξ φίλια	355
μεγάλων κόσμων κτεάτειρα,	
ἥτ' ἐπὶ Τροίας πύργοις ἔβαλες	
στεγανὸν δίκτυον, ὡς μήτε μέγαν	
μήτ' οὔν νεαρῶν τιν' ὑπερτελέσαι	
μέγα δουλείας	360
γάγαμον ἄτης παναλώτου.	

The irony here is, however, that the net, and the rules of retribution signified by it, are truly inescapable for everyone, even Agamemnon, whose safe return the chorus fervently desire. The irony is extended further by the fact that in the same stasimon the chorus sing what seems to be a condemnation of Troy and Paris, and an explanation of the divine will that brought them down (367-402);²⁷² yet the terms of this description will apply equally well to Agamemnon's transgression. Agamemnon's house is wealthy to excess, as Klytaimestra points out (πένεσθαι δ' οὐκ ἐπίσταται δόμος, 962), just as Troy was wealthy (φλεόντων δωμαίων

²⁷² Cf. Denniston and Page (1957) *ad* 367ff., who argue that these lines refer to Troy and Paris. Indeed, Paris is mentioned both before the excursus (ἐπ' Ἀλεξάνδρῳ, 363), and especially significantly at its end (οἶος καὶ Πάρις, 399).

ὑπέρφεν, 377). Agamemnon falls prey to persuasion when he is convinced by Klytaimestra to tread on the tapestries, just like earlier Troy fell under the spell of Peitho and transgressed (βιᾶται δ' ἅ τάλαινα Πειθῶ, 385). Thus, the first stasimon presents a number of themes that begin the sequence of explanation of the play's events, but which at that time transcend the dramatic occasion and knowledge of the chorus.

A variation on this phenomenon is the chorus' creation of 'decodable' patterns of imagery.²⁷³ These patterns emerge in the chorus' language and have ramifications beyond their current dramatic position in the text: the chorus as dramatic characters (unwittingly) create a sequence of utterances that bears out a greater than intended amount of meaning in the context of the drama as whole. By its intensity, multiple signification, and analytical requirements, this sequence begins to resemble something quasi-prophetic; and, in terms of the inspired nature that the chorus claim for their speech, 'doubly-determined'. An example of such a nexus of imagery is the mixing of the human and animal worlds, as it has been analysed by Heath. At the very start of the *parodos*, the chorus conflate a human metaphor with an image from the animal kingdom: Menelaos is described as a prosecutor in court (ἀντίδικος, 41), yet he and Agamemnon are described as a yoked pair (ὄχυρον ζεῦγος Ἀτρειδᾶν, 44).²⁷⁴ Further on, and introducing the vulture-simile, the verb κλάζοντες (48) is used to describe the Atreidai and the vultures, and this verb is equally applicable to the animal and the human spheres – another example that Heath points out of the human and animal worlds being mixed to an evil end.²⁷⁵ The vulture simile itself contains further

²⁷³ Cf. Peradotto (1964), Lebeck (1971), Heath (1999a). Such patterns of imagery are found in large numbers, though of course not exclusively, in the lines spoken by the chorus.

²⁷⁴ Heath (1999a) 21.

²⁷⁵ Heath (1999a) 22.

instances of the mixing: the anthropomorphism present in παίδων (50) has been discussed above (p. 82), and the conflation of the ‘human’ δεμνιοτήρη (53) with the ‘animal’ ὀρταλίχων (54) achieves the same effect.²⁷⁶

The implications of this mixing are developed both in the rest of the play and in the trilogy as a whole. In line 1224 (†λέοντ’ ἀναλκιν† ἐν λέχει στρωφόμενον), for instance, the same conflation between the animal and the human occurs: the prophetic Cassandra says that a cowardly lion (the usual, but problematic reading)²⁷⁷ or a cowardly wolf (on Sommerstein’s conjecture)²⁷⁸ invades Agamemnon’s and Klytimestra’s bed.²⁷⁹ Cassandra’s use of this strand of imagery strikingly underlines the danger inherent in the world-order of the *Agamemnon*. In the rest of the trilogy, this idea is borne out further: as Heath has argued, in the *Eumenides* “the Furies are the embodiment of the conflated world” of human and animal.²⁸⁰ In this sense, the language of the chorus can be seen as formative of an important interpretative theme of the plays, and indeed of the trilogy. However, the chorus at the start of the *parodos* do not understand the full significance of what they are saying, especially as this significance will only be finally played out in the last play of the *Oresteia*.

Another way in which the idea of ‘double-determination’ and divine inspiration relates to the authority of the chorus is through its application to the chorus’ specific sensitivity to the atmosphere of the play. This comes out most clearly in the third stasimon, where they express their fear for Agamemnon (975-7):

²⁷⁶ Heath (1999a) 25.

²⁷⁷ Cf. Fraenkel (1950) *ad* 1224, Denniston and Page (1957) *ad* 1224.

²⁷⁸ Cf. Sommerstein (2008) 146-7. However, both variants of this line contain animal imagery, and so this line inevitably contains a ‘mixing’ of the animal and the human.

²⁷⁹ For discussion, cf. Heath (1999a) 23-5.

²⁸⁰ Heath (1999a) 26.

τίπτε μοι τόδ' ἐμπέδως
δεῖμα προστατήριον
καρδίας τερασκόπου ποτᾶται;

975

The chorus feel afraid despite the fact that they have seen with their own eyes the king's return (note the stress on agency of self in αὐτόμαρτυς ὦν, 989). However, although they place the greatest trust in their own senses, they are affected by the ambience of the drama, by their sensitivity to its foreboding development, and by their innate sensitivity to the universality of justice (cf. the self-referential πρὸς ἐνδίκους φρεσίν (996), which suggests their knowledge of justice and its workings). This sudden perception and fear is said, moreover, to be driven by their “prophetic heart” (καρδίας τερασκόπου, 977),²⁸¹ which significantly moves their authority beyond the scope of the purely human. Finally, the sense of ‘inspiration’ is enhanced by their mention of the Fury, whose lament their heart repeats (θρῆνον Ἐρινύος, 991): it is perhaps the same divinities, the unseen Furies, whom the prophetess Cassandra will identify as permanently inhabiting the House of Atreus (1186-7):

τὴν γὰρ στέγην τήνδ' οὔποτ' ἐκλείπει χορὸς
ξύμφογγος οὐκ εὐφωνος.

This sensitivity to the workings of the divine which conspired to bring about the events of the play, and their unwittingly expressive and accurate language in this regard, suggest the chorus' privileged, ‘inspired’, almost prophetic knowledge.

²⁸¹ The phrase is thus translated by Sommerstein (2008) 115. On the prophetic language generally in this passage, cf. Bowie (2009) 214-5, who also comments on the words μαντιπολεῖ (978) and θρόνον (983).

Additionally, it is notable that at the end of the play there is a moment when the chorus' understanding of the laws of divine retribution, and of the wider implications of the regicide, frightens even Klytaimestra (1574-6):

κτεάνων δὲ μέρος βαιὸν ἐχούση
πᾶν ἀποχρῆι μοι, μανίας μελάθρων
ἄλληλοφόνους ἀφελούση. 1575

The chorus are, in fact, the only characters in the play who succeed in shaking the queen's confidence. In this connection, O'Daly has suggested that Klytaimestra (in 1567–76) can restore her confidence only by significantly misunderstanding what the chorus say in 1560-6: “[b]ecause the chorus's words generalize and are not temporally fixed, Clytemnestra can understand them as she will, as referring primarily to Agamemnon”. However, “she is shown to be totally unaware of [the] implications [of the supernatural element in her action] for her own future, just as she can and will not apply the law of retribution to herself”.²⁸² The chorus, however, express the workings of divine justice correctly, and in this respect seem to be in a privileged, and again almost prophetic, position, by contrast to Klytaimestra.

However, all this is not to say that the chorus are in fact prophetic, for what separates them from prophets in the *Agamemnon* is that prophets understand fully the significance of their speech (because they can fit speech into the framework of future events), while the chorus do not: the fact that it is possible to reconcile the chorus' insight with their dramatic position as humans with limited knowledge is one of the explanatory advantages of seeing their utterance ‘doubly-determined’ in this context. Thus, despite their association with Cassandra, in that they are the only character in

²⁸² O'Daly (1985) 19.

the play who enter into conversation with her, Cassandra and the chorus are shown to possess different kinds of knowledge, and this difference is connected to their different ages and positions. Cassandra received the gift of prophecy due to Apollo's infatuation with her youth and beauty, while the chorus touch on future events unconsciously in their utterance due to the divine 'inspiration' that is a function of their old age. The contrast is brought out further by the fact that Cassandra is described as the choicest flower of the Trojan captives, picked for Agamemnon by the army (αὕτη δὲ, πολλῶν χρημάτων ἐξαίρετον / ἄνθος, 954-5); while the chorus are men of withered foliage (κατακαρφομένης, 80).

The disparity between Cassandra's and the chorus' knowledge is shown, first, by the fact that, in their dialogue, the chorus are simply unable to understand her fully. While the chorus understand her references to past events, and Thyestes' banquet in particular, whenever she mentions new evils coming to the house they do not follow what she says (cf. especially τούτων ἄιδρίς εἶμι τῶν μαντευμάτων, / ἐκεῖνα δ' ἔγνω· πᾶσα γὰρ πόλις βοᾷ, 1105-6, and 1242-54; though the pattern runs throughout the passage). Even when Cassandra says outright that Agamemnon is about to die, the chorus refuse to believe her (1246-9):

Κα. Ἀγαμέμνονός σέ φημ' ἐπόψεσθαι μόρον.
 Χο. εὐφημον, ὧ τάλαινα, κοίμησον στόμα.
 Κα. ἀλλ' οὔτι Παιῶν τῶιδ' ἐπιστατεῖ λόγῳ.
 Χο. οὐκ, εἴπερ ἔσται γ'. ἀλλὰ μὴ γένοιτό πως.

Thus, unlike Cassandra, their inspiration does not include clear knowledge of the future, only of the past. Moreover, the disparity between the levels of understanding of Cassandra and the chorus is bolstered by the metrical scheme of the passage. While

Kassandra starts the exchange singing (1072), the chorus answer her in iambic couplets. However, at 1121, in the fifth strophic pair, the whole chorus are swept up into singing in dochmiacs, and it is Kassandra whose utterance shifts towards trimeters in the sixth and seventh strophic pairs.²⁸³ Thus, the chorus not only do not understand Kassandra's words, but their emotional development and interaction in the scene is also in antithesis to hers, as they become agitated just when she becomes calmer.

Notably, the chorus display a similar lack of true understanding when confronted with the words of the other prophet who features in the play – Kalkhas. Although the chorus cite his predictions verbatim, their frightening meaning evades them (146-55):

ἰήιον δὴ καλέω Παιῶνα,
μή τινας ἀντιπνόους Δαναοῖς χρονί-
ας ἐχενῆιδας ἀπλοίας
τεύξι, σπευδομένα θυσίαν ἑτέραν, ἄνομόν τιν' ἄδαιτον, 150
ναικέων τέκτονα σύμφυτον, οὐ δει-
σήνορα· μίμνει γὰρ φοβερά παλίνορτος
οἰκονόμος δολία, μνάμων Μῆνις τεκνόποινος. 155

These lines look forward to the murder of Agamemnon, and Kalkhas' words link this with Aigisthos' and Klytaimestra's revenge. As Raeburn and Thomas have pointed out, οὐ δεισήνορα may put the audience in mind of Klytaimestra, especially given the feminine endings of the next clause (φοβερά, δολία),²⁸⁴ and the delayed position of that clause's subject (Μῆνις), which allows Klytaimestra to linger in the audience's mind. Moreover, while οἰκονόμος δολία suits Klytaimestra, παλίνορτος, μνάμων, and τεκνόποινος can also suggest Aigisthos' revenge (παλίνορτος suits

²⁸³ Cf. Raeburn and Thomas (2011) *ad* 1035-1330.

²⁸⁴ Raeburn and Thomas (2011) *ad* 148-55.

him especially well). Kalkhas' words, therefore, expose the plot to murder the king, but the chorus, by virtue of their dramatic position, are unable to recognise this.

That the chorus should not be seen as vehicles of prophecy is further suggested by two aspects of the way they describe their age in lines 72-82. Firstly, in these lines, the chorus refer to themselves as walking with the help of their staffs (ἐπὶ σκήπτροις, 75), and plying their movement upon three legs (τρίποδας μὲν ὁδούς, 80). It has been suggested by commentators that these lines refer to the famous riddle of the Sphinx.²⁸⁵ This has a bearing on how the reader should understand the interaction between the chorus and prophecy in the *Agamemnon*. On the one hand, these references evoke the riddle of the Sphinx, and thus suggest that the chorus, who are recalling the riddle, might have access to a supernatural, almost portentous authority.²⁸⁶ However, much as with their construction for themselves of the persona of an epic narrator, here too supernatural authority is only partially accessible to the chorus. This comes through in the way the riddle, while recalled by the chorus, at the same time undercuts the supernatural nature of their authority: that the chorus apply the riddle to themselves means that they emerge rather as being the epitomes of the human condition, men who finish life walking on three legs, creatures bounded by human limits.

²⁸⁵ Cf. Fraenkel (1950) *ad* 80.

²⁸⁶ Although the Sphinx archaeologically was most often associated with grave monuments and reliefs for those who died in youth, the poets “everywhere dwell upon her horrible and portentous nature” (Goldman (1911) 379). Thus, in Sophokles she is described as a ῥή ῥαψωιδὸς ... κύων (*OT.* 391), and, tellingly for the present context, as a prophetic maiden: παρθένον / χρησμοιδόν (*OT.* 1199-200). Euripides likewise calls the Sphinx οὔρειον τέρας (*Phoen.* 806), and describes her as singing: ἀπομουσοτάταισι σὺν ᾠδαῖς (*Phoen.* 807). The element of singing seems to imply the creature's portentous as well as monstrous nature.

The second aspect of the choral self-description that sheds light on their relationship with prophecy is their comparison of themselves with a dream that appears by day: ὄναρ ἡμερόφαντον (82). Dreams in Greek religion generally, and in this trilogy specifically, have strong prophetic associations. For instance, in the *Khoephoroi* Klytaimestra sees a prophetic dream (*Khoe.* 33-4) that is recognised as being such by the characters in the drama. However, the crucial aspect of this comparison is that the chorus do not compare themselves to interpreters of dreams, but to the dreams themselves; thus, they are not like prophets, but resemble instead the means of prophecy.²⁸⁷ In other words, the chorus are once again positioned as being able to say things that carry great meaning, but at the same time as not being able to interpret these utterances.²⁸⁸ The reader and the audience thus become alerted to the enigmatic and interpretable nature of choral speech, whose multivalent use of language forms the basis of the prophetic weave of the poetic text. At the same time, the importance of old age in the play becomes here further developed through its continuing association with the ‘inspired’, ‘doubly-motivated’ choral utterance: it is by reason of their age that the chorus are a dream appearing by day.

It has been argued that the *Agamemnon* creates multiple ways in which choral authority can operate. The chorus is able to describe the events at Aulis in detail, including constructing powerful visual images, and quoting direct speech of those who had been involved in the events there. This authority is, on some level, inspired by the divine, and it was argued that this inspiration is connected with the chorus’ old age through the idea of ‘double-determination’, whereby the chorus’ old age makes

²⁸⁷ That they are similar to dreams also shows them to be vulnerable and human, rather than other-worldly and potent: cf. *Pi. Py.* viii. 95-6: ἐπάμεροι· τί δέ τις; τί δ’ οὐ τις; σκιᾶς ὄναρ / ἄνθρωπος.

²⁸⁸ Some scholars have even taken choral utterances as being formative for the events of the *Agamemnon*: cf. Owen (1952) 65. On cledomancy in the trilogy in general cf. Peradotto (1969a).

them suitable recipients of that authority. While divine inspiration makes the chorus able to use language in a way that is highly meaningful, however, it does not make them prophetic. The chorus' use of language can reveal deeper truths, but the full extent of its significance is often beyond the understanding of the chorus. Unlike the prophets in this play, the chorus are unable to understand the full significance of language, and especially how it fits into the working out of future events. Their age and inspired authority over language, therefore, both elevate them, and at the same time underline their limitations as human actors.

iii) The Chorus' Confrontation with Aigisthos and Klytaimestra

The last part of this chapter considers the confrontation scene between the chorus, Klytaimestra and Aigisthos in light of the foregoing analysis. In this scene, the behaviour of the chorus coincides with its characterisation in the rest of the play. The chorus' confrontational nature fits well with their characterisation as men who possess a military ethos; their disdain for the stay-at-home Aigisthos also fits into this pattern (1625-7), as was discussed above. In this scene, the chorus almost come to blows with the guard of Aigisthos, and this belies both their old age and their inaction in the preceding scenes of the play, especially in the scene where the chorus debate what they ought to do following the cries of Agamemnon from within the house (1346-71). Although the old men do not actually come to fight, the scene throws their age and identity into sharp relief, and thus repays closer scrutiny.

It is notable that in this scene there is renewed stress on the chorus' old age, especially when they are being berated by Aigisthos. He refers directly to it three times (γέρων ὦν, 1619; τῶι τηλικούτῳ, 1620; τὸ γῆρας, 1621) in his first reaction to their expression of discontent at the murder of Agamemnon. Later, Aigisthos' words recall the self-characterisation of the chorus as old men in lines 72-82 (where they compared their strength to that of children), when he describes their words as "foolish barking" with a phrase that recalls childish foolishness: νηπίοις ὑλάγμασιν (1631).²⁸⁹ This disdainful label of the choral utterance is highly ironic. While the chorus do describe their strength as childlike, the last section argued that the language of the chorus possesses authority inspired by the gods. Aigisthos does not appreciate the fact that the chorus' powerful language exists in combination with their weak physical state; and he appreciates even less the paradoxical situation in which the authority of the chorus' language depends precisely on their old age: to him, old age is a simple and straightforward affair.

Klytaimestra's attitude to the chorus is different in a number of important aspects. Klytaimestra only makes a passing reference to the old age of the chorus. She says that despite their age, the chorus will learn 'good sense' if they continue to dissent (1425): γνώσῃ διδαχθεῖς ὅψε γούν τὸ σωφρονεῖν, with ὅψε referring to the chorus' age.²⁹⁰ This reference, however, is not as strongly worded, and does not occur with the same relentless emphasis that Aigisthos employs. Elsewhere, moreover, Klytaimestra refers to the chorus in a respectful way, as, for instance, in line 1657: αἰδοῖοι γέροντες. Although at the very end she does echo Aigisthos' insult as a

²⁸⁹ This connotation of νήπιος is likely to have been conspicuous, since while that word is used in Homer to mean 'silly' or 'foolish' (e.g. μέγα νήπιος, *Il.* xvi. 46, of Patroklos' desire to join battle), it also has very strong associations with childishness (cf. the formulaic phrase νήπια τέκνα, e.g. in *Il.* ii. 136).

²⁹⁰ Cf. Fraenkel (1950) *ad* 1425 and 710.

reaction to the chorus' insult of 1671 (κόμπασον θαρσῶν, ἀλέκτωρ ὥστε θηλείας πέλας) by describing their words as "empty barking" (ματαίων τῶνδ' ὑλαγμάτων, 1672), this can be taken as motivated by a desire to calm Aigisthos in order to lead him back into the house and put an end to the confrontation; and is moreover not said to the chorus (though of course within their hearing), but rather to Aigisthos.

The difference in the treatment of the chorus' old age by Klytaimestra and Aigisthos informs the difference between their characters.²⁹¹ Perhaps the most important difference for the present discussion is that Aigisthos presses home his advantage of strength, but mentions no other aspect of the characters of old men. Klytaimestra, however, comes to appreciate the power of their age much more broadly. Although in 1403-4 she insists on her indifference to the chorus' opinion, only a few lines later she reprimands them for not reproaching Agamemnon for his killing of Iphigeneia: οὐδὲν τότ' ἀνδρὶ τῶιδ' ἐναντίον φέρων (1414). Klytaimestra thus admonishes them for their unjust employment of their narrative potential in criticising her and not Agamemnon, and shows that she cares about what they think and say. She suggests that their narrative is deficient in that it had (and still has) the wrong focus, that it does not represent both sides fairly. While recognising the power of the chorus' language, Klytaimestra nevertheless makes an assault on the authority and accuracy of their words, and hence also puts a question mark over the meaning of their old age: whether age has led them to wisdom and inspiration, or only to delusion. Only

²⁹¹ The comparison is encouraged by the parallelism of the retorts that the chorus make to the two antagonists: the first significant retort to Klytaimestra (and the first sung one) mentions public curses as punishment (δημοθρόους τ' ἀράς, 1409), and the same is true of the first retort of the chorus to Aigisthos (δημορριφεῖς, σάφ' ἴσθι, λευσίμους ἀράς, 1616). Again, both Klytaimestra (1425) and Aigisthos (1619-20) say early on that the chorus will have to learn 'good sense'.

following this does Klytaimestra mention the difference in physical power between the chorus and herself, by challenging them to try to defeat her in a fight (1423-5).

However, by attempting to deconstruct the narrative authority of the chorus, Klytaimestra also confirms the reality of its narrative power. Moreover, whereas previously in the play the chorus' narrative referred primarily backwards, following the murder, the direction of the narrative becomes increasingly forward-looking, and culminates in the chorus' description of the threat to Klytaimestra from the unending cycles of vengeance. The chorus affirm that god will continue punishing the family, and that consequently Klytaimestra will also suffer (1560-6, discussed above, p. 103; and cf. 1429-30 for an earlier example of the same motif). This forecast seriously frightens the queen, to such an extent that she seeks a way out of the cycle of vengeance (1567-76):

<p> ἐς τόνδ' ἐνέβης ξὺν ἀληθείαι χρησμόν· ἐγὼ δ' οὔν ἐθέλω δαίμονι τῶι Πλεισθениδᾶν ὄρκους θεμένη τάδε μὲν στέργειν δύσκλητά περ ὄνθ', ὃ δὲ λοιπόν, ἰόντ' ἐκ τῶνδε δόμων ἄλλην γενεᾶν τρίβειν θανάτοις αὐθένταισιν· κτεάνων δὲ μέρος βαιὸν ἐχούση πᾶν ἀποχρῆι μοι, μανίας μελάθρων ἀλληλοφόνους ἀφελούση. </p>	<p>1570</p> <p>1575</p>
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In this passage Klytaimestra admits that she believes what the chorus have said about the inevitability of retribution (ξὺν ἀληθείαι), and because of this she seeks a way out (ἐγὼ δ' οὔν / ἐθέλω) – she makes a desperate, and clearly ineffective, attempt to pay off the avenging spirit. By the end of their encounter, therefore, the chorus speak in a way that has a deep effect on Klytaimestra. They show that they are not old and

deluded, but that old age has brought out in them an ‘inspired’ wisdom.²⁹² In this context, the authoritative insight of the choral narrative becomes all the more appreciable.

Furthermore, Klytaimestra’s desire to escape retribution plays a part later in the scene, where the chorus come face to face with the unremittingly threatening attitude of Aigisthos. After the chorus announce their desire to fight Aigisthos and his guards, and to die fighting, Klytaimestra persuades Aigisthos not to punish them, and ends her speech of persuasion with a mention of her desire to put a stop to the endless chain of retribution (1659-60):

εἰ δέ τοι μόχθων γένοιτο τῶνδ’ ἄλις, δεχοίμεθ’ ἄν,
δαίμονος χηλῆι βαρεῖαι δυστυχῶς πεπληγμένοι.²⁹³

Klytaimestra’s conciliatory mood in this passage can perhaps be connected with the chorus’ exposition of the unending nature of retribution. On this supposition, Klytaimestra’s desire to protect the chorus is motivated by her desire to protect herself and Aigisthos. There is some paradox that in their near-physical confrontation with Aigisthos the chorus become protected through the agency of Klytaimestra; and she, in turn, chooses to help them because of the powerful narrative of the circle of vengeance which they have created for her in the previous scene: the physical safety of the chorus is ensured by their narrative authority. The chorus’ old age creates the need for protection, and provides the means for it.

²⁹² Note especially Taplin (1977) 327, where he argues that the chorus and Klytaimestra in this scene “move towards not so much compromise as insight” in understanding of the importance of Zeus, and the inevitability of retribution.

²⁹³ Text as given in Fraenkel (1950) vol. I 192. Sommerstein (2008) 202 gives ἄκος instead of ἄλις, but the substitution does not materially affect the argument presented here.

In the final scene, therefore, despite their angry and foreboding remarks, such as the mention of the curses of the people (1616), direct threats (1633), and the mention of Orestes (1646, cf. 1667), the chorus are protected by Klytaimestra, who has understood the validity and the inspired nature of their earlier narrative. This point is specifically brought out by her mention of their oracular power in 1567-8 (ἐς τόνδ' ἐνέβης ξὺν ἀληθείαι / χρησμόν). By contrast, Aigisthos' attitude to the chorus' language remains opportunistic. While he can accept its authority when it suits him (δεχομένοις λέγεις θανεῖν γε τὴν τύχην δ' αἰρούμεθα, 1653),²⁹⁴ he can equally well dismiss its significance when this serves his purpose better (1667-8):

Χο. οὐκ, ἐὰν δαίμων Ὀρέστην δεῦρ' ἀπευθύνῃ μολεῖν.
Αἰ. οἶδ' ἐγὼ φεύγοντας ἄνδρας ἐλπίδας σιτουμένους.

Despite the chorus' mention of the δαίμων, Aigisthos refuses to accept the oracular meaning of these words – which the audience know will come true – and writes them off as empty hopes.²⁹⁵ Thus, an important difference between the intelligence of Klytaimestra and the arrogance of Aigisthos is brought out by their reactions to the chorus' authority and their age.

The confrontation between the chorus and the regicides, therefore, combines the concepts of the power of narrative of the chorus and their physical weakness in a way that had not occurred in the play up to this point. Narrative authority protects the chorus, and allows them to stay onstage and hold their own until the very end of the play: their old age makes the chorus both vulnerable and secure. Moreover,

²⁹⁴ Denniston and Page (1957) 63, West (1990a) 272, and Sommerstein (2008) 202 give this line to Aigisthos. Of the recent editors in English, only Fraenkel (1950) vol. I 192 gives it to the chorus. The oracular meaning of δέχομαι is explained in LSJ s.v. I.2.b.

²⁹⁵ This is especially unwise in the context of the play, as Aigisthos himself was paying back on the son the sins of the father, and will be punished in turn by a son avenging his father.

Klytaimestra's and Aigisthos' interactions with the chorus serve to highlight the differences in their characters: the perceptiveness of Klytaimestra is drawn in contrast to the arrogance of Aigisthos. In addition, by predicting further vengeance and bloodshed, the chorus' inspired, quasi-prophetic, forward-looking insight points to the events of the following plays.²⁹⁶ Through the contribution of the chorus, the final scene dramatises a change in the progression of the events, the passing from one cycle of vengeance to the next.

iv) Conclusion

This chapter approached the chorus of the *Agamemnon* first by considering the role played by age in the construction of the chorus' identity. It was argued that the identity of the old men has a number of nuances that have not received due mention heretofore, for instance their closeness to the ethos of the city's fighting men, the connection between the old age of the chorus and the imagery and content of the *parodos*, and also the intricate way that the mood of the *parodos* develops around the various aspects of their self-identification as old men.

The following section considered the way old age fits into the system of choral authority and choral knowledge in the play. The importance of age was considered by looking at the idea of 'double-determination' to explain the source of the chorus' authority. However, the chorus' authority was shown to be different in nature from prophecy, since it was demonstrated that the chorus was often not conscious of the

²⁹⁶ Cf. Taplin (1977) 322: "1372 to the end is all aftermath, and is in some ways a transition to the following plays", and 328: "[i]f the great scene 1372-1576 foreshadows the trial and solution of *Eum*, then the final philistine contribution of Aegisthus foreshadows *Cho*."

full meaning of what they were saying. The last section focused on the interaction of the chorus with Aigisthos and Klytaimestra, and it was argued that the two regicides were characterised by this interaction. It was also suggested that the chorus' narrative authority introduced a new cycle of vengeance in that scene, to be explored in the following two plays of the trilogy: it is significant that the *Agamemnon* ends with an imposition of choral authoritative poetic language on Klytaimestra and Aigisthos.

CHAPTER IV. EURIPIDES' *HERAKLES*:

THE AGED CHORUS, POETIC LANGUAGE, AND FAILED

RENEWAL

i) Introduction

This chapter will build on the findings of the previous argument, where the link between old age and authority was established, by considering the connection between old age and poetry that exists in Euripides' *Herakles*. The analysis will begin with a consideration of the identity of the play's old chorus. While at the start they are shown to combine identities of former soldiers and singers, with the identity of the soldiers predominating in the first stages of the play, through the middle parts of the play and right up until the appearance of Iris and Lyssa the poetic identity is given greater prominence. As singers and poets, in these scenes the chorus undergo a 'renewal', whereby their artistic engagement is described as not being limited by age, and as causing them to feel and to behave in a more youthful manner.

The second stage of the analysis begins with a discussion of the way in which the shift in the self-characterisation of the chorus from soldiers to poets is built up through the language of the second and third stasima: the language of these songs is particularly significant, since they contain numerous words that relate directly to poetry and its performance. In the context of the performance of the *Herakles*, these words take on a meta-poetic, self-reflexive aspect, and suggest the play's self-awareness as a

poetically constructed text. Furthermore, the ‘poetic’ nature of the language focuses the audience’s attention on the precision of its use, on the deliberate use of language that the play exhibits at this point. However, deliberate use is juxtaposed with the numerous foreboding elements in the choral odes that arise through the chorus’ uncontrolled praise of Herakles. This stage of the argument concludes by suggesting that foreboding casts a shadow over the joyous atmosphere of Herakles’ victory, and as a result also undercuts the chorus’ assumption of a more youthful, reinvigorated persona of the praise-singer.

In the last stage of the argument, the focus shifts to the aftermath of Iris’ and Lyssa’s appearance. Their intervention undoes the chorus’ reinvigoration and new-found sense of youthfulness that came with their ‘poetic’ identity and the earlier praise of Herakles, and causes the old men to lose their identity as singers. By the end of the play, the chorus are presented as powerless old men.

ii) The Chorus’ Old Age, Dual Identity, and Renewal

Immediately upon their entrance, the chorus characterise themselves as very old men

(110-4):²⁹⁷

ἠλέμων γέρων ἄοι-
δὸς ὥστε πολὺς ὄρνις,
ἔπεα μόνον καὶ δόκημα νυκτερω-
πὸν ἐννύχων ὀνείρων,
τρομερὰ μὲν ἄλλ’ ὅμως πρόθυμ’.

110

²⁹⁷ The text of Euripides is taken from Diggle (1981), unless otherwise specified.

Even if γέρων, Nauck's emendation for γόων, is not accepted (Bond suggests that γόων <τ'> is an easier change, though less forceful),²⁹⁸ the reference of the chorus to themselves as grey birds (πολιὸς ὄρνις), nothing more than words (ἔπεα μόνον, cf. the old Amphitryon's self-description in line 229 as οὐδὲν ὄντα πλὴν γλώσσης ψόφου), visions and dreams in the night (δόκημα νυκτερω- / πὸν ἐννύχων ὄνειρων, cf. Ais. Ag. 82), and trembling (τρομερά, contrasted with their desire to do something, πρόθυμ') make their identification as old men immediately secure. The chorus' age is thus stated in unambiguous terms, and this characterisation persists strongly through most of the play.

However, even from this early point in the *parodos*, the chorus identify themselves as something more specific than just old men. In this ode, they present two 'sub-identities'. The first of these is their aspect as old singers. It is prevalent in the strophe of the ode, in the passage quoted above. Most strikingly, they call themselves singers of laments (ἠηλέμων ... ἀοιδός, 110). This characterisation is expanded by the chorus' description of themselves as πολιὸς ὄρνις. The commentators suggest that the bird in question is a swan,²⁹⁹ and this is significant because the swan's song is "loud and suited to a lament, as at A. Ag. 1444, [Eur.] *El.* 151".³⁰⁰ The identification is partly based on the comparison of the passage with 692 (κύκνος ὡς γέρων ἀοιδός) where the bird is explicitly a swan; and partly on the apparent frequency with which grey hair and the swan's plumage are likened (cf. Ar. *Wasps* 1064, Eur. *Bakkh.* 1365).

²⁹⁸ Bond (1981) *ad* 109.

²⁹⁹ Cf. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff (1889) *ad* 110: "691 ... erläutert, wenn nötig, den 'grauen Vogel' als den Schwan"; Bond (1981) *ad* 110.

³⁰⁰ Bond (1981) *ad* 110.

The second ‘sub-identity’ becomes prevalent in the antistrophe, where the identification of the choristers with singers becomes balanced by their identification as aged soldiers. Specifically, lines 119-30 explore the chorus’ military past, contrasting it with their present powerlessness:

ἴμῃ προκάμητε πόδα† βαρύ τε κῶ- λον ὥστε πρὸς πετραῖον	120
λέπας †ζυγηφόρον πῶλον ἀνέντες ὡς βάρος φέρων	
. τροχηλάτοιο πῶλου†. λαβοῦ χερῶν καὶ πέπλων, ὅτου λέλοι- πε ποδὸς ἀμαυρὸν ἴχνος.	125
γέρων γέροντα παρακόμιζ’, ᾧ ξύνοπλα δόρατα νέα νέωι	128
τὸ πάρος ἐν ἡλίκων πόνοις	127
ξυνῆν ποτ’, εὐκλεεστάτας	129
πατρίδος οὐκ ὄνειδη.	130

In this passage, the military nature of the chorus is emphasised specifically through the phrase ξύνοπλα δόρατα, and the same is implied by the phrases ἐν ἡλίκων πόνοις and εὐκλεεστάτας πατρίδος οὐκ ὄνειδη. The “toils of youth” refer to battle, and the disgrace that these men could have brought to their glorious fatherland is cowardice and failure in combat. At the same time, the decrepitude of the old men is brought out by the emphasis on their slow and laboured progress (βαρύ τε κῶλον, βάρος φέρων), and perhaps also by the catalectic iambic meter.³⁰¹ The chorus’ difficult condition is further emphasised by the forceful contrast between their current state and their earlier strength through the polyptotic expressions of age that frame lines 126 and 128: γέρων γέροντα, and νέα νέωι.

Following the *parodos*, however, where these identities were presented together, the characterisation of the old men as singers or fighters becomes split, to be deployed in

³⁰¹ Cf. Dhuga (2011) 84: “in our extant Greek tragedies and comedies, this meter is used in the parodoi only of choruses of old men”.

a way that reacts to (or is dictated by) the context of the play. The focus on the military side of the identity is signalled by Amphitryon's reminiscence of his past as a soldier (230-5):

ῥώμη γὰρ ἐκλέλοιπεν ἦν πρὶν εἶχομεν, γήραι δὲ τρομερὰ γυῖα κάμαυρόν σθένος. εἰ δ' ἦ νέος τε κάτι σώματος κρατῶν, λαβῶν ἂν ἔγχος τοῦδε τοὺς ξανθοὺς πλόκους καθημάτωσ' ἂν, ὥστ' Ἀτλαντικῶν πέραν φεύγειν ὄρων ἂν δειλῖαι τοῦμόν δόρυ.	230 235
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In these lines, Amphitryon dwells on his current weakness, contrasting it to his former strength, and also threatens Lykos by saying that if only he were able, he would kill him. These words pick up on the themes of lost strength already mentioned by the chorus, even recalling some of their earlier phraseology (cf. τρομερὰ γυῖα: τρομερά, 114, βαρὺ τε κῶλον, 119-20; and δόρυ: ξύνοπλα δόρατα, 128). Furthermore, they prefigure the rhetorical themes that the chorus will use in the passages where the confrontation with Lykos is dramatised; and in which, therefore, the aspect of the choral persona as former soldiers is highly relevant.

The first choral speech following Lykos' arrival and Amphitryon's reaction to it develops this choral persona. In that speech, the chorus leader responds to Lykos' threat against the chorus, and to his branding them as slaves in his land (247-51). This begins with the following lines (252-6):

ὦ γῆς λοχεύμαθ', οὓς Ἄρης σπεῖρει ποτὲ λάβρον δράκοντος ἐξερημώσας γένυν, οὐ σκῆπτρα, χειρὸς δεξιᾶς ἐρείσματα, ἀρεῖτε καὶ τοῦδ' ἀνδρὸς ἀνόσιον κάρα καθαίματῶσεθ';	255
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Amphitryon's attitude is recalled by the echo of καθιμάτωσ' ἄν (234) in καθαιματώσεθ', and the theme of manly vigour is brought in by the reference to the genealogy of the Thebans as warriors sprung from the teeth of the dragon. Although the tone is bellicose and confident, however, there is a suggestion of the chorus' weakness: these Thebans cannot do more than attack Lykos with staves (σκῆπτρα), which is a far cry from the destructive frenzy of which the first Sown Men, sprung from Ares (οὓς Ἄρης σπείρει), were capable.

The contrast between the chorus' present weakness and their former strength is substantiated later in the same speech. In lines 268-72 the chorus leader expresses a wish to take up the spear, yet admits that old age thwarts him from doing so:

ὦ δεξιὰ χεῖρ, ὡς ποθεῖς λαβεῖν δόρυ,
 ἐν δ' ἀσθενεῖαι τὸν πόθον διώλεσας.
 ἐπεὶ σ' ἔπαυσ' ἄν δοῦλον ἐννέποντά με
 καὶ τάσδε Θήβας εὐκλεῶς ὠνήσαμεν,
 ἐν αἷς σὺ χαίρεις. 270

This passage directly reacts to Lykos' insult of calling the chorus slaves (σ' ἔπαυσ' ἄν δοῦλον ἐννέποντά με; cf. μεμνήσεσθε δὲ / δοῦλοι γεγῶτες τῆς ἐμῆς τυραννίδος, 250-1). It also picks up on aspects of the *parodos*' description of the former martial valour of the old soldiers. In the *parodos* the chorus say that, when they were young, they did not disgrace their "most glorious country" by fighting with prowess (εὐκλεεστάτας / πατρίδος οὐκ ὀνειδή, 129-30). Here too the chorus leader says that it is only because of his old age that he cannot perform a glorious deed for Thebes (εὐκλεῶς). When the choristers were young, they were fighters with the spear (δόρατα νέα, 128; cf. Amphitryon's τοῦμόν δόρυ, 235), and it is the spear that they call for now (ὡς ποθεῖς λαβεῖν δόρυ).

In the next choral utterance, following Megara's speech to Lykos in which she resigns herself and the children of Herakles to death (275-311), the chorus again speak with some emphasis on their former military past, once more stressing their current powerlessness in contrast to the strength they had previously (312-5):

εἰ μὲν σθενόντων τῶν ἐμῶν βραχιόνων
ἦν τίς σ' ὑβρίζων, ραιδίως ἔπαυσά τ' ἄν·
νῦν δ' οὐδέν ἐσμεν. σὸν δὲ τούντεῦθεν σκοπεῖν
ὅπως διώσῃ τὰς τύχας, Ἀμφιτρύων. 315

Continuity with the previous utterances is in evidence: these lines recall the previously mentioned ideas of the chorus' strength (σθενόντων: ἀσθενεῖαι, 269; cf. Amphitryon's σθένος, 231); power, or lack of it, in their limbs (βραχιόνων: ὦ δεξιὰ χεῖρ, 268, βαρὺ τε κῶλον, 120; cf. Amphitryon's τρομερὰ γυῖα, 231); and the fact that they would like to put a stop to Lykos' tyranny (ἦν τίς σ' ὑβρίζων, ραιδίως ἔπαυσά τ' ἄν: σ' ἔπαυσ' ἄν, 270).

However, at this stage the choral characterisation begins to show movement away from the purely 'military' aspect, and this is prefaced by the fact that Megara gives in to Lykos' demands, and even undercuts one of the central points over which the chorus confronted Lykos. While the chorus reject the fact that they are his slaves, Megara pointedly calls Lykos their master (ἡμῶν δ' ἕκατι δεσπόταις θυμούμενοι / πάθητε μηδέν, 277-8). Following this, the chorus strikingly announce their powerlessness (νῦν δ' οὐδέν ἐσμεν), and remove themselves from the subsequent events by saying that from this point on the outcome of the confrontation rests with Amphitryon (σὸν δὲ τούντεῦθεν σκοπεῖν). In this, they significantly retreat from their personae as former soldiers, and perhaps look back to the strophe of the *parodos*,

in which they were characterised as singers, since in that passage the insubstantiality of the aged chorus was also emphasised (ἔπεια μόνον καὶ δόκημα νυκτερω- / πὸν ἐννύχων ὀνείρων, 112-3).³⁰² Following Megara's resignation to her fate, therefore, the chorus' bellicose speech is also toned down. Henceforth, the chorus begins to turn towards a different aspect of their portrayal – the 'poetic' aspect.

This tendency is continued in the next choral utterance. Shifting away from the trimeters that predominated in the passages where the chorus connected themselves with their military past, the chorus begin to sing in lyric metre (for the first time since the *parodos*) an ode describing the Labours of Herakles. This ode follows upon the exit of Lykos, Megara and Amphitryon, and the formal end of the *agon*. At the end of this ode, the chorus still lament their lost youthful vigour and strength (436-41):

εἰ δ' ἐγὼ σθένος ἦβων
 δόρυ τ' ἔπαλλον ἐν αἰχμᾶι
 Καδμείων τε σύνηβοι,
 τέκεσιν ἄν προπαρέεσταν
 ἀλκᾶι· νῦν δ' ἀπολείπομαι
 τᾶς εὐδαίμονος ἦβας.

440

However, although in this stanza the familiar themes of strength (σθένος: ἀσθενεῖαι, 269, σθενόντων, 312; cf. Amphitryon's σθένος, 231), spear-wielding (δόρυ: δόρατα, 128, δόρυ, 268; cf. Amphitryon's δόρυ, 235), and youth (ἦβων: νέα νέωι, 128, ἠλίκων, 127; cf. Amphitryon's νέος, 232) emerge, the majority of the ode, the longest and most formal surviving ode in Euripides,³⁰³ concerns itself with praising the labours of Herakles. In this, it is possible to trace increased emphasis on the 'poetic' aspect of the chorus' 'sub-identity' that was announced in the strophe of

³⁰² A line connecting these two choral utterances might be Amphitryon's οὐδὲν ὄντα πλὴν γλώσσης ψόφον (229).

³⁰³ Cf. Bond (1981) *ad* 348ff. (p. 146).

the *parodos*. The shift away from a military identification is dramatically explicable through the fact that the chorus can no longer be involved with the defence of the children of Herakles, since their fate is already decided.³⁰⁴

The change in the development of the choral persona is announced by the evocation of poetry and song in the first strophe of this ode (348-58):

αἴλινον μὲν ἐπ' εὐτυχεῖ μολπαῖ Φοῖβος ἰαχεῖ τὰν καλλίφθογον κιθάραν	350
ἐλαύνων πλήκτρῳ χρυσέῳ· ἐγὼ δὲ τὸν γᾶς ἐνέρων τ' ἐς ὄρφναν μολόντα παιῖδ', εἴτε Διὸς νιν εἶπω εἴτ' Ἀμφιτρύωνος Ἴνιν,	355
ὑμῆσαι στεφάνωμα μό- χθων δι' εὐλογίας θέλω. γενναίων δ' ἀρεταῖ πόνων τοῖς θανοῦσιν ἄγαλμα.	

Particularly striking are lines 355-6 (ὑμῆσαι στεφάνωμα μό- / χθων δι' εὐλογίας θέλω), which directly express the chorus' involvement with poetry, their desire to sing a hymn as a crown to the labour of Herakles. The conjunction of these lines with the announcement of the subject of the ode (αἴλινον) recalls the earlier statement of the chorus, made at the start of the *parodos*, that they are singers of laments (ἰηλέμων ... ἀοιδός, 110-1).³⁰⁵ Furthermore, the poetic texture of the strophe (and hence also its singers) is suggested on a different level by the fact that its subject matter, the formal lament for Herakles, takes the form of an encomium (cf. δι' εὐλογίας).³⁰⁶ This point is substantiated by Bond's further observation that much of the vocabulary of the strophe is normal for praise-genres, such as epinician odes and

³⁰⁴ Cf. Bond (1981) *ad* 348ff. (p. 146).

³⁰⁵ Cf. Barlow (1996) *ad* 348-441.

³⁰⁶ Cf. Bond (1981) *ad* 348ff. (p. 146).

funeral orations: the words he refers to in particular are ὑμνήσαι, στεφάνωμα, μόχθων, πόνων, εὐλογία, ἀρεταί, and ἄγαλμα.³⁰⁷ This indication of the purpose of the ode and its placement within a literary topography suggest the chorus' increasing engagement with poetry. As was mentioned above, this makes sense dramatically, since at this stage in the play, instead of continuing the development of their military aspect, the chorus switch to singing a commemoration for Herakles, outlining his labours in glorifying and positive terms.³⁰⁸ Given that the physical confrontation with Lykos has been lost, such glorification is now the only way that they can help the cause of Herakles' family.

The emphasis on the artistic character of the chorus intensifies in the next major choral utterance (not counting short interjections), the second stasimon, sung after the arrival of Herakles. While the loss that old age brings with it is still given pride of place in this song, that loss is not expressed in militaristic terms. Following the return of Herakles and his decision to punish Lykos, the old men no longer need to enter into any confrontation. They therefore lament their aged state only generally, without reference to loss of military standing (637-41):

ἀ νεότας μοι φίλον· ἄ-
χθος δὲ τὸ γῆρας αἰεὶ
βαρύτερον Αἴτνας σκοπέλων
ἐπὶ κρατὶ κεῖται, βλεφάρων
σκοτεινὸν φάος ἐπικαλύψαν.

640

In the second half of the ode, however, the chorus bring their poetic prowess into sharp focus. By contrast with their physical bodies, their prowess of song is seemingly

³⁰⁷ Bond (1981) *ad* 355-8. Cf. also Swift (2010) 124-9 for a more general argument that this ode partakes of epinician motifs. For instance, Swift notes that the mention of Herakles' lineage is a feature that connects the ode with epinicia (pp. 126-7).

³⁰⁸ Barlow (1982) 117-20, Foley (1985) 183.

untouched by age: they say that they desire to praise Herakles for as long as they live (673-86), and outline the way that they will do this, by singing paeans. This ode in addition alludes to the chorus' previous self-characterisation as singers (691-5):

παιᾶνας δ' ἐπὶ σοῖς μελάθροις
κύκνος ὡς γέρων ἀοιδός
πολιᾶν ἐκ γενύων
κελαδήσω· τὸ γὰρ εὔ
τοῖς ὕμνοισιν ὑπάρχει.

695

Connection with the *parodos* is established most obviously through the verbal echoes of κύκνος ὡς γέρων ἀοιδός with lines 110-1 (ἀοι- / δός ὥστε πολιὸς ὄρνις). Notable also is the echo of μέλαθρα (107) in μελάθροις, on both occasions describing Herakles' house.³⁰⁹ The first stasimon is recalled in the phrase τὸ γὰρ εὔ τοῖς ὕμνοισιν ὑπάρχει, which points to the earlier programmatic statement ὑμνῆσαι στεφάνωμα μό- / χθων (355-6). A more general connection with the preceding ode can also be observed in the prevalence of epinician themes in this stasimon (note specifically ἐν στεφάνοισιν, 677 and καλλίνικον, 681),³¹⁰ which have been explored by Parry.³¹¹ There is, then, a significant amount of continuity between the way the choral 'poetic' aspect has been presented heretofore, and the way it is elaborated in this ode. However, as well as continuity, there is also development of the presentation of the choral 'poetic' character through the one marked difference between this ode, and the attitude the chorus have held previously: earlier in the play, the chorus were singers of laments (ἠγλέμων, 110; αἴλινον, 348), whereas now they sing paeans (παιᾶνας). This development, tied to the greater optimism of the chorus

³⁰⁹ On the general thematic connection between this ode and the *parodos*, cf. Bond (1981) *ad* 637-700.

³¹⁰ On the epinician pedigree of καλλίνικος, cf. Swift (2010) 132-3.

³¹¹ Parry (1965); cf. Swift (2010) 129-31.

after the arrival of Herakles, underlines the development of the old men, who find themselves still capable, and even empowered, to perform.

The third stasimon follows in the same vein. In this ode, which follows on from the deception of Lykos, the chorus overflow with joy and confidence, especially after Lykos' death is announced. There is no lamentation of old age (the phrase ᾧ γεραιοί, 748 is hardly lamentation, and moreover occurs before the death of Lykos),³¹² and no mention of departed military strength – only praise of Herakles and of the gods. The tone is one of great celebration, even “exaltation”,³¹³ and the prominence of the chorus' ‘poetic’ sub-identity is brought out by their stated readiness to dance and sing in celebration. Two excerpts show this explicitly: πρὸς χοροῦς τραπώμεθα, 761, and 765-8:

μεταλλαγαὶ γὰρ δακρύων, 765
μεταλλαγαὶ συντυχίας
< ... > ἔτεκον ἀοιδάς.

One further passage makes the same point, subject to accepting a supplement (785-8):

σύν τ' Ἀσωπιάδες κόραι 785
πατρὸς ὕδωρ βᾶτε λιποῦ-
σαι <μοι> συναοιδοὶ
Νύμφαι.³¹⁴

The supplement <μοι> was suggested by Hermann, and is approved by Bond, who notes that this line is missing a syllable, and argues that the corresponding line in the

³¹² Cf. Dhuga (2011) 123.

³¹³ Cf. Swift (2010) 131.

³¹⁴ Text according to Kovacs (1998) 382-4. For justification of the supplement, see below; in all other details, the text of this passage is identical to Diggle's.

antistrophe (803) should not be reduced.³¹⁵ He also cites Cropp: “there is no certain instance of συναρδός without a following dative in the early users of the word (Hdt., Eur., Ar.)”.³¹⁶ Furthermore, as with the first and the second stasima, there are marks of the epinician genre. According to Swift, such features of the ode as moralising *gnomai*, especially on the limitations of wealth and power (772-80); praise of Herakles through praise of Thebes, and praise of Thebes through its foundation myth (792-7); and the use of the phrase καλλίνικον ἄγωνα (789) show epinician influence on this song.³¹⁷

This change between songs of lament and songs of praise, which takes place in conjunction with the change in the emphasis of the choral identity from military characterisation to being the possessors of the power of song and poetry, has an important consequence for the analysis of the presentation of the chorus' age. In contrast to the military aspect of their identity, which served constantly to emphasise their old age and decrepitude, in the second and third stasima, the presentation of the chorus' old age acquires a new dimension through the chorus' self-identification as empowered singers who are no longer limited by old age. The chorus are shown to be to some extent 'renewed', made to behave more youthfully, as their old age is presented as being powerless to limit their singing, their mastery of song;³¹⁸ and as unable to affect their exuberance, joy, and the capacity and desire to celebrate the victories of Herakles. Specifically telling in the second and third stasima are references to the joyfulness of the choral celebratory song and the fortunes of the chorus changing for the better (ἡδίσταν συζυγίαν, 675; μεταβολὰ κακῶν, 735;

³¹⁵ Bond (1981) *ad* 786f., 803f.

³¹⁶ Bond (1981) *ad* 786f. This has been confirmed through a TLG search.

³¹⁷ Cf. Swift (2010) 131-3.

³¹⁸ On choral rejuvenation (expressing an idea similar to the idea of renewal argued for here) brought about by the joy of celebration, cf. Bierl (1991) 142.

μεταλλαγαὶ γὰρ δακρύων, / μεταλλαγαὶ συντυχίας, 765-6); wine (παρά τε Βρόμιον οἰνοδόταν, 682); festivities (χοροὶ χοροὶ καὶ θαλία, 763; <μοι> συναοιδοί, 787); and garlands (ἐν στεφάνοισιν, 677; στεφαναφόρει, 781: though the latter is addressed to the river Ismenos, the invitation there is for Ismenos to join the chorus in celebration),³¹⁹ all of which are the usual accoutrements of (comic) renewal and (comic) *komoi*, common for victorious and ‘rejuvenated’ old men at the end of Aristophanic plays (this phenomenon will be discussed in depth in Chapter VI).

This connection is strengthened by the invocation to female divinities, Dirke and the local nymphs, to join in the procession (Δίρκα θ’ ἅ καλλιρρέεθρος, 784 and Ἀσωπιάδες κόραι, 785). In comedy, young women are an integral part of triumphant celebration and ‘renewal’; and these women can even be divinities, as in the *Peace* and the *Birds*. Moreover, the dynamic of the empowerment of the chorus is also reflected in the level of their control over celebrations, specifically the way they can issue commands to the local divinities in lines 781-97. The comic influence is finally suggested by such features as the chorus’ self-exhortation to turn to dancing (πρὸς χορούς τραπέμεθα, 761). Though this is not unprecedented in tragedy (e.g. the much-debated Soph. *OT* 896: τί δεῖ με χορεύειν; and Eur. *El.* 859-65: θεὸς ἐς χορόν, ὦ φίλα, ἴχνος ... ἀλλ’ ὑπάειδε / καλλίνικον ὠιδὰν ἐμῶι χορῶι), overt theatrical references are much more usual in comedy. In that genre, lines as explicit as (and even more explicit than) these are commonly spoken not only in choral

³¹⁹ This contrasts with the more sombre invocation of garlands in the first stasimon: στεφάνωμα μὲν / χθῶν (355-6). The crown there is not of celebration, but of eulogy; not a joyous crown, but a crown reflecting respect for the achievements of Herakles, presumed dead.

parabases, but also in more straightforwardly dramatic contexts (cf., for instance, *Ar. Peace* 174, where the crane operator is directly addressed).

Of course, in comedy celebration takes on a more radical form, with drunkenness and sexual acts; and the same level of explicitness should not be expected of a tragedy, where dynamics of renewal and youthfulness are mixed with a more restrained context. However, hinting at the themes of celebration, especially comic ones, should be sufficient to call up images of renewal. This is especially true in combination with the empowerment that occurs in the choral odes through the force of poetry, where the power of the chorus' song, their identity as singers, is drawn in a way that makes it seem independent of their age. Notable in this regard is the similarity of thought between these stasima (cf. especially 678: ἔτι τοι γέρον ἀοιδός), and *Ais. Ag.* 104-6. The comparison with the Aiskhylean passage underlines the empowerment of the old Thebans, who resemble the old Argives in combining within themselves dual identities of former soldiers and powerful speakers, whose power of speech is not bounded by their age.³²⁰

Another important way in which the chorus' reinvigoration and returning youthfulness are suggested is through the implication of what it means for them to be singers of praise, specifically of epinician praise, for Herakles. Most scholars would now agree that epinician odes could have been, and at some stage probably were, performed by the chorus (though this does not eliminate the probability that they were

³²⁰ Cf. Bond (1981) *ad* 678, who cites Wilamowitz and Fraenkel in support of the echo between the *Agamemnon* and this play, but is himself more reserved, postulating a lost original to which both passages refer. For a general survey, and a view of the *Herakles* as parodying the *Agamemnon*, cf. Assaël (1996).

also performed by monodic singers).³²¹ Thus, given the choral context of tragic lyric, the old Thebans would most likely have recalled choral performers of epinician odes, and these would most likely have been young men.³²² At any rate, in almost all contexts of choral performance that are currently known, male choral singers and dancers were either young men or boys. For instance, at the Dionysiac festivals in Athens, there were no choruses of old men, and in the *Bakkhai* Teiresias ties youth and dancing together: κάγω γὰρ ἦβῶ κάπιχειρήσω χοροῖς (190). Moreover, in Plato *Laws* 657d it is explicitly said that the old men do not dance any more, but that when they see choral performances they remember their youthful days when they did dance in the choruses (a similar sentiment is expressed in *Anakreontea* 53). Again, in *Laws* 665b it is considered somewhat unusual if men over 30 dance in the choruses of Dionysos, and incredible if men over 50 or 60 do so. The only ancient example of old men singing in a chorus comes in Plut. *Lyk.* 21. 1-2, where Plutarch mentions the Spartan *trikhoria*, a performance involving boys, adult men, and old men. Thus, in taking on the role of praise-singers, the chorus were taking on a role closely associated with youth. This impression can also be backed up metrically by the use of dochmiacs in starting the third stasimon (734-62). This metre was generally associated with high emotion,³²³ and could therefore suggest vigour of movement consistent with a condition of youthfulness or reinvigoration for the chorus.³²⁴ In this case, the excited rhythm of these verses is further brought out by what Bond calls the

³²¹ Cf. Carey (2007), Morrison (2007a) 7, Morrison (2007b) 43-5.

³²² Cf. Carey (2007) 207.

³²³ Cf. West (1987) 56, Dale (1968) 110.

³²⁴ Dhuga (2011) 124 comments on the contrast between this meter, and the “plodding catalectic meter” of the *parodos*.

“*staccato*” style of the passage, created by an almost total lack of connecting particles in the lyrics.³²⁵

Thus, the development in the choral character towards empowerment and renewal follows a significant build-up, in which the chorus are first seen to think of themselves primarily as former soldiers, and only then as old singers and poets. The build-up is formalised through the continuity of ideas and terminology, brought out in the preceding analysis, regarding the ways the two strands of characterisation are presented. This continuity suggests a defined vector for the change that the choral character undergoes, a vector that reacts in a constructive and consistent manner to the events of the play, and is influenced by the words and attitudes of both Amphitryon and Megara. During the confrontation with Lykos, the military aspect of the chorus predominates. However, by the time of the first stasimon, the most significant thing that the chorus can do is praise Herakles, and so the military aspect begins to recede. By the time of the second stasimon, complaints regarding old age are balanced by the empowerment that the old men feel at the power of poetry, and in the third stasimon this dynamic is so strong that old age is barely mentioned. The odes are instead filled with terminology of joy; and by dancing in celebration and praise, the elderly chorus attain to a role that is associated primarily with younger men. The joyful and celebratory circumstances lead the chorus to forget their frail condition, indeed to cease referring to it and to push it out of their minds; in other words, to attain to the tragic version of renewal, of a recaptured youthful state.

³²⁵ Cf. Bond (1981) *ad* 734-62. Bond compares this passage to *Med.* 1271-81 (the murder of the children), which he characterises as “a passage of great excitement”. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff (1889) *ad* 735-815 also speaks of “die durch dieses Erlebnis angeregten Stimmungen”.

However, this is only one side of the dynamic of renewal in this play. There is another, darker side, which becomes overt once the appearance of Lyssa dissipates the confidence and the joyfulness of the chorus. Following the appearance of the goddess, the chorus are cast back into their old age: their performance as singers of praise who can disregard age is deconstructed by the tragic events. However, the deconstruction of their poetic identity and the undoing of the effects of renewal do not come entirely as a surprise. Both of the (connected) processes are prefigured by certain elements in the chorus' celebration of Herakles' success. It will be argued in the next sections that, while the poetic language of the chorus creates for them their new youthful and vigorous state, some parts of it cannot be interpreted straightforwardly. A number of features in the second and third stasima, often couched in 'performative' language, suggest a transgressive attitude against the gods, and contain significant elements of foreboding. As a result, this language casts a shadow over both the triumph of Herakles, and over the resulting resurgence of the chorus: the chorus' 'youthfulness' was built on a sense of a poetic authority, which begins to emerge as being deceptive. The chorus' reinvigoration is thus undermined by elements of the same language that initially describes and enables it, in preparation to being eventually undone by the divine vengeance of Iris and Lyssa. This development is all the more powerful because it is brought out through metadramatic language, a linguistic pattern that is particularly striking in the context of tragedy, and whose interpretative impact will be considered in the next section.³²⁶

³²⁶ Important methodological background for this is provided by Henrichs (1994-5).

iii) Establishing Metadramatic Intentions: the Chorus as Performers

a. Instances of ‘poetic’ and ‘performative’ language

At line 673, the chorus begin the second strophe of their second stasimon. They have already sung for a significant length of time. However, at this stage, they embark on singing in a very different way from their previous songs. The language of song, dance, and poetry suddenly becomes more direct and sustained, as the chorus begin to build upon what seemed a casual remark in the *parodos*, that they are old singers (γέρων ἄοι- / δὸς ὥστε πολὺς ὄρνις, 110-1). The words and phrases that have poetic or dramatic reference are marked in bold in the quotation below (673-86):

οὐ παύσομαι τὰς Χάριτας ταῖς Μούσαισιν συγκαταμει- γνύς, ἡδίσταν συζυγίαν.	675
μὴ ζῶην μετ’ ἄμουσίας, αἰεὶ δ’ ἐν στεφάνοισιν εἶην· ἔτι τοι γέρων ἄοιδὸς κελαδῶ Μναμοσύναν,	680
ἔτι τὰν Ἡρακλέους καλλίνικον αἰίδω παρὰ τε Βρόμιον οἰνοδόταν παρὰ τε χέλυος ἑπτατόνου μολπὰν καὶ Λίβυν αὐλόν. οὐ πῶ καταπαύσομεν Μούσας αἶ μ’ ἐχόρευσαν.	685

Aside from the more obvious references to song and dance, this strophe contains references to the Graces, Muses and Memory, all goddesses connected with song and poetry. Similarly, garlands and victory are connected with the performance of song and poetry (for instance at a symposium, cf. pp. 139-40). Finally, Dionysos is an important god to evoke in this context, as he is the patron of the festival at which tragedy was performed.

As can be seen above, almost every line has a (meta-)poetic reference. This pattern is clearly, though not quite as densely, continued in the corresponding antistrophe (687-700):

<p> παιᾶνα μὲν Δηλιάδες <ναῶν> ὕμνοῦσ' ἀμφὶ πύλας τὸν Λατοῦς εὐπαιδα γόνον, εἰλίσσουσαι καλλίχοροι. </p>	690
<p> παιᾶνας δ' ἐπὶ σοῖς μελάθροισ κύκνος ὡς γέρων ἀοιδὸς πολιᾶν ἐκ γενύων κελαδήσω· τὸ γὰρ εὔ τοῖς ὕμνοισιν ὑπάρχει. </p>	695
<p> Διὸς ὁ παῖς· τᾶς δ' εὐγενίας πλέον ὑπερβάλλων <ἀρετᾶι> μοχθήσας τὸν ἄκυμον θῆκεν βίοτον βροτοῖς πέρσας δείματα θηρῶν. </p>	700

Here, the paeon is mentioned twice (παιᾶνα, παιᾶνας), as is the singing of hymns (ὕμνοῦσ', τοῖς ὕμνοισιν); and the word καλλίχοροι refers directly to dancing in the choruses. Moreover, the chorus are said explicitly to be singers singing like swans (κύκνος ὡς γέρων ἀοιδὸς / πολιᾶν ἐκ γενύων / κελαδήσω), and the last five lines of the antistrophe refer to the valorous deeds of Herakles – suitable material for praise.

This pattern develops in the third stasimon, where the chorus celebrate the death of Lykos. Firstly, Lykos' death shouts are presented as song to their ears, quite literally: μέλος (751); φροῖμιον (753). After the deed, the chorus announce the commencement of their celebration proper with πρὸς χοροὺς τραπώμεθα (761). They then almost immediately begin their dance, calling out to the pleasures of the celebration: χοροὶ χοροί (763). Following this, and picking up on their previous

self-characterisation as singers and dancers, the chorus state that their new situation has brought out a song from them: μεταλλαγαὶ συντυχίας / < > ἔτεκον ᾠοιδάς (766-7). Finally, they even ask the natural landmarks around Thebes to join them in celebratory performance (781-97), and in this request they use dramatic and poetic terms that have become familiar from the preceding passages: ἀναχορεύσατ' (783); συναοιδοί (787).

b. Analysis of 'poetic' and 'performative' language: the context of performance

Self-reflexive poetic, performative language is, therefore, a real and striking phenomenon in this part of the play, and is closely connected with building up the chorus' independence from their age, their capacity to act youthfully while praising Herakles despite their years. However, the interpretation of that language, and the interpretation of the role it plays in the creation of the aged-singer identity of the chorus, are not straightforward. Eventually, it will be argued that this language implicitly deconstructs as well as formally creates the newly reinvigorated and youthful state of the chorus. For the moment, however, it is necessary to focus on the reasons why it is important that this development occurs by means of 'performative' language. This section, therefore, will consider first the methods of interpreting this language, and then how this should affect the understanding of the chorus' engagement with their renewal and regained youthfulness.

b.i) The place of poetic, musical, and dance language within the fiction

The poetic, musical, and dance-related language of the odes builds on the character of the chorus as aged singers, and as such develops this aspect of their identity and self-characterisation. Furthermore, there are even aspects of this language which relate specifically to their age: Wilamowitz noted, for instance, that the reference to Mnemosyne (679) suited their old age particularly well, showing that even in old age they were not forgetful.³²⁷ However, the striking, and for this play unprecedented, concentration of this language suggests that there is more going on in the passage. Some scholars have been so puzzled by this aspect of the strophe 673-86 as to say that it does not fit into the rest of the play, and can only be explained as Euripides' personal intrusion into the drama.³²⁸ While this approach is not endorsed here, such a scholarly reaction indicates that the reasons behind – and the effects of – such a sudden and dramatic increase in the use of this kind of language should be analysed further.

One way to explain the presence of poetic language in this passage is to consider whether it fits into the fictional progression of the drama: the frequency of the references to singing and dancing in the context of celebration can be taken as being realistic expressions of sudden joy, and hence as appropriate for the given situation where the chorus express happiness at their unexpected deliverance. In other places in Greek drama, passages can be found that connect sudden happiness with an explicitly stated desire to dance, as here. One such example is *Soph. Aj.* 693-705, where the

³²⁷ von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff (1889) *ad* 674: “Mnemosyne bedeutet zunächst nur, dass das Alter den Chor noch nicht vergesslich gemacht hat”.

³²⁸ So, for instance, Kitto (1961) 262: “In the second stasimon it is difficult to see anything but an undisguised intrusion of the poet's own personality, such as we have not yet encountered.” For more references, cf. Parry (1965) 363 n. 1. For refutation, cf. e.g. Bond (1981) *ad* 673-86.

excerpt from the *Aias* above, there is limitation on both the number of lines and the richness of the language relating to poetry and performance. Only dance is talked of, and the bulk of the references to it are made through two key roots, based on ‘σχήμα’ and ‘ὀρχέομαι’:

Τρ. τί τὸ κακόν; τί πάσχετε, ὦνδρες; μηδαμῶς πρὸς τῶν θεῶν,
πρᾶγμα κάλλιστον διαφθείρητε διὰ τὰ σχήματα.
Χο. ἀλλ' ἔγωγ' οὐ σχηματίζειν βούλομ', ἀλλ' ὑφ' ἡδονῆς
οὐκ ἐμοῦ κινουῦντος αὐτῶ τῶ σκέλει χορεύετον. 325
Τρ. μή τί μοι νυνί γ' ἔτ', ἀλλὰ παῦε παῦ ὀρχούμενος.
Χο. ἦν ἰδοῦ· καὶ δὴ πέπαυμαι.
Τρ. φῆις γε, παύει δ' οὐδέπω.
Χο. ἐν μὲν οὔν τουτί μ' ἔασον ἐλκύσαι, καὶ μηκέτι.
Τρ. τοῦτό νυν, καὶ μηκέτ' ἄλλο· μηδὲν ὀρχήσηθ' ἔτι.
Χο. οὐκ ἂν ὀρχησαίμεθ', εἴπερ ὠφελήσομέν τί σε. 330
Τρ. ἀλλ', ὀρᾶτ', οὔπω πέπαυσθε.
Χο. τουτογὶ νῆ τὸν Δία
τὸ σκέλος ρίψαντες ἤδη λήγομεν τὸ δεξιόν.

To say that language relating to poetry, dance, and song is used to express the joy of the chorus at the return of Herakles is, therefore, insufficient to explain the amount and richness of specifically poetic and performative (rather than just purely celebratory) vocabulary in the strophe, such as the mention of the Muses, Graces, Memory, paeans, hymns, and crowns. While this language undoubtedly expresses joy, this explanation is too limited for a full interpretation of the use of performative language in these odes of the *Herakles*.

A second possible explanation is that this sort of language partakes of the themes of the symposium, as it mentions song, wine, and poetry. It would not be inappropriate, considering that the chorus are celebrating Herakles' miraculous return and his family's salvation from Lykos, that they should take on certain traits of symposiasts (and perhaps also, through their dancing, of komasts that symposiasts on occasion

turn into).³³⁰ Indeed, a number of elements in the strophe seem to point specifically to a sympotic setting. The most prominent is the reference to wine-giving Dionysos, a phrase that mentions both the most important element of a symposium (wine), and the god in his function as the giver of wine (Βρόμιον οἰνοδόταν, 682).³³¹ Also relevant is the mention of the crowns (ἐν στεφάνοισιν, 677), as garlands were a common accoutrement of symposia. More generic poetic references are likewise not out of place in a sympotic context, for it was a poetic as well as social event, and on this general level much of the language of the strophe in question fits into this scheme and can be explained by it: the chorus rejoice, and in rejoicing bring in aspects of a common mode of social celebration, the symposium. However, this is unlikely to be the primary interpretation of the passage taken as a whole, as the vast majority of the poetic references are too unspecific for this: symposium is not precluded by any of the references, but is specifically suggested by only a few.

Finally, the chorus might at this point be using poetic vocabulary and imagery, and therefore stressing their identity as inspired aged singers, because their poetic identity is in the process of being consolidated from simply aged singers into what Foley and Bierl have termed Theban ‘praise poets’.³³² As has been argued in the previous section, all the three stasima discussed bore the marks of epinician language and style. In conjunction with these epinician motifs, the metapoetic language of these lines

³³⁰ On the association between the *komos* and the symposium, cf. Pütz (2007) vi: “A symposium is a formal drinking-party which usually takes place after a *deipnon* and is frequently followed by a *komos*”. Note the endings of the *Wasps* and the *Akharnians*, where the old men return to the stage as *komasts* after a banquet. In Plato’s *Symposium*, the order is reversed, as Alkibiades joins the party after a *komos* (212c4-e3).

³³¹ Indeed, Bond (1981) *ad* 682 considers the phrase to be essentially a metonymic reference to wine.

³³² The term “praise poets” is used by Foley (1985) 185, and is then taken up by Bierl (1991) 144 as “Preisdichter”.

would assist in positioning and characterising the chorus more precisely as celebrating the achievements of Herakles.

The positioning of the chorus as epinician-singing praise poets would go some way towards explaining the density and kind of poetic language that the chorus are using here: this would account for the references to music, to poetic inspiration, and to dance on the fictional level. The problem with stopping there, however, is that although this language is not incompatible with the choral dramatic identity at this moment, since the chorus present themselves as singers of poetry, it is not clear how one should understand the term 'praise-poets' as it is applied to them. The text does not suggest that the chorus consciously as fictional characters take on the role of epinician 'praise-poets' (i.e. the chorus do not 'become' a kind of 'Pindar'), only that certain features begin to be integrated into their song that are associated with praise poetry in general and epinicia in particular. The term 'praise-poets', then, seems better to describe how the audience would rationalise the function of the chorus here, rather than how the chorus would rationalise their own function. A full interpretation, therefore, requires one to consider both the level of fiction and the level of 'performance'. Although it is necessary to tie in the use of 'poetic' language in the stasima to choral identity (otherwise one would have to have recourse to the 'poet's voice' idea), a better understanding can be achieved with a concurrent appreciation of the performative context of the drama, the self-referentiality of the play as a dramatic text, and what this means for the understanding of the development of the characters in the play.

b.ii) The place of metapoetic language in the context of performance

The consideration of the performative context is based on an important distinction: it is necessary to separate the meaning of the fictional characters' words, as they are spoken within the confines of the dramatic plot and 'in character', from the meaning they have when they are received by the audience in the context of the performance. It is possible to distinguish between the two levels, the level of the fiction and the level of the theatrical performance, because 'dramatic illusion' is never complete, and the drama imposes upon the audience an awareness of the context of performance.³³³ In the case of Euripides, Athenian dramatic festivals are this context. Drama is put on through the medium of poetry, song, music, and dance at a festival dedicated to Dionysos.

Because of the appreciation of the difference between the dramatic and the performative settings, the audience would not assume that the chorus as characters can be motivated to speak in a certain way through being aware of their performative setting. This is impossible, as the chorus as characters (i.e. as old Thebans) are unaware even of the fact that they are in a performance. Yet, this does not preclude an interpretation of the play in the context of performance from affecting the way the characters are perceived by the audience: in many instances, appreciation of the performative context of drama can unveil hidden ironies, and can reveal important

³³³ Note Easterling (1993) 79-80: "Theatre, we must assume, is built on a paradox: that the event presented by actors to an audience is real in the sense that flesh-and-blood people are taking part in the enacting, and the witnessing of the event and make-believe in that the situations and characters presented to the audience are pretended. ... The audience can deal with this contradiction quite comfortably ... So there is no likelihood that the audience will be subject to total illusion, and the term 'illusion' is probably better avoided ('breaking the illusion' is certainly unhelpful)."

intertexts (non-existent on a purely fictional level) that shed new light on a play's characters and plot.

Thus, while it is possible to interpret on the fictional level the references to singing, dancing, playing the *aulos*,³³⁴ the Muses, the Graces, Mnemosyne, and Dionysos, they also need to be read within the context of the dramatic performance in the theatre, as it was sung, danced, inspired by the gods, and performed in honour of Dionysos. The striking density of the 'poetic' terms in the two stasima facilitates this double reading, and moreover creates a linguistic strand or code that could be followed through in the drama. Crucially, the fact that this linguistic code is metadramatic suggests for the text a degree of self-consciousness as performance, and self-awareness as a text. This sort of self-awareness in turn suggests a deliberate, self-conscious use of language, and invites the audience's reflection on this song and this chorus in their own, 'experienced choreutic', terms. As a result, the irregularities in the use of language here become more significant, which has an effect on the intensity with which the sense of foreboding is presented in this passage. In effect, the entire process resonates with significant language: while renewal is created through the power of poetry, metapoetics deconstructs it; and renewal emerges as only a temporary illusion for the chorus, valid until they realise their true tragic (rather than 'comic') destiny.

³³⁴ On the significance of the *aulos* for tragedy, cf. Wilson (1999-2000).

iv) Troubling Language and Precise Language

At this stage it is important to clarify that the suggestion made above does not imply that the use of language in other parts of the play is careless. Instead, what has been suggested is that poetic self-reference increases the audience's awareness of the precision and control over the use of language in the relevant passages, and hence also their perception of the significance of the irregularities of that language. The increased awareness of this precision can carry over from the performative to the fictional level. Or, put differently, the audience would also *expect* the self-consciousness of the use of language in the drama to affect the language that the characters as dramatic figures use by making that language more significant, accurate and specific in the same way as it is all those things on the performative level.

It will be argued, however, that the precision of language does not carry over to the fictional world of the characters. Instead, the text uses very precise language on the performative level to emphasise that the chorus's use of language borders on carelessness, on the level of the fiction. Looking a little ahead, since it is inherently unlikely that the choristers in their dramatic guise as Theban elders would want to misuse paeanic language in a ritualistic context, the explanation for this must be that the dramatic text is trying to make a particular point by using this language in an unusual way. More specifically, the carelessness in the Theban elders' language *qua* characters creates an ominous atmosphere at this stage of the play, and this ominous atmosphere reflects not only on the future of Herakles, but also on the chorus'

presentation of their new-found vigour in praising the hero.³³⁵ The chorus' language both fashions their renewed, youthful state, and at the same time deconstructs their renewal and rejection of the limitations of age by showing that their poetic power, on which their youthful state is built, rests on a fragile and troubled basis.

a. Ambiguous language in the second stasimon (637-700)

The first antistrophe of this ode sets up a sense of foreboding when it subverts an atmosphere of overt celebration, and intersperses it with hints at transgression of appropriate behaviour. The first issue that creates the atmosphere of foreboding is the chorus' criticism of the wisdom of the gods: εἰ δὲ θεοῖς ἦν ξύνεσις / καὶ σοφία κατ' ἄνδρας (655-6). On this passage, Foley remarks, "[a]lthough recognition of the ephemeral nature of divine favour and of the uncertainty of human existence permeates epinician poetry, the poet generally avoids questioning divine morality or casting doubt on the divine blessing manifest in the moment of success."³³⁶ In fact, Foley's observation does not go far enough: aside from suggesting that the gods can be wrong and unwise, in the context of praising Herakles' return from the Underworld one might read into the words of the chorus a suggestion that Herakles' virtue, exhibited in his *anabasis*, was in fact achieved without divine help. The chorus at no stage here say that the gods had helped Herakles succeed in escaping from the Underworld. In any context, but especially in the context of epinician poetry that is so concerned with questions of envy of the victor, this is a troubling signal.

³³⁵ A (methodologically simpler) parallel is the use of language by Klytimestra in the *Agamemnon*. The Argive queen does not wish to use language in a foreboding manner in that play. However, this does not stop her language from being foreboding.

³³⁶ Foley (1985) 185.

Similarly, one might detect a troubling implication in the words spoken by the chorus that it is they, not the gods, who are the real determiners that some men are seen as good, and others as bad. While they say that the gods have conceived of no means to distinguish between people (νῦν δ' οὐδεὶς ὄρος ἐκ θεῶν / χρηστοῖς οὐδὲ κακοῖς σαφῆς, / ἀλλ' εἰλισσόμενός τις αἰ- / ὶων πλοῦτον μόνον ἀΐξει, 669-72), they at the same time continue with a statement that they will never stop praising Herakles for his victories (ἔτι τὰν Ἡρακλέους / καλλίνικον ἀείδω, 680-1). In effect, it is suggested that through their poetry the chorus can recognise and make known to others the worth of Herakles.³³⁷ This criticism of the gods takes on an even more sinister colouring because it follows the comparison between the chorus and Typhon, the arch-enemy of the gods (637-40). In saying that old age presses on them heavier than Aetna, the chorus make an oblique comparison between themselves and Typhon, as Aetna was the mountain that pressed down on the defeated giant (cf. *Pi. Py. i.* 13-26).

More generally, in making the comparison between epinician lyrics and this choral ode, it has been noted by scholars that the second stasimon is missing an important commonplace element of epinicia – the caution against pride. This reflects in an interesting way the idea that the chorus are being portrayed as lacking control over their language, at the same time as the text shows a remarkable self-awareness in its selection of vocabulary and language. The chorus are very forthcoming in their celebrations of Herakles, and in this their language takes on the colouring of the epinician genre. However, what they say also deviates in some important ways from

³³⁷ Barlow (1996) *ad* 637-700.

the traditional and necessary elements of the genres of praise poetry through the absence of the ‘watch out’ motif.³³⁸ It seems almost as if the chorus’ language runs away from them, and in this reflects forebodingly on Herakles’ future.

In the second antistrophe specifically, however, hints at foreboding come up with increasing urgency, as the antistrophe builds on earlier poetic imagery by describing the praise that is being sung by the chorus as a paean, and indeed comparing their praise paean to the paean sung to Apollo at Delos. The chorus stress the poetic connection between themselves and those who praise Apollo by specifically referring to the maiden singers as καλλίχοροι (687-700).³³⁹

παιᾶνα μὲν Δηλιάδες <ναῶν> ὕμνοῦσ’ ἀμφὶ πύλας τὸν Λατοῦς εὐπαιδα γόνον, εἰλίσσουσαι καλλίχοροι·	690
παιᾶνας δ’ ἐπὶ σοῖς μελάθροις κύκνος ὡς γέρων ἀοιδὸς πολιᾶν ἐκ γενύων κελαδήσω· τὸ γὰρ εὔ	695
τοῖς ὕμνοισιν ὑπάρχει. Διὸς ὁ παῖς· τᾶς δ’ εὐγενίας πλέον ὑπερβάλλων <ἀρετᾶι> μοχθήσας τὸν ἄκυμον θῆκεν βίστον βροτοῖς πέρσας δείματα θηρῶν.	700

696 τᾶς δ’ εὐγενίας Hermann: τὰς δ’ εὐγενείας L
697 <ἀρετᾶι> post Tyrwhitt (ἀρεταῖς) Nauck

The tone of this passage is celebratory, in line with the tone of the corresponding strophe. However, upon closer inspection, a more complicated, problematising direction begins to emerge. It is strange (indeed, troubling) that the chorus would refer

³³⁸ Swift (2010) 148: “In this context, it is noticeable that despite the play’s detailed engagement with epinician *topoi*, one theme of *epinikion* is entirely missing: what we might call the ‘watch out’ motif.”

³³⁹ Cf. Papadopoulou (2005) 47.

to their praise of Herakles as a paean. As Rutherford has argued, paeans primarily took gods for their subjects.³⁴⁰ In the classical period, moreover, paeans were rarely addressed to mortal men, and if this ever happened, they were invariably praises for the dead, such as for instance the paean sung at the Gymnopaidia for the battle of Thyrai (an early example, commemorating a conflict that dates back potentially to 669 BC): this moderate widening of the identity of the addressee from gods to heroically deceased men becomes more frequent only in the Hellenistic era.³⁴¹ It is also in the Hellenistic era that paeans to living people are first encountered.³⁴²

If Rutherford is correct, the chorus' language in this passage becomes ominous. Although Herakles does traditionally go on to become divine, the chorus dramatically have no way of knowing that this will happen.³⁴³ Herakles at this point has not yet been predicted worship that was due to a hero, let alone a god. As far as the chorus are aware, they are singing a paean to a mortal man (albeit a son of Zeus), and moreover to a man who is still alive. Indeed, this last aspect might carry with it additional problems, in that the connection of paeans with commemoration further hints at the looming downfall of Herakles. This effect is strengthened through the fact that paean-singing for Herakles is contrasted in the antistrophe with paean-singing for the most common and most proper addressee of this sort of lyric – the god Apollo.³⁴⁴ Herakles' exceptional position and the chorus' dangerous celebration of it are thereby emphasised all the more strongly.

³⁴⁰ Rutherford (1994-5) 125: "Perhaps Euripides meant for a sense of foreboding to be triggered by the reflection that in comparing themselves to the Delian maidens, the *choros* clearly implies that they are treating Heracles like a god, which may have appeared impious and hybriatic, a transgression of the convention that paeans should be addressed only to gods."

³⁴¹ Rutherford (2001) 57.

³⁴² Cf. the summary table in Rutherford (2001) 131; cf. also p. 58 for arguments that the paean to Lysander was performed after his death.

³⁴³ There is perhaps some irony, however, in the fact that the praise given to Herakles here might at some stage in the future, when he is deified, have been appropriate.

³⁴⁴ Foley (1985) 184.

In addition, the way the antistrophe is constructed suggests a parallelism between the sort of praise that is given to Apollo, and the sort of praise that is granted to Herakles. The parallelism is brought out by the antithetical structure of the μέν ... δέ clauses, and by the anaphoric repetition of παιᾶνα ... παιᾶνας at the start of lines 687 and 691, each of which also heralds the start of a new sentence. Moreover, the chorus sing the praise of Herakles while dancing around his house, just as the maidens dance around the temple of Apollo. One could also note that the number of lines given to the description of the maidens' song and the old choristers' song is roughly the same: four for the maidens, and three and a half for the old men. This comparison implies a levelling of status between Apollo and Herakles.³⁴⁵

Finally, the comparison is strengthened by the description of Herakles as the son of Zeus (Διὸς ὁ παῖς, 696), as this description can apply equally to Herakles and to Apollo, mentioned by name a few lines earlier. By being vague in this respect, the language given to the chorus constructs with an alarming equality the two figures, who are sons of the same father, and are praised with the same kind of song. However, the chorus go further than this, as they may even imply superiority of Herakles over Apollo. This last suggestion is based on Hermann's emendation of τᾶς δ' εὐγενίας for τὰς δ' εὐγενείας of the manuscripts. As Bond has argued, the emendation is "necessary for metre and responsion", and is moreover "a proper alternative form" of εὐγένεια.³⁴⁶ The emendation's singular reading suggests that the εὐγενία that is common to Herakles and Apollo by virtue of being the children of Zeus is surpassed

³⁴⁵ Cf. Rutherford (1994-5) 125, who writes that the chorus "compare themselves to paeon-singing Delian maidens and announce that they are themselves singing paeans, implying that Heracles is as worthy of having paeans addressed to him as Apollo is. This section contrasts with the earlier stanzas, which concentrate on mortality, both of the singers and of Heracles".

³⁴⁶ Bond (1981) *ad* 696.

by Herakles through something that is specific to him and not Apollo. With the widely accepted supplement <ἄρετᾶι>,³⁴⁷ the text now means “going beyond nobility with his virtue”, and implies that the nobility granted by the parenthood of Zeus is surpassed by Herakles through his ἄρετή, exemplified here for the chorus by his labours (of which they had sung in the first ode), and particularly by his successful return from the Underworld to rescue his family. The construction of this hierarchy between Apollo and Herakles is bolstered by the fact that the antistrophe has a priamel-like form, where praise rituals for Apollo come first, and are followed by those conducted for Herakles, who is by implication the greater entity.³⁴⁸

The co-ordination of the ode additionally brings out the troubling aspect of the chorus’ tone. The two strophes focus on the old age of the chorus: the first considers the chorus’ unenviable position as old men, while the second shows the chorus transcending it and becoming more youthful through their poetic power. The antistrophes, however, pick up on elements mentioned in the strophes, but turn them towards darker meaning. The first antistrophe continues the theme of the corresponding strophe, focusing on the value of youth, though turning it into a criticism of the gods. The second antistrophe likewise picks up on the poetic theme

³⁴⁷ The editors who accept it include Bond (1981) *ad* 696, 697 and Kovacs (1998).

³⁴⁸ Relevant for the argument of this and next sections is Currie’s thesis that even in the fifth century BC it was possible (and perhaps not unusual) to give heroic and divine honours to living persons (Currie (2005), esp. 158-200), especially through “an ecstatic reaction from an assembled crowd” (p. 193). However, even if Currie’s general thesis is accepted (and his use of evidence has been questioned in important ways, cf. Larson (2007) 202-3), this should not change the assessment of the significance of the chorus’ language here. Firstly, it is not clear whether and to what extent divine honours rather than heroic honours were granted to living men. Although Currie argues that this is not a “categorical difference” (p. 192), this is nevertheless a significant detail, and the majority of Currie’s examples involve heroic rather than divine honours. Secondly, the descriptions of the honours that Currie suggests were given to living men fall far short of the extent to which Herakles is praised in the second and the third stasima: none of Currie’s recipients of cult are set above Apollo, for instance. Finally, Currie himself admits (p. 154) that in Athens there seems to have been a reluctance to grant cult honours to “historical persons”. Currie’s arguments, therefore, do not significantly alter the present reading of the unusual and troubling nature of choral language in the *Herakles*. Cf. Swift (2010) 148 on the audience’s likely alarm at the application of ‘divine’ language to Herakles.

expressed so strongly in the second strophe, but in this case makes the poetry of the chorus, made manifest by their singing of paeans, seem inappropriately applied in the praise of Herakles. Similarly, just as the strophes are connected by the frequent references to age contained therein, so the antistrophes are linguistically connected, with the second antistrophe picking up on the references in the first to birth (δυσγένεια, 663 and εὐγένιας, 696) and virtue (ἀρετᾶς, 659 and <ἀρετᾶι>, 697). The darker passages are linked, even organised, through an emphatic precision of the language; and this precision is directed towards creating an ambiguous future for Herakles, not celebrating his current bright present.

The fact that the tone of the second stasimon carries with it an element of foreboding suggests that the renewal of the chorus rests on a poetic power that is problematic, and that cannot last. The chorus misapply poetic motifs, misinterpret the authority of the gods, and compare Herakles to Apollo in a way that presents the former in too advantageous a light. The resulting implication is that the renewed and newly youthful position of the chorus as singers of praise becomes undermined: the chorus' state becomes presented as improved only to build it up for a greater fall. The tendency towards such deconstruction only grows in the next stasimon.

b. Ambiguous language in the third stasimon (735-814)

Section iii. a of this chapter already outlined the main instances of poetic self-referential language in the third stasimon. This includes terms such as μέλος (751), φροίμιον (753), πρὸς χορούς τραπώμεθα (761), χοροὶ χοροί (763),

ἀναχορεύσατ' (783), and συναϊδοί (787). In addition, Bierl argued that the words μεταβολά (735) and μεταλλαγαί (765, 766) have a theatrical reference, as they play on the idea of the tragic *peripeteia*;³⁴⁹ and μεταλλαγαί are also said to have brought out a new song from the chorus: μεταλλαγαὶ συντυχίας / <...> ἔτεκον αἰοιδάς (766-7). Further to this, there are other words and phrases that recall poetic terminology and setting, the pattern of which is established in the second strophe of the previous stasimon. These include στεφαναφόρει (781), which recalls the mention of crowns of the chorus (ἐν στεφάνοισιν, 677); and Δίρκα θ' ἄκαλλιρρέεθρος (784) and Ἄσωπιάδες κόραι (785), which describe dancing young goddesses, and recall the description of the dancing maidens of Delos (cf. Δηλιάδες ... καλλίχοροι, 687-90). Thus, although the amount of self-referential language in this stasimon is not as great as in the preceding choral song, it is nevertheless concentrated and direct, and establishes a linguistic connection with the second stasimon. Overarching this, there is a connection of theme between the two choral songs: both are directed at praising Herakles, and both use 'poetic' language to achieve this. There is a connection of style between them as well, as both employ epinician-sounding terms.³⁵⁰ As a result, the same working assumptions can be made about the language in this ode as in the previous one regarding the engagement of the text with the ideas of control and accurate use of language. The text is self-reflexive about its own nature as a text, about its nature as a linguistic and musical medium. In this context, any irregularities, anomalies, or instances of 'inappropriateness' of

³⁴⁹ Bierl (1991) 143. Wilson (1999-2000) 435 suggests a musical register for μεταβολά. Note also the phrase καλλίνικον ἄγῶνα (789), which is taken by some scholars as another example of self-referential vocabulary in the ode: cf. Bierl (1991) 144 and Foley (1985) 216. Bierl thinks καλλίνικον ἄγῶνα can refer to the theatrical *agon*. Foley gives examples of contests being referred to as *agones*, and the victors as *kallinikoi* (her examples derive both from comedy and tragedy).

³⁵⁰ Cf. Swift (2010) 131-3.

language or sentiment in the words of the characters are all the more worthy of comment.

The primary problem with the praise of Herakles as it is presented in the third stasimon is its exuberance. So Foley: “The final ode before the central crisis and after the death of Lycus reaches a pitch of hysterical optimism ... Yet by the standards of epinician poetry the eagerness of the chorus to elevate Heracles to what amounts to divine status should make the audience uneasy.”³⁵¹ In addition, Swift has commented on the continuing absence of any warning to Herakles against pride, and has moreover termed the detailed praise of Herakles’ exploits and genealogy as ‘hymnic’: “In the third stasimon, Heracles is presented as a divine avenger, and the city and his birth and deeds are celebrated as though the Chorus were singing a religious narrative (798-814). The inclusion of language from these religious genres further highlights the absence of any warning to a mortal victor: for as the recipient of an *epinikion* Heracles is a mortal man, but as the recipient of a *paian* or *hymnos* he is by implication divine”.³⁵²

The inversion of the human and divine roles, moreover, can be traced through the fact that, instead of the usual hierarchy of worship between men and gods, it is local divinities who are invited in the course of this ode to praise Herakles’ victory and the city of Thebes (781-97):

³⁵¹ Foley (1985) 185–6. On adulation as preceding the fall, cf. already Sheppard (1916) 77-8. On uneasiness over Herakles’ elevation, cf. also Burnett (1971) 167-8, Silk (1985) 13-4 (who argues that the way Herakles is presented in the third stasimon shows him to be closer to a “god-hero” than a mortal, and that indeed Herakles himself shows traits of ‘divine’ anger in the way that he threatens to deal with the Thebans (pp. 12-3)), and Swift (2010) 131: “The ode is often described as hymnic, and indeed its unbridled praise of Heracles and portrayal of him as saviour and protector is more reminiscent of a religious than a secular song”.

³⁵² Swift (2010) 148.

Ἴσμήν' ὧ στεφαναφόρει
 ξεσταί θ' ἑπταπύλου πόλεως
 ἀναχορεύσατ' ἀγυιαί
 Δίρκα θ' ἅ καλλιρρέεθρος,
 σύν τ' Ἀσωπιάδες κόραι
 πατρὸς ὕδωρ βᾶτε λιποῦ-
 σαι <μοι> συναοιδοί³⁵³
 Νύμφαι τὸν Ἡρακλέους
 καλλίνικον ἀγῶνα.
 Πυθίου δεινῶτι πέτρα
 Μουσᾶν θ' Ἑλικωνίδων δῶματα,
 αὔξετ' εὐγαθεῖ κελάδωι
 ἐμὰν πόλιν, ἐμὰ τείχη,
 σπαρτῶν ἵνα γένος ἐφάνθη,
 χαλκασπίδων λόχος, ὅς γ' ἄν
 τέκνων τέκνοις μεταμείβει,
 Θήβαις ἱερὸν φῶς.

785

790

795

The divine elements are invited to celebrate together with the city: Ismenos, Dirke, the local nymphs, and the streets of Thebes are all urged to dance together in praise of Herakles. Additionally, in the second half of the strophe the Muses and even Apollo are invoked by the mention of Parnassus and Helicon. However, neither Apollo, the god of the lyre, nor the Muses are asked to inspire the song in praise of Thebes sung by the chorus. Instead, the chorus' demand is a much bolder one, especially given the context of opposition created between Herakles and Apollo in the previous ode (that is recalled by the linguistic connection of this strophe with the strophe in the second stasimon where Herakles was compared with Apollo, cf. κελάδωι, 792 and κελαδῶ, 679; and καλλίνικον, 789, 681): Parnassus and Helicon are to praise the city of Thebes directly.³⁵⁴

³⁵³ Cf. pp. 127-8 above.

³⁵⁴ A similar dynamic can be observed in 766-7: μεταλλαγαὶ συντυχίας / <...> ἔτεκον ἀοιδάς. It is not unusual to say that poets give birth to songs (cf. Eur. *Suppl.* 180-1, Ar. *Frogs* 1059, Cratin. fr. 203 Kassel-Austin; also Stevens (1971) *ad Andr.* 476), and the metaphor seems to play on the somewhat mystical, even divine, way that poetry comes into being. However, in the present passage, the application of the metaphor suggests that the changes performed by Herakles directly inspire the elders to poetry; and thus Herakles comes close to usurping the function of the Muses.

Additionally, the listing of the gods in this strophe, when seen in light of its metadramatic context, takes on further significance, since the ode's employment of self-referential language facilitates its placing in the context of generic convention. Bond provides a list of six passages where a series of gods are similarly invoked elsewhere in tragedy.³⁵⁵ The context of these passages is enlightening. The listing of deities in three of them (Soph. *OT*. 151-67, *OK*. 1085-95 and 1556-78) all occur in a time of crisis: in the *OT* the chorus sing while Thebes is gripped by plague and uncertainty, and in the *OK* the first passage occurs in the interlude when Theseus recaptures Antigone and Ismene, and the second comes after Oidipous' exit into the grove to meet his death. Something similar pertains to the other three cited passages: the feeling of crisis and foreboding in them is also very prominent. In Soph. *Aj*. 693-705 the chorus invoke Pan and Apollo following the exit of Aias after his deception speech, and the scene directly following that choral ode is the Messenger-scene, where the danger to Aias is revealed. That choral song, then, is full of dramatic irony, and so tension and foreboding. Similarly, the song at Eur. *Hkld*. 748-83 is delivered after Iolaos' exit to the battle, and covers the time of the armed conflict itself. Finally, in Ais. *Sept*. 87-181 the chorus address the various images of the gods in panic at the fact that their city is being attacked.

Based on these observations, it appears almost a generic convention (though it is difficult to make this claim with certainty, given the state of the evidence and the size of the sample) that a listing of divinities in a choral ode is a symptom or a way of expressing extreme tension in the dramatic situation, whether this tension is overt or is instead a prelude to a reversal. In this instance, the parallel from the *Aias* is

³⁵⁵ Cf. Bond (1981) *ad* 781-97.

particularly enlightening, since there as in the present passage the chorus are filled with confidence at the time of their invocation of the gods, but in the very next scene their confidence is to be replaced by panic and fear. The audience's heightened awareness of the self-reflexive nature of the passage in the *Herakles* would help the text to convey the expectation of a coming reversal, increasing its atmosphere of foreboding.³⁵⁶ Thus, the text would be able to engage with this generic expectation, playing on the idea that through the language which the old chorus use they are, in the light of tragic convention, unwittingly putting Herakles into a dangerous position. This praise song would become suffused with tension as the audience are given to understand that the moment of crisis is imminent, and has indeed arrived. Furthermore, this might be reinforced by the fact that the gods named in the strophe above remind one of the proposed violence and dangerously excessive nature of Herakles, in the sense that the rivers and the nymphs to which the chorus refer recall the threat of Herakles to fill Theban rivers with corpses (572-3),³⁵⁷ polluting and contaminating them.³⁵⁸

All this has an important impact on the presentation of the chorus' age. In their praise song of Herakles, the chorus not only put Herakles in a dangerous position, but in so

³⁵⁶ The passage from the *Aias* is quoted above, p. 138, and, perhaps significantly, also contains explicit self-reflexive dramatic language, e.g. νῦν γὰρ ἔμοι μέλει χορεῦσαι, 701.

³⁵⁷ Burnett (1971) 167-8. This passage recalls the contest between Akhilleus and the river Skamandros, whose current was clogged with corpses in *Iliad* xxi. 214-21; in that book, Akhilleus also problematically contested with the river god, and in xxii. 15-20 he even threatened Apollo.

³⁵⁸ Another 'problematization' of the list of divinities might be the mention of Dirke as one of the goddesses that are implored to join in the celebration at the death of Lykos. Dirke, however, is in this story the mother of Lykos (cf. ὡς ἦν πάρος Δίρκης τις εὐνήτωρ Λύκος, 27), and so an utterly inappropriate local divinity to be called to celebration at his death. One might also imagine that the audience could have been caused some concern by the fact that the land of Thebes is qualified by the chorus primarily as the land of the Sown Men, who in turn are characterised by their weapons, recalling their mutual slaughter (794-5); cf. Burnett (1971) 168. This is hardly an auspicious symbol with which to describe Thebes at this point: not only had Herakles threatened to kill his fellow citizens in revenge for the treatment of his family, and not only has Thebes just come out of civil strife (543), but also in retrospect the mutual killing of the Sown Men, children of the same earth and the same seed and therefore kin, reflects and foreshadows the actual kin-slaughter in which Herakles is going to be implicated shortly.

doing also undermine their own authority and their rejection of old age, which is based on rejoicing for Herakles' successes. There is significant irony in the fact that the words which praise Herakles and reinvigorate the chorus at the same time push them both closer to their undoing. The insecure and perilous nature of their renewal shows that the chorus are not free to tamper with their age, and that they are not liberated from their human condition by the achievements of the conquering hero. As a result, after the appearance of Iris and Lyssa the choral old age is set to emerge as ever present and ever powerful; ugly and painful in its reassertion of authority over the chorus; a true binding force on them; and a reflection of the tragic reversal of the play.

v) Iris and Lyssa, and the Return of Old Age

At the sudden appearance of Iris and Lyssa, the chorus' joyful dancing and singing is broken up into chaos as the old men struggle to escape the goddesses, urging their limbs to move faster (815-21):

— ἔα ἔα·	815
ἄρ' ἐς τὸν αὐτὸν πίτυλον ἤκομεν φόβου, γέροντες, οἷον φάσμ' ὑπὲρ δόμων ὀρώ;	
— φυγῆι φυγῆι νωθὲς πέδαιρε κῶλον, ἐκποδῶν ἔλα.	
— ὦναξ Παιάν, ἀπότροπος γένοιό μοι πημάτων.	820

The fear inspired by the goddesses puts an end to the celebratory song, and in this way begins to undercut the use of poetry by the chorus to escape their old age. At the same time, the chorus' age is emphasised by their address to each other as γέροντες

in line 817; and by the recollection of the exhortation of the chorus to one another in the *parodos*.³⁵⁹ There, the chorus struggled to climb to the house of Herakles, and had to urge their legs to be more pliant (τμή προκάμητε πόδατ βαρύ τε κῶ- / λον, 119-20). Here, while the movement is more chaotic and disorderly than in the *parodos*, the emphasis on the difficulty of the movement returns, as the old men are brought back to the disadvantaged and fragile position in which they began the play (νωθὲς πέδαίρε κῶλον). The joy that carried them along at the time of Herakles' return and his killing of Lykos evaporates, leaving them to face the harsh reality of the coming madness of Herakles and their own aged state. The future no longer looks as certain as they believed: the chorus' previous conviction regarding the future and confident celebrations are juxtaposed by their immediate expression of surprise (ἔα ἔα, 815)³⁶⁰ and overt fear (φόβου, 816). From a state of renewal and poetic empowerment, the chorus are brusquely returned to the confines of their aged condition.

The fact that this happens because of the appearance of the gods is also a significant detail. Just as the chorus placed Herakles on a level with the gods, so here the gods reassert their superiority over the celebrations of the chorus and over the position of Herakles. This is underlined by the words of Iris, who says specifically that she wants to punish Herakles because mortal affairs have become too great, and the divine is being downtrodden (841-2):

ἢ θεοὶ μὲν οὐδαμοῦ,
τὰ θνητὰ δ' ἔσται μέγала, μὴ δόντος δίκην.

³⁵⁹ This scene has been termed by some critics as a second prologue. Cf. Papadopoulou (2005) 123.

³⁶⁰ Cf. Bond (1981) *ad* 514.

This has been interpreted by Swift, for instance, as being a reference to the over-exultant celebrations of the chorus in the preceding odes.³⁶¹ This chapter's analysis is in agreement with this view, though it would be possible to take it a step further by making it relevant to the chorus' engagement with their age and youthfulness. The chorus become, due to their celebrations which they carry out energetically in the face of old age (cf. 673-86), to some extent disconnected from the passage of time, and so that little bit closer to a youthful state. However, as soon as the vengeful divinities appear on-stage, the distance between the mortal and the divine spheres is fully and painfully re-established, and the natural aged condition of the chorus also begins to re-emerge. This becomes effectively symbolised by the mention of the paean by the panic-stricken chorus: whereas previously, in the second stasimon, the chorus sang a 'transgressive' paean to Herakles, here they make an apotropaic prayer to Apollo, whom they characterise correctly in the given circumstances as the protecting god Paian (820).³⁶² Thus, the transgressive singing of the chorus is put into reversal, and the old men once again call on the gods for help.

vi) The Chorus after the Departure of Iris and Lyssa

Following the departure of the goddesses, and during the exact time when Herakles is being driven mad, the chorus sing an ode of lament. The primary difference between this ode and the preceding ones is the tone,³⁶³ even though this ode continues to use

³⁶¹ Swift (2010) 149; cf. Foley (1985) 186; and Parry (1965) 364.

³⁶² Cf. Rutherford (1994-5) 125.

³⁶³ The reversal in the tone of the passages is strengthened by the metrical scheme: here, as at the start of the jubilant third stasimon, the chorus begin the song in a largely dochmiac metre (cf. Bond (1981) *ad* 875-921. However, whereas before the dochmiacs embodied celebratory emotion, after the intervention of Iris and Lyssa this metrical structure resonates with despair.

the same theatrical terms as were used in the praise of Herakles and the narrative and celebration of the death of Lykos. However, the usage of theatrical material in this ode is markedly different from its use in previous passages, and reasserts the chorus' growing distance from their youthful state. In this ode, the chorus reapply the terms familiar from their songs of celebration to their lament over Herakles and their description of his downfall: χορευθέντ' ἐνάυλοις (879; the use of this verb stands out due to its unusual transitive sense, as also at 871 and 686),³⁶⁴ χορεύματ' (889), and μέλος ἐπαυλεῖται (895). In the previous odes, however, the idea of choral dancing was used in reference to the celebrations of the chorus (e.g. πρὸς χοροῦς τραπώμεθα, 761); and Lykos' death-cries too, described as a μέλος (751), were a cause for celebration. Here, the music and dance are mournful, devoid of joy and Dionysiac relish: κατάρχεται χορεύματ' ἄτερ τυπάνων / οὐ Βρομίου κεχαρισμένα θύρσωι (889-90); πρὸς αἵματ', οὐχὶ τᾶς Διονυσιάδος / βοτρύων ἐπὶ χεύμασι λοιβᾶς (892-3). By contrast, Dionysos was mentioned in the second stasimon as patron of celebration and wine (Βρόμιον οἰνοδόταν, 682), during the period of the chorus' 'renewal'. Now, however, the situation is diametrically opposite: blood has replaced wine, and Lyssa has replaced Dionysos: οὐποτ' ἄκραντα δόμοισι / Λύσσα βακχεύσει (896-7).³⁶⁵ The chorus follow Lyssa's example and her influence in their application of these words to the madness of Herakles rather than to their celebration of his successes, since she was the first to shift the application of self-reflexive theatrical language from describing the

³⁶⁴ Cf. Bond (1981) *ad* 686, 871, and n. 366 below.

³⁶⁵ Cf. Wilson (1999-2000) 435-7. Here, one kind of madness replaces another: on the association between Dionysos and madness, cf. Schlesier (1993) 93.

celebration of Herakles' return and of the killing of Lykos to describing Herakles' madness: τάχα σ' ἐγὼ μᾶλλον χορεύσω καὶ καταυλήσω φόβῳι (871).³⁶⁶

From this, two observations follow. Firstly, the chorus are shown to have completely moved away from the idea of using poetry as a path to renewal, to acting more youthfully. The circumstances permit the chorus only their old age, and not the celebratory use of poetry and theatrical language. In fact, though it is not unnatural for them to use 'poetic' language to describe the situation (as the identity of aged singers is still a part of their character), the fact that now they can only apply it to the madness of Herakles and not to their own song emphasises the extent to which their situation has changed; and emphasises the scale of the reversal that the plot has undergone. From persons reinvigorated and youthful, the chorus return to their grievous aged condition. Ironically, this process undermines and even reverses the completion of what the chorus had advised the gods to do regarding virtuous men. In the second stasimon the chorus sing that the gods should give virtuous men a double youth (655-62). However, this mark of favour is eventually denied to the chorus: although the gods allow them to feel reinvigorated for a time, the chorus' return to youth is undermined by the fact that they do not present the relationship between the gods and Herakles in a pious way.

The second observation is that at this stage there is no longer the juxtaposition between the inappropriate language of the chorus and the implied emphasis on accurate speech that self-reflexive dramatic language brings: the juxtaposition is broken up by the fact that the strand of foreboding, pessimism and disaster has

³⁶⁶ The appropriation of this language from one context into the other is underlined by the unusual causative use of the verb χορεύω in both the second stasimon (686) and here, cf. Bond (1981) *ad* 686, and n. 364 above.

become overt and all-prevalent, as the looming troubles foreshadowed in the chorus' language become fully achieved. Instead, the emphasis lies on the way that Lyssa's application of dramatic language to Herakles' madness is taken up by the chorus in their use of this language in describing and lamenting Herakles' fate. This again emphasises the extent of the reversal of the celebration, and the dismantling of the framework of renewal within which the chorus' language reflected their poeticism and liberated them from the confines of their age. The next section will consider the last stage of the development of the choral character, in which the chorus' identity as aged singers is completely relinquished, and is replaced by the identity of the chorus simply as old men.

vii) The Chorus after the Madness of Herakles

The chorus' reaction to the messenger speech again strikes a slightly different note from their previous discourse. Instead of using theatrical and poetical terms to express themselves as before, the chorus now say that they do not know how to lament the disaster of Herakles, as nothing in their life or poetic experience has taught them how to deal with a disaster on this scale (1025-7):

αἰαῖ, τίνα στεναγμὸν
ἢ γόον ἢ φθιτῶν ὦιδάν ἢ τίν' Ἄι-
δα χορὸν ἀχῆσω;

1025

The chorus can think of some parallels, like the stories of the Danaids and Prokne, but even these stories of disaster are overshoot by the extent of Herakles' misfortune (τάδε δ' ὑπερέβαλεν παρέδραμεν τὰ τότε / κακὰ τάλανι διογενεῖ κόρωι, 1019-20;

οὐ δὲ τέκνα τρίγων', ὦ / δάιε, τεκόμενος / λυσσάδι συγκατειργάσω μοίραι,
1022-4). Poetry and song as the chorus know and have been using them are incapable of dealing sufficiently with the depth of this disaster.

In this context, and in light of the special interpretative attention that is given in this play to the chorus' use of metapoetic language, the failure of the chorus' capacity for 'poetic' language is significant. Importantly, this 'abortive' passage is also the chorus' last use of 'poetic' language: after this, only Amphitryon and Herakles use comparable terminology when they call the madness a bacchanalia (1119, 1122, 1142). In addition, immediately after this, Amphitryon further deconstructs the chorus' 'poetical' identity by telling them to be silent, first at 1042-4 (Καδμεῖοι γέροντες, οὐ σῖγα σῖ- / γα τὸν ὕπνωι παρειμένον ἐάσετ' ἐκ- / λαθέσθαι κακῶν;), and again at 1068 (σῖγα σῖγα). Furthermore, he emphatically uses two verbs to describe the sounds they are now producing, the primary meanings of which are connected with making inarticulate or uncontrolled sounds, a long way from poetic and sung verses: μῆ / κτυπεῖτε, μῆ βοᾶτε (1047-8). The first refers primarily to wordless noise; and while the second implies words, it does not normally refer to words that are particularly refined or coordinated. Finally, the silence of the chorus that follows the awakening of Herakles (after line 1110, but excluding the *sphragis*, 1427-8) takes them entirely out of the poetical field, both as fictional characters, and as actors in the dramatic text.³⁶⁷

³⁶⁷ According to Kovacs (1998), their silence is absolute until the *sphragis*. However, Bond (1981) *ad* 1311f. gives the chorus two additional lines in the *agon* (1311-2). Even if the chorus do speak these lines, this is only a minor correction to the present argument: the chorus' participation in the plot after 1110 remains negligible, and occurs in the structured and expected context of the *agon*.

At this stage, then, the chorus' identity as aged singers is taken away from them. The circumstances are too terrible for them to express their condition through song and dance, and their lament is, moreover, described as clanging and shouting. They are repeatedly told to be silent and, although it is against their inclination even to lament more quietly (1059), they eventually give in to this. Following the destruction of Herakles' family, the function of the chorus as Theban 'praise poets' is no longer relevant, and the situation is shown to be far too terrible for any sort of stylised lament.³⁶⁸ At the same time, the chorus' identity as fighters is also unmentioned: it was abandoned after the conflict for the lives of Herakles' family was lost to Lykos in favour of the poetic identity, and has no further place in the present context.

As a result, the chorus becomes overwhelmingly characterised by nothing more than their age, which is four times mentioned in the scene by Amphytrion (γέροντες, 1042, 1054, 1081 and 1109). As behoves old men, in their last spoken line (with the exception of the traditional *sphragis*), the chorus associate themselves with Amphytrion (κἀγῶγε σὺν σοί, μὴ προδοῦς τὰς συμφοράς, 1110), who is also called πρέσβυς three times in dialogue with the chorus (1040, 1045, 1067): in this play, as on occasion elsewhere in Greek tragedy, old men tend to band together with other elders.³⁶⁹ With their youthfulness lost, old age pervades the identity of the chorus.

³⁶⁸ Cf. Foley (1985) 187.

³⁶⁹ On the potential affinity of old men for each other in tragedy (the *OK* specifically), cf. Burton (1980) 295, Gardiner (1987) 113-4, Falkner (1995) 224, Dhuga (2011) 15, 17-8. More generally, the affinity of mortals for one another, so strongly reflected through the prism of age, is an important 'message' of the play as a whole, as is brought out by the redemption of Herakles through his human friendship with Theseus: cf. Silk (1985) 14-8.

CHAPTER V. THE *OIDIPOUS KOLONEUS*:

A NUMINOUS OLD AGE

i. Introduction

This chapter turns from considering tragic choruses towards the examination of a tragic principal – Oidipous in Sophokles’ *Oidipous Koloneus*. Initially, it seeks to trace the way that Oidipous’ old age is constructed, to establish the importance of old age for his presentation as a character, and to note how Oidipous’ attitude to his age differs from the attitudes of the other old men presented in the play, the chorus and Kreon. In section iii, the striking discrepancy between Oidipous’ physical weakness and mental strength is considered. Section iv builds on this analysis, and focuses on the transformations that the figure of the old exile undergoes during the play: his gradual elevation from a powerless and dependent position towards a position of increased significance and power that allows him to achieve his goal of finding death and burial in Athens. Next, Oidipous’ relationships and interactions with others in the drama will be analysed, focusing specifically on the way these are significant for understanding the depth and uniqueness of his character. Finally, the chapter looks at Oidipous’ last moments and his passing, which is presented in the play as the high-point and the culmination of his mortal existence.

ii. Establishing and Describing Oidipous' Old Age

Oidipous' old age is established as an important part of his character from the very start of the play, where in his initial speech Oidipous not only points out that he is an old man, but also ascribes much of his current outlook on life to that fact, and to the experience of suffering acquired during his long existence (1-13):³⁷⁰

Τέκνον τυφλοῦ γέροντος Ἀντιγόνη, τίνας
 χώρους ἀφίγμεθ' ἢ τίνων ἀνδρῶν πόλιν;
 τίς τὸν πλανήτην Οἰδίπουν καθ' ἡμέραν
 τὴν νῦν σπανιστοῖς δέξεται δωρήμασιν,
 σμικρὸν μὲν ἐξαιτοῦντα, τοῦ σμικροῦ δ' ἔτι 5
 μεῖον φέροντα, καὶ τόδ' ἐξαρκοῦν ἐμοί;
 στέργειν γὰρ αἰ πάθαι με χῶ χρόνος ξυνῶν
 μακρὸς διδάσκει καὶ τὸ γενναῖον τρίτον.
 ἀλλ', ὦ τέκνον, θάκησιν εἴ τινα βλέπεις 10
 ἢ πρὸς βεβήλοις ἢ πρὸς ἄλσεσιν θεῶν,
 στήσόν με κἀξίδρυσον, ὡς πυθώμεθα
 ὅπου ποτ' ἐσμέν· μανθάνειν γὰρ ἤκομεν
 ξένοι πρὸς ἀστῶν, ἂν δ' ἀκούσωμεν τελεῖν.

In this speech, Oidipous focuses immediately on his identity as a blind old man (τυφλοῦ γέροντος), tying the two physical disabilities into a dynamic that will recur throughout the play. Oidipous also focuses on his poverty, and his status as exile (πλανήτην). These aspects of his character combine to bring out his weakness, his isolation from any societal structure that might protect his interests, and his utter dependence on his daughter. Furthermore, Oidipous' address to Antigone in line 1 focuses on the fact that it is his daughter who is Oidipous' helper, underlining the absence of his sons,³⁷¹ and Oidipous' increased vulnerability due to this. The visual presentation of Oidipous would only have strengthened this image: he is described in detail by Polyneikes as being dressed in rags, with hair dishevelled, and covered in

³⁷⁰ The text of Sophocles is taken from Lloyd-Jones and Wilson (1990b), unless otherwise specified.

³⁷¹ Cf. *Ant.* 1087 and *OT.* 444, where the blind Teiresias is led by boys, rather than girls.

dust and grime (1258-61). Indeed, the sight of Oidipous is so distressing that it provokes comment from almost every character in the play.³⁷² Oidipous' visual presentation and his initial self-description combine to create a portrait of a weak and frail figure, and underline his isolation and abandonment.

Oidipous' self-description is also unusual for surviving Sophoklean tragedies,³⁷³ and certainly in important ways unlike the presentation of Oidipous in the *Oidipous Tyrannos*.³⁷⁴ Oidipous states that he is content with his lot (τόδ' ἔξαρκούν ἐμοί) because his long life, full of suffering, has taught him to be satisfied with what he has; and his nobility gives him greatness of mind to bear his misfortunes (αἰ πάθαι με χῶ χρόνος ξυνών / μακρὸς διδάσκει καὶ τὸ γενναῖον τρίτον).³⁷⁵ At the same time, Oidipous expresses a desire to learn where he is and to listen to what the locals tell him to do (μανθάνειν γὰρ ἤκομεν). This sentiment fits with his reduced and vulnerable circumstances; yet it paradoxically combines the wisdom that is traditionally associated with old age with the lack of knowledge untraditional for old age.³⁷⁶

Following this introduction, the great age of Oidipous is constantly revisited throughout the drama, and the reader's understanding of it is gradually deepened as a result. A striking instance is the presentation of the lengthy process by which

³⁷² Falkner (1995) 212 and 308 n. 2. Falkner notes the utterances by the chorus (140-1, 150-1), Ismene (327), Theseus (551-6), Kreon (745-7), and Polyneikes (1255-63).

³⁷³ Knox (1964) 145-6; and Falkner (1995) 212, 229.

³⁷⁴ Whereas the Oidipous of the *OT* was unbending and stubborn, the Oidipous in the *OK* is more tractable (cf. Knox (1964) 194 n. 16). For more connections and guided contrasts between the *OK* and the *OT*, cf. the focused work of Seidensticker (1972); also Adams (1957) 164, Murray (1966) 26-8, Bushnell (1988) 87, Kelly (2009) 45-9.

³⁷⁵ For a discussion of the significance of these elements of Oidipous' experience, and their effect on his character, see Falkner (1995) 229-30.

³⁷⁶ Though cf. Falkner (1995) 226-8 on the ambiguous position of the old advisor generally in Greek literature, including tragedy.

Oidipous moves from within the grove to the new seat designated for him by the chorus (173-202). This scene is torturously precise in providing directions and accounts of Oidipous' movement, as if each step was a labour; and it is interspersed with Antigone's offers to lead Oidipous and support his aged frame (182-3, 197-9, 200-1).³⁷⁷ Furthermore, the difficulty that his old age created for undertaking any physical actions is underlined by the unique fact of a character sitting down in tragedy.³⁷⁸ The move culminates in Oidipous' lamentation of his condition: ὤμοι δύσφρονος ἄτασ (202).³⁷⁹ Although this complaint refers to more than just the age and weakness of Oidipous, and no doubt covers his terrible sufferings and exile, it directly follows Antigone's offer to support his old body (γεραὸν ἐς χέρρα σῶμα σὸν / προκλίνας, 200-1), and thus emphasises the suffering that is brought to Oidipous by his frailty.

This idea, and his dependence on others, is stated directly in lines 501-2 (οὐ γὰρ ἂν σθένει τοῦμόν δέμας / ἐρῆμον ἔρπειν οὐδ' ὑφηγητοῦ δίχα), where it is said that Oidipous is not only incapable of walking unaided because of his blindness, but is also impeded by his physical weakness.³⁸⁰ This weakness is, presumably, due mostly to age, though it could be understood as being compounded by the harshness of his life as an exile, a polluted and unwanted man in most people's eyes (cf. 5-6). Oidipous' frailty is recalled in the later comments of Kreon and Oidipous himself, that Antigone and Ismene are the 'staves' of Oidipous, on which he leans (τούτων ... σκήπτροι, 848; ὦ σκῆπτρα φωτός, 1109), and that they support him from both sides, giving him repose (ἐρείσατ', ὦ παῖ, πλευρὸν ἀμφιδέξιον / ἐμφύντε τῷ

³⁷⁷ Cf. Edmunds (1996) 51.

³⁷⁸ Cf. Falkner (1995) 221.

³⁷⁹ Accepting the interpretations of Kamerbeek (1984) *ad* 202: "malignant doom"; and of Lloyd-Jones (1994) 435: "[a]las for my ruinous affliction".

³⁸⁰ Cf. Falkner (1995) 213.

φύσαντι, κἀναπαύσατον / τὸν πρόσθ' ἐρῆμον τοῦδε δυστήνου πλάνου, 1112-4). The understanding of Oidipous' extreme physical weakness can be expanded with one final reference to Oidipous' dependence on Antigone: she acts as his anchor. This imagery implies that, without Antigone, Oidipous would not even be able to stand, but would fall over, as a ship is unable to maintain its position on the sea without its anchor (κάπῃ σμικροῖς μέγας ὥρμουν, 149).

In this description of the afflictions of old age, Oidipous' condition is the most extreme of all the old characters in the play, who, while not necessarily strong, are at least partially independent. However, even more than by his frailty, Oidipous is differentiated from the other old men in the drama by his attitude to old age. A powerful contrast between Oidipous and the chorus of old men is created through the fact that Oidipous never complains of old age directly.³⁸¹ The chorus, however, devote the penultimate choral ode of the play largely to the troubles of old age (1211-48). More than that, while the chorus at the end say that these are the troubles that they suffer together with Oidipous, they remain their own primary point of reference for these sufferings: ἐν ᾧ τλάμων ὄδ'—οὐκ ἐγὼ μόνος, 1239.³⁸² As such, they present an elaborate complaint of their condition, focused specifically on their age. Although early in the play, in his private prayer, Oidipous regrets the fact that he is old, and yearns after his former youth and physical strength (οἰκτίρατ' ἀνδρὸς Οἰδίπου τόδ' ἄθλιον / εἶδωλον· οὐ γὰρ δὴ τό γ' ἀρχαῖον δέμας, 109-10), in public he tends to complain of his other misfortunes such as exile and his crimes. He bears his old age with dignity. Furthermore, by not using age as a supplication tool,

³⁸¹ Falkner (1995) 256.

³⁸² Cf. Markantonatos (2002) 219 on Oidipous' courage in facing the “melancholy idea of life's futility”.

Oidipous shows self-respect and nobility of character (cf. 8),³⁸³ and his willingness to bear the inevitable hardship of old age without complaint.

Moreover, only in one scene does Oidipous use his old age in a rhetorical context, and this is in his *agon* with Kreon, over which Theseus stands as adjudicator:³⁸⁴ ὦ λῆμ' ἀναιδές, τοῦ καθυβρίζειν δοκεῖς, / πότερον ἐμοῦ γέροντος, ἢ σαυτοῦ, τόδε; (960-1); and τὸν ἰκέτην γέροντ' ἐμέ (1008). However, the way that Oidipous first mentions his years in that scene underlines his difference from Kreon in his attitude towards his old age: by comparison with the latter's rhetorical manipulations of it, Oidipous mentions his old age in a very restrained way. As soon as he comes on stage, Kreon describes himself as an old and hence powerless man in order to disarm the chorus' suspicion (ἦκω γὰρ οὐχ ὡς δρᾶν τι βουλευθείς, ἐπεὶ / γέρων μὲν εἶμι, 732-3),³⁸⁵ and a few lines later he again mentions his age, and the fact that he had to travel even though he was old, in an attempt to gain sympathy: ἀλλ' ἄνδρα τόνδε τηλικόσδ' ἀπεστάλην / πείσων ἔπεσθαι πρὸς τὸ Καδμείων πέδον (735-6). While Kreon here tries to elicit Oidipous' (and the chorus') sympathy through the 'same age' *topos* (and furthermore to portray his relationship with Oidipous as sympathetic in the eyes of the chorus), he shows little respect for and seemingly little knowledge of the depth of suffering that Oidipous' exile had inflicted on the old wanderer. Moreover, when the rhetorical situation suits him, Kreon can seek to minimise the effect of his age on his capacity to act. When he is opposed by Theseus, who has decided that the daughters of Oidipous must be returned to him, Kreon says that he will act despite his age. He does this in an attempt to put pressure on the

³⁸³ On Oidipous' insistence on his self-worth even in old age, cf. Falkner (1995) 252, 257.

³⁸⁴ Cf. Falkner (1995) 246. Since Oidipous has to fight Kreon in persuading Theseus, he counterbalances his old age to Kreon's.

³⁸⁵ However, as subsequent events show, Kreon is far from powerless.

confrontation with Theseus, and through this change in tactics to influence Theseus' decision: πρὸς δὲ τὰς πράξεις ἔτι, / καὶ τηλικόσδ' ὦν, ἀντιδρᾶν πειράσομαι (958-9). Unlike Oidipous, Kreon's main instinct is to make rhetorical mileage out of his old age in a way that is inconsistent and hypocritical.

The persistent references to old age, the description of its effects, and the contrast between Oidipous' and other old men's attitude to it serve gradually to uncover Oidipous' personality, and to define his character. Oidipous' old age serves to set him apart from the other characters in the play, even from the other old men. Gradually, the extent to which Oidipous differs from them, and how unusual a character he really is in comparison to them, becomes clear. When considered through the prism of age, his respectful and courageous attitude to his years shows his stature.

iii. The Divergence between Oidipous' Physical and Mental States

Another important aspect of Oidipous' old age is the divergence in his physical and mental potencies.³⁸⁶ In the examples given above, the weakness, frailty and dependence that mark his age relate purely to his physical body, while the potency of Oidipous' mind is never in question. This section will trace this divergence, exploring especially the early sections in the play and the interactions between Oidipous and Antigone and Oidipous and the chorus that are contained therein. The contrast between the two spheres is a powerful early signal regarding Oidipous' potential in

³⁸⁶ Cf. Falkner (1995) 213; also Shields (1961) 66. This divergence is greater for Oidipous than for the other old characters in the play, as Oidipous is both more frail and more intellectually attuned than they.

the drama, despite his old age and physical weakness. This potential will ensure the successful achievement of his aim to find repose in Attica.

The initial contrast between the physical and the mental states of Oidipous is drawn by the juxtaposition of his reliance on Antigone for all things physical, and his basic independence from her in respect of his mind and knowledge. Antigone is able to provide aid to Oidipous in physical matters, but is unable significantly to help him in any other way. The juxtapositions begin from the very start of the play. After Oidipous' eloquent, logical, and concise introductory speech, quoted above, Antigone suggests he rest on a rock nearby, specifying that he should repose his limbs (κῶλα κάμψον, 19), and that the road he has travelled has been tiring for an old man (μακρὰν γὰρ ὡς γέροντι προὔσταλης ὁδόν, 20). At the same time, Oidipous continues to press Antigone with questions and instructions (23, cf. 9-12).³⁸⁷ Antigone, however, seems unable to provide any further information on Oidipous' question regarding their location than he already knows, despite his blindness. Oidipous remembers what the travellers on the road had told them, that the place they had come to was Athens, and in fact he implies that Antigone knows that they have come to Athens from this very source: πᾶς γὰρ τις ἡῦδα τοῦτό γ' ἡμῖν ἐμπόρων (25) (note especially the explanatory γὰρ following Antigone's statement in the preceding line). Oidipous' mind, therefore, is sharp, and his memory potent.

Similarly, although Antigone's description of the grove to which they have come adds to Oidipous' understanding of his surroundings, it also builds on what he can already

³⁸⁷ This is a constant attitude for Oidipous: cf. Kelly (2009) 122-3 on his consistent questioning of others throughout the play.

perceive.³⁸⁸ Jebb has argued that the epithet given to the nightingales, πυκνόπτεροι (17), suggests not that they are “thickly-feathered”, but rather that there are many of them. The undisturbed bird-song of the numerous nightingales suggests the sanctity of the grove,³⁸⁹ in the same way that the ample, perhaps even unrestrained, growth of laurel, olives and vines suggests the reverence given to the location (16-7). Despite his blindness, Oidipous is not as reliant on Antigone as he appears to be at first glance.

The sense of Oidipous’ independence from Antigone can be deepened by considering her absence from the process of revelation of Oidipous’ identity. Despite her previous interjection when she helps Oidipous decide to move from the grove at the chorus’ behest, and then helps him with this movement (171-2), she is silent during this exchange, pushed out of the conversation by the more aggressive chorus.³⁹⁰ Oidipous makes this difficult decision independently.³⁹¹ However, the decision of Oidipous to unveil his identity before Theseus’ arrival in fact turns out to be propitious: the chorus say that it is precisely the fame of Oidipous’ name that will make Theseus hurry to Kolonos (καὶ κάρθ’, ὅταν περ τοῦνομ’ αἴσθηται τὸ σόν, 301); and it is in his quick arrival that Oidipous is able to find acceptance into the Athenian community and timely protection from Kreon, who arrives from Thebes to take Oidipous back.

³⁸⁸ Cf. Edmunds (1996) 42.

³⁸⁹ Jebb (1885) *ad* 17.

³⁹⁰ There is a textual problem here. Earlier editors, such as Campbell (1879) and Jebb (1885), and some modern ones (Kamerbeek (1984), for instance), assign line 217 to Antigone, as it is given in the manuscripts. On this line assignment, Antigone is not silent in the exchange. However, most modern editors, such as Dawe (1996), Lloyd-Jones (1994) and Lloyd-Jones and Wilson (1990b) (cf. Lloyd-Jones and Wilson (1990a) 224), following the arguments of Meridor (1972), assign this line to the chorus. Although going against the manuscript tradition, this assignment has more to recommend it. In addition to Meridor’s arguments, it may be noted that line 217 does not answer the question posed by Oidipous in 216, but, by contrast, forms a good transition between lines 215 and 219, which are unilaterally given to the chorus: line 217 fits better with the thought pattern of the chorus than with Antigone’s.

³⁹¹ And this is, arguably, a more difficult decision for Oidipous to make than the one that Antigone helps him with.

With Antigone absent from the debates on this decision, Oidipous is the one on whom responsibility for it rests, and the one who can take the credit for its fortunate outcome.

The favourable outcome of this scene, moreover, is based on Oidipous' ability to persuade the chorus to allow him to stay even after they learn who he is. Following the ineffectiveness of Antigone in the decision scene, in the scene where the chorus are trying to drive Oidipous out Antigone's words of persuasion are similarly ineffective.³⁹² Although her supplication (237-53, in lyric metre) is highly emotional, it does not focus on the question that the chorus raised regarding the reason why they cannot allow Oidipous to stay, namely their fear that Athens might be punished by the gods for giving sanctuary to a man hated by them (233-6):

σὺ δὲ τῶνδ' ἐδράνων πάλιν ἔκτοπος
αὔθις ἄφορμος ἐμᾶς χθονὸς ἔκθορε,
μὴ τι πέρα χρέος
ἐμᾶι πόλει προσάψης.

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In one place, indeed, one might even argue that Antigone's speech strains the bounds of comfort and piety by likening the chorus to gods (ἐν ὑμῖν ὡς θεῶι / κείμεθα τλάμονες, 247-8), arguably an unfortunate tactic when trying to calm the religious fears of the chorus.³⁹³ The end result of her supplication is that the chorus reply with what is almost an exact restatement of their earlier position (256-7):

τὰ δ' ἐκ θεῶν τρέμοντες οὐ σθένομεν ἄν
φωνεῖν πέρα τῶν πρὸς σὲ νῦν εἰρημένων.

³⁹² Cf. Winnington-Ingram (1980) 274: "If Antigone represents the power of persuasion, she fails".

³⁹³ Cf. Currie (2005) 188-9.

By contrast, Oidipous' speech that follows Antigone's addresses the concern of the chorus methodically, striving to contradict the chorus' conviction that Oidipous is a bad man, and so a person who could be hated by the gods; and adding to this the incentive of a tangible reward that Oidipous could bring to Athens.³⁹⁴

Firstly, Oidipous opposes the idea that he was the 'doer' of his crimes, insisting instead that he was a victim.³⁹⁵ Oidipous describes himself as suffering rather than doing (πεπονθότ' ἴσθι μᾶλλον ἢ δεδρακότα, 267). Furthermore, he denies that he is evil (καίτοι πῶς ἐγὼ κακὸς φύσιν; (270)), on the basis that to be an evil man one must intend the crime, and he had never intended to kill his father.³⁹⁶ Oidipous even boldly states that had he been aware that his attacker was his father, he still would have been in the right to act as he did (ὥστ' εἰ φρονῶν / ἔπρασσον, οὐδ' ἂν ᾧδ' ἐγιγνόμενην κακός; (271-2)), since he would not have been acting under malicious intent, but purely in self-defence (cf. 992-6). His character, Oidipous argues, is free from stain.³⁹⁷

³⁹⁴ While Linforth (1951) 135 has argued that this speech "produces an effect of natural spontaneity", Falkner (1995) 231 points out that "the change from lyrics to iambics marks the shift from an emotional to a more reasoned appeal". Spontaneity and reason are perhaps not mutually exclusive: Oidipous' rhetorical and intellectual prowess is all the more impressive, given that due to the dramatic situation he must speak without preparation, and yet is able to put together a cogent and well-aimed argument.

³⁹⁵ Cf. Murnaghan (1988) 38-9, Burton (1980) 263; for a view more critical of Oidipous, cf. Kelly (2009) 53-4. For an anthropological perspective on passivity associated with aging, cf. Van Nortwick (1989).

³⁹⁶ The importance of intent for Oidipous is not limited to this discussion, but also appears at other points in the drama, for instance in Oidipous' religious statement that one person can atone for many, if only the right intent is there (ἀρκεῖν γὰρ οἶμαι κἀντὶ μυρίων μίαν / ψυχὴν τᾶδ' ἐκτίνουσαν, ἦν εὐνοῦς παρῆι, 498-9). On this sentiment, cf. Falkner (1995) 234-5.

³⁹⁷ Gould (1966) 493 draws an important distinction: while Oidipous does not think of himself as a bad man, "it never occurs to him that he is freed by this fact from the uncleanness of the guilty man". In fact, Oidipous separates the notions of bad character, pollution, and guilt by reinterpreting the idea of guilt in a moral rather than a functional sense; i.e. through intent rather than through simply performance of the action (this latter would be more akin to the 'Aiskhylean' view of justice). Cf. Linforth (1951) 107: "to justify himself in the eyes of the chorus, he asserts his guiltlessness, not his freedom from pollution, and in the end the chorus are entirely won over though he never clears himself of the pollution which terrified them in the beginning." Also Rehm (2002) 338 n. 113: "In Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus*, Oedipus finds the Furies only after traveling to Athens; they don't rise up to haunt him after the murder of his father at the crossroads, recounted in *Oedipus Tyrannus*".

In the second part of his speech, Oidipous switches from defence to attack. He states that he is holy and pious by virtue of being a suppliant (ἦκω γὰρ ἱερός εὐσεβής, 287),³⁹⁸ and that the chorus would be committing, not avoiding, impiety by turning him out (ἔργοις ... ἀνοσίοις ὑπηρετῶν, 283).³⁹⁹ He also recalls his initial appeal to Athenian reputation (282-3, cf. 258-65), and solidifies this appeal by offering the (pragmatic) chorus a tangible reward for accepting his supplication (φέρων / ὄνησιν ἄστοις τοῖσδ', 287-8). With this, Oidipous wins what Antigone had been unable to achieve – a reprieve to stay where he is until the arrival of Theseus, who will make a final decision. The favourable outcome shows Oidipous' intelligence in picking the right approach, his eloquence in carrying it out, and his rhetorical independence from Antigone.

This tension between physical incapacity and intellectual and spiritual power is illustrated in a particularly interesting way through the intertextual link between the start of the *OK*, and Aiskhylos' *Eumenides*.⁴⁰⁰ The comparison between the two plays is initially suggested by the location of the Sophoklean drama, next to the grove of the Eumenides at Kolonos.⁴⁰¹ The location is revealed by the Peasant in 42-3, and after this it would have remained alive in the mind of the audience through the visual representations on the *skene*.⁴⁰² The goddesses inhabiting the sanctuary are then recalled powerfully to the mind's eye through the impassioned and unusual prayer of

³⁹⁸ Walker (1995) 184, 192 n. 42.

³⁹⁹ Cf. Falkner (1995) 232. On piety as a key character trait of the chorus, cf. Gardiner (1987) 110-3.

⁴⁰⁰ This tension is another facet of the phenomenon pointed out by Burian (1974), whereby Oidipous is seen as both a supplicating figure, and as a saviour.

⁴⁰¹ Kelly (2009) 71. Cf. also p. 72 on the connection created between the Eumenides in the *OK* and the Eumenides of Aiskhylos through the Peasant's description of them and their genealogy in lines 39-40 and 42-3.

⁴⁰² Winnington-Ingram (1954b) 18.

Oidipous to them (84-110),⁴⁰³ and scholars have noted that he shares further traits with the Eumenides. For instance, Kelly has pointed out that Oidipous pronounces curses throughout the play, taking on a function that is strongly associated with the Furies.⁴⁰⁴ He also notes “a series of shared themes and vocabulary”,⁴⁰⁵ many of which are concentrated in the encounter scene between Oidipous and the local man, such as the fact that the seat of Oidipous and the Eumenides is referred to with the same word, ἔδρα (Oidipous’: 36, 45, 112; Eumenides’: 84, 90); that Oidipous speaks all-seeing things (ὄσ’ ἄν λέγωμεν πάνθ’ ὄρωντα λέξομεν, 74) just as the Eumenides see everything (τὰς πάνθ’ ὀρώσας Εὐμενίδας, 42); that he “holds” the grove (ἔχεις γὰρ χῶρον, 37) in the same way as the Eumenides do (αἱ γὰρ ἔμφοβοι / θεαί σφ’ ἔχουσι, 39-40); that both Oidipous and the Eumenides are described as frightening in their aspect (Eumenides: 84, Oidipous: 141); and that the “kindliness” of Oidipous is referred to (τίς δῆτ’ ἄν ἀνδρὸς εὐμένειαν ἐκβάλοι / τοιοῦδ’, 631-2) in the same manner as the “kindliness” of the Eumenides (ὥς σφας καλοῦμεν Εὐμενίδας, ἐξ εὐμενῶν / στέρνων δέχεσθαι τὸν ἰκέτην, 486-7).⁴⁰⁶ Furthermore, Henrichs has argued that in line 100, through the phrase νήφων ἀοίνοις, Oidipous “signals his intention to meet these goddesses on their own ritual terms, viz. as their potential worshiper carrying νηφάλια”.⁴⁰⁷ A structural similarity between the *OK* and the

⁴⁰³ For the unusual nature of the prayer, cf. for example Birge (1984) 11 n. 3, who comments that Oidipous’ address to the Eumenides as ὦ γλυκεῖαι παῖδες ἀρχαίου Σκότου (106) suggests “closeness between equals”, a highly irregular state to be in vis-à-vis the Furies. Note also Winnington-Ingram (1980) 265, who points out how striking it is that Oidipous asks the Eumenides to pity him (οἰκτίρατ’ ἀνδρὸς Οἰδίπου τόδ’ ἄθλιον / εἶδωλον, 109-10).

⁴⁰⁴ Kelly (2009) 72; cf. Falkner (1995) 249; cf. also p. 207.

⁴⁰⁵ Kelly (2009) 72.

⁴⁰⁶ Kelly (2009) 72-3.

⁴⁰⁷ Henrichs (1983) 90. Cf. also Blundell (1989) 257 on the awesome visage of Oidipous, his second sight, sobriety, drinking blood, and the ability to bless and curse. Note also Segal (1981) 375, Minadeo (1994) 169, Mills (1997) 167.

Eumenides can also be noted: in these tragedies the chorus are given ‘searching-scenes’, the only two such scenes in surviving tragedy.⁴⁰⁸

Finally, the two plays are connected through an intertextual and thematic link between the scene where the Eumenides are first spotted in Aiskhylos’ play, and the moment when the chorus first catch sight of Oidipous.⁴⁰⁹ In the *Eumenides*, the priestess of Apollo at Delphi emerges from the temple and says of the goddesses: ἦ δεινὰ λέξαι, δεινὰ δ’ ὀφθαλμοῖς δρακεῖν (34). The chorus of the *OK* recall her words in their initial reaction to Oidipous: δεινὸς μὲν ὄρα̃ν, δεινὸς δὲ κλύειν (141). Both the chorus and the priestess are afraid of what they see, and do not know the identity of the objects of their gaze; and it is worth pointing out two further circumstantial similarities: in both cases the observers are old, and in both cases the objects of their observation are also old, though in the case of the Eumenides their old age is somewhat indeterminate: κόραι / γραῖαι, παλαιαὶ παῖδες, *Eum.* 68-9.

This connection assigns to Oidipous an ambiguous role in the drama. Although he is the unknown entity, the entity inspiring fear, he is also the one for whom the chorus are hunting. Structurally, therefore, the chorus take on the role of the Furies, while Oidipous is associated with that role through, for instance, the verbal connections with the description of the Eumenides; and through the statement that he is destined to take up residence with the Furies. The dilemma of Oidipous’ character, therefore, is that he partakes, though in different ways, of both power and powerlessness, and he is both hunter and prey, Fury and victim. It is not until later in the play that the audience are

⁴⁰⁸ Kaimio (1970) 134-7.

⁴⁰⁹ Cf. Lardinois (1992) 327.

shown which side of the two Oidipous inclines towards, when he pronounces his curses on Kreon and Polyneikes.

The next section will build on this analysis in order to show Oidipous' progression and transformation from an old man dependent on others, to an old man whose formidable authority becomes clear even before the mysterious ritual of his passing.

iv. The Transformations of Oidipous

a. Transition from beggary to confidence

Prior to Oidipous' realisation that he has arrived at the grove of the Eumenides, and insofar as it is possible to reconstruct his past from what he says, the old man must be understood to have been living in poverty, and having to beg for his sustenance.⁴¹⁰ At his entrance, Oidipous' presentation certainly makes him look like a beggar, unwashed and unfed as he is (cf. 1256-63). Moreover, in his initial speech Oidipous says that he expects to be received with "scanty gifts",⁴¹¹ and that although he asks for only a little, he must bear with even these demands being rejected, and must receive less than he asks for (5-6): an inherently humiliating process. Furthermore, Oidipous states that he is ready to acquiesce and to obey, to carry out whatever the locals might require of him (7-8; 12-3). It is telling that while later he berates his son for making him live like a beggar (σύ μ' ἐξέωσας, ἐκ σέθεν δ' ἀλώμενος / ἄλλους ἐπαιτῶ

⁴¹⁰ Some modern scholars disagree with this view: cf. Falkner (1995) 252. Falkner argues that in this drama Oidipous never stoops to flattery, and in fact conducts himself exclusively with dignity and nobility.

⁴¹¹ In the words of Lloyd-Jones (1994) 413.

τὸν καθ' ἡμέραν βίον, 1363-4), he never actually contradicts Polyneikes' words that as an exile he lived by flattery and by begging (1334-7).

However, Oidipous undergoes a process of transformation upon his arrival at Kolonos, and the effectiveness of this process is made manifest by such features of the drama as the contrast between his earlier failed demands for only small things, and his immediately successful demand that Theseus grant him a great favour (ὄρα γέ μῆν· οὐ μικρός, οὔχ, ἄγων ὄδε, 587). Oidipous barely even needs to argue for this to be accomplished. Furthermore, whereas at the start of the play Oidipous' state was one of physical weakness and dependence on others, as was argued above, by the time of his encounter with Polyneikes he can be described as the source of physical strength for those whom he will choose to help. As Polyneikes says, Oidipous will bring κράτος to whatever side he joins (οἷς ἂν σὺ προσθῆι, τοῖσδ' ἔφασκ' εἶναι κράτος, 1332); and without Oidipous, he will not even have the strength to survive (ἄνευ σοῦ δ' οὐδὲ σωθῆναι σθένω, 1345).

As important as the transformation of how Oidipous is viewed by others is the transformation in Oidipous' attitude to himself and his acquisition of mental and emotional confidence. This transformation begins immediately after the old man is told where he is by the Peasant, as he goes back on the statement made in his first speech, that he will do whatever he is told (marked by an indefinite subjunctive ἀκούσωμεν, 13). Instead of acquiescing with the instructions of the local, and much to the Peasant's surprise, Oidipous refuses to leave the grove (44-5).⁴¹² Because

⁴¹² It should be noted, however, that the increase in Oidipous' confidence is not a linear process. It goes through a number of stages, such as the arrival of the second prophecy through Ismene, his acceptance into Athens by Theseus, and the repulsion of Kreon's attack. An example of its uneven development can be seen in the fact that while Oidipous is able to argue the Peasant into allowing him to stay in the

Oidipous now recognises that he is nearing the culmination of his life, and with it both a worthy death and an ability to help his friends and harm his enemies (84-93), his actions henceforth become directed primarily not at obeisance, humility, and survival, but at achieving that culmination, and fulfilling what has been prophesied.⁴¹³

b. Oidipous' authority

The rising confidence of Oidipous and those around him in his value, in the worth of his body to the people whom he might choose to reward with it, is accompanied by the emergence of Oidipous' authority, manifest in his control of language, and his curses and blessings.

Throughout the play, Oidipous is shown to possess rare rhetorical talents. For instance, Kelly has noted that “[c]ontext and rhetoric influence the way he [Oidipous] frames the responsibility” of the city of Thebes (440-1), Eteokles and Polyneikes (599-600), Kreon (770), and Polyneikes (1356-7). When faced with the chorus, Oidipous blames the collective city of Thebes; when talking to Theseus, he blames the royal progeny, partly to rouse Theseus' sympathy, and partly because the issue of family would be important to a tragic autocrat; when faced with his antagonists, he blames them.⁴¹⁴ This divergence shows that Oidipous has a rhetorical control over language, which he uses for the purpose of convincing those around him, and convicting those against him.

grove, he is not successful with the forewarned and aggressive (and more authoritative) chorus. From them, Oidipous is able to secure only the guarantee of his safety, should he leave the grove (176-7).

⁴¹³ Cf. Bushnell (1988) 92 on the necessity of Oidipous' conscious choice in the fulfilment of the oracle.

⁴¹⁴ Kelly (2009) 64.

In addition to this, Oidipous has a more innate authority over language, which he attains through his knowledge of the past. Markantonatos has argued that this knowledge allows Oidipous to control the narrative of the past, and even to shape the future. The narrative authority of Oidipous, the “master story-teller”,⁴¹⁵ creates a proleptic authority over the coming events: “The lack of any doubting reactions, not to say major contrasting narratives, allows him not only to dominate the former events, but also to define prospective developments, which form part of the external future of the play”.⁴¹⁶

This aspect of Oidipous’ authority takes its root in the main from his curses and blessings, which take their initial power from the prophecies that he is given. Oidipous’ numinous utterings are deployed at intervals throughout the play, and undergo a complex process of development, as has already been noted by scholars. Knox, for instance, has argued that it is possible to detect a growing confidence in the curses that Oidipous speaks: while he starts by citing the authority of other divinities, he continues by cursing in his own name, on his own authority.⁴¹⁷

Oidipous’ potential in this regard starts to be unlocked through the mention of two prophecies, the first reported by Oidipous himself (87-95):

ὅς μοι, τὰ πόλλ’ ἐκεῖν’ ὅτ’ ἐξέχρη κακά,
ταύτην ἔλεξε παῦλαν ἐν χρόνῳ μακρῷ,
ἐλθόντι χώραν τερμίαν, ὅπου θεῶν
σεμνῶν ἔδραν λάβοιμι καὶ ξενόστασιν,
ἐνταῦθα κάμψειν τὸν ταλαίπωρον βίον,

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⁴¹⁵ This description is used in Markantonatos (2002) 29.

⁴¹⁶ Markantonatos (2002) 54.

⁴¹⁷ Knox (1964) 153-4, 156.

κέρδη μὲν οἰκήσαντα τοῖς δεδεγμένοις,
ἄτην δὲ τοῖς πέμψασιν, οἳ μ' ἀπήλασαν·
σημεῖα δ' ἤξειν τῶνδέ μοι παρηγγύα,
ἢ σεισμόν, ἢ βροντὴν τιν', ἢ Διὸς σέλας.

95

This prophecy, while it lays out the general framework for the coming action, mentioning the coming passing of Oidipous, and his capacity to bring benefits and calamities, is, however, sparing of specific details. For instance, it is unclear whether the Thebans are implied as those who drive Oidipous out, or just his sons; and the mechanism by which Oidipous might confer blessings and afflictions is not brought out. The second prophecy, reported by Ismene, is more precise. It states that the salvation of Thebes requires Oidipous' cooperation, and mentions the power of Oidipous' tomb (389-90, 392, 402, 411):

σὲ τοῖς ἐκεῖ ζητητὸν ἀνθρώποις ποτὲ
θανόντ' ἔσεσθαι ζῶντά τ' εὐσοίας χάριν.

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...
ἐν σοὶ τὰ κείνων φασὶ γίγνεσθαι κράτη.
...
κείνοις ὁ τύμβος δυστυχῶν ὁ σὸς βαρῦς.

...
τῆς σῆς ὑπ' ὀργῆς, σοῖς ὅταν στῶσιν τάφοις.

These prophecies enable Oidipous to understand his personal significance, and the power that is invested in him by the divine. That said, they are not born of his own authority, and state only what the gods have decreed will happen a long time from the dramatic date of the play, when the Thebans will invade Attica (cf. ὅτι σφ' ἀνάγκη τῆιδε πληγῆναι χθονί, 605).

These prophecies are given colour, however, when Oidipous develops them in his explanation of the significance of his grave to Theseus. Oidipous tells Theseus that, seemingly like a hero of cult, he will drink his enemies' blood (621-3):⁴¹⁸

ἴν' οὐμὸς εὐδῶν καὶ κεκρυμμένος νέκυς
ψυχρὸς ποτ' αὐτῶν θερμὸν αἷμα πίεται,
εἰ Ζεὺς ἔτι Ζεὺς χῶ Διὸς Φοῖβος σαφής.

Although stress is laid on the fact that Oidipous relies on the gods for the fulfilment of this statement, he nevertheless brings out the details of the future event and makes it more concrete in Theseus' (and the audience's) imagination. This makes his empowerment seem more palpable, as its effect and the process of Oidipous' satisfaction are brought before the mind's eye in an image both grotesque and at the same time grand and remarkable.

A similar trajectory for the development of Oidipous' authority of expression and his confidence in himself emerges from consideration of the curses with which Oidipous attacks his sons, Kreon, and on one occasion his city. Throughout the play, the curses generally become more elaborate and precise, longer in scope, and more full of hatred. As a result, those which come later sound more powerful generally than the ones that come earlier. The first curse against Oidipous' sons, provoked by the anger Oidipous feels at their choosing the kingship over recalling him to Thebes (cf. 418-9: καὶθ' οἱ κάκιστοι τῶνδ' ἀκούσαντες πάρος / τούμοῦ πόθου προὔθεντο τὴν τυραννίδα;), is not explicit, and veils its real threats in euphemism. It runs as follows (421-7):

⁴¹⁸ Cf. Knox (1964) 55, accepted by Wallace (1979) 45, on how drinking his enemies' blood might relate Oidipous to figures of cult heroes through recalling the sacrifice rituals that were performed for them.

ἀλλ' οἱ θεοὶ σφιν μήτε τὴν πεπρωμένην
 ἔριν κατασβέσειαν, ἐν δ' ἐμοὶ τέλος
 αὐτοῖν γένοιτο τῆσδε τῆς μάχης πέρι,
 ἧς νῦν ἔχονται κάπαναίρονται δόρυ·
 ὡς οὔτ' ἂν ὅς νῦν σκῆπτρα καὶ θρόνους ἔχει 425
 μείνειεν, οὔτ' ἂν οὐξεληλυθῶς πάλιν
 ἔλθοι ποτ' αὖθις·

It asks for strife and battle (ἔριν, μάχης), and asks that Oidipous should be able to decide their outcome (ἐν δ' ἐμοὶ τέλος / αὐτοῖν γένοιτο). If Oidipous is granted this power of decision, one of the brothers will not remain (οὔτ' ἂν ὅς νῦν σκῆπτρα καὶ θρόνους ἔχει / μείνειεν), and the other will not return (οὔτ' ἂν οὐξεληλυθῶς πάλιν / ἔλθοι ποτ' αὖθις). The authority for this curse rests firmly with the gods (οἱ θεοί), and the curse itself is presented as a wish in the optative (κατασβέσειαν). The same euphemistic sentiment is repeated a few lines later, when Oidipous speaks of the sons having no “benefit” from the rule of Thebes (οὐδέ σφιν ἀρχῆς τῆσδε Καδμείας ποτὲ / ὄνησις ἦξει, 451-2).

The curses following the initial one are perceptibly different. The second curse, in reply to Kreon's first speech, is pronounced against the city of Thebes (and it involves Kreon as its representative), and against the sons of Oidipous (787-90):

οὐκ ἔστι σοι ταῦτ', ἀλλὰ σοι τὰδ' ἔστ', ἐκεῖ
 χώρας ἀλάστωρ οὐμὸς ἐνναίων ἀεὶ·
 ἔστιν δὲ παισὶ τοῖς ἐμοῖσι τῆς ἐμῆς
 χθονὸς λαχεῖν τοσοῦτον, ἐνθανεῖν μόνον. 790

It states very specifically what Oidipous wants to happen to Polyneikes and Eteokles, and moreover assigns an important role to him in the process of wreaking havoc on Thebes: he will be the eternal avenging spirit, set against them. In addition, although

Kreon is not the primary target of this curse, the curse is a strong rebuke to him, saying that he will not get what he came for. Furthermore, it is delivered solely on the authority of Oidipous, without the mention of the gods.⁴¹⁹

The last two curses, one against Kreon and one against Polyneikes, are delivered directly to their objects, making them seem all the more frightening for being heard face to face. These curses are also the most detailed and concrete of those that Oidipous has yet pronounced. The first comes after Kreon's abduction of Oidipous' daughters and his threat to carry away the old man himself by force. Whereas before Oidipous explicitly cursed only his hated sons and the city of Thebes that cast him out, here he turns all his fire on Kreon and his family in response to this attempted injury (864-70):

μὴ γὰρ αἶδε δαίμονες θεῖέν μ' ἄφωνον τῆσδε τῆς ἀρᾶς ἔτι, ὅς γ', ὦ κάκιστε, ψιλὸν ὄμμ' ἀποσπᾶσας πρὸς ὄμμασιν τοῖς πρόσθεν ἐξοίχη βίαι. τοιγὰρ σὲ καὐτὸν καὶ γένος τὸ σὸν θεῶν ὁ πάντα λεύσσων Ἥλιος δοίη βίον τοιοῦτον οἶον κάμῃ γηρᾶναί ποτε.	865 870
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The curse is specific in its requirements: Kreon's and his family's old age should be like Oidipous'. Moreover, while Oidipous does ask for the authority of a god, Helios, who would accomplish the curse, he also states that until now he has been restrained by the Eumenides from pronouncing it – an indication that Oidipous feels himself to be in close concert with divine powers. More specifically, the fact that this curse has already come true in Sophocles' own conception of the Theban story suggests its authoritative nature: Kreon in the *Antigone* loses his wife, who commits suicide, just

⁴¹⁹ Cf. Knox (1964) 156, and n. 417.

like Iokaste did in the *OT*; and has his son Haemon turn against him, just as Oidipous is betrayed by his sons. At the end of the play he is left to live out his days bereft of his family, much like the exiled and aged Oidipous has been bereft of the pleasures of home and family.

The final curse is the one delivered by Oidipous against Polyneikes (1370-92). This curse is the longest, the most detailed; it is rhetorically extremely powerful. It specifies twice in explicit language the fratricide that awaits the brothers (ἀλλὰ πρόσθεν αἵματι / πεσῆι μιανθεῖς χῶ ξύναιμος ἐξ ἴσου, 1373-4; and ἀλλὰ συγγενεῖ χερὶ / θανεῖν κτανεῖν θ' ὑφ' οὔπερ ἐξελέλασαι, 1387-8); and it builds on previous curses that Oidipous had spoken (τοιᾶσδ' ἀράς σφῶν πρόσθε τ' ἐξανῆκ' ἐγώ, 1375). This curse even taunts Polyneikes by echoing the words of his supplication,⁴²⁰ which are now placed in the context of a curse that specifically trumps it (εἴπερ ἐστὶν ἡ παλαίφατος / Δίκη ξύνεδρος Ζηνὸς ἀρχαίοις νόμοις, 1381-2; cf. 1267-8: ἀλλ' ἔστι γὰρ καὶ Ζηνὶ σύνθακος θρόνων / Αἰδῶς ἐπ' ἔργοις πᾶσι).

Furthermore, the power of the curse and the power of Oidipous are emphasised through the divinities upon whom Oidipous calls: the darkness of Tartaros (1389-90), the Furies (1391), and Ares (1391-2). This is a much more negative conglomeration of divinities than any that Oidipous had previously used. Yet during his appeal to these gods, Oidipous remains very explicitly in control of his language, 'fitting' the right gods for the task. As Jebb has pointed out, it is apposite that the "primeval Darkness, *father of all*" is invoked by Oidipous' cursing of his sons:⁴²¹ τὸ Ταρτάρου / στυγνὸν πατρῶιον ἔρεβος (1389-90). Similarly, Oidipous is shown

⁴²⁰ Cf. Falkner (1995) 251 for further analysis of this theme.

⁴²¹ Jebb (1885) *ad* 1390.

as being at one with, and even reinforcing, the divine directives when he calls upon Ares as the god who brought about the strife between Eteokles and Polyneikes (Ἄρη / τὸν σφῶν τὸ δεινὸν μῖσος ἐμβεβληκότα, 1391-2). Oidipous' control of language, moreover, is emphasised by the threefold repetition of καλῶ (1389-91) in each of the appeals to the divinities, which marks both a rhetorical tricolon, and a mythological one: Tartaros is one of the primordial divinities of Greek mythology;⁴²² the Furies are archaic goddesses; and Ares is an Olympian deity, though with chthonic aspects.⁴²³ Oidipous thus uses the entire scope of the Greek pantheon and mythology to curse his son; and this curse is the fullest and most virulent of all, showing Oidipous at the peak of his authority, in confident interaction with frightening divinities, and with no trace of the beggar left about him.

The reactions to this curse from Polyneikes and Antigone also bear investigation, as they imply a new, supernatural level of authority for Oidipous. Antigone sees the words of Oidipous as not just curses, but as fully fledged prophecies (μαντεύμαθ', 1425; οἳ' ἐθέσπισεν, 1428),⁴²⁴ despite the fact that heretofore they had been referred to only as curses or prayers (τοιιάσδ' ἀράς, 1375, τάσδε συλλαβῶν ἀράς, 1384, τοιαῦτ' ἀρῶμαι, 1389, spoken by Oidipous; τὰ σκληρὰ πατρὸς κλύετε ταῦτ' ἀρωμένου, 1406, αἰ τοῦδ' ἀραί, 1407, spoken by Polyneikes). Antigone is perhaps right to give her father's curses this status: as the audience knows, they are destined to come true.⁴²⁵ The authority of Oidipous in this respect is brought out even further by Polyneikes' words, who responds to Antigone's labelling of the curses as prophecies

⁴²² Cf. 1574, referring to Death as child of Earth and Tartaros. Also note references in Jebb (1885) *ad* 1390.

⁴²³ Cf. Harrison (1891).

⁴²⁴ Cf. Segal (1981) 383.

⁴²⁵ However, Oidipous does not understand the full implications of his curse, for instance what consequences it will have for Antigone, and his authority therefore has some limitations, even at this stage. Cf. Burton (1980) 272, Winnington-Ingram (1980) 255, 275.

(1425) by saying that he must comply with his father's wishes: *χρήζει γάρ· ἡμῖν δ' οὐχὶ συγχωρητέα*; (1426). What is striking is not only Polyneikes' acceptance here of Antigone's description of Oidipous' words as 'prophecy', but even more so the concept of 'wishing'. The idea of wishing for something and then it coming true, reminiscent of supernatural power, strikingly blends together normally antithetical ideas of 'words' and 'deeds'.⁴²⁶ Through most of the play, the words and deeds of Oidipous have been kept separate: he says, for instance, that while Kreon attacks him with actions, he replies only in words (*ὀρῶσι κάμῃ καὶ σέ, καὶ φρονούσ' ὅτι / ἔργοις πεπονθῶς ῥήμασιν σ' ἀμύνομαι*, 872-3). However, as Oidipous' confidence grows, and as he comes closer to his destined end, so his words take on a greater power, and become equivalent to actions: the strengthening of Oidipous' spirit and the growth of his authority overshadow the physical weakness of his body. Thus, Oidipous reverts to, and indeed overshoots, the power he formerly had as king in Thebes: while it is a mark of kings to have powerful words, even Theseus draws a contrast between his words and deeds (*οὐ γὰρ λόγοισι τὸν βίον σπουδάζομεν / λαμπρὸν ποεῖσθαι μᾶλλον ἢ τοῖς δρωμένοις*, 1143-4). The blending of words and actions, therefore, suggests an even higher position for Oidipous, making him, towards the end of the play, take on aspects of language that look forward to the supernatural sphere which he will eventually inhabit.⁴²⁷ In light of this, Oidipous should be understood as a uniquely powerful dramatic character.

⁴²⁶ Kitto (1961) 388. Cf. Jebb (1885) *ad* 1426: "'aye, for he wishes it': implying that the wish may have prompted the prophecy".

⁴²⁷ This is not to say that Oidipous explicitly exhibits 'supernatural' traits before his passing, as is argued by Bowra (1944), Kitto (1961) 393, and Burian (1974) 425 (*contra*: Linforth (1951) 124-9), only that the language that Oidipous uses, and that is used of Oidipous, prefigures the supernatural transformation of Oidipous. For a further discussion and listing of the secondary literature on this question, cf. Jebb (2004b) 48-9.

v. Oidipous' Relationships

The extent to which, and the fundamental way in which, Oidipous stands out from other characters in the play can be further explored through consideration of his relationships with them, especially the way that Oidipous is so often misjudged or misunderstood by the people around him. Throughout the play, even those characters who are closest to Oidipous often make unwarranted assumptions about him; they do not understand his motives, and fail to predict his future actions.

An early example is Ismene's confusion over the significance for Oidipous of the oracle that she brings. Following the description of the war that has broken out between the brothers, Ismene finishes with the following statement (382-4):

ταῦτ' οὐκ ἀριθμός ἐστιν, ὧ πάτερ, λόγων,
ἀλλ' ἔργα δεινά· τοὺς δὲ σοὺς ὅπηι θεοὶ
πόνους κατοικτιοῦσιν οὐκ ἔχω μαθεῖν.

While she has not mentioned the prophecy openly, her father perceives the implications present in her phraseology: by saying that she does not understand how the gods will take pity on the old man, she suggests that she knows that they will pity him in some way nevertheless. He therefore asks if she has come bearing some new hope (385-6):

ἤδη γὰρ ἔσχες ἐλπίδ' ὡς ἐμοῦ θεοῦς
ὥραν τιν' ἔξειν, ὥστε σωθῆναί ποτε;

385

To this Ismene replies that she has indeed come bringing a prophecy (387), and that her evaluation of this prophecy is that the gods are lifting Oidipous up,⁴²⁸ in contrast to their previous treatment of him (νῦν γὰρ θεοὶ σ' ὀρθοῦσι, πρόσθε δ' ἔλλυσαν, 394).

The run of this passage casts light on why Ismene was originally at a loss: although she has come bearing glad tidings for Oidipous personally, she cannot understand how it is that this prophecy can indicate the end of his sufferings, especially given that his sons are at war. To Ismene's mind, Oidipous' sufferings cannot be nearing their end if Polyneikes and Eteokles are fighting with each other, and she holds this opinion perhaps because she projects her feelings of distress over the war onto her father. However, in doing this, Ismene cannot foresee the old man's current attitude to his sons, whereby he will reject both of them for their negligence of him, and will even condemn them to die. That Ismene assumes what she does – that a father should love his children, and should be terribly aggrieved at their conflict – is reasonable, especially as she herself has always felt her father's love.⁴²⁹ That she does not expect that Oidipous can to such an extent welcome his sons' mutual destruction underlines the surprise contained in the old man's character, the extent of his anger.

Another important misunderstanding of Oidipous and his situation occurs in Polyneikes' address to his father. This misunderstanding, established from the very start of Polyneikes' supplication, shows the distance that exists between the true

⁴²⁸ Though Oidipous' passing at Kolonos should not be seen as some sort of a 'reward': cf. Linforth (1951) 100-2, and 101 n. 20, Ronnet (1969) 309; *contra*: Bowra (1944) 314-5, 349; Winnington-Ingram (1954b) 16.

⁴²⁹ Cf. Adams (1957) 168, 172; and note especially 1110-1, 1617-9.

position of Oidipous, and Oidipous' position as assumed by his son. Polyneikes says to his father (1258-60):

τῆς ὀ δυσφιλῆς
γέρων γέροντι συγκατάκηκεν πίνος
πλευρὰν μαραίνων.

1260

Quite strikingly, Polyneikes calls the dust of Attica *δυσφιλής*, clinging to Oidipous as an old man clings to another old man, rotting his body. By this, he seems to imply that Oidipous' position in Athens is unnatural and harmful to him. However, it has already emerged during the course of the play that this statement is wrong. The dust of Attica is not *δυσφιλής*, quite the opposite: Oidipous is a friend to Athens, and Athens is a friend to Oidipous, since Athenian soldiers have just protected him from Kreon's (and Thebes') aggression. Moreover, by saying that dust clings to the old Oidipous like an old man, Polyneikes creates an ironic verbal affinity between the two, which plays on the affinity that in actual fact has been created between the old chorus in this play and the old protagonist;⁴³⁰ and might also suggest the idea of Oidipous' assimilation into the land of Attica.⁴³¹ By saying that the dust that covers Oidipous is 'old', the phraseology certainly calls to mind the length of Polyneikes' neglect of his father. In effect, the multiplicity of meanings and the irony in these lines demonstrate the unusual complexity of Oidipous' relationship with Athens, and his city and his family, a complexity that Polyneikes does not grasp.

In addition to this address, Polyneikes says a number of things that Oidipous is able to turn against him, showing the depth of his hatred for his son. Polyneikes' appeal to Zeus and Aidos (1267-9) is turned back on him by Oidipous' imprecation by Zeus and

⁴³⁰ Cf. n. 369.

⁴³¹ Cf. Calame (1998) 346-9, who remarks on Oidipous' integration into the very land of Athens.

Justice (1381-2), as was mentioned above. Similarly, Polyneikes' reference to the Erinyes of Oidipous (1299) is echoed in the list of the gods by whose names Oidipous curses his son (1391). There is therefore a sense in which it is Polyneikes himself who begins the narrative thread of 'the Erinyes' that culminates in his father's curse, and this impression is confirmed in lines 1432-4, where Polyneikes reinstates the power of his father's Erinyes (πατρός τῶν τε τοῦδ' Ἐρινύων, 1434).⁴³² Another striking instance of echoed language is Oidipous' transformation and appropriation of Polyneikes' unfortunate statement that he may really be the son of misfortune, rather than the son of Oidipous (ἐγὼ δ' ὁ σός, κεῖ μὴ σός, ἀλλὰ τοῦ κακοῦ / πότμου φυτευθείς, σός γέ τοι καλούμενος, 1323-4). With this statement, Polyneikes seeks to arouse pity in his father, since he does not really think that he is not the son of Oidipous. However, the gambit misfires, as Oidipous picks up on this idea, and twice explicitly disowns Polyneikes: ὑμεῖς δ' ἀπ' ἄλλου κοῦκ ἐμοῦ πεφύκατον (1369); and σὺ δ' ἔρρ' ἀπόπτυστός τε κἀπάτωρ ἐμοῦ (1383).⁴³³

While the vehemence of Oidipous' abhorrence of Polyneikes is remarkable, equally remarkable is the fact that neither Polyneikes nor Antigone thought it likely that he would exhibit this kind of emotion. That Polyneikes misjudges his father's feelings is perhaps not too surprising, given his previous lack of interest in Oidipous. However, that Antigone should have misjudged her father in this fashion *is* telling:⁴³⁴ it is on the advice of Antigone that her father saw Polyneikes in the first place (1181-1203), and it is also on her advice that Polyneikes persisted in his address to his father (1280-3).

⁴³² Jebb (1885) *ad* 1433f. makes the connection between these lines and 1299. Cf. also Winnington-Ingram (1980) 266, who points out that the word 'Erinyes' is used only twice in the play, both times by Polyneikes.

⁴³³ Cf. Easterling (1967) 9.

⁴³⁴ Though that Antigone should think that Oidipous would pity his son does not come entirely out of the blue, cf. 1108: τῶι τεκόντι πᾶν φίλον.

While Antigone understands that she actively has to persuade Oidipous to see his son (πάτερ, πιθοῦ μοι, 1181), it is unlikely that she would have persisted like this if she suspected what Oidipous' ultimate reaction would be.⁴³⁵ That Oidipous is as unpredictable as that even to the person closest to him points again to the depth and the surprise that can be contained within his character; to his unique nature.

Further interpretative mileage, this time regarding the nature of Oidipous' interaction with the world and the people around him at large, can perhaps be achieved from closer consideration of why Oidipous is so reluctant to speak to his son, a reluctance that forms the basis of an argument between Theseus, Antigone and Oidipous. The exchange starts with Oidipous giving his reasons as to why he does not want to see Polyneikes (1173-4):

παῖς οὐμός, ὤναξ, στυγνός, οὗ λόγων ἐγὼ
ἄλγιστ' ἂν ἀνδρῶν ἐξανασχοίμην κλύων.

Oidipous states first that his son is hated by him (στυγνός), and also that to hear his words would be most painful (ἄλγιστ'). Theseus reacts to this with some incredulity. He does not understand why to hear a voice can be painful (1175-6):⁴³⁶

τί δ'; οὐκ ἀκούειν ἔστι, καὶ μὴ δρᾶν ἄ μὴ
χρήζεις; τί σοι τοῦδ' ἐστὶ λυπηρὸν κλύειν; 1175

⁴³⁵ Cf. Jebb (1885) *ad* 1281f., who argues that *δυσχεράναντ'* in 1282 cannot be causative: in 1280-3, Antigone does not think her father might be annoyed at Polyneikes, but rather that one can be moved to words by an utterance full of indignation. Note also Kamerbeek (1984) *ad* 1280-1283.

⁴³⁶ Cf. Jebb (1885) *ad* 1176, who argues that the emphasis here is on *κλύειν*, not *τοῦδ'*. The implication is that while Theseus understands the enmity between Oidipous and his son, he does not understand why it is painful for him specifically to hear his son's words.

In reply to this, Oidipous emphatically repeats the message of his previous utterance, that his son's voice is most hateful to him (1177): ἔχθιστον, ὦναξ, φθέγμα τοῦθ' ἦκει πατρί. However, when Antigone enters the discussion only a few lines later, a part of her speech recalls Theseus' argument at 1175-6 that Polyneikes' words will not take away Oidipous' agency. According to Antigone, there should be no problem with giving Polyneikes a hearing, since, whatever Polyneikes says, Oidipous will not be fooled into doing what is disadvantageous to him (1185-8):

οὐ γάρ σε, θάρσει, πρὸς βίαν παρασπάσει
γνώμης ἅ μὴ σοι συμφέροντα λέξεται.
λόγων δ' ἀκοῦσαι τίς βλάβη; τά τοι κακῶς
ἠύρημέν' ἔργα τῶι λόγῳ μὴνύεται. 1185

That Antigone draws on this line of argument suggests that she does not see Oidipous' response in line 1177 as a satisfactory answer to Theseus' words in 1175-6: Antigone still believes, along with Theseus, that Oidipous should be guided in his decision regarding the grant of an audience to Polyneikes by whether he is able to preserve his agency in this encounter, or not; in effect, by the outcomes of the speech, rather than by the speech itself. However, in assuming this Antigone, like Theseus, seems to miss the logic that drives her father's uncompromising attitude regarding Polyneikes. This is suggested by the fact that Antigone's words, like Theseus', fail to change Oidipous' attitude towards his son's voice. Although Antigone does persuade Oidipous to see Polyneikes (1204-7), his yielding to her seems to have little to do with reassessing the significance for him of hearing Polyneikes: the phrase βαρεῖαν ἠδονήν (1204) suggests, rather, that Oidipous still believes that to hear Polyneikes will be difficult and painful (as he stated in 1173-4, 1177),⁴³⁷ but he gives in for other reasons.

⁴³⁷ Cf. Jebb (1885) *ad* 1204f., who argues that this phrase suggests that granting an audience to Polyneikes will give pleasure to Antigone and Theseus (cf. ὑμῖν φίλον), but pain to Oidipous.

That Antigone and Theseus make similarly directed arguments, yet make little discursive progress regarding the issue of Oidipous' distress at hearing Polyneikes' voice, suggests that there is misunderstanding between the parties in this debate of the terms of the argument, perhaps the very issue that is at stake. The reasons behind this emerge when the passage is considered from the point of view of Oidipous' blindness (recalled in this passage in lines 1199-1200).⁴³⁸ Because of his disability, Oidipous has limited capacity to perceive the world: aside from being able to touch his daughters (1135-6), his only method of getting a sense of the space and the people around him is through sound and speech. In effect, his entire universe is circumscribed by his sense of hearing. This phenomenon of Oidipous' character was demonstrated earlier in the play when, for instance, Oidipous introduced himself to the chorus with the statement that he has perceived them by voice: φωνῆι γὰρ ὄρω (138);⁴³⁹ and it is perhaps not an accident that the choral ode describing Kolonos (668-719) is recited by the chorus immediately after Oidipous has been finally accepted into Athens by Theseus: Oidipous is in this way being 'shown' his new homeland by the chorus, and the ode is in fact formally addressed to him (ξένε, 668).⁴⁴⁰

In this context, the fact that Oidipous is so strongly against giving an audience to Polyneikes becomes more explicable, as is his emphasis on the problem of hearing his

⁴³⁸ For treatments of the theme of Oidipous' blindness throughout the play, cf. Shields (1961), Edmunds (1996) 39-83.

⁴³⁹ A similarly potent statement, mixing Oidipous' sight and speech, is ὅσ' ἂν λέγωμεν πάνθ' ὄρωντα λέξομεν (74): Oidipous speaks 'sighted' words.

⁴⁴⁰ The importance of speech for Oidipous can also be gleaned from such occurrences as the emphasis that Oidipous puts on the words of the prayer to the Eumenides, recited to him by the chorus: τούτων ἀκοῦσαι βούλομαι· μέγιστα γάρ (485). Note also ἀνόσιον στόμα (981) and ἀλλ' ἅπαν καλὸν / λέγειν νομίζων, ῥητὸν ἄρρητόν τ' ἔπος (1000-1) on the importance of pious speech for Oidipous.

son's actual voice (ἔχθιστον ... φθέγμα, 1177): for the blind elder, hearing it implies an invasion and contamination of his entire universe – an enormous imposition on Oidipous, the scale of which Antigone and Theseus neither give sufficient consideration to, nor even seem to be aware of, as their questioning demonstrates (Theseus: τί σοι τοῦδ' ἐστὶ λυπηρὸν κλύειν; (1176); Antigone: λόγων δ' ἀκοῦσαι τίς βλάβη; (1187)).⁴⁴¹ For them, hearing someone's words is not a significant action, such as acting on these words would be. For Oidipous, however, the very experience of hearing his son's voice is an important process.

This aspect of misunderstanding the significance of speech for Oidipous is further developed in the interview between father and son. When Polyneikes comes to speak to Oidipous, he stresses repeatedly that he wants to hear something from his father in return (cf. 1271-9; note especially the pause after τί σιγαῖς; (1271), which emphasises Oidipous' silence, and Polyneikes' distress regarding it); and Antigone also encourages Polyneikes to proceed with the supplication, specifically so that he can elicit some reply from the old man (1283). In the context of Oidipous' blindness, these are non-trivial requests. Even as others' speech is his way of 'seeing' the outside world and the actors in it, the only way that Oidipous can interact with the dramatic universe (or exert control over it) is by speaking himself: speech is, in fact, the most significant action that he can perform. Here, therefore, by not answering Polyneikes, Oidipous initially refuses to acknowledge his presence; he acknowledges him only

⁴⁴¹ That Theseus has recourse to religious argument in reply to Oidipous' second statement (1179-80, in reply to 1177-8) should not be taken to suggest that he understands why it is painful for Oidipous to hear Polyneikes' words, as the reason has been outlined here; only that he accepts that it is painful. Theseus naturally mentions piety and the rights of suppliants because these are important issues for him, yet he says nothing that suggests further insight into Oidipous' condition (cf. 634 on Theseus' respect for Oidipous' supplication and 887-9, 1158-9, 1491-5, 1766-7 for Theseus' piety, and Kelly (2009) 114 on these more generally; note also Jebb (1885) *ad* 1182f. for Antigone's interpretation of the importance Theseus places on respect for the gods).

after he is pressured into doing this by the persistence of Antigone and Polyneikes, and vicariously by the wishes of Theseus (1348-51). The fact that the characters in the drama put this pressure on Oidipous to speak to Polyneikes strengthens the impression that they do not understand the intrinsic significance for Oidipous of granting an audience to his son. As a result, both the character and the motivations of Oidipous are shown to be very different from those of the other *dramatis personae*: Oidipous stands out not only through the depth and vehemence of his emotions (as was argued in the first half of this section), but also because the uniqueness of his character extends at its core even to the way that he interacts with the dramatic universe.

vi. Culmination: the Final Moments and the Death of Oidipous

One important aspect of Oidipous' old age remains to be discussed, an aspect that also strikingly shows Oidipous' uniqueness as a character: his transformation from a mortal into a supernatural being.

a. Oidipous in his final moments

One of the first things the audience perceive about the passing of Oidipous is that it is terrifying. The chorus shout in fear at the thunder, and do not know for what reason the sky has sounded (1462-71):

ἴδε μάλα· μέγας ἐρείπεται
κτύπος ἄφατος ὄδε διόβολος, ἐς δ' ἄκραν

δειμ' ὑπῆλθε κρατὸς φόβαν. ἔπταξα θυμόν· οὐρανὸν γὰρ ἀστραπὰ φλέγει πάλιν. τί μάν; ἀφήσει βέλος; δέδια τόδ'· οὐ γὰρ ἄλιον ἀφορμαῖ ποτ', οὐδ' ἄνευ ξυμφορᾶς, ὦ μέγας αἰθήρ, ὦ Ζεῦ.	1465 1470
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Indeed, their second expression of fear returns them to the thought, which had troubled them in the past, but which had been dispelled by Oidipous, that Zeus might be punishing them for having given sanctuary to Oidipous – that is, that they themselves could be in danger (1482-4):⁴⁴²

ἐναισίου δὲ σοῦ τύχοι-
μι, μηδ' ἄλαστον ἄνδρ' ἰδῶν
ἀκερδῆ χάριν μετάσχοιμί πως.

However, Oidipous is not at a loss.⁴⁴³ He immediately issues instructions to bring Theseus to him, and presses for this to happen until the king arrives. He is sure of his correct understanding of the events (καλῶς κάτοιδ', 1475). Thunder was one of the signs that he conjectured could accompany his passing (94-5),⁴⁴⁴ and in his interpretation here Oidipous, as elsewhere in the play, understands the situation correctly (Theseus, by contrast, says that he cannot interpret the signs: 1502-4). Notably, Oidipous does not experience the supernatural fear that the chorus experience at the time, and that even Theseus, who has seen the Underworld in person (cf. 1593-4), will experience at the moment of Oidipous' passing (1650-2):⁴⁴⁵

⁴⁴² Rosenmeyer (1952) 110.

⁴⁴³ Cf. Taplin (1971) 31-2, on how parallelism with the earlier scene of Antigone's abduction (831-90) underlines Oidipous' control here.

⁴⁴⁴ Cf. Markantonatos (2002) 119.

⁴⁴⁵ Cf. Burton (1980) 269-70, Seale (1982) 136.

ἄνακτα δ' αὐτὸν ὀμμάτων ἐπίσκιον
 χεῖρ' ἀντέχοντα κρατός, ὡς δεινοῦ τινος
 φόβου φανέντος οὐδ' ἀνασχετοῦ βλέπειν.

1650

What Oidipous does experience is an urgent anticipation of the unfolding events: this is the mood conveyed by the repeated injunctions to bring Theseus to him, and by the repeated use of demonstrative particles (τῆιδ', ὧδε, τῆιδε βᾶτε· τῆιδε γάρ μ' ἄγει / Ἑρμῆς ὁ πομπὸς ἢ τε νερτέρα θεός, 1547-8). These particles, moreover, convey a sense of Oidipous' growing perception of his surroundings.⁴⁴⁶ For the first time in the play, he can proceed unaided and unguided (1542-5):

ὦ παῖδες, ὧδ' ἔπεσθ'. ἐγὼ γὰρ ἡγεμῶν
 σφῶιν αὖ πέφασμαι καινός, ὥσπερ σφῶ πατρί.
 χωρεῖτε, καὶ μὴ ψάυετ', ἀλλ' ἑᾶτέ με
 αὐτὸν τὸν ἱερόν τύμβον ἐξευρεῖν.

1545

Oidipous is given both the strength to walk without leaning on anyone, and the capacity to perceive the destination and the way to it by himself. This transformation undoes the two main physical disabilities that have hounded Oidipous ever since the start of the play: his physical weakness and blindness, both connected closely to his old age (cf. line 1, p. 166, and also section ii of this chapter).

Of course, this does not mean that Oidipous physically regains his sight, only that blindness is no longer a disability for him. A few lines later, he calls the light he experiences for the last time “lightless” (1549-50):

ὦ φῶς ἀφεγγές, πρόσθε ποῦ ποτ' ἦσθ' ἐμόν,
 νῦν δ' ἔσχατόν σου τούμῳ ἀπτεται δέμας.

1550

⁴⁴⁶ Cf. Edmunds (1996) 76.

Oidipous here refers to the sun's warmth that he feels on his skin, as he prepares to pass into the cold realms of the earth. However, he says nothing about perceiving the sun's rays, and this implies that even with this transformation his eyesight has not returned.⁴⁴⁷ Instead, he is guided by the gods themselves (1547-8, quoted above); perhaps he is granted something akin to second sight, given the precision of his deictic pointers. Thus, although not physically altered, the old and blind Oidipous attains to grandeur, as at that moment he is empowered by the gods: for the first time in the play, the divine explicitly buoys him up from under the hold that the physicality of old age has upon him, finally fulfilling Ismene's words at 394: *νῦν γὰρ θεοὶ σ' ὀρθοῦσι, πρόσθε δ' ὥλλυσαν.*

As well as being released from the disabling physical hold of old age, Oidipous seeks a release from the hold that old age might have upon his future, upon the memory of him.⁴⁴⁸ As Oidipous' time on stage draws to a close, and as he is about to pass out of sight, he gives the Athenians instructions to remember his death forever, if they wish to retain him as benefactor (1552-5):

ἀλλά, φίλτατε ξένων,
αὐτός τε χώρα θ' ἤδε πρόσπολοί τε σοὶ
εὐδαίμονες γένοισθε, κάπ' εὐπραξίαι
μέμνησθέ μου θανόντος εὐτυχεῖς αἰεὶ.

1555

In asking to become a hero who is worshipped by the city, Oidipous asks for his name to become eternal due to a principle expressed earlier in the play, that “the strength of this land has not grown old” (*καὶ γὰρ εἰ γέρων ἐγώ, / τὸ τῆσδε χώρας οὐ γεγήρακε σθένος, 726-7*). By joining his memory to the act of remembrance

⁴⁴⁷ Cf. on this also the analysis of Edmunds (1996) 80 on lines 1638-9.

⁴⁴⁸ Cf. Falkner (1995) 259: “The knowledge that he will shortly die makes it incumbent on him to order his life not only for himself but for what he will leave behind”.

performed by the city, Oidipous transcends the bounds of a single mortal life. By ‘institutionalising’ himself in Athens,⁴⁴⁹ his memory becomes endless like the flow of generations in the city favoured by the gods (ἐγὼ διδάξω, τέκνον Αἰγέως, ἃ σοι / γήρωσ ἄλυπα τῆιδε κείσεται πόλει, 1518-9), and hence eternal (since the flow of generations in Athens, from an Athenian perspective, is never going to be extinguished). Oidipous ties himself to a city that, with him in it, has the potential to be invulnerable to age and time.⁴⁵⁰ Paradoxically, by the very act of dying, Oidipous breaks the hold of age, time and mortality upon himself in this respect.⁴⁵¹

Oidipous’ status is further elevated through the Messenger’s description of his knowledge regarding the exact location of the place of his death, and the rites that he has to perform in preparation. As scholars have noted, Oidipous finds the exact location in a place which he has never visited before (and was given no specific guidance in the prophecies about), and navigates his way successfully through a variety of very specific local landmarks (1590-7):⁴⁵² at the very moment of his passing, Oidipous is inspired by divinity, and very clearly set above the mortal state of those who follow his guidance off stage.

Additionally, Oidipous knows what he should be doing once he has reached the right place. Although the rites that he has his daughters perform are customary for burial (λουτροῖς τέ νιν / ἐσθῆτί τ’ ἐξήσκησαν ἧι νομίζεται, 1602-3), and include

⁴⁴⁹ Cf. Kelly (2009) 84; Segal (1981) 402; Daly (1986b). Note Segal (1981) 383 on Oidipous’ separation of himself from his past.

⁴⁵⁰ Cf. Henrichs (1993) 177.

⁴⁵¹ However, in this Oidipous presents a different (more positive) view of time and change than he had earlier in the play, where everything was susceptible to time (cf. 607-28). Cf. the caution expressed in Easterling (1999) 103, 105-6. However, in this play Oidipous has a privileged relationship with and understanding of time: cf. Budelmann (1999) 78-80.

⁴⁵² Cf. Easterling (2006) 141, quoting Jebb (1885) *ad* 1596.

washing the body, they occur at an uncustomary stage in the process, before the object of these rites is dead.⁴⁵³ For this reason, the fact that Oidipous has privileged knowledge is again brought into the play: although the rites are not unusual, the place and time of their application *is*, making a decision to perform them not trivial or obvious. This emphasises the fact that Oidipous chooses a mysterious model for his passing, presumably under the guidance of divine inspiration. In addition, the removal of rags and the washing off of the dirt, which were pointed to by Polyneikes as descriptive of his father's lowly state, symbolise Oidipous' stepping beyond the bounds of his human situation and his age:⁴⁵⁴ through embracing the end of his life, but reversing the order of the rites, Oidipous once again deconstructs the inevitability of mortality. To him, death has a meaning different from what it means for other men: it is not an end, but an induction into something new.

Furthermore, through this divine inspiration Oidipous becomes a true 'local' of the grove: like the chorus earlier on, he shows knowledge of the proper process that should be performed in the grove, while everyone else is a visitor to the holy place, and at a loss as to what to do.⁴⁵⁵ At the end of the play, therefore, Oidipous attains that state of knowledge which he coveted in his first speech: the knowledge local people have of their home, a home which Oidipous has finally acquired (12-3).

After the rites are performed, Oidipous is summoned by the voice of the gods. His interactions with the divine, and the apparent regard that the gods show for him and his human needs, as the Messenger reports, further distance him from a purely mortal

⁴⁵³ Cf. Kelly (2009) 84.

⁴⁵⁴ Cf. Segal (1981) 389.

⁴⁵⁵ Cf. Kelly (2009) 123: "The reversal between the first rite to the Eumenides, where Oedipus requested instruction, to his own last rite, where he gives it, is the most blatant symbol of his transformation".

state. Although the gods initially hurry Oidipous along with another roll of thunder (1604-7), they allow him to have his fill of lamentation with his daughters, and to have a satisfying farewell, in which all tears are shed (ὡς δὲ πρὸς τέλος / γόων ἀφίκοντ' οὐδ' ἔτ' ὠρώρει βοή, / ἦν μὲν σιωπή, 1621-3). Only then do the gods call Oidipous to the other world.⁴⁵⁶ Although the Messenger has no way of knowing this explicitly, a strong implication of the text is that the gods waited for Oidipous to complete his emotional farewell. Indeed, the implication of πάλαι δὴ τὰπὸ σοῦ βραδύνεται (1628) is that the gods have waited even beyond the time appointed for Oidipous' death – and this could be for no other reason than their regard for his final moments.

Additionally, it is interesting to note the manner in which the divine voice fills the grove: it comes from everywhere and rings out continuously (πολλὰ πολλαχῆι, 1626).⁴⁵⁷ Given that Oidipous is still physically blind, and that for him sound is the primary means of perceiving the world around him, the mode of the divine address empowers him in his final moments. Oidipous is at the centre of a grove that suddenly becomes perceptible to him: the divine voice coming from all around circumscribes the space of the grove in which Oidipous finds himself, and shows that Oidipous is in the right place at the right time; at the centre of an external world that is from his perspective filled completely with the divine presence. By contrast, for others the divine voice is a terrifying experience: ὥστε πάντας ὀρθίας / στῆσαι φόβωι δείσαντας εὐθέως τρίχας (1624-5). On this count too Oidipous is set apart from

⁴⁵⁶ Cf. Markantonatos (2002) 138, 142-3.

⁴⁵⁷ This is the explanation of the phrase given by Jebb (1885) *ad* 1626: “with repeated and manifold calling”.

the people around him: he is favoured by the gods, who at the end turn his physical blindness into a way of distinguishing rather than demeaning him (cf. 394).

b. The mystery of Oidipous' passing: hero or divinity?

Although it is generally agreed that Oidipous takes part in a process of transformation that takes him beyond mortal status, the exact nature of this process and its outcome are a mystery.⁴⁵⁸ This is dramatically explicable through Oidipous' insistence on the need for secrecy (1522-3, 1640-4), and Theseus, the only man who saw what happened, is committed to honouring that request (1758, 1760-3). In trying to understand what sort of process Oidipous undergoes, however, scholarly views split broadly into two camps. On the one hand, scholars have argued that Oidipous must be understood as a deified being; and some even mention the word 'apotheosis' in their descriptions of Oidipous' passing.⁴⁵⁹ However, most of the scholars who comprise this group state this opinion without due argument. On the other hand, some scholars, with Easterling most prominent among them,⁴⁶⁰ exclude the possibility that Oidipous is deified in the play, and suggest that he is only heroised. The difference of the two positions is important, and should not be dismissed. Those scholars who do not maintain a consistent distinction between the two positions, and at one stage talk of

⁴⁵⁸ The fact that he does not simply die is clear from the divine intervention into the process, and from the miraculous nature of his passing (cf. *ὡς λελοιπότα / κείνον τὸν ἀεὶ βίσιον ἐξεπίστασο*, 1583-4, with the analysis of Easterling (2006) 139-40 of the phrase *τὸν ἀεὶ βίσιον*). Indeed, the Messenger reporting the events says that a brief description would not do justice to what took place: *ἄ δ' ἦν τὰ πραχθέντ' οὔθ' ὁ μῦθος ἐν βραχεῖ / φράσαι πάρεστιν οὔτε τ' ἄργ' ὅσ' ἦν ἐκεῖ* (1581-2).

⁴⁵⁹ Waldock (1951) 219, Shields (1961) 73, Burian (1974) 428, Finkelberg (1997) 575, Markantonatos (2002) 137. Hester (1977) 22 n. 9 writes that apotheosis as a term "is freely used – as are others such as immortality (Rosenmeyer, 107, 109) and transfiguration (Nietzsche, p. 74)". Adams (1957) 176 talks of the "daimon-state" of Oidipous.

⁴⁶⁰ Hester (1977), Buxton (1980), Easterling (2006), Kelly (2009); cf. Bowra (1944) 341.

Oidipous as becoming a hero, while at another as a divinity or a god,⁴⁶¹ do not grant the distinction between gods and heroes sufficient importance: in Greek religion the two are not the same thing.⁴⁶²

Scholars arguing for divinisation give various arguments for this conviction, and in the following paragraphs the more important arguments are considered. The first argument concerns the divine ‘stature’ that Oidipous develops during the play. For instance, Daly notes that words normally associated with divinities are applied to Oidipous (e.g. μῆνις, 1328; ὀμφή, 550, 1351),⁴⁶³ and suggests that he is able to achieve “godlike and oracular stature”.⁴⁶⁴ However, these arguments are not conclusive. μῆνις is not used exclusively of the divine, and even in Homer it is used of Akhilleus’ anger (cf. *Il.* i. 1; the verb ἐπιμηνίω is also used of Aineias’ anger against Priam in *Il.* xiii. 460); and ὀμφή can be used of the human voice (e.g. Eur. *Med.* 175). Given the rarity of humans becoming gods (as opposed to half-divine heroes like Herakles or Asklepios), and given a lack of indication that Oidipous was worshipped as a god in Athens, this evidence does not carry sufficient conviction. Additionally, the interpretation of Oidipous’ “oracular stature” has often been challenged, and therefore should not be taken for granted as a basis for further arguments. Numerous scholars have suggested, instead, that in the course of the play

⁴⁶¹ So, for instance, Minadeo (1994), who mentions apotheosis on p. 159, but writes on p. 186: “This does not mean that Oedipus becomes, like Heracles, a certifiable god, but that the dramatization of his strange end imposes an aura of divinity”.

⁴⁶² Cf. Burkert (1985) 203-8, Bremmer (1994) 12-3. The lack of precision occurs in scholars’ use of other categories as well. Kirkwood (1958) 283-4, for instance, complains of Reinhardt that he “does not ... distinguish *daimon* from deity”. McDevitt (1972) 237 seems to equate heroes with chthonian divinities. The two are connected (cf. Scullion (1994)), but not identical.

⁴⁶³ Daly (1986b) 83 and nn. 43 and 45.

⁴⁶⁴ Daly (1986b) 83. Cf. Seale (1982) 116-7.

Oidipous uses his intelligence and knowledge to extrapolate facts from the prophecies, and is therefore not portrayed as a prophetic being.⁴⁶⁵

Another argument proposes that the potency of Oidipous' curses aligns him with divine powers, especially the Eumenides.⁴⁶⁶ Wallace, for instance, points out that Oidipous' curses go some way towards creating an aura of divinity, and comments on his affinity with the Eumenides, in whose grove he is to reside.⁴⁶⁷ Although this is an interesting observation, it too is not conclusive. After all, although Oidipous' curses become more concrete and developed throughout the play, in the last two curses that Oidipous speaks (against Kreon and Polyneikes), he curses by the power of other divinities (note the discussion above), not his own. Moreover, his affinity with the Eumenides in bringing harm and benefit, although strong, does not make him a Fury; while as a hero, buried in the grove of the Eumenides, some affinity between him and the host goddesses would be natural anyway.

A further argument might be that the divine interacts with Oidipous. Of itself, this is not strange, and in Greek tragedy even more direct encounters with the gods than the ones described in the Messenger's speech are common: note, for instance, the face-to-face encounter between Aias and Athena in Sophokles' *Aias*. A more pertinent point on the same theme, however, is made by Knox, who focuses on the fact that Oidipous is explicitly referred to as one of the gods in lines 1627-8, when the divine voice says τί μέλλομεν / χωρεῖν: "the divine 'we'", writes Knox, "completes and transcends

⁴⁶⁵ Cf. Linforth (1951) *passim*, Hester (1977) 31 n. 101, Kelly (2009) 66-8.

⁴⁶⁶ Cf. pp. 176-9.

⁴⁶⁷ Wallace (1979) 45 writes that "Oedipus' divinity is affirmed by this utterance [784-90]", quoting Rosenmeyer (1952) 110: "By pronouncing it the curser draws nearer to the divine sphere". However, on the same page, Wallace talks about Oidipous' heroisation: another example of inconsistency in the use of the terminology. Cf. Winnington-Ingram (1980) 275.

the equation of Oedipus with the gods; his identity is merged with theirs".⁴⁶⁸

However, this observation cannot bear this interpretative weight: the phrase could similarly be reconciled with Oidipous' becoming a cult hero, with the gods therefore conducting him to a position in the divine (as opposed to the mortal) sphere, though not making him a divinity as such.

These arguments, therefore, are not conclusive. The evidence for the alternative position is stronger. Firstly, all characters in the play, including Oidipous himself (βίου τελευτή, 1473; οὐ με χρὴ θανεῖν, 1521), think that Oidipous must die, as Easterling points out.⁴⁶⁹ Furthermore, after the initial thunder has sounded, and after Oidipous has been given second sight by the gods (and so presumably also knowledge), he refers to the fact that he will have a grave (τὸν ἱερὸν τύμβον, 1545), and to the fact that he is descending to Hades (ἤδη γὰρ ἔρπω τὸν τελευταῖον βίον / κρύψων παρ' Ἄιδην, 1551-2). In addition, when Antigone asks Theseus to point out her father's grave to her, Theseus refuses on the basis that this would not be in accordance with the wishes of the deceased, rather than because there is no grave to show (ἀλλ' οὐ θεμιτὸν κεῖσ' <ἐστὶ> μολεῖν, 1758; ὦ παῖδες, ἀπεῖπεν ἐμοὶ κεῖνος / μήτε πελάζειν ἐς τούσδε τόπους / μήτ' ἐπιφωνεῖν μηδένα θνητῶν / θήκην ἱεράν, ἣν κεῖνος ἔχει, 1760-3). This implies that Oidipous does have a grave, and has therefore died. Though this is not direct testimony, it is nevertheless important, as it comes from the one man who was with Oidipous until the very end, and who saw what happened. Finally, the specific power that Oidipous will possess has more akin with heroic than divine power. According to Oidipous himself, his

⁴⁶⁸ Knox (1964) 161; cf. also Reinhardt (1979) 223, Bushnell (1988) 106. Burton (1980) 294 is less committal. Cf., however, Edmunds (1996) 79 on the apparent distance between Oidipous and the speaking god in these lines.

⁴⁶⁹ Easterling (2006) 138; cf. Buxton (1995) 30, Hester (1977) 23, 24.

tomb will drink his enemies' blood (621-2), recalling rites of sacrifice at the tombs of cult heroes.⁴⁷⁰ Furthermore, to be effective against his enemies, Oidipous must be buried in Attica, in the same locality where his power will be required. This limitation is common for hero-cults (cf. the power of Orestes, linked to the location of his bones, described in Hdt. i. 67-8), but would be unusual for divinities.⁴⁷¹

This collection of evidence is harder to dismiss as, although dealing with an inherently mysterious event, it comes from explicit and consistent statements made by all the relevant characters in the play. Because death was a prerequisite to becoming a cult hero, but quite strange when combined with the idea of someone becoming a god,⁴⁷² it seems preferable to assume heroic rather than outright divine status for Oidipous at the end of the play, though perhaps with the proviso given by Easterling: whilst Oidipous should be seen as becoming a hero, the mysterious nature of his death allows him to benefit from “a special affinity with the other divine powers that protect Colonus and Attica, particularly chthonian deities”.⁴⁷³ Oidipous' passing will be evaluated from this perspective in the final part of this chapter.

c. Evaluating Oidipous' death

Although Oidipous does not become a divinity, the mode of his death is certainly a “victory” for the old man,⁴⁷⁴ who has been able to choose his death, and has been successful in carrying out that choice: ἐπραξεν οἶον ἠθέλεν (1704). In terms of

⁴⁷⁰ Cf. n. 418.

⁴⁷¹ Cf. Burkert (1985) 206, Kearns (1989) 3-4, Bremmer (1994) 13.

⁴⁷² Cf. Henrichs (1993) 177-8.

⁴⁷³ Easterling (2006) 139.

⁴⁷⁴ This word is used of the end of Oidipous by Bowra (1944) 346.

mortal concerns regarding death, Antigone points out that Oidipous had the good fortune to be mourned by his daughters after his death (οὐδὲ πένθος ἔλιπ' ἄκλαυτον, 1708), and the chorus substantiate this idea when they say that he died happily: ὀλβίως ἔλυ- / σεν τέλος, 1720-1 (literally “he released his end happily”, a significantly propitious expression). Even Theseus, who witnessed the full miracle and mystery of the passing of Oidipous, is of the same opinion, as he asks Antigone and Ismene not to mourn for their father. In his words, death came as a ‘grace’, a ‘favour’ to Oidipous: χάρις (1752).

Furthermore, since a lot of stress was put by the chorus on Oidipous’ death being painless (ἐπιπόνως μήτ' ἐπὶ βαρυαχεῖ, 1561; ἄρα θείαι κάπόνωι τάλας τύχη; (1585)), it is important that the Messenger intimates that this was indeed the case (1663-5):

ἄνῆρ γὰρ οὐ στενακτὸς οὐδὲ σὺν νόσοις
ἀλγεινὸς ἐξεπέμπετ', ἀλλ' εἴ τις βροτῶν
θαυμαστός.

1665

Daly has written that “[t]he ‘wonder’ of Oedipus’ passing consists in its very painlessness”,⁴⁷⁵ and the Messenger’s report certainly confirms its special status from that point of view. At the same time, however, when taken from the point of view of the chorus, the hope that Oidipous’ death will be painless is in fact a very sympathetic and human one, and an attitude that is specifically suited to their identity as old men. As people who would have had to face the fact that they too might die soon, the elderly chorus are concerned with the process of death, and naturally wish it to be as easy as possible.

⁴⁷⁵ Daly (1986a) 90.

By contrast, Oidipous himself is never concerned with these thoughts, just as he never complains about troubles specific to his old age (cf. section ii). This once more underlines how unique he is as an old man, and how different from the chorus. For him there are greater questions than how he will die. Partly, this stems from the fact that his personality is much grander: he is concerned with such questions as his legacy, his hero cult, and the way he might influence the world of the living even when dead. Partly, however, the fact that his concern is so different from the concern of other old men suggests that he does not see himself in the same relation to death as they do. This is reflected in particular in the fact that for Oidipous death is an aim, and for the chorus it is not: for him, death in Athens is not the end, the destruction of life's power,⁴⁷⁶ but rather a way to become empowered, to leave a legacy after himself, and once and for all to escape the mire of pollution and rejection to which his unfortunate birth consigned him.

Thus, Oidipous eagerly anticipates his hero cult, and his capacity to perform in death the deeds he wished to perform in life: helping to defeat a Theban army on Attic soil and glutting himself on their blood (621-2). Oidipous' continuing power, his potential to participate actively in the world of the living, is brought out even through the way that his relations with his tomb are described by Theseus: θήκην ἱεράν, ἣν κεῖνος ἔχει (1763). The active voice of the verb is unusual, as has been pointed out by Henrichs.⁴⁷⁷ In Homeric epic, the heroes are 'held' by their tombs, and the same occurs in lyric poetry. It is only in Aiskhylos and Sophokles that cult heroes are given

⁴⁷⁶ Some scholars have even seen connections between the transformation of Oidipous and initiation into the mystery religions: cf. recently Calame (1998), esp. 349-51; also Colchester (1942). Easterling (2006) 144 sees a verbal connection between the mysteries and Oidipous' passing.

⁴⁷⁷ Henrichs (1993) 175, on καθέξει in Soph. *Aj*, 1167. On the subtle use of language to set Oidipous apart after his death, cf. also Budelmann (1999) 43.

the capacity to 'hold' their tombs actively: Oidipous is therefore a striking example of a hero for whom death is not the end-all, but a process of empowerment.

However, even at the end of the play Oidipous is not fully removed from human concerns. For this reason, the protagonist also has a more 'personal' attitude to death, an attitude that is tied to his relationship with his daughters. When seen through the lens of his relationship with Antigone and Ismene, death is no longer simply a means for Oidipous to achieve his desired end. It becomes a process that has immediate and painful consequences both for the daughters whom he leaves behind, and for himself, who laments their deprivation. Although early on in the play Oidipous described death as a rest from troubles (παῦλαν, 88), when he is called by the final roll of thunder, he grieves with his daughters: ὁ δ' ὡς ἀκούει φθόγγον ἑξαίφνης πικρόν (1610).⁴⁷⁸ At the end of his time, Oidipous no longer sees death as an unadulterated good. In the final count, it is a mixed blessing, giving him rest from his troubles and empowerment to help his friends and harm his enemies; while at the same time separating him from Antigone and Ismene, who love him and whom he loves, and for whom his death will only bring new evils.

It is significant that Oidipous spends his last free moments prior to his death, before he is compelled to instruct Theseus regarding the mysteries of his passing, with them around him. This choice shows Oidipous' and his daughters' mutual love and grief. The power of these emotions is brought out further by the prominence that the tableau of Oidipous embracing his daughters has in the play. Although at this point the image is only narrated by the Messenger, on two prior occasions it was shown on stage:

⁴⁷⁸ Cf. Markantonatos (2002) 139, on πικρόν being focalised through Oidipous.

during the reunion of Oidipous and Antigone with Ismene upon her initial arrival in Athens; and during the reunion of Oidipous with his daughters when they are rescued by Theseus. The previous staging of the tableau gives the Messenger's narration significant power: it allows for a striking visualisation of the narrated scene; and it brings out very strongly the sense of loss and grief inherent in the image of the old Oidipous holding his daughters by casting it in contrast with the previous joyous scenes of reunion, scenes that so clearly illustrated the mutual love between them.⁴⁷⁹

Oidipous' passing is not a process of divinisation. The blind old man walks to his death. At this moment, a moment he has been waiting for, the gods exalt him and make him a supernatural being. However, it is also a moment of privation, when he must both say farewell to his daughters' love, and consign them to live the rest of their lives without *his* love (1611-9). At the same time, Oidipous' passing is a transcendence of time and age, and thus perhaps an example of 'renewal', a process that has been briefly discussed in the previous chapter and that will form the focus of the next. Oidipous attains eternal power in the city that will never grow old (it will always, through the flow of generations, 'renew' itself), and redefines his relationship with death and age through the fact of his continued influence on the world of the living. In the end, Oidipous is transformed from an old and blind beggar to a hero imbued with power that is exceptional and lasting.

⁴⁷⁹ Cf. Seale (1982) 137: "Another of the visual constants of the drama is the physical intimacy of Oedipus and his two daughters, which is highlighted by joyful reunions."

CHAPTER VI. OLD MEN IN THE COMEDIES OF

ARISTOPHANES: REJUVENATION AND REGENERATION

i) Introduction

Since renewal plays a central part in the presentation of so many of Aristophanes' old men, this chapter proceeds on a different basis from the preceding ones. Whereas the previous chapters dealt with one play at a time, here a range of Aristophanic plays in which an old man undergoes renewal are considered. These plays are the *Knights*, the *Akharnians*, the *Peace*, the *Wasps* and the *Birds*.

In the first place, however, an important distinction must be made. When modern critics of comedy talk of the renewals that the old protagonists undergo, they talk almost exclusively of 'rejuvenation'. Discussion of it goes back at least a century, to the work of Cornford.⁴⁸⁰ However, it is also with Cornford that imprecision in understanding the variations of what this process means and how it varies from play to play come about. Although he gave rejuvenation an important place in his work, he considered the process as part of a larger argument, without due emphasis on the fact that rejuvenations are not carried out in the same way in all the comedies, and without analysing, therefore, what difference this would make for the interpretations of the individual plays and their protagonists.

⁴⁸⁰ E.g. Cornford (1914) 87-94.

The same problem persists in more modern scholarship. For instance, although Byl, who first identified old men as a separate topic of study in Aristophanic comedy, treats rejuvenation as a topic in its own right, the treatment is cursory, and does not make allowances for the differences that exist between plays and their varying presentations of renewal.⁴⁸¹ The same charges can be levelled against the studies of Hubbard and Handley, which focus specifically on comic old age;⁴⁸² and against the works of MacDowell and Segal, whose range is more general.⁴⁸³ Segal in particular lays great stress on the importance of rejuvenation in Aristophanic comedy, seeing it not only as the climactic pinnacle of the plot, but even as a basic structural feature of Aristophanic plays, the ultimate expression of the theme of sexual and procreative potency that, according to him, characterises the heyday of Aristophanes' comedy. However, he does not consider the variations in this process; nor the fact that these variations can significantly affect the outcome of analyses. In fact, one of the main criticisms of Segal's study is that he approaches Aristophanic comedy with a conception of what it should be like.⁴⁸⁴ As a result, thematic variations are treated negatively, and this affects the work's critical sensitivity.

Furthermore, even when modern scholars note that there are differences in the way that rejuvenation is presented in the various plays, they do not explore them. For instance, Riu notices such differences, but does not take the observation further: "old men are always rejuvenated at the end (either in an explicit or a suggested way, depending on the case)".⁴⁸⁵ Similarly, Silk recognises the importance of rejuvenation, for instance when he writes that the changes connected with it that Aristophanes' old

⁴⁸¹ Byl (1977).

⁴⁸² Hubbard (1989), Handley (1993).

⁴⁸³ MacDowell (1995), Segal (2001).

⁴⁸⁴ Cf. Konstan (2002-3).

⁴⁸⁵ Riu (1999) 44.

men undergo are climactic events both for the characters and for the plays in which they occur.⁴⁸⁶ However, he does not try to categorise or define rejuvenation, despite the fact that – like Riu – he recognises that this process is not identical in the plays: “rejuvenations, of one kind or another, await old men at the end of various of the plays”.⁴⁸⁷

This chapter will, therefore, start by arguing that the various processes that scholars refer to under the blanket term ‘rejuvenation’ are not monolithic, and that this title does not describe accurately the range of mechanisms and outcomes that comic renewal presents. The analysis will start with the *Knights*, and will proceed to the *Akharnians*, the *Peace*, the *Wasps*, and the *Birds*. The second part of the chapter will then consider the roles that different kinds of renewal perform in the plays.

ii) The Logistics of Comic Renewal

a. The *Knights* and the rejuvenation of Demos

In the prologue of the *Knights*, two slaves explain the situation of the play. A wicked new slave now has their master’s ear, and he has made the other slaves’ lives intolerable. In line 40-3 they give a brief portrait of their master:⁴⁸⁸

νῶϊν γάρ ἐστι δεσπότης
ἄγροικος ὀργήν, κυανοτρῶξ, ἀκράχολος,

⁴⁸⁶ Silk (2000) 239-40.

⁴⁸⁷ Silk (2000) 239.

⁴⁸⁸ The texts of Aristophanes are taken from Wilson (2007), unless otherwise specified.

Δῆμος Πυκνίτης, δύσκολον γερόντιον
ὑπόκωφον.

The old age of Demos is brought out in the last phrase of the description (γερόντιον). It is stressed throughout the opening scene (for instance, Demos is called γέρων in lines 46, 61 and 70), and is mentioned throughout the play prior to his reappearance at line 1331.

However, this characterisation seems to undergo a remarkable change at the end of the drama (1321-32):

- Αλ. τὸν Δῆμον ἀφεψήσας ὑμῖν καλὸν ἐξ αἰσχροῦ πεποίηκα.
 Χο. καὶ ποῦ ἴστιν νῦν, ὧ θαυμαστὰς ἐξευρίσκων ἐπινοίας;
 Αλ. ἐν ταῖσιν ἰοστεφάνοις οἰκεῖ ταῖς ἀρχαίαισιν Ἀθήναις.
 Χο. πῶς ἂν ἴδοιμεν; ποῖαν <τιν᾽> ἔχει σκευήν; ποῖος γεγένηται;
 Αλ. οἷός περ Ἀριστείδηι πρότερον καὶ Μιλτιάδηι ξυνεσίτει. 1325
 ὄψεσθε δέ· καὶ γὰρ ἀνοιγνυμένων ψόφος ἤδη τῶν προφυλαίων·
 ἀλλ' ὀλολύξατε φαινομέναισιν ταῖς ἀρχαίαισιν Ἀθήναις
 καὶ θαυμασταῖς καὶ πολυύμνοις, ἴν' ὁ κλεινὸς Δῆμος ἐνοικεῖ.
 Χο. ὧ ταῖ λιπαραῖ καὶ ἰοστέφανοι καὶ ἀριζήλωτοι Ἀθηναί,
 δείξατε τὸν τῆς Ἑλλάδος ἡμῖν καὶ τῆς γῆς τῆσδε μόναρχον. 1330
 Αλ. ὄδ' ἐκεῖνος ὄραῖν τεττιγοφόρας, ἀρχαίωι σχήματι λαμπρός,
 οὐ χοιρινῶν ὄζων ἀλλὰ σπονδῶν, σμύρνηι κατάλειπτος.

In this passage, line 1321 suggests a radical alteration in the physical state of Demos: he is “boiled down”, turned beautiful from being ugly. This description recalls the highly physical and rejuvenational magic performed by Medeia, when she boiled an old ram until he became young again;⁴⁸⁹ and boiling is a process that brings about striking magical restoration in other mythological contexts, such as in the traditional story of Pelops’ revivification.⁴⁹⁰

⁴⁸⁹ Rogers (1910) *ad* 1321. Neil (1901) *ad* 1321 thinks that the boiling refers to Medeia’s rejuvenation of Aison. Whichever of the two is intended (or if both are), the reference is to a significant and striking episode of magic. For treatment of Medeia’s acts of rejuvenation in tragedy and wider literature, cf. Mastronarde (2002) 48-9.

⁴⁹⁰ Cf. Instone (1996) *ad* Pi. *Ol.* i. 25-95.

The transformation of Demos is also accompanied by a change of clothes, as he emerges dressed as he was when a youth. A change of clothes in drama often symbolises a change in status or mentality, as is the case in the *Wasps* for Philokleon,⁴⁹¹ and for Pentheus in the *Bakkhai* (to draw a tragic example as well). Moreover, that this transition for Demos involves becoming more like he was in the days of his youth is made manifest by the fact that Demos wears a golden cicada in his hair, as was fashionable during the period of the Persian Wars,⁴⁹² and that his hair is anointed with myrrh.⁴⁹³ The return to youthful ways is in addition implicitly suggested by the association of Demos with Aristeides and Miltiades (1325), the military heroes of Salamis and Marathon,⁴⁹⁴ and is also indicated by the fact that he no longer walks about holding voting shells (1332). The implication is that Demos has ceased to be a cantankerous and litigious old man.⁴⁹⁵

Because (especially) the image of ‘boiling down’ and the description of Demos’ new dress and mentality suggest a profound change, the usual view is to imagine Demos coming in looking younger than he did when he went off:⁴⁹⁶ on the basis of the evidence presented in the section on staging old age (pp. 58-60), this would constitute a change of wig, and could also include a change of mask for one less grotesque and wrinkled.⁴⁹⁷ This physical change would be rightly called ‘rejuvenation’: while it is

⁴⁹¹ Cf. p. 227-8 below.

⁴⁹² Sommerstein (1981) *ad* 1331.

⁴⁹³ Cf. *Peace* 862: μύρωι κατάλειπτος, with Olson (1998) *ad* 860-2, who notes that it was usual for the bride and groom to be “anointed with scented oil”. Demos, it is implied, is now (again) of an age to marry.

⁴⁹⁴ Cf. Neil (1901) *ad* 1325.

⁴⁹⁵ Cf. Sommerstein (1981) *ad* 1332 on the association between mussel-shells and the lawcourts.

⁴⁹⁶ Cf. Olson (1990) 60 n. 3 for scholars who have upheld this view.

⁴⁹⁷ Such a change of mask mid-way through the play was possible. Cf. Sommerstein (2001) *ad* 770-1, quoting Heberlein (1980) 132 n. 50 on the change of mask by the protagonist in the *Wealth*. For a tragic parallel of this phenomenon, cf. the entry of the blinded Oidipous in Sophocles *OT*.

important that Demos undergoes a change of mentality, nothing in the passage precludes physical change *per se*. The description of Demos' current and past states in line 1321 as καλός and αἰσχρός can naturally apply to a change in his looks.⁴⁹⁸ The same can be said of the question asked by the chorus in line 1324 (ποῖος γεγένηται;), and the reply of the Sausage-Seller in 1325 that starts with οἷος. Moreover, a physical change might be implied when the Sausage-Seller assuages the Chorus' curiosity by saying that they will "see" soon what Demos has become: ὄψεσθε δέ (1326).

However, Edmunds questioned this view by suggesting that Demos' transformation was no more than a make-over, a beauty treatment.⁴⁹⁹ According to him, Demos would have come back wearing the same mask and wig, though different dress. This is accepted by MacDowell, who argues that if Demos came back wearing a different mask, he would not have been recognisable as the same character. MacDowell also thinks that the description of Demos as he re-emerges is mostly focussed on his attire and mentality, rather than physical condition, and that this suggests that physical rejuvenation did not occur.⁵⁰⁰

The strongest recent refutation of Edmunds' position has been presented by Olson,⁵⁰¹ who argues firstly that the cicada brooch that Demos is said to be wearing (1331) is not a piece of attire associated with the old as such, as Edmunds had claimed. Rather, it has associations with old Athens and the previous generation, and so suggests a

⁴⁹⁸ Cf. Revermann (2006) 121, Silk (1990) 166 n. 30.

⁴⁹⁹ Edmunds (1987a) 256, Edmunds (1987b) 43.

⁵⁰⁰ MacDowell (1995) 104 n. 43.

⁵⁰¹ Olson (1990).

significant transformation for Demos, rather than the preservation of his old age.⁵⁰²

Secondly, Olson disagrees with Edmunds' interpretation of line 1349, οὕτως ἀνόητος ἐγγεγνήμην καὶ γέρον;, as meaning "Was I that stupid, though I was an old man?",⁵⁰³ instead arguing for the traditional interpretation of the line,⁵⁰⁴ which is also reproduced by Sommerstein in his translation: "Was I that stupid and senile?"⁵⁰⁵ This suggests that Demos reappears on stage looking younger, and so presumes a fundamental physical change.

Two further observations against Edmunds' position are relevant. Firstly, there are numerous examples in Greek drama where a change of dress was performed on-stage, such as the dressing of Dikaiopolis in the *Akharnians*, of Philokleon in the *Wasps*, of the In-law in the *Thesmophoriazousai*, and the undressing of Strepsiades in the *Clouds*. If the matter were simply a change of clothes, there is no unequivocal need for Demos to go off-stage. By contrast, if Demos went off-stage, a more radical change than just of costume might be expected in order to justify the effuse description of the transformation that is given in 1321-32. Secondly, Paphlagon had already offered Demos a "cosmetic" rejuvenation earlier on (908), which consisted of plucking out white hairs. This measure was mentioned at the same time as such petty fawning as providing a bowl of state pay, an ointment for shins, or a hare's tail to wipe the eyes (904-9). In comparison, the final rejuvenation ought to be more significant and climactic than just a change of clothes.

⁵⁰² Olson (1990) 61. Cf. Thuk. i. 6. 3; and Neil (1901) *ad* 1331 for more references.

⁵⁰³ Edmunds (1987a) 256 n. 91.

⁵⁰⁴ Olson (1990) 61-2.

⁵⁰⁵ Sommerstein (1981) 135.

So far, the traditional point of view emerges as the stronger one, and MacDowell's arguments do not undermine it. Firstly, Aristophanes spends a significant number of lines preparing for Demos' entry. Following this introduction, there cannot be any doubt as to who it is that is coming out of the house (cf. 1324, 1326-8, 1330, and especially 1331, ὄδ' ἐκεῖνος). Moreover, the Sausage-Seller gives a detailed description of Demos' new appearance (1331): Demos is that character who will have a cicada brooch and antique clothing. Even with a change of mask, he would have been readily recognisable. To answer MacDowell's second concern, that a focus on attire and mentality precludes rejuvenation, one might note that although various features of the passage can describe Demos' mentality, his physical change is nevertheless a point of focus. Moreover, the fact that there is emphasis on the change of Demos' attire is not surprising from a practical point of view: a change in costume would have been much easier to describe and identify than facial features of the mask within the context of performance in a large open-air theatre. Finally, reference to a change of clothes would have been made because it powerfully symbolises a change in status for Demos, and is an important part of the overall impression created by his return to youth.

In the *Knights*, therefore, a full, quasi-magical rejuvenation of Demos takes place. It comprises a change of clothes, of wig, and probably of mask; and a return to the mentality which he used to have when he was young, in the days of Marathon. This sort of process, radical and involving a physical change, is rightly called 'rejuvenation'.

b. The *Akharnians* and the *Peace*

In contrast to Demos, however, the protagonists of the *Akharnians* and the *Peace* do not undergo physical rejuvenation: they do not become younger versions of themselves. Instead, they undergo a process that is here given the name of ‘regeneration’, whereby the old protagonists begin to behave in a way that is more youthful, but do not become physically younger. Unlike rejuvenation, this is a gradual process, and it can be traced through the development of the protagonists’ use of sexual language in the plays.

In the *Akharnians*, an old man negotiates for himself a separate peace treaty with the Spartans, and reaps the benefits of peace. Although the protagonist, Dikaiopolis, is referred to as γέρων in 397, 1129 and 1130, from the time that he is able to secure the peace treaty he begins to show an active sexuality. For instance, in lines 271-5, he says:

πολλῶι γάρ ἐσθ’ ἦδιον, ὦ Φάλης Φάλης,
κλέπτουσαν εὐρόνθ’ ὠρικὴν ὑληφόρον,
τὴν Στρυμοδώρου Θραϊτταν ἐκ τοῦ φελλέως,
μέσῃν λαβόντ’, ἄραντα, κατα-
βαλόντα καταγιγαρτίσαι.

Furthermore, through the course of the play the exuberance of Dikaiopolis’ sexuality becomes increasingly manifest, which makes him behave and speak in a more youthful way: while some sexuality is expected of old age, an over-exuberance of it is normally seen as a sign of youth.⁵⁰⁶ Erotic themes develop from presentation of events

⁵⁰⁶ On the sexuality of old age, cf. the words of Blepyros in *Ekk1.* 619-20: while he does not deny the sexuality of old men, he is afraid that they would be sexually exhausted before they could sleep with the pretty girls, if they had to sleep with the ugly ones first. The same limited sexual vigour is

separate from the stage action, such as the description of (the memory of?) the rape of Thratta in the lines above,⁵⁰⁷ to introduction of more immediate representations of Dikaiopolis' sexuality through metaphor, innuendo, and obscenity relating to things actually happening on stage, to outright fulfilment at the end. An example of the middle stage of this development occurs in the scene where the Megarian wants to sell his daughters as piglets to Dikaiopolis. There is heavy sexual innuendo in the word-play on χοῖρος between its meaning of 'piglet' and the female sexual organ;⁵⁰⁸ and Dikaiopolis in that scene also makes a crude joke on the same topic: νῦν γε χοῖρος φαίνεται. / ἄτὰρ ἐκτραφεῖς γε κύσθος ἔσται (781-2).⁵⁰⁹ Unsurprisingly, the sale is a deal that Dikaiopolis strikes gladly (812-5). Similarly, in the scene with the Theban there occurs a "confusion of sexual and gastronomic desire",⁵¹⁰ as the Kopaic eel is presented to Dikaiopolis with strong sexual overtones (πρέσβειρα πεντήκοντα Κωπάιδων κορᾶν, / ἔκβαθι τῶδε κήπιχάριτται τῶι ξένωι, 883-4),⁵¹¹ to which Dikaiopolis responds immediately and very enthusiastically (ὦ φιλτάτη σὺ καὶ πάλαι ποθουμένη, 885; μηδὲ γὰρ θανῶν ποτε / σοῦ χωρὶς εἶην, 893-4).⁵¹²

Finally, at the end of the play, the earlier desires and euphemisms erupt in a *komos*, as the carousing Dikaiopolis returns with two young maidens, and uses frank sexual

suggested by *Wasps* 739-40, with Sommerstein (1983) *ad* 739-40. In that play, Bdelykleon also suggests that if his father had too much sex, he would likely die from it: cf. *Wasps* 1365, with Sommerstein (1983) *ad* 1365.

⁵⁰⁷ Cf. Olson (2002) *ad* 272-5.

⁵⁰⁸ Cf. Sommerstein (1980) *ad* 739.

⁵⁰⁹ Sommerstein (1980) *ad* 781-2.

⁵¹⁰ Olson (2002) *ad* 881-94; on this scene as parodying a type-scene from tragedy where a loved one is recognised, cf. Olson (2002) *ad* 885-94 and Sommerstein (1980) *ad* 881-94.

⁵¹¹ Olson (2002) *ad* 884.

⁵¹² The second quotation is from Eur. *Alk.* 367-8, which further suggests an amorous context for Dikaiopolis' words. Cf. Sommerstein (1980) *ad* 893-4, and Olson (2002) *ad* 893-4.

vocabulary to underline his fully awakened sexuality (1199-1201, 1209, 1216-7, 1220-1):

τῶν τιθίων, ὡς σκληρὰ καὶ κυδώνια. φιλήσατόν με μαλθακῶς, ᾧ χρυσίω, τὸ περιπεταστὸν κάπιμανδαλωτόν.	1200
...	
τί με σὺ δάκνεις;	
...	
ἔμοῦ δέ γε σφῶ τοῦ πέους ἄμφω μέσου προσλάβεσθ', ᾧ φίλαι.	
...	
κάγῳ καθεύδειν βούλομαι καὶ στύομαι καὶ σκοτοβινιῶ.	1220

A further reflection of his ‘youthfulness’ and vigour can be seen in the fact that he is insistently hailed as an Olympic victor in the last lines of the play (τήνελλα καλλίνικος, 1227, 1231; cf. 1228, 1230, 1232-4).⁵¹³ Athletic victory was the domain of younger citizens, onto whose territory Dikaiopolis now encroaches, with his strongly comic and Dionysiac (if not strictly athletic) feats of drinking prowess.

Throughout the *Akharnians*, therefore, Dikaiopolis is shown to be in possession of a lively and active sexuality, which becomes more strikingly expressed and increasingly fulfilled as the play goes on. By contrast, Demos in the *Knights* does not especially engage with (active) sexual images until the end of the play (1384-91).⁵¹⁴ Additionally, in the *Akharnians* there does not seem to be any textual evidence that the elderly protagonist returns looking younger, as was the case in the *Knights*. This precludes the possibility of this play presenting rejuvenation, as it was defined in the previous section. A new paradigm, one connected with the protagonist’s youthful

⁵¹³ Cf. Olson (2002) *ad* 1227, Dunbar (1995) *ad* 1764-5; and cf. also n. 310 on the close connection between this phrase and athletic victory.

⁵¹⁴ Cf. Scholtz (2004), and p. 246 below.

behaviour, and a pursuit of komastic pleasures linked to this kind of behaviour, is necessary to describe this transformation. This is the paradigm of ‘regeneration’.

The *Peace*, a play about Trygaios’ quest to save Greece from the ravages of war, presents another example of this paradigm. Trygaios too is an old man. Although he is called γέρων and πρεσβύτης by the Chorus only in lines 860 and 856 respectively, his age would have been apparent as soon as he appeared on stage. However, as in the *Akharnians*, it is possible to trace the increasing prominence that is given to the sexuality of Trygaios in the progression of the play by considering the evolution of references to it. They become more complicated over time, progressing from single words (e.g. κινεῖν, 341), to single lines (ἔχονθ’ ἑταίραν καὶ σκαλεύοντ’ ἄνθρακας, 440), to the introduction of images of sex (κόλπου γυναικῶν διατρεχουσῶν εἰς ἵπνόν, / δούλης μεθούσης, 536-7); and finally to outright statements of sexual intent and marriage, accompanied on stage by visual presentation of the object of the desire (“indulging” in Opora and taking her as wife, 706-12; 855-64), and obscenity (τοῦ πέους δὲ δεῖ, 870).⁵¹⁵ Indeed, the latter stages of the play exhibit extended passages of sexual metaphor presented in terms of athletic competitions (cf. the preceding page for Dikaiopolis’ hailing himself as a kind of ‘athletic’ champion), such as in lines 894-904, where Trygaios imaginatively describes the ways that the Council will be able to enjoy Theoria. Even the play’s ending is marked by strong euphemistic reference to coitus (1346-8, 1351-2):

οἰκήσετε γοῦν καλῶς
οὐ πράγματ’ ἔχοντες, ἀλ-
λὰ συκολογοῦντες.

...

⁵¹⁵ Segal (2001) 65: “For all his fluent and creative obscenity, Aristophanes still manages to startle his audience by using the bluntest possible non-metaphorical word for the male member (*to peos*)”.

τοῦ μὲν μέγα καὶ παχύ –
τῆς δ' ἠδὺ τὸ σῦκον.

Regarding the earlier set of lines, Sommerstein points out that “the fig and the fig-tree were common metaphorical expressions for the female and male genitals”;⁵¹⁶ and regarding the later lines Olson comments that ‘big and thick’ (μέγα καὶ παχύ) is used in “oblique descriptions of an erect penis”, and that following this the reference to Opora’s fig (τῆς δ' ἠδὺ τὸ σῦκον) suggests her genitalia.⁵¹⁷ Thus, as in the *Akharnians*, so also in the *Peace* the hero is connected to his sexuality in the early stages of the play, and this sexuality becomes more developed in the course of the drama. Furthermore, the hero in this play is also highly attuned to (personal) pleasure, which is to be shared with all Greeks who are granted the boon of peace (cf. e.g. 1316-31). All of this is compatible with regeneration.

On one occasion, however, there is a textual suggestion that Trygaios’ transformation may also be a physical rejuvenation, when his future marriage to the goddess Opora is mentioned (859-62):

Τρ. τί δῆτ' ἐπειδὴν νυμφίον μ' ὄρατε λαμπρὸν ὄντα;
Χο. ζηλωτὸς ἔσει γέρων, 860
αὔθις νέος ὦν πάλιν,
μύρωι κατάλειπτος.

Despite the linguistic similarities of these lines with *Knights* 1321-32 (cf. ἀρχαίωι σχήματι λαμπρός, 1331; σμύρνηι κατάλειπτος, 1332), it is not justified to see them as implying a physical change of the kind that Demos underwent. Unlike the description of the transformation of Demos, and his departure offstage

⁵¹⁶ Sommerstein (1985) *ad* 1348.

⁵¹⁷ Olson (1998) *ad* 1359-60.

during which the changes take place, there is no textual reference beyond these lines to a physical rejuvenation, and in fact Trygaios is still referred to as being an old man in the future (ἔσει γέρον). Nor does he go off-stage at this moment. It is preferable, therefore, to take these lines as referring metaphorically to his future capacity (note the future tense ἔσει) to perform youthful acts, i.e. to marry and have sex, rather than to shedding years physically.⁵¹⁸ On this reading, the linguistic similarity with the rejuvenation scene in the *Knights* should suggest no more than that the regeneration of Trygaios is a particularly striking and joyful one. That this should be the case is not surprising, as Trygaios is completely triumphant in this play, and is moreover about to marry a goddess: taken within the context of the play as a whole, this passage does not suggest a change such as occurred in the *Knights*. Regeneration is still the better model for the protagonist's character development in this play.

c. The *Wasps*

In the course of this drama, the old juror Philokleon is weaned off jury service, and engages in revelry and the *komos*. Because these are vigorous activities, associated primarily with younger men, his age becomes contested towards the end of the play. The transformation begins when Philokleon is dressed in different clothes and is given different shoes by Bdelykleon (1122-67), and Bowie has suggested that this change of clothes recalls a rite of passage into young manhood.⁵¹⁹ Moreover, Philokleon's old

⁵¹⁸ It is also unnecessary to see the pleonastic temporal expression αὔθις ... πάλιν as invariably suggesting a literal shift in time, such as would accompany a rejuvenation. Such temporal pleonasms are common, especially with words meaning 'again' (cf. Olson (1998) *ad* 845, Parker (2007) *ad Alk.* 187-8), and need not be taken literally. In this case, the pleonasm seems to convey the chorus' enthusiasm.

⁵¹⁹ Bowie (1993) 93.

clothes are strongly associated with his former status as jury-man. As Bowie has noted, to ask Philokleon μή φορεῖν τριβώνιον (116) is synonymous with asking him not to be a juror.⁵²⁰ In addition, on two occasions Philokleon's shoes are explicitly referred to in the context of going to the courts (εὐθύς δ' ἀπὸ δορπηστοῦ κέκραγεν ἐμβάδας, 103; μῶν ἀπολώλεκε τὰς / ἐμβάδας, 274-5). Replacing clothes and shoes, therefore, aptly symbolises a transition in the identity of Philokleon from cantankerous juror to vigorous komast, someone who partakes in the life-style that is advocated by the young Bdelykleon.⁵²¹

The possibility that Philokleon has somehow become younger is further developed later in the play. When Philokleon returns from the banquet, he is chased by a man who shouts that he will summon him to court, regardless of how young he is (1332-3), referring to the apparent custom of giving the young some license (cf., for instance, Dem. liv. 21, where the speaker suggests that the young can meet with an alleviation of their penalty due to their natural impulsiveness). To this Philokleon replies that his accuser is behind the times (ἀρχαῖά γ' ὑμῶν, 1336), and this is an answer that a young man might typically be expected to give. Moreover, twenty lines later he says of himself that he is young (νέος γὰρ εἶμι, 1355), and 'swaps' places with Bdelykleon, as if Bdelykleon were the father and he the young son (1351-9).⁵²²

However, it is not likely that Philokleon's transformation should be seen as a literal rejuvenation. Firstly, although Philokleon undergoes a change of costume, as happens

⁵²⁰ Bowie (1993) 93.

⁵²¹ According to Bowie (1993) 94, the τριβῶν is also a symbol of Philokleon's status as a hoplite (cf. 1123-4), and its removal, therefore, symbolises the end of that status as well, as the old man begins to mix with the higher echelons of society.

⁵²² This swap may look back to the previous actions of Bdelykleon, who has apparently come into possession of the family estate, and has offered to look after his father (736-40). This is, then, a comic extension of the process.

also to Demos in the *Knights*, this occurs in a very different way in the two plays. In the *Knights*, the costume change took place off stage, and was combined with a description of Demos as ‘boiled down’: this description is the single strongest evidence for his rejuvenation. In the *Wasps*, however, the old man re-emerges from the house in his previous guise, and there is nothing in the text to suggest that anything about him looks different. There has been no change of mask or wig; and while the change of Philokleon’s clothes and shoes does eventually take place (after much argument between the old man and his son), the very ordinary, gradual and non-magical nature of that change as it is shown unfolding on the stage underlines the difference between what happens in the *Wasps*, and the magical transformation that Demos underwent in the *Knights*. The fact that Philokleon undergoes a change of clothes, therefore, is not sufficient evidence for his rejuvenation.⁵²³

Furthermore, the fact that Philokleon is a young man is explicitly denied by one of the household slaves (commonly given the name Xanthias) even after the transformation of Philokleon, despite what the latter may claim. In the messenger speech by which he introduces the new Philokleon to the stage, the slave Xanthias calls him an old man (1299; cf. 1476; and also 1417, where the Accuser addresses Philokleon as ὄ γέρον). Later, he says that Philokleon will dance archaic dances (1479). The disjunction between Xanthias’ interpretation of Philokleon’s age and Philokleon’s own judgement of it continues as Xanthias incredulously reports that Philokleon had apparently vowed to show up the current poets as “Kronoses” (1480-1) – that is, as proverbially old and out of date.⁵²⁴ Additionally, both Philokleon and Bdelykleon refer to Philokleon’s penis as σαπρόν (1343, 1380), and this is a word typically associated

⁵²³ Furthermore, this and the following scenes might be more comic if Philokleon remains an old man.

⁵²⁴ Cf. MacDowell (1971) *ad* 1480.

with old age in comedy.⁵²⁵ Finally, in Philokleon's exchange with his son, both make jokes on the other's age, reflecting the complex interplay between what seems to be Philokleon's comic make-believe, and Bdelykleon's "reality" in this section. Philokleon suggests that his son hit his head falling off a tomb (1370), re-inventing the common joke that a person who was acting senselessly had fallen off a donkey, though with added comic association of the tomb suggesting that Bdelykleon is senile.⁵²⁶ Earlier, Bdelykleon had said that his father seems to be "lovingly yearning for an attractive young coffin" (ποθεῖν ἔρᾶν τ' ἔοικας ὠραίας σοροῦ, 1365),⁵²⁷ where σοροῦ is substituted humorously for κόρης.⁵²⁸ Sommerstein interprets the joke as meaning that "if Philocleon tried to have intercourse with Dardanis the strain would kill him", implying that he is a very old man.⁵²⁹

Philokleon does not, therefore, undergo a physical rejuvenation, and there is furthermore nothing in Xanthias' speech that follows the return of Philokleon and describes his boisterous behaviour that might suggest a change in his physical appearance, as was the case in the *Knights*. In addition, just as with Dikaiopolis and Trygaios, and unlike Demos, Philokleon's sexuality seems to be exhibited in earlier stages of the play, firstly through the representation of his love of being a juror as erotic (note, for instance, the old man writing erotic graffiti: ἦν ἴδι γέ που γεγραμμένον / υἷὸν Πυριλάμπους ἐν θύραι Δῆμον καλόν, / ἰὼν παρέγραψε

⁵²⁵ Cf. Oeri (1948) 11-2 on its application to old women.

⁵²⁶ Sommerstein (1983) *ad* 1370.

⁵²⁷ Sommerstein (1983) 133.

⁵²⁸ Cf. MacDowell (1971) *ad* 1365, Sommerstein (1983) *ad* 1365. There is a textual issue here, since line 1370 can be assigned to Bdelykleon, and 1365 to Philokleon: cf. Rusten (1977) for this assignment, and Halliwell (2008) 208-9 for an appraisal of the implications. However, regardless of how these lines are distributed, both father and son still have one insult based on age to hurl at each other.

⁵²⁹ Sommerstein (1983) *ad* 1365.

πλησίον “κημὸς καλός”, 97-9);⁵³⁰ and also through his interest in a defendant’s daughter (εἰ δ’ αὖ τοῖς χοιριδίοις χαίρω, θυγατρὸς φωνῆι με πιθέσθαι, 573) and boys’ genitals (παίδων τοίνυν δοκιμαζομένων αἰδοῖα πάρεστι θεᾶσθαι, 578). Moreover, as in the *Akharnians* and the *Peace*, towards the end of the play this sexuality becomes strongly manifested in his emergence on stage with a young girl in tow. As a result, it seems that a more accurate way to describe Philokleon’s newly-found ‘youthful’ habits is through the idea of regeneration, a symbolic reacquisition of youth through his dress-change and his actions.

However, Philokleon’s transformation differs from the two instances of regeneration covered so far, in the *Akharnians* and the *Peace*. Even though he violently chases away all of his callers and defeats Karkinos’ family in the dance, Xanthias, who seems to act as a sort of spokesperson for the household in the last scene of the play, does not accept his comic success in the way that the successes of Dikaiopolis and Trygaios are recognised and praised (cf. *Peace* 1341-3: ἀλλ’ ἀράμενοι φέρω- / μεν οἱ προτεταγμένοι / τὸν νυμφίον, ὦνδρες; *Akh.* 1230: τήνελλά νυν, ὦ γεννάδα· χῶρει λαβῶν τὸν ἄσκόν). Instead, he calls Philokleon ‘mad’ (μανίας ἀρχή, 1486; πῖθ’ ἐλλέβορον, 1489;⁵³¹ τάχα βαλλήσει, 1491;⁵³² μανικὰ πράγματα, 1496). This stands in special contrast to the treatment that Trygaios receives, who may be called ‘mad’ at the start of the play (cf. *Peace* 54; note *Wasps* 71 for Philokleon’s madness at the start of that play), but who is acknowledged as a saviour at the end. Unlike the *Akharnians* and the *Peace*, Philokleon’s regeneration does not bring resolution, but only more conflict with his own family and household.

⁵³⁰ Cf. MacDowell (1971) *ad* 98. For a full analysis of Philokleon’s erotic obsession with jury-service, cf. p. 263-4.

⁵³¹ Cf. Sommerstein (1983) *ad* 1489.

⁵³² Cf. Sommerstein (1983) *ad* 1491.

The implications of this will be discussed when this play is revisited in the second half of the chapter.

d. The *Birds*

Regenerative patterns, though again of a different kind, can also be observed in the *Birds*. This play presents an elderly protagonist, who is accompanied by another old man, Euelpides (φήμ' ἄπ' ἀνθρώπων ἀφίχθαι δεῦρο πρεσβύτα δύο, 320). Both men from the start show an active sexuality. The coarser Euelpides motivates his departure from Athens by wishing to look for a land where it is possible to indulge in pederasty with a young boy (137-42).⁵³³ In turn, Peisetairos' active sexuality is suggested by the context in which he comes upon his grand scheme, just after Tereus' description of the life of the birds: νεμόμεσθα δ' ἐν κήποις τὰ λευκὰ σήσαμα / καὶ μύρτα καὶ μήκωνα καὶ σισύμβρια (159-60). In fact, other than saying that birds live without purses (157), this is the only description of their life that Tereus gives. Of the foods that Tereus mentions in these lines, Dunbar comments that at least two (σήσαμον and μύρτον), and perhaps all four, were connected with weddings, as is implied by ὑμεῖς μὲν ἄρα ζῆτε νυμφίων βίον (161).⁵³⁴ Moreover, μύρτον seems to have been a euphemism for the female genitalia.⁵³⁵ Thus, Peisetairos' imagination and creative genius is sparked by (oblique) reference to sexual activity, as he starts on

⁵³³ Cf. Dunbar (1995) *ad* 128-34 on the assignment of these lines.

⁵³⁴ Dunbar (1995) *ad* 159-60, 160.

⁵³⁵ Cf. ταῖ γὰρ γυναῖκες οὐδὲ τῷ μύρτω σιγῆν / ἐῶντι, *Lys.* 1004-5; and Pl. Com. fr. 188. 13-5 Kassel-Austin, describing a sacrifice to Konisalos, a Priapic demon: Κονισάλωι δὲ καὶ παραστάταιν δυοῖν / μύρτων πινακίσκος χειρὶ παρατετιλμένων· / λύχνων γὰρ ὁσμάς οὐ φιλοῦσι δαίμονες. For further references, cf. Henderson (1975) 134-5.

a course to become a bird himself after hearing that bird life fulfils all his desires: leisure and food, absence of responsibility, and sexual fulfilment.

The sexuality of both old men is further developed in the presentation of their reactions to the Nightingale (667-74):

Πε. ὦ Ζεῦ πολυτίμηθ', ὡς καλὸν τούρνιθιον,
ὡς δ' ἀπαλόν, ὡς δὲ λευκόν.
Ευ. ἄρα γ' οἶσθ' ὅτι
ἐγὼ διαμηρίζοιμ' ἂν αὐτὴν ἠδέωσ;
Πε. ὅσον δ' ἔχει τὸν χρυσόν, ὡσπερ παρθένος. 670
Ευ. ἐγὼ μὲν αὐτὴν κἂν φιλήσαι μοι δοκῶ.
Πε. ἀλλ', ὦ κακὸδαιμον, ρύγχος ὀβελίσκοιν ἔχει.
Ευ. ἀλλ' ὡσπερ ὠϊὸν νῆ Δί' ἀπολέψαντα χρῆ
ἀπὸ τῆς κεφαλῆς τὸ λέμμα κἄιθ' οὕτω φιλεῖν.

While Euelpides' desires regarding the Nightingale are expressed in crude terms, as the old man says he wants to have intercourse with her and kiss her, Peisetairos' comments are subtler, but no less enthusiastic. He starts with an emphatic oath by Zeus, and proceeds to marvel at her good looks, with his excitement underlined by the tricolon of complementary adjectives (καλόν, ἀπαλόν, λευκόν), and by the repetition of the exclamatory ὡς. The tone of Peisetairos' expressions can also be understood by comparison with the *Knights*. Line 667 recalls Demos' reaction to the Treaties in *Knights* 1390 (ὦ Ζεῦ πολυτίμηθ', ὡς καλαί), where an identical oath by Zeus is used, and the good looks of the Treaties are commented on with the same exclamatory ὡς (cf. p. 247). The comparability of the two scenes is also suggested by the fact that in both scenes a young girl is introduced on stage for the protagonist(s) to admire: just as Demos is presented as sexually excited in the *Knights*, the same mood prevails for Peisetairos here. The erotic attitude of Peisetairos is also suggested by the

fact that he specifically refers to the Nightingale's marital availability (ὥσπερ παρθένος).⁵³⁶

The climax of Peisetairos' sexual development comes, however, in the scene in which he deals with Iris. At the start of the encounter, Peisetairos asks her sexually loaded questions, and at the end of the scene he threatens to rape her three times. These questions show Peisetairos' enthusiastic engagement with obscenity and erotic ideas (1211-6):

Πε.	ἤκουσας αὐτῆς, οἷον εἰρωνεύεται; πρὸς τοὺς κολοιάρχους προσῆλθες;	
Ιρ.		πῶς λέγεις;
Πε.	σφραγῖδ' ἔχεις παρὰ τῶν πελαργῶν;	
Ιρ.		τί τὸ κακόν;
Πε.	οὐκ ἔλαβες;	
Ιρ.	ὑγιαίνεις μὲν;	
Πε.		οὐδὲ σύμβολον
	ἐπέβαλεν ὀρνίθαρχος οὐδεὶς σοι παρών;	1215
Ιρ.	μὰ Δί' οὐκ ἔμοιγ' ἐπέβαλεν οὐδεὶς, ὦ μέλε.	

It has been pointed out that “each of Peisetaerus' questions is capable of being understood in a sexual sense, and each apparently is so understood by Iris.”⁵³⁷ Thus, προσέρχομαι could mean “approach for sexual purposes”,⁵³⁸ and σφραγίς and ἐπιβάλλω seem to have strong sexual overtones: σφραγίς can stand as a euphemism for the penis, and ἐπιβάλλω can mean “copulate with”, as well as its usual “attach”.⁵³⁹

⁵³⁶ Cf. Sommerstein (1987) *ad* 670 and Dunbar (1995) *ad* 670 on the apparent propensity of (it seems, specifically) unmarried women in Athens to wear large amounts of jewellery when seen in public, for instance on ceremonial occasions. Dunbar (1995) *ad* 670 also suggests that there may be a sexual pun implicit in Peisetairos' reference to the girl's ornaments, since χρυσόν might have been substituted as a surprise for κύσθον, which refers to the female genital organs.

⁵³⁷ Sommerstein (1987) *ad* 1212-6. Also cf. Dunbar (1995) *ad* 1212, 1213, 1214-5.

⁵³⁸ Sommerstein (1987) *ad* 1212-6.

⁵³⁹ Sommerstein (1987) *ad* 1212-6.

At the end of the scene, the innuendo finds culmination in the hardening of Peisetairos' language and attitude, as he resorts to sexual threats against Iris (1253-6):

σὺ δ' εἴ με λυπήσεις τι, τῆς διακόνου
 πρώτης ἀνατείνας τῷ σκέλει διαμηριῶ
 τὴν Ἴριν αὐτήν, ὥστε θαυμάζειν ὅπως
 οὕτω γέρων ὦν στύομαι τριέμβολον. 1255

His sexual vigour is expressed through the coarseness of the language, which not only mimics Euelpides' explicit outburst of sexual excitement at seeing the Nightingale (διαμηρίζοιμ' ἄν αὐτήν, 669);⁵⁴⁰ but also recalls the animation of Demos, who at the end of the *Knights* suggested that he wanted to have sex with the Treaties three times (κατατριακοντουτίσαι, 1391; and cf. p. 246); and even the reinvigoration of Dikaiopolis in the *Akharnians*, whose song about the pleasure he would take in sexually punishing a slave caught stealing wood was the first sign of his regeneration (271-5). Just as Dikaiopolis in that passage wanted to punish Thratta sexually, so here Peisetairos is also threatening Iris in her capacity as servant of Zeus.⁵⁴¹ In both plays the men possess a similar kind of desire to punish the women, and at the same time to perform an act enjoyable for themselves. The similarity of themes and language, therefore, between this passage in the *Birds* and other passages in Aristophanes where sexual reinvigoration occurs emphatically suggests the sexual development of Peisetairos' character.

The last scenes of the play, however, produce an unexpected turn of events for Peisetairos: he becomes deified. This change seems to have profound consequences for the presentation of his regeneration (Peisetairos is not physically rejuvenated, as

⁵⁴⁰ This echo is all the more explicit for the fact that διαμηρίζω is first attested in this play.

⁵⁴¹ On the girl's status in the *Akharnians* as a slave, cf. Sommerstein (1980) *ad* 273.

will be argued later). Although up until the last scene of the play, in which Peisetairos emerges as a deity, he appears to behave youthfully and in a regenerated and sexually reinvigorated manner, during the scene of his return to the stage as a god, his sexuality recedes into the background. At any rate, he talks about it and acts on it much less than is usual for men who have been regenerated in the sense that is developed in this chapter. This apparent asexuality of Peisetairos can be demonstrated through a comparison and contrast with the concluding scenes of the *Knights* and the *Peace*.

The conclusion of the *Knights* is structurally similar to that of the *Birds*. In both plays, the entry of the protagonist happens with pomp and is officially heralded, by the Sausage-Seller in the *Knights*, and by the Herald in the *Birds*. Moreover, the entry of the protagonists is framed in the same way in both plays. There is a call for well-omened speech (εὐφημεῖν χρή, *Knights* 1316; χρή θεῶς / Μούσης ἀνοίγειν ἱερὸν εὐφημον στόμα, *Birds* 1718-9), followed by an announcement of the standing of the emerging figures (τῆς γῆς τῆσδε μοναρχον, *Knights* 1330; τὸν τύραννον, *Birds* 1708). However, beyond these formal similarities, the plays' presentations of the protagonists have little in common. In the *Birds*, Peisetairos never explicitly states his desire for his bride, and it is the Herald who describes her good looks (ἔχων γυναικὸς κάλλος οὐ φατὸν λέγειν, 1713). Unlike Demos, who immediately responds to the Treaties with ὡς καλαί (1390), Peisetairos remains aloofly silent on this subject. Instead, he comments how pleased he is to be praised the way he is (ἐχάρην ὕμνοις, ἐχάρην ὠιδαῖς / ἄγαμαι δὲ λόγων, 1743-4). In fact, in terms of atmosphere and the protagonist's behaviour, it is the earlier scenes from the *Birds* involving the Nightingale and Iris, analysed above, that more closely resemble the

ending of the *Knights* and Demos' reaction to the Treaties, and this further brings out the alteration of Peisetairos' behaviour following his deification.

The unusual nature of the wedding celebration in the *Birds* is further substantiated through the comparison and contrast with the wedding celebration in the *Peace*. As in the *Birds*, so in the *Peace* the marriage is formally announced after a call for well-omened speech (cf. εὐφημεῖν χρή, *Peace* 1316). The good looks of the bride are also amply commented on (δεῦρ', ὦ γύναι, εἰς ἀγρόν, / χῶπως μετ' ἐμοῦ καλή / καλῶς κατακείσει, *Peace* 1329-31). However, in the *Peace* (as in the *Knights*, and unlike the *Birds*) it is Trygaios himself who comments on the good looks of his bride; and he plays a much more prominent part in the ceremony by announcing the wedding (1316-31). Just as with Demos, Trygaios' attitude to Opora in the wedding scene at the end of the *Peace* is more akin to Peisetairos' behaviour around the Nightingale and Iris, rather than to Peisetairos' behaviour in the corresponding scene of the *Birds*. This supports the suggestion that it is in those scenes, rather than in the final sequence of the play, that Peisetairos behaves in a manner more akin to the regenerated Dikaiopolis and Trygaios.

Peisetairos' only possible reference to his sexual interest in Basileia comes in the last lines that he speaks (1755-62):

ἔπεσθέ νυν γάμοισιν, ὦ φῦλα πάντα συννόμων	1755
πτεροφόρ' ἐπὶ δάπεδον Διὸς καὶ λέχος γαμήλιον.	
ὄρεξον, ὦ μάκαιρα, σὴν χεῖρα καὶ πτερῶν ἐμῶν	1760
λαβοῦσα συγχόρευσον· αἴρων δὲ κουφιῶ σ' ἐγώ	

His mention of the bridal bed, however, is a relatively undeveloped sexual reference, to be expected in this context. Moreover, there is some debate regarding the speaker of the lines in which the reference to the bed occurs (1755-8): while Dunbar assigns them with some hesitation to Peisetairos, Sommerstein gives them to the chorus-leader.⁵⁴² More interesting, therefore, as a possible sexual reference is Peisetairos' invitation for his bride to take hold of his wings (or feathers) in lines 1759-62. This may be an obscene reference, since some scholars have suggested that the word πτερόν can refer to the penis. Arrowsmith, for instance, argued on the basis of literary and visual evidence for the connection of birds / wings and the male genitalia.⁵⁴³ However, while visual evidence of the connection of birds with eroticism is ample,⁵⁴⁴ the literary evidence is, as Arrowsmith himself admits, "less strong".⁵⁴⁵ This is a problem for accepting the obscene reference of πτερόν, since to be certain that it is this specific term that can be used in such a manner, a literary confirmation would be much stronger evidence than just visual representations.

From the period close to Aristophanes' time, Arrowsmith discusses three examples. First is Plato *Phaedr.* 252b1-c1, a passage which seems to suggest the connection between wings and sexual potency through a gloss on the origin of the name Πτέρως:

τοῦτο δὲ τὸ πάθος, ὧ παῖ καλέ, πρὸς ὃν δὴ μοι ὁ λόγος, ἄνθρωποι
μὲν ἔρωτα ὀνομάζουσιν, θεοὶ δὲ ὁ καλοῦσιν ἀκούσας εἰκότως διὰ
νεότητά γελάσει. λέγουσι δὲ οἱμαί τινες Ὀμηριδῶν ἐκ τῶν ἀποθέτων
ἐπῶν δύο ἔπη εἰς τὸν Ἔρωτα, ὧν τὸ ἕτερον ὑβριστικὸν πάνυ καὶ οὐ
σφόδρα τι ἔμμετρον· ὕμνοισι δὲ ὧδε·

⁵⁴² Dunbar (1995) *ad* 1755-62, Sommerstein (1987) *ad* 1755-65.

⁵⁴³ Arrowsmith (1973); cf. also Segal (2001) 87.

⁵⁴⁴ Cf. the material evidence described at Arrowsmith (1973) 167, with five images also included in that article.

⁵⁴⁵ Arrowsmith (1973) 164.

τὸν δ' ἦτοι θνητοὶ μὲν Ἔρωτα καλοῦσι ποτηνόν,
ἀθάνατοι δὲ Πτέρωτα, διὰ πτεροφύτορ' ἀνάγκην.

Arrowsmith argues that ὑβριστικόν should be translated as 'indecent', and that the indecency is to be found in the word Πτέρως, which he interprets as meaning 'phallus'.⁵⁴⁶ The second piece of evidence is an unidentified fragment of a comedy: ἀλλ' ἢ τρίορχος ἢ πτέρων ἢ στρουθίας (fr. 416 Kassel-Austin). This fragment seems to suggest a lewd context for the use of the word πτέρων. The final passage is *Lys.* 774-6 (ἦν δὲ διαστῶσιν καὶ ἀνάπτωνται πτερύγεσσι / ἐξ ἱεροῦ ναοῦ χελιδόνες, οὐκέτι δόξει / ὄρνεον οὐδ' ὀτιοῦν καταπυγωνίστερον εἶναι), where πτέρυξ seems to "indicate the phallus".⁵⁴⁷

However, it must be noted that "πτερόν = phallus is nowhere explicitly attested",⁵⁴⁸ and the evidence collected by Arrowsmith for its obscene meaning is far from certain. The obscenity that Arrowsmith sees in the first passage involves the word Πτέρως, and thus this passage is problematic evidence for accepting an obscene meaning specifically for the term πτερόν. Moreover, the lines quoted in the *Phaedrus* do not straightforwardly suggest an obscene interpretation. The difficulty of this passage for the interpreter is acknowledged by Arrowsmith himself,⁵⁴⁹ and Yunis in a recent commentary has instead argued that the *hybris* and the humour of the passage are due to "the audacity of unmetrical, non-canonical, hitherto secret Homeric verses that contain the punning neologism Πτέρωτα ... that just happens to confirm S.'s story about how *erōs* grows the soul's wings", and that are "transparently Plato's

⁵⁴⁶ Arrowsmith (1973) 136, 164-5.

⁵⁴⁷ Henderson (1975) 128.

⁵⁴⁸ Henderson (1975) 128.

⁵⁴⁹ Arrowsmith (1973) 164-5.

invention”;⁵⁵⁰ and not, therefore, due to a suggestion of obscenity in these verses. Finally, even if it is accepted that there is an obscene joke in the passage, that joke might only have been intelligible in conjunction with the rest of the context of its presentation, such as the mention of Eros, and a reference to ‘growth’ (διὰ πτεροφύτον ἀνάγκην). In the *Birds*, however, no such configuration occurs. The obscene potential of πτερόν is far from proven by this passage.

The other two passages are equally tendentious as evidence. Firstly, as above, the words that are thought to be sexual euphemisms are different from the term πτερόν that is found in the *Birds*. Secondly, the obscene context of the comic fragment and the passage from the *Lysistrata* are not certain. In the comic fragment, the word πτέρων occurs in a list of birds’ names, and while τρίορχος seems to have been used as a euphemism for ‘phallus’,⁵⁵¹ the line itself does not suggest any obvious sexual context.⁵⁵² It seems unwarranted to invent such. A similar conclusion can be drawn from the passage from the *Lysistrata*. The swallows that are flying out of the temple in these lines refer to women running away from the Acropolis, and wings are the most natural implements to fly away with. Again, there is no reason to see a sexual pun in the use of this term. It is therefore safest to conclude that πτερόν was unlikely to have been understood as a euphemism for phallus:⁵⁵³ despite *Birds* 1755-62, the engagement of Peisetairos with sexual desire and sexual gratification in this scene is likely to have been rather negligible.

⁵⁵⁰ Yunis (2011) *ad* 252b6-c1.

⁵⁵¹ Cf. Arrowsmith (1973) 166.

⁵⁵² The line is quoted by Hesychios (*s.v.* πτέρων) as evidence for the fact that πτέρων is a kind of bird (εἶδος ὀρνέου). Hesychios, however, supplies no further context.

⁵⁵³ Nor do Sommerstein (1987) *ad* 1760-1 and Dunbar (1995) *ad* 1759-62 make any reference to a euphemistic usage here.

The comparison of the endings of the *Birds*, the *Knights*, and the *Peace*, therefore, highlights the surprising fact that Peisetairos seems to become less interested in sex at the climax of the play, and his lack of sexual interest in Basileia is brought out further by the very different way in which he reacted to her initial description by Prometheus. In that scene, Peisetairos reacted strongly to the portrayal of her as a most beautiful maiden, and as someone who looks after everything for Zeus (1537-41): ἅπαντα γ' ἄρ' αὐτῷ ταμιεύει; (1542). Peisetairos' excitement is based on sexual innuendo connected with the notion that *tamiai* and slaves in general were frequently objects of sexual attention, and this suggests that he was interested in Basileia at least in part because she could look after him sexually, just as she looks after Zeus.

After his deification, however, Peisetairos' attitude and interests change. He becomes less accessible (and much less talkative), and his previously suggested sexual interest in Basileia disappears. It is replaced by what seems to be an interest in power and status, and the enjoyment of his new position as king and god. This new attitude is suggested by the fact that Peisetairos is happy at the worship he is given, which is specifically shown to be divine by the fact that he is praised with hymns (ἐχάρην ὕμνοις, ἐχάρην ᾠδαῖς / ἄγαμαι δὲ λόγων, 1743-4).⁵⁵⁴ His extreme enthusiasm at receiving it is brought out by the forceful tricolon-construction of the sentence; by the repetition of ἐχάρην and the emphatic parallelism of the datives ὕμνοις and ᾠδαῖς; and by the semantic nuance of the phrase ἄγαμαι δὲ λόγων.⁵⁵⁵ As Dunbar notes, “ἄγαμαι + genit. means ‘I am struck with wonder at’, ‘I am full of admiration for’”, and so “momentarily comes down to a human level” in its expression of

⁵⁵⁴ Cf. Dunbar (1995) *ad* 1743-7, and p. 153 above.

⁵⁵⁵ This phrase is further emphasised by the fact that it is presented last, and is grammatically different from the preceding two, using a present rather than an aorist tense, and a noun in the genitive rather than the dative.

excitement at Peisetairos' elevated position.⁵⁵⁶ Yet the break in register suggests precisely the high degree of excitement for Peisetairos. Furthermore, both the elaborate and solemn way in which the Herald introduces the re-entry of Peisetairos, describing him as a shining star, brighter than the sun, and armed with the thunderbolt (1709-14),⁵⁵⁷ and the fact that he is referred to as τύραννος (1708) suggest an environment in which Peisetairos has exchanged the comic old man's usual desire for sexual (and otherwise physical) gratification for an attitude of someone who is in love with power.

However, it is important to emphasise that, despite the structural and linguistic parallels drawn between this play and the *Knights*, and despite the fact that Peisetairos undergoes two magical transformations (in this too he resembles Demos), the process he undergoes is not rejuvenation. The first transformation is his metamorphosis into a bird in line 801. However, there is no suggestion that the transformation does anything more than turn Peisetairos into a bird, as the magical root that Tereus offers will only make him grow wings, not shed years: ἔστι γάρ τι ρίζιον, / ὃ διατραγόντ' ἔσεσθον ἐπτερωμένω (654-5). Similarly, even after the metamorphosis, Peisetairos still refers to himself explicitly as old (γέρων, 1256). After the second transformation, although Peisetairos' physical appearance is amply described by the Herald, no mention is made of his becoming younger, and in the absence of textual indication, one should not conclude that this has taken place.

In conclusion, therefore, Peisetairos in the *Birds* should be understood to undergo a process similar to regeneration, at least until the moment of his deification. He is

⁵⁵⁶ Dunbar (1995) *ad* 1743-7.

⁵⁵⁷ Cf. Dunbar (1995) *ad* 1706-19.

inspired by the sexually coloured description of the life of the birds, and behaves in a vigorous and youthful way when he encounters the Nightingale and Iris. This attitude continues right up to the moment of his deification, as his initial thoughts about Basileia are coloured by sexual interest. However, after his deification, Peisetairos becomes much less accessible, and upon his re-entry he is given the most triumphant introduction of any Aristophanic hero, where it becomes clear that his position at the end of the play has diverged significantly from the positions of Dikaiopolis and Trygaios at the end of their respective plays. Thus, regeneration does not describe the full range of changes that Peisetairos' character and position undergo in this play. However, that is not to say that it is not a useful way of thinking about the *Birds*: on the one hand, regeneration explains Peisetairos' behaviour up until his deification; and on the other, after the deification, Peisetairos' divergence from what seems to be usual for a regenerated protagonist demonstrates the unique nature of his new position.

This section has shown that the renewal of protagonists that occurs at the end of Aristophanes' comedies is not a monolithic phenomenon of 'rejuvenation'. The significance of the variations in the process of renewal that were described above, and the impact these differences have on the plays, will be the subject of the next section.⁵⁵⁸

⁵⁵⁸ The *Ekklesiazousai* is another play that has been thought to present a rejuvenation of an old man. Sommerstein (1998), for instance, has written that the play ends with "the typically comic reassertion of masculinity triumphant as an old man, very visibly become young again" (p.32), "rejuvenated ... by the Viagra-like magic of comedy" (p.22). However, Sommerstein's assessment is extremely loosely put, and it is in fact unlikely that Blepyros undergoes either rejuvenation or regeneration, as the terms are used in this chapter.

Firstly, there are no signs in the text that Blepyros is physically rejuvenated, as there were in the *Knights*; and in fact it would be against the logic of the play for Blepyros to become physically rejuvenated, since he must remain old in order to benefit from Praxagora's utopia.

Secondly, Blepyros is sexually reinvigorated during the course of the play only in a very limited manner. He rues his impotence in 468-9 (ἦν δὲ μὴ δυνώμεθα, / ἄριστον οὐ δώσουσι) and 619-20 (καὶ πῶς ἡμᾶς τοὺς πρεσβύτας, ἦν ταῖς αἰσχραῖσι συνῶμεν, / οὐκ ἐπιλείπει τὸ πέος πρότερον πρὶν ἐκεῖσ' οἷ φῆις ἀφικέσθαι;), and Praxagora also jokes about his lack of sexual potency

iii) The Function of Comic Renewal within the Plays

a. The *Knights*

The rejuvenation of Demos brings the utopia of the ‘good old days’ to the world of the *Knights*. This utopia is highly political, as Athens is seen to enter into a period of good governance following Demos’ return to how he was earlier in the fifth century, at the time of the Persian Wars (cf. τῆς γὰρ πόλεως ἄξια πράττεις καὶ τοῦ ἕν Μαραθῶνι τροπαίου, 1334; and also the mention of Aristeides and Miltiades, 1325). For Demos, his past life as an old man is a period to be ashamed of (οὗτος, τί κύπτεις, 1354),⁵⁵⁹ while the transition to his new state is a joyful occurrence even before he reaps any of its immediate or physical benefits (ὧ φίλτατ’ ἀνδρῶν, ἐλθέ δεῦρ’, Ἀγοράκριτε. / ὅσα με δέδρακας ἀγάθ’ ἀφεψήσας, 1335-6). Under the guidance of the Sausage-Seller, Demos now approves of the good decisions that he made in his youthful past, such as choosing to spend money on building ships rather than on state pay, which seems to recall the way that silver from Laurion was used to build war-ships shortly before the Persian Wars (1350-4);⁵⁶⁰ and then independently moves to pass three beneficial policies for Athens:⁵⁶¹ to pay the sailors, many of whom were poorer Athenian citizens, fully and straight away (1366-7); to prevent

(καὶ σοὶ τοιοῦτον ὑπάρχει, 622). This is very different from what is to be expected from an old man who undergoes regeneration. Moreover, even in the komastic ending of the play the emphasis on stage is on food rather than sex (cf. 1133, 1135, 1139-40, 1149, 1153, 1169-79, 1181), and sexual discussion is absent so manifestly that Rogers (1902) *ad* 1138 thought that the girls who accompany Blepyros are meant to be his daughters, rather than attractive young women. Thus, Blepyros’ participation in the final *komos* hardly amounts to regeneration, as this process was shown to operate in this chapter. For this reason, the *Ekklesiazousai* is not included more fully in the present discussion.

⁵⁵⁹ On this as a gesture of shame, cf. Neil (1901) *ad* 1354.

⁵⁶⁰ Cf. Sommerstein (1981) *ad* 1350-3, MacDowell (1995) 105.

⁵⁶¹ On the independence of Demos’ proposals here, cf. Rogers (1910) *ad* 1366, MacDowell (1995) 104.

people from shirking military duty as hoplites (1369-71); and to reform the youth of Athens from passing harmful decrees and being babblers to being active young men, proficient at hunting (1382-3).

In doing this, Demos turns Athens towards its former glory. It is worth stressing that the radical nature of this change could have been attained only through a complete transformation of Demos, presented in this play as a magical rejuvenation. Demos changes into a young and benign ruler of Athens from a choleric old man who tyrannised his servants (ἄγροικος ὀργήν, κυανοτρῶξ, ἀκράχολος, 41; δύσκολον γέροντιον, 42), and whose deafness might have had political overtones (ὑπόκωφον, 43; cf. τὰ δ' ὦτά γ' ἄν σου νῆ Δί' ἐξεπετάννυτο / ὥσπερ σκιάδειον καὶ πάλιν ξυνήγετο, 1347-8).⁵⁶² Moreover, since Demosthenes presents the negative traits of the old Demos' character as predating the entry of Paphlagon into the household, and since Paphlagon simply worked out a way to make use of them (οὗτος καταγνοῦς τοῦ γέροντος τοὺς τρόπους, 46), the magical boiling down of Demos is highly important for the successful and happy resolution of the play. Only a change on that scale could offer a clean break with the harmful tendencies into which Demos had fallen. Chasing Paphlagon out, for instance, would not have solved the underlying problem.

As well as political benefits, however, the rejuvenation of Demos also leads to more direct (and comic) benefits for the protagonist. The most prominent pleasure that Demos is allowed to indulge in after his reformation is satisfying his sexual desires.

⁵⁶² Cf. Sommerstein (1981) *ad* 1347-8. Sommerstein thinks that this description suggests that Demos could choose to be deaf to certain appeals but not others.

Thus, after being offered a luxury of having a stool to sit on,⁵⁶³ Demos is also given permission to enjoy the boy who carries the stool (1384-6), a kind of pleasure associated with the old order of affairs to which Demos again belongs (εἰς τὰρχαῖα δὴ καθίσταμαι, 1387). This representation of Demos as an active *erastes* also redresses the presentation of him as a passive *eromenos* that was brought out both by the description of his previous life by the Sausage-Seller (orators saying to Demos: ὦ Δῆμ', ἐραστής εἰμι σός, 1341), and more broadly in the way that his relationship with Paphlagon has been described in the play up to this point (cf. for instance 732, Paphlagon on his relationship with Demos: ἐραστής τ' εἰμι σός). While Demos' previous sexual submission to Paphlagon was indicative of his gullibility, as he was tricked into playing the submissive role in the relationship,⁵⁶⁴ now Demos is presented as confident and clear-sighted, and back in control of his affairs.

Demos' new-found sexual vigour is further developed through the presentation to him of the Thirty-Year Treaties, who are embodied as young women, as is shown by the fact that they can be ordered to come closer: δεῦρ' ἴθ', αἱ Σπονδαί, ταχύ (1389).⁵⁶⁵ Demos' passion for them is suggested through the humorous etymologising of κατατριακοντουτίσαι (1391). This word, as well as bearing its apparent meaning of “to thirty-yearize up them”, can be jokingly interpreted as “to pierce them (*outasai*) three times (*tria*) with a long pole (*kontos*) from below (*kata-*)”, an exploit that suggests that Demos' sexual prowess is “evidently first-class”.⁵⁶⁶ Moreover, in both cases, with the boy and with the Treaties, Demos is shown to be a very willing

⁵⁶³ Cf. Sommerstein (1981) *ad* 1384, citing Heraklides Pontikos, who mentions that a camp-stool was a common luxury in early fifth-century Athens.

⁵⁶⁴ Cf. Scholtz (2004).

⁵⁶⁵ Note also ὡς καλαί, 1390 (cf. *Birds* 667) and 1394-5 (quoted below). Both would suggest that the Treaties are women. Moreover, an offer of a boy and then of women makes a natural pairing.

⁵⁶⁶ Sommerstein (1981) *ad* 1391.

participant: in the case of the boy, he calls himself “blessed” (μακάριος, 1387); and when he sees the Treaties he exclaims his pleasure at how beautiful they are (ὦ Ζεῦ πολυτίμηθ’, ὡς καλαί, 1390). The expression of Demos’ joy in these circumstances underlines his sexual reinvigoration.

Moreover, the description of the sexual pleasures of Demos’ new life not only underlines the hero’s success in the comic resolution at the end of the play, it also suggests a reinvigoration of Athens, insofar as Demos is a representative of the Athenian state (cf. ὀλολύξατε φαινομέναισιν ταῖς ἀρχαίαισιν Ἀθήναις, 1327, describing the reappearance of Demos). This becomes especially prominent when the Sausage-Seller instructs Demos to take the Treaties home with him, and enjoy them in the fields: νῦν οὖν ἐγὼ σοι παραδίδωμ’ εἰς τοὺς ἀγροὺς / αὐτὰς ἰέναι λαβόντα (1394-5). While this makes sense dramatically, in that Demos was originally a farmer (cf. ἄγροικος, 41), the increased sexual fertility of Demos, when placed in the context of the country-side, might suggest a return of fertility to Attica, and a resurgence of a normal and happy life in the country-side following the end of the war (cf. 805-7, the description of the joys of the country-life). In addition, the more vigorous demeanour of Demos goes hand in hand with the manly activities that the Athenian population will now follow: the young men will no longer sit chatting in the perfume market, but will go out hunting (1375-83), and the hoplites will not be able to shirk service (1369-71).

Finally, the fact that Demos is rewarded with the stool, its carrier and the Treaties *after* he outlines his new responsible and upright policies suggests that the comic rewards of this political utopia will continue for as long as Demos continues his good

governance of Athens; and this is also brought out by the fact that the Treaties are concluded for what seems to have been the longest conceivable period for such agreements at that time.⁵⁶⁷ Moreover, the causal relationship between Demos' good governance and his rewards is underlined by the Sausage-Seller's language. In line 1384, the Sausage-Seller specifically stresses that he is rewarding Demos because of his upright decisions (ἐπὶ τούτοις). The corollary of this is that Demos, as a representative of the Athenian people, can remain vigorous and happy for as long as he keeps making correct decisions, which he will do, now that he has been rejuvenated; and this in turn suggests that rejuvenation brings eternal happiness and good governance for Athens. Thus, Demos and Athens enter into a period of joy unlimited by time – the ultimate comic victory.

b. *The Akharnians* and the *Peace*

While there is no 'rejuvenation' in these two plays as the term is being used in this chapter, it was argued above that by their end the protagonists begin to behave more youthfully. The significance of this is best explained by considering the development of their characters in the context of the play as a whole, especially the lowly position from which the old men begin at the start of the plays, and the way that the old men begin to react against this position immediately upon the commencement of the intrigue. At the conclusions of these plays, the old men surpass their initial downtrodden and disadvantaged state, and this is clinched by their new found sexual 'youthfulness' and exuberance.

⁵⁶⁷ Cf. Sommerstein (1981) *ad* 1388-9, and *Akh.* 194-200: given the higher mortality rates of the ancient world, as these were presented in Chapter II, thirty years might have been a whole life-time for many Greeks, especially those already grown past childhood.

In the *Akharnians*, Dikaiopolis begins the play in a weak position. He opens with a speech about how full of bitterness his life is (ὄσα δὴ δέδηγμαί τὴν ἑμαυτοῦ καρδίαν, 1); and proceeds to tell the audience that he lives a constant disappointment, having only known four moments of delight (ἦσθην δὲ βαιά, πάνυ γε βαιά, τέτταρα, 2). Whenever he is happy, a reversal inevitably follows, such as not being able to see Aiskhylos' plays (9-12; that younger generations do not appreciate Aiskhylos is a common complaint of the old, cf. *Clouds* 1364-7). His largest disappointments, however, are the apathy of the citizens about the coming assembly (17-22), which leads in turn to his pain at the fact that there is no peace (εἰρήνη δ' ὅπως / ἔσται προτιμῶσ' οὐδέν, 26-7); and the fact that he is confined in the city and unable to return to his deme (στρυγῶν μὲν ἄστῦ τὸν δ' ἐμὸν δῆμον ποθῶν, 33). Indeed, Dikaiopolis' life in the city is far from pleasant. As he says in reply to the description of the travails of the ambassadors to Persia, they have been having a much easier time on their mission than he has, sleeping in the rubbish by the city walls (σφόδρα γὰρ ἐσωιζόμενῃ ἐγὼ / παρὰ τὴν ἑπαλξιν ἐν φορυτῶνι κατακείμενος, 71-2). At the same time, he is bossed around by the Herald and told to keep quiet (σίγα, 64; σίγα, κάθιζε, 123), and has his garlic stolen by the Odomantian mercenaries (163-8). Later, Dikaiopolis also complains that what made him particularly unhappy is the fact that grey-headed men had to continue serving in the army, while younger men served as ambassadors: the old generation was, in his opinion, thus treated unfairly by the city, and his disgust at that caused him to sue for peace (ὄρῶν πολιοῦς μὲν ἄνδρας ἐν ταῖς τάξεσιν, / νεανίας δ' οἴους σὺ διαδεδρακότας, 600-1).⁵⁶⁸

⁵⁶⁸ For the old generation being generally badly treated by the city, cf. the chorus in 676-91.

In response to this situation, Dikaiopolis gears up for action. He says that he will insist that peace be discussed in the assembly (37-9), and he questions Pseudartabas (ἐγὼ δὲ βασιανῶ τοῦτον μόνος, 110). He pays Godschild, who is (apparently) an immortal, to travel to Sparta and acquire a treaty for him and his family, introducing this idea as a terrible and great deed that he will perform: ἀλλ' ἐργάσομαί τι δεινὸν ἔργον καὶ μέγα (128). Furthermore, at the end of the assembly-scene it is Dikaiopolis, not the officers of the assembly, who brings the proceedings to a conclusion by claiming that he has had a sign from Zeus (λέγω δ' ὑμῖν ὅτι / διοσημία ἴστί καὶ ῥανὶς βέβληκέ με, 170-1). By becoming such an active and important participant in the events, Dikaiopolis distances himself from the lowly position in which he began the play, and begins to assert his control.

The growth of Dikaiopolis' self-confidence and stature is presented strikingly in the exchange that he has with Lamakhos upon the latter's first appearance on the stage. Lamakhos, like the Herald in the Assembly, looks down on the old and poor Dikaiopolis. However, whereas the Herald was able to shout Dikaiopolis down, the interaction between Dikaiopolis and Lamakhos follows an entirely different pattern. Lamakhos begins to insult Dikaiopolis as a beggar (οὗτος, σὺ τολμᾷς πτωχὸς ὦν λέγειν τάδε; (577a), and Dikaiopolis pretends to cower before his words (578-9). However, this ends up being a ruse to ridicule Lamakhos, as Dikaiopolis coaxes him into setting up his armour in such a way that Dikaiopolis might vomit into it (581-7). When Lamakhos replies indignantly, again calling Dikaiopolis a beggar (ταυτὶ λέγεις σὺ τὸν στρατηγὸν πτωχὸς ὦν, 593), Dikaiopolis comes back at him first by denying this with an incredulous question (ἐγὼ γὰρ εἶμι πτωχός; (594)), and

secondly by suggesting that he has more martial worth than Lamakhos (595-7). The control that Dikaiopolis has over the encounter with Lamakhos, the champion of war upon whom the chorus call, shows how far he has progressed towards becoming a confident and powerful hero of comedy.

By this point too Dikaiopolis has become a highly inventive man of action. He has already held a coal-sack hostage in his bid to influence the chorus, and has managed to procure raiment from Euripides to evoke the chorus' pity. However, even from this point on his influence continues to grow. Dikaiopolis sets up a market which he is able to defend against informers and prosecutors. He chases one of them away with a show of force (827-8), and later sells the other one, Nikarkhos, to the Theban merchant after binding him (926-8). In the interim, Dikaiopolis' market is praised by the chorus both as profitable (εὐδαιμονεῖ γ' ἄνθρωπος. οὐκ ἤκουσας οἱ προβαίνει / τὸ πρᾶγμα τοῦ βουλευματος; καρπώσεται γὰρ ἀνὴρ / ἐν τᾶγορᾷ καθήμενος, 836-8), and also as empty of unpleasant characters (839-59). Finally, Dikaiopolis becomes the one person who can control who gets peace and who does not, as he does with Derketes and the bridegroom. In this respect, the old man becomes the most powerful man in the city. He is approached for favours by Lamakhos himself, who asks him for delicacies for his table (960-2), and is invited to be the guest of honour at the feast held by the priest of Dionysos (1085-94).

Dikaiopolis' new-found position is expressed most clearly through his contrast with Lamakhos in the final scenes of the play, where in the end Lamakhos emerges as the loser, and Dikaiopolis as the winner. The contrast formally commences in the 'arming' scene of Lamakhos and Dikaiopolis (1093-142). In this scene, Lamakhos

asks his slaves to prepare his campaigning equipment and weapons, and Dikaiopolis asks his slaves to prepare his equipment and food for the banquet. During this preparation, Dikaiopolis parodies what Lamakhos says: he echoes his language, drawing a contrast between his bountiful life and Lamakhos' coming misery (cf. for example Lamakhos: παῖ παῖ, φέρ' ἔξω δεῦρο τὸν γυλιὸν ἐμοί, 1097; and Dikaiopolis: παῖ παῖ, φέρ' ἔξω δεῦρο τὴν κίστην ἐμοί, 1098). The mockery of Lamakhos goes even so far as to have Dikaiopolis' equipment compose "a kind of comic armour, to counterbalance Lamachus' real armour".⁵⁶⁹

However, the 'arming' scene creates not only parody and contrast between the two characters, but also a sense of competition. It is, therefore, significant that Lamakhos returns comically wounded and humiliated from his campaign. He has twisted his ankle, hit his head, lost his feather – and all while jumping a ditch (1178-83). His lament at his fall is bombastic and inflated, all the more so because it is a quotation from tragedy.⁵⁷⁰ ὦ κλεινὸν ὄμμα, νῦν πανύστατόν σ' ἰδὼν / λείπω φάος γε τοῦμόν, οὐκέτ' εἰμ' ἐγώ (1184-5). In particular, the use of κλεινόν and πανύστατον, and of ὄμμα to describe something dear to the speaker, recalls the language of tragedy / high poetry.⁵⁷¹ By contrast, Dikaiopolis returns as a comic victor, drunk and with a girl on each arm, putting great emphasis on his desire for them (cf. 1199-1201, 1209, 1216-7, 1220-1, quoted on p. 224). As in the arming scene, here too he parodies Lamakhos' language (cf. for example Lamakhos: λάβεσθέ μου, λάβεσθε τοῦ σκέλους· παπαῖ, / προσλάβεσθ', ὦ φίλοι, 1214-5; and Dikaiopolis: ἐμοῦ δέ γε σφῶ τοῦ πέους ἄμφω μέσου / προσλάβεσθ', ὦ

⁵⁶⁹ Harriott (1979) 97.

⁵⁷⁰ Cf. Olson (2002) *ad* 1184-5.

⁵⁷¹ Olson (2002) *ad* 1184-5.

φίλοι, 1216-7). Finally, he calls himself “victor” explicitly (cf. 1227, 1231), and with this the completeness of Dikaiopolis’ superiority moves beyond any doubt.

The erosion of the initially powerless position of the old man Dikaiopolis, therefore, begins through the presentation of his energy and success. However, his ultimate comic victory is expressed through the motifs of regeneration: the culmination of Dikaiopolis’ sexual exuberance, the drunkenness that was associated with young revellers at the *komos*, and his hailing as an athletic victor. The development of Dikaiopolis’ regeneration, its gradual build-up throughout the play, runs parallel with his progression from a downtrodden old man into a carefree komast who behaves in a youthful manner. While he started the play abandoned and ignored, a long way off from being sexually satisfied and waiting for others to turn up to the Assembly, at the end of the play he is sexually potent and accompanied by slave-girls; and he is the one for whom everyone at the party is waiting (δειπνεῖν κατακωλύεις πάλοι, 1088). Furthermore, Dikaiopolis’ release from war has turned his life towards a state of being for which he has been aiming all along. In this way, there is a sense that the benefits of regeneration satisfy all of Dikaiopolis’ aims, as these have been presented throughout the play; and his regeneration, moreover, is drawn as a reward for his energy and decisiveness in the earlier stages.

Finally, regeneration in the *Akharnians* operates in such a way that the happiness and celebration of Dikaiopolis are shown to have an unlimited temporal scope. The treaty that Dikaiopolis picks for himself seems to be for the longest period conceivable at the time,⁵⁷² and when he smells it, he can sense no trace of war, only of blissful peace-

⁵⁷² Cf. Sommerstein (1980) *ad* 194, Sommerstein (1981) *ad* 1388-9, and p. 248 above.

time living (195-200; for shorter treaties that smell of military preparations, cf. 189-90, 192-3); and even Lamakhos says nothing regarding a possible end to Dikaiopolis' celebrations: he only laments his own misfortune. Moreover, Dikaiopolis' focus at the end of the play is entirely upon celebration, and there is no suggestion that there should be anything beyond it in his future. Within the confines of Old Comedy, if change is not mentioned, it should not be presumed.⁵⁷³ As there is no such mention here, Dikaiopolis is remembered by the audience for his enjoyment of the celebration.⁵⁷⁴

Although in the *Peace* there is less of a focus on the lowly position of Trygaios at the outset, since the play begins with the Great Idea already in motion, the portrayal of this initial state of the hero provides, as in the *Akharnians*, the starting point from which Trygaios' character can develop. His helpless and disadvantaged position is most strongly brought out by the way that his slave describes him as being driven to desperation by the war – to such an extent that all he can do is shout up at Zeus (56-9). Moreover, Trygaios is compelled to fly up to heaven by the poverty that has arisen as a result of war, since he was not able to feed his children (119-23):

⁵⁷³ Cf. Silk (2000) 230 on how characters in Aristophanic comedy have no “effective” futures; see also MacCary (1979) 137.

⁵⁷⁴ It is harder to identify how far the celebration also spreads through the comic society: the extent to which Dikaiopolis shares his peace and bliss with the rest of the city on a dramatic level has been hotly debated (for a ‘selfish’ Dikaiopolis, cf. Whitman (1964) 78, Dover (1972) 87-8, Bowie (1993) 32-9; note also Foley (1988) 45-6, Newiger (1980) 223-4, Fisher (1993) 39-41; against this view cf. MacDowell (1983) 158-60, MacDowell (1995) 75-7, Parker (1991) 204-6, Carey (1993) 247-8, 250-1, Olson (2002) xlili-iv, Brockmann (2002)). However, Biles (2011) 83-94 has recently argued, picking up on the importance of lines 885-6 and 1150-61, and also on the mixing of elements of the celebration of dramatic victory with elements of the Anthesteria during Dikaiopolis' onstage celebration, that on the *metadramatic* level the ending of the play suggests that the benefits of peace are shared more widely: the celebration that Dikaiopolis enjoys after his victory in the Choes festival prefigures the victory celebration that the troupe as a whole will enjoy after the *Akharnians* wins first prize (as Aristophanes pretends it is bound to). Thus, just as with the rejuvenation of Demos, within the extraordinary framework of the festival of Dionysos, Dikaiopolis' regeneration is given an influence beyond just the old man himself.

δοξάσαι ἔστι, κόραι· τὸ δ' ἐτήτυμον, ἄχθομαι ὑμῖν,
 ἥνίκ' ἂν αἰτίζητ' ἄρτον πάππαν με καλοῦσαι, 120
 ἔνδον δ' ἀργυρίου μηδὲ ψακὰς ἦι πάνυ πάμπαν.
 ἦν δ' ἐγὼ εὖ πράξας ἔλθω πάλιν, ἔξετ' ἐν ὥραι
 κολλύραν μεγάλην καὶ κόνδυλον ὄψον ἐπ' αὐτῇ.

As in the *Akharnians*, however, Trygaios' ingenuity contrasts with his initial presentation as powerless and inactive. Early on in the play the audience find out that Trygaios has in fact come up with a scheme to go to heaven to demand that Zeus put a stop to the war, turning his apparently useless prayers to the god into background material for the formation of his Great Idea. Needless to say, this plan is highly unusual; and the comic boldness of it allows the second slave to say that his master is mad in an altogether new kind of way (ὁ δεσπότης μου μαίνεται καινὸν τρόπον, / οὐχ ὄνπερ ὑμεῖς, ἀλλ' ἕτερον καινὸν πάνυ, 54-5). Trygaios himself later confirms the uniqueness of his venture: ὑπὲρ Ἑλλήνων πάντων πέτομαι, / τόλμημα νέον παλαμησάμενος, 93-4.⁵⁷⁵ Moreover, he is very determined to achieve his goal, and is not put off by failures: even though he has already had one abortive attempt of trying to reach heaven by a ladder, during which he was comically hurt (ἔως ξυνετρίβη τῆς κεφαλῆς καταρρυσίς, 71), he is willing to increase the stakes and try something even more frightening and risky (cf. οἴμ' ὡς δέδοικα, κούκέτι σκώπτων λέγω, 173). The daring of Trygaios is emphasised structurally through the fact that his scheme is put into motion with very little introduction – already at line 79 Trygaios begins to mount the heavens on his beetle; and by its large-scale parody of Euripides' *Bellerophon*, who performed an act of extreme heroic defiance in trying to reach Olympus on the back of Pegasus.⁵⁷⁶

⁵⁷⁵ This also serves as a metadramatic comment on the originality of the plot of the *Peace*.

⁵⁷⁶ Cf. Olson (1998) xxxiv.

As well as inventiveness, Trygaios displays a significant amount of leadership and persuasiveness. In a move important for the scheme's successful outcome, he persuades Hermes not to denounce him to Zeus by arguing that to end the war would be advantageous to the Olympians, as it would stop the gods of the barbarians, the Sun and the Moon, from taking over worship in Greece (409-13):

ὅτι ἡ νῆ Δία
 ἡμεῖς μὲν ὑμῖν θύομεν, τούτοισι δὲ
 οἱ βάρβαροι θύουσι. διὰ τοῦτ' εἰκότως
 βούλοιντ' ἂν ἡμᾶς πάντα ἐξολωλέναι,
 ἵνα τὰς τελετὰς λάβοιεν αὐτοὶ τῶν θεῶν.

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A few lines further on, Trygaios displays further insight into the character of Hermes, and finds both what Hermes wants in the long-term, and what might sway his mind right at that moment: he offers him sacrifices in the future, and the gift of a libation bowl in the present (416-24). Only a little later, Trygaios and Hermes direct the chorus to free the goddess Peace, and Trygaios plays an important part in organising the chorus so that they might work efficiently (cf. 473-4, 491-3). In fact, it was again Trygaios who had summoned the chorus in the first place, taking advantage of the departure of War and Kydoimos (292-300); and he showed his control over them when he directed them in explicit terms to supplicate Hermes (εἰπέ μοι, τί πάσχετ', ὦνδρες; ἔστατ' ἐκπεπληγμένοι. / ὦ πόνηροι, μὴ σιωπᾶτ'. εἰ δὲ μή, λακήσεται, 383-4). Finally, Trygaios also managed to allay the displeasure of the goddess Peace with the Athenians by assuring her, on behalf of the city, that the Athenians would never jeopardise peace again (ἀλλ' οὐκέτ' αὐτῶι χρησόμεθ' οὐδέν, 685, of Hyperbolos; and ὥστ' οὐδέποτ', ὦ δέσποιν', ἀφησόμεσθά σου, 705). After achieving these things, Trygaios is very far removed indeed from his initial position of the downtrodden and helpless old man.

Going from strength to strength, Trygaios becomes not only a leader of the chorus and a persuasive speaker, but even achieves a position of social prominence. Most strikingly, after he manages to secure the favour of the goddess Peace he is granted Opora in marriage. This takes place after Trygaios' promise that the Athenians will never let go of peace, and is arranged specifically on this condition (cf. ἐπὶ τούτοις, 706). It occurs, therefore, as a direct result of Trygaios' actions. The betrothal not only elevates him by giving him a divine bride, but also cures the poverty of which he complained earlier in the play by bringing the goddess of plenty right into his house. Strikingly, in line 917 Trygaios is also ranked by the chorus second only to the gods, because he was able to procure peace for them (καὶ πλήν γε τῶν θεῶν αἰεὶ σ' ἡγησόμεσθα πρῶτον). Finally, the old man exercises a great amount of control over the future of the various tradesmen in the new world order: he receives gifts from the sickle-maker (1203-6), but chases Hierokles and the arms dealer with his companions away from his wedding feast.

As Trygaios moves further away from his initial position of disadvantage, regeneration begins to play an increasingly important role: just as with the *Akharnians*, here too the process of regeneration runs parallel to the rise of Trygaios' fortunes; and as with *Dikaiopolis*, there is an understanding that regeneration is Trygaios' reward for his actions. This idea is prepared through Trygaios' expression of joy at marrying Opora (ὦ φιλτάτη, δεῦρ' ἔλθὲ καὶ δός μοι κύσαι. / ἄρ' ἂν βλαβῆναι διὰ χρόνου τί σοι δοκῶ, / ὦ δέσποθ' Ἑρμῆ, τῆς Ὀπώρας κατελάσας; (709-11)), and is stated explicitly in lines 865-7:

οὐκουν δικαίως; ὅστις εἰς ὄχημα κανθάρου ἵπιβας 865
ἔσωσα τοὺς Ἑλληνας, ὥστ' ἐν τοῖς ἀγροῖσιν αὐτοὺς
ἅπαντας ὄντας ἀσφαλῶς κινεῖν τε καὶ καθεύδειν.

Through his increasingly youthful behaviour towards the goddess, his coming marriage and sexual development throughout the play, Trygaios is able to surpass completely the downtrodden position from which he has been moving from the start of the drama. Moreover, just as in the *Akharnians*, the processes of regeneration and joyful abandon introduce a timeless quality to the celebrations at the end of the play: the marriage to the goddess Opora, as well as Trygaios' promise that the Athenians will never again relinquish peace that precedes his betrothal to the goddess, serve as guarantees that the peace will be never-ending. Moreover, the play's ending is focused entirely on celebration, so that no thought of war or misery intrudes into the sexually charged wedding scene that is the *Peace*'s final sequence.

Finally, the benefits of peace brought by Trygaios affect not just himself, but the wider community, comprising the whole comic universe of Greece (or nearly the whole, since undesirables like Hierokles and the arms-dealer and his companions are excluded). This resurgence of the comic universe is prefigured in the effect that the chorus foresee that peace will have on them. They will turn away from being hard-hearted jury-men, and become gentler and more youthful (349-52):

κούκέτ' ἂν μ' εὖροις δικαστὴν δριμὺν οὐδὲ δύσκολον,
οὐδὲ τοὺς τρόπους γε δήπου σκληρὸν ὥσπερ καὶ πρὸ τοῦ, 350
ἀλλ' ἀπαλὸν ἂν μ' ἴδοις
καὶ πολὺ νεώτερον ἀπ-
αλλαγέντα πραγμάτων.

These lines should be read as suggesting that the chorus' renewal resembles that of Trygaios, in that they do not undergo a physical rejuvenation, since their renewal is

described in terms primarily of a change in their mentality. Moreover, this shift towards gentleness is motivated not by any sort of magic, but by a very believable reason, that with peace they will have an easier life. The idea of an easy and joyful life is associated with youthful behaviour, and of a hard life and a harsh temper with the reverse.

The spread of the celebration is also suggested through the excitement of Trygaios' slave at seeing Theoria (cf. ὄσῃν ἔχει τὴν πρωκτοπεντετηρίδα, 876; τὸ δεῖν', εἰς Ἴσθμια / σκηνὴν ἐμαυτοῦ τῶι πέει καταλαμβάνω, 879-80; οἴμ' ὡς καλόν, 891). This excitement should be compared with the slaves' disgust at their chores at the start of the play, and underlines the extent of the transformation that the comic universe undergoes during the play. The universality of the celebration is additionally confirmed through the fact that a whole crowd come to celebrate the marriage of Trygaios, with no sense that anyone, apart from the few people explicitly turned away, are excluded from it (ὄσον τὸ χρῆμ' ἐπὶ δεῖπνον ἦλθ' εἰς τοὺς γάμους, 1192). Through the fact that (nearly) everyone is free to join in the confirmation of Trygaios' comic triumph that is his regeneration and marriage to Opora, the comic universe as a whole is drawn into a timeless rejoicing in the bounty of eternal peace that is the play's comic resolution.

c. The *Wasps*

The *Wasps* presents a different model and employment of regeneration, where regeneration is part of the process by which the elderly protagonist recovers the comic

energy he has lost in the course of the play. The comedy begins with Philokleon locked up inside his house. The immediate reason for this is that his son and the rest of the household believe that the old man is sick in his mind, stricken with a love of being a juror (νόσον γὰρ ὁ πατήρ ἀλλόκοτον αὐτοῦ νοσεῖ, 71; φράσω γὰρ ἤδη τὴν νόσον τοῦ δεσπότη, 87; ὁ γὰρ υἱὸς αὐτοῦ τὴν νόσον βαρέως φέρει, 114). The old man's desire is understood to be an irrational affliction because it goes against the expectation of his son regarding what it is that he should want. The things considered by Bdelykleon appropriate for his father's age are listed by the young man in lines 736-40:

καὶ μὴν θρέψω γ' αὐτὸν παρέχων
ὅσα πρεσβύτηι ξύμφορα, χόνδρον
λείχειν, χλαῖναν μαλακὴν, σισύραν,
πόρνην, ἥτις τὸ πέος τρίψει
καὶ τὴν ὀσφῦν.⁵⁷⁷

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This attitude comes up at other moments in the play. Bdelykleon had earlier put forward a similar conception when he said that he wanted his father to live in luxury as a member of the upper class, not to be associated with the troubles that being a juror brings (503-7), and that the reason he did not let him go to the courts was to save him from being used by the demagogues (719-24). In addition, in 1003-7, Bdelykleon offers to entertain his father and take him to all the fashionable parties, in order to save him the trouble and spare him being made a fool of.

Although Bdelykleon seems to want what is best for his father (εἶθ' ὄφελέν μοι κηδεμών ἢ ξυγγενῆς / εἶναί τις ὅστις τοιαῦτ' ἐνουθέτει, 731-2), Philokleon reacts very strongly against the expectations that are foisted upon him by his son,

⁵⁷⁷ Sommerstein (1983) *ad* 739-40 suggests that the sexual activity described here is a sedate one. Cf. p. 222, and n. 506 above on the restrained sexual drive stereotypically expected of old men.

especially against the dependence on his son that the adoption of such a life-style would entail. Early on, in line 341, Philokleon says that his son would rather feast him at home than let him go to the courts, but the old man himself does not want this (ἀλλὰ μ' εὐωχεῖν ἔτοιμός ἐστ'· ἐγὼ δ' οὐ βούλομαι). Later, in the debate against his son, Philokleon gives his reasons. Among various comic motives – such as that as juror he is the beneficiary of a defendant's offer of enjoyment of his daughter in exchange for acquittal (573), and is able to look at boys' genitals (578) – he gives a number of arguments that relate directly to his rejection of the luxurious yet dependent lifestyle that his son wants for him. For instance, Philokleon argues that he has social importance because he is supplicated by important people (552-8), and has complete control over them (560-2). Furthermore, he possesses political power (590-602), and thus continues to play an active part in the city's affairs. However, the most delightful reason (ὁ δέ γ' ἥδιστον τούτων ἐστὶν πάντων, 605) is that he has financial independence from his family (605-18). Thus, a significant motivation behind Philokleon's desire to return to jury-service is based on rejection of the dependency, powerlessness, and leisured inactivity that Bdelykleon sees as his old father's remit.

However, after the *agon*, the old man's focus changes completely as a result of his son's arguments. These arguments attack Philokleon's core assumption regarding his value as a juror, that this activity brings him power and independence. Bdelykleon manages to convince his father that, as juror, he is closer to being a slave than a master (ἀλλὰ δουλεύων λέληθας, 517). Following this, Philokleon agrees not to go out to the city's law-courts, where he can be prey to the demagogues, but to stay at home to perform the same duties within his household, provided for in this activity by

his son. However, his son turns out to be no better than the demagogues whom he criticised as manipulators of the jurors (703-5), and himself swindles his father into acquitting Labes the dog (ἐξηπάτηται κάπολέλυκεν οὐχ ἐκῶν, 992): instead of wielding influence over others, Philokleon is once again shown to be a dupe, this time of his son. At this point, Philokleon reaches the lowest ebb of his fortunes. He physically collapses and almost dies (οὐδέν εἰμ' ἄρα, 997): it is as if he has nothing to live for after his attempts to evade the spectre of elderly dependence fail so spectacularly. Ironically, he has to be revived by his son (995-8), which once more shows his ultimate dependence on Bdelykleon. At this stage, for the first time in the play, Philokleon is sufficiently subdued and demoralised to accept Bdelykleon's repeated offer of a luxurious life-style, with his son providing everything, including invitations to fashionable parties (cf. 1003-7).

However, this turns out disastrously for Bdelykleon. As soon as his father embarks on his new life, he returns to his old tricks and behaves in his usual way, only in a new setting. Although Bdelykleon instructs his father in how to behave, when Philokleon arrives at the party, he ignores his son's lessons, and is the rudest of all the company (οὐ γὰρ ὁ γέρων ἀτηρότατον ἄρ' ἦν κακὸν / καὶ τῶν ξυνόντων πολὺ παροινικώτατος; (1299-300)). Moreover, he turns his son's advice about how to avoid prosecution (1256-61) upside down: by telling anecdotes, Aesopic and Sybaritic stories, he makes his position worse, not better. Instead of making the insult a laughing matter (κᾶιτ' εἰς γέλων / τὸ πρᾶγμα ἔτρεψας, ὥστ' ἀφείς σ' ἀποίχεται, 1260-1), he turns his victims into a laughing stock, and makes them even angrier than they were before. The sequence ends with Philokleon being physically carried back into the house by his son (1442-9).

In some important ways, the behaviour of Philokleon at the end of the play is no different from the way that he was behaving at the play's start. At the end, erotic language is heavily used to describe Philokleon's yearning for the flute-girl he brings with him from the party. For instance, he says that he wants sexual favours from her (ἔων οὐνεκ' ἀπόδος τῶι πέει τωιδὶ χάριν, 1347), and talks about making her his concubine (λυσάμενος ἔξω παλλακὴν, ᾧ χοιρίον, 1353). In addition, Bdelykleon uses the word ἐρᾶν (1365) to describe his father's motivations in bringing the girl. At the start of the play, similar erotic language is used to describe Philokleon's obsession with being a juror. One of the first things the audience is told about his disease is that he loves serving as juror (the same verb ἐράω is used), and that he groans whenever he is not on the front bench (ἐρᾷ τε τούτου, τοῦ δικάζειν, καὶ στένει / ἦν μὴ 'πὶ τοῦ πρώτου καθίζηται ξύλου, 89-90).⁵⁷⁸ Moreover, as a true lover, he cannot sleep away from his beloved, and even when he does, he dreams about the law-courts (91-3). Furthermore, in imitation of erotic graffiti about a man, he writes similar graffiti about the law-courts (κημὸς καλός, 99).⁵⁷⁹ He sleeps outside the court, as a lover should (104; compare the words of the young man in *Ekkk.* 963: εἰ δὲ μὴ, ἵκαταπεσῶν κείσομαι;⁵⁸⁰ and cf. also Plato *Symp.* 183a, 203d, *Theokr.* iii. 52). His attitude is summarised by lines 111-2 (τοιαῦτ' ἀλύει· νουθετούμενος δ' αἰὲ / μᾶλλον δικάζει), which are a parody quotation from Euripides' *Stheneboia*, and describe the longing of Stheneboia for Bellerophon.⁵⁸¹ Later on, the audience is told

⁵⁷⁸ Note also κείνων ἔραμαι (752), as Philokleon describes his attitude to jury-service using the same root verb. Cf. Segal (2001) 79, who also notes that Philokleon's passion for jury-service is so intense that he tries to kill himself when he is forced to give it up (lines 523, 756-9).

⁵⁷⁹ Cf. MacDowell (1971) *ad* 98.

⁵⁸⁰ Obelised by Wilson (2007), but accepted by Ussher (1973) and Sommerstein (1998).

⁵⁸¹ Cf. Sommerstein (1983) *ad* 111-2.

that missing his heart's desire causes him to reject food (508-11; cf. Eur. *Hipp.* 275, and *Lys.* 868-9).

There are further parallels between Philokleon's situation at the start and the end of the plays. He was considered ill and mad by his household at the start, and this is also true at the end (1486, 1489, 1491, 1496, quoted above, p. 231). As has already been mentioned, Bdelykleon attempts physically to keep him indoors on both occasions, and moreover thinks that Philokleon is not behaving appropriately: he should neither serve as juror, nor be aggressively chasing after young slave-girls. Furthermore, Philokleon chafes under his son's authority both at the beginning and end of the *Wasps* (καὶ φυλάττομαι σφόδρα· / τὸ γὰρ υἷδιον τηρεῖ με, 1355-6). Finally, as well as the similar eroticism that characterises Philokleon's two obsessions, at the start and end of the play he also possesses the same vigorous and aggressive energy with which to pursue them: just as before he was willing to fight his household to get out of the house (εἰ μὴ μ' ἔασεθ' ἥσυχον, μαχούμεθα, 190; cf. 166-7), and came up with numerous schemes of escape, at the end he escapes to compete against the sons of Karkinos, and in his drunken revel beats a slave, perhaps one of his former guards (ἐγὼ δ' ἀπόλωλα στιζόμενος βακτηρίαι, 1296).

Regeneration in this play, therefore, acts under different constraints and towards a different goal. Unlike the plays previously discussed, the old man does not start from low levels of sexuality at the start of the play to progress towards higher levels of sexual and youthful vigour at the end. Here, Philokleon is equally vigorous and erotically engaged at both points, and the low moment for him comes in the middle portion of the play. Regeneration, then, is the process by which Philokleon regains his

energy after his previous goals have been discredited; and the process through which he switches from a disturbingly erotic obsession with jury-duty, often associated with the old, towards sexual exuberance, positioned explicitly in this play as the province of the young. However, just as he was a difficult dikast, always eager to convict in the strictest way (ὕπὸ δυσκολίας δ' ἅπασι τιμῶν τὴν μακράν, 106),⁵⁸² so he has also become a difficult komast. As a result, instead of creating an atmosphere of resolution and a happy symposium, the ending of this play, just as its start, is shaped by physical conflict, brought about by Philokleon's regenerated vigour.

d. The *Birds*

This play also presents a complicated use of regeneration. While it follows to some extent the regenerative 'pattern' described above, it has been argued that regeneration is not sufficient to explain Peisetairos' transformations fully. The pattern exhibits itself in the fact that the old men Peisetairos and Euelpides seem to be presented at the start of the play in a disadvantaged position,⁵⁸³ and that by trying to overcome that disadvantage during the course of the play they move towards a happy and more 'youthful' life of physical gratification. However, Peisetairos' movement away from his initial position is a process that goes beyond regeneration, since Peisetairos ends the play not just rejuvenated, but actually deified.

⁵⁸² Cf. Sommerstein (1983) *ad* 106.

⁵⁸³ Cf. Whitman (1964) 170: "Like Dicaeopolis, he [Peisetairos] represents the individual fugitive from an increasingly impossible society." It should be noted, however, that in this play the engagement with the initial 'problem' for the old man is weaker than in, e.g., the *Akharnians* and the *Peace*; cf. Dobrov (2001) 107. Taken positively, however, the lack of focus on the 'problem' may be connected precisely to the fact that this play moves beyond the regenerative pattern. The elements of this pattern, therefore, are less strongly emphasised than elsewhere.

The opening of the play presents the old men escaping a miserable life in Athens. Though they are not exiled and are citizens with full rights, they can no longer stand the litigious culture of the city (33-41, especially 40-1: Ἀθηναῖοι δ' αἰεὶ / ἐπὶ τῶν δικῶν αἰδοῦσι πάντα τὸν βίον). The old men are also upset at the fact that they have to pay debts (κούκ ἀποδιδούς ἔχαιρες ὥσπερ νῶ ποτε, 115), and they fear being summoned to court out of the blue (μηδαμῶς / ἡμῖν γε παρὰ θάλατταν, ἴν' ἀνακύψεται / κλητῆρ' ἄγουσ' ἔωθεν ἡ Σαλαμινία, 145-7). Moreover, they are not presented as being particularly courageous: when they meet the servant of the Hoopoe, one of them falls over in fright (σὺ δὲ τὴν κορώνην οὐκ ἀφῆκας καταπεσών; (89)), and they both let go in their alarm of the birds they were holding as their guides. Their position of disadvantage is further suggested by the way that their journey is characterised at the start of the play: the old men complain that they have been wandering around for a long time at the bidding of senseless birds (5-8), and that they have been swindled at the market (ἦ δεινὰ νῶ δέδρακεν οὐκ τῶν ὀρνέων, 13).

However, the journey turns out to be successful: from the very start of the play, and especially after they encounter the Hoopoe, the old men move away from their disadvantaged position. They straightaway give the lie to their helplessness by taking the action of fleeing far from Athens (cf. 5-6). Moreover, as was argued in the previous section, their sexual vigour expresses itself increasingly prominently, first in Euelpides' statement of the reasons for which he left, and in Peisetairos' conception of founding a bird-city; then in the reaction of the old men to the Nightingale; and finally in Peisetairos' violent sexual attitude towards Iris. Peisetairos and Euelpides even fight off an attack of the bird-chorus, and they do this in a way that recalls

hoplite warfare.⁵⁸⁴ The old men arm themselves with their cooking utensils, which come to replace armour and weapons (356-61).⁵⁸⁵ In this respect, the development of the characters of the old men can be shown to follow the patterns of regeneration.

Peisetairos especially makes the effort to distance himself from any position of disadvantage that he might have been associated with at the outset. He is the author of the attempt to find Tereus and question him regarding which city is best, as Euelpides confirms (αἴτιος μέντοι σὺ νῶϊν εἶ τῶν κακῶν τούτων μόνος. / ἐπὶ τί γάρ μ' ἐκεῖθεν ἦγες; (339-40)); and it is he who comes up with the idea of founding a bird city, and persuades the others to put his idea into practice (ἦ μέγ' ἐνορῶ βούλευμ' ἐν ὀρνίθων γένει, / καὶ δύναμιν ἢ γένοιτ' ἄν, εἰ πίθοισθέ μοι, 162-3).⁵⁸⁶ He also thinks up the name of the new city (819); and is the driving force behind the urgency of the foundation of Nephelokokkygia (638-40):

καὶ μὴν μὰ τὸν Δί' οὐχὶ νυστάζειν <γ'> ἔτι
ὥρα ἴσθιν ἡμῖν οὐδὲ μελλονικιάν,
ἀλλ' ὡς τάχιστα δεῖ τι δρᾶν.

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Finally, Peisetairos is the one who deals with the visitors to the city, and he also performs the naming-day sacrifice. In all of these instances, Peisetairos displays initiative and energy similar to those of Dikaiopolis and Trygaios.

In addition to the combat passage referred to above, Peisetairos throughout the play employs and excels at military strategy, again undercutting his former position of helplessness that shapes his initial perception at the commencement of the play. His

⁵⁸⁴ Cf. Gelzer (1996) 207 on the military aspect of the language of the birds (in 343-53), which provokes an appropriate response from the old men.

⁵⁸⁵ Cf. Sommerstein (1987) *ad* 357, 359-60, 361; also cf. *ad* 364.

⁵⁸⁶ For the political energy of Peisetairos, cf. Arrowsmith (1973).

military expertise is praised by Euelpides in 362 (ὦ σοφώτατ', εὖ γ' ἀνηῦρες αὐτὸ καὶ στρατηγικῶς), and also Peisetairos uses a technical military term ἐπισκέλος (383) to direct Euelpides in how to retreat from the birds' attack after they ease off their anger.⁵⁸⁷ This terminology is continued in lines 386-92, where Peisetairos ends the aggressive action against the birds, and sets up a defensive military 'camp'. The protagonist, in fact, seems to have a proclivity towards military action, as can be observed from the selection of the aggressive cock as the patron of the city (ὅσπερ λέγεται δεινότατος εἶναι πανταχοῦ / Ἄρεως νεοπτός, 834-5); and from his reaction when Iris' entry into the city is reported to him, where he demands that everyone be armed and go out to catch the intruder, and asks for weapons himself (1185-7). It is telling that the chorus react to this with an assertion that war has indeed broken out (πόλεμος αἴρεται, πόλεμος οὐ φατὸς / πρὸς ἐμὲ καὶ θεοῦς, 1188-9).

However, beyond this, the further development of Peisetairos' character and position in the play exceeds the bounds of regeneration, since that process cannot explain some emerging features of his character, including the threatening aspects which he takes on as ruler of the bird-city. In this position, a key development of Peisetairos' character is his growing desire for power, which is presented in such a way as to create a feeling of unease regarding his transformation.⁵⁸⁸ The first hint in this direction is his dismissal of Euelpides to labour at and around the city walls (837-45):

ἄγε νυν σὺ μὲν βάδιζε πρὸς τὸν ἀέρα
καὶ τοῖσι τειχίζουσι παραδιακόνει,
χάλικας παραφόρει, πηλὸν ἀποδύς ὄργασον,

⁵⁸⁷ Cf. Sommerstein (1987) *ad* 383.

⁵⁸⁸ Cf. Bowie (1993) 166-77 on the *Birds* as representing a world that in the end cannot be free of *pragmata*.

λεκάνην ἀνένευγε, κατάπεσ' ἀπὸ τῆς κλίμακος, 840
 φυλακὰς κατάστησαι, τὸ πῦρ ἔγκρυπτ' αἶί,
 κωδωνοφορῶν περίτρεχε καὶ κάθευδ' ἐκεῖ·
 κήρυκα δὲ πέμψον τὸν μὲν εἰς θεοὺς ἄνω,
 ἕτερον δ' ἄνωθεν αὖ παρ' ἀνθρώπους κάτω,
 κάκειθεν αὖθις παρ' ἐμέ. 845

This decision shows his growing control, since Euelpides obeys it despite being unhappy at the prospect: in his reply he curses Peisetairos (οἴμωζε παρ' ἔμ', 846), and the nonsensical grammar of παρ' ἔμ' has been interpreted as an “irritated” and “exasperated” echo of Peisetairos’ words.⁵⁸⁹ Euelpides’ life working at these chores is likely to be hard, and very different from what he set out to find when leaving Athens: there is a hint in Peisetairos’ subsequent language that Euelpides will have to partake personally in all the work that he had been assigned. The phrase οὐδὲν γὰρ ἄνευ σοῦ τῶνδ' ἃ λέγω πεπράξεται (847) can mean both that Euelpides’ contribution is essential for the completion of the work, but can also be read as implying that he will be doing it all on his own.⁵⁹⁰

Taken in this light, a number of Peisetairos’ acts characterise his further development as problematic. He kills and cooks the birds which opposed his government (1583-5), and thus acts in a way that is representative of monsters and tyrants.⁵⁹¹ Peisetairos’ strongly militaristic character can also be taken in a negative sense, most strikingly through the fact that he becomes a *theomakhos*, and causes the birds actually to be at war with the gods (cf. 1188-9, quoted above; ἡμεῖς τε γὰρ πολεμοῦντες, 1591, spoken by Poseidon; and ἡμεῖς περὶ γυναικὸς μιᾶς πολεμήσομεν; (1639), spoken by Herakles). Even in the world of comedy, this is a disturbing position. His quest for

⁵⁸⁹ Sommerstein (1987) *ad* 846 describes the phrase as “an emphatic and exasperated echo of Peisetaerus’ words”, and Dunbar (1995) *ad* 846 calls the phrase “irritated and syntax-bending”.

⁵⁹⁰ Sommerstein (1987) *ad* 847.

⁵⁹¹ Bowie (1993) 168.

power, moreover, causes Peisetairos to revert to the life-style that he was initially trying to escape: in order to persuade Herakles, he uses arguments from the law-courts, from which he specifically fled, and the representatives of which (the statute-seller and the inspector) he chased out of the city.⁵⁹² Finally, his political position shows signs of becoming more totalitarian. First, Peisetairos throws out the inspector's voting urns (1032, 1053), which symbolise democratic governance.⁵⁹³ After this, he is described as an ἄρχων (1123), and later as a tyrant (τύραννον, 1708). The play concludes with him described as the greatest of the gods (ὁ δαίμόνων ὑπέρτατε, 1765). Once he reaches this position, he becomes unapproachable, more a figure to be worshipped than a regenerated and celebrating old man. In the context of this troubling behaviour, the omission of overtly sexual language in his interaction with Basileia suggests that, unlike other regenerated old men, marriage and sexuality are things which he uses for the concrete purpose of consolidating his power.⁵⁹⁴

Taken together, these developments in Peisetairos' character distance him significantly from the paradigm of regeneration, as it was presented in the other Aristophanic comedies discussed in this chapter. Instead of sexual interest, in the final scenes he appears more interested in his new status; and of the two old men who enter at the start of the play, it is perhaps the less ambitious Euelpides who fits more closely into the paradigm of regeneration. Thus, despite the celebration of Peisetairos' marriage, the ending of the comedy is painted in dark colours. This conflicts with the essence of regeneration, which is at its heart a joyful process. In the *Birds*, the process

⁵⁹² Gelzer (1996) 212.

⁵⁹³ Cf. Bowie (1993) 170.

⁵⁹⁴ On marriage to a consort of the former king as the final stage in accession to power by an outsider, cf. Bowie (1993) 164-5.

of renewal is overtaken by the ambition of Peisetairos and by his eventual deification. As a result, a feeling of unease pervades the ending of the play, especially given the fact that the reign of the now-immortal Peisetairos has the potential to last forever. Although the celebration of Peisetairos' success is quite literally 'timeless', his transformation into a god makes this a frightening rather than a happy outcome.

iv) Conclusion

Instead of the uniform process of renewal that old men are often presupposed by modern scholarship to undergo in comedy, a significant range of artistic possibilities emerged. While physical rejuvenation occurred only in one play, 'regenerations' of various kinds took place in the rest of the plays discussed. It was argued that within this framework the specific transformations that old men experience in Aristophanes' plays are closely entwined with the sorts of characters they become and the goals that they reach. Renewal of old age in Aristophanes is, therefore, a highly variable, flexible process.

In the *Knights*, Demos is rejuvenated, and the ending of the play produces a sense that his (political) reinvigoration may last forever. Moreover, the extent of change that Demos had to undergo in that play for there to have been a positive ending of that kind seems to have necessitated a process as radical as magical rejuvenation. In the *Akharnians* and the *Peace*, the old protagonists move away from a lowly position at the start of the comedies towards a state of endless celebration. However, no magical rejuvenation is necessary, as the transformations that take place in those plays involve

to a lesser extent changes of protagonists' characters than changes of the comic universe around them, and of their position in it: regeneration is the paradigm connected to these transformations. By contrast, in the *Wasps* regeneration does not herald the same resolution as it does for the *Akharnians* and the *Peace*. Instead, regeneration is a way for Philokleon to revive and redirect into a new setting the comic energy that he had lost after being persuaded by his son not to serve as juror. Finally, for Peisetairos in the *Birds* regeneration is not sufficient to encompass the entirety of his transformation, as he moves far beyond the patterns of regeneration when he is deified. In this, his transformation into a god is presented as an ambivalent process, as if straying beyond the boundaries of regeneration begins to turn the world of comedy from utopia towards dystopia.

CONCLUSION

Following a discussion of the context of old age in modern scholarship and ancient Athens, this thesis focused on demonstrating the ways in which old age was presented in Greek drama, and the role it could play in understanding the plays and the characters in them. The consideration of Aiskhylos' *Agamemnon* demonstrated the subtlety that can be contained within the characterisation of the chorus as old men, and the authority that this group can draw from old age: it was suggested that their age was the reason why these men could speak with divine 'inspiration', even if that inspiration did not enable them to act. The relationship between age and inspiration is presented in a different way in Euripides' *Herakles*. In this play the power of poetry affects old age, and permits the chorus to feel and act as younger men, for a time. The *Oidipous Koloneus*, by contrast, presented Oidipous on the basis of the contrast between his physical weakness as an old man and his developing status as an embodiment of heroic power, and a person who could therefore transcend the power of age and time.

The treatment of old age in comedy follows on from the tragic engagement with transcendence, and it does so in a characteristically comic way. Although regaining youthfulness was a key theme in the *Herakles*, and an escape from the limitations imposed on human existence by time was a feature of the *Oidipous Koloneus*, in the comedies that were considered renewal was much more central to the development of the plot, suggesting that deconstruction of old age was an important dramatic aim of

the comic poet (with an added option at the end, often taken, of problematising the deconstruction).

This thesis, therefore, does not agree with such judgements as that of Knox regarding the presentation of old age in tragedy, that old men are usually “either slightly ridiculous or sinister”.⁵⁹⁵ Mastronarde is closer to the truth: “the old men provide a version of the ‘other’ through which the playwright can evoke pathos and the audience can vicariously experience marginality and vulnerability, with occasional moments of unexpected triumph”.⁵⁹⁶ However, while this picks up on a number of important functions of old age in the tragedies, to describe the aged in that way employs a reductive definition of the concepts of vulnerability and marginality, and as a result oversimplifies the dramatic purpose and potential of the old men. On a broader view of vulnerability and marginality, taking into account the full scope of the plays rather than just the negative associations of old age that are imported into them, the elderly characters are not necessarily any more vulnerable or marginalised than the other characters. For example, Aiskhylos’ Agamemnon is hardly less vulnerable than the chorus of old men (who, for instance, can even hold their ground at the end of the play), for all his power and success; and Herakles is much more seriously marginalised following his madness than the elderly chorus ever are. Moreover, marginality and vulnerability are not always causally connected to old age: Amphitryon is ‘marginal’ and ‘vulnerable’ only because Lykos now rules the city, whereas before he was closely connected to the ruling family, and had an entirely different social standing; and the old chorus of the *Oidipous Koloneus* are respected

⁵⁹⁵ Knox (1964) 145, though he considers Oidipous in the *Oidipous Koloneus* an exception. Cf. Falkner (1995) 262, who sees representations of old age in Greek tragedy as ranging from “bleak to horrid”, with the *OK* again an exception.

⁵⁹⁶ Mastronarde (2010) 296-7.

members of their community, ‘vulnerable’ only until the threats by Kreon and the Thebans are countered by the rest of the Athenian *polis*. A similar statement can be made regarding Oidipous, since as well as acquiring the physical protection of Athens, he is also the drama’s central and eventually most powerful character.⁵⁹⁷ Finally, it should not be specified as extraordinary that old men experience “occasional moments of unexpected triumph”: triumphs in tragedy are rare for all of its participants, and old men are not distinct as a group for whom they are uncommon.⁵⁹⁸

The dramatic development of old men in comedy has also emerged in consequence of this discussion as a more complicated affair than it was often thought to be.⁵⁹⁹ The processes that old men undergo at the end of Aristophanic comedies are powerfully individuated, from physical rejuvenation in the *Knights*, to mental regeneration in the *Akharnians*, the *Peace*, and the *Wasps*, to actual deification in the *Birds*. Furthermore, the resolutions the old men reach at the end of the *Wasps* and the *Birds* are problematised, in that at the end of the *Wasps* the old man does not resolve the conflict with his family that started the play off, and at the end of the *Birds* the old Peisetairos is deified, but at the same time turns into a menacing tyrant-figure. Additionally, there are some plays, not discussed in this thesis, where old age does not triumph: Strepsiades finds himself in a difficult situation at the end of the *Clouds*, and in the *Thesmophoriazousai* the elderly relative barely manages to escape the women.

⁵⁹⁷ Cf. Dhuga (2011).

⁵⁹⁸ Major ‘triumphs’ of old men in tragedy occur in the *OK*, the *Herakleidae* (Iolaos), the *Elektra* of Sophokles (the Old Tutor), the *Suppliants* of Aiskhylos (Danaos), and, in a certain sense, also in the *Andromakhe* (Peleus). Old men at the end of these plays achieve what they strove for, though in the case of Peleus his grief is remedied rather by Thetis’ grant of divine status and immortality, and promise of being reunited with Akhilleus (Eur. *Andr.* 1253-78).

⁵⁹⁹ Cf. The introduction to Chapter VI.

A more accurate approach to describing the relation between old age and Greek drama would be to argue that elderly characters and old age are closely and productively integrated into their dramatic environments. The confines of tragedy often create a sense of tension and foreboding, a sense that reflects upon old age and is reflected by it in a lively way. Old age in tragedy, therefore, emerges as a powerful and informative dramatic concept, and this is true regardless of whether the protagonists or the chorus are the aged in question. In comedy, the old men often crystallise the essence of the comic spirit. This is partly because the presentation of old age is easily made humorous, and partly because triumph is the essence of comic wish-fulfilment, especially for old age that is normally so far removed from physical pleasures, and is often in a disadvantaged physical state. However, comedy does not imply invariable success (as tragedy does not imply invariable failure) and, as well as embodying wish-fulfilment, old age is a powerful image for the potential instability of comic victory. This complex picture of old age emerges as a result of detailed, subtle, and sympathetic treatment by the poets; and merits close analysis which does not try to simplify it.

One issue which does seem common to presentations of old men in both genres, however, is concern for giving the old characters a trait that would balance out at least some of the losses associated with old age. Thus, the old men in the *Agamemnon* present themselves as authoritative, and this can be explicitly contrasted with their reduced physical vigour. The chorus of the *Herakles* for a time replaced the loss of physical vigour with youthfulness attained through poetic power. In the *Oidipous Koloneus* the outcome is a little different, in that the old man dies, but in doing so attains his wish, and becomes a powerful cult hero. Unsurprisingly, this dynamic is

presented most obviously in the comedies of Aristophanes, and the renewal of old age contained therein. Additionally, traces of this process can be seen in plays that were not treated in detail in this thesis. For instance, Teiresias, although old and blind, is a figure of unquestionable authority in his portrayals in the *Antigone* and the *Oidipous Tyrannos*. The chorus' authoritative position is also palpable in the *Persai*, where the old men are presented as authoritative because of their social position (Ais. *Pers.* 1-7). Rejuvenation also occurs in *Hkld.* 849-58, where Iolaos regains his youth for a day in order to fight Eurystheus; and in the *Bakkhai* Teiresias and Kadmos undergo a process that seems to resemble regeneration, even though this instance of it is rather ominous.⁶⁰⁰

That so many plays follow this trend suggests that the concern with balancing the loss suffered by old men because of their age is an extremely significant one in Greek theatre. In turn, this implies an appreciation of the difficult condition of the aged, and acknowledges the need to maintain their status: Greek drama is astute in its recognition that everyone, especially the most vulnerable members of society, need to have a sense of personal worth and purpose to hold on to; and a sense of recognition and triumph to validate their existence.⁶⁰¹

Having considered the significance of old age in the literary context of Greek drama, it is possible to evaluate these findings in the comparative context of modern

⁶⁰⁰ The regeneration takes place at the start of a tragedy, and moreover Kadmos does not engage with it completely willingly and gladly. Cf. Eur. *Bakkh.* 191, 195, and Dodds (1960) *ad* 170-369.

⁶⁰¹ This approach is manifested in drama, but is not limited to it. Cf. the picture of the Trojan elders (*Il.* iii. 146-52) or Nestor, who are too weak to fight, but are instead considered to be the best councillors of the city or the army. On old age in Homer, cf. Falkner (1989b), Falkner (1995) 3-51.

gerontology. The detailed treatment of the aged in the dramas resonates powerfully with the academic trend of an increasingly sympathetic and complex view of old age, as does the sense that old age has something intrinsically valuable about it. However, there are also a number of differences in the way that old age is presented in Greek drama, and the way it is understood within the modern context.

An interesting comparative case is provided by Yahnke, who analyses a number of videos and films that take old age as their subject. He focuses his material through two themes: intergenerational relations, and the development of the elderly as characters (of particular interest is what he terms their ‘regeneration’). According to him, when films present intergenerational relations, both the elderly generation and the younger generation learn a significant amount from each other: the elderly are reminded of “unfinished tasks for them to complete”, while the young see the elderly as mentor figures.⁶⁰² Similarly in Greek drama, old men are almost invariably given qualities that make them valuable to and also make them stand out from those around them, such as authority or wisdom in tragedy, and inventiveness in comedy.⁶⁰³

However, although old age is thus presented as valuable through both media, the kind of value it has is different. In modern films, the value is often personal and individuated. In Athenian drama, however, the emphasis is on wisdom, authority and inventiveness expressed not just in a private setting, but in ways that influence or refer to the whole society. Examples of this are the performance of a narrative describing the fortunes of the entire Greek army by the chorus of the *Agamemnon*, or the publicly oriented presentation of epinician praise by the chorus of the *Herakles*, or even the

⁶⁰² Yahnke (2000) 293-4.

⁶⁰³ Demos in the *Knights* is an exception, but one which proves the rule.

magical creation of peace that affects the entire Greek world by Trygaios. The more public nature of the exploits of old age in Greek drama may be connected with its greater interest and instinctive involvement in city-wide affairs, but perhaps also speaks of a greater need (or a greater capacity) of Greek drama to reassert the public standing of old age. According to Aristotle, a significant part of being a citizen was fighting for the city.⁶⁰⁴ Since old men can no longer do this, there may perhaps be a tendency to replace their participation in the common endeavour of the city's defence with something that also pertains to the community at large.⁶⁰⁵

A contrast is also maintained between the ways that regeneration is presented in the two media. Yahnke notes: "Intergeneration almost always leads to regeneration (renewal, rejuvenation, and a restoration to wholeness of identity) for the old person. Regeneration signals an inward emotional and psychological change in the old person, manifested by a sense of closure, resolution, healing, acceptance, and clarity of purpose".⁶⁰⁶ Furthermore, regeneration can come about through "fulfilment" springing from "meaningful connections with [elders'] communities, or intimate relationships with other elders".⁶⁰⁷ For Yahnke, therefore, regeneration seems to mean primarily that the elderly come to appreciate and accept (in a positive way) their capabilities and circumstances; that they remember what is important to them in life; and that they draw (positive) emotions from their environment. By contrast, in Greek drama there is little sense that the identity of the old men can be (or needs to be) somehow 'restored' or 'healed', at least not within the scope that old age can afford; or that old age can bring 'fulfilment' in and of itself. Old age is a terrible, though

⁶⁰⁴ *Pol.* 1275a14-8, and cf. p. 56 above.

⁶⁰⁵ The chorus of the *Wasps*, specifically, contrast their defence of the city against the Persians in the past (1071-90) with their present defence of the city in the courts.

⁶⁰⁶ Yahnke (2000) 294.

⁶⁰⁷ Yahnke (2000) 294-5; quotations from p. 295.

natural, burden, and is accepted as such; and if it is to be transformed, this transformation must entail a transcendence of the very bounds of old age.

This significance that Greek drama places specifically on reinvigoration and regaining youth can perhaps be explained by considering the contemporary context. To a modern (Western) audience, the importance of a return to more youthful living might be obscured by the fact that in many parts of the world today people have access to improved healthcare and higher standards of living, and as a result live longer, healthier, and more pain-free lives. However, in the age of only rudimentary medical capacities, limited access to physical comforts, and almost no access to effective pain-killers (except, perhaps, wine), a return to the quality of life that people had when they were younger would be in practical terms a more meaningful achievement. The fact that transformation of old age in Greek drama often concerns itself with practicalities rather than self-searching does not make it shallower, but reflects instead what might have been a powerful contemporary need.

From the start of this investigation, it was expected that old age would be portrayed in a complex way in Greek drama: the study of the contemporary demographic, social, and performative context suggested as much, and the results have not disappointed the expectations. However, the present thesis cannot pretend to have exhausted this topic, and further directions for research broadly break down into two key areas. The first is expanding the evidence base of this work within Greek drama, something that this conclusion has already hinted at. For instance, old age is treated in fascinating ways in

such plays as the *Persai*, the *Andromakhe*, the *Herakleidai*, the *Bakkhai*, the *Alkestis*, the *Clouds*, the *Thesmophoriazousai*, and the *Dyskolos* (to name but a few), and all of these plays can be fruitfully analysed. The extension of the evidence base would also allow for a more precise comparison between the different treatments of old age by the individual dramatists. This could lead into discussion of the dramatists' late style, and especially its (self-reflexive?) engagement with old age. One might also consider the presentation of old women, and such tragic figures as Hekabe are likely to provide fruitful grounds for analysis.

The second way of extending the research is to consider how it fits into a broader Greek social context. An interesting option for doing this is to ask how old age engages with perceptions of and attitudes to death in ancient Greek drama and ancient Greece more generally. To what extent was death met in old age with acceptance, and in what contexts?⁶⁰⁸ Was old age specifically a time when ancient Greeks thought about death, and was it therefore a particularly frightening period of life for them? Was death itself a frightening concept, and in what way? Did attitudes change in the course of the Classical period, and were they different in the periods preceding and following? While some work has been done on this subject already,⁶⁰⁹ this remains a fertile (though rocky and perilous) field for further research.

⁶⁰⁸ Cf. Solon 27. 17-8 West, *Od.* xi. 134-7 on old age as a natural and happy time to die.

⁶⁰⁹ Sourvinou-Inwood (1981), Sourvinou-Inwood (1983), Morris (1989), Sourvinou-Inwood (1996).

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