

LINGUISTIC STUDIES IN
EURIPIDES' *ELECTRA*

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Linguistic Studies in Euripides' *Electra*

Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

by

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Abstract

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DPhil Thesis

Euripides' *Electra* has long been one of the playwright's most controversial works. This book offers a reading of the play concentrating on its language, which is analysed by applying a variety of modern linguistic approaches: conversation analysis, pragmatic theories of speech acts and inference, politeness theory, the study of the interplay of gender and language, paroemiology, and the study of discourse cohesion.

The first three chapters argue for the Peasant, Electra and Orestes, respectively, that their linguistic behaviour constitutes a vital part of their characterisation. The Peasant's (ch. 1) sturdy morality is established by the way his language becomes more forceful when he touches on ethical questions; it is then tested in his conversations with Electra, where his language is suggestive of a conflict between his morals and his desire to please his royal wife.

Electra herself (ch. 2) is characterised initially by the inability to communicate successfully with those around her — a disconnect which is suggestive of the fundamental incongruity of her circumstances. This adds a dimension to her motivations, which, as a force driving Electra's linguistic behaviour, remain highly stable throughout the play up until the matricide. Another consistent feature of Electra's language is the way it is patterned by her gender.

Orestes' characterisation in the early part of the play is ingeniously kept to a minimum through his sustained disguise. Various aspects of his language, but particularly his use of *gnomai*, contribute to that disguise, which involves a suppression of emotion, an avoidance of self-reference, and the exertion of control over the flow and topic of his conversation with Electra.

We can only interpret a dramatic text if we know what it says, and if we know who says what. In chapter 4, I argue that the linguistic approaches I adopt can also help us in making a determination about textual-critical problems, particularly concerning the issue of speaker-line attribution (two notorious cases are discussed: 671-84 and 959-87).

The final two chapters deal with longer speeches. In the messenger scene (ch. 5), Euripides uses linguistic devices to create an ebb and flow of suspense, and to manipulate audience expectation. In the agon (ch. 6), differences in the way Clytemnestra and Electra structure their speeches, particularly their *narrationes*, reveal much about their different (and fundamentally irreconcilable) viewpoints and approaches.

To my parents

PREFACE

I think of this work as the product of a marriage between linguistics and literary interpretation. To some, this may feel like a shotgun wedding; but if I can convince others that it can be a fruitful union between partners who provide each other mutual reinforcement, then I will consider the book a success.

Many thanks are in order. My dual approach was reflected in a pair of supervisors (one for the literary aspect, one for the linguistic), and ‘twice as many’ in this case really meant ‘twice as good’. In Oxford, Bill Allan has taught me more about Euripides and tragedy than he might realise, and if I say anything of interest about the interpretation of *Electra* in this book, it is due in part to his constant call for ‘pay-off’. He oversaw the project with patience (which I must at times have tried) and level-headedness (which I always appreciated), and frequently provided swift support with the administrative operation that a graduate degree entails (for supervisors as much as for candidates). At my undergraduate university in Amsterdam, I have known Albert Rijksbaron as a teacher, a supervisor twice over, and now as a collaborator (on a different book) and a friend. In each of these guises, his vast knowledge of Greek has been an inspiration, his keenly discriminating mind a trusty guide.

Of my great teachers at school and university, I would like to single out Jan Krimp and Ton Jansen (Haarlem), Fred Naiden (Tulane, New Orleans) and Irene de Jong (Amsterdam). Prof. de Jong also invited me (with Mathieu de Bakker) to take up a temporary job at the University of Amsterdam this past year — a great experience and a financial buoy in the final phase of my graduate career.

Earlier versions of two chapters were read by Philomen Probert and Angus Bowie, and by Scott Scullion and Adrian Kelly; their helpful notes have prevented countless errors and flaws. The questions and comments of audiences at various seminars and conferences have also led to numerous improvements to select sections and chapters: pride of place belongs to that august institution, Oxford’s Graduate Work-in-Progress seminars (long may WiP thrive!). In general, the graduate community in Oxford is not mentioned often enough in these prefaces; its members have made my DPhil experience a richer and better one.

My time in Oxford (first for the MSt, then for the DPhil) would not have been possible without the generous support of the VSB-Fonds, the ‘Talentenbeurs’ of the Netherlands Ministry of Education, the Prins Bernhard Cultuurfonds, the Arts and Humanities Research Council, Corpus Christi College, and the Charles Oldham Fund. In acquiring aid from the last of these sources, the assistance of my college adviser Stephen Harrison and of the President of the College, Sir Tim Lankester, was instrumental.

Finally, for various reasons, I would like to thank Glenn Lacki, Laura Bok, Tori McKee, Liz Lucas, Rob Cioffi, Juliane Kerkhecker, Luuk Huitink, and lastly Anouk Petersen, whose support in all the important ways was indispensable at all the important moments. *Optimis parentibus*, who made it all possible, this work is gratefully dedicated.

A NOTE ON CITATION AND ABBREVIATIONS

References to the works of ancient authors follow the conventions adopted in the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* (Hornblower & Spawforth 2003), except that speeches by the orators are always referred to by number. In the bibliography, journal titles are abbreviated as in *Année Philologique*.

Commentaries and editions are normally cited by author name (and title of the play) only: thus, Basta Donzelli (*app. crit.*) refers to her Teubner edition of the *Electra*, and Fraenkel *ad* Aesch. Ag. 1 to the relevant note in his *Agamemnon*. Otherwise, all works are cited using the author-year format (initials are occasionally added to disambiguate), except for the following three:

- | | |
|----------------------------|---|
| KG-I, KG-II | KÜHNER, R. & B. GERTH (1890). <i>Ausführliche Grammatik der griechischen Sprache</i> , 2. Bd: Satzlehre. Hannover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung. |
| Denniston, <i>GP</i> | DENNISTON, J.D. (1954). <i>The Greek Particles</i> , 2nd ed. rev. by K.J. Dover. London: Duckworth. |
| Rijksbaron, <i>S&S</i> | RIJKSBARON, A. (2002). <i>Syntax and Semantics of the Verb in Classical Greek: An Introduction</i> , 3rd ed. Amsterdam: Gieben. |

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MODERN LINGUISTICS AND EURIPIDES' *ELECTRA*

AIMS, APPROACHES, OUTLINE

Reading, linguistically

This book is first and foremost a literary reading of Euripides' *Electra*, a play which remains the subject of great interest and great controversy. In the course of my reading, I will draw the same kind of conclusions (about the text and its interpretation, characters, themes, and so forth) as have been drawn by scholars working on the play previously — they will in fact sometimes be the same conclusions. But the way in which I aim to reach those conclusions is somewhat different from what is usual in work on Greek tragedy. Throughout, the basis of my analysis will be the play's *language*. This may seem a vacuous statement concerning a play of which we have nothing left but its language,¹ yet in a discipline where 'research into Greek tragedy' has sometimes come to be synonymous with 'research into the (socio-political, religious, and historical) context of Greek tragedy', such a singular focus is worth making explicit upfront.² More importantly, in approaching the play's language, I plan to travel along some different avenues from those normally taken by classicists in linguistic enquiry: my close reading will be informed heavily by modern linguistic methodology, and it is a secondary aim of the work to show that this methodological apparatus, developed in the last half century in general linguistics, can teach us much about tragic language and how we should interpret it.

¹ This statement requires some modification, of course — but not much. Almost all of the 'evidence' for what we 'know' about *Electra* is circumstantial: (i) its relation to works using same mythical material, including Aeschylus' *Choephoroe* and Sophocles' *Electra* (whether coming before or after, see p. 49 below); (ii) its dating relative to other Euripidean works (insecure, cf. Basta Donzelli 1978: 27-71 — long-held beliefs about allusions to contemporary events were disproven by Zuntz 1963: 63-71); (iii) its place in the Euripidean *oeuvre* and tragedy more generally (with regard to the development of the form, literary techniques, etc.). There are very few — and largely inconsequential — scholia (cf. Keene 1891), only five papyrus fragments (cf. Basta Donzelli's Teubner edition, pp. xxxvii-xxxviii), and Euripides' version of the story does not appear to be represented in vase painting (the play is accordingly absent from Taplin 2007). The curious reference to the play in Plutarch's *Lysander* (15.3) seems to suggest that the play was known well enough in antiquity, and does something to disprove that *Electra* "has never been a terribly popular play" (Whitehorne 1978: 5).

² I do not mean to suggest that such context is unimportant, only that it will not be central to my approach.

Of course, to say that I will follow “different avenues” is not intended to discount the rich body of work that has emerged in recent decades which applies modern linguistic theory to ancient languages.³ Yet not all of the linguistic approaches I will adopt have been utilised, or utilised as fully as they can be, even in that current of research; and no one (to my knowledge) has attempted to apply all of them combined to a single text in order to see what they can tell us about the interpretation of that text.

A methodological problem immediately rears its head: can we hope to apply techniques that were developed in the study of modern languages (usually in their everyday, spoken form) fruitfully to ancient Greek (or any ‘dead’ language), let alone the highly stylised Greek of tragedy? The answer is a qualified ‘yes’, for various reasons. First of all, linguistic theory is often concerned with identifying ‘universal’ features of language usage. It must be admitted that as soon as a linguist claims universality for a feature he/she has described, two others will usually come out of the woodwork to contest that claim.⁴ Yet many of the approaches described below have proved remarkably resilient in the face of such criticism, and have been fruitfully applied to a very considerable range of languages, even in literary contexts.

Second, it has been argued that in spite of some clear superficial differences between literary and everyday language, all literature at a more fundamental level still uses the same rules and conventions as any other form of linguistic expression. Vimala Herman has argued, for example, that in the case of drama

it is a question of *mechanics*, in the exploitation by dramatists of underlying speech conventions, principles and ‘rules’ of use, operative in speech exchanges in the many sorts, conditions and contexts of society which members are assumed to share and use in their interactions in day-to-day exchanges. The principles, norms and conventions of use which underlie spontaneous communication in everyday life are precisely those which are exploited and manipulated by dramatists in their constructions of speech types and forms in play. Thus ‘ordinary speech’ or, more accurately, the ‘rules’ underlying the orderly and meaningful exchange of speech in everyday contexts are the *resource* that dramatists use to construct dialogue in plays. (1995: 6)

In other words, for dramatic dialogue to be comprehensible to an audience, it still must use the same linguistic resources that are familiar to them from their own daily conversations: natural occurring

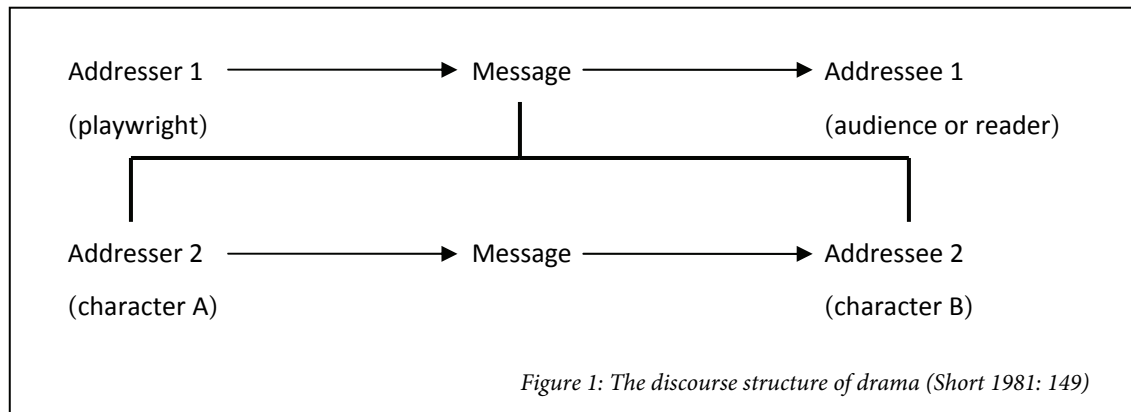
³ Nor is it a coincidence that much of that body of work derives from what is sometimes called ‘Dutch scholarship’ (even if this is somewhat unfair to numerous American, British, French, Spanish, Italian, Belgian (etc.) scholars working in the field). Book titles such as *Grammar as Interpretation* (Bakker 1997a) and *The Language of Literature* (Allan & Buijs 2007) may be taken as emblematic of this tradition, and explain my affinity with it. Outside of classics, my approach coincides with the work of the ‘Lancaster School’ in what is called, by its adherents, ‘stylistics’. The outstanding introduction is Leech & Short 2007; good introductory matter may also be found in Toolan 1998. Within this tradition, I have found the work of Culpeper on characterisation (e.g. 2001, 2002, 2009) and Toolan 1990 especially instructive.

⁴ For cultural differences in how language is used by speakers, cf. the essays in Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper 1989; for an opposing view, cf. Wierzbicka 1985.

conversation is, as it were, the template on which dramatic discourse is grafted. We find similar arguments used about ancient Greek, for example by Bakker on Homeric speech, who argued that it is a stylisation of everyday discourse “departing from it and yet retaining, or even highlighting, its most characteristic forms” (1997b: 17).⁵

A better understanding of how languages work, in short, will help us to understand how ancient Greek literary language works. All this is not to say that we should not constantly be sensitive to differences between literary and everyday language,⁶ between Greek and other languages, and between Greek society (as a determinant of language use) and that of our present day (this is especially true for the sociolinguistic approaches discussed below).

A further caveat involves the different levels on which literary language, especially that of drama, ‘means’. As audience members/readers of a play, we overhear communication taking place between characters, but at the same time, the playwright is communicating with us. Mick Short has represented this ‘embedded discourse structure’ as follows:



In applying linguistic approaches to the language exchanged between characters of a play — addresser 2 and addressee 2 — we should be continually aware that such language will be influenced by the aims of addresser 1 (in our case, Euripides).⁷

In the end, in assessing the value of linguistic methodology for literary interpretation, the proof is in the eating (and hopefully the pudding will taste good): if the approaches described below can be shown to lead to plausible readings,⁸ a case might be made for some methodological leniency, and we may give those approaches the benefit of the doubt.

⁵ This is also a fundamental concern for Minchin 2007, which is engaged throughout with the applicability of modern linguistic concepts to Homeric Greek.

⁶ This sensitivity entails that we are not surprised by some linguistic phenomena that would normally surprise us, for example the fact that characters in Greek tragedy consistently speak/sing in metre.

⁷ I do not wish to imply that such aims are retrievable (though I have few qualms about approaching the *Electra* as a work written by an author who intended it to have meaning in some ways and not in others), only that we should be constantly aware that there is more going on in a play than communication between characters.

⁸ As a first step towards showing that this is the case, I will use examples from *Electra* as much as possible in my description of linguistic approaches below.

Outline of the book

Most of what remains of this introduction is in essence a 'crash course' in selected sub-disciplines of modern linguistics, which will inform my analysis of *Electra* throughout the rest of the book. Since many or all of these approaches may be unfamiliar to classicists, I will have to spend some time on them. For the reader's ease, key terms are explained in a separate glossary at the end of the book, with references to the relevant discussions in this section, and I have printed these terms in a different (but I hope unobtrusive) **typeface** at their first appearance here, and then throughout the later chapters. This identifies terms whose meaning may not be evident or which may be used in an unfamiliar, technical manner. Armed with the glossary, the reader may thus work through my actual reading of the play in the subsequent chapters without (constant) recourse to the discussions below. Still, I feel it is necessary to provide a serious account of the approaches used first, since they underpin my analyses even when I do not explicitly say so. I will also briefly outline my principles in practicing textual criticism (roughly speaking: only where it matters). Finally, I end the introduction with a very brief 'view of the play', in which I give a preview of the major issues of interpretation about *Electra* which will concern me later in the book.

In the first three chapters that make up the body of the work, I will apply the theories described to the language of three important characters in the play, in each case to show that their characterisation is driven in part by their linguistic behaviour. Chapter 1 deals with Electra's husband, the Peasant, and serves both as a concise exemplification of my approach, and as a reading of the first few scenes of the play. Chapter 2 is concerned with the play's central character, Electra herself: again, the main thrust of this chapter (by necessity the longest of the book) will be to show how Electra's linguistic behaviour helps to establish her overall characterisation, though many other issues are treated along the way. Chapter 3 deals with Orestes in a similar, if somewhat more limited fashion (I focus on his language in the first half of the play): my reading argues for a new way of reading Orestes' moralising passages in the early scenes, and against the excessive distrust which these passages (especially 367-400) have so frequently been accorded.

Chapter 4 takes a somewhat different tack. In it I zoom in on two scenes of (presumed) stichomythia, 671-93 and 959-87, both notorious for problems concerning the division of lines and their attribution to speakers. My aim in the chapter is still to show how Orestes' and Electra's language in these scenes is instructive in making sense of their characters, but I also hope to demonstrate that some of the linguistic approaches I have introduced have bearing on textual-critical problems, specifically issues of speaker-line attribution (an aspect of transmission in which I believe the scanty evidence provided by the manuscript tradition to be, in these cases, more reliable than it is normally held to be).

By focusing on stichomythia, Chapter 4 is also the first in a series of chapters concerned with particular 'forms'. Chapters 5 and 6, which complete the book, continue on this path by looking at

two other forms, the messenger speech (chapter 5) and the agon (chapter 6). I hope that my analyses in these chapters can contribute to our understanding of the workings of narrative in Euripides' tragedies as well his use of rhetorical techniques, though similar issues of interpretation (especially characterisation) also remain central to my purpose.

LINGUISTIC APPROACHES

Introduction: *Bauformen* and text types

Any Greek tragedy — and a Euripidean tragedy perhaps most of all — consists of various, fairly well-circumscribed forms (rhesis, stichomythia, choral ode, *amoibaion*, monody, etc.), and each of these forms should be accorded a somewhat different approach. The methodological tools which will help us understand the internal workings of a long messenger speech are not the same as those that elucidate the finer nuances of a fast-flowing stichomythic exchange. This is one of the reasons why advances in modern linguistics may be so helpful to an analysis of Greek tragedy, since even though many admirable works of classical scholarship have explored each of the tragic subgenres in great detail,⁹ the idea that language 'works' differently in these different forms is rarely made concrete, nor those differences explored fully.

My own approach will be guided by divisions along somewhat different lines than the traditional *Bauformen* mentioned above, namely those of what are sometimes called 'text types': narrative, argument, description, dialogue, and so forth. The categories covered by these headers are not necessarily discrete, but rather frequently recurring networks of form, function and content.¹⁰ It will be clear from the terms 'narrative', 'argument' (etc.) themselves that such categories do not neatly correlate to the different building blocks of tragedy, even though some overlap may be expected (messenger speeches are mostly narrative, agon speeches are largely argumentative, and so forth).

Modern linguistic theory has become more and more attuned to differences in the workings of language in such different forms, and has developed different analytical techniques for each. Fundamental to all of this is the realisation that the sentence, traditionally the unit of analysis for linguistic study (something which is demonstrably still the case in all grammars of ancient Greek) is not a very helpful 'level' to zoom in on, or at least not unless sentences (or, better: utterances) are

⁹ Cf. the collected discussions in Jens 1971. On individual forms (and some more particular applications), cf. Schwinge 1968, Collard 1980 (stichomythia); Schadewaldt 1926, Battezzato 1995 (monologues); Erbse 1984 (prologues); de Jong 1991, Barrett 2002 (messenger speeches); Duchemin 1968, Lloyd 1992 (the agon); Popp 1968 (*amoibaion*). I have left choral odes out of consideration, cf. pp. 48-9 below.

¹⁰ For an introduction to text types (or 'modes of discourse'), cf. Smith 2003. Plato's distinction between *διήγησις* and *μῦθισις* could be seen as a rudimentary precursor to text types (though whether he meant the same as we do when we distinguish between 'narrative' and 'non-narrative' remains difficult to determine — an issue outside the scope even of this footnote).

considered part of a larger discourse which coheres in significant ways and which is situated in a particular communicative context. The text types mentioned above display telling differences in how they cohere internally (which affects how certain structural features such as particles, pronouns and tenses are used), and how they interact with their extra-linguistic context.

Accordingly, in my outline of linguistic approaches below, my initial and main focus will be on the workings of conversation, not as a collection of self-contained sentences, but as an intricate complex of interrelating utterances. From this discussion of the structure of conversation, I move on to other aspects of linguistics which demand that language be examined in its communicative context: that is to say, I will maintain a focus on the fact that tragedy features language used by particular speakers to particular addressees in particular situations. Finally, I will briefly mention some aspects which will prove important particularly for my analysis of larger stretches of narrative text and argumentative text, with special attention to the use of particles and tenses.

Conversation Analysis

In the last five decades or so, studies of naturally occurring conversation have taught us much about the fundamental workings of spoken communication between two or more interactants. Many of those studies were conducted in the name of **Conversation Analysis (CA)**.¹¹

CA sets out from the observation that conversation is characterised by **turn-taking**: one participant speaks and stops, another starts and stops again, and so forth. With two participants, this gives an A-B-A-B-A-B-etc. pattern of distribution, which is complicated in the case of three or more speakers. Speakers will normally hold the **floor**, that is, they will maintain the 'right' to speak, until they come to a point where another speaker is meant to take over. At such moments, the present speaker either **selects** the next speaker to take a turn (for instance by directing a question at a particular addressee), or he may allow anyone to **self-select**. If no one self-selects, the first speaker may opt to continue speaking and take another turn himself. Self-selection, of course, also takes place when conversation is first initiated.

CA deals extensively with many particulars of turn-taking and the selection process which are less relevant for tragic discourse: these include overlaps (remarkably rare in natural conversation), pauses, gaps, etc. (silences, however, are of great interest in the case of tragedy as well, though less so in the case of *Electra*).¹² More relevant to my purposes, however, are the notions of **adjacency pairs** and **preference organisation**.

¹¹ The foundational work is Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson 1974; Sacks' lectures on conversation have been edited and collected in Jefferson 1992. Good introductions to the field in Levinson 1983: ch. 6, Psathas 1995, Mey 2001: ch. 6, Sidnell 2010. CA has been applied to drama by e.g. Herman 1995, Bennison 1993 and Culpeper 2001: 172-80. Almost no one has used it in classical studies, excepting only (as far as I know) Minchin 2007 (on Homer) and, tangentially, Drummen 2009 (on conversational uses of ἀλλά; an article which owes more to Basset 1997 than it admits). As for tragedy: Mastrorarde's *Contact and Discontinuity* (1979) is not influenced by CA, yet concerned with similar issues.

¹² On silences in tragedy, cf. Taplin 1972, Montiglio 2000: ch. 2, Chong-Gossard 2008: ch. 3-4.

An adjacency pair is an 'automated' pattern in the structure of conversation which consists of a **first part** produced by one speaker and a **second part** produced by a different speaker. The utterance of a first part immediately creates the expectation of a second part which completes the adjacency pair. Here is a simple example of an adjacency pair from *Electra*:

ΗΛ.	τί δ' αὖ πόσιν σὸν ἄγριον εἰς ἡμᾶς ἔχεις;	QUESTION
ΚΛ.	τρόποι τοιοῦτοι. ...	ANSWER

(EL.) And why do you let your husband treat us so savagely? :: (CL.) Such are his ways. (1116-17)

Questions invite answers. By uttering a question, a speaker (Electra) not only selects another speaker (Clytemnestra; at this point the first speaker normally *must* give up the floor), but also raises the expectation that that new speaker will use his/her speaking turn to answer the question. Apart from question-answer, prototypical adjacency pairs include greeting-greeting, offer-acceptance, apology-minimisation, etc. More complex patterns have also been identified, such as the adjacency triple complaint-apology-forgiveness.¹³

The expectation raised by a first part is powerful: once an adjacency pair is initiated, a second part is normally expected, even if it takes a while to arrive; otherwise at least an account for the absence of a second part is required. Such delays and abortions are fairly common, and thus strict 'adjacency' is not a condition for the fulfilment of the expectation. Rather, a first part gives rise to 'conditional relevance': if some other move occurs instead of the required second part, it will be interpreted where possible as some preliminary to the doing of the second part; the relevance of the overarching adjacency pair remains in place until its first part is attended to or explicitly aborted. An example of delayed fulfilment of an adjacency pair in *Electra* is found a few lines down from the example cited above:

ΗΛ.	ἤκουσας, οἶμαι, τῶν ἐμῶν λοχευμάτων τούτων ὑπερ μοι θῦσον (οὐ γὰρ οἶδ' ἐγώ) δεκάτη σελήνη παιδὸς ὡς νομίζεται τρίβων γὰρ οὐκ εἶμ', ἄτοκος οὔσ' ἐν τῷ πάρος.	}	REQUEST
ΚΛ.	ἄλλης τόδ' ἔργον, ἢ σ' ἔλυσεν ἐκ τόκων.		
ΗΛ.	αὐτὴ ἴλοχευον κᾶτεκον μόνη βρέφος.		ANSWER 1
ΚΛ.	οὕτως ἀγείτων οἶκος ἴδρυται φίλων;		QUESTION 2
ΗΛ.	πένητας οὐδεὶς βούλεται κτᾶσθαι φίλους.		ANSWER 2
ΚΛ.	ἀλλ' εἶμι, παιδὸς ἀριθμὸν ὡς τελεσφόρον θύσω θεοῖσι. ... ¹⁵		ACCEPTANCE

¹³ Cf. Edmondson 1981, Culpeper 2001: 152-3.

¹⁴ Readers may object that Clytemnestra's first insertion is not a question: this is true in the grammatical sense, but I nonetheless think that her utterance is meant to elicit information from Electra and thus 'functions' (at least in part) as a question. For such 'indirect speech acts', cf. pp. 19-20 below.

¹⁵ For the text (many editors transpose 1107-8 after 1131), cf. p. 114, n. 168.

(El.) You have heard, I think, that I have given birth? Please make the customary tenth-night sacrifice for me: I do not know how to myself, as I am inexperienced and was childless until now. :: (Cl.) This is the duty of someone else, the woman who delivered your child! :: (El.) I was my own midwife, and bore the child on my own. :: (Cl.) Is your house so bereft of friendly neighbours? :: (El.) No one wants to acquire poor friends. (Cl.) Well then, I will go and sacrifice to the gods for the child's completed term. (1124-32)

Clytemnestra does not immediately accede to Electra's request, but rather uses two **insertion sequences** to sort out preliminary issues. The first part of the original adjacency pair (the request) retains its conditional relevance over the stretch of intervening question-answer sequences, which, because they intervene before the second part of the original pair, will be taken as relevant somehow to the fulfilment of that pair. In other words, the structure steers interpretation of Clytemnestra's questions as preliminaries she wants dealt with before making a decision about Electra's request. That she is not entirely satisfied with Electra's answers is clear from her ἀλλ(α) in 1132, which suggests that Clytemnestra breaks off the series of questions (implying that a sufficient answer has not been provided) and instead reverts to the original issue of the request.

More than one possible type of second part can complete a first part. For example, answers are not the only possible responses elicited by questions: a second speaker may equally well refuse to provide an answer, protest his/her ignorance, etc. What CA has shown convincingly, however, is that not all second parts are equal. There is a ranking, a **preference organisation**, operating over the alternative responses to first parts, such that there is at least one **preferred** and one **dispreferred** category of response. These notions do not necessarily equate to psychological ones (in that they do not refer to speakers' and hearers' personal preferences), but are rather structural features which suggest that one type of response (the dispreferred one) is more marked and significant. Dispreferred responses will usually be performed with more linguistic complexity, accompanied by hesitations, hedges, explanations, etc.:

Speaker A: Can you help me carry this box?	REQUEST
Speaker B: <u>Well</u> , <u>ehm</u> , I'm not supposed to do heavy lifting.	REFUSAL

Some general patterns of preferred and dispreferred responses are laid out in the table below. It is not certain that these patterns are uniformly applicable to tragic dialogue (the preferred response in one culture might be the dispreferred one in another); yet for the first four at least, I would contend that these describe patterns existing in Greek tragic discourse.

<i>FIRST PART</i>	<i>SECOND PART</i>	
	<i>Preferred</i>	<i>Dispreferred</i>
request	acceptance	refusal
offer/invitation/proposal	acceptance	refusal
assessment	agreement	disagreement
question	expected answer	unexpected answer, non-answer
blame	denial ¹⁶	admission

Figure 2: Preferred and dispreferred second parts (following Levinson 1983: 336)

The use of insertion sequences and dispreferred responses may reveal much about speakers' attitudes and behaviour in a particular conversation:¹⁷ they can be a sign that communication between interactants is not proceeding fluently, and I will argue in chapters to follow that such conversational features underline Electra's isolation and lack of connection to her adoptive surroundings in the play.

Moreover, the distribution of turns and the selection of speakers can reveal much about differing levels of power and involvement. Observing which speakers tend to initiate conversational sequences, self-select, 'hog' the floor, etc., can suggest which characters are dominating a certain scene, functioning as instigators, etc. (differences of gender also play a role here, cf. pp. 26-8 below). Related to this is a final notion which has been extensively studied in CA, namely that of **topic-management**: as well as exploring certain devices that speakers may use to introduce, maintain or change a discourse topic (what a conversation is 'about'), CA has shown that topic-management is related to power-distribution, as well as speakers' attitudes, differing degrees of engagement with the interaction, etc.¹⁸ Topic-management, too, will play a part in my analysis of the language of *Electra*'s characters below.

Pragmatics

In my treatment of the structural mechanics of the turn-taking system above, I used such terms as 'question', 'greeting', 'request', 'complaint', as if they were self-evident categories that require no further comment. The question how certain utterances come to express these particular communicative intentions and effects, in other words the relationship between the form of

¹⁶ The fact that denials are the 'preferred' (=unmarked) response to expressions of blame (for modern English, this is borne out by empirical research: cf. Atkinson & Drew 1979: 80; other languages may behave differently) makes it clear that preference organisation cannot be equated with the speakers' desires, personal preferences, etc.

¹⁷ For a suggestive discussion of the use of conversational features in characterisation, cf. Culpeper 2001: 172-80.

¹⁸ Cf. Culpeper 2001: 174, who refers to ample empirical support for these claims.

utterances and their meaning, was left unanalysed. Yet such issues are all but simple. Meaning as construed by participants in communication is not meaning in the abstract: that is to say, the meaning that an utterance has in a particular interaction is not simply a sum of the meanings of the words that make up that utterance, organised by some syntactical rules. Those constituent words, in fact, are often no more than 'cues' for the interactants to engage in all kinds of interpretative processes, eventually yielding a meaning which is much richer and much more complex than what is expressed by the linguistic tokens uttered.¹⁹ Consider the following lines from the parodos of *Electra*:

ΧΟ. (...) νῦν τριταί-
 αν καρύσσουσιν θυσίαν.
 Ἀργεῖοι, πᾶσαι δὲ παρ' Ἡ-
 ραν μέλλουσιν παρθενικαὶ στείχειν.
 ΗΛ. οὐκ ἐπ' ἀγλαΐαις, φίλαι,
 θυμὸν οὐδ' ἐπὶ χρυσείοις
 ὄρμαις ἐκπεπόταμαι.
 τάλαιν', οὐδ' ἰστᾶσα χοροῦς
 Ἀργείαις ἅμα νύμφαις
 εἰλικτὸν κρούσω πόδ' ἐμόν.

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(Ch.) The Argives are proclaiming a sacrifice two days from now, and the maidens are all going to go in procession to Hera. :: (El.) Not for fineries, my friends, nor for golden necklaces has my heart taken flight, me wretched one, nor will I stamp my whirling foot setting dances together with the brides of Argos. (171-9)

The propositional content of the Chorus and Electra's utterances might be paraphrased as follows: "All the virginal maidens are going to the festival of Hera", and "I have no desire for fineries or jewellery and I am not going to dance". But with this description of 'literal meanings',²⁰ we have in no way described what their utterances actually mean in the context of their interaction. The Chorus are *inviting* Electra to come along to the festival (an inference Electra has to draw, since the Chorus never explicitly say something along the lines of "We invite you"). Electra's response, in turn, should be seen as a rejection of the Chorus' invitation, even though she never explicitly says so.²¹

Meaning in communication thus depends on a variety factors: although it is somehow based upon the propositional content of utterances (the Chorus will not, for instance, normally infer from

¹⁹ This notion, that of 'linguistic underdeterminacy', is the driving force behind a massive body of linguistic research, including all work in pragmatics. For excellent discussion of the concept, cf. Carston 2002: ch. 1.

²⁰ I use scare quotes around the word 'literal' deliberately: it is a highly problematic term. Cf. e.g. Recanati 2004.

²¹ There is, in fact, a lot more inferencing and processing going on in the interpretation of these utterances than hinted at here. Electra and the audience must infer, for example, that πᾶσαι παρθενικαὶ refers to all the maidens *in Argos* (rather than in Sparta, Troy, the whole world, etc.), that παρ' Ἡρᾶν refers to the previously mentioned festival/sacrifice (the θυσία mentioned one line above, 173), that στείχειν involves the particular kind of 'going' that maidens do at the occasion of festivals, etc. etc. All this information requires interpretative work beyond what can be gathered from the words of the sentence only, depends in other words on 'pragmatic intrusion' into the 'truth-conditional' meaning of the utterance (terms which will become clear below).

Electra's words that she likes cheese), that content does not determine it fully; the 'end product' is rather the result of a complex process of inferences, assumptions, knowledge, desires, etc. of the participants of the interaction, and depends greatly on the linguistic and extra-linguistic context of that interaction. Nor is such meaning necessarily univocal: different people can understand the same utterance in different ways (and the same person can understand a single utterance in more ways than one); miscommunication and non-communication occur alongside successful interaction (as I will argue in chapter 2, the Chorus' word *παρθενικαί* is suggestive of why communication between them and Electra is not very effective).

The branch of linguistics that deals with meaning *in communication* (or 'in use', 'in context', etc.) is known as **pragmatics**. It is, notoriously, not a well-delineated discipline: it has been aptly described as a 'wastebasket', which has come to contain all the aspects of language study which do not fit into the traditional fields of semantics and syntax — which is to say all those aspects which are not easily described by the formal systems of analysis (akin to logic and mathematics) which are the tools of most semanticists and syntacticians. But linguists do not agree on what exactly is in the wastebasket:²² depending on one's definition, pragmatics studies either only a few fairly well-defined topics (deixis, reference, speech acts, inference and implicature, and presupposition) or a much wider range of issues (encompassing all the approaches discussed in this chapter, including conversation analysis and sociolinguistics).²³ At the same time, recent trends in semantics and syntax have aimed at reclaiming certain topics from what is normally considered the purview of pragmatics (or, in some cases, denying that they should be part of linguistic enquiry at all), so that defining what counts as what is harder than ever.

Still, some parts of this fluctuating territory are stable and fundamental, and they include the two strands of exploration which will be most relevant to my analysis of *Electra*. Not by coincidence, these two strands can be traced back to the 'founding fathers' (it is fair to call them that) of pragmatics: Austin and Searle (on speech acts), and Grice (on meaning).²⁴

²² There is a rough distinction between a (narrower) Anglo-American conception of the field and a (wider) continental European one. Cf. Mey 2001: 6-10 or Huang 2007: 4-5 for a discussion of problems in delimiting the use of the term. Mey's book is an especially readable introduction to the discipline, Huang's a slightly more formal one, Yule 1996 is a decent introduction on a smaller scale. Levinson's classic textbook (1983) is out of date in some respects but remains one of the finest treatments of any field of linguistics, and it contains an extensive discussion of problems of definition (pp. 5-35; Levinson fits in the Anglo-American tradition). For an introduction to the use of pragmatics in the study of Ancient Greek language, cf. Bakker 2010.

²³ I am personally sympathetic to a 'wide tent' approach to pragmatics: my (sub)section divisions should accordingly not be taken to express a theoretical persuasion.

²⁴ The key, foundational publications by these three have been usefully reprinted together in Martinich 2010: part II.

Speech Acts

Speech act theory, simply put, helps us understand what speakers *do* with utterances: the Chorus *invites* Electra, Electra *rejects* the invitation. The notion that people do anything at all with their words was, for a long time, not recognised in (or at least not central to) linguistic theory: the traditional focus of language philosophers was the declarative sentence, and the conditions under which such sentences were true or false (their 'truth-conditional meaning'): in this tradition there was a distrust for ordinary, everyday language use, which was considered at best inaccurate, at worst positively meaningless.

The work of J.L. Austin was instrumental in moving away from the strictures of such truth-conditional analysis. In a series of lectures published posthumously as *How To Do Things With Words* (1962), Austin pointed to such sentences as "I declare war on Zanzibar" and "I dub thee Sir Walter", and argued that such utterances have a force, changing the world in substantial ways, rather than a truth-conditional meaning. The utterances *do* rather than describe something: the saying of the sentence itself results in a state of war being in effect, and in Walter having the title. Austin described utterances such as the two above as **performatives**, which he contrasted, initially, with constatives (assertions, statements, i.e. utterances that describe states of affairs). He went on to argue that all utterances should in fact be seen as some kind of performative, in the sense that they all have one force or another: they are used to make requests, give orders, place bets, ask questions, etc. Even apparent constatives are best treated as 'doing' something, namely asserting, or stating.

Austin and other speech-act theorists distinguish between three different levels at which utterances are acts: the locutionary act (the act of saying the utterance), the illocutionary act (the act performed by making the utterance, such as requesting, stating, warning, etc.), and the perlocutionary act or effect (the bringing about of certain effects by means of the utterance). Unsurprisingly, speech act theory has focused on illocutionary force, in other words what utterances 'count as' (or even: 'are intended as'): their function in communication.²⁵

Speech act theory replaces truth conditions with certain conditions of appropriateness which must obtain before an utterance can be said to 'count as' an example of a speech act with a certain illocutionary force. In order for the performative "I dub thee..." to actually be successful at making Walter a Sir, the speaker has to be in a position of sufficient authority to do so. If such **felicity conditions** are not met, the utterance **misfires**. Misfiring can also happen at the other end: a speech act of betting, for example, is not really felicitous until the addressee responds with "You're on" (or a similar expression) to signify his 'uptake' of the utterance as a bet.

²⁵ It is worth noting that in studying the pragmatics of Ancient Greek we have to rely heavily on *perlocutionary* effects (what kind of reactions does a certain speech act elicit?) in determining how certain utterances function in terms of their illocutionary force.

Various classifications of speech act types have been proposed. The most influential taxonomy is that of J.R. Searle, a student of Austin and the towering figure of speech act theory.²⁶ His classification (1969, revised in 1979) depends on what kind of illocutionary point is expressed by an utterance, and how the speech act relates to the world (the 'direction of fit'). It is summarised in the table below:

<i>Speech act type</i>	<i>Direction of fit</i>	<i>S = speaker; X = state of affairs</i>	<i>Examples of speech acts</i>	<i>Example</i>
Representatives (or Assertives)	make words fit the world	S believes X	assertions, statements, conclusions, descriptions	"The earth is flat."
Expressives	make words fit the world	S feels (etc.) X	expressions of pleasure, pain, (dis)likes, joy, sorrow	"Congratulations!"
Directives	make the world fit words	S wants X	commands, requests, suggestions, questions	"Go away!"
Commissives	make the world fit words	S intends X	promises, threats, refusals, pledges	"I'll be back tomorrow."
Declarations	words change the world	S causes X	performatives	"You're fired."

Figure 3: Speech act types (following Searle 1979)

This classification already makes clear that there is no one-to-one fit between different speech act types and the syntactic structure and/or propositional content of utterances. In other words, though there are ways of making the illocutionary force of an utterance explicit, for example by using a phrase like "I promise [to be back tomorrow]", no such indication is required in order for an utterance to count as a certain type of speech act. An utterance like "Congratulations!", in fact, seems to have little syntactic structure or propositional content at all. More importantly, there is no necessary correlation between the three different syntactic sentence types that are present in most languages (declarative, interrogative, and imperative) and what speakers do with sentences of those types. To give two of the most frequently cited examples, both of the sentences below would normally function as requests:

Can you pass the salt?

Interrogative sentence type

[Said to someone sitting by an open window:] It's cold in here.

Declarative sentence type

²⁶ Other taxonomies have been proposed by e.g. Bach & Harnish 1979.

Searle called utterances like these, that is to say utterances that do not express their illocutionary force by 'wearing it on their sleeve', **indirect speech acts**. It should be noted straight away that this distinction between direct and indirect speech acts has been called into question, generally for good reasons.²⁷ Yet, even if we question the validity of the concept of indirect speech acts, still a more general notion of indirectness has proven to be incredibly helpful to linguists in making sense of a whole range of other issues, such as metaphorical language, irony, politeness (see below), and so forth; we will see shortly how indirectness can be explained in terms of Gricean pragmatics.

Looking again at the example from *Electra* given above, speech act theory as described thus far proves quite helpful in analysing what is going on between Electra and the Chorus. The Chorus' statement is an indirect speech act inviting Electra to the festival, and Electra similarly responds with an indirect speech act turning the Chorus down. The notion of felicity conditions is useful in determining why communication between them appears to be flawed: one of the conditions for inviting someone to something would normally be that the invitee is able and allowed to attend the occasion: as we will see in chapter 2, it appears that Electra and Chorus are not exactly in agreement on whether these conditions are really met: for Electra, who has a fundamentally different view of the state of things, the Chorus' invitation 'misfires' (but then, so too does Electra's response: more about this in chapter 2).

Left unanswered, however, is the question how Electra (and the audience) can know that the Chorus' statement is really an invitation: how do we assess what is really meant beyond bare propositional meaning? To answer these questions, I now turn to the other founding father of pragmatics mentioned above, the British language philosopher H.P. Grice.

(Neo-)Gricean theories of meaning

Grice's crucial suggestion, expounded in lectures later published as 'Logic and Conversation' (1975),²⁸ is deceptively simple: human conversation is by nature a *cooperative* enterprise. He argued that conversation is guided by certain unwritten and unspoken rules, which all participants in an interaction expect all others to follow. These rules are part of a general **cooperative principle**, which Grice formulated as the following prescription for speakers:

Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged. (Grice 1975: 45)

This principle subsumes several more specific **maxims** of conversation: a maxim of **quantity** (make your contribution no more and no less informative than required), **quality** (try to make your

²⁷ Cf. Levinson 1983: 263-76 (with compelling arguments against what he calls the 'literal force hypothesis'), Huang 2007: 111. Another problem is that some 'indirect' speech acts become conventionalised to the extent that they seem to 'wear their illocutionary force on their sleeve' after all: the 'normal' interpretation for a question beginning with "Could you ...?" is as a request.

²⁸ Grice followed up on his theory in 1978, 1981 and 1989

contribution one that is true), **relation** (be relevant) and **manner** (be perspicuous, avoid obscurity and ambiguity).

According to Grice, a speaker in a conversation may normally be expected to observe the overall cooperative principle: he will therefore normally observe the maxims. Yet speakers frequently deliberately fail to comply with the rules, blatantly flouting one or more of the maxims. In such a case, the addressee will attempt to reconcile this exploitation of a maxim with his expectation that the speaker is in compliance with the cooperative principle, by trying to draw meaning out of the utterance that *does* suggest that the speaker is cooperating with the principle. In this way, such an utterance will give rise to what Grice called a **conversational implicature**. Grice offers many examples of such conversational implicatures, such as the following two where the maxims of quantity and relation, respectively, are exploited:

A is writing a testimonial about a pupil who is a candidate for a philosophy job, and his letter reads as follows: 'Dear Sir, Mr. X's command of English is excellent, and his attendance at tutorials has been regular. Yours, etc.' (Gloss: A cannot be opting out [of the cooperative principle], since if he wished to be uncooperative, why write at all? He cannot be unable, through ignorance, to say more, since the man is his pupil; moreover, he knows that more information than this is wanted. He must, therefore, be wishing to impart information that he is reluctant to write down. This supposition is tenable only on the assumption that he thinks Mr. X is no good at philosophy. This, then, is what he is implicating.) (1975: 52)

At a genteel tea party, A says *Mrs. X is an old bag*. There is a moment of appalled silence, and then B says *The weather has been quite delightful this summer, hasn't it?* B has blatantly refused to make what HE says relevant to A's preceding remark. He thereby implicates that A's remark should not be discussed and, perhaps more specifically, that A has committed a social gaffe. (1975: 54)

If we now look again at our earlier example from *Electra*, it is possible to explain how the Chorus' invitation works as a conversational implicature, using a similar gloss:

The Chorus has said that all the maidens are going to the festival, which as a mere informative statement seems not to conform to the maxims of quantity (they are saying more than Electra needs to know) and relation (what's it to Electra?). But there is no reason to suppose that they are violating these maxims. They must, then, be trying to impart more than what they have literally said, a supposition which is tenable on the assumption that they want Electra to join them. This, then, is what they must be implicating.

Using the cooperative principle and the theory of conversational implicatures, Grice's theory thus begins to allow us to explain how meaning can be inferred beyond that of (or replacing that of) the bare propositional content of an utterance, in other words to understand how more is communicated than what is explicitly said. This, in turn, helps in explaining a whole host of 'indirect'

uses of language, including not only indirect speech acts (which get their 'true' illocutionary force as an implicature) but also such literary techniques such as irony, metaphor, tautology, etc.²⁹

It is, then, unsurprising that such a powerful model has had a profound and lasting impact on pragmatic theory, to the extent that Grice's writings have rightly been claimed to form the basis of "virtually all current work in linguistic pragmatics" (Chierchia & McConnell-Ginet 2000: 239). Much of this 'Neo-Gricean' work has been concerned with reinterpreting, revising or reconstructing the cooperative principle and its constituent maxims: all of those maxims, and the various sub-maxims that Grice proposed, have been subjected to intense scrutiny and debate. Yet the whole body of work suffers from some of the same flaws that can be imputed to Grice's original proposals:

- Some of Grice's postulates (and those of many Neo-Griceans) do not appear to hold up in different cultural settings, and the extent to which any of them are 'universal' has thus been questioned.³⁰
- A more fundamental theoretical problem lies in the description of conversation as by nature and universally *cooperative*: in certain situations (often situations of conflict), conversation is clearly neither cooperative nor expected to be so.³¹ Greek tragedy, in fact, very often features contexts where interactants explicitly do not expect their interlocutors to be truthful, informative, etc. Rather, as Leezenberg has pointed out:

tragic utterances are driven by something like a linguistic habitus, that is, by an expected way of speaking and acting that is differentiated according to age, gender, and social status, rather than by the conscious deliberation of an autonomous and rational speaker. One cannot speak here of any neutral or 'normal' form of conversation that is violated or exploited, but rather of a socially constituted and differentiated power to speak in specific ways, a power which moreover is always open to negotiation and challenge. (2005: 200-1)

- On a more practical level, the Gricean model does not give an explicit account of *how* conversational implicatures are derived (or how some are, but others are not). On the speaker's side of things, it is left unexplained why a speaker would produce utterances that flout maxims in the first place (if one intends to be cooperative anyway, why not simply obey all the maxims?)

What we need, then, is a theory which still allows us to maintain a saying/implicating distinction, in other words to understand how more can be communicated than is said, without promoting

²⁹ Irony/sarcasm: violation of the maxim of quality (e.g. "Medea treated her children *wonderfully!*" — not true), therefore something else must be implicated (Medea was very awful to them). Metaphor: violations of all kinds of maxims (quantity, relation), leading to reinterpretation. Tautology: violation of the maxim of quantity (e.g. "War is war." — says nothing that is informative), again leading to an implicature (cf. p. 79, n. 53 and p. 83, n. 61 for the implicatures of tautologies).

³⁰ Cf. Huang 2007: 34-5 with n. 10 for discussion.

³¹ Cf. Mey 2001: 76, with further references.

cooperation to an inviolable rule of linguistic behaviour, and that allows us to understand why speakers produce utterances in certain forms and hearers derive certain inferences from them as opposed to others. The best and most influential attempt at such a theory has become known as **relevance theory**.³²

Relevance theory is a theory not just of communication, but of human cognition in general. It claims that human cognition tends to seek optimal **relevance**, where relevance is defined in a technical sense as a balance between the processing effort required to interpret a stimulus (an input) and the amount of cognitive effects achieved ('meaning', for Sperber and Wilson, is a change in a person's 'cognitive environment'): the greater the effort, the lower the relevance; the greater the cognitive effects, the greater the relevance.

Applied to communication, relevance theory proposes that both the production and the interpretation of utterances are governed by a single **principle of relevance** (which is reminiscent of Grice's maxim of relevance, but is seen to be an overarching law of all cognition, rather than a principle with various constituent maxims). Sperber and Wilson formulate their principle as follows:

Every ostensive stimulus conveys a presumption of its own optimal relevance. (Wilson & Sperber 2004: 612)

What this means is that every communicative utterance will be presumed to be relevant enough to be worth the audience's processing effort, and that it is the most relevant one compatible with the communicator's abilities and preferences (which need not include being cooperative, informative, etc.). In other words, a speaker will produce an utterance as relevant as he is willing and able to produce, and the addressee will try to derive as much relevance from that utterance as he can.

Thus, this process of deriving meaning from an utterance is geared towards deriving as much meaning from it as possible while exerting as little processing effort as possible (hence an addressee will not go on deriving unlimited numbers of implicatures). The processing effort decodes the propositional meaning of an utterance and also tackles all the necessary pragmatic inferences:

There may be ambiguities and referential ambivalences to resolve, ellipses to interpret, and other underdeterminacies of explicit content to deal with. There may be implicatures to identify, illocutionary indeterminacies to resolve, metaphors and ironies to interpret. All this requires an appropriate set of contextual assumptions, which the hearer must also supply. (Wilson & Sperber 2004: 613)

The interpretation arrived at may include various implicatures of varying strength (stronger ones that are vital to satisfy the expectation of relevance, and weaker ones that help with satisfying that expectation, but are not essential because the utterance suggests a range of similar possible

³² The theory originates in the 1986 work of Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson, who updated it in 1995, 2002, Wilson & Sperber 2004. It has been usefully elaborated by Carston (Carston & Uchida 1998, Carston 2002).

implicatures, any one of which would do). The co-occurrence of various weaker implicatures allows for ambiguity.

Looking at the Chorus' invitation to Electra one final time, we might imagine Electra's (and the audience's) processing of their utterance along the following lines (not intended as a chronological sequence, but as an ongoing process with multiple aspects operating in parallel):

- Decoding the linguistic tokens of the utterance, and performing disambiguation and reference resolution so that the proposition derived is maximally relevant: *πᾶσαι ... αἱ παρθενικαί* refers to all Argive maidens; *παρ' Ἡραν* to the festival just mentioned, *στείχειν* to a procession, etc. etc. (cf. n. 21 above);
- Supplying various contextual assumptions about the situation (including whether or not the Chorus might intend merely to inform Electra about the festival happening, whether it is the kind of festival they might think Electra should attend, etc.);
- Constructing an appropriate hypothesis about the intended meaning/force of the utterance (which will be considered optimally relevant as an invitation, as lesser interpretations do not sufficiently change Electra's cognitive environment to be worth the processing effort).

Finally, after this discussion, I should briefly point out how I believe Gricean pragmatics, particularly its most developed scion relevance theory, may prove helpful in my reading of *Electra*. First, as a way of looking at meaning in communication, such theories of inference provide us with ways of explaining how speakers may mean more and different things than what they 'literally' say, while allowing (in the case of relevance theory at least) for ambiguity, multiple meanings, and communicative misfires. At numerous points in the following pages, I hope to make clear how such theories of inference may make clear what is going on in the communication between characters (and between Euripides and his audience).³³

Relevance theory in particular also suggests something else, namely that we should pay attention to every word on the page. Every word a character utters demands that other characters perform the required processing effort to make some sense of it, and we are to assume that every utterance, and every part of an utterance, is significant for the message that a speaker wants to convey (as well as for the 'message' that Euripides is conveying to us, sometimes even more so). In a way, relevance theory thus confirms that in order for us to approach questions of how an original audience member might have reacted to a play, close textual reading is an absolute minimum requirement.

³³ Cf. e.g. pp. 58, 60 n. 41, 71 n. 19, 79 n. 53.

Sociolinguistics

The pragmatic theories described above focus on what speakers *do* with utterances, and how addressees make sense of them given the fact that the sentence form and propositional content of most utterances is insufficient or even irrelevant to what is really meant. But thus far we have treated speakers and addressees themselves mostly as abstractions: in reality, of course, the speech of participants in conversation is determined in part by all kinds of *social* factors, such as status, race, gender, age, religion, cultural norms of social behaviour, etc. Each of these social determinants brings with it a complex of rights, responsibilities and taboos with regard to speech. If we hear a school pupil on his first day greet his teacher with “What’ up, Jill?”, we are surprised not because the ‘meaning’ of that utterance is hard to work out or because a greeting is an unsuitable kind of utterance for the occasion, but because we expect speech between school pupils and teachers to be regulated by certain social pressures which this particular student appears not to heed.

Though it may easily be subsumed under the broad header of pragmatics (and often is),³⁴ the branch of linguistics that studies the effects of such societal aspects on language use is widely known as **sociolinguistics**. Despite the inherent difficulties in studying ancient Greek through this lens (lack of native speakers, meagre evidence for the social roles of some groups, such as women and slaves), there has been a steady flow of work in this area in the past twenty years, with Eleanor Dickey’s work on forms of address (1995, 1996) and Andreas Willi’s book on sociolinguistic variation in Aristophanes (2003) as the best-known and most important examples. Including these offerings, most work has centred on the effects of gender (especially female gender) on language use,³⁵ while some work has also begun to emerge in the study of politeness phenomena, a burgeoning sub-field of sociolinguistics.³⁶ These two aspects will prove most important for my discussion of *Electra* as well (though cf. p. 15 above for the relation between power and conversational behaviour, and pp. 38-40 below on social aspects of gnomic utterances), and I will briefly discuss the state of research in both of them more fully.³⁷

³⁴ Cf. p. 17 (with n. 22) above.

³⁵ Female (and male) speech in Greek: Alexiou 1974, Gilleland 1980, Bain 1984, Dickey 1995, McClure 1995, Sommerstein 1995, Dickey 1996, McClure 1999, McClure & Lardinois 2001, Mossman 2001, Willi 2003, Duhoux 2004, Mossman 2005, Minchin 2007: part II, Chong-Gossard 2008.

³⁶ Politeness: Brown 2003, Willi 2003, Lloyd 2004, Lloyd 2005, Brown 2006, Lloyd 2006, Minchin 2007, Scodel 2008, Lloyd 2009, all with regard to Greek; cf. for Latin e.g. Hall 2009. Lloyd’s works on tragedy (2005, 2006, 2009) have been especially helpful, though I will register below some issues with the Brown & Levinson model which he uses unquestioningly.

³⁷ Gender and politeness, incidentally, are increasingly interrelated fields in linguistics: a small library could be filled with books on how gender influences linguistic politeness (cf. for an overview Mills 2003).

Gender

“The perception that women use different speech from men, and employ it differently, is much older than the science of linguistics”, notes Mossman (2001: 374). This is very true, but the science of linguistics has done much to match that perception with an understanding of *how* exactly women’s speech is different from men’s, and *how* they employ it differently. The bibliography on language and gender (in modern languages) is terrifyingly vast,³⁸ and differences between male and female speech have been mapped to a great level of detail, their interpretation relentlessly and furiously fought over (two factions dominate: the explicitly feminist ‘theory of deficit/dominance’ and a more benign ‘theory of difference’).

As for the application of such research to Greek literature, this is by no means a straightforward exercise: complications include the fact that women are given a prominent voice only in a few genres of Greek literature (tragedy and comedy above all others), and that the works in which we find them were mostly written *by* and *for* men. Women themselves, of course, had a largely marginal role in Greek society.³⁹ Thus, even if we find differences between male and female speech, it is probable, as Adams put it for Latin, that we are dealing with “popular stereotypes of female behaviour rather than ... objective observations” (1984: 43). Still, much fruitful work has been done on gender-specific language in Greek literature,⁴⁰ and there are more insights to be gained.

The two-part question above (“how women’s speech is different ... how they employ it differently”) is an indication of how the issue of women’s speech in Greek tragedy might be examined at two different levels: what we might call a micro- and a macro-level. At the micro-level, we might look at what women ‘sounded like’, that is to say look at points of (quantifiable) linguistic detail, such as the use of certain interjections, particles,⁴¹ syntactical constructions,⁴² word order, and so forth. Laura McClure has shown (1995), for example, that certain expressions are exclusive or preferential to either male or female speakers in Euripides — these include interjections such as οἷ γῶ (female exclusive), ἐῖ ἔ (female preferential) and εἶα (male preferential), certain forms of address

³⁸ The modern debate begins with Jespersen 1922: 237-54; recent influential contributors are, among many others, Lakoff (e.g. 1975), Tannen (e.g. 1993, 1996), Cameron (e.g. 2003) and Coates (e.g. 2004). Some recent introductory textbooks are Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 2003 and Julé 2008. Numerous bibliographies and other resources may be found online, for example through <http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/organisations/igala/Index.html>.

³⁹ This is a topic too complex and vast to go into in detail, though it must be inextricably linked to a sociolinguistic enquiry into female and male speech (in this case more than usual, the ‘socio-’ part of ‘sociolinguistic’ constitutes a can of worms). For a concise summary with further bibliography, cf. McClure 1999: 19-24. On the role of women in tragedy, foundational work may be found in various chapters of Zeitlin 1996; for a brief introduction, cf. Mossman 2005.

⁴⁰ Cf. n. 35 above.

⁴¹ Denniston (*GP* lxxiii) suggested that women were perhaps “peculiarly addicted to the use of particles, just as women to-day are fond of underlining words in their letters”. The suggestion (not the sentiment) is to some extent confirmed for Aristophanes by Willi 2003: 182-4.

⁴² Gildersleeve suggested in a review that irregular syntax in the speech of Homeric women was “intended to be feminine syntax” (1907: 208).

and certain kinds of oaths, etc. Still, McClure's research at this level has not revealed a great many differences, and even if we assume that she has not exhausted all the features we might find, the stylised nature of tragic language makes it likely that what gains can be made in this area will be on the margins at best.⁴³

At the macro-level, we may ask broader questions: what do women talk about? What kind of rhetorical techniques do they use? What kind of speech activity are they likely to perform? McClure, again, has contributed much to our understanding of these aspect of female speech with her book *Spoken Like a Woman* (1999), where she deals with 'verbal genres' such as lamentation, gossip and sexual persuasion. Mossman's article cited above (2001) applies similar methods to the *Electra*, particularly to the characters of Electra and Clytemnestra. The gendered use of language in Euripidean song (and its 'non-use' in silences) have also been examined in a recent book by Chong-Gossard (2008). All of these works will inform my analysis of Electra's language (chapter 2) in particular.

Though it is useful to keep in mind that gender-variations occur in these different ways (both in form and in content), it may be superfluous to point out that no clear dividing line between my two levels can or should be drawn — in fact, I will argue in chapter 4 that the whole range of issues involved needs to be considered in practicing textual criticism. Moreover, a crucial aspect of what modern research into gender-conditioned language has taught us falls somewhat outside the scope of my two levels: women and men 'sound' differently and use language differently depending on whether they are in **single-sex** or **mixed groups**.⁴⁴ Thus, such differences as there are between male and female talk cannot be analysed without looking at contextual setting: female linguistic behaviour in all-female contexts differs from their behaviour in mixed groups, as well as from male behaviour in all-male groups, and so forth. Very significant as well are interruptions, either into a gender-exclusive conversation by someone of the other gender, or within mixed-gender interactions (where behaviour such as 'grabbing the floor' and 'hogging the floor' may reflect dominance).

This latter realisation (that the make-up of the group matters), now well established in modern research, is slowly making its way into classical studies as well.⁴⁵ I hope to show that it is highly significant in the case of Euripidean tragedy, where real differences can be demonstrated between

⁴³ Cf. Bain 1984: 27. More research may yield unexpected findings, and areas such as particle usage remain un(der)explored. Matters are different in (Aristophanic) comedy, where Willi has isolated a significant number of female-preferential features (2003: 176-92, 193), many of which may make female speakers appear more polite than male speakers (cf. n. 37 above). The features he has identified for Aristophanes do not appear to show the same distributional variations in Euripidean tragedy (if they occur at all), though I have been unable to explore this in as much detail as would be needed for firmer conclusions.

⁴⁴ The principle was first explored by, among others, Kramer 1975 and West 1979; it is further developed in various studies in Tannen 1993 and in Coates 1996.

⁴⁵ The point is fundamental to Mossman 2001; it is also made, if in different terms ('space') and without the same grounding in current linguistic enquiry, by Chong-Gossard 2008: 6-21.

women's linguistic behaviour in female-only situations and in mixed groups, and where 'interruptions'⁴⁶ are significant as well. A neat example of this can be found in our play: immediately after the *parodos*, Electra (who up to this point was onstage only with the female chorus, or so she believed) is suddenly confronted by two men:

οἴμοι· γυναῖκες, ἐξέβην θρηνημάτων.
ξένοι τινές παρ' οἶκον οἶδ' ἐφροστίους
εὐνάς ἔχοντες ἐξανίστανται λόχου·

Oh no! Women, I have left my lamentations: some strangers here, lying in wait at the altar by the house, are coming out of their ambush. (215-17)

Electra's first line virtually symbolises the issue: Electra, up to this point in the company of only women (γυναῖκες is a significant form of address here), has to abandon her typically female linguistic behaviour (θρηνημάτων, lamentation is one of McClure's 'verbal genres') as the female-exclusive setting is interrupted by male intrusion (ξένοι τινές).

I hope to make clear in chapter 2 that this is only one of many points in the play where Electra's language is fundamentally determined by her gender, and that her linguistic behaviour varies depending on whether men are present. In chapter 4 I will revisit the issue of gender-specific language in the context of some moments of contested speaker-line attribution in the play.

Politeness and power

Attention to linguistic politeness phenomena had long been of a purely prescriptive nature (that is, manuals on how to speak politely), until sociological and anthropological interest in the topic seeped into linguistic approaches in the 1970s. Since then, politeness research (both linguistic and otherwise) has undergone an incredible expansion, and it continues to grow at breathtaking pace.⁴⁷ Partly as a result, politeness as an object of research has been aptly described as "a many-headed hydra" (Watts 2003: xi), not only because the concept is so incredibly complex, but also because many (sometimes diametrically opposed) models have been developed to describe and explain it. Even if we focus merely on polite language use rather than polite behaviour more generally (but should we?), dozens of competing approaches mean that it will be impossible to provide more than the barest outline of the field here.

Still, what work has been done on linguistic politeness in Greek and Latin literature⁴⁸ shows a strong uniformity, since a single text underpins the approach of all those offerings. This classic work

⁴⁶ I use scare quotes here because interruptions are a feature of naturally occurring dialogue *par excellence*, and we should thus be careful before applying insights to dramatic dialogue (especially dialogue as regimented as that of tragedy); but cf. pp. 8-9 above.

⁴⁷ A bibliography of the most important works — "by no means a comprehensive bibliography" — of the *Linguistic Politeness Research Group* lists some 200 titles (<http://research.shu.ac.uk/politeness/bibliography.html>).

⁴⁸ Cf. n. 36 above.

— to date the most influential text on linguistic politeness,⁴⁹ even though it has been challenged by numerous and often justified critiques — is a long article by Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson (1978, republished as a book with a new introduction in 1987), which proposes some 'universals in language usage'.

Brown and Levinson's model revolves around Erving Goffman's concept of **face**, which Goffman defined as "the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact [i.e. interaction]", and as "an image of self, delineated in terms of approved social attributes" (1955: 213). Brown and Levinson modified this concept and split it into two technical terms for the universal human desires to be approved and admired ('positive face') and not to be imposed upon ('negative face'):

[positive face:] the positive consistent self-image or 'personality' (crucially including the desire that this self-image be appreciated and approved of) claimed by interactants

[negative face:] the basic claim to territories, personal preserves, rights to non-distraction — i.e. to freedom of action and freedom from imposition (1987: 61)

These desires should be maintained by participants in a social interaction, as far as possible, for the duration of that interaction, and it is thus in the interest of all the participants to reduce possible threats to each other's face (like Grice, whose model they utilise extensively, Brown and Levinson assume that conversation is by nature cooperative). Interactants in conversation will thus adopt communicative strategies designed to maintain each other's face as best they can.

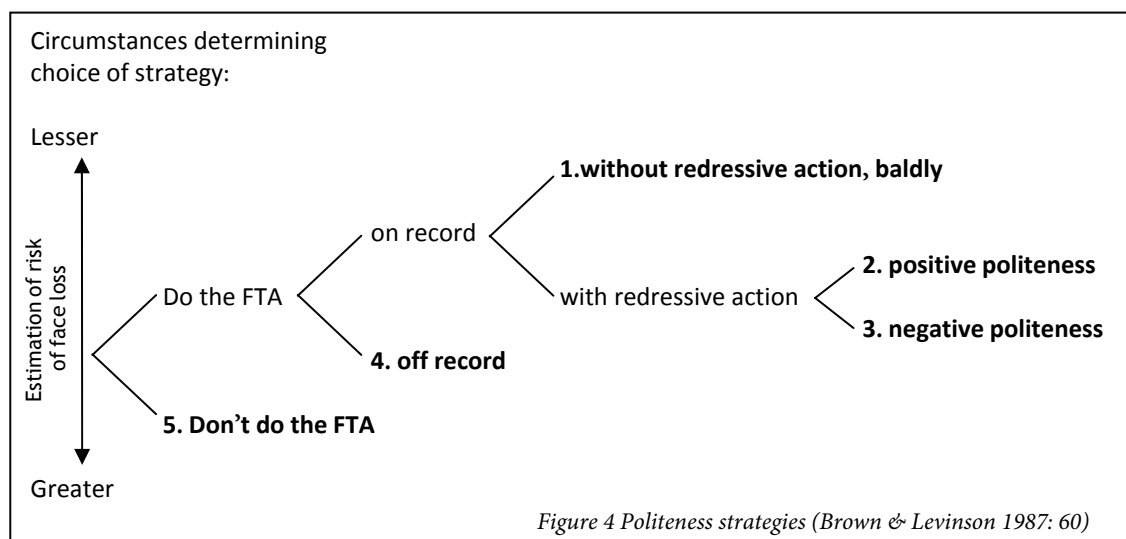
In Brown and Levinson's account, face-threats caused by conversational utterances, such as criticisms and insults (damaging positive face) or commands, requests and threats (damaging negative face), are described as **face-threatening acts (FTAs)** (1987: 65-8). Such FTAs litter everyday conversation, and range from the very marginal to the quite severe. 'Politeness' is then defined as any measure undertaken by a speaker to reduce the threat of a FTA, by supporting or enhancing the positive face of the addressee ('positive politeness'), or avoiding transgression of the addressee's freedom of action and freedom from imposition ('negative politeness').

Brown and Levinson suggest that a speaker will select one of various **politeness strategies** to negate or minimise the threat which may be caused by a contribution he wishes to make to the conversation. The simplest strategy to avoid any face-threat is not to make the intended contribution at all. On the other end of the spectrum, the 'worst case' is to perform the FTA with no redressive action, or **baldly**. In between these extremes, speakers can utilise various linguistic instruments to offer redress, orientated either towards the addressee's positive face (positive politeness strategies,

⁴⁹ The major competing model to that of Brown and Levinson before the publication of Watt's *Politeness* (2003), more about which below, was that of Leech (1983). Other models have not entirely lost all currency either: approaches by Robin Lakoff (1973, 1975), Fraser and Nolen (1981), Arndt and Janney (1987), and Blum-Kulka *et al.* (1989) are still frequently cited in the literature.

e.g. familiar forms of address, expressions of interest or agreement) (1987: 101-29), or towards his/her negative face (negative politeness strategies, e.g. expressions of deference, hedges, indirectness, apologies, etc.) (1987: 101-211). Alternatively, and as an extension of negative politeness, speakers may phrase their utterances in an ambiguous way so that it is possible to ignore the threat to face. Brown and Levinson call this last strategy going *off-record*, as opposed to the performance of unmistakable FTAs which are 'on-record'. Such off-record strategies are usually couched in the form of indirect speech acts (cf. pp. 19-20 above).

Which strategy from this list is selected will depend largely on the amount of face-threat the speaker calculates that his FTA will carry. The greater the expected face-threat, the more likely it is that a speaker will choose not to do the FTA, or do it in a circumspect way. Figure 4 presents Brown and Levinson's different strategies diagrammatically, with the different strategies ranked (from 5 to 1) according to how much compensation they can offer:



As for the estimation of risk of face loss, the seriousness of an intended FTA depends, according to Brown and Levinson, on the social distance between speaker and hearer, the power that the hearer has over the speaker, and on the degree to which the act constitutes an imposition on the hearer.

Most of Brown and Levinson's book is concerned with a discussion of individual 'substrategies' which serve to pursue one or more of the 'superstrategies' laid out in the diagram. To give a few examples:

[Positive politeness strategy:] *Notice, attend to H (her/his interests, wants, needs, goods, etc.):*

Jim, you're really good at solving computer problems. → (FTA) I wonder if you could just help me with a little formatting problem I've got.

[Negative politeness strategy:] *Give deference:*

Excuse me, **officer**. I think I might have parked in the wrong place.

[Off-record strategy:] *Use rhetorical questions:*

I'm sorry, but **how was I to know that?**

(First two examples from Watts 2003: 89-90, third adapted from Brown & Levinson 1987: 223)

Each of these examples in fact includes more strategies than one: in the second, for example, we find, apart from the deferential address “officer”, the conventionalised apology “Excuse me”, as well as various hedges in “I think ... might”. Similarly, in the first example, the positive politeness strategy is combined with negative ones (hedging in “just” and “little” and the conventional phrasing as a question “I wonder if...”).

It is crucial to repeat here that, according to Brown and Levinson, these strategies too are used cross-linguistically, if not universally: the same strategy is found in different languages to serve similar FTA-redressing goals. It is this supposed universality which has allowed classical scholars to apply Brown and Levinson's model to Greek texts (and I too will make use of their repertory of strategies, many of which appear operative in Greek).

Yet the universality Brown and Levinson claim for their model has come under severe criticism from other sociolinguists — as have other aspects of their work.⁵⁰ Many of these criticisms have been gathered together in a recent textbook on politeness by Richard Watts (2003), whose own model has been gaining some ground in the field. Many of the points Watts makes (2003: 85-116) are familiar from earlier criticisms of Brown and Levinson: that they focus too much on politeness rather than on *impoliteness* (thereby ignoring the more salient behaviour);⁵¹ that they fail to properly account for the role of the addressee and bystanders of a conversation;⁵² that their dualistic account of face — the negative part — does not apply to many (mostly far-eastern) societies which are more collectivist in nature; that the ‘variables’ in their formula cannot predict conversational behaviour (a criticism borne out by empirical studies).⁵³

But Watts' main point of criticism is much more fundamental in nature: he argues that Brown and Levinson (and others) unjustly conflate *linguistic* politeness strategies (‘second-order politeness’ or ‘politeness₂’) with ‘folk’ or ‘lay’ interpretations of politeness, that is to say how polite certain behaviour is *actually* perceived to be in conversations (‘first-order politeness’ or ‘politeness₁’): it is, in

⁵⁰ The most extensive and scathing (if largely accurate) critique may be found in Werkhofer 1992.

⁵¹ This complaint parallels similar criticisms of Grice's cooperative principle (cf. p. 22 above): for attempts to move towards a ‘conflict model’ of communication based on power relations, cf. Leezenberg 2002 and 2005 (on Greek tragedy); Watts' own model is in fact in this vein. For *impoliteness*, cf. also Culpeper 1996, Culpeper, Bousfield & Wichmann 2003.

⁵² The addressee is involved only inasmuch as he factors into the speaker's calculations of the weightiness of a FTA. As Werkhofer phrased the criticism, Brown and Levinson's model “is biased towards a one-sided individualism, a bias that is not only due to the role ascribed to the speaker's initial face-threatening intention, but to other individualistic premises.” (1992: 157)

⁵³ Especially questionable in the light of these empirical studies is the notion that the weightiness of a FTA determines the selection of a politeness strategy. Nor is social distance as accurate a predictor of polite behaviour as, e.g., the *affective* relationship between speaker and hearer. More importantly, as Werkhofer points out, because Brown and Levinson defined their variables ‘distance’, ‘power’ and ‘imposition’ as “static entities that determine polite meanings, these variables represent a narrow approach to social realities ... that neglects the dynamic aspects of social language, aspects that ... should be at the heart of a [proper account of politeness].” (1992: 176)

fact, very possible for someone's use of one of Brown and Levinson's politeness strategies to be considered not polite at all, and they can even be used with a deliberately *impolite* effect. We need only think of an example like "Would you [^]*mind* closing the window?"⁵⁴ to see that a mere change in the prosodic contour of a sentence can dramatically change the way it is going to be interpreted (under Brown and Levinson's theory, this phrasing would still have to count as an instrument for politeness). Politeness₁ — 'real' politeness — is according to Watts

not merely a matter of the linguistic expressions that [one] uses, but rather depends on the interpretation of that behaviour in the overall social interaction. ... A theory of politeness₂ should concern itself with the discursive struggle over politeness₁, i.e. over the ways in which (im)polite behaviour is evaluated and commented by lay members and not with ways in which social scientists lift the term '(im)politeness' out of the realm of everyday discourse and elevate it to the status of a theoretical concept ... (2003: 8-9)

Watts proposes to improve on Brown and Levinson's model by going back to the original Goffmanian conceptualisation of face, which he thinks Brown and Levinson wrongly appropriated and misconstrued as a *fixed* property of individuals. The key, Watts argues, is that a social concept like face is open to constant change and renegotiation, and that in order to understand first-order politeness (i.e. behaviour that people actually consider to be polite), we need to be attuned to the dynamic nature of conversational interaction as social practice (no two conversations are the same, and the situation as constructed mutually by interactants changes constantly during a conversation).

Watts' shift of focus to this more contextually sensitive interpretation of politeness — focusing on interlocutors' perceptions of polite and impolite behaviour rather than on abstractions — leads him to reclassify much of what has been seen as politeness as supportive **facework** with no function other than to maintain **politic behaviour**. Watts defines politic behaviour as "that behaviour, linguistic and non-linguistic, which the participants construct as being appropriate to the ongoing social interaction" (2003: 276): politic behaviour circumscribes, in other words, the normal parameters in which an interaction of a particular kind between particular speakers operates (though the baseline may itself shift during the course of the conversation). On this account, many conventionalized or ritualized utterances such as "Could you pass me . . . ?" and "Would you please . . . ?", which Brown and Levinson considered politeness-devices, are usually no more than what is expected in the circumstances and therefore do not have to give rise to an interpretation as polite behaviour (though they may). Only when speakers use linguistic facework *in excess* of what is required by the situation can this be interpreted as linguistic politeness;⁵⁵ conversely, when interactants clearly do not do enough, or when they deliberately exacerbate a FTA (aggressive

⁵⁴ Where ^ represents a rising pitch (emphasis) on the verb 'mind'.

⁵⁵ Watts uses **relevance theory** to underpin his model: excess facework is, then, maximally **relevant** only if interpreted as politeness (which is an **implicature** of an utterance)

facework), such behaviour can be open to an interpretation as impolite. To complicate matters even further, politeness and impoliteness may be evaluated in different ways by different interactants: sometimes behaviour which is interpreted as polite is still evaluated negatively (for example when someone is being 'too polite' for the situation).

A helpful feature of Watts' treatment is his focus on the relationship between politeness and power (which he defines as "the freedom of action to achieve one's goals, regardless of whether or not this involves the potential to impose one's will on others to carry out actions that are in one's interests", 2003: 276). Rather than a fixed variable which factors into the calculation of how threatening a FTA will be (as in Brown and Levinson's model), Watts sees power, too, as something over which people involved in social interaction continually struggle. The *exercise* of power — one person trying to affect another in a manner contrary to his/her initially perceived interests — can often be interpreted as impolite, though facework can be used in an attempt to prevent such an inference. Watts amply proves (2003: 213-5, 218-32) that the exercise of power and (im)politeness are closely interrelated.

To round off this section, I will attempt to show how politeness theory might fruitfully be applied to Greek texts, by looking ahead at a few more lines of the *Electra*, immediately following the moment discussed above, p. 28. As Orestes and Pylades come forward out of their hiding place, the following exchange between Electra and Orestes (in disguise) takes place:

- ΗΛ. οἴμοι· γυναῖκες, ἐξέβην θρηνημάτων. 215
 ξένοι τινές παρ' οἶκον οἶδ' ἐφεστίους
 εὐνάς ἔχοντες ἐξανίστανται λόχου·
 φυγῆ σὺ μὲν κατ' οἶμον, ἐς δόμους δ' ἐγὼ
 φῶτας κακούργους ἐξαλύξωμεν ποδί.
 ΟΡ. μὲν, ὦ τάλαινα· μὴ τρέσης ἐμὴν χέρα. 220
 ΗΛ. ὦ Φοῖβ' Ἄπολλον, προσπίτνω σε μὴ θανεῖν.
 ΟΡ. ἄλλους κτάνοιμι μᾶλλον ἐχθίους σέθεν.
 ΗΛ. ἀπελθε, μὴ ψαῦ' ὦν σε μὴ ψαύειν χρεῶν.
 ΟΡ. οὐκ ἔσθ' ὅτου θίγοιμ' ἂν ἐνδικώτερον.
 ΗΛ. καὶ πῶς ξιφήρης πρὸς δόμοις λοχᾶς ἐμοῖς; 225
 ΟΡ. μείνας' ἄκουσον, καὶ τάχ' οὐκ ἄλλως ἐρεῖς.
 ΗΛ. ἔστηκα· πάντως δ' εἰμὶ σή· κρείσσων γὰρ εἶ.
 ΟΡ. ἦκω φέρων σοι σοῦ κασιγνήτου λόγους.
 ΗΛ. ὦ φίλτατ', ἄρα ζῶντος ἢ τεθνηκότος;

(El.) Oh no! Women, I have left my lamentations: some strangers here, lying in wait at the altar by the house, are coming out of their ambush. Let us run away in flight from these criminals: you go down the track, I will go into the house. :: (Or.) Wait, poor lady! Do not shrink from my hand! :: (El.) Apollo, I plead to you, do not let me die! :: (Or.) May I kill others more hated than you. :: (El.) Get away! Keep your hands off what you are not supposed to handle! :: (Or.) There is no one whom I could touch with more right. :: (El.) And how is it then that you are lying in ambush, sword in hand, at my house? :: (Or.) Stay, listen, and you may change what you say. :: (El.) I am

still; I am yours anyway, since you are stronger. :: (Or.) I am here bringing word to you from your brother. :: (El.) My dear man! Is he alive, then, or dead? (215-29)

Brown and Levinson's model cannot help much in making sense of Electra's first few contributions to this exchange. She ignores Orestes' first plea (μὲν', 220) completely and directs her utterance at Apollo instead (221);⁵⁶ in her next turn, without any form of greeting or redress, she tells Orestes to get away and accuses him of touching someone whom he should not (223); her turn after that contains another accusation, this time of violent posturing (ξιφήρης) and laying an ambush (λοχᾶς) (225). All of these turns thus constitute threats to Orestes' face, and Electra performs her FTAs 'baldly' and 'on-record'. This could really only be explained in Brown and Levinson's model as an estimation by Electra that the FTAs are not that severe (cf. Figure 4 above, p. 30). But the key, of course, is to realise that this is not the kind of situation where politeness has any place for Electra. She believes that she is being assaulted: not the kind of 'interaction' where one has to give deference or attempt to do any supportive facework. Brown and Levinson's model, with its reliance on rational actors who constantly seek to maintain and support each other's face, thus cannot really explain what is going on here.

If we attempt to apply some of Watts' terminology, the politic behaviour in such an extremely conflictual situation allows for any amount of face-threat without any compensating facework, and we should not be surprised that Electra remains, up to 227, entirely unfriendly. When we now look at Orestes' contributions to the exchange, it is interesting to see how he seems to be negotiating with Electra over the very nature of the interaction they are having: he is constantly trying to modify how Electra views the situation (and thus what the politic behaviour of the situation is). His own utterances contain several instances of supportive facework, which we could interpret as polite: his use of ὦ τάλαινα (220), his assurance that she is not his enemy (222). At 222 and especially at 224 (τάχ' οὐκ ἄλλως ἐρεῖς), his comments can be seen as attempts to steer the conversation towards cooperative rather than conflictual discourse. Electra remains unconvinced, however: her πάντως in line 227 suggests that she rejects Orestes' suggestion,⁵⁷ even though she has found it necessary to let go of her own perceived interests (running away) because of the enormous power that he has over her (armed man over unarmed woman). This rejection also indicates that in spite of Orestes' efforts at politeness, Electra herself has not yet evaluated any of his utterances positively.

Only after the stranger has revealed that he speaks 'on behalf of Orestes' does Electra accept the new status of the conversation, and her sudden change of tone is remarkable: ὦ φίλτατ(ε), she calls him (229).⁵⁸ This inaugurates a scene which, as I hope to show in my full analysis of the stichomythia

⁵⁶ Electra's σε in this line is not addressed to Orestes, cf. Cropp *ad loc.*

⁵⁷ By highlighting that the current proposition ('I am yours') is true regardless of the truth value of preceding ones (Orestes' reassurances), Electra signals that she rejects the validity of Orestes' earlier statements. Cf. Watts 2003: 228 for discussion of the similar English phrase 'in any event'.

⁵⁸ Cf. on this point p.77 below.

in chapter 2, is the locus of a great many interesting features from the viewpoint of politeness theory. Applying such theory can, I believe, add much to our understanding not only of the interaction between Electra and Orestes, but between Electra and other characters (especially the Peasant) as well. As mentioned above, I will make use in my analysis of the repertory of linguistic politeness strategies proposed by Brown and Levinson, but I will also try to remain sensitive to context and interactants' reactions (*à la* Watts), to avoid coming to untenable conclusions about (im)politeness in the play.

Gnomic utterances in context: some aspects of modern paroemiology

General reflections on the vicissitudes of life, the relationship between men and gods, and on proper moral behaviour are a feature found in Greek literature from its earliest incarnations. Both the Homeric narrator and his characters express such γνῶμαι in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, and after Homer they remained a popular feature of literature (as well as becoming increasingly important in rhetorical training and education).⁵⁹ Tragedy is no exception; what is somewhat exceptional, however, is the way in which tragic gnomai — especially Euripidean gnomai — have been studied by scholars.

The key term here is 'relevance'⁶⁰ (an issue which is germane, in fact, to many discussions of Euripides' technique, particularly his choral odes). If we trace the development of scholars' treatment of Euripidean gnomai, we find early efforts to excise from our texts any instance which was felt to be irrelevant to the preceding and following lines. Many such generalisations were considered to be either intruding marginal comments, or the interpolations of overzealous actors trained in a culture that enjoyed rhetorical grandstanding. In recent decades this trend has been reversed — if not fully⁶¹ — as scholars re-evaluate how general reflections (usually viewed foremost as a feature of rhetoric) fit into the structure of the speeches that contain them, and how they relate to the themes, motifs and characters of plays.

Still, considering this preoccupation among scholars with the contextual relevance of gnomic utterances, it is surprising to note the limited scope they have allowed even recently for the term 'context'. What many fail to take into account is that every gnome uttered is in itself a *communicative* act situated in a particular communicative context: every general reflection is uttered by a particular speaker, speaking to a particular (set of) addressee(s), in a particular spatio-temporal setting, with particular aims. Therefore, the questions we should ask are not only "Why does the speaker use this gnomic utterance here?", but also "Why does *this* speaker use this gnomic utterance here?", "Why

⁵⁹ Cf. *REA* s.v. 'Gnome, Gnomendichtung, Gnomologien' (Horna in Suppl. vol. 6, 74-90).

⁶⁰ The term is not used here to refer to **relevance theory** (discussed above).

⁶¹ Indeed one of the more serious demolition enterprises in the text of *Electra* was a deletion of nearly all of the gnomic passage 367-400 by Reeve, in 1973. I shall register my disagreements with Reeve more fully in ch. 3.

does he/she do so *in this company?*”, and — perhaps most important of all — “Why does the speaker use a gnomic utterance *at all* (as opposed to another form of expression)?”

When it comes to a closely related feature, the use of proverbs, questions very similar to these have been asked for some time by anthropologists and ethno- and sociolinguists working on language use in present-day societies. Indeed, ‘context’ — in a broad sense — has become central to the field of paroemiology (the study of proverbs). Some of the findings and theories of modern paroemiologists were applied to Greek gnomic utterances in a dissertation and a series of articles by André Lardinois.⁶² His discussion of Homeric *gnomai* (and, in one case, of Sophoclean ones)⁶³ is instructive, and I shall follow his approach to some extent in my own treatment of gnomic passages in *Electra*.

Attentive readers may raise the question whether work on present-day proverbs can be readily applied to ancient gnomic language. Indeed, as Lardinois notes, “Greek *gnomai* are not the same as modern proverbs”,⁶⁴ yet, he adds, “they can be effectively studied in the same way.” Proverbs, in the strictest sense, are in fact a rather limited subset of a larger category of ‘wisdom sayings’: what makes proverbs exceptional within this larger category is the fact that they are normally anonymous and passed on (almost) identically from one generation to the next.⁶⁵ We do not find such formal stability in Greek *gnomai*:

Instead, what we find are novel renditions of the same basic thoughts; for example, *Odyssey* 7.294: αἰεὶ γὰρ τε νεώτεροι ἀφραδέουσιν (“For always thoughtless are youngsters”) expresses the same sentiment as *Iliad* 3.108: αἰεὶ δ’ ὀπλοτέρων ἀνδρῶν φρένες ἠερέθονται (“Always flighty are the minds of young men”) but in different words. I submit that Greek *gnomai* were, at least until the fourth century B.C.E., part of a living tradition in which every performance was a re-creation, very much like epic verse. They are, like epic verses, “coined” with the help of traditional formulae and themes. (Lardinois 1997: 215)

Thus, in a sense, *gnomai* can be both *expression* and *source* of popular wisdom.⁶⁶ Nor is this unique to Greek *gnomai*: various present-day cultures show a similar “living tradition” in the production of

⁶² Lardinois 1995, Lardinois 1997, Lardinois 2000, Lardinois 2001, Lardinois 2006. A few other works have looked at how gnomic language characterises speakers in Greek literature (Tompkins 1993, Budelmann 2000: 74-80, Mossman 2001).

⁶³ Lardinois 2006.

⁶⁴ Nor, to be fair, are ancient *gnomai* the same as ancient proverbs: cf. Morgan 2007: 26 n. 19. Distinguishing between γνώμη, παροιμία, ἀπόφθεγμα, ὑποθήκη, etc. is not straightforward; for discussion, cf. Morgan’s chapter on ancient proverbs (2007: ch. 2), as well as Lardinois 1995: 7-20, Russo 1997. I will use *gnom**-words as catch-all terms (alongside ‘general reflection’, ‘sententious statement’, etc.).

⁶⁵ For a fuller discussion of ‘proverbiality’ (a vexed concept itself), cf. Mieder 2004: 4-20, Arora 1984, Norrick 1985.

⁶⁶ It is not for nothing that gnomic expressions are an important source for scholarship on ancient moral thinking, and that such works as Dover 1974 refer to them frequently (cf. also Morgan 2007: ch. 2). It should be noted, however, that *gnomai* are not necessarily acceptable to *all* addressees: the musings about wealth, status and moral worth in the *Electra*, for example, have been seen to undermine established moral thinking rather than to affirm it, and this has even been held to be the whole point of the play (cf. especially Arnott 1981: 179-81). In any case, the *Electra* is definitely concerned with the applicability of received notions about status and nobility, all of which must have been highly relevant at the time of the play’s first performance (cf. pp. 47 below).

wisdom sayings. As for the “traditional formulae” Lardinois mentions, there are certain linguistic and structural features of *gnomai* (and proverbs, etc.) that make them stand out as such: these features include an absence of specific referents and deictics, tense-usage (normally present or future),⁶⁷ and certain recurring phrases (many Greek *gnomai* begin with *χρή*, for example).

More important for my purposes than differences between proverbs, Greek *gnomai*, and other wisdom sayings, is what they have in common. This commonality resides first of all in the type of content that such expressions present (“wisdom, truths, morals, and traditional views”, Mieder 2004: 4). Secondly, wisdom sayings are frequently metaphorical, and this holds for many Greek *gnomai* (though certainly not all). Thirdly, and most importantly, they share the particular manner in which their meaning is ‘produced’.

The very meaning of a proverb in normal usage is determined by context: without context, for example, we cannot know whether “A friend in need is a friend in deed” is to be taken as an expression of thanks (by the recipient of friendship), loyalty (by the giver of friendship), or something else. Similarly, in the case of the Greek *gnomai* cited from Homer by Lardinois above, we need to know that Menelaus is producing this gnome when he is trying to get Priam to take an oath rather than one of his sons (*Il.* 3.108): only then can we see how it functions as an argument in support of his thesis that oaths sworn by young men are unreliable. Similarly, Odysseus’ gnome (*Od.* 7.294) only gets its full meaning if we realise that it is said in praise of Nausicaa, to her parents, because she is unusually wise for her age.

General reflections are thus by nature an *indirect* way of speaking (cf. pp. 19-22 above), sometimes doubly indirect. If someone uses “A bird in the hand ...” in a conversation, the ‘literal meaning’ of his metaphorical expression (having to do with birds, hands and bushes) is translated into an expression of a general truth (the preferability of something certain over something that is greater but uncertain),⁶⁸ but it only derives its final, contextualised meaning from the application to the particular situation at hand (e.g. advice to stay in one’s job). The last of these steps (from general meaning to specific application — known in paroemiology as the *explanation*) is present in the interpretation of all forms of wisdom sayings, and in as much as modern paroemiology can shed light on this kind of production of meaning, it can be fruitfully applied to Greek *gnomai* as well.

Incidentally, in drama, this indirectness of gnomonic expressions makes it particularly suitable to be manipulated for purposes of dramatic irony. Because the ‘applied’ meaning of a general reflection is determined by the particular context in which it is used, it allows for different interpretations by

⁶⁷ Greek also uses the gnomonic aorist, as well as the potential optative construction.

⁶⁸ Whether this first step of ‘translation’ is prominent or even present at all depends on various factors, including the extent to which a metaphorical expression has been conventionalised (few people will normally activate conceptual notions of buckets and flying legs when someone speaks of “kicking the bucket”). Figurative meaning and metaphor has been a favourite topic of cognitive linguistic research for some time, most influentially in Lakoff & Johnson 1980, Lakoff 1987. For more resources, cf. <http://www.conceptualmetaphor.net/>.

different addressees.⁶⁹ In the case of generic expressions embedded in dramatic conversation, this context-dependency also encompasses the 'contextual' gap between characters (internal addressees) and the audience (external addressees). Thus, as Lardinois has argued for gnomic expressions in the 'Deception Speech' of Sophocles' *Ajax*:

The polysemous nature of such expressions increases the different layers of interpretation. In this case, as so often in tragedy, there is a discrepancy between the things the text-internal addressees (Tecmessa and the chorus) know and those which the text-external addressee (the Athenian audience) knows, creating the well-known effect of dramatic irony. (2006: 217)

We shall see that in *Electra*, too, general reflections are used to manipulate the varying levels of knowledge between different characters and between the characters and the audience.

Another aspect of the usage of gnomic speech relates closely to this notion of indirectness as well. It has been shown for indirect utterances in general, and for proverbs in particular, that such expressions may serve, as it were, as a hedging technique — as a way in which a speaker can obscure or decrease the personal commitment he/she expresses towards his utterance. Gnostic utterances can allow a speaker to deny responsibility for the content of his/her utterance, exactly by focusing not so much on the particular but on the generic (regardless of the particular application which it will always have). The purposes of utilising such distancing techniques vary: a speaker may be trying to be polite, or to avoid having to give his/her own opinion. In the case of proverbs in particular, Neal Norrick has demonstrated that they allow the speaker "to disguise his true feelings, to leave himself an escape route", and that "speakers cite proverbs to avoid personal commitment" (1985: 27).⁷⁰

With this last point I have already entered upon the social (interactive) dimensions of proverbial speech,⁷¹ and it is in this area that modern paroemiology will prove to be particularly helpful for my discussion of *Electra*. As well as allowing an avoidance of personal commitment to an utterance, proverbs also serve as an invocation of authority:

in uttering a proverb a speaker quotes a traditional item of the folklore of the community. As items quoted from this stock, proverbs carry the force of time-tested wisdom, and the speaker can draw on this authority. This correlates strongly with the observation ... that proverbs most commonly have evaluative function and a didactic tone in free conversation. Essentially the same effect can be achieved by citing scripture, famous authors or recognized authorities in the relevant field. In each case the speaker adds authority and credibility to his utterance by identifying himself with traditional wisdom, beliefs and prejudices of the community at large ... (Norrick 1985: 28)

⁶⁹ In short, proverbial expressions are "hetero-situational, poly-functional and poly-semantic" (cf. Mieder 2004: 132).

⁷⁰ Cf. also Taylor 1962: 169, Green 1975.

⁷¹ For the social context of proverb usage, cf. Mieder 2004: 133-4, with further references. The pioneering study in this field is Arewa & Dundes 1964; an exemplary study is Briggs 1985.

Although Greek *gnomai* are, as noted above, not so much a quotation of a “traditional item of folklore”, or “time-tested” *per se*, they nonetheless may be said to make a similar appeal to generally accepted (or acceptable) wisdom. Thus, they too serve as a method of invoking an authority outside — and more widespread than — that of the speaker alone. Readers of Euripidean tragedy will also have little trouble relating the description “most commonly have evaluative function and a didactic tone in free conversation” to *gnomai* as they find them used by Euripides' characters.

The evaluative and didactic tone of generalising expressions also entails that their use in conversational contexts carries with it some complications. When it comes to the constant negotiating of **face** which goes on in conversations, it can be damaging to make an evaluative utterance about an addressee, or to adopt a didactic tone. Proverbial expressions thus prove to be a particularly complex and subtle instrument for negotiating speaker-addressee relations in a conversation: they may constitute a threat to someone's face while at the same time softening that threat. For example, when I say “No man is an island” to a friend who I believe is unjustly refusing my help, my statement can well be considered to threaten my friend's face (I am berating him for his behaviour), yet I have made some effort to soften the blow of my criticism by avoiding a more outright expression of disapproval. Whether my expression is considered to be polite depends, of course, on the nature of the conversation that I was having with my friend, our relative social status, and so forth.⁷²

These social complexities of proverb usage were analysed by Peter Seitel (1969). Seitel categorised proverbial utterances by their applicability to the speaker (**first-person sayings**), the addressee (**second-person sayings**), or a person other than the speaker or addressee (**third-person sayings**) — these designations are irrespective of the use of grammatical person and number in the ‘proverb text’. My “No man is an island” above, in this classification, would be a second-person proverb (applied to the addressee, my friend), even though the verb in the proverb text is in the third person. Singular or plural persons are possible (depending on the number of people the proverb is applied to), and proverbs may apply to more than one person at the same time, directly or indirectly. As Seitel observed from his empirical research, there are important differences between the conversational uses of first, second- and third-person sayings: second-person sayings (applying to the addressee) tend to be restricted to speakers in a position of relative authority, while first and third-person sayings are employed more freely. Lardinois, who applied Seitel's model to Homeric *gnomai*, confirmed that the trends identified by Seitel hold true there as well, but added that second-person sayings are found used among social equals in the *Iliad* when they served as insults and taunts, and conversely in the case of compliments and praise. Though neither Seitel nor Lardinois fully explored the reasons for this distribution, it is, I hope, clear from my preceding discussion why their findings should be the way they were: second-person proverbs, when they serve

⁷² For proverbs as a mechanism of politeness, cf. Obeng 1996.

as an evaluative or didactic statement, constitute a possible threat to the addressee's face (while also softening that threat). Whether any facework is required to compensate for such a threat, and how much, depends on the relative power and authority of the speaker and addressee, and the nature of the conversation they find themselves in.

In short, the use of general reflections in conversation can serve a complex role in the intricate negotiation of face and power between speakers and addressees. Another brief example from *Electra* may be instructive here. Shortly before the moments between Clytemnestra and Electra treated above, the queen makes the following remark to her daughter:

ὦ παῖ, πέφυκας πατέρα σὸν στέργειν ἀεὶ.
ἔστιν δὲ καὶ τόδ'· οἱ μὲν εἰσιν ἀρσένων
οἱ δ' αὖ φιλοῦσι μητέρας μᾶλλον πατρός.
συγγνώσομαί σοι·

My child, it is in your nature to keep feeling affection for your father. This, too, is something that happens: some belong to the male side, others are more devoted to their mother than to their father. I will be patient with you. (1102-5)

Clytemnestra's general sentiment expressed in the sentence οἱ μὲν ... πατρός (1103-4; signposted as a generalisation by the introductory phrase ἔστιν δὲ καὶ τόδ') is applied to the particular case of Electra; thus, we are dealing with a **second-person saying**. In the context (Electra has just completed an angry speech directed at her mother, 1060-96), Clytemnestra's lines seem designed to deflect some of her daughter's criticisms by portraying them as the result merely of Electra's affection for her father, rather than of an objective assessment of the case at hand. Clytemnestra's gnome then serves to portray Electra's emotions as a typical trait of some children. The example involves many social intricacies: on the one hand, Clytemnestra's gnome seems to strike a conciliatory note, since it suggests that she does not blame her daughter personally for her bias — it is merely something to be expected from some children. Her seemingly placatory tone is made explicit in the following line, συγγνώσομαί σοι (1105). On the other hand, however, the fact that Clytemnestra can use a second-person saying (which is not obviously meant to insult or criticise), is suggestive of the power-differential which she believes still exists between herself and her daughter: equals and those of inferior status are less likely to use second-person gnomai unless they are meant to be hurtful (in which case the constraints of status are ignored). Moreover, the very fact that Clytemnestra uses a generalisation to make her point seems to preclude debate on it: it is not only Clytemnestra who thinks that Electra is biased; commonly accepted wisdom says so. We may thus detect, perhaps, a note of impatience and superiority in Clytemnestra's words. As I will argue in chapter 2 (pp. 108, 115), this is a constant feature of the scene.

Throughout this dissertation, I hope to show that the aspects of gnomonic language described above are vital for a full interpretation of the gnomai used by the characters of *Electra*. As a related point, I

hope to show that the textual suspicion which many of these general reflections have elicited is unfounded.

Narrative and argumentative texts: discourse cohesion

All the approaches discussed above have focused on aspects of language in interaction, aspects which prove important especially in dialogical sections of plays. But as noted above (p. 11-12), some parts of Greek tragedy do not lend themselves as well to analysis using such methods. Longer rheseis in a narrative or argumentative mode should still, I hasten to add, very much be seen as situated in their communicative context (and my discussion of gender and gnomic language will prove relevant to such longer speeches as well). But the internal structure of such discourses has less to do with the interactive relationship with other characters, and more with the organisation of thought and argument (in the case of argumentative speeches) or of story and plot (in the case of narrative passages).

An analysis of such internal structure requires that we consider a number of linguistic devices that lend coherence to a text. Recent work in ancient Greek linguistics has devoted much attention to the cohesive properties of many of these instruments, including particles, tense usage, pronouns, word order, sentence complexity, etc.⁷³ Much of what I want to say about these features is best reserved for individual discussions in the chapters to follow, but I would like to note a number of general points of recurring significance here.

First, a few words about particles: it is now generally recognised that these devices should not be described in terms of 'referential' meaning (denoting some entity or relation in the 'real' world), but rather in terms of 'functional' meaning (particles don't 'mean', they 'do'). These functions occupy different levels: some particles primarily determine relationships between different parts of a discourse (these are traditionally known as 'connective' particles, e.g. *καί, δέ, γάρ*); others ('modal' or 'interactional', e.g. *δή, τοι, μήν*) deal more with the relationship between interactants (speaker, addressee) and the content of the utterance in which they are embedded.⁷⁴ A function on both these levels is possible as well (and there are often diachronic shifts of function).

The latter category of particles ('modal') is interesting in the light of the nuances of conversational interaction which I have discussed earlier in this section, and I will comment on their use where appropriate. The former, discourse-structuring kind deserves some further comment here, especially

⁷³ Cf. in general the contributions in Bakker & Wakker 2009, which cover all these topics. Further references may be found there, and will be given below where relevant.

⁷⁴ Kroon, in a study of Latin particles (1995), has influentially distinguished between a 'representational', a 'presentational' and an 'interactional' level of discourse. Most particles function either on the presentational or interactional levels. For a direct application of Kroon's model to Greek particles, cf. Wakker 1997a

with regard the 'scope' of these particles. One of the crucial gains made in recent scholarship⁷⁵ is the realisation that connective particles do not necessarily connect one sentence to another, but rather serve to structure a discourse into constituent 'acts' and 'moves',⁷⁶ which may stretch over a series of sentences, even whole parts of speeches. Acts and moves form a hierarchy: a move may consist of a main act and a subsidiary act, and different particles are used to indicate this structure. To give a few examples: Bakker has shown (1993) that the particle δέ marks a (neutral) boundary between sections of discourse; De Jong has demonstrated (1997) that the particle γάρ (a particle introducing a 'subsidiary' segment of discourse) may introduce entire embedded narratives; the particle οὖν, similarly, has been shown to introduce new, relevant sections of a discourse (of whatever length), rather than merely sentences which serve as an inferential conclusion (cf. my discussion of οὖν at p. 129). These discourse-structuring functions are important for an analysis of argumentative discourse, in order to follow the precise development of an argument, and for narrative discourse, in order to see breaks in the flow of a narrative and to trace the speed and 'mode' of narration (a sequence of sentences introduced by δέ is very different in terms of narrative style than a similar sequence of sentences introduced by καί).⁷⁷

When it comes to the style and speed of a narrative — issues that have been examined especially by narratologists⁷⁸ — another crucial factor determining such aspects is the use of verbal tenses. The tenses used in narrative are the imperfect (or pluperfect), aorist and the historic present, and the distribution of forms in these various tenses reveals a great deal about the way a narrative is structured and paced. Again, I reserve most of what I have to say on these issues to the chapters to follow (particularly chapters 1, 5 and 6), but I do wish to make two brief comments here, on the function of the historic present (which plays a significant role in two important narrative sections in *Electra*, the prologue and the messenger speech), and on the aorist.

Recent research on the historic present in Greek⁷⁹ has attempted to give a more precise description of the value of this phenomenon than the rather nebulous terms 'immediacy' and 'vividness' which still have most currency in classical scholarship. According to this research, the primary function of the historic present is to mark decisive, pivotal events in a narrative — events that inalterably change

⁷⁵ Particularly *vis-à-vis* the treatment of these particles in Denniston, *GP* and 1952. The former work, *Greek Particles*, justifiably remains a classic, but cannot be treated today as the definitive treatment (cf. Rijksbaron 1997a).

⁷⁶ For this terminology, cf. e.g. Filiattaz & Roulet 2002. An earlier version of their model is followed by Kroon 1995 (cf. n. 74 above).

⁷⁷ For 'narrative modes', cf. R.J. Allan 2007, 2009, Kroon 2007, Adema 2007. The linguistic and narratological studies underlying these works include Fleischman 1990, Chafe 1994, Roulet, Filiattaz & Grobet 2001, Smith 2003.

⁷⁸ There has been a confluence between linguistics and narratology (compatible fields from the start) in recent work, in that more attention has been paid to the linguistic phenomena that create certain effects in narrative texts. Cf. for general discussion e.g. Mey 2001: ch. 9, and for good examples of this kind of research the works mentioned in the previous n., as well as de Jong 1997, de Jong 2007

⁷⁹ My description is based mostly on Rijksbaron, *SeS* §7, Rijksbaron 2006, R.J. Allan 2007, 2009.

the state of the narrated world.⁸⁰ This function is not an 'objective' one, that is to say we do not find every 'objectively crucial' event in a narrative marked by the historic present. Rather, the historic present is a device which can be exploited by a narrator for his/her own rhetorical purposes: it is the narrator who chooses to mark certain events as more significant than others, highlighting those which he considers to have a high degree of 'tellability'.⁸¹ The subjective purposes of a narrator may sometimes even clash with what would objectively be considered a 'crucial' event (for a striking example of this in the messenger speech of *Electra*, cf. p. 178).

As for the aorist, in interpreting the use of this tense, the distinction between narrative and non-narrative text is absolutely vital, since its aspectual value will have different consequences in such different contexts. In narrative, the aorist is the normal tense for 'pushing the story forwards': it marks the main events which together constitute the plot (the historic present, then, is a special alternative for the aorist, while the imperfect is often used to mark the framework within which — or background against which — these main events and actions take place, cf. Rijksbaron 1988, R.J. Allan 2009).⁸² In such cases, the aorist expresses no more than that the action took place (in its entirety) during the time of the story — accordingly, it is usually best translated by an English simple past ('Aegisthus banished Electra'). In other text types, however, for instance in argumentative text, the aorist will often express that an action has been completed relative to the moment of speaking — and is therefore best translated with an English perfect ('Aegisthus has banished Electra').⁸³

Issues such as tense usage, particles and other points relating to 'cohesion' in texts will be of some significance throughout the following chapters, but will come to the forefront especially in chapters 5 and 6, where I discuss the messenger speech and the rheseis of the agon, respectively.

TEXTUAL CRITICISM

It remains for me to very briefly outline my principles in practicing a less 'modern' type of analysis of Greek tragic texts: determining what those texts (should) actually say. No work that foregrounds the language of a classical text can ignore problems of textual transmission, and the *Electra* has its share

⁸⁰ This use is sometimes extended into a 'punctuating' use marking the start of a new episode in a narrative, cf. Rijksbaron, *S&S* §7.3, R.J. Allan 2009: 193 with n. 57.

⁸¹ I adopt this term from R.J. Allan 2009: 195.

⁸² These functions may be explained as a result of the aspectual values of the tense-stems: the aorist stem (marking complete/whole actions) expresses actions from beginning to end, whereas the imperfect (aspect of the present tense-stem, marking incomplete actions) can be used for actions which are ongoing/repeated. In narrative, the 'background'/'framework' is often sketched by what is *going on* when (or up until) 'foregrounded' actions/events happen. These aspectual values are subject to controversy: for competing views contrast e.g. Rijksbaron, *S&S* §1, with Sicking 1992, Sicking & Stork 1996.

⁸³ For the difference between the value of the aorist in narrative and non-narrative text, cf. Rijksbaron, *S&S* §§ 6, 8. More fine-grained distinctions should be applied: narrative, for instance, is itself a variegated text type (cf. n. 77 above), and the tenses have different uses even within narrative.

of difficult cruces. My approach has been not to avoid these, yet not to seek them out either. In other words, in what follows I will practice detailed textual criticism when my reading hits upon places where the constitution of the text is an issue of debate, but only when what is read actually has bearing upon my analysis of the play. Thus, for example, I will not treat the famous crux in the first verse of the play in detail (cf. p. 52, n. 7), but I will discuss the textual problems in 311-13 in depth (pp. 86-9); similarly, I have no desire to wade too deep into the quicksand that is the authenticity of the Aeschylean tokens in the recognition scene (cf. p. 48 below), but will argue against treating too much of 367-400 as interpolated (pp. 132-8). Discussions of textual issues which are relevant but not crucial for interpretation are normally relegated to the footnotes.

A pair of cases is given special attention, to the extent that the passages in question are treated in a separate chapter (chapter 4). The problems in 671-93 and 959-87 concern not so much what is read but which characters should be assigned which lines to perform. I believe that the linguistic approaches described above can shed some light on these notorious issues of speaker-line attribution, and I hope to show that in this way too, these approaches can help us interpret the play (the question 'who says what' is of more than simply textual-critical interest, after all).

A VIEW OF THE PLAY⁸⁴

"Controversy about the evaluation of Euripides' *Electra* still rages as fiercely as empty tigers or the roaring sea", wrote Arnott in 1981 — a statement which is hardly less true today. To conclude my introduction, I provide here a very brief overview of some of the interpretative issues that have given rise to such controversy, and a first indication of my own views concerning these issues.⁸⁵

Characters and characterisation

The issue of character and personality in Greek literature is a complex one, and its appreciation has seen a complex history, particularly in the past century. This is not the place to rehash the many arguments about characterisation in tragedy (and Greek literature, if not *all* literature, more generally),⁸⁶ except to observe that scholars seem to have abandoned — rightly — the extreme positions of the debate for a more measured approach. Neither the notion that tragedy represents

⁸⁴ This section deliberately shares its title with a similar, more extensive one in Cropp's excellent commentary (xxix-xxxviii): comparison will show that it shares more than its title. My debt to Cropp will be clear throughout this book: I can only hope that my analyses will be taken as a reinforcement, not a pilfering, of his.

⁸⁵ As with any of Euripides' plays, especially his later ones, the debate surrounding *Electra* is deeply intertwined with controversy over how to understand Euripides' works more generally. For an excellent 'history of scholarship' concerning these issues (though it does not go past the mid-1980s), cf. Michelini 1987: ch. 1. Cf. for such general issues now also Mastronarde 2010.

⁸⁶ The debate about characterisation in Greek literature is well paralleled in discussions of the topic in, for instance, English literary criticism. For an overview, cf. Culpeper 2001: 5-12.

'real people' with lives that extend beyond what we see on stage,⁸⁷ nor the idea that the tragedians were not interested in characterisation at all,⁸⁸ holds much stock today. Instead, more balanced views have emerged, which suggest that characters on the Greek stage will at least have some degree of 'human intelligibility',⁸⁹ and which consider what Greek concepts for 'character', 'personality', 'individuality', etc. may have looked like.⁹⁰

A question much less discussed, but vital to my own approach, is whether the tragedians used linguistic or stylistic means to characterise their figures, in other words whether speakers in Greek tragedy are characterised *by their own language*. This is an under-studied subject in Greek literature *tout court*: as Tompkins rightly noted almost forty years ago, the 'widespread reluctance to consider character important in Greek literature' led to a 'consequent failure to observe characteristic language' (1972: 182).⁹¹ Fraenkel, indeed, explicitly denied the existence of any linguistic characterisation in Euripides: "In Euripide non si trova caratterizzazione per mezzo della lingua, ma in Eschilo e Sofocle c'è" (1977: 36). It will be my contention that Euripides *does* adapt his language to the individuals speaking it, and that closely examining the speaking styles used by the characters of *Electra* (using the linguistic approaches discussed above) will in fact reveal a great deal about their characterisation.

The siblings are the main characters of interest in the play, and a brief preview of their treatment is in order. To begin with Electra herself (the central figure of the play, and the most controversial), I will argue in chapter 2 against the extremes of negative criticism which the character has elicited. The early scenes of the play, I suggest, present us not with an Electra wallowing in self-inflicted misery (as many scholars would have her), but with a figure torn from her proper surroundings and placed in incompatible, impossible circumstances. She is a 'heroic' figure trapped in a mildly comic universe, an Electra trying to play her traditional (and legitimate) part but unable to do so because of the very untraditional setting she finds herself in. This adds an interesting layer to her motivation for the

⁸⁷ The usual target for scholars criticising this 'humanising' position is Vickers, who writes, for example, that "Tragedy is about people, and what they do to each other ... The plays translate the clash of will and motive into forms, which although obeying complex literary conventions, still represent human actions, and convey them with intensity, if we are prepared to accept the conventions" (1973: 3).

⁸⁸ The 'de-humanising' view was first expounded on Sophocles by Tycho v. Wilamowitz (1917); on Euripides, the most influential restatements are those of Zürcher (1947) and Dale (e.g. 1954).

⁸⁹ The influential term used by Gould 1978.

⁹⁰ (Most of) the essays in Pelling 1990 represent a definitive shift away from the extremes mentioned. For discussion of the Greek concepts of character and personality, cf. Gill 1996 and Blundell 2002: 53-67 (on Plato). On tragedy, other useful treatments of characterisation include Mossman 1995: ch. 4, Allan 2000: ch. 3, Seidensticker 2008.

⁹¹ The exception is Homer's Achilles, whose use of language has received more attention than that of any other character in Greek literature, from A. Parry's famous 'The Language of Achilles' (1989 [1956]) onwards (see e.g. Martin 1989: ch. 4 for a survey of pre-90's scholarship). Noteworthy in particular is the vehement debate in *Language* around 1980: Friedrich & Redfield 1978, reaction by Messing 1981, response Friedrich & Redfield 1981. Excepting Achilles, the list of relevant publications is short indeed. It includes Tompkins 1972, 1993, Katsouris 1975, Kitzinger 1976 (*non vidi*), Lardinois 2000. On Latin, cf. Abbott 1907, Maltby 1979.

matricide: her distress at her personal displacement (and Orestes' exile) fuses with her desire to avenge Agamemnon's death, and this complex of issues engenders in Electra the vindictive hatred which inspires her (and through her, Orestes) to the matricide. As the play progresses and the matricide approaches, the balance between these motivations seems to shift somewhat, so that in the agon between Electra and her mother, the issue of her own and her brother's mistreatment is the focus of her speech (see chapter 6) — this calibrates audience sympathy, and casts another troubling light on the matricide. Electra's motivations and behaviour are also coloured greatly by her gender, which Euripides foregrounds in varied and subtle ways (to be discussed throughout chapter 2).

Orestes, too, has been much maligned. Two aspects of his behaviour have irked scholars: the long delay in the revelation of his true identity, and the way in which he kills Aegisthus in the messenger speech. The 'ugly' aspects of the latter scene, I will argue in chapter 5, are not designed to convey a simple moral, a good-versus-bad condemnation of Orestes and rehabilitation of Aegisthus (who is certainly not as sympathetic a character as some scholars suggest); nor is the messenger speech, with its exciting and suspenseful narrative, really the place for such character evaluations in the first place. Rather, the troubling undertones of the tyrannicide foreshadow the much more serious problems of the matricide (which has some important thematic parallels to the messenger narrative: an unsuspecting victim attending a sacrifice, being sacrificed him/herself). As such, the messenger scene represents an initial stage in a gradual shift of tone from the jubilant atmosphere surrounding the tyrannicide to the deeply tragic horror of the matricide.

As for Orestes' delayed recognition, I cannot improve on Cropp's discussion:

The prolonged anonymity has complex literary and dramatic motives. In the *Odyssey* Odysseus ... withholds his identity from his wife even when assured of her loyalty and from his father until this almost breaks his heart. With Orestes' disguise Euripides creates similar dramatic effects of suspense and paradox while also re-working motifs from the equivalent scenes of Aeschylus and Sophocles. There are also factors internal to his own tragic design. First, the early scenes of the play are not so much about Orestes as about Electra, and the portrayal of Electra's grief and isolation requires a postponement of the recognition ... Secondly, the prolonged disguise actually limits the characterisation of Orestes ... [which makes him] into something of a cipher — a young man open to direction like Telemachus in the *Odyssey*, undertaking the deed because he is imperceptive and inexperienced, performing it only under the impulsion of Apollo and the vehemence of Electra. (xxxiv-xxxv)

In chapter 3, I will focus on the ingenious ways in which Euripides "limits the characterisation of Orestes" in the early scenes and creates the "dramatic effects of suspense and paradox" which Cropp mentions.

Themes and motifs

The language of *Electra* features some recurring visual and thematic motifs which calibrate the moral and emotional tone of the play. For my purposes, identifying these themes is important because they

can help us distinguish between different 'layers' of meaning and communication, between characters and between playwright and audience (introduced above, p. 9). The visual and thematic strands that run through the play are, principally, to be seen as part of the latter 'message', and it may be counterproductive to read too much psychological subtlety into moments that reinforce that message. We should perhaps not dwell too long, for example, on the question why the Messenger uses a simile drawn from the athletic sphere (824-5), other than to reflect on the prominent role for this motif in a large part of the play. Similarly, when Denniston remarks that Orestes "could not use so brutally unequivocal a phrase as σφαγῆς πάροιθε" (ad 959-66), this may be making too much of a phrase which seems designed to underline the motifs of hunting and sacrifice at a crucial point in the play (of course, Euripides is very capable of crafting such moments to have local *as well as* broader thematic significance).

The examples just given — hunting, sacrifice and athletics — are the dominant imagistic motifs in the play: the first two of these, in particular, are pervasive in Greek tragedy in general and in the *Oresteia*-tradition in particular,⁹² and they serve a prominent role surrounding the two killings. It is interesting to note that the athletic imagery, with its triumphant overtones, disappears entirely after Orestes comes onstage with Aegisthus' corpse: this is part of a marked shift of tone surrounding the matricide.⁹³

Thematic material of a somewhat different nature is prominent in the earlier scenes of the play. Euripides explores issues of wealth, nobility and character, and has the Peasant, Orestes and the Old Man all expound a 'new ethic', in which good conduct is a more reliable test of worth than external signs or hereditary status. Such issues were surely highly relevant in Euripides' contemporary democratic society; in the context of the play only, these new standards seem to underline the disconnect between the traditional ('heroic') role which Electra wants to adopt for herself and her incompatible new surroundings; it is also indicative of Euripides' innovative approach to tradition, more about which presently.

Tradition (and the recognition scene)

I have above described Electra as a character 'trying to play her traditional part' but unable to do so because of the 'untraditional' nature of her circumstances. This is typical of Euripides' treatment of

⁹² For imagery in Euripides, cf. Barlow 1986b; in tragedy more generally, e.g. Porter 1986 (with further references). For sacrifice in tragedy and *Oresteia* myth (including the *Electra*), cf. Zeitlin 1965, Burkert 1966, 1983, Lebeck 1971, Mirto 1980, Porter 1990, Henrichs 2000. For hunting: Lebeck 1971, Vernant & Vidal-Naquet 1981, Burkert 1983, Vidal-Naquet 1986.

⁹³ On the athletic imagery, cf. Arnott 1981: 187-9; Kubo 1967: 23-4; Myrick 1994: 138-141, and now also Swift (2010: 156-72), who helpfully draws out the many points of contact with epinician lyric. Imagery related to the sun, light, etc., also disappears entirely from the play just before the matricide (cf. Cropp, p. xlii).

tradition in this play (and his later *oeuvre* more generally),⁹⁴ particularly his interaction with Aeschylus' *Choephoroe* (for Sophocles' *Electra*, see below). Euripides' approach in this respect is complex and highly innovative, and *Electra* draws attention to its novelty from the start by the unexpected setting the protagonist is placed in. I do not think such features are, at their core, 'polemical' towards tradition (as various scholars have seen them): rather, Euripides' modifications and reinterpretations of Aeschylus (and others) advertise the creativity inherent in his own approach rather than 'flaws' in his predecessors.

It is in this way, too, that I think the recognition scene, with its much-discussed 'criticisms' of the tokens in *Choephoroe*, should be interpreted (rather than as 'polemic', 'parody' or 'satire').⁹⁵ To make my position clear from the outset, I take the entire scene to be genuine, and do not think that any convincing structural or linguistic argument has been offered to cast suspicion on it⁹⁶ (thus, the debate surrounding its authenticity is not as relevant for my purposes as many other textual questions in which such arguments do have a role to play — other kinds of objections against the scene are inherently subjective, and to my mind, less reliable in determining authenticity).⁹⁷ The scene should be seen as a deeply self-conscious statement of Euripides' innovative approach, the most explicit example of such playful intertextuality in his extant work.⁹⁸ But, like other similar cases, the scene has local significance apart from its 'look-how-original!'-function. As I will discuss in chapter 2, the scene is as much about Electra's lack of insight as it is about playing with Aeschylus' *Choephoroe*, and deleting the scene would actually spoil quite a bit of the effect.

The roads not taken...

Finally, I should mention a few things which I will not discuss the chapters to follow. A first general point to make is that this is a reading of Euripides' *Electra* (and one with a specific bent at that), not a line-by-line commentary, so that some scenes will receive more attention than others, while some will receive none at all. The most glaring omission is that of the choral odes — for reasons outlined below — but the absence of detailed discussions of other parts of the play will also be noticed

⁹⁴ The best general accounts, in my opinion, of Euripides' use of tradition may be found in Goldhill 1986a and Michelini 1987 (both have sections on *Electra* specifically).

⁹⁵ For an assessment of the different terms applied to Euripides' reaction to Aeschylus in the recognition scene, cf. Davies 1998: 401-2.

⁹⁶ Cf. Basta Donzelli 1980b and Cropp *ad* 518-44 (iii) for discussion of the 'objective' arguments against authenticity, which they rightly see as very weak.

⁹⁷ The debate over authenticity began in earnest with a note in Fraenkel's *Agamemnon* (pp. 821-6; Fraenkel followed Mau 1877), and was taken up by (citing only the most directly relevant works) Paduano 1970, Bond 1974, Ronnet 1975, Bain 1977b, Basta Donzelli 1980b, West 1980, Tarkow 1981, Halporn 1983, Kovacs 1989, Goff 1991, Jouanna 1997, Davies 1998, Müller 2000.

⁹⁸ But not, in the end, fundamentally different from other examples of the same technique (which have sometimes caused less suspicion). Cf. Mastrorarde on the similar case of *Phoen.* 751-2 (*ad loc.*), and the discussion of several other cases in Davies 1998.

(Orestes' speech at 82-111 and Castor's at 1238-91, for example; the recognition scene will also receive relatively limited attention compared to the preoccupation with the scene in the scholarship on the play).

The omission of the choral odes deserves some additional comment. Apart from limitations of space and scope, it will be seen that the type of linguistic analysis that I aim to perform (along the lines sketched above) is inherently less applicable to the odes. Without a clear communicative setting, the odes resist interpretation using the methodological approaches I aim to apply to the rest of the play. For interpretation of the thematic and emotional contribution the odes make to the play (they are, I think, more than the irrelevant 'embolima' they are sometimes made out to be), I would refer to a number of articles discussing the individual odes.⁹⁹

Lastly, one of the perennial issues for scholars dealing with Euripides' *Electra* is the chronological priority relative to Sophocles' play of the same name. Though I suspect that Sophocles' play is earlier, I do not think the question can be settled unless some new evidence is presented,¹⁰⁰ and I would prefer to analyse Euripides' play in its own right. Sophocles' *Electra* can be a helpful point of comparison, but this kind of comparison carries with it the risk that one play is seen only in relation to the other. In any case, from the point of view of linguistic analysis, the rest of Euripides' *oeuvre* is a more helpful comparand than any Sophoclean tragedy.

⁹⁹ Cf. Walsh 1977, Rosivach 1978, King 1980, Morwood 1981, Jouanna 1998, Csapo 2009.

¹⁰⁰ Not much that is new has been said about the issue recently, and the history of the question (with bibliography) in Matthiessen 1964: 81-8 has not really been superseded.

———— *C o n c l u s i o n* ————

APPROACHING TRAGIC LANGUAGE

The discipline of Classics is notorious — if often unjustly so — for being slow to adapt to developments in other fields. Whatever measure of truth resides in that claim is, given our subject matter, perhaps not greatly surprising, nor even such a bad thing. Yet considering the central role language (in many different forms) plays in our enterprise, and considering, too, that the science of linguistics has seen dramatic innovations and changes take place in the last few decades, it should perhaps lead to a moment's pause to realise that many classicists, when they seek to better understand an aspect of the languages they deal with every day, turn first to works dating back to the first half of the 20th Century, or longer ago. Admittedly, it is not easy to surpass works like Kühner's grammars or Denniston's *Greek Particles*: but in the light of new and constantly progressing insights about language, we may ask if those classic works should be the end point or the point of departure for our enquiries.

The modern linguistic approaches described and adopted in this book offer more than terminological gimmickry: it is not, in other words, just a question of giving new names to familiar concepts. Rather, terms such as 'speech *act*' and '*pragmatics*'¹ reveal a fundamentally different way of looking at language: instead of a collection of symbols that bear meaning according to certain rules, language is a social activity, a *doing*; it derives its meaning in the process of communication between interactants, each with his/her own background and knowledge, aims and desires.

As much as any other aspect of behaviour, the use of language can tell us a great deal about such individuals, and about larger groups. If that is right, and if I am right to think that modern linguistics can help us analyse the use of ancient Greek language in ways that traditional descriptions of Greek cannot, then the study of Greek literature can be much enriched by insights developed in that field. I hope to have shown in the preceding chapters that at least in the case of Greek tragedy, looking at language in this way can shed some light on all kinds of interpretative questions.

I suspect that my analyses will also have made clear implicitly some of the limitations inherent in my approach. Many of these limitations are due to the fact that my end product was never meant to be a collection of linguistic observations, but an attempt to study a single work of literature and to say something about that work. Given that aim, some methodological techniques from modern linguistics quickly turn out to be much more useful than others (and I have nowhere near exhausted its store). I would also not want to suggest that my approach is a 'better' way, or an 'exclusive' way to

¹ Though the term is unfortunately derived, as Bakker points out (2010: 151): the discipline looks at the *doing* of language (πρᾶξις) rather than the product (πρᾶγμα).

reach certain conclusions about the meaning of a play. Indeed, I began this work by writing that many of my findings would sometimes be the same as those of other scholars, though I would reach them via a different route. In the end, the point is that linguistic analysis can and should aid and steer literary interpretation, not that it can function as a replacement for it.

Three areas seem, to my mind, the most promising for further work. First, the idea that speakers are characterised by their speaking styles has not been a very popular one in Classics, but this says more about a pervasive narrowness in the accepted definition of ‘style’ (a narrowness which can be prevented by adopting the perspective on language sketched above), and about the troubled history of the very concept of characterisation in our field (cf. pp. 44-5), than about what I believe we actually find in our texts. Especially in the case of tragedy (a genre where the action revolves entirely around the spoken word), it is hard to imagine how a playwright could affect characterisation without modulating his characters’ speech — unless, of course, we want to give up on the notion of characterisation altogether, which I do not.

Second, I believe that more can be said about gendered language in Greek tragedy. It is striking to see the extent to which the make-up of the group (**mixed** versus **single-sex**) seems to determine the linguistic behaviour of Electra in this play, and I am confident that other plays may yield similar (yet different, since no two Euripidean women are the same) findings.

Finally, I feel that general reflections in Greek tragedy deserve to be fundamentally re-evaluated, and positioned, as I have tried to do throughout this book, squarely within their *communicative* context. Conservatism in textual criticism is, apparently, a vice of youth; yet I have never been satisfied with the knee-jerk reach for the interpolation scalpel in the case of Euripidean *gnomai* which do not sit as well in their surrounding lines as some scholars think they should.

Each of these projects would require a very careful analysis of Euripidean (or Aeschylean/Sophoclean/tragic) language. If I have shown that such an analysis could profit from the application of modern linguistic method, that shall be a useful conclusion in itself. If, on top of that, I have said anything worth saying about *Electra* — a difficult, but I believe powerfully tragic play — then my job is done.

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GLOSSARY OF LINGUISTIC TERMS

Numbers in parentheses refer to the pages in the introduction where a term is discussed; as above, a different typeface marks terms which are explained elsewhere in the glossary. In formulating these entries, I have profited from Allott 2010 (an introduction to pragmatics organised by 'key terms'), and from the glossary in Watts 2003.

Adjacency pair (12-15): In CA, an adjacency pair is an automated sequence of conversational turns, consisting of a first part and a corresponding second part, the first giving rise to the expectation that the second will follow. Examples are question-answer, request-acceptance/denial, greeting-greeting. A preference organisation regulates which variety of second part is the more regular and unmarked response to a first part (e.g. an acceptance is the unmarked response to a request, a denial the more marked variety). Such patterns may vary across languages and cultures.

Bald (29-30): In politeness theory, a FTA which is performed without any redressive facework is called bald. Bald FTAs may, but do not have to, give rise to an interpretation as impoliteness.

Conversation analysis (CA) (12-15): Also known as the study of 'talk-in-interaction'. CA involves detailed examination of naturally produced samples of language in use, in order to catalogue and understand the repertoire of members of a speech community for the organisation of talk. Topics include the system by which speakers divide speaking turns (**turn-taking**), regularly occurring patterns of sequential turns (**adjacency pairs**), and the ways in which speakers agree on and maintain or change a topic of conversation (**topic-maintenance**). CA is sometimes seen as part of **pragmatics**. The theoretical vocabulary and method developed in CA has been applied to literary conversation as well.

(Conversational) implicature (20-2): In Gricean pragmatics, an implicature is what a speaker means in making an utterance beyond what he/she actually ('literally') says. For example, in the following conversation

Pylades: Would you like to go see a film tonight?

Electra: I have a lot of work to do.

Electra clearly intends to communicate that she cannot accept Pylades' invitation, even though such a meaning is not part of what the words of her utterance mean. The communicated meaning has to be derived through a process of inference. In Grice's work, such inferences

depend on the **cooperative principle** and **conversational maxims**; other pragmatic theorists have proposed different systems (e.g. the **principle of relevance** in **relevance theory**).

Cooperative principle (20-1): The notion (first proposed by H. P. Grice) that in conversation participants try to make their contributions suitable to the shared purpose of the 'talk exchange' that they are engaged in: speakers follow a set of **conversational maxims**, principles with which it is reasonable to comply in the pursuit of cooperation in communication. The cooperative principle also allows hearers to derive inferences: if a speaker seems to violate a **maxim**, the hearer will re-interpret his/her utterance so in a way that ensures that its meaning does comply with the principle (such an inference is called a **conversational implicature**). The cooperative principle has been heavily criticised, e.g. by the proponents of **relevance theory**.

Dispreferred turn: See preference organisation.

Explanation (37): In modern paroemiology, the meaning of a proverb or wisdom saying *as applied to the particular case at hand*. For example, in the following conversation

Clytemnestra: Will you ever finish fixing that infernal radiator?

Aegisthus: Rome wasn't built in a day, darling.

Aegisthus deflects Clytemnestra implied criticism about his pace of work by suggesting that the task is a considerable one and therefore takes a significant amount of time to complete. This particular application (concerning the radiator) of a general truth (concerning the time it takes to perform large tasks) is called the explanation.

Face (29-32): In **politeness theory**, the image that a person wants to adopt for himself in social interaction (as a technical term, the concept derives from the work of Ervin Goffman): in other words, the way that an individual sees him/herself or would like to be seen by others. Politeness can be understood as an attempt to avoid damage to another's face. Brown and Levinson divided face into positive face (the desire to be liked and appreciated) and negative face (the desire to be free from constraint); others have criticised this division.

Face-threatening act (FTA) (29-33): In **politeness theory**, any act (verbal or otherwise) that threatens the **face** of another participant in an interaction/conversation. According to Brown and Levinson, all expressions of politeness are oriented towards a particular FTA, and serve to limit the damage to face done by that FTA.

Facework (32): In **politeness theory**, any effort made by the participants in verbal interaction which is designed to preserve (or damage, in the case of aggressive/negative facework) their own **face** or that of others.

Felicity conditions (18): In **speech act** theory, felicity conditions are the conditions that must be satisfied for a speech act to be performed successfully. If such conditions are not satisfied, the speech act **misfires**. For example, if a person presiding over a wedding ceremony says ‘I now pronounce you husband and wife’, but is not qualified to officiate, then no marriage has taken place (a misfire). Felicity conditions generally concern the types of participant that must be involved in a certain speech act, the attitudes and intentions of those participants, and procedures and conventions that must be followed in performing the act.

First part: See **adjacency pair**.

First-person saying (39-40): In modern **proverbology**, proverbs and other wisdom sayings are sometimes classified according to the person(s) or thing(s) to whom/which the general sentiment expressed is applied in a particular case (see also **explanation**). If the generalisation is applied to the speaker him/herself, it is a first-person saying; if it is applied to the addressee, it is a second-person saying; if it is applied to someone (or something) else, it is a third-person saying. Singular and plural are both possible, as are multiple persons (when a sentiment applies to more than one group/person). This is not to be confused with grammatical person and number. For example, in the following conversation

Castor: What did you think of Agamemnon’s Powerpoint presentation?
Polydeuces: Well, clearly, you can’t teach an old dog new tricks.

Polydeuces’ generalisation is a third-person saying, as his general sentiment (a person who is used to doing things a certain way will not normally change) is applied to Agamemnon (who probably more frequently uses slides).

Floor (12): In **conversation analysis**, the metaphorical space (i.e. the ‘right’) to speak. A speaker has the floor for as long as his/her speaking **turn** lasts, at which point it is either taken over by another speaker, or (if no other speaker is **selected** or **self-selects**) the first speaker may continue.

Gricean pragmatics (20-5): a branch of pragmatics originating in the work of P. H. Grice, that deals with meaning as it is inferred by hearers and intended to be communicated by speakers, beyond that meaning which is enclosed in the actual words used. In a sense, **relevance theory** is also part of this tradition. Key terms include (**conversational**) **implicature**, the **cooperative principle** and **conversational maxims**.

Illocutionary act (18): in **speech act** theory, the act performed in making an utterance, such as promising, asserting, requesting, etc. The illocutionary act is traditionally contrasted with the locutionary act (the physical act of saying something) and the perlocutionary act/effects (the

resulting effects which are caused by the utterance. For example, when considering the sentence ‘New recruits have to polish their boots twice a day’, we may wonder about its illocutionary force even if we know the ‘literal meaning’ of the sentence. If spoken by a reporter in a news story on the army it will probably have the force of an assertion, but if it is uttered by a commanding officer to a group of recruits, it will have the force of a command.

Indirect speech act (19-20): In **speech act theory**, an utterance which achieves a certain illocutionary force without ‘wearing it on its sleeve’; in other words, any utterance where the intended force does not correspond to the sentence type (declarative, interrogative, imperative) or with an illocutionary ‘tag’ (“I request that...”, “I promise that...”). For example, someone can make an assertion in the form of a question: thus, the utterance “Who wouldn’t want to win a million pounds?” would normally function as an assertion, that all people want to win such a prize. Deriving the ‘real’ illocutionary force from an indirect speech act depends on inference, in some cases on linguistic and cultural convention (for example, in English requests are conventionally uttered in indirect form, such as “Could you...?”, rather than the direct “I request that...”).

Insertion sequence (13-14): in **conversation analysis**, a sequence of conversational turns which intervenes between the **first** and **second part** of an adjacency pair. The first part of that adjacency pair retains ‘conditional relevance’ over the insertion sequence(s), which will accordingly be interpreted as preliminary to the fulfillment of the overarching pair. For example, in the following conversation

Old Man: How much does that iPad cost?
Peasant: Pounds or euros?
Old Man: Pounds, please.
Peasant: It’s four-hundred and twenty-nine, then.

the Peasant’s question will be seen as somehow relevant to the Old Man’s, and it will be felt that the Peasant sees the completion of the intervening pair as a prerequisite for him to provide a satisfying answer to the Old Man’s question.

Manner: See maxim of conversation.

Maxims of conversation (20-1): The conversational maxims are a central part of **Gricean pragmatics**: they are rules/principles which speakers observe in conversation, and together make up the **cooperative principle**. If they are intentionally violated (‘flouted’), this will give rise to a **conversational implicature**. The four maxims are that of **quantity** (make your contribution no more and no less informative than required), **quality** (try to make your

contribution one that is true), **relation** (be relevant) and **manner** (be perspicuous, avoid obscurity and ambiguity).

Misfire: See **felicity conditions**.

Mixed group (27-8): An interaction consisting of male *and* female participants. As opposed to a **single-sex group**. The make-up of a group is an important factor in the analysis of the influence of gender on language use.

Off-record (29-30): In **politeness theory**, a **politeness strategy** that consists of formulating a FTA in such a way that the face-threat can be ignored, often in the form of an **indirect speech act**. The speaker will 'implicate' (see **conversational implicature**) that part of his message that entails the face-threat, without literally saying it. The hearer is thus offered an 'out', which he/she can take by ignoring the implicature.

Performative (18-19): A **speech act** which 'changes the world' merely by virtue of the utterance being made. For example, merely by uttering the sentence "I hereby declare this exhibition opened", a speaker may change the status (opened or closed) of the exhibition in question. Performatives 'create' rather than 'describe' facts, and cannot be true or false (they do have **felicity conditions**).

Politeness strategy (29-31): In **politeness theory**, one of any number of possible forms of expression which prevents damage to the hearer's (and/or speaker's own) **face**. According to Brown and Levinson, politeness strategies are oriented either towards positive face (positive politeness) or their negative face (negative politeness) (see **face**).

Politeness theory (28-25): The study of how speakers use linguistic expressions in order to be polite to others and maintain social equilibrium. The central concept involved in politeness theory is that of **face**. The most influential theory is that of Brown and Levinson, but it has been frequently criticised, among others by Watts.

Politic behaviour (32-3): In Watts' version of **politeness theory**, that behaviour (linguistic and non-linguistic), which the participants construct as being appropriate to the ongoing social interaction.

Pragmatics (15-25): The study of language as it *used* by speakers *in context*. Pragmatics studies the relation between what sentences mean and what speakers mean when they utter them, or (in another conception of the discipline) it attempts to describe in psychologically realistic terms how human communication works.

Preference organisation (14-15): In conversation analysis, the system which regulates which second part is the more marked response to the first part of an adjacency pair. For example, both a rejection and acceptance are possible second parts to complement an invitation as first part, but rejections normally constitute a more complex conversational turn (including pauses, hedges, etc.), and are therefore more marked than acceptances. In this case, rejection is the dispreferred second part, acceptance the preferred second part. These terms should not be taken to suggest psychological/emotional preference, only linguistic markedness. Preference organisation may vary between languages and cultures.

Preferred turn: See preference organisation.

Principle of relevance: See relevance theory.

Quality: See maxims of conversation.

Quantity: See maxims of conversation.

Relation: See maxims of conversation.

Relevance theory (22-3): A theory of communication and cognition developed by Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson. The theory is built around the technical notion of **relevance**, the balance of 'cognitive effects' and processing effort required for those effects. Relevance theory claims that human cognition generally seeks to achieve the greatest gain in accurate representations of the world for minimum processing effort. As a part of linguistic pragmatics (in the tradition of Grice), relevance theory provides an account of how utterances are interpreted through a process of inference to the best explanation. This inferential process is guided by the communicative **principle of relevance**, which states that every utterance contains a presumption of its own optimal relevance (i.e. that it is worth expending processing effort on interpreting the utterance until the meaning derived from it satisfies expectations of meaningfulness).

Relevance (23): In relevance theory, a property of stimuli (inputs). The amount of relevance depends on how much 'cognitive effect' (crudely speaking, how much 'meaning') can be derived from an input and how much processing effort is required to derive those effects. The greater the effort, the lower the relevance. The greater the effect, the greater the relevance.

Second part: See adjacency pair.

Second-person saying: See first-person saying.

Select: See **turn**.

Self-select: See **turn**.

Single-sex group: See **mixed group**.

Sociolinguistics (25-35): The study of the effects of social variables, such as status, gender, age, etc. on the use of language. **Politeness theory** is normally considered part of sociolinguistics, which is itself sometimes seen as part of **pragmatics**. Another important topic of research in sociolinguistics is gendered language.

Speech act (17-20): **speech act theory**, originating in the work of Austin and Searle, examines the things that speakers *do* with their utterances (such as making a request, placing a bet, giving an order, or describing a state of affairs). Apart from classifying utterances by their **illocutionary force** (into categories such as ‘commissive’, ‘performative’, etc.), speech act theorists have looked at the **felicity conditions** which must be fulfilled for the successful utterance of a speech act. **Speech act theory** is considered part of **pragmatics**.

Third-person saying: See **first-person saying**.

Topic-management (15): In **conversation analysis**, the way in which interactants agree on, maintain, or change the topic of conversation. **CA** studies the linguistic devices speakers can use to keep a topic going or change it, but also the relation between topic-maintenance and social and cultural factors, such as the relative authority of speakers.

Turn, turn-taking (12): In **conversation analysis**, the mechanisms that govern the turn-taking system are one of the central topics of analysis. Interactants in a conversation alternate speaking turns, each of which lasts to a point where it would be natural for a different speaker to take over (in other words, speakers normally have the **floor** until they complete their turn). At such ‘transition relevance places’, the first speaker either **selects** (explicitly or implicitly) another speaker to take over, or allows any other speaker to **self-select**. In case no one **self-selects**, the first speaker can also continue speaking. There are normally surprisingly few overlaps and pauses between speaking turns, indicating a highly effective system of organisation. The power to apportion turns (**selection**), to ‘hog the floor’, or to **self-select**, may depend on the relative authority of the speakers or on other social/contextual factors.

