THE CHORUS IN DIALOGUE:
READING LYRIC EXCHANGES IN GREEK TRAGEDY

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ABSTRACT

From the “Ode to Man” to songs of praise, the Greek tragic chorus are readily associated with the odes that they sing. Critical accounts, however, overlook their performances in a different mode: lyric dialogues in which they engage with actors through song or a lyrical mixture blending speech. In this dissertation, I argue that these exchanges were sites of active and self-conscious experimentation in fifth-century Athenian tragedy, in which tragedians not only tested the performative capabilities of both chorus and actor but also explored the conditions under which interactions between a group and an individual succeeded or failed.

In addition to defining and providing a taxonomy of lyric dialogues, I show that these exchanges, which blend choral and solo voices in song at critical junctures in the plot, tend either to dramatize reactions to horrific revelations or to reenact ritual laments for the dead. In both cases the tragedians stretch the boundaries of dialogue, often by staging curious exchanges that blend song and speech, at times even reversing the fundamental tragic pattern of speaking actor and singing chorus. These highly emotionally charged dialogues provide an opportunity to study how tragedy represents the strains placed on interpersonal communication, in particular the expression of strong emotion in a communal setting, while at the same time allowing us to see the experimental and self-reflexive nature of the genre.

Combining philological attention to the theatrical and metrical qualities of these moments with the insights of social theory and performance studies, I argue that their frequency and dramatic sophistication suggest a persistent interest among the tragedians in the conditions under which a group and an individual are able to communicate and
successfully perform rituals. I contend that the questions of communicative and ritualized action explored in these moments capture tensions fundamental both to Greek theatre and to the emerging Athenian democracy.
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INTRODUCTION

In the opening episode of Sophocles’ *Oedipus at Colonus*, Oedipus and Antigone, who have wandered endlessly through the country fleeing the pursuit of Creon, arrive in the outskirts of Athens and attempt to rest their weary bodies by a sacred grove. Immediately following their arrival, the chorus of old men appear, accusing them of irreverence and trespassing, and proceed to instruct and question Oedipus in an aggressive manner. The entire scene (117-253), which replaces the traditional choral entry song, depicts a lengthy and unusual sung discussion between actors and chorus, led by a domineering group of old men who direct both the subject and the rhythms of the entire exchange. Their exchange follows a regular strophic form, consisting mostly of two pairs of strophes and antistrophes. Though the general pattern of their shared “song” mimics the structure characteristic of choral odes, the various interruptions by Oedipus that punctuate the exchange remind us that this is not the usual reflective song that establishes the play’s central concerns, but rather a dynamic conversation that advances the plot and is an integral part of the action.

This dissertation examines similar moments in extant tragedy: lyric exchanges in which the chorus engages with actors through a mixture of speech and song. Because the Greek chorus is most readily associated with the odes that they sing, critics and students of tragedy often overlook these choral performances in a different mode, scenes in which they are “in dialogue” with actors. In these moments, the singing group contributes to the plot, playing a role akin to another actor, able to challenge and join in the action along with the protagonist (συναγονιζόμεθα). Here, the chorus is no longer “meditating” upon
or even “mediating” between the stage and the audience through song, but instead propelling the action forward through their sung and spoken interventions.

My interest in these moments initially arose from a concern with the common view of the chorus as passive recipients of the action on stage, who at most provide a sung, detached response to the actors’ speeches and deeds in the performance space. Partly to blame for this rigid reading of the tragic chorus’ role and potential on the Greek stage is Aristotle, who gave inadequate attention to choral matters (χορικών) in his Poetics.¹ His aloofness and general silence on the chorus, perhaps the most integral and recognizable component of ancient Greek tragedy, coupled with the ideas found in Problêmata 19.48 (previously ascribed to him) describing the group as an inactive “useless attendant” (κηδευτής ἀπρακτος),² have had an enormous influence on the modern understanding and interpretation of the tragic chorus, which was until recently seen as possessing a decorative function in tragedy.³ Recent scholarship has moved away from these Aristotelian paradigms that neglect and marginalize the chorus’ role and function in tragedy, as scholars examine the group’s authority, identity, and status as well as their overall variety and flexibility.⁴ Among these, the suggestion made by Jean-Pierre Vernant and Pierre Vidal-Naquet has been especially influential; they claim that the tragic chorus represents the communal voice of the contemporary democratic city - and thus it derives its authority from this - while individual actors embody an outdated heroic

¹ When listing the constituent parts of tragedy, Aristotle gives the chorus last place: πρόλογος ἐπεισοδίων ἔξοδος χορικών (Arist., Po. 1452b16).
² (Ps.-)Aristotle, Problêmata 19.48 (922b): ὁ οὖκ οἰκεῖον ἐστι χορῷ. ἔστι γὰρ ὁ χορός κηδευτῆς ἀπρακτος: εὕρουσαν γὰρ μόνον παρέχεται οἷς πάρεστιν.
view.\(^5\) Taking issue with this model that sees the chorus as the collective representation or model of the Athenian citizen body, John Gould points out that our extant choruses invariably consist of marginal social groups that were in no way representative of the Athenian citizen body who watched these plays.\(^6\) Simon Goldhill’s work critically refutes the marginalization of the chorus and attempts to reinstate the authority of their collective voice by studying their significance in the action of the plays as well as their larger relevance to Athenian democracy.\(^7\) Helene Foley reminds us that though the dramatic identity of a tragic chorus is an important aspect of their role, their connection with and evocation of χοροί - elsewhere in Greek society an established religious and educational institution - nonetheless contributes to their overall authority.\(^8\)

Scholarship on the social and ritual function of the χορός has indeed influenced our understanding of its tragic counterpart. Recent work reveals that ritual choruses actively contribute to the process of forging religious and social communities, and ensuring their continuity. Claude Calame’s seminal work on Greek choruses of young women revealed particular social contexts of the archaic Greek chorus, grouping its practices with rites of passage and initiation, previously the concern of social and cultural anthropologists.\(^9\) Steven Lonsdale examined the role of choral cultic dance in archaic

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\(^5\) Vernant and Vidal-Naquet 1981.

\(^6\) Gould (1996: 220): “Within the fictional world of the play, the chorus, with only two exceptions in the surviving plays, enacts the response to events, not of representatives of the citizen body, but precisely of those whom the democratic city of Athens and its institutional core of adult, male citizen-hoplites had defined as marginal or simply excluded from the controlling voice of ‘the people’. The tragic chorus is characteristically composed of old men, women, slaves, and foreigners (the last often non-Greeks as well as non-Athenians). By combining two or more of these categories to produce a chorus, say, of female non-Greek slaves, the chorus may indeed be perceived by the citizen audience as doubly, or even triply, marginal.” For recent thinking on the identities of the tragic chorus, see Foley 2003 and Dhuga 2011.

\(^7\) Goldhill 1996.

\(^8\) See also Plato’s Laws 654a, in which the Athenian stranger concludes that an uneducated man is one who does not possess any choral training: Οὐκοῦν ὁ μὲν ἀπαθεῖτος ἀξόρευτος ἡμῖν ἔσται, τὸν δὲ πεπαθεῖμένων ικανῶς κεχορευκότα θετέον; Calame 1977.
and classical Greek social rituals, as initiations, courtship and marriage rituals and funeral rites.\textsuperscript{10} Most recently, Barbara Kowalzig explores the interaction of myth and ritual in choral performances and their impact on the immediate community of worshippers.\textsuperscript{11} These and other studies have revealed that in Greek society χοροί were a crucial instrument for the establishment of communities and the negotiation of their boundaries, allowing mortals to connect and relate to one another. Tragedians, though engaged in the business of dramatic representation rather than direct ritual celebration, tended to align their fictional choruses with the traditions associated with the ritual chorus: thus these insights on ancient Greek χοροί have improved our understanding of the manner in which playwrights may have utilized their own dramatic choruses.\textsuperscript{12}

Despite the fact that scholars now underline the group’s overall thematic and structural importance to each play and to society at large, they have tended to limit their attention to choral odes in their analyses: the chorus’ sung lyrics in the form of parodoi and stasima are in practice seen as their chief – and sometimes sole – contribution to the action of the plays. Other more dynamic choral interventions, such as stichomythia between the chorus leader and an actor and especially lyric exchanges between the group and individual character(s), have often been neglected in favor of ode-centered interpretation and analysis. Though choral odes comprise a critical function of the chorus, they are certainly not the sole means of assessing their overall role, nor of gauging their contribution to the action on stage. Because most scholars focus on these reflective lyrics which frame tragic episodes (and which furthermore lie outside of the

\textsuperscript{10} Lonsdale 1993.
\textsuperscript{11} Kowalzig 2007.
\textsuperscript{12} I do not consider in depth the relationship between the tragic chorus and its ritual counterpart nor the notion of tragedy as a sub-species of the choral performance genre, which are elsewhere studied in Kranz 1933, Webster 1970, Parry 1979, Herrington 1985, Calame 1994-1995, and Swift 2010.
tragic plot), modern scholarship on the chorus frequently features a reconciled view of the choral function in tragedy, which sees the chorus as a structural necessity but nevertheless considers its role as instrumental, and merely complementary to the action of any given play.  

One of the aims of The Chorus in Dialogue is, then, to offer an enhanced view of the choral role in tragedy by studying their dynamic interactions with actors in scenes of lyric dialogue. All extant plays feature at least one lyrical exchange in which the collective voice of the chorus interacts with the solitary voice of the actor, and many contain at least two such exchanges. The few studies dealing directly with lyric dialogues, such as those by Richard Kannicht and Hansjürgen Popp, have been predominantly concerned with establishing a typology of such moments, and have been guided by technical and metrical concerns. Some articles have considered the function and role of individual amobaia, and other studies have considered a particular subset of these exchanges, kommoi, which reenact the ritual lament for the dead, but no comprehensive study exists of all such moments. Only one scholar, Oliver Taplin, touches on the overall purpose of these scenes (albeit in a consideration of late Sophoclean lyric dialogues): “almost the only safe generalisation about its function is that lyric dialogue occurs at junctures where the playwright makes the drama ‘boil over’, so to

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13 For example, West (1987: 12): “The chorus’ task is to change the gear of the action, interrupting its forward flow and examining it in new perspectives. Their look at events allows time for reflection and judgment, leisure to consider motivation and causal explanations...Their role is that of an interested commentator who is able not only to reflect, but to look around as well as directly at an action, providing a sort of philosophical pause in highly poetic form,” (his emphasis). Easterling (1997b: 164) comments that the tragic chorus’ main role is “to act as a group of ‘built-in’ witnesses”, whose job is “to help the audience become involved in the process of responding,” (her emphasis). Most recently, in his consideration of Aeschylean choruses, Gruber 2009 similarly argues that the tragic chorus’ chief function is to focalize and guide the viewing audience’s response.


speak, from the tighter argumentation of iambics into the more volatile thought-sequences of lyric.”17 The Chorus in Dialogue will attempt to tackle the fraught and complex nature of lyric dialogues while at also interpreting their dramatic function and larger cultural implications.

In using the terms “lyric dialogue” and “lyric exchange” to describe actor-chorus exchanges in particular (and thus excluding duets between actors), I adapt the definition of the term amoibaion set out by Richard Kannicht: “mit diesem Wort werden grundsätzlich alle Wechselgesänge bezeichnet, an denen mindestens zwei Personen beteiligt sind und in denen minderstens eine Rolle lyrisch ist.”18 In the Chorus in Dialogue, a lyric exchange (or less commonly, amoibaion) will be understood as any exchange between chorus and actor(s) that contains at least some lyrical verse, whether a purely lyrical or semi-lyrical dialogue (that is, partly sung sequences in which only one party converses in lyrics). These exchanges between chorus and actors constitute the majority of lyric dialogues in extant tragedy and the presence of this particular subset in every extant play testifies to a persistent interest in the interactions an individual and a group could have. Many of their interactions are at times antagonistic, and in this way the chorus and its collective voice can be considered an “instrument in the ensemble of tragic performance” pitted against the “solo voices” of the actor(s).19 More significant to my concerns in the Chorus in Dialogue, in these moments both the actors and the chorus, though spatially separated, share the same “speaking space” in scenes of lyric exchange.20

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18 Kannicht 1957: iii.
19 Gould (1996: 234) suggests that one further way of reading the chorus (other than his view) would be to read it “as it were, diachronically, as another instrument in the ensemble of tragic performance, an instrument for the solo ‘voices’ to play with or against.”
20 This is contrary to the claims of A. M. Dale, who (1969: 211) suggested that the chorus and actors simply occupied separate speaking spaces in Greek tragedy, declaring that there existed an “unbroken law, all
A relationship between the chorus and actor is established and visibly enacted in lyric dialogues, which are consequently a suggestive context in which to re-examine not only the role of the chorus in Greek Tragedy, but also the manner in which the tragedians represent the conversations between a group and an individual. Furthermore, lyric exchanges, which blend choral and solo voices in song at critical junctures in the plot, tend either to dramatize reactions to horrific revelations or to reenact ritual laments for the dead. As my studies of lyric dialogues will show, interpersonal communication is strained in tragedy and lyric exchanges provide an opportunity to study the manner in which tragedies represent these very strains, in particular the expression of strong emotion in a communal setting.

The tragedians’ interest in the dynamic between chorus and actor(s) reflects other and analogous forms of social interaction in the fifth-century democratic city, most notably the public performances of the political leaders. The fifth century Athenian polis was full of small groups and networks, organized around a particular political cause or united by social ties, which continually interacted with one another. Such groups were often organized around a particular individual, who acted as their spokesman when encountering other groups or the city at large.21 Likewise, singling out individual citizens or a small subset of people and differentiating these from the masses at large was a

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21 The most common example is the supporters of particular political leaders, described as the hoi peri or hoi amphi, which is then followed by the name of a politician. Connor (1971: 68) defines this circle surrounding as “the political group.” For more on Athenian groups and factions see Connor 1971: 3-32.
frequent and common practice in the democracy, as seen in the extant literature of the period, which readily separates the δῆμος and the “better men” who led or addressed the citizen body. In other words, the political world of classical Athens was full of many actor-chorus scenarios.

The phenomenon of θόρυβος (audience’s clamor) shows that such moments could be a reciprocal and interactive process, and at times antagonistic. The audience had the ability to respond to any given speaker and frequently did so through various means: the crowd could have immediately communicated their thoughts “through direct verbal intervention (e.g., catcalls) and nonverbal signals (e.g., restlessness), at a short remove through voting, and at a greater remove through their subsequent behavior toward the speaker.” Accounts of such clamor are pervasive in ancient evidence and testify to the immense power a crowd wielded in fifth- and fourth-century Athens. The crowd’s clamor was also by no means restricted to the city’s deliberative bodies; their heckling was also a frequent phenomenon in the theater. Though the tragic chorus was a fictional group and one often deliberately distanced from the political groups of contemporary Athens by their marginalized identity, scenes of lyric dialogue nonetheless

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22 Terms such as βέλτιστος, βέλτιστοι, ἀριστος, εὐγενεῖς, and γενεαῖοι, a more distinguished group of citizens - whether by social class or prominence - were continually contrasted with the δῆμος at large, often pejoratively referred to as “the mob” (δῆμος), cf. Sinclair 1988: 15, quoting relevant passages in Hdt. 1.196.5; Thuc. 2.65.2, 6.53.2; Xen. AP 1.2, 4-9; and Arist. Pol. 1293b34-42, 1304b1. See also Aristotle Pol. 1291b14-30, which differentiates the γνώριμοι from the δημος.


24 See Bers 1985 for dikastic thorubos, and Tacon 2001 on thorubos in the ekklesia. Tacon (2001: 177) shows that the latter is just as prevalent as that reported by the orators in the lawcourts: “both direct and indirect evidence suggest that informal banter between the speakers themselves, interruptions of the speakers by the demos, and vocal debate between sections of the demos aligned behind opposing politicians were wholly typical and actually integral features of Assembly debate, and, by extension, of Athenian democracy.” See also Ober 2003: 7, who terms this phenomenon as the “behavioral training” of public speakers, in which the collective voice could control and even stop the offending singular voice of the speaker.

represent a form of individual-group interaction that could have resonated with these political phenomena.

The Chorus in Dialogue thus studies the interplay between the actors and chorus in the lyric dialogues of the plays of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides. I examine the interactions between a leader and a collective group as a way of understanding fifth-century Athenian representations of the processes of communication and the dynamics of ritual, as well as Greek tragedy’s relationship to religious and social realities. By focusing on the way in which reciprocity between chorus and actor is both established and breaks down, I argue that lyric dialogues are places where the three extant Athenian tragedians explore the conditions under which communication and ritual action are possible.

The structure of my thesis and the layout of chapters reflect my interest in the larger thematic problems presented by lyric dialogues, which frequently dramatize fraught conversations reacting to new revelations and re-enact ritual laments for the dead. My first chapter, “Classifying Lyric Dialogues,” surveys ancient and modern accounts of these exchanges, and offers a definition and taxonomy of lyric dialogues. In examining their various types and exploring their protean form, which pits protagonists against chorus in a variety of configurations, it demonstrates both the versatility of — and the difficulties presented by — lyric dialogues. The second chapter, “Lyric Conversations,” focuses on their most common form: conversational lyric exchanges that depict intense and fraught exchanges of information between chorus and actor. Combining a broad discussion of these amplified dialogic exchanges with detailed readings of lyric dialogues in Aeschylus’ Agamemnon, Sophocles’ Ajax and Euripides’ Helen, I show that the
emphasis in these moments is invariably on the fragile nature of the interactions between an individual and a group, specifically the ease with which the dialogic process can collapse. “Managing Mourning in Tragic Kommoi,” the third chapter, argues that lyric dialogues that represent the ritual lament for the dead (kommoi) are places in which tragedians study the conditions under which communal ritual action either succeeds or fails. Specifically, I contrast successful scenes of communal mourning (Aeschylus’ Persians, Euripides’ Trojan Women) with more common moments of failed lament — in which the ritual of mourning breaks down on stage (Sophocles’ Antigone, Euripides’ Alcestis and Heracles). The fourth chapter, “Mourning with Electra,” develops the notions of amplified dialogues and communal mourning that I have explored in the second and third chapters, by examining the numerous lyric dialogues staged between Electra and her accompanying chorus in Aeschylus’ Choephoroi, Sophocles’ and Euripides’ Electra and Euripides’ Orestes. I claim that while Aeschylus establishes Electra and the chorus as successful mourners, Sophocles and Euripides instead use their interactions in lyric dialogue to explore the very nature of lamentation and grief through a series of discussions in which the value of mourning is explicitly negotiated.

By focusing on the interaction and interplay between protagonists and chorus in these moments, my aim is to generate new insights into the flexibility and variety of the choral voice, as well as into tragic representations of the processes of communication and the dynamics of ritual. The tragedians’ interest in and experimentation with the fundamental tragic tension between actor and chorus during these moments reveals the manner in which they interrogate the role of communal dialogue and ritual, significant
concerns in an emerging democracy that struggled to articulate the relationship between the democratic people and elite individuals.
CHAPTER 1: CLASSIFYING LYRIC DIALOGUES IN GREEK TRAGEDY

This chapter surveys the various forms of lyric dialogues (sometimes grouped under the heading amoibaia) found in extant Greek tragedy, and outlines my interest in one particular subset consisting of interactions between chorus and actors. This overview proposes a new characterization and taxonomy of these moments, which differs from previous formulations, and explains my decision to focus specifically on actor-chorus exchanges, which are by far the most prevalent type of lyric dialogue found in extant Greek tragedy.

I begin by examining the general definitions and terminology commonly associated with moments of lyric exchange in ancient and modern accounts. As I mentioned in the introduction, previous scholarship dealing with these moments has predominantly focused on developing a coherent and comprehensive vocabulary that captures all variations of lyric dialogue. This is mainly due to two general factors: the lack of ancient terminology and guidance as well as the metrical and structural complexity of these moments. After a discussion of some of the discrepancies, misunderstandings, and clarifications found in recent scholarship on lyric exchanges, I outline the terms and categories that I employ in this study, which focuses explicitly on chorus-actor exchanges. I also provide tables listing all extant tragic lyric dialogues, along with others which further classify the lyric dialogues that this study examines. Finally, I consider some of the difficulties implicit in an investigation that focuses on a tragic form that is especially volatile and whose mechanics are among the least understood aspects of Greek tragedy.

26 Other helpful overviews can be found in Pulquerio 1965: 1-6 and Popp 1971, esp. 221-237.
Definitions and Difficulties

In the twelfth chapter of the *Poetics*, Aristotle identifies the choral part of tragedy (χορικῶν) as one of the four main constituent elements of tragedy. Elaborating on the term, he lists four lyrical parts: *parodoi*, *stasima*, songs of actors, and *kommoi*, and subsequently claims that the first two are universal (κοινὰ) to all plays, while the latter two are less common (ἰδια). He further defines the three that directly involve the chorus:

χορικῶν δὲ πάροδος μὲν ἢ πρώτη λέξις ὡλη χοροῦ, στάσιμον δὲ μέλος χοροῦ τὸ ἀνευ ἀναπαίστου καὶ τροχαίου, κομμὸς δὲ θρήνος κοινὸς χοροῦ καὶ ἀπὸ σκηνῆς.

Aristotle, *Poetics* 1452b17-18

Belonging to the choral part is the *parodos*, which is the first undivided utterance of the chorus, a *stasimon* is a song of the chorus without anapests and trochees, and a *kommos* is a joint lament between the chorus and those on stage [i.e. actors].

According to Aristotle’s definition, then, the choral part of tragedy consists of only three main choral contributions: the entry songs of the chorus, their odes, and the laments they may share with actors. Of the three, *kommos* is the only lyrical part in which the actor plays a role. Though the philosopher had briefly mentioned songs of actors (τὰ ἀπὸ τῆς σκηνῆς), he makes no further mention of them in his treatise.

Despite the fact that Aristotle’s statements do not correlate exactly with what is found in extant fifth-century tragedy, many of his limited definitions were nevertheless

27 That is, along with the prologue, episode, and exodus: πρόλογος ἐπεισόδιον ἔξοδος χορικῶν, *Poetics* 1452b16. See above, n.1 in the introduction.
28 Arist., *Po. 1452b17-18*: τὸ μὲν πάροδος τὸ δὲ στάσιμον, κοινὰ μὲν ἀπάντων ταῦτα, ἰδια δὲ τὰ ἀπὸ τῆς σκηνῆς καὶ κομμοί.
29 All translations are my own, unless otherwise indicated. ἀπὸ τῆς σκηνῆς, “from the stage”, refers to the actors in a tragedy (as opposed to the chorus, who were positioned in the orchestra).
30 For responses and criticisms to descriptions of tragedy in Aristotle’s *Poetics* see Halliwell 1986. Some scholars have attempted to qualify Aristotle’s comments: for example Bywater (1909: 206) has argued that
adopted by modern critics, precisely because there was little or no other ancient evidence. In particular, *kommos*, which Aristotle explicitly associates with the ritual lament (*θρήνος*), became the standard word used to describe all moments of lyrical exchange between chorus and actors in tragedy, even though it is found in no other ancient testimony. Though some late nineteenth century scholars such as Paul Masqueray increasingly began to examine the use of such inadequate terms in the classification of lyrical parts, they nevertheless continue to support Aristotle’s designations. In the case of *kommoi*, it was not until the early twentieth century that the terminology associated with it began to change. Noting that many extant lyric dialogues do not contain any laments, Francis Cornford took issue with the universal use of *kommos* to refer to all lyric dialogues, and proposed instead the more encompassing term *amoibaion*, which is found in some ancient descriptions referring to conversations in both poetry and drama. He challenged the view of Masqueray and other scholars who maintained that tragic *kommoi* were later adapted in the fifth century to include moments of violent emotions, and gave examples to support his claim that the opposite was rather the case: that is, Aeschylean “*kommoi*” in fact contain a range of emotions, including joy, whereas eighteen of twenty-

---

31 The sole exception is perhaps A. *Ch.* 423: ἔκοψα κομμιών, where the term is significantly linked with the verb κόπτω.

32 In his discussion of *kommoi*, Masqueray (1895: 17) defends Aristotle’s definition linking it to lament, arguing that it was later adapted to include moments of violent emotion: “le Commos tragique était, du moins à l’origine, un chant de douleur, dont l’exécution était accompagnée de tous ces gestes violents et de toutes ces marques extérieures de tristesse qui conviennent à l’exubérance méridionale… Plus tard, son caractère se modifia, et il finit par être employé dès qu’une émotion violent s’empara des acteurs ou des choreutes : la nature de cette émotion pouvait être très variée.”

33 Cornford 1913. Among the ancient sources for *amoibaia* are a scholiast on Sophocles’ *Ajax* 38, who uses it to refer to the conversation between Odysseus and Athena: ἐν τοῖς ἀμοίβαιοις κατὰ βραχύ δηλούται ἡ ὑπόθεσις. For a full list, see Popp 1971: 221, n. 3.
one Euripidean “kommoi” are in fact lamentations. He thus concluded that kommoi were a particular subset of amoibaia. Building on Cornford’s work, other scholars, such as Diehl and Peretti, continued to reanalyze and reclassify these moments: Ernst Diehl identified κομμοί as the exchanges between chorus and actor of a threnetic nature, μέλη ἀπὸ τῆς σκηνῆς as the songs of actors, and ἀμοιβαία as all other exchanges between chorus and actors that do not involve lamentation. Aurelio Peretti focused on this last subset, non-threnetic lyric exchanges between chorus and actors, labeling these as epirrhematic. By the mid twentieth century, then, the non-Aristotelian term amoibaia emerged as a preferred name for describing lyric dialogues.

The clarifications of Cornford, Diehl and Peretti allowed Richard Kannicht and Hansjürgen Popp to carry out extensive investigations of amoibaia in tragedy. Their examinations of these moments, however, were likewise guided by technical and formal concerns, such as identifying different types of lyric dialogue, the meters they employ and the position they occupy in any given play. Kannicht, in particular, expanded Cornford’s definition of amoibaia to include any exchange, divided between at least two participants, which contains at least some element of song: a lyric dialogue is thus “a song of exchange, which is divided between at least two people and in which at least one of them has a lyrical (sung) role.” Popp adopts this much broader definition, which

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34 Cornford 1913: 44.
35 Diehl 1921.
36 Peretti 1939 adapts the term ἐπιρρήματα for tragedy, a name which referred to one of the parts of the comic parabasis in antiquity (see Suda s.v.) and was revived by Zielinski 1885. According to his definition, ἐπιρρήματα in tragedy are the spoken passages that frequently follow lyric stanzas in moments of ἀμοιβαία; these are especially typical of extant Aeschylean lyric dialogues, see my “Performing Dialogue” section in chapter 2 below.
37 Popp 1968, 1971 (a revised and abridged version of Popp 1968) and Kannicht 1957.
38 Kannicht (1957: iii): “mit diesem Wort werden grundsätzlich alle Wechselgesänge bezeichnet, an denen mindestens zwei Personen beteiligt sind und in denen mindestens eine Rolle lyrisch ist.”
significantly allows for the inclusion of actors’ songs and duets.\(^{39}\) He accepts it from the outset, and though he classifies \textit{amoibaia} into two general types, \textit{reinlyrische} and \textit{halblyrische},\(^{40}\) he devotes the bulk of his work to providing a systematic description of all the formal possibilities of \textit{amoibaia} in extant tragedy. His various categories and headings nevertheless reveal the difficulty of classifying every single structure and meter associated with lyric dialogues, and in particular when dealing with epirrhematic \textit{amoibaia}, which contain varying mixtures of lyric, recitative and spoken verses.\(^{41}\)

Thanks to the classifications of Kannicht and Popp, critics have identified some general ways in which certain tragedians employ lyric dialogue. For example, Reginald Burton notes that Sophoclean lyric dialogues blending speech and song typically depict a clash of views between the two parties.\(^{42}\) Popp’s discussion of epirrhematic \textit{amoibaia} that involve dochmiacs allows us to see that Euripides tends to use these semi-lyric exchanges for significant and shocking developments such as Hecuba’s discovery of the death of Polydorus (\textit{Hecuba} 658-725), or Theseus’ reaction to Phaedra’s lying tablet (\textit{Hippolytus} 811 – 890).\(^{43}\) These general indications can be helpful, yet upon closer


\(^{40}\) Popp 1971: 225, though he also identified another “mixed type” (\textit{Mischtypus}) that combines the two general types, giving as example the Great \textit{Kommos} in \textit{Choephoroi} 306-478 and \textit{Andromache} 501-44, both of which involve more than two participants.

\(^{41}\) For example, Popp (1971: 231-232) provides various categories for half-lyric \textit{amoibaia}: \textit{anapaestische Epirrhēmata}, \textit{Trimeter-Epirrhēmata}, \textit{episodische Epirrhēmata}, \textit{Rhesis}- oder \textit{Dialog- Epirrhēmata}, and \textit{Hexameter Epirrhēmata}. For more on epirrhematic lyric dialogues, see Pulquerio (1965: 5), who distinguishes between these and wholly lyric dialogues: “Distinguirei um diálogo lírico-recitativo, a que conservo o título tradicional de diálogo lírico-epirremático, de um diálogo inteiramente lírico, para o qual proponho a designação \textit{διάλογος αμοιβαία} (\textit{διάλογος αμοιβαίας ή μέλος})”; and also Fileni 2007.

\(^{42}\) Burton (1980: 17) notes that “the main functions of epirrhematic scenes, in which originally the actor spoke trimeters interspersed with the chorus’ lyrics in strophic corresponsion, are to advance the dramatic movement by giving necessary information and to heighten tension by depicting a clash of views or personalities.” See also Popp’s classification of \textit{Aktionsamoibaia} and \textit{Pathos-Amoibaia} for Sophoclean lyric dialogues, Popp 1971: 253-257.

\(^{43}\) Popp 1971: 261.
investigation they do not hold true for all moments. Though it is sometimes the case that iambic trimeters are juxtaposed with dochmiacs in scenes of fraught emotion, as noted earlier, this is not always the case: the parodos of Euripides’ Children of Heracles (73-117) features a chorus employing the dochmiac meter (usually the meter of distress) merely to question Iolaus. We can often see common elements, but since lyric exchanges contain a great deal of variation, each case should be analyzed in its own terms. This is what the approach advocated here enables me to do.

**Terms and Classifications Employed in The Chorus in Dialogue**

This dissertation builds on all these previous important studies, but adopts a more widely applicable terminology and a more workable sub-classification of the varying types, while avoiding fastidious categorization. For the purposes of this study, a lyric dialogue will be identified as an exchange between two participants in which there is some element of lyric, no matter how insignificant. This characterization is a useful step towards a new analysis of these moments, as it allows for the broadest consideration possible. This analysis stresses the lyric nature of these moments and emphasizes the choral role: it therefore departs from Kannicht in referring to these moments as lyric dialogues or exchanges instead of the more common term employed in scholarship, amoibaia.

Applying my characterization to extant tragedy yields ninety-five moments of lyric dialogue, each falling under one of three main types depending on the participants involved. These are illustrated in the following tables, grouped by tragedian:
### Tables 1A-C. Lyric Dialogues in Extant Tragedy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AC = ACTOR(S)-CHORUS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AA = ACTOR-ACTOR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CC = CHORUS-CHORUS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p = PARODOS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 1A. AESCHYLUS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Play</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>No. of dialogues</th>
<th>Lines and Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pers.</td>
<td>472</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>249-289 (AC), 694-702 (AC), 908-1077 (AC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Th.</td>
<td>467</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>203-244 (AC), 686-711 (AC), 822-1004 (CC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supp. (c. 460)</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>348-437 (AC), 734-761 (AC), 825-865 (CC), 866-902 (AC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.</td>
<td>458</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1072-1177 (AC), 1407-1576 (AC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ch.</td>
<td>458</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>306-478 (AC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eum.</td>
<td>458</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>778-891 (AC), 916-1031 (AC)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total in extant Aeschylus:** 17, with one occurring in the place of the parodos

#### 1B. SOPHOCLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Play</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>No. of dialogues</th>
<th>Lines and Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aj. (c. 445)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>201-262 (AC), 348-429 (AC), 866-878 (CC)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ant. (c. 442)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>801-882 (AC), 1261-1346 (AC)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tr. ?</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>862-895 (AC), 971-1043 (AA)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OT (c. 430)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>649-696 (AC), 1297-1368 (AC)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El. (c. 412)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>121-250 (AC, p), 823-870 (AC), 1232-1287 (AA)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ph. 409</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>135-218 (AC, p), 827-864 (AC), 1081-1217 (AC)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OC 401</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>117-253 (AC, p), 510-549 (AC), 833-886 (AC), 1447-1499 (AC), 1670-1750 (AC)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total in extant Sophocles:** 22, with 3 occurring in the place of the parodos.

#### 1C. EURIPIDES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Play</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>No. of dialogues</th>
<th>Lines and Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ALC. 438</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>244-279 (AA), 393-415 (AA), 861-934 (AC)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Med. 431</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>131-212 (AC, p), 1271-1281 (AC)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heracl. (c. 430)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>73-117 (AC, p)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hipp.</strong></td>
<td>428</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>176-266 (AA), 565-600 (AC), 811-890 (AC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Andr.</strong></td>
<td>426</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>501-544 (AA), 825-865 (AA), 1173-1225 (AC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hec.</strong> (c. 424)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>154-215 (AA), 684-723 (AC), 1056-1108 (AC)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Supp.</strong> (c. 424)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>794-836 (AC), 990-1033 (AC), 1072-1079 (AC), 1123-1164 (CC)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HF</strong> (c. 417)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>735-762 (AC), 910-921 (AC), 1042-1088 (AC), 1178-1213 (AA)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ion</strong> (c. 417)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>219-236 (AC, p), 763-807 (AC), 1437-1509 (AA)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tr.</strong></td>
<td>415</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>153-196 (AC, p), 239-291 (AA), 577-607 (AA), 1209-1259 (AC), 1287-1332 (AC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>El.</strong> (c. 413)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>167-212 (AC, p), 860-879 (AC), 1177-1232 (AC)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>IT</strong> (c. 413)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>123-235 (AC, p), 644-656 (AC), 826-899 (AA)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hel.</strong></td>
<td>412</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>164-251 (AC, p), 330-385 (AC), 625-697 (AA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ph.</strong> (c. 410)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>103-201 (AA), 1340-1353 (AC), 1480-1581 (AA), 1710-1736 (AA)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Or.</strong></td>
<td>408</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>140-207 (AC, p), 1246-1312 (AC), 1369-1502 (AC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ba.</strong> (c. 405)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>576-603 (AC), 1031-1042 (AC), 1168-1199 (AC)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>IA</strong> (c. 405)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1475-1530 (AC)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total in extant Euripides:** 56, with 9 occurring in the place of the parados

**Total number of lyric dialogues in extant tragedy:** 95

*breakdown by type:*

- 71 AC
- 18 AA
- 6 CC

*occurring in place of parodoi:*

- 1 in [Aeschylus]: Pr.
- 3 in Sophocles: El., Ph., OC
- 9 in Euripides: Med., Heracl., Ion, Tr., El. IT, Hel., Or., and [E.] Rh

This categorization enables us to further distinguish three main types of lyric dialogue in surviving Greek plays: between actors and chorus (AC), between two or more actors (AA), and between two choruses (CC), which may include the exchanges of two half-
choruses as in Sophocles’ *Ajax* 866-878. These tables clearly illustrate the prevalence of actor-chorus exchanges in extant tragedy, which comprise seventy-one of the ninety-five established, that is, approximately seventy-five percent of all extant lyric exchanges.

The taxonomy in Tables 1 A-C differs significantly from the list of “‘Kommoi’ in Extant Tragedy” provided by Cornford in his article denouncing the universal use of the term.\(^{44}\) In this, the only table listing all such moments,\(^{45}\) Cornford merely focuses on exchanges between chorus and actors, as allowed by Aristotle’s definition of *kommos*. He also excludes all *amoibaia* that occur in the place of the *parodos* (namely, those in [Aeschylus’] *Prometheus Bound*; Sophocles’ *Electra, Philoctetes, Oedipus at Colonus*; and Euripides’ *Medea, Children of Heracles, Ion, Trojan Women, Electra, Iphigenia among the Taurians, Helen, Orestes*, and [Euripides’] *Rhesus*). This is most likely due again to the fact that he follows the classifications of Aristotle, who considers the *parodos* as a separate category. As a result, for plays like *Children of Heracles*, Cornford lists “no κομμός.” His list also excludes what are in theory *stasima*, but ones that are addressed to and contain the responses of an actor, such as the “Ode to Sleep” in Sophocles’ *Philoctetes* 827-864, where the chorus converse with Neoptolemus while singing a strophic pair, and his response is included between the chorus’ strophe and antistrophe. Similarly, in Euripides’ *Electra* 860-879 the chorus of maidens address and speak to the protagonist, whose responses also divide the strophic stanzas of the chorus. I will argue that we can usefully treat these and other similar moments as lyric dialogues. Another analogous moment can be found in Euripides’ *Medea* 1271-1281, a brief lyric

\(^{44}\) Cornford 1913: 43.  
\(^{45}\) Neither Popp 1971 nor Kannicht 1957 provide such a list or single table recording all *amoibaia*. Popp (1968: 155-164), however, does contain a lengthy “Index der Amoibaia mit Kurzbeschreibung und Register,” which I discuss below.
dialogue that occurs during the play’s fifth stasimon. The boys’ cries inside the house interrupt the singing of the chorus, and as the chorus wonder aloud whether to intervene, one of the boys encourages them to do so, as if they had heard the chorus’ musings.\(^{46}\)

Cornford’s lines at times differ from those I provide in the tables — the chief reason being that he does not include any anapests that may open the lyric dialogue. For example, he excludes Xerxes’ initial laments in Persians 908-917, the chorus’ shocked reaction at seeing the blinded Oedipus at Oedipus Tyrannus 1297-1306, as well as the chorus’ introductory anapests in Antigone 801-805. All of these, I argue, are an integral part of the lyric exchange and cannot be separated from what follows.\(^{47}\) For example, Antigone’s first word, ὑπάτε (806), directly engages with the chorus’ ὑπατα at 804, which they had uttered in anapests upon her entrance.\(^{48}\) Similarly, Xerxes’ anapests, which he delivers immediately after making his first entrance, are a crucial part of his subsequent exchange with the chorus. Though it is at times difficult to determine the boundary between a lyric dialogue and a larger dramatic episode, as I discuss below, in such moments it yields greater insight if we include introductory anapests that may preface the lyric dialogue proper.

The lyric dialogues I have listed in these tables correlate more with Popp’s index of amoibaia outlined in his dissertation.\(^{49}\) However unlike Popp, who studies all lyric dialogues regardless of participants, I will concentrate exclusively on exchanges between actors and chorus. Their overwhelming prevalence, which, as I stated above, comprise

\(^{46}\) For another similar scene see E. HF 735-762, in which Lycurgus’ death cries interrupt the chorus’ song though there is no similar “conversation” between the two participants (arguably, however, Lycurgus’ address at 754, ῥ ἰ ὀ θα θαλαθος γαιη, ἀπόλλωμαι δόλωσ, could be interpreted as being directed to the chorus). I also include this more tenuous moment among extant tragic lyric dialogues, although I exclude A. Ch. 869-874, in which Aegisthus’ cry is merely heard by and commented upon by the chorus.

\(^{47}\) For more on tragic anapests, see Brown 1977.

\(^{48}\) See my discussion “Frustrated Antiphonal Laments in Sophocles’ Antigone” in chapter 3 below.

\(^{49}\) Popp 1968: 155-164.
nearly seventy-five percent of all lyric dialogues in extant tragedy, is one compelling reason. More importantly, as I have suggested in the introduction, these chorus-actor interchanges are fruitful places in which to study significant dramaturgic issues: not only the chorus’ contribution to the drama and the group’s ability to συναγωνίζεσθαι but more importantly the relation between the actors on stage (ἀπὸ σκηνῆς) and the chorus in the orchestra pit, a relation which is (and has been since antiquity) widely recognized as constituting the heart of the Greek tragic form.

In order to better understand these moments, I have classified them into two general categories: wholly lyric dialogues and ones that blend speech and song. Most lyric dialogues between chorus and actors fall into the second category, which Popp termed as halblyrische. Nineteen are wholly lyric affairs. Only two Aeschylean plays contain wholly lyric dialogues:

<p>| Table 2A. Wholly Sung Lyric Dialogues between Chorus and Actor(s) in Aeschylus |
|---------------------------------|-----|---------------|-------------|</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Play</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>No. of dialogues</th>
<th>Lines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pers.</td>
<td>472</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>908-1077</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ch.</td>
<td>458</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>306-478</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As I discuss in my second chapter, most Aeschylean lyric exchanges depict a speaking actor with a singing chorus who react to dreadful news or novel happenings. These two, however, reenact the ritual lament for the dead (θρῆνος) — and hence are true kommoi — and as a result they employ a wholly lyric form.

Sophocles, on the other hand, appeared to have made use of wholly lyric dialogues only in his last three extant plays, as the following table illustrates:51

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50 Arist., Po.1456a25-27: καὶ τὸν χορὸν δὲ ἔνα δὲ ὑπολαμβάνειν τῶν ύποκριτῶν, καὶ μόριον εἶναι τοῦ ὄλου καὶ συναγωνίζεσθαι μὴ ὀσπερ Ἐυριπίδη ἄλλ’ ὀσπερ Σοφοκλεῖ.
Unlike the wholly lyric dialogues found in Aeschylus, Sophocles does not restrict this particular subset to reenacting the ritual lament. For example, *Philoctetes* 1081-1217 depicts an isolated hero who addresses the natural environment surrounding him while the chorus address him to no avail. Euripides likewise appears to be more flexible with these moments, employing them in thirteen different occasions, not limited to lament:

Euripides’ wholly sung lyric dialogues cover a range of situations: from Electra and the chorus tip-toeing around the sleeping Orestes (*Orestes*) to Dionysus’ revelation of his divinity to the chorus (*Bacchae*). Some of these re-enact the ritual lament (*e.g.* *Iphigenia among the Taurians* 123-235 and *Trojan Women* 1287-1332), whereas others depict sung conversations (*e.g.* *Electra* 167-212 and *Helen* 164-252).

In direct contrast to wholly lyric dialogues, lyric exchanges that blend speech and song are more numerous and more varied:
Tables 3A-C: Lyric Dialogues between Chorus and Actor(s) that Blend Speech and Song

3A. AESCHYLUS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Play</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>No. of dialogues</th>
<th>Lines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pers.</td>
<td>472</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>249-289, 694-702</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Th.</td>
<td>467</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>203-244, 686-711</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supp.</td>
<td>(c. 460)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>348-437, 734-761, 866-902</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.</td>
<td>458</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1072-1177, 1407-1576</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ch.</td>
<td>458</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eum.</td>
<td>458</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>778-891, 916-1031</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[A.] Pr.</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>128-192</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total:** 12

3B. SOPHOCLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Play</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>No. of dialogues</th>
<th>Lines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aj.</td>
<td>(c. 445)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>201-262, 348-429, 879-973</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ant.</td>
<td>(c. 442)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>801-882, 1261-1346</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tr.</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>862-895</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OT</td>
<td>(c. 430)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>649-696, 1297-1368</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El.</td>
<td>(c. 412)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1398-1441</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ph.</td>
<td>409</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>135-218 (p), 827-864</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OC</td>
<td>401</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>117-253 (p), 510-549, 833-886, 1447-1499</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total:** 15

3C. EURIPIDES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Play</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>No. of dialogues</th>
<th>Lines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alc.</td>
<td>438</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>861-934</td>
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<tr>
<td>Med.</td>
<td>431</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>131-212 (p), 1271-1281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heracl.</td>
<td>(c. 430)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>73-117 (p)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hipp.</td>
<td>428</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>565-600, 811-890</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andr.</td>
<td>426</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1173-1225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hec.</td>
<td>(c. 424)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>684-723, 1056-1108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supp.</td>
<td>(c. 424)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>990-1033, 1072-1079</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HF</td>
<td>(c. 417)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>735-762, 910-921</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ion</td>
<td>(c. 417)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>219-236 (p), 763-807</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tr.</td>
<td>415</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1209-1259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El.</td>
<td>(c. 413)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>860-879</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT</td>
<td>(c. 413)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>644-656</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hel.</td>
<td>412</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ph.</td>
<td>(c. 410)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1340-1353</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Or.</td>
<td>408</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1246-1312, 1369-1502</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

24
This subset of fifty-two represents the vast majority of lyric exchanges between chorus and actors (approximately seventy-three percent). These tables illustrate the fact that the vast majority of extant plays contains at least one exchange between chorus and actor that blends speech and song. Only three do not: Aeschylus’ *Choephoroi*, Euripides’ *Helen*, and *Iphigenia in Aulis*. This is not surprising when one considers that the *Choephoroi* contains the longest lyric exchange (though wholly lyric) between chorus and actors, the Great *Kommos*. As I discuss in my second chapter, Euripides’ *Helen* is a play concerned with the dynamics between a chorus and its leader, and thus the absence of an epirrhematic lyric dialogue between Helen and the chorus of captive Greek women is not conspicuous. *Iphigenia in Aulis*, in addition to being riddled with later interpolations, revolves around the complicated emotions of father and daughter as they face her death; when Euripides depicts the chorus “in dialogue” with her it is to demonstrate a sympathetic and cooperative lament at 1475-1530.

**Staging Chorus and Actors in Dialogue: Some Limitations**

My demarcation and this taxonomy have thus allowed me to situate all exchanges between individual and group, whether the chorus and actor(s) involved employ verse-verse, verse-song, song-song or some mixture of these possibilities. There are, however, other difficulties relating to the mechanics of actor-chorus exchanges. Most of these complexities are due to the lack of evidence of the precise manner in which ancient tragedians staged the conversations of their choruses with their characters. We now turn
to some of the problems and necessary limitations that arise as a result of our imperfect knowledge of the ancient Athenian stage.

The first of these considerations is the ambiguous dramatic role of the tragic chorus leader. Traditional accounts of the Greek theatre relate that tragedy began with the singling account of the leader (ὁ ἐξάρχων) of the dithyrambic chorus, who became the first actor.\textsuperscript{52} Though the role of the actor grew and became more important during the course of the fifth century,\textsuperscript{53} tragic choruses continued to have a leader separate from the ὑποκριτής. The role of tragic chorus leader (the chief choreut who is now referred to as κορυφαῖος, a marked departure from the traditional term χορηγός)\textsuperscript{54} does not appear to be as prominent as his archaic counterparts, χορηγοί such as Alcman’s Agido and Hagesichora. Though the term κορυφαῖος is used occasionally in some places,\textsuperscript{55} there exist very few references describing at length the role of a chorus leader in tragedy. Only Aristotle mentions in passing that the leader was the musical expert, the most skilled compared to his fellow dancers: ἀνάγκη μὴ μίαν ἐἶναι τήν τῶν πολιτῶν πάντων ἀρετήν, ὃσπερ οὐδὲ τῶν χορευτῶν κορυφαίου καὶ παραστάτου (Politea 1277a).\textsuperscript{56} He stood in the middle of the left-hand rank,\textsuperscript{57} and gave the tone and starting signal for

\textsuperscript{52} Arist., Po. 1449a. See also Kranz 1933, esp. chapters 1 and 4, and Pickard-Cambridge 1988.


\textsuperscript{54} Whereas the term chorēgos previously referred to the chorus leader of archaic choral poetry, the tragic chorēgos was in charge of funding and putting together a chorus, as part of a particular kind of public service (λειτουργία) that was as prestigious and expensive as maintaining a warship (τριήραρχία), see Pickard-Cambridge 1988: 86-93.

\textsuperscript{55} Such as references in passing like Demosthenes 21.60 containing the story of a citizen who was a chorus leader, or in Ar. Pl. 953. It is also used to refer to political leaders, e.g. in Hdt. 3.82, Pl. Tht. 173c.

\textsuperscript{56} See also Arist. Metaph. 1018b.

\textsuperscript{57} Dio Chrysostom 56. 366; Ps. Aristotle, De mundo 399a15; Lucian, Merc.Cond. 28. See also Csapo and Slater 1995: 353.
singing. Yet Peter Wilson points out that unlike his other counterparts, the tragic κορυφαίος is rarely distinguished inside any given play:

“for unlike his lyric predecessors, the tragic koryphaios seems to have been distinguished from his fellow-khoreutai in only the most functional of ways: a better singer, more adept at guiding and controlling the movements of his troupe. But at the dramatic level, the koryphaios is hardly differentiated from the collective — speaking for it, to be sure, but in a manner which makes it hard to identify any distinguishing feature of this individual from his group; as though he were the mouthpiece of convenience to facilitate the group’s interaction with the individual actors, the mediator between song and speech — and one, perhaps, with a degree of formal anonymity suited to a “democratic” collective. Unlike his satiric counterpart, the tragic koryphaios within the text and its action takes no observable role as a leader — or only in the rarest of instances.”

In other words the tragic chorus leader is inseparable and indistinguishable from his fellow chorus members.

The ambiguity of the role of the κορυφαίος also extends to the division of tragic choral parts. Though stasima were believed to have been sung by the entire chorus, it is unclear whether they continued to sing in unison during other moments, or whether the leader alone uttered their remarks. Though we have no direct ancient evidence, most scholars believe the koryphaios spoke during scenes of stichomythia and lyric dialogues, drawing from the model given by the parabases of Old Comedy, or on the assumption that it would have been more practical to train only a few χορευταί to perform both a

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58 Ps. Aristotle. Pr. 19, 22, 45.
60 See also Page 1937. Their movements, which may have helped in this matter, are also unknown; As Pickard-Cambridge (1988: 244) comments: “when the leader engaged in dialogue with the actors, he must have faced them, as did probably the whole chorus, and in the absence of the actors they are likely, when not dancing, to have faced the audience; but by what manoeuvres they changed their direction is unknown.”
61 Pickard-Cambridge 1988: 245. In the plays of Aristophanes, chorus leaders play a more defined role, and at times even possess the rare ability to exhort their fellow khoreutai to sing and dance: see B. Gentili’s entry “corifeo” in the Encyclopedia dello Spettacolo (vol. 3) 1452: “talora, ma molto raramente, egli potra persino apostrofare i coreuti per esortarli a un’azione o alla danza (Aristoph. Vesp. 1516, Thesm. 655, Ran. 382).”
singing and speaking part. Alternatively, they draw on the assumption that collective
delivery in unison is less easily understood, a common idea in ancient accounts of music:

\[
\text{διὸ καὶ μᾶλλον ἐνὸς ἀκούοντες συνίεμεν ἢ πολλῶν ἀμα ταὐτά λεγόντων, καθάπερ καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν χορδῶν.}
\]

Ps. Aristotle, *De Audibilibus* 801b15-17

We understand hearing a single voice better than many voices speaking the same
things at the same time, just as with the strings of a musical instrument.

Maarit Kaimio, who conducted an extensive study of the uses of the singular and plural
about and by the chorus in Athenian drama, rehearses many of these arguments, yet
nevertheless reminds us that there is no evidence either way. In all examples from
surviving drama, the *mss.* attribute all lines to Χορός, and provide no indication of the
role of the leader in the delivery of these lines. Even the only extant tragic lyric dialogue
in which the chorus speaks and sings in immediate succession, Aeschylus’ *Suppliants*
734-63, provides no answers. Though the trimeters attributed to the chorus are
syntactically independent of all the adjacent lyrics that are also given to the chorus, this
“provides insufficient evidence for concluding that these lyrics cannot possibly have been
sung by the Coryphaeus.” Likewise, the example in Euripides’ *Hippolytus* of the
strophe sung by the chorus (362-72) and whose corresponding antistrophe is sung by
Phaedra three hundred lines later (669-79), is not sufficient evidence. Here, scholars
attribute the delivery of the choral lines to the chorus leader precisely because a single
actor sings the corresponding antistrophe; as Barrett comments: “we know next to
nothing about the delivery of lyrics assigned to Χορός, but since Ph.’s lament is a
monody it seems likely that this corresponding lament is a monody too, sung not by the

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whole Chorus but by its Leader.” There is thus no basis in ancient sources for the modern editorial practice of assigning lines to an individual leader rather than the whole group. In my study I therefore do not wish to discount the possibility that the entire group may have spoken ἐξ ἐνὸς στόματος at all moments, especially during lyric dialogues.

Another major difficulty surrounding tragic lyric dialogues is that unlike other dramatic scenes (such as ἀγῶνες) their boundaries are at times hard to determine, particularly if the dialogue in question a) occurs within a larger episode and b) continually fluctuates between stichic (iambic trimeter) and lyric meters. Epirrhematic lyric dialogues in which the iambic lines of an actor surround short choral stanzas are easily identifiable because of the regularity of their form (e.g. Aeschylus’ Suppliants 348-406 or Persians 256-289), yet many others involving the lyrics of an actor prove more difficult: for example, Euripides’ Hecuba 684-723 denotes a lyric dialogue in which the Trojan queen briefly expresses herself in dochmiacs while the chorus and the servant woman who brought Polydorus’ body remain in speech. I have begun at verse 684, which coincides with the first instance of lyric, yet the conversation between those three participants first began at 657, with the entrance of the servant-woman. Others start as a choral stasimon and then are transformed into a lyric dialogue, such as Euripides

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65 Barrett 1964: 225. Halloran (1995: 179) agrees: “who delivered these lines – chorus or chorus leader – is uncertain, but since the corresponding stanza is monodic, the chorus leader is the more likely candidate.”
66 For a history of the division of choral parts by commentators, see Fraenkel 1950 (vol. 3): 661 and Kaimio 1970: 104.
67 Zielinski 1885: 5. Dale (1954: 74) explains: “there are certain conventions in Greek drama to which we adjust ourselves with difficulty; such is the relation between stage-lyric and dialogue. The thread of action does not necessarily run continuously through both of these in a strict sequence of time. There are many aspects where a situation is realized first in its lyric, then in its iambic aspect – that is to say, first emotionally, then in its reasoned form. Where the latter appears as a development of the former, picking up and expanding for rhetorical conviction what passion had left only half-articulate (as, for instance, in the Cassandra scene Tr. 308-510), or where Phaedra, Hipp. 373-430, gives a clear analysis of her own emotional state) we accept the sequence as natural.”
Suppliants 778-836, and Medea 1271-1281, discussed above. Finally, some lyric dialogues are astrophic (i.e. there is no regular metrical responsion or division into strophe and antistrophe), which poses a particular problem for the setting of boundaries.

The border between monody and lyric dialogue is oftentimes especially difficult to determine. Some lyric dialogues occurring in place of the parodos are preceded by a monody (such as Andromache, Hecuba, Sophocles’ and Euripides’ Electra and Trojan Women). Many fall under the category of what C. W. Willink terms a “punctuated monody” — that is, a musical passage which “begins and ends with the opening and concluding lyrics of the monodist” and is “framed between, as well as punctuated by, the contrasting spoken utterances of another actor or the chorus.” A recent definition of a tragic monody even allows for the inclusion of brief choral lines: as Beverley writes, a monody is “a passage of solo actors’ lyric which is of at least, say, ten lines and is either uninterrupted or only briefly interrupted by the chorus or other actors.” Despite the inclusion of two verses of speech by the chorus, examples like Euripides’ Suppliants 990-1033 are often considered a monody precisely because an isolated or self-absorbed character sings an entire strophic pair. Yet I would consider this as a lyric dialogue since the actor engages with the chorus’ speech: Evadne initiates her antistrophe with the word

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68 On Euripides’ tendency to substitute other lyric forms for choral stasima in his late plays, see Kranz 1933: 229-30.


70 See Barner 1971 and Beverley 1997.

71 Willink 1989: 45-46.

72 Beverley 1997: 3.
δρῶ (1012) which directly echoes the chorus’ καὶ μὴν δρᾶς at 1009. The same applies to choral odes that are either interrupted by an actor’s utterance, such as Lycus’ death cries which interrupt the chorus’ song in Heracles 734-762, causing them to abandon their antistrophe.

Lyric dialogues between chorus and actors are thus versatile and difficult moments, containing complex structures and possibilities. All plays contain at least one such exchange, and nearly all plays — with only three exceptions discussed above — include a lyric dialogue that blends song and speech. The following chapters will demonstrate that given their frequency and dramatic sophistication, they are a fruitful context in which to examine social dynamics in tragedy, since they establish and visibly enact a relationship between the chorus and actor. As such they afford an opportunity to think about the manner in which tragedy explores the myriad ways in which a social being could interact with a particular community.
As the third *stasimon* in Sophocles’ *Trachinian Women* draws to a close, a cry (ιώ μοι, 862) suddenly emerges from within the house of Heracles, causing the chorus of Trachinian women to stop singing and dancing. Switching to the customary conversational iambic trimeter, the chorus begin a dialogue with Deianeira’s nurse, who enters the stage in order to inform them of their mistress’ death. The chorus’ shock at the news affects their ability to speak, and in 876, 877 and 879 we witness three instances of *antilabê*, a verse that is shared between two speakers:

χόρος, οὖ δέ ποθ’ ώς θανούσα; Τρ. πάντ’ ἀκήκοας.  
χόρος, τέθυηκεν ἡ τάλαινα; Τρ. δεύτερον κλύεις.  
χόρος, τάλαιν’ ὀλέθρου τίνι τρόπῳ θανείν σφε φής:  
Τρ. σχετλίω τὰ πρὸς γε πράξειν. χόρος, εἰπέ, τῷ μόρῳ…

Chorus: You do not mean that she has died? Nurse: You’ve heard it all.  
Chorus: Is the poor woman dead? Nurse: You hear it again.  
Chorus: Poor woman! How do you say that she died? Nurse: Miserably, with regards to how it was done. Chorus: Tell me, how, …

In dividing verses between speakers, Sophocles tinkers with the standard form of tragic dialogue in order to convey the chorus’ surprise. He then stretches its boundaries by taking the chorus’ inability to speak even further at verse 880, when they complete the request for more information begun in 879:

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73 The nurse’s first announcement of the death is rather cryptic: “Deianeira has departed on the last of all journeys with motionless foot” (βέβηκε Δηάνεια τὴν πανωτάτην / ἐξ ἄθων ἀπασῶν ἐξ ἀκωήτου ποδός, 874-5). Βέβηκε is sometimes used in connection with suicides in Sophocles, cf. *Ant.* 766 (the chorus on Haemon): ἀνήπ, ἀναξ, βέβηκεν ἐξ ὀργῆς ταχύς, and *OT* 1074-5 (the chorus on Jocasta): τί ποτε βέβηκεν, Οἰδίπους, ὑπ’ ἄγριας / ἄξασσα λύπης ἢ γυνή;  
74 In extant tragedy only Sophocles and Euripides employ *antilabê* (Hesychius A 5432 Latte: ἀντιλαβαί–λογικαὶ ῥῆσεις ἐξ ἡμιστίχων λεγόμεναι κατ’ ἄμοιβήν παρὰ τοῖς τραγικοῖς). One of the most common uses of *antilabê* is to communicate shock and surprise: e.g when Philoctetes is caught off guard by Neoptolemus’ sudden decision to leave: Φ. ἡδι, τέκνον, στέλλεσθε; Νε. καθάρος γὰρ καλεί (Ph. 466), or when Jocasta informs Antigone of the upcoming duel between the brothers: Ἀν. πῶς εἴπας; Λο. αἰχήμην ἐς μίαν καθέσσατον (E. Ph. 1274). At times it is employed to express heightened and contrasting emotions, e.g the finale of Oedipus and Creon *OT* 626-29 and *IA* 310. For more on the dramatic function of tragic *antilabê*, see Seidensticker 1971: 201-3 and Hogan 1997.  
75 The text is that of Lloyd-Jones and Wilson 1990a.
Precisely at the moment in which the chorus accept their mistress’ death, they return to the lyric mode, finishing their address to the nurse in sung and distressed dochmias that raise the emotional register of the dialogue. For the remainder of the conversation (880-895) the chorus continue to sing their questions to the speaking nurse, transforming the conversation into a frenetic and unstructured exchange that regularly fluctuates between sung and spoken utterances so as to chart the characters’ emotional oscillations. The chorus’ mode of communicating in song is so infectious that even the nurse is momentarily affected: at 892, when they ask “what are you saying” (τί φωνεῖς), she sings her reply “the truth” (σαφήνη) by mimicking the chorus’ bacchiacs. This exchange, which blends speech and song, may seem an odd choice for a dialogue that essentially conveys information between two parties, but it neatly captures the troubled emotions of the women on stage as well as the general uncertainty following Deianeira’s death. More importantly, it illustrates how tragedians exploited form in order to subvert the experience of dialogue in a genre where the iambic trimeter was the most basic and conventional unit of speech.

This chapter is concerned with these varied and frenetic “conversations”, sung and half-sung dialogic exchanges between chorus and actor staged at a point of emotional climax. Though they comprise the most regular point of contact between actor and chorus, these lyric dialogues — which henceforth I refer to as “conversational” —

As I noted in my introduction, this chapter excludes lyric dialogues that reenact the ritual lament, the subject of chapter 3.

A play’s chorus may also communicate with a character in moments of stichomythia, but these interactions are brief; for the chorus, saying anything more than four trimeters long was unusual, cf. West 1981: 61. Their comments are often of little dramatic value: they either call attention to other characters who have recently arrived on stage, ask or answer questions, or offer pithy advice or succinct remarks on the situation.
contain no standard format: they frequently take the form of a wholly sung exchange between the singing group and a protagonist, but most extant examples contain a mixture of song and speech in varying quantities. Because these moments aim to capture the immediate reactions of characters and chorus to recent horrific events, tragic conventions are often abandoned in such lyric dialogues: for example, a speaking chorus which interacts with a singing actor is not unusual. As a result, the process of information exchange varies greatly: some conversational lyric dialogues depict failed conversations in which participants do not listen to one another; others chart changing emotion. The emphasis in these moments is almost always on the fragile nature of exchange of information between two participants, specifically the ease with which such a process can collapse. This chapter argues that conversational lyric dialogues were active sites of experimentation where tragedy’s boundaries are continually tested in order to explore the conditions under which communication between a group and an individual is possible.

As they are frequently used at high points in drama for emotional conversations between chorus and actor, conversational lyric dialogues reflect various processes of communication, and explore the nature of common interactions. Here, I specifically focus on the dynamics of communication and social interaction depicted in these dialogues, paying close attention to the utterances, and to shifts in conversations and their implications in these moments, thereby revealing the poet’s interests in the dynamics of successful communication. In my discussion I draw on the social theories of Jürgen Popp 1971 termed these *halblyrischen amoibaia* (as opposed to *reinlyrische amoibaia*). See Tables 1 and 2 in the Appendix.

78 This is a somewhat incomplete examination, as it only focuses on the language of tragedy, and excludes the tones of voice and gestures of the actors utilized during each performance, which are crucial to the overall process of communication. Unfortunately this information is by and large not available. Nonetheless the meter utilized in a particular moment can give an indication of the emotional register.
Habermas, particularly the concept of “communicative action.” Combining linguistic, philosophical and social theories, Habermas describes the capacity of two individuals to achieve communal understanding that can lead to cooperative action.\textsuperscript{80} Utilizing Habermas’ theories and ideas on language and communication I explore representations of communicative competence in tragic lyric dialogues, particularly in cases where characters are depicted as irrational speakers.

In my first section, I outline general trends in such scenes in order to provide an overview of conversational lyric dialogues. I then turn to three particular lyric dialogues in which expectations are subverted in order to demonstrate a particular type of conversational process: between Cassandra and the chorus in Aeschylus’ \textit{Agamemnon}, between Ajax and the chorus in Sophocles’ \textit{Ajax}, and between Helen and the chorus in Euripides’ \textit{Helen}. In these three lyric dialogues the tragedians test the capabilities of actors and chorus as they explore what makes communication possible between a group and an individual in three different contexts: the first is a conversation between Greek and barbarian that lies at the crossroads of divinely inspired utterance and rational speech, another explores dialogue in the aftermath of war and at the brink of madness, and the final one studies exchange in song. A study of these conversational lyric dialogues allows us to see how each tragedian stages the fragile process of communication between a group and an individual while providing us with a glimpse at the larger concerns of each play.

\textsuperscript{80} Habermas 1981: 86: “The concept of \textit{communicative action} refers to the interaction of at least two subjects capable of speech and action who establish interpersonal relations (whether by verbal or by extra-verbal means). The actors seek to reach an understanding about the action situation and their plans of action in order to coordinate their actions by way of agreement.”
Performing Dialogue: Patterns of Conversational Lyric Exchanges

As I stressed in my first chapter, all lyric dialogues are versatile moments that contain a variety of configurations. In what follows, I give a general account of the patterns inherent to conversational lyric dialogues in each tragedian — that is, ones which principally depict an exchange of information between an actor and a chorus. This account allows us not only to perceive the Bauform’s overall versatility whenever interrogating the feasibility of communication between chorus and characters, but it also reveals the singularity of the exchanges in Agamemnon, Ajax, and Helen, which form the subsequent focus of this chapter.

Most lyric dialogues are conversational, depicting a dialogue between chorus and actor(s) at critical junctures in the drama. Since they usually coincide with news of imminent disaster, death, horrific revelations or other significant occurrences in the plot, these moments tend to be highly charged emotionally, providing an opportunity for strong feelings to be explored and expressed. Tragedians employ contrasting meters in such moments, since meter provides a reliable register of emotion, and they frequently stage exchanges that blend speech and song. In the opening of this chapter we saw how in Trachinian Women Sophocles charts the varying emotional responses of the chorus and the nurse through varying meters, as the news of Deianeira’s death is gradually revealed. Likewise, Euripides offsets diverging emotions through contrasting spoken and sung meters in Hippolytus 811-890, as Theseus and the chorus react both to Phaedra’s death and to the discovery of the lying tablet she left behind. Because the area of its

81 Only a few re-enact the ritual lament, and all of these are wholly lyric, see Tables 2A-C in chapter 1, and 4A-B in the appendix. These will be the focus of chapter 3. It must be noted, however, that not all wholly lyric dialogues re-enact the ritual lament: Helen 164-251, which I discuss below, is a conversational lyric dialogue that is wholly sung.
expression often incorporates great extremes of emotion, a lyric dialogue can almost be described as an inflated conversation, always on the verge of implosion. In these moments, tragedians amplify dialogue, providing an opportunity to study how tragedy represents the strains of interpersonal communication.

These “amplified dialogues,” however, can follow strikingly regular patterns. In most extant tragic lyric dialogues, the chorus tends to initiate the exchange. That is to say that an actor who engages with the chorus in these moments usually does so at the chorus’ prompting, as his title (ὑποκριτής) suggests. In cases of lyric dialogues that blend speech and song, the chorus frequently makes use of its customary medium, song, while actors speak in iambic trimeters.\(^82\) Perhaps because a singing chorus usually begins such conversations, the majority of lyric dialogues, including those that contain a mixture of speech and song, also possess a regular strophic form.\(^83\) Despite being organized in this manner, lyric dialogues are not always clearly defined scenes. They may be a part of a larger scene of dialogue between an actor and the chorus, where the lyric dialogue prefaces a more general stichomythic exchange in trimeters between the two interlocutors.\(^84\) In other words the lyric dialogue sometimes performs in an abbreviated and frenetic manner what is often elaborated upon in speech.\(^85\)

Most conversational lyric dialogues in extant Aeschylus follow the same pattern: a singing chorus interacts with a speaking actor, whose reply in spoken trimeters or

\(^{82}\) The case of a speaking chorus and a singing actor, in which the fundamental tragic pattern is reversed, will be discussed in the following section on *Agamemnon*. On the phenomenon of a singing actor see Hall 2002.

\(^{83}\) See n. 69 in chapter 1 above for a full list of astrophic lyric dialogues in extant tragedy.

\(^{84}\) Kranz (1933: 24 and 166) notes that lyric dialogues are often followed by a reiteration of the same themes in a lengthier interaction in trimeter.

\(^{85}\) E.g. S. *Aj.* 348-429 and *E. Hel.* 164-251, which are both followed by a “calmer” conversation between the participants of the lyric dialogue, who discuss the same issues introduced in the lyric dialogue but now in the regular iambic trimeter of dialogue.
recitative anapests divide each strophe and antistrophe sung by the chorus. Such conversations tend to underscore high points of tension, such as when the messenger arrives from Salamis narrating the defeat of Xerxes’ army to the chorus of Persian elders in *Persians* 249-289. The lyric dialogues in *Seven Against Thebes* are typical of such Aeschylean lyric exchanges. Besides featuring a singing chorus and speaking actor, they are found at critical junctures of the plot where the poet illustrates contrasting emotions between the chorus and Eteocles. Following an angry outburst at 182-202 in which Eteocles criticizes the chorus’ panic, Aeschylus stages a lyric dialogue at 203-44 between the troubled Theban maidens (who predominantly sing in the agitated dochmiac meter) and a speaking Eteocles who attempts to calm them down. The contrast between the sung and the spoken here serves to highlight the differences between the chorus’ panic and Eteocles’ calm. Throughout the exchange he manages to calm them down somewhat, as evidenced by the fact that as the lyric dialogue progresses each lyric stanza shrinks from five to three verses (five verses in the first strophic pair at 203-215, four in the second at 219-229, three in the third at 233-241), though the chorus nevertheless do not abandon the dochmiac. In a second lyric dialogue (at 686-711) Aeschylus once again demonstrates a disjunction between an actor and the chorus by juxtaposing spoken and sung meters, as the anxious Theban maidens attempt to dissuade a resolute Eteocles from fighting.

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86 This is the case in *Pers*. 249-289, 694-702 (Darius replies in tetrameters); *Th*. 203-244, 686-711; *Supp*. 348-437, 734-761, 866-902; *A*. 1407-1576 (Clytemnestra utilizes both trimeters and anapests in her replies); *Eu*. 778-891, 916-1031 (Athena gives anapestic replies), and [*A.*] *Pr*. 128-192 (anapestic). That is to say, this pattern occurs in *all* extant Aeschylean lyric dialogues except for great moments of lament (*kommoi*) found in *Pers*. 908-1077 and *Ch*. 306-478, and of course, in the conversation between Cassandra and the chorus in *A*. 1072-1177 which will be discussed in the next section. See also Pulquerio 1965 and Gruber 2009.

While Aeschylean lyric dialogues tend to contrast a speaking actor and a singing chorus, Sophoclean lyric dialogues explore the varying dynamics of conversation, particularly among a large number of participants. Sophocles often features two or more actors in dialogue with the chorus, creating vigorous and complex conversations that differ from Aeschylus’ straightforward one-to-one model. For example, Oedipus Tyrannus 649-696 features all three actors onstage in dialogue with one another, in different configurations: the frequent interjections and antilabic interruptions of the chorus and Oedipus comprise the sung strophe, while those of Jocasta and the chorus form the antistrophe. In between these two stanzas, Sophocles additionally inserts iambic trimeters between Oedipus and Creon. The sense is of a fragmented and jumbled polyphonic exchange. A singing actor interacting with a speaking chorus is also not uncommon in Sophoclean lyric exchanges. In such moments the chorus is often uncooperative, refusing to partake in emotional conversation with an expressive protagonist: soon after Oedipus’ blinding the distraught protagonist screeches in frenzied lyrics before a seemingly stoic chorus who barely speak to him (1297-1368). In other occasions, it is the actor who refuses to engage with the chorus: in the first half of Philoctetes 1081-1217 Sophocles depicts the despondent warrior, deprived of his weapons, singing his laments to the rocks and birds that surround him, while actively ignoring the group of sailors who in vain attempt to converse with him. Many Sophoclean conversational lyric dialogues may be called “deaf” or failed dialogues, in which participants do not listen properly to one another or refuse to interact with one another.

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Though Euripides goes back to the one actor chorus model favored by Aeschylus,\textsuperscript{89} he tinkers further with tragic format, frequently transforming what may have been a straightforward choral ode into sudden dialogue.\textsuperscript{90} This is the case in the \textit{parodos} of \textit{Ion} (184-236): in the last quarter of the choral song, the chorus address their verses to Ion at 219-21, prompting an immediate response from the protagonist. Thus the chorus’ entrance song is promptly transformed into a joint exchange between chorus and actor. Singing actors frequent Euripidean lyric exchanges\textsuperscript{91} and very often in amoibaic \textit{parodoi}, that is, in dialogue with the chorus at the precise moment of the \textit{parodos}.\textsuperscript{92} Many of these \textit{parodoi} are a natural extension of an actor’s monody, and it is often hard to delineate between the two.\textsuperscript{93} Finally, Euripides often features astrophic lyric dialogues, which enhance the already chaotic sense of such scenes.\textsuperscript{94}

These patterns testify to the tragedians’ interest in the dynamics of dialogue, in particular the many different configurations that lead to successful or unsuccessful exchange. In the three detailed readings that follow the tragedians depict novel types of exchange between actor and chorus, all of which emphasize various important aspects of the communication process as well as the varying manner in which each tragedian experimented with the performative capabilities of his actors and chorus.

\textsuperscript{90} On Euripides’ tendency to substitute other lyric forms for choral \textit{stasima} in his late plays, see Kranz 1933: 229-30.
\textsuperscript{91} In fact, Euripides is the only one of the three tragedians (with the notable exception of [A.] \textit{Pr.} 561-612) who regularly features lyric duets and dialogues between actors. See Beverley 1997, and Barner 1971.
\textsuperscript{92} \textit{Med., Heracl., Ion, Tr., El., IT, Hel., Or.} and [E.] \textit{Rh.} See Table 1C in chapter 1 above.
\textsuperscript{93} See my discussion in chapter 1.
Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon* and the Play of Ill-communication

The lyric dialogue between Cassandra and the chorus in Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon* is one of the most notable sites of Aeschylean experimentation, one that continually subverts tragic expectations. First, the exchange shows the chorus in conversation with the play’s third actor, who surprisingly emerges as a veritable speaking character as she suddenly slides from silence to frenzied cries.\(^95\) Besides Cassandra’s emergence as a speaking character, the lyric dialogue reveals another surprise: the ὑποκρήτης (by definition the “one who responds”) initiates and leads the lyric exchange with the chorus, the only example in extant Aeschylean drama where such a dynamic occurs.\(^96\) Furthermore, Cassandra sings while the chorus speaks, thus reversing the fundamental tragic pattern of singing chorus and speaking actor.\(^97\) This novel dynamic is not a static one: while the first half of the exchange (1072-1113) features Cassandra singing a mixture of agitated meters (dochmiacs and bacchiacs) before a perplexed speaking chorus, in the second half (1114-1177) the chorus’ agitated dochmiacs dominate the conversation, as Cassandra increasingly employs spoken trimeters in her utterances. Aeschylus’ formal tinkering at the seams of tragic dialogue results in a conversation between actor and chorus that is unparalleled in extant drama. In this volatile dialogue marked by an oscillating blend of speech and song, Aeschylus explores a type of garbled conversation led by a non-rational, non-Greek speaker whose utterances never cease to baffle her internal audience.

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\(^95\) Her prior silence suggested that she would be a κοκόφος πρόσωπον, see Knox 1972; cf. also Ar. *Ra.* 911-920. On Cassandra’s silence, see Taplin 1972: 77-78, Thalmann 1985: 228-9, and Montiglio 2000: 213-16.

\(^96\) This will also be the case in Euripides’ *Helen*.

\(^97\) Fraenkel (1950: 487) comments that this lyric exchange represents “a special variety of ‘epirrhetic’ composition.”
Part of the difficulty is the problematic speaker that Aeschylus constructs: a foreign prophetess who attempts to communicate multi-temporal utterances, the specialty of prophets since Calchas.\textsuperscript{98} Prophetic language is notorious for its enigmatic nature, producing immediate incomprehension (and in Cassandra’s case it is a doubly tortuous process),\textsuperscript{99} but in this lyric dialogue the conundrums of prophecy are emphasized further through a conscious switch between hysterical dochmiacs and the conversational iambic trimeter. The contrast in meters utilized throughout the lyric dialogue underlines the disjunction between an inspired prophet and a clueless audience. Yet she is not merely a prophet: she is a foreigner, as her Asiatic name suggests.\textsuperscript{100} Her foreignness is emphasized in the play: \textit{e.g.} 1050-1, \textit{άλλα εἶπερ ἐστὶ μὴ χελιδόνος δίκην / ἀγνῶτα φωνὴν βάρβαρον κεκτημένη.}\textsuperscript{101} Fraenkel describes her strange speech as “something between a song and those wild notes of lamentation which were familiar to the Athenians from the ritual performances of the barbarian mourning-women from the East.”\textsuperscript{102} By staging a dialogue between this barbarian divine communicator and a chorus of elderly Argive citizens, Aeschylus creates the largest social divide between actor and chorus. The figure of Cassandra allows the poet to pit various oppositional categories against one another — barbarian and Greek, prophecy and rational speech — both of

\textsuperscript{98} In Homer, Cassandra is merely described as the most beautiful of Priam’s daughters (\textit{Il.} 13.365), with no explicit mention of her prophecies. The \textit{Cypria} appears to have been the first ancient text that associates her with prophecy, and appears to have been the first place where she is characterized as such, and by Pindar’s \textit{Pythian} 11 her role as a prophetess is cemented. On Calchas, see \textit{Il.} 1.70: δὲ ἡδή τά τ’ ἐόντα τά τ’ ἐσοδέμα πρό τ’ ἐόντα.

\textsuperscript{99} \textit{cf.} Heraclitus fr. 93: \textit{ὁ ἀνάξ, οὗ τὸ μαντεῖόν ἔστι τὸ ἐν Δελφοῖς, οὕτε λέγει οὕτε κρύπτει ἄλλα σημαίνει (“the lord, whose oracle is among the Delphians, does not speak nor hide but rather he signals”). Mazzoldi 2002 speaks of the alternation of ecstasy and rationality inherent to Cassandra.

\textsuperscript{100} Hall 1989: 20.

\textsuperscript{101} The text is that of Page 1972. “Well, that is if she does not possess a strange and foreign language, like a swallow.” Clytemnestra’s instructions at 1060-1 also highlight her foreign nature: \textit{εἰ δὲ ἄξωνύμων οὔσα μὴ δέχῃ λόγον, / οὖ δ’ ἀντὶ φωνῆς φράζε καρπάνων χερι, “if you do not comprehend and understand what I say, then instead of speech, speak with your foreign hand.”}

\textsuperscript{102} Fraenkel 1950: 539.
which are illuminated through contrasting song and speech, and to explore what occurs when these are brought together. Misunderstandings and imperfect dialogues are not a novelty in Aeschylus, but the creation of such an improbable exchange where one of the characters is such a distinctive speaker indicates an interest in experimenting with the conditions under which communication occurs. It is thus no surprise when the Trojan Princess suddenly bursts into frenzied and prophetic lyrics that the chorus struggle to make sense of her utterances.

Along with contrasting meters, the dialogue reveals contrasting worldviews that prevent full communication and understanding. In the first pair of strophes at 1072-1079, the poet points out two ways in which one can refer to Apollo: Cassandra’s ὄπολλον (1073, 1077) vs. the chorus’ Λοξίου (1074) τὸν θεὸν (1078). Perplexed at the use of ὄτοτοτοτοῖ, a word of lament, in connection with Apollo, the chorus attempt to establish contact with her by asking her about the nature of her cries at 1072-1073: τί

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103 Rosenmeyer (1982: 189) alerts us to the nuances of Aeschylean speech and the difficulties of finding a “natural” dialogue in Aeschylus: “Aeschylean speech is self-absorbed, isolated, marked off from what precedes and what follows by a gulf of silence. Intermittent, continuations, the meshings of natural conversation are the discoveries of a later drama. Each Aeschylean speech act is, as it were, enveloped in silence; the speaker is alone with his impulse toward communication. Communication is expression contained within the limits of its own self-sufficiency.”

104 Cassandra’s hermeneutic task has been compared to the act of translation; as Pillinger (2009: 17) notes, “Cassandra, like the translator, tries to pass on a message that is not her own to control, one that she appears only to diminish and warp beyond recognition.” The role of the chorus as recipient of her message is similarly marked: Gruber (2009: 364) describes the chorus’ role as “Informationsempfänger…ein interner, stellvertretender Rezipient.”

105 λέγω and its variants dominate the earlier scene of Cassandra’s silence: when addressing her for the first time with an emphatic καὶ σοῦ, Clytemnestra nevertheless appends a Κασσάνδραν λέγω (εἰςω κοιμίζου καὶ σῦ, Κασσάνδραν λέγων at 1035). Following Clytemnestra’s address at 1035-1046 (and Cassandra’s silence), the chorus speak to her: σοὶ τοι λέγουσα παύεται σαφὴ λόγον (1047). See also Clytemnestra at 1052 (ἑῶ ψευδών λέγουσα πείθω νυν λόγωι), and the chorus at 1053 (ἄπων, τὰ λόγια τῶν παρεκτῶν λέγει). Goldhill 1984: 83 points that the prelude to the Cassandra scene emphasizes “the process of communication and the heuristic gap in communication and the means of bridging that gap (πείθω, ἐρμηνεύσ) and the desire for clarity (σαφῆ, τοροῦ).”

106 This word is generally used in moments of lamentation or sorrow: in Aeschylus besides from this scene (where it is used 1072, 1076, 1256), it is found in Pers. (268, 918), Suppl. (889, 898). S. El. 1215, E. Tr. 1287, 1294; Andr. 1197-1200, Or. 1389, and Ion 789.
As she does not offer a reply to their question and continues to repeat the same cries invoking Apollo (1072-1073 = 1076-1077) the chorus begin to take up the role of commentator, no longer addressing her directly but rather talking about her in the third person. This is a role that they continue to play throughout the dialogue.

In these first strophes, Aeschylus introduces another obstacle to communication: the phenomenon of a triangulated conversation. At 1082, Cassandra delivers an explanatory statement (marked by γάρ) in iambic trimeter, which is addressed to the god: ἀπώλεσας γάρ οὐ μόλις τῷ δεύτερον. On one level, she somewhat engages with the chorus’ original question at 1074 (τὰ ταῦτ’ ἀνωτότυξας ἀμφὶ Λοξίου). But the ἀπώλεσας and τῷ δεύτερον reveal Cassandra’s true addressee, the god, whom she rebukes for past crimes. The chorus is unable to recognize this slide into the past, though they rightly guess she might be prophesying at 1084. When she addresses the god again in the antistrophe, asking where he leads her (ἄν ἐν τῷ στέγνῳ; 1087), the chorus is likewise unable to see that she seeks contact with Apollo. They reply to her question as if it had been directed at them: πρὸς τὴν Ἀτρειδῶν εἰ σὺ μὴ τόδε ἐννοεῖς, / ἐγὼ λέγω σοι καὶ τάδ’ οὐκ ἐρεῖς ψύθη (1088–

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107 “Why do you wail with Loxias’ name?”
108 Heirman (1975: 262-3) reads Cassandra’s screams as a form of glossolalia and even attempts to deconstruct her language: “What she actually is conveying in this pseudo- or rather stunted language could be transcribed in real language as “O Thou-Thou-To Thee I pray” (o-to-to-toi), “Thou-To Thee I pray!!” (to-to-toi), “Appear!!!!!” (Da.)”
109 E.g. 1078-9: ἢδ’ αὔτε δισφημοῦσα τὸν θεὸν καλεῖ / οὐδὲν προσήκοντ’ ἐν γόοις παραστατέειν and 1083-4: χρήσειν ἐοίκεν ἀμφὶ τῶν αὐτῆς κακῶν / μενεῖ τὸ θεὸν δουλιά περ ἐν φρενί (“Again she calls out to the god while defiling his name / a god for whom it is not appropriate to include among wails” and “It seems as though she is going to speak about her own sufferings / the divine can be present even in the mind of a slave”).
110 “You have destroyed me, without any difficulty, for a second time.”
111 “Ah, to where are you leading me? Towards what sort of house?”
Here, though the conversation is triangulated, Aeschylus shows a brief moment of contact through meter, as Cassandra utilizes iambic trimeter so far used only by the chorus. The poet continues to flirt with the possibility of true contact between Cassandra and the chorus when the prophetess replies with a corrective μισόθεου μὲν οὖν (1090).

These initial four strophes thus depict a tortuous conversation, marked by Cassandra’s riddling prophecies. The chorus’ inability to understand is a recurrent theme: e.g. 1105-6 (τούτων ἁδρίς εἰμὶ τῶν μαντεωμάτων, ἐκεῖνα δ’ ἐγών πᾶσα γὰρ πόλις βοᾷ), and 1112-3 (οὕπω ἡμνήκα· γὰρ ἐξ αἰνιγμάτων ἐπαργέμοιοι θεσφάτοις ἁμηχανῶ). But in the fifth strophe Aeschylus depicts clairvoyance without mediated commentary from Cassandra, as Cassandra begins to see future happenings. It is at this point that the chorus begin to attempt to understand Cassandra in her own terms: claiming that her tale (λόγος) does not cheer them, they promptly leave behind the trimeter and switch to the lyric mode. They expertly employ Doric alphas as well as the agitated dochmiae Cassandra had been employing in the first half of the lyric dialogue. At the same time, Cassandra begins to use some trimeters in the sixth and seventh strophic pairs. Both chorus and actor have successfully learned to communicate in the manner of the other participant in the dialogue. Yet the chorus’ perplexity with Cassandra’s speech continues, and finally they declare her insane.

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112 “Towards the house of the Atreidæ. If you don’t realize this, then I am telling you, and you will not say that this is false.”
113 “It is rather a house that hates the gods.”
114 1105-6: “I don’t understand this prophecy, but the other one I recognized; the entire city shouts it” and 1112-3: “Still I do not understand; For now I am at a loss from these riddles couched in obscure oracles”, cf. Judet de la Combe (2001: 447) who writes: “Le chœur analyse son incompréhension en disant trois fois la difficulté, avec les enigmes (αἰνιγμάτων), les paroles divines obscures (ἐπαργέμοιοι θεσφάτοις) et l’aporie (ἁμηχανῶ).”
115 “Clairvoyance without mediated commentary” is one of the four stages that Mazzoldi 2002 identifies as integral parts of this scene.
calling her strange song a tuneless tune (νόμον ἁνομον, 1142), that is inarticulate (τὰ δ’ ἐπίφοβα δυσφάτωι κλαγγαὶ / μελοτυπεῖς ὁμοὺ τ’ ἵρθίοις ἐν νόμοις, 1152-3). The chorus believe that her utterances are inauspicious and thus dangerous, yet continue to imitate her song. Only near the end of the dialogue do they begin to show signs of understanding her speech: they note her clarity (τί τόδε τοιοῦ ἥχαν ἐπος ἐφημίσω; 1162) and recognize some of her earlier sayings (ἐπόμενα προτέροις τάδ’ ἐφημίσω 1173). The lyric dialogue reaches a conscious ending when the chorus state τέρμα δ’ ἀμηχανῶ (1177). Simon Goldhill interprets this as the chorus’ inability to control the narrative, but they have placed an end to the misunderstanding.

The exchange with chorus continues in a different mode, a change from lyric to speech that promises to bring more clarity:

καὶ μὴν ὁ χρησίμος οὐκέτ’ ἐκ καλυμμάτων ἔσται δεδομένως νοεγάμου νύμφης δίκην, λαμπρὸς δ’ ἔοικεν ἡλίου πρὸς ἀντολάς πνεῶν ἐφήξειν, ὡστε κύματος δίκην κλύξειν πρὸς αὐγάς τούθε πῆματος πολύ μείζων. φρενώσῳ δ’ οὐκέτ’ ἐξ αἰνεγίματων·

Behold, my prophecy will no longer see through a veil, like a newly-married bride, rather it will rush clear like the wind going against the rising of the sun, like a wave it will dash against its rays, a woe far greater than this one. No longer will I speak in riddles.

This self-conscious appraisal speaks to the tortuous process performed in the lyric dialogue. The figurative language utilized to describe song and lyric (an oracle that will

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116 “You are mad and possessed by a god.”
117 “[from where] do you sing these frightful things with unutterable screeches and in notes that are shrill?”
118 “Why have you spoken words that are entirely clear?”
119 “The things you have spoken strike a chord with what you uttered before.”
120 “As for the end, I am at a loss.”
121 Goldhill 1984: 85.
no longer see through a veil; no longer will she speak in riddles) makes an argument for the clarity of speech (λόγος) associated with the iambic trimeter. The καὶ μὴν announce the entrance of speaking Cassandra, who will now explain in a reasoned manner what has happened. In the scene that follows, three speeches (relating to the near past, near future, herself) better explain some of the multi-temporal prophecies delivered in the lyric dialogue.

In the *Agamemnon*, Aeschylus demonstrates the potential of lyric dialogue as a site in which to explore the boundaries of tragic concerns. Though initially both actor and chorus possess their own communicative strategies – song and speech, respectively – both successfully learn and utilize the other’s techniques: Cassandra increasingly speaks in trimeters (she proves herself to be a highly articulate speaker of Greek) while the chorus resort to frenzied dochmiacs in the latter part of the dialogue. In showing the two always communicating in diverging ways, the lyric dialogue performs hysteric conversation, fraught with misunderstanding. It is no surprise that this lyric dialogue is one of the few depictions of a conversation between Greek and barbarian, and that it operates at the nexus of prophetic/frenzied and rational language, and also speech and song.

Only once more in his extant corpus does Aeschylus demonstrate a similar self-conscious awareness in another “hybrid” lyric dialogue containing song and speech: in *Eumenides* 778-891. After Apollo acquits Orestes, the tragedian stages an uncomfortable encounter between Athena and the enraged Furies. In the lyric dialogue that ensues following the departure of the god and the young man, Aeschylus once again demonstrates two types of communicative strategies that can exist in the dialogic process.

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122 1254: καὶ μὴν ἄγαν γ’ Ἑλλην’ ἐπίσταμαι φάτιν.
of tragedy: the Eumenides sing their anger at Athena in a mixture of iambic and dochmiac lyrics while the goddess attempts to persuade them in speech (ἐμοὶ πιθεσθε, 794). The chorus of the Furies is so enraged that their strophes and antistrophes are exactly the same content, not just meter (778-792 = 808-822 and 837-846 = 870-880). In spite of their repetition Athena claims she will never tire of speaking (οὕτοι καμοῦμαι σοι λέγουσα, 881). In the end, Athena’s rational logos wins. The refusal of the Eumenides to yield their lyrics shows their stubborn rage; in the Agamemnon the chorus’ use of the dochmiac demonstrates a willingness to meet the prophetess halfway in order to achieve an understanding. However, despite the chorus’ willingness to cooperate, Cassandra proves to be too problematic a speaker for them. Conversational lyric dialogues containing contrasting modes and meters are thus useful for delineating and emphasizing stark juxtapositions: from depicting an opposition between Greek and barbarian as well as prophecy and rational language, as the Agamemnon illustrates, to showing the polarization that exists between new and old gods, each of whom employs a different mode of communication, as in the Eumenides.

**Abortive and Aborted Dialogue in Sophocles’ Ajax**

The previous section illustrated how Aeschylus tests the boundaries of tragic dialogue in a tortuous exchange between Cassandra and the chorus of Argive elders in a play heavily invested in the semantics of misunderstandings. This dialogue in particular featured a unique and problematic speaker whose utterances – darting between past and present, the prophetic and the conversational – led to imperfect reception among her immediate audience. In Ajax 348-429, Sophocles likewise demonstrates an interest in
staging a volatile and fruitless exchange between chorus and actor, but this time focusing on the role of flawed listeners. His play depicts an actor (though here the protagonist and not the third actor) expressing his distress in song to a familiar audience consisting of his mistress and his men, who speak in reply to his lyrics, in the same manner as the Argive elders had done with Cassandra. Though Sophocles has increased the number of participants in his lyric dialogue, which now depicts an exchange between characters who have a close social bond,\(^{123}\) the type of “conversation” that follows is a one-sided affair with minimal contact between speaker and audience: instead of responding to the protagonist’s distraught utterances addressed to them, the chorus and Tecmessa either analyze his psychological condition or admonish his manner of speaking. Beyond expressing unease about his language, Tecmessa and the chorus generally ignore the content of Ajax’s lyrics. Both their lack of attention and failure to take up the role of cooperative listeners drive Ajax to turn inward and adopt an isolated stance. As the lyric dialogue progresses and the hero’s pleas remain ignored, Ajax’s stanzas approach monodic levels, as they increase in terms of length and emotion, working actively to silence Tecmessa and the chorus, who in the final pair of strophes speak a mere two verses. In the course of three strophic pairs, Sophocles charts an arc of futile conversation that leads directly towards Ajax’s isolation, and ultimately his suicide. The poet shows us how easily what was presumably a dialogue becomes a monologue in a moment of great stress – and likewise a lyric dialogue a monody – even one that involves

\(^{123}\) This is one of the few extant lyric dialogues that occurs between more than one actor and the chorus, along with *Choephoroi* 306-478 (Great Kommos). In extant Sophocles they are fairly common: *Ant.* 1261-1346, *OC* 117-253, 833-886, 1447-1499, 1670-1750, *OT* 649-696, *El.* 1398-1441. In the surviving plays of Euripides they are found in *Med.* 131-212 and 1271-1281, *Heracl.* 73-117, *Hec.* 684-723, *Ion* 763-807, *IT* 644-656, *Ph.* 1340-1353, and *Or.* 1246-1312. See Tables 4B, 5B and 5C.
three participants who share a close bond.  The strains placed on the characters by the present situation generate a failed conversation.

Tecmessa’s initial depiction of Ajax as a unique and problematic speaker gives an insight into her behavior during 348-429. In the scene prior to the lyric dialogue in question, her extended narration to the chorus — which relates the actions of a maddened man under the spell of Athena — stresses the range of strange language of which Ajax is capable, creating the expectation that he will continue in this vein: his repertoire includes a type of superhuman language (κακὰ δεννάξων ῥήμαθ’, ἀ δαίμον / κούδεις ἀνδρῶν ἐδίδαξεν, 243-44), as well as clichés (ὁ δ’ εἶπε πρὸς με βαί’, ἀεὶ δ’ ὑμνοῦμενα: / “γύναι, γυναιξὶ κόσμου ἢ σιγὴ φέρει”, 292-3). He seems to specialize in expressive sounds, such as barking while striking his head (παίσας κάρα θώνξεν’, 308), though he is capable of repressing these violent outbursts, as evidenced by his voicelessness (καὶ τὸν μὲν ἡστο πλεῖστον ἄφθογγος χρόνον’, 311). Finally, when he comes to his senses, he wails miserably in high-pitched laments never before heard from him:

ο δ’ εὐθὺς ἐξώμωξεν οἴμωγάς λυγράς, ἃς οὔποτ’ ἀυτοῦ πρόσθεν εἰσήκουσ’ ἑγόρων πρὸς γάρ κακοῦ τε καὶ βαρυπύχου γόους τοιούτῳ ἀαί ποτ’ ἀνδρός ἐξήγειτ’ ἐχειν’ ἄλλ’ ἀψόφητος ὄξεων κωκυμάτων

124 In the Ajax, Sophocles does not divide actor and chorus by age and gender as with Cassandra and the chorus of Argive elders in the Agamemnon. Instead, he features a chorus of soldiers, his trusted men who have accompanied him to Troy from Salamis. As Scholion 134a (Christodoulo 1977) notes, they have the rare ability to speak frankly with him: πιθανῶς αὐτῷ ὁ χρόνος ἐσκεύασται ἀπὸ Σαλαμίνων ἀνδρῶν τούτῳ μὲν παρρησιαζομένων ὡς ἑλευθέρων τούτῳ δὲ συμπαθῶς ἐχόντων ὡς πολιτῶν καὶ αἰδημονίως λαλοῦντων ὡς υπηκόον· ὦ γάρ πιθανόν ἐξ Ἀχαιῶν εἰσάγειν καὶ διὰ τὸ μὴ ὄντως συνάχθεσθαι καὶ διὰ τὸ μὴ προσκρούειν τὸ βασιλεῖ. τὸ δὲ τῶν αἰχμαλώτων κηδεμονικοῦ μὲν, ὡς Αἰσχύλος ἐν Θρῆσκοις, οὐ μὴν εὐπρόσωπον· ὅρα γὰρ οἰον αἰχμαλώτους ἐπιτιμᾶν τῷ Μενελάῳ.

125 “He cursed it with foul words which a god, and no one among mortals, had taught him.” The text is that of Lloyd-Jones and Wilson 1990a.

126 “He then told me those brief and oft-quoted words: ‘woman, silence brings a woman honor.’”

127 “He struck his head and he shrieked.”

128 “And then for the longest time he sat, without a sound.”

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Suddenly he wailed mournful lamentations, such as I had never before heard from him. For he used to always say that such cries were the mark of a cowardly and dejected man; he used to weep without any sound of shrill wailing bellowing like a bull.

In voicing a desire to see the hero express himself in more conventional ways, specifically through the use of speech rather than sound, Tecmessa draws attention to his newly altered state of mind which has clearly affected his ability to communicate. The inability of the hero to express his feelings directly, even after coming out of Athena’s spell, is thus presented as a major problem at the outset of the play. The fact that Tecmessa’s account ends with the hope that the now sane Ajax might be overcome by the words of his friends (i.e. the chorus: φίλων γὰρ οἱ τοιοίδε νικῶνται λόγοις, 330),129 strongly anticipates the chorus’ subsequent conversation with him at 348-429.

According to Tecmessa, Ajax’s varied expressions and avoidance of a recognizable language are clear signs of his insanity and inability to communicate. The inarticulate groans that precipitate the lyric dialogue between Tecmessa, the chorus and Ajax give the impression that he continues to be mad: in the interpretation given by the chorus, Ajax is either sick (ἀνήρ ἔοικεν ἦ νοσεῖν, 337) or grieved by his earlier sickness (ἡ τοῖς πάλαι / νοσήμασι ξυνοῦσι λυπεῖσθαι παρῶν, 337-8). The multiple addressees to whom Ajax directs these groans contribute to a picture of incoherent madness. Twice he laments himself (ἰῶ μοί μοι, 333, 336), then he proceeds to address two absent figures, his son (ἰῶ παῖ παῖ, 339) and his brother (Τεῦκρον καλῶ. ποῦ Τεῦκρος; 342). Ajax’s ἵω groans, which operate extra metrum – that is, outside of the general bounds of the

129 “For men of his kind can be won over by the words of friends.”
tragic dialogue – are infectious, causing Tecmessa’s speech at 341 to fragment into a series of abrupt questions that end in a lament: τί ποτε μενοινξῆ; ποῦ ποτ’ εἴ; τάλαυ’ ἔγω. 130 Only when Ajax slips back into trimeters at 342-3, even though he calls someone who is not there, do the chorus declare him sane (ἀνὴρ φρονεῖν ἔοικεν, 344). The change from lyrics to trimeter contributes to a picture of an ambiguous mental state, a perception which will ultimately affect his ability to communicate and be understood by others. Nevertheless, throughout the three strophic pairs that comprise the lyric dialogue, Ajax will continue to utilize a sung mode (mostly dochmiacs) that is continually contrasted with the spoken iambic trimeters of Tecmessa and the chorus. In the lyric dialogue between Cassandra and the chorus in Aeschylus’ Agamemnon, this juxtaposition illustrated the different communicative strategies of inspired prophet and baffled audience; in the Ajax the different registers are taken as indicative of the divide between madness and sanity.

This preface thus points out the varying dynamics of comprehension and the fragile nature of the communication process, both of which Sophocles continues to emphasize throughout the lyric dialogue. What a listener says reveals not only what she has understood from the speaker but also her judgment regarding the value of what the speaker says, specifically whether it is worthy of her attention. 131 Tecmessa and the chorus’ response to Ajax’s cries begins an unbreakable cycle of interpretation rather than direct response: as the hero attempts to communicate his distress in a sung mode, his soldiers and his wife do not fully engage with him – instead they prove to be deaf listeners, continually commenting to each other on his “insanity” or “sickness” without

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130 “What does he have in mind? Where are you? Wretched me!”
131 See Brown 1995 for a comprehensive look at the role of the listener in conversations.
responding to him. When Ajax attempts to enlist the help of his fellow men in the first strophe, specifically appealing to (and underlining via repetition) their loyalty (ἰὼ / φίλοι ναυβάται, μόνοι ἐμῶν φίλων / μόνοι ἐτ' ἐμμένοντες ὀρθῶ νόμῳ, 349-50), the chorus ignore him and instead direct their comments to Tecmessa: (οἶμι ὡς ἔοικας ὀρθὰ μαρτυρεῖν ἀγαν. / δηλοὶ δὲ τούργον ὡς ἀφροντιστῶς ἔχει, 354-5). This is remarkable given that the chorus’ first words in the play are addressed to an Ajax who is not there (Τελαμώνιε παῖ, 134). In the antistrophe, Ajax once again tries to establish contact by switching to an emphatic singular address (σὲ τοὶ σὲ τοι μόνουν, 359). Both Tecmessa and the chorus admonish him as a response: εὐφημα φῶνει (362) and μὴ,...αῦδα (368). When not regulating his language in this way, they take up a role of interpreters, choosing to interact with one another rather than with the distressed hero. The verb “to be like, seem” (ἔοικα) is a standard part of their communicative repertoire (utilized at 334, 337, 344, 354), as they routinely ignore Ajax’s pleas and turn to one another. In fact, the only point of direct contact Tecmessa and the chorus have with the hero is when they express unease about his language, requesting that he tone it down, as noted previously. They communicate this desire through a series of commands, like the two above: “Speak better omened words; do not place (more pain)” (εὐφημα φῶνει μὴ ... τίθει, 362), “Don’t speak” (μὴ,...αῦδα, 368), “Yield and think well” (ὔπεικε καὶ φρόνησον εὐ, 371), “Don’t talk big” (μηδὲν μέγ’ εἴπησ, 386), “pray” (εὐχοῦ, 393). These verbs are “regulative”, using Habermas’ classification of performative verbs,

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132 “Hail, my sailor friends, the only ones among my friends, the only ones who still abide by the law of loyalty”
133 “Alas, your testimony seems to be exceedingly true! / His action shows that he is completely mad”
134 “you, indeed, you, indeed alone”
135 “Speak better omened words!”
136 “Don’t speak.”
which function to command and direct conversation in a particular way that is pleasing to
one party. As evidenced through their directive commands, a dialogue with
“friends” does not guarantee a space in which successful communication, one in which
both parties can articulate their concerns easily and unproblematically, will occur.

This failure of contact resulting from chorus and Tecmessa’s refusal of the
listener role leads Ajax to turn inward in the second strophe, which begins with a second
appeal to those around him (όρης, 364) but ultimately ends with a strange rebuke to the
absent Odysseus at 379-382. Having been ignored, his song increasingly becomes
more isolated as he now actively chooses to ignore those around him. In the final
strophic pair, which some scholars consider a separate monody, Sophocles allows no
interruptions from either Tecmessa or chorus, as in the second strophic pair. In this lyric
dialogue, Sophocles depicts the now sane Ajax, who is ignored and dismissed as mad by
an inner audience of “friends”, and is now capable of articulating his dire present
situation. Even after he delivers a cogent soliloquy in the third strophe and antistrophe,
both Tecmessa and the chorus refuse to move beyond their earlier picture of Ajax: ω δυστάλαινα, τοιάδ’ ἄνδρα χρήσιμον / φωνεῖν, ἀ πρόοδεν οὕτος οὐκ ἔτη ποτ’ ἂν
(410-11) and οὕτωι ο’ ἀπείργειν οὐδ’ ὀπως ἐώ λέγειν / ἔχω, κακοῖς τοιοῦτος συμπεπτωκότα (428-29). It is precisely this inability to face the present that

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137 These fall into the category of regulatia, see Habermas 1971.
138 Blundell (1989: 72 n. 62) points out that here in the lyric dialogue (in the first strophe, at 349 and in the
third strophe at 406) are only times when Ajax refers to anyone as φίλος.
139 Burton (1980: 21) notes that the language used for criticizing Odysseus is “derived from the market-
place, more frequent in Old Comedy and Attic Oratory than in the lyrics of Tragedy.”
141 “I am wretched! Such words does this good man speak, words which previously he would have never
dared to utter!”
142 “I do not know how to restrain you, nor even how to let you speak, when you have encountered such
evils.”
contributes to the lack of cooperation, which marks this as a failed and imperfect dialogue, an example of what Habermas terms “pseudo-communication.”

It is not that Ajax is incapable of communicating. When mad, Ajax is at one with his word and actions. Sophocles provides a glimpse of Ajax communicating successfully in the play’s opening scene. His first act of speech in the play, a conversation with Athena, is a straightforward dialogue, in which Ajax listens closely and responds to the goddess’ questions, and vice-versa. In the lyric dialogue he shares with the chorus and Tecmessa he emerges for the first time in the play as a speaking rational character, no longer under the influence of the goddess. That this dialogue documents the breakdown of communication underscores his isolation and conveys to the audience the desperation of his situation.

Writing against general accounts of communication which assume “a cooperative listener who is prepared to adopt the point of view of the speaker,” Gillian Brown reminds us that listeners are active participants in conversation, consciously choosing “whether or not they will pay attention to a message, and if they do pay attention, they may select which part of the message they will focus on.” The analytic behavior of the chorus and Tecmessa points to their refusal to take up such a role when communicating with Ajax. Sophocles proves that they are quite capable of taking up such a role: the play’s two other lyric dialogues, which are shared between Tecmessa and the chorus,

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143 Habermas 1970: 206: “Pseudo-communication produces a system of reciprocal misunderstandings which, due to the false assumption of consensus, are not recognized as such. Only a neutral observer notices that the participants do not understand one another.”

144 The dialogue includes evidence of the fact that both are clearly in conversation with one another: at its outset Athena comments on Ajax’s greeting as “well said” and asks for more (καλῶς ἔλεξας. ἀλλ´ ἐκεῖνο μοι φράσον, 94). Ajax responds to all of the goddess’ questions and there is constant rephrasing and rearticulation: 99 and 100 τεθύασιν ἄνδρες, ὡς τὸ σοι ἔννικ´ ἐγώ, to which Ajax responds with θανάστες (echoing Athena’s τεθυάσισ) and πρὶν ἄν at 107-108.

illustrate the ease of successful communication and collaboration between an individual
and a group. In 201-262, a conversational lyric dialogue, they work actively to piece the
story together; in 879-93 they lament jointly for Ajax. In the first lyric dialogue
Tecmessa – whose emergence from Ajax’s hut may have surprised an audience expecting
the hero – and the chorus collaboratively work together in order to piece together all the
information they possess about Ajax: Tecmessa has privileged information inside the hut
and the chorus has access to the rumors floating around the camp – their lyric dialogue
combines all the dreadful news. The lyric dialogue at 879-93 depicts successful
lamentation and close communication between Tecmessa and the chorus over the body of
Ajax. In both cases, the lyric dialogues between Tecmessa and the chorus illustrate close
cooperation, as well as communicative competence and rationality. When they speak,
they gather their information and work together in order to produce coherent
understanding. By contrast, the lyric dialogue with Ajax demonstrates the opposite
effect. By couching the lyric dialogue with Ajax in between these two functional and
successful conversational dialogues, Sophocles creates and underlines his isolation and a
very different process of communication.

Commenting on the politics of the Ajax and its relevance to Athens, Christian
Meier writes:

> it seems likely that the play would have prompted discussions and political
> arguments about the relationship between the leaders and the people in
> Athens; about the conceit and arrogance of the nobility; the calls for
> unremitting obedience on and off the battlefield; the amount of freedom
> that an individual should be granted; perhaps also about revolt against
> political decisions.\(^{(146)}\)

\(^{(146)}\) Meier 1993: 184.
Among other things, the failed conversation between Ajax and Tecmessa and the chorus raises the question of a leader who cannot appropriately express himself, and how the perception of his insanity and incommunicability affects any subsequent conversation. In a play whose later action will be defined by contrasting speeches, the importance of dialogue is crucial: this lyric dialogue illustrates the beginnings of the process of isolation, which will be continued in trimeter and later in the play. By focusing on the success or failure of communication between two parties, we see how the tragedians illustrate the complexities and nuances of the dialogic process. Lyric dialogues are more than moments of action or *pathos*. This particular case underscores Ajax’s unique position but also the failure of the chorus to make contact with him; they will continue to fail him, if we consider their inappropriate reaction to his deception speech.

Sophocles is the master of dialogue: credited with experimenting with on-stage dynamics through the addition of another actor, he frequently opened his plays with an extended dialogue between two actors. In this particular lyric dialogue, all the elements that might otherwise ensure a successful conversation are present, in particular willing participants, both a speaker who wishes to communicate his distress as well as listeners who are concerned about our speaker. Yet the poet chooses to illustrate the difficulties of comprehension even among close friends, and in particular among three parties. In this dialogue, Sophocles has increased the number of performers by adding another actor, Tecmessa. In other scenes that involve three participants (namely 89-117 and the final scene at 1318-1373), one is always left out; as Jacques Jouanna comments: “le troisième

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147 This play in particular is invested in speech as evidenced by its three major *agōnes*: between Ajax and Tecmessa, 430-544; Menelaos and Teucer, 1047-1162; Agamemnon, Teucer, and Odysseus, 1226-1375.
148 Pearson (1957: 90) sees this lyric dialogue as “a lyric expression of tragic pathos.” Cf. Popp 1971: 253, who categorizes Sophoclean lyric dialogue under one of two headings: *Aktionsamoibaion* and *pathos-amoibaion*.
What is remarkable in this lyric dialogue is that the addition of the third leads to the protagonist and main speaker being left out of the conversation. The inability of the listeners to understand him and to integrate into the conversation causes Ajax’s isolation from society and demonstrates the essential nature of understanding: as John Locke writes, “unless a man’s words excite the same ideas in the hearer which he makes them stand for in speaking he does not speak intelligibly.”

Dismantling χορεία in Euripides’ Helen

The Helen was one of Euripides’ most experimental plays in terms of plot, but also with regards to musical form: it grants a large musical role to its protagonist, and features only three choral odes, with the first appearing at 1107, in the final third of the drama. Given that the play was produced during the “New Music” revolution that placed emphasis on professional solos, Helen’s musical dominance in the play is not surprising. The heroine’s involvement in the play’s parodos

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149 Jouanna 2007: 238. In the first scene, Ajax’s role is that of a spectacle, rather than participant: Athena, intends to ‘display his sickness’ (δείξω δὲ καὶ οἱ τὴν ἐπιστήμην νόσον, / ὣς πᾶσιν Ἀργείων εἰς ἀπάτην ἥρως, 66-7). See also Goldhill 2009b.
150 Locke 1971: 262.
151 The play is referred to as τὴν καὶ νῆα Ελένην in comedy (Ar. Th. 850), though the idea of a faithful Helen who never went to Troy can be traced back to Stesichorus, cf. frag. 193.12-16 (PMG), Hdt. 2.112-20, Pl. Phdr. 243a-b, R. 9.586c, and Isocrates Helen 64. E. El. 1280-3 also mentions the version of this story.
152 Its happy ending has challenged generic notions of tragedy past and present: A. W. von Schlegel once considered it “die belustigenste aller Tragödien” and recently Barker (2007: 7) declared of the Helen “questa non è tanto una tragedia quanto una sorta di avventuroso melodramma romantico.” See also Segal 1971, Seidensticker 1982.
153 Helen, the only singing character in the play, sings various musical parts throughout the drama: apart from the parodos (which contains a sequence of monodic sections at 164-78, 191-210 and 229-251), she sings a monody at 348-85 and a recognition duet with a speaking Menelaos at 625-97.
154 This pattern of privileging the actor’s lyrics has been linked to Euripides’ interest in the “New Music” of the last quarter of the fifth century BCE, characterized in particular by virtuoso actors who performed passionate monodies; cf. Barner 1971, Hose 1990: 230-56, Beverley 1997, Csapo 2004. As West (1992: 366) writes: “this was an age in which, in music as in the theatre, public enthusiasm was increasingly focused on the virtuoso skills, personality, and showmanship of the individual performer.”
is, however, unparalleled in extant drama and illustrative of the extent of Euripides’ tinkering. The younger tragedian not only inserts his heroine into the choral entry song, creating a lyric dialogue that replaces the traditional parodos, but he also depicts her as calling attention to χορεία, choral music and dance. Rather than a ritual lament or an “amplified” dialogue in which the poet depicts a successful or failed exchange between chorus and actor, Euripides employs the lyric dialogue in order to reflect upon the nature of the chorus itself, and particularly the dynamics of choral experience and performance. He does so by placing a protagonist on stage who at first assumes the burden of being her own chorus. Her initial verses, though sung alone, dwell precisely on the crucial issue of responsiveness and reciprocity in music. When the chorus suddenly join her on stage, they transform a lone Helen into a chorus leader (χορηγός), and alter what may have initially appeared as a freestanding monody into a lyric dialogue. Their divergent contributions in the form of antistrophes sung in direct response to Helen’s strophes also modify Helen’s concerns. In these two strophic pairs, Euripides stages two contrasting models of communication and contact that are possible between a leader and her chorus: the first pair (167-190) illustrates contention and disagreement while the second (191-228) demonstrates the opposite, harmonious cooperation. Through opposing strophic pairs, in the parodos of the Helen Euripides examines the process by which a chorus and a chorus leader are able to produce harmonious music.

This lyric dialogue is preceded by highly stylized prooimion sung by Helen who self-consciously draws attention to her status as musical performer and establishes her virtuosity. This brief but elaborate invocation is full of self-referential notes:

ό μεγάλων ἄχέων καταβαλλόμενα μέγαν οίκτον
ποίον ἀμιλλαθῶ γόνον ἢ τίνα μούσαν ἐπέλθω

165
δάκρυσιν ὡς θρήνος ὃς πένθεσιν: αἰαὶ.\footnote{The text is based on Allan 2008.}

Oh, as I construct my great lamentation for my great woes what cry shall I make, or what Muse shall I approach with tears or dirges or gestures of grief? Ah, ah!

The technical language employed here, such as καταβαλλόμενα in line 164, draws attention to the actual process of composition. This word, which I have translated as “construct” in order to capture its meaning of “laying a foundation,” emphasizes Helen’s role as the founder and initiator of her own lament. Helen is building this particular lamentation and not merely singing it. In considering what to sing she also establishes her range of musical expertise. She skillfully employs the hexameter, perhaps the only appropriate meter for a subject as expansive as her great woes (ἐγνάλων ἀχέων). These three verses, which end with an operatic cry of aiai, make clear that she is a virtuoso, an experienced poet-performer such as Arion who is easily capable of singing a μέγαν οἰκτόν. The opening creates the expectation that the expert singer will continue to sing a free-standing monody by herself instead of a joint musical dialogue with the chorus.

Precisely in the moment at which she is singing alone Helen suddenly begins to think in choral terms. She calls for musical and emotional accompaniment in her first strophe. In what looks and sounds like solo song, an entire strophe sung by one person, Helen wishes that she was not alone but was instead joined by a mourning chorus to accompany her and complete her music, specifically one of the most prominent mythical choirs, the Sirens. Not only does she evoke an image of a choir in harmony at 174 (μουσεῖα...ξυνωιδά), musical songs that are responsive, but in employing polyptoton in her cry to the Sirens (at 173 πάθεσι πάθεσα, μέλεσι μέλεα), Helen both exemplifies and
provides the precise type of echo she desires from a chorus. This is not just a simple echoing of sounds anticipating the eventual choral echo: her repetitions also transform her into her own chorus. Pointing out that Helen speaks of her own goos (at 165) while referring to the terms thrēnoi and thrēnēmata (166 and 174), scholars such as Barker claim that Helen needs expert and professional musicians, and assume that the chorus’ participation is the next logical step in Helen’s song.156 Yet Euripides has demonstrated Helen’s expertise in the prelude, and in this particular strophe he presents us with a striking image of a heroine who becomes her own chorus as she considers calling for a choral response.

As a result of Helen’s opening verses, when the chorus arrives, having presumably entered in the course of her song, one might assume that they will readily give the accompaniment and support that she has both called for and begun to provide. However, in their antistrophe, at 179-190, their opening words clash with Helen’s preceding words: they offer a picture of bright domestic life that dismisses her mournful concerns and is resonant instead of the Nausicaa scene in Odyssey 6. Though they sing an antistrophe that metrically matches that of Helen’s (employing the same predominantly trochaic rhythms set by her), their responding song is a lengthy complaint about the discordant nature of her music. The chorus describes her laments, as Ford points out, as an “indecipherable noise: a din (ὀμφαδον at 184), a scream (ἔλακεν at 185), wailing (αἰάγμασι at 186), groaning (στένουσα again at 186), and a shout (ἀναβοϊ at 190).”157 In other words, the chorus see Helen’s first strophe as artless and without music – they specifically evoke the image of clashing lyreless music at 185 (ἄλυρον ἔλεγον).

156 Barker 2007: 13
This is invoked elsewhere by Euripides, significantly in the *parodos* of the *Iphigenia among the Taurians*, a play that shares much in common with the *Helen*. Though its *parodos* is also shared between chorus and protagonist, the singing group is not superseded by Iphigenia and instead they initiate their own entry-song. Singing in response to the chorus’ summons, Iphigenia there describes her situation as being confined in lyreless laments,\(^\text{158}\) to which her cooperative chorus immediately reply that they will cry forth (ἐξαυδάσω at 181) responsive songs (ἀντιψάλμους ὠδᾶς at 179). They effectively transform her song into a formal *thrēnos*, with antiphonal singing and language of ritual. In the *Helen*, on the other hand, the chorus’ response in the first strophe fails to transform Helen’s laments into a *thrēnos*, as they instead choose to comment on the discordant nature of unaccompanied song claiming that solo song without a choral response is inelegant and noisy. Through the invocation of lyreless song, the chorus thus refuse to acknowledge the highly crafted and choral elements of Helen’s song, presenting her instead as a dislocated participant in a choral performance.

The chorus also alters the strong intimations of musical reciprocity set forth in Helen’s first strophe. Whereas Helen imagined the mythical and famous choir of the Sirens as her accompaniment, they compare Helen to a solitary Naiad screaming, a nymph marked by her isolation. The end of Helen’s strophe had underlined the role choral music plays in the reciprocal relationship between humans and gods. There, Helen

\(^{158}\) Euripides, *IT* 144-147: ἰῶ δὴ διώσαι, διαβαθμήτοις ὡς βρῆνοις ἐγκεκριμέναι, τὰς οὐκ εὐμοῦσον μολπάς ἀλύροις ἔλγεοις, αἰαί, ἐν κηθεῖοις ὦκτοις.
sings that, as thanks for granting her a musical chorus, Persephone\textsuperscript{159} will receive a paean as a thank-offering.\textsuperscript{160} In invoking Pan, one of the few gods who does not take part in reciprocal exchange with humans, the chorus disagree with Helen. While her description points out one of the major functions and benefits of the χορός in Greek culture, as a communal social and religious institution that links mortals to gods, the chorus instead draw attention to a scene of divine rape and isolation. The image of the rocky glen which shouts aloud the rape provides the sole echo in the chorus’ reply. Though the chorus impeccably copy the rhythm of Helen’s strophe in their antistrophe, they provide a deficient response. Unlike the cooperative choral reply to Iphigenia, the model provided by this strophic pair is of disturbed or distorted choreia.

Despite the chorus’ extended criticism, Helen nevertheless continues with her song and subject, and in the second strophic pair she stubbornly employs many of the same formulations, repetitions and rhythms that she had in her first strophe. In her second strophe at 191-210, her determination to echo herself once again compensates for the lack of a cooperative choral response. What is striking is the multiplicity of rhetorical repetition: such as anadiplosis at 194 (ἐμολέν ἐμολε), and 207 (ἀφανές ἀφανές), polyptoton at 194 (δάκρυα δάκρυσ) and anaphora 198-99 (δ’ ἐμέ ... δ’ ἐμόν), as well as alliteration 198 (πολυκτόνον) and 199 (πολύπονον). As Helen orchestrates her song and repeats her laments, we are forced again to think about the role repetition plays in music, and particularly its essential function in a choral setting. The emphasis on

\textsuperscript{159} Whose experience the Euripidean Helen shares as another woman abducted by the god who is later reinstated to her normal life - cf. Foley 2001: 301-31.

\textsuperscript{160} As Ford (2010: 289) notes, there is a theme of reciprocal exchange (χάρις), that is “strongly marked by the sequence πέμψει (174) - χάριτας (175) - λάβῃ (178).”
repetition in this lyric dialogue also accentuates the chorus’ prior uncooperativeness in the first strophe.

The corresponding choral antistrophe, however, suddenly reveals that Helen is after all successfully able to mold and direct choral song. The chorus begin to copy Helen’s repetitions, and we find verses that directly engage with their corresponding phrases in Helen’s strophe, such as ἐλαχεὺ ἐλαχεν at 214 echoes Helen’s ἔμολευ ἔμολε at 195. The chorus similarly duplicate Helen’s anaphora of δι’ δι’ at 198-99 in 217-218 with τι τι. Also, lines 207 and 226 contain λέλοιπε in the same position. We may also note the echoing of Helen’s ὁ δ’ ἐμός at 202 with the chorus’ ὁ δὲ σῶς at 226, the doubling of διδωμά at 206 and 220, as well as the reiteration of οἴχεται of 204 at 219. Not only do the chorus begin to echo her just as she had wished, but they also directly engage with Helen’s subject matter. The chorus no longer criticize the nature of her song, but instead they reply directly to her laments, providing the appropriate response, support and sympathy. This sudden cooperation in the second antistrophe stands in marked contrast to their deficient response found in the first strophic pair. In the course of two strophic pairs, then, Euripides places side by side the two extremes of musical communication: dissonance and harmony.

The form itself of the dialogue encourages this reading of contrasting strophic pairs offering two opposed models of choral communication. This, the play’s first song, features a significant and original moment in the development of such exchanges between actor and chorus, for the first time presenting us with an actor who initiates and even ends sung conversation, a conversation that furthermore stands in place of the traditional choral entry song. That Euripides decides to share the parodos with the protagonist is in
itself not unusual but it is rare for an actor to sing the opening verses of the parodos proper, rather than the chorus. Though in other Euripidean tragedies the chorus’ entrance song is precipitated by an actor’s cry (e.g. Medea and even Iphigenia among Taurians), or a parodos is staged as a direct response to an actor’s monody (e.g. Hecuba, Trojan Women, Electra), this is the only extant tragedy in which choral song is presented as a direct and metrically dependent response to an actor’s song. The form of the parodos, which consists of two strophic pairs, is also highly unusual in its equal division of strophes. In moments of lyric dialogue actor and chorus typically share each strophe and antistrophe; here we have an anomalous structure of alternating strophe and antistrophe, sung by Helen and then by the chorus. This even division not only separates the two voices participating in the dialogue, but it also allows us to see clearly the precise responses that the leader is able to elicit from her chorus, and allows us to explore the issue of musical responsiveness, which Helen emphasized in her first strophe.

In a drama whose protagonist played a prominent role in Spartan myth and cult as a chorus leader, and in a play whose chorus is largely silent until verse 1107 when their first stasimon finally takes place, these new developments seem even more striking. The parodos is far from being simply an “emotional response to the situation set out in the prologue” or even a “patterned threnody” as some critics have proposed - it is rather an exploration of two opposed models of cooperation between a chorus and its leader. Few have addressed the problem of the deficient choral response found in the first strophic pair, particularly in light of the identity of the chorus who disagree, Greek

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163 Willink 1990: 78.
captives whose experience, both personal and musical, parallels that of Helen.\textsuperscript{164} I suggest rather that the initial inability of these two well-matched parties to achieve concordant song, when contrasted with the easy cooperation of the second strophic pair, point to the fragile nature of exchanges between an individual and a collective. Euripides illustrates the ease with which even such a process can collapse, and he does so by means of an innovative and flexible form, which, as Aeschylus’ earlier and very different testing had demonstrated, is particularly apt for exploring the conditions of dramatic cooperation, whether spoken or musical.

Like Aeschylus and Sophocles – who also featured a singing actor in their lyric dialogues – Euripides is thus also interested in studying the relationship between actor and chorus, particularly when engaged in an emotionally fraught conversation. This time, however, he specifically works with the older configuration of chorus and leader.\textsuperscript{165} By depicting an actor who explicitly plays a formal role as chorēgos, who is able to mold and direct choral song, Euripides expands the actor-chorus dynamic typically found in lyric dialogue in order to explore the nature of communication between a chorus and its leader in a musical context. He also directly questions the tragic conventions related to

\textsuperscript{164} Wright 2005: 176 notes that the choruses of Iphigenia in Tauris, Helen, and Andromeda all feature choruses of the same nationality as the heroine, even though they are set in distant locales: “The Greek choruses of the escape-tragedies are therefore unconventional: they seem to be another way in which Euripides has reduced the exoticism of his chosen settings, has made them even less foreign, by putting his foreigners in the minority. Furthermore, the presence of large numbers of Greek women in such remote, inaccessible regions is intrinsically unlike and highly outré. Why on earth are they there? How did they arrive at these far-flung regions at all, and why have they ended up, coincidentally, as attendants to the respective heroines?” Though Murnaghan (forthcoming: 15) argues that this chorus are “temporary companions that substitutes for the close kinswomen that she will ultimately rejoin.”

\textsuperscript{165} Murnaghan (forthcoming: 4-5) declares that tragedy “represents an adaptation of nondramatic lyric both in its form and in its content. Formally, tragedy represents a reworking of the choral configuration of chorus and leader... In adapting choral forms, tragedy broadens the separation between choruses and leaders: formally, actors' speeches differ in their dialects, meters, and musical register from the songs of choruses; within the dramatic fiction, choruses are assigned roles in which they are more different from the main characters than are typical nondramatic chorus members, who are closely similar in age, status, and local origin to their leaders.”
choral experience precisely in a lyric dialogue between protagonist and chorus that replaces the traditional *parodos*.

**Conclusion**

In joining the voices of actor and chorus at emotional peaks in their drama, the tragedians staged hybrid and amplified conversations in lyric dialogues. These exchanges offered them a great deal of flexibility: a poet could, for example, choose to depict a singing actor interacting with a speaking chorus in order to press a particular point. Through the many possibilities it offered poets interested in depicting an exchange of information, lyric dialogues were active sites of experimentation. In these conversations, the tragedians explore the conditions under which communication is possible between chorus and actor in a variety of contexts. The lyric dialogue in *Agamemnon* 1072-1177, which presents the unique case of a foreign prophetess who attempts to communicate with a community of elders, points to the pivotal role of the speaker in making herself understood. Sophocles on the other hand depicts in *Ajax* problematic listeners who fail to take up their role. It is significant that these same listeners are shown as capable of communicating cooperatively and with relative ease in the other two lyric dialogues of the play: the contrast between these two lyric dialogues and 348-429 is clear, and demonstrates the important role that understanding plays. In the *Helen*, Euripides makes a different contribution to the history of communication by focusing on the type of dialogue and cooperation that emerges in a musical context. *Helen*, a wholly lyric dialogue that nevertheless depicts a conversation, gives us an insight into how the dynamics of leader and group essential to ritual choral performance could be invoked during lyric dialogue, which becomes a site of musical conversation.
CHAPTER 3: MANAGING MOURNING IN TRAGIC KOMMOI

In the second half of Euripides’ *Suppliants*, the arrival of the bodies and the urns of the seven dead warriors who attacked Thebes produces one of the most elaborate scenes of communal mourning in extant tragedy, one whose staging may have required more than fifty people.166 In a play that directly addresses the problem of the unburied and dishonored dead, this scene of lament is of utmost dramatic and thematic importance.167 As soon as the funeral cortège enters the stage, Adrastus, the Argive king, takes on a directorial role, prompting and guiding the chorus throughout the scene with a series of commands: στεναγμόν... ἀπόσατ’ ἀπόσατ’ (798-800),168 προσάγετ’... σώμαθ’ αἰματοσταγῇ (811-2),169 ἀίτε μου (820),170 and ἰδετε κακῶν πέλαγος (824).171 The chorus of women does as they are told, and the poignant exchange that follows depicts a long duet of lamentation between Adrastus and the chorus, in which the two collaboratively lament for the fallen dead. This exchange is no longer an “amplified dialogue”, a category that I developed for conversational lyric dialogues in the previous chapter, in which the poet depicts an emotional and fragile conversation between characters and chorus as they discuss and react to recent horrific events. Unlike the exchange between Tecmessa, the chorus and Ajax, the response of Adrastus and the chorus is not immediate and fraught; it is no longer an unstructured response to what has

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166 Chourmouziades 1965: 81 arrives at this figure, having counted the pallbearers of the bodies, Adrastus and his attendants, Theseus and his attendants, along with the chorus of mothers. Such a number requires that the action take place in the orchestra, see Collard 1975: I. 25-26.

167 The play also features grieving parents (Adrastus and a chorus of mothers) who travel to Athens seeking help with this particular cause. In the parodos the chorus of mothers demonstrate their anguish at their inability to bury their sons: ἐσιδοῶ’ ἀικτρᾶ μὲν ὀσσῶν δάκρυ’ ἀμφὶ βλεφάρῳς, ῥυότα δὲ σαρκῶν πολιῶν / καταδρύματα χειρῶν. τί γάρ; ἀ φθιμένους παιδὰς ἐμοὺς οὔτε δόμοις / προθέμαι οὔτε τάφων χωματα γαῖας ἔσσω (49-53).

168 “Shout, shout your groan.” The text is of Diggle 1981.

169 “Bring forward the blood-drenched bodies.”

170 “Hear me.”

171 “Behold this sea of troubles.”
just occurred on stage but rather a more retrospective and ritualized attempt to comprehend and communicate traumatic events. In the previous chapter, I argued that scenes of conversational lyric dialogue, such as that in Sophocles’ *Ajax*, illustrate the manner in which the Greek tragedians explored the boundaries and possibilities of communication during times of emotional duress. This chapter turns to scenes of collective mourning in order to consider the rituals through which communal action and communication can be shaped and understood in tragedy.

Scenes of lyric dialogue between actor and chorus often possess this potential for exploring the conditions under which interaction between an individual and a group succeeds or fails. It is therefore not surprising that tragedians often use them to depict the mourning ritual, which was typically a communal activity in the ancient Greek world. The ritual dirge (θρῆνος) formed an essential part of the funerary rites for the dead in ancient Greek society.  Though some extant ancient literary *thrēnoi* possess a choral form and others consist of a series of solo utterances that are followed by choral refrain, the structure of the ancient Greek ritual lament was antiphonal, following a call and response format uniting a leader or leaders and a larger mourning group, leaders

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172 Various works, such as Kurtz and Boardman 1971, Vermeule 1979, Garland 1985, Morris 1987 and 1992, Humphreys 1993, Seaford 1994, and Sourvinou-Inwood 1983 and 1995 have examined and established the importance of burial rites in the ancient Greek world. More recently, scholars’ attention has been turned towards the ritual lament (θρῆνος); works such as Reiner 1938, Alexiou 1974 (2002), Holst-Warhaft 1992, Sultan 1993, Derderian 2001 and Foley 2001 have shed light on ancient Greek lamentation practices, which were also an indispensable part of the complex rites due to the dead in a funeral ceremony.

173 E.g., those of Pindar and Simonides.

174 Such as the laments of Andromache, Hecuba, and Helen which are answered and complemented by the collective groan of Trojan women in *Iliad* 24.

175 Alexiou (1974: 132) explains that the forms of the ritual lament found in literature (Homeric solo laments with refrain and choral threnodies) can be understood in terms of the genre in which they are found: “the predominance of the solo laments with refrain and the choral laments… could be explained by the tendency of epic to develop the narrative element at the expense of antiphony and refrain, and of lyric to concentrate on the choral and musical elements.” Calame (1977: 82), who defines the threnody as a “type of monodic performance with choral accompaniment,” emphasizes the role of the rhythmic accompaniment of exclamations by a chorus of women. He (1977: 83) furthermore remarks that the
who may have been female relatives of the deceased\textsuperscript{176} and professional mourners not related to the family. Margaret Alexiou in fact suggests that the \textit{thrēnos} involved the antiphonal singing of these two groups: “strangers and kinswomen, each singing a verse in turn and followed by a refrain sung in unison.”\textsuperscript{177} Antiphony and group participation were important features of the \textit{thrēnos}, which required interaction amongst an assembly of mourners.\textsuperscript{178}

Tragedy reproduces this antiphonal ritual structure, depicting certain lyric dialogues (\textit{kommoi}) that are shared between a mourning actor and the chorus, and which have a strophic form to facilitate the required antiphonal response.\textsuperscript{179} In addition to being antiphonal, \textit{kommoi} in tragedy possess certain metrical and stylistic features commonly associated with such a ritual, such as repetition, address to the dead, and inarticulate cries.\textsuperscript{180} These conventions, furthermore, are often exploited for dramatic purpose. Given that social codes governed the performing roles of the participants in ancient laments, tragedy likewise depicts varying relationships between the leader of the \textit{thrēnos} and the larger group of fellow mourners. Though often the male or female character who

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\textsuperscript{176} Female kin led and performed many of these songs, see Alexiou 1974: 10. The funeral laments in modern Greece (\textit{miroloyia}) are also performed by women, but are no longer led by the close female kin of the deceased, who are overwhelmed with grief: according to Danforth (1982: 72-3): “wives, daughters, mothers, and sisters of the deceased...spend much of their time crying, sobbing, and calling out to the deceased. The singing is led by women who are less directly touched by the death, more distant relatives of the deceased or women who are not related to him at all.”

\textsuperscript{177} Alexiou 1974: 13.

\textsuperscript{178} Alexiou (1974: 134) comments: “There is no example in Greek antiquity of a lament which has lost all traces of refrain.” See also Tsagalis 2004: 48-52.

\textsuperscript{179} \textit{Cf.} Aristotle’s definition of \textit{kommos} as a \textit{thrēnos} shared by the chorus and those on stage, discussed in chapter 1.

\textsuperscript{180} Wright 1986: 12.
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leads the lament is a close family member,\textsuperscript{181} the accompanying chorus may not be the best group suited for the task: the identity of the chorus and their relationship to the character informs the extent to which they will cooperate in or refuse the lament. As this chapter will demonstrate, tragedians mirror and distance the familiar rite of the ritual lament in \textit{kommoi}, stylized and self-conscious representations that can emphasize or subvert the communal experience of mourning as well as the collective expression of strong emotion.

In a study that explores the nature of interaction between chorus and actor(s) in moments of lyric exchange, \textit{kommoi} occupy a special place as a major subset of \textit{amoibaia} in Greek tragedy.\textsuperscript{182} Here, rather than discussing theories that seek the origins of tragedy in ritual \textit{thrēnoi},\textsuperscript{183} this chapter examines these tragic depictions of communal lamentation as enacted in their dramatic context. My readings will be informed by recent theories that define ritual as a type of social action, the collective performance of any ritual that communicates and reinforces the communal beliefs of a particular group, thus forming a crucial part of a larger process of socialization.\textsuperscript{184} I therefore examine the dynamics of ritual participation as depicted on the tragic stage – the interactions that are conducive to lament, how they facilitate communal mourning or anticipate its failure. I study the interplay between chorus and actor as depicted in their varying emotional...

\textsuperscript{181} Unlike actual lamentation practices in ancient Greece, (which were led by female relatives of the deceased), Greek tragedy employs both male and female leaders and choruses in moments of communal mourning. See Appendix 1: The Female Mourning Stage? : Laments and Gender.

\textsuperscript{182} See chapter 1 above for a discussion of the terminology related to these moments, such as the often-blurred distinction between \textit{kommoi} and \textit{amoibaia}.

\textsuperscript{183} See Nilsson 1911, Reiner 1938, and Else 1965. On lamentation for dead heroes as a potential source of tragedy, see Seaford 1994: 142 and \textit{passim}.

\textsuperscript{184} See Durkheim 1965 on ritual as a central sociological concept and a universal category of social life; on ritual as a form of communication, see Leach 1968. More recently, Bell (1992: 7) proposes that ritual activities “be removed from their isolated position as special paradigmatic acts and restored to the context of social activity in general.”
responses, what is said and what is left unsaid, even as they engage in more formalized behavior and employ ritualized language. Though we crucially lack the accompanying music and the gestures, it is fruitful to reflect on what the meters used suggest about the performance. Because certain meters have particular emotional connotations or ritual resonances, they formed part of the repertoire of dramatic conventions that the tragedians employed and exploited in moments of lyric dialogue.

My consideration of these moments is guided by the larger notion of “managing mourning.” In this chapter, I explore this in a double sense: first, who manages to mourn? What needs to occur between actor and chorus for mourning to be successful, and what transpires when this fails to occur? Second, how do the tragedians manage mourning on the tragic stage? How are these scenes of lyric exchange dramatically organized, and theatrical conventions employed and subverted? Focusing on such questions allows me to underline the reciprocity and theatricality inherent in moments of mourning. Elias Canetti, when discussing the death rites of the Warramunga tribe in Central Australia, introduces the term “lamenting pack” to describe the energy the group of mourners derive from their activity:

“the essential thing is the excitement as such, the state of having something to lament in common. The ferocity of the lament, its duration, its resumption the next day in the new camp, the amazing rhythm in which it increases and, even after complete exhaustion, starts afresh — all this is

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185 Mourning itself was perceived to be deeply theatrical, as such an ideal place for self-reflexive inquiry. Tragic kommoi, as I suggest in this chapter, exploit this intrinsically theatrical nature of mourning. According to Aristotle’s lost Symposium, mourners disfigure themselves — by cutting off their hair and putting aside any celebratory wreaths — in homopatheia, “sympathy” with the dead: ὑμᾶς αὐτῶς τῇ τῇ κοινῇ τῶν τριχῶν καὶ τῇ τῶν στεφάνων ἀφαιρέσθαι. (Fr. 101 Rose = Ath. 15. 675a). See Seaford 1994: 86 for examples of mourning practices of “sympathetic befoulment.” As Murnaghan (1999-2000: 108) elaborates: “like an actor, a mourner is a duplicitous figure, one who imitates death, but with a living voice, who testifies to death, but cannot help still being alive. In that he or she experiences a bond of sympathy with the dead but does not follow him or her to the bitter end, the mourner is also like the spectator of a play.”
proof of the fact that what matters here is the reciprocal stimulation to lament.”

The “reciprocal stimulation to lament” which Canetti identifies is emphasized by tragedians in kommoi. But as I will show there are moments in which it strikingly fails to occur, as various forces prevent the execution of communal grief. By focusing on the interplay between individual and collective in these moments, and in particular the process of “face-to-face interaction,” a concept developed by sociologist Ervin Goffman, who describes “the reciprocal influence of individuals upon one another’s actions when in one another’s immediate physical presence,” I will argue that though this “reciprocal influence” often serves as the basis for some collective moments of mourning in tragedy, it can also subvert other communal scenes of grief.

My discussion is restricted to a limited number of kommoi, those in which an actor laments in a ritual context with a chorus rather than conducting a private lament or monody. This leaves aside the various examples of an individual actor who borrows some of the conventions and language of lament in order to perform a private lament, though these often are expressed in a lyric form. I examine only what is considered “amoibic” exchange between the chorus and actor, structured around their interaction. Focusing on their interplay allows me to analyze how tragedians create or undermine a sense of community. By considering the dramatic and social identities of both chorus and mourning character, which play a significant role in the successful or subverted communal mourning, I illustrate the processes of communication and reciprocity that are possible between the two groups in different social situations.

186 Canetti 1960: 105.
188 See Alexiou 1974: 113 for list of tragic women who lament themselves. On the extensive role of lament within tragedy, see Segal 1993a: 13-20.
Ritual is a function of social interaction, as this chapter demonstrates. The three sections that follow show how the Greek tragedians explored the types of collaboration that were possible between a bereaved family member and a group of fellow mourners in kommoi. Scholars who have studied lamentation have emphasized this act as one uniting the living and the dead, allowing the bereaved to sustain a social relationship with the deceased.\textsuperscript{189} Consequently this chapter will also focus on the role of tragic mourning ritual to create or undermine community among its participants: did participation in a shared activity provided an occasion for strengthening ties between group and individual?

\textbf{Good Grief: Aeschylus’ \textit{Persians} and Euripides’ \textit{Trojan Women}}

My study of the dynamics of ritual participation as enacted in kommoi begins with a consideration of two moments of uninterrupted, \textit{successful} communal ritual mourning between an actor and chorus: \textit{Persians} 908-1078 and \textit{Trojan Women} 1287-1332. As the most prominent examples of “full laments” in extant tragedy,\textsuperscript{190} these two scenes (along with \textit{Seven Against Thebes} 961-1004)\textsuperscript{191} appear to mirror contemporaneous practices of the ancient Greek ritual lament: not only do they feature a marked antiphony between actor and chorus that is augmented by shrill cries and iambic lyric measures,\textsuperscript{192} but they also depict the ritual cries and gestures typically associated with mourning, such as

\textsuperscript{189}Caraveli-Chaves 1980.
\textsuperscript{190}See Wright 1986 for a distinction between “full” and “reduced” laments in tragedy.
\textsuperscript{191}I do not discuss this kommos at length here, since scholars suspect that it contains various interpolations and alterations. The controversy hinges on the questionable role of Antigone and Ismene, who having been announced by the chorus at 861-65 (and subsequently addressed in 870-3) are then suspiciously silent. Some of the play’s manuscripts attribute the verses at 961-1004 to the two sisters, but scholars have recently argued that their presence is most likely interpolation and that these verses were sung instead by a divided chorus. For a general sketch of the arguments, see Lloyd-Jones 1959, Dawe 1967, Taplin 1977: 169-91, West 1992, and Sommerstein 1996: 130-4. For more on the sisters’ silence, see Taplin 1972: 85-89.
\textsuperscript{192}Broadhead (1960: 317) notes that anapestic and iambic meters were used commonly in \textit{thrēnoi} because “a rising rhythm was suitable for the loud and shrill utterances of a \textit{thrēnos}.” See also Kannicht 1969: II. 106, n. 2.
tearing at the hair and beating the breast. In this section I discuss how Aeschylus and Euripides manage these “successful” scenes of mourning, that is, how they stage interactions between leader and chorus that are conducive to cooperative and unproblematic lamentation. In part, this cooperation is facilitated by the fact that in both kommoi Aeschylus and Euripides feature a character and a chorus of the same gender and social status. But as my discussion will suggest, the position of both kommoi also dictates their success: these kommoi are exodoi that close their respective plays, which are furthermore dominated by the language and sounds of lament. In the case of the Trojan Women, the kommos between Hecuba and the captive Trojan women concludes Euripides’ entire trilogy.193 By ending their plays with such collaborative kommoi in which protagonist and chorus of shared social backgrounds lament and mourn the disasters that occurred during the course of the drama, the tragedians demonstrate a concern with achieving catharsis and emotional closure at the end of their harrowing plays.

At the same time, these kommoi go beyond mourning the deceased. By illustrating a defeated protagonist and chorus as well as a captive leader and group grieving for a large number of dead countrymen and relatives, they bring into focus the experience of the survivors themselves. In their grief, both Xerxes and Hecuba with their respective choruses reflect on their new status and social situation. Even as they are depicted performing gestures that seek contact with the dead, such as beating the earth in Trojan Women,194 actor and chorus offer a joint commentary on their current state, and in

193 Trojan Women was staged as the final play in a trilogy that included the lost plays Alexander and Palamedes (along with the satyr-play Sisyphus); see Scodel 1980. Persians was the second play of Aeschylus’ trilogy, see Moreau 1992-3.
these harmonious *kommoi* they work together to define and communicate their new situation.

In both cases, the tragedians draw attention to the experience of the survivors in an attempt to articulate their status in the aftermath of calamity. Part of this act of communication involves narrating and reliving the past: both *kommoi* contain an extended narration of catastrophic events that leveled the Persian and Trojan race. Both plays thus end with a powerful spectacle of communal grief that simultaneously depicts the unity of the survivors: the Persian elders bemoan the death of their fallen men with their former military leader and the despairing Trojan women and former queen fall to their knees before they begin their life of slavery.

*Aeschylus’ Persians*

The longest and most demonstrative *kommos* in extant tragedy, the dirge found at the end of Aeschylus’ *Persians* is the result of an unparalleled process of cooperation between Xerxes and the chorus, defined by close antiphony and responson. Their initial interaction in the *kommos* is marked by contention: at first Xerxes laments himself and his own actions while the chorus underline his responsibility in the destruction of the Persian army. As the dirge progresses and its rhythms intensify, the *kommos* becomes less contentious and more collaborative, driven by a responson and harmony between chorus and actor not witnessed elsewhere in extant tragedy. What we witness is an astonishing exercise in the formation of a collective: though Xerxes initially underlines his own individuality and responsibility as chief mourner, his solo voice slowly collapses

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195 Hall (1996: 20) points out that this is a dirge that involves “a young man waving his quiver and rags at twelve old grey-haired men who beat their breasts, pluck their beards, and tear at their clothes and hair.”

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into that of the chorus, with the result that the *kommos* ends on what appears to be a wholly communal cry of grief. While at the beginning, both actor and chorus sang extensive verses separately, towards the end they switch to a more streamlined call-and-response format, with each singing only one verse. In the closing moments of the lyric exchange, an antiphonal space entirely without any tension is created, unique in extant tragedy.

The *kommos’* general structure reflects this pattern. The lyric dialogue can be divided into two parts, distinguished by both form and content: 908-1001 and 1002-1077. The first half is dominated by anapests and a more dynamic interaction, while the second contains lyric iambics and more intense involvement between the two, what I will call a “stichomythic” lyric form. The first half, which is more reflective, emphasizes the dramatic individuality of both Xerxes and chorus: Xerxes expresses his sense of failure while the chorus hold him responsible for the disaster. The chorus, as Broadhead writes, is not “a mere sounding-board to vibrate in sympathy with the King’s emotions;”\(^{196}\) in this first half the elders refuse to comfort him and it is only after he acknowledges his role in the destruction of fallen warriors that they share his grief. In the second, individual experience and blame yields to collective grief as both collaborate and willingly participate in the creation of a joint song marked by alternating lyrics.

The anapestic opening at 909-930 illustrates the diverging concerns of both parties, which accounts for the dynamic and contentious interaction.\(^{197}\) Xerxes’ opening words at 909-917, which contain a series of first person pronouns, reveal a debased yet

\(^{196}\) Broadhead 1960: 315.

\(^{197}\) On a formal level, both these scenes are dominated by iambic lyric measures. Both contain recitative and melic anapests (“Klage-anapäste”). Brown 1977 illustrates how widely used anapests are in tragic ritual contexts, and suggests that the meter was originally used in lamentation ritual.
self-involved king whose immediate focus is on himself: he (δύστηνος ἔγώ, 909) has met with an unexpected fate; his strength (ἐμοὶ ἔρωμη, 913) is drained when he sees the chorus; he wishes that Zeus would have killed him along with the other men (κάμε μετ’ ἀνδρῶν, 915). Though he acknowledges the trodden Persian race, he emphasizes his own helplessness (τὸ πάθω τλῆμων, 912). In contrast to the chorus, who had defined themselves in terms of the men who had “gone” as soon as they entered the stage (τάδε μὲν Περσῶν τῶν οἰχομένων / Ἑλλάδ’ ἐς αἰαν πιστὰ καλεῖται, 1-2), Xerxes mentions these men as an afterthought to himself. The chorus’ response at 918-30, on the other hand, reveals their continued concern for the men who have perished. Though they echo Xerxes’ idea of a δαίμων being responsible (at 921: οὐς νῦν δαίμων ἐπέκειρεν, which picks up on 911) and employ the same anapests as Xerxes, they provide him no comfort, and instead direct their energies at lamenting the Persian army and the might of Persia: ὅτοτοι, βασιλεύ, στρατιάς ἄγαθης / καὶ περσονόμου τιμῆς μεγάλης / κόσμου τ’ ἀνδρῶν (918-20). Thalmann writes that these three words, στρατιά, τιμή (particularly one that is described as περσονόμος), and κόσμος “represent slightly different ways of looking at a single entity — the Empire.” In their response, the chorus thus draws attention to the wider scope of the Persian disaster, and illustrate that it extends beyond the king. Not only do they shift the focus away from the king, but also

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198 The text is that of Page 1972.
199 Whereas the chorus’ use of the word in line 1 is ambiguous, in 917, Xerxes makes clear that οἶχεσθαί is - and has always been- equivalent to θυόκειν. Assaël (1992-1993) discusses the reappearance of certain verbs such as βαινει and οἶχεσθαί as “Eschyle élabore tout un système d’échos entre la parodos et l’exodos.”
200 Garvie (2009: 338) points out that Xerxes is the only character in Aeschylean tragedy “who enters with anapests to which the Chorus responds also in anapests.”
201 “Alas, King, for that noble army, / and for the great honor of Persian rule / and for the men who adorned it.”
they passionately blame Xerxes for the men’s death in a passage accompanied by a clear switch to melic anapests:203

Earth bewails the youth
of the young men she bore, killed by Xerxes,
who has crammed Hades with Persians. For many men from Agbatana,
the flower of the land,
archers, many throngs of men,
were destroyed.
_Aiai, aiai, for their valuable defense!
The land of Asia, king of the country,
has terribly, terribly been brought to her knees.

The chorus not only sing of their disappointment at Xerxes, but the Doric alphas they employ now testify to an accusatory tone. They end a verse with dochmiac character at 930: αίνως αίνως ἐπὶ γόνυ κέκλιται. Prior to the _kommos_ proper, we thus find an agitated note that is the result of the conflicting concerns of two parties, concerns that presage a potentially uncooperative lyric dialogue.

These conflicting concerns, however, begin to fade into the background by the time the _kommos_ kicks off at 931. Through a series of formal echoes and concessions to the chorus, Xerxes easily takes up the role of chief mourner in the first strophic pair. Though he continues to present himself as a subject for lamentation (_δι', ἔγὼν οἰοὶ_

203 As evidence by the presence of spondaic dimeters at 922, 925, 928, Doric alphas at 928 and resolution at 930. Broadhead (1960: 287) wonders whether the coryphaeus delivers the first four lines, which are recitative anapests.
he does so while admitting his failure by utilizing many of those same Doric alphas the chorus had employed in accusing him (μέλεος γένναι γαί τε πατρώιαι / κακόν ἀρ' ἐγενόμαιν, 932-3). He confirms his new status as plague of the fatherland in a line that has “the savor of a dochmiac,” according to Else, κακὸν ἀρ' ἐγενόμαιν,” which mimics the chorus’ final quip at 930. He thus reveals his admission of guilt in a manner that engages the chorus on their own terms. This admission prompts the chorus to announce a programmatic statement that indicates that they will sing and initiate the ritual of mourning (πέμψω πολύδακρυν ἰαχάν, 940). The chorus will take up their role as fellow-mourners, and will do so in a particularly wild and unrestrained manner, in the style of Mariandynian mourners.

In the antistrophe Xerxes instructs the chorus to let it out: ἣσο οἱ τοι ὑδάν / δύσθροον ὡδάν (941-2), to which the chorus agrees and elaborates: ἡσο τοι ἵκαί < > πἀνδυρτον ...κλάγγω δ' αὖ γόνον ἀρίδακρυν (944-7). In their response, the chorus directly comply with Xerxes’ request at 941-2, but they also begin the process of echoing that will later dominate the lyric dialogue: they repeat Xerxes’ πἀνδυρτον (944) and employ the term πενθήτηρος (946), which is “in meaning, metre, and termination” identical to the word that occupies the same position in the strophe: θρηνητήρος (937), as well as ἄριδακρυν (947) which echoes πολύδακρυν at 940. Though Aeschylus provided a hint of tension in the anapastic preface, by the time the kommos opens both parties are depicted as willing partners.

204 “Here I am - oioi! – a subject for lamentation!”
205 “I, a wretch, have become a plague upon my race and my fatherland.”
206 Else 1977: 76.
207 Hall 1996: 171: “The Mariandynians were a people of north-western Asia...famous for their wild ritual laments.” See also Alexiou 1974: 11-12. At 1054 Xerxes will instruct the chorus to cry out the Mysian lament: καὶ στέρον ἰδρασε κατιβά τὸ Μύσιον. According to a scholion the Mysians (and the Phrygians) were particularly known for their laments: οἱ γάρ Μυσοὶ καὶ οἱ Φρύγες εἰσὶ μᾶλιστα θρηνητικοί.
208 “Let out your dismal, plaintive, ill-sounding voice.”
209 “I shall indeed let out my plaintive voice...I shall shriek a tearful lament.”
210 Hall 1996: 171.
After a programmatic opening, the joint enterprise of mourning begins not with ceaseless dismal noise, as promised, but rather with an extended narration of past events, which dominate the second and third strophic pairs. Constant repetition and a sudden shift to Ionics increase the emotional register of the piece, as Xerxes recalls and narrates the events at sea. Though Xerxes initiates each strophe, it is the chorus’ questioning about the Persian generals that leads the narrative along, inducing a response and further retelling from Xerxes. This is the same structure as in the epirrhematic exchange with the messenger earlier in the play: the chorus’ prompting guides the response of the actor. The chorus’ persistent questions lead to a sincere admission by Xerxes of his longing for these men:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{\'ιυγγά μοι δῆτ' } \\
\text{άγαθῶν ἐτάρων ὑπομιμήσκεις } \\
\text{<αλαστ> ἀλάστα στυγνά πρόκακα λέγων} \\
\text{βοάι βοάι μοί} \text{ μελέων ἐντοσθέν ἦτορ.}
\end{align*}
\]

You stir up in me
a longing for my brave comrades
speaking of unforgettable – unforgettable – and loathsome evils beyond evils.
My heart cries out, cries out, from inside my limbs!.

As these lines indicate, to mourn is to remember. This admission reminds us of the role that extended narration can play in the mourning process, which can demand commemoration during its first stage as a way of expressing the loss of the dead. Thus the chorus initially pursues an interrogative roll-call of the missing commanders, which not only forces Xerxes to claim responsibility for their death at 962-5, but also constitutes an elaborate naming process, a procession of names to be mourned. The chorus’ questioning ceases in the middle of the third antistrophe, when they express astonishment that they are gone:

\[211\text{ On the exotic nature of the catalog of Persian names, see Schmitt 1978, Broadhead 1960: 318-21, Hall 1989.}\]
I am amazed, amazed that they do not follow behind your wheeled car.

In this repetition of ἔταφον (from τέθητα) one almost hears τάφος. In recalling those men, the chorus resuscitates them and with the repetition of ἔταφον they effectively bury them.

Perhaps because of this act of burying and recognition by Xerxes of the longing he has for his comrades, the fourth strophe marks a major break in the responsion pattern. Both Xerxes and the chorus together lament those perished Persians. They begin to echo each other more and more until they are effectively repeating each other’s moans. For the first time at 1008-9 we see the first person plural being utilized (πεπλήγμεθ’, which is echoed by both Xerxes and the chorus) as pace changes. Now that both parties realize that Xerxes is the sole remnant of the Persian army, they begin to work together in order to create another great collective. The last strophic pair of the kommos, which depicts Xerxes issuing instructions and the chorus immediately obeying, illustrates this:

Xe.: Beat your breasts and cry out the Mysian lament.
Cho. Painful, painful!
Xe: And pluck the white hair of your beard
Cho. With clenched hands, clenched hands, I do so in great distress.
Xe. Raise a shrill cry. Cho. This too I will do.
Xe. Tear your robes with your finger-nails.
Cho. Painful, painful!
Xe. Pluck your hair and pity the army.
Cho. With clenched hands, clenched hands, I do so in great distress.
Xe. Let tears fall from your eyes. Cho. I am moistening them.

The chorus’ immediate willingness to obey instructions from Xerxes demonstrates the king’s ability as a leader, who issues clear commands that are easily obeyed. The ease with which Xerxes orders the chorus in these lines persuades one to picture him as a military commander, and specifically to imagine the larger Persian machine that he commanded and the Greeks destroyed. There is no possibility of dissent or disobedience for a leader such as Xerxes, who easily commands a large collective. Aeschylus thus demonstrates the might of the recently defeated Persians at precisely their weakest moment. The closing epode continues to stress Persian prowess by illustrating the remarkable process by which the voices of chorus and actor can easily collapse into one another:

Xe. Cry out in response to my cries.
Cho. Oioi oioi.
Xe. Go wailing to the palace.
Cho. Iō, Iō the Persian earth is hard to tread on.
Xe. Cry iōa throughout the city.
Cho. Iō, iōa indeed; yes, yes.
Xe. Wail, treading softly.
Cho. Iō, Iō the Persian earth is hard to tread on.
Xe. ἔδε ἔδε triple-oared…
Cho. ἔδε ἔδε were the ships in which they died.
Xe. Escort me home now.
Cho. I will indeed escort you with ill-sounding wails.

This epode demonstrates how easily the Persians on stage can create a harmonious and indistinguishable wholly collective cry of grief. Though this final lyric dialogue is dominated by the actions, sounds and gestures of ritual lament, such as breast-beating, hair- and robe-tearing, repeated inarticulate cries impossible to translate, the ease with which the Persians move towards collective action and enact a communal ritual activity (though they may be perceived as extravagant) is extraordinary.212

The play’s parodos had hinted that such a wild display of grief was possible, as the chorus of Persian elders imagine the cries of lamentation which would emerge should the Persians lose:

115

ταύτά μου μελαχρίτων φρήν ἀμύσσεται φόβωι,
οὰ, Περσικοῦ στρατεύματος, τοῦδε μὴ πόλις πύθη-
ται κένανδρον μέγ’ ἀστυ Σουσίδος.

καὶ τὸ Κισσίων πόλισμ’ ἀντίδουπον ἁίσεται,
οὰ, τοῦτ’ ἔπος γυναικοπληθῆς ὀμίλος ἀπών,
βυσσίνοις δ’ ἐν πέπλοις πέσηι λακίς.

These things cause my black-robed heart to be torn with fear — oah! the Persian army! — lest the city, the great city of Susa, empty of men, hear this cry.

And the Kissian city will sing in response
oah! This song the horde of women will cry out tearing their linen gowns.

Yet the song sung in response to the disaster is explicitly female: the chorus describe Susa as being empty of men (κένανδρον) and imagine the response of a lamenting horde

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212 Else (1977: 76) comments that “the last pages of the Persians, in English, sound like a parody of grief.”
of women (γυναικοπλῆθης ὀμίλος).\footnote{213} By the play’s end, this feared action of antiphonal lamentation between two Persian cities becomes a reality, as predicted by the future ἄισεται. As we have seen, however, such a cry is enacted between Xerxes and the chorus instead of the imagined massive hoard of women: the ἄντιδουτον of 120 is echoed at 1040, 1048, 1066 whereas the feared tearing of the robes at 124 is realized in the final kommos, performed by the Persian elders. The evidence on the ancient ritual lament seems to discourage grieving men (though old men are sometimes exempt from such concerns)\footnote{214} but in this particular case the extreme emotions displayed by these men in the play’s final scene have been glossed as a function of their barbarian ethnicity, representative of an especially Oriental display of grief.\footnote{215} Yet Aeschylus does not merely depict passionate and unrestrained male collective grief, but rather emphasizes a lucid process of mourning involving various stages such as narration and admissions of guilt, which ultimately results in inarticulate cries.

Earlier scenes, however, suggest that the meeting between the chorus and Xerxes would be an explosive one, dominated by incoherence. At 249-289 Aeschylus stages a “wild, disjointed dialogue”\footnote{216} between the messenger, who recounts the disaster at Salamis, and the chorus of elders; in response to the messenger’s news the chorus employ

\footnotetext[213]{On the “femininity” and “manlessness” of the defeated land of Persia (repeated at lines 166, 289, 298, 579-80, 718, 730, 920), see Anderson 1972: 169 and Hall 1993: 117-8.}
\footnotetext[214]{See Appendix 1.}
\footnotetext[215]{Prickard (1879: 120) is an example: “there is absolutely no restraint or propriety observed, and the scene must have been nothing but ludicrous to any spectator.” Adams (1952: 53) questions whether this is a serious moment: “But even after allowance is made for the fact that it is cast in a barbaric mould to portray Oriental abandonment to grief, it seems definitely lighter in mood and thinner in content; and the cries, lamentations, and gesticulations of King and Chorus surely pertain rather to the satyr-play than to serious drama.” Finally, Broadhead (1960: xxiii) complained of “the mechanical wailings of an Oriental dirge.” Modern criticism no longer focuses on these anachronistic notions of propriety in grief. Hall 1989, in particular, has alerted us to the sophisticated manner in which Aeschylus evokes Persian styles of expression and diction.}
\footnotetext[216]{As Hall (1996: 129) comments: “The effect is of a wild, disjointed dialogue, of shock, panic, and extremes of grief, mingled with curiosity, settling in neither one register nor the other.”}
for the first time the shrill cries of grief that they will later repeat (and which will eventually dominate) during the final dirge with Xerxes. Following the messenger’s departure the chorus sing a dirge-like ode at 532-597, which not only features additional inarticulate cries that reappear in the final kommos, but also some of the same metrical overtones: their song is prefaced by introductory anapests at (532-557) just as the dirge between Xerxes and the chorus (at 909-930), and employs many of the same iambic meters that will feature in the final kommos (1002-1078). Every strophic pair in this ode also contains a series of words that is repeated twice or three times, an effect which achieves a remarkable plangent ritual effect. The chorus’ lyric responses to the speaking messenger — both during his report and after his departure — thus provide a significant preview to their behavior in the final great dirge. The messenger’s report likewise offers a glimpse into Xerxes’ susceptibility to inarticulate grief as opposed to rational speech: as soon as the king learns of the defeat, he tore at his robes and shrieked (ῥήξας δὲ πέπλους κάνακωκύσας λιγύ, 468). According to Edith Hall, “men do not kokuein in serious Greek literature,” the word instead implies a “high-pitched shriek of despair” that is common in women’s lamentations over dead bodies at the funeral. Xerxes is also the only main character in Greek tragedy who never employs spoken iambic trimeters. That Aeschylus deprives the play’s only man of fighting age of speech, while depicting him as a shrieker at the moment of defeat, underscores Aeschylus’ intended role for the

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217 For example: ἀνία ἀνία (256, 1055, 1061), σιαὶ (257, 270, 283, 672, 928, 1039) and variants of ὅτοτοι (268, 274, 918, 1043, 1051). Other more articulate phrases appear only in this dialogue and again in the final kommos, such as variants of συγνώς: συγναί γ’ Αθάνατ at 286, συγνάς Αθάνας at 976, ἀλαστα συγνά πρόκακα at 990.
218 ποποῖ (550, 560), τοποῖ (551, 561), φεῦ (568, 576), ἥ (569, 577, 652, 657), ὀ (570, 574, 578, 582).
219 Among those cries that are continually repeated are: ποποῖ, τοποῖ, φεῦ, ἥ, and ὀ.
220 Hall 1993: 120.
221 Hall 1999.
king: Xerxes is a mourner, who will both embody and emotionally enact the Persian defeat on stage.\footnote{Benedetto and Medda (1997: 71-2) discuss the visual contrast between Darius on stage (in una zona ‘alta’) and Xerxes in the orchestra with the chorus (una [zona] ‘bassa’): “per contrasto, l’arrivo di Serse nell’esodo avviene sul piano dell’orchestra, in corrispondenza alla sua umiliazione, in quano sovrano sconfitto.” Taplin (1977: 127) points out that Xerxes’ movements in the orchestra reverses the retreat from salamis. See also Garvie 1978: 70-1, Rehm 2002: 249.}

By the time Xerxes enters the stage,\footnote{This is a sudden entrance, one that carries no announcement as had Atossa’s at 150-158, see Taplin 1977. Scholars have discussed the various ways in which Aeschylus increases audience expectation for the Persian king’s arrival, see Taplin 1977, 92 and Thalmann 1980, 261-7.} then, the audience would have had some indication of what would unfold before them once the ἄνακωκύσας king encounters the all too ready ὀτοτοτοῖ-shrieking chorus.\footnote{On whether Atossa was on stage during the final kommos, see Broadhead 1960: 845-51, Taplin 1977, and Garvie 2009: 337 for a summary of competing views. I believe that the same actor who played Atossa also played Xerxes.} The discussion with the messenger created an expectation of incoherent cries instead of carefully organized and ritualized grief, with layers of narration and communal reconsideration of status. Through the grief of a failed general and Persian elders Aeschylus demonstrates the creation of a new identity and a new collective. Yet the extreme antiphony maintained in this, the longest ritualized lament in tragedy, instead illustrates the might of the Persians as a group. Such collaboration is a testament to the awesome power of the Persian collectivity, one that perhaps functioned to reenact the prowess of the Persian army on the Athenian stage. The ritualized words and actions that form the backbone of this exchange ultimately bring order and stability to traumatized lives, while specifically helping to reintegrate the fallen king into Persian society. The initial disagreements depicted between the two allow us to see the manner in which ritual mourning can unify a once divided group. Seaford writes that ritual “is socially effective, because it leaves the group…with an
enhanced image of its identity and solidarity." 225 In this particular case, the re-enactment of mourning ritual on stage not only functions to honor the dead but also crucially communicates the joint experience of the survivors.

Euripides’ Trojan Women

Like Aeschylus’ Persians, Euripides’ Trojan Women expresses an intense interest in the dynamics of mourning. As it documents the experience of “captive women,” 226 the play resounds with songs of lament, which dominate many of its scenes. 227 Throughout the play Euripides repeatedly takes apart the group of Trojan women who groan at Hector’s funeral in Iliad 24, and reassembles it in various lyric configurations: Hecuba alone (monody at 98-152), Hecuba with the Trojan women (parodos, final kommos), Andromache and Hecuba (lyric dialogue for Hector at 577-607), and chorus of Trojan women alone (choral stasima). In Trojan Women, Euripides thus reunites the principal female mourners for Hector in Iliad 24 — with the exception of Helen — but crucially expands that complex Homeric lament: in his much shorter play, Euripides amplifies the cries of the Trojan Women into an impressive never-ending polyphonic song for Troy itself. 228 That the play features such elaborate arrangements reveals Euripides’ great interest in articulating, enacting, and exploiting the intense and often mixed emotions of

225 Seaford 1994: xii.
226 Dué 2006.
227 In fact, the predominance of these songs has prompted scholars to argue that the play itself constitutes a prolonged lament — e.g. Krummen (1998: 316): “Euripides’ Troerinnen sind als Stück selbst schon gleichsam im Rhythmus des rituellen Liedes, des Klageliedes, gehalten” and Suter (2003: 1): “The play is, from both the minute technical, and the overall structural, point of view, a lament” — and not an episodic plot or disunified piece, as Haigh (1896: 300) proposed: “The Troades, produced in 415, is perhaps the least interesting of the extant tragedies. The plot consists merely of unconnected scenes, depicting the miserable fate of the Trojan captives; and the execution is not in the best style of Euripides.”
228 Significantly, Helen is the only woman who had sung a goos in II. 24 and who does not sing in Trojan Women, but rather speaks, as she has been reclaimed by the Greeks in the play and no longer has a place in oriental dirges.
these now enslaved women and the expressions of grief that they can generate as a result of their condition.\textsuperscript{229} As in \textit{Persians}, ritualized language and formalized gestures communicate the trauma of those who have survived.

Given the persistence of lament, one may expect that the play’s final scene, staged as a ritual song of lament between Hecuba and the chorus, would constitute a climax that would provide a suitable closure to these earlier songs of grief. Yet this \textit{kommos} does not do much as an ending point, as Francis Dunn observes:

\begin{quote}
\textit{``Trojan Women} ends more abruptly than any other surviving play of Euripides, with none of the familiar closing gestures, while it begins with a double \textit{deus ex machina} that displaces those gestures to the prologue. In the \textit{Hippolytus}, beginning and ending mirror one another, but \textit{Trojan Women} begins at the end and remains stuck there. This inversion of the plot and this absence of direction give the play its remarkable emotional intensity; they also leave the drama itself violently dismembered.''\textsuperscript{230}
\end{quote}

Songs of lament have the capacity to provide relief, as the chorus suggest: \textit{ως ἦδυ δάκρυα τοῖς κακῶς πεπραγόσιν / θρήνων τ’ ὀδυρμοί μούσα θ’ ἥ λύτας ἔχει} (608-609),\textsuperscript{231} and elaborate final scenes of mourning can provide a sense of closure by dealing with the aftermath of a loss, and by providing those left behind with an outlet in which to reflect on their new status as survivors, as in the final \textit{kommos} of the Persians. The communal lament found at the end of Euripides’ play instead communicates the growing anxiety of the women. This song, described as \textit{ἰαλέμως} at 1304, contains two strophic pairs dominated by iambic rhythms, which are augmented by ritual gestures of kneeling, beating the earth, and addressing the dead, some of which are also found in the second

\textsuperscript{229} There are discordant elements as well: Cassandra leads a song for her own wedding in a monody at 325-40, and even utters the \textit{makarismos} blessing - words, as Rehm (1994: 128) remind us, “that should come from others.”

\textsuperscript{230} Dunn 1996b: 101-2.

\textsuperscript{231} “How sweet for those who fare badly are tears, the keening of lamentations, and the song that has grief as its subject!” The text is that of Diggle 1981.
half of *Persians*. Though this song reenacts a familiar ritual of mourning on stage, there is no body present on the *ekkyklema*; the final *kommos* crucially begins *after* the body of Astyanax is taken away. Despite these ritual traces, the *kommos* is ultimately not concerned with the dead, but rather with the surviving Trojan Women. Euripides invokes the recognizable sounds and rhythms of the *thrênos* in order to illustrate the aftermath of catastrophe on an entire community.

Euripides gives various indications that we are not dealing with a typical *thrênos*; for example, the three apostrophes that Hecuba calls out are not addressed to the dead, but are rather directed to Zeus, Priam, and Hecuba’s limbs. Her first apostrophe, which launches her song after an extended ὑπερτοτοτοτοῖ, calls on Phrygian Zeus to witness the sufferings of the survivors:

*Krónie, πρύτανι Φρύγιε, γενέτα
†πάτερ ἀνάξια τῆς Δαρδανίουτ
γονᾶς, τάδ’ οία πάσχομεν δέδορκας:  1290*

Son of Kronos, lord of Phrygia, father of our race,
do you see what things we suffer, unworthy for the Dardanians?

Despite the fact that Hecuba had previously depicted the gods as a collective as uncaring (ἳὡ θεοί· καὶ τί τοὺς θεοὺς καλῶ; / καὶ πρὶν γὰρ οὐκ ἠκουσαν ἀνακαλούμενοι, 1280-1), she specifically invokes a local Zeus in the aftermath of Troy’s destruction. In the second strophe, she addresses the dead Priam, but she does so in terms of his new status and hers:

*iὡ ἵὡ, Πρίαμε Πρίαμε,*
σὺ μὲν ολόμενος ᾿αταφός ᾿αφιλός
ἀτας ἐμᾶς ἄιστος εἰ.  1313

*Iō, iō, Priam, Priam!*  
You have perished graveless, friendless  
And you are unaware of my destruction.
Hecuba laments Priam’s cruel death, particularly the change of status brought about by the war: in death he is graveless and friendless (ἄτοσφός ἀφιλος). Her final address is to her own weary limbs:

\[\text{Ἰδὼ ἵδω, τρομερὰ τρομερὰ, μέλεα, φέρετ' ἐμὸν ἱχνος'. ἦτ' ἐπὶ δούλειον ἀμέραν βίου.}\]

*Iō, iō* Trembling trembling limbs make your way. Go into your life’s day of slavery.

In all three cases, the queen demonstrates a concern with her own present situation. Instead of calling out to dead Trojans as might be expected during a ritual lament she instead addresses her anxiety about her new life. Like Hecuba, the chorus similarly place a great emphasis on position and rank, yet their words focus on the overall status of the city itself. In Hecuba’s first apostrophe to Phrygian Zeus the chorus echo Hecuba’s δέδορκας (1290) and elaborate that the city is dying: δέδορκας δὲ μεγαλόπολις ἀπόλις ὀλωλεν οὐδ’ ἦτ’ ἐστὶ Τροία (1291-2).\(^{232}\) The chorus include the transferred epithet ἀπόλις, usually utilized of people, but here remarkably employed for the city itself. The statement about Troy being ἀπόλις speaks more to the women’s present experience and their current status: to have no city — for a chorus — is to have no place in which to perform cult song. Because we are dealing with an extraordinary situation involving the fall of a city, there is little commemoration of the dead while the survivors are apprehensive about their future.

The chorus’ replies to Hecuba generally indicate a particularly close and collaborative interaction between them, full of echoes and further elaboration. When

\(^{232}\) “He sees. But the great city is now a non-city and has perished. Troy is no more.”
Hecuba begins to call to her children (ὦ τέκνα, κλύετε, μάθετε ματρὸς αὐδᾶν, 1303), the chorus re-phrase her intentions, providing a commentary on her actions: ἰαλέμωι τοὺς θανόντας ἀπύεις, 1304. Similarly, when Hecuba explains her ritual gesture of sinking to the ground to beat the earth (1305-7), the chorus respond with another gesture that mimics that of Hecuba but elaborate upon it as well: διάδοχα σοι γόνυ τίθημι γαίαι / τοὺς ἐμοὺς καλοῦσα νέρθεν / ἄθλιους ἀκοίτας (1307-9). Euripides employs antilabē between the two in order to emphasize further their intense harmony at 1310-1311 and 1325-6. Throughout the kommos the two are in tune with one another and the ritual lament flows effortlessly.

Their collaboration is in part due to their special status as survivors and witnesses of the effects of war. As in Persians, chorus and actor devote a part of their lament to the act of narration. The Trojan Women relive Troy’s last moments:

Εκ. ὡτοτοτοτοῖ.

Ἑκ.: ὀτοτοτοτοῖ!

Ἰλίς ἔρχεται Περγαμοῦ καὶ τὸ πολὺ καταπελτᾶ ἔρχεται,

Χο.: ὡς πετάει τοὺς ὄρεις, εἰς τὴν 

[μελαθραὶ πυρὰ κατάδρομα δαίω τε λόγχαι.] 1300

Hec.: Ototototoi!

IIium is blazing – Pergamum’s buildings are consumed with fire and the citadels and the summits of the walls.

Cho.: Like smoke rises with wings towards heaven our land, fallen to the spear, withers away.

[The dwellings are overrun by fire and by the spear of the enemy.]

Hecuba and the chorus describe in great detail the physical remains of Troy. Later Hecuba tells of the flame and smoke that covers the city (τὰν φόνιου ἔχετε φλόγα

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233 “I follow you and place my knees upon the earth. I call up from below my wretched husbands.”
δορὸς τε λόγχαν, 1318 and κόνις δ’ ίσα κατεῒι πτέρυγι πρὸς αἰθέρα / ἄιστον οἰκῶν ἐμῶν μὲ θῆσει, 1320-1) while the chorus impress upon the audience how Troy and the temples of the gods will be no more, without a name (τάχ’ ἐς φίλαν γὰν πεσεῖσθ’ ἀνώνυμοι, 1319 and ὄνομα δὲ γὰς ἀφανὲς ἔσιν· ἄλλαι δ’ / ἄλλο φρούδου, οὐδ’ ἔτ’ ἔστιν / ἀ τάλαινα Τροία, 1322-4). They then imagine the sound of the city’s towers falling, as an earthquake engulfs their beloved Troy (1325-6). In this strophe, the chorus and Hecuba are engaged in an elaborate exercise that relives the downfall of Troy. Troy only survives in the women’s collective song of the city’s downfall.

The emphasis on the disappearance and namelessness of Troy here is noteworthy, since Hecuba herself had acknowledged earlier in the play the power of song, capable of preserving their story:

1245  

εἰ δὲ μὴ θεὸς ἔστρεψε τὰνω περιβαλῶν κάτω χθονός, ἀφανὲς ἄν δύντες ὑπ’ ἄν ύπομηπεῖσεν ἄν μούσας ἀοίδας δύντες ύστέρων βροτῶν.  

But if the god had not overturned things, throwing was above the earth below, we would have been unknown and not have been praised in song nor provided a theme for later singers.

The very act of singing proves that Troy is not and never will be anonymous, as does the fact that this song about Troy is emphatically positioned at the play’s close. The song also illustrates the paradox of lamentation – they emphasize the loss of the city’s name in a song that will preserve the memory of that lost city.

What is, then, the function of this ritualistic song and the gestures that accompany it in a song that relives Troy? Margaret Alexiou and Gail Holst-Warfhaft have pointed
out the role these songs play in calling out for revenge. Yet this song is not exactly about revenge in those moments. The song is rather about commemoration and the process of creating historical memory. The various laments in the play, especially this joint *kommos* at the end, not only reveal the conflicted emotions of the women but serve as an important marker of “cultural trauma,” a concept sociologist Jeffrey Alexander defines as follows:

> Cultural trauma occurs when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways.”

Alexander furthermore claims that traumas are socially constructed, that the manner in which people react to the events themselves is precisely what traumatic, and not the events themselves. This lament illustrates the process of trauma creation: in producing a collective memory of the downfall of Troy, the women relive their city’s destruction. In doing so, they crucially define their cultural trauma for the audience, who are invited to share their experience. The emphasis in this lament is thus on collective suffering and memory. Euripides’ focus on the collective experience not only testifies to his interest in the communal aspect of the lament ritual, but also in the formation of group consciousness and memory. Such a focus on the collective of defeated women and their process of commemorating and grieving for their city presumably contained a certain

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236 Alexander (2004: 10): “Trauma is not the result of a group experiencing pain. It is the result of this acute discomfort entering into the core of the collectivity’s sense of its own identity. Collective actors ‘decide’ to represent social pain as a fundamental threat to their sense of who they are, where they came from, and where they want to go.”
poignancy if it was the case that the play was composed after the destruction of Melos and the enslavement of its women and children.\textsuperscript{237}

In their laments, Hecuba and the Trojans are also concerned with their new lives of slaves, and in particular mourn the loss of a communal life where they participated in social and religious institutions and practices. Early in the play, Hecuba had highlighted her role as \textit{exarchos} in the lament:

\begin{verbatim}
μάτηρ δ᾽ ὤσεῖ πτανοῖς κλαγγάν
tὸρυσιν ὑπὸς ἐξάρηκω γώ
μολταν οὗ τὰν αὐτὰν
οἱαν ποτὲ δῆ
σκῆπτρῳ Πρίαμοι διερειδομένου
ποδὸς ἀρχέχορου πλαγαίς Φρυγίους
εὐκόμποις ἐγέρχον θεοὺς.
\end{verbatim}

Like a mother bird over her winged children, I lead off the song of lamentation, not at all the same song that I used to lead, when as Priam leaned upon his scepter, with the loud-sounding beat of chorus leader’s foot for the Phrygian gods.

The new song of lament that she leads is contrasted with the previous ritual festive songs (\textit{ἐὐκόμποις}) she led as Queen of Troy. In this \textit{kommos} she continues in her role as leader of the lament rather than festive songs. Beyond mourning the dead, she and the chorus lament themselves and their new situation. Even though this particular \textit{kommos} contains the ritual gestures typically associated with the \textit{thrēnos}, it also speaks to the particular experience of the women, specifically communicating their anxiety over their new status as slaves.

\textsuperscript{237} Rehm (1994: 128) calls it “one of the greatest antiwar plays ever written” one that “speaks for the Melian woman and for countless other victims of ‘civilized’ savagery.” Yet the evidence for the destruction of Melos before the composition of Euripides’ \textit{Trojan Women} is not secure. Alexander (2004: 1) explains that “it is by constructing cultural traumas that social groups, national societies, and sometimes even entire civilizations not only cognitively identify the existence and source of human suffering but “take on board” some significant responsibility for it.”
Vincenzo Di Benedetto and Enrico Medda identify *Persians, Septem* and *Trojan Women* as the only plays in the extant corpus that end with a communal lament.\(^{238}\) It is no coincidence that these plays involve the downfall of a city and a race, and that the *kommos* also plays a large role in reflecting on the role of the survivors. In these two plays which involve an actor and a chorus with a close bond, communal mourning is easily achieved and managed, not only because of the close relationship they share but also because trauma has made them work together towards defining their new situation. Successful mourning is a traumatic act – one that not only addresses the loss the survivors feel for the dead, but also allows them to negotiate and articulate their own status. In these two plays the tragedians explore the dynamics of successful mourning, illustrating that it is not always a straightforward process of commemoration for the dead.

**Frustrated Antiphonal Laments in Sophocles’ *Antigone***

Questions related to “managing mourning” take on special urgency in Sophocles’ *Antigone*, a play that debates the right to perform burial rituals for the dead. The play pits two of the most Knoxian tragic heroes against one another: Antigone and Creon.\(^{239}\) Critics and students of the play have emphasized the isolation of both characters: Antigone as a figure who utilizes lament as a way of resisting masculine civic authority,

\(^{238}\) Di Benedetto and Medda (1997: 356) note that more often a lament is followed by a *deus ex machina* or the intervention of another character: “c’è poi un modulo per cui una tragedia finisce con un lamento seguito dall’intervento del deus ex machina (*Ippolito, Andromaca, Supplici* di Euripide…l’*Elettra* di Euripide e *le Baccanti*). C’è poi il modulo del lamento seguito dall’intervento di personaggio dotato di grande autorità: Teseo nell’*Eracle*, Teseo nell’*Edipo a Colono*.” Segal (1993: 157) argues that a play’s end is the appropriate place for arousing tragic emotions of pity and fear, achieving catharsis.

\(^{239}\) A figure who, according to Knox (1964: 5), in his actions actively goes against mortals and gods and then “blindly, ferociously, heroically” holds on to what he believes to the point of self-destruction.
Creon as an inflexible king whose very obstinacy leads to his downfall.\footnote{Foley (2001: 321), for example, reads Antigone as someone who employs lamentation in order to make “a public and politically motivated display of injustice.”}

A focus on the two scenes of lyric dialogue, which involve ritual lamentation for the dead, allows us to see the process through which the isolation of Creon and Antigone occurs. As I discussed in the previous chapter, Sophocles’ “conversational” lyric dialogues have a tendency to illustrate miscommunications and misunderstandings between an increasingly isolated hero and a clueless chorus (as in Ajax 348-429 and Philoctetes 1081-1217) as well as the ease in which these “deaf” and dysfunctional dialogues can occur. Kommoi, or lyric dialogues that reenact the ritual lament for the dead, work in a similar fashion: the communal activity of mourning fragments and collapses because the chorus fail to fulfill their expected role as fellow-mourners. Both lyric dialogues illustrate how the ritual of mourning as a collective enterprise breaks down on the Sophoclean stage. These scenes constitute moments of broken antiphony, in which the chorus either participates only partially in or simply does not contribute to the lament of a character on stage. The chorus’ identity as elders plays a part in achieving the reverse effect from what would be the case in a customary ritual lament (such as in Persians and Trojan Women): as their exchange with Antigone progresses, the difference in sex and status between them and the heroine is stressed as it becomes obvious that they are not an appropriate chorus for Antigone, whereas their refusal to join Creon (with whom they shared a close relationship throughout the tragedy) brings about his isolation.

The growing chasm between the chorus and actor in both scenes reveals the way in which Sophocles works to isolate the solo voice in moments of tragic mourning, as he had in moments of conversational lyric exchange: in the first scene, Antigone’s dynamic
with the chorus illustrates an elaborate process of separation which directly leads to her unique self-lament and underlines the unusual nature of her death. In the second scene, Creon’s inarticulate cries of mourning represent a rare form of male lamentation, as typically both the leader of the lament and the responding chorus would be female or foreign, but here the solo voice is that of the chief male citizen. Through a detailed account of these two scenes, we can see the multiple senses in which mourning is managed on the Sophoclean stage.

_Antigone and the chorus, 801-882_

We can begin to understand the techniques by which Sophocles subverts his audience’s expectations in the play’s first lyric dialogue, where he stages the gradual removal of the choral voice at the precise moment when a joint song of lament and consolation might be expected. Rather than a communal lament and funeral song that honors the soon to be dead Antigone, Sophocles gives us a moment that is fraught and contested between the heroine and the chorus. On a formal level there are frequent verbal echoes, addresses and responses between chorus and actor, but such close formal engagement between Antigone and the chorus ultimately emphasizes the failure of actual ritual collaboration. This half-sung half-chanted lyric dialogue in fact represents a severe disjunction between the two groups, a disjunction which is partly expressed through meter. As in the _Agamemnon_ and the _Ajax_, where the chorus’ spoken trimeters clashed with the singing protagonist’s words, the chorus’ initial answers in chanted anapests stand in contrast to Antigone’s sung lyrics. In the second half of this scene the chorus do shift into lyrics that metrically match those of Antigone, but their remarks nevertheless
constitute rebukes, sung as they are in a heavily condemnatory meter. Even when echoing each other metrically, protagonist and chorus speak in markedly different registers throughout the exchange. The metrical contrast is one way in which the process of isolation begins to occur.

The opening of this scene builds the expectation that a joint lament or (at the very least) a shared song of consolation will take place. In, the chorus, who had prior to this scene sung a hymn to Eros — a scene that scholars have read as a substitute for the wedding song of Antigone and Haimon\textsuperscript{241} — now transition to a more funereal setting. They declare that they are unable to hold back their stream of tears as they see Antigone:

\begin{quote}
\begin{verbatim}
νῦν δὲ ἡδὴ γὼ καυτὸς θεσμῶν
ἐξω φέρομαι τάδ’ ὀρῶν, ἱσχεῖν δὲ
οὐκέτι πηγὰς δύναμαι δακρύων,
τὸν παγκόιτην ὅθ’ ὀρῶ θάλαμον
τήν’ Ἀντιγόνην ἀνύπουσαν\textsuperscript{242}
\end{verbatim}
\end{quote}

But now I myself am carried beyond the laws seeing these things, and I can no longer restrain the stream of tears when I see Antigone here passing to the bridal chamber where all are lulled to sleep.

The chorus express their emotional involvement with Antigone’s suffering. As they announce her entrance on stage the Theban elders specifically speak in terms of the παγκόιτην θάλαμον, introducing the new motif of the Bride of Hades, a figure which intertwines funeral and marriage, ceremonies which were ritualistically similar in ancient Greece.\textsuperscript{243} The chorus’ words here indicate that they sympathize with her situation,

\textsuperscript{241} Seaford (1987: 108) points out that the Eros ode is to be read as a substitute for Antigone and Haimon’s hymenaion, which would have been performed at their wedding.
\textsuperscript{242} The text is that of Lloyd-Jones and Wilson 1990a.
\textsuperscript{243} Rehm 1994: ch. 1 and Seaford 1987. In parts of modern Greece, funeral laments continue to bear close resemblance to wedding songs; Danforth (1982: 74) writes that the two types of songs shared so much similar iconography, musical form and narrative structure that many songs are sung at both funerals and weddings: “the lyrics and the basic melody of these songs are the same whether they are performed at death rites or at weddings, but the manner in which the melody is sung varies according to the occasion. When
introducing the expectation that they will provide her with consolation in the exchange that follows. In next strophe, calling upon the chorus as witnesses, Antigone attempts to draw them in as participants in a new type of song that she begins, precisely by echoing the very language they had previously used as they announced her entrance:

See me, citizens of my native land, as I make my last journey, and for the last time look on the light of the sun and never more. Hades who lulls all to sleep is taking me, still living, to the shore of Acheron, not with the wedding song that was my due, nor has any song been sung for me at my marriage, but I shall be the bride of Acheron.

Her opening command, ὀρᾶτε (806) builds on the chorus’ ὀρῶν and ὀρῶ (804); likewise, παγκόιτην (804) is echoed in παγκόιτας she uses of Hades (811). She also elaborates upon what the chorus had hinted at in their statement of seeing her pass to this nether bridal chamber where all are lulled to sleep: she draws attention to the fact that she is walking her last journey and also looking upon the light of the sun for the last time, while pointing out the rituals and songs that she will lack; she is to be without a share in

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these songs are sung at weddings, the style is more forceful, vigorous, and joyful; the melody more elaborate, with trills and light melismatic phrases. At death rites the style is more somber and restrained; the melody flatter and less elaborate.” See also Alexiou 1974: 120-22 and Danforth 1982: 86-9 for examples of songs that are sung at both weddings and funerals. Holst-Warhaft (1992: 41) attributes the close similarities between wedding songs and laments to the fact that “weddings in cultures like rural Greece most of which is virilocal involve the departure of the bride from her parents’ home, and often from her village.”
hymeneia (ὑμεναίω / ἔγκληρον, 813-14) without any song ὀμνος at her marriage 
(815—816). Conspicuous repetitions (such as νεάταν...νέατον... at 807-808) underline 
these missing rituals.244 She evokes ritual in language that is itself ritualistic in its 
repetitions. The impression given by such close engagement with the chorus’ words is 
that she hopes to lead them in a funeral song, and that they will reply in a manner that 
will echo and complement her words in similar fashion.

Sophocles quickly subverts these expectations. Instead of responding to 
Antigone’s lyric grievances, the chorus reinterpret her condition as praiseworthy at 817- 
822: οὐκοῦν κλεινὴ καὶ ἐπαινον ἔχουσ’ / ἐς τὸδ’ ἀπέρχη κεῦθος νεκύων: / οὔτε 
φθινάσιν πληγεία νόσοις / οὔτε ξιφέων ἐπίχειρα λαχοῦσ.245 Not only do they deny 
that she is a figure worthy of lamentation,246 but they do so in anapests, a chanted and 
restrained meter that contrasts with Antigone’s lyrics. Their lack of a matching lyrical 
response suddenly transforms Antigone’s song into a monody or solo song, and the 
process of isolation begins as the chorus fail to enter into a process of lamentation and 
instead offer an alternative understanding of her situation. At the formal level the 
structure of the chorus’ answer somewhat mimics Antigone’s: they also order their 
replies around οὔτε οὔτε (819-20), which match those from Antigone’s stanza (813-4). 

Though their response contains some intentional verbal parallels that are at a formal level 
engaging with Antigone’s lyric stanza, they nevertheless disagree that she is a subject

244 Later in the kommos she will continue to invoke her ‘unwed’ status: ἀγαμός (867), ἀνυμέναις (876), 
ὡ τύμβος, ὡ νυμφεῖον (891).
245 “Is it not with glory and with praise that you depart to this cavern of the dead? Not smitten by wasting 
maladies nor paid the wages of the sword.”
246 And in general, also worthy of song, as Kitzinger (2008: 51) writes, “with the words κλεινὴ and ἐπαινον 
(817) [the chorus] acknowledges her as the subject of song.”
worthy of lament. The chorus instead assert her singularity, namely, that of all mortals she will descend to Hades of her own will, alive, and alone: ἀλλ' αὐτόνομος ζώσσα μόνη δὴ θυντῶν Αἰδήν καταβήσῃ (821-22). Their response initiates an elaborate process in which the chorus contest Antigone’s claim to lament. The chorus’ words suggest the potential for collaborative lament to dissolve into competing understandings of the subject of lamentation.

Forced to continue her song without an antiphonal reply from the chorus, in the antistrophe, Antigone immediately takes up the chorus’ claim and attempts to argue her case as a lamentable subject:

I have heard that the Phrygian stranger, Tantalus’ daughter, died the saddest death near lofty Sipylus; her did the growth of the rock, like clinging ivy, subdue, and as she melts away rain, as men say, and snow never leave her, and with her ever—weeping eyes she soaks the mountain ridges; as the god sends me to sleep I am most like her.

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247 That the chorus began their reply with the connective οὕκουν is also seen by some scholars as a sign of contention. Denniston (1996: 436) points out that this is a substitution for ὠδεῖν, translating 817 as “Well, are you not dying a glorious death?” He furthermore (ibid.) comments that “Jebb’s ‘therefore’ is inappropriate.” Lloyd-Jones and Wilson (1990b: 136) approve of Denniston’s choice: “Denniston is surely right to write ὠδεῖν and to take the sentence as interrogative.”

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She points out the clear parallel between her death and that of Niobe, transformed into stone following the slaying of her children by Apollo and Artemis. Her petrification, in Antigone’s view, resembles her own imminent stony death. The antistrophe is framed by two superlatives: Niobe’s death is described as saddest, λυγροτάταιν (823) and Antigone herself is most like her, ὀμοιοτάταιν (833). Both superlatives directly contend with the chorus’ view of Antigone as possessing glory and praise in 817 (οὐκουν κλείνῃ καὶ ἔπαινον ἔχουσ’). The chorus then counter Antigone’s parallel by demonstrating a crucial difference between the two cases: Niobe, in their view, was of divine ancestry: ἀλλὰ θεός τοι καὶ θεογενής (834), in direct contrast to their own humanity (ἡμεῖς δὲ βροτοί καὶ θνητογενεῖς, 835). Where Antigone seeks to present herself as singular and perhaps divine, the chorus immediately insist that she belongs with them on the side of the mortals through the pronoun ἰμεῖς. Again, far from simply being isolated, it is the very status of her isolation that we see contested. In the place of a communal song of lament, Sophocles stages an elaborate process of negotiation in which Antigone’s status is continually challenged, through both contrasting meters and competing points of view.

The fact that Antigone herself is deeply disappointed as evident in her response substantiates my claim that the audience would have recognized the chorus’ failure to fulfill their expected role. Once she has realized that the chorus will not participate in a joint lament, Antigone construes the chorus as enemies in a new strophe at 838-852. Interpreting the chorus’ words as mockery (οἶμοι γελώμαι, 839), she suggests that they do her outrage (με…ὡριζεῖς, 840). She draws attention to their identity for the first time in 843, as rich men of the city (ὡ πόλεως / πολυκτήμονες ἄνδρες) — underlining the

248 “But she was a goddess and the child of gods.”
249 “and we are mortal and the children of mortals.”
distance between her and them in terms of gender and status. In increasing agitation (as evidenced by the dochmiacs and iambic lyrics in 845-852) Antigone then appeals to the Theban waters and soil to be her witnesses to her position as she sees it: φίλων ἀκλαυτος (847). As Antigone furthermore claims, the chorus’ unwillingness to recognize her pitiable state has alienated her in such a way that she gives herself an in-between status: at 851 she describes herself as a μέτοικος, a metic who belongs neither among the living nor the dead. It is only after she has vehemently rejected their view and their friendship that they begin to rebuke her, for the first time joining her in song: προβάσε β’ ἐπ’ ἐσχατον θράσος / ὑψηλόν ἡς Δίκαις βάθρον / προσέπεσες, ὦ τέκνων, ποδι. / πατρῷον δ’ ἐκτίνεις τιν’ ἄθλουν (853-856).\(^{250}\) From 802-838, the chorus had responded to Antigone’s lyrics with anapests; at this point they finally join her in lyrics that mimic some of the iambic meters she had been employing in her previous strophe, particularly at 848-52. It is significant that the moment when they choose to likewise respond in lyrics is the moment when they most disagree;\(^{251}\) Kitzinger, who reads the kommos as a “struggle between the chorus and Antigone to control the use of song,”\(^{252}\) sees this moment as “a struggle between different voices...giving it the feel of a lyric competition.”\(^{253}\) In the remainder of this scene, while there is the form of dialogue, each is in fact singing and responding to themselves: instead of antiphonal song where one sings a strophe that prompts a similar metrical response from the other in an antistrophe (such as Seven Against Thebes) or even a song with internal responson where the chorus

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\(^{250}\) “Advancing to the extreme of daring, against the lofty altar of justice, you stumbled my child! And you are paying for some crime of your fathers.”

\(^{251}\) Ditmars (1992: 118) sees a continued contrast in “the greater regularity of their iambics over hers.”

\(^{252}\) Kitzinger 2008: 50.

\(^{253}\) Kitzinger 2008: 56.
and actor share each strophe (such as Persians and Trojan Women), this kommos features what may be two competing songs.

Towards the end of the “dialogue” Antigone increasingly draws attention to her unwept status that was mentioned at line 847, once again illustrating her expectation of conducting a communal joint lament with the chorus. The epode she sings begins with the word unwept (ἀκλαυτός) at 876 and ends with a statement that she lacks friends who would lament her unwept fate: τὸν δ’ ἐμὸν πότμον ἀδάκρυτον / οὐδεὶς φίλων στενάξει (881-2).254 The chorus’ tears at the beginning of this lyric dialogue had suggested such a song would occur. When the chorus fail to provide the pity she seeks and instead choose to interrogate her situation, Antigone, who had been seeking a community of grief, responds by stressing her singularity and ultimately her isolation.

The many formal parallels and close echoing of words set up the expectation of joint action and communal song, yet the lyric dialogue stages a gradual but certain process of separation that leads to Antigone’s isolation. In this scene, a mourning song which should have been expressed through lyric dialogue fragments at what should be the moment of its validation. Instead of uniting the two groups in harmonious song Sophocles illustrates the way in which both parties misunderstand and misinterpret one another, and stages the removal of the choral voice at a moment when a communal song of lament and consolation is expected. There is no resolution; both parties have reached an impasse immediately preceding Antigone’s death. Through the interaction of Antigone and the chorus, Sophocles suggests that managing to mourn is a process that requires recognition and participation of others. He reveals the necessity of collaboration by staging results of its failure.

254 “and my fate, unwept for, is lamented by no friend.”
The chorus’ interaction with Creon in the play’s second and final lyric dialogue once again illustrates the manner in which Sophocles subverts expectations by staging an exchange between an actor and an uncooperative chorus. In this case, however, Sophocles goes even further. He does not simply have the chorus offer an alternative interpretation but has them not participate in the communal mourning process at all. Here the chorus refuses to interact with the grieving Creon, as he mourns his deceased son and wife, at the precise moment when the ritual is most needed, in a scene of prothesis, when their bodies adorn the stage. The solo song of Creon is filled with the characteristic tropes and stylistic features of ritual lament (such as inarticulate cries, direct address to the dead, repetition and exclamations), but the absolute lack of response from the chorus of elders marks a severe disjunction in the mourning ritual. It is Creon alone who employs these stylistic features while lamenting first the death of his son and then that of his wife: his rousing laments receive no response from the group of elders who witness his cries. In other words, Sophocles showcases two corpses which are surprisingly mourned by a single isolated voice. On one level, the chorus’ silence denotes a thematic transition that underscores Creon’s final debasement. The lack of antiphony in this threnodic context not only drastically isolates Creon’s mourning voice but it also recalls the earlier dialogue between Antigone and the chorus, in which the chorus similarly refrained from their expected role as fellow mourners; now we have the opposite phenomenon — silence instead of constant interrogation and refutation. As the scene progresses and the king’s laments are repeatedly met with silence, Creon
increasingly begins to rely on repetition to provide the sense of antiphony that the chorus fail to offer. In this way, Sophocles stages a corrupted ritual lament that is led and answered by the same man: Creon, previously the chief political voice in the city, takes on the role of both lead mourner and chorus.

As with the last lyric dialogue, the actor initiates contact with the chorus. Creon’s lyrics are direct response to the chorus’ announcement of his entrance: καὶ μὴν ὃδ᾽ ἀνὰξ αὐτὸς ἐφήκει / μνῆμ᾽ ἑπίσημον διὰ χειρὸς ἔχων (1257-1258). In the previous lyric dialogue, the chorus was moved to tears by the sight of Antigone; the chorus here, however, does not offer any words of pity, despite the “conspicuous monument” (μνῆμ’ ἑπίσημον) of Haimon’s body present on stage. Instead, the Theban elders turn their attention to Creon rather than to the dead body: they propose that his ruin came from his own error: ἀλλ᾽ αὐτὸς ἀμαρτῶν (1260). It is at this point that Creon launches into his first lyrical lament, lines 1261-1269. Considered in isolation one can see that they constitute a miniature lament for the dead Haimon, with many of the formal features that define lament: cries, direct address, exclamations, anadiplosis, polyptoton, redundancy and the topos for a dead child. In particular, Creon’s frequent repetition — e.g., φρενῶν δυσφρόνων (1261) and νέος νέω (1266) — does indeed create an atmosphere of quasi-ritual intensity one that is appropriate to a funereal context. Yet the focus of many of these stylistic features are not on Haimon but on Creon himself, who laments his own rash decisions which led to the death of his son. In doing so, he echoes the verdict of the chorus, further elaborating on the idea of his own error, αὐτὸς ἀμαρτῶν: he

255 “Here comes the king himself, bearing a conspicuous monument in his arms”
256 “but from his own error”
257 Wright 1986: 81.
begins with ἰὼ φρενῶν δυσφρόνων ἀμαρτήματα (1261).\textsuperscript{258} and he ends by once again reemphasizing the chorus’ point: ἐμαῖς οὐδὲ σαῖς δυσβουλίας (1269).\textsuperscript{259} By choosing to lament his errors and the disaster caused by his decisions, he deliberately engages with the chorus on their terms. In these lines it is thus clear that Creon, throughout his lament for his son, is in dialogue with the chorus. He is, in other words, attempting to establish contact with the chorus on their own terms in order to elicit their response, which is necessary for successful communal mourning to occur.

Yet the powerful exchange which Creon seeks and the \textit{prothesis} scene demands soon fragments. In their reply to Creon, the chorus merely offer a terse statement conveying the idea that he has learned too late (οἶμ’ ὡς ἔοικας ὑπὲ τὴν δίκην ἰδεῖν, 1270).\textsuperscript{260} Once again Sophocles employs a different meter so as to underscore the vast difference in emotions: the chorus’ spoken iambic trimeter denotes a sharp contrast to Creon’s sung dochmiacs, a meter used to express strong feeling, whose characteristic use, according to A. M. Dale, is for “the panic of the Theban women under siege, the half-articulate prophecies of Cassandra, Theseus’ lament for Phaedra, the ravings of Agave, etc.”\textsuperscript{261} Not only have the chorus’ spoken trimeters crushed the force of Creon’s impassioned dochmiacs, but their refusal to engage in antiphonal lyric singing forcefully detains Creon from delivering the corresponding antistrophe. What the king then utters at 1271-1276 in response instead of the expected antistrophe can only be considered some sort of a quasi-lyrical mixture, one that wavers between fervent sung dochmiacs and spoken iambic trimeters:

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{258} “Woe for the errors of my mindless mind”
\item \textsuperscript{259} “through my folly, not through your own!”
\item \textsuperscript{260} “Alas, you seem to have seen justice only late!”
\item \textsuperscript{261} Dale 1968: 110.
\end{itemize}
Beginning with the exclamation οἶμοι, he first straightforwardly admits to having learned his lesson in standard conversational trimeter, but then Creon, who had earlier in the play rejected the guard’s suggestion of a divine force at work in burial of Polyneices, unexpectedly introduces the idea of a god bearing a heavy weight in dochmiacs in 1273, where he employs a dense cluster of short syllables that produce a frantic effect. This contrasts more with the regular beat of the conversational iambic trimeter at 1272 and 1274. Ultimately, he reverts to dochmiacs in his last two lines 1275-6, with exclamations such as οἶμοι and φεῦ φεῦ inserted at the beginning of each line. Creon ends with repetition: πόνοι...δύσπονοι at 1276, perhaps in an attempt to once again invite the chorus to answer him. By mixing all these metrical elements Sophocles points to the function of formal dramatic effects in creating and disrupting meaning.

The addition of the messenger to the scene decisively alters the dynamic between Creon and the chorus. The messenger becomes the other voice on stage during the bulk of Creon’s laments. It is his news in 1281-3 which provokes the antistrophe of Creon’s lament in 1284-92. Creon’s antistrophe is a series of questions, the first of which is addressed to Hades, but the rest are addressed to the messenger. Though he has asked a number of direct questions of the messenger, Creon does not immediately receive a full
account of her death; instead the messenger points out the *ekkyklema* which carries the body of the queen at 1293: ὅραν πάρεστιν οὐ γὰρ ἐν μυχοίς ἔτι. Hugh Lloyd-Jones and Nigel Wilson (following Richard Jebb) both believe that the chorus, not the messenger, speaks at this pivotal moment: they argue that this is the case because of symmetry (chorus spoke at 1270, immediately after the strophe so they must speak here as well despite the manuscript). Yet given the silence and lack of exchange between the king and the body of elders thus far as well as the predominant role of the messenger, I suggest that the messenger delivered these lines. Also, because we are operating in a scene where so much is subverted, symmetry is not what we should expect to find. In any case, despite the fact that he is fully integrated within the exchange, the messenger nevertheless is separated from Creon at all times: he delivers all his lines to the king in the iambic trimeters of speech, in stark contrast to Creon’s heavily expressive dochmiac laments.

The chorus’ silence continues even during the messenger’s brief description of Eurydice’s death at the altar and in particular at the mention of her dying curses. They maintain their silence even while Creon delivers another lyric strophe fraught with more repetitive word-play at 1306-11, such as the repetition of σίαι σίαϊ (1306) and polyptoton δείλαιος...δείλαίσ (1310-11). It is at this point of intense repetition but still no proper antiphony that Sophocles provides a glimpse of another mourning voice: according to the

262 “You can see it! It is no longer hidden indoors.”
263 *cf.* the texts of Jebb (2004a) and Lloyd-Jones and Wilson (1990a) at 1293. On this line, Lloyd Jones and Wilson (1990b: 148) offer the following explanation: “symmetry requires that this line be spoken by the Chorus’ quoting the corresponding line at 1270.” Griffith 1999 leaves it unclear and decides to focus on the question of the body. Kamerbeek (1978: 206) provides an account: “This line is given to the chorus (coryphaeus) by many editors since Erfurdt, to the messenger by Campbell, Dain-Mazon, G. Muller, as in the mss. The fact that 1270 is spoken by the Coryphaeus does not sufficiently warrant Erfurdt’s attribution and the words seem to come naturally as the Messenger’s answer.”
messenger, Eurydice experienced the death of her son, which was loudly to be lamented (ἄξυρκώκυτον, 1316) and therefore worthy of a proper lament.

Apart from this brief suggestion of another lamenter, Creon is the only prominent mourning voice exclaiming ἵψ, οἴμοι, αἰαῖ, ἄμοι throughout this kommos. Once he is on stage, the chorus only replies in 1270, where they suggest that he has seen too late, but nowhere else until 1326, when Creon requests to be led off and more importantly, where he declares himself to be the living corpse the chorus sang of earlier. As I discuss in the appendix, “The Female Mourning Stage? Gender and Lamentation in Ancient Greece,” scholars have pointed out the prominence of women in funeral lamentation. One could argue that in depicting Creon as a frantic mourning figure Sophocles aims to feminize him. In this final lyric dialogue, Creon does perform the predominantly female role of highly emotional lyric lamentation over a dead child. Yet looking at the two lyric dialogues in relation to one another allows us to see how Creon is constructed as the counterpoint to Antigone’s assumption of the role of mourner and one who buries. Now there is literally no one but him to mourn the members of his family. In this lyric dialogue he also enters in a funeral procession that reverses Antigone’s departure to death/marriage. He is led away like a bride or prisoner, which is a dramatic mirroring of Antigone’s own last exit. The two lyric dialogues point to two separate processes of isolation which culminate in the ruler going into his empty house and Antigone led out of the city and the realm of the living.

Immediately preceding this lyric dialogue, Sophocles stages a brief conversation between the chorus and the messenger, who discuss Eurydice’s departure and unnatural silence. The messenger naively believes that she has retreated indoors so as to mourn
privately in the house. The chorus, on the other hand, offers the following view: οὐκ οἶδ᾽ ἐμοὶ δ᾽ οὖν ἢ τ᾽ ἀγαν σιγὴ βαρύ / δοκεῖ προσεῖναι ξῆ μάτην πολλή βοή (1251-2).

At 1255-6, the messenger repeats the idea that excessive silence is dangerous: εὖ γὰρ οὖν λέγεις. / καὶ τῆς ἀγαν γὰρ ἐστὶ ποι σιγῆς βάρος.

This final scene, which follows this curious exchange, is indeed characterized by an “excessive silence” from the chorus and an abundance of lament from Creon, a lament which remains necessarily incomplete as a result of the silence of the chorus. The nature of the interaction between the chorus and Creon in this last lyric dialogue, particularly when compared to its pair in the play thus suggests a powerful reading of the play: the complete lack of antiphonal response underscores and brings about Creon’s utter isolation from society, far more than that experienced by Antigone, who, as I have previously suggested, was at least previously able to maintain a prolonged and animated negotiation with the chorus.

By depicting disjunctions between the protagonists and the chorus at precisely the moments when a lyrical exchange is conventionally expected, Sophocles is concerned to exploit the thematic and performative aspects of ritual lament in order to isolate the soloist. In both cases the ritual formalities are disrupted in order to reveal the terrifying ease with which collective expression can give way to a deserted voice. The antiphonal response of the accompanying mourning group is fundamental to ritual lament; it is precisely the chorus’ refusal to respond and take up their role as full participants in the ritual that initiates the process of isolation, and emphasizes the need for rituals to not only be collectively performed but also collectively validated if they are to succeed. In the case of Creon, the vision of the prominent voice of reason now engaged in inarticulate

264 “I do not know; but to me both excessive silence and loud crying to no end seem grievous.”
265 “Yes, you are right; excessive silence also has its dangers.”
solitary grieving reveals the reliance of even the chief political male on these larger processes of communal validation.

When dealing with laments and mourning in ancient Greece, the response of a group was absolutely essential: the inarticulate grieving of women is transformed into an ordered song, into music, precisely at the point when others appear to echo and to share the pain of the lead mourner.266 Yet antiphony is not just an aesthetic or dramaturgical device, it also serves a significant social purpose. The work of anthropologists and ethnographers who study modern lament underscores the important role that antiphony plays in validating the laments of the leaders; Seremetakis, for example, highlights its function among Maniot women in the southern Peloponnese: “The truth claims that arise from the ritual…depend on the emotional force of the pain, and the jural force of antiphonic confirmation. By stating that they cannot properly sing laments without the help of others, Maniot women reveal that pain, in order to be rendered valid, has to be socially constructed in antiphonic relations.”267 In the Antigone, Sophocles allows us to experience two solo laments that are witnessed but not validated, thereby drawing attention to the conditions on which such laments depend. In the case of the first lyric dialogue, the dramatist leads us to believe that the chorus will respond, yet the time is rather spent in contention with Antigone. In the case of Creon the chorus passively witness his lament as he increasingly begins to assume the choral role in a futile attempt at self-validation. In the Antigone, Sophocles thus removes the antiphony and collaboration that made Persians and Trojan Women so successful.

266 As Ford (2010: 285) writes, “solitary cries of pain are converted into musical art when others come to share the mourner’s burden: a chorus gives articulation and shape to a soloist’s lament and creates the possibility of future repetitions, formal and controlled, in which ceremonial choirs of women elaborate that first cry into an art which can be repeated at regular intervals to please the gods.”

267 Seremetakis 1991: 120.
Staging and Subverting κοινὸν ἀχος\(^{268}\) in Euripidean kommoi

As we have seen, in their closing moments Greek tragic plays can often gesture towards funeral and/or burial and their accompanying rites. At the end of a drama, funerary rites, particularly the enactment of a thrēnos, can serve as “a kind of closural ritual par excellence”\(^{269}\) which simultaneously commemorates the dead while defining and reinforcing a new status and identity for those left behind — as I have shown with Euripides’ Trojan Women, and Aeschylus’ Persians. In the final scene of Sophocles’ Antigone, such closure or strong awareness of community is never realized, however: the chorus’ refusal to participate in the antiphonal ritual lament over the bodies of Eurydice and Haimon functions to isolate Creon, who is literally the only one left to mourn his family, and fails to construct the community of mourners that is typically created for the dead.

In this section I focus on two plays where Euripides stages a communal scene of grief between chorus and actor: Alcestis and Heracles. Like other kommoi already examined in this chapter, the kommoi in these plays evoke ritual contexts: in Alcestis the kommos takes place as the funeral procession returns after her burial, and in Heracles it occurs immediately after the bodies of the hero’s recently murdered wife and children are brought out on stage on the ekkyklema. These moments also possess many of the same ritual elements featured in Persians and Trojan Women, such as close antiphony, interjections, ritual gestures and physical manifestations of grief. Yet none of these moments occur at the end of the play, but rather are featured somewhere in the middle. As such, they do not provide the emotional closure that Persians and Trojan Women

\(^{268}\) Hipp. 1463-4: κοινὸν τὸ δ’ ἀχος πᾶσι ποιλιταῖς / ἡλθὲν ἄειπτος; “This common grief has come upon all citizens unexpectedly.”

\(^{269}\) Roberts 1993: 574.
provide, and instead are utilized to mark a significant turning point in the play. These three plays also feature a male leader of the lament, along with a male chorus, as in Sophocles’ *Antigone*. To depict a male protagonist as mourning figure, especially if accompanied by a male chorus, may be a peculiar choice, especially given the conventions of and restrictions on lamentation discussed in the appendix. In this section I suggest that in staging the *kommos* in varying positions other than the end of the play, and by depicting situations in which the participants refuse to take up their expected roles, Euripides is no longer concerned with achieving “successful” and cathartic mourning as was the case in *Trojan Women*. Rather he draws attention to the many processes that make the ritual mourning possible, often by subverting typical aspects of the ritual expected by the audience. In doing so, Euripides creates an aesthetically distancing effect allowing a space for criticism about the act of lamentation. In these two plays, *kommoi* no longer represent moments of mourning where a community of lamenters is brought together to reflect on the social status of the survivors, but instead offer an opportunity to reflect on what such a scene might entail.

**Euripides’ Alcestis**

In a play concerned with mourning and commemorating a virtuous wife, who has agreed to die on behalf of her husband, the reenactment of the ritual lament for her
might be considered “the most tragic movement” in the drama.\textsuperscript{272} Indeed the anticipation of the *kommos* at 861-934 is high: at that point, Admetus and the chorus of local old men (ἔκ τινων πρεσβυτῶν ἐντοπίων), who are present from the outset precisely to mourn Alcestis (συμπαθήσοντες τῇ τῆς Ἀλκήστιδος συμπορᾷ),\textsuperscript{273} re-enter the stage in a funeral procession. Yet Euripides does not depict a straightforward lament for the woman who has been recently buried, as might be anticipated. Rather, in a *kommos* mostly composed of two strophes sung by the chorus and punctuated by Admetus’ chanted verses, he chooses to stage a strange encounter between an inconsolable Admetus and a chorus who, though sympathetic at first, ultimately questions the nature and value of Admetus’ lamentation for his dead wife. Given the play’s initial focus on death and the subsequent process of bereavement, one might expect a song of mourning that visibly enacts the emotions of the afflicted and provides a glimpse into what the lamentation at the off-stage funeral might have looked like. In the *Alcestis* Euripides self-consciously engages in an interrogation of the nature of tragic lament at the point when it might be expected. In this *kommos*, the nature of lament is explicitly challenged, just as will be the case in the *Electra* plays, which I examine in the next chapter. Unlike *Electra*, however, Admetus is the direct cause of Alcestis’ death. The fact that he as bereaved husband is denied the proper lament further underscores the irony and disjunction in this unique and improbable situation.

Earlier scenes in the *Alcestis* emphasize the importance of the rituals that are associated with death and anticipate the enactment of a ritual lament on stage. In the

\footnotesize
\begin{itemize}
\item Conacher 1988: 189.
\item According to the hypothesis of Aristophanes the Grammarian.
\end{itemize}
parodos, the chorus, who are the first mortals who occupy the stage (after a divine prologue), continually search for any signs which might indicate that Alcestis’ death has taken place. Commenting on the quiet, they immediately note that there are also no physical signs of death outside the door. They hear no groans (στεναγμόν, 86), beating of hands (χειρῶν κτύπου κατὰ στέγας, 87), wailing (γόνον, 88). In the antistrophe they focus on the fact that other ritual evidence of death is lacking: there is no lustral basin (πηγαῖον... χέρνιβον, 99-100), they note the lack of shorn hair at the door (χαίτα τ’ οὔτις ἐπὶ προθύροις / τομαῖος, 101-2), as well as of any young women beating their breasts (τούδε νεολάια / δουπεῖ χείρ γυναικῶν, 103-104). In the first stasimon, they likewise wonder whether to cut their hair or put on black garb (ἡ τέμω τρίχα / καὶ μέλανα στολόν πέπλων / ἀμφιβαλώμεθ’ ἡδη, 215-7). Such obsession with ritual is clearly a concern with not encountering pollution, or perhaps of not giving offense, but ultimately it functions to demonstrate that on stage, as in real life, death is “experienced indirectly through the rituals performed by survivors.” The chorus’ initial actions and attention to detail thus establish a ritualistic atmosphere which anticipates the “ritualistic” act of lament that will presumably be staged in the kommos.

Following the parodos and before the kommos, Euripides stages Alcestis’ last moments, from a prolonged farewell to her husband, household and children to the actual ritual carrying of her corpse to the tomb. The chorus and Admetus, who had left the stage in a funeral procession with the body of the dead woman, return at line 861.
Admetus’ first utterance as he enters the stage, ἰω, is a powerful vocal indicator of his deep distress. This prolonged sound of mourning might give the impression that a song of lament will soon take place, one that will articulate the emotions unleashed after the funeral. And indeed, in what follows, Admetus is depicted as the picture of bereavement itself:

ὶω,

στυγναὶ πρόοδοι, στυγναὶ δ᾿ ὁψεῖς
χήρων μελάθρων.

ὶω μοι μοι, αἰαὶ <αιαὶ>.

ποί βῶ; ποί στῶ; τί λέγω; τί δὲ μὴ;

πῶς ἀν ὀλοίμην;

ἥ βαρυδαίμονα μῆτρα μ᾽ ἔτεκεν. 865

ζηλῶ φθιμένους, κείνων ἔραμαι,

κεῖν ἐπίθυμῳ δῶματα ναίειν.

οὔτε γὰρ αὐγὰς χαίρω προσορῶν

οὔτ᾽ ἐπὶ γαίας πόδα πεζεύων·

τόιον ὄμηρον μ᾽ ἀποσυλήσας

‘Αἰδηθ Ἀνάτος παρέδωκεν.

ἰο, how hateful the approach, how hateful the vision

of this widowed house!

ἰο, oh me! aiai, aiai!

Where am I to go, where to stay? What am I to say, what do I not say?

I wish I could die!

My mother bore me, ill-fated.

I envy the dead, I desire their state,

I yearn to dwell in their halls.

For I take no joy in looking on the light

nor in walking upon the earth.

Such is the hostage Death robbed from me

and handed over to Hades.

In an anapestic preface similar to Persians 909-930, Admetus expresses his disdain for the widowed house (at 861-2), his uncertainty about how to mourn (ποὶ βῶ; ποὶ στῶ; τί λέγω; τί δὲ μη), and his wish to die; in short, he focuses on himself just as Xerxes had in his prelude to the subsequent dirge. Prefatory anapests containing such cries and

278 Admetus’ questions can also be seen as an example of the “rhetoric of desperation” described by Fowler 1987.

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statements of desperation often precede tragic songs of lament, and function as an essential introduction to the exarchos, the leader in the act of mourning, who will set the tone for the song. In this kommos, however, Admetus fails to take up his proper role as song leader as he remains stuck in a desperate loop, repeating the same sentiments over and over, never once engaging with the singing chorus as he fails to move to any lyrical meter more expressive of emotion — he stubbornly lingers at the anapestic opening of the song of lament.

It is the chorus, then, who begin the song of mourning proper at 872 with iambic lyrics, as they encourage to Admetus to enter the house he so dreads: πρόβα πρόβα, βαθὶ κεῦθος οἶκων.279 That they repeat the command to enter (πρόβα) is not “a typical Euripidean” echo, as L. P. E. Parker claims,280 but rather an indication that in their song, the chorus is about to channel some of the characteristic tropes and stylistic features of lyric lament, among which are refrain and repetition. Yet Admetus’ interjected cries (αιαί, Ἠ Ἠ, φεῦ φεῦ, ἰώ μοι μοι), inserted extra metrum, stop any developing song that may have emanated from the chorus and forced them to focus their attention on the grieving king. At 873, for example, in direct response to his αἰαὶ the chorus declare that his sufferings are worthy of his cries (πέπονθας ἄξι' σιαγμάτων) — they are αἰαγμάτων — and in doing so they echo him by repeating his αἰαὶ. This initiates a pattern that will continue throughout the rest of the stanza, in which the chorus attempt to engage with Admetus by directly commenting on his inarticulate cries of pain. That Admetus continues such cries while the chorus unsuccessfully try to engage him gives the

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279 “Go on, go on, step inside the house.”
280 As Parker (2007: 228 ad loc.) comments, “Euripides likes to repeat words, and such repetitions usually reappear in correspondence.” The same will occur with τῷχα τῷχα at 889, which as Parker (2007: 231) points out, echoes the corresponding πρόβα πρόβα at 872 “in word-length, accentuation and final long σ.”
impression of a disjointed dialogue, and not a harmonious song in which the grief of the
survivors is channeled and dealt with in a productive manner. Admetus’ inconsolable
nature takes over the song and guides the chorus’ response in this first strophic pair.

The chorus’ final verses at 876-7: τὸ μῆτρον εἰσὶνεῖν φίλίας ἀλόχου / πρόσωπον σ’ ἔσαντα λυπρῶν,²⁸¹ however, finally provoke him into some sort of
engagement with the chorus. As he states, they have invoked the wound on his heart: that
which literally lacerates (ἡλκωσεν, 878) his heart — his wife. Again resorting to selfish
reasoning, he claims that he envies those unmarried and without children (the ἄγαμος
ἀτέκνοις in 882) because their grief is moderate — thus implying that mourning for a
child or wife is a process so great that it pushes one to the extreme. His choice of words
at 885-888 (παιδών δὲ νόσου καὶ νυμφίδιος / εὐνάς θανάτοις κεραίζομένας / οὐ
τλητὸν ὀρᾷ),²⁸² particularly the adjective κεραίζομένας, bridal beds that are ravaged by
death, indicates an interesting level of aggression which suggests that the death of a wife
is an act of such violence that it necessitates excessive grief.

After the initial moment of sympathy, the chorus decide to place a limit on
Admetus’ grief. In the antistrophe, the chorus offer a powerful counter-argument to
Admetus: while it may be unendurable to witness a wife’s death — fate is nevertheless
hard to wrestle (δυσπάλαιστος, 889). The chorus, having heard his statement about the
unmarried and childless having one soul and a moderate burden, now remind him that he
sets no limit on grief (πέρας δὲ γ’ οὐδὲν ἀλγέων τίθη, 890). Their advice to endure at
892 recalls the injunction at Archilochus’ fragment 13 (West): ἀλλὰ τάχιστα / τλήτε,

²⁸¹ “To no longer see the face of your beloved wife is a painful thing.”
²⁸² But the sicknesses of children and wives ravaged by death on their marriage-bed are unendurable to see.”
In the *Alcestis*, while the chorus do not draw attention to his status as a male mourner they carefully remind Admetus that he is not the first to have lost a *wife*.

Admetus’ reply at 895, citing the ‘long’ (μακρά) pain and grief of survivors of the dead, counters the chorus’ words and justifies the duration and depth of his grief. He then turns to the chorus with an accusatory question directed at them: τί μ᾽ ἐκώλυσας ῥίψαι τύμβου / τάφρον ἐς κόιλην καὶ μετ᾽ ἐκείνης / τῆς μέγ᾽ ἀρίστης κεῖσθαι φθίμενον; (897-99). Dale notes that this is an ingenious way of reminding the audience of an off-stage event, Alcestis’ funeral, an event which has recently taken place. Yet, as R. Fowler argues, Admetus “cannot act on a death wish because the whole plot presupposes the opposite.” While there is no doubt that his grief is genuine, this introduces a certain theatricality, and sense of irony.

The second strophic pair continues this incessant back and forth interrogation and negotiation of the nature and the value of Admetus’ grief, but crucially the chorus is no longer interrupted by his cries. They are finally allowed to employ continuous song, though they will continue to be ignored by him. Perhaps in an attempt to comfort him as well as grab his attention, the chorus tell Admetus about a kinsman whose only son died. A son’s death is worthy of lament (ἄξιοθρησκος), the chorus claim, implying that the death of a wife, who was replaceable, is not. Not only is such a personal anecdote by the chorus unique in Greek tragedy — so much so that scholars used to believe that Euripides

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283 “But endure swiftly, leave womanly grief.”
284 “Why did you prevent me from throwing myself into the open tomb and lying dead with her, who was the best of women?”
285 Dale 1954 *ad loc.*
was here utilizing the chorus to speak in his own person — but it is also exceptional in that it is directly critical of Admetus and his mourning; the man who lost his son was able to bear his sorrow, though he himself was without an heir and old, which is not the case for Admetus whose son still lives.

Admetus, however, ignores this illustrative exemplum and almost rehearses his prefatory words of 861-871:

O image of my house, how am I to enter, and how am I to live in you with my fortune so changed? Alas! How great the difference! Once accompanied with Pelian pine torches and bridal songs, I ventured inside arm in arm with my dear wife, and a rowdy crowd followed, praising me and my dead wife and me, because she and I, both nobly born, were joined together. But now songs of grief instead of wedding songs and black robes instead of white are leading me into an empty bed chamber.

He again addresses the house, and wonders how to enter. This prompts him to remember the last time he entered the house surrounded by a clamorous throng (πολυάχιτος

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287 See Parker (2007: 233): “The oddity here has long tempted commentators to suggest that Euripides is speaking in his own person, and that, moreover, the bereaved father was Anaxagoras, often referred to in later antiquity as the ‘teacher’ of Euripides, whose fortitude when he lost his son was legendary.”
κωμος) — during the ritual of marriage, whose rites are similar to that of death, with the crucial exception that instead of wedding songs (υμεναιοι at 922) and makarismoi (919) now one has goo and white and black. In the antistrophe, the chorus tries to reason with him once again: they remind him that he is still alive. At the end of this song, Admetus will switch to trimeters and continue to articulate the loss of his wife. But there is no sense of resolution at the end of this song; the chorus and Admetus have reached an impasse.

In the Alcestis, Euripides takes special care to dramatize the rare experience of a widower. Yet at the moment of highest emotion, in the kommos, Euripides does not stage a harmonious song which would culminate and properly close the grieving process of the men, a process so meticulously charted in the play. Rather he depicts an odd and drawn-out interrogation of what is at stake by Admetus’ lamenting. The tragedian, who had elsewhere in the play carefully and unproblematically documented the elaborate emotional responses of these men affected by this death, suddenly stages a disjunction between formerly cooperative mourners who had shared a close relationship up to this point in the play. By staging such a kommos, Euripides draws attention to the theatrics of lament, and prepares both Admetus and the audience for a reversed situation where mourning will no longer be necessary. He does so in a play that stresses the irony of Admetus’ situation, as he mourns a wife who died in his stead.

Euripides’ Heracles

Euripides’ Heracles 1042-1088 poses a similarly fraught question regarding the appropriateness of mourning in unique circumstances: should Amphitryon mourn for his
grandchildren and daughter-in-law, who have been killed by his adoptive son in a fit of madness, while the murderer lies asleep and unconscious among their corpses? In this scene, Euripides goes beyond turning the kommos into a site of contested lamentation between the chorus and a blameworthy party, as he had in the Alcestis, and instead presents us with an exchange discussing the dangers potentially posed by the act of mourning. In this kommos, Amphitryon argues passionately against the laments of the chorus, lest it wake the slumbering Heracles and incite him into further destruction. Thinking only of their personal safety, Amphitryon repeatedly denies the stubborn group of old men the opportunity to express any grief. The chorus’ insistence, however, does result in a fleeting moment of cooperative lament spanning a mere three verses until Amphitryon once again begs for silence. This unusual exchange, which couches the briefest glimpse of communal mourning amidst pleas for silence and stubborn refusal, allows us to see opposed and varied processes of mourning alongside one another. Its astrophic and amorphous form furthermore adds to the frenetic and unusual nature of the song. This irregular form on the one hand underscores the urgency of the issues at stake, but it also allows us to observe the manner in which Euripides draws attention to the many dynamics of mourning.

The chorus’ reaction to these unusual events offers one answer to the question outlined above: one should certainly mourn the dead, no matter the circumstances. Following the messenger’s narration of the events inside the house the chorus

288 Astrophic lyrics similarly dominated 875-921, during the precise moment of Heracles’ murder of his loved ones, as the chorus, Amphitryon (inside the house) and the messenger bemoan and react to the horrifying events taking place off-stage in a chaotic form appropriate to their shock. Dale (1968: 111) believes that Euripides here “developed a wholly different technique of metrical construction,” one that followed “the new musical tendencies of his day.” New Music may be one answer behind these astrophic moments but their fraught content should not be ignored.
immediately begin to examine their repertoire, wondering what song they shall raise for the dead:

\[
\text{aiai, tina stenagymon } \\
\eta\ gamon \eta\ phihtov\ omadon\ h\ tiv' 'Aida xoron akhsoi.}^{289}
\]

\text{Aiai, what groan,}
\text{or wail, or song for the dead, or what chorus of Hades shall I raise?}

The arrival of the bodies of Heracles’ murdered wife and children along with the slumbering murderous hero, however, disrupts the chorus’ musings and introduces an element of urgency, as they abandon their song in favor of more involved exclamations. They begin to cry out exclamations of grief \textit{extra metrum}, which lie outside the boundaries of the regular tragic meter: \textit{feu feu, i\omega moi}. Their description of Amphitryon, who accompanies the bodies, to a mourning bird (\textit{O δ' o\delta' tis o\rho\nuis a\πteron katasta\νov / o\δina te\knov pre\sbvus yst\νw}i podi / yk\ra\nu di\w\koh\nu h\l\vs\nuin pa\s\ε\σ\ν' o\δe, 1039-41) immediately sets the stage for an act of communal mourning, as it identifies him as the expected leader of the lament.

Amphitryon, however, immediately requests silence from the outset, drawing attention to the dangerous figure of the slumbering Heracles amidst the bodies: \textit{Kadmei\oi ge\r\ou\te\s, o\u s\i\ga s\i\ga to\u yp\nu\w\i par\r\i\m\e\n\nu\nu \e\s\e\t' ekla\b\e\s\b\ai k\k\a\w\n;} (1042-4).^{290}

In his plea for silence (\textit{o\u s\i\ga s\i\ga}), he nevertheless makes use of the repetition that is typical in scenes of mourning. When the chorus respond with tears, he orders them to stop:

\[
\text{Am. ekast\른w pro\bb\at\e, m\h} \\
\text{ktupie\te, m\h\ bo\at\e, m\h} \\
\text{t\on ev\d' i\a\nu\nu\h'} \\
\text{ypn\wde\a t' eu\nu\aw} \\
\text{'\ge\e\i\r\e\t'}
\]

\text{289 The text is that of Diggle 1981.}
\text{290 “Old men of Thebes, won’t you in silence, silence leave him asleep to forget his sufferings?”}
Am. Stand farther away
do not call out or make a sound,
do not wake him up
since he is sleeping
peacefully in his drowsiness.

In directing the chorus with a series of imperatives (πρόβατε, μὴ κτυπεῖτε, μὴ βοᾷτε,
μὴ ἐγείρετε), Amphitryon acts like the exarchos of the lament that the chorus had
anticipated, though his instructions prohibit traditional lament. Though the two parties
are still opposed, Euripides nevertheless inserts some elements characteristic of the ritual
lament, making us aware of the interaction that is not happening. He will continue to do
the same at 1059, when the chorus declare that Amphitryon’s requests for a softer thrēnos
(οὐκ ἀτρεμαίη θρηνὸν οἰ- / ἀξετ’, 1054-5) are for them “impossible, impossible, alas!”
(ἀδύνατ’ ἀδύνατ’ οἶμοι). The playwright also intertwines their cries, and dramatically
divides the verse so that it is shared between the two:

Am. εγείρετ’. Cho. οἶμοι,
φόνος δοσις ὁδ’ Αμ. ā ā, διὰ μ’ ὀλεῖτε. Cho. κε-
χυμένος ἐπαυτέλλει.

Am. Wake. Cho. Alas,
how much bloodshed this is… Am. Ah, ah, you will destroy me. Cho.
that was spilled and rises up.

Not only does Euripides places their arguments side by side, but he also juxtaposes
different sounds — the chorus’ repeated -ος (φόνος δοσις) sounds versus Amphitryon’s
expressive cries ā ā.

Having experimented in this manner with the expressions of opposed parties,
Euripides then considers a brief but alternative scenario in which they collaboratively
lament. Once the chorus and Amphitryon verify that the hero is still sleeping, they both
proceed to offer a structured and ritualized response to the aftermath of the murder:
It is the chorus who now take up the role of the leader, inducing Amphitryon to lament, if only for a couple of verses. Amphitryon, who suspects that Heracles is waking up, suddenly demands silence once again, and for the rest of the exchange (until 1088) will once again bicker with the chorus. This kommos, which is framed by two instances of uncooperative behavior between disagreeing parties, thus contains at its very center a brief and anomalous moment of antiphonal and collaborative lament. Not only does the playwright fluctuate between varying and opposed actions of the lamenting group and the expected leader of the lament, but at the precise moment when the two are briefly engaged in the very act that has been thus far denied, he reverses the expected roles: it is the group which leads the act, while the leader offers the response typically given by the group. In this way Euripides explores the various possibilities that the kommos offers to a tragedy.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have demonstrated how each of the tragedians carefully manages successful, fragmented or failed laments in several tragic kommoi. Kommoi involving full cooperation between leader and chorus (such as those in *Persians* and *Trojan Women*) are cathartic moments that stress and build community, often allowing a group of participants to reflect on their new status in the aftermath of a disaster. The *Antigone’s*
kommoi illustrate that mourning can only be managed through the validating presence and participation of others, as Sophocles stages the removal of the support and response which would have been provided by the chorus. In the Alcestis and Heracles, Euripides explores the ability of kommoi to induce catharsis by placing them in positions away from the end of the play, and by introducing a set of unique circumstances that may prevent or preclude the lament as an appropriate response. By illustrating the various ways in which tragedians stage such moments, I have suggested that kommoi between actor and chorus are particularly suited for an exploration of the conditions under which communal ritual can or cannot be successful.
In this chapter, I turn my attention to various lyric dialogic interactions staged between Electra and an accompanying chorus throughout the fifth century, as illustrated in four extant plays: Aeschylus’ *Choephoroi*, Sophocles’ and Euripides’ *Electra*, as well as Euripides’ *Orestes*. Beginning with Homer, the bloody and vengeful saga of the House of Atreus repeatedly haunted the Greek literary imagination. In particular, its latest installment, the vengeance of Orestes, commanded a great deal of attention in archaic and classical Greek poetry and art.\(^{291}\) Initially, the emphasis was on Orestes himself: Homer’s *Odyssey*, for example, continually holds up Orestes as a victorious model to be emulated by Telemachus.\(^{292}\) Pindar’s eleventh *Pythian*, dedicated to the young victor Thrasydaios of Thebes, similarly invokes Orestes as an exemplary role model and even as a mythical analogue for the victorious young Theban; the ode devotes its entire central mythical narrative to the actions of the adolescent Orestes, who, like Thrasydaios, also came from Delphi and accomplished a great deed worthy of praise.\(^{293}\) But in the later part of the fifth century, it is his sister Electra who takes center stage in the saga, as the subject of two eponymous plays by Sophocles and Euripides. These plays, which constitute the main focus of this chapter, testify to later fifth-century Athens’ growing interest in the figure of Electra, who becomes the iconic mourner *par excellence*. Her role as a mourner can only be understood in the broader context of recent scholarship centered on the phenomenon of ancient Greek lamentation, discussed in

\(^{291}\) The theme is treated in Homer’s *Odyssey*, the lost epic poem *Nostoi* attributed to Hagias of Troezen (cf. EGF *Nosti* 2), Stesichorus’ *Oresteia* (which itself was reportedly modeled after another *Oresteia*, that of an older poet Xanthus, whose work is also lost), as well as in Pindar’s eleventh *Pythian*. For depictions related to the theme in the art of the period, see Séchan 1926: esp. 86-101, Vermeule 1966. See also Davies 1969.

\(^{292}\) This is the case in *Odyssey* 1.29, 1.298, 3.310, 4.546, and 11.458.

\(^{293}\) *Pythian* 11, 36-7: ἄλλα χρονία σὺν Ἀρεί πέρνειν τε ματέρα δήκη τ’ Ἀἰγισθον ἐν φοναῖς.
depth in the previous chapter. Scholars have claimed Electra as one of the figures who embodied the dangerous and emotional power of female lament in ancient Greek literature. In the plays under scrutiny in this chapter, Electra’s cries for her murdered father are increasingly depicted as transgressive; particularly in the later adaptations of Sophocles and Euripides, her laments threaten the social order and political stability of the Argive kingdom.

In these plays, Electra’s personal laments habitually take the form of sung or recited lyrics that express her intense emotion. In fact, she possesses a remarkable singing role in all four plays in this chapter; the plays of Euripides and Sophocles, in particular, frequently feature her alone on stage uttering a monody. Yet Electra should not be understood as a solitary figure of lament, similar to Antigone. In the four plays I examine, these “private” moments of grief on stage significantly tend to give way to an involved exchange with the chorus that either extends or alters the laments she has uttered on her own. As with the collective moments of mourning discussed in the previous chapter, these exchanges are also modeled on actual fifth-century funerary lamentation practices, particularly the thrēnos, which featured individual singers and a collective group that provided the required antiphonal response or refrain. In the previous chapter, I explored some prominent examples of kommoi in tragedy, communal moments of mourning likewise shared between actor and the chorus, which closely mimic actual thrēnoi: formally they contain a strophic form usually articulated by breaks

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295 In Sophocles’ and Euripides’ eponymous plays, she becomes the ultimate (extreme) singer: in both, a monody by Electra (35 verses in Sophocles and 55 in Euripides) precedes the actual entry of the chorus. As Hall (2006b: 304) discusses, there is a sociological dimension to Electra’s singing, as song is a performed marker of high social status. Even when presented on stage in a state of servitude, as in Euripides, Electra retains what Hall (2006b: 305) considers her “privilege of lyric self-expression” as a high-born character.
between antistrophe and strophe (sometimes epode) as well as by changes in antiphonal singing. In this chapter, I study the “threnodic” exchanges between Electra and her choruses, from the *Choephoroi* to Euripides’ *Orestes*. In the Great Kommos of the *Choephoroi*, which adheres closely to the collaborative model described above, we again see how the communal lament of women functions as an effective means of forming female solidarity, just as I illustrated in the previous chapter with Euripides’ *Trojan Women*. Yet what is initially staged in Aeschylus as a productive and cooperative shared lament, in which both parties mutually depend and even learn from each other, later evolves into extended heated discussions between the two on the nature of lament and the process of mourning. In their *Electra* plays, Euripides and Sophocles distort the shared harmonious threnody between Electra and the chorus found in the *Choephoroi* in order to discuss and problematize the very act of lamentation in radically different ways. Both tragedians are interested in staging moments of broken and contrasted antiphony between Electra and her choruses, in contrast to the harmony and direct resposion found in Aeschylus. These later plays rather reveal a larger interest in the polyphony and cacophony that can be generated by the two groups: Electra and the chorus are now shown in various lyrical and semi-lyrical conversations about the act of lamentation. In fact, these later Euripidean and Sophoclean lyric dialogues debate the appropriateness as well as the duration of the lament process, which if not checked or stopped in time was perceived to have been potentially harmful to the lamentor, who could subsequently descend into madness.

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297 Holst-Warhaft 1992: 27, 102. Plutarch, *Consolation ad Apollonium* considers grief to be the most cruel: ἢ λύπη τὸ χαλεπώτατον πέρικεν εἶναι πάντων (102c). He quotes Philemo 106 (PCG): πολλῶν φύσει
Because the nature and value of lamentation are being explicitly negotiated at every turn, one can neither catalog nor gloss such moments as straightforward tragic *thrēnoi*, moments of collective and cooperative mourning. Most of these lyric exchanges between Electra and the chorus display agonistic qualities, characterized by fraught tension and even different registers in diction and meter — in other words, similar to the “amplified dialogues” presented in the second chapter, though crucially the majority of Electra’s conversations with the chorus are wholly sung affairs. As such I contend that the various lyric dialogues between Electra and her choruses are a fruitful concluding point from which to investigate the complexities of the actor-chorus relationship as well as the tragedians’ interest in the interplay and the nature of communication between the two groups. Likewise, it allows us to examine first-hand how Sophocles and Euripides experimented with Electra as a model of mourning set out by Aeschylus: these later tragedians specifically use Electra and her accompanying chorus, who emerge in the *Choephoroi* as iconic mourners, in order to reflect on the nature and even appropriateness of the act of lament, particularly when it may be excessive and/or belated.

*Electra in Archaic and Classical Greek Literature*

Central to this chapter is my claim that Sophocles and Euripides were directly engaging with Aeschylus’ compelling portrayal of Electra and especially with her intimate relationship with the chorus, as presented in the *Choephoroi*. I examine this dynamic found in Aeschylus’ play in the first section of this chapter, but a few words on

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298 Each play contains three lyric dialogues between Electra and the chorus, a total of six: of these only two are ones that blend lyric and speech: S. *El.* 1398-1441 and E. *El.* 860-879. See tables 1B, 1C, 2B, 2C, 3B, and 3C in chapter 1 above.
Electra’s role in the earlier Greek literary tradition are needed in order to fully understand Aeschylus’ treatment, which would so influence Sophocles and Euripides. Her prominence in moments of lyric dialogue is even more striking in light of the fact that she is a relatively new figure in late archaic and classical Greek literature.

In the earliest treatments of the *Oresteia*, Electra seems to have played no major role in the saga as far as we can tell. She is not present in Homer, and likewise ignored by Pindar in his eleventh *Pythian*. We also do not know if she appeared in Agias of Troizen’s account of the myth, in his lost epic *Nostoi*. The poet of the *Cypria*, according to the scholiast of the Laurentian manuscript of Sophocles’ *Electra*, gave Agamemnon four daughters, none of whom were named Electra, but rather Chrysothemis, Laodice, Iphigenia, and Iphianassa. She only appears in the Pseudo-Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women*, where she is named as one of two daughters born to Clytemnestra; however, scholars believe that this poem was written perhaps as late as the sixth century. Her absence in some of the earliest literary treatments of the vengeance of Orestes is perplexing, but a second-century CE source tells us that a name change may have been involved. According to Aelian, Electra was quite possibly known by another name:

Γάνθος ὁ ποιητής τῶν μελῶν (ἐγένετο δὲ οὕτως πρεσβύτερος Στησιχόρου τοῦ Ἱμεραίου) λέγει τὴν Ἡλέκτραν τοῦ Ἁγαμέμνονος οὔ τούτο ἐχειν τοῦνομα πρῶτον ἄλλα Λαοδίκην. ἐπεὶ δὲ Ἁγαμέμνων ἁνημέθη, τὴν δὲ Κλυταιμνήστραν ὁ Αἴγισθος ἐγήμε καὶ ἔβασίλευσεν,

299 According to *Iliad* 9.145 (=9.287) Agamemnon’s three daughters are: Χρυσόθεμις καὶ Λαοδίκη καὶ Ἰφιάννασσα.
300 See Oliveri 1897.
301 On S. El. 157, the scholiast writes: ἦ Ὀμήρῳ ἀκολουθεῖ εἰρηκότι τὰς τρεῖς θυγατέρας τοῦ Ἀγαμέμνονος ἦ, ὡς ὁ τὰ Ἔπερια, τέσσαρας φησίν, Ἰφιγένειαν καὶ Ἰφιάννασαν.
Xanthos, the lyric poet, (who was older than Stesichorus of Himera), claims that Electra, daughter of Agamemnon, did not have this name at first, but rather Laodice. After Agamemnon was murdered, and Aegisthus married Clytemnestra and became king, the Argives called the unmarried old virgin Electra, since she did not have a husband and had no experience of the marriage bed.

If we understand this passage, either the Homeric Laodice later became equated with a popular epithet ἀλέκτρος, or a lyric poet wrote a fanciful story about the origins of Electra’s name, with the result that the two figures were syncretized in the tradition.

In any case, it would seem that Electra enters the tradition by the time of Xanthus. Based on sparse but important fragments that have come down to us, it appears that Stesichorus, who wrote after Xanthus, extensively reworked the emphasis of the myth of Orestes. In particular, his lost Oresteia gave women a major role in the saga. Clytemnestra took a prominent place in the narrative: it is here where she is first featured as having the prophetic dream of a serpent and perhaps it was Stesichorus who allowed her the use of the murderous double axe. A nurse, who also appears in Pindar’s eleventh Pythian and in the Choephoroi, was also responsible for saving young Orestes. But most importantly, an Oxyrhynchus fragment tells us that Stesichorus’ Oresteia included what appears to have been the very first recognition scene between Orestes and Electra,

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303 This is despite the charge found in Athenaeus 513a that Stesichorus reportedly borrowed heavily from Xanthus: πολλά δὲ τῶν ξάνθου παραπεποίηκεν ὁ Στηθίχορος, ὡσπερ καὶ τὴν Ὀρέστειαν καλομένην. (=PMG 699). See Robert 1881: 149-91, Séchan 1926, and Podlecki 1971.

304 PMGF 219: ταῖς δὲ δράκοις ἐδόκησε μολεῖν κάρα βεβροτωμένος ἁκρόν, / ἐκ δ’ ἄρα τοῦ βασιλέως Πλεισθενίδας ἔφανη.

305 See Pindar, Pythian 11.17 and A. Ch. 733-782, in which she has a speaking part. As a scholiast to Choephoroi 733 (=PMGF 218) writes, the nurse had a different name in each of these accounts: Κιλιοσαν δὲ φησὶ τὴν Ὀρέστου τροφῆν, Πινδ(αρος) δὲ Αρασίων, Στηθίχο(ρος) Λαοδάμειαν.
achieved by means of a lock of hair. Nevertheless, Electra’s exact role in Stesichorus remains unclear. We know he was one of the main sources for Aeschylus, who borrowed this recognition scene. But as far as we can tell Aeschylus was the first to flesh out fully the character of Electra, who possibly appears for the first time in an expanded role in Aeschylus’ trilogy. Though much is still unknown about Stesichorus’ Oresteia and particularly about Electra’s role in the lost poem, it is clear that Aeschylus continued to expand the role of the main women of the family. Yet the Agamemnon is utterly silent as to Electra’s existence, a fact which makes her sudden appearance in the Choephoroi all the more surprising and dramatic. The intense focus on her involvement in the first half of that play introduces a substantial quantity of fertile material that would be taken up approximately forty-five years after Aeschylus’ Oresteia, by Sophocles and Euripides, both of whom decide to view the tragedy from her point of view. As Jan Kamerbeek writes, at the root of both their tragedies is “the idea of the sister who has remained at home with the murderers of the father and who, faithful to the memory of the latter, during the long years of her suffering and isolation, has craved for the return of her brother, for the day of justice and liberation.”

In this way, both Sophocles and Euripides engage intensively with their tragic predecessor, who had availed himself of earlier archaic and classical models now lost. Sophocles and Euripides clearly also engaged with each other, but this chapter will not

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306 An Oxyrhynchus fragment (Oxy. 2506 fr. 26 col ii) claims that the recognition by the lock of hair was an invention of Stesichorus: τὸν ἄναγκαρίσων μὲν δὲ τού βοστράχοι/ Στείρισθοι γάρ ἦσσιν (verses 11-13 in PMGF 217). See also Page 1963: 37.
307 As Goldhill (2006: 149) writes: “in Aeschylus’ Oresteia (458 BCE) there is a pivotal shift of expressability. Now Electra is a character, a figure who speaks and who has a narrative.”
309 Of course, I am not discounting the strong possibility that Sophocles and Euripides also had access to this earlier material. In fact, we know of instances where Euripides borrowed from Stesichorus, such as the bow Apollo gives to Orestes to use against the Furies in the Orestes, cf. Podlecki 1971: 318-320.
attempt to argue whose play came first.\textsuperscript{310} What I will emphasize, however, is that both pay homage to the interactions between Electra and the chorus in the first five hundred lines of the \textit{Choephoroi} in the many lyric dialogues of their plays, which in turn stage diverging encounters between the two parties. In this chapter, I discuss these lyric dialogues in relation to each other as well as in the wider context of their respective plays. As my analysis will show, the Electra plays are more than the unhappy plots of revenge drama whose protagonists refuse to be consoled by an accompanying chorus. Sophocles and Euripides stage crucial conversations between the two parties which to a large degree interrogate the notion of extreme and inappropriate lamentation and mourning. In both their versions, Electra and the chorus do not straightforwardly lament or engage in a recognizable \textit{threnos} as in Aeschylus; they rather discuss and debate the place of these laments. Significantly, these discussions are no longer taking place at the tomb of Agamemnon, but in a more public setting: both Sophocles’ and Euripides’ Electras leave the home and lament in front of the palace so as to draw the attention of chorus. A close examination of lyric exchanges in these plays will show that though Aeschylus may have established Electra and the chorus as mourners by lyricizing their grief, Sophocles and Euripides instead use them to explore the nature of lamentation and grief through a series of discussions, which often verbalize the various problems that the act of mourning may pose.

\textsuperscript{310} For a summary of the debate, see Vögler 1967: 17-51. Subsequent sections will provide more detailed information as to the possible dates scholars have conjectured for each play.
Aeschylus’ Choephoroi

I begin with a consideration of the Choephoroi, as it is the earliest extant representation of Electra in tragedy. Scholars have outlined the numerous ways in which both later tragedians aggressively and subtly evoke and engage with Aeschylus, from the widely discussed recognition scene between Orestes and Electra\textsuperscript{311} to a plethora of other moments that directly recall scenes from the Choephoroi. Of the two, Euripides’ Electra is perhaps more direct than Sophocles’ play in its use and evocation of Aeschylus’ tragedies. Not only does he highlight the implausibility of the argument employed in the Aeschylus’ recognition scene,\textsuperscript{312} but he also parodies other key Aeschylean moments in the trilogy: Electra’s entrance with a water-pot on her head is a pointed allusion to the carrying of the libations in the Choephoroi, Clytemnestra’s entrance on a chariot directly evokes the carpet scene in the Agamemnon, and the religious language that suffuses Aeschylus’ trilogy is “echoed and distorted in the Electra.”\textsuperscript{313} It is clear that when studying either Euripides’ or Sophocles’ Electra, one must consider their crucial relation to Aeschylus.

My focus in this section, however, will not be these previously discussed points of intersection with Aeschylus, but rather the way in which Sophocles’ and Euripides’ plays engage with the relationship between Electra and the chorus, particularly as illustrated in the first episodes of Aeschylus’ play leading up to the Great Kommos. Following Orestes’ opening prayer to Hermes, the conversations and exchanges between Electra and the chorus, who have been sent by Clytemnestra to offer libations to Agamemnon,

\textsuperscript{311} Vögler 1967, Solmsen 1967.
\textsuperscript{312} Goldhill 1986: 247-8. For Euripidean innovations to this scene, see Tarkow 1981.
\textsuperscript{313} Goldhill 1986: 250. See also Zeitlin 1970. Carey (2008: 97) also sees the peasant as a rival to the watchman in Aeschylus: “It is difficult not to see in the vivid non-heroic figure who opens Electra an attempt to trump the opening of Agamemnon.”
become the focus of the first episodes of the drama: their extensive speeches are frequently punctuated by extended scenes of *stichomythia*, at 106-123 and 164-182, which articulate the strong relationship that exists between actor and chorus. Though the chorus of slave women occupy a different social plane from Electra, as social inferiors (διωκοί γυναικες, δωμάτων ευθημονες: “servant women who set the house in order,” 84), the play nevertheless intimately links and associates the Argive princess with these foreign women in the first five hundred lines. Both Electra and the chorus are similarly attired in black mourning garb (10-18), but most strikingly, Electra describes her situation (as well as that of Orestes) as having been sold by her mother: (πενεκμένοι γάρ νῦν γέ πως ἀλώμεθα, 132), similar to a slave (καγὼ μὲν ἀντίδουλος, 135). Likewise, the chorus describe their situation in a manner that emphasizes their similarity to Electra, who is bereft of a father: in the final epode of the *parodos*, they speak of having been taken away from the house of their *fathers* into a life of slavery: ἐκ γάρ οἴκων / πατρώων δούλιον <μ'/> ἐσάγων αἰσαν (76-77). The play thus makes a visual and thematic link between the two.

Despite such emphasis on their shared emotional and social experiences, it is clear that the chorus is the more dominant party in the relationship. The play’s *parodos* at 23-83, performed in a triadic structure with an epode, establishes the slave women’s strong and committed persona, whose assertiveness will be further emphasized when in dialogue with the generally hesitant Electra. In the first pair of strophes, the chorus describe the current situation in the house of Agamemnon: the first strophe narrates the chorus’ role in the libations and dirge that they intend to undertake for the dead Agamemnon (23-31),

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314 The text is that of Garvie 1986.
while the antistrophe tells of Clytemnestra’s prophetic dream that precipitated the libation offerings (33-41). Despite the fact that they must restrain their emotions (βίαι φρενῶν αἰνέσαι, πικρὸν στύγος / κρατούσαι, 79-80), and serve and suffer their masters (δακρύω δ’ ύψ’ εἰμάτων / ματαίοις δεσποτάν / τύχαις, κρυφαίοις πένθεσιν παχνουμένα, 81-3) as they outline in the epode, they make clear their distaste for Clytemnestra and their task of pouring libations. In the second pair of strophes, they specifically complain of Clytemnestra’s underlying selfishness (χάριν ἄχαριτον, 44) and godlessness (δύσθεος γυνᾶ, 46). Though their remaining utterances contain more ambiguous remarks, they nevertheless include prescient observations, such as σέβας δ’ ἀμαχον ἀδάματον ἀπόλεμον τὸ πρὶν / ... νῦν ἄφισταται (55-7)315 and ῥοπᾶ δ’ ἐπισκοπεῖ Δίκας / ταχεῖα τούς μὲν ἐν φάει (61-2).316 Such remarks, which border on warnings, along with their previous admonitions, are striking coming from a group who have been summoned by Clytemnestra simply to mourn and lament. That they offer such commentary, especially after they have performed the traditional activities associated with the dirge,317 establishes them as a potentially dangerous collective.318

This strong assertive performance overshadows Electra’s debut on the tragic stage, particularly since Electra is presented as an exceptionally naïve character in Aeschylus, who will need to learn from such a chorus.319 Electra’s first ever spoken act

315 “Reverence, which was previously unconquered, untamable and unvanquished, is now absent.”
316 “The scales of justice keep watch and swiftly acts against those in the light.”
317 The first strophe outlines the ritual activities that they have already carried out, such as beat their hands on their head and/or breast (δέχεσθαι σῶν κότων, 24), gashed their cheeks with their nails (πρέπει παρῆς φονίσι’ ἀμυγγοῖς ὄνυχος ἄλοκο νεοτόμωι, 25), and torn their garments (λιθοφόροι δ’ ύψασσάτων / λακίδες ἐβλαδοῦν ὕπ’ ἄλγεσιν, / πρόστεροι στολοὶ πέπλον ἄγελάστοις / ἕμφοραῖς πεπληγμένωι, 28-31).
318 On the perceived disruptive power of lament in antiquity see Holst-Warhaft 1992.
319 Scholars have pointed out Electra’s diffidence and deference to the chorus: according to Conacher (1974: 331), she “must be schooled by the Chorus in how to ‘adapt’ Clytemnestra’s propitiatory offering; who, when she does, cannot bring herself actually to name Orestes as the longed-for avenger and who
in tragedy is a request that has been cited as “témoin de la jeunesse naïve d’Electre”:

she specifically asks the chorus to serve as her counselors: γένεσθε τώνδε σύμβουλοι πέρι (86).

She poses a series of questions that simultaneously reveal her incompetence as well as her reliance on them: τί φώ χέουσα τάσδε κηδείους χοάς; / πώς εὕφρον εἴπω; πώς κατεύξωμαι πατρί; (88-9). Her deliberations continue for another fifteen lines, and she ends in the way she began, re-emphasizing her naïveté and dependence on the chorus’ sage advice: λέγοις ἄν εἴ τι τώνδ’ ἔχεις ύπέρτερον (105).

In the next hundred lines (106-211), the play depicts a strong teacher-student relationship between Electra and the chorus, who guide her through the libation process. Electra continues to direct her questions to the group of slave women as they instruct her every step, culminating in a prayer to Hermes in 124-149 and the chorus’ astrophic “paean to the deceased” in 152-163. Aeschylus, however, shows that this straightforward teaching relationship between the two is actually a mutually dependent one. After the libation is finished, Electra discovers something new at the tomb — the offerings of Orestes — and it is she who must now guide the chorus in what she has found: νέου δὲ μύθου τοῦδε κοινωνήσατε (166). The chorus immediately ask her to speak, λέγοις ἄν (167), echoing Electra in 105 and 108. Their subsequent questions to Electra make clear that the teaching relationship has been reversed; the fact that the chorus is learning

prays, for herself, that she may be more σῶφρόν and more pious (ἐυσεβίατερον) of hand than her mother (see vv. 138-44).”

“Please be my advisers in these matters.”

“What do I say as I pour the funeral libations? / How do I speak properly? How will I pray to my father?” Conacher (1987: 105) notes, “for what we notice most about this Electra is the gentle and tentative nature of her approach to the grim situation thrust upon her. Her first speech opens with a series of timid questions to the Chorus, culminating in the question whose fearful irony she hardly dares express (93-5).”

“Speak, if you have any better ideas than these.”

“Take part in this novel news.”

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from her is emphasized: πῶς οὖν; παλαία παρὰ νεωτέρος μάθω, (171).\textsuperscript{325} During this first half, Aeschylus thus stages an intimate drama of ignorance and learning between the Chorus and Electra, in which the two change roles towards the end. The first episode provides a glimpse into the complex dynamics that will be portrayed in the subsequent episode, the Great Kommos of 306-478.\textsuperscript{326} In this, the only extant Aeschylean exchange involving more than one actor in conversation with the chorus, the presence of Orestes will change the relationship and the exchange between the chorus and Electra. Its ritual form, which combines the thrēnos at a tomb with a ὑμνος ἀνακλητικός\textsuperscript{327}, requires participation from the children of Agamemnon and especially from Orestes as the agent of vengeance. This song is in fact the ἐπιτύμβιον αἴνον which the chorus of Argive elders had desired in Agamemnon 1547, the first mourning rite at the tomb for Agamemnon postponed, but interestingly combined with invocation of Agamemnon’s spirit for aid, similar to the invocation of Darius in Persians. This exchange between the chorus of slave women, Orestes, and Electra is furthermore the longest and most elaborate lyric composition in extant tragedy, considered by some the most complicated song in all of extant Greek poetry.\textsuperscript{328} Though the chorus frequently take up a teaching role, instructing the newly reunited Electra and Orestes, neither character can be described as entirely dependent on their instruction; the ritual structures employed require that they take up more dominant roles as the children of the deceased.

Nevertheless, the chorus’ dominance in the kommos is remarkable: of one hundred and seventy-three lines ninety-six belong to them, that is, roughly fifty-five

\textsuperscript{325} “How can I, an old woman, learn from someone who is younger?”
\textsuperscript{327} Schadewaldt 1932: 313.
\textsuperscript{328} Wilamowitz-Moellendorff 1914: 209.
percent, compared to forty-two to Electra and thirty-five given to Orestes (twenty-five and twenty-percent, respectively).\textsuperscript{329} At various points throughout the *kommos* the women remind the children of Agamemnon of the situation at hand, counteracting any doubts or questions they may have: for example, when Orestes begins the *kommos* proper at 315-322 with questions addressed to his father, the chorus identify lament as the right course of action:

\begin{quote}
tέκνου, φρόνημα τοῦ θανόντος οὐ δαμά-
ζει πυρὸς μαλερὰ γνάθος,
φαίνει δ᾽ ὑστερον ὀργάς:
ότοτιξεται δ᾽ ὦ θυμίσκων,
ἀναφαίνεται δ᾽ ὦ βλάπτων,
πατέρων δὲ καὶ τεκόντων
γός ἔνδικος ματεύει
ποινὰν ἀμφίλαφως παραχθεῖς.
\end{quote}

Child, the mind of the dead is not overcome
by the destructive jaws of fire;
later he reveals his anger.
He who is murdered is bewailed,
he who can harm is revealed;
a legitimate lament for fathers and parents,
when it has been stirred up loud and full,
seeks [the murderer] out.

At other points they change the music and the direction of the lament, causing the emotions of Orestes and Electra to intensify, such as when they begin to evoke the Arian dirge and the wailings of Cissian women (423-9). They also end the *kommos* with a cry of victory at 473-475. In other words, throughout this *kommos*, the chorus “steadily remain initiator, adviser, and inciter to Electra and Orestes; the children never ask or direct the chorus to follow or support their lead”.\textsuperscript{330} Orestes does, after all, say that the lecturing of the chorus pierces his ear like an arrow: τοῦτο δισμπέρφς οὖς / ἵκεθ᾽ ἀπερ 
tε βέλος' (380-1). The chorus in the *Choephoroi* thus pushes the action forward despite

\textsuperscript{329} McCall 1990: 23.
\textsuperscript{330} McCall 1990: 23.
the fact that they are lowly foreign women. In this complex lament the role of the chorus is far from passive, far from being the mere antiphonal respondent based on the Homeric model. More importantly, their role is extraordinary, if one takes into account the various fifth-century Athenian funerary laws that prohibited individuals not closely related to the deceased from taking part in *threnoi*.

In this first half of the play, Aeschylus highlights the chorus’ role in inciting Electra and later Orestes. Their interactions with the chorus in particular reveal their dominance, as the heroine’s tragic debut is characterized by her meekness and reliance on the chorus. Unlike her later incarnations, Aeschylus’ Electra is “a conventionally proper girl.” During the Great Kommos, under the tutelage of the chorus, Electra learns how to become a mourner. After she fulfils this role, however, she promptly disappears from the Aeschylean stage. Euripides’ and Sophocles’ later plays would expand her role and explore the possibilities presented by her unique situation. As we shall see, they invert and distort the Aeschylean paradigm of a meek character and a dominant chorus as they problematize Electra’s belated laments for her father.

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331 Sider 1978 argues that they look forward to the Furies of the *Eumenides*.
332 See Appendix 1.
333 Goldhill 2006: 149. He (ibid.) furthermore notes that Electra “speaks in the play primarily during acts of religious observance, such as the opening scene of pouring offerings, and the great mourning song: religious ritual is the privileged scene of public female utterance. She is sent inside by her brother as the moment of revenge approaches in order to wait in silence for marriage, which is the archetypal role of a woman in the patriarchal family.”
Euripides’ *Electra*

In the aftermath of the naval battle of Aegospotami in 404 BCE, the fate of the vanquished Athenians was hotly debated and discussed by the victorious Spartans and Thebans. According to Plutarch’s biography of *Lysander*, the options were many: some proposed that the Athenians be sold into slavery, others (prompted by a Theban) suggested that the city be razed to the ground. These ideas, however, were quickly dismissed after a certain Phocion sang the opening two lines of the *parodos* of Euripides’ *Electra* at the banquet where the Theban and Spartan allies were gathered:

*Εἴτα μέντοι συνοισίας γενομένης τῶν ἡγεμόνων παρὰ πότου, καί τίνος Φωκέως ἄσαντος ἐκ τῆς Εὐριπίδου Ἡλέκτρας τὴν πάροδον ἢ ἡ αρχή

*Αγαμέμνονος ὃ κόρα, ἠλέθον, Ἡλέκτρα, ποτὶ σὰν ἀγρότειραν αὐλάν, πάντας ἐπικλασθῆναι, καὶ φανῆαι σχέτλιον ἐργον τὴν οὕτως εὔκλεα καὶ τοιούτους ἄνδρας φέρουσαν ἀνελεῖν καὶ διεργάσασθαι πόλιν.

Plutarch, *Lysander* 15

Afterwards, when the leaders had gathered at the banquet, and a certain Phocian sang the *parodos* from the *Electra* of Euripides, which begins:

> “O daughter of Agamemnon
> I have come, Electra, to your rustic farm”

everyone was moved to pity, and felt it to be a shocking deed to eliminate and destroy a city that was so renowned, and that produced such poets.”

This story gives an indication of the vast emotional power wielded by the first meeting between Electra and the chorus in the play, which is staged in the form of a lyric dialogue, as with the majority of Electra-chorus encounters after Aeschylus. That a lyric exchange could have produced such an effect is not surprising in theory, given that it involved song, often cited as inducing powerful emotions in its listeners. What I find especially remarkable is that it is a *dialogue* (and not a solo song or lament), in which the

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334 Plutarch *Lysander* 15: ἔνιοι δὲ καὶ προτεθήκαν φασιν ὡς ἀληθῶς ὑπὲρ ἀνδραποδίσμου γνώμην ἐν τοῖς συμμάχοις, ὦτε καὶ τῶν Ἐθβαῖον Ἐριὰνθον εἰσηγήσασθαι τὸ μὲν ἀστι κατασκάψαι, τὴν δὲ χώραν ἀνεῖναι μηλόβοτον.
chorus attempts to cheer a mournful Electra, that is presented as one of the greatest moments of *captatio misericordia* or pity in tragedy, one that is reportedly able to rouse the emotions of the hostile Spartans and Thebans. It also appears to be one of the few moments in the history of this play’s criticism in which we hear no mention of nor any reference to the other versions of the play by Aeschylus and Sophocles, often hailed by critics as superior and even more emotionally persuasive.\(^{335}\) Furthermore, this story differs markedly from the one found in Aulus Gellius about Sophocles’ *Electra*, in which the actor Polus channeled the authentic grief he felt for the death of his son into his performance of Electra for a production of Sophocles’ play.\(^{336}\) While Aulus Gellius’ report reveals the impact the play as a whole had upon one individual actor’s experience, this story offers a glimpse into the affective power the play could exercise through a lyric exchange between actor and chorus. As I will show in this section, scenes of lyric dialogue ought to have a similarly powerful influence on modern critics, who in their routine readiness to find Euripides’ *Electra* wanting, often neglect the choral dynamics of the play.

Unlike the gathered assembly of Thebans and Spartans, modern critics have often not been able to appreciate Euripides’ *Electra* on its own terms.\(^{337}\) Most criticism tends

\(^{335}\) Critics are unsure as to which play came first, Sophocles’ or Euripides’ *Electra*. Denniston (1939) dated Euripides’ version to 413 because of the concern of the Dioscuri about sailing to Sicily in lines 1347-8 (read as an allusion to the Athenian expedition to Sicily; *cf.* Thuc. 7.20.2, 7.42.1) as well as their references to Helen’s *eidolon* in Troy while she physically was in Egypt in 1280-3 (Euripides’ *Helen* was performed in 412). Scholars who have studied the number of resolutions in Euripides’ iambic trimeter (which increase from 420s onward) have, however, suggested an earlier date for his *Electra* – see Zielinski 1925: 133-240, Ritchie 1964: 206-3 and Dale 1967: xxiv-xxviii. For more on metrical resolution and dating in Euripides, see Devine and Stephens 1981: 43-64, esp. 47-49, Cropp and Fick 1985, and Finglass 2007: 1-4.

\(^{336}\) Aulus Gellius 6.4.

\(^{337}\) These criticisms are in accord with general scholarship on Euripides, which has tended always to judge him in comparison to his predecessors: in the words of Schlegel (1883: 133), Euripides “was truly to be pitied for having been preceded in the treatment of this same subject by two such men as Sophocles and Aeschylus. But what compelled him to measure his powers with theirs, and to write an *Electra* at all?”
to discuss the play explicitly and subjectively in relation to the *Choephoroi* and/or Sophocles’ *Electra*, to the detriment of Euripides’ version, which has been consequently denigrated on aesthetic and even ethical grounds. This tone was set in the nineteenth century, when in his *Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature* A. W. Schlegel pronounced the *Electra* to be “perhaps the very worst of Euripides’ pieces,” and even went as far as to claim that “whatever there is of the tragical in his drama is not his own, but belongs either to fable, to his predecessors, or to tradition.” H. D. Kitto describes it as a “melodrama,” a watered down parody of the Sophoclean version. Likewise, whenever scholars turned their attention to the specific character of Electra as depicted by Euripides, they invariably operate in a comparative or superlative mode: for example, one scholar describes her as “the most ostentatious martyr in Greek tragedy.” Another argues that Euripides presents “a deft and damning portrait of matricidal woman in action.” Recent scholars, however, have taken a step away from such unhelpful criticisms, and have adopted a more objective stance toward the play, stressing Euripides’ innovations and revisions of the Aeschylean model. Scholars have discussed in particular the play’s “realism”, antiheroic (namely, anti-Iliadic) mood, and even its self-conscious

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338 Schlegel 1883: 133.
339 Kitto 1939: 330. He groups the Electra with *Orestes, Phoenician Women*, and *Iphigenia at Aulis*, other “recognition plays” labeled tragicomedies. On the *Electra* and *Orestes*, he (ibid.) comments: “they are grim and not gay, and are based on character-drawing rather than on the excitements of an intricate plot.”
340 For a summary of such views, see Lloyd 1986: 2, Michelini 1987: 187, n.23.
341 O’Brien 1964: 28-9. As Kitto (1939: 334) notes, “this Electra is a woman in whom it is hardly possible to find a virtue; she is implacable, self-centred, fantastic in hatred, callous to the verge of insanity. Why does Euripides invent this woman? What does she prove? What is the point of a dramatic hero who is all black?” See also Porter (1990: 255-81) for a summary of other subjective criticisms leveled against Electra.
342 Conacher 1967: 203. He (ibid.) claims that “it is as if Euripides, looking first at the ‘facts’ of the legend on the one hand, and then at the other possible treatments of it, had decided: ‘So much for the supernatural (or “mythological”) and the “heroic” treatment of such events. My play will present the sort of Electra who, shored up by no divine commands or absolute ideals of loyalty, will, in certain circumstances, seek to slay her mother.’”
effects. The *Electra* has also been discussed as a play of revenge: according to Said, Euripides takes up the theme of the *Choephoroi* as a protest against the glamorization of revenge: “pour mieux dénoncer le scandale de la vengeance et démontrer l’horreur du talion.” Anne Burnett, who also follows the revenge reading, goes even further: she claims the play offers “the representation of a heroic human action in its decadence.”

This scholarship is right in emphasizing the intertextual links between Euripides’ *Electra* and Aeschylus’ *Choephoroi* (and even between Euripides’ and Sophocles’ versions, which certainly drew on one another, though we are unsure which of the two came first). Particularly in this play, in which Electra is denied her chief traditional attribute of being ἀλέκτρος, Euripides is in a sense “polemicizing” against his predecessor Aeschylus; his aggressive alterations and inversions forcefully reexamine the characters, features, and key moments of the *Choephoroi*. There is no doubt that Euripides carefully studied Aeschylus’ play when staging his play; in fact, one could argue that in his *Electra* Euripides fully implements certain ideas briefly alluded to in the *Choephoroi*, such as Electra’s complaints about her own (and Orestes’) social position:

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343 Porter (1990: 255) summarizes the ‘realist’ reading as follows: “In Euripides’ treatment of the Orestes story (as opposed to those of Aeschylus and Sophocles) the patina of legend is stripped away and we are presented with ordinary people who perform the acts assigned to them by tradition, but do so in broad daylight, as it were, amid the disconcerting realism, the unglamorous mundaneness of the dramatic world that Euripides sets before us.” Zeitlin 1970 focuses on the festival of Hera at Argos as a way to discuss Euripidean “realism,” cf. Lloyd 1986 and Goff 1999-2000 for a more nuanced treatment. On anti-heroic and anti-Iliadic Euripides, see Michelini (1987: 185-6), who claims: “The pastoral scene, in the remote and mountainous border areas, frequented by herdsmen and approached by a steep and arduous path, has an obvious resemblance to the remote area of Ithaka where Odysseus first begins to test the prospects for his return. Like Eumaios, the peasant farmer who has married Elektra is a poor man whose high standards of loyalty put to shame the lower morals of people at court. Like Odysseus, Orestes is cautious in planning his revenge and delays long in identifying himself, even to his friends. Like Laertes, Elektra lives in the country, imposing upon herself need, labor and physical misery as a token of her inner suffering. Like the suitors, the opponents of the protagonists are characterized by sexual corruption and by a taste for luxury that contrasts severely with the neediness of the loyalists. And, like the suitors, Klytaimnestra and Aigisthos suffer a cruel revenge, plotted secretly and carried out with considerable brutality.”


κάγω μὲν ἀντίδουλος, ἐκ δὲ χρημάτων / φεύγων Ὀρέστης ἐστίν (Ch. 135-136). In Euripides, Electra’s appearance (dirty: 184, 1107, with poor garments: 185, 304, 1107, and short hair: 108, 241) can only be described as slave-like; similarly her first action on stage, tied to the physical act of retrieving water, situates her in a servile status.

In this section, I explore yet another, often neglected, link to Aeschylus, as I have suggested in my introduction and first section: I argue that Euripides was especially interested in the relationship between Electra and the chorus, as dramatized and emphasized in the first half of the Choephoroi. I also maintain that Euripides deliberately changed this in his choral dynamics. As discussed above, the first half of the Choephoroi is characterized by an intense interest in the dynamic between Electra and the chorus: extensive trimeter exchanges and even stichomythia between the two ultimately culminate in the longest lyric dialogue in any tragedy (one that also involves the newly arrived Orestes) and testify to their closeness and mutual dependence. Euripides plays with this dynamic found in the Choephoroi and tests its adequacy. In his Electra, Euripides minimizes contact between Electra and the chorus and stages only two short lyric dialogues between the two. There is also an additional lengthier one that is shared between chorus, Electra and Orestes, which I contend is a new restaged version of the Choephoroi’s Great Kommos. As in Sophocles, Euripides’ lyric dialogues occur at critical junctures in the plot: in place of the parodos, after the death of Aegisthus, and after the death of Clytemnestra. Despite the fact that the last two lyric dialogues take place after long-awaited events, ones that mark the completion of the vengeance against Agamemnon, these exchanges illustrate a major disjunction between the chorus and Electra, particularly when compared to their relationship in Aeschylus. As I explore in

346 “I am a slave, and Orestes is in exile, deprived of his money.”
this section, each party appears to be conversing in entirely different registers during their
shared lyric exchanges, precisely at moments when they might have been expected to be
in harmony. The final dialogue, Euripides’ answer to the Great Kommos, is a fragmented
exchange that conveys despair, and not united resolve.

It should be noted that in this play Euripides makes the relationship between
Electra and Orestes more central, a relationship that is not fully explored on stage in the
Choephoroi because of Electra’s disappearance after the Great Kommos; nor is it one
developed by Sophocles, who keeps the two apart for most of his play. In Euripides,
the relationship between brother and sister takes center stage, to the detriment of the
relationship between Electra and the chorus found in both Aeschylus and Sophocles.
Nevertheless, the relationship between Electra and the women is accentuated despite its
brief spotlight on stage. The chorus are among many characters who undermine Electra’s
perspective. They are deeply involved in the plot; in fact most of their odes constitute
“brief songs that are closely involved in the action of the play.” Above all, interactions
with the chorus function so as to illustrate her isolated and desolate position. In
Sophocles, as I discuss in the next section, the lyric dialogues that are staged between the
chorus and Electra are, by contrast, extended engaged affairs that enact complex
negotiations and confrontations. They testify to the playwright’s interest in stretching
and expanding the relationship found in the Choephoroi in order to test its absolute
limits. In Euripides, however, we witness a rejection of the communal, manifested in

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347 Michelini (1987: 206) comments: “other versions stress the relation between the siblings, while in fact
substituting one for the other.” Kitzinger (1991: 326) notes that “unlike Sophocles [Euripides] does not
subordinate Elektra to Orestes in the murder of Clytamenstra. Her hand is laid on top of his as they
perform the murder together, and together they describe the murder and their feelings about it afterwards to
the choros.” See also Tarkow 1979.
strange and brief lyric dialogues that impress upon the audience an overwhelming sense of isolation. When the two groups do interact on stage, it is often a fraught and disjointed exchange. Euripides succeeds in presenting a world in which there is little communication nor even a sense of collaboration between Electra and the chorus.

Introducing Electra

In his version of Electra’s story, Euripides stages three distinct introductions to his protagonist, providing three distinct opportunities for the audience to become acquainted with her: first, in a “second” prologue at 54-63 which develops into a brief dialogue with the farmer until verse 81; then, by herself as she performs a monody before a hidden inner audience of Orestes and Pylades at 112-166; and also in a lyric dialogue with the entering chorus at 167-212. One might think that the first two “performances” by Electra anticipate the third, the lyric dialogue with the entering chorus; such is the case in Sophocles where Electra’s “monody” serves as a prelude to the longer lyric exchange with the chorus which is also the play’s parodos. Euripides, however, chooses to emphasize the second of the three, Electra’s lengthy monody, at the expense of the two shorter conversations which frame it. When the lyric dialogue with the chorus is finally staged, it is anti-climactic in some respects despite its key position in the play, serving in the place of the parodos. By depicting Electra’s first interactions on stage — with the farmer, and with the chorus — as unsettling, Euripides thereby conveys that his Electra is most functional when alone. Aeschylus’ Choephoroi had featured a lengthy introduction to Electra and the chorus in which the two work well together, particularly during moments of lament. Euripides, on the other hand, takes great pains to isolate Electra
from the chorus in order to depict a self-sufficient lamenting Electra, who does not need anyone else to perform the mourning ritual.

From its outset, the first small conversation between Electra and the peasant does not seem like a conversation. The opening of this curious “dialogue” illustrates Electra’s readiness to lament on her own, even to “monodize” in trimeters. Her first outburst at 54-63 is uttered as if she were alone, delivering a pseudo-prologue:

wicklungurstmas, χρυσέων ἀστρων τροφή,
ἐν ἐν τοῦ ἄγγος τῷ ἑφεδρέουν κάραι
φέροισα πηγάς ποταμίας μετέχομαι
γόους τ’ ἀφίημ’ αἰθέρ’ ἐς μέγαν πατρί,
οὐ διὶ τ’ χρείας ἐς τοσόνδ’ ἀφίγμενη
ἀλλ’ ὡς ύβριν δεῖξομεν Αἰγίσθου θεοίς,
ἡ γὰρ πανώλης Τυνδαρίς, μήτηρ ἐμῆ,
ἐξεβαλέ μ’ οἴκων, χάριτα τιθεμένη πόσει
tεκούσα δ’ ἄλλους παιδας Αἰγίσθωι πάρα
πάρεγ’ Ὄρεστῃ κάμε ποιεῖται δόμων.349

O black night, nurse of the golden stars,
in which I go for water from the stream,
carrying this pitcher set on my head,
and send forth my laments for my father into broad heaven -
I do not do this from any need
but to show the gods the hybris of Aegisthus.
For the evil daughter of Tyndareus, my mother,
threw me out of my house, wishing to please her husband.
As she has other children with Aegisthus,
she treats Orestes and me as bastards.

These impassioned lines, which appear in an iambic speech, are full of the language and conventions of lament, and directly introduce the reader to Electra’s plight. Electra addresses her plaints to a heavenly entity,350 to night: ὡ νῦς μέλαινα (54).351

349 The text is that of Diggle 1981.
350 This will also be the case in Electra’s first entrance in Sophocles’ Electra 86-7: ὡ φάος ἄγνων /καὶ γῆς ἱσόμους ἀήρ, where an intellectualizing, re-mythologizing tone is struck. Cropp 1988: 103 points out that other “complaint-monologues”/monodies likewise address deities and/or elements.
351 Electra’s direct appeal to the night, ὡ νῦς μέλαινα, is curious, as it is more common for lamenting women to address the light, not the night, as they are about to die: e.g. Ἄλιε καὶ φάος ἀμέρας / οὐράνιαί
Immediately she explains her coming out of the house by means of the prop on her head, which scholars have pointed out is a barbed reference to the *Choephoroi*, but which also functions to underscore her ἀντίδουλος (*A. Ch.* 135) status. No less significantly, she indicates that these lines have been a kind of performance, as she goes outside in order to lament, (γόους τ᾽ ἀφίμη αἰθέρ’ ἐς μέγαν πατρί, 59). Her lament has a clear purpose: ἀλλ’ ὡς ὑβριν δείξωμεν Αἰγίσθου θεοῖς (58). She makes her case very plainly, but her words also give the impression that they require no response, as if Electra were by herself.

The peasant’s question at 64-66 reminds us of the reason for the iambic speech — despite Electra’s “monodizing” outburst, this is a conversation, meant to draw a response. His query certainly undermines the “monodic” tone which Electra has just struck in her quasi-personal lament: τί γὰρ τάδ’, ὡ δύστην’, ἐμὴν μοχθεῖς χάριν / πόνους ἔχομαι, πρόσθεν εὖ τεθραμμένη, /καὶ ταύτ’ ἐμοῦ λέγοντος οὐκ ἀφίστασαι; (64-6). Though he addresses her as δύστηνος (her chief epithet in Sophocles) he makes clear that she has no need to toil to fetch water, particularly on his behalf (ἐμὴν μοχθεῖς χάριν, 64) and that in fact her situation is not entirely as hopeless as she had outlined. Curiously, he does not mention her legitimate complaints against Aegisthus, which she highlighted as her chief reason for going outside the house. Nor does Electra continue with her plaints or laments once she is aware of the peasant’s presence. Instead, in the rest of the

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352 “Why do you labor so on my behalf, o unhappy one, doing hard work, when you were previously well cared for, and you do not stop even when I tell you?”

conversation from 68-81, they discuss and reflect on the nature of their labors and hard life. It is clear that he finds her a cooperative and diligent worker, quite unlike the Electra of Sophocles, whose primary activity is lamenting, one that is recognized by every character on stage. That he does not mention nor take issue with the laments emphasized in 54-63 is strange, as is the fact that she herself does not continue them once in his presence, especially given that she later claims that her laments are an on-going act. Even in this brief conversation, it becomes clear that for Euripides’ Electra, lamenting is an entirely private affair that involves no one else.

This small conversation between the peasant and Electra is programmatic for the nature of interaction in the rest of the play. In Euripides, Electra will be shown to be a self-sufficient lamenter, who prefers to lament alone. When confronted in conversation by someone else she will cease to lament. Such is the case with Electra’s extended monody at 112-166, and the subsequent parodos at 167-212. That this monody is longer than the actual lyric dialogue between Electra and the chorus in the parodos should not surprise us, but should rather be taken as indicative of the nature of interaction in this play, which deliberately explores moments of solitary grief. In Euripides, Electra’s lyric monody is very much a proper full lament, complete with the stylistic and thematic features typical of the genre, such as cries, direct address, exclamations, repetition, and description of the mourning process. In short, it contains everything but a chorus with whom to sing in responsion, despite the fact that many of her cries appear explicitly directed at someone: for example, she raises a rather distressed call to lament in a

\[\text{\underline{\text{354}}} \text{πάτερ, σοί / κατά γάς ἐνέπω γόος / οἶς ἀεὶ τὸ κατ’ ἡμαρ / διέπομαι (144-7).} \]

\[\text{\underline{\text{355}}} \text{See Wright 1986: esp. 12.}\]
mesode: ἵθι τὸν σὺτὸν ἔγειρε γόον (125). Conspicuously, this example does not call for any generic lament, but rather a specific refrain (τὸν σὺτὸν γόον), which underscores the fact that she is the only performer on stage. Since there is no chorus present to receive such an injunction, Electra has no choice but to “repeat” her song alone, beginning her antistrophe with the very same verses as the strophe (127-9 = 112-4). As Martin Cropp comments, in this particular monody “Electra is alone but acts like an exarchos, dictating movement, song and gesture to herself.” Metrically, however, Electra’s monody is rather monotonous: it is a strictly aeolo-choriambic song, populated with various glyconics and other close cousins. According to Dale, this monotony has a purpose; the song “achieves its plangent effect by an extraordinary metrical monotony.” The monody is almost a ritualized γόος, a formal personal lament, yet a striking one in which the singer vocalizes her own responses as evident by the structure of the song with strophes broken up by mesodes. The play’s staging additionally stresses her “self-chorus” role: at some point during Orestes’ speech in 82-111, Electra must have re-entered the stage through parodos A, the same used for the entrance of the chorus. During this particular monody the absence of a chorus is highly conspicuous, and increases anticipation for their arrival, but it also underscores Electra’s strange self-sufficiency in moments of lament.

356 “Come, raise the same lament.”
358 Dale 1969: 3.
359 For the (Homeric) distinction between γόος and ὑρήνος see Alexiou 1974 and Tsagalis 2004. Here, Electra mentions γόος several times (59, 125, 141, 144) but ὑρήνος only once (215).
360 Orestes and Pylades had recently entered through parodos B, so it cannot be the case that Electra entered the stage through that entrance; see Taplin 1977.
Already in antiquity, Euripides was renowned for developing the monody in tragedy. Yet Electra’s monody is strange precisely because its content suggests a missing choral audience. Electra’s monody begins with an imperative, one which is again addressed to a chorus that simply is not there: σὺντειν’ (ὦρα) ποδὸς ὑμᾶν· οὐ, / ἐμβα ἐμβα κατακλαίουσα (112-3), which is repeated in the antistrophe at 127-8. Likewise, Electra’s use of ὦρα implies a “right” time of performance, which is inconsistent in a spontaneous song uttered by one person. The two mesodes include further commands to an absent chorus: θι τὸν αὐτὸν ἔγειρε γόνον, / ἀναγε πολύδακρυν ἄδονάν (125-6) and ἐ, δρύπτε κάρα (150). The command in the first mesode (125-6) is particularly poignant, because of the constellation of short syllables in these two lines, which suggest a “paroxysm of grief.” She later directs someone to take down the vessel from her head: θές τόδε τεύχος ἔμας ἀπὸ κρατός ἐλοῦσ’ (141). That Electra issues such commands while alone on stage borders on the absurd, but her persistence in performing with the ritual by herself is impressive, not to mention effective. As the monody progresses, she elaborately describes her ritual of lament, which involves tearing at her skin and striking her head (ὦνυχὶ τεμνωμένα δέραν

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361 In the Frogs, Aristophanes’ “Euripides” boasts how he improved tragedy: ἰσχυνα μὲν πρώτιστον αὐτὴν καὶ τὸ βάρος ἀφεῖλον ἐπιλίσας καὶ περιπάτοις καὶ τευτλίοις λευκοῖς, χιλῶν διδοὺς στυμυλισάτων ἀπὸ βιβλίων ἀπηθῶν· εἰτ’ ἀνέτρεψον μονοβίας (941-944).

362 “Hasten (for it is the time) the rush of your feet; O, march on, march on, lamenting!”

363 “Come, raise the same lament / take up the pleasure of much weeping.” For a similar sentiment to πολύδακρυν ἄδονάν, see E. Supp. 79-80: ἀπλήστος ἀδε μ’ ἐξάγει χάρις / γόων.

364 “Ah, Ah, claw the face!”


366 “Take this pitcher from my head and put it down.” Some scholars believe that a servant indeed emerged out of Electra’s rustic home in order to deal with the dramatically significant pitcher; see Schadewaldt 1926: 215 n. 3; Bain 1982: 273. I believe, however, that it is yet another self-apostrophe and no servant appears, as Donzelli (1978: 288-96) suggests.
/ χέρα τε κρᾶτ’ ἐπὶ κούριμον / τιθεμένα θανάτωι σώι, 147-9), and perhaps even performs or gestures to them on stage. Her second mesode includes a bird simile, a common topos in moments of lament; yet instead of the archetypal nightingale, she likens herself to a swan that calls out to its beloved father (οία δὲ τις κύκνος ἀχέτας / … / πατέρα φιλτατον καλεῖ, 151-3). It is striking that Electra’s monody contains such choral language and ritual description, both of which are characteristic of communal mourning activities.

It is important to realize, however, that the monody is not just a ritualized personal lament, though that is certainly the emphasis. Electra’s monody contains other personal complaints that convey to the general audience (and in this case to the inner audience as well) a sense of the character’s situation, in keeping with the other pre-parodos monodies in surviving Euripides. The first strophe and antistrophe contain her trademark cry: ιό μοι μοι (114, 129), which also features in Sophocles’ play. One of her first utterances in the monody is a crucial act of self-naming:

έγενόμαν Ἀγαμέμνονος 115
καὶ μ’ ἔτικτε Κλυταιμήστρα
στυγνά Τυνδάρεω κόρα,
κικλήσκουσι δὲ μ’ ἀθλίαν
'Ηλέκτραν πολιτήται. 119

I was begotten of Agamemnon
and Clytemnestra,
the hated daughter of Tyndareus, bore me.
The citizens call me
wretched Electra.

367 “tearing my skin with my nails and striking my cropped head with my hand for your death.”
368 This appears in S. El. 107 and 149.
369 “Just as some shrill swan…calls to its beloved father.” The mourning swan had been previously used by Aeschylus’ Clytemnestra in reference to Cassandra’s lament before her death: ἢ δὲ τοι κύκνον δίκην / τὸν ύστατον μέλῳσα θανάσιμον γόνον / κείται, φιλήτωρ τοῦδ (Ag. 1444-46)
370 The only extant Euripidean monodies which take place before the parodos are Andr. 103-116, Hec. 59-97, El. 112-66, and Tr. 98-152. According to a scholiast on Frogs 53, Euripides’ Andromeda opened with a monody uttered while she is chained to a rock. See also Ar. Th. 1009-1136, and Webster 1965.
These utterances clearly establish who she is, as does the fact that she expresses her desire for Orestes’ arrival, invoking him in his typical role of savior: ἐλθοῖς δὲ πόνων ἐμοὶ / ταῖ μελέαι λυτήρ (135-6). This monody thus introduces and establishes Electra as a unique lamenter and familiarizes both the general and inner audience (Orestes and Pylades) with her emotional state.

It is only after this elaborate solitary “ritual” has been completed that the chorus enters the stage. Though this parodos is metrically consonant with Electra’s monody, as it is also mostly made up of glyconics, the chorus’ first utterance, an invitation to Electra to join Hera’s festival, is incongruous in terms of content:


O daughter of Agamemnon, I have come, Electra, to your rustic farm. There came, there came some Mycenaean man, a milk-drinker and a mountain-walker. He announced that the Argives are proclaiming a sacrifice three days from now, and to the temple of Hera all the maidens will march.

Electra, who has in effect performed a communal ritual alone, is now offered a chance to partake in a proper communal celebration, probably the Heraia. Froma Zeitlin has revealed the larger thematic relevance of the Heraia, despite the fact that the festival “at

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371 “If only you would come, who would deliver miserable me from toils.”
372 Because of the close metrical links, the parodos smoothly flows after Electra’s monody, as is the case in the monody and parodos of Sophocles’ Electra, which are likewise metrically and structurally coupled.
373 Calame (1977: 39-40) has pointed out that στείχιν in this context may suggest a formal procession.
374 Cropp 1988: 112.
first glance, seems to have no direct relevance to the plot of the play.  

In their invitation to Electra, the chorus seem unaware of Electra’s lamentations, just as the farmer was. But I contend that Euripides here introduces the notion of Electra taking part in an actual ritual so as to confirm her self-sufficiency, which was established in the monody. Over the course of this dialogue, it will become clear that Electra cannot and will not join in a communal ritual event. Even in this first stanza uttered by the chorus we can detect that it is already too late. The chorus’ ἡλυθον is certainly a tardy reply to Electra’s earlier call ἔμβα, ἔμβα κατακλάιουσα (112). Their anadiplosis of ἐμολέ...ἐμολέν at 169 (as at 585) has been taken as indicative of their state of great excitement, but I read it as a jarring echo of Electra’s ἔμβα, ἔμβα. The chorus’ absence had been felt throughout Electra’s monody, but now the fact that they have arrived with an offer of joining another celebration underlines that they are irrelevant and out of place.

Electra’s immediate response to the chorus, the fact that she does not have anything to wear (οὐκ ἐπ’ ἁγλαῖαις, φίλαι, / θυμόν οὐδ’ ἐπὶ χρυσέως ὀρμοῖς ἐκπεπόταμαι / τάλαιν’, 175-8), becomes a major issue of contention in her first encounter with the collective of women. Though the strophe is metrically shared between Electra and the chorus, the two diverging responses offer a powerful visual

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376 Denniston (1939: 70), on the other hand, attributes this to an annoying habit of Euripides: “This mannerism of repeating words, often quite unimportant ones, ad nauseam, is justly ridiculed by Aristophanes (Rа. 1331-64).”
377 “My wretched heart does not go aflutter with feasts nor with gold necklaces.”
378 Scholars, such as Michieli (1987: 192), have read Electra’s response as shame and humiliation because of her low social status. Others see it as a character flaw; for example, O’Brien (1964: 28-9), citing this very moment has called Electra “the most ostentatious martyr in Greek tragedy,” as she “complains of the clothes she must wear, the tasks she must perform, the hut she must live in, and her exclusion from the dances and sacred rites...She has just refused the chorus’ invitation to the festival and their offer of fine clothing.”
contrast, between Electra’s rags and short hair and the chorus’ references to the gold and fine clothing associated with the festival. With such a focus on clothes, it is no surprise that scholars tend to overlook Electra’s second, no less important reason for not attending the festival: οὐδ’ ἱστάσα χοροῦς / Ἀργείαις ἡμᾶ ψύμφαις (178-9); here, Electra essentially rejects participation in communal life and specifically refuses to take up her role as chorus leader. As Halporn writes, this exchange is conducted “in what might well be called the Partheneion style,” since “the chorus has called on Electra to take up the role of Hagesichora and she refuses.” Electra instead reminds the chorus that she is there to lament, an activity which she can accomplish on her own: δάκρυσι νυχεύ- / ω, δακρύσων δέ μοι μέλει / δειλαία τό κατ’ ἤμαρ (181-183). In order to stress her point, she returns to the issue of her outward appearance, pointing out some physical indications of her mourning, such as her hair and ragged dress: σκέψαι μου πιναράν κόμαν / καί τρύχη τάδ’ ἔμων πέπλων (184-5). Her shabby clothes and poor physical appearance thus become a critical part of Electra’s “personal front.” A “front”, according to sociologist Ervin Goffman, constitutes “that part of the individual’s performance which regularly functions in a general and fixed fashion to define the situation for those who observe the performance.” In this, her first performance before the chorus, Electra repeatedly utilizes a visual prompt, her clothes, in order to convey her

380 “Nor will I set up a chorus with the Argive brides.”
381 Halporn 1983: 100. As Denniston (1939: 71) comments: “If she went to the festival, she would naturally, as a princess, direct the proceedings: but at the same time she would herself mix with the country women in the dance (κρούσω πὸδ’ ἐμόν).” See also Calame (1977: 45-6) on ἱστημι for establishing the chorus.
382 “I spend my nights in tears, and by day tears are my wretched concern.”
383 “Look at my dirty hair and the rags of my clothes.”
384 Goffman 1959: 32. He further claims (1959: 34) that “personal front” specifically refers “to the other items of expressive equipment, the items that we most intimately identify with the performer himself and that we naturally expect will follow the performer wherever he goes.”
state of mourning to the chorus. It is inappropriate for her to participate in this festival, for various reasons, chief among which is her state of mourning. Yet the fact that such an invitation is extended by the chorus in their first encounter with Electra reveals an interest in problematizing her perpetual state of bereavement from the outset of the play.

In the antistrophe, the chorus offer a powerful counter-argument: μεγάλα θεός (190) and immediately attempt to remedy what they perceive to be Electra’s dilemma, the lack of clothes: ἀλλ’ ἵτι καὶ παρ’ ἐμοῦ χρήσαι / πολύπτυνα φάρεα δῦναι / χρύσαι τε χάρισιν προσθήματ’ ἀγλαίας (190-2). Electra’s “personal front” has certainly made an impression: the chorus wrongly assume that this is the cause of her worry instead of seeing it as indicative of her mourning and abstention from normal everyday social life. Despite this misunderstanding, they nevertheless address the subject of her lamentation with the following remark:

δοκεῖς τοῖς σοῖς δικρύοις
μὴ τιμῶσα θεοὺς κρατή-
σειν ἐχθρῶν; οὕτοι στοναχαῖς ἀλλ’ εὐχαίτι θεοὺς σεβί-
ζουσ’ ἐξείς εὐαμερίαν, ὦ παῖ

Do you think that by your tears,
and not honoring the gods
you will vanquish your enemies? Not by groans,
only by reverencing the gods
with prayers will you have good fortune, my child.

The chorus do respond to Electra’s laments, but not appropriately according to critics, who see their response — that one should offer prayers and not laments to the gods — as a “commonplace view.” Such platitudes become more jarring when one compares

385 Other reasons certainly excuse her from participation, such as her ambiguous status - can Electra, a former princess who is both παρθένος and γυνή, lead a chorus of Argive local brides?
386 “But come borrow from me woven robes to put on, and golden things to increase the joys of the feast.”
them to the advice offered by the chorus of slave-women in Aeschylus’ *Choephoroi*.

Whereas Aeschylus’ chorus incite Electra and Orestes to pursue personal revenge, Euripides’ chorus advise Electra to do the precise opposite. Electra’s response to the chorus in 198-212 is aggressive but logical:

None of the gods listens
to the voice of an ill-fated woman,
nor to the long-ago murder of my father.
Alas for him who was murdered
and for him who still lives as a beggar!
He lives, I suppose, in some other land,
wandering as a wretch to the hearths of workers,
though he was born of a famous father.
And as for myself,
I live in the home of a poor man,
wasting my life on a mountain crag,
exiled from the home of my father.
But my mother, on a bloody bed,
lives as a wife to another.

Here she illustrates the futility of appeal for divine help through a mini-lament outlining the particulars of her story: in eleven lines, she addresses her dead father, her exiled brother, her misery, and her mother’s lechery and adultery (201-212). The chorus’ response is a surprising non-sequitur in *trimeters*, in which they blame Helen for Electra’s suffering (πολλῶν κακῶν Ἐλληνικαί αἰτίαι ἔχει / σῆς μητρὸς Ἐλένη...
σύγγονος δόμοις τε σοῖς, 213-4)\textsuperscript{388} and which forcefully puts a stop to the lyric dialogue.

In this short lyric dialogue which stands in the place of the \textit{parodos}, it is clear that Electra and the chorus are devoted to different kinds of singing, despite the fact that they are \textit{literally} singing and sharing the same song - each strophe is neatly divided between the chorus and Electra. Though there is some level of engagement between the two, Euripides appears more interested in showcasing how the two easily misunderstand one another. What is particularly strange about this exchange is the unanswered question: why would the chorus invite a mourning woman to participate in a festival? Citing passages from \textit{Suppliants} and \textit{Ion}, Lloyd writes “festivals were joyous occasions and thus not proper places for mourners, who were in any case unwelcome because of their ill-omened lamentations (\textit{cf. Suppliants} 63, 289-290, \textit{Ion} 245-246)”\textsuperscript{389} Even after Electra’s mini-lament in 201-212, in which she succinctly makes her case, the chorus’ response is perfunctory, resorting to the hackneyed notion of Helen as ἀρχη γακζων. Euripides could have very well extended the lyric dialogue by including a second pair of strophes in which the chorus could have properly responded to Electra’s mini-lament, perhaps even by lamenting with her. That he markedly chose not to have them fully engage with Electra on the subject of lament is startling.

At this point, however, Orestes and his companions have entered the stage and so the “conversation” between Electra and the chorus must end. Noticing that she is no longer alone with the chorus, Electra laments that she must drop the subject: οἷμοι,

\textsuperscript{388} “Helen, the sister of your mother, is the source of all the evils to the Greeks and to your house.” As Denniston (1939: 74) notes, “that the coryphaeus should mention Helen at 213-14, without a cue in the preceding lines, is somewhat abnormal.”

\textsuperscript{389} Lloyd 1986: 7

162
That she wrongly characterizes the various arguments she has put forth to the chorus throughout the dialogue as θρηνήματα is significant, as it further highlights the misapprehensions and misunderstandings that are prevalent in this lyric exchange. The entire exchange between Electra and the chorus does not contain any moment that can be characterized as dirge-like; in fact, despite Electra’s best efforts and arguments, the chorus does not appear to acknowledge Electra’s case for mourning, not even after the succinct summary Electra provides in 198-212. Their response at 213-4, which blames Helen, is cursory at best. If anything, Electra’s monody, which precedes this exchange, is far more deserving of the term θρηνήμα, given that it contains various stylistic and thematic elements that pertain to a θρηνος.

Making (Brief) Contact

The second lyric exchange context marks a stark contrast from the first. Whereas previously the audience was exposed to an Electra eager to discuss the causes of her distress to a reluctant chorus, here the audience witness Electra and the chorus working together at last. There has been, of course, a remarkable change of events: since the parodos the chorus have witnessed the return of Orestes (at first in disguise with Pylades) as well as the recognition of the siblings, and have also commented on the mood following such events. Once the plan has been set in motion to pursue direct revenge, Electra instructs the chorus to announce the “beacon-news” at 694. Immediately after the messenger announces the death of Aigisthus, the chorus launch into a song addressed to Electra, which rightly anticipates her happy reaction:

390 “Oh no, women, I broke off the dirge.”
391 Of course, in direct contrast to A. Ag. 281-316.
θέσ ἐς χορόν, ὃς ἀλλα, ἱχνος, ὡς νεβρός οὐράνιον
πτιβαμα κουφίζουσα σὺν ἀγλαίαι.
νικάι στεραναφόρα κρείσσω τῶν παρ᾽ Άλφειοῦ
ῥεθροῖς τελέσας
κασάγνητος σέθεν ἀλλ’ ὑπάειδε
καλλινικον ὦδαν ἐμῶι χορῶι.

860

865

Set your feet in dancing position, dear friend, like a fawn leaping up to
heaven with joy. Your brother has completed and won a crown of victory
greater than those by the streams of the Alpheus. Come, accompany my dance
with a song of triumph.

The chorus, who had previously extended an invitation to Electra to a festival, now
commands her to dance. This song of celebration, which can be described as
inaugurating an epinician for Orestes, a καλλινικον ὦδαν complete with dactyl-
epitrites, marks a shift in genre. Yet, unlike in epinician, the addressee actually
interrupts and responds with iambics, which, as Cropp points out, is unique in extant
tragedy.

870

ὁ φέγγος, ὃ τεθριππον ἠλιοῦ σέλας,
ὁ γαία καὶ νυὲ ἣν ἐδερκομὴν πάρος,
νὺν ὄμω τοῦμον ἀμπτυχαί τ᾽ ἔλευθεροι,
ἐπεὶ πατρὸς πέπτωκεν Ἀγισθος φονεύς.
φέρ᾽ ὃ δὴ ἵ χω καὶ δόμοι κεύθουσί μου
κόμης ἀγάλματ᾽ ἔξενεγκώμεν, φίλαι,
στέψο τ᾽ ἀδηλφοῦ κράτα τοῦ νικηφόρου.

O light, o chariot-drawn blaze of the sun,
o earth and night which I previously looked upon!
Now I am free to open my eyes,
since the murderer of my father, Aegisthus, has fallen.
Come, friends, let us bring out all the adornments that I possess

392 Some critics have claimed that the chorus here perform a ὑπόρχησις (a song accompanied by dance)
because of the language at 860-1, 865, 875. Among them is Denniston (1939: 154): “We may assume, with
Keene, that this little chorus, like the one at 585-95, is a ὑπόρχησις, a lively dance expressive of rapturous
joy, employing movements more vigorous than the stately posturings of the ordinary tragic dance, and even
(cf. Ath. 630E) approaching the commix κόρδαξ.” Compare, however, Dale (1969: 38-39): “the argument…whether a given tragic ode, such as Soph. Aj. 693 ff., OT 1086 ff., Eur. El. 859 ff., is or is not a
Hyporcheme, as found in some of our critical editions, is without meaning. If we knew enough about the
Hyporcheme, we might find this or that stasimon to be ‘hyporchematic’ in tone, but this is not what Tzetzes
and the older grammarians meant by their use of the word in defining the parts of tragedy. To them it was a
‘song accompanied by dancing’, a necessary invention once Stasimon had come to be thought a
‘motionless song.’”

and the house conceals for his hair,
I shall crown the head of my victorious brother!

Just as in the *parodos*, the chorus invite Electra to join them in a dance – and this time it appears as though she might accept. In fact, Electra’s response in 870-1, in which she exhorts the chorus to bring out some of her adornments that are stored away, accepts the chorus’ offer of clothes and adornments for the festival made at 190-3. The contrast with the first lyric exchange is striking, as she now abandons the “personal front” she had so flaunted in the last lyric dialogue. The chorus do acknowledge her reply but ultimately decide to go on singing without her:

οὐ μὲν νῦν ἀγάλματ’ ἀείρει κρατί’ τὸ δ’ ἀμέτερον
χωρήσεται Μούσαιοι χόρευμα φίλοιν. 875
νῦν οἱ πάροις ἀμέτέρας γαῖας τυραννεύσουσι φίλοι βασιλῆς
dικαίως, τοὺς ἀδίκους καθελόντες.
ἀλλ’ ἴτω ἐξυναυλος βοᾶ χαράι.

Ok, you bring adornments for his head,
but we shall dance the dance that is dear to the Muses.
Now the former beloved rulers of our land will reign
justly, since they destroyed the unjust.
But let us shout together with the aulos, in joy!

As a half-lyric dialogue — or more accurately, a choral ode with a trimeter passage by Electra inserted between strophe and antistrophe — this short lyric dialogue is curious in form and its function is unclear. One might anticipate that following the death of Clytemnestra, the poet might stage a joyous and lengthy lyric dialogue. Such a short lyric dialogue in which the chorus sings and the actor replies in trimeters looks like an abbreviated version of a typical Aeschylean lyric dialogue, such as those found in *Persians* 256-289 *Seven Against Thebes* 203-244, which I discussed briefly in my second chapter. But the tone and genre of the song is different: in the *Persians* the chorus’

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394 Denniston (1939: 154) cites Page as believing that the phenomenon of a dialogue between an actor and chorus where they sing short lyrics might have been “a relic of archaic technique.” See Fraenkel (1950 vol. 165
laments are strikingly interwoven with factual trimeters from the messenger, and in the
Seven their emotional outbursts are tempered by Eteocles. Here, they sing for joy in one
short pair of stanzas, which are accompanied by an interjection in trimeters by Electra. It
is also worth noting that at this very point in his play, Sophocles stages a lyric dialogue
between Electra and the chorus in which they react to the supposed death of Orestes (i.e.
the lie by the paidagogus).

Euripides’ (not-so-) Great Kommos

The Great Kommos in Aeschylus’ Choephoroi, which has been discussed above
as one of the lengthiest and most important examples of a funerary lament enacted in
tragedy, can also be described as an elaborate exercise in overcoming doubt. With the
chorus’ prompting and reassurance, the previously hesitant Electra and Orestes are
gradually persuaded into matricide; throughout this great lyric exchange the chorus
addresses each and every uncertainty and misgiving the siblings have. The Great
Kommos’ concluding strophes reflect their newly united resolve, and the lyrics uttered by
the three (chorus, Electra and Orestes) share a clear sense of purpose. In the last lyric
dialogue of his Electra, however, Euripides inverts this process and stages the opposite
progression, the steady crumbling of resolve and the growing sense of despair. The
choral voice, which was so strong in Aeschylus, now appears fragmented and disjointed.
Likewise, the determination that Electra and Orestes shared in the Choephoroi before the
tomb of their father has vanished in Euripides; now that they stand before the bodies of
Aegisthus and Clytemestra (on the ekkylema), they express feelings of regret for having

2: 487-8), where he discusses this “older form” in which the lyrics of the chorus are followed by the
trimeters of an actor.
avenged their father. This final kommos furthermore stands out precisely because it does not feature any mourning. Electra, Orestes and the chorus do not lament or commemorate Clytemnestra, despite the fact that her body is before them; instead they obsessively reenact her last moments. Unlike other kommoi staged towards the end of a drama, this one does not achieve a sense of closure, but rather the opposite effect. This final lyric exchange is remarkable not only because Euripides has managed to restage and rewrite Aeschylus’ Great Kommos, but because he has done so by eliminating the strong choral voice that dominated and propelled the action in the Choephoroi. He has likewise eliminated the sense of cooperation between Electra and the chorus, a fleeting glance of which he offered in the previous lyric dialogue following the death of Aegithus. As it neither establishes a sense of closure nor even a hint of collaboration between the participants of the exchange, who in previous versions were renowned precisely for their collaboration, this final kommos brims with a clear sense of despair.

Preceding this last lyric dialogue, Euripides includes an interesting choral interlude in 1147-1164. This brief song is significant as it foreshadows the breakdown in the choral voice that will be staged in the upcoming lyric dialogue. Immediately after Electra persuades Clytemnestra to go into the house where she will be murdered, the chorus offers some thoughts, beginning with the brief, but suggestive utterance ἀμοβάς κακῶν μετάτροποι πνέου- / σιν αὖραι δόμων (1146-7). Unlike similar moments which precede the murder (of Aegisthus), such as in Sophocles’ Electra 1384-142 and even in Euripides’ Orestes, at 1246-1310, the chorus is here alone, without Electra. In an excited combination of dochmiacs and iambics, the chorus, described as “exultant” by

395 “Repayment for evils. The winds of the house are shifting and blowing.”
Denniston as they wait for the dénouement,\textsuperscript{396} here sing an ode on justice. Cropp claims that this combination of meters is common “in such stylized sequences accompanying behind-the-scenes violence.”\textsuperscript{397} In content, it is unlike these moments but rather similar to the anapestic prelude by the chorus prior to the Great Kommos in the Choephoroi 306-314:

\begin{verbatim}
 ἀλλ᾽ ὦ μεγάλαι Μοῖραι, Διόθεν
tηδε τελευτᾷν,
 ἦ το δίκαιον μεταβαίνει:
 ἀντὶ μὲν ἐχθρᾶς γλώσσας ἐχθρᾶ
 γλῶσσα τελείθων τούφειλόμενον
 πράσσουσα Δίκη μέγ᾽ ἀυτεί:
 ἀντὶ δὲ πληγής φονίας φονίαν
 πληγήν τινέτω. δράσαινα παθεῖν,
 τριγέρων μύθος τάδε φωνεῖ.
\end{verbatim}

Great Fates, by the will of Zeus
let matters end in the way
in which Justice pursues!
“In exchange for hostile words let hostile
words be paid” - so Justice,
who exacts what’s due, cries out.
“For a murderous blow a murderous blow
let him pay.” Let the doer suffer,
so goes the thrice old saying.

In Aeschylus it would appear from the chorus’ utterances that Justice is an almost visible entity, extremely active: she pursues (μεταβαίνει) and even cries out loud (ἀυτεῖ) presumably in pursuit of Clytemnestra, who is not named. In Euripides, though the ode is about justice, Agamemnon is the visible focus. Following their gnomic statements at 1146-7, the chorus then describe and even reenact the last moments of Agamemnon in excited dochmiacs:

\begin{verbatim}
 τότε μὲν <ἐν> λουτροῖς
 ἐπεσεν ἐμὸς ἐμὸς ἀρχέτας,
 ἰάχησε δὲ στέγα λαίνοι
\end{verbatim}

\textsuperscript{396} Denniston 1939: 190.
Once in the bath
my ruler, mine, fell,
and the roof and the cornice of stone
in the palace shouted as he cried,
“why, cruel woman, do you kill me
who has returned to my homeland
after ten harvests?”

The anadiplosis (έμος έμος), alliteration (φονεύσεις φίλαν πατρίδα) and hyperbaton (σχέτλιε...γύναι, πατρίδα ... έμαν) mark this as a remarkable passage whose function is to underline the guilt of Clytemnestra. Scholars have marked lacunae after verse 1154, as the lines that match verses 1163-4 in the antistrophe are missing here. But it is clear that from the continuation of the ode in the antistrophe that the blame is placed squarely on Clytemnestra’s shoulders:

Justice flows back, bringing her
to judgment for her stray bed. When her wretched husband
returned at last to his home and
to the Cyclopean walls that reached to heaven,
she with her own hand killed him with a sharp-edged weapon,
taking the axe in her hands. O, wretched husband, how
evil gripped this miserable woman!
Like a lioness in the mountains prowling the woods
she accomplished these things.
The simile of Clytemnestra as a mountain lioness recalls the parable of the lion in the house in *Agamemnon* 717-36. The chorus is united in blaming Clytemnestra and in demonstrating unwaveringly loyalty to Agamemnon. The focus on the guilt of Clytemnestra is consistent and we are to expect that it will continue in this way — that the murderers will rightfully avenge the death of their father.

Clytemnestra’s sharp cry inside the *skênê*, however, suddenly disrupts the choral interlude and even the unity in their voice: ὁ τέκνα, πρὸς θεῶν, μὴ κτάνητε μητέρα (1165). There are other moments in extant tragedy when off-stage death cries are heard by an on-stage chorus, most prominent among them Agamemnon’s death cries in Aeschylus, a rare moment in which the chorus separate into individual speaking voices because they do not know what to do. This off-stage cry will similarly initiate a series of split commentary from the chorus. Having heard the cry, the chorus stop and ask κλέως ὑπάρχοντι βοῶν; (1166). The chorus, who had just condemned Clytemnestra on the charge of διαδρόμου λέχους at 1156 and whose death they had eagerly anticipated, is suddenly moved by the maternal plea and the cry ἵνα μοὶ μοὶ of Clytemnestra. Bizarrely, the chorus now join her in mourning: ὡμοῖς κἀγὼ πρὸς τέκνων χειρομένης (1168). It is strange that their reaction is now one of pity, they who had previously singled her out as deserving of justice. One would have expected a moment of rejoicing, similar to the death of Lycus in the *Heracles*. Perhaps the pity stems from the fact that she is being overpowered by her children, but immediately after

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398 Knox 1952.
399 “Children, by the gods, do not kill your mother!”
401 “Did you hear that cry coming from inside?”
402 “I mourn as well, as her children overpower her.”
403 In *HF* 750-3, the chorus’ response after they have heard Lycus’ cry is as follows: ὅδε κατάρχεται μέλος ἐμοὶ κλέειν / φίλιον ἐν δόμοις βάνατος οὖ πόρσα. / βοῶι φόνου φροίμιου στενάζων ἀναζ.
such an admission of compassion they appear to revert to their previous position in the
next line: νέμει τοι δίκαν θεός, ὡταν τῦχη (1169). Then they oscillate back to pity
mixed with righteous indignation: σχέτλια μὲν ἔπαθες, ἀνόσια δ’ εἰργάσω, τάλαιν’,
eυνέταν (1170-1). This marks an enormous difference from Choephoroi 827-830
where the chorus tell Orestes not to be moved by Clytemnestra’s cry. At 1170,
σχέτλια μὲν ἔπαθες, the chorus furthermore utilize the same word Agamemnon had
uttered in death against his wife, but here they utilize it sympathetically. We are
witnessing a striking split reaction in the choral voice, similar to the moment in the
Agamemnon following the Argive king’s death cry. Here, Euripides appears to channel
the inaction and separation of the chorus of the Agamemnon in order to undermine the
long-awaited act of revenge.

Suddenly, Orestes and Electra appear on stage. The chorus announce their arrival
at 1172-6:

ἀλλ’ οἶδε μητρὸς νεοφόνοις ἐν αἴμασιν
περιφυμένοι βαίνουσιν ἐξ οίκων πόδα
< >
tροπαία, δείγματ’ ἀθλίων προσφαγμάτων.
οὐκ ἔστιν οúdeις οἴκος ἄθλιώτερος
tῶν Τανταλείων οὐδ’ ἔρι ποτ’ ἐκγόνων

But here they come from the house,
soaked in the newly-shed blood of their mother
< >
trophy, proof of their miserable sacrifice.
There is no house, nor has there been,
that is more miserable than that of the family of Tantalus.

404 “A god dispenses justice, whenever it happens.”
405 “Cruelly you have suffered, but you did unholy things to your husband, miserable one.”
406 Α. Ch. 827-30: σύ δὲ θαρασόν ὡταν ἔκι μέρος ἔργων, ἐπαύσεις βρεοῦσαι “τέκνων”, “ἔργωι
πατρός” αὖδα, καὶ πέραιν ἀνεπύμφρου ἄταν.
This announced entrance is surprising, particularly when compared to the same moment in Sophocles’ *Electra*: καὶ μὴν πάρεσιν ὁ ἄτεις φοινία δὲ χεῖρ / στάζει θυηλής Ἀρεώς, οὐδ’ ἔχων θεγείν (1422-3). Whereas the Sophoclean chorus clearly find no fault with the bloody deed of Orestes, the chorus’ remarks in Euripides are more ambiguous and perhaps border on the negative. That Orestes and Electra are described as soaked (πεφυρμένοι) in their mother’s blood, as they wheel out the *ekkyklema* is condemning. What follows is not a typical lament for the dead, nor a song of victory, as was the previous lyric dialogue. It does not contain any rhetorical or descriptive features of lament which were prevalent in Electra’s monody, such as anaphora, polyptoton, contrast of past and present, or description of mourning. Instead, Euripides stages a conversation in lyric iambics between Orestes, Electra and the chorus about the unnaturalness of murdering one’s own mother. It is about the deed committed rather than the death itself. Nowhere do we see an address to the corpse, which is present on stage, and Clytemnestra is instead spoken of in the third person. The body of Aegisthus, which is also on stage, is ignored. “La grande innovation d’Euripide,” writes Rachel Aélion, “c’est le remords des deux meurtriers.” In this last lyric exchange, both Orestes and Electra relive the murder itself. They mime Clytemnestra’s last words and screams, and relive the moment at which the knife cuts her throat (1221-23), all the while informing the audience of their hesitation. As Anne Burnett supposes, the original audience watching this play “comes as close as any Attic audience ever will to watching a staged

408 Wright 1986.
409 Aélion 1983: 123.
act of revenge, and in this case it is a mother-killing.” The much-lamented Agamemnon has vanished from the picture now that the horror of matricide has sunk in. Euripides has rewritten the Great Kommos.

In the following three pairs of strophes, brother and sister lament for what they have done, and particularly for the death of their mother, which had previously been eagerly anticipated. Each stanza constitutes a shared song between at least two performers: in the first pair Orestes begins each stanza, followed by Electra, then the chorus; in the second, Electra is silent as Orestes and the chorus discuss Clytemnestra’s last moments; in the third, Orestes and Electra revisit their role in the murder and talk about the aftermath. As they focus almost solely on the death of their mother, its aftermath, and what it means to have killed her, they rewrite the misogynistic ending of Eumenides in which motherhood is denied to Clytemnestra (Eum. 658). As the siblings reenact their mother’s last moments, the verb τίκτω (“to bring forth into the world”) and its variants feature in a number of lines: τεκοῦσ (1184), τέκνων (1186), ἔτικτεν (1212), ἔτικτες (1229). No less frequent is the word for mother itself: ματρὶ (1183), μᾶτερ (1186), ματέρα (1197), ματρὸς (1212), ματρός (1220), ματέρος (1223), ματέρος (1227). Unlike the Great Kommos where the focus is on the father, Euripides reclaims the focus on the mother.

In these lines Euripides likewise re-imagines communication and contact between Electra and the chorus. In the first pair of strophes, as Electra laments her regrets, the chorus offer support and more importantly, genuine interaction. In the first strophe, Electra discusses her responsibility, which she ties to her excessive grief: δακρύτ’ ἀγαν,
The chorus immediately respond to Electra’s admission of guilt and appear to bemoan Electra’s fortune: ἵω τύχας τσάς τύχας / μάτερ τεκούσ’ (1185-6). The text is difficult here, but it is nevertheless easy to see the chorus’ sympathetic response to Electra (ἵω τύχας τσάς τύχας). In the first antistrophe, Electra bewails her social life, which she had previously shunned in the play’s parodos. She now wonders: ἵω ἵω μοι. ποί δ’ ἐγώ, τίν’ ἐς χορόν, / τίνα γάμον εἶμι: τίς πόσις με δέξεται / νυμφικάς ἐς εὐνάς; (1198-1200). The chorus reply directly, first commenting on her train of thought: her thinking (on the importance of social life, perhaps?) has changed (πάλιν πάλιν φρόνημα σόν / μετεστάθη πρός αὔραν, 1201-2). They then offer a direct moral judgment on the situation: φρονεῖς γάρ ὀσία νῦν, τότ’ οὐ / φρονοῦσα, δεινά δ’ εἰργάσω / φίλα, κασίγνητον οὐ θέλοντα, 1203-5). This reproach is somewhat softened by the direct address as φίλα. Such a response is a far cry from the platitudes they uttered in the parodos, whenever confronted by Electra.

In his Electra, Euripides minimizes the close and cooperative relationship between Electra and the chorus as presented in the Choephoroi in order to illustrate moments of either broken or no antiphony. In three very distinct lyric dialogues, which occur at critical junctures, Euripides illustrates the disconnected relationship between the two. When both Electra and the chorus generally interact on stage, a strange exchange seems to be taking place, as the eager Electra cannot generate an appropriate response

412 “Excessive tears, brother, and I am responsible.”
413 “Alas for fortunes, your fortunes, mother who bore”
414 “Alas, alas, woe is me. Where shall I go, to what dance, to which wedding am I to go? What husband will accept me into his marriage bed?”
415 “Back, back, your thinking has shifted with the wind.”
416 “Now you think holy things, but this was not previously the case, and you accomplished a terrible thing, friend, though your brother was not willing.”
from the resistant chorus. Only in the last lyric dialogue do we perceive more consistent engagement between the two, but this is after Electra and Orestes unexpectedly regret their decision to kill their mother. Sophocles’ play, as we shall see, continues to experiment further with Electra’s relationship with the chorus. Unlike Euripides, however, Sophocles will amplify the discord that could exist between the two by staging lyric dialogues that are more antagonistic in nature, ones in which the chorus directly confront Electra’s propensity towards vocal grief. The harmony achieved in Aeschylus’ Choephoroi will become a fleeting memory as Sophocles continually eschews communal and cooperative mourning between the women.

**Sophocles’ Electra**

“Es ist als wenn Sophokles sagte, ‘ich habe die Choephoren nicht vergessen, aber ich mache es anders’.”

Scholars have long been frustrated by the elusive nature of Sophocles’ adaptation of the Electra myth, which leaves ambiguous the issue of matricidal vengeance, crucial to the saga of Orestes. According to one critic, the Electra offers “fewer toeholds than any other of the seven Sophoclean peaks,” and it is no surprise that scholars have failed to reach an overall consensus on the play. Scholarship can generally be placed in one of two opposing camps: one which espouses an optimistic and positive reading of the play, and another which holds a pessimistic view. In his Electra, Sophocles has as far as we

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417 Fraenkel 1962: 22 n.1
418 Woodard 1964: 163.
419 Belonging to the optimist camp are those who argue that Sophocles presents the matricide as ethically justified or that his treatment does not in any way raise any moral questions, such as Murray (1905: vi), who notoriously summarized the play as a “combination of matricide and good spirits.” Davies (1999)
can tell entirely re-imagined the situation in Argos, with the result that it is no longer primarily the story of Orestes the avenger as in Aeschylus and Euripides (and presumably in Stesichorus), but rather that of Electra, who is now conceived as the absolute central focus of the saga of post-Agamemnon Argos.\(^{420}\) Above all else, it is precisely this particular privileging of Electra which has made modern critics of the play uncomfortable: since it ignores the moral and religious implications and aftermath of the matricidal vengeance (previously emphasized in the Oresteia at great length and neatly dealt with in the \textit{deus ex machina} in Euripides), Sophocles’ play appears on the surface to be purely a psychological drama.\(^{421}\) Some scholars, in an attempt to explicate or even rationalize Sophocles’ ambiguous silence on the ethics of the matricide, have asserted that the playwright was reverting to a “Homeric” view of the myth, in which Orestes’ vengeance is unproblematically seen as a heroic deed worthy of general \textit{kleos} and, specifically, of emulation by Telemachus, while Clytemnestra’s death is simply not

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\(^{420}\) As Méautis (1957: 227) comments, “L’Electre ... est une tragédie ‘féminine,’ dont le centre est une héroïne non un héraos.” Critics have addressed the two competing and contrasting tempers and worldviews of Electra and Orestes in the play. Woodard (1964), for example, claims that brother and sister embody a critical division between \textit{logos} and \textit{ergon}, which are united at the end of the play. See Kitzinger (1991) on diverging male and female \textit{ethê} and voices.

\(^{421}\) Modern scholars have diverged in their approach to Electra in the play, identifying different central conflicts. As Woodard (1964: 163) summarizes, “For there are critics who feel that Electra should completely engage our attention, and there are those who consider Orestes more important. For the former side, Electra is deeply sympathetic and dominates the play, while Orestes is merely a symbol, with no dramatic force, and remains inessential. To the latter side, which has traditionally been more common, Electra is unappealing and hardly human, and Orestes poses certain problems around which the play as a whole turns.” The problem, according to Winnington-Ingram (1980: 228), is essentially as follows: “is this a play of ideas or a play about a person? The ideas concern matricide as an act of just retaliation and, in other dramatic treatments, have been focused upon Orestes as the matricidal son, upon his responsibility and his ultimate fate; the person is Electra.”
commented upon. Yet reservations related to the “lack of Furies” in Sophocles’ version, which have long dominated the scholarship of his *Electra* and which ultimately stem from a direct comparison to the *Choephoroi* and Euripides’ *Electra*, may not even be the right focus nor indeed the right set of questions for this play, as has been recently argued by Helene Foley. In much of the scholarship that centers on the matricide, there is a tendency to over-emphasize the ethics of punishment found in the Aeschylean and Euripidean versions, though it is wholly absent in Sophocles, and to lose sight of what seems to be the central focus of Sophocles’ play, Electra herself. In other words, Sophocles has effectively expanded and rewritten the saga of Orestes from the unique perspective of a character who does not feature in Homer, and who possessed a far more limited role in the plays of Aeschylus and Euripides, and presumably in Stesichorus’ adaptation of the *Oresteia* as well.

Besides the concentrated spotlight on Electra, as well as the manner in which the matricide is handled, there are other salient differences between Sophocles’ treatment of the myth and the versions found in the *Choephoroi* as well as in Euripides’ play: namely

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422 Murray (1897: 237) comments, “it is only Sophocles who takes the saga exactly as he finds it. He knows that those ancient chiefs did not trouble about their consciences: they killed in the fine old ruthless way. He does not try to make them real to himself at the cost of making them false to the spirit of the epos.” Winnington-Ingram (1980: 217) explains the reasoning behind this view: “At one extreme we have a robust ‘Homeric’ Sophocles, untroubled by the moral squeamishness of an Aeschylus, and at the other an Aeschylean sensitiveness to the moral implications of the vengeance and a presumption that the Furies are only waiting for the play to end to initiate their traditional pursuit of Orestes.” Jebb (2004b: xli) had also emphasized what he considered the “Homeric colouring in the Electra”: “Sophocles seems to say to his audience, ‘I give you, modified for drama, the story that Homer tells; put yourselves at the Homeric standpoint; regard the act of Orestes under the light in which the *Odyssey* presents it.’” On the issue of the lack of Erinyes in the *Odyssey* with regard to Orestes’ story, see Seaford (1994: 11), who claims that Homeric epics “tend to exclude killings within the family and even within the extended kinship group.”

423 Foley 2001: 147.

424 Winnington-Ingram (1954-1955), who makes Electra the focus of his reading, seems to be the exception, but nevertheless he interprets Electra’s role as a function of the matricide: he claims she plays the part of a Fury. Yet I do not mean to neglect the crucial vengeance aspect of the saga: Electra must be understood within the larger backdrop of Athenian and Greek vengeance ethic, as Foley (2001: 147, 151) points out.
the fact that Sophocles completely avoids the political element so prevalent in Aeschylus and later taken up by Euripides, in order to emphasize the personal. As Bernard Knox points out, in Sophocles’ *Electra*, “the dominant words…are not πόλις and πολίτης (they occur only rarely) but πατήρ, μήτηρ, ἀδελφή, κασίγυντος, δῶμος, δῶμα, οἶκος; they recur with obsessive frequency from beginning to end of the play.”425 This is a play whose world revolves around intimate relationships and personal emotions. The downplaying of the political, and particularly the exclusion of the *polis*, is striking regardless of the exact date when Sophocles staged his play in Athens.426 Though some scholars have found some political strands in the play,427 what is ultimately clear is that in his version Sophocles stages a singular personal and emotional perspective, as focalized through Electra. The Argive princess seems to be the complete center of attention in Sophocles’ universe, the chief performer and interpreter of the play; all events are “focused on what she feels, thinks and plans.”428 Not only are most of the dramatic

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425 Knox 1982: 8. As he further comments (*id. loc.*): “Even in the one passage where the language suggests a political theme, Electra’s vision of the glory she and her sister will win if they murder Aegisthus – its striking use of the dual is a reminiscence of the battle-hymn of Athenian democracy, the Harmodios song – even here the achievement for which they will be celebrated is not the liberation of Argos but the salvation of the house of Atreus; το ισονόμους τ’ Αθήνας ἐποιησάτμεν κορες ω τὸν πατρώον οἰκόν ἔξεσασάτην (978).”

426 The dates of both Sophocles’ and Euripides’ *Electra* are uncertain; in the words of Lloyd-Jones (1964: 372), “those who confidently claim to know the date of Sophocles’ *Electra*…are living in a private world.” *Communis opinio* dictates that Sophocles’ version is a late play, based on perceived formal similarities with the *Philoctetes* and *Oedipus at Colonus*, for example the fact that wholly lyric dialogues are only found in these, as mentioned in chapter 1. The parallels are not merely restricted to form, but extend to content as well: according to Reinhardt (1979: 136) the dramas of Sophocles’ old age, (that is, *Electra, Philoctetes* and *Oedipus at Colonus*) all involve an ever-present “feeling of expulsion,” which spreads out “in painful detail through every step and stage of the whole drama, until it is resolved by the divine ordinance.” Ultimately, however, Reinhardt (*id. loc.*) argues that Electra is more closely connected with the *Philoctetes* because of what he claims as the shared “framework of intrigue which carries pain and loneliness to their limits before relief comes.” See also Vögler 1967: 86-100, Owen 1936.

427 For example, Juffras 1991, Foley 2001: 145-171, and Konstan 2008. The latter (2008: 79), emphasizing that the play was produced in the aftermath of the oligarchy of the Four Hundred, suggests that in *Electra*, “Sophocles selected a myth about the successful recuperation of power by the heirs of the legitimate ruler, and represented their action as unequivocally positive in spite of the shedding of kindred blood, as a way of figuring the restoration of the democratic constitution in Athens and the defeat of the oligarchic usurpers.”

428 Lesky 1965: 119.
events in the Sophocles’ play focused on Electra rather than Orestes, but also she occupies the stage for about ninety percent of the drama, with the longest speaking part of any character in all extant tragedy. It has even been argued that the end of Sophocles’ play, which inverts the order of the deaths of Aegisthus and Clytemnestra found in Aeschylus and Euripides, privileges Electra.\footnote{As Scott (1996: 151) comments, “while Aeschylus has Clytemnestra killed last in order to precipitate the problems with the Furies that lead to the issues at the core of the Eumenides, Sophocles’ Aegisthus views the corpse of Clytemnestra and leaves the stage still alive. Since Orestes carries the mother-killer theme, Sophocles’ Electra is not upstaged by the madness of her brother, the appearance of the Furies, or Orestes’ departure for Delphi.”} In fact it is perhaps the only play in extant Sophoclean tragedy where an actor plays only one role through the entirety of the play.\footnote{See Pickard-Cambridge 1988: 137-149. The other possible exception in extant Sophocles was the actor who played Oedipus in Oedipus Tyrannus.} In Aeschylus, significantly, this is only the case in the Agamemnon, with the actor who took the part of Clytemnestra; in this way we can almost see Sophocles’ Electra as a performative rival to Aeschylus’ Clytemnestra, who previously held one of the lengthiest and most extended female roles in tragedy.\footnote{Carson (2001: 42) claims that Electra is also the foremost screamer in Sophocles: “In range and diversity of aural construction Electra surpasses all other screamers in Sophocles, including Philoctetes who suffers from gangrene in the foot and Heracles who gets burned alive at the end of his play.”} In short, extant tragedy shows no other protagonist — let alone any other Electra — who so dominates a play’s action and language, and consequently the audience’s attention.

Yet even in a play so wholly focused on one individual, whose dramatic discourse is often entirely egocentric, Sophocles includes several prolonged conversations between Electra and the chorus. The chorus in the Electra are one of two women choruses in extant Sophocles, and it is clear that they represent confidantes meant to accompany the female lead.\footnote{The other female chorus is, of course, in the Trachiniae. For trends related to the gender of Sophoclean choruses, see Esposito 1996.} The dialogues between Electra and the chorus of Argive women share a(nta)gonistic similarities to the agônes and encounters staged in the first half of the play,
between Electra and Chrysothemis on the one hand, and between Electra and Clytemnestra on the other. Unlike these encounters between characters, however, the interactions between the chorus and the protagonist occur more persistently throughout Sophocles’ play, and they come at crucial junctures in the plot as in Euripides: in place of the *parodos*, after the announcement of Orestes’ “death”, and during the actual murder of Clytemnestra. Furthermore, these moments constitute dramatic micro-contexts in which Electra and the chorus negotiate several issues, but in a predominant lyric mode, in keeping with Sophocles’ attention to the personal and the emotional. Unlike in Euripides, these Sophoclean conversations between the chorus and Electra are extended affairs. In other words, at crucial dramatic points Sophocles stages elaborate “dialogues” between the chorus and Electra in a mode which dramatically juxtaposes the individual voice with a chorus of collective voices.

At first glance, these lyric dialogues may be seen as playing a straightforward role. Much like the *agones* with Chrysothemis and Clytemnestra, these lyric exchanges first and foremost function to reveal Electra’s *ethos*, as they constitute important face-to-face interactions in which to study Electra’s presentation of her own self. But their recurrence and length (especially when compared to lyric dialogues in Euripides’ *Electra*) reveal a decided interest in staging and placing the choral voice in opposition to a solo voice. Furthermore, when one considers that these confrontational lyric dialogues are set within the larger context of the ritual lament (*thrênos*), which was communally shared between an individual lead singer and a chorus, it becomes clear that Sophocles was interested in creating, exploring, and exploiting a growing rift between the two parties precisely during the moments when they are supposed to be producing a

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harmonious communal and shared lamentation. In this play Electra is explicitly dramatized as an unceasing lamenter (one can almost say an obsessional one) whose excessive lamentation poses a grave problem. Scholars such as Seaford have repeatedly emphasized the boundless and even unwarranted nature of her laments and outbursts.\footnote{Seaford 1985.} Her loud cries constitute a threat to political and social order, as Clytemnestra declares: μὴ σὺν φθόνῳ τε καὶ πολυγλώσσῳ βοὴ / σπείρῃ ματαίαν βάξιν εἰς πᾶσαν πόλιν (641-2).\footnote{“Lest in hatred and with her verbose shouting she spread a profane rumor throughout the city.” The text is that of Lloyd-Jones and Wilson 1990a.} Yet these exchanges between Electra and the chorus do not constitute simple uncomplicated laments or even straightforward thrēnoi as they are often glossed in scholarship; rather they are self-conscious discussions of the act of lament. As I will show, these lyric dialogues are an important component of the significant meta-theatrical element rampant in the play, which according to Mark Ringer, is “one of the more self-conscious plays in the history of the drama.”\footnote{Ringer 1998: x-xi.} In the Electra, Sophocles repeatedly dramatizes a lamenting character aware of the problems her lamentation poses; in addition, he takes care to stage several elaborate discussions about the act of lament, discussions conducted with the group who in ritual would normally be expected to provide an antiphonal response to the keener’s laments.\footnote{See Alexiou 1974, Seremetakis 1991.} Sophocles’ Electra is, in other words, a play very much concerned with exploring an individual in extremis against the larger backdrop of the breakdown of cooperative ritual.

My reading reaffirms the centrality of the chorus in the play and gives nuance to a group of women who are often taken to be straightforward supporters of Electra. It has often gone unremarked that they are a chorus deeply involved in the action, certainly the
most involved chorus in the extant plays dealing with Electra. In his analysis of the choral odes, Reginald Burton has noted that contrary to other Sophoclean choruses whose odes include broader and at times more mythic perspectives, those in the Electra are restricted to observations about the action of the play. According to the second extant ancient hypothesis, the chorus are local maidens (ἐπιχώριοι παρθένοι); a scholiast describes them as γυναῖκες τῇ Ἡλέκτρᾳ συναχθόμεναι. The manner in which they are described in the play indicates that they share the same social status as Electra, as they are noble Mycenean females (γενέθλα γενναίων 129, φιλία γενέθλα 226) who are citizens (πολίτες, 1227), in direct contrast to the chorus of captive slave women in the Choephoroi and the local peasant women in Euripides’ Electra. Scholarship has tended to see them in an encouraging but nevertheless limited role, and for the sake of a positive reading has often overlooked or played down the moments of tension that emerge from the lyric dialogues of the play. When discussing the chorus, Gordon Kirkwood sees that “all the nonplatitudinous comments are spoken in support and encouragement of the protagonist or in hostility to his adversaries.” Cynthia Gardiner catalogues the many ways the chorus work in “conspiratorial harmony” with Electra and at the same time argues for the “reciprocity of affection and respect between Electra and the chorus.”

438 Burton 1980: 200-1. Gibbons (2008), who recently translated Sophoclean odes for a general audience in order to promote the notion of Sophocles the poet, explicitly excludes those in the Electra: as he (2008: 5) states in his introduction, “The odes in Elektra do not at all lend themselves to being read independently of that play.”


440 Though Electra is initially mistaken for a maid by the Paidagogus in 78.


443 Gardiner 1986: 143. See especially her concluding remarks (1986: 163): “Sophocles has made the chorus women who, filling the office of many allegorical female figures from Roma to Columbia, symbolize the spirit of the nation without implying any actual participation of women in the political reality of the state. It is the function of these Mycenaean women to display, as representatives of the people of the land, the emotional response of those people: the conviction that Electra’s actions are right and just, approved by society and the gods.”
Jenny March writes that the chorus “emphasize the positive tenor of the play.”\textsuperscript{444} Leona Macleod views them as representing the polis in the play with a personal touch.\textsuperscript{445} By and large, the chorus has been seen as a sympathetic support network for Electra or even a harmonious chorus to her frenzied lyrics. Only Ignacio Errandonea argues for a more active and complex role, but one that he defines as ultimately to translate Electra’s lamentations (\textit{logoi}) into deeds in order to carry out the required vengeance.\textsuperscript{446} In what follows, I closely examine the various lyric dialogues in the play and their contexts to reveal implicit tensions between Electra and the chorus, even though they share an affinity. That these moments of negotiation depict the varying relationship and interplay between the chorus and Electra – what Simon Goldhill terms the “shifting patterns of support and hesitation between female collective and heroine in Electra plays”\textsuperscript{447} – not only illustrates the play’s deep concern for the complexities of the actor-chorus dynamic, fundamental to tragedy, but more importantly also offers a crucial insight into the importance of antiphonality in the genre and the range of the chorus’ responsive expression.

\textsuperscript{444} March 2001: 17. She (\textit{ibid.}) goes as far as saying that chorus’ approval should guide our response to the play: “thus if they judge the revenge action to be an unalloyed triumph, as indeed they do, this argues that we too should interpret the play in this way. Sophocles himself put his \textit{Electra} on stage, directing it as \textit{didaskalos}, and it is hard to believe that he wrote this confident and optimistic part for his Chorus, but directed his play so that it seemed to end in a dark mood of doubt or despair, quite at odds with what the Chorus themselves are singing.”

\textsuperscript{445} Macleod (2001: 43): “By choosing free-born citizen women, Sophokles broadens the focus of the action to include the polis while still creating an environment in which Elektra, assured of a natural sympathy due to their common sex, is free to express her feelings. The presence of the chorus is thus a constant reminder of the public sphere in which Elektra’s actions take place.”

\textsuperscript{446} Errandonea (1968: 16) comments: “el Coro de la \textit{Electra} de Sófocles no está consagrado, como generalmente se ha creído, a frenar los impetus vengativos de una joven enfurecida y ansiosa de castigar a su madre parricida, ni tampoco a cantarle cantos de consuelo o de moderación, sino que (en cierto sentido, al contrario) sus cantos son correctivos o reprensiones a la hija, que pone toda su venganza en lamentos vanos, en odios ineficaces y en el despecho estéril, y exhortarla a encauzar ese odo, y hacerlo eficaz, y traducirlo \textit{en obras}, y \textit{consumar}, en fin, \textit{la venganza}.”

\textsuperscript{447} Goldhill 1996: 248.
Let us begin with the *parodos*, the locus in which Sophocles chooses to stage the initial encounter between Electra and the chorus. The *parodos* does not occur immediately after an opening expository dialogue between Orestes and the *paidagogos*, as is the case with most other extant Sophoclean plays.\(^{448}\) Just as Euripides does, Sophocles instead decides to depict the protagonist delivering an anapestic “monody,” a recitative which reveals Electra’s conflicted state of emotions.\(^{449}\) Electra, whose heavy long-syllabic outburst ιώ μοί μοι δύσπηνος (77)\(^{450}\) within the skēnē had previously disrupted her brother’s business-like exchange with the *paidagogos*, first appears alone without the chorus. This is the only instance in Sophoclean tragedy in which the protagonist performs a monody before the chorus’ entrance.\(^{451}\) The practice rather resembles Euripides, who often places an actor’s monody between the end of the prologue and the beginning of the *parodos* (as is the case in *Electra*, but also in *Andromache*, *Hecuba*, *Trojan Women*, *Ion*, and *Helen*).\(^{452}\) Electra’s lone lament is certainly aimed at underscoring her extreme isolation; in the words of Ierulli, “the effect is an emphasis both on lyric and isolation: a protagonist who emphasizes lament, and who is marginalized because she does.”\(^{453}\) In my view, this further testifies to an interest

\(^{448}\) Most extant plays by Sophocles begin with a dialogue between two actors, as opposed to Euripides’ proclivity for beginning his play with a prologue delivered by one of the actors.

\(^{449}\) There is no consensus as to whether the anapests she employs in 86-120 are ‘recitative’ or ‘melic’ anapests. Kamerbeek (1974) and Finglass (2007) have recently argued that Electra’s monody is rather a recitative lament, not a sung one, given the lack of Doric alphas and the frequent occurrence of dimeters without word-division between the metra, as set out by West 1982. See Finglass 2007: 118.

\(^{450}\) “Ah me, Ah wretched me!”

\(^{451}\) A protagonist sings a monody before the entrance of the chorus in Euripides: this is the case in *Hec.*, *Tro.*, and even *Electra*, discussed in the section above, as well as in *Prometheus Vinctus*. See also Barner 1971. For Euripidean monodies, see Beverley 1997.

\(^{452}\) In Euripides’ *Electra* the trimeter section of the prologue is followed by Electra’s monody before the entrance song of the chorus.

\(^{453}\) Ierulli 1993: 220. This also highlights Sophocles’ departure from the *Choephoroi*; the *paidagogos’* curt ἕκτασκι at 82 indicates a rejection of that play, *i.e.* Sophocles will not allow an early recognition. Barner (1971: 284-5) emphasizes the effect and the role a monody in the beginning the play has for the depiction of the ethos of a character, as opposed to one that takes place in another part of the play.
in staging disjointed thrēnoi and illustrating breakdowns in the mourning ritual, a process which will be made clear in the parodos. Whereas in the Choephoroi, all three parties (Electra, Orestes, and the chorus) are in harmonious agreement and sing together the most salient example of a thrēnos in extant tragedy, Sophocles’ Electra chooses to depict all three separately. When the chorus do arrive, they do not join Electra in her lamenting – rather they initiate a discussion, questioning her reasons for continuing to engage in such a lament.

That the chorus has no marked entrance is the first of many indications testifying to their remarkable role in the play. Arthur Pickard-Cambridge supposes that they enter during Electra’s “monody.” 454 They must have, because their response indicates that they have heard some of her words. This would mean that they, much like Electra with her disrupting outburst, constituted yet another surprising and unsettling interruption meant to take the audience further away from the rational world of Orestes and the paidagogos. 455 Electra’s monody is a disjunction, 456 but so is the entry of the chorus, whose continued silence during Electra’s lament must have troubled the watching audience expectant of a shared lament. Past commentators have seen Electra’s monody as an extension, or even a second part of the prologue, 457 but the presence of the chorus

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455 As (Beverley 1997: 10) writes, “the [prologue] speech sets up the plot, the monody the lyric tenor of the play.” This lyric tenor is continued in parodos.
456 See Scott (1996: 302 n. 137), who points out the contrast between the “practicality of the prologue” as between Orestes and the paidagogos and “the emotional intensity of Electra”. This is also noted by Kells (1973: 86-7) who comments on verses 77-120: “The sound contrasts vividly and dramatically with the prosaic iambic trimeters that have preceded and are to follow. The contrast (conventional in tragedy) between lyrics and iambics is rendered more than usually dramatically significant in this play by the two facts that the preceding iambics have insisted so much on time and precision of time (Electra conspicuously lacks a sense of time), and that the ‘world’ which we have seen introduced by Electra’s lyric outburst is a world of women.”
457 Jebb (2004b: 121) takes a strict view: in his opinion, it belongs to the prologue, “since it precedes the entrances of the Chorus.” Kamerbeek (1974: 31) comments that “it is decidedly better to regard Electra’s
would have marked it off as a new chapter, to be read in conjunction with the *parodos*.

As Reginald Burton comments:

“The fully lyric *parodos* may have been inspired by a desire to integrate more closely the parts played by both chorus and actor in the scene that follows the prologue. On their first entry the chorus must be given information known already through the prologue to some of the actors and audience. In Sophocles’ earlier plays, in which the *parodos* is confined to the chorus, this information is imparted in the first episodion by an actor, but in *Electra* a striking change occurs: chorus and actor are brought into contact with each other through the medium of sung dialogue. Furthermore, the use of song for both reduces the emotional gap between them that might have been felt had the actor spoken trimeters or recited anapests. In the *parodos* of this play Electra and the chorus together explore the pathos of her predicament through what is in the strict sense a commos, a shared lyric of lament. *Philoctetes* and *Oedipus at Colonus* reveal a further development: the *parodos* is no longer confined to lament but embraces a variety of feelings, excitement, curiosity, suspense and shock. Thus did Sophocles, no less than Euripides, continue up to the end of his life to experiment with new methods of handling the relations between actor and chorus.”

In this play it is clear that Sophocles was experimenting with the fundamental actor-chorus dynamic. But Electra and the chorus do not “explore the pathos of her predicament through…a shared lyric of lament,” as Burton claims above. In direct contrast to the *Choephoroi*, whose elaborate lament at the tomb can be properly described as a *thrēnos*, Sophocles and Euripides (who likewise utilizes this pattern of a monody followed by a *parodos* staged as a lyric dialogue in the *Electra* and *Orestes*) appear interested in separating the two groups, as well as in testing their relationship. Though there is uncertainty as to which Electra play was the first to initiate this tendency of showing Electra alone first then in duet with chorus,

459 it is worth noting that Sophocles’ *Electra* is the most elaborate of these representations. Both the monody and the *parodos*...
taken together constitute the longest lyric piece in extant Sophocles; this demonstrates a concern to illustrate the considerable range of musical meters of which Electra was capable. In this play, Sophocles illustrates Electra performing in three modes: monody, lyric dialogue, and speech.

As the first mode in which she communicates, the monody is crucial in introducing Electra. Both its contents and more formal aspects have perplexed most scholars. Richard Jebb calls it a θρήνος ἀπὸ σκηνῆς, a “lyric lament delivered by an actor alone, as distinguished from the joint κομμῶς of actor and Chorus,” one that has two συστήματα, consisting on the one hand of verses 86-102 which are retrospective, and 103-120 which are prospective on the other. Despite the apparent neat division in two parts, there is no exact metrical responson: the first half has one more anapest than the second half. Though some scholars have proposed that it was recited rather than sung, verses 88-89 and 105-106 display some features of lyric. The lament can thus be read as a strange hybrid, one which will anticipate the disjointed thrēnodic parodos.

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460 Parker (1997: 57) informs us that in tragedy lyric anapests are associated with mourning: “they are used extensively in a number of structurally elaborate scenes of lamentation, of which the earliest to survive is Pers. 907-1001 (Xerxes and the chorus).” Parker (id. loc.) cites Sophocles’ Electra 86-250 as the only surviving example of such a phenomenon in Sophocles. On Persae 907-1001, see chapter 3 above as well as Hall 1999, 2006, Pickard-Cambridge 1988: 156-164, and Webster (1970: 117), who comments: “this kind of melic anapest appears here for the first time, but there is no reason to suppose that Aeschylus invented them; it is more likely that he took them over from the grave lament and that they were originally processional, like marching anapests, and sung while the body was being taken to the grave.”

461 Jebb 2004b: 19. Terminology is again an issue: how does this match up with Aristotle’s κομμῶς δὲ θρήνος κοινός χοροῦ καὶ ἀπὸ σκηνῆς?

462 See Campbell ad 86-250. Woodard (1964: 166-67) claims that “passive” activity fulfils traditional female duty of mourning. See also Burnett 1998:121-123.

463 Diggle 1981 has posited a lacuna. See Kamerbeek (1974: 34) on 116: “Perfect responson could be obtained by inserting something like: aiai, aiai.”

464 Finglass (2007: 118) writes, “most of Electra’s anapests fail to meet the criteria for sung anapests, and so must be recitative.”

465 As Finglass (2007: 118) comments, “these four lines all have contracted bicipitia throughout…and lack word-division between the metra, with the overlap in three of the four cases consisting of a full long syllable.”
The first half describes a performative speech act. Electra repeatedly tells us what she is doing: ὄσα τὸν δύστηνον ἐμὸν θηνῶ / πατέρ’ (94-95). Electra’s extremely visual and detailed description of her own act of lamenting is rife with many of the stylistic features common to lament; we see anaphora: πολλὰς μὲν θηνῶν ωδάς, / πολλὰς δ’ ἀντίλεις ἤσοου (88-89), repetition: ἵω μοί μοί δύστηνος (77, 94), inarticulate cries (ἵω), and address to the dead: σοῦ, πάτερ, οὐτώς / αἰκῶς οἴκτρῶς τε θανόντος (101-102), a verse which displays salient assonance, as I have emphasized. She likewise describes her self-flagellation, a feature that is common to lament, but which here is conveyed with strikingly graphic imagery: στέρνων πλαγάς αἷμασσομένων (90). She also tells us when she performs her lament: ὀπόταν δυοφερὰ νὺξ ὑπολειφθῇ (91). She succinctly narrates the manner of Agamemnon’s death:

πατέρ’, ὁν κατὰ μὲν βάρβαρον αἶαν
φοίνιος Ἀρης οὐκ ἐξένισεν,
μήτηρ δ’ ἥμη χώ κοινολέιχης
Αἰγίσθος ὀπώς δρῦν ύλοτόμωι
σχίζουσι κάρα φονίω πελέκει.

Father, on whom bloody Ares did not confer guest-honors while in a barbarian land, and my mother and the man who shares her bed Aegisthus split his head with an axe, as woodcutters on oak.

466 “How often I lament for my unfortunate father.”
467 Also common in other plays: S. Aj. 630-3, OC 1608-9, A. Pers. 1054, Ch. 423-8, Eu. 960-4. See Alexiou 2002: 207 n. 27.
468 “blows against my bloody breast.”
469 “when dusky night has been left behind.”
She repeatedly describes how no one mourns him: κοῦδείς τούτων οἰκτος ἀπ’ ἄλλης / ἦ ’μοῦ φέρεται. ἦ ’μοῦ (101). In these short verses she conveys a great deal of information, while lamenting alone.

In the second half she suddenly declares that she will not stop lamenting: ἀλλ’ οὐ μὲν δὴ λήξω θρήνων στυγερῶν τε γόρων (104). This programmatic utterance is one that will be repeated and enacted at various points in the play, and the λήξω will take on special force particularly when confronted with the chorus in lyric dialogue. The idea of never ceasing is not uncommon in lament, nor is the fact that she describes herself as a nightingale (which the chorus call her in the second stasimon in 1075-77, but not before): μὴ οὐ τεκνολέτειρ’ ὡς τις ἁπέδων / ἐπὶ κωκυτῷ τῶν δε πατρῶν / πρὸ θυρῶν ἡχῶ πᾶσι προφωνεῖν (107-109). What is remarkable is Electra’s emphasis on her solitude, particularly with [οῦδείς] ἦ ’μοῦ at 101, which anticipates and is echoed by μοῦνη at 119. The lack of antiphonality and the chorus’ absence is most felt at this point. If the chorus were on stage the irony of these statements would indeed be striking.

By staging a lone Electra and an entering chorus who remain silent, the monody hints at the breakdown of the mourning ritual that is enacted in the parodos. The parodos in Sophocles’ Electra, staged as a lyric dialogue between Electra and the chorus, illustrates the complex and at times disjointed interaction between the two. As I stressed earlier, that this parodos (along with the monody that precedes it) constitutes the longest lyric composition in extant Sophocles reveals the centrality of the relationship between the chorus and Electra in this play. The formal structure of the parodos reflects what

470 “And no pity is offered by anyone other than me, father, when you died so shamefully and pitifully.”
471 “But never shall I cease from my dirges and painful laments.”
472 See also S. El. 353, 379, A. Pers. 705, and Bion Epit. Ad. 97.
473 “Like a nightingale who has killed her young, I cry out loud with shrill wails to all before the doors of my father.” Cf. note 73 above.
appears to be an intimate friendship between the two: both respond to the other in roughly equal strophic pairs, and each party echoes closely the meters of the others, thereby signaling basic agreement. Yet despite the metrical and structural similarities, most of the lyric dialogue’s content expresses key differences as well as contrasted emotions; in it, Sophocles carefully illustrates the ways in which the two parties disagree and express differing opinions, despite the various formal parallels and verbal echoes. As Reginald Winnington-Ingram notes,

“it might appear at first sight that the scene is designed for nothing else than to convey the grief, the courage and the despair of Electra, counterpointed by the moderate counsels of a sympathetic but unheroic Chorus. But this is not quite so. Electra and the Chorus sing alternately; and while she expresses and rouses emotion, they raise questions – or Sophocles raises questions through them.”

I do not mean to propose that the chorus tells us how to read Electra (or that by extension, the chorus stands for the poet’s voice), as Winnington-Ingram’s comment here suggests: my purpose here is rather to emphasize the parodos as a complex contest, one that is neither a straightforward lament, nor a scene of persuasion. Both groups have a measure of respect for the other, but nevertheless they engage in this complex discussion, at times rife with rebuke. With the exception of lyrics found in Oedipus at Colonus, this parodos is longer than any lyric in Sophocles or even in Euripides. In approximately one hundred lines, Sophocles stages an elaborate game of negotiation in which meaning is continually contested and sometimes misinterpreted, a contest characterized by contrasting and competing points of view that does at times offer some consolation.

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475 Finglass (2007: 139-140) notes that “Electra’s lack of contempt for her advisors separates her from other Sophoclean heroes (most notably Antigone). Moreover, her recognition of the unpleasant aspects of her behaviour reveals a self-awareness absent from many of Sophocles’ protagonists. There is more to her than monolithic defiance.” Structurally and formally, the strophic pairs indicate that the two groups respect one another as they negotiate.
The opening of the first strophe, ὃ παῖ παῖ δυσταυ-, sets up the false expectation that the chorus might directly join Electra’s lament, providing the necessary refrain to complement her cries. However, their full address to Electra, ὃ παῖ παῖ δυσταυνοτάτας / Ἡλέκτρα ματρός (121-122), in which they describe Clytemnestra as wretched, δύστηνος, reveals that full harmony is not guaranteed.

Whereas Electra had portrayed herself as δύστηνος (77), which Orestes echoes before he even encounters her (88) (and which Electra also uses to describe Agamemnon ὅσα τὸν δύστηνον ἐμὸν θηνῶ at 94), the chorus apply the same unhappy word (in the superlative) to Clytemnestra, but now with a seemingly moral sense: “wretched.” Instead of straightforwardly responding to Electra’s lament, the chorus decide to question its appropriateness: τίν’ ἄει / λάσκεις ὃδ’ ἀκόρεστον οἰμωγάν / τὸν πάλαι ἐκ δολερᾶς ἁθεώτατα / ματρός ἀλόντ’ ἀπάταις Ἀγαμέμνονα (122-5). Though Electra immediately recognizes (οἴδα τε καὶ ξυνίημι τάδ’, οὐ τί με / φυγγάνει, 131-2) that they have come to her in order to console her (ἡκετ’ ἐμὼν καμάτων παραμύθιον, 130), she stubbornly refuses to stop lamenting: an echo of her earlier programmatic statement uttered in the monody ἀλλ’ οὐ μὲν δὴ λήξῳ / θρήνων στυγερῶν τε γόων (103-4) lurks behind οὐδ’ ἐθέλω προλιπεῖν τόδε / μὴ οὐ τὸν ἐμὸν στενάχειν πατέρ’ ἀθλιον (132-3). Electra pleads with them to leave her alone, which suggests that this is a conversation which has previously taken place. In her pleading she addresses the

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476 “Electra, daughter of a most wretched mother.”
477 “Why do you always express this ceaseless lament for Agamemnon, who long ago godlessly perished by the wiles of your deceptive mother?”
478 “I know and I understand these things, it does not escape me.”
479 “You have come to assuage my sorrows.”
480 “But never shall I cease from my dirges and painful laments.”
481 “But I do not wish to leave this, not to lament for my unhappy father.”
chorus as ω̄ παντοίας φιλότητος ἀμειβόμεναι χάριν (134). Such an emphatic use of ἀμειβόμεναι (exchange) underlines the fraught and complex relationship between the two, who express differences of opinion while they share the same song, each singing half of one strophe as in the parodos of Euripides’ Electra.

In the antistrophe, the differences of opinion increase as the chorus further question Electra. The chorus begin by countering that she will never raise Agamemnon from Hades neither with laments nor with prayers (οὔτε γόοσιν, οὐ λίταῖς; 137), traditional advice that recalls the commonplace response in Euripides El. 193-7. They instead urge the moderation she has left behind (ἀλλ’ ἀπὸ τῶν μετρίων ἐπ’ ἀμήχανον / ἀλγος ἀεὶ στενάχουσα διόλυσαι, 140-1), as no analusis (release) is possible (ἐν οἷς ἀνάλυσις ἔστιν οὐδεμία κακῶν, 143), a notion which is in direct contrast to the chorus’ encouragements in the Choephoroi. Sophocles’ chorus simply cannot understand Electra’s propensity towards grief: τί μοι τῶν δυσφόρων ἔφη; (144). Electra responds that her duty to her father makes it right for her to lament: νήπιος δὲς τῶν οἰκτρῶς / οἰχομένων γονέων ἐπιλάβεται (145-6). This gnome with some assonance condemns the forgetting of a dead parent, whose death has been especially deplorable (οἰκτρῶς). She then applies this to herself but her words mark a strong break. She turns to mythology, explicitly comparing herself to exemplars like Procne and Niobe. This is reminiscent of the Antigone, but the unusual feature is the way that

482 “You who in every sort of friendship give gratitude in exchange.”
483 McCall (1990: 23) places a strong emphasis on the involvement of the chorus in the Choephoroi; in his view, throughout this kommos the chorus “steadily remain initiator, adviser, and inciter to Electra and Orestes; the children never ask or direct the chorus to follow or support their lead”. On the notion of release (lusis) in Sophoclean tragedy, see Goldhill 2009a.
484 “Why do you throw yourself into suffering?”
485 “Foolish is he who forgets his parents who have perished piteously.”
486 In the oldest extant version of the myth, Niobe is cited as the extreme exemplum of a mourning parent by Achilles to a grieving Priam in Iliad 24.602-617. Lyric poets took up earlier versions of her story:
the chorus there turns to mythology in order to deny Antigone’s claim to exemplarity. That Electra, a virgin who describes herself as “tireless” (ἀκάμαστα) and “childless” ἀτεκνος (164) compares herself to two renowned mothers who mourn their children ceaselessly, is striking, far more than when the chorus apply the case of Amphiareus to Electra. Electra actively works to raise her mourning activity to mythical status as a way of justifying it before the chorus.

The second strophe from 154-192 extends the similarity to the Antigone. In a more conversational mode (iambics and dactyls dominate this strophic pair) the chorus remind her that her sisters Chrysothemis and Iphianassa share her sorrow — in other words they insist that she is not as singular as her actions would suggest. Having made their point, the chorus change tactics and finally attempt to console Electra by reminding her of the existence of Orestes (whose name is emphatically delayed until the very end) and the possibility of his return:

κρυπτᾶ τ’ ἄχεων ἐν ἥβα
ὀλβιος, ὅν ἀ κλεινὰ 160
γὰ ποτε Μυκηναῖων
dέξεται εὐπατρίδαν, Διὸς εὐφρονι
βῆματι μολόντα τάνδε γὰν Ὀρέσταν.

Concealed from these painful things since youth,
is the happy one, the well-fathered one whom
the renowned land of the Myceneans
will receive someday, when by the kindly aid of Zeus,
he comes to this land, Orestes.

Sappho wrote about the original friendship between Niobe and Leto (fr. 142 V.); Pindar composed a paean on this subject as well (Ps.-Plut. De musica 15, 1136c and A. Niobe fr. 154a, 1-3 TrGF). According to later sources Bacchylides (Gell. 20,7) and Mimnermus (Ael. VA 12, 36) treated parts of her myth. There were also several “Niobe” dramas staged in Athens during the fifth century, which sadly do not survive: Aeschylus reportedly dramatized the events after the death of her children (Ar. Ra. 911-922) and Sophocles’ version described prior events as well as the death of her children (S. fr. 441a-451 TrGF). See also Hopman (2004) who discusses S. Ant. 823-835 in which Antigone compares her fate to that of Niobe. For story of Proene see Il. 24.599-620

488 Loraux 1998.
The mention of Orestes, however, has the opposite effect, as evidenced by Electra’s sudden outburst at 164-173. The chorus’ response to Electra in the second antistrophe reveals that the elaborate negotiation, which dominated the first half of the parodos and was reminiscent of Antigone’s lyric dialogue with the chorus at 801-880, is over and that the chorus will now focus their energies on assuaging Electra’s fears. In this antistrophe, they offer Zeus as consolation: ἔτι μέγας οὐρανῷ / Ζεὺς, ὃς ἐφορᾷ πάντα καὶ κρατύνει (174-5).489

When Electra outlines her own personal suffering, with insistent alphas repeated at 185-192,490 the chorus finally stir in 193, leaving behind their attempts at consolation, and respond with the anapests employed by Electra in her monody. For a brief moment the audience catches a glimpse of what could have been had the poet decided not to dramatize the tensions between the two groups; that is, if the response beginning at 193 had followed Electra’s plaints in her monody. The chorus describe Agamemnon’s death: οἰκτρά μὲν νόστοις αὐθά, / οἰκτρὰ δ’ ἐν κοίταις πατρώας, / ὅτε οἱ παγχάλκων ἄνταία / γενύων ὀρμάθη πλαγά (193-6),491 in a vivid manner which strongly recalls the opening of Electra’s monody. Not only do we have anaphora (οἰκτρά), but there is also the repeated element ἄνταία... πλαγά, which echoes ἄντήρεις...πλαγάς (89-90). The change in tone is also marked by a clear shift to anapests with heavy spondees in 193-196. This particular strophe engages with Electra’s monody, which suggests that Sophocles wanted to impress upon his audience the possibility of some cooperation.

489 “Zeus is still the great ruler of heaven, who surveys and rules all.” Scott (1996: 156) notes that the chorus seem to have a more Aeschylean view of Justice than Electra does.
491 “Piteable was the cry when he returned, pitiable in his parental bed, when the blow of the bronze-jawed axe was set against him.”
between the two after all. In this one very brief moment the chorus cease critiquing Electra and actually mourn in unison with her.

The chorus’ description of the murder of Agamemnon prompts another outburst from Electra, who addresses the single day and night of the fateful death of her father. Verses 201-212 constitute another “monodizing” outburst similar to that in Euripides’ *Electra* 54-63, but one now complete with a direct appeal to Zeus: οἷς θεὸς ὁ μέγας Ὀλύμπιος / ποίνιμα πάθεα παθεῖν πόροι, (209-210).492 Her outspokenness frighten the Chorus, who now resume their previous antagonism with an even greater emphasis in the third antistrophe:

quotations

Do not speak any longer!
Do you not perceive how the present situation came to be?
Do you into a doom of your own making
so disgracefully throw yourself?
You possess excessive evils,
always producing wars for your melancholy soul!
One does not contend with those in power,
so endure these things!

We are back to conflict and tension, as evident in the chorus’ rebukes here. At 223-4, Electra once again repeats a variant of the programmatic statement uttered in the monody ἀλλ’ οὐ μὲν δὴ λήξω θρήνων στυγερῶν τε γόων (103-4): “I will not hold back from these ruinous cries, so long as there is life in me” (ἀλλ’ ἐν γὰρ δεινοῖς οὐ σχῆσι / ταύτας ἀτας, / ὃφρα μὲ βίος ἔχω, 223-4). Her cries to the chorus echo sentiments

492 “May the great Olympian god give them avenging punishments to suffer.”
earlier expressed in the first half of the *parodos*, but in a far more insistent manner:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ἀνετὲ μ’ ἀνετε παράγοροι.} \\
\text{τάδε γὰρ ἄλυτα κεκλῆσται:} \\
\text{οὐδὲ ποτ’ ἐκ καμάτων ἀποπαύσομαι} \\
\text{ἀνάριθμος ὡδε βρήκων.}
\end{align*}
\]

Leave me, leave me, counselors.
For these cries shall be called insoluble
and I will never cease from my sorrows,
with my unmeasured laments.

Not only does Electra again urge the chorus to leave her be, but she returns to the concept of *analusis* the chorus had introduced at 141-2. She also emphatically declares that the chorus’ mission, which she had openly recognized at 130 (ἔκετ’ ἐμῶν καμάτων παραμύθιον), has failed.

In the epode, the chorus weakly restate their good intentions. Yet Electra forcefully states her case in 236-250 in a manner that will put a decisive stop to this dialogue. She breaks the circularity of argument by creating a unique, and therefore unanswerable, song which employs a mixture of rhythms (among them dactylic, anapestic and dochmiac), to which the chorus has no sung response. The chorus instead reply to her in spoken trimeters. As Scott (1996: 156) comments, the chorus’ music is “stilled by her forceful tone; they are unable to continue the musical dialogue and reply in spoken iambics.” The lyric dialogue is over, but it is clear that its overall tone was that of an extended conflict. Despite the brief moment of shared grief, in which the individual and group were united, most of this encounter demonstrates the complex fissures that exist between Electra and the chorus, who are at times deeply engaged and at others deeply agonistic. The *parodos*, which is set in a “threnodic” context, never achieves the status of a full dirge. Instead, the song is devoted to a series of questions and statements regarding Electra’s motives for lamentation. In this *parodos*, Sophocles explores the
nature and value of lamentation with those who would have, in a ritual setting, otherwise been *exarchos* and an antiphonal group.

Though not as elaborate as the amoibaic *parodos*, the second lyric dialogue of 823-70 likewise demonstrates an intense interest in the interplay between the play’s protagonist and its chorus. As in the *parodos*, Sophocles once again eschews staging a cooperative lament between the chorus and Electra, but this time, he does so at what may be Electra’s lowest point in the play: the *paidagogos*’ false speech has just announced the “death” of Orestes. The dialogue is likewise prefaced by an extended outburst in trimeters at 804-822 by Electra, which again contains the traces of a solo lament. After her trimeters, the chorus launches into what appears like the opening of a choral ode:

\[
\text{ποῦ ποτε κεραυνοῖ Διός, ἡ ποῦ } \\
\text{φαεθὼν Ἀλίος, ταῦτα ἐφορῶντες } \\
\text{κρύπτουσιν ἔκηλοι;}
\]

Where are the thunderbolts of Zeus, and where is shining Helios, if they look upon these things and quietly conceal them?

Suddenly, Electra’s *ἐ ἐ, αἰσθὶ* prompts the chorus to engage with her in dialogue, as they ask why she weeps: *ἂ παῖ, τί δακρύεις;* (829). Thus a second lyric dialogue begins at yet another crucial moment in the play, one which problematizes Electra’s grief at the precise moment when it should have been permissible.

In the following two pairs of strophes, Sophocles traces a careful arc from the chorus to Electra: while the former attempt to console, the latter resolutely asserts the

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493 Though she laments in iambics, Electra nevertheless includes various repetitions (*e.g.* at 804-806). She also reproaches Orestes, much like other women when uttering laments, *cf.* Alexiou 1974.

494 On 823-870, Kamerbeek (1974: 114) comments: “It is doubtful whether we should consider the next scene as a new epeisodion (the third) and thus the kommos as a substitute for a stasimon, or whether the kommos has to be regarded as part of the, then very long, epeisodion stretching from 516 to 1057. I prefer the first possibility, because the two contrasting scenes 516-659 and 660-822 form a clear unity, whereas 871-1057 would seem to be more satisfactory if regarded as a comparatively independent unit in the structure of the play than as an annex to the second epeisodion. But the problem does not admit of a definite solution.”
futility of any solace. The chorus’ first offer of hope is the example of Amphiareus, whose son Alcmeon was actually able to avenge his father.\footnote{Pindar Nem. 9.24. On this seemingly irrelevant mythic exemplum, Kamerbeek (1974: 115) writes: “We have to bear in mind that the real situation will vindicate the parallel between Agamemnon-Clytaemnestra-Orestes and Amphiaraus-Eriphyle-Alcmeon. So we have a case of very ingenious (we might say overingenious) dramatic irony.”} To Electra, the evocation of such a mythological exemplum is ridiculous, since she believes Orestes to be irrevocably dead. She therefore interrupts the chorus with the inarticulate cries εἰκόνα (840) and φεῦ (842), and presses her point by pointing out her unique situation at 845-9:

\begin{quote}
oίδε των ἐν πένθει ἐμοί δ᾽ οὕτις ἐτέρας ὡς γὰρ ἐτήνη, / φροῦδος ἀναρπασθεὶς.
\end{quote}

In this exchange, we have evidence of antilabē, a feature of late Sophoclean lyric.\footnote{“I know, I know! For there appeared an avenger for the one in grief, but for me there is no one. For he whom I had is gone, snatched away.” See also Ag. 1146-9 where Cassandra likewise rejects a mythological exemplum offered by the chorus as consolation.} This makes the exchange more clipped and hostile, adding to the atmosphere of disagreement.\footnote{See also Philoctetes 1169-1217 and OC 176-236, 510-48, 833-43, 876-86.}

At 849, the chorus change their tune, much as in the parodos (at 193). The chorus finally acknowledge Electra’s dire situation: “wretched woman who encounters wretched things” (δειλαία δειλαίων κυρείς, 849). The rest of the strophe catalogues what appears to be a disjointed exchange which in essence repeats the very sentiments expressed in the previous strophe. It is clear that their relationship has become more strained, as emphasized by the occasional bout of antilabē. As Finglass remarks, the relationship between Electra and the chorus has indeed changed, as she grows more isolated: “Electra no longer acknowledges the friendly motives of the chorus (contrast 130-1, 134) and her rejections of its assistance are more vehement (cf. 830, 861-3). The staccato exchange,
different from the leisurely style of the *parodos*, conveys the increase of tension.  

Instead of having a moment of full, collaborative lament, Sophocles once again decides to dramatize the differences of outlook between Electra and the chorus.

In the play’s final lyric exchange at 1398-1441, Sophocles reunites the three performers involved in the *Choephoroi*’s Great *Kommos*: the Chorus, Electra and Orestes, paralleling Euripides. Yet he does so only temporarily: the exchange consists of two strophes, one divided between Electra, the chorus, and Clytemnestra (speaking off-stage), and an antistrophe shared between Electra, the chorus and Orestes. This replacing of one singer with another is strange: as scholars have noted, it is normally the case in tragedy that the same character sings or recites all the corresponding lines in both the strophe and antistrophe.  

In this way, Sophocles singles out the constant element in this exchange: Electra and the chorus. Both appear to be working together and communicating effectively throughout the exchange; the impression at the exchange’s end at 1438-41 is one of cooperation.

When evaluating the lyric dialogues in the Electra, Gordon Kirkwood writes that all three “bear on the intensity of Electra’s grief and her desire for revenge; the first two (121-250 and 823-870) stress the close sympathy that exists between the princess and these Mycenean women; the third emphasizes an emotional crisis at the moment of Clytemnestra’s death (1398-1441).” As we have seen in this section the first two do not stress “the close sympathy” between Electra and the chorus; if anything, they reveal just how tenuous the connection is between the two as they discuss the value of the act of lament. The chorus, more often than not, state the futility of incessant lament in

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499 Finglass 2007: 356.  
Electra’s circumstances. The final lyric dialogue does, however, depict them working together, though in this brief exchange Electra is the more explicitly involved party urging action. In any case, the two are not as harmonious as scholarship depicts them to be.\textsuperscript{502}

The intense encounters between Electra and the chorus are further evidence that the primary concern of the play is not in the male voices as represented by Orestes and the \textit{paidagogos}, but rather the female world of Electra and the chorus. There is a dissonance between male and female voices, and more importantly a lack of responsion. The dialogue between Orestes and the \textit{paidagogos}, and between Electra and chorus in the prologue, is not merely “male” juxtaposed with “female”, as some scholars have noted: it is more importantly one of responsion.\textsuperscript{503} The opening of the play presents the audience with two dialogic modes. While the speeches of Orestes and the \textit{paidagogos} are harmonious, both end their speeches with an appeal to \textit{kairos} and echo a verb (\textit{imen}), which indicates their common resolve. Electra and the chorus, on the other hand, present a different problem. At 813 Electra declares, \textit{μόνη γράφει εἴμι}, and this is absolutely true: at most of the junctures at which she demonstrably needs the chorus, particularly to lament, they either refuse or urge a different course. It is clear that in his lyric dialogues, Sophocles is more interested in staging moments of broken and contrasted antiphony. He explicitly utilizes Electra and the chorus, previously established as mourners in the

\textsuperscript{502} For example, March (1996: 66) makes three points on chorus’ role in the play: “first, that the chorus’s role is to suffer with Electra, to comfort her, support her, advise her, all of which we see most clearly in the first part of the play; second, that they support the revenge action, declaring the justice of the vengeance and making plain the background of the approving gods, which comes out very clearly in the central section of the play. Then thirdly, in the very last part of the play they move, just as Electra does, into taking part in the revenge, from passive to active, in strong contrast to the beginning where their role was simply to utter words, \textit{logoi}. Now they become involved in the deeds, the \textit{erga}, and in the final triumph.”

\textsuperscript{503} Kitzinger 1991: 302.
Choephoroi in order to problematize and discuss the act of lament, particularly the futility of incessant lament.

Epilogue: Euripides’ Orestes

The interplay between the chorus and Electra continued to fascinate in 408 BCE, when the Orestes was produced.\(^504\) Though his play is centered on the madness of Orestes, Euripides nevertheless gives a long vocal part to the deuteragonist, Electra. Likewise he features a chorus of Argive women who are the companions of Electra. The play’s parodos, in particular, seems to engage with the parodoi of Euripides and Sophocles’ Electra plays. Not only does it take the form of a lyric dialogue (as in the Electra plays), but also it likewise constitutes the first encounter between Electra and the chorus, as in Euripides and Sophocles. Interestingly, in this self-conscious play it is Electra herself who announces the chorus’ arrival. Prefacing their entrance with one of her characteristic self-pitying cries (ὠ τάλαιν ἐγώ), she describes them as her co-mourners: αἱδὲ αὖ πάρεσσι τοῖς ἐμοῖς θρηνήμασιν / φίλαι ξυνωιδοῖ (132-3).\(^505\) The αὖ has perplexed scholars:\(^506\) but I suggest that it, along with the φίλαι ξυνωιδοῖ, must be understood in relation to the earlier Electra plays. The Orestes alludes obliquely to the earlier Electra plays which precede it and acknowledges the bond between Electra and the chorus. Ironically, in this play, the roles are reversed: it is Electra who begs the chorus to be silent, as she is afraid that they might wake Orestes: οὐ φίλταται γυναικεῖς,

\(^504\) A scholiast commenting on line 371 of the play gives this date.
\(^505\) “Here they come again, my singer friends who accompany my laments!” The text is that of Diggle 1994.
\(^506\) West (1987: 190), who translates it as “again” comments that “if this is the right translation, it is a unique suggestion of previous songs which the audience has not heard.”
In the following lyric dialogue, Electra, who in previous situations had a “self-chorus” role, easily takes on the role of exarchos, as she successfully directs the chorus’ initial movement onto the stage.

The other two lyric dialogues in the play likewise invert the situation in Euripides’ and Sophocles’ Electra plays. The play stages one at 960-1010, in which the chorus and Electra actually lament after the messenger has announced that the Pelasgians have decreed the death of Orestes and Electra, and another at 1246-1310 in which Helen is to be murdered off-stage. In the former, Electra and the chorus actually launch into a traditional lament with the ritual beating of the head and scratching of the cheeks: a kommos in the strict sense of the word. Electra also offers a long solo at 982-1012, one that is integrated with the choral laments. This is the lament that the Electra plays had so studiously avoided, as Euripides and Sophocles had strived to keep the two groups apart.

In the final lyric dialogue, the unity between Electra and the chorus continues: there is total engagement and exchange as the two work together and even sing together in harmony so as to speed on the death of Helen:

{Ηλ.} καὶ {Χο.}

φονεύετε καίνετε θείνετ’

ολλυτε, δίπτυχα δίστομα φάσγαν’

ἐκ χερὸς ἰέμενοι,

τάν λιποπάτορα λιπογάμετον, ἂ πλείστον

ἐκανεν Ἑλλάνων

dορὶ παρὰ ποταμὸν ὀλομένους,

ὅθι δάκρυα δάκρυσι πέσε σιδαρέοις

βέλεσιν ἀμφὶ τὰς Σκαμάνδρου δίνας.

507 “Dearest friends, walk with a quiet foot, do not be noisy, let there be no noise! For though your friendship is well-intentioned, nevertheless it would be a great misfortune to wake him up.”
Murder, kill, slay
destroy [her], let go the twin double-edge sword
in your hand,
towards her who left her father, left her marriage, she who
killed so many Greeks
who were destroyed by the spear along the river,
where tears upon tears fell with iron darts
along the eddies of the Scamander.

In this play, though the focus is no longer on Electra and the women who accompany her, we can nevertheless detect a sense of the reception of the tradition of the Electra plays which came before the *Orestes*, particularly their interest in the interactions of Electra and the chorus.

**Conclusion**

The *Vita Sophoclis* 6 preserves a story claiming that Sophocles reportedly composed his plays according to the talents (πρὸς τὰς φύσεις) of his actors and chorus. Some scholars have in fact cited precisely this as a way to explain his *Electra*: A. S. Owen, who singles out both the *Philoctetes* and *Electra* as plays with remarkable singers as protagonists, suggests that “Sophocles is writing both plays at a time when he can secure one very efficient singer-actor, to whom he can assign a part which is much more important musically than he could have given to the actor of Heracles or Oedipus.” With Electra, at least, the answer cannot be that simple. She does indeed possess a remarkable singing role in all the plays in which she is featured, but Electra’s solos tend to give way to elaborate lyric dialogues with the chorus in both Sophocles and Euripides. It is clear that these plays are not concerned with merely showing off the

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508 FGrHist 334 F 36.
509 Owen 1936: 151. In these plays, he (*ibid.*) notes that “no one except the protagonist has any singing to do.” The charge originated from a comment by a scholiast to Ar. Nu. 1266, which claims that Sophocles often wrote for a particular actor, Tlepolemus, so as to draw on his strengths as a performer.
actor’s voice. Instead, the large number of lyric dialogues shared between the chorus and Electra rather testify to an interest in juxtaposing solo voice with that of the chorus, particularly during discussions of lament. For Electra, more than any other character in tragedy, the encounters she has with these choruses at critical junctures, particularly in Euripides and Sophocles, reveal the focus the later tragedians had on her and the chorus as mourners. That lament is being explicitly negotiated during these lyric dialogues in Sophocles and Euripides illustrates a concern with re-thinking and re-contextualizing the ritual thrēnos, particularly as imagined in Aeschylus’ *Choephoroi*. Electra and the chorus do not simply mourn in Sophocles and Euripides, rather they discuss the act of mourning.

In her ethnographic study of modern Maniat women in the Peloponnese, anthropologist Nadia Seremetakis writes of the importance of antiphony in women’s mourning ritual: “antiphony is an extension of the ethic of helping.” The chorus, who repeat laments and respond with sobs and inarticulate cries, are crucial to the mourning ritual — both ancient and modern — precisely because they simultaneously validate and complement the soloist’s grief. A comparative reading of these lyric dialogues allows us to see how in both Euripides’ and Sophocles’ *Electra*, there is little validation of Electra’s grief and no sign of communal mourning, as in the *Choephoroi*. Sophocles and Euripides expand the role of Electra, who now embodies the problem of excessive lament and sustained mourning. Electra and her accompanying chorus, previously established by Aeschylus as iconic mourners, are now utilized as a vehicle through which discussions on the nature of grief and the value of lament can take place.

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510 Seremetakis 1991: 100. Also, Holst-Warhaft (2005: 154): “the chorus of respondents (sobbing, gesturing, making small comments on the text, or uttering inarticulate cries) acts as witness to the korifēa, or leading singer, on record for the community as a whole.”
CONCLUSION

In this study, I have examined the many ways in which chorus and actors communicated and interacted with one another during moments of lyric dialogue. Based on a thorough formal examination of the phenomenon in the entire tragic corpus, I have sought to provide insight into representations of the communication processes as illustrated in extant Greek tragedy. Studying lyric dialogues alongside one another reveals the variety of ways in which tragedians depicted and understood the dynamics of communication — and similarly ritual action, which could arguably be seen as a form of communication — between chorus and actors. Though we know almost nothing of the dances that accompanied these plays I would like to suggest in concluding that it might be helpful to think of the structured but flexible nature of lyric dialogues as being similar to a dance. In a lyric dialogue, as in a dance, both partners (actor and chorus) must coordinate with each other in order to gain mutual understanding or agreement. In both instances, this process can be either fluid and graceful or ostentatiously adversarial and fraught. The variety and flexibility of the form of lyric dialogues further confirms this analogy because no two dances are the same — despite the presence of some underlying rules that may govern the movement.

In the preceding chapters, I have demonstrated that the versatility of lyric dialogues speaks to the frequency to which tragedians tested the performative capabilities of actors and chorus, as they explored the two fundamental tensions of tragedy: between individual and collective, and between speech and song. As the only space in tragedy in which actors and chorus share the same speaking and communicative space — as they are no longer separated by act-dividing song — lyric dialogues offer a crucial insight into
the interactions that are possible between these two parties. My first chapter offered a broader definition and categorization of lyric exchanges, outlining all such moments in extant Greek tragedy, and also provided a consideration of some of the difficulties one may face when studying such flexible moments. In my second and third chapters, I focused on the contact that is either established or broken between chorus and actor during conversational lyric dialogues or kommoi, which enact the ritual lament, and argued that such attention reveals a concern with the dynamics of interactions that may occur between an individual and a group. The second chapter, in particular, tackled the possibility of placing speech and song in rapid succession, which is noteworthy in a genre where spoken verse is always separated from choral lyric in terms of music as well as language. This interplay between speech and song, particularly when they occur in exchanges that feature a speaking chorus in dialogue with a singing actor such as the exchange between the Argive elders and Cassandra in Aeschylus’ Agamemnon, reverse the fundamental tragic pattern. Additionally, lyric dialogues, in which the choral role is similar to that of another actor, provide an opportunity to study the tragic choral voice and its relationship to the larger ritual performance tradition: in the parodos of the Helen, staged as a lyric dialogue between the eponymous heroine and her chorus, Euripides explores the relationship between a chorus leader and her group that is fundamental to ritual choreia. My third chapter explored both successful and failed attempts at re-enacting the ritual lament on the tragic stage and the larger implications this had for its play as a whole: while Aeschylus’ Persians and Euripides’ Trojan Women end and achieve closure with successful kommoi, or representations of the thrēnos, Sophocles’ Antigone explores a scenario in which the antiphonal group refuses to take up its
customary role precisely at the moment when their participation is most required: as two bodies adorn the stage at the very end of the play. Euripides’ *Alcestis* and *Heracles* similarly address varying possibilities of failed laments.

My fourth chapter considered in detail the four extant plays which feature Electra, a character who emerges as a central figure in fifth century tragedy. These four plays contain a large number of lyric dialogues between the heroine and a chorus — invariably a group of maidens whose social status mirror that of Electra, even in the *Orestes*. The presence of these persistent interactions speaks to a concern among the tragedians with exploring the boundaries and possibilities of lament, given the heroine’s association with the act of mourning. In these interactions we see amplified dialogues that borrow heavily from the language and gestures of lament - conversational lyric dialogues that at times mimic the *thřēnos*.

This study concerning the lyric dialogues of extant tragedy has in part revealed the multifaceted nature of the choral voice, particularly in the many moments when the chorus is “in dialogue” with actors. Through these interactions, the chorus is an integral part of the drama and cannot be considered peripheral to the action of the play. More specifically, this examination has allowed us to acquire a better understanding and appreciation of scenes of lyric dialogue, and in particular the manner in which the tragedians utilized these moments as a crucial frame within which to stage problems of communication and ritual.
APPENDIX 1

THE FEMALE MOURNING STAGE?:

GENDER AND LAMENTATION IN ANCIENT GREECE

εἰπός δ` ἄν ὅτι τὸ γυναικεῖον γένος ἐστὶ θηριωδείς καὶ
φιλόθρημον καὶ φιλόδυρτον καὶ θηριωτικόν.
Pollux, Onom. VI. 202

In Ancient Greece, lament was categorically defined as a gendered art and voice.
Margaret Alexiou’s The Ritual Lament in Greek Tradition first highlighted the prominence of women in ancient funeral lamentation practices, a fact that is attested in the archaeology, epigraphy, and literature of antiquity and extends to the present day.\(^{511}\) Subsequent anthropological studies have confirmed that the act of mourning has emerged as a significant source of empowerment for ancient Greek women, who were otherwise subordinated to men and generally “silenced” in society.\(^{512}\) Laments not only provided an outlet for grief but they also functioned as an important vehicle for social criticism and protest, allowing women to express grievances and subversive expressions of rebuke. These constituted powerful speech-acts with an enormous potential to incite violence and revenge.\(^{513}\) As Laura McClure writes, “in the fifth century, female lamentation is

\(^{511}\) Alexiou 1974.

\(^{512}\) Sultan 1993, McClure 1999, Lardinois and McClure 2001. Sultan (1993: 92) elaborates: “In these songs of mourning women are empowered through their pain to address publicly issues of social importance; the most successful performers skillfully weave sometimes abrasive, often persuasive, and always highly charged juridical and political language into their lament.” Seremetakis (1991) claims the same for modern laments.

\(^{513}\) Alexiou (1974: 21-22) observes: “the women, by wailing, lacerating themselves and holding ceremonies in public, were attracting attention which might amount to a social menace, not only indecent but dangerous. In the inflammable atmosphere of the blood feud between the families of Megakles and Kylon that was still raging in Solon’s time, what more effective way could there be to stir up feelings of revenge than the incessant lamentation at the tomb by large numbers of women for ‘those long dead’?” See also Alexiou 1974: 124-5, Caraveli 1986, Seremetakis 1990 and 1991, Holst-Warhaft 1992, and Foley 2001: 19-56.
construed as a source of danger and disorder, able to undermine the stable, masculine community of the polis.”  

For many scholars, the fact that several poleis legislated a series of funerary laws aiming to restrain any excessive manifestations of mourning confirms the perceived disruptive power of female lamentation for the dead. In Athens, Solon’s laws in the sixth-century BCE changed the nature of funerals conducted in the city. A main concern appears to have been women’s conduct at the funeral, in particular curbing women’s proclivity to excess grief in public, whether as hired or private mourners. According to Plutarch, Solon placed women’s public excursions, mourning and festivals under a strict law that aimed to curb any disorder and licentiousness. Demosthenes provides more details, as Richard Seaford summarizes:

The laying out (prothesis) must take place inside. The funeral procession (ekphora) must be before sunrise on the day after the prothesis. In the ekphora the men must walk in front and the women behind. No women under the age of 60, except close relatives, may enter the chamber of the deceased or follow the procession to the tomb. No women, except close relatives, may enter the chamber of the deceased when the body is carried out.

These laws may in part have to do with new anxieties about death and pollution, as Sourvinou-Inwood proposes, given women’s role in handling the dead body, or perhaps they are more a result of a concern to diminish social instability produced by

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514 McClure 1999: 40-1.
516 There are three sources for this law: Plutarch’s Life of Solon, Demosthenes 43.62, and Cicero De Leg. 2.59-66.
517 Plutarch, Sol. 21.5: Ἐπίστησε δὲ καὶ ταῖς ἔξοδοις τῶν γυναίκων καὶ τοῖς πένθει καὶ ταῖς ἔφορταῖς νόμον ἀπείρωντα τὸ ἄτακτον καὶ ἀκόλουστον.
518 Seaford 1994: 75.
520 See Kurtz and Boardman 1971: 146 and Parker 1983: 35.
lavish and emotionally intense aristocratic funerals. Yet, as one scholar points out, “to restrict female participation in the prothesis and funeral procession (ekphora) to kin and women over sixty markedly reduced both the aural and the visual impact of the procession.”

Nicole Loraux discusses another suggestive fifth century development, the emergence of the Athenian state-sponsored literary genre of the epitaphios logos, or public funeral oration; this specific male-centered discourse left no room for women’s lament. Yet women’s lament was not entirely suppressed in Athens: as Loraux proposes, lament, “rejected by both the Ceramicus and the Agora….flows back to the theater, *intra muros.*” The theatre, according to Holst-Warhaft, subsequently appropriates lamentation for its cathartic function “while stressing its essentially female, barbarian-oriental and un-Athenian nature.”

Though scholars have claimed that lamentation was one of the predominant speech genres that male authors assigned to individual female characters in archaic and classical Greek literature, mourning in Greek tragedy is not restricted to either gender. Ann Suter has recently shown that the Athenian stage of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides is filled with male mourners, thus challenging the notion of mourning as a

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521 This would explain the ban on “set-piece laments” (τό θρηνεῖν πεποιημένα), in Plut. *Sol.* 21.6.1. See also Seaford (1994: 79-86, esp. 83): “all the practices restricted serve one or more of a series of phenomena (emotional intensity and attachment to the dead, public display, a large group, a dynamic role for the female, grief for those buried earlier), each of which would, in the case of murder, arouse dangerous hostility to the rival kinship group, or at least, even had there been no murder, express and confirm the strength and divisive solidarity of the mourning king and their followers.”

522 Humphreys 1980: 100.


524 Loraux 1998: 10. She further elaborates (*ibid.*) that it is, however, “kept away from the civic self; representations of mourning, of its greatness and its perplexities, fill tragedy, because the tragic genre dramatizes the essential exclusions the city has instituted for the citizens’ use.”


predominantly female activity in tragedy.\textsuperscript{527} Scholars have pointed to changing shifts in attitudes towards male grief in the archaic period,\textsuperscript{528} yet male characters cry and grieve throughout Greek tragedy, examples include Theseus’ grief at the death of Phaedra (\textit{Hippolytus} 801-890), Ion’s tears as he remembers the mother who left him (\textit{Ion} 1369-71), Polynieces’ tearful entrance upon finding his father and sister (\textit{Oedipus at Colonus} 1250-3), Polynieces’ emphatic tears upon his return to Thebes (\textit{Phoenician Women} 366, 370), and Polymestor’s lamentations for the slain Polyxena (\textit{Hecuba} 954-961).\textsuperscript{529} On the Athenian stage, male grief is often presented as a result of deep personal loss, and as Swift points out, “tragic lamentation bears little resemblance to post-Solian Athenian practice.”\textsuperscript{530} One cannot simply say that male lamenting characters are “feminized” in these moments, or that a tragedian is engaging in a heroic gender reversal.\textsuperscript{531} More likely is that the tragedians, who often set their plays in the heroic age, channel Homer’s heroes, 

\textsuperscript{527} Suter 2008.

\textsuperscript{528} Drawing upon artistic and iconographic material on mourning as well as literary texts, Van Wees (1998: 43) argues that in the archaic period men and women were redefined as “psychologically virtually different species”; men began to be characterized by their self-control and women by their lack of emotional restraint. Stears (1998: 115) points out that Attic black- and red-figure vases also differentiated men and women in representations of the \textit{prothesis}: “Typically, the men enter in a procession from left to right, with their arms raised in salutation, palm facing outwards, performing a prepared and orderly dirge. They proceed no further than the feet of the corpse and are met by the male members of the household, who return their gesture. The women in the scene appear unresponsive to the procession but continue in their lamentation, standing closely around the corpse, which is their chief focus of interest...in sharp contrast to the orderly procession of men, the women are depicted as being distraught. They tear at their hair as they sing their lament, moving around the bier as they grieve.” Foley (2001: 28) cites the exhortation against unmanly grief in Archilochus’ fragment 13 (\textit{ήλλα τάχιστα / τλήτε, γυναικεῖον πένθος ἀπωσάμενοι, 9-10}).

\textsuperscript{529} Male tears are also invoked and recalled in narration: Philoctetes describes his tears and lamentations upon seeing the departing ships (\textit{Phil.} 278), Neoptolemus likewise mentions his tears for his dead father (\textit{Phil.} 360), Menelaus remembers the tears that came following the announcement of Agamemnon’s death (\textit{Orest.} 365-69), and Talthybius tells Hecuba how Andromache’s departure made him weep (\textit{Tr.} 1130). A request from Hecuba prompts Talthybius to recall — and crucially, to \textit{reenact} — earlier tears: διπλά με χρήσεις δάκρυα κερδάναι, γύναι, / οίς παιδός οίκτων νῦν τε γάρ λέγων κακά / τέγξεις τόδ’ ὀμία πρὸς τάφωι θ’ ὁτ’ ἄλλυτο (\textit{Hec.} 518-520).

\textsuperscript{530} Swift 2010: 323.

\textsuperscript{531} Segal (1993a: 66): “Tears...function as one of the female elements through which tragedy can explore the male fear’s of feminization.”
who often weep openly and unproblematically.\textsuperscript{532} It is thus hard to draw any solid conclusions about the ritual lament from tragic material alone, where any act of mourning constitutes a stylized representation, if for no other reason than that it was composed and performed by men.\textsuperscript{533}

\textsuperscript{532} Monsacré 1984: esp. 137-42. In the opening of \textit{Iliad} 23 Achilles is even depicted as the \textit{exarchos} who leads his male comrades in the passionate lament (ἀδινοῦ ἔξηπτε γόος, 17). See also \textit{Odyssey} 8.521-31, when Odysseus is compared to a lamenting woman, \textit{cf.} Nagy 1978: 100-1 and Foley 1978. Such grief by an epic hero is famously later subject to Socrates’ criticisms in \textit{Republic} II and III, see Swift 2010: 320-22.

\textsuperscript{533} On the representation of the female voice in tragedy, a much-discussed and contentious topic in scholarship, see Easterling 1987, Murnaghan 1988, Segal 1993b, Katz 1994, Seidensticker 1995, Zeitlin 1996b, Hall 1997, McClure 1999, Foley 2001 (This is by no means an exhaustive list). Griffith (2001: 118) argues that the concept of “female impersonation” did not require the actors or \textit{choreutai} to alter their voices in order to sound like women; instead it “relied more heavily on gesture, gait, dance step, and bearing, and on changes of costume, than on distinctively feminine voice or language.”
### Tables 4A-B. Wholly Sung Lyric Dialogues between Chorus and Actor(s) in Extant Greek Tragedy (in detail)

#### 4A. Between One Actor and the Chorus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Play</th>
<th>Lines &amp; Context</th>
<th>Notes on Structure &amp; Salient Features</th>
<th>Meter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. A. Pers.</strong></td>
<td>908 – 1077</td>
<td>Xerxes and the chorus deliver an anapastic opening at 908-30. From 931-1077 they sing a <em>kommos</em> with antiphonal song, inarticulate cries and gestures of lament. The exchange consists of seven strophic pairs (931-1065) with a final epode (1066-1078); each strophe is shared between Xerxes and the chorus. From the fourth strophic pair until the end (1002-1078), the form of each strophe changes to a “stichomythic” pattern, in which every single verse is alternated between singers.</td>
<td>Lyric anapests in the first and third strophic pairs (931-947 and 974-1001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. S. El.</strong></td>
<td>121–250</td>
<td>Electra and the chorus sing three strophic pairs (α: 121-136=137-152, β: 153-172=173-192, γ: 193-212); each strophe is shared between the two.</td>
<td>A mixture of dactyls and iambics in the first two strophic pairs (121-184)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play</td>
<td>Lines &amp; Context</td>
<td>Notes on Structure &amp; Salient Features</td>
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<td>stage and attempt to console her.</td>
<td>The lyric dialogue ends with an epode, (233-50) also divided between the chorus and Electra, but it is almost monodic: the chorus sings 3 verses (233-5), while Electra sings 14 (236-50). The lyric dialogue is preceded by a monody from Electra (86-120).</td>
<td>121-2 and 137-8. The third pair contains sung anapests. The epode is a mixture of anapests, dactyls and dochmiacs.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This is the play’s parodos.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Aeolo-choriambic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. S. El. 823 – 870</td>
<td>The chorus and Electra sing two strophic pairs (α: 823-36=837-48, β: 849-58=859-70), in which each strophe is shared between the two. As in the parodos, a lament from Electra leads to lyric dialogue. Inarticulate cries from Electra: ἵλη, αἰσθή (826), φεῦ (828, 843), ἵλη, ἰάω (840) antilabai: 830-3, 842-5, 855, 866</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4. S. Ph. 1081 – 1217</td>
<td>Philoctetes and the chorus sing two strophic pairs (α: 1081-1100=1101-1122, β: 1123-1145=1146-1168); each strophe is</td>
<td>Primarily aeolo-choriambic with dactylic and iambic rhythms</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Play</td>
<td>Lines &amp; Context</td>
<td>Notes on Structure &amp; Salient Features</td>
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<td></td>
<td>the cave which will see his death while the chorus address his resolution and attempt to persuade him in vain.</td>
<td>divided between the two singers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lines 1169-1217, also shared between the two singers, are an astrophic epode, which contains <em>antilabē</em> and a more dynamic alternation between singers.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Philoctetes actively ignores the chorus in the first two strophic pairs.</td>
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<td>5. E. <em>Supp.</em></td>
<td>794 – 836</td>
<td>Adrastus and the chorus sing a strophic pair <em>(798-810 = 811-23)</em>, with an epode at 823-836.</td>
<td>Mostly iambic rhythms throughout with some dactyls <em>(808, 821)</em> and dochmiacs <em>(804, 817)</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Adrastus returns with the bodies of the Seven and initiates a lament with the chorus.</td>
<td>The chorus deliver an anapestic prelude at 794-7, announcing the return of Adrastus.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>This is an antiphonal <em>kommos</em> full of exclamations <em>(e.g. ἵω ἵω, αἰσι)</em>, direct address to the dead <em>(e.g. προσαναδῶ σὲ τὸν θανόντα, 804)</em> and other mourning gestures <em>(e.g. 826-7)</em> typical of lament.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. E. <em>HF</em></td>
<td>1042 – 1088</td>
<td>This is an astrophic exchange between</td>
<td>Predominantly dochmiacs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Play</td>
<td>Lines &amp; Context</td>
<td>Notes on Structure &amp; Salient Features</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Amphitriton and the chorus try not to wake the sleeping Heracles.</td>
<td>the chorus and Amphitriton. It has some antilabē (e.g. 1051, 1052, 1061, 1064).</td>
<td>some iambics (1053-4, 1064-1067, 1072-3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. E. Tr.</td>
<td>153 – 196</td>
<td>The lyric exchange between the two is also the first strophic pair of the parodos.</td>
<td>Lyric anapests with spondaic rhythm (197, 198, 200, 202, 203, 204, 210, 211, 213)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The chorus, divided into two groups, enter as a result of Hecuba’s cries. They exchange information regarding the Greeks and lament their situation.</td>
<td>Hecuba and a half-chorus each sing strophe and antistrophe (153-175=176-196). Each stanza is punctuated by cries of lament (e.g. ἵκι, ἵκω, ἐ ἐ, φεῦ φεῦ).</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. E. Tr.</td>
<td>1287 – 1332</td>
<td>Hecuba and the chorus sing two strophic pairs full of laments (α: 1287-1292=1294-1301; β: 1302-1316=1317-1332).</td>
<td>Dominated by lyric iambic rhythms, with a high number of resolutions</td>
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<td></td>
<td>After the body of Astyanax is taken away, Hecuba and the chorus lament for Troy.</td>
<td>Their song is described as ἰαλέμως at 1304.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>This dialogue is a kommos full of antiphony, ritual gestures (such as kneeling, beating the earth, and addressing the dead) and ritual cries (e.g. ὅτοτοτοτο) that at times take up a whole verse (1288, 1300, 1313, 1328).</td>
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<td>Play</td>
<td>Lines &amp; Context</td>
<td>Notes on Structure &amp; Salient Features</td>
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<td>9. E. El.</td>
<td>167 – 212</td>
<td>This lyric dialogue consists of one strophic pair (167-189 = 190-212), in which each stanza is shared between the chorus and Electra.</td>
<td>Aeolic meter with some dactylic rhythms</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The chorus invite Electra to a festival in celebration of Hera.</td>
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<td>This is the play’s <em>parodos</em>.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>10. E. IT</td>
<td>123 – 235</td>
<td>This lyric dialogue is an astrophic <em>thrēnos</em> with antiphonal singing, ritual gestures and language (e.g. ἀντιψάλμους ὁίδας ὑμνοῦν...έξαυθάσω at 179-181).</td>
<td>Predominantly lyric anapests</td>
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<td>The chorus ask Iphigenia to tell them why she has called for them.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>There is no responsion, but there is anadiplosis (e.g. 138 ἄγαγες ἄγαγες).</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>This is the play’s <em>parodos</em>.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. E. Hel.</td>
<td>164 – 252</td>
<td>Helen sings a brief <em>prooimion</em> at 164-166.</td>
<td>Iambo-trochaic (mostly trochaic) meter with resolution and syncopation</td>
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<td>Helen’s cries of grief draw the attention of the chorus who</td>
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<td>The lyric dialogue takes the form of two strophic pairs (α: 167-178 = 179-190 and β: 191-210 = 211 - 228) shared</td>
<td>The <em>prooimion</em> consists of two dactylic hexameters (164-5) and a pentameter (166).</td>
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<td>Play</td>
<td>Lines &amp; Context</td>
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<td></td>
<td>eventually join her song.</td>
<td>between Helen and the chorus, and an epode (229-252) sung by Helen.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>This is the play’s <em>parodos</em>.</td>
<td>It has an unusual structure: Helen sings the strophe, and the chorus follow with a metrically dependent antistrophe.</td>
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<td>12. E. Hel.</td>
<td>330 – 385</td>
<td>Astrophic lyric dialogue.</td>
<td>Iambo-trochaic meter with resolution and syncopation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Before entering the palace to see Theonoe, Helen laments her situation with the chorus.</td>
<td>Helen is in dialogue with the chorus until 361, when the dialogue becomes monodic until the end.</td>
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<td>13. E. Or.</td>
<td>140 – 207</td>
<td>The chorus and Electra sing two strophic pairs (α: 140-52 = 153-65 and β: 166-86 = 187-207), in which each stanza is shared between the two.</td>
<td>Predominantly dochmiac, with some iambo-trochaic rhythms</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The chorus join Electra and tip toe around the sleeping Orestes.</td>
<td>There are some examples of verbal repetition: (e.g. κάταγε κάταγε at 149, φόνον at 165-6, ἔκανες ἔθανες at 195).</td>
<td>Enoplian cola at 181-184</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This is the play’s <em>parodos</em>.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Play</td>
<td>Lines &amp; Context</td>
<td>Notes on Structure &amp; Salient Features</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Dionysus reveals himself to the chorus.</td>
<td>Their dialogue is filled with direct address (e.g. 577, 581) and ιω cries.</td>
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<tr>
<td>15. E. Ba.</td>
<td>1168 – 1199</td>
<td>Agave and the chorus sing one strophic pair (1168-1182 = 1183-1199).</td>
<td>Predominantly dochmiac and iambic, with some iambelegi at 1179-80 = 1195-6</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agave informs the chorus of her success at the hunt.</td>
<td>There are frequent changes of speaker, antilabē and repetition.</td>
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<tr>
<td>16. E. IA</td>
<td>1475 – 1530</td>
<td>This astrophic exchange consists of a song by Iphigenia (1475-1499), which is followed by a brief exchange between her and the chorus (1500-1509). A song by the chorus ends the exchange (1510-1530). The exchange contains some repetitions (e.g. 1484-5) and ιω cries.</td>
<td>Predominantly iambic-trochaic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 4B. BETWEEN TWO ACTORS AND THE CHORUS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Play</th>
<th>Lines &amp; Context</th>
<th>Notes</th>
<th>Meter</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17. A. Ch.</td>
<td>306 – 478</td>
<td>Great <em>Kommos</em>; ἐπιτύμβιος θρῆνος (334)</td>
<td>Predominantly aeolo-choriambic</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The chorus, Electra and Orestes lament and invoke the spirit of Agamemnon at his tomb.</td>
<td>The chorus delivers an anapestic opening at 306-314.</td>
<td>Lyric iambics dominate in 405-465</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Lament for the dead Agamemnon</td>
<td>314-422 contains four lyric triads, sung in alternation: Orestes, Chorus, Electra. In each triad a strophe is sung by Orestes and the antistrophe by Electra; these two are separated by a new strophe from the chorus. In the first three triads (314-399), choral anapests follow Electra’s antistrophe.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Evocation and narration (423-478)</td>
<td>From 423-455 the Chorus sings in responsion with either Orestes or Electra, and they no longer provide anapestic commentary.</td>
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<td>Lines 456-465 consist of a single strophic pair, with a miniature triadic structure, where strophe and antistrophe are divided between Orestes, Electra and the chorus.</td>
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<td>In 466-475 the chorus sing a regular strophic pair, often compared to a mini stasimon.</td>
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<td>The lyric dialogue is followed by a brief series of anapests at 476-478.</td>
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<td>Play</td>
<td>Lines &amp; Context</td>
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<td>18. S. OC</td>
<td>1670 – 1750</td>
<td>The chorus, Antigone and Ismene sing two strophic pairs (α: 1670-1696=1697-1723, β: 1724-1736=1737-1750): the first is divided between the three while in the second pair the strophe is divided between Antigone and Ismene and the antistrophe between the chorus and Antigone.</td>
<td>Iambo-trochaic with some dactylic and choriambic cola (first pair)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Iambo-trochaic (second)</td>
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## Tables 5A-C. Lyric Dialogues between Chorus and Actor(s) that Blend Speech and Song (in detail)

### 5A. **Between One Actor and the Chorus**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Play</th>
<th>Lines &amp; Context</th>
<th>Notes on Structure &amp; Salient Features</th>
<th>Meter</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. A. Pers.</td>
<td>249 – 289</td>
<td>Singing chorus; speaking actor</td>
<td>Predominantly lyric iambic (chorus)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>A messenger narrates the recent events at Salamis to the chorus of Persian elders, who lament in response to the news.</td>
<td>Iambic trimeter (messenger)</td>
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<td>Atossa is present on stage but is silent.</td>
<td>Dochmiacs at 268 and 274</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The chorus utter several inarticulate cries: ἄνια ἄνια (256), σισι (257, 270), and ὄτοτοτοῖ (268, 274).</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<p>|          | 694 – 702       | Singing chorus; speaking actor        | Ionic <em>a minore</em> (chorus) |
|          |                 | With Darius’ sudden appearance (achieved as a result of the chorus’ necromantic hymn), the chorus are unable to speak and instead express their reverence and awe in song. | Trochaic tetrameter (Darius) |
|          |                 | The chorus sing one lyric strophe and antistrophe (694-96=700-02), which are separated by Darius’ three tetrameters. |       |
|          |                 | The pair is dominated by anaphora: σέβομαι (694, 695) and δίομαι (700, 701). |       |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Play</th>
<th>Lines &amp; Context</th>
<th>Notes on Structure &amp; Salient Features</th>
<th>Meter</th>
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<td>3. A. Th.</td>
<td>203 – 244</td>
<td>Singing chorus; speaking actor</td>
<td>Predominantly dochmiacs, with some aeolic elements (chorus)</td>
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<td>Eteocles berates the frightened chorus of Theban women.</td>
<td>Iambic trimeter (Eteocles)</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. A. Th.</td>
<td>686 – 711</td>
<td>Singing chorus; speaking actor</td>
<td>Dochmiacs (chorus)</td>
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<td>The chorus attempt to dissuade Eteocles from fighting, precisely at the moment when he dresses himself for war. They begin their appeal by addressing him as τέκνον (686).</td>
<td>Iambic trimeter (Eteocles)</td>
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<td>The chorus sing two strophic pairs; (α: 686-88=692-94, β: 698-701=705-08); each strophe is followed by three trimeters from Eteocles.</td>
<td>698-700 is the longest consecutive string of dochmiacs in extant tragedy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. A. Supp.</td>
<td>348 – 437</td>
<td>Singing chorus; speaking actor</td>
<td>Predominantly dochmiacs, with some syncopated iambic trimeter (372-374), and cretics in 418-437 (chorus)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>In 348-406, the chorus sing three strophic pairs (α: 348-53=359-64, β: 370-75=381-86, γ: 392-96=402-06); each strophe is followed by five trimeters from Pelasgus.</td>
<td>Iambic trimeter (Pelasgus)</td>
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<td>Play</td>
<td>Lines &amp; Context</td>
<td>Notes on Structure &amp; Salient Features</td>
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<td>At 407-417 Pelasgus offers his “diver” speech, which is followed at 418-437 with two sung strophic pairs (418-22=423-27 and 428-32=433-37) by the chorus.</td>
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<td>6. A. <em>Supp.</em></td>
<td>734 – 761</td>
<td>Speaking/singing chorus; speaking actor</td>
<td>Iambic trimeter, dochmiacs (chorus)</td>
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<td>After Danaus informs the chorus of the Egyptians’ arrival, they express fear while their father attempts to calm them.</td>
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<td>The chorus sing two strophic pairs (α: 734-38=741-45, β: 748-52=755-59); two trimeters from Danaus follow each strophe. Prior to each strophe the chorus speak two iambic lines (734-5, 741-2, 748-9, 755-6).</td>
<td>Iambic trimeter (Danaus)</td>
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<td>This is the only lyric dialogue in which the chorus speak and sing in immediate succession.</td>
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<td>7. A. <em>Supp.</em></td>
<td>866 – 902</td>
<td>Singing chorus; speaking actor</td>
<td>Dochmiacs (chorus)</td>
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<td>An Egyptian herald orders the reluctant chorus to embark on the Egyptian ship.</td>
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<td>The chorus sing two strophic pairs (α: 866-75=876-83, β: 884-89=895-902); in the first pair, three trimeters from the messenger follow strophe and antistrophe while in the second strophe and antistrophe, he utters only two.</td>
<td>Iambic trimeter (herald)</td>
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<td>8. A. Ag.</td>
<td>1072 – 1177</td>
<td>Speaking and singing chorus; mostly singing and speaking actor. There are seven pairs of strophes in this dialogue: the first four (1072-1110) sung by Cassandra, are each divided by two trimeters from the chorus. In the final three pairs (1114-1177) each strophe and antistrophe is shared between the two participants. When the chorus join in at 1121 their song is prefaced (at 1119-1120) by two trimeters, like those followed each of Cassandra’s strophes in 1072-1110. From 1080 onward, Cassandra speaks several verses: 1082, 1087, 1092, 1097, 1102, 1109, 1116, 1127, 1138-39, 1148-49, 1160-61, and 1170-71.</td>
<td>Predominantly dochmiacs with some iambic rhythms (Cassandra and chorus) Iambic trimeter (chorus and Cassandra)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. A. Ag.</td>
<td>1407 – 1576</td>
<td>Singing chorus; speaking and chanting actor Dochmiacs, with some iambic and anapestic rhythms (chorus). It contains four major parts: 1407-1447, 1448-1480, 1481-1529, and 1530-1576. Three <em>ephymnia</em> are found at 1455-1461, 1489-1496 = 1513-1520, and 1538-1550.</td>
<td>Iambic trimeter (until 1447) with anapests at 1462-7, 1475-80 (Clytemnestra)</td>
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<td>Notes on Structure &amp; Salient Features</td>
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<td>In 1407-1447, the chorus sing one</td>
<td>This metrical pattern of period of anapests</td>
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<td>strophic pair, in which strophe and</td>
<td>followed by a variety of lyrical meters is</td>
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<td>antistrophe are each followed by</td>
<td>unique in extant tragedy.</td>
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<td>Clytemnestra's trimeters (at 1412-25</td>
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<td>and 1431-1447).</td>
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<td>In 1448-1480, the chorus sing another</td>
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<td>strophic pair. The pair is divided by</td>
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<td>the first <em>ephymnium</em>, to which</td>
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<td>Clytemnestra replies in anapests at</td>
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<td>1462-1467. Following the antistrophe</td>
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<td>at 1468-74, Clytemnestra again replies</td>
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<td>in anapests.</td>
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<td>In 1481-1529 the chorus sing another</td>
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<td>strophic pair. This time, each stanza is</td>
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<td>followed by the same <em>ephymnium</em>, which</td>
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<td>is once again answered by Clytemnestra’s</td>
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<td>anapests.</td>
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<td>In 1530-1576 another strophic pair by the</td>
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<td>chorus is once again divided by an <em>ephymnium</em></td>
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<td>and Clytemnestra’s anapests at 1551-9. She</td>
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<td>also replies to the antistrophe at 1567-76.</td>
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10. A. *Eu.* 778 – 891 Singing chorus; speaking actor Blend of iambics and dochmicas (chorus)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Meter</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>After Orestes’ acquittal, Athena persuades the Erinyes, who had vowed to remain in Athens as a curse and a blight.</td>
<td>The chorus sings two strophic pairs (α: 778-93=808-23, β: 837-46=870-80); in each pair strophe and antistrophe are identical in content and meter. Following each strophe, Athena responds with trimeters of varying length: in response to the first strophe, Athena speaks 14 trimeters (794-807), to the first antistrophe 13 (824-836), to the second strophe, 22 (847-869), and to the second antistrophe she speaks 11 trimeters (881-891).</td>
<td>Iambic trimeter (Athena)</td>
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<td>11. A. Eu.</td>
<td>916 – 1031</td>
<td>Singing chorus; chanting actor The chorus sing three strophic pairs (α: 916-26=938-48, β: 956-67=976-87, γ: 996-1002=1014-20). Following each strophe, Athena responds with anapestic lines of varying lengths: 11 lines (927-37, 1003-13, 1021-31); and 8 (948-55, 968-75, 988-95). The final strophe and antistrophe begin with χαίρετε, χαίρετε (996, 1014).</td>
<td>Predominantly lekythion with some iamb-trochaic rhythms (chorus) Recitative anapests (Athena)</td>
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<td>Play</td>
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<td>12. [A.] Pr.</td>
<td>128 – 192</td>
<td>Singing chorus and chanting actor</td>
<td>Aeolo-choriambic (chorus)</td>
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<td>The daughters of Ocean appear before the chained Titan.</td>
<td>The chorus sing two pairs of strophes α: 128-35=244-51, β: 160-67=178-85; each strophe and antistrophe is followed by anapests from Prometheus (at 136-143, 152-159, 168-177, and 186-192).</td>
<td>Recitative anapests (Prometheus)</td>
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<td>This is the play’s parados.</td>
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<td>13. S. Aj.</td>
<td>201 – 262</td>
<td>Chanting and singing chorus; Chanting actor</td>
<td>Recitative anapests (Tecmessa and chorus)</td>
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<td>Tecmessa and the chorus discuss Ajax’s most recent actions when maddened.</td>
<td>In 201-220 Tecmessa and the chorus employ recitative anapests.</td>
<td>Aeolo-choriambic (chorus)</td>
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<td>In 221-262 the chorus sing a strophic pair, in which each strophe (221-232 = 245-256) is followed by a reply from Tecmessa in anapests (at 233-244 and 257-262).</td>
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<td>14. S. Aj.</td>
<td>879 – 973</td>
<td>Singing chorus; singing and speaking actor</td>
<td>Largely dochmiac (chorus and Tecmessa)</td>
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<td>Tecmessa and the chorus lament over the recently discovered body of Ajax</td>
<td>Lyric dialogue is prefaced by an astrophic epiparodos at 866-878.</td>
<td>Iambic trimeters (Tecmessa)</td>
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<td>The chorus and Tecmessa sing one epiparodos at 866-878.</td>
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<td><strong>15. S. Ant.</strong></td>
<td>801 – 882</td>
<td>Chanting and singing chorus; singing actor</td>
<td>Recitative anapests and iambics (chorus)</td>
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<td>Antigone sings her funeral song before her death in front of a questioning chorus.</td>
<td>Antigone sings two strophic pairs (α: 806-16=823-33, β: 838-52=857-71) and an epode (876-82). In each pair, her strophes are followed by choral utterances: first anapests (817-22, 834-838) and then two metrically corresponding short iambic stanzas (853-56=872-875).</td>
<td>Predominantly aeolo-choriambic (Antigone)</td>
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<td><strong>16. S. Tr.</strong></td>
<td>862 – 895</td>
<td>Chorus and actor speak and sing</td>
<td>Iambic trimeters in 862-878, except 862, 865, and 868 (chorus and nurse)</td>
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<td>The nurse tells an unbelieving chorus of Deianeira’s death.</td>
<td>Astrophic form: from 862-879, chorus and nurse mostly speak in iambic trimeters and from 880-895 the two employ a lyrical mixture.</td>
<td>Lyrical mixture: iambic trimeter (881, 888, 889, 891), iambic dimer (882, 884, 887), dochmiacs (880, 893), bacchiac (890, 892) (chorus and nurse)</td>
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<td><em>Antilabê</em> at 876-877 and 879.</td>
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<td>17. S. OT</td>
<td>1297 – 1368</td>
<td><strong>Speaking chorus and singing actor</strong>&lt;br&gt;The chorus react in shock to Oedipus’ blinding. In 1297-1306 the chorus offer an anapestic prelude, to which Oedipus responds in 1307-11. Oedipus then sings two strophic pairs (α: 1313-18=1321-25, β: 1329-35=1349-55); in the first pair, each strophe and antistrophe is followed by two trimeters from the chorus, while the second pair is divided by a brief exchange consisting of one trimeter from the chorus and agitated verses from Oedipus (1337-46).</td>
<td>Anapests, Iambic trimeter (chorus) Dochmiacs (Oedipus)</td>
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<td>18. S. Ph.</td>
<td>135 – 218</td>
<td><strong>Singing chorus; chanting actor</strong>&lt;br&gt;The chorus sing three strophic pairs; (α: 135-43=150-58, β:169-79=180-90, γ: 201-09); Neopolemus’ anapestic dimeters follow each strophe. This is the play’s <em>parodos</em>&lt;br&gt;After the first antistrophe, a single dimeter from the chorus at 161 breaks up Neopolemus’ reply (159-168). There is <em>antilabē</em> in first line of the third strophe and antistrophe (201, 210).</td>
<td>Aeolochoriambic with some iambic and dactylic elements (chorus) Recited anapests (Neoptolemus) (No Doric e.g. ἑμήν, 148; βιοτῆς, 164)</td>
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<td>19. <em>S. Ph.</em></td>
<td>827 – 864</td>
<td>Singing chorus and chanting actor. The chorus sing one strophic pair (827-38 =843-54); strophe and antistrophe are divided by Neoptolemus’ reply at 839-42. The chorus also sing an epode (855-864).</td>
<td>Mixed rhythms: dactylic, aeolo-choriambic and iambic (chorus) Dactylic hexameters (Neoptolemus)</td>
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<td>Ode to sleep: the chorus sing a prayer to sleep and then urge Neoptolemus to seize the opportunity.</td>
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<td>20. <em>S. OC</em></td>
<td>510 – 549</td>
<td>Singing and speaking chorus and actor. The chorus and Oedipus sing two strophic pairs; each strophe and antistrophe is divided among the two. The first strophic pair (510-20 = 521-32), shared between Oedipus and the chorus, is full of short exclamations (e.g. ἔμοι, ἐξὺ ἐξ). The second strophic pair (533-49) contains several instances of <em>antilabai</em>.</td>
<td>Aeolo-choriambic (first strophic pair) Iambic rhythms and iambic trimeter (second strophic pair)</td>
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<td>The chorus ask Oedipus about his incestuous family.</td>
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<td>21. <em>E. Al.</em></td>
<td>861 – 934</td>
<td>Singing chorus; chanting actor. Admetus utters an anapestic preface (861-871), followed by two strophic 231</td>
<td>Lyric iambics (chorus) Anapests (Admetus)</td>
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<td>Admetus and the chorus return from Alcestis’</td>
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<td>funeral off-stage. Admetus mourns while the chorus admonishes him for his grief.</td>
<td>pairs sung by the chorus (α: 873-877 = 888-894 and β: 903-10 = 926-33). Anaplectic verses of varying lengths from Admetus follow each stanza sung by the chorus. In the first strophic pair, Admetus interjects inarticulate cries (αιστι, ἐ̄, φευ φευ, ῒι ν τ μοι) after each verse sung by the chorus; the second pair has continuous song.</td>
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| 22. E. Hipp. 565 – 600 | Singing and speaking chorus, speaking actor | Dochmiacs (chorus) | Iambic trimeter (Phaedra: except at 569) |
| Phaedra eavesdrops as the nurse talks to Hippolytus. She communicates her shame to the chorus. | Spoken exchange between chorus and Phaedra at 565-568, followed by an astrophic exchange between a singing chorus and Phaedra, who mostly speaks except for ῒι ν τ μοι, αἰστι at 569. The exchange ends (596-600) in trimeters. | Iambic trimeter (chorus: 566, 568, 598) |

<p>| 23. E. Hipp 811 – 890 | Singing and speaking actor and chorus | Alternating dochmiacs and trimeters (chorus and Theseus) |       |
| The chorus first offer a brief lament in 232 | | | |</p>
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<td>24. E. <em>Andr.</em></td>
<td>1173 – 1225</td>
<td>Chorus and Peleus lament</td>
<td>Dactylic rhythms (1st strophic pair: Peleus)</td>
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<td>Singing actor and speaking chorus</td>
<td>Lyric iambics with trimeters (2nd pair: Peleus)</td>
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<td>Anaplectic preface by chorus (1166-1172)</td>
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<td>over Neoptolemus’ body.</td>
<td>Two strophic pairs; Peleus sings both stanzas in the first (α: 1173-1183=1186-96), each of which is separated by two iambic trimeters from the chorus.</td>
<td>Iambic trimeter at 1184-5, 1197, 1200 1203, 1208, 1211</td>
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<td>Scene of prothesis.</td>
<td>Both chorus and Peleus sing the second pair (β: 1197-1213 = 1214-25).</td>
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<td>β is an antiphonal lament containing various cries of mourning (ὅττοτοτοτοῖ).</td>
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<td>25. E. Hec.</td>
<td>1056 –1108</td>
<td>Singing actor and speaking chorus</td>
<td>Dochmiacs, with some anapestic and iambic rhythms (Polymestor)</td>
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<td>Polymestor enters the stage blind, and like a savage beast.</td>
<td>In this astrophic exchange, Polymestor sings two frenzied passages (1056-1084 and 1090-1106), each of which is followed by two trimeters from the chorus at 1085-6 and 1107-8.</td>
<td>Iambic trimeter (chorus)</td>
</tr>
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<td>26. E. Supp.</td>
<td>990 – 1033</td>
<td>Singing actor, speaking chorus</td>
<td>Aeolic rhythm (Evadne)</td>
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<td>Evadne suddenly appears on the cliff above the temple, and reflects on her</td>
<td>Evadne sings one strophic pair, (990-1008 = 1012-1030). Each stanza is then followed by three trimeters from the chorus.</td>
<td>Iambic trimeters (chorus)</td>
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<td>wedding with her now dead husband.</td>
<td>(1009-11, 1031-3)</td>
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<td>27. E. Supp.</td>
<td>1072 – 1079</td>
<td>Singing chorus, speaking actor</td>
<td>Dochmiacs (chorus)</td>
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<td>The chorus and Iphis react to Evadne’s suicide.</td>
<td>This is a brief, astrophic outburst, in which two verses from the chorus alternate with one trimeter by Iphis.</td>
<td>Iambic trimeter (Iphis)</td>
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<td>Some of the chorus’ cries appear extra metrum (ιω, ἐ ἐ).</td>
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<td>28. E. HF</td>
<td>735 – 762</td>
<td>Singing chorus, speaking actor</td>
<td>Dochmiacs (chorus)</td>
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<td>Lycus’ death cries interrupt the chorus’ song.</td>
<td>This impromptu lyric dialogue is also the first strophic pair of the play’s third stasimon.</td>
<td>Iambic trimeter (Lycus)</td>
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<td>The chorus sing one strophic pair (735-748 = 750-761). The first stanza is followed by an ιω μοί μοι from Lycus, whereas the second is interrupted by one trimeter from him at 754.</td>
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<td>29. <strong>E. HF</strong></td>
<td>910 – 921</td>
<td>Singing chorus, speaking actor A messenger arrives and informs the chorus that Heracles has killed his children. This is an astrophic exchange between the messenger and the chorus, with some examples of <em>antilabē</em>. 910 and 911 are iambic trimeters split between the messenger and the chorus; 916 is a full trimeter by the messenger.</td>
<td>Iambic trimeter (messenger) Lyric iambics and dochmiacs (chorus)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. <strong>E. Ion</strong></td>
<td>219 – 236</td>
<td>Singing chorus, chanting actor The chorus address the newly arrived Ion asking him questions related to the sanctuary. This lyric dialogue is part of the play’s <em>parodos</em>, in which the chorus sing two pairs of strophes. It is only the last quarter of the <em>parodos</em>, the second antistrophe that constitutes a lyric dialogue with Ion. In 219-236 choral lyrics are interspersed with Ion’s recitative anapests in irregular order.</td>
<td>Mostly aeolic with some iambic (190 / 201) (chorus) Recitative anapests (Ion)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play</td>
<td>Lines &amp; Context</td>
<td>Notes on Structure &amp; Salient Features</td>
<td>Meter</td>
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<tr>
<td>31. E. Tr.</td>
<td>1209 – 1259</td>
<td>Speaking actor, singing chorus</td>
<td>Lyric iambics and dochmiacs (chorus)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>As Hecuba adorns the body of Astyanax,</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>the chorus lament.</td>
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<td>This is an astrophic exchange, in which</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Hecuba’s trimeters of varying lengths</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>are followed by choral lyric cries.</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>There is some <em>antilabē</em> and broken</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>syntax.</td>
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<td>32. E. El.</td>
<td>860 – 879</td>
<td>Singing chorus and speaking actor</td>
<td>Dactylo epitrite (chorus)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The chorus and Electra react to</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Orestes’ murder of Aegisthus.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The chorus sing one strophic pair</td>
<td>Iambic trimeter (Electra)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(859-65 = 873-79), addressed to</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Electra.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>After the strophe, Electra delivers an</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>iambic response at 866-72.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The chorus also accompany their singing</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>with a hyporchematic dance.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. E. Or.</td>
<td>1369 – 1502</td>
<td>Singing actor and speaking chorus</td>
<td>A mixture of iamb trochaic rhythms (e.g.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>In this astrophic exchange, the slave</td>
<td>1369-74, 1408-15), dochmiacs (1375-9,</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>sings verses of varying lengths and metrical rhythms, which are followed by one trimeter from the chorus.</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>1381-92), lyric anapests (1395-9, 1426-36),</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>and lyric iambics (e.g. 1400-7, 1443-51) (</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>slave)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Iambic trimeter (chorus)</td>
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<td>Play</td>
<td>Lines &amp; Context</td>
<td>Notes on Structure &amp; Salient Features</td>
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<tr>
<td>34. E. <em>Ba.</em></td>
<td>1031 – 1042</td>
<td>Singing chorus and speaking actor</td>
<td>Dochmiacs (chorus)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The chorus converse with a messenger after he announced the death of Pentheus.</td>
<td>In this astrophic exchange, the chorus sing two verses after the news of Pentheus’ death, to which the messenger responds with two spoken lines.</td>
<td>Iambic trimeter (messenger)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. [E.] <em>Rh.</em></td>
<td>23 – 55</td>
<td>Singing chorus and chanting actor</td>
<td>Predominantly aeolo-choriambic with some dactyils (chorus)</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>The chorus of Trojan sentinels are looking for Hector.</td>
<td>The chorus sing a strophic pair (23-33 = 41-51), to which Hector responds with anaepts.</td>
<td>Iambic trimeter (Hector)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>This is the play’s <em>parodos</em>.</td>
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<tr>
<td>37. [E.] <em>Rh.</em></td>
<td>895 – 914</td>
<td>Singing actor and speaking chorus</td>
<td>Enoplian with some ithyphallic and dactylic rhythms (Muse)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play</td>
<td>Lines &amp; Context</td>
<td>Notes on Structure &amp; Salient Features</td>
<td>Meter</td>
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<td>The Muse laments for the dead Rhesus.</td>
<td>The muse sings a strophic pair (895-90 =906-914), in which each stanza is divided by two trimeters from the chorus.</td>
<td>Iambic trimeter (chorus)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 5B. Between Two Actors and the Chorus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Play</th>
<th>Lines &amp; Context</th>
<th>Notes on Structure &amp; Salient Features</th>
<th>Meter</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>38. S. Aj.</td>
<td>348 – 429</td>
<td>Singing protagonist, speaking deuteragonist and chorus.</td>
<td>Anaplectic preface 201-220</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The second pair breaks the pattern: after a series of dochmiacs in 364-66 (=379-81), Ajax speaks a line of trimeters (at 367/382), which initiates a mini conversation held entirely in trimeters (368-371/383-386), with the exception of two spondaic outbursts at 370/385. Tecmessa speaks to Ajax in the strophe (at 368 and 371) and the chorus in the antistrophe (at 383 and 386). Ajax’s final pair is almost monodic, with only two trimeters from Tecmessa dividing Ajax’s strophe and antistrophe.

|            |            | Dochmiacs and iambics (Ajax)            | Iambic trimeter (Ajax, Tecmessa and chorus) |

|            |            |                                      |                                               |

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Play</th>
<th>Lines &amp; Context</th>
<th>Notes on Structure &amp; Salient Features</th>
<th>Meter</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| 39. *S. Ant.* | 1261 – 1346 | Speaking chorus, singing and speaking protagonist, speaking deuteragonist  
Arriving with the body of Haimon, Creon laments the death of his son. A messenger brings news of Jocasta’s death.  
This is the *exodos* of the play.  
Creon first sings two strophic pairs, (α: 1261-69=1284-92 and β: 1271-76=1294-1300) which are interspersed with trimeters from the chorus and the messenger: at 1270 (chorus) and 1293 (messenger).  
After strophe and antistrophe β β six lines of iambic trimeter dialogue between the messenger and Creon follow (at 1277-83 and 1301-05).  
Creon continues with a third and fourth strophes (γ: 1306-11 and δ: 1317-25), which are then followed by their corresponding antistrophes (γ’: 1328-32 and δ’: 1339-46). These are again interspersed with trimeters from the messenger and Creon at 1312-16, from the chorus at 1327-8, and from Creon and the chorus at 1334-9.  
Final anapests from the chorus at 1347-53 end the play. | Iambic trimeter (chorus, messenger, Creon)  
Predominantly dochmiacs (Creon) |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Play</th>
<th>Lines &amp; Context</th>
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<th>Meter</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>40. S. OC</td>
<td>117 – 253</td>
<td>Singing and chanting chorus; chanting actors</td>
<td>Aeolo-choriambic (both strophic pairs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The chorus question the recently arrived strangers, Oedipus and Antigone.</td>
<td>The chorus sing one strophic pair (117-37 = 150-169); each strophe is followed by dialogue in anapests: in the first instance between Oedipus and the chorus (138-149) and the second between Oedipus and Antigone (170-175).</td>
<td>Anapests (Oedipus, Antigone, chorus)</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>A second strophic pair (176-191=192-206) is sung between chorus, Oedipus and Antigone.</td>
<td>Dactylic song (chorus at 229-36)</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
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<td>An astrophic part follows in 207-253, which can be divided into two sections: lyric stichomythia with antilabai (208-227, shared between Oedipus and the chorus) as well as songs of the chorus (229-236) and Antigone (237-253).</td>
<td>Aeolic with dactylic rhythms (Antigone’s song at 237-53)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41. S. OC</td>
<td>1447 – 1499</td>
<td>Singing chorus; speaking actors</td>
<td>Predominantly dochmiacs with some iambic rhythms (chorus)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oedipus asks Antigone to send for Theseus as the end of his life approaches.</td>
<td>The chorus sing two strophic pairs (α: 1447-56 = 1463-71 and β: 1477-85 = 1491-99), in which each stanza is followed by trimeters from Oedipus and Antigone, except for the second antistrophe.</td>
<td>Iambic trimeter (Antigone and Oedipus)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Play</td>
<td>Lines &amp; Context</td>
<td>Notes on Structure &amp; Salient Features</td>
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<tr>
<td>E. Med.</td>
<td>131 – 212</td>
<td>This is an astrophic exchange, with an astrophic opening (131-138), in which sung anapests from the chorus are followed by anapests from the nurse (139-143), and then sung anapests from Medea (144-7).</td>
<td>Sung and chanted anapests (Medea, Nurse, chorus)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Medea’s cries inside the house startle the nurse and bring about the entrance of the chorus</td>
<td>This is the play’s <em>parodos</em>. More anapests follow a choral strophic pair (148-59 = 173-83): sung anapests from Medea (160-167), chanted ones from the nurse (1698-172, 184-203).</td>
<td>Predominantly aeolic meter with some dactylic rhythms (134-7) (chorus)</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
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<td>The chorus then sing another astrophic stanza (204-212).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Med.</td>
<td>1271–1281</td>
<td>Singing chorus; speaking actors</td>
<td>Trimeters (boys)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The cries of the boys inside the house interrupt the chorus’ ode.</td>
<td>This brief lyric dialogue occurs during the fifth <em>stasimon</em>, which has two strophic pairs (α: 1251-1260 = 1261-1270 and β: 1273-1292). The boys’ trimeters (at 1271, 1272) interrupt the first strophe of β. The chorus reply to these and the boys again speak at 1277, 1278.</td>
<td>Dochmiacs (chorus)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play</td>
<td>Lines &amp; Context</td>
<td>Notes on Structure &amp; Salient Features</td>
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<td><strong>44. E. Heracle. 73 – 117</strong></td>
<td>The arrival of the chorus interrupts the harm done to Iolaus. The chorus speak two trimeters in answer to Iolaus’ cry.</td>
<td>Singing chorus and speaking actors.</td>
<td>Iambic trimeter (chorus, Iolaus, Herald)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>One strophic pair follows (75-94 = 95-110), with a blend of speakers: the chorus and Iolaus in the first stanza, and the chorus, Iolaus and the herald in the second.</td>
<td>Dochmiacs and lyric iambics (chorus).</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>This is the play’s parodos.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>45. E. Hecuba. 684 – 723</strong></td>
<td>A serving woman brings the body of Polydorus to Hecuba. In this strophic exchange, Hecuba offers agitated lyrics of varying lengths, which are interspersed by trimeters from the chorus and serving woman.</td>
<td>Singing protagonist, speaking chorus and actor</td>
<td>Dochmiacs (Hecuba)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Iambic trimeters (chorus, serving woman)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>46. E. Ion 763 – 807</strong></td>
<td>This is an strophic exchange between Creousa, the old man and the chorus. There is asyndeton (763-5), anadiplosis (783, 789, 799). After 773, each party delivers about two verses each in irregular order.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Dochmiac and iambic rhythms (Creousa, old man)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>As Creousa and the old man lament, the chorus inform them of Apollo’s oracle.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Iambic trimeter (old Man and chorus)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play</td>
<td>Lines &amp; Context</td>
<td>Notes on Structure &amp; Salient Features</td>
<td>Meter</td>
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<tr>
<td>47. E. <em>IT</em></td>
<td>644 – 656</td>
<td>Singing chorus and speaking actor</td>
<td>Dochmiacs (chorus)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The chorus sing a brief lament, which Orestes and Pylades answer.</td>
<td>In this astrophic exchange, the chorus lament in verses of varying length, to which Orestes and Pylades respond with one trimeter.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Iambic trimeter (Orestes, Pylades)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48. E. <em>Ph.</em></td>
<td>1340 – 1353</td>
<td>Singing chorus and actor, speaking actors</td>
<td>Dochmiacs (chorus: 1340-1, 1350-1; Creon: 1345-6).</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Creon and the chorus react to the messenger’s news that Eteocles and Polynices are dead.</td>
<td>A brief astrophic interlude punctuated by some dochmiacs from the chorus as they lament the deaths of the brothers.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Iambic trimeter (Creon, messenger)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49. E. <em>Or.</em></td>
<td>1246 – 1312</td>
<td>Speaking and singing chorus and actor, speaking actor.</td>
<td>Predominantly dochmiacs, with some enoplian cola (chorus and Electra)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Electra instructs the chorus to act as looking guard. They hear Helen’s screams from within.</td>
<td>From 1246-85 Electra and the chorus engage in a strophic exchange (1246-65 = 1266-85).</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>From 1286-1310 the exchange becomes astrophic with more spoken lines.</td>
<td>Iambic trimeter (chorus: 1258-60, 1278-80; Electra: 1251-2, 1271-2, 1286-7, 1291-2, 1297-8; Helen: 1296, 1301)</td>
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</table>
### 5C. Between Three Actors and the Chorus

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Play</th>
<th>Lines &amp; Context</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>50. S. OT</td>
<td>649 – 696</td>
<td>Singing chorus; singing and speaking actors</td>
<td>Blend of iambic and cretics, dochmiac dimeter (chorus)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The chorus attempt to dissuade Oedipus of seeking the truth and leave Creon.</td>
<td>Two strophic pairs (α: 649-60 = 678-90, β: 661-68=690-97); the first strophe is shared between the chorus and Oedipus (649-667) and the second pair between chorus and Jocasta (678-696).</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>In between strophe α and β, there are trimeters between Oedipus and Creon.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<p>| 51. S. El. | 1398 – 1441     | Singing and speaking actors and chorus                               | Dochmiacs and iambic trimeter (Electra, Orestes, Clytemnestra, chorus) |
|           |                 | Electra and the chorus comment as Clytemnestra is killed off-stage by Orestes (strophe). | One strophic pair is sung between Electra, Orestes and the chorus: the strophe (1398-1421) between Electra and the chorus, with the off-stage death cries of Clytemnestra interspersed (1404-05, 1409, 1415-16) and the antistrophe (1422-41) between Electra, Orestes and the chorus. |
|           |                 | Orestes enters the stage confirming his mother’s death to Electra and the chorus as he prepares to kill Aegisthus (antistrophe). | There is no exact responis: Clytemnestra’s lines in the strophe match the lines by Orestes in the antistrophe; likewise some of Electra’s lines in the |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Play</th>
<th>Lines &amp; Context</th>
<th>Notes on Structure &amp; Salient Features</th>
<th>Meter</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>52. S. OC</td>
<td>833 – 886</td>
<td>Singing and speaking chorus and actors</td>
<td>Dochmiacs (Oedipus, Creon, Antigone, and chorus)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Oedipus, chorus, Creon and Antigone sing one strophic pair (833-43=876-86).</td>
<td>Iambic exclamation (Oedipus: 833, 876)</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>From 844-875, a series of iambic trimeters fellow, with frequent antilabai.</td>
<td>Iambic trimeter (Oedipus, Creon, Antigone, and chorus)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>strophe correspond to lines by Orestes and the chorus in the antistrophe.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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