‘Seen But Not Heard’: Gender and the Choral Voice in Greek Tragedy

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In fond memory of David Raeburn

ὅτι καλὸν φίλον αἰεί

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Contents

Abstract 3

Introduction 5

1. Seen But Not Heard? 6
2. Scope 12
3. Summary of Chapters 15

Chapter 1: The Sociolinguistic Method 21

1. Context and Approach 23
    1.i Women in Athens: A Sociolinguistic Study 23
    1.ii Socio-Historical Linguistics 29
2. Evidence and Examples 43
    2.i 'Feminine' Language in Tragedy 44
    2.ii The Boundaries of Gender 51

Chapter 2: Finding the 'Feminine' in the Choral Voice 64

1. Methods of Marginalisation 66
    1.i Mourning 67
    1.ii Storytelling 77
    1.iii Escape 92
2. Shifting Gender Dynamics 103

Chapter 3: Stereotypes on Stage 130

1. Stereotyping Speech-Networks 135
    1.i Female Conversation 135
    1.ii Gossip 147
2. Gendered Perspectives in the Choral Odes 159
    2.i Women and War 160
    2.ii Invoking Aphrodite 170

Chapter 4: Tragic Grief: Gender and Genre 192

1. Homeric and Archaic Lament 195
2. The Politics of Aeschylean Lament 203
    2.i The Magnitude of Male Lament 204
    2.ii Women and the City 224
3. Gendered Grief in Sophocles and Euripides 245

Conclusion 257

Appendix: Recurring Speech Patterns in the Choral Voice 263

Bibliography 277

Abstract

This thesis explores the influence of gender on the choral voice of Greek tragedy. By looking internally at linguistic patterns across the choral voice of Tragedy as well as externally at contemporary sources for women in Athenian literature and society, the thesis argues that the tragedians differentiated the language of their female choruses in a variety of situations. These 'feminine' uses of language allow for a more positive interpretation of how female characters depicted on the stage corresponded to the real-life women in Athens than has often been presented in existing scholarship on this issue.

The focal point of the thesis is the choral voice, since this character-type tends to represent specific sub-sections of society whose characters and voices would have been more familiar to the original audience than the remote heroes and heroines of the myths. By combining modern sociolinguistic theory with a fresh look at sociological readings of female characters in Tragedy, the thesis adds nuance to the existing, often polarised, debates in this area of scholarship and uses new frames of analysis to deepen our understanding of how gender is used to characterise the choral voice in Tragedy.

Chapter 1 introduces modern sociolinguistic methodology and theory, and argues that it is possible to construct a 'sociolinguistic approach' which can be applied to the language of Tragedy. It introduces the three main recurring syntactic features which underpin the linguistic and literary analysis of the following chapter, and takes into account the methodological boundaries of using gender as a lens through which to study an artificial, male-constructed literary language. Chapter 2 applies this sociolinguistic approach to the choral voice across Tragedy, arguing that female choral language in the plays of all three tragedians is differentiated from that of male choruses in order to emphasise women's

verbal, social and physical marginality. Chapter 3 takes a broader sociological approach to analysing women's voices in the Tragic chorus, arguing that the female choral voice not only represented male stereotypes of women's speech, but also may have reflected some understanding of the societal realities facing contemporary women in Athens. Chapter 4 argues that in the context of lament, the language of the choral voice may have been differentiated less strongly along gendered lines than elsewhere in Greek culture.

Introduction

Hyt ys an old Englysch sawe [saying]: 'A mayde schuld be seen, but not herd'.[1]

So runs the first recorded reference to the phrase more commonly known to us from its later usage as 'children should be seen but not heard', from the fifteenth-century homilies of the Augustinian Canon John Mirk. Strikingly, at the earlier stages of its use the phrase seems to have singled out young (unmarried) women as its subject. Indeed, more than three centuries later Richard Graves recorded the same maxim in the form 'that a pretty woman should rather be seen than heard'. Only in the nineteenth century does the phrase become associated more generally with 'children' than specifically with 'young women'.

This English saying is only of direct relevance to a study of 'gendered' speech in the chorus of fifth-century BC Athenian tragedy insofar as it serves as a reminder of the universal nature of this topic. Much scholarly ink has already been spilled on the debate over the relative physical, social and verbal isolation of 'ordinary' women in Classical Athens.[2] Much more will be spilled on the subject over the course of this thesis, as a means of understanding the specifics of the social and political context in which Greek tragedy was created. Nevertheless, it is important not to lose sight of the fact that male-dominated societies have often sought to govern how women behave, including their speech: whether these ideals held when they made contact with the reality of each society, however, is another question altogether.

[1] Simpson & Speake (2015) *ad loc.*: 'children should be seen but not heard'.
[2] The following list merely scratches the surface of the vast array of bibliography on this topic: Richter (1971) 1-8; Pomeroy (1975); Gould (1980) 38-59; Loraux (1981) 37-67, Lefkowitz (1983) 31-47; Peradotto and Sullivan (1984); Arrigoni and Gentili (1985); Cohen (1989) 3-15; Just (1989); Loraux (1993); Walker (1993) 81-91; Taylor (2011) 703-720; Foxhall (2013); Pritchard (2014) 174-193; McClure (2019); and Backler (2021).

Generalities aside, the exhortation that women be 'seen but not heard' also has a particular resonance in Athenian theatre, where female characters abound but real-life women may have been harder to come by. Take, for instance, the original audience's experience of Euripides' *Medea* in 431 BC. In the opening scenes of the play, a Nurse, a chorus of female Corinthians and finally Medea herself appear on stage, but none of these are actually women: they're male actors in costume as women, wearing conventional Tragic masks denoting a female character-type to maintain the façade, and speaking words created by a male poet.[3] This is the 'male gaze' in action: women represented through the lens of male expectations, observations, and – naturally – biases.[4] Is there a place for 'real' women in the confected choral voice of fifth-century Athenian tragedy? This is the central question with which the following thesis is concerned, considering it through the dual lenses of sociolinguistics and sociology.

1. Seen But Not Heard?

More often than not, the women of Greek tragedy are defined in opposition to their real-life counterparts, due to the perceived contradiction between the prevalence of female characters on the stage and the political and social confinement of actual Athenian women.[5] This has given rise – not without reason – to the view that Tragedy's socially (and sometimes also politically) transgressive female characters are designed by men and for men as an oblique means of interrogating the complex questions surrounding male selfhood and Athens' civic ideology.[6]

[3] See Pickard-Cambridge (1988) 177-209 on the costumes and masks used in Tragedy.
[4] Zeitlin (1996) has the most detailed exploration of this argument.
[5] The archetype of this argument is Gomme (1925) 1-25; it has since formed the obvious starting point for further discussions on this theme in e.g. Richter (1971) 1-8; Shaw (1975) 255-266; Schaps (1977) 323-330; Gould (1980) 38-59; Zeitlin (1990b) 63-96; Hall (1997) 93-126; Foley (2001); Mossman (2005) 352-365; and Rutherford (2012) 289-291.
[6] See in particular Zeitlin (1990b) 63-96 and Hall (1997) 93-136 for this argument.

Even the long-running debate over whether women were allowed in the original audience of the plays at the City Dionysia is steeped in this male-focused narrative. The argument is often perceived as a deciding factor for how Tragedy is to be interpreted, as laid out most clearly by Goldhill:

> The frame of drama is determined by its audience. If there are only men and predominantly Athenian citizens present, then the plays' evident concerns with gender politics and with social debate and with the practice of deliberative life within the city become questions addressed to the citizen body as a body: it is as citizens that an audience may be expected to respond. The issues of the play are focused firmly through the male, adult, enfranchised perspective. If there are women present, although the 'proper or intended' audience may remain the citizen body, there is a different view of the city on display, and while the citizen perspective remains dominant, it is in the gaze of citizens and their wives that the plays are enacted.[7]

On this interpretation, the presence or absence of women in the theatre simply marks the difference between plays created *entirely* for citizen men and plays created *primarily* for citizen men. Our scant evidence from Plato points towards the latter interpretation: in *Gorgias* 502d, Socrates describes theatre performances as 'a kind of rhetoric directed at a public composed of children together with women and men, slave and free', while *Laws* 658c-d espouses the opinion that educated women (along with most of the rest of the crowd) would always choose Tragedy over Comedy as the best performance. On balance, then, it seems most plausible that at least some women were allowed to be present at the original performances of these plays.[8] In my view, however, the binary nature of the debate itself is unnecessarily reductive. Whether or not women were physically present in the theatre for

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[7] Goldhill (1997) 66.

[8] Following the arguments and evidence in Henderson (1991) 133-147; Csapo & Slater (1994) 286-305; Roselli (2011) 158-194; Finglass (2019) 96-97. *Contra* Goldhill (1997) 54-68, I am inclined towards a broader socio-religious rather than narrowly political interpretation of the City Dionysia festival, which would lean towards female participation in the dramatic festival. Equally, while the ancient testimony for female spectators laid out by Csapo & Slater is inconclusive, the often-cited joke in Ar.*Pax.*962-7, involving a slave throwing *krithai* ('barley grains', but also a slang-word for a penis) into the audience, is more easily interpreted as positive rather than negative evidence for women's presence in the theatre (see Olsen [1998] 254-5 *ad* 966-7). The double-entendre in the crucial line – οὐχ αἱ γυναῖκές γ' ἔλαβον (966) – is best understood as meaning both literally, 'the women didn't catch any [barley-grains]', and figuratively, 'the women didn't get any' (corresponding with the next line, 967: ἀλλ' εἰς ἑσπέραν δώσουσιν αὐταῖς ἄνδρες, 'but they will get some from their husbands tonight'). The meaning of line 966 suggested by Goldhill (1997) 63 – 'the women don't have [a penis]' – requires the verb λαμβάνω to be translated in a way that does not correspond to existing lexical senses (for a full list, cf. Diggle [2021] 857-8).

the original performances of the tragedies, these plays would almost certainly have become embedded in the wider Athenian social and cultural consciousness nonetheless – as the evidence from Plato suggests. It is likely, therefore, that women of all social strata would have had some knowledge or experience – even if only second-hand – of the most famous themes, scenes and characters from the festival dramas. This is not to disregard completely the issue of just how androcentric an audience the tragedians were targeting when composing their plays, but to offer a more nuanced approach to this debate beyond the dichotomy of women's presence or absence in the theatre itself.

A male-focused perspective is, of course, an important and necessary foundation of any understanding of Tragedy's place in its original social and cultural context. To my mind, however, this narrative cannot and should not represent the whole story. Recent gynocentric analyses of women's position in Classical Athens have argued persuasively that women were not necessarily a politically or socially censored group in the way conventionally held by scholars, and that within and beyond the home they were able to exert more influence on their social environment than has often been acknowledged in this debate.[9] Viewed from this perspective, the conventional wisdom that Tragedy's female figures were simply artificial contraventions of the 'real' social norm deserves to be re-examined. While the fundamentals remain aligned with an androcentric approach – it is impossible to ignore the fact that the women depicted in the tragedies were created and acted by men – it is nevertheless possible to reframe the question from a more positive angle: how far did the depiction of female characters correspond to social realities (and not simply élite ideals) in Athens? Were the women of Tragedy purely an imagined construct, or is their presentation informed at least in part by the tragedians' genuine observation of the actions

[9] Nevett (2011) 576–596; Taylor (2011) 703-720; Karanika (2014); Jacqmin (2015) 31–45; Taylor and Vlassopoulos (2015); and Backler (2021).

and reactions of the women around them? Because of the paucity of our evidence, both literary and historical, it is impossible to answer these questions confidently, but (as with much of the study of Classics) the lack of a definitive solution does not preclude the value of the exploration itself.

Given the mimetic nature of drama, an essential aspect of women's characters in Tragedy is the language they use or, rather, the language put into their mouths by the men who create their characters. The following thesis uses modern sociolinguistic theory to explore in more detail the voices, and therefore characterisation, of female characters in Greek tragedy, on their own terms as well as through the lens of the male poets who created these dramatic figures. The focal point of the study is the chorus, whose consistent character-type across Tragedy allows for a genre-wide comparative approach to syntactic and literary analysis. The results of this analysis, when connected with the study of gender in Tragedy from both a textual and contextual perspective, bring to light new perspectives on the characterisation and role of the chorus.

While linguistic analysis alone can prove a useful tool in the arsenal of literary analysis, in order to understand the impact of gender on the language of Tragedy in the round a fuller exploration of its historical and cultural context is needed. The sociological study of female characters in Tragedy is not without significant precedent in existing scholarship, where discussions of the relationship of female characters in Tragedy to their real-life Athenian counterparts abound. These have often taken the form of exploring gender dichotomies in Tragedy, and particularly of the 'feminine' or 'masculine' motivations of female characters on the Tragic stage, for example in the work of Michael Shaw, Sarah Pomeroy and Nicole Loraux.[10] The most recent collection of essays on female characters, edited by Patrick

[10] Shaw (1975) 255-266; Pomeroy (1975) 93-119; and Loraux (1991).

Finglass and Lyndsay Coo, has focused on fragmentary Tragedy, complementing the various studies of gender relations and women's roles in extant tragedies.[11]

Pivotal to my own discussion of women in Greek tragedy have been the studies undertaken by Helene Foley and Laura McClure on the sociological relationship between women in Tragedy and women in Athens.[12] These works do not deny Tragedy's androcentric core – that is, the argument that female characters may have been created primarily as foils against which men could explore the difficult issues of self and civic duty. However, they also argue for the possibility that women's representation on the stage also reflects, at least to some extent, the social realities of Athens: Foley, for instance, argues that female characters are doing 'double duty' in the plays, simultaneously steeped in and challenging the idealised social roles given to them by Athenian men.[13]

The methodological underpinning of this thesis is particularly indebted to McClure's *Spoken Like A Woman*, the first full-scale study of women's speech in Athenian drama.[14] This work covers much of the sociohistorical ground on the gendered dynamics of speech in the changing social and political world of fifth-century Athens, and offers a new frame of analysis for female speech in the plays she discusses through five speech genres that she considers to be 'feminine' in their Athenian context: gossip, seductive persuasion, *aischrologia* (at women-only festivals), lamentation, and ritual speech.[15] My own sociolinguistic analysis inevitably builds on these same verbal genres but aims to extend the work of McClure into new speech contexts, such as women's experience of love and war,

[11] Finglass & Coo (2020). Studies of female characters in individual tragedies/tragedians include Zeitlin (1978) 149-184 & (1990a) 103-115; Powell (1990); Griffith (2001) 117-136; and Wheeler (2003) 377-388.
[12] McClure (1999); Foley (2001); and Foley (2004).
[13] Foley (2001) 4, following Gould (1980) 38-59 and Just (1989).
[14] McClure (1999).
[15] McClure (1999) 29.

and to further nuance the existing discussion around the 'gendered' nature of gossip and lamentation. In particular, where possible I aim to explore the duality of male-constructed female language in Tragedy, which often represents a (male) stereotyped view of these 'feminine' forms of speech but can sometimes also reflect a more genuine depiction of women's experiences (and potentially voices) in Athens.

One final point of differentiation between my own work and existing scholarship is my focus on the choral voice as the primary means of exploring the impact of gender on the language of Tragedy.[16] My approach builds on full-scale comparative studies of choral language such as Laura Swift's *The Hidden Chorus*, and uses the chorus' dramatic function as a consistent character-type to highlight patterns of gendered language across the work of all three tragedians, rather than relying solely on the more typical author-by-author approach.[17] Additionally, to my mind the chorus is the best vehicle through which to connect the female voices of ancient drama with those of their real-life counterparts, despite the linguistic remoteness of Tragic choral language.[18] Unlike the more distant aristocratic heroines of Greek tragedy, the chorus more often than not represents a recognisable sub-section of ordinary people with ordinary experiences, motivations and fears. Indeed, choruses are typically defined by their social function, of which gender plays a significant part – female choruses are, for instance, variously mothers, maidens, wives and slave-women.[19] For this reason, the choral voice not only provides a fairly consistent linguistic dataset – the necessary basis for any comparative sociolinguistic approach – but also presents the closest

[16] The sociolinguistic studies of Tragedy conducted by, e.g., McClure (1995) 35-60 and (1999); Mossman (2005) 352-365; and Lewis (2015) 217-241 rely primarily on analysing the language of female protagonists in the tragedies.
[17] Swift (2010). For tragedian-specific studies of choral language, see Burton (1980) and Hose (1990).
[18] This issue is explored more fully in chapter 1.
[19] Notable exceptions are the divine choruses, such as Furies of Aeschylus' *Eumenides* and the Oceanids of *Prometheus Bound.* On the social identity, and particularly marginality, of the choral voice in Tragedy see e.g. Calame (1977a); Mastronarde (1998) 55-80; Gould (1998) 217-243 and Goldhill's response (1998) 244-256; and Foley (2003) 1-30. Choral marginality and its impact on the female choral voice is discussed in more detail in chapter 2.

sociological resemblance between the female characters represented on the stage and the real-life women in contemporary Greek (and particularly Athenian) society.

Despite the wealth of scholarship on the subject of women in Tragedy, there is nevertheless scope for further innovation in the methods used to approach this topic. My own work, while necessarily grounded in the comprehensive range of preceding scholarship in this area, aims to progress the debate in two ways: by bringing a more comprehensive understanding of sociolinguistic methodology to existing literary and sociological analysis of Tragedy, and by putting the chorus at the front and centre of a more positive approach to contextualising the women of Tragedy with their counterparts in Athenian society. The resulting conclusions do not blaze a wholly new trail in this already much-studied area of scholarship. Instead, the aim of this thesis is to add nuance to existing, often polarised, debates and to use new frames of analysis to add an extra dimension to our interpretation of the choral voice in Tragedy.

2. Scope

Inevitably, choices have had to be made about the scope and structure of the thesis. My aim is to prioritise analytic rigour over a wide-ranging survey of the topic, but the benefits of this approach inevitably come at the expense of some breadth. There are two main areas in which this manifests itself in the following chapters, one relating to the sociolinguistic aspect of the thesis, the other to its sociological contextualisation.

First, it is important to state at the outset that this thesis does not aim to provide a comprehensive sociolinguistic study of the choral voice in Tragedy. The primary reasons

for this lie in the limitations of the linguistic evidence base and the resulting heterogeneity of the analysis arising from it. As is explored more fully in the first chapter, a sociolinguistic approach which applies modern methodology and theory to ancient literary texts is necessarily limited in its scope. A thesis built purely on comparative syntactic analysis of every choral ode would almost certainly yield many interesting conclusions, but their disparate nature would likely render only some of them of tangible benefit to a wider literary and sociological analysis of the choral voice in Tragedy. For this reason, I have concentrated my efforts on three forms of syntax in the choral voice which recur with some consistency across the plays of all three tragedians: tragic cries, close repetition and rhetorical questions.[20]

These three focal points of my linguistic analysis have been chosen precisely because their frequency across both the male and female choral voice aid a comparative analytic approach. Since they are not sex-specific language features (although there is some evidence that they may be sex-preferential), this evidence-base in and of itself is not intended to be empirical testimony of the existence of deliberately 'gendered' language in Tragedy. Instead, the linguistic analysis of this data is intended to be used as a foundation from which innovative and nuanced approaches to the literary analysis of the choral odes can be advanced. This approach mirrors the methodological logic of Suzanne Romaine, who argues that

> written language, both literary and non-literary… is a datum of interest to both students of language and literature, though the use each will make of this fact will depend on the discipline or background from which they approach the problem. The territories are overlapping and not mutually exclusive; and there does not seem to be much point in arbitrary compartmentalization.[21]

[20] The full evidence base for these three features of choral language is laid out in the Appendix.
[21] Romaine (1982) 21.

In my own view, the value of a sociolinguistic approach to women's voices in Tragedy is clearest when used in combination with existing avenues of literary analysis. For this reason, the sociolinguistic approach taken in this thesis is neither exhaustive nor an end in itself, but rather designed to work in conjunction with (and mutually reinforce) a wider examination of gender and language in the choral voice.

Second, it is important to recognise the Athenocentric nature of the sociological contextualisation that accompanies my linguistic and literary analysis. While modern scholarship has often disagreed on the precise nature of the social, cultural and political relationship between Tragedy and Athens, there has been broad acceptance that plays which were produced by and for Athenians were meant to be relatable at least to some degree to the realities faced by those Athenians.[22]

However, there is plenty of evidence to suggest that, from its earliest period, Tragedy transcended a purely Athenian audience. On the one hand, non-Athenians were brought to Tragedy by the fact that they were permitted to attend the City Dionysia festival.[23] On the other, Tragedy was brought progressively to more and more non-Athenian audiences through performance and re-performance traditions across the Mediterranean and beyond.[24] Undoubtedly, the heterogeneity of the various audiences of Tragedy would have elicited different reactions to the settings and characters portrayed on the stage, and not all would have seen a direct resemblance between the women on stage and the women of their own cities and cultures, whether in Athens or elsewhere.

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[22] See e.g. Winkler & Zeitlin (1990); Sommerstein (1993); Hall (1997) 93-126; Boedeker & Raaflaub (2005) 109-127; and in particular the sensitive discussion of this issue in Griffith & Carter (2011) 1-7.
[23] Csapo & Slater (1994) 286-301; and Roselli (2011) 118-157.
[24] Good overviews of the performance of Tragedy outside Athens can be found in Wilson (2007b); Bosher (2012b); and Csapo *et al.* (2014). For specific geographies, see e.g. Wilson (2007a) 351-377 and Bosher (2012a) 97-111, on Sicilian Tragedy; Ceccarelli & Milanezi (2007) 186-214, on Tragedy in Cyrene; Moloney (2014) 231-248 and Guen (2014) 249-274, on Tragedy in Macedonia; and Braund & Hall (2014) 371-390, on Tragedy in the Black Sea region.

With this in mind, there are nevertheless two reasons for making Athens the basis of Tragedy's sociological contextualisation. The first is that regardless of its gradual internationalisation, the dramatic tradition itself remains first and foremost an Athenian construct, created in the first instance by Athenian playwrights and performed to a primarily Athenian audience at the Athenian festival of the City Dionysia. The primary port of call for its cultural context, therefore, should still be Athenian political, legal and social traditions. The second is that our best evidence for the period in which the majority of the extant tragedies were created comes from Athens, coinciding as it did with the city-state's 'golden age'. Comparative evidence most often comes from the very Athenian traditions of oratory, Old Comedy, historiography and epigraphy, creating a self-fulfilling (even if in some ways self-limiting) prophecy of Athenocentrism.

This is not to say that work cannot and should not be undertaken on the presentation and reception of female characters in Tragedy beyond Athens: further study of, for instance, potential connections between the societies of the Black Sea region and the depiction of the Taurians in Euripides' *Iphigenia among the Taurians* would be a natural – and needed – extension of this thesis. Nonetheless, with a few exceptions, a non-Athenian sociological reading remains out of the scope of the following argument.

3. Summary of Chapters

Chapter 1, 'The Sociolinguistic Approach', examines in detail various modern sociolinguistic theories about the impact of gender on language and suggests ways in which each of these theories can be applied to the sociological context of women's speech in

Athenian society and drama. It acknowledges the limitations of such an approach, namely the paucity of evidence for the speech of real Athenian women, the fact that almost all the sources for female speech in fifth-century Athens are male-authored, and the difficulties of extrapolation from the small proportion of tragedies which are now extant. However, recent scholarship on female speech in Greek literary sources such as Old Comedy and Homeric epic shows that with judicious use of sociolinguistic methods, some patterns and conclusions can be drawn from ancient, male-authored material to analyse potentially 'feminine' forms of speech in the tragedies.

Three recurring speech forms in the choral voice of the extant tragedies are then introduced: tragic cries (their volume and intensity), close repetition of words or phrases, and rhetorical questions. Close analysis of a passage from Aeschylus' *Seven Against Thebes*, incorporating all three of these features of speech, shows that they can be attributed to women's voices as a means of showing a heightened emotional state, conditioned vocal authority or other characteristics associated with the male perception of Athenian women.

Finally, other uses of these three syntactic speech-forms in Tragedy are considered, most notably in the language of lament and expressions of pain. The interaction of gender with these linguistic portrayals of emotion in speech is discussed, demonstrating that even when attributed to male rather than female speakers these speech patterns can nevertheless be used to amplify 'feminine' characteristics, setting up the more detailed discussion of these themes to follow.

Chapter 2, 'Finding the 'Feminine' in the Choral Voice', gives a detailed analysis of how the three main patterns of female speech identified in the previous chapter are put to use across the tragedies, in particular to highlight the marginal social position of the chorus-women

involved. The concept of choral 'marginality' itself is broken down into three parts: verbal, social, and physical.

First, the speech patterns are connected with depictions of chorus-women in a state of heightened emotion such as panic, grief or anxiety, demonstrating how syntax and linguistic expression can emphasise the chorus' verbal and social marginality. Further sociolinguistic studies are then used to show how gender and race can intersect to marginalise the voice of the chorus in certain situations. This leads into a wider discussion of how similar syntactic patterns can depict the chorus-women of various plays as lacking the authority to tell the mythological narratives which form part of the chorus' role on stage. An examination of the 'escape' motif in the choruses of Tragedy demonstrates how the chorus' physical marginality contributes to their verbal and social disenfranchisement.

Finally, the chapter considers instances in which the marginality of the female choral voice is used ironically, as chorus-women who would not ordinarily be able to exert authority over the drama are sometimes able to influence the plot despite their low social position. This leads to an exploration of plays in which the choral voice changes during the play, moving from 'feminine' forms of syntax towards more assertive, confident and 'masculine' forms of speech within the same play, according to the needs of the plot.

Chapter 3, 'Stereotypes on Stage', moves away from a purely sociolinguistic approach to a broader sociological contextualisation of the female choral voice in Tragedy. It uses evidence from epigraphy, oratory, Old Comedy, historiography and philosophy to connect the chorus-women on stage with other representations of women in Athenian literature and culture.

The chapter's primary focus is on Euripides' plays, which, as well as being the most numerous of the extant plays and fragments, present the broadest array of women on stage as protagonists and chorus members. One strand of the argument relates to the close relationship between later Euripidean Tragedy and Aristophanic Comedy, arguing that some of Euripides' chorus-women are presented through their speech in a similar manner to Aristophanes' female characters, as gossiping and unintelligent. The argument is advanced that Aristophanes and Euripides create a similar stereotyped version of female speech in their plays, for comic effect and as a way of characterising 'ordinary' or lower-status female characters. Various attitudes towards female friendships and speech-networks in Athens are then considered in relation to how they are portrayed on the Tragic stage. By incorporating epigraphic and literary evidence for women's perspectives on female friendships, the argument aims to show that both women and men recognised the social importance and emotional closeness of female friendships, but that male anxieties over the power of such networks could influence the depiction of female friendships in contemporary literature. This dual perspective can be seen in Euripides' treatment of female gossip, as by turns empowering for the women involved and inherently dangerous to the men excluded from it.

Finally, the chapter uses a similar evidence base from outside Tragedy to consider how the choral voice treats similar themes but from perspectives which differ according to gender. These differences become particularly prominent in the universal themes of love and war which pervade the choral voice of Tragedy, and demonstrate an overlap with the 'gendered' attitudes towards these issues in wider Athenian society.

Chapter 4, 'Tragic Grief: Gender and Genre', explores one area in which the nuances of a 'gendered' approach to choral language deserve further consideration. Lament has often

been characterised by scholars as a primarily 'female' speech act based on evidence from funerary rituals from across the archaic and classical Greek world. The chapter begins by laying out comparative depictions of lament from Homeric and archaic sources, as well as the presentation of lament in archaic and classical art, to show that in the pre-classical period the act of lament was delineated less clearly along gender lines than has often been recognised.

This comparative approach is then extended to Aeschylus' tragedies, in which the choral laments share more in common with their Homeric counterparts than with the more stylised, and obviously 'gendered', ritual laments which were depicted in late-archaic and early classical art. To view Aeschylean choral lament through the lens of a female-centric voice risks ignoring or having to explain away the laments performed by the chorus elders of *Agamemnon* and *Persians*, comparable both in length and emotion to those found in the corresponding female voice. For this reason, the argument focuses on analysing these laments in more detail, concluding that male lament in Aeschylus is defined more by the magnitude of the crisis (usually political as well as personal) than simply the gender of the lamenters. Male lament is then compared with female lament in Aeschylus' plays, arguing that women's laments are 'politicised' in the tragedies to act as a vehicle for confronting wider democratic issues such as tensions between the individual and the state, and the potentially disruptive power of marginalised voices in society.

Finally, the discussion focuses on the choral laments of Sophocles' and Euripides' plays, arguing that the long choral laments of Aeschylus' plays are progressively replaced with individual laments by protagonists in later Tragedy, with the choral voice instead playing a secondary, supporting role, including some potentially 'gendered' differences in the way Sophoclean and Euripidean choruses support the protagonists as they express their grief.

Ultimately, however, the argument suggests that lament in Tragedy was less 'gendered' than it may have been perceived in broader Athenian society, and that the relative openness with which men and women are allowed to express their grief in these plays may instead have formed part of the wider narrative of 'cultural distancing' which separated the largely fictional world of the Tragedies from the realities of their audiences.

Chapter 1

The Sociolinguistic Method

Introduction

The concept of gendered speech deservedly occupies a central place in the field of modern sociolinguistics as a result of pioneering studies on the interaction between language and gender in modern societies.[25] The idea that gender can affect language is also applicable to the realm of literature, and particularly to drama, as a medium communicated primarily through direct speech. A sociolinguistic approach to literary study ought, therefore, to play a particularly important role in our understanding of Greek tragedy both as a literary genre and in its sociological context, since, as Judith Mossman writes,

> it is perennially startling that a culture that prescribed the invisibility and silence of women produced, and indeed promoted to the highest cultural status, a genre in which women are portrayed as supremely articulate.[26]

Studies of women's voices in Greek tragedy are already numerous, with most scholarship focusing either on the cultural or historical aspects of portraying women on stage in Athens, as exemplified in the work of Foley and Zeitlin, or on the role of gendered language in the characterisation of the heroines in Tragedy, as found particularly in the work of Loraux, McClure and Mossman.[27]

[25] Crucial first studies into gendered language were conducted by Labov (1972); Trudgill (1972) 179-95; and Lakoff (1973) 45-80. Their work has profoundly influenced the many and diverse recent investigations into this area of sociolinguistics, such as Holmes (1995); Eckert & McConnell-Ginet (2003); Holmes & Meyerhoff (2003); Coates & Pichler (2011); Eckert (2011) 64-75; and Coates (2013).
[26] Mossman (2005) 352.
[27] Principal scholarship in this area includes Shaw (1975) 255-266; Loraux (1991); McClure (1995) 35-60; Zeitlin (1996); McClure (1999); Mossman (2001) 374-384; Griffith (2001) 117-136; Wheeler (2003) 377-388; and Foley (2004) 127-168.

Underrepresented in this line of research, however, is the voice of the chorus: despite the fact that 'there may well have been slightly more female than male choruses in Greek drama', the concept of a 'gendered' choral voice, in linguistic terms at least, has received surprisingly little attention.[28] Our evidence for Athenian tragedy is, of course, skewed by the accidents of transmission which have preserved certain plays rather than others; almost any conclusion drawn from this evidence can only tentatively be extended to the tradition as a whole. Nevertheless, a study of the linguistic elements of choral odes reveals a recurrence of certain features which can be attributed predominantly to female speakers. That the Tragic chorus is an especially fertile vehicle for this literary technique should not in itself be surprising; their role is characterised by their group status, often representative of a broader subsection of society as citizens, slaves, maidens or mothers.[29] Unlike the heroines of the Tragic myths, therefore, who tend to extremes of emotion and daring beyond the scope of most female experience, gender stereotypes can be applied with particular ease to the chorus, a part of the mythological *dramatis personae* already at least partly familiar in the civic reality of the Athenian audience.

This chapter examines how modern sociolinguistic theories about the effect of gender on language can be applied to the ancient, artificial, male-constructed, literary 'speech' of the Tragic chorus. This so-called 'socio-historical linguistic' approach is then compared with similar studies of ancient literary language – in particular that of Aristophanes, Menander and Homer – to gain a greater understanding of the strengths and limitations of applying sociolinguistic methodology to the language of Tragedy. Finally, there follows a more detailed examination of potentially 'gendered' forms of Tragic syntax in the plays, as well as

[28] Foley (2003) 12.
[29] Notable exceptions to female choruses modelled on a sub-section of society include the Furies and Oceanids in Aeschylus' *Eumenides* and *Prometheus Bound* respectively.

of how these recurring speech forms are used elsewhere in Tragedy beyond the confines of the female choral voice.

1. Context and Approach

1.i Women in Athens: A Sociolinguistic Study

While the recognition that gender can influence language has certainly flourished within sociolinguistic research over the course of the last half-century, this area of scholarship is by no means monolithic. Numerous studies have used varying methodologies to reach conclusions about how and why women and men communicate differently, each of which adds another layer of nuance to this complex area of debate. In establishing a sociolinguistic approach to the ancient literary language of Tragedy, therefore, it is important in the first instance to assess which elements of these theories may be relevant to fifth-century Athenian perceptions of gender.

The principal approaches to the modern debate can be categorised by the terms 'deficit', 'dominance' and 'difference'.[30] In broad terms, the 'deficit' and 'dominance' approaches both rely on power in communication, suggesting that women are continually subordinated in their speech because of a male-normative language system, while the 'difference' model attributes gendered language instead to the societal construction of male and female 'sub-cultures'.[31] An early proponent of the 'deficit' and 'dominance' approaches is Robin Lakoff, who uses evidence from the speech of North American women to assert that there is a distinct form of women's language characterised by an increased use of questions, including

[30] Terms of reference taken from Coates (2013) 5. See Thorne & Henley (1975) for a full discussion of both theories.
[31] A good overview of the 'difference' model can be found in Eckert & McConnell-Ginet (1992) 465-466.

tag-questions such as 'it's a nice day today, isn't it?'; hedges and qualifiers, such as 'quite', 'probably', 'sort of'; and euphemism to avoid vulgar or overly informal language.[32] Lakoff concludes from her evidence that

> 'women's language'... submerges a woman's personal identity, by denying her the means of expressing herself strongly, on the one hand, and encouraging expressions that suggest triviality in subject-matter and uncertainty about it.[33]

Lakoff's account of differences in speech between men and women suggests that women's language is somehow 'deficient' in comparison to a male norm, and that societal expectations and conditions reinforce this 'deficient' mode of speech. This itself feeds into the 'dominance' model, which, in Coates's words, 'sees women as an oppressed group and interprets linguistic differences in women's and men's speech in terms of men's dominance and women's subordination'.[34] Both approaches hinge on the context of a patriarchal society in which men are considered to be authoritative, so that their use of language in turn reflects their position of power, thereby marking out women's speech in opposition to this norm.

Such an explanation of language differentiation is also pertinent to the situation of fifth-century BC Athens, where active citizenship, including participation in democratic affairs such as passing decrees, was restricted to a select subset of men only. In this way, we can safely follow John Gould (himself following Shirley Ardener) in classifying Athenian women as – at least in political terms – a 'muted group': not literally silent, of course, but muted in the sense that, as Gould writes, 'the dominant structure of society is articulated and communicated in terms of a male world-position'.[35] The 'deficit' and 'dominance' approaches are also important when considering the fundamental issue that women's language in Tragedy is entirely constructed by men. As a result, a one-sided filter that is

[32] Lakoff (1973) 49-57.
[33] Lakoff (1973) 48.
[34] Coates (2013) 6.
[35] Ardener (1975) 1-17; and Gould (1980) 38. Loraux (1991) 1-3 supports this with her analysis of death in Athens, contrasting the public glory of men's deaths through the *epitaphios* with the private mourning of a woman's death, whose glory existed only with reference to her qualities as a wife.

absent in the everyday spoken word and represents a patriarchal language norm has already been applied to the language of female characters in these plays. Distinctions which seem to characterise women's speech as 'deficient' or weak – such as the tentativeness in expression, hedges, and tag questions recognised by Lakoff – are likely, therefore, to be exaggerated in the representation of female language from a male perspective in Tragedy. In my view, the element of power which characterises the 'deficit' and 'dominance' explanations of gendered language is an important lens through which to view the language of Tragedy, influenced as it is by both its male composers and the social disparity of the genders in fifth-century Athens.

The 'difference' model, by contrast, argues that power and dominance do not reveal the full picture of language differentiation by gender. Deborah Tannen, a key proponent of this theory, suggests that misunderstandings in communications with the opposite gender can occur because, in effect, women and men are speaking 'cross-culturally' as a result of their societally-induced, gender-segregated upbringing.[36] The idea is that subtle differences in educational methods, pastimes and conversational attitudes between girls and boys from an early age go on to influence how they then perceive and communicate with each other later in life. This leads to a 'male' communicative type, characterised by

> self-assertion…competing with one another to establish their individual claims to hierarchical status…seeking large audiences and avoiding showing themselves as vulnerable

and a differing 'female' communicative type, through which

> women emphasize connection with others…seeking empathy and understanding rather than guidance from their conversational partners…suggesting or asking rather than directing or telling.[37]

[36] Tannen (1991) 1-3.
[37] Eckert & McConnell-Ginet (1992) 466, with reference to Tannen (1991).

In effect, this theory arrives at the same conclusions about women's language as the 'deficit' and 'dominance' models, emphasising the female tendency towards tentativeness rather than authority and empathy rather than hierarchy, but explains it rather differently.

The cross-cultural 'difference' theory, too, is relevant to an Athenian society which appears to have been resolutely gender-segregated in both the private and public spheres during the fifth century BC.[38] Josine Blok's influential study of the interaction between women's spaces and their speech in classical Athens identifies the three areas of life in which women, in the ideal of the male-orientated society, would have been verbally active in Athenian society, categorised as private, semi-private and public.[39] The private sphere was centred around the *oikos*, since, according to the preconceptions of both ancient texts and modern scholarship, a woman was expected to be unrevealing and reserved in her speech, so as to preserve the privacy of the family.[40] This combination of expected domesticity and linguistic censorship led Michael Shaw to write of female characters in Tragedy that 'by the very act of being in a drama, which always occurs outside the house, they are doing what women should not do'.[41]

Blok's second category of female speech in Athens encompasses both a private and a public setting. An Athenian woman would ideally have been heard in a 'semi-public' space only through her role in formal lamentation, by nature semi-public since female laments typically began at the bedside and ended in the public sphere when the body was laid outside.[42] Myriad representations of women in art and literature, from Homer's *Iliad*

[38] See Gould (1980) 46-48 on the physical separation of women in the home.
[39] Blok (2001) 95-116.
[40] In modern scholarship see Gould (1980) 48; Blok (2001) 100. Ancient evidence includes Pericles' statement that women ought to ensure that they are not the subject of male conversation (Thuc. 2.45.2) and references in S.*Aj.*292; E.*Tro.*645-656; and E.*Her.*476 to the Greek maxim that 'silence is a woman's glory', collected by Richter (1971) 4.
[41] Shaw (1975) 256.
[42] Blok (2001) 104. However, legislation in the sixth century BC, seemingly brought in by Solon, limited the 'public' aspect of female lamentations by requiring the body to be laid out within the grounds of the house rather than in the public sphere: see Plut.*Vit.Sol.*21.4-5.

onwards, exemplify this ritual and familial function of women in society, which furthers the male view of lamentation as a stylised and idealised form of female speech.[43]

Blok concludes that in the purely public sphere, women were seldom expected to be heard, and that as a result, much of their participation in daily civic life revolved around others' perceptions of their intentions.[44] For instance, when out in public, women would often be expected to be 'in the company of other women, children or male kin', in order to preserve their reputation from others' gossip.[45] Further, one 'acceptable' reason for women to be out in public was to visit other women, which only increased the role that gossip played in the perception of women as both objects and perpetuators of idle chatter. The final, and most obvious, ideal form of public female speech was in Athenian ritual and religious festivals, both in female-only rituals such as the *Thesmophoria* and in universal civic festivals such as the *Panathenaea*. Religion permitted, and indeed encouraged, women to sing hymns or say prayers as part of their set ritual roles.[46]

We should consider these 'respectable' or 'proper' forms of female speech in Athens more as models for the social conditioning of women's speech than as the actual social contexts which defined when women would be heard, since Athenian women, despite male attempts to compartmentalise and constrain their societal roles, were far from a homogeneous group with the same intentions and motivations. Nevertheless, drawing on the social conditions of female speech – an inherent lack of rhetorical authority, the predominance of lamentation and ritual speech, and the networks of rumour and gossip – we can go further than Blok by

[43] *Il.*24.719-755; and cf. Alexiou (2002) for a more detailed discussion of the history of lament in Greek tradition. The gendered dimension of lament speech in Greek ritual and literary traditions is explored more fully in chapter 4 of this thesis.
[44] Blok (2001) 109.
[45] Blok (2001) 109-111.
[46] Calame (1977a).

connecting these social conditions with linguistic theory. Women's speech contexts, it seems, interact in an interesting way with the cross-cultural 'difference' model of gendered language as presented in modern studies. It is possible to argue that the separate social and civic spheres occupied by women in fifth-century Athenian society likely constrained, at least to some extent, their modes of speech. As such, their voices would have been heard most often in the main areas in which they were expected to be active: in the house, in laments, in female-centric networks and in ritual choruses at religious festivals. The male tragedians, therefore, were bound to stylise and overstate the forms of female speech recognisable to them from the separate societal roles which women were expected to play.

A further influence on our understanding of gendered language which cannot be ignored is that of 'folk-linguistics', encompassing certain ideas – devoid of empirical evidence – which have percolated through the human consciousness throughout history about women and their voices. Coates demonstrates clearly the pervasiveness of these stereotypes in various cultures through the medium of proverbs, such as 'a woman's tongue wags like a lamb's tail'; 'foxes are all tail and women are all tongue'; and 'où femme y a, silence n'y a' ('where there's a woman, there's no peace and quiet').[47] These adages point to the general sentiment that women talk a lot – or, at least, a lot more than men are perceived to do. This is accompanied, too, by judgements on the content of female speech: another English proverb, 'many women, many words; many geese, many turds', is an indication of folk-linguistic depictions of women as chatterers, prattling on with vacuous conversation.[48]

Similar maxims survive from antiquity, preserved in the *monostichoi*, or one-line verses, attributed to Menander. In these proverbs, women are often equated with evil itself:

[47] Coates (2013) 9.
[48] Taken from Ray (1773) 36.

θάλασσα καὶ πῦρ καὶ γυνὴ τρίτον κακόν (Men.*Mon.*323), 'woman is the third evil after sea and fire', and διὰ τὰς γυναῖκας πάντα τὰ κακὰ γίγνεται (Men.*Mon.*203), 'on account of women all evils come to pass'.[49] There is also some suggestion of the prevailing Greek (male) view of women's speech as being inherently deceitful and treacherous expressed in proverbs such as γυνὴ <δὲ> κολακεύει σε τοῦ λαβεῖν χάριν (Men.*Mon.*167), 'a woman flatters you for the sake of getting something', and ἐν γὰρ γυναιξὶ πίστιν οὐκ ἔξεστ' ἰδεῖν (Men.*Mon.*233), 'it is not possible to find faith in women'.[50] These age-old ideas about gender and language find especially fertile ground in literary contexts, where characters are most likely to be stylised and truisms clichéd in worlds removed from, yet representative of, our own. If Shakespeare can give his heroines such lines as 'do you not know I am a woman? When I think, I must speak', there is little doubt that similar stereotypes of 'the gossiping woman', 'the emotional woman' or 'the deceptive woman' would have entered, even if unconsciously, the male-constructed female speech of Tragedy.[51]

1.ii Socio-Historical Linguistics

While modern sociolinguistic studies can interact fruitfully with our knowledge of the society and culture of fifth-century Athens on a general level, extending this application to the specific dramatic context of Tragedy in Athens inevitably throws up a variety of methodological questions which need to be addressed. Judith Mossman has succinctly summarised the possible problems of pursuing modern sociolinguistic practices in the realm of Tragedy, citing 'a potential danger of anachronism and of cultural inappropriateness in applying some criteria to the female speech in the tragic texts'.[52]

[49] Translations and references taken from Lazaridis (2007) *ad loc*.
[50] Lazaridis (2007) *ad loc.*
[51] Spoken by Rosalind in *As You Like It* III.2.264.
[52] Mossman (2005) 353.

However, it is necessary to go further in critiquing, as well as embracing, sociolinguistic methods in our study of ancient literature.

There are three distinct issues implicit in Mossman's critique. The first is that any sociolinguistic study of Tragedy must rely on *texts*, i.e. written, rather than spoken, data. The second is that these texts are written in a literary language, which itself is a necessarily artificial imitation of 'real' language, compounded by the fact that female speech in Tragedy is written and performed by men. The third is that establishing the sociological context for and real-life examples of fifth-century Athenian spoken language is virtually impossible because of the dearth of extant evidence relating to the oral tradition.

The first two of these concerns are general problems related to the conceptualisation and application of sociolinguistic theory, and have been tackled comprehensively and persuasively by Suzanne Romaine in her work on 'socio-historical linguistics'.[53] She argues that sociolinguistics as a discipline always gives primacy to speech data and the spoken word, but that it can and should be extended to cover written language as well; in her view, 'written language' encompasses literary language, which should be seen as a specialised subset of the non-literary written language and therefore subject to differentiation according to the same sociolinguistic variables as in other forms of the written and spoken word.[54] Romaine concludes her argument with the following statement:

> In more general terms, the position one would have to take is this: there exist linguistic methods of analysis which are already valid; if written language is an instance of language, then the same techniques apply to all instances of language.[55]

This defence of 'socio-historical linguistics' works to counter two of the most problematic aspects of applying sociolinguistic methodology to Tragedy: that the data is drawn from

[53] Romaine (1982).
[54] Romaine (1982) 14-17.
[55] Romaine (1982) 17.

written rather than spoken sources, and that the language portrayed is literary rather than everyday speech. A similar view is taken by Andreas Willi, who argues that 'a language… is in reality a bundle of overlapping languages or linguistic varieties', and that in the written word, the choice of which linguistic varieties to use is almost always a conscious decision by the author, whereas linguistic variables are a largely subconscious feature of the everyday spoken word.[56] Similarly to Romaine, he concludes that 'no literary work can be fully decoded without the contribution of socio-historical (variational) linguistics'.[57]

While consensus can be found on the application of sociolinguistic methods to the written word in general – and in both literary or non-literary language – there is a further complication in the case of poetry. Poetic language tends to be even more remote from typical everyday speech: the language of Greek tragedy, a composite *Kunstsprache* of Attic-Ionic and Doric dialect forms, is a case in point. Poetry is also written in metre, whose rhythms further limit both the linguistic choices available to the poet and any comparisons between its artificial construction and reality. As the language of the chorus, on which this thesis depends, combines the furthest extremes of both artificial poetic dialect and obscure metrical forms, the additional issue of its remoteness from the spoken word in Athens must be addressed. The case against looking for sociolinguistic diversity in poetic language is put most forcefully by Mikhail Bakhtin, who stresses that the poet's distinctive, singular viewpoint combined with the metrical complexities of the language mean that all linguistic variation is subsumed into this one voice.[58] However, Bakhtin adopts a very narrow definition of 'poetry', excluding from his discussion the multiple viewpoints which the dramatic poet can admit when creating a piece of theatre. Indeed, even the author himself

[56] Willi (2002a) III.
[57] Willi (2002a) III.
[58] Bakhtin (1981) 294-300. By contrast, he argues that a prose author *can* if they wish choose to use the pluralities of narrative perspective to introduce and embrace linguistic variation.

acknowledges that linguistic variation in poetic language may not be totally lost in the distancing factors of dialect and metre:

> More often than not, we experience a profound and conscious tension through which the unitary poetic language of a work rises from the heteroglot and language-diverse chaos of the literary language contemporary to it.[59]

Although the issues of metrical and dialectal remoteness undoubtedly complicate the task, there is, to my mind, at least a conceptual argument for advancing the sociolinguistic method in the realm of Greek tragedy.

However, theoretical arguments in favour of extending sociolinguistic methodologies to ancient literary texts cannot counter the third issue facing any linguistic study of an obsolete language, which is that there is little evidence from which to reconstruct the voices of real Athenian women or even the contexts in which those voices would have been heard. As such, it is difficult to provide an accurate sociolinguistic context for any observations about gender in the literary language of Tragedy. There is some evidence that ancient societies in Greece were cognisant of gender differentiation in language. In Plato's *Cratylus* 418b-c, for instance, Socrates mentions women's preference for preserving archaising forms of speech, while in Aristophanes' *Women at the Thesmophoria*, after Euripides' relative has been dressed as a woman, Euripides enjoins him to 'make sure you also convincingly imitate a woman with your voice when you speak' (ἢν λαλῇς δ', ὅπως τῷ φθέγματι | γυναικιεῖς εὖ καὶ πιθανῶς, 266-7).[60] Michael Gilleland, too, has sought to collect some ancient sources for gender discrepancies in language, although these are disparate and few.[61] Taken together, these pieces of evidence are small but helpful indications that an awareness of gender and

[59] Bakhtin (1981) 298.
[60] This admonishment must surely refer to impersonating the *style* of women's speech as well as merely imitating tone and voice pitch, as φθέγμα elsewhere in Greek usage can mean both the sound of the voice and, more broadly, the language and words spoken by it. Interestingly, the use of the verb λαλεῖν is itself indicative of especially gendered speech, as Willi notes that the vast majority of the instances of λαλεῖν in Aristophanic comedy are used with derogatory force when referring to women's speech: Willi (2003) 168-169.
[61] Gilleland (1980) 180-183.

its perceived effect on language was, at the very least, likely to have been present in the cultural climate of fifth-century BC Athens. Nevertheless, the central issue – that we will never be able to actually *hear* women's voices of the period – remains.

The question then arises as to whether fruitful studies of gendered variation in ancient, written, literary language are still possible given the scarcity of 'real-life' spoken evidence with which to compare it. Here it is useful to turn to the work of others in the field who have sought to examine the impact of gender on poetic language elsewhere in ancient Greek literature.

Most notable among these is Andreas Willi's comprehensive study of Aristophanic language, which seeks to apply broader sociolinguistic theory to the linguistic variations from standard Attic Greek which are visible in Aristophanes' plays.[62] Willi makes clear the basis of his methodology for assessing the sociolinguistic properties of linguistic variation in Aristophanes, which relies on internal differentiation (i.e. instances where there are obvious irregularities in the language used when compared to the 'normal' forms which form the basis of the dramatic dialect), and external differentiation (i.e. when types of language ought, based on modern sociolinguistic theory, to be considered linguistic variation – such as the 'genderlect' of female speech).[63] Both of these approaches can be plausibly extended to a similar sociolinguistic study of Tragic language, and particularly one which focuses on analysing the impact of gender. However, Willi acknowledges a third plank of evidence which informs his understanding of linguistic variation in Aristophanes' Attic-based *Kunstsprache,* or 'artificial literary dialect': the evidence from Attic prose,

[62] Willi (2003).
[63] Willi (2003) 3-4. The 'internal differentiation' method is also followed exclusively by Bain (1984) 24-42 in his study of female speech in Menander, albeit largely for reasons of necessity given the paucity of New Comedy which has survived.

epigraphy and grammatical studies which have survived alongside the literary texts. While necessarily incomplete, Willi nevertheless sees these sources as important reference points because they take us as close as we are likely to get to understanding what real-life, everyday speech in Athens would have sounded like.[64] In particular, Aristophanic language – despite being necessarily a *Kunstsprache* of its own – shows enough overlaps with what little we know of ordinary Attic syntax to suggest that, like its depiction of 'ordinary' characters and 'real-life' Athenian settings, Old Comedy's language can be analysed with reference to what might have been the actual spoken language of Athens.

By contrast, Tragedy's palpably more remote *Kunstsprache* has much less in common with anything resembling the reality of Athenian speech. As a result, any sociolinguistic approach to Tragedy would need to rely on the first two aspects of Willi's methodology alone: 'internal' differentiation, based on analysing patterns of intra-textual linguistic divergences, and a narrow definition of 'external' differentiation, which seeks to connect these divergences with wider sociolinguistic theories on the impact of gender on language. That a fruitful study of ancient Greek poetry can be attempted in this way – that is, without recourse to comparisons with the actual spoken language of the time – is evidenced by the work of Elizabeth Minchin on gendered differences in the style and syntax of Homeric speeches.[65] Minchin considers various speech forms that are used in everyday language and that are also found in Homeric dialogue, such as questions, rebukes, interruptions, directives and narrative storytelling, and uses sociolinguistic theories such as the 'difference' and 'dominance' models (as outlined earlier in this chapter) to highlight the

[64] Willi (2003) 1-7; his perspective on the relationship of Aristophanic language to both Tragedy and 'real' Attic Greek is laid out in more detail in Willi (2002a) 111-150. This approach is reinforced by the work of Sommerstein (1995) 61-85, which seeks to reconstruct as far as possible the everyday language of Athenian women using Comedy (and in particular Aristophanes and Menander) as its sources.
[65] Minchin (2007).

impact of gender on how these speech-acts are deployed.[66] She concludes that the impact of gender on language analysed in modern sociolinguistic studies can, but does not always, translate to Homeric poetic discourse: for instance, rebukes in Homer's epics – as in contemporary linguistic studies – are mainly the preserve of male speech, while protests tend to be dominant in women's speech; equally, men prefer to ask direct information-questions, while women use questions primarily to share their own viewpoint more widely.[67]

These existing sociolinguistic studies of Greek poetic language, whether informed by 'real-life' colloquialisms, as in Comedy, or simply analysing the verse on its own terms in conjunction with modern sociolinguistic theories, as in Minchin's work on Homeric epic, have helped to lay the groundwork for my own sociolinguistic approach to the 'female' language of Tragedy. Further encouragement is provided by Laura McClure, whose study of female speech in Euripides provides a starting point for a wider-scale intra-textual analysis of 'feminine' speech forms and their impacts on the characterisation of women in Tragedy.[68]

McClure recognises the extra challenge that Tragic language poses in this regard, acknowledging that 'the highly stylized speech of tragedy, normally far removed from colloquial language, presents several difficulties for a study of this kind'.[69] Nevertheless, she follows the logic of Minchin's work above: that gendered differentiation within the artificial, stylised language of Tragedy may exist, and that the issue is, at the very least, worth exploring. McClure's conclusions, based on a survey of Euripidean language from across

[66] Minchin (2007) 145-287.
[67] Minchin (2007) 282-287.
[68] McClure (1995) 35-60.
[69] McClure (1995) 36.

lyric and non-lyric settings, are two-fold. On a 'macro' level, she argues that the distribution of the different forms of Tragic poetry creates a gendered baseline: in particular, she observes that female characters in Euripides are assigned more lyric lines than men – whether monodies or as choruses – which indicates that lyrics may have been considered a more inherently 'feminine' form of language by Euripides. On a 'micro' level, her analysis is based as far as possible on 'sex-exclusive' or highly 'sex-preferential' syntactic features – namely specific interjections like οἴ (particularly the meaning of 'ah me!'); expressions of sympathy or pity, such as τάλας, δύστηνος, ἄθλιος and τλήμων (all with a similar meaning of 'unlucky', 'unhappy', or 'wretched'); and 'intimate addresses' using the vocative + μοι (such as ὦ τέκνον μοι – 'oh my child'). Taken together, she argues that the 'exaggerated emotionality' of lyric itself, when combined with sex-specific interjections, descriptions and addresses which are designed to show or elicit sympathy in emotionally testing circumstances, combine to reinforce the roles that women play in Euripides' tragedies more generally.[70]

McClure's work undoubtedly lays important foundations for a broader sociolinguistic study of Tragedy. However, the narrow scope of her study – cataloguing only the sex-specific and highly sex-preferential syntactic forms of Euripides' plays – necessarily constrains the scope of the conclusions leading from it, which lean more towards multiple discrete interpretations of each linguistic form than a broader understanding of how and why 'feminine' language forms are used in Euripides' work. My own analysis differs from McClure's in three key ways. First, my data is taken from female voices across the plays of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides. Second, the focus of my analysis is almost entirely on the choral voice of Tragedy (with discussion of non-choral parallels where relevant). Third, my methodology relies on a qualitative rather than overly quantitative approach, governed

[70] McClure (1995) 57-59.

by analysing where, how and why certain linguistic patterns appear to be used by female choruses in ways which differ from the language of male choruses.

Combining these aspects, my approach uses sociolinguistic methodology as a frame through which to understand how the tragedians construct the language and characters of female choruses across their plays. Of course, as has become apparent over the course of the argument so far, any sociolinguistic approach to an ancient poetic language like Tragedy must necessarily focus only on a narrow aspect of sociolinguistic methodology: that is, the principles of sociolinguistic theories about gendered language rather than the practical analyses of gendered differences in real-life spoken language. This is particularly true of the Tragic *Kunstsprache*, whose very purpose is to distance the dramatic world of the plays from the realities of their original audiences. As previous studies in this field have recognised, the conclusions from any such narrowly-defined use of modern sociolinguistic methodologies can only take us so far. It is for this reason, therefore, that my own sociolinguistic study of gendered language in Tragedy is necessarily balanced by a wider literary and sociological analysis of the female choral voice, i.e. 'socio-historical linguistics' in the broadest sense of the term. For this reason, the resulting sociolinguistic analysis should be seen as a reinforcement and complement to this wider approach to literary analysis, rather than the end product in its own right. Indeed, as Minchin's abstract says of her own application of sociolinguistic methodology to Homeric poetry, 'the absence of clearcut and consistent findings on this question does not diminish the value of the original question'.[71]

One final aspect of my 'socio-historical linguistic' approach that deserves further clarification is my decision to focus on the chorus as a vehicle through which to explore the sociological connections between the women portrayed on the Tragic stage and the real-life

[71] Minchin (2007) online abstract, accessed via https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199280124.001.0001.

women of fifth-century Athens. On a purely practical level, the chorus is particularly suited to a Tragedy-wide comparative approach because it represents a consistent character-type across the literary tradition. However, there is also a case to be made that the chorus is the group closest in their social level to many of the original audience members – Athenian or non-Athenian. Unlike the protagonists of the tragedies, who are often extreme personalities facing extreme situations in which they are driven to act in extreme ways, the chorus represent an identifiable societal sub-group which would have been familiar in the audience's own reality. While the figures of Medea, Antigone and Iphigenia are portrayed as functionally remote from (even if nevertheless intelligible to) those watching their tragedies, the slaves, maidens, mothers, wives and daughters of choruses are intuitively more likely to be representative of their real-life counterparts in the society from which these dramas emerged.[72]

Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that the chorus-women of Tragedy are not simply a direct copy of their Athenian counterparts, due to the distortions inherent in the translation of the real world into the artificial dramatic world of Tragedy. The wider issue of how far the audience was expected to relate to the *dramatis personae* of Tragedy has been recognised by Claude Calame, who lays out various *prese di distanza* – 'distancing effects' – which dominate the form of Tragedy:

> ...distanza tra i luoghi rappresentati sulla scena e l'Atene degli spettatori, distanza tra le parole proferite dagli attori o i coreuti e l'autore del dramma, distanza tra le forme rituali tradizionali e le variazioni dionisiache che esse subiscono sulla scena, distanza provocata dal fatto che i ruoli femminili di attori e coreuti sono recitati da uomini; distanze istituite – tutte – e materializzate dalla maschera che consente la presentazione dell'azione drammatizzata al pubblico, occhi negli occhi.[73]

[72] For a similar argument, see Sourvinou-Inwood (2003) 265-267.
[73] Calame (1995) 99.

> *...distance between the places represented on the stage and the Athens of the spectators, distance between the words uttered by the actors or chorus members and the tragedian, distance between traditional ritual forms and the Dionysian variations they undergo on the stage, distance as a result of the fact that the female roles of actors and choruses are played by men; and all these distances established and made material by the mask that facilitates the presentation of the dramatised action to the audience, eyes to eyes.*

Of course, some of the 'distancing effects' listed by Calame are simply part and parcel of the recurring features or conventions which define the works of any consistent literary tradition. For this reason, it's important not to over-interpret the extent to which these features inhibit those in the audience from recognising and connecting with the characters on stage. Just as modern theatre productions often require their audiences to suspend disbelief over issues of plot, costume or staging, so too would the original productions of Tragedy have created a largely coherent but separate theatrical world for their spectators. Equally, just as modern audiences are able to relate to characters despite this 'fourth wall', it stands to reason that ancient audiences would have been able to engage with female characters on the Tragic stage even though these 'women' were in fact men wearing theatrical masks.

This is not to deny that some of these features may have created barriers between the characters and their audiences. For instance, the fact that the vast majority of tragedies are set outside Athens has often been interpreted as a sign of geographical and cultural distancing, perhaps with a view to offering implicit political comparisons between Athens and its rivals.[74] This raises the issue that if the setting of a play was intended to be in some way 'othering' to an Athenian audience, then a chorus of Thebans, Corinthians or Phoenicians may have seemed equally culturally distant to an Athenian audience. Moreover, it is possible that such cultural distancing was compounded by a ritual distancing

[74] On the use of non-Athenian characters as a means of Athenian self-definition, see Hall (1989) 121-133 and (1997) 100; and Dhuga (2011) 8; on the use of different geographies as a distancing device, see Sourvinou-Inwood (2003) 15-25; and on the representation of Thebes in particular in Athenian drama, see Zeitlin (1990c) 130-167.

effect, as the paucity of direct evidence to support the existence of female festival choruses in Athens during the fifth century BC could suggest that the very notion of seeing 'female' (albeit male-acted) choral performances on stage may have seemed alien to an Athenian audience.[75]

However, potential geographical or political distancing effects need not obscure to exclusion the relevance of relatable social and personal depictions of the chorus' character-types on the Tragic stage. For instance, the exact nature of the 'distancing effect' between the chorus and the audience would have been fluid between and within plays, according to the stance the chorus adopted over the course of the drama as well as to how far the gender, social status, and ethnicity correlated with the different members of the audience (men or women, young or old, etc).[76] On this interpretation, there follows a more nuanced interpretation of why the tragedies might embrace non-Athenian settings and characters. As Edith Hall argues, although Tragedy represents a 'distorted' view of Athenian 'social relations', 'the very plot-patterns of the genre itself, shaped by and shaping the Athenians' collective thought-world, testify to their social and emotional preoccupations'.[77] On the topic of the relationship between non-Athenian chorus-women and their 'ordinary' Athenian counterparts, Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood is even more direct:

> In the world of the play the citizen women of Trachis, or of Corinth, or of Argos, or of Phthia, were equivalent to Athenian women in the world of the audience. In both cases, women were not central, they were in a weak position, vulnerable.[78]

To my mind, therefore, the plurality of non-Athenian characters represented on stage should be seen as just one of these 'distorting' factors. Equally, as I argue in chapters 2 and 3 of this thesis, the male-authored, male-acted depiction of female characters is derived as

[75] For the cultural context of female *choreia* in the Greek world, see Budelmann (2013) 81-98 and Kowalzig (2007); for their role in Classical Athens specifically, see Budelmann & Power (2015) 252-295.
[76] See, for instance, Sourvinou-Inwood (2003) 265-289.
[77] Hall (1997) 99-100.
[78] Sourvinou-Inwood (2003) 281.

much from male literary (and potentially cultural) stereotypes of the women around them in Athens as from the actual behaviour of Athenian women themselves. This layer of artificiality would have meant that even a perspective focalised through a 'female' character's lens would have been intelligible to men in the audience. With regard to women on the stage, therefore, while the levels of distancing are necessarily differentiated to some extent by the differing genders or social statuses of those in the audience, this remoteness does not completely detach the social world of the perspective of female characters in general – and the women of the chorus in particular – from the understanding of the audience (and particularly the Athenians within it), whether men or women.

In a sociolinguistic study of Tragedy, however, the 'distancing effect' between the women in the Tragic chorus and their potential real-life counterparts that is most difficult to deal with is linguistic. Even within the already distant Tragic *Kunstsprache*, the chorus' language is even further removed from almost anything resembling typical 'speech' to audiences ancient and modern. Instead, it is built on archaising or ritual language, Doric dialectal features, and often highly complex lyric metrical forms. In addition, the chorus' delivery of their odes – sung to music while moving in a highly-choreographed fashion around the *orchēstra* – adds a further layer of distance from their audience.

Nevertheless, from a methodological point of view, we have already seen that it is possible to undertake intra-textual analysis of an artificially-constructed literary dialect without recourse to comparisons with the reality of the spoken language. Moreover, the very function of the chorus in Tragedy goes some way to closing the distance between the chorus and the audience that is opened up by the remoteness of their 'speech'. As Gregory Nagy has persuasively argued, central to choral performances in archaic and Classical Greece – whether as part of ritual settings or in the theatre – is the chorus' use of mimesis (crudely,

'imitation') to represent various identities and therefore mediate between the poetic, dramatic or ritual world in which they are immersed and the 'real' world of those observing their performance.[79] He concludes:

> In the case of classical drama... such mediation between solo and choral performance bridges the gap between characters in an archetypal past and the citizens of Athens in the present, whose attendance at Athenian State Theater was understood to be an act of civic participation. The nonprofessional chorus could mediate between the professional actors who represented the archetypal characters on the one hand and, on the other, the body of Athenian citizens who participated in the dramatic festivals of their city by virtue of attending Athenian State Theater.[80]

The question remains, however, whether the 'mediating' function of the chorus as a character-type can be extended to the language they use to communicate between the dramatic world of the play and the real world of the Athenians in the theatre. Claude Calame argues that it can, describing the 'polyphony' of the choral voice in Tragedy as being drawn from its multifaceted mediating role:

> As in melic poetry, the choral group not only uses self-referential statements to offer its songs as speech acts, and thus as ritual song acts, but, in a striking expression of polyphony, it takes on different roles to react emotionally to the action played on the stage, to try to influence it or just to give a commentary on it.[81]

This interplay between the performative aspects of the chorus' ritual-inspired song and what Calame terms the 'ethnopoetical', anthropological side to their dramatic character show that the distancing effects of their language can co-exist with the social and cultural proximity of their character-type to the audience's expectations.[82] In my view, too, the chorus' voice should be seen as an extension of the mediating role that this character-type plays in Tragedy. To this end, the 'distancing effect' of the chorus' remote language can be understood as one contributing factor to their complex and multifaceted relationship with the audience, rather than merely as an inconvenience or barrier to studying the choral voice from a sociolinguistic perspective.

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[79] Nagy (2013) 227-256.
[80] Nagy (2013) 256.
[81] Calame (2013) 36.
[82] Calame (2013) 36.

The discussion so far has laid out the foundations of scholarship on which my own methodology is based. Taken together, these frameworks are able to demonstrate that even a 'socio-historical linguistic' approach, which cannot rely on real-life spoken evidence and must instead take its data from an artificial literary language written entirely by men, can nevertheless generate a fruitful exploration of gendered language in Tragedy using principles familiar from modern sociolinguistics. With this theoretical foundation established, it is possible to turn towards a more concrete exposition of how the sociolinguistic method can be applied to the female choral voice of Tragedy.

2. Evidence and Examples

Three syntactic features of Tragic diction that recur with particular frequency in the choral voice are tragic cries, close repetition and rhetorical questions. While these features are not sex-specific, they are in some cases sex-preferential towards the female choral voice, especially when used in conjunction with each other to signal anxiety, fear or more general emotionalism.

Analysed within their dramatic and sociological contexts, these features create a layer of 'femininity' in the chorus' language. While this will be developed to show patterns of feminine language across the choral voice of Tragedy in chapter 2, the following discussion uses the parodos of Aeschylus' *Seven Against Thebes* to exemplify this patterning.

It is important, too, to acknowledge the boundaries of a 'gendered' perspective on the chorus' language, including the linguistic interplay between gender and other traits such as

religious fervour or physical and mental vulnerabilities. However, even if gender cannot be conclusively identified as the sole explanation for the use of these syntactic features in choral language, it should nevertheless be explored further as part of the wider interpretation of linguistic patterns in the choral voice of Tragedy.

2.i 'Feminine' Language in Tragedy

> In general, 'female impersonation' relied more heavily on gesture, gait, dance step, and bearing, and on changes of costume, than on distinctively feminine voice or language. Thus, overall, the most distinct features of any role, female or male, were conveyed in the first place through means other than the voice: a Nurse, or Queen, or Slave Chorus was recognisable even before a word was spoken, from mask, costume, posture, and movement.[83]

Mark Griffith's dismissal of the importance of women's speech in drama prompts some important preliminary observations. Onstage, various factors would need to work together to ensure that an audience could distinguish female from male parts in an all-male cast. The visual aspect of female impersonation, as described by Griffith, would – by design – be immediately obvious to the spectators at the City Dionysia festival, and perhaps inevitably informed their expectations of the character-types put before them. However, by stressing the importance of the visual delineations of gender, Griffith makes an argument which focuses too much on 'stage' over 'page' – or, more accurately for the first audiences of these works, 'sound'. Initial character profiles may certainly have been created by appropriate costume, posture and movement: there is every reason to expect, for example, that the chorus of slave-women in the opening movement of the *Libation Bearers* complemented their sung lamentation with deliberately exaggerated physical acts of lament, and were conceivably also costumed in such a way as to make clear their outsider social, and perhaps

[83] Griffith (2001) 118-119.

even ethnic, status before they even began to sing.[84] However, character development through the delineation of gender, with all its subtlety and adaptability through the course of a drama, is best conveyed through the characters' speech; it is therefore to the gendered language of choral odes that our attention must turn for a full appraisal of the dramatic potential of gender in the choral voice.

While no feature of choral language is solely confined to one gender rather than the other, three core linguistic elements in the chorus' songs recur overwhelmingly in the voice of women rather than men. These are: repetition of words or short phrases; repeated questions, often about themselves and their own predicament; and the 'tragic cries' associated with the emotional response to crises in tragedy, such as ἔ ἔ, αἰαῖ and φεῦ, among others. The following section from the parodos of Aeschylus' *Seven Against Thebes*, in which the Theban maidens fear for the future of their city, demonstrates both the presence and importance of all three of these 'feminine' features of language:

> τίς ἄρα ῥύσεται, τίς ἄρ' ἐπαρκέσει
> θεῶν ἢ θεᾶν;
> πότερα δῆτ' ἐγὼ ⟨πάτρια⟩ ποτιπέσω
> βρέτη δαιμόνων;
> ἰὼ
> μάκαρες εὔεδροι,
> ἀκμάζει βρετέων ἔχεσθαι· τί μέλ-
> λομεν ἀγάστονοι;
> ἀκούετ' ἢ οὐκ ἀκούετ' ἀσπίδων κτύπον;
> πέπλων καὶ στεφέων πότ' εἰ μὴ νῦν †ἀμ-
> φὶ λιτὰν† ἕξομεν;
> κτύπον δέδοικα·[85] πάταγος οὐχ ἑνὸς δορός·
> τί ῥέξεις; προδώσεις, παλαίχθων
> Ἄρης, τὰν τεάν;
> ὦ χρυσοπήληξ δαῖμον, ἔπιδ' ἔπιδε πόλιν
> ἄν ποτ' εὐφιλήταν ἔθου. (93-107)

[84] See Hall (1989) 131 for the presentation of this chorus as 'foreign' in Greek eyes. However, as Sommerstein notes, the women cannot be Trojan and are therefore most likely to be Greek (but non-Argive) slaves who were captured when the Argives conquered their city: see Sommerstein (2008b) 221 n.20 *ad* 75-76.

[85] I read δέδοικα instead of transmitted δέδορκα here, as conjectured by Askew: see Page (1972) *ad loc*. Not only does it correspond more accurately with the chorus' frenetic expressions of fear in this ode, but a more figurative interpretation of κτύπον... πάταγος may also provide a first indication of the particular clash of spears between Eteocles and Polyneices which the chorus will come to fear by the end of the play.

> *Who among the gods or goddesses will save us, who will defend us? Shall I throw myself before the statues of my ancestral deities? Oh! Blessed ones, seated on high, it is time to grasp your statues. Why do we hesitate, lamenting loudly? Do you – or do you not – hear the clash of shields? When – if not now – shall we [adorn our prayers with offerings of ?] robes and wreaths? I fear the clash: it is not just the noise of a single spear. What will you do? Ares, Thebes' guardian of old – will you betray your own land? Oh God of the golden helmet, watch over, watch over the city that you once used to regard with favour.*

The generalised tragic cry of ἰώ (97) in this passage is complemented by ἰὼ ἰώ (87) and ὀᾶ (89) preceding it, and by the opening lines of the strophic pairs that follow it, such as ἔ ἔ ἔ ἔ (150, 158); and ἰὼ παναλκεῖc θεοί ('oh! all-powerful gods', 166) with corresponding ἰὼ φίλοι δαίμονεc ('oh! beloved deities', 176), demonstrating a high concentration of language expressing acute emotional distress across the parodos as a whole.[86] Similarly, exact or almost exact repetition of words and phrases within this passage is evident from τίc ἄρα ῥύcεται, τίc ἄρ' ἐπαρκέcει (93); ἀκούετ' ἢ οὐκ ἀκούετ' ἀcπίδων κτύπον (100); and ἔπιδ' ἔπιδε (106). More widely in the parodos such repetition occurs in ἴτ' ἴτε ('come, come!', 109) and κλύετε παρθένων κλύετε πανδίκωc ('listen, listen to our maiden [prayers], as is right', 171).[87] Close repetition in such high density suggests urgency and intensity of feeling, as well as contributing to the sense of emotional distress highlighted by the tragic cries in the parodos.[88] In general, the female tendency towards intense emotional expression is a Greek literary *topos*, reflecting a broader societal view of women as emotionally volatile creatures.[89]

More broadly, lines 93-107 constitute an almost continuous string of questions, mostly pertaining to the chorus themselves: in the space of just fifteen lines, the women ask which divinities will protect them; whether they should prostrate themselves before the civic

[86] On the theme of discordant noise (including choral cries) in the play, see Thalmann (1978) 57-61.
[87] However, ἴτ' ἴτε (109) is contested. Although it is printed by Page (1972), West (1998) secludes these words because of the prohibited *brevis pro longa* in a dochmiac sequence. See Page (1972) *ad loc*: '*fort.* χθονὸc πάντεc ἴτ' ἴτ', *ut tollatur illicita brevis pro longa inter dochmios*'.
[88] The metre complements the emotional language: as Hutchinson (1994) 57 notes, 'the dochmiac metre expresses wild emotion: its effect is particularly notable here, since Aeschylean choruses often entered with spoken anapaests'. Mastronarde (1994) 387 *ad*. 818-819, on a similar passage of close repetition in E.*Pho*.818-819, comments: 'such iterations mark a heightening of emotional involvement'.
[89] See, for instance, Semonides fr.7 for an early example of this view. In Sophocles' *Electra,* too, Electra is presented as ranging between emotional extremes throughout: see Wheeler (2003) 377-88 for the gendered characterisation of Electra; for female speech in Euripides, see McClure (1995) 57-59.

statues of the gods; why they are delaying action by groaning aloud; whether their fellow chorus-members have heard the clatter of shields; when they should offer robes and garlands to the gods in prayer; and finally they address Ares directly, asking the god whether he is intent on betraying the place he once favoured. Again, the persistent run of questions builds on the emotional intensity implied in the tragic cries and repetitions discussed above. In addition, however, the formulation of the chorus' response to the crisis in the city as repeated questions suggests a form of speech which has been composed specifically to both complement and highlight a distinctly 'feminine' voice.[90]

Firstly, the chorus' questions highlight a portrayal of their fear for the protection of their city in crisis which is conditioned by their gender. They ask which of the gods will save them (τίς ἄρα ῥύσεται, τίς ἄρ' ἐπαρκέσει | θεῶν ἢ θεᾶν; [92-3]), and whether they should prostrate themselves before their shrines in prayer (πότερα δῆτ' ἐγὼ 〈πάτρια〉 ποτιπέσω | βρέτη δαιμόνων; [95-6]), as if they are unsure as to how they should even begin to pray for the city, such is the extent of the calamity. The repetition of τίς ἄρα further adds to the intense emotional urgency in these questions, while the pronoun ἐγὼ in the choral voice indicates a personal action, and potentially a personal motive too, suggesting that the chorus act out of personal fear as well as civic anxiety.[91]

The chorus' expression of civic values differs markedly from the same values expressed by male choruses in the parodos of Sophocles' *Antigone* and the third stasimon of Euripides'

[90] Of course, the use of rhetorical questions themselves are not unique to the female voice: as the Appendix to this thesis shows, male choruses (particularly in Aeschylus) also use interrogative speech in times of distress. However, these are used primarily within the specific linguistic context of 'lament' rather than to convey anxiety or fear, as here. Male lament in Aeschylus is discussed in detail in chapter 4 of this thesis.
[91] During their subsequent prayer to the city's gods, which comprises the remainder of the parodos, their priorities are oriented towards saving Thebes: cf. especially 104-107 and 166-180. The chorus' personal fate is entwined with the fate of the city itself, so the combination of the two perspectives is unsurprising.

Children of Heracles.[92] In the latter example, the chorus of men from Marathon also pray for the safety of their city in battle, as Demophon's Attic troops take on an Argive offensive for the sake of the suppliant children of Heracles. Unlike the women of *Seven Against Thebes*, however, these men show no hesitancy and ask no questions in their imprecations to the gods on behalf of their city. Further, their optimism and confidence contrasts directly with the Theban maidens' fearful utterances, as is exemplified in their statement Ζεύς μοι cύμμαχος, οὐ φοβοῦ- | -μαι, Ζεύς μοι χάριν ἐνδίκως | ἔχει· ('Zeus is my ally, I have nothing to fear, Zeus justly fights my cause', 766-8).[93] The chorus' lack of fear about the city's safety, as well as their assured faith in the gods' support for their cause, presents a very different picture from the timid, hesitant questions posed by the women in the parodos of *Seven Against Thebes*.

In *Antigone*, the city elders sing on the same topic as Aeschylus' chorus – the defence of Thebes against Argive invaders – albeit from the point of view of success in battle rather than anticipation of the war. Even so, the nature of their choral voice differs strikingly from that of the choral voice in *Seven Against Thebes*, as their concern in the ode is purely, and much more overtly, for the city and its release from political turmoil.[94] The chorus' single-minded focus on political freedom in Sophocles' play must be informed at least in part by gender, since elder statesmen are attuned to the importance of the city's autonomy because of their political involvement in it, whereas women stand to lose everything close to them in war: their family, their home and – most significantly – their personal freedom. Donald Mastronarde has convincingly argued that female choruses in Euripides tend to be

[92] S. *Ant*. 100-161; E.*Her*.748-783.
[93] For a broader discussion of this passage and the chorus' confidence in the surety of Zeus' protection, see Dhuga (2011) 66-69.
[94] Griffith picks out specific instances in the parodos where the chorus 'speak for the city as a whole', and stresses that 'their first Song is an expression of the city's joy and relief at the defeat of the invading army' – a civic, rather than personal, joy: Griffith (1999a) 139-140 *ad* 100-161.

concerned primarily with the domestic, including the impact of the household on wider civic issues, rather than matters of governance *per se*.[95] I would extend this observation to include Aeschylus' chorus of *Seven Against Thebes*, who are shown to be much less comfortable taking on an authoritative civic voice in times of *stasis* than their male counterparts.[96]

Secondly, the volume and intensity of the chorus' questions in *Seven Against Thebes* further highlight the overt 'femininity' of this form of expression, especially in the social context underpinning the chorus' ode. The women proceed with their civic prayers hesitantly, continually asking questions about their future actions to confirm the validity of their intentions: they ask τί μέλ|λομεν ἀγάστονοι; ('why do we hesitate, lamenting?', 98-99), and delay their prayers to the city's gods by commenting on the increasing intensity of the battle around them: ἀκούετ' ἢ οὐκ ἀκούετ' ἀσπίδων κτύπον; ('do you – or do you not – hear the clash of shields?', 100). Even within the accepted female civic role of religious dedication and prayer, therefore, the women falter. Rather than simply uttering their civic prayers, which then dominate the rest of the parodos from lines 109-180, they preface their actions with questions. Their indecision is highlighted especially by the interrogative pronoun πότερα in the question πότερα δῆτ' ἐγὼ ⟨πάτρια⟩ ποτιπέσω | βρέτη δαιμόνων ('shall I throw myself before the statues of my ancestral deities?', 95-6); the progression from hesitation to determination of their religious actions is marked only by their later question πέπλων καὶ στεφέων πότ' εἰ μὴ νῦν †ἀμ|φὶ λιτὰν† ἕξομεν; ('when – if not now – shall we [adorn our prayers with offerings of ?] robes and wreaths?', 101-2), in which πότερα (implying 'am I to do this [or something else]?') becomes πότ' εἰ μὴ νῦν ('when, if not now?'). These questions, delaying and displaying caution over their every move, can be contextualised in the more

[95] Mastronarde (1998) 55-80.
[96] Mastronarde (1998) 64.

marginal civic and social place of women especially in war, which conditions their authority to act on behalf of their city. The syntactic expression of their helplessness through the mode of questioning also fits with modern sociolinguistic theories, which agree that women's speech is characterised by a greater number of questions than male conversation, and that this is often due to women feeling that they are less secure in their authority when speaking.[97] The notion of expressing relative powerlessness through questions – which themselves can be seen as both the cause and effect of women's diminished verbal authority – is felt vividly in the Theban maidens' frenzied song.

Thirdly, the purpose of the maidens' questions aligns with a linguistic phenomenon noticed elsewhere in modern sociolinguistic studies: that female questions are more often used to invite participation from others in a group and create a collaborative method of communication than simply to gain information.[98] This potential gendered difference in the use of interrogatives is outlined most clearly by Maltz & Borker:

> There are two interpretations of the meaning of questions. Women seem to see questions as part of a conversational maintenance, while men seem to view them primarily as requests for information.[99]

The context of the passage already makes clear that the maidens' questions serve a largely rhetorical rather than active information-gathering purpose, since their opening addresses, in the form of prayers to the gods, may be expected to go unanswered.[100] However, the divide between collaborative and purely transactional questioning is made explicit in the three consecutive questions that follow:

> τί μέλ-
> λομεν ἀγάστονοι;
> ἀκούετ' ἢ οὐκ ἀκούετ' ἀσπίδων κτύπον;
> πέπλων καὶ στεφέων πότ' εἰ μὴ νῦν †ἀμ-
> φὶ λιτὰν† ἕξομεν; (98-102)

[97] Coates (1996) 200; Maltz & Borker (1998) 417-434; and Coates (2013) 85-111.
[98] See, for instance, Coates (1996) 174-202 & 265-267; and Minchin (2007) 175.
[99] Maltz & Borker (1998) 430.
[100] On the wider tradition of unanswered prayers in Greek tragedy, see Mikalson (1989) 81-98.

Why do we hesitate, lamenting loudly? Do you – or do you not – hear the clash of shields? When – if not now – shall we [adorn our prayers with offerings of ?] robes and wreaths?'

Regardless of how these lines were originally performed, whether as a group or by individuals in the chorus, their intention is to present the maidens as in a frenetic conversation with one another. These questions either ask for confirmation that the group agrees with the sentiments and course of action expressed, or seek affirmation for the women's feelings of panic, and in turn propel the conversation onwards to its conclusion in further prayers to the gods. Such a collaborative speech environment, where the women's questions serve as both encouragement and support of their emotional and practical responses to the crisis, will soon be contrasted with the blunt, sarcastic questions employed by Eteocles when he confronts the chorus in the following scene.[101]

This preliminary investigation has demonstrated that the linguistic formulations of tragic cries, close repetition and continuous questions all have their roots in the social, ritual and literary representations of women in Greek culture. When combined, as they are in the parodos of Aeschylus' *Seven Against Thebes,* with themes of fear, lament and religious acts, these linguistic effects appear to lend the chorus-women's ode a distinctly 'feminine' tone.

2.ii The Boundaries of Gender

Alongside a 'gendered' linguistic analysis as outlined above, it is also important to acknowledge that there may be other, non-gendered reasons for the frequent recurrence of repetition, tragic cries and repeated questions across Tragic diction, both choral and non-choral. Nor are they a sex-specific linguistic form, as male choruses, too, ask multiple

[101] Cf., for instance, Eteocles' questions ἢ κωφῇ λέγω; ('am I speaking to the deaf?', A.*Sept.*202) and τί οὖν; ('for what reason?', A.*Sept.*208).

questions, lament with tragic cries, and repeat words and phrases, albeit rarely as abundantly as female choruses or to the same effect.[102] For this reason, it is also worth exploring how else these 'feminine' language forms can be interpreted in the plays, in order to demonstrate that the sociolinguistic method can be used to complement and co-exist with other avenues of interpretation of Tragic language.

One important intersection with the sociolinguistic method is how tragic cries, close repetition and rhetorical questions are used to create formal poetic styles within Tragic diction. According to analysis by Elinor Wright (as summarised by Ann Suter), these three features seem to cohere with the stylistic and structural elements of laments in Tragedy:

> She [Wright] identifies also various stylistic features, such as anaphora, anadiplosis, polyptoton, repetition (especially of proper names), address to the dead, series of questions typically beginning τί or πῶc, typical vocabulary, and inarticulate cries.[103]

Given the nature of the genre and the chorus' role as 'active bystanders' who witness, respond to, and – most importantly – are the survivors of the plays' catastrophes, it is unsurprising that linguistic features identified with lament should recur across both the female and male choral voice of Tragedy.[104] This, too, is extended to non-choral lyric monodies: a similar style of language characterises the laments of particularly Euripidean protagonists, both male and female, such as Peleus in *Andromache* (1173-1225), Electra in *Electra* (112-166), Antigone in *Phoenician Women* (1485-1538), Adrastus in *Suppliant Women* (788-836), and Hecuba in *Trojan Women* (98-153).

[102] Prominent examples (discussed in more detail over the course of the thesis, and particularly chapter 4) are as follows: multiple questions: S.*OT*.1098-1109; S.*OC*.1468; S.*Aj*.172-181, 1185-1189; E.*Alc*.77-130; close repetition: A.*Pers*.658-680; S.*Aj*.866-871; E.*HF*.763-780; general cries: A.*Pers*.648-680, 927-1076; E.*Alc*.213-237; E.*HF*. 875-909. A full collection of tragic cries, repetitions, and rhetorical questions in the choral voice (male and female) across the extant tragedies can be found in the Appendix.
[103] Suter (2003) 3.
[104] On the importance of male lament in Tragedy, see Suter (2008b) 156-180. This topic is developed more fully in chapter 4.

However, it is not enough to explain away these 'feminine' linguistic forms in Tragedy as simply the formal expression of non-gendered Tragic lament rather than a subset of feminine language use differentiated from other speech in the plays. While it is tempting to argue that what could be identified as female speech more naturally fits under the category of 'lament speech', this ignores the role that these speech forms play in the characterisation of women in particular beyond expressing grief. Importantly, as the next chapter will explore, many of the choral odes in which these linguistic forms recur are not formal laments. Indeed, our example of the parodos of Aeschylus' *Seven Against Thebes* occurs at the beginning of the play, before any death or catastrophe has occurred, and instead expresses intense fear and anxiety over impending troubles rather than a grieving response to them. While some of these stylistic features may have been rooted in the specific context of ritual lament to depict male and female grief, it is clear that in Tragedy they are also used more broadly in the voices of women to indicate a heightened emotional state, which in turn contributes towards fostering a 'gendered' method of characterisation.[105]

The 'hyper-emotional' nature of the syntactic features described by Elinor Wright above, and outlined here as recurrence of tragic cries, close repetition and rhetorical questions, is not only a feature of women's voices in Tragic diction. In particular, the tragedians use these syntactic features to depict pain, madness and divine possession in lyric utterances (both choral and non-choral, male and female) across the Tragic tradition. In these instances, although the primary emotion conveyed is not conditioned by whether the speaker is male or female, gender may nevertheless represent a contributing factor to the linguistic depiction of this physical and mental suffering.

[105] There remain questions which cannot be answered about the exact relationship between formal laments in Tragedy and their counterparts in real-life Athens. While some literary stylisation is bound to have found its way into Tragic lyrics, the ritualistic, religious aspect of women's laments in Athens leaves me inclined to believe that their formalised literary counterpart in Tragedy would at least have been recognisable as such to a male audience, if not directly comparable.

An example of this can be seen in the choruses of Euripides' *Bacchae* and Aeschylus' *Eumenides.* These constitute two groups of women – Bacchants and Furies, respectively – whose primary characteristic is not their gender but their state of divine, or divinely-inspired, frenzy. In both plays, the chorus' language displays many of the hallmarks of what has so far been categorised as 'feminine language'. However, given that the syntactic features at their broadest level seem to characterise emotionally heightened speech, the leap from generally 'emotionally-driven' to specifically 'frenzied' language is not a difficult one to make. Additionally, the convention of both Dionysiac ritual and Greek religious tradition dictates that the two choruses of maenads and Furies must necessarily be female, which suggests that any language differentiation should be seen as a function of their divinely-possessed state rather than their femininity.

In purely linguistic terms, too, there is a clear overlap between what the example of Aeschylus' *Seven Against Thebes* identifies as 'feminine' language and what seems to represent the language of frenzy or even madness in these two plays, particularly in terms of close repetition. In Euripides' *Bacchae*, for instance, the high volume of repetition is evident from the beginning of the parodos onwards in words and phrases such as τίς ὁδῷ, τίς ὁδῷ; ('who is in the road?', 68), ἴτε βάκχαι, ἴτε βάκχαι ('on you Bacchants', 83), and εἰς ὄρος εἰς ὄρος ('to the mountain', 116 & 162). To some extent, this repetition is indicative of the cultic and ritual elements of the chorus' hymn-like odes, with a 'call-to-arms' addressed to fellow worshippers and the repetition of the god's name under the varying guises of Βρόμιε Βρόμιε ('Bromius', 412 & 584) and ὁ Διόνυσος ὁ Διόνυσος ('Dionysus', 1027).[106] However, the broadly ritual and the specifically maenadic are not indistinguishable. The

[106] On the cultic elements, see Seaford (1996) 35-44; on the hymnic elements, see Damen & Richards (2012) 343-369.

repetition here also creates a sense of frenetic urgency, which chimes with the chorus' wider depiction of maenadism throughout the play.[107] Put simply, the frenzy associated with the nature of their ritual worship is amplified by the syntactic recurrences in their songs.

A similar pattern is evident in Aeschylus' *Eumenides*. Here again, the sense of frenzied urgency is created in the chorus' repetition of particular phrases as they scramble to follow the fleeing Orestes, such as λαβὲ λαβὲ λαβὲ λαβέ ('chase!', 130) and ἔγειρ', ἔγειρε ('wake [her] up!', 140). Unlike in Euripides' play, however, their language is not linked to a specific cultic or ritual depiction, although the two choruses share the quality of 'the divine', as the Bacchants are divinely possessed and the Eumenides are chthonic divinities. Instead, there is an intersection between the chorus' frenzied repetition and their characterisation as animalistic. This is reinforced by the unusual stage direction of μυγμός ('a moaning sound', 117 & 120) and ὠγμός ('a groaning sound', 123 & 126) which represent the discordant, inhuman sounds the audience first hears from the Furies, as well as the tragic cry of ἰοὺ ἰοὺ πόπαξ (143), which, as a *hapax legomenon* in Tragedy, seems to depict a noise that is best described as half-cry, half-howl.[108] Clytemnestra herself describes the Furies' cries as being 'like a dog that never stops thinking of the hunt' (ἅπερ | κύων μέριμναν οὔποτ' ἐκλείπων πόνου, 131-2), underlining the chorus' multiple simultaneous personas as goddesses, women, hunting dogs, and frenzied demons.[109] On this interpretation, then, the language used by the Bacchants and Furies is characterised more by its representation of their divine-linked

[107] See Bierl (2013) 211-226 for a fuller discussion of the chorus' self-referential maenadism. Similar examples of divinely-inspired frenzy can be seen in the depiction of Cassandra in E.*Tro.*308-341, in which her frenetic lyric monody is peppered with frequent repetition to amplify her maddened state.

[108] See Nooter (2017) 261-267 on the animalistic voice of the Eumenides before and during the parodos.

[109] For the representation of Furies as dogs elsewhere in Tragedy, see Heath (1999) 33-34. Again, the depiction of the crazed Cassandra – this time in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* – provides a fitting parallel. Cassandra's first words are a quasi-unintelligible mix of tragic cries and repeated appeals to Apollo (ὀτοτοτοῖ πόποι δᾶ | ὦπολλον ὤπολλον, A.*Ag.*1073-1074 & 1076-1077). Similarly to the Furies of *Eumenides*, her divinely-inspired frenzy also intersects with her animalistic characterisation by Clytemnestra in the preceding lines, as variously a swallow (1050) and a beast of burden under the yoke (1066-1067). Cassandra's opening lines seem designed to continue rather than counter her simultaneously animalistic and maddened state, just as the Furies' opening words echo Clytemnestra's depiction of them as frenzied dogs.

frenzy than by their gender, which seems at first glance to be a subordinated aspect of their choral identities.

However, in both plays there are also indications that the gender of the two choruses may also contribute to their characterisation. In Euripides' play, for instance, the Bacchants' religious awe is not just a function of the cultic representations of maenadic Dionysiac worship, but may also conform to a wider (male-authored) literary stereotype, evident particularly in Old Comedy, that women – due to their emotional volubility and greater tendency towards credulity – were more likely to be seen as superstitious, and therefore beholden to religious fervour, than men.[110] This is reinforced by the fact that religious involvement was often the only avenue open to women who wanted to participate in Athenian society. As Rachel Finnegan writes,

> In Athenian society, religion represented for women a rare opportunity to leave the home, to meet other people and to contribute something valuable to the community. The enthusiasm with which such opportunities were met is sometimes presented as bordering on fanaticism, and therefore negatively evaluated.[111]

As orgiastic cults in particular tended to be more than usually associated with female-only worship, it is unsurprising that women's participation in these cults was treated with suspicion and negativity in some male commentary.[112] In Euripides' presentation of the maenadic Bacchic chorus, therefore, including through the language the women use, a secondary layer of gender stereotyping based on opinions in the society of his own time may also be visible in the women's volubility and dedication to their religious duties.

[110] Dover (1974) 99-100.
[111] Finnegan (1995) 133. For epigraphic evidence of the high social esteem in which women's religious roles were held, see *IG* I³ 35 (Athens 450-445 BC), on appointing a priestess of Athena Nike from the people and creating a proper sanctuary; *IG* I³ 36 (Athens 424/3 BC), on allowing a payment of 50 drachmas to the priestess of Athena Nike; and *IG* II² 3453 (Athens 360 BC), on a statue erected in honour of the priestess Lysimache, who served the cult of Athena Polias for 64 years.
[112] For further analysis of the prejudices attached to female participation in mystery cults, see Rauhala (2019) 1-55. For evidence of male suspicion concerning women's religious rites, see Dem.19.259-260 and Lys.1.20.

Similarly, there is a gendered undercurrent to the presentation of the Furies in Aeschylus' *Eumenides*, which forms part of the wider male-female dichotomy throughout the *Oresteia* trilogy. As Froma Zeitlin argues, over the course of the Oresteia 'social evolution is posed as a movement from female dominance to male dominance, or, as it is often figuratively phrased, from "matriarchy" to "patriarchy"'.[113] This gendered power struggle is particularly obvious in the trial scene of *Eumenides* (566-672), in which the Furies represent Clytemnestra's interests while Apollo represents Orestes', and the Furies seek to highlight the sanctity of the mother-child relationship while Apollo seeks to diminish it. Indeed, Athena's decision to endorse Apollo's stance represents a subjugation of individual- or familial-driven vengeance, exemplified by women such as Clytemnestra and the Furies, in favour of a male-centric, civic legal system represented by Apollo and Orestes.

Further, the feminine-masculine, emotion-logic dichotomy is amplified in the *epirrhēma* between the Furies and the androgynous Athena following her decision to grant Orestes immunity from his crimes (778-891). The Furies' rage is uncontainable, their obstinacy evident from the exact repetition of their opening outburst (778-792) in lines 808-822. Their language, too, is punctuated by the 'feminine' syntactic features of close repetition, such as ἰὸν ἰὸν ('poison', 782 & 812) and ὦ Δίκα Δίκα ('oh Justice!', 785 & 815), and the tragic cries of φεῦ (781, 811, 837, 839, 870 & 871) and οἰοῖ δᾶ φεῦ (841 & 874). This is contrasted strongly with Athena's non-lyric responses, which represent logic and reason, and mostly use rational – and ultimately successful – arguments to persuade the Furies to accept the result of the trial.[114] Although the Furies are identified first and foremost in *Eumenides* by their frenzied chthonic status, their gender again becomes a secondary contributing factor to their characterisation as the play progresses.

[113] Zeitlin (1978) 151.
[114] The one exception is when Athena implicitly threatens them with the thunderbolts of Zeus at lines 826-829.

One final intersection with the syntactic forms identified elsewhere as 'gendered' language is in the vocalisation of physical pain in Tragedy. At the outset, there is something of a gendered differentiation in the depiction of pain in Tragedy. Descriptions of women's physical pain tend to centre on the experience of childbirth: Medea's insistence that she would rather stand three times in battle than give birth once (Euripides' *Medea* 250-1), for instance, echoes the chorus-women's connection between a hypothetical source of Phaedra's suffering and the pain women undergo during childbirth in Euripides' *Hippolytus* (161-9).[115] However, when women's physical suffering is depicted on stage, it is often as a result of a mental or emotional affliction:[116] in *Prometheus Bound*, Io's physical suffering is indistinguishable from the psychological frenzy with which she was punished by Hera (561-608), while in *Hippolytus*, Phaedra's apparent physical frailty is eventually revealed to be because of the destructive passion she feels (373-430).[117] By contrast, men in Tragedy – and particularly heroes – are shown onstage in the throes of physical pain in a way that women are not.

This physicality of male pain is expressed in particular by the heroes Philoctetes and Heracles in Sophocles' *Philoctetes* (as a result of his long-standing injury, 742-750, 783-805) and *Women of Trachis* (as a result of Deianira's poisonous 'love-potion', 1005-1017, 1023-1043) respectively, as well as by Hippolytus in Euripides' *Hippolytus* (as a result of Theseus' invocation, arising from Phaedra's allegations, of Poseidon's curse, 1347-1388).[118] The intensity of their suffering is expressed not just in the differentiated rhythms of their speech

[115] This corresponds with the relation of the word ὀδύνη ('sharp pain') to the context of childbirth in Greek poetry, for a more detailed discussion of which, see Loraux (1981) 49-51.
[116] Often but not always, cf. the death of Alcestis in Euripides' play of the same name.
[117] Elsewhere in Tragedy, female physical suffering is tightly connected with acts of lament, themselves a function of emotional distress, such as A.*Suppl.*70-71, 120-122 & 131-133; A.*Cho.*28-29; E.*El.*140-149; E.*Pho.*1350-1351; E.*Suppl.*71-78; E.*Tro.*790-798, 1235-1237.
[118] For a detailed analysis of the relevant passages in Sophocles' *Women of Trachis* and *Philoctetes*, see Nooter (2012) 73-81 and 134-139.

– sung in lyrics rather than spoken in iambic trimeter – but also in the syntactic forms they use, which broadly correspond to those identified above as belonging to 'feminine' speech.[119] Tragic cries, such as παπαῖ (*Philoctetes* 744-5), αἰαῖ αἰαῖ (*Hippolytus* 1347 & 1370) and ἔ ἔ (*Women of Trachis* 1005, 1015 & 1026), pepper the lyrics of all three passages. Close repetition of words and phrases also distinguishes these outbursts, as seen in ὦ Θάνατε Θάνατε ('oh death, death', *Philoctetes* 797), Ζεῦ Ζεῦ ('oh Zeus, Zeus', *Hippolytus* 1363), and ἐᾶτέ μ' ἐᾶτέ με ('allow me, allow me', *Women of Trachis* 1005).[120] Finally, all three heroes ask pleading, rhetorical questions about their plight: examples include ὦ Θάνατε Θάνατε, πῶc ἀεὶ καλούμενοc | οὕτω κατ' ἦμαρ οὐ δύνηι μολεῖν ποτε; ('oh death, death, why – despite me always calling for you from day to day – can you never come?', *Philoctetes* 797-8), τί φῶ; ('what can I say?', *Hippolytus* 1385), and οὐδ' ἀπαράξαι ⟨μου⟩ κρᾶτα βίου θέλει | μολὼν τοῦ cτυγεροῦ; ('is no one willing to come and strike the head from my hateful body?', *Women of Trachis* 1015-6).

Taken together, the prevalence of these three syntactic markers could simply be an indication of 'the language of pain', expressed as an intensified version of 'the language of lament' (i.e. emotional stress) to which these features also belong. However, gender may also be a contributing factor to the heroes' language, particularly in the 'feminine' terms used by Heracles and Hippolytus to express their suffering. To begin with, there is some, albeit scant, evidence that women were more associated with 'the body' – both its physicality and its weaknesses – in ancient Greece.[121] In *Republic* 395d-e, for instance, Plato argues that young men should not be allowed to imitate women when they are in the throes of emotional agitation, but still less when they are 'ill, in love or in labour pains', ascribing the undue

[119] See Nooter (2012) 21-22 for the use of 'invocatory lyric' to express pain in Tragedy, and for the idea that pain, whether physical or mental, is 'a hallmark experience of Sophocles' heroes'. I concentrate here on physical rather than emotional pain as the linguistic connection between the 'invocatory lyric' used to express it and the aspects of 'feminine speech' I have identified above is stronger.
[120] The use of apostrophe, particularly in Philoctetes' lyrics, is itself potentially 'feminine', as it is used primarily by women in Tragedy during laments: see Nooter (2012) 132-134.
[121] See Cawthorn (2008) 47-60 for a more detailed overview of this subject.

capacity for both mental and physical distress to women rather than men.[122] Similarly, Nicole Loraux has argued that just as death, and in particular the 'noble death' of dying in battle, was the civic duty of men in ancient Greece, so too bodily suffering, in the form of labour pains to produce these warriors, was the civic duty of women.[123] Froma Zeitlin, meanwhile, stresses that caring for other bodies was the preserve of women in archaic and Classical Greece, who birthed and nursed their own and others' children, cared for the sick in their household and laid their dead to rest during funeral rites.[124]

These arguments are all bolstered by the evidence from Tragedy, which emphasises the connection between the female body and physical suffering obliquely through the lens of male heroes experiencing pain. Hippolytus in Euripides' play is an obvious example: a man whose very rejection of women and love identifies him more closely with a virginal maiden than a young man.[125] The 'feminisation' of his experience of pain during his final appearance at the end of the play has already been the subject of scholarly discussion, most notably by Froma Zeitlin:

> He cries out that "pangs dart through his head" (1351) as they were said to dart through the belly of a woman in travail (164-66) and that "a spasm leaps up in his brain" (1352). A little later, he voices his desire (*eramai*) for a two-edged sword to divide his body in two and "put his life to bed" (1375-77).[126]

Even if the cause and symptoms of Hippolytus' pain are different from those afflicting Phaedra, the terms which the hero uses to describe his distress nevertheless link with those used by the chorus-women in the parodos (121-169) to give their own account of the physical suffering that all women are expected to face.

[122] Spelman (1982) 114-119 argues that by connecting women with 'the body' Plato could use them to exemplify the antithesis of his ideal moral world in which the soul was valued above the body.
[123] Loraux (1981) 37-67, cf. in particular 67.
[124] Zeitlin (1996) 351-352.
[125] Zeitlin (1996) 234-235.
[126] Zeitlin (1996) 248. See also Loraux (1981) 58-59.

In the case of Heracles in Sophocles' *Women of Trachis*, the breakdown of gender boundaries is even greater. Precisely because Heracles is the paradigmatic masculine Greek hero, his physical degradation and concurrent emasculation are all the more stark. In general terms, Heracles' downfall is 'gendered' in the same way as Hippolytus': both heroes are brought down by the actions of women who themselves suffered mentally and physically for their love of each hero. Like Hippolytus, too, Heracles refers to his disease in terms which refer to sexuality, albeit in more violent and graphic terms. While Hippolytus simply 'desires' for a death-blow to come and 'put his life to bed', Heracles uses the phrase θρώσκει δ' αὖ ('again it leaps up', 1026) to describe the waves of pain: as Chiara Blanco has noted, this verb has secondary meanings of 'attack', 'surmount' and 'impregnate'.[127] Later on, the hero is even more explicit about his emasculation, describing himself as crying out 'like a maiden' (ὥστε παρθένος, 1071) as having been 'discovered to be a woman' (θῆλυς ηὑρημαι, 1075).

Particularly interesting, however, are the symptoms that Heracles suffers from the toxic effects of the poisoned robe, such as spasms, a feeling of suffocation, waves of pain, and impaired vision. These, according to analysis by Chiara Blanco, can all be related to the ancient medical diagnoses of female uterine disorders, most notably the 'wandering womb', found in the Hippocratic corpus.[128] If this medical understanding of female diseases had indeed bled into the cultural consciousness, then Sophocles may have intended to provide his audience with a physiological as well as societal view of the 'feminisation' of weakened men. Even if it did not, however, it is nevertheless reasonable to conclude, with Katrina Cawthorn, that 'the suffering, wounded hero in tragedy seems to become deeply feminised, his fate sealed by the fact that his suffering is inflicted by a woman'.[129]

[127] Blanco (2020) 39. For a general overview of Heracles' 'gendered' expression of pain, see Loraux (1981) 59-64 and Cawthorn (2008) 76-91.
[128] Blanco (2020) 37-42 cites symptoms from Hippoc.*Mul*.1.7., 2.15, 2.18, 2.40.
[129] Cawthorn (2008) 71.

All of this brings us back to the linguistic argument at the heart of how heroes in the throes of pain express themselves. The argument that there are gendered overtones to the syntax of Hippolytus' and Heracles' cries of pain is reinforced by the volume of evidence from the content of their lyrics to suggest that the audience ought to see them as effeminate, or at the very least emasculated, in their physical suffering. The case for the eponymous hero of Sophocles' *Philoctetes* is less clear, since a gender dichotomy is absent from the play. Nevertheless, the evidence from across Tragedy, as well as elsewhere in Greek social and philosophical thought, is just enough to suggest that the original audience may have considered Philoctetes to have been 'unmanned' because of his physical weakness, and that his syntax of pain therefore overlaps with the syntax of women's voices elsewhere in the Tragic canon.

Conclusion

The study of sociolinguistics is conventionally associated with analysis of contemporary, spoken language. This chapter has aimed to show that similar methods can be applied, albeit with necessary caution and sensitivity, to the written, literary, and even poetic language of the ancient world. By taking inspiration from a variety of similar sociolinguistic approaches to the study of gender in ancient Greek poetic language, I have been able to formulate and distinguish my own methodology for studying the impact of gender on the choral voice of Tragedy. Despite the paucity of evidence for the speech of real Athenian women, the fact that almost all the sources for female speech in fifth-century Athens are male-authored and the difficulties of extrapolation from the small proportion of tragedies which are now extant, there is, in my view, nevertheless scope for intra-textual sociolinguistic analysis of Tragic language.

As described above, my own method analyses patterns of syntactic data which recur across the choral voice of Tragedy, and particularly in contexts of lament, but are prevalent in the female choral voice beyond the limitations of 'lament speech'. The chorus is used as the primary vehicle through which the analysis is conducted, despite the remoteness of their lyric dialect, because they represent a reasonably consistent character-type across the breadth of Tragedy. The effect of mediation between the chorus and their audience makes their concerns and their personalities relatable, even if, paradoxically, their speech is the furthest removed from everyday Athenian speech.

The three recurring syntactic features of potentially 'feminine' speech – tragic cries, close repetition of words or phrases, and rhetorical questions – have been demonstrated in the initial *exemplum* from the parodos of Aeschylus' *Seven Against Thebes.* The case study demonstrates that when used judiciously, and with acknowledgement of its limits, this application of the sociolinguistic method to the choral voice of Tragedy can yield some interesting conclusions as to the construction of 'ordinary' female characters.

Finally, the discussion of other uses of these speech forms in Tragedy, such as in contexts of lamentation, religious or ecstatic maenadism, and expressions of pain, has explored the limitations of studying these syntactic forms purely from a 'gendered' perspective. Even so, in many of these instances the familiar linguistic forms are seen to contribute to or amplify a gendered overtone to the other, primary characteristics of the language. This has set the scene for how the impact of gender on the choral language in Tragedy can be studied, which will be explored in more detail over the course of the following chapter.

Chapter 2

Finding the 'Feminine' in the Choral Voice

Introduction

The social conditioning of women's speech in both private and public places is entwined with the tragedians' linguistic methods of conveying female characters, since female choruses often voice anxieties about speaking openly, doubt the authority or veracity of their speech, and show a propensity for gossip and 'idle chatter' within their social networks. The consistency with which female choruses are presented in this overtly 'feminine' way suggests that the tragedians intended to create a stylised presentation of gender based, in part, on a recognisable representation of a socially-conceived 'ideal' woman in Athens in this period. In the same way that choruses containing city elders could be familiar to an audience as representations of their own elderly citizens, so too may choruses of women and girls have been recognisable to spectators as 'typical' women. An obvious reason for creating a deliberately gendered choral voice is to contrast the chorus of ordinary Greek women living ordinary lives with the extraordinary, and often dangerous heroines with whom they interact onstage: if Medea, Phaedra, and the Electra of both Sophocles' and Euripides' plays are seen to transgress their gender boundaries by deceiving, conniving and killing, then their respective choruses exist to highlight the contrast between the perspective of normal (Athenian) women and the dangerous contravention of the usual social order by these heroines.[130]

[130] Deianira provides a contrast to this model, since she is a heroine who is presented in a female light: her concerns are for her marriage and her family, which leads her to act as she does, and Mossman has observed that Deianira 'repeatedly expresses doubts, qualifies or attaches reservations to her assertions' – see Rutherford (2012) 294-295 for this linguistic interpretation of Deianira's character.

This chapter aims to move beyond the general, however, and examine how the sociolinguistic method, as introduced in the previous chapter, can be fruitfully used to demonstrate the connection between the mimetic characterisation technique of artificially constructed 'female speech' and depictions of gender. In my view, the recurrences of syntactic features such as tragic cries, close repetition and rhetorical questions at key moments of female choral song are used by the (male) tragedians to highlight choral femininity at particular moments of the drama. The 'gendered' nature of the chorus' language in these situations is often reinforced by comparison with either the presence of related, but significantly divergent, passages in the male choral voice, or – sometimes more poignantly – the total absence thereof. In this way, gendered language becomes a tool for communicating the social marginality of women which, as the previous chapter has shown, was representative at least of male depictions of women in fifth-century Athenian society (and possibly also consistent with women's own experiences of their position in society). While this literary representation of female speech is necessarily stylised through its inherent artificiality, the undercurrent of themes in its deployment across the Tragic tradition seems to be pertinent to the attitudes and experiences of their original audiences, who may have found some connections between the realities of the social structure in classical Athens and its literary creations.

1. Methods of Marginalisation

The uniting feature of recurring speech patterns in the female choral voice such as tragic cries, close repetition and rhetorical questions is undoubtedly 'marginality'. Whether in mourning or mythologising, the language of female choruses in Tragedy is peppered with speech patterns that evoke (to differing extents) their position on the margins of the drama.

Of course, the very nature of the chorus as a character-type is to be distant from the action, prevented by physical or social constraints from directly influencing the crises unfolding onstage.[131] Nevertheless, this dramatic marginality coexists with and is illuminated by women's perceived diminished authority beyond the stage, too.

In the context of the discussion that follows, 'marginality' is broken down into three distinct forms: verbal marginality, physical marginality, and social marginality. 'Verbal marginality' refers to the chorus' doubt in their authority to speak openly or correctly. It can be seen, for instance, in female hesitancy over how to lament most fittingly the catastrophes they witness on stage, as well as in the doubt female choruses shed on the authority of the backstories or mythological *exempla* they expound in their odes. 'Physical marginality' refers to women's understanding of their relative lack of agency to physically intervene in or remove themselves from certain situations, and manifests itself particularly in how choruses describe their desire to leave behind their immediate surroundings in the so-called 'escape odes' of Tragedy. 'Social marginality' underpins both verbal and physical marginality, and is most evident in situations where the chorus is at its most precarious in the context of the play, such as the anxiety of the Trojan women faced with exile from their homeland and an unknown fate in the aftermath of war.

All three types of marginality appear across the Tragic tradition, and particularly in certain contexts – most notably during lament scenes and choral odes which feature mythological backstories or *exempla*. Additionally, female choral marginality can be further illuminated by the relative absence of male expressions of verbal, physical or social vulnerability in comparable dramatic contexts in the plays. Finally, these depictions of female marginality are very often underpinned by familiar speech patterns such as tragic cries, close repetition

[131] See Foley (2003) 1-30 for a detailed discussion of choral marginality in Tragedy.

and rhetorical questions. These syntactic recurrences, when taken together, evoke the sense of heightened emotion with which women's voices and temperament are commonly associated throughout Greek literature and beyond. Through finding and interpreting these linguistic patterns, we are also able to gain a further foothold in finding and interpreting the 'feminine' in the poetic language of ancient Athenian tragedy.

1.i Mourning

Female choral marginality, both verbal and social, can often be found in the context of lamentation, and particularly in women's hesitation over how to begin or properly conduct their own laments. To some extent, as Alexiou notes, hesitation in a lament can be part of its formal structure, with the speaker beginning by 'expressing anxiety lest he should fail to find words adequate for the occasion'.[132] However, in some contexts of lamentation, particularly in the female choral voice, this ritual hesitation takes on a secondary force, conditioning their authority to speak out in mourning and heightening the emotionalism of their speech.

In Euripides' *Phoenician Women*, for instance, the chorus break off from lamenting the demise of Eteocles and Polyneices to ask πότερον ἄρα νέκυν ὀλόμενον ἀχήςω; ('but which shall I lament as dead?', 1295). The strophe which this question concludes is itself a formal lament, encompassing both Jocasta's loss as a mother and the double death of the sons themselves, so there should be no need for the chorus to qualify their ability to sing in mourning for the dead – they have been doing so already. On one level, the chorus' question can be taken as a qualification of their *right* to lament the demise of the Theban royal family, since they are outsiders to the city, simply visiting Thebes on their way to Delphi. However,

[132] Alexiou (2002) 161.

the question also carries the suggestion of which corpse the chorus *ought* to prioritise in their lament. This adds a secondary force which hints at the ethics of the brothers' actions preceding the war, a theme which had already been developed to the full in Sophocles' *Antigone.*

Sophocles' *Women of Trachis* portrays the same hesitation over the chorus' lament. After the choral ode during which Deianira commits suicide offstage, the chorus suddenly responds to a commotion indoors with the following questions:

> πότερον ἐγὼ μάταιος, ἢ κλύω τινὸς
> οἴκτου δι' οἴκων ἀρτίως ὁρμωμένου;
> τί φημι; (863-5)
>
> *Am I mistaken, or did I hear just now a cry of lamentation rise up through the house? What am I saying?*

The qualification πότερον ἐγὼ μάταιος ('am I mistaken') has the immediate effect of demonstrating the chorus' surprise at the sound they're hearing, and yet the rest of the question focuses attention on the sound of lamentation (οἴκτου… ὁρμωμένου). The qualification exaggerates their reaction of surprise: not only are they taken aback to be hearing sounds of lamentation in the house, but they also question their own powers of perception in a manner which reflects a simultaneously irrational and yet socially-constructed lack of confidence in their personal authority. The notion of surprise, combined with intensity of emotion as the nurse reveals the truth, is again manifested in their speech through the insistent questions they pose to the nurse in lines 882-8.[133] The women's disbelief at the turn of events, and its constraint of their ability to lament, is made even more clear in their next ode, as Heracles' body is brought on stage. Like the chorus of *Phoenician Women*, they too ask the question which tragedy they should lament first:

> πότερα πρότερον ἐπιστένω,

[133] Lines 883-884 are attributed to the nurse by Hermann, while 886-887 are attributed to the nurse by the manuscripts. I follow Lloyd-Jones & Wilson, who keep the string of questions in the choral voice, with the nurse providing answers in between their frantic questions: Lloyd-Jones & Wilson (1990) *ad loc*., see further in Davies (1991) 207-208.

πότερα μέλεα περαιτέρω,
δύσκριτ' ἔμοιγε δυστάνῳ. (947-9)

Which shall I groan for first? Which misery is the worse? It's difficult for me in my grief to decide.

πότερα, especially when repeated, particularly conveys the act of deliberation with its sense of 'which of the two', demonstrating the difficulty of performing a lament in the face of the double disaster which has befallen the house. In the opening stages of their lament, the chorus find themselves at a loss because the unexpected trauma of Deianira's death has rendered it difficult for them to decide how to proceed with their dirge. The secondary shock of suicide alongside the realisation of Heracles' doom is therefore highlighted in the play through the feminine voice of the chorus, whose restrictions on their ability to perform their civic function of lamentation demonstrate the emotional impact of the tragedy on the women involved.

Ann Suter has argued convincingly against the notion that lament is inherently gendered in the literary world of Greek tragedy, by demonstrating that the many instances of male lament in the genre prove it to be a universal form of speech in this area of literature.[134] Her argument that male lamentation does not necessarily signify reduced authority or an overtly 'feminised' character presentation is particularly convincing, since it is easy to allow prejudices from our knowledge of female societal roles to influence the literary analysis of these passages.[135] Nevertheless, allowing that men also lament in tragedy, and that doing so does not diminish their status as men, does not imply that they always lament in the same way as women do – in fact, some examples of male lament in the extant plays only serve to strengthen the case for the specifically 'gendered' forms of lamentation discussed above.

[134] Suter (2008b) 156-180. Suter is particularly careful to distinguish between gendered *societal* laments and what she interprets as non-gendered *literary* laments, using this distinction to discuss instances of male laments in Tragedy which have been forgotten or dismissed by scholars. She does not offer a comparison between male and female forms of lament, as I aim to do here.
[135] Suter (2008b) 164.

Suter argues briefly against this idea, asserting that formal aspects of Tragic lament do not vary between genders:

> If lament were a female genre, one might expect to find variation by gender, in particular in the topoi and linguistic features, but one does not.[136]

It is unsurprising that the *topoi* of laments do not vary greatly between male and female laments, as the thematic and situational elements – the expression of grief following a death – are precisely what defines such passages as 'lament' to an audience. However, some linguistic aspects do vary according to gender: in particular, the manner in which a chorus expresses their personal grief is, in my view, a crucial 'gendering' factor in Tragic lamentation.

As already discussed, women tend to question their ability to lament at the emotional climax of a play, often expressing their laments through questions or the language of uncertainty introduced by interrogatives such as πότερον. In male laments, on the other hand, the chorus tend to lament by expressing their emotions freely, with no qualification of their current actions or how they should express their grief. This lack of restraint is particularly evident in Antigone, when the chorus express their dismay at Antigone being brought before them to her death, thereby introducing the ensuing *kommos* between chorus and heroine:

> νῦν δ' ἤδη 'γὼ καὐτὸς θεμῶν
> ἔξω φέρομαι τάδ' ὁρῶν ἴσχειν δ'
> οὐκέτι πηγὰς δύναμαι δακρύων
> τὸν παγκοίτην ὅθ' ὁρῶ θάλαμον
> τήνδ' Ἀντιγόνην ἀνύτουσαν. (801-5)
>
> *But indeed I myself am now being carried beyond the lawful bounds as I witness this, and I am no longer able to restrain the streams of my tears, when I see Antigone here meeting her end at the final resting-chamber, now her bridal suite.*

This passage highlights both the extent of the chorus' grief – they are carried beyond 'the laws', in this context implying that their sorrow is now outside the normal bounds of

[136] Suter (2008b) 165.

emotion – and makes conscious mention of the irrepressible nature of their lamentation as they describe the uncontrollable tears which accompany their reaction to Antigone's demise. Unlike the female laments of *Phoenician Women* and *Women of Trachis*, in which an emotional reaction prompts hesitation over the women's lament, the men of the *Antigone* chorus show no such restraint. A similarly forthright, rather than hesitant, expression of grief can be found in the fourth stasimon of *Oedipus the King,* during which the male chorus set out Oedipus' woes before explaining ὡς ὀδύρομαι | περίαλλ' ἰὰν χέων | ἐκ στομάτων ('how I weep beyond all others, uttering a cry from my mouth, 1219-1220).[137] The male tendency to lament without the verbal restraint seen in female choruses is also indicative of greater rationality in grief contexts. In the examples from both *Antigone* and *Oedipus the King*, the chorus use *exempla* to rationalise their own grief or that of the protagonist. The chorus of *Oedipus the King* describe Oedipus himself as a παράδειγμα ('paradigm') in 1193, using the king's tragedy to exemplify the wider tragedy for mortals of a seemingly indiscriminate god-given fate.[138] In *Antigone*, on the other hand, the chorus use Antigone's own comparison of her grief with that of Niobe to rationalise her impending demise, arguing that the mere comparison of her fate with that of such elevated figures, who are equals to the gods (ἰσοθέοις, 837), is itself high praise. Additionally, the following stasimon (944-987), which accompanies Antigone's journey to her death, is entirely comprised of further mythological *exempla* attempting to rationalise her fate.[139]

[137] Kamerbeek's conjecture ὡς ὀδύρομαι (1229a), for the majority manuscript reading ὀδύρομαι γὰρ ὡς, is accepted widely following the confirmation of ἰὰν by P.Oxy.2224 in E.*Hipp.*585: see Lloyd-Jones & Wilson (1990) *ad loc*.

[138] This practice is similar to the second stasimon of E.*Alc.*435-476 in which the chorus rationalise their grief over Alcestis' death by making her into a 'paragon of virtue' and the definitive example of a perfect wife.

[139] Again, Euripides' *Alcestis* is an important parallel for this passage: in *Alc.*861-910, the chorus act as a foil for Admetus in his grief, first rationalising his fate by explaining its universality among mortals (E.*Alc.*891-894) and then by using a more specific example of a family member who suffered the same fate but nevertheless bore it well (E.*Alc.*903-911).

One context of grief which pertains only to women can be found in Euripides' *Hecuba* and *Trojan Women*, connected as they are through their setting in the immediate aftermath of the sack of Troy and their focus on the fate of the Trojan women who have lost everything – their status, husbands and freedom – to the victorious Greek army. The key distinction between these plays is in their scope: *Hecuba* revolves around the utter desolation and reversal of fortunes suffered by a once prosperous queen, firstly in her enslavement and secondly, as emerges over the course of the tragedy, in the loss of all of her children to the effects of the war. Her eventual murder of Polymestor, and exoneration for the act, is of but little comfort in the end to a woman who has endured so much. The chorus' role, therefore, is as a supporting act to the amplified misery and degradation suffered by their former queen. What the chorus suffer is common to all women captured in war: their experience instead provides a universal backdrop against which Hecuba's particular misfortunes are highlighted, demonstrating the unique desolation which the queen must undergo in addition to these collective woes.[140] In *Trojan Women*, however, the focus is not on Hecuba alone, whose suffering is just one story of female predicament among many, showcased through the individual scenes depicting the equally desperate fates of Cassandra, Hecuba and Andromache, and set against the undeserved good fortune of Helen. In this play, therefore, the chorus' voice entwines with that of the protagonists, sharing the central plight shared by all the women – regardless of their status – of being forced to leave Troy in slavery.[141]

[140] So Mossman (1995) 69: '[the chorus] invest their account with pathos by their very situation as well as their words. The women in our play feel, and express throughout the play, a deep sympathy for Hecuba which is born of shared experience…conversely, their descriptions of their sufferings illuminate Hecuba's by implication'. See also Grube (1941) 114 for a similar discussion of the chorus' role.
[141] Suter goes so far as to argue that the whole play constitutes a series of almost continuous Trojan lament-type scenes, broken only by Greek characters and the *agon* between Hecuba and Helen: Suter (2003) 6-11.

Since the protagonists of both plays are women, and the context and pathos developed through each tragedy specifically relates to the plight of women, it is unsurprising that the linguistic features of the choral voice which are indicative of gendered character delineation can be found in abundance in these plays. The women's helplessness and marginality in the situation of war is particularly highlighted in the interconnected parodos of *Trojan Women* (153-196) and first stasimon of *Hecuba* (444-483), both of which centre on the chorus' anxiety over their future slavery in Greece. In both instances, the chorus speculate over where in Greece they will eventually land after being taken away from Troy. In both instances, too, the emphasis is on how little the chorus really knows or understands their situation.

In *Trojan Women*, this choral ignorance is made obvious by the situation itself: the women emerge after hearing Hecuba's lamentation and question their queen about the Greeks' intention to sail and whether they have yet been allotted a new master from the victorious army, demonstrating how unaware they are of what their immediate future holds.[142] In *Hecuba*, however, the chorus' ignorance is less easily discernible, found rather in the pathetic irony of their falsely hopeful ideals about a life of slavery. Their travelogue describes potential Greek destinations positively, dwelling on the beautiful landscape of Phthia in 451-4 and the mythological associations of Delos with Leto, Apollo and Artemis in 458-461. This positive perspective on their new homes is undermined, however, by their admission that they will be confined to a low-status domestic life wherever they end up – οἰκτρὰν βιοτὰν ἔχουσαν οἴκοις ('living a piteous existence in the house', 457) – which renders the relative beauty of the landscape around them an irrelevancy for their future lives.

[142] Suter argues that these themes of marriage and sea-voyage, often portrayed as a form of death, are drawn from ideas in formal lament and as such shape the parodos into an unconscious and ironic 'proleptic lament', consistent with the prophecy of the destruction of the Greek fleet outlined in the divine prologue but unknown to the chorus themselves: Suter (2003) 13-19.

A similar irony can be detected in the fact that Euripides emphasises the cults of two explicitly virginal goddesses, Artemis and Athena, as rituals in which the chorus assume they will participate as part of their future servitude.[143] Apart from the fact that the cults which they describe would not, in reality, have been open to enslaved women, female slavery by its nature entailed sexual servitude, too, as Polyxena herself has already made clear in lines 365-6.[144] Therefore, far from minimising the adversity of slavery through idealised fantasy, as Ann Michelini argues, the ironies in this ode instead convey the women's anxiety and ignorance about what their future holds.[145] This interpretation is also reinforced by evidence from the Greek itself, as the chorus repeatedly refer to their personal misery at being torn away from their homeland even within their idealised imaginings, and the entirety of the concluding antistrophe keeps the chorus' plight present amidst their idealised visions of their future.

With the context and interpretation of the parallel odes in *Trojan Women* and *Hecuba* established, it becomes obvious that a key method of sustaining the themes of anxiety, grief and ignorance which underpin both passages is through the linguistic formulation of the chorus' apprehensions as relentless questions. In the first stasimon of *Hecuba*, after the original question ποῖ με τὰν μελέαν πορεύ-|cειc ('where will you take me in my wretchedness?', 447-8), the chorus' further questions, speculating about diverse places and situations in Greece in which they might end up, are introduced mainly with multiple repetitions of ἤ ('or') to signal many different possible futures, as evidenced in 449, 451, 454, 466, and 472. This frantic questioning sustains both the ignorance of their perspective, as

[143] Rosivach (1975) 354-357.
[144] The idealised fantasy which the chorus project and its opposition to reality are discussed by Michelini (1987) 331.
[145] Michelini (1987) 330-331. My interpretation of this ode aligns with that of Mossman (1995) 78: 'the chorus provides an amplification of her [Polyxena's] horror of servitude, not a modification of it'.

highlighted through the irony of the examples they give of their future locations or activities, and the anxiety which arises concurrently with this ignorance.

On the other hand, immediacy, as opposed to future speculation, governs the tone of the parodos in *Trojan Women.* The chorus' questions are compressed into compact phrasing, adding to the urgency of the situation at hand. Their ode begins with a direct address to Hecuba and a volley of questions about the cause of her lament: Ἑκάβη, τί θροεῖc; τί δέ θωΰccειc; | ποῖ λόγοc ἥκει; ('Hecuba, why are you calling out? What is the meaning of what you're saying? What are you getting at?, 153-4).

The staging of this scene further exacerbates the fraught tension inherent in the Greeks' imminent departure from Troy with their female plunder. The manuscripts report a variance in the attribution of the parodos, with some sources assigning the first strophic pair to the full chorus and others to two semi-choruses.[146] On that probable view, it becomes clear that the chorus' anxious unawareness of their imminent departure from Troy is increased by the duality of the questions asked first by one semi-chorus and then the other. In the opening strophe of the ode, the first of these semi-choruses, in response to Hecuba's news that the Greeks are readying their ships, ask what the soldiers' intentions are and whether the time has indeed come to bid Troy farewell: οἳ 'γώ, τί θέλουc'; ἦ πού μ' ἤδη | ναυcθλώcουcιν πατρίαc ἐκ γᾶc; ('Woe is me, what do they want? I suppose they will carry me off over the sea away from my homeland?', 161-2). This anxious sentiment is then echoed in the opening lines of the antistrophe, spoken by the newly-arrived second semi-chorus: ἦ

[146] Diggle (1981) *ad loc.* attributes these lines to two semi-choruses, and gives the evidence on both sides of the debate in his *apparatus*. The evidence of the text is supported by a scholiast's remark on line 166, clarifying its meaning: λέγει πρὸc τὰc λοιπὰc τὰc ἔcω, ἵνα τὸ ἡμιχόριον ἐξέλθῃ ('she [the chorus leader] speaks to the women left indoors, in order to get the Hemichorus to come outside') – see Σ E.*Tro.*166, p.352.166 Schwartz.

κατὰ πρύμνας ἤδη ναῦται | στέλλονται κινεῖν κώπας; ('or are the sailors now preparing to ply the rudders at the stern?', 180-1).

Speculation and conjecture about their future destinations follow the Trojan women's intense questioning and are expressed, in a similar manner to the questions posed by the chorus in *Hecuba*, by repeated ἤ. However, while such questions governed almost the full length of the stasimon in *Hecuba*, in *Trojan Women* the chorus' imaginings are compressed to a mere three lines:

> τίς μ' Ἀργείων ἢ Φθιωτᾶν
> ἢ νησαίας ἄξει χώρας
> δύστανον πόρσω Τροίας; (187-9)[147]
>
> *Which Argive or Phthiote or man of an island country will take me, wretched, far from Troy?*

This condensed nature of the chorus' questioning, alongside the duplication of the questions posed by both semi-choruses as they arrive on stage, together focus attention on the urgency and panic of the chorus' current situation, with the Greeks on the cusp of departure. The urgency created by the linguistic features of the ode differentiates the parodos of *Trojan Women* from its counterpart stasimon in *Hecuba,* in which the same choral ignorance and anxiety is demonstrated, but such emotions are instead presented through extended speculation over the chorus' ironically-charged future prospects.

While a fifth-century Athenian audience would perhaps not have readily related to the impassioned pleas of the Trojan women in these plays, who are at the most basic level simply barbarian concubines won by the spear, there is nevertheless reason to believe that some of their experiences did resonate with Athenian women across the spectrum of contemporary society. John Gould has highlighted, for instance, that the legal status of an

[147] Diggle (1981) *ad loc.* justifies, but does not print, Wecklein's conjecture νησαίας ἄξει χώρας, rather than the manuscripts' accusative νησαίαν ἄξει χώραν. The genitive is needed to justify the second ἤ.

Athenian woman was dependent throughout her life on a *kyrios* – a male guardian, be it her father, son or husband – who held control of her dowry, wealth and body at all times.[148] Therefore, in a society which sought to define women as 'incapable of a self-determined act, as almost in law an un-person, outside the limits of those who constitute society's responsible and representative agents', the extremities of the Trojan women's situation and the emotional expression of their plight may well have told a more universal tale of female physical and verbal subjugation than the tragedies' immediate context might suggest.[149]

1.ii Storytelling

Another way in which female verbal and social marginality are illuminated in the choral voice is through the narration of the mythological stories which govern the themes and structure of many choral odes. There is a certain 'cognitive dissonance' inherent in the role of the chorus in general, who as a character-type are often physically unable to intervene in the action and socially marginal in the drama's setting, and yet still often possess the verbal authority to advise, philosophise and mythologise over the course of the tragedy.[150] John Gould has used the idea of 'collective experience' to demonstrate this conflict between the chorus' narration of related mythological stories and the marginality of their persona on stage.[151] Gould's argument, for instance, explains why the choruses of Euripides' *Phoenician Women* and Aeschylus' *Suppliants* are able to cite foundation stories and other myths relevant to the cities they find themselves in, despite being 'marginal' both in voice and

[148] Gould (1980) 43-46.
[149] Gould (1980) 43-44. The 'gendered' expression of women's plight in wartime in the choral of voice of Tragedy is explored more fully in chapter 3.2.i.
[150] The Tragic chorus' inherent narrative authority derives, of course, from the ritual and civic role played by choruses in the communities of archaic and classical Greece, as summarised by Mastronarde (2010) 90-93 and discussed in detail in Calame (1977a).
[151] Gould (2001) 378-404.

ethnicity to the setting of the dramas. As a result, 'social memory' in the choral voice forms a basis for their verbal authority in Tragedy, in contrast with their physical or social marginality.[152]

Recent studies in sociolinguistics can also inform our discussion of the impact of ethnicity on the choral voices of both *Phoenician Women* and *Suppliants*. Current scholars in the field, such as Nicole Holliday, have begun to focus on the concept of 'code-switching' in the speech of people with various racial backgrounds, particularly those with a complex or multiform race identity; this phenomenon becomes especially prominent when they are placed into a speech environment representing only one part of their identity, as they use speech patterns to 'perform' the ethnolinguistic aspects of the context they are in.[153] While Holliday's research focuses on intonation difference and spoken language patterns in biracial speakers of Standard American English and African American language, which at first glance share little in common with foreign female choruses in Tragedy, there is scope for understanding the authority of the choral voice in *Phoenician Women* and *Suppliants* through the lens of this type of sociolinguistic approach in conjunction with Gould's idea of 'social memory'.

In both instances, while the choruses cannot be said to be biracial in the definition used by Holliday, they do share a genealogical, and therefore ethnic, connection with both Greece and their homes of Tyre and Egypt respectively. This is made particularly clear in Aeschylus' play, as the chorus of suppliants aim to use their ancestral connection with Argos to leverage support for their cause. Some of the parodos (11-18 & 40-56) and most of the first stasimon (524-599) are concerned with the story of Io, a Greek maiden chased, in the form of

[152] Foley (2003) 12-19.
[153] Nicole Holliday's study of bi-racial Black/White men's intonation in different speech contexts is at the forefront of this new area of research: Holliday (2016) & (2019).

a heifer, by Hera's gadfly over the sea to Egypt, where she eventually settled and gave birth to their ancestor Epaphus. This story, known to both the Egyptian chorus and their Greek protectors in Argos, serves to diminish the women's 'otherness' as foreigners and establish a common ground of ethnicity with their hosts.

Simultaneously, however, the women betray – and indeed emphasise – their foreignness in their speech, as in their repeated refrain at the end of the parodos:

> ἱλέομαι μὲν Ἀπίαν βοῦνιν·
> καρβᾶνα δ' αὐδὰν εὖ, γᾶ, κοννεῖc.
> πολλάκι δ' ἐμπίτνω ξὺν λακίδι λινοcινεῖ
> Cιδονίαι καλύπτραι. (117-21 & 129-132)
>
> *I call on the hilly land of Apia - you, land, understand my barbarian speech - and time after time*
> *I tear at the linen fabric of my Sidonian veil.*

In these four lines, the chorus evoke their geographical, linguistic and sartorial otherness, in contrast to their previous portrayal of their shared ancestry with the Argives. Later, they even refer to their own skin colour – … μελανθὲc | ἡλιόκτυπον γένοc ('dark-skinned, sun-beaten race', 154-5) – as a defining, and presumably differentiating, aspect of their identity in comparison with the Greeks. Their foreignness is also apparent in the following episode, when Danaus warns them to be temperate in their speech because of their status as foreign refugees – χρεῖοc εἶ ξένη, φυγάc· ('by necessity you are a foreigner, an asylum seeker', 202) – and in the fact that, at first sight, they mistake Pelasgus' muted royal attire as fit for a temple warden rather than a ruler (246-8). However, their subsequent plea to the Argive king is based once again on their shared ancestry, and in the course of their ensuing debate with Pelasgus over the validity of their case, their foreignness seems to co-exist with rather than undermine their genealogical alignment with Argos.

In Euripides' *Phoenician Women*, too, the Io story is presented during the chorus' first appearance on stage (243-9) as a bridge between Thebes and Tyre, albeit in the more

generalised form of explaining the chorus' sympathy for the current situation in the city through Io's connection to both Greece and the chorus' Tyrian ancestors from her offspring Epaphus. This same connection to Greece is brought into sharp relief with their foreign identity in their next ode, as the chorus trace their Greek ancestral connection through Epaphus and Io, but with 'barbarian' prayers and cries:

> καὶ cέ, τὸν προμάτορος
> Ἰοῦc ποτ᾽ ἔκγονον
> Ἔπαφον, ὦ Διὸc γένεθλον,
> †ἐκάλεc᾽ ἐκάλεcα βαρβάρωι βοᾶι,
> ἰῶ, βαρβάροιc λιταῖc†· (676-80)
>
> *And you, Epaphus, child of our ancestress Io, born from Zeus, you I call on with barbarian cry – ioh! – and with barbarian prayers.*

Once again, it seems, the chorus' connections to the land they find themselves in and their simultaneous acknowledgement of their foreignness are allowed to co-exist in their choral voice. The code-switching between their Egyptian heritage and simultaneous claims to Greekness is reminiscent of the sociolinguistic phenomenon born from multiple co-existing racial identities which emerges from Holliday's research.

It is, of course, unwise to neglect the fact that expressing their foreignness is also a dramatic necessity, given the impracticality of composing odes in a language other than Greek; the chorus' 'foreign' self-identification, then, forms part of the wider suspension of disbelief over the arrival of a Greek-speaking foreign group of women.[154] However, when the chorus' Egyptian or Tyrian ethnicity is closely juxtaposed with their claim to a shared Greek origin, there results an interesting tension between these two seemingly opposing, and yet co-existing, expressions of identity.

[154] So Sommerstein (2008a) 303n.23 *ad* 119: 'Although, in accordance with the conventions of tragedy, the words that actually come out of the Danaids' mouths are Greek, we are expected to imagine that they are speaking Egyptian (just as e.g. we are expected to imagine that the performers' linen masks are human faces)'. Cf also Sommerstein (2019) 127 *ad* 117-9.

And yet, while in *Suppliants* the chorus' re-telling of Io's myth is not undermined by their foreign identity precisely because of their shared claim to its genealogical appropriateness, the chorus' narrative authority in *Phoenician Women*, ironically the same play as Gould used as supporting evidence for his argument of the innate choral authority within collective experience, seems to be diminished during the drama because of their outsider's perspective. Edith Hall, for instance, notes the following about Euripides' play:

> ...although it is modelled in part on Aeschylus' *Septem contra Thebas*, Euripides externalises in the ethnicity of his chorus-members the timorousness and threnodic lyricism which Aeschylus had related exclusively to their gender.[155]

On the one hand, therefore, the Phoenician women re-tell important foundational and aetiological myths connected with Thebes, a place in which they have only accidentally and temporarily found themselves, which demonstrates to some extent Gould's idea of shared social memory. On the other, however, they also qualify their supposedly inherent authority to tell these tales with an admission of their own social and ethnic marginality to the action.

In the epode of the second stasimon (818-832), for instance, the chorus recount in brief the crucial founding myths of Thebes: the serpent from the teeth of which the 'sown men' sprung; the city's walls which were charmed into place by the music from Amphion's lyre; and the genealogical line of the city's kings which can be traced as far back as Io. However, the women also preface their ability to recount these stories with the following qualification: βάρβαρον ὡς ἀκοὰν ἐδάην ἐδάην ποτ' ἐν οἴκοις ('so I heard, I heard, the foreign tale once in my home', 819), demonstrating a lack of confidence in their account, which is based only on local hearsay, as opposed to a more authoritative version which native Thebans might have told. Further, in line with Hall's observations above, the choral voice of the play is not only conditioned by their foreignness, but also by their gender; Mastronarde notes in his

[155] Hall (1989) 116.

commentary on this line that 'such iterations [ἐδάην ἐδάην] mark a heightening of emotional involvement'.[156]

The abundance of such repetitions represents intense anxiety and emotionalism and is therefore often characteristic especially of a female choral voice; repetitions are found here in lines 818-9, and abound throughout the chorus' next ode, as in 1018, 1030, 1033, 1036, 1054, and 1060. As a result, the notion of 'foreignness' which affects the chorus' narrative ability in the play is entwined with other linguistic methods of presenting their anxiety in a particularly 'feminine' light, increasing the force of their social marginality to the events of the tragedy. Ethnicity, in this instance, provides a further intersection with their gender to condition the women's language: as a result, their authority for the foundation tales of a Greek city comes through the lens of the βάρβαρον... ἀκοὰν – 'the foreign tale' – that is to say, the version of the story known to them only after it had travelled from Greece to their native Phoenician homeland. In this way, the chorus' social marginality to the situation in Thebes because of their foreign ancestry is made explicit through their verbal marginality, in the doubts they express about their own narrative ability.

This conditioned manner of expressing stories in the voice of a non-native female chorus is also visible in Aeschylus' *Libation Bearers,* whose chorus is comprised of foreign slaves from Agamemnon's household.[157] The marginality of their choral voice is increased as a result of their non-Argive ethnicity and low social standing in addition to their gender, which in turn creates a further 'conditioning' effect on the authority of their speech. This is particularly

[156] Mastronarde (1994) 387 *ad* 818-19.
[157] There is little consensus as to exactly where these slaves are from. Hall (1989) 116 suggests that they are presented in the play as Trojan prisoners, *contra* Garvie (1988) 53-54, who argues that their almost civic role during the play suggests their 'Greekness', and Sommerstein (2008b) 221 n.20 *ad* 75-76, who points to their advanced age in this play as rendering their capture as maidens from the recent Trojan war impossible. In any case, Aeschylus' play does not require the chorus to explain, but they are nevertheless – at least initially – external to the political and civic heart of Argos as slaves-by-the-spear.

evident in the first stasimon of *Libation Bearers* (585-652), in which the chorus focus their ode on mythological *exempla* of women who have destroyed the bonds of kinship, relating these 'nightmare' examples of women's behaviour to Clytemnestra's actions. This scathing ode, spoken by women against women (although, of course, composed and acted by men), can be interpreted as an ultimately doomed attempt to justify the morality of Orestes' matricide, thereby averting the inexorable Furies. Such an explanation would account for some of the more didactic and persuasive expressions found in the ode, as Kurt Sier has shown in his analysis of the stasimon:

> Der lehrhaft-argumentative Ansatz des Chors wird explizit in der Einleitung der Exempla, 603f...was ein Gegenüber fingiert, in dem sich der Zuschauer angesprochen fühlen kann.[158]
>
> *The chorus' didactic approach becomes explicit in the introduction of the* exempla*,* 603f...*which sets up a point of comparison in such a way that the spectator is made to feel as though they are included [in the discussion].*

The chorus seek to use specific examples to justify their broader views, espoused in the first strophic pair, that women's 'all-daring passions' (παντόλμους ἔρωτας, 597) are the cause of kindred destruction.[159] As a result, their language is deliberately inclusive and didactic, convincing the audience of their authority by creating a rhetorical opposition between the superlative intellects of those listening to their song and the lesser mortals confined to ignorance in this matter. The chorus' instructive manner in this stasimon can be compared to the fourth stasimon of Sophocles' *Antigone*, in which the male chorus use a didactic tone to situate Antigone's reversal of fortune in the context of similar examples from mythology. The combination of gnomic statements and detailed *exempla* in Sophocles' chorus echoes the moralising attitude of the female chorus in *Libation Bearers.*

[158] Sier (1988) 192.
[159] See Gould (1980) 55-56 for an interpretation of this 'misogynistic' ode in the context of the wider male view of the position of women in myth and reality in Classical Athens.

However, the female chorus of Aeschylus' play departs from its Sophoclean parallel in the second part of the ode, as indications of the women's marginal social status from the perspective of both gender and ethnicity begin to emerge in their song. The women preface their *exempla* with a qualifying question:

> ἀλλ' ὑπέρτολμον ἀν-
> δρὸς φρόνημα τίς λέγοι
> καὶ γυναικῶν φρεσὶν τλημόνων
> παντόλμους ἔρωτας, ἄ-
> ταισι 〈 〉 συννόμους βροτῶν;[160] (594-598)
>
> *But who can talk about man's spirit, too bold, and the all-daring passions of women with reckless hearts, companions to the follies of mortals?*

The rhetorical expression τίς λέγοι, 'who can talk about', is interpreted by Sier as demonstrating 'die Unergründlichkeit' – the inscrutability, or fathomless nature – of the statement, which makes the chorus' ensuing attempts to answer this very question in spite of their own misgivings all the more surprising.[161] From the beginning of the ode, then, the defiant, didactic choral voice is qualified by a more doubtful tone. The duality of the chorus' verbal authority is further demonstrated by the fact that, only in this ode of the play, the choral voice assumes a 'personal' tone. As Kurt Sier writes:

> …nur hier (623, 629) und, in besonderer Funktion, am Ende der Exempla (s. zu 638) begegnet die Ich-Form.[162]
>
> *…only here (623, 629) and, in a specific role, at the end of the* exempla *(to 638), does the 'I'-form occur.*

The chorus' own opinions are contrasted with the more formal informative manner assumed at the beginning of the stasimon, already suggesting that their testimony relies more on their specific viewpoint than established fact. Their closing question 'which of these stories have I collected unfairly?' (τί τῶνδ' οὐκ ἐνδίκως ἀγείρω, 638) is particularly striking. While rhetorically speaking this question could be read as simply an affirmation of

[160] The sense of these lines, despite the metrical difficulty, can be communicated clearly without conjecture. Tucker's 〈ματαίαισι〉 seems at least plausible in the context, to convey the unnecessary suffering that women create for mankind through their actions.
[161] Sier (1988) 191.
[162] Sier (1988) 192.

their explanations, the personal tone of the question introduces an element of doubt, as if inviting the audience to critique their suggestions in the narrative, since their perspective is that of a social and (potentially) cultural outsider.

Ultimately, the audience would almost certainly have agreed with both the chorus' invective against the passions of women and the mythological evidence they use to support this claim.[163] However, the doubts that creep into the chorus' ode through their more personal and questioning tone contribute to the play's overall theme of the problematic ethics associated with retributive justice. Clytemnestra may be as bad as the evil women described, but her murder by her son cannot be justified by the chorus' arguments alone, as is testified at the end of the play with the arrival of the Erinyes.

A further facet of diminished authority in the voice of female choruses is demonstrated in the doubts that women in the chorus place on the truth of their own tales. In the second stasimon of *Iphigenia at Aulis,* for instance, the chorus imagine the Greek fleet landing at Troy, and predict the fear felt by the Trojan women at the army's arrival, ending their narrative with a focus on Helen as the cause of such monumental strife. Their description of Helen's genealogy, however, is couched in terms which demonstrate the chorus' lack of belief in the tale they are telling:

> διὰ cέ, τὰν κύκνου δολιχαύχενος γόνον,
> εἰ δὴ φάτις ἔτυμος ὡς
> †c' ἔτεκε Λήδα† ὄρνιθι πταμένωι,
> Διὸc ὅτ' ἀλλάχθη δέμας, εἴτ'
> ἐν δέλτοις Πιερίcιν
> μῦθοι τάδ' ἐc ἀνθρώπους
> ἤνεγκαν παρὰ καιρὸν ἄλλως.[164] (794-800)

[163] Invective which, of course, originates from the *male* voice of Aeschylus himself.
[164] Line 796 is difficult to reconstruct. I prefer Musgrave's conjecture c' ἔτεκε Λήδα over ἔτυχεν ('met with' – euphemistic language for μίγνυcθαι) as transmitted in the manuscript Tr and printed in cruces as †ἔτυχε Λήδα† by Diggle (1994) *ad loc.*, because ἔτεκε conveys the sense of the genealogical tale most directly, while presenting the least interference with the text. Elmsley's ἔτεκε Λήδα c' is another alternative, while Hermann's suggestion of ἔτεκεν with the deletion of Λήδα, and conjectures which supply participles such as Scaliger's 〈μιγεῖc'〉; Porson's 〈μιχθεῖc'〉; and Monk's 〈πλαθεῖc'〉 are less convincing.

> *Because of you, child of the long-necked swan, if indeed the report is true that Leda bore you to a winged bird, the changed form of Zeus himself—or perhaps, on the tablets of the Pierian Muses, stories brought these tales to men wrongly, beyond their due measure.*

That the chorus are unsure of their own words is evident from the construction εἰ δὴ - 'if indeed...'. The picture of the chorus' diminished verbal authority is further complicated by the chorus' defence of their potentially faulty story. The women imply that the Muses themselves have been misleading them in their narrative, since the Muse-inspired 'tablets' (i.e. the stories written down – typically by male poets) on which the chorus-women have to rely for their information may themselves be promoting these potentially false stories.[165] The hesitation over their verbal authority, both linguistically and metaphorically, highlights a more tentative narrative voice which is characteristic of women who would ordinarily not expect such influence to be attributed to their speech.

The same principle can be found in the second stasimon of Euripides' *Electra*, in which the chorus narrate the mythological cause of the strife in the House of Atreus through the story of the golden lamb, culminating in the aetiological epilogue of Zeus' decision to change the course of the sun from East to West in order to express his dissatisfaction with Thyestes' behaviour. However, instead of ending the choral ode there, or – as eventually happens – relating this *aition* to the main theme of crime and punishment in the play, the chorus digress into their own reflection on the tale:

> λέγεται 〈τάδε〉 , τὰν δὲ πί-
> στιν σμικρὰν παρ' ἔμοιγ' ἔχει,
> στρέψαι θερμὰν ἀέλιον
> χρυσωπὸν ἕδραν ἀλλάξαν-
> τα δυστυχίαι βροτείωι
> θνατᾶς ἕνεκεν δίκας. (737-742)

[165] It is, of course, also possible to read the chorus' questioning of Leda as part of the tradition of intellectualising myth-revision rather than a facet of diminished female vocal authority, in line with the (male) genre of sophistry and philosophy at the time. However, these two interpretations are not mutually exclusive: there may even be further irony in a chorus of 'ordinary' women attempting to assume the rationalising guise of a sophist.

> *It is said, though the story has little credibility at least as far as I'm concerned, that the sun turned around his fiery golden throne and changed it to the disadvantage of mankind for the sake of ensuring mortal justice.*

This unexpected musing is presented in a deliberately 'personal' tone, as is highlighted by παρ' ἔμοιγ' ἔχει ('at least as far as I'm concerned'), indicating that the chorus have departed from their elevated narrative voice and are now citing their own opinion as a group of Argive women. Further, the very fact that this passage is not only superfluous to the overall thematic and structural shape of the stasimon but also a deliberate digression from the focus of the ode emphasises the difference in the tone of the choral voice. On one level, the digression provides simply a lightly comic effect: the chorus undermine themselves and at the same time subvert the typical expectations of religious solemnity in choral song; in short, Euripides exhibits a moment of playfulness with the formal Tragic style. On another level, however, the playful levity of the passage could also be interpreted with a pinch of irony, as the audience witnesses a group of provincial, 'ordinary' women boldly question the credibility of foundational mythological tales, just as the chorus of *Iphigenia at Aulis* questioned the authority of Muse-inspired male poetry in the example above. Of course, despite attacking the basis of their story in natural law, the chorus of *Euripides* nevertheless justify the tale on the grounds of its social utility – that these terrifying stories are still useful to society because they 'make mortals fear the gods' (743-4). While this should be seen in part as simply a typically Euripidean tactic of subversion, seeking to question the status quo and rationalise stories of the gods, there is scope to find another level of irony in the use of ordinary women's voices to convey this thinly-veiled attack on the (male-dominated) 'establishment view'.

Hesitancy in the female choral voice over the reliability of their narratives can be contrasted with the confidence displayed in the male choral voice when telling similar aetiological or genealogical tales. One such passage is in the second stasimon of Sophocles' *Oedipus at*

Colonus (668-719), in which the chorus proudly sing an ode in praise of Colonus, Sophocles' own Attic deme. After describing various topographical and pastoral features of the landscape, the men utter one last boast (710-9): it was here that Poseidon created the first bridle for horses. Far from doubting this aetiological narrative, the chorus revere it as true, positioned at the end of the ode as a culmination of all the other praiseworthy features of the place. The men's sense of pride in the tale prevents them from expressing any doubt about its provenance or veracity, instead embracing it as a proud part of their cultural heritage.

Similarly, in the third stasimon of Euripides' *Heracles* (763-821), after Heracles has returned at the crucial moment to save his family and halt the threats of the tyrant Lycus, the chorus sing an ecstatic ode of praise and joy in the face of this sudden and unexpected reversal of fate. Their praise of Heracles, and in particular his strength, is sung through the story of his genealogy: unusually, Heracles was said to have a mortal father – Amphitryon, a protagonist in Euripides' play – as well as the divine parentage of Zeus. The chorus do not attempt to doubt or discredit the divine version of the story in the face of Amphitryon's role in the drama. Instead, they herald the story of Heracles' conception by Zeus as genuine and beyond any doubt, describing it with the words ὡς | πιστόν μοι ('as [has been proven] a true story to me', 801-2). The authority of their narrative, even in the face of two conflicting stories, prevails: unlike the women of *Electra* and *Iphigenia at Aulis*, the male chorus here exhibit no trace of doubt as to the reliability of their genealogical myth.

The closest parallel in the male voice of the female tendency to doubt the reliability of their own narratives can be found in Euripides' *Children of Heracles*. After the messenger's speech reporting the battle-deeds of the formerly frail Iolaus, which were reportedly overseen by two stars in the sky interpreted as being Heracles and Hebe, Alcmene now accepts her belief

in the story that Heracles has become deified (871-2). The choral ode which follows this scene (892-927) highlights two competing stories of Heracles' death, as the chorus deny the existing narrative of the hero's mortal demise in favour of his divine transformation, expressed through the phrase φεύγω λόγον ὡς ('I shun the story that…', 912).[166] This passage could be seen in a similar light to that in Euripides' *Electra,* as both choruses show scepticism towards a received narrative. However, the male chorus' refutation of received wisdom is reinforced by the messenger's account: they simply agree with, and strengthen, Alcmene's own reversal of opinion in the face of what has been reported from the battlefield. The expression of their scepticism is therefore much stronger than that of the *Electra* chorus, and expresses no doubt: φεύγω λόγον ('I shun the story') is an assertive phrase, as opposed to the women's qualification of their sentiment with the words παρ' ἔμοιγ' ('at least as far as I'm concerned', 738), with the particle γε itself reducing the authority of their assertion to merely a personal conjecture advanced by a group of rustic women. In this way, the choruses of both *Iphigenia at Aulis* and *Electra* are characterised in an overtly 'feminine' way through a more uncertain narrative voice than is found in similar instances in the male choral voice, manifesting their diminished vocal authority in these plays.

The investigation so far has aimed to demonstrate how the tragedians' multi-faceted depiction of female speech in the choral voice represents various aspects of Athenian social expectations of the contexts for and restraints on women's speech. Female choruses continually qualify their own authority to lament and narrate myths, even going so far as to doubt the reliability of their own choral voice; this compromised capacity to fulfil this narratorial aspect of their dramatic role can be found in *Iphigenia at Aulis, Women of Trachis,* and *Andromache*. Additionally, such femininity can be associated with 'foreignness' to further marginalise female choral characters, as in *Trojan Women*, *Hecuba, Phoenician Women*

[166] I prefer Elmsley's emendation φεύγω to φεύγει in L (see Diggle [1991] *ad loc.*).

and *Libation Bearers.* As well as the impact exerted by these examples of gendered speech on the particular contexts in which they occur, a broader pattern emerges of the close relationship in Tragedy between the social context and the linguistic representation of female choruses. It remains, of course, impossible to construct a direct relationship between the reality of women's speech in fifth-century Athens and the characteristics attributed to the female voice in Tragedy. Nevertheless, it is plausible that the stylised 'feminine' choral voice resonated with the expectations and prejudices of those who experienced the original performances, thereby creating a recognisably 'Athenian' female voice.

1.iii Escape

The preceding analysis has focused on verbal marginality, but references in the female choral voice to their physical weaknesses can also intersect with the chorus-women's 'outsider' social status. Of course, the idea of lacking physical agency is not in itself confined to depictions of women. In fact, in Tragedy it is often chorus-men who refer to their bodily infirmities, usually in the context of city elders who are politically active but no longer physically capable. In Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, for instance, the chorus-men refer to themselves as 'leaning on sticks' (νέμοντες ἐπὶ σκήπτροις, 75) and 'going on their three-footed way' (τρίποδας μὲν ὁδοὺς | στείχει, 80-1), while in the opening lines of the parodos, the elders of Euripides' *Heracles* describe themselves as 'being propped up on sticks' (ἀμφὶ βάκτροις | ἔρεισμα θέμενος, 108-9). [167]

By contrast, female physical marginality is most conspicuous in the leitmotif, found predominantly in the female choral voice, of a desire to escape. The expression of these

[167] See Dhuga (2011) 16-23 for a broader discussion of how and why choruses of old men make reference to their physical infirmity in Tragedy.

themes in the choral voice often comes in the form of so-called 'escape odes', in which the chorus respond to the 'reality' of the action onstage by wishing to be elsewhere, often because they are facing a difficult situation in the play.[168] Conventionally, this wish is expressed in the form of the volitive optative of the verb γίγνομαι ('to be' or 'become', usually indicating a change of state); the effect is to give a counterfactual nuance, indicating the speaker's awareness that their wish is impossible.[169] This counterfactual element is most clearly explained by Matthew Wright:

> When the characters and chorus fantasize about escape, they are envisaging themselves in a dreamlike situation as doing the impossible; as transcending their boundedness like a god, a ship, a bird; of flying; of soaring beyond constraints; of being liberated, like gods, from human boundaries and covering a vast geographical range.[170]

The archetypal 'escape ode' is found in Euripides' *Hippolytus*, when the chorus wish that they could become birds and fly away from Troezen rather than face the horrors of Phaedra's impending suicide:

> ἠλιβάτοις ὑπὸ κευθμῶσι γενοίμαν,
> ἵνα με πτεροῦσσαν ὄρ-
> νιν θεὸς ἐν ποταναῖς ἀγέλαις θείη· (732-4)
>
> *Would that I could be nestled in among the steep mountain hollows, in a place where some god might turn me into a winged bird among the soaring flocks.*

The wish to be transformed into a bird is the most common way in which women in Tragedy – whether in the chorus or as protagonists – express their desire to be able to leave a situation behind. Other examples include Euripides' *Andromache* (861-4), when Hermione wishes that she could be a bird as a means of escaping punishment for her wrong-doings in Phthia, and Euripides' *Ion* (796-9), when Creusa wishes she could fly away from her troubles in Greece. The same sentiment appears again – albeit more obliquely – in lines 1238-9 of the

[168] For further discussion of the use of escape odes in Tragedy, see Padel (1974) 227-241; Barlow (2008) 38-42; and Swift (2009) 364-382.
[169] Cf. Padel (1974) 227-241; and Wright (2005) 221 n.227.
[170] Wright (2005) 221.

same play, when the chorus express the idea of a 'winged escape-route' (φυγὰν πτερόεσσαν) to describe how their own escape from punishment now seems to be impossible.[171]

The theme of flight – both physically (as a bird) and spatially (as a means of relocation) – is particularly pronounced in Euripides' escape-tragedies, *Helen* and *Iphigenia among the Taurians.* In both plays, the chorus initially share the same fate as the heroine of being marooned in a foreign land with no means of returning to Greece. However, the action of the two plays is centred on the coincidental arrival of a long-lost relative to the heroine: Iphigenia's brother Orestes and Helen's husband Menelaus in *Iphigenia among the Taurians* and *Helen* respectively. After a scene of delayed recognition, the heroine and her new-found accomplice plot and successfully execute their escape back to their homeland in Greece; the chorus of each heroine's female attendants, meanwhile, are unable to follow their mistress and are instead left behind. The chorus' escape odes in these plays, then, represent 'escapism' in a broader context than simply wishing to get away from an unpleasant situation. Their purpose is rather to create a sense of personal nostalgia and longing for the homeland the women cannot obtain, while supporting and celebrating each heroine's successful escape.

Portrayed in this way, the chorus' desire to be able to fly like a bird over the sea becomes even more poignant in the context of a tantalisingly close and yet still unattainable means of escape. In Euripides' *Helen*, for instance, the chorus wish that they could join the groups of migrating cranes passing north through Egypt towards Sparta, in order to be able to tell the Spartans that Helen and Menelaus are on their way home:

> δι' αἰθέρος εἴθε ποτανοὶ
> γενοίμεθ' ὅπαι Λιβύας
> οἰωνῶν στιχάδες

[171] See also S.fr.476, although the identity and gender of the speaker is unknown, and Ar.*Av.*1337-9 for a comic version.

ὄμβρον χειμέριον λιποῦ-
σαι νίσονται (1478-1482)

Would that I could become winged and fly through the air to where the ranks of Libyan birds go when they leave behind the wintery rain...

The point of their wish is ostensibly to show their excitement for the happy couple's successful escape from Egypt, rather than their own longing for escape. However, in the context of the full ode (1451-1511), and especially their detailed descriptions of Spartan topography and religious festivals, it is also possible to read an undertone of nostalgia into their well-wishing words.[172]

The sense of longing and nostalgia is, however, much more evident in the comparable escape ode of *Iphigenia among the Taurians.* Here, after having been informed of Iphigenia's plan for escape, the chorus reflect at length on the contrast between the happy homecoming that awaits Iphigenia and their own still unattainable wish to make the same journey. First, they make an ironic comparison of themselves with the halcyon bird (the Greek name for a female kingfisher), before describing their nostalgia for the familiarity of their home and the lives they should be living:

ὄρνις, ἃ παρὰ πετρίνας
πόντου δειράδας, ἀλκυών,
ἔλεγον οἶτον ἀείδεις,
εὐξύνετον ξυνετοῖς βοάν,
ὅτι πόσιν κελαδεῖς ἀεὶ μολπαῖς,
ἐγώ σοι παραβάλλομαι
θρήνους, ἄπτερος ὄρνις,
ποθοῦς' Ἑλλάνων ἀγόρους,
ποθοῦς' Ἄρτεμιν λοχίαν, (1089-1097)

Halcyon bird, you who sing mournfully of your fate by the rocky cliffs above the sea, the cry for your husband – easy to interpret for those who understand it – that you always sing: I match my laments with yours, though I am but a wingless bird, who longs for the meeting-places of the Greeks, and for Artemis of childbirth...

The chorus' wistful nostalgia is heightened not only by their sense of longing, comparable with that of the kingfisher (named after Alcyone who, in myth, was turned into a bird

[172] See Padel (1974) 235-240 for a fuller discussion of the theme of 'escapism' in this ode.

because of the intensity of her longing for her husband), but also by the fact that their nostalgia is incurable. Unlike the kingfisher, they are wingless and therefore unable to obtain any relief from their troubles. This is compounded by the more typical language of escape later on in the ode, when the chorus wish to be able to follow Iphigenia's ship as it sails westwards to Greece:

> λαμπροὺς ἱπποδρόμους βαίην,
> ἔνθ' εὐάλιον ἔρχεται πῦρ:
> οἰκείων δ' ὑπὲρ θαλάμων
> πτέρυγας ἐν νώτοις ἀμοῖς
> λήξαιμι θοάζουσα: (1138-1142)
>
> *Would that I could traverse the gleaming racecourse where the fire of the sun goes: only once I am hovering over the chambers of my house would I stop the wings on my back from beating.*

There is a poignancy in the chorus' position of immobility arising from the fact that the only means of escape the chorus can imagine is if they were magically to grow wings. Their chances of escape are so remote that the women cannot even dare to think about the only plausible method of leaving the island – that is, by boat, as Iphigenia is about to do – and instead confine themselves to fictional illusions in their helplessness.[173]

The chorus' comparison of their situation with that of the halcyon bird also provides the closest allusion to the archaic antecedent of Tragedy's counterfactual escape-wishes, first found in Alcman *PMG* 26:

> οὔ μ' ἔτι, παρθενικαὶ μελιγάρυες ἱερόφωνοι,
> γυῖα φέρειν δύναται· βάλε δὴ βάλε κηρύλος εἴην,
> ὅς τ' ἐπὶ κύματος ἄνθος ἅμ' ἀλκυόνεσσι ποτῆται
> νηδεὲς ἦτορ ἔχων, ἁλιπόρφυρος εἴαρος ὄρνις.
>
> *Honey-voiced, sacred-singing maidens, my limbs can carry me no longer. Would – oh would – that I could be a ceryl, which flies with the halcyons over the crest of the waves with a fearless heart, a bird of the springtime as purple as the sea.*

The context of the passage is explained by Antigonus of Carystus: Alcman is now too old to take part in the dancing he used to enjoy, and wishes that he could become a ceryl – the

[173] See Barlow (2008) 28, who stresses the importance of the sea as a physical, and very real, barrier to escape that the chorus are able to circumvent only in their imagination and longing.

Greek name for a male kingfisher – as it is said that halcyons help to carry aloft their ceryl mates when they have become too old and weak to fly on their own wings.[174] On this interpretation, Alcman wishes to be transformed into a bird because it is the only means by which he will be able to achieve the otherwise unobtainable, that is, to be able to join in the dances once more despite his elderly physique.

That the wish centres on counteracting the physical infirmity of the old man intersects with its use in the female voice of Tragedy, as, like Alcman, the women wish to be turned into birds because it is the only means by which they could have the agency to leave behind their current situation. This recognition of their physical marginality intersects with their concurrent social marginality: the chorus of *Hippolytus,* for instance, wish to fly away because they know that Phaedra's demise is now inevitable and they do not have the power to stop it, while Hermione and Creusa wish to escape from their realities because the security of their social position has been put in peril: Hermione's because her plot to kill Andromache has been revealed and she fears being thrown out of the house by her husband Neoptolemus; Creusa's because she remains a childless queen while her husband has just received a son as a result of Apollo's own oracle, which could lead to her autochthonous power being usurped. For the choruses of *Iphigenia among the Taurians* and *Helen*, the mere fact that they are unable to escape is due in part to their more marginal social position. Unlike their aristocratic mistresses, whose relationship to their captor-ruler and surprise reunion with a male accomplice is what enables them to effect their escape, the ordinary chorus-women have no such means of plotting a similar deception or flight.

The intersection between women's physical and social marginality is further illuminated by instances of 'escape' themes which depart from the archaic antecedent of wishing to become

[174] Parker (1997) 340-341.

a bird. In Aeschylus' *Suppliant Women*, for instance, the chorus wish to become a puff of smoke or to disappear completely so that they don't have to face the fate of being forced into marriage with the sons of Aegyptus:

> μέλας γενοίμαν καπνὸς
> νέφεσσι γειτονῶν Διός:
> τὸ πᾶν δ' ἄφαντος
> ἀμπετὴς ἀιδνὸς ὡς
> κόνις ἄτερθε πτερύγων ὀλοίμαν. (779-783)
>
> *Would that I could turn into a puff of dark smoke that mingles with Zeus' clouds, that I could cease to exist completely and float away, unseen and without wings, like dust.*

This beautiful piece of pictorial poetry aptly demonstrates the women's physical and social vulnerabilities: they are trapped in a foreign land as suppliants, have been left on their own while the terms of their asylum are being negotiated with the Greek king, and all the while are being chased by the men whom they have no choice but to marry and who wish to take them back by force. In this instance, the women's only recourse is to hope to fade away into nothingness as a means of escaping both the precarious nature of their current situation as foreign refugees and the horrors (in their mind at least) of the alternative from which they fled. Once again, female physical incapacity is entwined with social marginality in the context of a desire to escape.

This idea of 'passive' escape, in which chorus-women wish to be taken away from a situation by the means of some external force rather than under their own steam, can also be found in Sophocles' *Women of Trachis.* Here, the chorus wish to be carried away from Trachis by a blast of wind so that they don't have to witness what Heracles has been reduced to in his agony and suffering:

> εἴθ' ἀνεμόεσσά τις γένοιτ' ἔπουρος ἑστιῶτις αὔρα,
> ἥτις μ' ἀποικίσειεν ἐκ τόπων, ὅπως
> τὸν Ζηνὸς ἄλκιμον γόνον
> μὴ ταρβαλέα θάνοιμι
> μοῦνον εἰσιδοῦσ' ἄφαρ· (954-8)
>
> *Would that a favourable gust of wind would come to the house to take me away from this place, so that I do not drop dead from fear as soon I catch but one glimpse of the mighty son of Zeus.*

Just like the suppliant maidens in Aeschylus' play, the women of Trachis here are physically trapped, aware that Heracles' mangled body will soon be brought into their presence but desperate not to have to face the sight. Aware of their own limitations and the impossibility of the idea that they might simply be able to take off from their homeland and start again elsewhere, they can only pray to be forcibly taken up and away from the house by some fortuitous event – in this instance, a freak gust of wind.

These two examples, when taken alongside the more conventional escape theme of wanting to be transformed into a bird, indicate that, in the female voice, escape wishes are almost always framed in a 'passive' way on the part of the speaker. Even when the women who seek to get away from a difficult situation do not dream of undergoing some form of physical transfiguration, they still anticipate that their escape would only be made possible by some sort of outside intervention, whether natural or supernatural.

The representation of physical marginality through the theme of escape appears to be a particularly 'feminine' trope in Tragedy, despite the most common expression of 'escapism' – wishing to be a bird – originating in the male voice of Alcman. Only two instances of comparable escape themes are found in the extant male choral voice, both of which show significant divergences in tone from the passages in the female voice discussed above.

The first, and most obvious, comparable episode is in Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus*, when the chorus of elderly Colonian men wish that they could leave their immediate surroundings to join the Athenian soldiers who have gone to intercept Creon on his way back to Thebes and rescue Oedipus' daughters, Antigone and Ismene:

> εἴην ὅθι δαΐων
> ἀνδρῶν τάχ' ἐπιστροφαὶ
> τὸν χαλκοβόαν Ἄρη
> μείξουσιν, (1044-7)

> *Would that I could be where the enemy, wheeling around, will soon join the clashing bronze of battle.*

The same volitive optative and counterfactual nuance apply here as in the construction of escape wishes in the female choral voice. In this respect, then, Burton is right to categorise the passage as an 'escape ode' of the type outlined above.[175] Regardless of its formal attributes, however, the tone and expression of the male chorus' 'escape' wish is very different from its conventional use in Tragedy. Rather than wishing they could take flight (figuratively or literally) from a difficult situation, the Colonian elders instead wish to leave their immediate surroundings precisely because they want to be on the battlefield and participating in the tense fight against their enemies. In the words of Dhuga:

> The Elders of Colonus evince (at least a desire for) involvement not detachment when they begin the second stasimon emphatically with an optative wish.[176]

This is antithetical to the typical use of the escape motif in the female voice of Tragedy, where (for instance) Aeschylus' suppliant women want to disappear totally like dust. The male chorus' agency is further highlighted by the fact that they do not need to pray to be physically transformed or subject to some external force as a pre-condition of their wish. Unlike their female counterparts, who can only dream of escape when their physical agency is given over either to the features of a different animal or to some imagined force of nature, the male chorus does not need to wish that they were someone or something else in order to be able to think of joining in the battle.

The old men seem to qualify their physical agency later in the same ode, when they re-invoke the theme of 'escape' as a means of expressing their desire at least to be closer to the battle even if they cannot be involved in it:

> εἴθ' ἀελλαία ταχύρρωστος πελειὰς
> αἰθερίας νεφέλας κύρσαιμ' ἄνωθ' ἀγώνων

[175] Burton (1980) 281 and n.32.
[176] Dhuga (2011) 36. See also Edmunds (1996) 66 and Wilson (1997) 113-114 for discussions of the escape theme in this ode.

αἰωρήσαςα τοὐμὸν ὄμμα. (1081-3)

Would that I could be a dove, swift as a storm, strong in speed, so that I might reach as high as the clouds in the upper air and cast my eye down over the contest.

The chorus' desire here is closely linked to Alcman's counterfactual wish to become a ceryl in *PMG* 26, and so provides a more immediate comparison with the bird-transformation escape theme in the female choral voice. Both Alcman and the Colonian chorus-men are qualified in their physical agency to use their bodies in the way that they used to – whether in choral dances or in fighting on the battlefield – and both turn to comparisons with birds as a means of getting closer to being able to participate in these situations. In a way, then, the bird imagery here does represent the male chorus' physical marginality, just as it does when expressed in the female choral voice.

However, the 'escape' motif is again turned on its head because the chorus are ostensibly only invoking this desire because a dove would be able to obtain a better (literally, a bird's eye) view of the minutiae of the battle than they can from rural Colonus, rather than as a means of expressing their hopeless situation. Again, their desire is to be more involved in a tense situation instead of detaching themselves from it. For this reason, the 'escape' motif in the voice of the Colonian elders does not evoke the same connotations of social marginality as is found in similar passages in the female voice. Instead, the sense of crisis or helplessness evident in women's pleas to escape, usually caused by their own recognition of the interplay between their physical and social marginality, is here replaced with a sense of excitement and urgency in the men's longing to experience the buzz of the battlefield once again.

The chorus of Sophocles' *Ajax* provides the only other example of the escape theme appearing in the extant male choral voice, when the soldiers dream of seeing Cape Sounion on their journey home from Troy:

γενοίμαν ἵν' ὑλᾶεν ἔπεστι πόντῳ

πρόβλημ' ἁλίκλυστον, ἄκραν
ὑπὸ πλάκα Σουνίου,
τὰς ἱερὰς ὅπως
προσείποιμεν Ἀθάνας. (1216-1222)

Would that we could be where the wooded, sea-beaten promontory towers over the sea, under the high plateau of Sounion, so that we could greet holy Athens.

Again, the chorus' wish is constructed as a volitive optative, the typical form of escape wishes. As in comparative situations in the female voice, it also emphasises the chorus' wish to exchange the troubles of their current situation, stuck in Troy and no longer able to count on the protection of their leader Ajax, for the comfort of their return home. In these respects, then, the soldiers' nostalgia for their return to Greece most closely resembles that of the female choruses in Euripides' escape-tragedies *Iphigenia among the Taurians* and *Helen*.

However, unlike the women in these plays, who wish to be turned into birds in order to be able to cross the sea back to the Greek mainland, the soldiers are able to dream of being within touching-distance of Athens themselves. This reflects their greater physical agency relative to that of their female counterparts: the Trojan war is over and soon they will be able to start the long journey home in their ships. They can dare to dream of Sounion because there is every possibility that their wish to be there may yet happen. The serving-women of Euripides' plays, on the other hand, through witnessing how difficult, dangerous, and ultimately serendipitous the escape of their mistresses has proven to be, are all the more discouraged from thinking about the notion of escape as anything but the wildest figment of their imagination. The impossibility of their hopes of going home, encapsulated in the fact that they can only conceive of their escape in the form of a bird, provides the crucial point of contrast with the soldiers' longing for their own distant (but achievable) homecoming.

Whether under the guise of a bird or a puff of smoke, women's desire to escape in Tragedy is most often conceptualised as taking effect through some kind of physical transformation. Even if they do not undergo a bodily change, they are nevertheless still aware that their only means of leaving behind a difficult situation is to submit themselves to some external natural or supernatural force: almost never are they able to conceive of leaving a situation on their own terms and in their own bodies.[177] In part, of course, this represents the necessarily counterfactual nature of an escape wish, which is always presented in Tragedy as unattainable in order to intensify the emotional and dramatic impact of the situations which the characters are forced to face despite their ardent desire not to. However, it is precisely this counterfactual nature of the escape theme in the female voice – in contrast to its expression in the male choral voice – that highlights both the physical marginality and, often, the intertwined social marginality of the women who long to get away from the precarity of their present situation, but do not have the means to do so.

2. Shifting Gender Dynamics

The discussion so far has shown how specific aspects of female choral language in Tragedy can be linked with Athenian social expectations of women's verbal, physical and social marginality. The presence of gendered language does not, however, imply a monotone method of characterisation: instead, stereotypical delineations of speech can just as easily be subverted or ignored as they can be perpetuated in the course of a drama. Once a specifically 'female' voice has been established across the tradition, as seems to have been the case, its very existence can be twisted to create unexpected dramatic effects. Such subversions can be seen in both the female and male choral voice, where sudden changes

[177] The one counterpoint to this is E.*Bacch.*402-433, when the chorus wish that they could go to Cyprus, where it would be legal for them to undertake their worship of Dionysus – unlike in Thebes.

in tone between the choral odes can in some cases be interpreted most effectively as a deliberate transgression of the borders of gender which are elsewhere in the Tragic tradition generally reinforced, rather than undermined.

While linguistic formulations of women's speech sometimes remain consistent with a feminised character portrayal, the restricted authority concurrent with such forms of speech can also be undermined through structural irony in the construction of the plot to allow such socially marginalised choruses more influence over the drama than they would themselves expect. Further, a shift in gender dynamics can also be generated through changes in the linguistic formulation of the chorus' speech within the same drama, thereby varying and amplifying its impact on the play. A differentiation of syntax and tone, signalling a shift in the role of the chorus within the tragedy, is present in both the male and female choral voice; this versatility of use highlights the important role that language has to play in creating and subverting gender portrayals of the chorus in Tragedy.

The predominance of questions in the female choral voice is a typically 'feminine' linguistic formulation found across Tragedy, often as a method of conditioning or limiting female verbal authority. In some contexts, however, a female chorus appears to question their own actions seemingly as a way of demonstrating their social marginality in the drama, but in reality highlighting an ironic ability to anticipate the course of the drama despite their verbal limitations. In each such instance, the women's hypothetical or rhetorical questions, which in themselves qualify their own authority to act or speak, are fulfilled over the course of the play. The structural irony created between the limited authority inherent in the chorus' questions and their ability, in spite of this, to foresee the course of action in the drama sometimes better than protagonists, demonstrates the importance of gender

dynamics not just for the purposes of characterisation but also for plot development in Tragedy.

The chorus of Aeschylus' *Libation Bearers*, for instance, herald their influence on the plot through their initial hesitation over speaking out. After Clytemnestra has taken Orestes into her house, thinking that he is the messenger of her son's death, the chorus ask the question πότε δὴ στομάτων | δείξομεν ἰσχὺν ἐπ' Ὀρέστηι; ('how long, indeed, will it be before we display the strength of our words in support of Orestes?', 720-1). This suggests that as a female chorus, they feel themselves helpless in the scheme of the murder plot; only after it has taken place will they be able to show their open support for Orestes.[178] However, almost immediately after demonstrating their powerlessness, the chorus have a chance encounter with a serving maid sent by Clytemnestra to fetch Aegisthus and his spearmen to hear the news of Orestes' death. After hearing the instructions given to her by Clytemnestra, the chorus command her to give a different message to Aegisthus instead:

> μή νυν σὺ ταῦτ' ἄγγελλε δεσπότου στύγει,
> ἀλλ' αὐτὸν ἐλθεῖν, ὡς ἀδειμάντως κλύηι,
> ἄνωχθ' ὅσον τάχιστα γαθούσηι φρενί. (770-2)
>
> *Don't take that message to our hated master, but tell him – as quickly as possible and with joy in your heart – to come* alone *so that he can hear the news without fear.*

When the slave-woman agrees to change her message on the chorus' instruction, it becomes clear that despite their purported anxiety over demonstrating their support for Orestes, the women have nevertheless managed to influence the drama significantly, thereby ensuring the success of the revenge plot.

[178] See, however, Garvie (1988) 240-241, who argues that the chorus-leader alone said this line, in an exhortation to her fellow chorus-members to join in the prayer which governs the rest of the choral anapaests. This interpretation is plausible in its immediate context, but the inherent temporal ambiguity in the future verb-form δείξομεν suggests that a double meaning, also encompassing the chorus' response to Orestes' eventual victory, is at least equally plausible.

Finally, the same pattern of a qualification of verbal authority followed by an immediate impact on the course of the drama is found in Euripides' *Ion*. After finding out that Xuthus has been granted a son by the oracle, who seems unexpectedly to be the temple-boy Ion, while their mistress is to be left childless, the chorus suspect a conspiracy. After Xuthus swears them to silence over the oracle's revelations about Ion, the following choral ode allows the chorus to express their suspicions about Ion and work out what course of action to take. Their worries, however, are conditioned to an extent by their lack of authority as slave-women, and are therefore expressed first of all through a string of questions rather than outright condemnation:

> τίν', ὦ παῖ πρόμαντι Λατοῦc, ἔχρη-
> cαc ὑμνωιδίαν;
> πόθεν ὁ παῖc ὅδ' ἀμφὶ ναοὺc cέθεν
> τρόφιμοc ἐξέβα; γυναικῶν τίνοc; (681-4)
>
> *Oh prophetic son of Leto, what song did you utter? Where did this boy come from, who was nursed around your temple? Which woman's son is he?*

As the sequel to this passage indicates, their scepticism is aimed firstly at Apollo's oracle, suggesting that it may have been tampered with – by bribery or other means – in order to get Xuthus' desired outcome. It is then aimed at Ion himself, hinting at his deliberate attempt to usurp the autochthonous Athenian throne as an outsider in their insistent questions about his ancestry. After deliberating some more, their final question of the strophe – τίc οὐ τάδε ξυνοίcεται; ('who will deny these things?', 694) – confirms their suspicions and yet, as Lee writes, '...appealing for agreement suggests that the Chorus is aware that their statements are mere conjecture'.[179] The slave-women, despite having their own misgivings, clearly do not have the authority to verify or act on them. The end of this strophe connects neatly with the opening lines of the antistrophe, in which the chorus move from deliberation to action – again expressed through the medium of a question: φίλαι, πότερ' ἐμᾶι δεcποίναι | τάδε τορῶc ἐc οὗc γεγωνήcομεν ('women, should I reveal these

[179] Lee (1997) 238.

things clearly to my mistress' ear?', 695-6). Once again, the interrogative pronoun πότερ' highlights the deliberative nature of the question.[180] In this way, the chorus are portrayed as simultaneously conscious of their subordinated social status but also loyal to their mistress and willing to transgress the expectations of their marginal position, in defiance of Xuthus' orders, on her behalf. In the end, of course, they do indeed disclose their worries to Creusa, which in turn sets in motion the monumental plot shift governing the rest of the drama. The chorus' suspicion and accompanying tentativeness, presented to the audience through the linguistic method of repeated questions, serves the immediate dramatic purpose of building anticipation of the crucial turning point of the play. However, this passage also demonstrates the power of female networks and relationships, an important aspect of women's everyday lives in Athens.[181] Despite the chorus' worries about transgressing their position and speaking out in defiance of Xuthus to their mistress, they nevertheless overcome these anxieties out of loyalty towards and empathy for Creusa. We are left to wonder whether the same chorus might not have been as willing to divulge their knowledge if they had been speaking to a king against the orders of their queen.

This pattern of limited verbal authority in the female choral voice, introduced into the drama through hesitancy over their actions or speech, has few parallels in the male choruses of Greek drama as a result of the inherently gendered nature of its dramatic context. Male choruses do use questions as an attempt to change the direction of the narrative at various points, but the irony created in the tension between a female chorus' diminished vocal authority and the influence they nevertheless exert over the plot is absent from any similar patterns in the male choral voice.

[180] *Contra* Gibert (2019) 233, who says 'that the chorus do not express the alternative (keeping silent) suggests that they will easily make up their minds to disobey Xuthus'.
[181] Cf e.g. Petersen (1997) 35-74; Taylor (2011) 703-720; and Schweitzer (2016) 337-364. This topic is discussed in more detail in chapter 3.1.ii.

Sophocles' *Philoctetes* provides the closest parallel for the situation of Euripides' *Ion*, both in the chorus' dedication and subordination to Neoptolemus and in their attempts to influence the course of the action. As dependent soldiers, duty-bound towards their leader and of a lower social status than the hero himself, the chorus of *Philoctetes* have a similar relationship with Neoptolemus as the slave-women of Ion with Creusa. This is reflected in the opening stages of *Philoctetes*, when the chorus ask Neoptolemus how best they can help him in his deception plot: τί χρὴ τί χρή με δέcποτ', ἐν ξένᾳ ξένον | cτέγειν, ἢ τί λέγειν πρὸc ἄνδρ' ὑπόπταν; ('master, what must I, a stranger in a strange land, conceal from the suspicious man, or what must I say to him?', 135-6). These questions highlight the soldiers' dedication to Neoptolemus and willingness to help him fulfil Odysseus' orders to deceive Philoctetes, in the same way as the chorus of *Ion* are dedicated to helping Creusa get a favourable oracle to solve her childlessness.[182] The chorus then demonstrate their complicity in the next strophe, in which they offer a false prayer to Earth decrying the deception of Neoptolemus by the sons of Atreus, itself a false story which has formed part of his deceptive narrative in order to earn the trust of Philoctetes.[183] The soldiers' devotion to Neoptolemus' plan also drives their attempt to persuade their hero at the play's turning point that the sleep into which they have lulled Philoctetes is the perfect opportunity to steal his bow and fulfil Odysseus' orders. This, too, parallels the situation in *Ion*, when chorus-women decide to reveal Xuthus' secret to their mistress at a crucial juncture in the drama. In *Philoctetes,* the chorus' bid to decisively influence the ensuing plot leads them, uncharacteristically, to assert themselves against their leader, urging Neoptolemus to get the job done in this moment of quiet secrecy: λαθραίωc | ἐξιδοῦ ὅπωc πράξειc ('make sure you do the deed in

[182] See Pucci on the parodos of *Philoctetes*: 'Reinhardt (p.191) parla di un doppio compito del Coro: dare risonanza all' intrigo appoggiando le menzogne di Neottolemo e accompagnare con il suo canto le sofferenze di Filotette' ('*Reinhardt [p.191] discusses a double task of the chorus: to lend weight to the intrigue by supporting Neoptolemus' lies and to accompany the sufferings of Philoctetes with its song*'): Avezzù, Pucci & Cerri (2003) 179.
[183] S.*Ph.*391-402.

secret', 850-1).[184] However, despite their similar situation of social marginality and a close relationship with the protagonist, the male chorus of *Philoctetes* are unable to sway even their trusted leader and captain to action, leaving the dramatic turn of events solely to Neoptolemus' own devising, while the female chorus' revelations in *Ion* are the driving force which unexpectedly incite their mistress to action. The irony of the influence held by a choral voice with limited authority because of their gender is therefore lost in a similar passage involving a male chorus, suggesting the primacy – and potentially dangerous potency – of close female relationships in particular over male bonds of friendship.

A similar moment of fleeting tension in the plot through choral intervention is felt in the parodos of Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus*, as the chorus' questions to Oedipus about his heritage and exile transform into horror when they realise who he is. At this point, the chorus orders him to leave in an authoritative command: ἔξω πόρσω βαίνετε χώρας ('go away, far away from this land', 226). Their sudden turn against the suppliant in their midst causes tension in the plot, even at this early stage, by raising the possibility that Oedipus will be forced out of Athens at least temporarily at the behest of these local men. However, after Oedipus has revealed his kindly purpose to the Athenians in veiled language and asked for an audience with Theseus, the chorus admit that it is for their rulers, rather than themselves, to decide his fate and that a messenger has already been dispatched to fetch him (292-8). The male chorus of locals, whose authority over their land is expressed through imperatives aimed at the suppliant Oedipus, are eventually revealed to be unable to exert any real influence on the play. Dhuga argues against this view, highlighting the ironic contrast

[184] I accept, along with Lloyd-Jones & Wilson (1990) *ad loc.*, Campbell's conjecture λαθραίως over the transmitted λάθρᾳ, to regularise responsion with line 834. Webster (1970) 122 interprets the chorus' tone here as 'a very polite suggestion', which fails to capture the full implication of a loyal and dependent choral group speaking against their king.

between the chorus' expression of their age and their attempts nonetheless to direct the action at the beginning of *Oedipus at Colonus* and Euripides' *Children of Heracles*:

> ...what is so striking in *Oedipus Coloneus* and *Heraclidae* is the stark contrast between the chorus' references to their debility on the one hand, and on the other hand the interventionist nature of those choruses: the former makes the latter remarkable.[185]

To some extent this counter-argument is valid, since the chorus' arrival in both plays, while not in itself decisive in the plot's progression, nevertheless establishes the drama's setting and holds up the action until their leader arrives. However, the tension lies in the discrepancy between the authoritative manner in which the old men of *Oedipus at Colonus* express themselves and the physical frailty of their character-group. In their attempted but eventually impotent interventions, the male chorus here provides a foil to the dramatic irony created by female choruses who, despite their social marginality, nevertheless sometimes have the capacity to impact the course of certain tragedies in a meaningful way.

The power dynamics established by gendered language can, as we have seen, be overturned to give women more control over the action of a drama than their speech initially seems to allow. However, in instances such as Aeschylus' *Seven Against Thebes* and *Suppliants*, a more obvious shift in gender dynamics is achieved through a differentiation in the linguistic formulation of the women's speech at different stages of the drama. The choral voice in each of these plays is dominated by fear: in *Seven Against Thebes*, the women's anxiety for the safety of their city is palpable from the first lines of the parodos, while the very fact that the women of Aeschylus' *Suppliants* have left their homeland to beg for help abroad illuminates their desperation and distress as early as their opening pleas.[186] Another feature which connects both dramas is the presence of a powerful male ruler – Eteocles in Thebes and Pelasgus in Argos – with whom the chorus must interact at critical moments in the play.

[185] Dhuga (2011) 19.
[186] A.*Sept*.78-181; A.*Supp*.1-175.

Immediately, a contrast between the social marginality of the female chorus and the political authority of the rulers becomes apparent, reinforcing the gender dichotomy that comes to dominate the themes of both plays. This imbalance of power is only increased by the specific situations of the women, who are either helpless onlookers in the civic crisis of war or vulnerable suppliants far from home.

In each instance, the chorus-women change the style of their language over the course of the drama, and in particular when addressing their political superiors, in order to present themselves as a persuasive force at critical moments in the drama. The changing power dynamic between a powerful king and ordinary chorus-women who have so far been seen as weak (either through fear for their city or through their suppliant status) is represented in the syntactic shift from the chorus' language of anxiety in earlier scenes of the play to a more assertive tone that mirrors the speech of the male leaders. In this way, the gendered conventions of female choral language can be subverted in order to allow otherwise powerless women to assert their own authority in a critical situation. This change of sociolinguistic register underlines a wider shift in the interlinked dynamics of gender and power in these two plays, both of which take as their focus the tensions of between a group of women who are socially or politically marginalised and an authoritarian male figure on whom their safety depends.

This interplay between gender and power is especially evident in the first episode of *Seven Against Thebes.* The chorus' preceding ode laid bare their terror and anxiety over the coming battle, which disrupted and threatened their sanctioned ritual prayers for the city's safety. As the city's ruler, Eteocles naturally wishes to re-establish order and calm among his citizens and to instruct the women to carry out their religious duties correctly so as not to jeopardise the collective citizen body; this broad purpose of his speech is traceable in lines

182-6, 191-4 and 236-8. However, the ostensibly civic-minded reasoning for his reproach of the chorus' behaviour becomes buried beneath his sustained misogynistic stance throughout his initial conversation with the chorus (182-286). From his first words to the chorus Eteocles demonstrates a supercilious contempt for the entire female gender, using his authority to cement the limitations imposed on women in a male-dominated society. His opening address to the chorus immediately creates an air of disdain, describing the women as 'insufferable creatures' (θρέμματ' οὐκ ἀνασχετά, 182). After outlining his specific grievance against the women's current behaviour, he returns to a more general invective against women, summed up in his wish 'never to have to live with a woman, in good times or bad' (μήτ' ἐν κακοῖσι μήτ' ἐν εὐεστοῖ φίλῃι | ξύνοικος εἴην τῶι γυναικείωι γένει, 187-8). This misogynistic statement is further reinforced after more expressions of annoyance at the chorus' frenzied actions, dismissing their conduct as 'what you get for living with women' (τοιαῦτά τἂν γυναιξὶ συνναίων ἔχοις, 195).[187] The final point of his opening speech forbids the chorus from performing any more panic-stricken supplications of the gods, but once again this specific instruction is contextualised in a broader statement about the dual spheres of men and women in Greek society: μέλει γὰρ ἀνδρί, μὴ γυνὴ βουλευέτω, | τἄξωθεν· ἔνδον δ' οὖσα μὴ βλάβην τίθει ('affairs outside the house are men's business: it is not for women to advise on these matters, so stay inside and do no harm', 200-1).

Hutchinson cautions against allowing a modern perspective on gender relations to cloud our judgement of Eteocles in this scene, as the hatred expressed so openly of the female species is far from abnormal in Greek literature.[188] Nevertheless, Eteocles' misogynistic attack should not be dismissed quite so lightly: in the words of Brown, 'the fact remains that

[187] Blomfield's conjecture τἂν for γ' ἂν, as found in most manuscripts, emphasises the connection between the actions of the chorus and a wider female pattern: the specific is symptomatic of the general. The connective τ' therefore seems a much more effective way of conveying Eteocles' double-pronged attack on both the chorus themselves and their gender as a whole (see Page [1972] *ad loc.*).
[188] Hutchinson (1994) 75.

it is not fully justified by the dramatic situation – i.e., by the irresponsible behaviour of this one group of women'.[189] In light of this, Eteocles' virulent hatred of women in his opening speech to the chorus is most easily interpreted as a further facet of his position not only as a ruler over his people, but also as a man in conflict with women. The poet's intention, in Brown's words, is to set up this scene so that 'the audience sees the two parties in the dispute as representative of the two sexes'.[190] The separate spheres of women and men in normal civic life are seen to be polarised even further in wartime, as the women's personal fears for their safety infiltrate into their civic responsibilities, while those same civic responsibilities provoke a reaction of the utmost rationality from their male ruler.

This presentation of a gender dichotomy in conjunction with a power dichotomy between a king and his subjects is maintained over the course of the ensuing *epirrhema* (203-244) through the linguistic formulation of Eteocles' dialogue with the chorus, as he continually asks for justification of their actions. The king's manner gradually shifts towards commanding the women, through orders such as πύργον στέγειν εὔχεσθε πολέμιον δόρυ ('pray that the fortifications can withstand the enemy's spear', 216); μή μοι θεοὺς καλοῦσα βουλεύου κακῶς ('do not call on the gods while counselling ill-advisedly', 223); and μή νυν...κωκυτοῖσιν ἁρπαλίζετε ('do not greet [bad news] with wailing', 242-3), indicating an assertive attitude in line with his own entrenched views on masculine superiority. His language, then, from syntax to tone, plays a crucial role in characterising both his power over his people and his male rationalism set against the emotionalism of his female interlocutors.

[189] Brown (1977) 303.
[190] Brown (1977) 305.

As a result of the opening scenes of the play, the gendered power dynamics of *Seven Against Thebes* already seem to have been cemented by the advent of the first stasimon (287-368). However, the crucial revelation of the Scout (631-648) that Polyneices has selected himself to stand at the seventh gate of Thebes, asking to face his brother in battle, suddenly changes the dynamics of the drama. A dismayed Eteocles rails against his brother but nevertheless expresses his obligation to fight, succinctly explained in his question τίc ἄλλοc μᾶλλον ἐνδικώτεροc; ('who else is more appropriate [to fight him]?', 673). In an *epirrhema* (677-719) between Eteocles and the chorus which parallels the previous *epirrhema* of 203-244, the dynamic between Eteocles and the chorus shifts remarkably in tone, with the chorus taking on the role of counsellors to their Theban ruler, who is utterly resigned to his fate.[191]

This change is underlined by the difference in the linguistic formulations of their dialogue with Eteocles: now it is the chorus who ask their king to justify his position with the question τί μέμοναc, τέκνον; ('Why this madness, child?', 686), paralleling the demands that he himself had made of the Theban women in the previous *epirrhema*. Similarly, the orders which Eteocles gave in the first *epirrhema*, expressed as negative imperatives, are now put into the mouth of the chorus instead: μὴ φίλτατ' ἀνδρῶν, Οἰδίπου τέκοc, γένηι | ὀργὴν ὁμοῖοc τῶι κάκιcτ' αὐδωμένωι ('dearest of men, son of Oedipus, don't take on the same temperament as Polyneices, who says the most horrible things', 677-8); μή τί cε θυμοπλη- | θὴc δορίμαργοc ἄτα φερέτω ('don't let the folly of a bloodthirsty battle-lust consume your heart and carry you away', 686-7); and ἀλλὰ cὺ μὴ 'ποτρύνου· ('do not be incited to do this', 698). The syntactic parallels between the two *epirrhemata* are striking, as Eteocles' power over the women, which was established in his misogynistic remarks before their first

[191] Winnington-Ingram (1983) 33 argues persuasively that 'the similarity of form might have suggested that Aeschylus wished the two scenes to be considered together, even without the similarity – and contrast – of subject matter'.

dialogue, seems to vanish in the second, as the chorus ironically takes on the king's previous authoritative role.

The completeness of this change in dynamic has long perplexed scholars, some of whom see it as an indication of Aeschylus' interest in fate and inherited guilt over coherent character creation or narrative consistency, while others prefer to try and find the connections, rather than differences, between the two scenes.[192] My purpose here, however, is not to add to the debate on Eteocles' character portrayal, but rather to show the important role of specific linguistic markers in creating such a monumental shift in the relationship between Eteocles and the chorus. In some ways, of course, the chorus performs the necessary function of providing a foil for Eteocles: just as their fear illuminated his authoritative character in the first *epirrhema*, so too does their moralising advice highlight his new-found awareness and acceptance of the inevitability of his fate. It would be wrong to try to over-psychologise a choral voice which exists, at least in part, to support the monumental sufferings of the protagonist. Nevertheless, there is a particular dramatic purpose behind the chorus' sudden change of tone. At this critical moment on which the safety of not just their king but their entire community depends, the women suddenly pivot from anxiety to assertiveness in a last, desperate attempt to dissuade their king from a potentially disastrous course of action, all demonstrated in their linguistic shift from their first terrified interactions with Eteocles to replicating the king's own style of language. The changing gender-power dynamic (emphasised in the chorus' changing sociolinguistic register) creates additional pathetic irony. At the crisis point of the drama, the audience is made to realise that even despite the chorus' greatest efforts as the fate of their king and city

[192] For a well-argued treatment of the play's inconsistencies, see Winnington-Ingram (1983) 16-54; on specifically narrative inconsistency, see Dawe (1963) 31-42; on the role of an external 'Erinys' in Eteocles' decision-making, see Solmsen (1968b) 109-123; and on his character across the play see Lesky (1961) 5-17 and Brown (1977) 307-18. Earlier treatments of the arguments for and against inconsistencies in the plot and Eteocles' freedom of will include Wolff (1958) 89-95 and von Fritz (1962) 193-226.

hangs in the balance, they are nevertheless unable to sway Eteocles once he is intent on his doomed course.

A similar sociolinguistic shift underpins the gender-power dynamic which governs the choral voice of Aeschylus' *Suppliants.* The Danaid maidens, arriving as suppliants to Argos, are immediately depicted as fearful not only of the situation they have left behind as they fled from their husbands-to-be, but also of what lies in store for them as vulnerable immigrants in a foreign land. After setting out the situation in their prologue-parodos, the chorus begin to reveal their fear and grief in a more and more open way:

> τὼc καὶ ἐγὼ φιλόδυρτοc Ἰαονίοιcι νομοῖcι
> δάπτω τὰν ἁπαλὰν Νειλοθερῆ παρειὰν
> ἀπειρόδακρύν τε καρδίαν,
> γοεδνὰ δ' ἀνθεμίζομαι
> δειμαίνουc' ἀφίλου τᾶcδε φυγᾶc
> Ἀερίαc ἀπὸ γᾶc
> εἴ τιc ἐcτὶ κηδεμών.[193] (69-76)
>
> *So I too, embracing my grief through Ionian strains, tear at my soft, Nile-baked cheek and strike at my heart inexperienced in sorrow. But I adorn myself with grief, fearing whether there is anyone who will act as a protector for this unloved band of refugees from the land of mists.*

Their sorrow is described in raw, physical terms through the violent verb δάπτω, which is used in epic to mean 'devour', but here demonstrates instead the pain they inflict by using their nails to claw at their cheeks.[194] Similarly, γοεδνὰ δ' ἀνθεμίζομαι, 'I adorn myself with grief', also has physical undertones, as the connotation of ἀνθεμίζομαι is culling or plucking flowers.[195]

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[193] Sommerstein (2019) 53 and West (1998) 130 print εἰλοθερῆ - 'sun-baked' – a conjecture by Musgrave and Bothe, for Νειλοθερῆ as found in the manuscript tradition and printed by Page (1972) and Friis Johansen & Whittle (1980a) 83. However, Νειλοθερῆ, explained in Friis Johansen & Whittle (1980b) 68, is more powerful in its geographical precision, as the theme of the Danaids' simultaneous foreignness and claim to Greek ancestry through Io is developed throughout the play. On the other hand, I agree with Sommerstein's reading δειμαίνουc' ἀφίλου, also printed by Friis Johansen & Whittle (1980a) and West (1998) after Weil, over δειμαίνουcα, φίλοc printed by Page (1972) after Enger: the emphasis is on the chorus' present fear of being an unknown, uncared-for band of suppliants in a foreign land, not on whether their potential protector in Greece will also be their 'friend' (φίλοc).

[194] *Il.*16.156-9, where δάπτουcιν is used in a simile of wolves devouring a newly-hunted deer; for a full discussion of the use of this verb, see Friis Johansen & Whittle (1980b) 69. See A.*Cho.*24-5; E.*Hec.*655-6; and E.*Hel.*1089 for similar descriptions of the 'physical' acts of lament in Tragedy.

[195] Translation taken from Sommerstein (2019) 116 *ad* 73-6.

A theme concurrent with the chorus' grief is their fear: these emotions are deeply entwined for the maidens, simultaneously afraid of the future unknown and weeping for the grief in their past. Another feature of the chorus' persona established early in the play is the dissonance between their foreign background and their purported Greek ancestry. On the one hand, their cheeks are 'Nile-baked' (Νειλοθερῆ), while the phrase Ἀερίας ἀπὸ γᾶς seems to be an allusive reference to Egypt as the 'land of the mists', either with reference to Aëria as the mother of Aegyptus or to the geographical features of the landscape itself.[196] On the other, the chorus assert that their lament is sung in 'the Ionian manner', which suggests a particularly Greek mode of singing, albeit one associated with Persian or foreign influence.[197] However, as their song progresses, the women lapse more and more into wild emotionalism: repeated cries such as ἰὴ ἰή (115); ἰὼ ἰὼ (125, 162); and ἔ ἔ (152) are frequent, and their gloomy outlook and continued laments are strengthened, as in their hyperbolic statement ζῶσα γόοις με τιμῶ ('though alive, I honour myself with laments', 116).

The Danaids' distress in the opening stages of the play is sharply contrasted with their persuasive rhetoric when faced with Pelasgus himself, the ruler of Argos. After an initial dialogue in which the chorus outline their reasons for coming as suppliants to Argos and their ancestral right to the king's protection, Pelasgus is still unwilling to take up their cause, fearing for the safety of his own people if incited to war by the sons of Aegyptus arriving to reclaim their rightful wives. The chorus take to lyrics in response, attempting to persuade him, and so begins the *epirrhema* (348-432). Initially, their tactic is one of eliciting pity,

[196] Sommerstein (2019) 117; Friis Johansen & Whittle (1980b) 73.
[197] According to Friis Johansen & Whittle (1980b) 65-66, 'this equation [of Ionians] with dirges is based…on the inference that the Ionians were influenced by the extravagant modes of mourning practised by various tribes in Asia Minor'. However, Friis Johansen & Whittle argue against this reading, instead interpreting the phrase, improbably, as 'in Greek pastures', as a contrast to Νειλοθερῆ. Sommerstein (2019) 115 notes, more credibly, that 'non-Greeks in general tended to refer to all Greeks as Ionians', which better explains the chorus' contrast between 'Greekness' and 'foreignness'.

comparing themselves to a cow in flight from a wolf whose cries to her herdsman inform him of her distress (348-354). When Pelasgus remains unsure, however, the chorus' manner shifts. Gone are the distressed pleas and emotional cries of the parodos. Instead, the women turn to the ruler of Argos with the same authoritative tone, expressed through demanding imperatives, as the chorus of *Seven Against Thebes* use in their attempt to dissuade Eteocles from his doom.

Their commands are initially targeted at Pelasgus himself, made explicit by the inclusion of the pronoun cύ ('you') to strengthen the force of their imperatives: cὺ δὲ παρ' ὀψιγόνου μάθε γεραιόφρων· ('though old in wisdom, learn from someone younger-born', 361); and cύ τοι πόλις, cὺ δὲ τὸ δήμιον· ('you are the city, you are the populace', 370). Pelasgus, still at a loss, continues to refuse outright to protect the women, driving the chorus to enter the realm of religious and moral *gnōmai* which place divine justice at the centre of their cause: τὸν ὑψόθεν cκοπὸν ἐπιcκόπει ('consider him who looks down from above', 381); and ξύμμαχον δ' ἐλόμενος Δίκαν | κρῖνε cέβαc τὸ πρὸc θεῶν ('taking Justice as your ally, pronounce in favour of what is considered honourable by the gods', 395-6). Pelasgus once again dithers, citing a need for deep thought over rash action (407-417); in response, therefore, the women utter two continuous strophic pairs constructed entirely of imperatives, signalling the climax of their persuasive rhetoric (418-437). The chorus' protracted attempt to persuade Pelasgus to fight for their cause is underlined by a different tone and language from that of their introduction to the play. When faced with a powerful man, they suppress their fear and grief, turning instead to admonishments and *gnōmai* to reason on level terms with a figure of authority. This sociolinguistic shift in the chorus' voice is integral not just to the plot, which hinges on the Danaids persuading the reluctant Pelasgus to back their cause in order to gain sanctuary in Argos, but also to the wider treatment of gender dynamics in the play. That a group of foreign women on the run is able to persuade a king to risk the

consequences of inciting war on their behalf – despite the danger it then poses to his own citizens – makes the wider political point that even socially marginal voices are nevertheless able to influence, and even threaten, the traditional social and political fabric of a community.[198]

Shifting dynamics in the choral voice are not solely confined to women: the male choral voice, too, can gain authority over the course of a drama from an initially marginal position.[199] More often than not, however, the shift in authority in the male choral voice is also influenced by gender, and more specifically the impact of gender on the relationship between chorus and protagonist. This is particularly prominent in Euripides' *Alcestis*, where the chorus' parodos, despite conforming to a generic 'type' of parodoi where the current predicament of a protagonist draws the chorus onstage, nevertheless runs counter to our expectations of a male choral voice.[200] Within this common genre of entry-songs prompted by a new or altered situation in the drama, gendered differences emerge. Male choruses are more prone to incite the protagonist to action, or at least effect some change in the drama: for instance, the chorus of Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus* enter, having heard about the blind interloper, in order to force Oedipus to move away from the sacred grove in which he has been unwittingly resting. Similarly, the men of Marathon in Euripides' *Children of Heracles* who hear the commotion between Iolaus and the Herald arrive to intervene before the former is dragged away from the shrine.[201] Even the chorus of Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, whose

[198] This gender-power dynamic, expressed in the tension between female voices and male authority in *Seven Against Thebes* and *Suppliants*, is discussed in more detail in chapter 4.2.ii of this thesis.
[199] Euripides' *Heracles* presents, in part, a shift in dynamic in the male choral voice seemingly unconnected to gender: the male chorus' parodos takes the form of a lament for Heracles (E.*HF*.107-137), but they gradually grow more confident and finally triumphant after his reappearance and destruction of Lycus (E.*HF*.735-814). Their joy is short-lived, however, with the sudden arrival of Iris and Lyssa to effect Heracles' sudden downfall, which in turn diminishes their choral authority once again.
[200] Other examples include A.*PV*.128-196; S.*Tra*.94-140; S.*Aj*.134-200; S.*OC*.117-236; E.*Med*.131-204; E.*Her*.73-110; E.*Hipp*.121-169; E.*And*.117-146; E.*Tro*.148-229; E.*IT*.123-235; E.*Hel*.167-254; E.*Or*.143-207.
[201] While their intervention is primarily verbal rather than physical, merely rebuking the Herald until their leader Demophon arrives, this 'holding device' before Demophon is introduced is nevertheless necessary.

monumental parodos stretches far beyond the usual scope of an entry-song of this type, provoke the entrance of Clytemnestra through their request for an explanation of the sacrifices suddenly springing up across the city.

Instead of following this type, however, the chorus of *Alcestis* arrive on stage in confusion at the lack of action in the royal house on the day of Alcestis' fated death. Rather than driving forward the action, therefore, they delay Alcestis' arrival onstage because of their ignorance of the new events and marginality to the house itself: only after the chorus' hesitancy over whether to begin a lament, followed by the serving maid's protracted description of the queen's condition, is the plot allowed to move forward with Alcestis' entrance.[202] This delayed entrance is particularly striking in contrast to the situation in *Hippolytus*, for instance. Both parodoi are sung in the absence of the heroine but about their condition, and yet in *Hippolytus* the song is followed directly by Phaedra's appearance on stage, in a dramatic revelation of the crisis to both the chorus (as internal spectators) and the audience (as external spectators). On the other hand, *Alcestis*, in a similar vein to Sophocles' *Ajax*, has an intermediary character report on the condition of the protagonist before they are allowed to be seen. This delay increases the tension between the chorus' hopes or expectations for the state of affairs in the house and the reality of the situation when they are eventually able to witness it for themselves, all while underlining their limited authority as a result of their tangential or subordinate relationship with the protagonist.

The chorus of *Alcestis* enter the stage not only in an ultimately failed attempt to bring the heroine onstage with their questions, but also to mourn for the impending demise of their queen. However, because they are not privy to the knowledge of whether or not Alcestis has

[202] Seemingly the one other parallel for such an ineffectual entry-song, also in the male voice, is Euripides' *Heracles*, which, as Dhuga (2011) 83 notes, 'has no ostensible motivation'. However, see n.214 for the particular circumstances which condition the choral voice in this drama.

already died, they are forced to restrain themselves from lamenting prematurely, and instead turn to question each other about their (lack of) understanding of the situation in the house:

> κλύει τις ἢ στεναγμὸν ἢ
> χειρῶν κτύπον κατὰ στέγας
> ἢ γόον ὡς πεπραγμένων; (86-8)
>
> *Does anyone hear a groan or a beating of hands in the house or a lament, as if it were* a fait accompli?

The chorus's confusion highlights just how disconnected they are from the emotional centre of the royal house: they want to offer sympathy and support to their queen, but are not on close enough personal terms to be invited to share in her sufferings.[203]

The chorus' 'failed lament' in the parodos stands in sharp contrast to comparative choral entry-odes, almost always sung by female choruses, in which the chorus arrives on the scene with the express purpose of supporting or lamenting jointly with a protagonist who is already present onstage. Examples include Euripides' plays such as *Helen*, *Iphigenia among the Taurians*, *Medea* and *Trojan Women*, in which the women of the chorus offer their emotional support to their heroine in order to emphasise from the outset the close personal bond between the heroine and her female chorus. Even in the parodos of Sophocles' *Electra,* during which the women of the chorus seem initially to sing in counterpoint rather than harmony with Electra's depth of feeling, at the end of the parodos the chorus nevertheless reaffirm their sympathy for their heroine's plight.

In this light, the male chorus' failed attempts to lament in conjunction with their queen in *Alcestis*, when set against examples of similar, yet successful, female chorus/heroine parodoi

[203] The highly unusual nature of Alcestis's situation, given her awareness that she must die that day, compounds this disconnect between female protagonist and sympathetic male chorus: when the queen does belatedly appear, she in effect sings her own premature lament in conjunction with her husband Admetus, while the chorus is confined to a mostly silent ringside seat.

elsewhere in the Tragic tradition, not only amplifies the irony of their diminished choral authority at the beginning of the play but also highlights the importance of gender in the relationship between the chorus and protagonist. In the end, what could have been a shared lament leads instead to a parodos marked by choral confusion, expressed in the chorus' series of questions, due to the lack of a close enough emotional bond between the male chorus and their female ruler. As a result, the gender dynamics at play in the conspicuous absence of a personal relationship between the sympathetic chorus and their heroine serve to diminish the authority of the men's choral song at the beginning of the play.[204]

Although the chorus' first contributions to the drama seem to emphasise their marginality rather than authority in the play, their power and influence suddenly increases in the wake of Alcestis' death. The departure of Alcestis changes the gender dynamics of the chorus-protagonist relationship, with the chorus-men now interacting with their king, Admetus, rather than the queen. This, in turn, precipitates a shift to an emboldened, more assertive choral voice as the elders take up their traditional role as the trusted adviser to a male ruler. After witnessing their king welcome a jolly Heracles into his house and order a full feast to take place even though he has been newly bereaved, the chorus are aghast at the ethical implications of Admetus' decision and demand an explanation from their leader:

> τί δρᾷς; τοσαύτης συμφορᾶς προκειμένης,
> Ἄδμητε, τολμᾷς ξενοδοκεῖν; τί μῶρος εἶ; (551-2)
>
> *What are you doing?! Admetus, are you so bold as to play the host even after such a great disaster has befallen you? Why are you being such a fool?*

The language here is so forthright as almost to appear rude, which seems an extraordinary tone for citizen men to take in relation to their ruler.[205] The repetition of the sharp

[204] Mastronarde (2010) 101 goes further, interpreting Euripides' unusual choice of a male rather than female chorus in a domestic setting as a device which '"silences" a female perspective that might challenge the exchange of lives and more sharply criticize the reversals or betrayals perpetrated by Admetus'.
[205] However, according to Parker (2017) 168, 'Greek kings in literature, from Homer downwards, lack numinosity. Those under their command habitually treat them as no more than *primi inter pares*'.

interrogative τί and the chorus' vocative address to Admetus are both striking, but pale in comparison to the almost comically incredulous final question τί μῶρος εἶ; ('why are you being such a fool?!'). The tentative questions characteristic of the chorus' entry-song seem to belong to a different choral voice entirely, such is the shift of tone towards one of authority and even equality of status in opposition to the king. Admetus, for his part, defends his assertion of the importance of guest-friendship in life, and seemingly brings the chorus round to his view, as their ensuing ode in praise of the benefits of his former display of xenia attests.[206]

In their next exchange with the king and accompanying ode, the chorus' influence and authority increase even further. As Admetus and the chorus re-enter following their burial of Alcestis, the choral voice is revealed to be the antithesis of their previous laments in the parodos, becoming instead a foil of rationality for the emotional agony of Admetus:

CH: τύχα τύχα δυσπάλαιστος ἥκει.
AD: αἰαῖ.
CH: πέρας δε γ' οὐδὲν ἀλγέων τίθης.
AD: ἔἔ.
CH: βαρέα μὲν
φέρειν, ὅμως δὲ...
AD: φεῦ φεῦ.
CH: τλᾶθ'. οὐ σὺ πρῶτος ὤλεσας...
AD: ἰώ μοί μοι.
CH: γυναῖκα· συμφορὰ δ' ἑτέρους ἑτέρα
πιέζει φανεῖσα θνατῶν. (889-894)

CH:Fate, fate inexorable has come.
AD: Alas!
CH: But you put no limit on grief.
AD: Ah ah!
CH: Though these things are difficult to bear, nevertheless –
AD: Oh oh! –
CH: Endure. For you are not the first to have lost –
AD: Oh woe is me! –
CH: a wife. Different misfortunes happen to and weigh on different mortals.

[206] E.*Alc.*560-605. Michael Lloyd (1985) 127 highlights the chorus' objections as adding to the complexity of the hospitality theme in the play, since they force Admetus to defend himself, in turn airing a legitimate (and ultimately successful) counter-argument to the obvious ethical dilemma of his surprising decision.

Admetus' tragic cries are reminiscent of the chorus' earlier tragic cries of παπᾶι (226) and αἰαῖ (227) in their condensed lament for Alcestis as she emerges from the house. Similarly, just as Admetus earlier urged his wife not to succumb to her death – ἔπαιρε σαυτήν, ὦ τάλαινα, μὴ προδῷς ('raise yourself up, poor suffering woman, and don't surrender', 250) – the chorus now urge him not to succumb to his grief and instead to endure a pain more universal than he understands. In this exchange, the chorus-protagonist relationship has undergone almost a full reversal from the play's opening scenes: where once the emotionally overwhelmed chorus was met with the stoic authority of Alcestis, now the elders are the ones displaying calm rationality in the face of Admetus' emotional disarray. Additionally, the chorus' ensuing ode (960-1005) displays a further increase of their influence over Admetus. While Admetus' defence of his hospitality to Heracles persuaded the chorus to his side, as reflected in their praise narrative of his past *xenia* during their connected stasimon at 569-605, here it is the chorus who are more persuasive. In a rare break from dramatic convention in choral odes, the chorus explicitly address and advise an onstage protagonist during their stasimon following Admetus' lament, through a direct appeal to their king:[207]

> καὶ c' ἐν ἀφύκτοιcι χερῶν εἶλε θεὰ δεcμοῖc.
> τόλμα δ': οὐ γὰρ ἀνάξειc ποτ' ἔνερθεν
> κλαίων τοὺc φθιμένουc ἄνω. (984-6)
>
> *The goddess has caught you too in her inescapable bonds. But endure: for you will never bring back the dead from below by weeping.*

The chorus urge Admetus to 'endure' rather than grieve, since his tears are futile: he will not raise Alcestis from the dead through tears. Because the king is onstage throughout this ode, it is implied from the staging that he will have heard and listened to its content, particularly as it is directed so forcefully towards him. This is confirmed in the following climactic scene

[207] In most other instances of choruses directly addressing a character during an ode, the protagonist is off-stage and therefore unable to hear their advice, pleas or threats. Examples include Orestes in A.*Cho.* 783-837; Antigone in S.*Ant.*944-987; Ajax in S.*Aj.*134-200; Medea in E.*Med.* 824-865 and 1251-1291; Clytemnestra in E.*El.*432-486.

in which Heracles presents Admetus with a veiled bride who is eventually revealed to be Alcestis herself, fetched from Hades by Heracles as a token of gratitude for Admetus' *xenia*. The tension is built, however, from Admetus' initial rejection of the new, unknown bride in accordance with Alcestis' dying wishes, and Heracles' deliberate concealment of his actions and her identity until the last minute. As part of this, Heracles deliberately deceives Admetus by wishing that he could have brought back Alcestis from Hades (1073-4), even though this is exactly what he has done. In response, Admetus replies: οὐκ ἔστι τοὺς θανόντας ἐς φάος μολεῖν ('it is not possible for the dead to come back into the light', 1076). His sentiment directly echoes that of the chorus in 985-6, which, given he was onstage to hear it, suggests that he has been persuaded by the chorus' advice to adopt a state of grim acceptance, which characterises his tone throughout the *stichomythia* with Heracles leading up to the big revelation.[208] The unusual situation of the chorus addressing an onstage character during their stasimon and the impact of their words on Admetus' outlook highlights the chorus' authority over their king in comparison to their earlier marginality.

This sudden shift in the dynamics between the chorus and protagonist coincides with a change in the protagonist with whom the elders are in contact: their parodos concerns, and indeed seeks out, Alcestis, whereas her death constitutes a change to Admetus as the protagonist with whom they are communicating. The change in authority and corresponding change in gender of the character to whom the chorus must relate is surely no accident, as is demonstrated through the change in the syntax as well as the tone of the choral voice during the course of the play. Alongside the tragic cries of παπᾶι (226) and αἰαῖ (227), as mentioned earlier, their condensed lament before the introduction of Alcestis onstage features repetition, such as δῆλα…δῆλα ('it is clear', 218) and ἰδοὺ ἰδού ('look', 232) and repeated questions and addresses to both the gods and Alcestis (213-7, 226-7), all of which

[208] For a wider discussion of the 'ineluctability of death' theme in the play, see Lloyd (1985) 123-127.

are hallmarks of forms of language more usually associated with a feminine voice, as well as being connected with the traditionally female occupation of lamentation. Even without the context of lament, their initial confusion and self-doubt in lines 77-111 is presented in similarly feminine linguistic terms through numerous frantic questions, an address to the gods (91-2) and repetition: ἔθιγες ψυχῆς, ἔθιγες δὲ φρενῶν ('you have touched my heart, you have touched my mind', 108).

The chorus' lack of authority seems to stem in part from their attempt to sympathise with their queen, embodying a more feminine persona in an attempt to establish a closer relationship with the female protagonist. The irony rests, of course, in their failure to do so, highlighted by Alcestis' absence from the parodos, which deprives the chorus of a joint lamentation similar to that of female choruses and protagonists elsewhere in the tradition. After Alcestis' demise, however, the focus of the plot, and with it the chorus' attentions, switches to Admetus. The forthright manner in which the chorus questions, berates and advises their king suggests a more comfortable and open dynamic from their shared masculinity than the chorus' attempted, but ultimately marginal, relationship with a female protagonist.

Sudden changes over the course of tragedies in both the role of the chorus and the dynamic between chorus and protagonist provoke on the one hand a useful or even essential change of direction in the plot, and on the other an interesting window onto how gendered language and social marginality in the choral voice can be exploited and subverted to effect this transformation. In some cases the subversion of a traditional choral role underscores the irony of having a supposedly unauthoritative female chorus affect the action in decisive ways, as is clear from the scenes discussed in Aeschylus' *Libation Bearers* and Euripides' *Bacchae* and *Ion*. Most interesting, however, is the depiction of choral relationships with

protagonists through the lens of gender and gendered language, which in turn governs the wider themes and characterisation techniques as well as the plot of tragedies such as Aeschylus' *Seven Against Thebes* and *Suppliants* alongside Euripides' *Alcestis.* The undercurrent of gender which links these examples demonstrates its potency not just as a means of identifying and consolidating the social marginality of the choral voice, familiar from women's own position in fifth-century Athens, but also as a dramatic device in its own right, used by the tragedians to highlight the potential for gender relations to alter or even endanger traditional (male-centric) structures of power.

Conclusion

This chapter has aimed to give a detailed analysis of how the three main patterns of female speech identified in the previous chapter as part of the 'sociolinguistic method' can be analysed across the Tragic tradition, and in particular to highlight the marginal position of the chorus-women involved.

In the context of the female choral voice, 'marginality' can be seen to operate on three levels: social, verbal and physical. Social marginality, often shown in depictions of chorus-women in a state of heightened emotion such as panic, grief or anxiety, demonstrates how syntax and linguistic expression can reinforce depictions of the chorus' vulnerability in difficult situations. This intersects with their verbal marginality, in which syntactic patterns are used to depict the chorus-women of various plays as lacking confidence and authority in their own speech across a variety of situations, and most notably in their ability to relate the mythological narratives which form a central part of the choral role. Physical marginality, illuminated particularly in the use of the 'escape' motif in female choral voice, also intersects

with the chorus' social marginality. The chorus' impossible dreams of escape show how little agency these ordinary women have to leave difficult or dangerous situations behind, or simply to be able to recreate their mistress' escape from enforced exile and return home.

The discussion has also highlighted instances in which the marginality of the female choral voice is used ironically, as chorus-women who would ordinarily be on the sidelines of the story are sometimes able to influence the plot of the drama despite their low social position. Finally, it has explored examples of the chorus' verbal authority changing over the course of a play. The alteration of the chorus' tone, from 'feminine' forms of syntax, expressing doubt or panic, towards more assertive, confident and 'masculine' forms of speech within the same play, highlights the recurrent theme in Tragedy of the interaction between gender and authority in civic society.

Finding the 'feminine' in the choral voice is undoubtedly made much more difficult because the lyric metres and poetic forms consciously keep the language of choral songs at a distance from anything found in the everyday voices of 'real' Athenian women. Nevertheless, through a close linguistic analysis of recurring speech forms within the chorus' odes, we can find certain patterns of language which seem to contribute a 'gendered' overtone to female choral language. The conclusions arising from this sociolinguistic approach are reinforced by the broader sociological depictions of women's speech, and their contribution to the characterisation of women on the dramatic stage, explored in more detail in the following chapter.

Chapter 3

Stereotypes on Stage

Introduction

In the later decades of the fifth century, one tragedian in particular, Euripides, became especially interested in creating tragedies centred on the experiences of women. The titles of many of the plays themselves – such as *Trojan Women, Suppliant Women, Phoenician Women, Helen, Hecuba, Andromache* – attest to the importance of female protagonists in his plays, most often supported by a female chorus, which presented each drama through an often overwhelmingly feminine perspective. At the same time, differences between the extant Athenian tragedies and comedies became increasingly blurred, as Euripides borrowed themes and characters from Aristophanic comedy and Aristophanes parodied scenes from Euripidean tragedy.[209]

To some extent, Euripides' interest in the female perspective in his tragedies and their close relationship with Aristophanic comedy combine to increase the visibility and homogeneity of the type of women portrayed on the Athenian stage. These female characteristics have been highlighted by Kenneth Dover, who uses instances from later fifth-century Comedy and Tragedy to demonstrate that Attic drama of this period often portrayed women as by

[209] For more on this topic, see Nelson (2016) 64-73. Of course, what have come to be known as Comic tropes are also found in Tragedy at earlier stages in the tradition. Taplin (1986) 163-174 provides a good general analysis of the points of similarity between Tragedy and Comedy; Sommerstein (2002) 151-168 examines the use of vulgar Comic language in Aeschylus' *Oresteia*; Finglass (2018) 76-82 briefly outlines the tragicomic elements of Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*; and Jendza (2020) 40-52 discusses aspects of 'paracomedy' in Aeschylus' *Eumenides* – in particular the animalistic chorus, happy processional ending and political focus. However, the presentation of women on stage becomes especially stylised in later fifth-century Tragedy and Aristophanic Comedy: it is for this reason that Euripides' plays are the primary focus of this chapter.

turns gossiping, unintelligent and deceptive.[210] The development of a more homogenous type of literary female speech in Euripides' and Aristophanes' plays is certainly visible in the ordinary female choral voices of *Electra, Hypsipyle, Ion* and *Iphigenia at Aulis*, demonstrating the extent of the genre-switching at play between Euripides' later tragedies and Aristophanes' Comedies. To some extent, then, Euripides' chorus-women simply form part of a long tradition of stereotyping women in Greek literature. Having inherited some of the tropes familiar from the archaic lyric of Semonides and Alcman, the everyday women of Athenian drama begin to resemble the stock female character sketches that develop over the course of New Comedy into Hellenistic mime.

That said, the influence of Aristophanic Comedy can only go so far to explain Euripides' presentation of the female voice on stage. Euripides' chorus-women are not just figureheads of frivolous speech, but often also use their speech networks to support and empathise with other women, demonstrating close female companionship. By displaying such female friendships on stage, Euripides corroborates the few surviving female-authored sources for women's lives in contemporary Athenian society. Two funerary inscriptions from late fifth-century Athens seem to provide evidence for close female friendships in this period. The first of these commemorates a young woman called Biotē on a funeral stēlē set up by another woman, Euthylla (*IG* I^3 1295bis):

> πιστῆς ἠδείας τε χάρι | ν φιλότητος ἑταίρα |
> Εὔθυλλα στήλην τήνδ᾽ ἐ | πέθηκε τάφωι |
> σῶι, Βιότη· μνήμην γὰρ | ἀεὶ δακρυτὸν ἔχοσα |
> ἡλικίας τῆς σῆς κλαί | ει ἀποφθιμένης .[211]
>
> *For your faithful and sweet love, your friend*
> *Euthylla has raised this stele over your grave,*
> *Biote: with remembrance always filled with tears,*
> *She weeps for your lost youth.*

[210] Dover (1974) 98-99; see also McClure (1999) 60-62.
[211] Text and translation taken from González González (2019) 78. See also Lewis *et al.* (1994) *ad loc.*

The second is an epigram dedicated to Anthemis by her 'companions' (ἑταῖροι), on a stēlē depicting Anthemis with a woman labelled 'Hierophile'; the most convincing argument for explaining the relationship of Hierophile to Anthemis is that the former was 'named as *pars pro toto* of her companions'.[212] Since the relationship of these pairs of women to each other is not made explicit (as, for example, sisters or slaves and mistresses) beyond the words ἑταίρα / ἑταῖροι, the most natural conclusion to draw is that Hierophile and Euthylla present themselves as particularly close friends of the women they honoured in death.[213] These female dedications in fifth-century Athens are reminiscent of the scant evidence for the gynocentric poetic voice which survives from ancient Greece. For instance, Sappho uses the word ἑταίρα to depict female companionship in frs. 126, 142 and 160.[214] In the fourth century, Erinna's epyllion *The Distaff* is dedicated to her childhood friend Baucis, describing various games they used to play as girls.[215] Two further epigrams attributed to Erinna also centre on her close emotional friendship with Baucis (*AP* 7.710 and *AP* 7.712).[216]

For women in fifth-century Athens, as for Sappho and Erinna in the extant literary sources, female friendship was clearly both important and intimate. This, too, is reflected in some of the male-authored sources for women's relationships with each other in the classical period. In Demosthenes 55, for instance, in which a man defends himself against exaggerated claims of property damage brought by his neighbours, the defendant calls on his mother's close friendship with the mother of his accusers as testimony to their bogus claims of damage.

[212] González González (2019) 81.
[213] For a fuller discussion of both inscriptions, see González González (2019) 78-81.
[214] Athenaeus (Ath.13.571d) uses Sappho fr.142 and fr.160 as evidence for women using the term ἑταίρα to describe their female friends, apparently in opposition to the secondary meaning of 'courtesan' which the word later acquired: see Campbell (1982) 157. Schlesier (2013) 199-222 counters this received wisdom, using onomastic analysis of personal names in Sappho's poetry to suggest that her named companions may have been connected with the world of higher-status courtesans; nevertheless, Schlesier does not refute the conventional assumption that Sappho's poetry depicts women's close emotional – and sometimes physical – relationships with each other as friends and lovers, whatever their social status.
[215] For the text and potential context of this poem, see eg. Levaniouk (2008) 200-232; and Taylor (2011) 712-713.
[216] The attribution and authorship of these epigrams is disputed. Even if they were not written by Erinna, however, they still bear testimony to the female friendship outlined in *The Distaff*, which can be attributed more securely to Erinna (cf. Bowman [2019] 78-79, *contra* West [1977] 95–119).

The man's argument rests on the fact that when his neighbours' property was flooded, their mother sought comfort in her distress by confiding in his own mother and showing her the damage caused (55.23-4). This testimony's credibility relies not only on the closeness of this particular friendship, but also on the broader cultural premise that women often visited their female neighbours at home and depended on each other for emotional support.[217]

There is also, however, an undeniable tension in various Athenian literary sources between male acceptance of female companionship and anxiety about its potential to disrupt social norms. In Lysias 1, for instance, the speaker blames women's friendships for his failure to spot his wife's adultery. He believed her when she told him she needed to go to her neighbour's house in the night so that she could relight their baby's lamp, even though this was just a ruse to let her lover in and out of the house (1.11-14). He also depicts the female-only Thesmophoria festival as a vehicle for female adultery, as it was there that she met her lover's mother – with the obvious implication that the occasion allowed the women to organise the affair together (1.20). Such male anxiety over women's friendships is again evident in Aristophanes' *Women at the Thesmophoria*, whose story depends on the fictional Euripides' worry that the Athenian women are using the women-only sanctuary of the Thesmophoria festival to hatch a plot against him, and even in Euripides' own *Bacchae,* in which Pentheus' downfall is caused in part by his own suspicions that Dionysiac worship incites female sexual misconduct.[218]

More generally in Tragedy, close relationships between a female protagonist and her chorus-women are often mobilised or problematised in the course of the play because of

[217] See eg. Ar.*Lys.*1-65 and Men.*Sam.*35-8 for a similar attestation of female friendships with their neighbours in Old and New Comedy.
[218] Henderson (1990) 66 sees the opening lines of Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* as a comic interpretation of the male stereotype of women's behaviour at all-female festivals set out by Euripides in *Bacchae.*

their potential to harm men by either subverting their power structures or causing their downfalls. Some female choruses, as in Sophocles' *Women of Trachis,* are merely empathetic witnesses: even here, their lack of opposition to Deinaira's love potion plan makes them complicit in the resulting catastrophe for Heracles. In Euripides' plays this empathy often translates to active participation, in both the vows of silence sworn by the chorus on behalf of heroines who are on the point of acting in a transgressive or subversive way to the detriment of men (as in *Medea*, *Helen*, *Hippolytus* and *Iphigenia among the Taurians*) and in the act of breaking their silence or deliberately misleading male characters to advance their heroines' cause (as in *Ion* and *Iphigenia among the Taurians*).[219]

This male anxiety over women's friendships and networks of communication is heavily embedded in many of the extant literary and historical sources, which explains in part the various depictions of female speech as simultaneously trivial and dangerous in some of Euripides' plays: by undermining the credibility or authority of female speech, it is rendered less dangerous in its subversive potential. However, the poet is clearly also aware of the importance of female companionship for women in his own society, using women's empathy with other women to great dramatic effect in the choruses of his war-time tragedies such as *Andromache, Hecuba* and *Trojan Women.* In this way, Euripides offers a dual perspective on female speech in his choral voice.

Another dual perspective is apparent in the tragedians' – and particularly Euripides' – treatment of love. Here, too, flashes of realism can be found in the differing perspectives on Aphrodite and Eros found in the male and female voices of Tragedy. Men's more positive reception of the goddess may speak in part to their relative sexual freedom in comparison

[219] Full discussion of the role of choral silence and female complicity in each of these passages can be found in Chong-Gossard (2008) 155-182. For a broader discussion of women's oaths in Euripidean tragedy, see Fletcher (2003) 29-44.

to women, whose constant anxieties over Aphrodite's dangerous potential in the Tragic tradition could easily stem from the very real precariousness of their social and personal status in the context of strict adultery laws and the threat of divorce. Overlaid onto these kernels of truth, however, are stereotypes of women as prone to a sexual proclivity which they are unable to control because of their weaker minds (and therefore powers to resist), found elsewhere in Comedy but perhaps even originating in the realms of medicine and philosophy.

On the one hand, then, 'ordinary' women – who gain most visibility in Euripides' tragedies – can be presented in a similar fashion to their Aristophanic counterparts as uneducated, untrustworthy, frivolous and physically or mentally weak, to ironic or comic effect. On the other hand, these same chorus-women are also able to create and sustain *pathos* when needed through their emotional sensitivity to the experiences of other women from all walks of life, whether they are caught in the throes of battle or love. By harnessing common stereotypes and blending them with overtones of the realities faced by women in Athens, Euripides is able to present his chorus-women as a multi-faceted character type, adaptable to the specific dramatic or emotive needs of each drama.

1. Stereotyping Speech-Networks

1.i Female Conversation

The blurred boundaries between later Euripidean tragedy and Aristophanic comedy can be seen most clearly in the poets' similar treatment of female conversation. Women's conversations with other women have long been presented in historical, social and literary contexts as simultaneously loquacious and vacuous. The male representation of women's

language as stereotypically 'girly' and superficial in Greek poetry can be seen as early as the 7th century BC lyric of Alcman. In his *Partheneion* 1, the poet depicts the performance (real or imaginary) of a chorus of maiden women competing in a local Spartan religious festival.[220] The language he puts into the mouths of the girls is made unmistakeably 'feminine' by its immediate, mimetic and pictorial quality:

> ἦ οὐχ ὁρῆις; ὁ μὲν κέλης
> Ἐνητικός· ἀ δὲ χαίτα
> τᾶς ἐμᾶς ἀνεψιᾶς
> Ἀγησιχόρας ἐπανθεῖ
> χρυσὸς [ὡ]ς ἀκήρατος·
> τό τ᾽ ἀργύριον πρόσωπον,
> διαφάδαν τί τοι λέγω;
> Ἀγησιχόρα μὲν αὔτα·
> (fr.1.50-55)[221]
>
> *Don't you see? The racehorse is Venetic, but my cousin Hagesichora's hair shines bright like untouched gold, and as for her silvery complexion...but why am I saying this openly? Here is Hagesichora herself.*

The girls' rhetorical questions, emphasis on vivid visual descriptions and the immediacy of the language combine to create the impression of informal, chatty girlish language.[222] A few lines later (fr.1.64-77), Hagesichora's beauty is brought further into focus as a function of the girls' open discussion of her erotic appeal: the flirtatious descriptions are enlivened by references to women's clothing and trinkets such as an 'ornate golden snake' – presumably some form of jewelry (ποικίλος δράκων | παγχρύσιος, fr.1.66-7) and a Lydian headdress (μίτρα | Λυδία, fr.1.67-8). While the poetic form of *Partheneia* is itself defined to some extent by its focalisation of the female voice, Alcman uses both content and syntax to exaggerate and stylise his chorus as 'girly' beyond the poem's necessary function as a ritual or religious maiden-song.[223]

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[220] The exact context is debated: see for instance Calame (1977b) & (1983) and Bowie (2021) 527-558.
[221] Text from Campbell (1988) 364-365 *ad loc.*
[222] For a similar (albeit more understated) male depiction of a 'girlish' female voice, see Pindar fr.94b.
[223] That said, it is also important to avoid conflating Alcman's exaggerated and stereotyped depiction of a male-constructed female lyric persona with the general self-referentiality of the choral voice in archaic lyric, which is often used to define the form and function of each song.

In the context of Athenian drama, female characters' voices are used to amplify the broader literary stereotype of women as prone to impulsive, immediate emotional reactions instead of rational foresight: the hallmarks of what Kenneth Dover terms 'a butterfly mind'.[224] This trope is particularly evident in Aristophanes' comedies. In the opening scene of *Lysistrata* (1-95), for instance, the eponymous heroine attempts to corral her fellow women into taking over the city, only to find her charges constantly distracted, often by each other. From a linguistic perspective, the stereotype is also reinforced across the dramatic tradition through specific speech patterns attributed especially to ordinary or low-status female characters. In Euripides' tragedies, such women are typically represented in the collective character-types of the chorus, despite their own differentiated social identities such as slave-women, maidens and housewives, since they are able to embody the 'everyday' woman in a way that the highly individualised personalities of the aristocratic heroines cannot. The close entwinement of Euripides' chorus-women with the Athenian women who are front and centre of Aristophanes' female-centred comedies highlights the genre-switching at play between Athenian Tragedy and Comedy. It also provides the Tragic poet with a clever way of reworking Homeric epic or famous cultural landmarks from the unexpected perspective of ordinary women, subverting his audience's expectations and showcasing his creative artistry.

One such example of this stereotyped female conversation appears in Aristophanes' *Women at the Thesmophoria*, in which a group of Athenian women, fed up with being portrayed negatively in Euripides' tragedies, hatch a plot against him at the female-only Thesmophoria festival. In response, Euripides sends in one of his relatives, disguised as a female festival-goer, in order to clear his name. One particularly striking feature of this gender impersonation is the way in which the newly-disguised relative also attempts to

[224] Dover (1974) 100.

imitate how he thinks 'normal' women speak, fabricating a conversation with an imaginary slave-girl on his way to the festival:

> δεῦρό νυν, ὦ Θρᾷτθ', ἕπου.
> ὦ Θρᾷττα, θέασαι, καομένων τῶν λαμπάδων
> ὅσον τὸ χρῆμ' ἀνέρχεθ' ὑπὸ τῆς λιγνύος. (279-81)
>
> *Come over here, Thratta, follow me. Oh Thratta, look at the size of the crowd coming up here under the smoke of the burning torches!*

The volume of commands and direct addresses to the imaginary 'Thratta' lend an acutely conversational tone to the language, while vivid descriptions of the character's surroundings amount to a sort of ecphrasis – a literary technique through which the audience is invited to view an object or scene from the perspective of the narrator. This male attempt at speaking like a woman functions on one level as simply another facet of the play's broader metatheatrical irony, since by disguising himself as a woman, 'In-law' becomes in the play what the other female characters are in reality: male actors impersonating women.[225] And yet, conversational language and ecphrases are also present in the voices of ordinary female characters, represented by the chorus, in Euripides' *Ion, Electra, Iphigenia at Aulis*, and the fragmentary *Hypsipyle*. By drawing on this contemporary stereotype of female conversation laid out in Old Comedy, Euripides is able to create layers of social and literary irony in the gulf between the chorus' portrayal as superficial, unintelligent women, who marvel at their immediate surroundings with exaggerated excitement, and the religious, cultural or literary import of the scenes they describe.[226]

In the parodos of *Ion*, for instance, a chorus of Athenian slave-women arrive onstage at Delphi, one of Greece's most important religious sanctuaries. Their reaction to seeing this impressive site for the first time is to behave like tourists, pointing out and admiring each

[225] See Taaffe (2014) for more detail on how Aristophanes uses gender-switching in his 'female' plays.
[226] See Zeitlin (1994) 138-196 for an extended commentary on the ecphrases in *Ion* and *Iphigenia at Aulis*, situating these passages in a wider context of Euripides' interest in the developing 'cultural memory' of the audience, internal and external, as well as the interplay between contemporary Athenian visual arts and drama.

decoration on Apollo's temple, their 'butterfly minds' flitting happily from one artwork to the next.[227] During lines 185-218, the chorus' language is peppered with exhortations from one semi-chorus to another to look at various features of their surroundings, the passage thereby assuming the form of a garrulous intra-choral dialogue. The first semi-chorus says 'come and have a look at this!' (ἰδού, τᾶιδ' ἄθρηcον, 190), to which their counterparts answer 'I see it!' (ὁρῶ 194); similarly, 'do you see…?' (λεύccειc, 209), is answered by 'yes I see' (λεύccω, 211), as the women take turns to describe in pictorial detail the famous temple art at the sanctuary of Delphi. The conversational immediacy of the chorus' language is undeniably similar to the attempt at feminine language made by Aristophanes' disguised male character in *Women at the Thesmophoria*, albeit this time in the mouths of 'real' female characters as opposed to a male impostor. In the specific context of Euripides' play, the representation of female speech also intersects with the chorus' low social status as slaves, highlighting the cultural irony inherent in the chorus' portrayal as excitable but uneducated admirers of such grandiose artwork.[228]

Elsewhere in Euripides' plays, the use of ecphrasis to characterise the female choral voice is especially evident in the context of war, imposing a feminine perspective on this most masculine of arenas. In *Electra, Iphigenia at Aulis* and the fragmentary *Hypsipyle*, ordinary chorus-women for whom war would otherwise be unthinkably remote are granted glimpses of this distant heroic world. The gulf in perspective between the heroes, whose fame is

[227] According to Winnington-Ingram (1976) 483, 'it is likely that the site was familiar to both poets…and to numerous members of the audience. To say that, in the late fifth century, Delphi had become a "tourist attraction" might be anachronistic, but it is clear that those who visited the festivals or went to consult the oracle…could also be interested in "seeing the sights"'. The depiction of the chorus as 'tourists' may have added further humour to the scene, as the women are animatedly describing this famous temple to an audience who may already know it well.

[228] The ecphrasis of *Ion* in particular is often cited as a key paradigm for similar ecphrases found in Hellenistic mime, particularly in Herod.4.21-38 and Theoc.15.78-86, which lends more weight to the notion that it forms part of a gradually crystallising literary tradition of defined female speech: see Goldhill (1994) 197-223 on the role of ecphrasis in Hellenistic poetry; Hunter (1996) 149-150 on the presentation of female speech in Theocritus' *Idyll* 15; and Skinner (2001) 202-206 for *Ion* as the inspiration for Hellenistic ecphrasis.

embedded deep in Greek cultural and literary consciousness, and the everyday women enthralled by their brief experiences of a martial environment, creates a fruitful source of irony. In part, this irony is literary: the most famous heroic episodes are narrated and preserved in the cyclic epics covering the Theban and Trojan wars, distinguished from all other forms of Greek poetry because of their grandiose literary status as well as their Panhellenic cultural significance. That all three tragedians aimed to bring some of the literary and cultural gravitas inherent in epic to their tragedies can be attested in the sheer volume of plays set against the backdrop of the Theban and Trojan epic cycle narratives.[229] Euripides, in contrast to his fellow Tragic poets, also diverges from the solemnity of these epic models, by transferring heroic episodes out of their remote, masculine context and into a quotidian setting. To an Athenian audience steeped in the stories of their epic past, the literary irony in the clash of worlds between the heroic and the everyday would have been immediately apparent. However, a separate, social irony is also evident in the cultural chasm between the masculinity of the heroic context and the femininity of the women who are often afforded a window into this usually inaccessible environment as a result of their participation in female networks of friends and family. As such, the recurrent characterisation of female voices using the technique of ecphrasis enhances ironies both internal and external to the drama.

The clearest demonstration of these ironies can be found in the first stasimon of Euripides' *Electra* (452-486), during which the chorus give their own depiction of Achilles' shield, most famously described in *Il.*18.478-612. The literary irony is immediately obvious from the

[229] In extant Tragedy, e.g. Aeschylus *Agamemnon* and *Seven Against Thebes*; Sophocles' *Antigone, Ajax, Oedipus the King* and *Oedipus at* Colonus; and Euripides' *Hecuba, Iphigenia at Aulis* and *Trojan Women.* In fragmentary Tragedy, e.g. Aeschylus' *Achilleis* and *Oedipus* trilogies (from the latter only *Seven Against Thebes* is extant); Sophocles' *Epigoni* and *Odysseus Acanthoplex*; and Euripides' *Telephus* and *Oedipus.* Ancient testimony to Aeschylus' Homeric debt survives in the poet's supposed description of his plays as 'slices from the banquet of Homer' in Ath.8.39.17.

context of the Homeric original, whose unusually pictorial digression into each aspect of the shield, focalised through the characteristically remote epic narrator's voice, forms an ecphrasis of its own.[230] And yet, Euripides' version of this scene is all the more poignant because the same basic object as the Homeric ecphrasis describes is portrayed not only from a strikingly different viewpoint, but also with strikingly different features. The narrators of the Euripidean ecphrasis are rustic Argive chorus-women, whose feminine perspective is outlined in their explanatory preface to the description of the shield, recounting how they 'heard from a traveller from Troy, who had arrived at the port of Nauplia' about the famous shield of Achilles (Ἰλιόθεν δ' ἔκλυόν τινος ἐν λιμέσιν | Ναυπλίοισι βεβῶτος, 452-3). That a network of hearsay is revealed to be the source of the women's familiarity with this famous epic object immediately highlights the social divide between the world of everyday women and that of warring heroes; the chorus' light-hearted tone is a far cry from the initial responses of the Myrmidons and Achilles when presented with the armour, which range from fear to anger respectively.[231] Moreover, it also situates the shield's ecphrasis in the overtly female linguistic environment of hearsay, enhancing the feminine narratorial perspective.

Once the description is underway, some expected correspondences with the shield's Homeric counterpart emerge: both Euripides' chorus-women and the Iliadic narrator refer, for instance, to depictions of the sun and stars (464-9 ~ *Il.*18.483-9). However, there are also significant divergences, most notably the chorus' description of Perseus holding aloft the severed head of Medusa (458-462), which is conspicuously absent from the Iliadic depictions of convivial, rustic communities at work and play. Richard Garner rightly underlines the

[230] Unusual at least in Homeric epic: Cropp (2013) 171 cites only the 'more routine description' of Agamemnon's armour at *Il.*11.15-44 within the Homeric poems, although the Pseudo-Hesiodic *Shield of Heracles* provides a comparably elaborate comparison, or indeed imitation, from wider archaic poetry.
[231] *Il.*19.14-17.

importance of this difference in the dramatic context of the play: this first mention of the Perseus theme recurs later, at 1221-3, to describe Orestes' stance – eyes averted – as he kills his mother, and is a theme also inherited from Aeschylus' version of the myth in *Libation Bearers* (831-7).[232]

Beyond Euripides' clever use of dramatic irony, simultaneously foreshadowing Orestes' matricide and playfully reworking his own Aeschylean model, there is also a secondary irony in how the divergence of the ecphrasis from its Homeric source in turn characterises the women from whose perspective it is told. The importance of rumour as their source for the shield's appearance returns to prominence in the context of a mismatch between the expectations of the shield's description and the chorus' own version: their awareness of the fallibility of rumour, alongside Euripides' own implicit acknowledgement of creative poetic licence, is evident in their prefacing remarks to the ecphrasis, in which they elect to describe 'the sort of decorations' they'd heard about from the Nauplian traveller (τοιάδε σήματα, 456). The operative word is τοιάδε, which allows for a more general approach to the material than, for instance, τάδε σήματα – 'the following decorations' – would have allowed. Euripides is here signalling his intention to depart from his Homeric source at will. His chorus, as a result, are forced to admit that their second- or third-hand source for the shield, bound up in the chain of hearsay, may in fact not be accurate.

It is even possible to construct a further, albeit less secure, facet of literary and social irony at play in this passage. The opening of the chorus' ecphrasis, focusing on Perseus' triumph over Medusa symbolised by her severed head, not only recalls the Perseus motif of Aeschylus' play, but also has an Iliadic precedent in the condensed description of Athena's aegis at *Il.*5.738-742, which forms part of her brief battle-arming type-scene. Depicted on the

[232] Garner (2014) 124.

aegis, so the narrator informs us, is 'the Gorgon's head, a dread monster, fearsome and awful, a portent of aegis-bearing Zeus' (ἐν δέ τε Γοργείη κεφαλὴ δεινοῖο πελώρου | δεινή τε σμερδνή τε, Διὸς τέρας αἰγιόχοιο, *Il.*5.741-2). Despite the differing lengths and details of their descriptions, Athena's aegis and Achilles' shield nevertheless have in common the vivid portrayal of their appearance and their function as divinely-made arms. It is just possible, therefore, that the chorus' divergence from the traditional ecphrasis of the shield – especially without the clarification of Orestes' later portrayal as Perseus in the context of the drama – could be interpreted as a misremembering of the Iliadic precedent, confusing one set of divine armour with another. If correct, such an interpretation would amusingly further the chorus' rustic characterisation. Since their primary interaction with the heroic world is through second-hand news, the various fantastical tales of divine armour they hear could easily have become conflated in their narrative.

A similar form of ecphrasis occurs in the parodos of *Iphigenia at Aulis* (164-230), when a chorus of young women arrive onstage having run from nearby Chalcis to see the Greek army gathering at Aulis on their way to the Trojan War.[233] The chorus give a pictorial account of the most famous Greek heroes familiar from Homeric epic, transferring the well-known 'catalogue of ships' passage of *Il.*2.484-760 into a female-narrated ecphrasis. The transformation of such a well-known episode in the *Iliad*, a poem set in the thoroughly masculine context of war and narrated with little regard for the female voice, into the voice of a group of women excitedly picking out 'celebrity' faces in the Greek army in itself subverts the gravitas of the epic original.[234]

[233] Diggle (1994) *ad loc.* deems these lines '*fortasse Euripidei*', his category for the lines most likely to be legitimately Euripidean, a view shared by both Collard & Morwood (2017a) *ad loc.* and Kovacs (2002) *ad loc.*
[234] Zeitlin (1994) 160-164 connects this emphasis on the women as spectators with the move in fifth-century Athens away from relying on oral historical and literary sources in favour of more fixed, permanent memorials of such scenes via their visual representation in art.

The chorus' description of their own physical appearance, when set against that of their macho subjects, also adds to the femininity of the choral voice. The chorus' identity is defined more clearly in their words ἀμέτεροι πόσεις (176), 'our husbands', consciously referring to their married state. Unlike the usual depiction of married women, however, in which the experiences of being wives and mothers is emphasised, here the chorus' youth is vividly depicted in the women's description of themselves as 'reddening my cheeks with a youthful blush' (φοινίσσουσα παρῇδ' ἐμὰν | αἰσχύναι νεοθαλεῖ, 187–8). This pictorial description of the chorus' flushed cheeks ostensibly refers to their prior explanation of having run some distance to catch sight of the army. In lines 185-6, however, the chorus describe their route as being through the grove of Artemis, emphasising a connection to virginity which complements their girlish physical description. Since lines 185-188 also introduce the ensuing catalogue of heroes, the chorus' 'flushed cheeks' take on a second, more erotic tone, as if they are simply a gaggle of girls gawping at their heroic idols rather than 'respectable' housewives.[235]

In their commentary, Collard & Morwood counter the tendency of readers to '"eroticize" the women's curiosity': in their note on lines 187-8, they speculate instead that the reason for the women's blushing is either because they are married and in the grove of the maiden goddess Artemis, or because they feel shame at seeing the army.[236] However, neither of these explanations is as satisfactory as the 'eroticized' reading, since the women explicitly state that their purpose for coming to Aulis in line 171 was 'to gaze at the army of Achaeans' – Ἀχαιῶν στρατιὰν ὡς ἐσιδοίμαν – while any shame felt at being married in Artemis' grove only increases the irony of their overt wish, as married women, to indulge in maiden-like

[235] However, given the common trope throughout Aristophanic Comedy that married women always have sex on their mind (as is particularly visible in *Lysistrata* and *Women at the Thesmophoria*), this depiction of flustered housewives could also be further evidence of the increasingly close relationship between the plays of Euripides and Aristophanes during the final two decades of the fifth century BC.
[236] Collard & Morwood (2017b) 299.

activity. As such, Euripides creates an ironic contrast between the chorus' split identity as respectable married women on the one hand and virginal girls eager to get a good look at their favourite warrior-heroes on the other.

Female choral curiosity about and observation of male activities is also presented through the lens of ecphrasis in a fragment from Euripides' *Hypsipyle*, identified by an ancient scholar on Aristophanes' *Frogs* as one of Euripides' later plays.[237] Set in Nemea, the plot centres on the eponymous protagonist, depicted as the house-slave of Lycurgus and Eurydice and nurse to their son. A fragment of the parodos reveals a chorus of local women coming by the house on their way to the local grove, in order to see the Argive army who have paused there on their journey to fight alongside the 'Seven' in Thebes. Upon finding Hypsipyle sweeping the doorstep of the house, the women attempt to persuade her away from her duties to join them in their fanciful gazing:

> δεῦρο †τανˆ λειμῶνα Νέμει[ον·
> ἀc[τ]ράπτει χαλκέο[ι]cιν ὅπλο[ιc
> Ἀργείων π[ε]δίον πᾶ[ν·
> ἐπὶ τὸ τᾶ[c] κιθάραc ἔρυμα
> τᾶc Ἀμφιονίαc ἔργον [
> ὠ[κυ]πόδαc Ἄ[δρ]αc[το]c [
> ὁ [δ'] ἐκάλεcε μένο[c
> ποικίλα cάματα [
> τόξα τε χρύcεα [
> κα[ὶ] μονοβάμονε[c
> ἀειρόμενοι χθ[ον
> (fr.752f.29-39)[238]
>
> *All of the Nemean plain is flashing with the Argives' arms of bronze. Against the bastion, the work of Amphion's lyre . . . swift-footed Adrastus . . . (and) he has summoned the might . . . intricate devices . . . and golden bows . . . and single-stepping . . . raising (from?) the ground . . .*

This situation is in some ways similar to that of Euripides' *Electra*, whose chorus attempt to cajole their heroine into joining them at a local festival in the parodos (167-212). The chorus of *Hypsipyle*, however, present their persuasive argument through the medium of ecphrasis

[237] Σ Ar.*Ran.*53; see Collard & Cropp (2008a) 254.
[238] Text and translation taken from fr.752f.29-39 in Collard & Cropp (2008a) 269.

in order to enhance the excitement of the scene, implicitly contrasting the extraordinary exceptionality of the occasion with Hypsipyle's mundane servile duties. Viewed cynically, the chorus' eagerness and encouragement are no more than a necessary plot device. Hypsipyle, after agreeing to go with the chorus and bringing her infant charge with her, leaves the baby unattended in the grove where he is fatally wounded by a snake bite; this dereliction of duty functions as a crucial catalyst for the denouement of the play's remaining plot. However, this pictorial description also provides a feminine window into one of the most famous battles of the 'Theban cycle' of epic poetry, portrayed vividly and emotionally elsewhere in Tragedy in Aeschylus' *Seven Against Thebes* and Euripides' own *Phoenician Women.*[239] The chorus-women diminish the gravitas of their heroic subjects, using their depiction of the heroes as simply a persuasive tool by which to convince their friend to join them in their harmless feminine fun. By reducing the epic and tragic proportions of the war to an idealised vignette seen through the eyes of excited local women, Euripides simultaneously highlights the seclusion of women from the male arena of war and provides an ironic subversion not only of the earlier epic and Tragic traditions, but even of his own treatments of the same epic context.

The literary evidence for female conversations in Athenian drama suggests that the speech of ordinary female characters was portrayed with some consistency across Euripides' and Aristophanes' plays, for comic or ironic effect. It is certainly plausible to interpret the two poets' similar depictions of female speech as one facet of a broader chain of intertextual allusion and parody between Euripidean Tragedy and Aristophanic Comedy. Euripides' *Electra* and *Ion* are dated to 415-413 BC, which may have given Aristophanes inspiration to parody the chorus' language in his *Women of the Thesmophoria* a few years later. Once it had become a recognisable trope on or off the stage, Euripides then turned to the same winning

[239] On the feminine perspective that governs the entire play, see Chong-Gossard (2020) 198-215.

formula for his *Hypsipyle* in 410 BC, and later, the flirtatious housewives of *Iphigenia at Aulis* in 405 BC. How far these literary stereotypes corresponded with broader societal stereotypes of female speech is of course uncertain, but their very presence in Athenian drama as a means to entertain or amuse the poets' audience suggests that they must have resonated at least to some extent with contemporary perceptions of gender roles in Athens.

1.ii Gossip

Gossip, rumour and idle chatter are language features common to various societies, ancient and modern, as a means of disseminating information and opinions about people and events among communities. As a speech act, gossip is often defined in opposition to rumour as follows:

> Whereas rumour may or may not involve people and is always speculative, 'gossip' is always about people, and may include fact or supposition.[240]

These speech networks reinforce social networks, since similar cultural or personal reference points sustain each person's interest in the subject matter, perpetuating the onward spread of gossip. Further, gossiping strengthens existing 'social bonds' by creating mutual trust within the networks who receive and pass on the reports.[241] It has even been suggested that gossip works to unite societal sub-groups in opposition to others, by creating a distinct set of values based on a similar social position which binds those belonging to the group even more tightly together.[242]

[240] Eidinow (2015) 172.
[241] Dunbar (1996) 78-79; Dunbar (2004) 100-110; and Eidinow (2015) 172.
[242] Gluckman (1963) 307-316.

While gossip networks can be created and maintained by any group in society, they are most often associated with women's speech.[243] Cross-culturally, gossip is generally seen as part of a wider pejorative stereotype of women's speech as vacuous chatter conducted privately in the home or among friends, in opposition to men's restrained, public, and authoritative style of speech.[244] This folk-linguistic stereotype is certainly reflected on the Greek stage in the male-constructed speech of Comedy, where the verb λαλεῖν is used almost exclusively to characterise speech as 'chatter' (more often than not associated with female speech) rather than any serious means of communication.[245] Gossip is also prevalent as a form of female speech across Tragedy, but becomes associated particularly with the 'ordinary' female voice of the chorus in Euripides' plays. In some cases, it is simply a linguistic marker of choral speech: the chorus of *Phoenician Women*, for instance, are able to recite the foundation stories of Thebes because they are familiar with the stories which were circulating in their own homes (819).

In Euripides' plays, female gossip is often presented as an inherently dangerous or subversive speech act. This seems to reflect the anthropological idea that gossip has the potential to unite one social sub-group against others in society, and is particularly pertinent to an Athenian society in which women had various opportunities to form social networks with each other in the male-exclusionary domains of everyday domestic chores and female-only festivals.[246] As Laura McClure writes:

> Because gossip is often characterized as furtive, and because it creates a speech community among women, classical drama depicts this speech genre as potentially harmful to men and to the polis through its threat to undermine traditional social hierarchy.[247]

[243] See Coates (1989) 94-122;
[244] Willi (2003) 167-168; Talbot (2003) 468-486.
[245] McClure (1999) 60-61.
[246] McClure (1999) 57. For contemporary representations of some of these female-specific contexts, see Petersen (1997) 34-74.
[247] McClure (1999) 58.

In support of this theory, McClure cites instances in Tragedy in which women are shown as 'conspirators against men' through their conversations with each other, such as Iphigenia's rationale for the oath of silence she bids the chorus swear in *Iphigenia Among the Taurians*: γυναῖκές ἐσμεν, φιλόφρον ἀλλήλαις γένος, | σώιζειν τε κοινὰ πράγματ' ἀσφαλέσταται ('for we are women, by nature well-disposed towards each other, unfailingly looking out for our shared interests', 1061-2), as well as the conversation between Phaedra and her Nurse in *Hippolytus* (311-361) which is the catalyst for the rest of the Tragic plot.[248] *Medea* provides another clear example, as the chorus are initially sympathetic to Medea's woes and complicit in her desire for revenge as they watch her seduce and deceive Creon, Jason and Aegeus in turn. It is only when she reveals her intention to kill her own children that we realise the usual networks of female trust and support have been broken, as Medea pivots away from being a mortal woman and towards her divine heritage. In each of these examples, a women-only setting excludes male input or control over their speech, which – from a dominant male perspective in society – can render such female conversation dangerous and subversive. In the case of *Hippolytus*, *Iphigenia among the Taurians* and *Medea*, this male fear of women subverting male authority and the usual social order through their female networks is borne out over the course of the Tragic plot, as Phaedra and Iphigenia are seen to leverage their friendships with chorus-women to engineer their escape from male authority and future punishment.[249]

In the language of the chorus, echoes of this same male anxiety can be seen the role that gossip between women plays in the plot of *Ion* (725-807), when the chorus decide to tell their mistress Creusa that Xuthus has proclaimed Ion to be his son, thereby directly disobeying

[248] McClure (1999) 59. For a detailed discussion of oaths of secrecy and silence in the female voices of Euripides' plays, see Chong-Gossard (2008) 155-182.
[249] Phaedra's suicide exonerates her from private and public blame over her feelings for Hippolytus; Iphigenia's successful escape allows her to evade the Taurian king's oppressive regime and punishment for her deceit.

Xuthus' previous instructions to them to keep their silence (666-7). Their decision to confide in Creusa sets up her murder attempt against the boy later revealed to be her own son by Apollo, derailing the god's own plans. By prioritising their private, social network of trust and obligation to their mistress and friend over the explicit instructions from a male authority, the chorus temporarily subvert the intended social order, demonstrating the potentially disastrous consequences of women's unregulated gossip networks.[250]

Even when gossip does not have the power to be directly dangerous or disruptive, its fallibility can nevertheless undermine the credibility of the women who spread it. In the parodos of *Hippolytus,* for instance, the chorus are drawn onstage precisely because of the chain of gossip which has brought them news of Phaedra's illness, as is common of choral entry songs elsewhere in Tragedy.[251] In the case of *Hippolytus*, however, the setting and manner in which the chorus found out the information about Phaedra is described in particular detail, evoking an identifiably feminine communicative context:[252]

> Ὠκεανοῦ τις ὕδωρ στάζουσα πέτρα λέγεται,
> βαπτὰν κάλπισι πα-
> γὰν ῥυτὰν προιεῖσα κρημνῶν.
> τόθι μοί τις ἦν φίλα
> πορφύρεα φάρεα
> ποταμίαι δρόσωι
> τέγγουσα, θερμᾶς δ' ἐπὶ νῶτα πέτρας
> εὐαλίου κατέβαλλ'· ὅθεν μοι
> πρώτα φάτις ἦλθε δεσποίνας. (121-30)

[250] Stereotypical male equivalents exist in the dynamic between military generals and their dependent soldiers, particularly in Sophocles' *Ajax* and *Philoctetes*, whose relationship is often similar to that of mistress and slave-women. These dependent soldiers show similar levels of loyalty and support to Ajax and Philoctetes respectively, even when they act outside the bounds of reason or expectation. The gendered aspect of the heroine-handmaiden relationship stems not from loyalty *per se*, but instead from how the chorus-women's loyalty is used to advance the interests of their mistress specifically to the detriment of the men who are persecuting her (and despite the risks involved in such a strategy).

[251] See Halleran (2000) 160-161 for a brief discussion of the parodos in relation to similar choral entry scenes.

[252] Halleran (2000) 160-161 notes that the 'religious discourse of the prologue' is replaced with 'something at once mundane and particularly female', but does not embark on a fuller explanation of the feminine language of the ode, as I aim to do here.

> *There is a rock, so the story goes, which trickles forth water from Oceanus itself, pouring over its ledges a babbling brook into which pitchers are plunged. It was there that a friend of mine happened to be dipping her fineries in the stream's pure waters and draping them over the sunny rockface; it was from there that the first rumour about my mistress came to me.*

The quasi-mythologised opening line of the chorus' ode is immediately offset by the women's descriptions of everyday female experiences, encountering a female friend as they do their chores. Women gossiping while at their washing with other women is the epitome of a female-only social context; as such, the chorus' opening words already emphasise the femininity of their perspective. Moreover, this elaborate introduction to the scene also explains the origin of the rumour (φάτις, 130) carrying word of Phaedra's sickness. Interestingly, the construction of line 130 could even imply that the story first originated among those who were washing their clothes at the stream, not that the chorus were there themselves. If interpreted this way, the chorus' words allude to multiple networks springing up in different locations where women gather, suggesting that gossip is seen as a widespread source of female knowledge.

The rest of the ode, in which the chorus outline Phaedra's supposed illness and attempt to diagnose its cause, is presented accordingly as an extension of this same rumour circulating at the stream. This is supported by their account of Phaedra's symptoms in the ensuing lines (131-140), which uses reported speech introduced by the verb κλύω ('I hear', 135) to communicate this second-hand knowledge. Further, the women's following diagnostic questions, in lines 141-60, can be read as the perpetuation of this network of gossip – the next link in the chain. Just as they have heard about the physical effects of her illness through rumour, so too the chorus pass on their own version of the story, complete with elaborations from their own conjectures, to the audience. The female network of gossip, then, is presented to its fullest degree over the course of the chorus' opening ode.

Laura McClure interprets this 'circulation of stories among women at their washing' as a 'medium by which false rumours are generated in the *Hippolytus*'.[253] In this way, the chorus become the first link in a chain of female-dominated networks of incorrect or deceitful speech across the play. By attempting to attribute the cause of Phaedra's illness to Theseus' infidelity or bad news from her homeland Crete, when in reality the issue is the queen's own inclinations towards infidelity and suicide, the chorus are shown to be ironically almost correct but also very wrong in their diagnoses.[254] This leads to the nurse's deception of Phaedra by spreading the gossip (now confirmed to be true) to Hippolytus, which in turn provokes Phaedra posthumously to deceive Theseus with her own lying testimony, falsely denouncing Hippolytus to his father to ensure his punishment and her exoneration. As such, women's speech is presented as by turns fallible and deceptive throughout the play, with the multiple and unknown sources of gossip playing a key role in gradually diminishing the credibility of women's speech to those around them in the drama.

The close relationship between gossip and a female environment is particularly noticeable when set alongside a very similar passage in the male choral voice of Sophocles' *Ajax*. Like the chorus of *Hippolytus*, Ajax's soldiers arrive onstage in their opening ode (134-200) to ask about the true cause of the 'loud shouting' (μεγάλοι θόρυβοι, 142) during the night, since they have heard Odysseus spreading 'whispered words' (λόγους ψιθύρους, 148) about Ajax's alleged attack on the Greek cattle. Once again, there appears to be a chain of rumour circulating through the chorus of soldier-companions about the hero of the drama, which the chorus-men address through questions and speculations during their ode.[255] Unlike the chorus of *Hippolytus,* however, Ajax's men immediately seek to discredit, rather than

[253] McClure (1999) 123.
[254] See Halleran (2000) 162-163 on these lines.
[255] Taplin also links the chorus' calls to an offstage protagonist in both *Hippolytus* and *Ajax* with the chorus' questions to Clytemnestra in the parodos of Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*: Taplin (1989) 281.

perpetuate, the rumour. They call it a λόγος...κακόθρους (138), a 'bad-mouthed' tale, instantly seeking to suspect its reliability, and go on in lines 147-163 to speculate as to why someone might try to falsely dishonour a hero as mighty as Ajax. Patrick Finglass interprets the chorus' attitude to the gossip as being a projection of their own worries about Ajax's conduct, commenting that

> the chorus are not disdainful of the rumour, and admit their fear (137-140). The lyric builds on this underlying anxiety by assuming that the rumour is true, and offers different reasons for Ajax's inexplicable behaviour.[256]

Certainly, the chorus' fears for Ajax's safety (and, by extension, their own) become the focus of the play, especially in the immediate aftermath of the hero's death. At this early stage in the drama, however, the chorus' faith in Ajax remains almost entirely unshakeable. Even when their mood begins to shift towards worry and dismay (170-186), they still retain their stance that Ajax's enemies are spreading 'stories' – μύθους (189) – about him, calling on their hero to emerge and set everything to rights. This tension between the chorus' unwavering confidence in Ajax, which leads them to instinctively discredit the rumours, and their creeping anxiety over the potential veracity of the report, dominates the parodos and creates a poignant and emotional irony when the truth is finally revealed in the following scene.

That the male chorus of *Ajax* are depicted as a group of soldiers for whom idle chatter is dangerous and subversive contrasts with the presentation of the chorus-women in *Hippolytus,* whose domestic-focused setting facilitates and perpetuates their networks of gossip. This is further demonstrated by the fact that the chorus of Euripides' play do not refute or even doubt what they hear from their friend at the wash-pools, instead immediately amplifying the original story with further claims and elaborations of their own. On the other hand, the chorus of *Ajax* initially use the fact that Ajax's supposed actions are reported through a whispered story from an unsympathetic informant to attack rather than

[256] Finglass (2011) 176-177.

interrogate both the rumour and its source. In Euripides' play the chorus are willing participants in the rumour mill, while the soldiers of Sophocles' *Ajax* are unwilling to believe any bad news about their commander, which in turn leads them to assume that the rumour must be malicious and from an unsympathetic source. Only in lines 170-181 do Ajax's men offer a condensed version of the persistent diagnostic questions posed by the women of Troezen in lines 141-60 of *Hippolytus*, and even then the formulation of their language is less directly interrogative, replacing some of their questions with language such as ἦ που (176) – 'perhaps'.[257] This suggests a more abstract, contemplative tone of enquiry, in comparison with the immediate emotional responses of Euripides' washer-women.

There is a case for explaining the differing reactions of the choruses in these plays according to the differing scale of each rumour's impact on the protagonist concerned. The story about Ajax, for instance, appears more immediately harmful to the hero's reputation, since Odysseus' reported slander represents shame and dishonour brought not only on Ajax himself but also on the soldiers dependent on him, as the chorus make clear when they say 'we have no strength to defend ourselves against these things other than you, my lord' (χἠμεῖc οὐδὲν cθένομεν πρὸc ταῦτ'| ἀπαλέξαcθαι coῦ χωρίc, ἄναξ, 165-6 – and see also 142-3). In comparison, the reputational damage of Phaedra's reported illness is less significant at this stage: her condition invites the chorus to express their sympathy for her rather than discredit the gossip, whose slanderous potential is only fully understood when the true cause of her sickness is revealed. Nevertheless, the detailed description of Phaedra's dire physical and mental condition is itself degrading for a queen, especially when the chorus suggest Theseus' infidelity as the cause of these issues. As early as the parodos, then, and

[257] Intriguingly, both Ajax's men and the Troezenian women suspect that Ajax and Phaedra have been struck down by Artemis after failing to honour her properly with sacrifices. However, Euripides' chorus-women then go on to focus on more mundane domestic causes of Phaedra's sickness, whereas Ajax's men can only imagine that Artemis or Ares are exacting revenge for some minor grudge, so great a force would be needed to overcome their conquering hero.

before the confirmation of the fact in her own words, Phaedra's reputation is at stake in the dissemination and perpetuation of rumours about her. Since the basic situation is comparable in both plays – the protagonist faces significant reputational damage as a result of rumours – the differences in the chorus' response to these gossip networks is even more striking. The female chorus of *Hippolytus* amplify and perpetuate the chain of chatter about the queen, while the male chorus of Ajax immediately seek to discredit and deny any rumour about the hero Ajax before they entertain the possibility of its truth.

Another counterpoint, and precedent, to Euripides' depiction of gossip in the female voice can be seen in the early interactions between the male chorus of Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* and their interim ruler Clytemnestra. The chorus' suspicion that Clytemnestra has been overly credulous and reliant on gossip in her authorisation of sacrifices to mark the sack of Troy (264-275 & 479-487) has been discussed in detail by Laura McClure, whose analysis concludes that the elders 'attribute both garrulousness and credulity to females: easily convinced by rumors, women spread gossip rapidly'.[258] In a similar fashion to the male chorus of *Ajax,* the chorus-men in this play seek to dismiss Clytemnestra's reasoning as being based on 'fledgling rumour' (ἄπτερος φάτις, 276) rather than definitive proof, associating the perceived stereotype of female gullibility with gossip. To the male mind of the chorus, at least, female characteristics are informed by female speech forms: the volubility of gossip, explicitly described by the men as 'spoken by women' (γυναικογήρυτον, 487), is the cause of women's wider vulnerability to naïve credulity.

This stereotype of the female mind and speech is accentuated by the chorus' own language, peppered with cognates of the verb πείθω in order to exploit its double meaning of both 'persuade' and 'believe'. The chorus' first address to Clytemnestra asks 'by the persuasion

[258] McClure (1999) 75.

of what report' she has authorised such a display of sudden religious fervour (τίνος ἀγγελίας | πειθοῖ, 86-7), using a passive sense of the term to convey her trust in the news. In their ensuing scepticism over Clytemnestra's cause for optimism, they question whether her source is 'credible' (τὸ πιστόν, 272): can it be believed? The negative associations of belief with credulity are more explicitly outlined in the chorus' next question, asking if the queen is merely following 'the persuasive apparitions in dreams' (ὀνείρων φάσματ' εὐπειθῆ, 274). The chorus' perception of Clytemnestra as overly credulous and too easily swayed is highlighted in their use of cognates of πείθω to indicate the full range of persuasive power, from the trustworthy evidence implied in πιστός to the easily believable but also fickle connotations of εὐπειθής. This use of cognates of πείθω to connect Clytemnestra with a tendency to believe the report too easily is seemingly reinforced by the chorus' later statement that 'womankind is too credulous' (πιθανὸς ἄγαν ὁ θῆλυς, 485). However, πιθανὸς can also be understood as 'persuasive', suggesting denunciation of Clytemnestra on two fronts, that she was too trusting of an apparent rumour and that she then spread the rumour in order to persuade others.[259] In the chorus' minds, then, two female stereotypes become bound up in the single idea of persuasion, presenting women as both persuadable and persuasive.

The subversive danger of these stereotypes is similarly reinforced by male perceptions of women's speech, as the association of gossip with women furthers their tendency towards credulity and persuasion by facilitating the spread and amplification of potentially dangerous stories. The coherence of these stereotypes for the original audience remains difficult to assess; certainly, the chorus' worries about women's credulity are dismissed by Clytemnestra herself and by the arrival of the Herald whose testimony confirms her

[259] This reading would also absolve the men of their own volte-face: in A.*Ag.*351-353 they were persuaded by Clytemnestra's speech to trust her judgement, a position they now abandon with the excuse 'she was *too* persuasive'.

judgement. However, just as the male chorus of *Ajax* is rightly wary of the dangerous power bound up in rumours, so too the chorus of *Agamemnon* is proved to be rightly wary of the dangers of persuasiveness in women's speech, as Clytemnestra's fateful instruction that Agamemnon be persuaded by her, expressed in the imperative πιθοῦ ('obey!', 943), leads to the king's demise at his wife's hands. In *Hippolytus,* by extension, the network of false rumours perpetuated by the chorus contributes to the web of deceptive speech which ultimately brings about the successive deaths of both Phaedra and Hippolytus, caught in the nexus of rumour and deceit. There is a suggestion across the Tragic tradition that male anxiety over the potential dangers of separate, and therefore perhaps subversive, networks of female speech is legitimate and therefore ought to be legitimised.

However, contrary to McClure's description of female gossip as intrinsically 'harmful to men' in Athenian drama, Euripides in particular does not always depict gossip in his plays in such a negative light. In some instances, gossip or rumour is not presented as inherently dangerous, evil or fallible, but simply as a knowledge network which women use to inform each other of news from male-dominated speech contexts from which they would otherwise be excluded. This is particularly clear in the depiction of 'sanctioned' forms of female gossip based on a trustworthy male source, which allow women privileged access to knowledge about the male arena of war which they would otherwise be unable to obtain. In *Electra,* for instance, the chorus are only able to describe the details of Achilles' famous shield because they have heard rumours about it from a man who arrived at Nauplia from Troy (Ἰλιόθεν δ' ἔκλυόν τινος ἐν λιμέσιν | Ναυπλίοισι βεβῶτος, 452-3). For the chorus of *Iphigenia at Aulis* (173-184)*,* the sight of the Greek army at Aulis simply corroborates the story their husbands had already told about the impending war, giving them the authority to pass on the story they have heard about Helen's abduction and the Judgement of Paris. The extent of the chorus'

prior knowledge of the war and the mythology behind it is blurred into their reliance on their husbands for information about the Greek leaders themselves.

The most poignant example of women using gossip to come to terms with a male-dominated world can be found in *Hecuba* (108-152). Here, a Trojan woman comes to Hecuba to forewarn her of Polyxena's impending demise, explaining that she left her master's tent – presumably without permission – after hearing of the Greek assembly's plans to sacrifice the queen's daughter. Such furtive, secretive communication between women of men's plans could easily pose a subversive threat to the male world of assemblies and political decisions, but Euripides instead chooses to emphasise the marginality of the Trojan women as victims of war by showing them to be powerless to prevent the tragedy. In the end, the women's network of reports does little more than give Hecuba and Polyxena more time to lament the news before Odysseus arrives to confirm it. Here, any dangerous potential in the female gossip networks is neutralised simply because the Trojan women, as the victims of war, are unable to use the information to their advantage against their oppressors.

Gossip certainly forms part of the stereotyped female speech employed by Euripides to enhance the feminine characterisation of his chorus-women. However, within the broad range of hearsay on display in his dramas, different categories of gossip emerge. The most dangerous forms of gossip are those which elude male control: the example from *Hippolytus* demonstrates most clearly the grey area between false rumours often generated in fallible gossip-networks and deliberate deceit: while the former is accidental and the latter deliberate, both types of gossip have the potential to be equally detrimental. And yet, gossip can be a feminine feature of speech without needing to be dangerous or subversive: when men deliberately contribute to this female knowledge network, the reliability of their report assures the credibility of the women's stories, neutralising the danger posed by any false

rumours, deceptive or otherwise. In this way, Euripides offers a dual perspective on gossip to his audience: on the one hand, gossip reinforces existing male anxieties over the subversive potential of female-dominated forms of speech; on the other, it provides women with a way to navigate and support each other through a male-dominated world from which they are largely shut out.

2. Gendered Perspectives in the Choral Odes

While specific speech patterns are helpful for defining wider literary, and perhaps even sociological, stereotypes of fifth-century Athenian women, the impact of gender on the choral voice can also be seen more broadly across the tragedies in the content and expression of the chorus' odes. While each drama finds its own nuances in the cycles of myths which underpin Tragic plots, the more gnomic choral odes lend themselves especially well to topics which characterise the human condition, particularly love and war. These two themes are themselves representative of the distinct societal roles that women and men inhabited in Classical Athens and continue to inhabit in many cultures today, as encapsulated in Jean-Pierre Vernant's statement 'marriage is for the girl what war is for the boy: for each of them these mark the fulfilment of their respective natures.'[260] In this context, we might expect to find love narratives confined to women's voices and war narratives to male voices in Tragedy, but this does not prove to be the case. The chorus of elders in Sophocles' *Antigone* (781-805) are able to address an ode to Eros in much the same way as the chorus-women of Euripides' *Hippolytus* (525-564), while the descriptions of war and its effects on those left behind are equally poignant in the voices of the Trojan women in

[260] Vernant (1988) 34. This is reinforced by the argument in Loraux (1981) 37-67 that in Spartan and Athenian societies death in childbirth for women was seen as the equivalent of death in battle for men.

Euripides' *Hecuba* (1038-1041) as in the descriptions given by the male chorus in Aeschylus' *Persians* (429-455).

Within these generalised themes, however, diverging perspectives begin to emerge which do seem to adhere at least in part to notions of gender. All manner of choruses sing about the impacts of love and war on family and society, but how these topics are conceptualised differs according to whether they are expressed by chorus-men or chorus-women in a way that reinforces existing societal expectations of men and women in Athens. For instance, female choruses tend to conceptualise war, which in Athens especially was designated as a civic matter, in familial and domestic terms. On the other hand, male choruses appear to understand love in the context of its effects on the wider community and society rather than as a deeply personal emotion. Even the contexts in which women and men invoke the goddess of love in Tragedy seem to diverge according to gender, reflecting the different social expectations on men and women – some even enshrined in Athenian law –in the realm of marriage and adultery. These patterns combine to give further insights into the interplay between the tragedies and their social context, reinforcing conventional expectations of how men and women perceived, or ought to perceive, the world around them.

2.i Women and War

In line with the prominence of speech networks in women's voices elsewhere in Euripides' plays, and particularly in depictions of female conversation and gossip, the tragedian's most expansive treatment of women's language as a vehicle for female friendship and empathy can be found in his depictions of women's emotional trauma in war. That war should be a

topic of song in equal measure for men and women reflects the all-pervasive consequences of war on everyone in society. Men are the most directly affected as the soldiers on the front line, but women too are caught in the cross-fire. They must stay behind while their husbands, brothers and fathers go off to battle, a waiting game which itself would have been fraught with danger. For women in fifth-century Athens especially, war must have brought constant upheaval due to the Athenian *kyrieia* system, in which women were always under the legal protection of a male guardian (*kyrios*). In peace-time, the situation may have been relatively stable: a woman's guardianship began with her father, was passed to her husband when married, and only changed to her son or brother in the event of her husband dying or divorcing her.[261] During war, however, and particularly long-running hostilities such as the Peloponnesian war, women would have faced perpetual insecurity and instability, as the long absences (or death) of their current *kyrios* would have precipitated the physical upset of potentially having to change household to another husband or guardian, as well as the emotional upset of being continually separated from their spouses or relatives.[262] As the war continued, a replacement husband may well have been even harder to come by as more men were killed in battle and the ageing female population's biological clocks continued to tick; dowries may also have provided another potential barrier to marriage as families' finances became increasingly precarious in the economic turmoil of war. As David Schaps writes:

> Sometimes the women would remarry; often they were left to a dreary widowhood. For a girl, the loss of a father or brother, who would have provided her dowry, might threaten spinsterhood, or at least a marriage much worse than she would have hoped for.[263]

The second threat for women was the outcome of the war. If they were on the losing side, they faced slavery, eviction from their homeland, and life as a concubine or maid-servant in

[261] For more on the *kyrieia* institution in Athens, see Gould (1980) 43-46; Just (1989) 26-39; and Harrison (1998) 108-111.
[262] This is presumably the situation alluded to in E.*Andr*.1038-41, when the chorus describe how Greek women wept for their previous husbands 'as they left their homes for another partner' (ἐκ δ' ἔλειπον οἴκους | πρὸς ἄλλον εὐνάτορ', 1040-1041).
[263] Schaps (1982) 207.

the houses of their conquerors. Even if their side won and their kinsmen returned safely from the war, women nevertheless faced domestic upheaval if their victorious husbands brought back foreign slave-women and concubines.[264]

This female perspective on war is widely represented in the tragedies. Deianira in Sophocles' *Women of Trachis* (26-45) and Clytemnestra in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* (855-905) articulate the fear and vulnerability of a wife waiting for the return of her husband from war.[265] The protagonists of Euripides' *Hecuba* and *Trojan Women*, too, poignantly display the defenceless suffering of women captured after the war has been lost. The mothers of the Seven Against Thebes in Euripides' *Suppliant Women* (955-971) present their sons' death not only as a personal loss but also as a loss of their civic status. Where once they were proud progenitors of warriors, now they are simply bereaved widows. Finally, the plots of Aeschylus' *Agamemnon,* Sophocles' *Women of Trachis* and Euripides' *Andromache* all aptly demonstrate the dangers of victorious warriors bringing a foreign woman into their homes. Recent scholarship is beginning to analyse these examples in the context of trauma studies, focusing particularly on how the tragedians' presentation of emotional disruption can differ according to the gender of those affected.[266]

The choruses of Tragedy are especially attuned to the theme of universal suffering in war, emphasising its impact on everyone – men and women, the victorious and the defeated. For instance, rather than focusing on the Greek victory over the Trojans, the chorus-women of Euripides' *Helen* instead lament the Greeks who died in battle (1122-3). The women then

[264] How common this practice was outside myth is unclear, but it was certainly a common feature of the Peloponnesian war according to Thucydides' account: women are mentioned as being sold into slavery by both sides in Th.3.36.2; Th.3.68.2; Th.4.48.4; Th.5.3.4; Th.5.32.1; and Th.5.116.4 – see Harvey (1985) 67-90.
[265] While Clytemnestra's speech is itself a lie, in order to fulfil its purpose of deceiving Agamemnon its content and emotional appeal must at least have been realistic to her audience both within the drama and in the theatre.
[266] Rabinowitz (2014) 185-206; and Weiberg (2020a), (2020b) and (2022) 282-302.

make special mention of the wives who are grieving the loss of their spouses, whose 'homes lie bereft of marital love' (ἄνυμφα δὲ μέλαθρα κεῖται, 1125). Similarly, even after the Greek victory over the Trojans has been revealed, the elders of Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* describe instead the suffering of Argive families who sent their men to battle but received only the grief-inducing dust of their ashes (βαρὺ | ψῆγμα δυσδάκρυτον, 441-2) in return. The suffering of the winners is just as poignant as the perspectives of those on the losing side, prominent in plays such as Aeschylus' *Persians* and Euripides' *Hecuba* and *Trojan Women*.

Although the tragedies depict the suffering of war from both sides of the battlefield, the chorus' expression of this theme tends to focus on the consequences of war for their own people: Greeks sympathise with the sufferings of fellow Greeks, Trojans with Trojans, Persians with Persians. However, in a striking departure from this trend, some of Euripides' female choruses are able to display pity for their counterparts on the opposite side of the battlefield. Euripides is certainly the tragedian most interested in the depictions of women's suffering during war, be it as the central theme of the drama (*Hecuba, Suppliant Women* and *Trojan Women*), or as a passing reference to war's wide-reaching consequences (*Andromache*, 1038-1045; *Helen*, 1122-5; and *Iphigenia at Aulis*, 785-793). Nevertheless, Euripides' use of the chorus as a vehicle for empathising with those beyond their own kin is particularly unusual.

In *Iphigenia at Aulis*, after Agamemnon's intentions to sacrifice Iphigenia in order to enable the Trojan war have been made clear, the chorus of Greek women sing an ode in which they envisage the suffering their men will bring to Troy. This culminates in their wish never to have to undergo the same torment as the Trojan women are set to endure:

> μήτ᾽ ἐμοὶ μήτ᾽ ἐμοῖσι τέκνων τέκνοις
> ἐλπὶς ἅδε ποτ᾽ ἔλθοι,
> οἵαν αἱ πολύχρυσοι
> Λυδαὶ καὶ Φρυγῶν ἄλοχοι
> σχήσουσι, παρ᾽ ἱστοῖς
> μυθεῦσαι τάδ᾽ ἐς ἀλλήλας·

"Τίς ἄρα μ᾽ εὐπλοκάμου κόμας
ῥῦμα δακρυόεν τανύσας
πατρίδος ὀλλυμένας ἀπολωτιεῖ;"[267] (785-793)

May there never come to me or to my children's children an expectation of the kind the Lydian women with their great gold and the wives of the Phrygians will have, as at their looms they say these words to one another: 'Who will it be that †strains to drag† me by the fine tresses of my hair as I shed tears, and who will pluck me as the flower from my fatherland in its destruction?'[268]

The Greek women visualise their Phrygian and Lydian counterparts by constructing in their minds the familiar female scene of the Trojan women working at their looms; the setting of such a universally intelligible scene is itself a marker of the chorus' understanding of and empathy with their 'enemies'.[269] The chorus then depict the fear and vulnerability of the soon-to-be conquered Trojan women by imagining their speech to one another, which reinforces the immediacy and intensity of the image as well as the chorus' implicit compassion for the enslaved subjects who will have to undergo this ordeal.[270] This powerful scene not only poignantly recalls the perspective of the losing side which was the focus of Euripides' earlier plays *Trojan Women* and *Hecuba*, but also reminds both the chorus-women and the audience of women's universally precarious wartime position. This is heightened by the expression of such empathy in the voice of women who will not have to experience that pain because of their remoteness from the battle lines and their side's ultimate victory.

A similar, albeit less developed, illustration of how women's sympathy can transcend established battle lines is found in Euripides' *Andromache.* The chorus' sympathy for

[267] Text reproduced from Collard & Morwood (2017a). Diggle (1994) marks this passage, and indeed the entire ode, as *vix Euripidei*, but I follow Collard & Morwood (2017a) 55-62 in arguing against such an overly sceptical treatment of the passage . The content of this ode, which is similar to other female choral odes on the topic of war's brutality and inevitability, may also speak in favour of its authenticity: see, for instance, E.*Andr.*274-308, 1010-1046; E.*Hec.*629-656; E.*Tro.*799-859, 1060-1117.
[268] Translation taken from Collard & Morwood (2017b).
[269] The depiction of women talking while at their work mirrors Euripides' similar scene of the 'gossiping washer-women' in the parodos of *Hippolytus*, discussed above. The context, however, is very different, as the women are pictured debating their own fate rather than speculating about the cause of another's demise.
[270] So Collard & Morwood (2017b) 434: 'the use of direct speech…adds pathos to the imagined scene of rape'. Bers (1997) 113 interprets the scene as depicting the Trojan women 'surrendering to extreme pessimism even before the Greeks arrive at Troy', but this produces a less powerful image in the context of the chorus' prayer.

Andromache's situation is evident even as early as the parodos, as their pretext for entering the stage is to bring some comfort to Andromache despite their being Phthian and Andromache Phrygian (Φθιὰς ὅμως ἔμολον ποτὶ σὰν Ἀσιήτιδα γένναν, 'though I am a Ptthian, I have come to you, who are of Asian descent', 119). In their first stasimon, after Hermione's bitter anger has been contrasted with Andromache's dignified restraint, the chorus turn to the general suffering of the Trojan war, wishing in counterfactual terms that it had never taken place. As well as detailing the suffering of the Greek army, the chorus also mention that the war has caused the enslavement of Trojan women (301-2). It is possible to understand their awareness of the Trojans' plight only in the context of their good will towards Andromache, whom they then address directly as the immediate example of a former princess now enslaved in the upheaval of war (302-3), but a similar sentiment is later restated in their fourth stasimon (1010-1046). Here, the chorus return to the theme of the brutality of war, but alternate fully between their sympathy for the Greeks and for the Trojans. They begin with questions to Apollo, asking why the gods sacked Troy. Their emotional engagement with their enemies' plight is evident in their reference to the enemy city as 'wretched, wretched Troy' (τάλαιναν τάλαι-|ναν ...Τροίαν, 1017-8). The total destruction of the Trojan land, altars and kings then leads the chorus-women to dwell on misfortunes closer to home such as Agamemnon's murder and Orestes' ensuing matricide, all stemming from the same war (1019-1036). Finally, the chorus evoke images of Greek wives, not dissimilar to themselves, mourning their dead husbands and having their lives uprooted, before acknowledging that while Greek men died in their multitudes, this 'plague' of war was similarly deadly for the Trojans (1044-6). While the emphasis on female suffering in war is a subsidiary theme to the broader brutality of war for citizens and cities, the women nevertheless demonstrate an extraordinary affinity for their supposed adversaries throughout the play.

Some contrition on the part of the victorious Greeks may be expected in Athenian drama, as Athenian society grappled with the moral obligations and ambiguities inherent in an expanding empire. On a literary level, too, a broader perspective in the choral voice is likely to be more forthcoming in plays not directly connected to the devastation of battle. For the chorus of *Iphigenia at Aulis*, the eve of war allows them to consider for the first time what the future consequences of this momentous occasion will be. They had arrived onstage as naïve onlookers to appreciate the impressive sight of the army, but once Iphigenia has been revealed to be the first victim of these men, their thoughts naturally turn from innocent admiration to more troubled expectation of the scale of suffering the Greeks are set to inflict on the enemy. If this fleet is able to order and sanction the death of their own leader's daughter, there will be no limit to the violent force with which they will fight the Trojans. Conversely, the Greek women of *Andromache* reflect on the play's action from the opposite perspective: the war has taken place, it was as vicious as predicted, and ultimately no side has ended it 'well': even the conquering heroes such as Neoptolemus and Agamemnon do not survive on their return or enjoy their victory, while the plight of the conquered victims like Andromache only seems to worsen after the war is over.

And yet, the most extraordinary example of Euripidean women's wide-ranging sympathy for others in war appears in *Hecuba*, in the voice of the Trojan women who are war's most prominent victims in the play. The emotional scene of Polyxena's sacrifice, reported by Talthybius to her distraught mother, provides the backdrop for the chorus' ensuing ode (629-656) which, understandably, focuses mostly on the troubles upon troubles that have been imposed on them by war. The epode, however, moves instead to consider the same theme from the opposite angle, as the women imagine war's effects on their Greek counterparts:

> στένει δὲ καί τις ἀμφὶ τὸν εὔροον Εὐρώταν
> Λάκαινα πολυδάκρυτος ἐν δόμοις κόρα,

πολιόν τ᾽ ἐπὶ κρᾶτα μάτηρ τέκνων θανόντων
τίθεται χέρα δρύπτεταί τε < > παρειάν,
δίαιμον ὄνυχα τιθεμένα σπαραγμοῖς. (650-6)

But some Spartan girl, too, is full of grief in her home by the fair-flowing Eurotas, and a mother of dead children puts her hands to her grey head and tears at her cheeks, bloodying her fingernails as she tears them.

Judith Mossman rightly describes this sudden and unexpected pivot in the ode towards the plight of Spartan women as 'a beautiful touch', noting too that πολυδάκρυτος recalls the same word (albeit with a passive rather than active meaning) used by Achilles of Hector's corpse at *Il.*24.620, in a scene which also focuses on the shared understanding of war's brutality between two people on opposite sides of the battlefield.[271] That the chorus focus on Sparta in particular, rather than simply the Greek land as a whole, is a particularly important testament to the women's expression of empathy. As the home of Helen, Sparta ought to be at the epicentre of the Trojans' antipathy: indeed, in a later ode, the chorus will go so far as to curse Helen by praying that she never makes it back there (943-952). As a result, the women's statement of solidarity with their victorious Spartan equivalents becomes all the more powerful in its emotive force. The chorus' image is itself poignantly precise: the 'Spartan girl' weeping in her home seems to correspond to the chorus' own situation, while the mourning mother is undoubtedly meant to represent a Greek version of Hecuba. The Trojan women's trauma is certainly worse than that of any Spartan woman, since they will have to leave not just their homes but also their homeland, enslaved by their conquerors. Nevertheless, the women's grief for their husbands and Hecuba's grief for her children is, for a brief moment, matched in the chorus' imagination by that of their opponents.

This concern for women and families in war, sometimes even transcending battle lines, appears to be a perspective shared mostly by female choruses. Male choruses, on the other hand, tend to have a more politically-focused understanding of war, as a necessary evil

[271] Mossman (1995) 85.

which ensures the safety of the city and protects its moral values. In the parodos of Sophocles' *Antigone* (100-148), for instance, as the chorus of elders reflect on the battle which has just taken place in Thebes, the men do not betray any sympathy for the defeated Polyneices and his attacking Argive force. Instead, the chorus' account is marked out by the justice they feel has been enacted in the protection of their city against its aggressors. In their dispassionate retelling of the death of Capaneus, one of the Seven who marched against them, the elders show that there is no room for empathy with the enemy in this world of military justice. The same 'masculine' perception of war as the enactment of civic justice is also apparent in the legal language used by the chorus of elders in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* to describe the Greeks' attack on Troy, calling Menelaus the 'prosecutor' of Priam (ἀντίδικος, 41) and the expedition itself a 'lawsuit' (ἀρωγήν, 47).[272] Similarly, the chorus in Euripides' *Children of Heracles* support the ensuing battle only because Heracles' suppliant family has been ill-treated by the Argive adversaries; because of this, the Marathonian men deem it morally wrong (κακόν, 763) to surrender their city's suppliants. Across all three tragedians, then, male choruses' accounts of battle tend to adhere to their 'public' role of enforcing justice and civic obligations, against the 'private' concerns expressed by chorus-women about the effects of war not just on the city itself, but also on the families within it.

These differing perspectives on war in the male and female choral voices form part of a wider theme in Tragedy of women's affinity with the private sphere (*oikos*) in contrast with men's preoccupation with the public sphere (*polis*), itself indicative of gendered expectations in fifth-century Athenian society.[273] And yet, even within this seemingly gendered divide in how male and female choruses conceptualise war, the illustrations of women empathising

[272] For more on this topic, see Raeburn & Thomas (2011) xxx-xxxiii.
[273] The importance of this gendered divide in Tragedy has already been emphasised by e.g. Zeitlin (1990b) 103-115, on the *oikos*/*polis* divide in Aeschylus; and Mastronarde (2010) 246-261, on the private/public dichotomy in Euripides.

with their counterparts across enemy lines in *Andromache*, *Iphigenia at Aulis* and *Hecuba* are nonetheless striking. Euripides' compassionate chorus-women must be viewed in the specific socio-historical context of the Peloponnesian War. The ambivalent attitude towards war in many of Euripides' plays has already been widely discussed with reference to the Peloponnesian War, a conflict which was defined in opposition to the Persian wars by the fact that Greeks fought against other Greeks, rather than a common enemy.[274] Elsewhere in drama, Aristophanes' *Acharnians* and *Peace* speak to the political tensions within Athens as its citizens grappled with factional struggles and violent battles between Athens and her former allies. That Euripides' depictions of the victims on both sides of war are best understood as Tragedy's exploration of this societal debate can be seen in the fact that scholars have plausibly interpreted tragedies such as *Iphigenia at Aulis* as 'blame-poetry rather than praise-poetry'.[275] In this light, the chorus-women of *Andromache, Iphigenia at Aulis* and *Hecuba* may best be understood as voicing one side of the wider social polemic in Euripides' work: if these women can empathise with their *foreign* enemies, should the Athenians not spare some compassion for their own *Greek* adversaries?[276]

Euripides' unique female perspective on war goes hand-in-hand with his broader tendency towards portraying a feminine point of view in his tragedies: by contrast with Aeschylus' plays, in which political crises arise when the individual comes into conflict with the *polis*, Euripides' dramas instead depict the social and domestic crises which occur when political issues infiltrate the *oikos*. Donald Mastronarde connects this trend, particularly in the context of Euripides' preferred 'feminine' experiences of war, with the weakened political

[274] See, for instance, Saxonhouse (1980) 65-81; Croally (1994) 55-6; and Storey (2006) 171-186. Of course, Greek-on-Greek wars were the norm in the archaic and Classical periods, with the Persian wars providing the exception that proved the rule.
[275] Storey (2006) 173.
[276] See Croally (1994) for the fullest exploration of this idea.

and civic bonds in later fifth-century Athens, as the threads of a community ravaged by war, economic hardship and social upheaval began to unravel:

> La tendenza di Euripide andrebbe connessa, penso, soprattutto alla sua propensione…per la presentazione del punto di vista delle donne in contesti di guerra (soprattutto nelle conseguenze della guerra). Fare ciò significa ridurre l'elemento della voce civica o politica della comunità, che riflette forse l'indebolimento delle forze coesive della società attica negli ultimi decenni del V secolo.[277]
>
> *Euripides' style should be connected, I think, especially to his propensity…for presenting the views of women in contexts of war (especially in the aftermath of war). To do so is to reduce the element of the civic or political voice of the community, which perhaps reflects the weakening of the cohesive forces of Attic society in the last decades of the fifth century.*

Regardless of any political reasons behind the poet's decision to privilege the feminine perspective in his war-plays, it was nevertheless a conscious dramatic choice. This may have been influenced by social perceptions not just of women's domestic role in society, but also of their social networks with other women around them, as depicted elsewhere in art and literature of the period.[278] Euripides' presentation of women in wartime, then, may provide a rare window into some of the realities, as well as stereotypes, of women's experiences in Athenian society.

2.ii Invoking Aphrodite

Love in all its various forms is a prevalent theme in Tragedy. Its prominence is especially evident in 'love gone wrong' tragedies such as Sophocles' *Women of Trachis* and Euripides' *Hippolytus*, but its more positive incarnations are also visible in, for instance, the relationship between Menelaus and Helen in Euripides' *Helen*. The power this emotion holds over those it conquers, consumes and influences is personified in the voices of male and female characters across Tragedy as the divinities Aphrodite (known more commonly by her cult

[277] Mastronarde (1998) 64. See also Wright (2007) 430, who argues that fifth-century literature such as Comedy (as well as Tragedy) used the Trojan war 'as a means of exploring contemporary conflict'.
[278] For female companionship elsewhere in literature, see e.g. Dem.55, Ar.*Lys.*1-65 and Men.*Sam.*35-8; in art, see Petersen (1997) 34-74.

name Cypris) and Eros.[279] Intriguingly, when the deities of love are invoked by characters in Tragedy gendered patterns emerge. While Aphrodite's power and its associated dangers are recognised universally by men and women, male characters also invoke the goddess in a wholly or primarily positive light, as the bringer of carefree happiness and prosperity. By contrast, for female characters in Tragedy, Aphrodite tends to represent an overwhelmingly dangerous force, whose positive side is always counterbalanced by her destructive potential.

Within the choral voice in particular, another distinction becomes clear. When male choruses reference love in the form of Aphrodite, Cypris and Eros, they do so in terms which emphasise love's ability to disrupt civic and political values. In the female choral voice, however, concerns about love are presented in terms of a much more personal and domestic emotional battle. To some extent, the very nature of Tragedy as a genre can explain the prominence of Aphrodite's destructive side: in plays which tend to place their protagonists in extreme and impossible situations, it is natural that love should be portrayed in its most intense and disruptive form.[280] However, in my view the difference between these gendered perspectives on the nature of love can be better explained in the context of the laws and social norms governing love and marriage in fifth-century Athens. Women's experience of desire, and particularly intense or forbidden feelings, would have been contingent in part on the stringent divorce and adultery laws in Athens which threatened their social and

[279] See Romilly (1976) 309-321 on love as an invincible force in Tragedy. Aphrodite and Cypris are used almost interchangeably as names for the goddess of love, although Cypris seems to have been more common in Tragedy: according to the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*, 'Cypris' is used 77 times in extant tragedies; 'Aphrodite' only 24. There is some suggestion of delineation between the two names, with Aphrodite representing a more benign force and Cypris a more dangerous one (see, for instance, Collard & Cropp [2008b] 427), but the available evidence is not conclusive enough to establish this with any certainty.

[280] Tragedy's focus on the negative sides of love is discussed further in e.g. Seaford (1987) 106–130; Calame (1999) 141–150; Kaimio (2002) 95-119 (in the context of destructive marriages); and Thumiger (2013) 27-40 (on love as a sickness in Tragedy).

economic status.[281] Men, on the other hand, certainly had more freedom to act on their desires within and beyond their marriages. As Maarit Kaimio writes:

> There is no doubt about male dominance in Athenian society. In sexual matters, the men had several accepted options: they could satisfy their desire with male lovers, hetairas, or female slaves as well as with their wives. The women were allowed no sexual experiences with men before marriage, and the marriage was an affair of exchange between two households, where the possible sexual attraction of the girl toward her future husband was not a matter of consequence.[282]

In Tragedy, this social context appears to be reflected in speech: male characters invoke the goddess of love as a positive as well as negative force, while for women Aphrodite is almost always a disruptive if not destructive force. Even when condemning the viciousness of Aphrodite and Eros, men do so in respect of the effects of love gone wrong on the *polis*, while women's similar fears are largely confined to the domestic sphere. In this way, the social norms of fifth-century Athens seem to permeate Tragedy in the poets' treatment of love on stage.

The tendency of both men and women in Tragedy to associate Aphrodite/Cypris with power and strength (mostly to destructive ends) is encapsulated in Sophocles' unidentified fragment 941, as follows:[283]

> ὦ παῖδες, ἥ τοι Κύπρις οὐ Κύπρις μόνον,
> ἀλλ᾽ ἐστὶ πολλῶν ὀνομάτων ἐπώνυμος.
> ἔστιν μὲν Ἅιδης, ἔστι δ᾽ ἄφθιτος βίος,
> ἔστιν δὲ λύσσα μανιάς, ἔστι δ᾽ ἵμερος
> ἄκρατος, ἔστ᾽ οἰμωγμός. ἐν κείνῃ τὸ πᾶν
> σπουδαῖον, ἡσυχαῖον, ἐς βίαν ἄγον.
> ἐντήκεται γάρ †πλευμόνων† ὅσοις ἔνι
> ψυχή· τίς οὐχὶ τῆσδε τῆς θεοῦ βορός;
> εἰσέρχεται μὲν ἰχθύων πλωτῷ γένει,
> χέρσου δ᾽ ἔνεστιν ἐν τετρασκελεῖ γονῇ,
> νωμᾷ δ᾽ ἐν οἰωνοῖσι τοὐκείνης πτερόν.
>
> * * *

[281] For instance, adulterous women were required by law to be expelled from their husband's house and to be forbidden from taking part in Athenian religious cults: the evidence is set out in [Dem].59.85-7: for text & translation, see Carey (1992). For further discussion of divorce and adultery laws in Athens, see Cohen (1991) 98-132; Cohn-Haft (1995) 1-14.

[282] Kaimio (2002) 96.

[283] Sommerstein translates ὦ παῖδες as 'o maidens', and argues that the speech was almost certainly given by a female protagonist to a chorus of maidens, tentatively attributing the lines to Medea in *Women of Colchis*: Sommerstein (2020) 68-9.

ἐν θηρcίν, ἐν βροτοῖcιν, ἐν θεοῖc ἄνω.
τίν᾽ οὐ παλαίουc᾽ ἐc τρὶc ἐκβάλλει θεῶν;
εἴ μοι θέμιc—θέμιc δὲ—τἀληθῆ λέγειν,
Διὸc τυραννεῖ πλευμόνων ἄνευ δορός, 15
ἄνευ cιδήρου· πάντα τοι cυντέμνεται
Κύπριc τὰ θνητῶν καὶ θεῶν βουλεύματα.[284]

Children, the Cyprian is not the Cyprian alone, but she is called by many names. She is Hades, she is immortal life, she is raving madness, she is unmixed desire, she is lamentation; in her is all activity, all tranquillity, all that leads to violence. For she sinks into the vitals of all that have life; who is not greedy for that goddess? She enters into the swimming race of fishes, she is within the four-legged brood upon dry land, and her wing ranges among birds.

* * *

...among beasts, among mortals, among the race of gods above. Which among the gods does she not wrestle and throw three times? If I may speak out—and I may speak out—to tell the truth, she rules over the heart of Zeus, without spear, without iron. All the plans of mortals and of gods are cut short by the Cyprian.

While fragment 941 is undoubtedly the most comprehensive surviving treatise on the role of Aphrodite in mortal and immortal affairs, traces of a similar perspective can be found in extant tragedies. The goddess' influence is evident in the opening lines of the first stasimon of Sophocles' *Women of Trachis* – 'great is the power of the Cyprian, always she carries off victories' (μέγα τι cθένοc ἁ Κύπριc· ἐκφέρεται νίκαc ἀεί, 497) – as well as in Theseus' closing lines of Euripides' *Hippolytus* – 'Cypris, how acutely I will remember your vicious deeds' (ὡc πολλά, Κύπρι, cῶν κακῶν μεμνήcομαι, 1461). Indeed, the name 'Cypris' itself seems to be used by male and female characters as something of a by-word for forceful or forbidden desire in the Tragic tradition, used euphemistically of infidelity or unfaithful desire (in Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound* [650], and Euripides' *Hippolytus* [465] and *Ion* [1093]), as well as other types of licentious behaviour or trouble in love (in *Prometheus Bound* [864], and Euripides' *Andromache* [240] and *Bacchae* [317 & 688]). There is, then, certainly some consistency to the portrayal of love and its dangerous effects across the work of the tragedians.

[284] Text and translation taken from Lloyd-Jones (2003) 404-5.

It is unsurprising that in a genre such as Tragedy, these more destructive and chaotic sides of love are given special prominence. Nevertheless, the force of desire, particularly under the guise of the goddess Aphrodite and her associate Eros, is prominent not just in the events which unfold on stage but also in the speech of the characters who must find ways to express and explain them. As Ursula Bittrich writes:

> So haben die Tragiker, und insbesondere Euripides, die Abgründe, in die Aphrodite und Eros treiben können, immer wieder entweder direkt in Szene gesetzt oder zum Gegenstand der Reflexion insbesondere in den Chorliedern erhoben.[285]
>
> *Thus the tragedians, and Euripides in particular, have repeatedly either directly staged the abysses to which Aphrodite and Eros can drift or raised them to the level of an object of reflection, especially in the choral songs.*

To an extent, Bittrich is correct to assert the prominence of love themes in Euripides' extant plays, as this theme often intersects with the poet's wider propensity to centre his dramas on the domestic and familial rather than the political and civic.[286] And yet, recent scholarship has highlighted that Sophocles, too, made the dangers of desire a prominent feature in various of his dramas: it may well be simply due to the caprices of transmission that only one such play, *Women of Trachis*, survives in contrast to Euripides' many love-focused plays.[287] The discussion that follows, then, will be centred largely on Euripides as necessitated by the wider evidence base available. Nevertheless, we should not be tempted to regard gendered portrayals of love on stage as a specifically or even perhaps predominantly Euripidean feature, but rather as a wider theme in Tragedy whose analysis is now hampered by the accidents of time which have skewed study of the genre.

[285] Bittrich (2012) 106.
[286] Mastronarde (1998) 64 also connects the prevalence of domestic, and therefore women-focused, plays in Euripides with a potentially broader trend across later Tragedy to conceive of the chorus as a sympathetic companion to their heroine in her plight rather than an independent, more objective perspective on the events of the drama.
[287] See Wright (2017) 223-224 for the argument that Euripides was not alone in featuring depictions of love on stage; and Sommerstein (2020) 62-72 for a full discussion of the portrayal of love in Sophocles' fragments.

The clearest example of how Aphrodite's devastating force is primarily expressed by female characters can be found in Euripides' *Hippolytus*. The female chorus first recognise the goddess' destructive power after Phaedra reveals her horrific secret, when they describe her love as 'a misfortune sent from Cypris' (ἄσημα δ' οὐκέτ' ἐστὶν οἶ φθίνει τύχα | Κύπριδος, 371-2). The Troezenian women later narrate two other stories in which Cypris caused violence from forbidden desire, citing Heracles' lust for Iole, which caused the destruction of her city, and Zeus' lust for Semele, which caused her demise (545-564). The Nurse, too, frames Cypris as the agent of Phaedra's destruction:

> Κύπρις οὐκ ἄρ' ἦν θεός,
> ἀλλ' εἴ τι μεῖζον ἄλλο γίγνεται θεοῦ,
> ἣ τήνδε κἀμὲ καὶ δόμους ἀπώλεσεν. (359-361)
>
> *So Cypris is not a god, but something altogether more powerful than a god: she has destroyed this woman, she has destroyed me, and she has destroyed the royal house.*

This is echoed by Phaedra herself, who acknowledges just before her own suicide that it is Cypris, rather than the Nurse or Hippolytus himself, who has brought her down (725).

Hippolytus is the most extreme example of the negative connotations attached to Aphrodite. The play's focus on mortals' belated recognition of the goddess' power stems from Euripides' decision to have Aphrodite herself deliver the prologue, in which she sets out her scheme for destroying Phaedra and Hippolytus. This allows the audience access to the outcomes of the play, and reinforces the theme of ignorance of Aphrodite's machinations turning belatedly to recognition only when all is too late. Nevertheless, similar effects can be found elsewhere in Tragedy, particularly when referring to the goddess' impact on women. For instance, in various plays, both Aphrodite and Cypris are named by women as the cause of the Trojan war, via the goddess' encouragement of Paris' forbidden love for Helen.[288] Similarly, the chorus-women of Sophocles' *Women of Trachis* present the goddess

[288] Aphrodite: E.*Hel*.1121, E.*IA*.181; Cypris: E.*Andr*.289, E.*Hel*.364 E.*IA*.184 & 1300, E.*Tro*.368 & 983.

as supremely powerful, masterminding the violent contest between Heracles and Achelous for Deianira's hand in marriage, as well as Heracles' own destruction as a result of his unfaithful desire for Iole and Deianira's ensuing sexual jealousy (497-530 & 860-1). Further, Creusa in Euripides' *Ion* describes Apollo, who violently sexual assaulted her, as 'doing a favour to Cypris' (Κύπριδι χάριν πράσσων, 896) while Hecuba accuses Helen of unfaithful desire for Paris by saying that her mind 'was turned to Cypris' when she saw him (ὁ σὸς δ' ἰδών νιν νοῦς ἐποιήθη Κύπρις, 988). We also find this in the fragments: Ino's disastrous desire causes her to exclaim 'alas, women's hearts - we are saddled with such disease from Cypris' (ὦ γυναικεῖαι φρένες· ὅσον νόσημα τὴν Κύπριν κεκτήμεθα, *Ino* fr. 400), while *Dictys* fr. 331 depicts another female speaker – probably Danaë – hoping that if love (ἔρως) ever captures her, it does not turn her towards Cypris (οὐδέ μ' εἰς Κύπριν τρέπων). The juxtaposition of *erōs*, representing the general concept of love, with Cypris, representing a specifically negative side to love, is particularly striking.

Even when women do perceive love in a more positive light, it is most often in the context of love's 'bitter-sweet' nature. The depiction of love as two-sided, representing both a pleasurable and dangerous emotion, is associated with Aphrodite and Eros throughout archaic lyric poetry – in both male and female voices – and in the Tragic tradition is expressed most eloquently by the hero Bellerophon in Euripides' *Stheneboea* fr. 661.22-4: 'one type of love is hateful and leads to Hades, the other leads instead towards moderation and virtue'.[289] In general, however, it is chorus-women in Tragedy who highlight the bitter-sweetness of love, rather than men. The chorus of Euripides' *Medea* assert that Cypris can bring happiness in moderation, but this is tempered by the constant threat that she might

[289] For further discussion on Eros' double personality, see Bittrich (2012) 105-129; Carson (2014); and Wright (2017) 219-242.

instead inflict love in excess or unfaithful desire on the chorus-women (627-644).[290] In Euripides' *Hippolytus,* the chorus highlight the cognitive dissonance inherent in the 'bitter-sweet' force of Eros, who is addressed as 'you who bring sweet pleasure to the soul of those against whom you march into battle' (εἰσάγων γλυκεῖαν | ψυχᾷ χάριν οὓς ἐπιστρατεύσῃ, 526-7). The chorus-women of *Iphigenia at Aulis* (543-557) are even more precise: according to them, Eros has two arrows, one bringing happy love and the other bringing chaotic strife. The women can only pray that Aphrodite endows them with love in moderation rather than excessive desire. The fragments, too, exemplify this picture of love as two-faced. In Euripides fr. 897, an unknown speaker wishes not to be excluded from experiencing Eros but with the proviso that they also be kept away from his viciousness; the same sentiment is captured pithily in Euripides fr. 929a – 'you breath two types of breath, Eros'.

As Bellerophon's prologue in *Stheneboea* shows, male characters can be just as aware of the dangers as well as the delights of love; similarly, Eros is just as destructive in the eyes of the male chorus of Sophocles' *Antigone* (781-805) as he is for the chorus-women of *Hippolytus* and *Iphigenia at Aulis*. And yet, there is also an extra layer of nuance to the way in which the tragedians distinguish how male characters in Tragedy can perceive the gods of love (and particularly Aphrodite). In Euripides' *Alcestis*, for instance, Heracles – at this point unaware of the death of Alcestis – tries to lighten the sombre mood in the royal house by urging everyone to forget their sorrows and have fun, exhorting a house servant to 'honour Cypris, the greatest sweet pleasure for mortals, for she is a kindly goddess (τίμα δὲ καὶ τὴν πλεῖστον ἡδίστην θεῶν | Κύπριν βροτοῖσιν: εὐμενὴς γὰρ ἡ θεός, 790-1). Similarly, both the male messenger in Euripides' *Bacchae* (773) and the chorus-men of Euripides' *Children of Heracles*

[290] In their following ode (835-845), the chorus describes Aphrodite as a purely beneficent deity whose presence as graced Athens itself. However, this is in the context of Athenian patriotism rather than the chorus' emotional experiences, and is intended to set up the sharp contrast between the grace of the goddess (and, by extension, the city) and the defilement that will be brought to Athens if Medea is allowed to shelter there after committing the act of infanticide.

(894) describe Cypris-Aphrodite respectively as a 'delight' (τερπνόν) and 'pleasurable' (εὔχαρις) for mortals. Equally, in the songs of the Colonian elders in Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus* (693) Aphrodite is simply a benign deity who has blessed their beloved homeland with divine gifts. That these instances of Aphrodite as a positive force are confined solely to the voices of male characters – at least as far as our evidence from the extant and fragmentary tragedies goes – marks a strong contrast with the dangerous potential with which the goddess is associated by the women of Greek tragedy.

The eminently more positive reception given to Aphrodite by men in Tragedy raises interesting questions, and can be explained to some extent by looking more closely at Tragedy's relationship with its Athenian social context. Any sociological extrapolations from this literary evidence are necessarily tentative, but in my view it is possible to find a connection here between the literary realm and historical reality.

In Athenian law, high-status women's sexual lives were under intense scrutiny. According to the law stated in [Demosthenes] 59.87, the husbands of adulterous women were legally required to turf them out of the house; such women were then excluded from public cults and the religious life of the city. As Roger Just concludes:

> In short the result of a woman's adultery was to place her outside the category of women capable of producing *gnesioi* [legitimate sons], and her role within the Athenian polis and the grounds for her incorporation into its civic and religious life were thus abrogated. She was placed on the same level as a hetaira or a foreigner, and the severe penalty of *atimia*, loss of civic rights, which fell on a husband who failed to divorce an adulterous wife clearly indicates that the wife's adultery was not seen as (or only as) an injury against the husband.[291]

This regulation of women's reputations was implemented not so much to defend personal morals or punish emotional deceit as to uphold the safety of the political life of the city.[292]

[291] Just (1989) 70.
[292] This is made clear from the mere fact that punishments for adultery are written into the public law of Athens rather than left to the discretion of individuals.

The daughters and wives of citizen men, whose civic role was to provide future Athenian citizens, were a precious commodity – as evidenced by the dowries which accompanied them – and, as with all such commodities, were therefore subject to political rules and regulations. Of course, the legal burden of adultery could be felt by Athenian men, too, when caught in the act with an Athenian-born wife: in Lysias 1, for instance, Euphiletos defends his murder of Eratosthenes under the Athenian law which permits husbands to murder the man having an affair with his wife if he catches the adulterer *in flagrante delicto.* However, judging by the lengths to which Euphiletos goes to defend his actions, this form of punishment was probably rarely used, and instead some form of fine would usually have been extracted in or out of the courts.[293] Apart from the obvious exception of loss of life, then, the punishment of women's adultery usually carried a harsher sentence – the loss of reputation and civic rights – than the monetary punishment often exacted from adulterous men.

Similarly, from what little we know of divorce laws it appears that women's situation was very much more precarious than men's. In five of the nine lawcourt speeches mentioning divorce, the separation process was initiated by the husband, whereas only two divorces are instigated by women.[294] This discrepancy can be explained by the fact that men could make arrangements directly with the men of the households involved to begin proceedings, while women were required to present their case to an archon and risk public scrutiny of their reputation – the mere fact of speaking out in a usually all-male setting would have been an unusual, and therefore risky, step for women to take. Further, of the two recorded divorces which were initiated by women, one was only unsuccessful because Alcibiades forcibly dragged his wife away from the lawcourt where she was giving evidence against him, as a

[293] Just (1989) 68.
[294] Cohn-Haft (1995) 2-4.

last resort to put a halt to the procedure.[295] Not only was the process for divorce harder and more precarious for women to instigate than for men, but also the reasons for a man divorcing a wife could be many and various. In addition to adultery (as in Lysias 1, Demosthenes 59.87 and Lysias 14.28), divorces were arranged because the husband wanted one (or sometimes merely additional) legitimate heir(s), or for financial improvement if his prospective new wife's dowry was bigger than that of his current wife.[296] In many of these cases, the divorcing husbands arranged a different marriage for their ex-wives – presumably acting in good faith towards the kinsmen of the woman otherwise 'left behind' – but as there was no specified legal threshold which grounds for divorce were expected to meet, and no legal procedure which men were required to follow, women could (at least in theory) be summarily divorced for no fault of their own and with no onward marriage plan in place. This situation undoubtedly incentivised women to stabilise their social position by assuring their good reputation as a diligent, competent and moderate wife when managing the home. Any excessive emotions which threatened to disrupt the functioning of their marriage could have significant impacts on their social and financial status as well as their personal relationship with their husband.

Finally, the sexual norms of Athenian society themselves allowed a sexual freedom to men that was absent in women's lives. Athenian women were married when very young – the only sexual relationships they were expected to have were with their husbands (unless they fell into the category of courtesans). Men, on the other hand, married much later, and probably not until they were around 30 years old, and before that time could enjoy what Brulé describes as 'sexual versatility'.[297] A man could, over the course of his lifetime, switch

[295] Andoc.4.14; see Cohn-Haft (1995) 4 & 11-14. Importantly, Alcibiades' wife is described by Andocides as being a decent woman who decides to initiate divorce proceedings only as a last resort against her husband's flagrantly profligate behaviour.
[296] Thompson (1972) 211-225; Cohn-Haft (1995) 9-11.
[297] Brulé (2003) 90; cf. also Just (1989) 146-147.

back and forth between the 'sexuality of procreation', fulfilling his political duty to provide heirs for the state within the confines of his marriage, and the 'sexuality of recreation' beyond the home, whether with female slaves, prostitutes, or male *erōmenoi*.[298] In this context, it is substantially less surprising that Aphrodite and her associated pleasures could be perceived by men as little more than a welcome distraction from civic responsibilities, while for women any infidelity was always as dangerous as it was desirable. In the context of Tragedy, the relative sexual freedoms of men in comparison to women in society are depicted in the differing perceptions of the goddess of love according to the gender of those who invoked her.

In my view, then, there is a hint of 'realism' to be found in the gendered characterisation of love in Tragedy, which becomes clearer when the plays are connected with their sociological context. However, as ever with the literary evidence of fifth-century Athens, any recognition of actual social norms which conditioned female behaviour in Athens is often obscured by the cultural stereotypes pinned on women by male anxieties. In the context of desire, especially in Euripides' plays, Aphrodite's particularly dangerous potential for women is also bound up with the wider stereotypes of women as libidinous and unable to control these emotional excesses. In part, this cultural typecasting of women arises from the Greek tendency to polarise and pigeonhole the world into opposites: Greek and Barbarian, man and woman, slave and free-born all became diametrically opposed in the Athenian consciousness.[299]

This polarisation finds its full expression in fourth-century philosophical texts, such as Aristotle's description of women in *History of Animals* 608b1–14 as lacking in courage,

[298] Brulé (2003) 90.
[299] Just (1989) 153-155.

(emotional) moderation, shame, integrity and intelligence – all qualities which stood in opposition to the profile of an ideal Athenian man. This idea was already permeating the literary world of fifth-century Athens before Aristotle, and is especially evident in Aristophanes' depiction of his comic women as openly lascivious and incapable of suppressing their sexual appetite.[300] Tragedy's expression of women's proclivity to lustfulness is necessarily very different from that of Comedy, but in the female expression of Eros and Aphrodite's bittersweet nature in Euripides' *Hippolytus, Iphigenia at Aulis* and *Medea* the same trope is visible. The women of Tragedy, by constantly acknowledging and fearing Aphrodite's dangerous potential, also express a typically 'male' view that the women around them were constantly battling their own emotional weaknesses and excesses; sometimes, as the likes of Phaedra, Stheneboea and Helen (at least in most traditions) show, their susceptibility to lust gets the better of them – with disastrous consequences.

Turning to the chorus' view of love in Tragedy, another pattern emerges. While the differences between the male and female choral perspectives on love are to some extent a function of the differing styles of the three tragedians, the various choral depictions of love are nevertheless striking in their conformity to gendered notions of how Athenian men and women 'ought' to understand such issues. That love in its many incarnations is more rarely discussed in the male than the female choral voice is not in itself surprising. However, men's trepidation over Aphrodite's power is expressed in very different terms from that of women: for men, love is a political concern in its potential to disrupt the processes of a functioning society when it goes wrong, while women are more finely attuned to the emotional, familial and poignantly psychological disruption Aphrodite can cause. Political themes are more dominant in Aeschylus' and Sophocles' work, while Euripides is the master of the tragedy

[300] Dover (1974) 100-101; Just (1989) 158-163. See also the ancient medical justifications for women's higher libido in Brulé (2003) 96-99 & 111-113.

of intimacy – to this extent, a 'gendered perspective' can be difficult to differentiate from the tragedians' differing poetic styles. Nevertheless, a plausibly concurrent pattern of gender-based views emerges from choral expressions of love's power across the Tragic tradition.

The first indication of this can be found in Aeschylus' *Suppliants*. Since the play revolves around women's rejection of the institution of marriage, it is not surprising that the chorus of Danaid maidens also reject the notion of 'love' by declining to address the issue at all in their odes. Rather than framing their predicament in terms of their private emotions – which would garner less understanding from a foreign king – the chorus-women instead pursue the path of political ethics, appealing to Pelasgus' moral duty as a king to accept these endangered suppliants. The core issue, that the women are fleeing their own civic duty of marriage, remains the elephant in the room for much of the play.[301] It is only after the marauding sons of Aegyptus have been driven out and the suppliant status of the women ensured that Aphrodite, the goddess of marital unions, is discussed. The Danaid women introduce the theme with a prayer: 'may nothing come to pass under the compulsion of Cytherea' (μηδ' ὑπ' ἀνάγκας | τέλος ἔλθοι Κυθερείας, 1032).[302] The topic of Aphrodite's power is then picked up by the secondary chorus, who are almost certainly Argive soldiers.[303] Their general point, that marriage is a woman's destiny, is reinforced by their description of Aphrodite's importance as a goddess:

> Κύπριδος δ' οὐκ ἀμελεῖν, θεσμὸς ὅδ' εὔφρων·
> δύναται γὰρ Διὸς ἄγχιστα σὺν Ἥρᾳ.
> τίεται δ' αἰολόμητις
> θεὸς ἔργοις ἐπὶ σεμνοῖς.[304] (1034-7)

[301] The tensions in the play between the ethics of supplication itself and the ethics of the Danaids' reasons for seeking asylum are discussed in more detail by Gantz (1978) 279-287.
[302] The text and explanation given by Friis Johansen & Whittle (1980a) 317 and Sommerstein (2019) 367, that the manuscripts' γάμος is tautologous and therefore most likely to have originated as a gloss on τέλος, is convincing.
[303] This is the most widely accepted argument for the chorus' identity in these lines: see, for instance, Friis Johansen & Whittle (1980c) 306-9; Rösler (2007) 187-188 and n.30; Sommerstein (2019) 368-370.
[304] Text from Sommerstein (2019)., which is, in my view, the most plausible.

Do not forget Cypris – this is a wise rule of thumb: for, alongside Hera, she is closest to Zeus. She is a goddess full of wiles, respected for her noble deeds.

The men acknowledge Aphrodite's powers of deception and disruption in their description of her as αἰολόμητις ('full of wiles'), but the rest of their description is closer to that of Sophocles' fr.941, discussed above, depicting Aphrodite as a powerful and august deity. By casting the goddess as a solemn and revered divine force, the Argive men highlight not only Aphrodite's unassailable power, but also the legitimacy of her influence as the goddess of love and therefore marriage, which 'has been the fate of many women before now' (μετὰ πολλῶν δὲ γάμων ἅδε τελευτὰ | προτερᾶν πέλοι γυναικῶν, 1050-1). The implication is that because Aphrodite is a necessary force in the community, given she facilitates the means of its continuation, the women's desire to avoid marriage fundamentally opposes this powerful goddess. The soldiers' warning, repeated in their final words – 'do not demand too much of the gods' (τὰ θεῶν μηδὲν ἀγάζειν, 1061) – positions Aphrodite as a civic necessity and common good, despite her disruptive side. In this way, love in the male choral voice is seen through the lens of the community rather than the individual, encapsulating the fundamental tension in the play between the rights of the suppliant women and the continued prosperity of Argos as a city.

Another example of how love is often framed by male choruses as a force with civic and political implications can be found in the third stasimon of Sophocles' *Antigone* (781-805). The ode is itself an unusual response to Creon and Haemon's stand-off in the preceding episode. Rather than focus on the topic at hand – a family rift – the chorus' ode instead looks at the issue more obliquely via Haemon's future marital commitment to Antigone, portraying the father-son dispute as being caused by the immense power of love, simply a by-product of Eros' far-reaching force. By omitting from the ode any direct response to Creon's orders and Haemon's response, Sophocles develops the irony of the situation. The chorus do not and cannot criticise their new leader, so instead rely on the more conventional

song-topic of love to explain what they have witnessed – a subject that will later dominate the play in the 'marriage to death' imagery employed by Antigone in the *kommos* and enacted by Haemon in his suicide.[305] Despite their common choral *topos*, the elders show some nuances of gender in their presentation of the subject matter.

The ode begins in the conventional fashion, describing the full extent of Eros' powers. In the antistrophe, however, a particular theme emerges connecting love with justice. First, Eros is described as 'forcing the minds of the just towards injustice, to their dishonour' (cὺ καὶ δικαίων ἀδίκουc | φρένας παραcπᾷc ἐπί λώβᾳ·, 791-2). Later in the same passage, love is connected again with the law, albeit in a now uncertain textual tradition. According to the manuscript evidence, desire 'is seated alongside the great laws' (τῶν μεγάλων πάρεδροc ἐν ἀρχαῖc | θεcμῶν·,[306] 798-9), although emendation along the lines of Griffith's τῶν μεγάλων παρβαcίαιcιν | θεcμῶν ('through transgression of the great laws') surely makes more sense in the context of the preceding lines.[307] Either way, Eros and Aphrodite – both of whom are named in the course of the ode – are framed in terms of their relationship to the law and their power over men's own civic responsibility towards justice.[308] Love's power is not only felt on an individual level but also in the public ramifications of individuals' desires and actions.

This 'male' perspective on love's power becomes especially obvious when contrasted with a similar ode in the female choral voice. Sophocles' *Women of Trachis* also addresses the forceful power of Aphrodite in shaping Deianira's actions over the course of the play, which comes to the fore particularly in the second stasimon (497-530), but from the perspective of

[305] See Griffith (1999a) 255.
[306] Following the text of Lloyd-Jones & Wilson (1990) *ad loc.*
[307] Griffith (1999a) 260.
[308] Varoulakis (2012) 226-227, deferring to the transmitted text in 797-798, regards these lines as making an overtly political statement by outlining the 'sovereign power' of love .

a female chorus a similar theme is treated very differently. The two odes begin with similar statements – compare Ἔρως ἀνίκατε μάχαν ('love unconquerable in battle', *Antigone* 781) with μέγα τι cθένος ἁ Κύπριc· | ἐκφέρεται νίκας ἀεί (great is the power of the Cyprian – always she carries off victories, *Women of Trachis* 497-8). And yet, as the elders of *Antigone* move towards a more 'political' framing of love's power, the women of *Women of Trachis* instead give an intensely emotional rendering of love's potency:

> ἁ δ' ἐὐῶπιc ἁβρὰ
> τηλαυγεῖ παρ' ὄχθῳ
> ἧcτο τὸν ὃν προcμένουc' ἀκοίταν.
> ἐγὼ δὲ θάτηρ μὲν οἷα φράζω·
> τὸ δ' ἀμφινείκητον ὄμμα νύμφας
> ἐλεινὸν ἀμμένει <τέλοc>·
> κἀπὸ ματρὸc ἄφαρ βέβαχ',
> ὥcτε πόρτις ἐρήμα.[309] (525-530)
>
> *But she, delicate in her beauty, sits on a distant hillside to await her husband – I speak as though I saw it with my own eyes – as the bride's visage, the purpose of their strife, piteous to behold, waits. And all of a sudden she is gone from her mother like a lonely calf, bereft.*

As Erika Weiberg has powerfully shown, the chorus' independent narration of the violent struggle for Deianira's hand in marriage builds on Deinaira's own version of the events in the prologue of the play (9-23), a story which she had been unable to tell in full because of the psychological trauma she has continued to face from the events.[310] This intensely visual and poignant representation of the emotional turmoil faced by an individual woman because of men's desires presents a strong contrast to the grandiose statements of love's power over justice laid out by the male choral voice in *Antigone*.

[309] Zieliński's reading θάτηρ, 'spectator', for codd. μάτηρ, 'mother' is much more persuasive (see Lloyd-Jones & Wilson [1990] *ad loc.*). Deianira had earlier addressed the chorus as though they were maidens – or at least less experienced in life and love than she is (S.*Tra.*141-152) – so it seems implausible here that the chorus could refer to themselves as her 'mother' – even if in a figuratively 'protective' sense. On the other hand, the chorus are relaying in vivid pictorial detail a story that has been told to them, if obliquely, by Deinaira herself (S.*Tra.*9-23). They are therefore 'almost a spectator' of the events, in the sense that the tale, even second-hand, has enough of an emotional impact on the chorus-women for them to narrate it as if they were there themselves.
[310] Weiberg (2018) 35-6; (2020a) 179-182. See also Ormand (1999) 41 on the presentation of Deianira's isolation and vulnerability in this passage.

The 'feminine' perspective of love's power over the individual rather than the state is continued in the voices of Euripides' female choruses. In *Medea* (627-643), for example, the women pray to Aphrodite as a means of amplifying Medea's suffering in love by asking the goddess not to bring a similar fate to them, asking 'never, oh mistress, may you smear your ineluctable arrow with desire and fire it from your golden bow at me' (μήποτ', ὦ δέσποιν', ἐπ' ἐμοὶ χρυσέων τόξων ἀφείης | ἱμέρωι χρίσας' ἄφυκτον οἰστόν, 633-4). The women continue their prayer, asking for moderation rather than anger in the marital home and wishing never to have unfaithful feelings for someone else (636-643). Donald Mastronarde contends that the chorus' voice here should be read as gnomic:

> The chorus continues to use what may be called the 'ethical first person' to espouse moral positions that are meant to be exemplary of what is to be expected of all decent persons.[311]

However, the chorus' prayers can just as easily be portrayed as a personal reaction to Medea and Jason's situation. After seeing the power that desire holds over Medea and the disastrous effects of Jason's infidelity on both the marriage itself and all the people involved, the chorus' words are more plausibly self-reflective: what if that were *me*? However the choral voice is to be interpreted, the Corinthian women's perspective is decidedly personal. Their worries are for love's impact on both themselves and their families rather than the functioning of the city around them.

The use of prayer to the gods of love as a means of conveying female anxiety over the destructive potential of love is continued in *Hippolytus*, during the chorus' hymn to the power of Eros and Aphrodite (525-564). While most of their song is sung from the 'universal' perspective of love's power over mankind, the women also turn to personal prayer as part of their hymn, asking Eros not to show himself to them in hostility or come in excess (μή μοί ποτε σὺν κακῷ φανείης | μηδ' ἄρρυθμος ἔλθοις, 528-9). A similar theme is found in *Iphigenia*

[311] Mastronarde (2002) 277.

at Aulis (543-557), if the transmitted text is indeed original.[312] This ode, too, begins in a conventionally gnomic style, with generalisations about Eros and Aphrodite's two-faced natures – the gods are benign in moderation but cause chaos from excessive desire. Once again, however, the general turns to the personal when the women address 'most beautiful Cypris' (Κύπρι καλλίστα, 553) directly:

> εἴη δέ μοι μετρία
> μὲν χάρις, πόθοι δ' ὅσιοι,
> καὶ μετέχοιμι τᾶς Ἀφροδί-
> τας, πολλὰν δ' ἀποθείμαν. (554-7)
>
> *May delight be mine in moderation, and legitimate desires, and may I have my share of Aphrodite but hold her off when excessive.*

The use of prayer in each instance focuses attention on the chorus' own fears about love for themselves and their families. Prayer can, of course, be an intensely personal act, but there is perhaps an extra layer of irony to be found in the fact that it is also central to women's civic role in Greek city states. Whether at festivals or in times of crisis, women were expected to offer prayers on behalf of their community; indeed, many of the personal pleas to Aphrodite or Eros in the female choral voice are embedded in more general hymns and prayers. This adds a poignant touch to women's much more private and personal experiences of love, while providing a strong contrast with the 'masculinised' perception of love as a civic and political as well as emotional force.

Aphrodite/Cypris and Eros shared some characteristics at least in the literary sphere of Athens. In the context of Tragedy, the goddess and god of love are almost universally regarded as an omnipotent force of nature and creation, whose sphere of influence extends from the divine to the mortal and even to the animal kingdoms. Both men and women are aware not just of love's power, but also its dangerous potential to hold sway over their lives

[312] Diggle (1994) *ad loc.* labels this '*fortasse non Euripidei*' – his second of four categories, in descending order, of the likelihood that the text is securely and genuinely Euripides' own.

and livelihoods. And yet, within this broad framework of consistency, some differences emerge which can be drawn at least to some extent along gender lines. Men in Greek tragedy can view Aphrodite as a benign deity, for instance, whereas for women she is almost always a dangerous deity – even if the result of her powers is 'bittersweet'.

Explanations for this gendered divide may be found in some of the external evidence for women's position in Athenian law and society. Since their social position depended upon their male *kyrioi*, if a wife were suspected of adultery, the full force of Athenian law would come down on her and she would be in danger of losing civic and social privileges as well as the stability of her husband's home. Men, on the other hand, enjoyed more avenues for sexual freedom than women were ever allowed, although, as we see in Lysias 1, their experiences of adultery could also be fraught with danger. And yet, women's struggle against love also speaks to a wider 'male' view of women's characters prominent across the contemporary Athenian literary tradition. As ever, if the recognition of the actual social position of women in Athens exists in the tragedians' presentation of female characters on stage, it is often obscured by overlapping layers of male anxieties and stereotypes. In this instance, the pervasive stereotype of women as sexually charged and subject to their passions because of their weakness of will finds its way into Tragedy and Comedy, suggesting that it was relatively embedded in the cultural consciousness.

Another stereotype reinforced by societal norms and expectations was that women were concerned only with themselves and their personal lives (embodied in the *oikos*), while men busied themselves with public and civic affairs (embodied in the *polis*). It is in the context of such a divide that nuances in the male and female choral perspectives on love are most plausibly interpreted. While the male choruses of Aeschylus' *Suppliants* and Sophocles' *Antigone* explore the political implications of Aphrodite's power on their communities, the

corresponding female perspective in Sophocles' *Women of Trachis* and across Euripides' female choral voice is one of intense personal fear and experience of Aphrodite's full and dangerous powers.

Conclusion

This chapter has sought to use evidence from outside of Tragedy to connect the characters of the chorus-women on stage with other literary, and perhaps even real, women elsewhere in Athenian society. In my view, fruitful correspondences within and beyond Tragedy can be found through analysing the stereotypes of women's speech and personalities across the available fifth-century literary and sociohistorical evidence and setting this evidence alongside various instances of female choral song found in Tragedy.

In particular, there appears to be a specially close relationship between the voices of 'ordinary' women in later Euripidean Tragedy and Aristophanic Comedy. Often, Euripides' chorus-women are presented through their choral odes in a similar manner to Aristophanes' highly-stylised female characters, as gossiping and unintelligent. It seems likely that Aristophanes and Euripides intended to create similar stereotypes of female conversation in their plays, both for comic effect and as a way of depicting these lower-status female characters in ways that would have been familiar to their audiences from elsewhere in their literature and society.

A similar methodology can be used to assess the various attitudes towards female friendships and speech-networks in literary and historical evidence from Athens, in order to illuminate parallels with how female solidarity is portrayed on the Tragic stage. While

the available epigraphic and literary evidence for both women's position in Athenian society and the existence of female friendships is scarce, what little there is seems to show that both women and men recognised the social importance and emotional closeness of female friendships, but that male anxieties over the power of such networks could influence the depiction of female friendships. This dual perspective can be seen in Euripides' treatment of female gossip, as by turns empowering for the women involved and inherently dangerous to the men excluded from it.

Finally, evidence external to Tragedy is used to consider how the choral voice treats similar themes but from perspectives which differ according to gender. These differences become particularly prominent in the universal themes of love and war which pervade the choral voice of Tragedy and demonstrate an overlap with the 'gendered' attitudes towards these issues in wider Athenian society. As the nuanced views of love and war in Tragedy show, and as this chapter itself has maintained throughout, internal comparisons across the plays can be usefully connected with other literary and historical parallels. Through a thorough analysis of both the plays themselves and their sociological contexts, therefore, we are better able to navigate the complex layers of realism and stereotyping which pervade the male-authored (and particularly Euripidean) female voice of Tragedy.

Chapter 4

Tragic Grief: Gender and Genre

Introduction

The act of lament in the archaic and classical Greek world is usually understood by modern scholars to be a female occupation in both its ritual and literary forms.[313] Ancient sources such as Plutarch's account of the law attributed to Solon which curtailed female lament practices, as well as evidence from funerary depictions on vases across the archaic period, certainly reinforce our perception of the overwhelming prominence of women's activities in archaic funerary practice.[314] However, often neglected in the discussion of the centrality of women in Greek funerary rituals is the role of male lament, despite the fact that in Homeric epic, archaic art and Tragedy itself men are seen to mourn their dead in various ways.

Male lament in Tragedy has already been explored in Ann Suter's excellent article which argues that the expression of male grief does not diminish the status of men or 'feminise' them in the extant plays, concluding instead that male lament is as legitimate an expression of emotion as female lament across the Tragic tradition.[315] Suter's argument, which encompasses expressions of grief in both the individual and collective voice across all three tragedians, is particularly relevant to Aeschylean choral lament. Choral responsibility for and involvement in lament is especially strong in the extant Aeschylean plays. This reflects

[313] For lament as a female ritual role, see Alexiou (2002) 6-10; Loraux (1986) 44-46; Holst-Warhaft (1992) 14-39; Blok (2001) 104; and Swift (2010) 304-305. For lament as a female literary role in Homer, see Swift (2010) 305-306; and in Tragedy, see McClure (1999) 40-47; and Foley (2001) 19-56.
[314] Plut.*Vit.Sol.*21. For the depiction of mourning in archaic art, see Shapiro (1991) 629-656 and Van Wees (1998) 19-46, discussed in more detail below.
[315] Suter (2008b) 156-180.

the chorus' significance more generally in Aeschylus' *dramatis personae*, leading Loraux to remark that 'the choral parts are so important that one might almost take the chorus to be the protagonist'.[316] The central role of the choral voice in Aeschylus' dramas is especially evident in *Seven Against Thebes, Agamemnon, Libation Bearers* and *Persians*, all of which contain sustained choral laments or *kommoi* shared with protagonists; the chorus of *Suppliants,* too, deliver a long prologue-parodos in which they cast themselves as being in a state of continual mourning.[317] It is clear from this brief summation of the extant evidence that lamentation, whether male or female, plays a fundamental part in the identity and function of both Aeschylus' choral personas and, by extension, his broader dramatic purpose.[318]

In Sophocles' and Euripides' plays, however, choral involvement in lament, both male and female, tends to decrease in length, intensity and frequency. When the chorus is involved in lament, it is often as a secondary participant, fulfilling an antiphonal, consolatory or diminished role in support of the fuller individual laments of various protagonists.[319] Furthermore, within this reduced role of lament across the choral voice in later Tragedy comes a more pronounced gender divide. Male choruses in Sophocles' and Euripides' plays appear more likely to urge restraint in grief or offer consolation to the bereaved through praise of the dead than the lamenting male choruses of *Persians* and *Agamemnon*. Female choruses, on the other hand, continue to play a more active part in lament, through supporting others either in grief or misfortune, while some later female choruses also tend to take the lead in lamenting a disaster, whether their own or someone else's. It is also surely

[316] Loraux (2002) 55.
[317] This prevalence of lament in both the female and male choral voice also corresponds with a much higher distribution of speech-patterns linked with the language of lament in Aeschylean drama than in later tragedies, as laid out in the Appendix to this thesis and discussed in Suter (2003) 3, summarising Wright (1986).
[318] Holst-Warhaft argues that for the contemporary Athenian audience Aeschylus' choruses were 'reminders of a world familiar but no longer viable': Holst-Warhaft (1992) 128.
[319] Examples include S.*Ant.*806-882 & 1257-1353; S.*El.*121-235; S.*OC.*1670-1750; S.*OT.*1297-1425; E.*Alc.*861-961; E.*Andr.*1173-1225; E.*El.*167-212, 1177-1232; E.*Hel.*167-254; E.*HF.*886-909; E.*Hipp.*817-855; E.*IT.*123-235.

significant that the only two surviving Euripides plays whose choruses display an active, sustained and intense involvement in lament commensurate with Aeschylean drama are *Trojan Women* and *Suppliant Women*, both centred around a female chorus. While these distinctions are not hard-and-fast rules, a general pattern of diminution and gendering of lament seems to unfold over the course of the Tragic tradition, which deserves fuller exploration.[320]

It may seem odd to question rather than reinforce the importance of gender in Tragic lament, when funerary rituals were one of the few settings in which women were able, and indeed encouraged, to engage openly in fifth-century Athenian customs. And yet, as Suter has suggested and the evidence from the tragedies demonstrates, male choral lament does have an important part to play in Tragedy, both on its own terms and in its interaction with lament in the female choral voice. It is also apparent that the role of lament – as well as the role of gender within this form of speech – is in flux before and during the fifth century BC, when the three extant tragedians were composing their works. How far literary lament accurately reflects ritual lamentation, or indeed actual funerals conducted in archaic and classical Athens, is undoubtedly a thorny issue. So, too, is the question of whether the tragedians' depictions of lament were recalling a form of lament no longer acceptable to the fifth-century Athenian audience or reflecting changes in contemporary funerary practice.[321] Despite such uncertainties, the extant evidence for Greek funerary traditions – literary and cultural – is nevertheless valuable to our study of lament patterns in Tragedy, highlighting some of the nuances of this literary form beyond its assumed femininity. The following

[320] There have been numerous studies of the intersection between cultural and literary lament in Tragedy, such as Holst-Warhaft (1992) 129-170; McClure (1999) 40-47; Foley (2001) 21-54; and Swift (2010) 298-366, mostly on how changing Athenian attitudes to lament practices and women's social position are presented in Tragedy. However, comparatively little work has emerged on, for instance, the differences between the tragedians in their presentation of lament and the nuanced integration of archaic *goos* and *thrēnos* lament forms into the Tragic form.

[321] The argument that laments in Tragedy recalled behaviours no longer socially acceptable in classical Athens is tentatively made in Holst-Warhaft (1992) 128.

discussion will attempt to trace in the long laments of male choruses in Aeschylean drama some aspects of male mourning practices found in Homeric and archaic sources. This is contrasted with a more, although not completely, 'gendered' attitude to grief in Sophocles and Euripides' plays, perhaps reflecting changing attitudes towards gender roles in an increasingly structured political society. The literary and cultural evidence for Greek lament practices also opens up further perspectives other than gender through which to study lament in Tragedy, allowing a fuller understanding of its varied but crucial role within the Tragic tradition.

1. Homeric and Archaic Lament

Homeric epic is often used as the starting point for a discussion of lament, providing evidence for the early separation of Greek lament forms into two categories, *thrēnos* and *goos*, described by Alexiou as consisting in their most basic form of 'inarticulate wailing over the dead man'.[322] There has recently been increased scholarly interest in the differences between these lament forms; the following discussion of Homeric lament is merely my own brief interpretation of the existing work undertaken in this area.[323]

The final book of the *Iliad* presents the most famous example of the two lament types in action, when the lament for Hector's corpse is led off by a group of singers (ἀοιδοί) who perform a *thrēnos*, to which Hector's closer kin – Andromache, Helen and Hecuba – each add their own personal *goos* (*Il.*24.720-3).[324] The juxtaposition of the two terms allows for an immediate distinction between them: on the one hand, for instance, the identity of the *thrēnos* singers is not explicitly indicated, but may be assumed to be male from the

[322] Alexiou (2002) 102.
[323] E.g. Monsacré (1984) 135-197; Cannatà Fera (1990) 11-13; Tsagalis (2004) 2-8; and Swift (2010) 299-304.
[324] See Alexiou (2002) 11-12. For a detailed analysis of the performance and structure of *gooi* in Homeric epic, see Derderian (2001) 35-40.

grammatical construction of ἀοιδοὺc…οἱ μὲν ἄρ' ἐθρήνεον ('singers, who began the *thrēnos*', Il.24.720-722), while the *goos* singers in these scene are all close kinswomen.[325] This identification of a *goos,* particularly in the female voice, is made evident in the formula ἦρχε γόοιο or ἐξῆρχε γόοιο ('led off the *goos*') accompanying each of the lament speeches of Andromache, Hecuba and Helen in *Il.*24.723, 747 & 761 respectively, and appearing again as the preface to Hecuba's lament for her son in *Il.*22.430.

These attempts to distinguish the Homeric *thrēnos* and *goos* on stylistic and performative grounds are necessarily cautious because of the paucity of our evidence, but the majority of lament speech in Homeric poetry, and particularly the performance of the *goos*, seems to be associated with female performers.[326] And yet, this type of lament is not exclusively the preserve of women's voices. Achilles' grief for Patroclus is so exceptional that the *goos* formula ἐξῆρχε γόοιο, elsewhere reserved for Hector's kinswomen, is used twice to preface Achilles' personal laments for Patroclus (*Il.*18.316-355 and *Il.*23.17-23).[327] Derderian notes other exceptional aspects of Achilles' behaviour in his mourning for Patroclus, such as tearing his own hair (*Il.*18.27) and reaching out to touch the body (*Il.*23.18): actions which, when set alongside his *goos* laments, are more reminiscent of female than male funerary rituals.[328] Achilles' extraordinary expression of his grief can, to some extent, be understood as simply a further manifestation of the complexity of his heroism which is reinforced throughout the poem in his actions and speech, through the magnitude of his anger at his fellow soldiers, his refusal to fight in the war and his extraordinary meeting with Priam at the end of the poem. As such, it would be easy to dismiss his incursion into otherwise 'feminine' lament

[325] For the argument that the *thrēnos* was always sung by male hired singers, see Tsagalis (2004) 5-6. However, a similar form of mourning is also found at *Il.*19.301-2, where the speech of a single mourner, Briseis, is set against the collective mourning of a separate group of women; this scene may also represent lament of the personal *goos*-type set against that of the collective *thrēnos*-type.
[326] Alexiou (2002) 108; Swift (2010) 305-306, especially 306n.16.
[327] Derderian (2001) 56.
[328] Derderian (2001) 53-54, particularly 53n.146 & 54n.147-9.

practices as another feature of his character that contrasts with, and event undercuts, the traditional model of a Homeric hero.[329] However, the Achaeans in general and the Myrmidon soldiers in particular are also associated with the *goos* lament through the formula ἀνεστενάχοντο γοῶντες ('so they raised their groans while singing the *goos*', *Il.*18.315 & 355), used solely in the poem to mark the death of Patroclus. It is surely significant, too, that Priam is twice described in his grief as rolling around in the dirt and dust of the earth, expressing extreme emotion by physically defiling himself in mourning for Hector (*Il.*22.414; *Il.*24.164-5). While Achilles' unusual display of more typically female mourning practices may draw attention to his unique and sometimes subversive brand of heroism, it is clear that other men in the epics are also seen to lament and grieve in extraordinary ways according to the magnitude of the loss they experience. In the Homeric world, it seems, lament was only partially a gendered concept: while kinswomen tended to be the primary source of personal *goos* laments, such practices also depended to an extent on the vehemence of grief felt by the heroes in the loss of particular close relatives and companions.

The *thrēnos*, perhaps in opposition to the seemingly 'feminine' *goos* in Homeric epic, has often been seen as the 'male' form of lament, using as evidence the separation of the male singers – ἀοιδοί – of the *thrēnos* at *Il.*24.720-2 and the female singers of the *goos*.[330] This difference in the identity of the singers in Homeric poetry is compounded by the fact that only close kin perform *gooi*, whereas the unusual verb ἐθρήνεον, a *hapax legomenon* in the *Iliad*, perhaps indicates hired professional mourners rather than simply other relations or friends of the deceased.[331] That the *thrēnos* can also be sung by female voices is demonstrated

[329] Derderian links the violence of his lament for Patroclus with the violence of his revenge on Hector, as a demonstration of the heroic value of *kleos*: Derderian (2001) 57.
[330] E.g. Easterling (1991) 149; Shapiro (1991) 636; and Tsagalis (2004) 6.
[331] Richardson (2000) 351-352; Tsagalis (2004) 6. While the practice may have become a feature of archaic ritual lament, in the poetic context of the battlefield at Troy, it is more likely that the ἀοιδοί were understood not as 'professional mourners' but instead as Trojan citizens, perhaps even soldiers, who represented the Trojan community but were not as closely connected to Hector as his immediate kin.

in the final book of the *Odyssey*, where the Muses – female, and 'professional' only so far as they are the goddesses of song – act as singers of the *thrēnos* at Achilles' funeral (*Od.*24.58-62).[332] While there may be legitimate cultural assumptions to be made about the connection between professionalism and men as opposed to emotionalism and women in archaic Greek culture, the case for 'gendered' lament forms in the Homeric poems is certainly not clear-cut.

In the absence of any indication of the content of this lament form in Homeric epic, our understanding of the *thrēnos* as a distinct literary form must instead centre on the work of the archaic lyric poets. This approach, too, is made uncertain by the paucity of our extant evidence, limited as it is to a few fragments from Pindar and Simonides which were only later categorised as *thrēnoi* by Alexandrian scholars because of their formal similarities. Despite the scarce evidence base, it is nevertheless possible to trace some recurring motifs in these scraps of threnodic poetry, such as praise for the dead, mythological narratives, gnomic utterances and consolatory statements.[333] We should not, as Laura Swift recognises, 'overstate the case' for a definitive *thrēnos* form in archaic Greek literature or culture, given the paucity of literature and performance context on which to base our assumptions.[334] However, some of the themes of the *thrēnos*, as far as they are recoverable from the fragments of Pindar and Simonides, deserve fuller attention, particularly in the light of their influence on the various lament traditions visible in Tragedy.

Closer examination of the threnodic motifs in the extant lyric fragments is further hampered by the overlap of many of these *topoi* with other lyric or lament forms. Gnomic utterances and mythological narratives, for instance, are also a feature of Pindaric and

[332] As noted by Tsagalis (2004) 6.
[333] Harvey (1955) 168-170; and Alexiou (2002) 12-13.
[334] Swift (2010) 302-304 & 310.

Simonidean epinician poems.[335] This issue is particularly prominent in relation to the praise-narratives of Simonidean and Pindaric *thrēnoi*, which also form the core component of victory-inspired epinician odes.[336] In part, the theme of praise is inseparable from the act of lament itself, since to be commemorated in death is itself a form of praise.[337] However, the form and content of the archaic *thrēnos* can, to an extent, be differentiated from that of the Homeric *goos* through their divergent expressions of this praise-narrative. In the *goos* laments for Hector at the end of the *Iliad*, the women's admiration for the hero is expressed in relation to themselves and their current situation. Andromache explains that her husband used to be the protector not only of herself and their son, but also more broadly the city and its people, particularly those who could not defend themselves (*Il.*24.728-732); Hecuba calls Hector her favourite son and compares his monumental death with the more mundane dispatch of his brothers at Achilles' hands (*Il.*24.748-756); and Helen likewise expresses her positive relationship with her brother-in-law through the comparison of his kindness with others' contempt towards her (*Il.*24.762-772). In all of these examples, Hector's good qualities are exposed, but only within the broader scheme of his personal connection with each of the women involved, rather than on his own terms as a *kleos*-seeking hero.[338]

Further, praise for Hector is even inverted into blame in the *gooi* of his kinswomen: Andromache, for instance, explains her own and their child's pitiful current and future situation as being the direct result of Hector's untimely demise, while Hecuba's only praise of her son is that in his death the gods have treated him marginally better than her other children; the underlying issue remains that he died in the first place.[339] On the other hand,

[335] See especially Cannatà Fera (1990) 23-27 & 28-31 on the overlapping *topoi* of threnodic and epinician poetry in Simonides and Pindar respectively.
[336] The intertwining of threnodic-praise and epinician-praise is especially evident in Pindar's description of the Muses' lament in *Od.*24.58-62 as πολύφαμος in Pind.*Isthm.*8.58: see Swift (2010) 313.
[337] Cannatà Fera (1990) 28-9; Murnaghan (1999) 204.
[338] This feature of the Homeric *goos* has been discussed by Holst-Warhaft (1992) 113.
[339] The narrative of blame in these laments is raised by Holst-Warhaft (1992) 112 and Perkell (2008) 94.

the many similarities of theme and poetic style between epinician and threnodic poetry in Pindar and Simonides suggest that praise-narratives in archaic literary *thrēnoi* were more likely to honour the dead in relation to their lineage and glorious deeds than their personal qualities or the pain of their absence. As such, these differing approaches to the universal act of praise in archaic literary lament can provide tentative grounds for a generic distinction between *gooi* and *thrēnoi*, as the conjectured identity of the lament-giver – close relatives in *goos* laments and more distant, perhaps professional singers in the *thrēnos* – is also reflected in the content of their song, through their divergent expressions of praise for the dead.

The discussion so far has centred on the influence of gender and genre on literary lament forms of the pre-classical period, establishing an archaic context for the stylised, highly-developed laments encountered across Tragedy. It is important, too, to lay out in brief the corresponding cultural evidence for archaic lament in Greece, in order to gain the broadest foundations for a nuanced exploration of Tragic laments. The visual evidence for funerary practices, discernible from archaic vases, is particularly instructive for our understanding of the changing gender roles in burial rites over the course of the 7th-5th centuries BC. The most common funeral scenes in archaic art depict the practice of *prothesis*, in which the body is laid out with mourners placed in formulaic, gender-segregated positions around it: women are portrayed closest to the head of the body, in some vases physically tearing at their hair or defiling themselves in lament, while men stand apart at the foot of the corpse raising one arm in a unified gesture of mourning.[340] This evidence immediately suggests that men – whether direct kin or in a professional mourning capacity – were at least present and involved in the ritual process of lamenting in archaic Greek society, even if their expression of grief is presented as restrained and formalised in comparison with the more outwardly emotional postures of mourning women. Alan Shapiro attempts to draw a direct link

[340] Shapiro (1991) 633-6; Stears (2008) 139-142.

between this division of gender roles and the literary depictions of mourning at the end of the *Iliad*, equating the female stylised mourning on vases with the *gooi* sung by Hector's kinswomen and the more restrained artistic depiction of male coterie with the unidentified *thrēnos*-singers of *Il.*24.720-2.[341] As we have seen, however, this is too simplistic a conclusion when faced with contrasting Homeric evidence such as male *goos*-laments of Achilles, the physical lamentation of Priam, and a female-sung *thrēnos* for Achilles.

A more fruitful approach is taken by Hans van Wees, who seeks to place the most common *prothesis* vase scenes within a broader diachronic framework charting the developments in funerary practice, or at least their representation in visual culture, over the course of the archaic period.[342] Van Wees's interpretation of the figures on the earliest vases suggests that, even as early as the Geometric period, women were associated with a stronger emotional state in mourning – depicted with two hands raised rather than the one-armed gesture of men – but that this relatively small separation of gender roles, along with the gender segregation of mourners around the body, became more pronounced over the course of the archaic period.[343] The gradual strengthening of this gendered funerary divide can be viewed through the changing depictions of each gender in traditional *prothesis* vase scenes. For instance, the one-armed gesture of male mourning appears to be a continuous feature in archaic art from 760-640 BC, and there seems to be little differentiation in where the men stand in relation to the body. From 640 BC-580 BC, however, men are absent from private funeral settings, and when they are re-introduced to these *prothesis* scenes on vases after 580 BC, it is as a unified group in a set formulaic position, separated from the women at the foot of the body and with one arm raised towards the corpse in a display of restrained

[341] Shapiro (1991) 634-636.
[342] van Wees (1999) 19-46.
[343] van Wees (1999) 19-21.

mourning.[344] What begins as only a small distinction from women's mourning – the raising of one hand instead of two – ends as a strongly-defined, restricted role which is positionally and physically separate from women's mourning. On the other hand, women's lament gestures change markedly over the course of the same period. Between 740-640 BC, the simple two-armed gesture gives way to the introduction of laceration and other physical forms of grief. From 640 BC onwards, however, such violent acts of lament are portrayed alongside a variety of non-violent mourning poses which reintroduce the two-armed gesture, resulting in laceration and other forms of self-harm being completely replaced by these more physically restrained grief gestures after 580 BC.[345]

It is tempting to extrapolate from this small but significant array of cultural material a tantalising wider narrative of archaic social upheaval underpinned by the democratising shift from the individual to the state, particularly in the light of Plutarch's testimony of Solon's restrictive funerary laws. However, there is neither an adequate range of evidence nor enough artistic or cultural context to draw strong conclusions about the dating and magnitude of a change in public attitudes to the role of gender in expressing grief. Instead, this evidence suggests simply that pre-classical lament is a fluid concept which was not initially a rigidly gendered custom or an inflexible ritual practice, as is also reflected in the varying literary as well as artistic depictions of laments over this period. As such, our understanding of its form, function and development in Athenian Tragedy must be filtered through the lens of an evolving early tradition, which was crystallised only during the course of the classical era into a practice defined by gender and genre.

[344] van Wees (1999) 21, 29 & 33-4.
[345] van Wees (1999) 20-34.

2. The Politics of Aeschylean Lament

The intensity and frequency of choral lament in the extant Aeschylean plays seems at first glance to support the argument that lament in Tragedy is a mostly female occupation. The Theban maidens of *Seven Against Thebes*, foreign household slaves of *Libation Bearers* and Egyptian suppliant women of *Suppliants* are all politically marginalised figures whose voice is nevertheless amplified through the medium of lament. Consequently, it would be easy to account for the central role of these women's voices in the dramas as justifiable to an original audience on the grounds that lament was an expected speech form for women.[346] However, to view Aeschylean choral lament through the lens of a female-centric voice risks ignoring or having to explain away the laments performed by the chorus elders of *Agamemnon* and *Persians*, comparable both in length and emotion to those found in the corresponding female voice. Rather than dividing lament in these plays on the grounds of gender, I favour instead an approach that sets Aeschylean male lament alongside Homeric grief, functioning as a recourse to men as well as women in moments of acute anguish and catastrophe. The extant traces of Aeschylus' *Achilleis* trilogy provide the closest link between the poet's Iliadic precedents and his own re-working of Homeric lament on stage. In the extant dramas, this epic style of grief is transferred from the battlefield to the political sphere, portraying mourning as a justifiable expression of male emotion in the face of significant civic disasters.

Aeschylus' Homeric representation of male lament contrasts with a more ambiguous attitude to female lament in his tragedies. The unnerving political effects of lamentation in the powerful choral voices of the women of *Seven Against Thebes, Libation Bearers* and

[346] The two other female choruses in plays attributed to Aeschylus – the Furies of *Eumenides* and the Oceanids in the disputed *Prometheus Bound* – are goddesses, whose immortality elevates them beyond the need to lament death as mortals do.

Suppliants combine to cast a shadow over female lament when removed from its familial context and placed into the public sphere, suggesting a far from straightforwardly accepting attitude to women's role in mourning. Rather than reflecting an attitude to mourning familiar from his literary antecedents, Aeschylus presents his female choruses as politicised characters taken from his own contemporary environment. As the evidence from vases shows, the cultural context of lament in the early fifth century is in flux, but one increasingly divided by gendered actions and formulaic ritual gestures, as befits a nascent democracy navigating the path that connects the individual, family and state. In such a climate of change, Aeschylus uses the emotional force of lament, sung by socially marginalised figures in the new democratic system, to demonstrate the very real political tensions between individual and city, as well as the disastrous consequences of their mismanagement.

2.i The Magnitude of Male Lament

The male choral laments of *Agamemnon* and *Persians* are often discussed within the narrow confines of masculinity and femininity. It has been argued, for instance, that the male chorus of *Agamemnon* are only allowed to lament after Agamemnon's demise because Clytemnestra, who should – as the king's close kin – assume this role, is so perversely masculinised that the chorus are forced to take on the traditionally female funerary role themselves.[347] Even Ann Suter, whose argument seeks to normalise male lament in Tragedy, is unable to break out of the confines of a gender dichotomy in her brief discussion of this passage, arguing instead that 'Aeschylos's point here is not that the chorus is "feminized" by doing this "female" thing but that the masculinized Clytaimestra is outrageous in trying

[347] See especially McClure (1999) 97-100; also e.g. Pomeroy (1995) 98-9; and Foley (2001) 211-234 & (2004) 133 & 157.

to silence them'.[348] Further, the wild laments of the elders in *Persians* are now almost inextricable from the claim of feminisation as a result of Edith Hall's seminal work on the presentation of barbarians in Greek tragedy.[349] Both of these arguments seek to excuse men for expressing themselves in a form which is considered 'feminine' on the grounds that they are either infirm elders, whose powerlessness is contrasted with the subversive power of a masculinised woman, or effeminate foreigners, whose cultural disparities in relation to their Greek adversaries colour their every thought, word and deed. Such attempts to analyse laments through the narrow lens of gender risk suppressing the similarities shared both by these plays in particular and extant Aeschylean tragedy more widely.

In both plays, while the immediate catastrophe focuses on the death of a hero or heroes, there is also a broader political crisis arising from the outcome of the tragedy. In *Agamemnon,* the chorus are well aware that their king's absence has fundamentally destabilised the entire political system of Argos. In their first interaction with Clytemnestra, their initial tolerance of her as the Argive ruler - ἥκω σεβίζων σόν, Κλυαιμήστρα, κράτος ('I have come in honour of your power, Clytemnestra', 258) – is quickly qualified by the justification that she is only in charge because their rightful king is at war: δίκη γάρ ἐστι φωτὸς ἀρχηγοῦ τίειν | γυναῖκ', ἐρημωθέντος ἄρσενος θρόνου ('for it is right to honour the wife of a leader, when the throne is lacking a man', 259-260). While the chorus acknowledge the subversion of traditional gender roles in Clytemnestra's grip on power, their words also reflect a wider concern for the continuity of political order – even if at a woman's hands – in Argos. Much like the elders at the beginning of Sophocles' *Antigone* reacting to Creon's ascent to power, the prosperity of their land and its people is the chorus' core interest.[350]

[348] Suter (2008b) 163.
[349] Hall (1989), although, as I shall argue, the connection between barbarians and effeminacy in her work has been overstated. See also Holst-Warhaft (1992) 130-133; Hall (1996) 13; and Dué (2006) 74-75 & 88-89.
[350] S.*Ant.*155-7, greeting Creon's first arrival onstage.

Their thinly-disguised unease later becomes outright contempt for Clytemnestra's position of power, criticising her authorisation of celebratory sacrifices in thoroughly misogynistic terms as the token of a credulous female mind (483-7). This, in turn, is completely contrasted with their reverence for Agamemnon as he appears onstage, whom they address not by name but by title, as βαcιλεῦ ('king', 782). The elders even doubt their own ability to appropriately honour and address the king, presumably in part as a result of his lengthy absence at war: πῶc cε προcείπω, πῶc cε cεβίξω; ('how should I address you, how should I honour you?' 784). After acknowledging Clytemnestra as a temporary ruler but seeking to undermine her power, their deferential reaction to Agamemnon's return to the throne is surely more than just a comment on gender roles, although of course this theme amplifies their intent. Rather, for the chorus it represents the reinstatement of proper political order after a decade of upheaval following the departure of both the king himself and his army, presumably consisting of men who formed the Argive political elite. It is on these terms, then, that the chorus' lament for their king's death should be considered.

A gender dichotomy is at play in the great *epirrhēma* between chorus and Clytemnestra (1407-1576), and ought not to be dismissed out of hand: the chorus' first reaction to Clytemnestra's exultant opening speech is to wonder at the arrogance of her triumphal defeat of a man (1399-1400), and the pointed references to her as a woman and Agamemnon as her husband continue throughout their following lyrics (1407; 1453-4; 1470; 1544). However, the theme of gendered power is seen to work in tandem with rather than against the wider issue of political *stasis* in Argos. This point is developed by Hall, who argues:

> The relationship between Clytaemnestra and Aegisthus subverts both the sexual hierarchy and the political order, for in Greek eyes despotism was inextricably linked both with dominant women (Arist.*Pol.*5.1313b 32-5; 6.1319b 27-9) and with uncontrolled or illicit sexual desires.[351]

During the play's *epirrhēma*, it is the chorus of elders who express this facet of Greek thought through the medium of lament, as Agamemnon's demise represents both the usurpation of power at a woman's hands and Argos' corresponding descent into barbarian-like despotism. The line between their personal, emotional grief for their king and the wider political implications of his death is constantly blurred during the chorus' lament. The king's demise has left them wishing they were dead (1448-1451), but their personal grief is set alongside the public in their description of Agamemnon as 'a most gracious guardian' (φύλακος εὐμενεστάτου, 1452), guarding their own safety and, by implication, that of the community as a whole. At the emotional height of their lament comes the refrain ἰὼ ἰὼ βασιλεῦ βασιλεῦ | πῶς σε δακρύσω; (Oh, Oh, my king, my king, how should I weep for you?', 1489-1490; 1513-4). The tragic cries and rhetorical question over how to adequately grieve for the death of someone close to you are hallmarks of a personal form of grief (usually for a family member, but here seemingly transferred to the context of friendship). However, in contrast to the chorus' address to Clytemnestra as γύναι ('woman', 1407) or directly by name (258), Agamemnon is also referred to by his royal and political title, βασιλεῦ. Once again, the dual nature of the private (emotional) and public (political) implications of his death are underlined in the chorus' grief. Finally, the elders use language typical of loss and fear – ἀμηχανῶ...|ὅπᾳ τράπωμαι ('I am at a loss as to where to turn', 1530-2) – but in relation to the destruction of the royal house (πίτνοντος οἴκου, 1532), and therefore the centre of power itself, rather than their personal grief for Agamemnon.[352]

[351] Hall (1989) 208 and n.28.
[352] Cf. A.*Pers.*458-9; A.*Suppl.*378; E.*Med.*642-5; E.*Or.*635 for similar uses of this phrase.

The political crisis resulting from Agamemnon's demise is laid bare through the role of the chorus as a collective voice for the Argive citizenship as a whole in opposition to the two architects of Agamemnon's death. The chorus are confident in their prediction of public ill-will following Clytemnestra's actions, asserting that she will incite the 'people's curses' (δημοθρόους τ' ἀράς, 1409) and be transformed into 'an object of civic hatred' (μῖσος ὄβριμον ἀστοῖς, 1411).[353] With the arrival of Aegisthus onstage, the elders restate the 'public curses' which will arise as a result of Agamemnon's murder (δημορριφεῖς...λευσίμους ἀράς, 1616) and ask 'how could such a cowardly man could rule as tyrant in Argos' (ὡς δὴ σύ μοι τύραννος Ἀργείων ἔσῃ, 1633). When they patriotically state that 'it is not the habit of the Argive people to respect an evil man' (οὐκ ἂν Ἀργείων τόδ' εἴη, φῶτα προσσαίνειν κακόν, 1665), against the backdrop of an armed stand-off against Aegisthus, the chorus effectively embodies a microcosm of the general political stasis about to erupt between the Argive people and their usurping despots. From this perspective, there is no need to try to excuse the chorus-men lamenting for their king on the grounds of either Clytemnestra's masculinisation or their own feminisation as a result. In the wider context of a total political breakdown at the end of the play, the chorus' personal lament for Agamemnon is both justifiable and necessary in its amplification of the bigger public crisis threatening the Argive people.

The connection between personal lament and political crisis in Aeschylean tragedy is evident to an even greater degree in the great closing *kommos* of *Persians* (908-1076), in which the extent of the political tragedy is illuminated in the interactions between the chorus and Xerxes in their shared lament. In this scene, the chorus openly grieve for the loss of their army, political system and empire as a result of defeat at the hands of the Greeks. For this

[353] For stoning as a collective punishment and its appearance elsewhere in Aeschylean tragedy, see Michelakis (2002) 24-25.

reason, their lament is longer and more intense than that of *Agamemnon*, whose tragedy, while self-contained, is also to be understood as just the first stage of the trilogy. The Persian elders' interactions with their king are particularly interesting in the light of the ethnographic presentation of Persian despotism highlighted throughout the play. The chorus are continually in thrall to their rulers, visualised in their prostration (προcπίτνω, 152) before Atossa upon her arrival onstage and in their reverential awe of Darius' ghost as it appears before them:[354]

> cέβομαι μὲν προcιδέcθαι,
> cέβομαι δ'ἀντία λέξαι
> cέθεν ἀρχαίῳ περὶ τάρβει. (694-6)
>
> *I am overawed to look at you, overawed to speak in front of you, because of my former fear of you.*

The chorus' ode between the raising of Darius' ghost and the entrance of his disgraced son reveals their embrace of the culture of despotism under their former king's rule, as they praise the prosperity, peace, territorial expansion and political stability which accompanied Darius' reign (852-907). Immediately after this nostalgic depiction of prosperity past, their current king appears onstage a disgraced man: alone, devoid of his army, dressed in rags, and armed only with an empty quiver, representing to both the chorus and audience the humbling disintegration of the Persian identity, empire, military might and system of governance. Alongside this visual emblem of Persian defeat, there is a stark contrast in how the chorus greet Xerxes in comparison with their reception of his mother and father, the queen mother and former king, earlier in the play. The chorus do not perform a *proskynesis*, as they did for Atossa, nor do they replicate the reverential address they gave to Darius. Instead, Xerxes is greeted only in relation to his part in the wider loss of the Persian army and empire: '*ototoi*, king, for the noble army and the great honour of Persian empire' (ὀτοτοῖ, βαcιλεῦ, cτρατιᾶc ἀγαθῆc | καὶ περcονόμου τιμῆc μεγάληc, 918-9). The political crisis

[354] Cf. Hall (1989) 93-100 on the presentation of politics in *Persians*; 154-159 on the stereotypes of 'barbarian' politics in Greek literature and culture.

transcends their adherence to Persian cultural norms, as Xerxes no longer resembles a regal authority who deserves the grovelling attentions of his elder statesmen.

In a similar manner to the Argive elders of *Agamemnon*, the chorus depicts the wider political crisis arising from a specific catastrophe through the medium of lament, whose characteristic antiphonal structure is used to demonstrate the political dysfunction permeating the Persians' defeat. The chorus' grief in the opening section of the lament is steadfastly focused on the tragic demise of the Persian army, holding Xerxes himself responsible for the disaster: 'the land groans for the youth of its own soil laid low by Xerxes' (γᾶ δ᾽αἰάζει τὰν ἐγγαίαν | ἥβαν Ξέρξᾳ κταμέναν, 922-3). The king's address by name rather than by honorific title is comparable to the *Agamemnon* chorus' expression of their disdain for Clytemnestra by addressing her directly and reserving the title of rulership only for Agamemnon. Here, however, the effect is made even more poignant by the play's context of Persian despotic rulership.

Xerxes acknowledges both his personal and public guilt, describing himself as someone worthy of grief (αἰακτός, 931), wretched, and a blight on his people (μέλεος γέννᾳ γᾷ τε πατρῴᾳ | κακὸν, 932-4). When he commands the chorus to lament on his behalf, however, their antiphonal response does not acknowledge his personal suffering, instead focusing on Xerxes' failings as a king, losing the army, city and empire:

> Ξε: ἵετ᾽αἰανῆ πάνδυρτον
> δύσθροον αὐδάν. δαίμων γὰρ ὅδ᾽ αὖ
> μετάτροπος ἐπ᾽ ἐμοί.
>
> Χο: ἥκω τοι καὶ πάνυ, †λαο-
> παθῆ τε σεβίζων† ἁλίτυπά τε βάρη
> πόλεως, γέννας. πενθητῆρος
> κλάγξω δὴ γοόν ἀρίδακρυν. (941-949)
>
> *Xe: send forth a groan steeped in dire sorrow. For this divine power has turned itself around against me.*

Cho: I shall do so indeed, honouring the sufferings of the soldiers and the sea-imposed burdens of the city, of the people. I will cry aloud the tearful lament of a mourner.

That the king's reference to his personal suffering goes unacknowledged by his once loyal subjects, who are intent instead on exposing his political suffering, displays the extent of the constitutional disarray created by Persia's catastrophic defeat. Xerxes tries to change the lament narrative by invoking the might of the Greeks to explain the army's downfall (950-1), but the chorus are instead further emboldened to question their king directly on his actions in battle. The refrain, a typical aspect of the lament form, is deployed to highlight both the chorus' grief for their compatriots and their disregard for Xerxes' status as despotic king. The first such instance is in lines 955-961, as follows:

οἰοιοῖ βόα καὶ πάντ' ἐκπεύθου.
ποῦ δὲ φίλων ἄλλος ὄχλος;
ποῦ δέ σοι παρασταται,
οἷος ἦν Φαρανδάκης,
Σούσας, Πελάγων καὶ Δατάμας
ἠδὲ Ψάμμις, Σουσισκάνης τ'
Ἀγβάτανα λιπών; (955-961)

Alas, alas, cry aloud and find out about the whole affair. Where is the rest of the multitude of our companions? Where are those who stood beside you, such as Pharandaces, Susas, Pelagon and Datamas – and indeed Psammis, and Susiscanes who came from Agbatana?

Similar lists of names are found elsewhere in lines 966-973; 978-986; and 992-1001. By reeling off the names of various Persian soldiers who accompanied Xerxes on his military expedition and demanding answers about their deaths, the chorus use their lament to create a sort of 'catalogue' effect familiar from both their prologue-parodos which opened the play and epic poetry, elevating the scale of the war and its associated losses. However, these repeated lists of names are particularly striking in the context of lament, which is usually sung over the body or at the tomb of a single individual. Indeed, the public recitation of the names of war heroes as a means of keeping them within the collective memory is a core feature of the *epitaphios logos* developed as part of the further democratisation of Athens in the wake of the Persian wars.[355] Although the dates are uncertain, it is nevertheless possible

[355] Loraux (1986).

that Aeschylus intended to allude to this new, democratic form of remembrance here precisely because it jars with the perception of Persian autocratic rule, suggesting the disintegration of the usual political order. Not only do the chorus emphasise the scale of the tragedy by demonstrating just how many soldiers have been left behind in battle, but they also elevate the status of the fallen to the same level as Xerxes himself in their lament. In response, Xerxes is humiliated into admitting his cowardly actions (ὀλοοὺς ἀπέλειπον – 'I left them for dead', 963) and forced to re-live the defeat over and over again (963-5; 974-7; 987-991; 1002). His own downfall is already complete and his personal tragedy laid bare. And yet, this fall from grace is further amplified in the passionate lament of his own subjects, which takes on the political connotation of rebellion as the elders no longer grant the king the obeisance he once commanded.

Despite the political disunity in this first part of the *kommos*, the chorus and their king begin to unite in grief, so that by the end of the play Xerxes even seems to be leading and orchestrating the chorus' lament (1038-1076). Mark Griffith has sought to interpret the change in dynamic between Xerxes and the chorus during this scene as 'an extended process of "acceptance" by the representatives of his father's rule in the form of the lyric exchanges of lamentation and recrimination'.[356] Ann Suter, following this argument, sees this scene as part of a wider pattern in Tragedy of 'male lament as admission of and liberation from earlier mistakes and faults and the beginning of restoration of moral authority'.[357] Both arguments, in my view, spin the closing stages of *Persians* in a positive light which is absent from the unremitting display of mourning onstage. The Persian elders' gradual alignment with the king's lament after their powerful display of political disarray is not a sign that they

[356] Griffith (1999b) 62-63.
[357] Suter (2008b) 162. She cites the male protagonists of Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*, *Ajax* and *Antigone,* and the lament of Adrastus in Euripides' *Suppliant Women* as examples of this 'confessional' lament pattern in the male voice: 162-164.

have suddenly absolved Xerxes of his guilt and accepted him once more as their king, but rather that both parties have come to a mutual acceptance of and capitulation to the full extent of the disaster at hand. The chorus' sharp anguish at the loss of their compatriots is progressively replaced by a fuller understanding of the political upheaval which Xerxes, as much as the rest of the Persians, must now endure. As such, in response to this absolute dissolution of their livelihoods, prosperity, political system and empire, the elders need no justification of their right to lament.

While the grounds for male lament in Aeschylus may be explained by situating the chorus' personal grief in a wider framework of political crisis and Homeric precedent, the intensity of Aeschylean lament in the male choral voice defies gender expectations in the light of our evidence for funerary practice elsewhere in Greek literature and culture: in short, Aeschylus' male laments are more notable for their similarities with than their differences from corresponding female laments. Analysis purely through the prism of gender raises more questions than it answers in Aeschylean tragedy, whereas a more unified approach can be based on the scale of the public crisis at stake in these plays. For instance, the chorus' grief in *Agamemnon* is at least comparable with that of the female chorus in the *kommos* of *Libation Bearers* (306-509), and this similarity is reflected in the cause of both laments: public grief for Agamemnon and horror at the actions of his murderous successors. Further, the display of wild, emotional language in *Persians* goes far beyond anything found elsewhere in the male voice of Greek tragedy, resembling more in its intensity and length the female laments of Aeschylus' *Seven Against Thebes* and Euripides' *Trojan Women.*[358] The final choral lament of *Seven Against Thebes* (875-1004) in particular shares many similarities with the *kommos* between the Persian chorus and Xerxes, since both function as antiphonal laments

[358] Hall notes that 'the plangent *threnoi* of *Troades* nearly equal the inconsolable grief expressed by Xerxes and the chorus in *Persae*, and at times seem deliberately designed to echo passages from the earlier drama': Hall (1989) 132.

which develop into line-by-line responsion and end with little more than incoherent tragic cries.[359] All three plays, despite the gender of their choruses, are comparable because they deal with the same subject matter: the devastation of a city as a result of war. The Theban maidens of *Seven Against Thebes*, the captive women in *Trojan Women* and the slave-women of Agamemnon in *Libation Bearers* need no excuse to utter their emotional outpourings at the death of their leaders and the destruction of their cities. And yet, despite also mourning for their lost cities and leaders, the Persian and Argive elders of *Persians* and *Agamemnon* are constantly excepted or emasculated by scholars for their similar reactions to a similar catastrophe. A more plausible interpretation is that Aeschylean grief on stage is dependent more on the magnitude of the crisis than the gender of those who lament it.

All that said, male mourning in Aeschylus appears to contradict the social trend towards the curtailment of lament, both male and female, in classical Athens. The shifting attitudes towards funerary practice are evident not just in the suppression of extravagant lament practices after Solon's reforms but also in the rise of the *epitaphios logos* – a restrained, public celebration of the city dead – over the course of the fifth century BC.[360] As such, there is an obvious incongruity between the male laments of Aeschylus's tragedies and the emotionally restrained approaches to lament practice which were beginning to emerge in the society around him. However, the same argument can be made in the face of private female laments, which were in the process of being muted in favour of public ceremony, and yet few seek to excuse female choruses from their impassioned displays of mourning, unless to distinguish them as foreign.[361]

[359] See Else (1977) 77-78 for the argument that the same type of lament can be sung by two such different choral identities because it is based on real Greek ritual mourning practices.
[360] Cf Alexiou (2002) 104-108; and Loraux (1986).
[361] E.g. Hall (1989) 130-131.

Of course, the depiction of impassioned lament on stage could be a facet of the wider distancing effect on the Greek stage between the theatre and the audience. The scenarios depicted in Tragedy – such as family trauma and revenge, political stasis, war – are often skewed and intensified versions of potentially real situations and emotions which form part of the human condition. As such, the theatre provided a space in which the extremes of these universal experiences could be explored by the poet and his audience, to create a kind of communal 'stress test' of potential domestic or civic issues – much in the way dreams can sometimes reflect the brain replaying difficult situations in exaggerated or twisted ways. As Lada-Richards has argued, to some extent this distancing effect defines Tragedy as a literary tradition:

> "Distancing" is a *sine qua non* of Greek tragedy itself, as the tragic universe is always situated in a remote mythic past... The tragic *dramatis personae* are "translated" into a different milieu, determined by the new forms of political and juridical thought belonging to the city, the fifth-century democracy of Athens.[362]

While the type of distancing on the Athenian stage is more nuanced and complex than, say, the Brechtian *Verfremdungseffekt*, the entire performance culture of Greek tragedy – with masks, music, and male actors playing female roles – presumes that the actors and their actions are not direct representations of the Athenian audience and their social or political reality.[363] As such, in a dramatic tradition that already seeks to dislocate itself spatially and temporally from its audience, it is perfectly plausible that a form of 'cultural distancing', exemplified by excessive mourning practices, could have played a part in separating the boundaries between myth and reality for the audience.[364]

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[362] Lada-Richards (1997) 90-91.

[363] Lada-Richards (1997) 66-107 examines in more detail how far the modern ideas of 'Brechtian' and 'Stanislavskian' can be applied to the performance culture of ancient Greek drama.

[364] Indeed, the cultural distancing associated with the excessive nature of the grief displayed by these epic heroes of old could well be a means of demonstrating the progress of the democratic society of the audience in comparison with the difficulties associated with the old-style heroic world (such as the move from retributive to law-court justice, as is key theme of *Agamemnon*). For a more detailed exploration of this type of cultural distancing, see Allan & Kelly (2013) 77-122.

This temporal, spatial and cultural distancing effect is only strengthened when combined with specific intertextual resonances from a different time and culture. For this reason, it seems to me that an exploration of lament in Aeschylus' poetic antecedents – and in particular Homeric epic – can help to explain and contextualise the scale and intensity of both male and female lament in his plays. Aeschylus' poetic debt to his epic predecessor was already acknowledged in antiquity: in some sources, Aeschylus himself is said to have 'described his tragedies as slices from the great banquet of Homer' (ὃς τὰς αὑτοῦ τραγῳδίας τεμάχη εἶναι ἔλεγεν τῶν Ὁμήρου μεγάλων δείπνων, Ath.8.39.17). In the context of lament, it is in the *Iliad* that we can find depictions of male grief which are of a comparable scale and intensity to similar examples in Aeschylus' plays. Even in the *Iliad,* lament is still distinguished at least weakly along gendered lines, as women are more likely than men to sing or lead laments. Nevertheless, men also grieve openly in the poem – and in doing so, they express themselves just as emotionally as female characters. Two striking examples are in the physical displays of grief shown by Achilles and Priam over the deaths of Patroclus and Hector: the former rends his own hair (*Il.*18.27) and reaches out to touch Patroclus' body (*Il.*23.18), while the latter defiles his body in the dust in his anguish over Hector's death (*Il.*22.414; *Il.*24.164-5). This physical grief is also reinforced in verbal form, as both men offer emotional spoken laments to each corpse: Achilles – introduced by the *goos* formula – in *Il.*18.316-355 and *Il.*23.17-23, and Priam in *Il.*22.416-428.

Another Aeschylean lament theme – the entwining of personal and public/political loss – can also be traced back to Homeric epic. In the *Iliad*, the laments over Hector's corpse are made all the more poignant by the wider effect his death is seen to have on the safety of Troy. At the initial laments over Hector's body, Hecuba leads a *goos* in which she praises her son in relation to the help he gave to the Trojans – πᾶσι τ' ὄνειαρ | Τρωσί τε καὶ Τρῳῇσι κατὰ πτόλιν ('a help to all the Trojan men and women throughout the city', *Il.*22.433-4) – while

Andromache goes on to describe how her husband alone was able to protect the Trojans' battlements (*Il.*22.507). Andromache's later *goos* over Hector's corpse entwines the personal with the public to an even greater degree, linking Hector's death explicitly with the future destruction of the city and the disaster it will bring to its populace, citing the wives and children of the perished Trojan army who will become enslaved and transported to Greece as a result of his death (*Il.*24.728-732). The equation of Hector's safety with that of the city as a whole is picked up in Aeschylus' portrayal of the *Agamemnon* chorus' laments for their king, who represented political order in Argos, and the elders' laments in *Persians* for their army, whose destruction corresponds with the destruction of the Persian empire, identity, and prosperity.

Beyond these overarching similarities, an even stronger link between Aeschylean and Homeric lament can be traced in the lost *Achilleis* trilogy comprising *Myrmidons*, *Nereids* and *Phrygians*. These three plays take their names from the identity of their choruses, and their plots – as far as they can now be recovered in fragmentary form – are drawn directly from famous episodes of the *Iliad*.[365] The first of these, *Myrmidons*, tells the story of Achilles' refusal to fight and subsequent grief at Patroclus' death in battle; the intensity of the drama is focalised in Achilles' powerful display of individualism against the wishes of the Achaean collective, represented in the tragedy by his Myrmidon soldiers.[366] *Phrygians* seems to have depicted the ransoming of Hector's body familiar from the final book of the *Iliad*, ending with laments over the hero's body.[367] The broadest consensus remains that *Nereids* was the intermediary play in which Thetis and the Nereids console Achilles and bring him his new armour, as described in *Iliad* 18, preparing him for the return to battle and perhaps

[365] For a more comprehensive overview of the trilogy's recoverable story-arc and its Homeric antecedents, see Sommerstein (1996) 338-348.
[366] See especially Michelakis (2002) 22-57.
[367] Sommerstein (2008c) 262-265.

culminating in the offstage death of Hector.[368] In a war trilogy involving the battlefield deaths of famous heroes, the Homeric laments of Achilles and the Myrmidons over Patroclus and of Priam and the Trojans over Hector were bound to have been transferred from the epic milieu to the Tragic stage. While there is little direct evidence in the fragments of the plays of the chorus' personas, they likely played a central role in the tragedies bearing their names, which almost certainly meant leading or accompanying the laments of the bereaved in each drama: Achilles in *Myrmidons* and *Nereids*; Priam in *Phrygians.* The Homeric attribution of expressions of grief to men as well as women is especially evident in *Myrmidons* and *Phrygians*, whose *dramatis personae* seem to have been either entirely or overwhelmingly male.[369] Aeschylus takes this facet of the Homeric precedent even further, departing from his epic source by transferring the laments for Hector at the end of the *Iliad* from the voices of Trojan women to Trojan men, as is evident in the masculine collective noun of the original title Φρύγιοι ('Phrygians'). The Iliadic *gooi* sung by Hector's female relatives and the *thrēnoi* performed by undefined bystanders are replaced with the laments of Priam and the Trojan soldiers, perhaps even men who were under Hector's direct command, which intensifies the masculine arena of the war setting and creates a closer connection between the grieving chorus and their hero.[370]

Inevitably, modern scholars have focused on the laments of the Phrygian chorus, whose peculiar dancing in their choral songs received attention as early as in Aristophanes' plays.[371]

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[368] West (2000) 338-352 suggests that *Nereids* could instead have formed the third play of the trilogy, telling the story of Achilles' death and the laments of Thetis and the Nereids over his body, based on the account of his death which forms the story of the Epic Cycle poem *Aethiopis*. However, contemporary vase evidence points strongly to Thetis' and the Nereids' involvement in Achilles' arming scene, which renders the play's position as the second part of the trilogy overwhelmingly more plausible: see Sommerstein (2008c) 156-157.

[369] Uhlig (2020) 108-113. Sommerstein (2008c) 262-263 cites possible evidence for one female character in *Phrygians*, most plausibly Briseis (if this is indeed accurate).

[370] The close relationship between soldiers and their heroic leaders, if this definition of the relationship between the Phrygian chorus and Hector is correct, mirrors similar close chorus-hero relationships in Sophocles' *Ajax* and *Philoctetes.*

[371] See fr.696 KA, in Henderson (2007) 444.

This brief ancient comment, along with the identification of the chorus as lamenting Trojan men, is enough to provoke assertions of barbarian effeminacy and comparisons with Aeschylus' extant Persian chorus.[372] However, such mimetic markers of foreignness, exemplified in the chorus' choreography and no doubt also their speech, do not require explaining or excusing their laments on the grounds of barbarism and its perceived effeminacy. To do so, in fact, would call into question the likely ending of *Myrmidons,* featuring a joint lament for Patroclus between Achilles and his soldiers, presumably mirrored in the opening scene of *Nereids* as Nereids and Thetis arrive onstage to take up the process of consoling Achilles over his loss where the Myrmidons left off. Pantelis Michelakis asserts that by lamenting Patroclus' corpse, Achilles performs on stage 'a practice which identifies him sexually, politically or ethnically with the "other"', and therefore portrays him as 'a transgressive individual', which also reflects similar arguments relating to Achilles' heroic exceptionalism in his Homeric laments.[373] Aeschylus clearly intended to depict his Achilles, in line with the Iliadic hero's character, as exceptional in anger, grief and revenge across the *Achilleis* trilogy. However, Achilles' exceptional laments in *Myrmidons* are almost certainly shared or at least supported by the soldier-chorus, representing the broader collective attitude of the Achaean army, which reflects the Homeric account of the Myrmidons' mourning over Patroclus in *Il.*18.315 & *Il.*18.355. Even in Aeschylus' epic antecedents, then, the act of lament itself was both communal and acceptable, which suggests that while Achilles' heroic figure is by nature transgressive, the laments performed by him and his men are not as problematic as some scholars have suggested. The Myrmidon chorus' role in lamentation was also likely to have been replicated by the Nereids in the ensuing play, and continued – albeit from the opposite perspective – by the Phrygian chorus' laments in the final play. As such, despite our scant and fragmentary evidence for

[372] Michelakis (2002) 54-55; and Uhlig (2020) 113n.36.
[373] Michelakis (2002) 45-46; reflecting Derderian (2001) 53-57.

Aeschylus' trilogy, we can be relatively confident that the choruses' roles were comparable across each of the plays: the Myrmidon soldiers, Nereid goddesses and Phrygian men all seem to have consoled Achilles and Priam respectively, supporting and contributing to their acts of lamentation. In this respect, Aeschylus' Iliadic trilogy continued the Homeric depiction of lament as the concern of everyone in wartime, rather than as a speech form restricted to a specific gender or ethnicity.

A more detailed account of the close relationship between male laments in Homeric epic and Aeschylean tragedy can be gleaned from the language of extant plays. The Argive elders in *Agamemnon*, for instance, appropriate a common *topos* of Homeric *gooi* in their repeated wishes to die in the face of their king's destruction (1458-1454 & 1538-1540), which resonate with laments for Hector in the *Iliad* such as Andromache's wish not to have been born (*Il.*22.481) and Helen's desire to have died before landing at Troy (*Il.*24.764). Further Iliadic correspondences can be found in *Persians*, particularly in the Persian elders' self-defilement by beating their heads and breasts and tearing at their beards (1052-7), which echoes Achilles' and Priam's actions when first faced with the deaths of Patroclus and Hector (*Il.*18.316-355 and *Il.*22.405-428 respectively). That male grief occurs less frequently than female mourning in Homeric epic renders these outbursts of intense emotion by hardened war heroes even more poignant. However, the heroic status of Achilles and Priam is not undermined through their actions. Instead, their laments serve to elevate the demise of Patroclus and Hector from other battlefield deaths on the grounds of the enormity of the calamity, both for the surviving kin and, in the case of Hector, the safety of the people he represented. Similarly, the status of the choral elders in *Agamemnon* and *Persians* should not be regarded as undermined by their impassioned displays of grief, since the scale of the crisis – personal and political – more than justifies it. In this way, echoes of the content and the context of Homeric laments are visible in Aeschylus' tragedies, whose choruses lament

on almost equal terms and with few gender disparities as a result of the depth of the private and public catastrophes prevailing in each play.

The unity of choral lament in Aeschylean tragedy should not overshadow important differences in choral identity between the plays, most noticeably the fact that the chorus of *Persians* are presented in barbarian terms. The argument that Aeschylus' *Persians* presents a deliberately 'othered' foreign choral voice, whose weakness, luxury and emotionalism stands in opposition to the Greeks' self-definition as brave and hardy, has been set out most comprehensively by Edith Hall.[374] This ethnographic depiction is almost certainly, at least to some extent, the product of literary stylisation, creating and perpetuating specific, recognisably Athenian stereotypes of their Near-Eastern neighbours. In Hall's seminal monograph, however, an explicit connection between foreignness and effeminacy in the laments of the Persian elders is actually conspicuously absent. Reference to foreign emasculation is instead confined only to a more general statement about the portrayal of luxuriousness in Greek literature, suggesting without further evidence that 'in this form of deviation from Hellenic self-restraint there is often an element of effeminacy'.[375] Later works, including those of Hall herself, have pigeon-holed the Persian chorus more decisively as effeminate in the eyes of an Athenian audience because of their various actual and perceived divergences from Greek political ideals.[376] However, as with the male laments of Aeschylus' *Phrygians*, it seems to me impossible for modern scholars to discern whether the literary construction of a foreign Persian voice would have been interpreted unanimously or predominantly as 'effeminate' by the original audience.

[374] Hall (1989) *passim*, especially 76-100.
[375] Hall (1989) 126.
[376] See e.g. Georges (1994) 95, who describes the chorus as 'psychologically emasculated beings'; Hall (1993) 108-133; Foley (2001) 29; and Dué (2006) 57-8 & 61.

The most overt reference to the feminine in the Persian choral voice is in Xerxes' calls for the elders' physical self-defilement by plucking their hair and beards, and beating their breasts. Elsewhere in Aeschylean tragedy, violent mourning is presented as a female – and particularly foreign female – pursuit, practised by the Egyptian suppliant maidens and the slave-women in the house of Agamemnon.[377] Physical self-defilement is also, as we have seen, a feature of female funerary depictions on some archaic vases, providing a cultural context for this ritual action. That a male chorus should perform this type of self-harming lament usually reserved only for women is therefore clearly intended to be unexpected and jarring, highlighted particularly in the image of the chorus plucking their beards (1056), which draws attention to the specifically male anatomy of the elders as they carry out a distinctly feminine act. As a result, the conclusion often drawn from this picture of the Persian chorus' self-defilement is that Aeschylus intended to portray their mourning in a derogatory, effeminate manner.[378]

In the end, the argument rests on the purpose and reception of the play. According to one school of thought, Aeschylus intended the play to be performed and received as a *Schadenfreude*-type 'epinician' to the Athenian victory at Salamis. On this interpretation, the display of pejorative effeminacy at the climax of the drama was intended to invoke a sense of patriotic pride.[379] The other major scholarly view, which seems to me more plausible, is that Aeschylus intended the play to function as a Tragedy in the true sense of the word.[380] On this interpretation, the strength of despair exhibited by the ruined king and his distraught subjects deliberately sought to complicate the immediate reaction of a Greek-

[377] A.*Suppl.*70-71, 120-122 & 131-133; A.*Cho.*28-29.
[378] E.g. Harrison (2000) 91; and Foley (2001) 29.
[379] The 'epinician' interpretation is supported by Craig (1924) 99; Murray (1962) 121; Clifton (1963) 111-122; and more recently Georges (1994) 85-113.
[380] For the play's position as a traditional Tragedy, see Broadhead (1960) xxiii; de Romilly (1974) 16; and Rosenbloom (2006) 141-6. The argument for empathy with the Persians' plight, particularly in the universalisation of the play's themes, can be found in Goldhill (1988) 189-193; Swift (2010) 326-327; and Nelson (2016) 208-219.

sympathising audience by deepening their emotional connection with the plight of their enemies, to produce conflicting feelings of pride and pity; rejoicing and remorse. This is not to deny the contrast between the male Persian chorus and their feminine style of mourning, but instead to interpret it as yet another means of portraying the extent of the catastrophe to various audiences who may never have needed to comprehend defeat on such a scale.[381] So complete is the destruction of Persia that this once-proud nation's elders can only resort to a form of lament which resembles, for Aeschylus' audience, the very extremes of female mourning practice, in order to adequately express their grief. Interpreted in this light, the construction of the Persian identity as a barbarian 'other' co-exists with but does not undermine the chorus's status as elder statesmen in their own right. Freed from the exceptionalism inherent in the scholarly drive to equate foreignness with femininity, the chorus' lament is more easily intelligible both in terms of its wider cultural and literary context (in particular Homeric), and in its similarity with other laments across Aeschylean tragedy.

The picture of male lament that emerges from Aeschylus' extant tragedies is one informed by gender parallels and distinctions, but defined by its political and public force. Male grief in Aeschylus is almost equivalent to female mourning in its scope, drawing inspiration from the more universalised depictions of funerary rituals in Homeric epic. The crises of death on the Iliadic battlefield seem to have been mirrored on the dramatic stage in Aeschylus' lost *Achilleis* trilogy; this same thread of Homeric lamentation is then transferred to the civic catastrophes that give rise to public strife in *Agamemnon* and *Persians*. The male-dominated

[381] There is some evidence to suggest that *Persians* was also performed in Sicily, where the tyrant Hieron I was keen to emphasise the part played by the Sicilians in the Persian wars, and was therefore intended to appeal to a broader audience than merely Athenian sensibilities: see Wilson (2017) 9 & Karanasiou (2017) 33-53. Evidently, each new audience would have responded differently – both as individuals and collectively – according to how deeply involved they had been in both the Persian wars as a whole and the battle of Salamis in particular (the focus of the play). Nevertheless, the range of reactions within and across different audiences need not negate Aeschylus' *intention* to complicate the audience's response to the Persians' defeat by forcing them to understand it from the perspective of their adversaries.

arenas of politics and war intersect with the collective experience of the crises arising from these tragedies to create an environment of lament and grief which is most effectively projected in the voice of a male choral voice grieving for its communities as much as for itself.

2.ii Women and the City

The discussion of male lament in Aeschylus' plays has concentrated so far on the definition of 'political' in its most abstract sense as 'pertaining to the community rather than the individual', encompassing communities as diverse as the collective experience of war in the *Achilleis* trilogy, the depiction of an Argive proto-*polis* in *Agamemnon* and the subjects of despotic rule in *Persians.* In short, 'political' has been defined more-or-less as 'public'. In Aeschylean depictions of female lament and distress, however, the women's voices are 'political' in a different way, challenging the traditionally male forms of governance and structures of power in their communities from a marginalised, often domestic perspective.[382] Froma Zeitlin describes Aeschylus' 'politicised' perception of women succinctly as follows:

> la femme est le plus souvent identifiée aux forces extérieures à la solide citadelle de la cité patriarcale…mais elle est identifiée aussi aux valeurs culturelles, plus particulièrement dans le domaine où culture et nature se rencontrent, c'est-à-dire dans le milieu domestique et, surtout, dans son rapport avec les enfants.[383]
>
> *'Woman' is most often identified with the forces outside the solid citadel of the patriarchal city…but she is also identified with cultural values, especially in the area where culture and nature meet, i.e. in the domestic environment and, above all, in her relationship with children.*

Women are presented as simultaneously 'outsiders' to the political bounds of the city but 'insiders' to its cultural and particularly domestic values. In Aeschylus' plays, the chorus' expressions of distress transcend its cultural and domestic place to infiltrate a political space

[382] The politicisation of female lament in Tragedy has already been covered in some detail by Helene Foley: Foley (2001) 19-55. I aim to build on her work, offering in addition a more detailed examination of specifically Aeschylean female lament.
[383] Zeitlin (1988) 231.

in which women should not normally expect to operate, highlighting the constant tension in women's 'outsider-insider' personas.[384] The maidens of *Seven Against Thebes* lament the demise of the warring brothers Eteocles and Polyneices as if from the perspective of personal grief, but their act of lament itself signifies the breakdown of the proper political order following the destruction of the ruling family. The transferal of female lament from its proper place in a private, household setting to the public, political sphere is even more stark in *Suppliants,* as the legitimacy of the Danaid maidens' entreaties, strengthened through their acts of lament for their domestic situation, becomes increasingly ambiguous in the context of its wider effects on the Argive polis explored throughout the trilogy.[385] Finally, the chorus' joint lament with Orestes and Electra in *Libation Bearers* is used as Orestes' catalyst for vengeance in the play, demonstrating once again the potentially destructive power of this female-focused form of speech. In each instance, the women's social marginality as figures with little or no civic status highlights the unexpected, and sometimes unnerving, influence of their laments on the political sphere.[386] This, in turn, reflects a distorted vision of Aeschylus' own environment, as a democracy in its infancy began to cement a civic ideology in opposition to aristocratic familial dominance. By presenting women's lament as a threat to the male-dominated structures of governance in society, Aeschylus highlights the underlying tension in any democracy between the often competing forces of the individual and the state.

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[384] In this context, 'distress' and 'lament' go hand-in-hand and bleed into each other: not all expressions of distress analysed in the following discussion are strictly 'lament' in its narrowest form (i.e. an immediate response to the death of someone) and can lament-style features can be used as a means of 'mourning in advance' to express the extent of the chorus's anguish and fear (as in the parodoi of *Seven Against Thebes* and *Suppliants*). Nevertheless, to my mind the emotional correspondences between true lament and 'lament' in its expanded form of 'distress' run deep enough to allow these passages to be considered together under the wider umbrella of grief.

[385] This polarisation of male and female, private and political, and *genos* and *polis* which provides a thematic link between *Suppliants* and *Seven Against Thebes* has already been explored in broad terms by Froma Zeitlin; I aim instead to show how the chorus' voices themselves amplify these thematic schisms in both tragedies: cf. Zeitlin (1990b) 103-115.

[386] For a sociological and anthropological perspective on the connection between grief and political power across societies, see Holst-Warhaft (2014) 5-19.

The most extensive portrayal of female distress and lament in Aeschylean tragedy is found at the end of *Seven Against Thebes*, whose chorus of Theban maidens 'stand outside the social system on its threshold', using their odes instead to set the emotional tenor of offstage events and respond in real time to the Argive army's attack on Thebes.[387] Their long and passionate opening song (78-181) is nominally framed around the female civic duty of prayer, supplication and sacrifice to the city's gods in times of crisis and war. This may have reflected actual practice in Greek culture, perhaps exemplified in the female dedication of statues to the temple of Aphrodite at Corinth during the Persian wars.[388] Regardless of the reality of women's wartime conduct, there is certainly a literary trope of female dedication during battles from as early as Homeric epic, when the Trojan women bring a supplicatory gift of a *peplos* robe to Athena as part of their prayer for protection against the Greeks (*Il.*6.297-310). And yet, the chorus appear to deviate from the appropriate practice of their ritual duties. Their prayers are presented as erratic, panicked and scattered, punctuated instead by pictorial language describing the encroaching battle (79-91, 120-127 & 150-165) and the women's own terrified shrieks (87, 136, 150, 158). Moreover, their religious duty to the city is supplanted at times by fearful appeals to the gods for their own safety, such as when they ask the gods to 'look at this band of maidens who come in supplication against their enslavement' (ἴδετε παρθένων | ἱκέσιον λόχον δουλοσύνας ὕπερ, 109-110). The chorus' awareness of the particularly precarious situation for women in wartime is again emphasised in their self-representation as maidens, as they implore the gods to 'listen to the rightful prayers of maidens made with outstretched arms' (κλύετε παρθένων κλύετε πανδίκως | χειροτόνους λιτάς, 170-1).

[387] Zeitlin (1990b) 110.
[388] The status of the female dedicators is contested as a result of the varying sources for the original epigram, but this evidence for female wartime prayer and sacrifice is relatively secure: see Lefkowitz & Fant (2016) 367 for the translated inscription; Budin (2008) 335-355 for more detail on its contested sources and interpretation.

In the scene immediately following the chorus' opening ode, Eteocles rebukes the women for this display of fearful anxiety. According to the king, the maidens' conduct undermines their own safety as well as that of the rest of the city by destroying civic confidence and weakening the community's bonds during the crisis (182-6). Eteocles' argument rests not on his outright disagreement with the chorus about their ritual actions, but on the pessimistic and unconstructive formulation of these prayers.[389] The overtly misogynistic tone of his speech ironically detracts from his nominally civic purpose, although Eteocles' wider denunciation of women's conduct can to some extent be seen as simply an extension of his specific displeasure with the chorus' behaviour.[390] Nevertheless, the core principles of the king's reasoning are sound: personal fear is dangerous in a time of crisis, whereas community values strengthen a society under threat. Eteocles' focus on civic values in his criticism of the chorus is also exemplified in his warning that anyone who disobeys his commands 'will not escape their fate of public stoning' (λευστῆρα δήμου δ'οὔ τι μὴ φύγῃ μόρον, 199). As is evident from its use elsewhere in Aeschylean tragedy, stoning is seen as a public and democratic form of punishment used against individuals who fail to respect the values of the community. Consequently, Eteocles' threat of stoning seeks to restore civic values after the chorus' display of personal panic.[391]

Further, Gregory Hutchinson argues that Eteocles is right to rebuke the chorus over the manner of their ritual actions because the maidens' prayers in the parodos appear to involve supplicating the gods, such as when they contemplate whether to 'fall down in front of statues of the gods' (πότερα δῆτ' ἐγὼ <πάτρια> ποτιπέσω | βρέτη δαιμόνων; 95-6). Supplication was seen, at least in literary terms, as the last resort when all other hope in war

[389] Hutchinson (1994) 73-75.
[390] Zeitlin (1990b) 108 interprets Eteocles' display of misogyny as a total rejection of family – embodied in women's role of continuing the *genos* – in favour of city, describing an 'overvaluation of one term over the other (*polis* vs. *genos*)' which fits the trilogy's wider exploration of the causes for the ruling family's downfall.
[391] Cf. A.*Ag.*1616; for stoning as a collective punishment, see Michelakis (2002) 24-25.

has gone. In this way, Hutchinson's point that 'the chorus's action would suggest, to Greeks, a premature terror and despair' is surely appropriate.[392] Zeitlin, too, describes the chorus as representing 'ungovernable instincts of fear and ill-omened anxiety'.[393] The exact nature of the chorus' ritual actions in the parodos are hard to assess without precise staging instructions. Nevertheless, the danger of promoting 'premature terror and despair' is also explored in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon.* In that play, the chorus continually seek to quash their pessimistic foreboding in favour of positive speech during their opening ode, exemplified in the refrain 'cry woe, woe, but may the good prevail' (αἴλινον αἴλινον εἰπέ, τὸ δ' εὖ νικάτω, 121, 139 & 149). There is certainly a theme in Aeschylean drama that words have power: just as in *Agamemnon* the chorus' acknowledgement of their own foreboding contributes to sealing the king's doom, so too in *Seven Against Thebes* the chorus' prayers to the gods as if the city has already been lost could contribute to sealing their city's doom.

From the perspective of both literary precedent and a democratic culture of communal values, then, Eteocles is correct to reproach the maidens for their display of personal fear. He even suggests an alternative form for their prayers in his closing words of the scene (264-286), proposing that the chorus ask the gods to fight as the city's allies (ξυμμάχους εἶναι θεοὺς, 266) rather than the women's protectors.[394] By advocating once more for a constructive civic prayer rather than destructive individual supplication, Eteocles closes an argument that is both persuasive and necessary. The chorus' eventual acceptance of his instructions reinforces the strength of Eteocles' case, leading them to promise to be quiet (σιγῶ, 263). The first word of their second ode – μέλει (287) – translated roughly as 'this is

[392] Hutchinson (1994) 74; he cites the examples of Cassandra and other Trojan women supplicating statues at the very end of the Trojan war, in contrast to the more ritually contained and formalised ὀλολυγή prayer described in *Il.*6.297-310.
[393] Zeitlin (1990b) 110.
[394] Eteocles' re-phrased civic prayers for the chorus provide a fitting compromise for what Zeitlin describes as 'the battle…between the women's view of the gods as all-encompassing forces and Eteocles' more practical and rationalizing outlook': Zeitlin (1990b) 110.

my duty...' appears to reinforce their submission to Eteocles' superior reasoning, but immediately afterwards they return to the theme of personal anxiety, continuing '...but my soul does not sleep from fear' (φόβῳ δ'οὐχ ὑπνώσσει κέαρ, 287). The chorus' volte-face comes out of the blue in its direct contravention of Eteocles' parting words, and seems intended to take the audience by surprise: as Hutchinson says, 'the reversal of our expectations is...deliberately abrupt'.[395] The chorus' return to their individual fears is highlighted once again during their second ode as they ask 'what might happen to me?' (τί γένωμαι, 297), answering their own question later on when they consider once again the specific plight of women in war, particularly through the lens of female vulnerability to violence and enslavement (326-337, 363-368). The women's words and behaviour have changed very little from their initial frenzied ode, even despite Eteocles' attempts to keep them in check. An audience might have half-expected Eteocles to return and make good his threats of punishment for disobedience, were it not for the interruption of the Scout bringing news of the Seven who have gathered at each of Thebes' gates.

The centre-point of the action, where *genos* and *polis* irreconcilably meet, shifts away from the chorus and towards Eteocles as he prepares to face his brother in single combat in order to save his fatherland. After Eteocles' departure to his doom, however, the chorus' voice once again predominates. Their ensuing ode (721-790) points to the inevitability of the outcome based on the previous catastrophes that have rocked the royal house, citing Laius' guilt which has then been inherited through the family line and referencing Oedipus' own curse on his sons to secure their doom. While the chorus' song serves a structural purpose of reaffirming the audience's knowledge of the myth and situating this play firmly within its context as the final instalment of Aeschylus' *Oedipus* trilogy, the women also revert to their earlier displays of premature despair, lamenting the demise of Eteocles and Polyneices

[395] Hutchinson (1994) 287.

before the outcome is confirmed. Their pessimism is made explicit in the statement 'when they die at each other's hands' (ἐπεὶ δ' ἂν αὐτοκτόνως | αὐτοδάικτοι θάνωσι, 734-5), using the conjunction ἐπεὶ to express the brothers' fate in the concrete rather than deliberative terms of 'when', not 'if'.

When at last the messenger appears onstage to announce the outcome of the battle, he opens his account not with the expected tragedy of the deaths of Eteocles and Polyneices but with seemingly positive news: he tells the women to 'take courage' (θαρσεῖτε, 792) because 'the city has been saved from the yoke of slavery' (πόλις πέφευγεν ἥδε δούλιον ζυγόν, 793). The statement is doubly ironic. Firstly, it transfers the chorus' own fear of slavery that drove their premature anxiety earlier in the play into a civic context, as the city, rather than womankind, is portrayed as the fortunate escapee of enslavement. Secondly, the survival of the city has been guaranteed only because of the mutual slaughter of its rulers: the *genos* has been overthrown for the sake of the *polis*, a point that will be made explicit in the chorus' ensuing lament.[396] The contrast with the maidens' doom-laden previous ode and the messenger's initially upbeat tone is stark, wrenching the audience away from the female perspective of war and back to a pragmatic view of crisis, similar to Eteocles' own insistence on the importance of civic loyalty and duty at the beginning of the play. This 'political' perspective is necessarily an inherently male point of view, advanced by the male characters in this play as well as elsewhere in Tragedy: in the parodos of Sophocles' *Antigone* (100-161), for instance, the city elders welcome the city's military victory instead of lamenting the demise of Eteocles and Polyneices as individuals. In this way, the polarisation of male and female roles and perspectives in the community continues to reverberate across the drama even after its principal proponent has met his end.

[396] Seaford (1994) 346-347.

With the eventual announcement of the brothers' deaths the messenger departs, leaving the stage open to the last remaining female characters in the drama. The play as it is transmitted to us contains a final scene involving discussions over the burials of Eteocles and Polyneices, before which Antigone and Ismene arrive onstage to lament their brothers' deaths. The sisters' entry is announced by the chorus (862), and it has been suggested that part of the ensuing lament (961-1004) was sung by the alternating voices of Antigone and Ismene rather than two semi-choruses, as befits its antiphonal structure.[397] However, the scene itself and the sisters' entrance is clumsy. As such, the most dramatically plausible option is that the sisters did not appear in the original play and were added instead for later performances in order to link Aeschylus' play with the themes of Sophocles' *Antigone*. On this interpretation, the chorus' announcement of the sisters' entry at 861-874 is often excised, along with the final scene itself at 1004-1078. This view has gained the most modern scholarly support and indeed some go even further, dismissing the antiphonal lament at 961-1004 as it features two lines (996-7) which seem to work best in the voices of the sisters rather than the chorus.[398] The most sensible position on the issue of the play's ending is that of Alan Sommerstein, who calls for the excision of the first two passages, on the grounds that the characters of Antigone and Ismene were a product of reperformance tradition rather than the original play, and the retention of the lament of 961-1004 – apart from the controversial lines 996-7 – to create a long final lament by the chorus, first as a whole and then broken down into semi-choruses.[399] Sommerstein's analysis is especially attractive because the structure of the chorus' lament in his version of the text would mirror the final scene of *Persians*, which also ends with a long antiphonal lament involving the chorus and also breaks down into single-line exchanges at the end.

[397] Lloyd-Jones (1959) 80-115.
[398] Dawe (1967) 16-28; Brown (1976) 206-219; Taplin (1989) 169-191.
[399] Sommerstein (1996) 130-134; summarised in Sommerstein (2008a) 147-149.

Further, such an ending makes most sense from a literary point of view. Throughout the trilogy, the audience have seen each generation of the prominent members of the Labdacid house succumb to their fate, leaving Eteocles and Polyneices as the last of the male line to meet their doom. The last character-group standing at the end of it all is the chorus of Theban maidens, in itself a poignant reminder of the total breakdown of political order in the city through the obliteration of the ruling family. Moreover, the chorus' long final lament forms the culmination of their politically problematic forms of speech throughout the play, this time left unchallenged in the absence of any male figure of power.[400] The chorus' control of the play's linguistic register in this final section of the drama is evident as early as their pronouncement that 'miseries have come which must be bewailed in lamentation rather than words' (ἦλθε δ'αἰ-|ακτὰ πήματ' οὐ λόγῳ (846-7). This implicitly challenges Eteocles' earlier rebuke of their anxieties and insistence on communally productive, rational speech, as the chorus' previous fears now seem justified. The city's martial crisis has been resolved only through the creation of a political crisis in its place, and the position of women in such an unstable community is almost as precarious as if the city had been sacked.

If it is true that Antigone and Ismene did not play a part in the ending of the drama, the irony of their absence is felt even more keenly in the role of the chorus as chief lamenters over the bodies of their ruler and his brother. Lament – that most personal of acts – is transferred from its expected familial setting in the voices of Antigone and Ismene into the civic sphere, now represented by the chorus. By performing a dirge for the political leaders of their city – a function which should ordinarily belong to the close kin of the deceased – the chorus blur the boundaries between private and public.[401] Consequently, their lament takes on a civic

[400] See Holst-Warhaft (1992) 133-135 for a brief discussion of this theme.
[401] The impersonal nature of the chorus' lament is discussed in more detail by Foley (2001) 49-51.

rather than personal function, as the women of the city honour the rulers of their community in death. This represents a reversal of the situation at the beginning of the play, when the women's voices were presented as challenging civic values and threatening political order. The chorus' long lament at the end of the tragedy represents the culmination of the destruction of both the Labdacid royal house and, by extension, the political order of Thebes. The women are the last vestiges of the community still remaining; their only agency now is grief.

Aeschylus' *Suppliants* presents female lament in a similarly unsettling light, in which the Danaid maidens' emotional appeals are used to legitimise their otherwise highly problematic suppliant status, playing on the Greek cultural awareness of the emotional turbulence for girls embarking upon marriage to explain Pelasgus' eventual acceptance of the Danaids into the Greek *polis* of Argos, despite the immediate civic issues this will cause and the murderous threat they will eventually pose. The political force of the women's problematic suppliant status also amplifies the broader polemic in the *Danaid* trilogy between women and men, as well as family and city.[402] As such, Aeschylus once again hints at the dangerous potential of female voices, depicting women as harnessing the emotional power of their voices to influence not only Pelasgus within the drama but also the external audience of the production itself.

In contrast to Tragedy's mostly positive portrayal of suppliants, presented in the main as deserving of their hosts' pity and protection, Aeschylus puts the dangerous consequences of accepting vulnerable foreigners into a city right at the heart of his *Danaid* trilogy.[403] While

[402] Zeitlin (1990b) 104 describes this tension, present across Aeschylean drama, as 'the politics of gender'.
[403] The largely positive view of suppliants in Tragedy is evident in the successful supplications by Oedipus in Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus*, the mothers of the Seven in Euripides' *Suppliant Women*, and Heracles' children in Euripides' *Children of Heracles.*

many scenes of supplication in Tragedy involve the city quickly pitying or embracing those seeking clemency of their own accord, the Danaids have to fight to persuade both the audience and the people of Argos, represented by Pelasgus, to accept their suppliant rights. In the end, they resort to negative forms of persuasion through threats and coercion, warning Pelasgus of the potentially polluting damage they could do if they commit suicide on his land because of his refusal to take them in (392-6).[404] To understand why their claim to clemency is so shaky, and how lament fits into the Danaids' negative, manipulating persuasive strategy, it is necessary to look further at the wider myth and trilogy as well as the cultural conditions in Athens and beyond which form a crucial backdrop to understanding the dynamics of the drama.

Suppliants is the only play to survive of its wider trilogy, leaving the exact details of the order and content of the trilogy's other two plays *Aigyptioi* and *Danaides* to speculation. However, some rudimentary assumptions can be made.[405] The presumed fundamentals of Aeschylus' plot are outlined as follows by Garvie:

> If we ask what is essential, and what Aeschylus could not have failed to use, we find only four elements which are common to all the versions, or at least not contradicted by one or more of them. First the story concerns two brothers Danaus and Aegyptus, descendants of Io, the former with fifty daughters, the other with fifty sons. Secondly the brothers quarrel. Thirdly the fifty sons marry the fifty daughters, who are commanded by Danaus to murder their husbands on their wedding-night. And fourthly all obey, with a single exception, that of Hypermestra who spares her husband Lynceus.[406]

The position of *Suppliants* in this basic plot structure for the trilogy is uncertain, but the most logical argument based on the content of *Suppliants* itself – namely the long introductory prologue-parodos and the lack of any explicit reference in the play to the quarrel of Aegyptus and Danaus as the precursor for the women's flight to Argos – is that this was the

[404] The political importance of this threat cannot be underestimated. Danaus later reports that it played a major part in the city's decision to vote for the suppliants' acceptance into the city (A.*Suppl.*615-622). Cf. further discussion of the Danaids' threats of pollution in Mitchell (2006) 217-8; and Bachvarova (2009) 289-300.
[405] For an overview of the main controversy over the order of the three plays, see Sommerstein (2008c) 277-287.
[406] Garvie (2006) 164.

first play. On this interpretation, *Aigyptioi* then covered the consequences of the battle between the sons of Aegyptus and the Argive forces foreshadowed at the end of *Suppliants*, culminating in the marriages going ahead. Finally, *Danaides* depicted the murder of the husbands and the exceptional story of Hypermestra and Lynceus.[407] Regardless of the disputed details of the trilogy, the Danaids' murderous crimes would presumably have been known to the audience from the earlier versions of the myth. For this reason, the opening lines of Aeschylus' extant play might already have seemed problematic to an audience who knew these self-styled 'suppliants' rather as dangerous, violent, foreign women.[408] The political issues of the Danaids' acceptance are further emphasised within the bounds of *Suppliants* itself, as the Egyptian herald's rebuttal by Pelasgus (911-953) provokes the future onset of war between Argos and Egypt over the possession of the Danaids. Zeitlin rightly interprets the civic danger posed by the Danaids as one part of the broader Aeschylean reflection on the inevitable tension in a democratic society of balancing the importance of family with loyalty to one's city:

> Taking the Danaids into the polis poses a serious political hazard for the citizens who will have to do battle with the pursuing Egyptians and to risk their lives and even the city's security in order to guarantee the safety of those who are related to them only by a remote connection of kinship.[409]

Pelasgus himself references the political and legal binding force of Argos' official acceptance of the suppliants when confronted by the Egyptian herald (911-953), forging a direct link between the women's personal claims to asylum and the political repercussions for Argos. With all this in mind, even if the trilogy did not encompass the violent threat posed by the Danaids specifically as murderers of men, the dramatic scope of *Suppliants* alone is enough to highlight the intrinsic danger to a city of accepting responsibility for vulnerable outsiders.

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[407] Mitchell (2006) 207-210. Sommerstein (2010) 89-116 argues instead that *Aiguptioi* was the first play of the trilogy, which set out the nature of the quarrel between Aegyptus and Danaus, followed by *Suppliants* and finally *Danaides* covering the rest of the story of marriage, murder and the sparing of Lynceus.
[408] For the pre-Aeschylean tradition of the Danaids' violence, see Bachvarova (2009) 292-294.
[409] Zeitlin (1990b) 109.

Moreover, the very nature of the Danaids' claim to asylum is contentious in the context of the civic importance of marriage in Athenian, and more broadly Greek, social consciousness in the fifth century BC. In a similar fashion to the chorus of *Seven Against Thebes*, the Danaids are anxious for very personal reasons, desperate to escape men they have no wish to marry.[410] Their personal fear, again like that of the maidens in *Seven Against Thebes*, runs in contravention to the city's political ideals. Just as the Theban maidens' panic in war-time undermines civic rationality and collectiveness in a crisis, so too does the Danaids' flight from marriage, itself a 'civilising' institution for women, undermine both their position within the bounds of society and indeed the familial bonds which perpetuate the existence of society itself:

> C'est le mariage qui civilise la femme, très littéralement, qui la dompte, car le mariage dans l'usage grec est perçu comme un joug qui sub-jugue et domestique.[411]
>
> *It is marriage which civilizes the woman, very literally, which tames her, because marriage in Greek terms is perceived like a yoke which subjugates and domesticates.*

The civic importance of marriage is exemplified in archaic and classical Greek cultures through its formalisation in legal and social rituals which heavily involved men, such as the *engye* – a betrothal contract between the groom and his father-in-law to be – as well as the giving of dowries and the change of the bride's legal protector – *kyrios* – from father to husband.[412] Women were even given a specific title, *nymphē*, to reflect the age at which they were eligible to be a bride; this term only ceased to be applicable after they had fulfilled their civic function of motherhood.[413] The enormity of marriage as a life stage for girls is also evident in many of the extant literary and material sources, commemorating both the positive aspects of marriage for a girl's social position and the intense emotional turmoil

[410] Zeitlin notes that both plays share a theme of characters with polarising stances against the opposite sex: misogyny against women by Eteocles, and misandry by the Danaids in their hatred of marriage, which frequently extends to men in general: Zeitlin (1990b) 106.
[411] Zeitlin (1988) 232 (my own formatting).
[412] Gould (1980) 38-59; Oakley & Sinos (1993) 9-11; Rehm (1994) 11-21; and Seaford (1994) 206-213.
[413] Oakley & Sinos (1993) 10.

inherent in changing to an entirely new household, social circle and domestic role.[414] As such, it is plausible that the original audience, male or mixed, would have recognised in the Danaids' attitudes to marriage a wider literary and cultural stereotype of the 'unwilling bride' reluctant to begin her journey into society.[415]

Aeschylus not only recreates this tension between societal expectations and personal emotions on the dramatic stage, but also amplifies the issue by emphasising the Danaids' suppliant status. Far from being Argive maidens who are nervous about leaving their *genos* to fulfil their new duties to the *polis*, the Egyptian interlopers use their leverage as pitiable suppliants to launch their emotional appeal, the success of which disrupts the societal values of their host community and ultimately brings the threat of war to the city.[416] In this highly polarised atmosphere, the Danaids' opening suppliant pleas answer first and foremost to the audience's existing awareness of the psychological impact of marriage on young women, before the women's attention is turned to the persuasion of Pelasgus, who represents political power in Argos.

The formulation of the chorus' prologue-parodos to include passages of lament is particularly striking in this regard. Not only is lament an emotionally charged form of speech, whose inclusion so early in the drama – and indeed the trilogy – indicates the intensity of the drama yet to unfold, but it also intersects in an interesting way with cultural connections between marriage and death across the Greek tradition. Rush Rehm demonstrates the primary bond between the two ideas:

[414] The emotional isolation of marriage is particularly felt in Sappho fr. 94 & fr. 114; for a broader sweep of the cultural evidence for attitudes to marriage in Greek thought see Seaford (1987) 106-107.
[415] Seaford, for instance, notes that 'the attitude of the Danaids resembles in several respects the attitude associated with the Greek bride or her female companions, but taken to an exotic extreme': Seaford (1987) 110.
[416] Ironically, as Zeitlin notes, 'the king and his citizens may grant the Danaids temporary shelter but it is the institution of marriage that will give them social space and status': Zeitlin (1990b) 110.

> ...the connection between wedding and funeral rites was encoded in the term κῆδος (*kēdos*), a word-group that refers both to "a relation by marriage"...and to the "funeral ritual".[417]

Behind the etymology, however, lies a wealth of cultural and literary evidence demonstrating how closely the two rituals were linked in the practices and consciousness of ancient Greek societies. Both rituals symbolise a journey towards physical change, be it from living to dead or from virgin to bride and eventually mother. This is reflected, for instance, in the similarities between the ritual preparations for corpses and couples: in both cases, the brides and bodies are bathed, anointed and covered before their ritual journey.[418] Further, the link between marriage and death extends beyond ritual activities, emerging across Greek literary contexts and particularly on the Tragic stage, where the poetic poignancy of the 'marriage to death' motif can find its most vivid form.[419] The untimely death of unmarried women such as Iphigenia and Antigone represents a justifiably pitiable situation for both the family and the community as a whole, deserving of the empathetic response that such situations were bound to receive from the audiences of Euripides' *Iphigenia at Aulis* or Sophocles' *Antigone.*

It is precisely this empathy for the emotional turmoil of marriage and its associations with death which Aeschylus exploits in the Danaids' opening choral ode. The women are openly performative about their emotional condition, describing their sufferings as 'visible in lament' (ἰηλέμοιcιν ἐμπρεπῆ, 115) and externalising their physical defilement in the depths of their suffering (69-71). They even draw attention to the bizarre futility of their own dirge, exclaiming 'I honour myself with laments even though I am still alive' (ζῶcα γόοιc με τιμῶ, 116). Beyond the chorus' use of the emotional power bound up in the register of lament itself,

[417] Rehm (1994) 22.
[418] Rehm (1994) 29.
[419] Cf. Sappho fr.96. In Tragedy, heroines such as Antigone, Iphigenia and Alcestis fulfil this motif in various ways: see e.g. Seaford (1987) 106-130 and Rehm (1994) *passim*.

the women harness their audience's pity stemming from a wider cultural understanding of women's anguish in marriage, despite its civic necessity, to provoke sympathy for their suppliant status and political requests. The tension between the Danaids' emotional appeals and their civic contraventions is highlighted in their threats of suicide (154-161). Once again, Aeschylus leverages the emotional responses arising from the deep connections between marriage and death in the audience's cultural consciousness while simultaneously subverting the type: the Danaids are not lamenting their premature demise before they are able to fulfil their social position in marriage, as is the case with Iphigenia and Antigone, but are contemplating their deaths precisely because of the existential threat that marriage poses for them.

As a result, the Danaids' lament problematises a political situation that should otherwise be more straightforward. As foreign suppliants with little claim to Argos' land or protection whose appeals contradict the civic cohesion of their host society, Pelasgus' position, from the audience's perspective, should be easy. Why bring war and its related suffering to his own people for the sake of women who are abdicating their social responsibilities, especially if they will turn out to be dangerous husband-killers? And yet, the force of the chorus' lament gives more psychological coherence to the essentials of the drama's plot. The tension between the well-documented emotional turmoil of marriage for young women and the civic necessity of the institution is exploited to its furthest extreme by Aeschylus. The Danaids' vivid depiction of the enforced and unwanted nature of their marriages further complicates the moral and emotional undertone of their pleas by implicitly comparing the arranged marriages to a form of rape. In this way, the audience are forced to confront not only their own cognitive dissonances encompassing the positive and negative aspects of marriage and its closeness to death in their culture, but also made to understand the

dangerous political power that women's laments can wield, and ultimately why Pelasgus feels he has to yield to the Danaids' demands.

The female chorus of Aeschylus' *Libation Bearers* is in some ways the closest Tragedy comes to replicating the ritual culture of death and lamentation on the dramatic stage. Its central *kommos* scene (306-509) enacts a funeral ritual where close kin mourn the deceased and are gradually incited to avenge him by others in the kin group, a phenomenon which is common to many cultures across time.[420] Where the drama departs from reality, however, is in the identity of the chorus, who not only participate in Agamemnon's funeral dirge alongside his children but also incite Orestes to revenge, despite being outsiders to both the family and city as foreign household slaves. The chorus' leading role in this otherwise familial ritual reflects the disjointed political setting of *Libation Bearers*: in *Seven Against Thebes* and *Suppliants*, the outwardly strong political structures of Thebes and Argos become increasingly threatened by the crisis of war, implicating the chorus' acts of in the political stasis that ensues. In *Libation Bearers*, however, political stasis is embedded into the drama from the beginning, following Clytemnestra's combined regicide and mariticide at the end of the preceding play. As such, the chorus' laments in this play serve to unite and strengthen a previously weakened family unit in order to further disrupt an already fragmenting political unit, demonstrating Aeschylus' use of the collective female voice to dramatise and polarise the tension between family and state, *genos* and *polis*.[421]

The politically disruptive force of the chorus' laments is visible from their first appearance onstage, in which they describe in gory detail the physical defilements they are practising as

[420] Seaford (1994) 86-89.
[421] The public, and therefore political, nature of lament seems to be a particular concern of the *Oresteia* trilogy: as Holst-Warhaft notes, 'mourning, in the *Oresteia,* is always treated in a 'political' context', adding 'by re-representing traditional lament, particularly in the *Choephoroi*, the plays expose its frightening power': Holst-Warhaft (1992) 136.

part of the act of lamentation they've been ordered to carry out (25-31). The pictorial violence of their language, describing the colour of their gashed cheeks and the sound of their clothes as they are ripped, has an almost baroque quality to it, and was clearly designed to create a startling entry scene. The chorus swiftly reveal the reasons behind their task of lamenting and bringing offerings to Agamemnon's tomb, recounting Clytemnestra's fear for her own safety after an ill-omened dream. As well as an explanation, however, the slave-women also offer their own judgement on the situation, describing Clytemnestra's religious dedication as 'uncharitable charity' (χάριν ἀχάριτον, 44) – an outward display of piety underpinned by selfish motives, or what might now be termed 'virtue signalling'. Similarly, they describe Clytemnestra as an 'ungodly woman' (δύσθεος γυνά, 46), questioning what atonement there can be for a woman who has shed another's blood (48). In light of their verbal attacks on Clytemnestra and scepticism of her attempts at expiation, their gruesome opening lament is revealed to be just as performative as Clytemnestra's intention behind the sacrifice itself.

At the end of their opening ode the picture changes again, as the chorus reveal their own hidden laments for the suffering of the royal house, describing how they conceal their tears beneath their clothes (δακρύω δ'ὑφ' εἱμάτων, 81) by shrouding their faces to prevent detection. This is a poignant note on which to end the ode, contrasting with the women's earlier dismissal of their opening melodramatic lament. The chorus' closing lines show that they do lament their dead king and master, but only on their own terms rather than for the specious reasons given by Clytemnestra. The chorus' secret act of rebellion against the ruling household demonstrates how fractious the political climate of Clytemnestra's tyranny has become, as even the household slaves are finding their own ways to revolt. This not only prepares the ground for Orestes' matricide, which is seen as an inevitable and necessary cure for the tyrannical stasis in Argos, but also highlights how politically engaged the slave-women are despite their social marginality. This, in turn, lays the foundations for

the great *kommos* scene between the chorus, Orestes and Electra which dominates the first half of the play.

The *kommos* itself follows a pattern observed as early as Homeric epic, in which the scene of lamentation over the corpse, often presided over by women, provides the backdrop for the emotional journey from grief to vengeful anger enacted by the male close kin.[422] This echoes, for instance, the lament conducted by Briseis and the surrounding women for Patroclus' corpse (*Il.*19.282-302), which heralds Achilles' shift in focus from grief for his kinsman to vengeful anger against the Trojans. In Aeschylus' scene (306-509), however, the chorus play an active and sustained role in combining lament with incitement to vengeance.[423] From their opening words of the *kommos*, the slave-women situate their appeals to the gods in the realm of avenging Justice, declaring that the goddess Dike herself 'exacts payment for what is owed to her' (τοὐφειλόμενον | πράσσουσα, 310-311) and recalling an old saying that 'the doer must suffer' (δράσαντι παθεῖν, 314). From here their lament progresses in tandem with that of Orestes and Electra, supporting the children's laments and intertwining their own praise of Agamemnon as a ruler. When the message that vengeance is the only cure for grief finally cuts through, with Orestes appealing to Zeus the avenger to help him, the chorus further incite his lust for revenge, wishing to sing a triumphant hymn over the deaths of Aegisthus and Clytemnestra (386-9) and describing the 'malignant hatred' (ἔγκοτον στύγος, 393) they feel for the ruling tyrants.[424] The slave-women go even further in connecting lament with revenge when they reveal to Orestes and Electra that Agamemnon's corpse was defiled by Clytemnestra (ἐμασχαλίσθη δ' ἔθ', 439), clearly hoping to enflame their vengeful

[422] See Holst-Warhaft (1992) 144-152 for a detailed discussion of this scene.
[423] See Seaford (1994) 91-92 for a brief discussion of how lament and vengeance are intertwined in this scene; 92-105 for the broader connection of the matricide and ensuing pollution with political events in pre-classical Athens.
[424] Foley (2001) 35 connects the chorus with Electra, as both character-types are women whose 'subordinate status' and hatred for Clytemnestra and Aegisthus drives their desire to depose the two tyrants.

anger even further as the siblings grieve. The result of the *kommos* determines the course of the rest of this play and the opening of the next, legitimising Orestes' polluting revenge on a human level just as it has been sanctioned in the divine sphere through Apollo's oracle. However, beyond its dramatic function, it also reflects the wider political influence which women's laments may once have wielded in the enactment of justice across Greek societies.

The chorus' active role in this lament-revenge nexus would not in itself have been surprising to the Athenian audience, as women's deep involvement with lament practices throughout the archaic Greek world must surely have fostered in the cultural consciousness a connection between female laments fanning the family's grief, and any ensuing acts of personal vengeance undertaken by male relatives on behalf of the deceased. Helene Foley, for instance, has argued compellingly that the *kommos* scene should be situated within the wider cultural and ritual traditions of grief and revenge which dominated Greek society in the pre-classical period:

> I believe, however, that *Choephoroi* deliberately situates Orestes' ultimate failure to terminate the family vendetta in a context where women traditionally played or were thought to have played a central and perhaps even dangerous role. Lamentation, with its strong generation of emotion, focuses the power and desire to carry through revenge in a communal setting that builds connections between past, present, and future members of the group… To put this another way, Orestes is determined from the start to commit his crime, but the kommos creates a social context for his act that subsequently came to be outlawed in classical society along with vendetta justice itself.[425]

While the chorus' lament does not bear direct resemblance to the structured funerary rituals likely to have been in place by the time Aeschylus composed this play, the situation and cultural memory would nevertheless have rendered the dangerous power of the women's laments familiar to his audience. This led Foley to argue that the chorus' role in retributive justice highlights the civic necessity of instituting legal procedures to remove their emotive power from the equation, mimicking in mythic form the wider cultural and

[425] Foley (2001) 34.

democratic shift away from the power of the individual and towards a collective approach to grief and justice.[426]

However, there is surely also a political as well as cultural or historical point to be made in the emotional potency of the slave-women's laments. As with the chorus' lament at the end of *Seven Against Thebes*, a group of non-kin women usurp the traditional role of familial grief and skew it instead towards a public rather than private setting. It would surely have seemed shocking that foreign household slaves should become so deeply and emotionally invested in both fostering the grief of Orestes and Electra and fomenting their vengeful hatred against Clytemnestra and Aegisthus. The calls for revenge are driven at first not by Orestes and Electra, as would be expected, but by a group of downtrodden outsiders with nothing to lose. As such, the persuasive and destructive power of the chorus' lament is exacerbated by their status as socially marginalised slaves, who should not have any grounds for emotional involvement in the plight of the ruling family. The vehemence of their appeals for justice and revenge on behalf of Agamemnon further emphasise the broken political system exemplified in Clytemnestra's tyrannical rule. Even the most disenfranchised members of society are able and willing to exert influence over the political situation in order to express their horror at the disintegrating structures of governance in the city.

Through a detailed examination of Aeschylus' female laments, it becomes clear that women's grief is politicised and problematised in a way that male grief is not. In *Seven Against Thebes, Suppliants*, and *Libation Bearers,* Aeschylus weaponises the political potency of female lament to expose and amplify the broader societal tension between family and city – a topic that was especially pertinent to the city of Athens at the dawn of its democratic system. In *Suppliants* and *Libation Bearers* especially, the chorus' position at the very fringes

[426] Foley (2001) 33-36.

of Greek society as foreign suppliants or slaves further highlights these tensions, such that the impact of their laments on the political life of the city is all the more startling and subversive. In all three examples, it is the emotive power of lament which is able to persuade, defy and influence the more powerful (male) political agents in society, as the 'outsider' women disrupt the establishment to further their own agendas. My discussion has centred on what seems to be a specifically Aeschylean view of female agency through ritual speech, but the influential capacity of lament in the female voice appears as a theme elsewhere in Tragedy, embodied most notably in Sophocles' heroines Electra and Antigone in their eponymous plays as well as in the chorus of Euripides' *Suppliant Women.*[427]

It is plausible that Aeschylus' focus on the power of female lament itself inspired a dramatic *topos* that resonated throughout the tragedians' works. This is particularly true of Euripides' *Suppliant Women*, which is set up as if to consciously combine elements of Aeschylus' *Suppliants* and *Seven Against Thebes* in choral identity and setting. And yet, it is equally possible that cultural and civic tensions in the democratic system continued to be perpetuated throughout the fifth century BC between the individual and the state, women and men, the politically disenfranchised and the politically empowered. For this reason, the tragedians may have found of their own accord that the emotional medium of female lament was the most powerful dramatic tool to reflect, distort and amplify these complex civic issues.

[427] The power of ritual language in these three plays is discussed in detail by Foley (2001) 19-55.

3. Gendered Grief in Sophocles and Euripides

If lament in Aeschylus is divided only weakly along gender lines, featuring intense and complex male laments as well as problematised female laments, in Sophocles' and Euripides' plays the picture becomes more complex. Unsurprisingly, the general trend towards the diminished role of the choral voice in later Tragedy is replicated (with a few notable exceptions) in the diminished choral laments in these plays.[428] Nevertheless, a further change from Aeschylus can be seen in the types of lament which predominate in Sophocles' and Euripides' plays. While Aeschylus' choruses are often the drivers of lament, in Sophocles and Euripides they more often than not provide a supporting role to protagonists in their individual expressions of grief. In this 'diminished' lament role, however, further patterns of gender emerge, which deserve fuller attention.

Unlike in Homeric epic, where rigid formulae allow lament to be separated into two distinct types, *goos* and *thrēnos*, in Tragedy very little such linguistic distinction exists.[429] Across the plays of all three tragedians, the term *goos* and its cognates are used 73 times, while *thrēnos* and its cognates appear 58 times – in most of these instances, the terms are used in the generic context of 'acts of lamentation' or 'groans' rather than to distinguish the content or form of the lament.[430] This lack of separation between the two types of mourning is exemplified particularly in passages of Sophocles' and Euripides' plays where the two terms

[428] Euripides' *Suppliant Women* and *Trojan Women*, which both position choral lament as a central feature of the plot, are the two main exceptions to this rule.
[429] See the earlier discussion in Part I of this chapter for more details of the formal differences.
[430] The exception is in Aeschylus, where *thrēnos* and its cognates tends to be used specifically in the context of 'set dirges', as in A.*Ag.*992 & 1322, A.*Sept.*1064, and is also often linked with laments uttered at the tomb of the deceased (the so-called *thrēnos epitumbios*), as in A.*Ag.*1541-2, A.*Cho.*335 & 926, A.*Per.*686. For a similar argument see Loraux (2002) 58-59.

are used together as synonyms, such as when Andromache proclaims that she will fill the air 'with laments and groans and tears' (θρήνοιϲι καὶ γόοιϲι καὶ δακρύμαϲι, 92).[431]

The linguistic loosening of lament terms in Tragedy has often led scholars to assume that all formal distinctions between the *thrēnos* and *goos* also collapsed between epic/archaic poetry and fifth-century Athenian drama. For instance, as Margaret Alexiou says of lament in Tragedy:

> In the classical period, the *thrênos* was still remembered as a distinct type of lyric poetry, but it was interchangeable with *góos*, especially in tragedy, and could be used to refer to any kind of lament, not necessarily for the dead.[432]

Katharine Derderian concurs, arguing that

> lament in tragedy is designated by a wide spectrum of vocabulary that appears to be used indiscriminately of genre, including γόοϲ and θρῆνοϲ.[433]

To my mind, however, such generalisations can be too simplistic. While the terms *thrēnos* and *goos* are often used almost interchangeably in Tragedy, particularly in Sophocles' and Euripides' plays, some differences in the form and content of choral laments are still visible. Through a closer examination of laments in the choral voices of all three tragedians, it is possible to trace some differences in the types of lament which appear on stage in earlier and later Tragedy, as well as the overall development of a more 'gendered' expression of lament in the choral voice of Sophocles and Euripides' plays in comparison with those of Aeschylus.

Despite the lack of linguistic differentiation in the laments of Tragedy, the form of many Aeschylean choral laments is nevertheless often most closely related to the Homeric *goos*. Just as in the *Iliad* the use of the *goos* formula ἦρχε γόοιο or ἐξῆρχε γόοιο ('led off the *goos*')

[431] Other examples of *goos* and *thrēnos* being used as synonyms can be found in S.*El.*104; E.*Hec.*434; E.*Med.*1211; E.*Suppl.*88. The terms are never used as synonyms in Aeschylus' extant plays.
[432] Alexiou (2002) 103.
[433] Derderian (2001) 136-137.

tends to signify a personal lament and an expression of raw grief over the body by a close companion or kinsman (most notably in the laments over Hector's body at the end of the poem), so too are elements of this spontaneous expression of grief visible in the male and female choral laments of Aeschylus' plays. Typical *goos* themes such as the importance of the deceased to their community as well as the scale of the personal loss experienced by the speaker are prominent in, for instance, the laments of *Agamemnon, Libation Bearers* and *Seven Against Thebes.* Further, traces of a typical *goos* form, in which the individual and collective expressions of grief alternate in the roles of a 'lead mourner' and supporting group, can be found in the kommoi of *Libation Bearers, Persians* and *Seven Against Thebes*.[434]

By contrast, with the exception of the long laments in Euripides' *Suppliant Women* and *Trojan Women*, there are very few comparative examples of intensely passionate choral grief in the plays of Sophocles and Euripides. Of course, as noted above, this difference can be attributed to an extent to the generally diminished role of the chorus in later Tragedy. Indeed, in place of the long choral laments which characterise Aeschylean drama, Euripides – and, to a lesser extent, Sophocles – broadened the scope of lament poetry to prioritise the voices of individuals over those of a group.[435] This is exemplified in the many solo lyric laments in Euripides' plays, such as the sung exchange between Hecuba and Polyxena in Euripides' *Hecuba* (154-215), the joint lament between Antigone and Oedipus in Euripides' *Phoenician Women* (1485-1581), and the great lyric monody sung by Electra in Euripides' play of the same name (112-158; paralleled in non-lyric form in Sophocles' *Electra* 1126-1170). These laments more often than not fit the *goos* style of mourning, sung as an emotional response

[434] Indeed, the alternation between the voices of the chorus and Clytemnestra throughout the elders' lament for their king (A.*Ag.*1407-1576) could be interpreted as a warped version of a typical antiphonal *goos* structure.
[435] This coincides with the broader tendency towards lyric monodies and away from traditional choral lyrics in later Euripidean tragedy: see, e.g., Csapo (2000) 399-426.

to a deeply personal catastrophe involving close kin; the chorus, meanwhile, are conspicuously absent.

Where, then, do the chorus fit into this new type of lament poetry in which the solo rather than collective voice dominates? In many of the later plays, the chorus' role is that of an outsider looking in on the *goos*-type lamentations of the protagonists, reflecting their generally more marginal connection to the action. This can be seen at its broadest level in Euripides' *Phoenician Women*, whose plot is modelled on Aeschylus' *Seven Against Thebes*. In the Aeschylean version, the chorus' identity as Theban maidens ensures a deep personal connection to the situation, binding the maidens' fate with that of their city. As a result, they lament deeply and passionately for first the military safety of Thebes and then its political safety embodied in the fates of the warring brothers Eteocles and Polyneices. By contrast, the chorus of Euripides' *Phoenician Women*, as ethnic outsiders to the action, can only lament the city's woes in general terms, leaving the personal laments for the two brothers to the voices of their closest family.

Euripides' play presents the most extreme example of choral marginalisation from longer form laments in the later Tragic tradition. More often in Sophocles' and Euripides' extant plays, however, the chorus' voice is integrated with that of the mourning individual in a supporting role, responding to the main lament by a protagonist. This 'respondent' role is taken up by both male and female choruses. In the female choral voice, examples are found in Euripides' *Andromache* (1173-1225, with Peleus), *Helen* (167-254, with Helen), *Iphigenia among the Taurians* (123-235, with Iphigenia), *Suppliant Women* (1072-1079, with Iphis), and *Trojan Women* (1209-1250 & 1287-1332, with Hecuba). In the male choral voice, the same pattern is seen in Sophocles' *Antigone* (806-882, with Antigone) and *Oedipus at Colonus* (1670-1750, with Antigone and Ismene) alongside Euripides' *Alcestis* (861-961, with Admetus) and *Children of*

Heracles (608-628, responding to Iolaus). Unlike in Aeschylus' plays, in which the chorus' identity is often integral to the context of the drama, in many of Sophocles' and Euripides' plays the choruses are lamenting at an emotional distance, using their voices to support other individuals in their grief. If the intensely personal choral laments of Aeschylus represent a *goos*-style lament, then the very nature of the collective, distanced forms of lament in later Tragedy more closely resembles the *thrēnos* style exemplified in the final books of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. Although the terms *goos* and *thrēnos* became indistinguishable on a linguistic level across Tragedy, it seems to me clear that, on a formalistic level at least, some distinctions remained.[436]

While the move towards choral *thrēnoi* rather than *gooi* in Sophocles' and Euripides' plays can be seen across both the male and female choral voice, the content of their supporting laments indicates some interesting distinctions which can be drawn more obviously along gender lines. In general, women tend to play an active part in the lamentation process even if their role is diminished in scope, often expressing their sympathy for the afflicted individual in their laments. Unsurprisingly, this is most noticeable when the chorus-women are lamenting the plight of another woman. In both Euripides' *Helen* and *Iphigenia among the Taurians*, for instance, the chorus' identity as Greek slaves stuck in a foreign country already aligns their perspective with that of these two similarly cut-off Greek heroines. When Helen and Iphigenia mourn for their own situations, the chorus has some understanding of and sympathy for the issues each woman faces, even though they cannot fully understand her individual plight. In *Trojan Women*, the chorus and Hecuba share collectively in the grief for their own lost families and city. When Hecuba faces the additional tragedy of the murder of her grandson and final descendant Astyanax (1209-1250),

[436] See Weiss (2017) 245-249 for a similar argument that the 'musicality' of *thrēnos* laments is separated from, but nonetheless juxtaposed with, the 'non-musicality' of *goos* laments in Euripides' *Helen* and *Iphigenia among the Taurians.*

it is only natural for the chorus of Trojan women to respond to their queen's catastrophe in equally emotional terms. Of course, it comes as no surprise that chorus-women should feel a close affinity with a female protagonist even if they are external to her own lamentation. And yet, female sympathy for others' tragedies also extends to supporting men through similar woes. In both Euripides' *Andromache* and *Suppliant Women*, for instance, the chorus lament in responsion with Peleus and Iphis respectively, two elderly men who have just lost one of their children. While the women have no direct experience of the men's suffering, they nevertheless lament alongside them in equally emotional terms.

Male choral laments, on the other hand, tend to follow a different pattern when supporting the grief of a protagonist. While women involve themselves wholeheartedly in the personal circumstances of the afflicted individual, men instead tend to console the living, praise the dead, and offer more generalised reflections on the situation, borrowing themes familiar from the few remaining examples of *thrēnoi* attributed to Pindar and Simonides.[437] In Euripides' *Children of Heracles,* for example, Iolaus begins a lament after one of Heracles' maiden daughters offers herself up as a sacrifice on behalf of her family. In response, the chorus-men open with a series of gnomic statements, beginning with the assertion that 'no man can be blessed or cursed without the will of the gods' (οὔτινά φημι θεῶν ἄτερ ὄλβιον, οὐ βαρύποτμον, | ἄνδρα γενέσθαι, 608-9). The men of Marathon then exhort Iolaus 'not to groan or grieve excessively over the gods' decisions' (ἀλλὰ σὺ μὴ προπεσὼν τὰ θεῶν στένε, μηδ' ὑπεράλγει | φροντίδα λύπᾳ, 619-620), and finally lavish praises on the character and conduct of the maiden and her ultimate act of self-sacrifice. Throughout the ode, then, the chorus espouse the typically threnodic idea that bad fortune should be contextualised in the wider scheme of life's uncertainties, and that as a result it is more profitable to praise the

[437] For a more detailed discussion of motifs in archaic *thrēnoi*, see Part I above, as well as Harvey (1955) 168-170; Alexiou (2002) 12-13; and Cannatà Fera (1990) 23-31.

dead than weep for their loss. These same themes are continued in Euripides' *Alcestis*, when the chorus-men attempt to comfort Admetus as he laments for his wife. The chorus contextualise his loss in terms of an 'inescapable fate' (τύχα δυσπάλαιστος, 889), before commanding Admetus to 'endure' (τλᾶθ', 893) rather than lament because he is not the first man to lose a wife. When Admetus continues to grieve regardless, the chorus offer a story of an elderly acquaintance who lost his only son and yet still bore his grief in due proportion (ἔφερε κακὸν ἅλις, 907) – in implicit contrast to Admetus' overt sorrow.

The tendency to minimise lament and replace it with gnomic statements and praise in the male choral voice extends to interactions with women, too. The most famous example is in Sophocles' *Antigone*, when the elders of Thebes attempt to console Antigone as she laments her own impending death. Although Antigone mourns her untimely death as a virgin, the chorus invoke the theme of praise, saying 'are you not going to this cave of your death covered in glory and praise' (οὐκοῦν κλεινὴ καὶ ἔπαινον ἔχουσ'| ἐς τόδ' ἀπέρχει κεῦθος νεκύων, 817-8). In response to Antigone's comparison of her grief with that of Niobe, who was turned into a rock by the gods because of her ceaseless mourning, the chorus change the nuance of the parallel back to that of praise, asserting that Antigone is lucky to be able to compare her death with that of mythological demi-gods. Similarly, the elders of Colonus attempt to hold back Antigone and Ismene from lamenting for the death of their father in the closing stages of Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus*. The chorus-men first urge the two sisters to 'bear bravely what the god has sent and not become too consumed with emotion' (τὸ φέρον ἐκ θεοῦ φέρειν, | μηδὲν ἄγαν φλέγεσθον, 1694-5), before falling back on the praise narrative, asking them to stop their grief because Oedipus 'attained a fortunate end to his life' (ἀλλ' ἐπεὶ ὀλβίως ἔλυ- | σεν τέλος, ὦ φίλαι, βίου, 1720-1). Once again, the response of male choruses to others' grief is underpinned by exhortations of praise-narratives and forbearance over lamentation and excessive emotion.

It is important not to overstate the differences between the content of male and female choral laments in Sophocles' and Euripides' plays. These are not hard-and-fast rules: the male elders of Euripides' *Heracles*, for instance, are nevertheless active participants in Amphitryon's grief for Heracles' madness throughout the second half of the play. Further, the main counterpoint to the otherwise emotional and compassionate supporting laments of the female choral voice can be found in the chorus' response to Electra's excessive grief in both Sophocles' and Euripides' plays of the same name. It is surely significant that in this respect the chorus-women of both later plays represent a departure from their counterparts in Aeschylus' *Libation Bearers* (306-509). In Aeschylus' play, the chorus take an active role in leading off and encouraging Electra's laments, whereas in Sophocles' and Euripides' versions, the chorus-women instead attempt to discourage her from excessive mourning. The chorus of Sophocles' play advise Electra to 'have courage' (θάρσει μοι, θάρσει, | τέκνον, 173-4) and 'not to create sorrow out of past sorrows' (μὴ τίκτειν c' ἄταν ἄταις, 235). The chorus of Euripides' play go even further, proclaiming that Electra 'will only attain prosperity if she honours the gods with prayers rather than groans': οὕτοι cτοναχαῖc, | ἀλλ' εὐχαῖcι θεοὺc ceβί-|ζουc' ἕξειc εὐαμερίαν, ὦ παῖ (195-7). It is important to remember that Electra as character is by tradition exceptional in the magnitude of her grief for her father. Her grief, too, becomes dangerous in its own right, used as a vehicle for justifying and inciting murderous revenge on Clytemnestra and Aegisthus. As a result, the chorus' reticent expressions of support for Electra's wild lamentations are less a function of consolatory threnodic motifs, and are instead more easily explained as the most natural way of confronting Electra's emotional excess than as representative of female choral lament more broadly across Sophoclean and Euripidean drama.

Even with these caveats in place, there is nevertheless an intriguing divide in the choral voice of later Tragedy between women whose role is to participate actively in lamentation and men who prefer to minimise grief in favour of public praise. The plausible connection between the diminished role of laments in Tragedy and the rise of the *epitaphios logos* in Athens has already been made persuasively by Nicole Loraux, Laura McClure, and Helene Foley, with particular reference to the muting of women's laments in favour of public praise in Euripides' *Suppliant Women*.[438] Indeed, it is certainly possible that the rise of the *epitaphios logos* during the fifth century BC as a public, democratic means of commemorating Athens' dead had a broader influence on the types of lament found in the choral voice of later Tragedy. The diminution of choral lament almost universally across Sophocles' and Euripides' plays may itself be a function of a democratic society that sought to minimise the excesses of private grief. In particular, the gendered attributes of later choral laments - the male voice often advocating consolatory motifs and praise for the dead while the female voice tends towards empathy and emotion - may also reflect the gendered divide between the role of male public officials who led the *epitaphios logos* and the women whose private grief the *epitaphios* attempted to constrain.[439]

However, such an argument can only take us so far in relation to the gendered aspects of lament in later Tragedy. While there may be gendered differences in the choral laments of Sophocles' and Euripides' plays which could be explained by the rise of the *epitaphios logos* in Athens, male protagonists are nevertheless allowed to lament for their private sorrow in an emotional, personal way which replicates that of female grief in these plays. Just as Teucer laments for Ajax in Sophocles' play of the same name, so too do Admetus, Peleus, Iolaus, Amphitryon, Theseus, and Iphis and Adrastus all lament for their own personal

[438] Loraux (1986) 48-49; McClure (1999) 44-46; and Foley (2001) 36-44.
[439] For further details of how the *epitaphios logos* was performed, see Loraux (1986).

catastrophes in Euripides' *Alcestis, Andromache, Children of Heracles, Heracles, Hippolytus* and *Suppliant Women* respectively.[440] Indeed, in *Alcestis* and *Children of Heracles,* as discussed above, the male chorus even attempts to discourage the bereft Admetus and Iolaus from mourning their loss too greatly. Similarly, in *Suppliant Women*, Theseus helps Adrastus to replace his private grief for the soldiers lost in battle for Thebes with public commemoration and praise for their dedication to their community (838-941).

Conclusion

As this chapter has aimed to show, it is too simplistic to delineate lament solely along gendered lines in Tragedy. Evidence from Homeric and Archaic lament, as well as the depiction of lament in archaic and classical art, is itself a study in the limitations of seeing gender as the sole conditioning feature of grief in Greek literary and cultural sources: pre-classical sources in particular suggest that the act of lament was delineated less clearly along gender lines in Greek societies than has often been acknowledged.

This trend is most visible in Aeschylus' extant tragedies, whose male laments in particular share close similarities with Homeric depictions of grief. To view Aeschylean choral lament purely through the lens of a female-centric voice risks ignoring or having to explain away the laments performed by the chorus elders of *Agamemnon* and *Persians*, comparable both in length and emotion to those found in the corresponding female voice and in Homeric epic. A more nuanced approach to analysing Aeschylean male laments suggests the conclusion that men's grief in Aeschylus is defined more by the magnitude of the crisis (usually political as well as personal) than simply the gender of the lamenters.

[440] See Suter (2008) 156-180 for further discussion of these scenes of male lament.

There is a similar story of subversion to be found in Aeschylean female lament. Women's expressions of intense emotional grief may be expected given their central role in archaic and classical Greek funerary rituals. However, in Aeschylus' extant plays, their laments are often 'politicised', used as a vehicle for confronting wider democratic issues such as tensions between the individual and the state, to convey the force of disruptive power that marginalised voices in society have the capacity to exert.

Just as choral lament in Aeschylus' plays appears to depend primarily on the scale of the disaster rather than the gender of those lamenting it, so too in Sophocles' and Euripides' plays grief is often less 'gendered' than has sometimes been claimed. Some more obviously gendered patterns of lament do emerge in the choral voice of Sophocles' and Euripides' plays, with more personal, empathetic lament themes expressed mostly by female choruses and more generic, praise-focused consolatory themes espoused mainly by male choruses. Nevertheless, the picture again becomes more complex when considering that male protagonists lament in ways that mirror their female counterparts across Sophocles' and Euripides' plays.

Despite the gendered perception of ritual lament across archaic and classical cultural traditions, therefore, the social context of lament practices is not often visible on the Tragic stage. Instead, lament seems to be used to create a wider distancing effect between those on stage and those in the audience. It seems to me that male characters are allowed to lament freely in the plays, in the manner generally associated with women, as a means of demonstrating the extreme situations which they are forced to endure. In a dramatic tradition removed both spatially and temporally from its audience, mourning in Tragedy -

in both the female and male voice – may be seen as an additional form of 'cultural distancing', highlighting for the audience differences between theatre and reality.

Conclusion

This thesis has explored the influence of gender on the choral voice of Greek tragedy, both within the plays themselves and as a means of connecting them with their social context. By looking internally at speech patterns within the tragedies as well as externally at contemporary sources for women in Athenian literature and society, the thesis has shown that the tragedians differentiated the language of their female choruses in a variety of situations within the plays, constructing a male-authored 'type'. Careful analysis of these language patterns alongside external evidence for women's social position in Athens has demonstrated that greater nuance can be brought to the debate over whether the presentation of women in Tragedy bears any resemblance to the situation of real women in fifth-century Athens.

The contribution of this thesis to the already rich debate in this area is twofold. First, the use of sociolinguistic methodology in combination with sociological interpretations of the plays has brought a new perspective to existing literary analysis of women's voices in Tragedy. Second, making the often over-looked chorus the primary reference point for an exploration of 'ordinary' women on and off the stage has extended the scope of existing work in this area, such as Laura McClure's *Spoken Like A Woman.*[441] Using these methodological innovations, my primary aim has been to advance a more positive approach to connecting the women of Tragedy with their counterparts in Athenian society than has often been reflected in scholarly debate.[442]

[441] McClure (1999).
[442] Cf. Shaw (1975) 255-266; Gould (1980) 255-266; Zeitlin (1990a) 63-96; Hall (1997) 93-126; Foley (2001); Mossman (2005) 352-365; and Rutherford (2012) 289-291.

The first two chapters have introduced one way of integrating modern sociolinguistic methodology into the choral language of Tragedy. A systematic sociolinguistic analysis of an artificial, ancient literary language for which the real-life context of Athenian spoken word has been largely lost must necessarily be limited in its scope. Nevertheless, seminal modern theories about the impact of gender on women's speech – such as the 'deficit' and 'dominance' models – can be applied in broad terms to both an Athenian social context and, by extension, to the male-constructed female speech found across Tragedy. In simple terms, sociolinguistic studies of gendered language allow the argument to be advanced that despite the obvious 'male gaze' that underpins the language of Tragedy, it is likely that the tragedians nevertheless used their own observations and experiences of women in Athenian society, alongside the cultural biases which typify the male-dominated sources of the period, to inform the characters they created. When set alongside the typically 'androcentric' approach to the women on the Tragic stage, this approach has added nuance to a debate that has too often relied on seeing the female figures of Tragedy as mere foils for male civic concerns and anxieties.[443]

In the context of this thesis, the sociolinguistic method has been used as a new foundation on which the broader literary and sociological analysis of the female choral language in Tragedy, which occupies much of chapters 3 and 4, is based. In this regard, it is heavily indebted to the methodology employed by Laura McClure in *Spoken Like A Woman*, but has extended and re-framed this method of linguistic-literary-sociological analysis through its focus on the choral voice. This has allowed for a more consistent comparative approach to the language of women across the work of all three extant tragedians than the individualised portraits of the plays' protagonists can provide. It has also used the chorus' mediating role between the remote aristocratic heroines of mythology and the socio-cultural realities of the

[443] This 'androcentric' view is advanced particularly by Zeitlin (1990a) 63-96.

Athenian audience to argue that this character-type can provide the most fruitful point of contact between the women on the Tragic stage and their real-life Athenian counterparts.

A full sociolinguistic analysis of female choral language in Tragedy has been beyond the scope of this thesis due to the sheer volume of data-points that would need to be systematically catalogued and analysed. For this reason, my own approach has centred on three syntactic forms – tragic cries, close repetition and rhetorical questions – which recur across the choral voice in Tragedy. While these forms are not sex-specific, their use in female choral language has been compared with similar passages in male choral language to identify the potentially 'gendered' ways in which these speech-patterns can be used across the choral language of all three tragedians. Nevertheless, there is scope for those with deeper expertise in linguistic analysis to extend this nascent area of scholarship in Tragedy, building on the work of Laura McClure (on sex-specific and sex-preferential language forms in Euripides) and Virginia Lewis (on gendered language in Sophocles' *Electra*), for instance.[444] There is also scope to take the methodology of comparative linguistic and literary analysis in new directions, for example via a comparative analysis of the metrical forms used across choral odes, to gain a better understanding of whether the musicality of the chorus' songs was influenced by sociological factors such as gender, ethnicity, or social class.

The second two chapters of the thesis have extended this comparative approach, moving away from purely sociolinguistic analysis to encompass a broader sociological reading of the female choral voice in Tragedy. This has facilitated a closer examination of how Athenian male conceptions of gender are used in Tragedy to characterise the style, substance and context of women's speech.

[444] McClure (1995) 35-60; and Lewis (2015) 217-241.

Chapter 3 has compared the depiction of female speech in Old Comedy with the language of the 'ordinary' women of Euripides' choruses with the conclusion that in the latter part of fifth-century drama, women's literary speech was often typecast by the (male) poets as being gossiping, vacuous and unintelligent, reflecting the wider cultural stereotypes of women evident in other surviving male-authored sources from the period. This stereotyped female speech correlates with the typically 'androcentric' view of women in Tragedy which argues that in a literary tradition that was created by and primarily for men, women are depicted in stylised terms – and often as foils for the desirable characteristics in citizen men.[445] However, reading Tragedy's choruses solely through the lens of 'the male gaze' does not accurately take into account the whole picture. In particular, the differences between how male and female choruses treat typical choral themes such as love and war have shown not only that the tragedians consciously differentiated the views of their choruses on these issues by gender, but also that they were sensitive to some of the realities of women's economic, legal and social position in Athens, which in turn are reflected in their presentation of the everyday female characters on stage.

This has enabled a more positive interpretation of how the women on stage in Tragedy relate to their real-life counterparts in Athens. Rather than viewing Tragedy's female characters in opposition to the realities of Athenian women's lives, the thesis has instead argued that the tragedians (and particularly Euripides) created female characters with a 'dual perspective', capable of simultaneously projecting the established female stereotypes visible elsewhere in androcentric Athenian literature and articulating a worldview that may have reflected a genuine observation and understanding of women's experiences in contemporary Athenian society.

[445] See in particular Zeitlin (1990a) 63-96; Hall (1997) 93-136 and Foley (2001) for this argument.

Chapter 4 has tested the limits of the correlation between gendered stereotypes and sociological reality in Tragedy in the specific area of lament. Lamentation is often seen as a 'feminine' speech act, as reflected in the surviving historical and cultural evidence for ritual lament traditions in the pre-Classical and Classical periods. However, the prominence of male lament throughout Tragedy – and particularly in Aeschylus' plays – raises the question of how far the tragedians' literary representation of lament corresponded to actual funerary practice in fifth-century BC Athens. Instead, the thesis has argued that Tragic lament often has more in common with Homeric and archaic literary lament, in which men are able to express their grief more fully and freely than the cultural constraints on Athenian citizen would have allowed. While some gendered differences between male and female laments in Tragedy are visible, the thesis has argued that the language of lament is delineated less strongly along gender boundaries than its socio-cultural context suggests as a means of culturally distancing the dramatic action (and its intended emotional impact) from the social ideals governing the actual behaviour of both men and women in Athens.

The thesis has added to existing sociological analysis of Tragedy by focusing the debate on the often over-looked choral voice of Tragedy rather than the language of the plays' protagonists. It has argued that despite the linguistic remoteness of the chorus' poetic language from the actual speech of Athenians, this character-type is nevertheless well-suited to a sociological analysis of Tragedy in its Athenian context. Precisely because the chorus typically represents a recognisable societal subgroup, in my view they are better positioned to fulfil a mediating role between actor and audience than Tragedy's archetypally individualised and anachronistic heroes and heroines. However, further nuance can and should be added to the sociological debate surrounding Tragedy's position in Greek culture more broadly than Athens. Given the recent – and welcome – focus on

performance traditions of Tragedy beyond the City Dionysia, there is scope to provide a fresh look at how the female characters in these plays may have been perceived in non-Athenian – and indeed non-Greek – cultural contexts, particularly in comparison to the sociohistorical backdrop of fifth-century Athens.

The central aim of this thesis has been to rebalance rather than fundamentally reshape previous, and often excessively polarised, debates on the characterisation and function Tragedy's female characters. Instead, its innovation lies on the one hand in its methodology, by integrating sociolinguistic techniques more systematically into the study of Tragic language, and on the other in its scope, by putting the choral voice at the front and centre of the plays' sociological contextualisation. In so doing, it has been able to illuminate Tragedy's already well-known female characters in new ways and to suggest that on the fifth-century dramatic stage, the male tragedians did occasionally allow the real women around them to be seen *and* to be heard.

Appendix: Recurring Speech Patterns in the Choral Voice

Introduction

The appendix is intended both as a stand-alone guide to recurring patterns of speech in the choral lyrics of Tragedy and as a key to some of the passages discussed in the main body of the thesis. It is organised by two sub-headings: 'female choral lyric' and 'male choral lyric'. Within these categories, the plays are listed alphabetically by author (Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides respectively).

The three linguistic categories – 'tragic cries', 'close repetition' and 'rhetorical questions' – denote types of syntax which are particularly prevalent in the choral voice. 'Tragic cries' refers to exclamations, often extraneous to the syntax of the line, uttered in a state of anxiety, frenzy or lament. 'Close repetition' refers to words or phrases repeated for emphasis either consecutively or within close proximity in the text, allowing for adjustments such as *nu ephelkustikon* and elision. 'Rhetorical questions' refers to questions asked by the chorus in their lyric passages where there is no obvious intended respondent on stage; most often these questions refer to either themselves, other (offstage) characters, or more general, gnomic issues.

The evidence is listed within each category by order of the line number in which it appears, with multiple instances of the same type listed once and followed by the relevant line numbers: for instance, φεῦ (781) (811) means that φεῦ occurs twice, at lines 781 and 811. Some of the examples are made uncertain by textual issues. These instances have additional markings, with footnotes to clarify whether the text is uncertain, conjectured, or of doubtful

authenticity. The text for the appendix, including any relevant editorial decisions, is drawn from the Oxford Classical Texts editions for each play as listed in the Bibliography.[446]

The linguistic categories have been chosen because they represent recurring syntactic features across the choral lyric voice, male and female, of the extant tragedies. In the context of the thesis, the sociolinguistic background of this appendix is discussed further in chapter 1, and discernible patterns within this body of evidence are elaborated on in chapters 2 and 4. As with any evidence drawn from literary sources, editorial selections of the material have been made according to the categories described above; the appendix is therefore not to be seen as a fixed data-set, but rather as a necessarily subjective guide to the types of linguistic evidence which can be found across the choral lyric voice in Tragedy.

[446] **Textual differences are marked as follows:**
* Text uncertain.
† Text conjectured.
§ Authenticity doubted.
** *LSJ* defines ἰώ as 'an exclamation…esp. in invoking aid, freq. also of grief or suffering' (p.847, accessed from http://stephanus.tlg.uci.edu/lsj/). It should be noted that throughout this appendix instances of ἰώ are listed as tragic cries only when uttered in the sense of the latter part of this definition, as a cry of grief or suffering.

Female choral lyric

Aeschylus

Eumenides
Choral identity: Furies

Tragic cries
ἰοὺ ἰοὺ πόπαξ (143)
ὦ πόποι (145)
ὦ (357)
ἰὼ** (808) (821)
φεῦ (781) (811) (837) (839) (870) (871)
οἰοῖ δᾶ φεῦ (841) (874)
(Total: 13)

Close repetition
λαβὲ λαβὲ λαβὲ λαβέ (130)
ἔγειρ', ἔγειρε (140)
ἐπάθομεν..ἐπάθομεν (143-5)
ὅρα, ὅρα (254)
μᾶτερ...μᾶτερ (321-2)
ἰὸν ἰὸν (782) (812)
Δίκα Δίκα (785) (815)
ἐμὲ...ἐμὲ (837-8) (869-870)
χαίρετε χαίρετ' (996-7)† (1014)
(Total: 12)

Rhetorical questions
εὔδεις; (141)
τί τῶνδ... (154)
τίς οὖν... (389-393)
τίς δὲ... (522-5)
τί ῥέξω; (788) (818)
τίς μ'... (842) (875)
(Total: 8)

Libation Bearers
Choral identity: Foreign slaves of the royal house

Tragic Cries
ὀτοτοτοτοτοῖ (159)
ἰώ** (469) (470)
αἰαῖ αἰαῖ (1007) (1009) (1019)
(Total: 6)

Close repetition
κλύε...κλύ' (157)
νῦν...νῦν...νῦν (725-6)
ἐμὸν ἐμὸν (825)
Ζεῦ Ζεῦ (855)
ἔμολε...ἔμολε (935-7)
διπλοῦc...διπλοῦς (938)
(Total: 6)

Rhetorical questions
τί γὰρ... (389-390)
τίς λέγοι... (595-8)
τί τῶνδ'... (638)
πότε δὴ... (720)
τί λέγω; (855)
πόθεν ἄρξωμαι... (855-6)
πῶc ἴcον... (858-9)
πῶc ἔχει; (871)
πῶc κέκρανται... (871)
ἢ μόρον εἴπω; (1074)
ποῖ δῆτα κρανεῖ; (1075)
ποῖ καταλήξει... (1075-6)
(Total: 12)

Prometheus Bound
Choral identity: Oceanids – maiden daughters of Oceanus

Tragic cries
φεῦ (687)
ἰὼ ἰὼ** (693)
(Total: 2)

Close repetition
οὔποθ'...οὔποτ' (688)
μοῖρα μοῖρα (693)
ἦ cοφὸc ἦ cοφὸc (887)
μήποτε μήποτέ (894)
(Total: 4)

Rhetorical questions
τίς ὧδε... (160-1)
τίς οὐ... (162-3)
παῖ ποτε... (183-4)
φέρε, πῶc... (545)
εἰπέ, ποῦ... (546)
τίς ἐφαμερίων... (547)
οὐδ' ἐδέρχθηc... (547-550)
(Total: 7)

Seven Against Thebes
Choral identity: Theban maidens

Tragic cries
φεῦ φεῦ (135)
ἔ ἔ ἔ ἔ (150) (158)
ἔ ἔ (327) (339)
αἰαῖ (787) (893) (894)
ἰὼ (845) (871)§ (951) (975) (986) (994a) (994b) (1000) (1001) (1002) (1003)
ἰὼ ἰὼ** (875) (881) (969) (998) (999)† (1004)
ἠέ (966a) (966b) (978a) (978b)
(Total: 29)

Close repetition
τίς ἄρα…τίς ἄρ᾽ (93)
ἀκούετ᾽…ἀκούετ᾽ (100)
πότε ποτ᾽ (101-2)†
ἔπιδ᾽ ἔπιδε (106)
κλύετε…κλύετε (171)
τίς ἂν…τίς ἄν (738-9)
δι᾽ ὧν…δι᾽ ὧν (904-5)
ciδαρόπληκτοι…
ciδαρόπληκτοι (911-2)
διπλᾶ… διπλᾶ (972)
ὀλοὰ…ὀλοὰ (993)
(Total: 10)

Rhetorical questions
τίς ἄρα… (93-4)
πότερα δῆτ᾽… (95-6)
τί μέλλομεν… (98-9)
ἀκούετ᾽… (100)
ποτ᾽ εἰ μὴ νῦν… (101-2)
τί ῥέξεις; (104)
προδώceις… (104-5)
τί πόλις… (156)
τί γενήceται; (156)
ποῖ δ᾽ ἔτι… (157)
τί γένωμαι; (297)
ποῖον δ᾽… (304-311)
τί ἐκ τῶνδ᾽… (356)*
τίς ἂν… (737)
τίς ἂν σφε… (738)
τίν᾽ ἀνδρῶν… (772-7)
πότερον… (825-831)§
τί φῶ; (850)
τί δ᾽ ἄλλο… (851)
(Total: 19)

Suppliants
Choral identity: Egyptian maidens

Tragic cries
ἰὴ ἰή (115)
ἰὼ ἰώ** (125)
ἰὼ** (125) (162)*
ἔ ἔ (142) (152)
ἆ (162)
ὅ ὅ ὅ ἅ ἅ ἅ (825)*
ἠέ ἠέ (831)
αἰαῖ αἰαῖ (866)
οἰοῖ οἰοῖ (876)
οἰοῖ (885)
ὀτοτοτοτοῖ (889) (899)
(Total: 14)

Close repetition
ἰλέομαι … καλύπτρᾳ. (117-122 & 128-133)
cπέρμα … ἐκφυγεῖν. (141-3 & 151-3)
ὄναρ ὄναρ (887)
ὀτοτοτοτοῖ … Ζεῦ. (889-892 & 899-902)
μᾶ Γᾶ μᾶ Γᾶ (890 & 900)
(Total: 9)

Rhetorical questions
ποῖ τόδε… (126)
καὶ τότε δὴ τίc… (571-3)
τίς γὰρ ἂν… (586-7)
τίν᾽ ἂν θεῶν… (590-1)
τίς ἂν δόμοc… (647-650)
τί πειcόμεθα; (777)
ποῖ φύγωμεν… (777-8)
πόθεν δε… (792-9)
ἀμφυγᾶc τίν᾽… (806-7)
τέλεα δὲ πῶc… (810)
τί δ᾽ ἄνευ… (823-4)
(Total: 11)

Sophocles

Electra
Choral identity: Argive maidens

Tragic cries
φεῦ (843)
παπαῖ (867)
(Total: 2)

Close repetition
ὦ παῖ παῖ (121) (1084)
θάρσει…θάρσει (173)
οἰκτρὰ…οἰκτρὰ (193-4)
μήποτε μήποθ' (496)
φθίνει φθίνει (1414)
(Total: 6)

Rhetorical questions
ποῦ ποτε… (823-5)
τί τοὺς… (1058-1062)
τίς ἂν… (1081)
(Total: 3)

Women of Trachis
Choral identity: Trachinian maidens

Tragic cries
ὦ πόποι (852)
ἰὼ** (856)
αἰαῖ (968)
(Total: 3)

Close repetition
Ἅλιον Ἅλιον (96)
πόθι μοι πόθι μοι (98)
παιᾶνα παιᾶν' (210-1)
ἰὼ ἰὼ (221)
ἴδε ἴδ' (222)
ἀφίκοιτ'ἀφίκοιτο (655)
ἔτι…ἔτ' (829)
ἦ που…ἦ που (846-7)
ἔτεκ' ἔτεκε (893)
(Total: 9)

Rhetorical questions
πόθι μοι… (98-9)
ἦ Ποντίας… (100-1)
ἐπεὶ τίς… (139-140)
τίνες ἀμφίγυοι… (504)†
τίνες… (505-6)
πῶς γὰρ… (828-830)
πῶς ὅδ'… (835-7)
πότερον ἐγὼ… (863-4)
τί φημι; (865)
πότερα πρότερον… (947)
πότερα μέλεα… (948)
πᾷ δ'… (965)
τί χρή… (969-970)
(Total: 13)

Euripides

Andromache
Choral identity: Thessalian women

Tragic cries
ὀττοτοτοτοῖ (1198)
ἰὼ ἰὼ** (1226)
(Total: 2)

Close repetition
θεοῦ θεοῦ (1031)
νόσον…νόσον (1044)
τλήμων…τλήμων (1168)
θανεῖν θανεῖν (1208)
(Total: 4)

Rhetorical questions
δεσπόταις ἁμιλλᾷ… (127-8)
τί σοι καιρὸς… (130-2)
τί μόχθον… (133-4)
τίν᾽ οὐκ… (299-300)
τίνος οὕνεκ᾽… (1013-8)
πῶς πείθομαι; (1036)
(Total: 6)

Bacchae
Choral identity: Asian bacchants

Tragic cries

Close repetition
τίς ὁδῷ; τίς ὁδῷ; (68)
ἴτε βάκχαι, ἴτε βάκχαι (83)
βρύετε βρύετε (107)
εἰς ὄρος εἰς ὄρος (116) (162)
ῥεῖ δὲ…ῥεῖ δὲ…ῥεῖ δὲ (142-3)
ὦ ἴτε βάκχαι, ὦ ἴτε βάκχαι (152-3)
Ὁσία…Ὁσία (370-1)
ἀίεις; ἀίεις (373-4)
Βρόμιε Βρόμιε (412) (584)
ἐκεῖ…ἐκεῖ…ἐκεῖ (415)
οἷαν οἷαν (537)§
σύναγεν…σύναγεν (562-3)
ἰὼ ἰὼ (582)
δέσποτα δέσποτα (582)
ἃ ἃ (586) (596)
δίκετε…δίκετε (600)
εὐδαίμων…εὐδαίμων (902-4)
ἴτε…ἴτ᾽ (977)
ἐς ὄρος ἐς ὄρος (986)
ἔμολ᾽ ἔμολεν (986)
ἴτω…ἴτω (992) (1011)
ὁ Διόνυσος ὁ Διόνυσος (1037)
(Total: 26)

Rhetorical questions
τίς ὁδῷ; (68)
τίς ὁδῷ; (68)
τίς μελάθροις; (68-9)
τάδε Πενθέως… (373)
ἀίεις οὐχ… (374-8)
τί μ᾽ ἀναίνῃ; (533)
τί με φεύγεις; (533)
ἐσορᾷς τάδ᾽… (550-2)
πόθι Νύσας… (556-9)
πῦρ οὐ… (597-9)
ἀρ᾽ ἐν… (862-876)
τί τὸ σοφόν… (877-880)* (897-900)*
(Total: 13)

Electra
Choral identity: rural Argive women

Tragic cries
ἰὼ** (1185)
(Total: 1)

Close repetition
ἔμολέ…ἔμολεν (169)
ἀνὰ…ἀνὰ (445)
ἔτ᾽ ἔτι (485)
τότε…τότε (727)
ἐμὸς ἐμὸς (1149)
τύχας…τύχας (1185)
ἄλαστα ἄλαστα (1186-7)†
πάλιν πάλιν (1201)
(Total: 8)

βοῆς ἠκούσατ᾽… (747-8)
κλύεις ὑπώροφον… (1166)
(Total: 2)

Hecuba
Choral identity: Trojan women

Tragic Cries
ὤμοι (475) (476)
(Total: 2)

Close repetition
αὔρα…αὔρα (444)
ὤμοι…ὤμοι (475-6)
ἐμοὶ χρῆν…ἐμοὶ χρῆν (629-630)
δορὶ…δορὶ (908)
ὀλέθριον ὀλέθριον (1031)
(Total: 5)

Rhetorical questions
ποῖ με… (447-8)
τῷ δουλόσυνος… (448-9)
ἢ Δωρίδος… (449-450)
ἢ Φθιάδος… (451-3)
ἢ νάσων… (455-461)
σὺν Δηλιάσιν… (462-5)
ἢ Παλλάδος… (466-474)
(Total: 7)

Helen
Choral identity: Greek slave-women living in Egypt

Tragic cries
αἰαῖ (211)
(Total: 1)

Close repetition
ἔλαχεν ἔλαχεν (214)
ἔμολεν ἔμολε (1118)
ναῦται…ναῦται (1462)
(Total: 3)

Rhetorical questions
τί γὰρ… (217)
τί δ᾽ἀνὰ… (218)
τίς φησ᾽… (1137-8)
(Total: 3)

Hippolytus
Choral identity: Trozenian women

Tragic Cries
ὦ (362a) (362b)
ἰώ μοι** (365)
φεῦ φεῦ (365) (680) (778) (866) (870)
ὤμοι (591)
αἰαῖ (595) (814) (881)
ἒ ἔ (595) (1255)
ἰὼ ἰὼ** (811) (1147)
φεῦ (1145)
(Total: 17)

Close repetition
ὦ…ὦ (362)
Ἔρως Ἔρως (525)
ἄλλως ἄλλως (535)
σὺν…σὺν (551)
ἔνεπε δ᾽ἔνεπε (580)
εἴδομεν εἴδομεν (1124)
(Total: 6)

Rhetorical questions
σὺ γὰρ… (141-4)*
σὺ δ᾽ ἀμφὶ… (145-7)*
ἢ πόσιν… (151-4)
ἢ ναυβάτας… (155-160)
ἄιες ὦ… (362-3)
τίς σε… (369)
τί σοι μήσομαι; (592)
τί δρῶμεν; (782)
ἦ δοκεῖ… (782-3)
τί δ᾽; (784)
οὐ πάρεισι… (784)
τίς ἄρα… (816)
τί τὸν… (1148-1150)
(Total: 13)

Ion
Choral identity: slave-women of Creusa

Tragic cries

Close repetition
δύο…δύο (466)
ὄλοιτ᾽ ὄλοιτο (705)
(Total: 2)

Rhetorical questions
ἆρ᾽ ὃς… (196-200)
τίν᾽, ὦ παῖ… (681-2)
πόθεν ὁ παῖς… (683-4)
γυναικῶν τίνος; (684)
τίς οὐ… (694)
πότερ᾽ ἐμᾷ… (695-8)
τίνα φυγὰν… (1238-1243)
τί ποτ᾽… (1246-7)
ἆρα θέλουσαι… (1247-9)
(Total: 9)

Iphigenia at Aulis
Choral identity: Euboean women

Tragic cries
ἰὼ ἰώ** (1510)§
(Total: 1)

Close repetition
Ἀχαιῶν…Ἀχαιῶν (171-2)
ἔριν ἔριν (183) (587)
διάφοροι…διάφοροι (558-9)
πότνια πότνια (1524)†§
(Total: 5)

Rhetorical questions
τίν᾽ ἄρ᾽… (1036-1047)
ποῦ τὸ… (1090-7)
(Total: 2)

Iphigenia among the Taurians
Choral identity: maiden Greek slave-women of Iphigenia

Tragic cries
οἴμοι (186) (187)
φεῦ φεῦ (651)
αἰαῖ (652)
(Total: 4)

Close repetition
ἔβαcαν ἔβαcαν (402)
πῶc…πῶc (422-3)
ποθοῦc᾽…ποθοῦc᾽ (1096-7)
ἔτι…ἔτι…ἔτι (1250)
(Total: 4)

Rhetorical questions
τίνες ποτ᾽ (399-406)
ἦ ῥοθίοις… (407-412)
πῶc τὰc… (422-438)
πότεροc ὁ… (654)*
(Total: 4)

Medea
Choral identity: Corinthian women

Tragic cries
φεῦ φεῦ (358)
ἰὼ** (1274)
(Total: 2)

Close repetition
ἕκλυον…ἕκλυον (131)
θανάτῳ θανάτῳ (650)
οὐ…οὐ (656)
cκέψαι…cκέψαι (851-2)
οὐκέτι…οὐκέτι (976-7)
δέξεται…δέξεται (978-9)
κατλιδετ᾽ ἴδετε (1252)
μάταν…μάταν (1261-2)
ἀκούειc…ἀκούειc (1273)
μίαν…μίαν (1282)
(Total: 10)

Rhetorical questions
ἄιεc, ὦ Zεῦ… (148-150)
τίc coί… (151-2)
cπεύceιc… (152-3)
πῶc ἂν… (173-7)
ποῖ ποτε… (359)
τίνα προξενίαν… (359-361)
πῶc οὖν…(846-850)
πόθεν θράcoc… (856-9)
πῶc δ᾽ὄμματα… (860-2)
τί coι… (1265-7)
παρέλθω δόμουc; (1275)
τί δῆτ᾽… (1290)
(Total: 12)

Orestes
Choral identity: Argive women

Tragic cries
αἰαῖ (316)
φεῦ (327)
ἰώ** (976)
ἰὼ ἰὼ** (1537)
(Total: 4)

Close repetition
τινύμεναι…τινύμεναι (323)
καθικετεύομαι
καθικετεύομαι (324)
ἔλακεν ἔλακε (330)
τίς…τίς (333) (831-2)
κατολοφύρομαι
κατολοφύρομαι (339)
ἔλεος ἔλεος (968)
βέβακε…βέβακεν (971)
ὦ Διὸς ὦ Διὸς (1299)
σιγᾶτε σιγᾶτ᾽ (1311)
κτύπον…κτύπον (1353)
ὀλόμενον ὀλόμενον (1364)
τέλος…τέλος (1545)
ἔπες᾽ ἔπεσε (1547)
(Total: 14)

Rhetorical questions
τίς ἔλεος… (333-5)
τίνα γὰρ… (345-7)
τίς νόσος… (831-3)
τί δρῶμεν; (1539)
ἀγγέλλωμεν ἑς… (1539)
ἢ σῖγ᾽ ἔχωμεν; (1540)
(Total: 6)

Phoenician Women
Choral identity: Phoenician maidservants to Apollo's temple

Tragic cries
φεῦ φεῦ (246)
ἰώ** (680) (1290a) (1290b) (1290c)*
αἰαῖ αἰαῖ (1284)
φεῦ δᾶ φεῦ δᾶ (1296)
(Total: 7)

Close repetition
κοινὰ…κοινὰ (243-4)
ἐκάλες᾽ ἐκάλεσα (679)*
βᾶθι βᾶθι (681)
πάντων πάντων (686-7)
ἔτεκες…ἔτεκες (818)
ἐδάην ἐδάην (819)
ἔβας ἔβας (1019)
ἔφερες ἔφερες (1030)
ἰάλεμοι δὲ…ἰάλεμοι δὲ (1033-4)
ἰηιήιον…ἰηιήιον (1036-7)
ἀγάμεθ᾽ ἀγάμεθ᾽ (1054)
γενοίμεθ᾽…γενοίμεθ᾽ (1060-1)
τρομερὰν…τρομερὰν (1284-5)
ἔλεος ἔλεος (1286)
ἰώ…ἰώ (1290)
ὁμογενῆ…ὁμογενῆ (1291)
δι᾽…δι᾽ (1292)
τάλαιν᾽…τάλαινα (1293)
πέσεα πέσεα (1298)
(Total: 19)

Rhetorical questions
τί ποθ᾽… (784-5)
πότερος ἄρα… (1288-1292)
πότερον ἄρα… (1295)
(Total: 3)

Suppliant Women

Choral identity: Mothers of the seven Argive heroes who fought at Thebes

Tragic Cries

ἒἔ (77)† (85) (1074)
ἰὼ** (918) (1072) (1077) (1114)
ἰὼ ἰώ** (1127) (1134)
αἰαῖ (1147)
(Total: 10)

Close repetition

δὸς…μετάδος (58)
ἵτ᾽ ὦ…ἵτ᾽ ὦ (73-4)
βᾶθι…βᾶθι (271-2)
οἰκτρὸν…οἰκτρὸν (281)
ἐκλύετε…ἐκλύετε (366)*
ἄμυνε…ἄμυνε (377)
τίνα…τὶν᾽ (605-6)
εἰδείης…εἰδείης (622)
τίς….τίς (623)
τὸ σὸν…τὸ σὸν (631)
οὐκέτ᾽…οὐκέτ᾽ (955)
ἑπτὰ…ἑπτὰ (963)
ποῦ… ποῦ (1134-5)
ἅλις…ἅλις (1147-8)
(Total: 14)

Rhetorical questions

τί γάρ; (51)
ἐκλύετε τάδ᾽… (366-9)*
τί μοι… (374-5)
ἆρα φίλιά… (375-6)
τίνα λόγον, τίν᾽… (606-7)
τίνες γὰρ… (611)
πῶς ἱκοίμεθ᾽… (618-9)
τίς ποτ᾽…(623-5)
τί γάρ… (789)
τί μὲν γὰρ… (790-1)
πῶς ἂν… (796-7)
τί γὰρ… (1120-2)
ποῦ δὲ… (1134)
ποῦ λοχευμάτων… (1135-7)
(Total: 14)

Trojan Women

Choral identity: Trojan women, newly enslaved

Tragic cries

οἳ ἐγώ (161)
ἰὼ ἰώ** (164) (187) (1118) (1251)
οἴμοι (176) (1231)
αἰαῖ αἰαῖ (197) (1226)
ὤμοι (1091)
ἒ ἔ (1216) (1303) (1318)
ἰώ μοί μοι** (1237)
ἰὼ** (1331)
(Total: 15)

Close repetition

νέατον…νέατον (201-2)
τίς οὐκ…τίς οὐ (527-8)
ἔβας ἔβας (804)
Ἴλιον Ἴλιον (806)
πυρὸς πυρὸς (815)†
ᾇ…ᾇ…ᾇ (831-2)
Ἔρως Ἔρως (840)
εἶδε…εἶδε (850-1)
Ἰδαῖα τ᾽ Ἰδᾶια (1066)
μέλει μέλει (1077)
ὦ…ὦ (1081)
βοᾶι βοᾶι (1090)
ἔθιγες ἔθιγες (1217)
ἄρασσ᾽ ἄρασσε (1235)
ἄλγος ἄλγος (1310)
(Total: 15)

Rhetorical questions

μή με… (178-9)
ἦ κατὰ… (180-1)
ἤδη τις… (184)
τῷ πρόσκειμαι… (185)
τίς μ᾽… (187-9)
ποίοις δ᾽… (197-8)
τίς οὐκ…(527-8)
οὕτω δὴ… (1060-1070)
(Total: 8)

Male choral lyric

Aeschylus

Agamemnon
Choral identity: Argive elders

Tragic cries
φεῦ (1143) (1448)
ἰὼ ἰὼ** (1455) (1489) (1513)
φεῦ φεῦ (1483)
ἰὼ ἰή** (1485)
ὤμοι μοι (1494) (1518)
ἰὼ** (1538)
(Total: 10)

Close repetition
αἴλινον αἴλινον (121) (138) (159)
πῶc cε…πῶc cε (785)
Ἴτυν Ἴτυν (1144)
βαcιλεῦ βαcιλεῦ (1489) (1513)
πῶ, πῶ (1507)
γᾶ γᾶ (1538)
τίc ὁ…τίc ὁ (1541)
(Total: 10)

Rhetorical questions
τίc οἶδεν… (478)
τίc ὧδε… (479-482)
τίc ποτ᾽… (681-7)
πῶc cε… (785)
πῶc cε (785-7)
τίπτε μοι… (975-8)
τίc ἄν… (1020-1)
τίc ἀγαθὰ… (1132-3)
τίc ἄν… (1341-2)
τίc ἄν… (1448-1453)
τί γὰρ… (1487)
τί τῶνδ᾽… (1488)
πῶc cε… (1490) (1514)
φρενὸc ἐκ… (1491) (1515)
τίc ὁ μαρτυρήcων; (1506)
πῶ, πῶ; (1507)
τίc ὁ θάψων νιν; (1541)
τίc ὁ θρηνήcων; (1541)
τίc δ᾽ ἐπιτύμβιον… (1547-1550)
τίc ἄν γονὰν… (1565)
(Total: 22)

Persians
Choral identity: Persian elders

Tragic cries
ὀᾶ (116) (122) (570) (573) (578) (582)
αἰαῖ (257) (283)
ὀτοτοτοῖ (268) (274)
ποποῖ (550) (560)
τοτοῖ (551) (561)
φεῦ (568) (576)
ἠέ (569) (577) (652) (657)
οἴ (663) (671) (1045) (1053)
αἰαῖ αἰαῖ (672) (928)† (1039)
ὦ πόποι (852)
ὀτοτοῖ (918)
οἰοἰοῖ (955) (966)
ὦ ὦ (985)
ἰὼ ἰὼ** (1005) (1070) (1074)
παπαῖ παπαῖ (1031)
ὀτοτοτοτοῖ (1043) (1051)
οἰοῖ οἰοῖ (1067)
ἰωὰ (1072)
ἠὴ ἠή (1076)
(Total: 41)

Close repetition
ἄνι᾽ ἄνια (256)* (1055) (1061)
Ξέρξηc …Ξέρξηc (550-2)
νᾶεc…νᾶεc…νᾶεc (560-2)
ἦ φίλοc…ἦ φίλοc (647)
Ἀϊδωνεὺc…Ἀϊδωνεὺc (650)
βαλήν…βαλήν (658)
δυνάcτα, δυνάcτα (675)*
ἄναεc ἄναεc (680)
cέβομαι…cέβομαι (694-5)
δίομαι…δίομαι (700-1)
αἰνῶc αἰνῶc (930)
ποῦ δὲ…ποῦ δε (956-7) (966-8)*
μυρία μυρία (980)
ἔλιπεc ἔλιπεc (985)
ἔταφον ἔταφον (1000)
ὀρῶ ὀρῶ (1019)
δύα δύα (1039)
ἄπριγδ᾽ ἄπριγδα (1057) (1063)
ναὶ ναί (1072)
(Total: 23)

Rhetorical questions
τίc ἀνὴρ… (94)
τί ὁ κραιπνῷ… (95)
τίπτε Δαρεῖοc… (555-7)
ἦ ῥ᾽ ἀίει (635-7)
ἆρα κλύει μου; (639)
τί τάδε… (675-7)
(Total: 6)

Sophocles

Ajax

Choral identity: Ajax's soldiers from Salamis

Tragic cries
ὤμοι (227) (900) (901) (909) (946) (1205)
ὄιμ᾽ (354)
ὤμοι μοι (610)
φεῦ φεῦ (958)
(Total: 9)

Close repetition
μὴ μή (190)
ἔπεc᾽ ἔπεcε (619)
αἴλινον αἴλινον (627)
ἰὼ ἰὼ (694) (707)
Πὰν Πάν (694) (695)
νῦν…νῦν (707-8)
πᾷ πᾷ πᾷ (867-8)
ἰδοὺ ἰδοὺ (870)
τίc ἂν…τίc ἂν (879)
πάντα…πάντ᾽ (911)
πᾷ πᾷ (912)
ἔμελλεc…ἔμελλεc (925)
ἔρώτων δ᾽ ἐρώτων (1205)
τίc…τίc (1215)
(Total: 16)

Rhetorical questions
ἦ ῥά… (172-181)
πᾷ γὰρ οὐκ… (868)
τίc ἂν… (879-887)
τίc ἄρα… (1185-1191)
τίc μοι, τιc… (1215)
(Total: 5)

Antigone

Choral identity: Theban elders

Tragic cries

Close repetition
Ἔρωc…Ἔρωc (781-2)
cὺ καὶ…cὺ καὶ (791-3)
παῖ παῖ (949)
(Total: 3)

Rhetorical questions
πῶc δ᾽ εἰδὼc… (376-7)
τίc ἀνδρῶν…. (604-5)
(Total: 2)

Oedipus at Colonus

Choral identity: Elders from Colonus

Tragic cries
ἰὼ ἰώ** (140)
ἐή (150)
(Total: 2)

Close repetition
ὁ πάντων, ὁ πάντων (119-120)
πλανάτας, πλανάτας (123-4)
δεινὸc…δεινὸc (141)
περᾶc…περᾶc (155-6)
δεινὰ…δεινὰ (1077)
τελεῖ τελεῖ (1079)
ὁρᾷ δ᾽ ὁρᾷ (1453)
ἴλαοc…ἴλαοc (1480)
ἰὼ ἰώ (1492)
βᾶθι βᾶθ᾽ (1492)
Αἰδωνεῦ Αἰδωνεῦ (1559-1560)
(Total: 11)

Rhetorical questions
τίc ἄρ᾽ ἦν; (117)
ποῦ ναίει; (117)
ποῦ κυρεῖ… (118-120)
ἔρδουcιν ἢ μέλλουcιν; (1074)
τί μάν; (1468)
ἀφήcει βέλοc; (1468)
(Total: 6)

Oedipus the King
Choral identity: Theban elders

Tragic cries
ὦ πόποι (167)
ἰώ** (1186)
φεῦ φεῦ (1303)
(Total: 3)

Close repetition
δεινά…δεινὰ (483)
τίς σε…τίς σε (1098)
τίς…τίς (1189)
τὸν σόν…τὸν σὸν (1193-4)
πῶς ποτε πῶς ποθ' (1211)
εἴθε σ' εἴθε σε (1217)
πόλλ'…πολλὰ…πολλὰ (1304-5)
(Total: 7)

Rhetorical questions
τίς ποτε τᾶς… (151-3)
τί μοι ἢ νέον… (155-6)
τίς ὄντιν'… (463-6)
τίς ἔτι ποτ'… (892-4)
τί δεῖ με… (896)
τίς σε… (1098-1101)
ἢ σέ γ'… (1101-2)
τίς γάρ… (1189-1192)
τίς ἀθλιώτερος…(1204-6)
πῶς ποτε…(1211-3)
(Total: 10)

Philoctetes
Choral identity: Neoptolemus' sailors

Tragic cries

Close repetition
τί χρὴ τί χρὴ (135)
πῶς…πῶς (175)
βάλλει βάλλει (205)
εὐαίων, εὐαίων (829-830)
ἴθι ἴθι (832)
πολύ…πολὺ (838)†
βαιάν…βαίαν (844-5)
γνῶθ'…γνῶθ' (1165)
(Total: 8)

Rhetorical questions
πῶς ποτε… (175-6)
(Total: 1)

Euripides

Alcestis
Choral identity: men of Pherae

Tragic cries
αἰαῖ (215)† (228)
παπαῖ < > (226)*
ἰὼ ἰώ** (741)
(Total: 4)

Close repetition
δεινὰ…δεινὰ (218)
πόριζε…πόριζε (222)
ἰδοὺ ἰδού (233)
ὦ…ὦ (234)
πολὺ δὴ πολὺ δὴ (442)
ἔτλας ἔτλας (461)†
πρόβα, πρόβα (872)
τύχα τύχα (889)
(Total: 8)

Rhetorical questions
τί ποθ'… (77)
τί cεcίγηται… (78)
νῦν δὲ βίου… (130)
τίc ἂν… (213-4)
ἦ τέμω τρίχα… (215-7)
(Total: 5)

Children of Heracles
Choral identity: men from Marathon

Tragic cries

Close repetition

Rhetorical questions
τίc ἡ βοὴ… (73-4)
ποίαν cυμφορὰν… (74)
ποῦ ταῦτα…(369-370)
(Total: 3)

Heracles
Choral identity: old men of Thebes

Tragic cries
ὀτοτοτοῖ (875)
ἰὼ** (886)
αἰαῖ (900) (913) (1025)
φεῦ φεῦ (1028)
ἰώ μοι** (1031)
οἴμοι (1051)
(Total: 8)

Close repetition
τέκεα τέκεα (115)
οἵους οἵους (136)
παρά τε…παρά τε (682-3)
χοροὶ χοροὶ (763)
μεταλλαγαὶ…μεταλλαγαὶ (765-6)
θεοὶ θεοὶ (772)
φυγῇ φυγῇ (818)
ταχὺ…ταχὺ (884-5)
δάιον…δάιον (895)
ἰδοὺ ἰδού (904)
δάιοι…δάιοι (914-5)
ἀδύνατ' ἀδύνατ'(1059)
(Total: 12)

Rhetorical questions
τίc ὁ θεοὺc… (757-9)
ἆρ' ἐc… (816-7)
τίνα cτεναγμὸν…(1025-7)
τί παῖδ'… (1087-8)
(Total: 4)

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