



## SOPHOCLES AND THE GREEK TRAGIC TRADITION

Thirteen essays by senior international experts on Greek tragedy take a fresh look at Sophocles' dramas. They reassess their crucial role in the creation of the tragic repertoire, in the idea of the tragic canon in antiquity, and in the making and infinite recreation of the tragic tradition in the Renaissance and beyond. The introduction looks at the paradigm shifts during the twentieth century in the theory and practice of Greek theatre, in order to gain a perspective on the current state of play in Sophoclean studies. The following three sections explore respectively the way that Sophocles' tragedies provoked and educated their original Athenian democratic audience, the language, structure and lasting impact of his Oedipus plays, and the centrality of his oeuvre in the development of the tragic tradition in Aeschylus, Euripides, ancient philosophical theory, fourth-century tragedy and Shakespeare.

The volume is dedicated to Professor Pat Easterling of Newnham College, Cambridge, to mark her seventy-fifth birthday. It has been written by some of her many former pupils and collaborators and recognises the enormous contribution she has made to the study of Greek tragedy and, in particular, of Sophocles.

SIMON GOLDHILL is Professor of Greek, Cambridge University, and a Fellow of King's College. He has published widely on Greek literature and drama, with books including *Reading Greek Tragedy* (1986), *Performance Culture and Athenian Democracy* (co-authored with Robin Osborne, 1999), and *How to Stage Greek Tragedy Today* (2007).

EDITH HALL is Research Professor in Classics and Drama at Royal Holloway, University of London. Her books include *Greek and Roman Actors: Aspects of an Ancient Profession* (2002, co-edited with Pat Easterling) and *Greek Tragedy and the British Theatre 1660–1914* (2005, co-authored with Fiona Macintosh), which was a runner-up for the Theatre Society Book Prize, the Criticos Prize, and the Wheatley Medal.



Pat Easterling in the garden of Wadham College.

# SOPHOCLES AND THE GREEK TRAGIC TRADITION

EDITED BY  
SIMON GOLDHILL AND  
EDITH HALL



**CAMBRIDGE**  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS  
Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town,  
Singapore, São Paulo, Delhi, Tokyo, Mexico City

Cambridge University Press  
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org  
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107404045

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First published 2009  
First paperback edition 2011

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library*

*Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data*

Sophocles and the Greek tragic tradition / edited by Simon Goldhill and Edith Hall.  
p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-521-88785-4 (hardback)

1. Sophocles – Criticism and interpretation. 2. Oedipus (Greek mythology) in literature.  
3. Mythology, Greek, in literature. 4. Tragedy. I. Goldhill, Simon. II. Hall, Edith, 1959–  
III. Title.

PA4417.S68 2008

882.01 – dc22 2008045256

ISBN 978-0-521-88785-4 Hardback

ISBN 978-1-107-40404-5 Paperback

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## *Illustrations*

*Frontispiece* Pat Easterling in the garden of Wadham College.

1. Apulian volute-crater, Antikensammlung, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin.

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## Contributors

ANGUS BOWIE held his first post as a Research Fellow at Emmanuel College, Cambridge (1974–7), before becoming Lecturer in Greek at Liverpool University (1977–81). He is currently Lobel Praelector in Classics at the Queen's College, Oxford and CUF Lecturer in Classical Languages and Literature. His publications include *The Poetic Dialect of Sappho and Alcaeus* (New York 1981), *Aristophanes: Myth, Ritual and Comedy* (Cambridge 1993), and an edition and commentary on Herodotus Book 8 (Cambridge 2007). He is also the author of articles on comedy, tragedy, historiography, Virgil and religion.

PETER BURIAN is Professor of Classical and Comparative Literatures, and Theater Studies at Duke University. He is the author of numerous articles on ancient Greek literature, the theory of literary translation, and the reception of classical texts, in addition to his commentaries on Aristophanes' *Birds* (Bryn Mawr 1991) and Euripides' *Helen* (Warminster 2007). He has also published translations of Greek tragedy and edited *Directions in Euripidean Criticism: A Collection of Essays* (Durham, NC 1985).

RICHARD BUXTON is Professor of Greek Language and Literature at the University of Bristol. He works on ancient Greek literature (especially tragedy), and on ancient mythology and religion. His books include *Persuasion in Greek Tragedy* (Cambridge 1982) and *Imaginary Greece* (Cambridge 1994, now translated into four languages). He has edited *From Myth to Reason?* (Oxford 1999) and *Oxford Readings in Greek Religion* (2000). His book *The Complete World of Greek Mythology* (London 2004) has been translated into nine languages. Since 2006 he has been President of the Foundation for the *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae*. He is currently working on a study of Greek narratives of metamorphosis.

CHRIS CAREY was shaped by Liverpool and Jesus College, Cambridge; he has taught in Cambridge, St Andrews, the USA and London (Royal Holloway and University College London) and has been guest teacher at Leiden, Belgrade and Budapest. His research interests include early Greek poetry, Greek oratory

and law, and drama. His most recent publication is the Oxford Classical Text of Lysias (2007).

**PAUL CARTLEDGE** is the inaugural A. G. Leventis Professor of Greek Culture at the University of Cambridge, and a Professorial Fellow of Clare College. He holds a visiting Hellenic Parliament Global Distinguished Professorship at New York University. He has authored and edited numerous books, most recently *Eine Trilogie über die Demokratie* (Stuttgart). Forthcoming in 2009 are *Ancient Greece: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford) and *Greek Political Thought in Practice* (Cambridge). He holds the Gold Cross of the Order of Honour, awarded by the President of the Hellenic Republic, and is an Honorary Citizen of Sparta.

**SIMON GOLDHILL** is Professor of Greek at Cambridge University. He did his PhD under Pat Easterling's supervision. He has since published widely on Greek literature, including *Reading Greek Tragedy*, *The Poet's Voice*, *Foucault's Virginity*, *Who Needs Greek?* and most recently *How to Stage Greek Tragedy Today*, and *Jerusalem: City of Longing*. He is Director of the Cambridge Victorian Studies Group, and a Fellow of King's College, Cambridge.

**EDITH HALL** is Professor of Classics and Drama at Royal Holloway, University of London, where she also directs the Centre for the Reception of Greece and Rome. While a lecturer at Oxford University in 1996 she co-founded the Archive of Performances of Greek and Roman Drama with Oliver Taplin. Her books include *Inventing the Barbarian* (1989), an edition of Aeschylus' *Persians* (1996), *Greek and Roman Actors* (2002, co-edited with Pat Easterling), *Greek Tragedy and the British Theatre* (2005, co-authored with Fiona Macintosh), *The Theatrical Cast of Athens* (2006), and *The Return of Ulysses: A Cultural History of Homer's Odyssey* (2008). She is currently working on a book entitled *Classics and Class*.

**ISMENE LADA-RICHARDS** is Reader in Greek Literature and Culture at King's College, London. She is the author of *Initiating Dionysus: Ritual and Theatre in Aristophanes' Frogs* (Oxford 1999), *Silent Eloquence: Lucian and Pantomime Dancing* (London 2007) and numerous articles on Greek and Latin literature, the performative dimension of Athenian drama and the pantomime genre. Her next project is a study of ancient pantomime's afterlife in eighteenth-century England and France.

**FIONA MACINTOSH** is Reader in Classics at the Archive of Performances of Greek and Roman Drama and a member of St Cross College, Oxford. Her publications include *Dying Acts: Death in Ancient Greek and Modern Irish Tragic Drama* (Cork 1994) and with Edith Hall, *Greek Tragedy and the British Theatre 1660–1914* (Oxford 2005). She is currently editing *The Ancient Dancer*

*in the Modern World* and has co-edited numerous other volumes including *Medea in Performance 1500–2000* (Oxford 2000), *Dionysus Since 69: Greek Tragedy at the Dawn of the Third Millennium* (Oxford 2004), and *Agamemnon in Performance 458BC to AD2004* (Oxford 2005).

CHRISTOPHER PELLING is Regius Professor of Greek at Oxford University. He has written about Plutarch and Shakespeare before in his Cambridge commentary on Plutarch's *Life of Antony* (Cambridge 1988) and in *Plutarch and History* (London 2002). His other books include *Literary Texts and the Greek Historian* (London 2000), and he edited *Characterization and Individuality in Greek Literature* (Oxford 1990) and *Greek Tragedy and the Historian* (Oxford 1997). He is currently finishing a commentary on Plutarch's *Life of Caesar*.

MICHAEL SILK is Professor of Classical and Comparative Literature, and from 1991 to 2006 was Professor of Greek Language and Literature, at King's College, London. Forthcoming publications include three books: *Poetic Language in Theory and Practice*; *The Classical Tradition: Art, Literature, Thought* (with Ingo Gildenhard and Rosemary Barrow); *Standard Languages and Language Standards: Greek, Past and Present* (co-edited, with Alexandra Georgakopoulou).

OLIVER TAPLIN retired in 2008 from the Tutorial Fellowship he has held at Magdalen College, Oxford since 1973. He has held the title of Professor at Oxford since 1996; and he co-founded the Archive of Performances of Greek and Roman Drama there with Edith Hall in the same year. His first book was *The Stagecraft of Aeschylus* (1977), and his most recent is *Pots and Plays* (2007). The leading motif of his work has been the reception of poetry and drama through performance in both ancient and modern times. He has made sustained efforts to participate in the practice as well as the scholarship of the theatre, and harbours ambitions of translating Greek tragedies for performance.

KOSTAS VALAKAS is Associate Professor of the Theory and Interpretation of ancient Greek Drama at the Department of Theatre Studies in the University of Patras, Greece. He has published papers on the three extant tragedians as well as on language, political themes and performance in ancient Greek theatre, and is currently working on Sophocles and on Aristotle's *Poetics*.

## *Foreword*

*Paul Cartledge*

Pat Easterling was my fairy godmother. When I arrived in Cambridge in October 1979 (immediately from Warwick University, but ultimately from Oxford), I came as the equivalent of a metic: with no College attachment, and no prior connection to the University, I was now a resident but I felt an alien. Pat was Secretary to the Faculty Board of Classics, in some ways a more onerous or at least more all-encompassing role than its equivalent (or equivalents) today. One of the Secretary's tasks was to look after waifs and strays like me, and to assist at my initiation into the mysteries of Cambridge academia. This was done by means of presenting me to the Vice-Chancellor in the Senate House for the Cambridge higher degree that would enable me to practise my allotted tasks of teaching, research, administration, and examination. I chose to take a Cambridge PhD (by 'incorporation' of my Oxford DPhil). Pat held my hand, literally.

In many respects and aspects she has been my hand-holding Cambridge fairy godmother ever since that autumn day of 1979. It is thanks to her that very soon after I arrived the seeds were sown of my contribution to *The Cambridge Companion to Greek Tragedy*: a small group of us – Cynthia Farrar, Malcolm Schofield, Pat and I – would together read and discuss, politically, a number of archetypal tragedies, beginning with *Antigone*.

A decade or so later, it was Pat who as Chairman of the national JACT Greek Committee pushed me gently in the direction of Aristophanes, another playwright to be read politically – or so it still seems to me. Closer to what soon became my home, it was Pat again who (with Geoffrey Lloyd) was the prime mover in 1982 in instigating the new Part II Classics option of Group X (for cross-over, interdisciplinary study), an innovation that I take to be a clear marker of what remains distinctive of Classics at Cambridge. Thinking rather of classical outreach, I would single out the achievements of the Cambridge Greek Play Committee (responsible for Cambridge's triennial play), which Pat has served selflessly for five decades and more; to that dedication of hers I owe an involvement of my own that

has been remarkably exhilarating and fulfilling. Because of these and other quite unobtrusive but career-defining interventions of hers it is for me a huge pleasure and honour to have been invited to write these few words of encomium and personal reflection on a relationship I cherish above almost all others, in intertwined academic-personal terms.

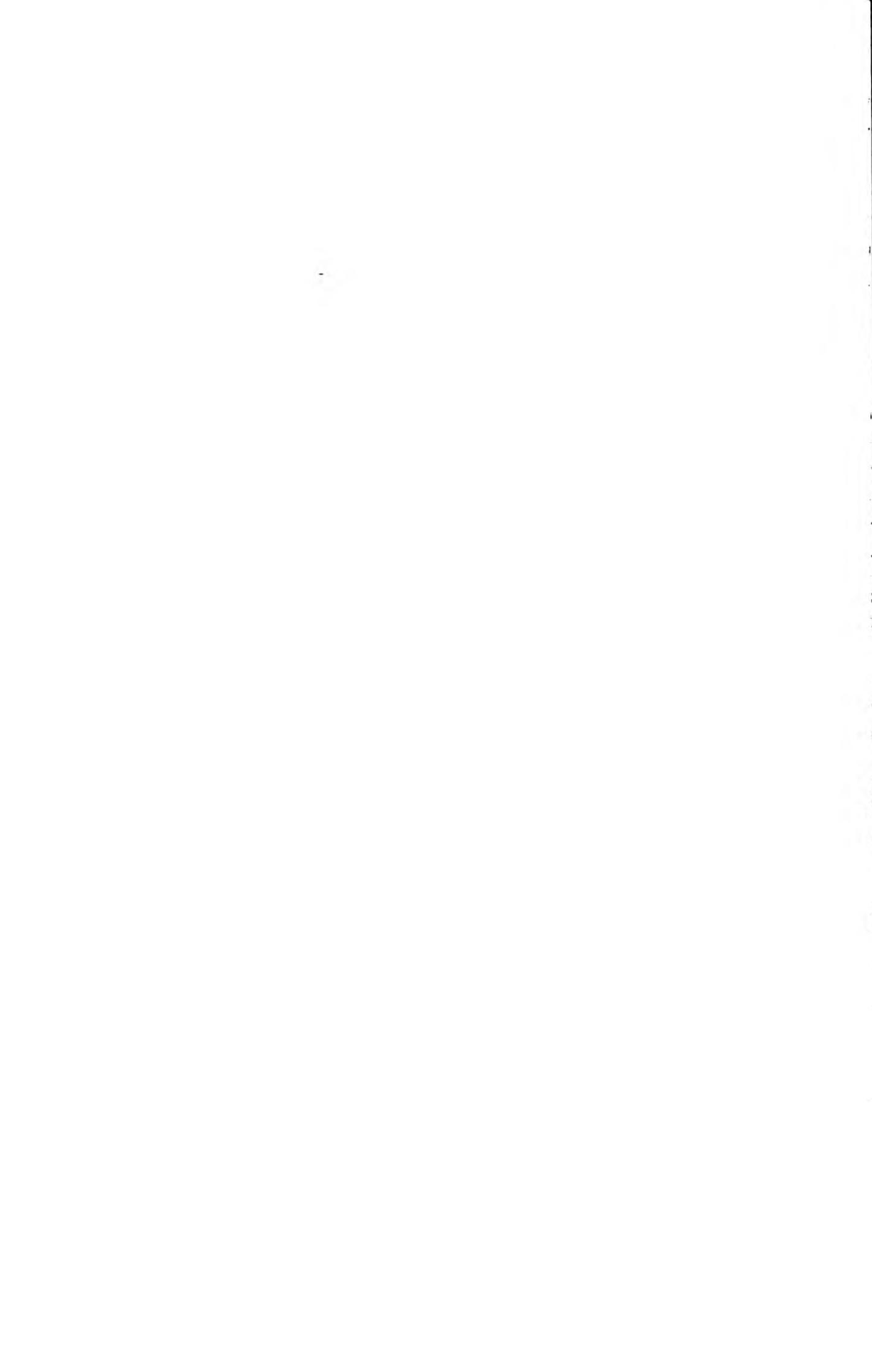
But I conclude on a more impersonal note, trying however inadequately to register the immensity of her general impact on the world of scholarship. Pat's academic record of publication is just that: on public record, for both admiration and emulation. It hardly takes a genius to detect the Sophoclean thread that runs through it from her palaeographic debut in 1960 to her most recent Byzantine and Classical lucubrations on that extraordinarily creative figure. This Sophoclean orientation is also, aptly enough, of more general moment. For, according to *Le Monde des livres* (25 January 2008), we are reliving *le siècle de Sophocle* (a reference to a recent 900-page tome by Jacques Jouanna). Few in our time have made anything like as major a contribution to our understanding of Sophocles as has Pat Easterling. So here, by way of an envoi, is an unattributed 'fragment' (no. 771) of the master, a characteristic utterance, in the translation of one of Pat's own masters (Hugh Lloyd-Jones):

And this I know well is the god's nature:  
to clever men he always tells the truth in riddles,  
but to fools he is a poor instructor and uses few words.

We poor fools must make what we can of the divine's ineffable laconism, but clever – and wise – persons such as Pat will solve the riddles that would otherwise disguise the truth from us.

## *Acknowledgements*

We would like to thank Michael Sharp at Cambridge University Press for his encouragement of the project from its inception, the Assistant Editor Elizabeth Noden, Caroline Murray, who took the book so ably through production, the anonymous readers for their helpful comments, Brenda Hall for providing, at very short notice, the excellent index, and Muriel Hall for her scrupulous copy-editing. Others who have helped in a variety of ways include Felix Budelmann, John Easterling, Pantelis Michelakis, and Rosie Wyles. The book is dedicated, of course, to Pat Easterling.



## *Abbreviations*

<i>BMC</i>	British Museum Catalogue
<i>CID</i>	Rougemont, G. (1977) <i>Corpus des inscriptions de Delphes</i> . Vol. 1. Paris
<i>DK</i>	Diels, H. and W. Kranz, eds. (1951–52) <i>Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker</i> , 2 vols. 6th edn. Berlin and Zurich
<i>FGrH</i>	Jacoby, F. (1923–58) <i>Fragmente der griechischen Historiker</i> . Berlin
<i>GVI</i>	Peek, W. (1955) <i>Griechisches Vers-Inschriften</i> . Berlin
<i>IG<sup>2</sup></i>	<i>Inscriptiones Graecae<sup>2</sup></i> , eds. F. H. de Gaertringen et al. Berlin 1924–
<i>KA</i>	Kassel, R. and C. Austin (1983– ) <i>Poetae Comici Graeci</i> . 8 vols. Berlin and New York
Kannicht	See <i>TrGF</i>
<i>LIMC</i>	<i>Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae</i> 1. Zurich 1981
<i>LSCG</i>	Sokolowski, F. (1969) <i>Lois sacrées des cités grecques</i> . Paris
<i>LSS</i>	Sokolowski, F. (1962) <i>Lois sacrées des cités grecques</i> . Supplement. Paris
Peek	See <i>GVI</i>
<i>PCG</i>	Kassel, R. and C. Austin (1983– ) <i>Poetae Comici Graeci</i> . 8 vols. Berlin and New York
Radt	See <i>TrGF</i>
<i>RE</i>	<i>Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft</i> , eds. A. Pauly, G. Wissowa and W. Kroll. Stuttgart and Munich 1893–1980
<i>SIG<sup>3</sup></i>	Dittenberger, W. (1915–24) <i>Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum</i> . 3rd edn. Leipzig
<i>ThesCRA</i>	<i>Thesaurus Cultus et Rituum Antiquorum</i> . Los Angeles 2004–6

*TrGF*

Snell, B., S. Radt and R. Kannicht, eds. *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta*. 4 vols (1971–85), Göttingen. Vol. III *Aeschylus*, ed. S. Radt (1985), Vol. IV<sup>2</sup> *Sophocles*, ed. S. Radt and R. Kannicht (F 730a–g ed. Kannicht) (1999)

## CHAPTER I

### *Sophocles: the state of play*

*Simon Goldhill and Edith Hall*

When Sir Richard Jebb sat down in 1900 to write the preface to the third edition of his commentary on Sophocles' *Antigone*, he wrote as Professor of Greek at Cambridge, a Member of Parliament, and a leading public intellectual. This was the year in which he was knighted for his services to education. He was, and knew he was, Britain's leading expert on Greek tragedy.<sup>1</sup> His writings on Sophocles have remained deeply influential, and for his generation he was an iconic figure, who embodied the summation of classical learning – his name could be readily cited in the *Times* as the authority to close any classical question. But his preface makes rather odd reading today. There is, he wrote 'no better example of ideal beauty attained by truth to human nature' than this tragedy. 'The Parthenon was slowly rising from the Acropolis', and Antigone herself 'bears the genuine impress of this glorious moment in the life of Athens'. She is 'the noblest, and most profoundly tender, embodiment of women's heroism', as the play itself is marked by the 'self-restraint' typical of Greek art.<sup>2</sup> To a modern ear, Jebb's words are strikingly and even paradigmatically Victorian – a term we use here quite without the sniffiness with which this era is so often dismissed by arrogant modernity.

'Ideal beauty' and 'truth to human nature', for example, reveal Jebb's intimate engagement with the German idealist philosophy of Hegel and the German literary critics who followed Hegel,<sup>3</sup> just as this language also reflects the Oxford-led critical flair of Ruskin, Pater, and even the genial, prolific and extremely popular journalistic essays on character and nature written by his local colleague, A. C. Benson – who reveals how deeply such

<sup>1</sup> On Jebb, see now Chris Stray (2007a) with further bibliography. The title page specifies 'Sir Richard Jebb, Litt. D., Regius Professor of Greek and Fellow of Trinity College in the University of Cambridge, and MP for the University: Hon. DCL Oxford; Hon. LLD Edinburgh, Harvard, Dublin and Glasgow; Hon. Doct. Philos., Bologna.'

<sup>2</sup> Jebb (1900a) v–vi.

<sup>3</sup> A useful introduction in Pinkard (2002); for detailed bibliography on nineteenth-century German literary criticism of Greek literature see Holtermann (1999), especially ch. 4.

ideas had penetrated into literary culture by 1900.<sup>4</sup> The idealism and the beauty of tragedy – despite its destructive violence and horrific acts – were a commonplace of Victorian critical writing, and the proof of such values by the criterion of ‘truth to nature’ has roots in Pre-Raphaelite thinking about art as much as in pre-Freudian psychology.<sup>5</sup> Jebb’s critical language spans the technical world of criticism and the general intellectualizing milieu with an easy familiarity.

The recognition of the ‘glory’ of Athens – no modern hesitations about Empire, slavery, or the treatment of women and foreigners here – slips without friction into the evaluation of Antigone herself as ‘noble’ and ‘tender’, two adjectives which are buzz-words for the evaluation of women in Victorian culture, but which find few echoes in modern discussion of the female virtues. This laudatory depiction of Antigone goes back a good way in Victorian writing. In 1845, Thomas de Quincey had extolled Helen Faucit in the role not just as an embodiment of Greek artistic ideals – ‘What perfection of Athenian sculpture! The noble figure, the lovely arms, the fluent drapery! . . . Perfect is she in form; perfect in attitude.’ – but also as ‘Holy heathen, daughter of God, before God was born . . . idolatrous, yet Christian lady’.<sup>6</sup> ‘Noble’ and ‘tender’ bring Antigone firmly into the (Christian) value system of Victorian belief. Jebb’s words are acceptably traditional, that is, as well as authoritative. ‘Self-restraint’ too looks back to the tradition inaugurated by Winckelmann on Greek art, where ‘noble simplicity’ and above all ‘tranquillity’ are privileged evaluations.<sup>7</sup> ‘Self-restraint’ connotes the classical in a pointed way, especially for readers who were not trained to regard torture, sexual abuse of slaves, and imperial exploitation as an expected part of their study of classical culture. Jebb’s words, as he reaches to express the universal value of tragedy in general and of *Antigone* in particular, mark him very much as a figure of his time.

It is an inevitable professional hazard for any scholar, and especially for literary critics, to remain blind to the moment of history at which they write. At one level, this blindness is a condition of social discourse.

<sup>4</sup> On Ruskin’s criticism, see e.g. Landow (1971), Sherburne (1972) and Emerson (1993); on Pater, see Iser (1987), Evangelista (2003) and Osbourn (2005); A. C. Benson, the Master of Magdalene College, probably less well-known today than his brother the novelist E. F. Benson, wrote several volumes of essays collected from his writing for periodicals; *From a College Window* (1906), for example, went through at least four editions and fifteen impressions.

<sup>5</sup> On the Pre-Raphaelites, see Prettejohn (1999) and (2005) each with further bibliography. It is revealing to find Zeuxis described as ‘the Millais of his day’ in a standard mid-Victorian introduction to Sophocles (Collins (1871) 2n.).

<sup>6</sup> De Quincey (1863) 225; Marshall (1998) 204–5; both cited and discussed in Hall and Macintosh (2005) 328–30. For background see Hall and Macintosh (2005) 316–49.

<sup>7</sup> See Potts (1994); Morrison (1996).

Every society has its tacit knowledge, that is, its assumptions, ideologies and deep beliefs that must remain opaque to its citizens. Tacit knowledge functions only in as much as it remains tacit, unrecognized. When such grounding becomes visible, it becomes open to contestation, worry, or mere discussion; and the very process of explicitly recognizing the formerly tacit will always cause disruption – like thinking about how to ride a bike while doing it, or pointing out, as you do it, exactly why you offer to buy a drink for someone in a bar. At this level, critics, like all of us, are children of a particular epoch.

At another level, most academic disciplines have a commitment to continuity: a recognized history is part of what constitutes a discipline as a discipline, after all. Despite the long influence of Thomas Kuhn's concept of paradigm shift, many scientists, especially mathematicians, seem to conceive the history of their subject as a continuing series of attempts to solve a set of problems, where technology and understanding advance, and new problems are added to old ones, which pass away when solved. Euclid and Ptolemy are recognizable and honoured predecessors of Stephen Hawking. (In the humanities, some philologists, for example, have often adopted a similar model in a self-interested appeal to the modern privilege of science.) The aggressive critical reaction to feminist scholars who have suggested that male bias affects science itself (and not merely the messy business of appointments or behaviour in the workplace) may indicate how deeply felt this sense of an unsullied continuity of a subject can be.<sup>8</sup> This normative model of continuity – 'we are dealing with the same issues as faced our ancestors in the field' – can hide just how local, historically contingent and culturally specific a scholar's engagement is likely to be.

At a third level, the excitement and pressure of the here and now, with its infighting and obsessions and petty malices, all too often obscure a writer's place in history. What seems to be a pressing concern, a crucial point, a telling knock-down argument, emerges in the grand scheme of things as trivial, personally motivated, and wholly parochial. Who knows if the fate of their prose is to become a bizarre example of the oddity of the era for some future, even newer New Historicist?

There are barriers, then, to understanding the historical moment at which we write. (And this stricture applies to the authors of these words, however self-conscious they wish to be especially concerning the

<sup>8</sup> Harraway (1989); (1991) on modern biology is particularly telling. Psychoanalysis has been a particular battle ground since Mitchell (1974) and Gallop (1982) – but also all aspects of medical ethics and practice on women's bodies: see e.g. Stanworth (1987); Keller (1985); Keller and Longino (1996); and the many studies of science and gender in history.

contemporary interest in self-reflexive criticism). But this has never stopped critics reflecting on the development of their subject, or trying to indicate what makes their time special or just different. And there are moments when such reflection seems particularly apposite. 1900 is one of those moments. It is apposite partly because the turn of a century is always likely to prompt reflections on times passed and time to come, and never more so than in 1900, when the Victorians were acutely aware of the ending of an era and a sense of transition (which the death of the queen the next year re-enforced). This was a year to make beginnings. Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams* – symbolically – has 1900 on the title page, though it appeared in 1899; in Germany Max Planck published his study of quantum theory in 1900 and the first Zeppelin flight took place; in North America the first popular and available camera was produced by George Eastman; in Britain the Labour Party was founded – and, in classical archaeology, Arthur Evans bought the land in Crete which would reveal Knossos to the world. The Victorian age, and the end of the nineteenth century especially, was obsessed with progress, change and the advance of man. (The rapid expansion of the newly industrialized city brought a heightened sense of the loss of the old ways, much as science was proudly parading the triumph of the new ways: the nineteenth century was fascinated by its own self-awareness of modernity, and discussed it – performed it – in many arenas from Darwin or Marx's ideas of human development through science's challenge to religion to the railways' change of the countryside.) As many a Victorian noted, 1900 is in this sense a perfect moment to explore the change into modernity.<sup>9</sup>

But 1900 also seems to us a particularly good point to reflect on the sea changes in Western appreciation of Sophocles (and Greek tragedy in general). Of course, despite the importance of 1900 as a self-aware moment of change for the Victorians, there is bound to be a strong element of the arbitrary in choosing any one year to focus a discussion of so complex and diffuse an issue as the changing cultural and intellectual understanding of Sophocles. We could have begun in 1888 in the ancient Roman theatre at Orange, with Jean Mounet-Sully's first epoch-making performance as Oedipus in Lacroix's *L'Oedipe roi*, the realization of the role that influenced Freud, whose understanding of the Oedipus myth changed intellectual as well as theatrical history.<sup>10</sup> We could easily have looked back to the 1870s and seen an instrumental figure in, say, Lewis

<sup>9</sup> A huge bibliography on the Victorian understanding of the past could be given: ours would include Melman (2006), Stocking (1987), Turner (1981), Jenkyns (1980), Bann (1995), Burrow (1981).

<sup>10</sup> See Macintosh (1997) and (2009); Goldhill (2002) 108–78.

Campbell, whose involvement in stagings of tragedies in St Andrews town hall and a private theatre in Edinburgh, and whose championing of plays such as *Trachiniae* against the criticism of Schlegel could be seen to have turned the tide in favour of modern performance of Greek tragedy.<sup>11</sup> We could have chosen the 1880s and pointed to the importance of Sophocles in the movement for women's education as *Electra* and *Antigone* became staples of the performance repertoire in women's colleges such as Girton in Cambridge,<sup>12</sup> and the suffragist painter Evelyn de Morgan used Sophocles' Deianeira in one of her reconceptions of mythological figures from a woman's perspective.<sup>13</sup>

We could equally easily have looked forward to 1912 when the substantial papyrus fragment of Sophocles' satyr play *Trackers* was first published, and to the problems that scholars experienced when they tried to reconcile its ribald tone with the widespread view that Sophocles was 'a kind of enlightened bishop', as E. M. Forster put it.<sup>14</sup> W. H. D. Rouse damned *Trackers* with faint praise as 'quite amusing' in *The Classical Review*,<sup>15</sup> while the disappointed F. G. Kenyon concluded that 'the poet did not trouble himself greatly over this class of composition, but was content to produce a passable libretto'.<sup>16</sup> On others, however, such as the high-minded Gilbert Murray, the poetry apparently made a properly Sophoclean 'impression of rare beauty',<sup>17</sup> and trainee scholars were encouraged to argue that Sophocles had morally improved the character of the satyrs relative to their gross licentiousness in other poets.<sup>18</sup> But although we could have entered the story of Sophoclean reception at any of these points, Jebb is an iconic figure of lasting influence whose work can stand as a symbol for the Victorian enterprise of Sophoclean scholarship – and there is consequently a particular rhetorical value at least in starting our reflections with Jebb in his study in Cambridge in 1900.

Jebb's position as an academic and as an intellectual could certainly be more fully explored. His reading of German scholarship ties him into a modernizing school in Britain. Classical scholarship, for all its influence within the education system and the culture of the country, was correctly perceived to be lagging behind the scholarly advancements in Germany.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>11</sup> See Hall and Macintosh (2005) 430–61. <sup>12</sup> See Hall (1999).

<sup>13</sup> See the cover of this book and Lawton Smith (1997–8) 5. <sup>14</sup> In *The Longest Journey* (1907).

<sup>15</sup> Rouse (1912) 235. <sup>16</sup> Kenyon (1919) 6.

<sup>17</sup> Murray (1917) 233. An experiment with performing *Trackers* was conducted in Germany as early as 1913, according to its first editor (Hunt (1914) 83).

<sup>18</sup> Murphy (1935) 206. *Trackers* has been routinely ignored in book-length studies of Sophocles and his drama, as the indexes to e.g. Whitman (1951) and Winnington-Ingram (1980) demonstrate.

<sup>19</sup> See Stray (1996) and (1998).

Jebb was a scholar who had strong personal and intellectual ties with Europe. A national perspective is formed in relation to other national traditions (especially at this time), and Jebb's commentary is making a particular claim about what great scholarship and a monumental work should look like: his commentary stands, self-consciously, on a cusp for British scholarship on Sophocles, moving it away from the torpor of the mid-century. Tragedy as a genre also played a particular role in the literary and scholarly imagination. George Eliot – say – or Thomas Hardy integrated tragic perspectives via their reading of Greek into the structure and moral expectation of their novels.<sup>20</sup> Matthew Arnold in his opposition of Hebraism and Hellenism, and in his defence of studying Greek as opposed to science, made a special place for Sophocles – the 'mellow glory of the Attic stage', who 'saw life steadily, and saw it whole'.<sup>21</sup> Sophocles had a particular image. He was often termed 'pious'; his role as a general – a figure of public administration, like Jebb – was cherished. He had neither the craggy difficulty of Aeschylus, nor the cynical difficulty of Euripides. Sophocles was judged – as Aristotle was seen to encourage – the most perfect writer of the most perfect period of literature, the classic of the classical.<sup>22</sup> To work on tragedy and on Sophocles was to go to the heart of the Victorian canon.

The very form of a commentary – the most authoritative and important form for classical scholarship at the time – put Sophocles' language into central focus. Knowing Greek was a badge of honour for the Victorian gentleman (and like most badges, it was tarnished, flaunted, flashed and mocked in multiform ways in practice).<sup>23</sup> Jebb's commentary not only aimed to take the understanding of Sophocles' Greek to a new level, but also, and quite shockingly, did so by writing in English and by including a facing-page English translation. It is hard now to recover how polemical this decision was. It moved away from the decent obscurity of Latin notes and the outsider's barrier of the Greek alphabet to what was correctly seen as a popularizing gesture (attacked and defended as successful/vulgar; accessible/letting down the side of real scholarship: the terms of the debate in Classics have barely shifted on this issue).<sup>24</sup> In 1900, however, the commentary on all the extant plays was now complete. It had been received and celebrated. Jebb's position was publicly marked by his knighthood that

<sup>20</sup> On Eliot see Easterling (1991a) as well as Jenkyns (1980) 112–32.

<sup>21</sup> Phrases from Arnold's poem 'To a Friend'. See Anderson (1965), with Collini (1994).

<sup>22</sup> See Jenkyns (1980) 87–111.

<sup>23</sup> See e.g. Vasunia (2005) and (2007) on knowledge of Greek as a requirement for the Indian Civil Service; Hall (2007b) 75–7 on gentlemanly translation; for less reverent attitudes see Hall and Macintosh (2005) chs. 12–15 and Richardson (2007).

<sup>24</sup> See Stray (2007b).

year. When he writes the new preface of the *Antigone*, he writes with the fullest weight of authority that Victorian institutional power could bestow. All of these forces – and more besides – would be necessary to locate Jebb's masterpiece within its cultural context.

But 1900 and Jebb's *Antigone* (third edition) mark a turning point also for what is about to happen. In 1901 Hugo von Hofmannsthal was reading Sophocles ('in a forest', he adds, with typical self-dramatization),<sup>25</sup> when he first conceived a plan for a new translation of *Electra*. His play *Elektra* was first staged in Berlin in 1903, and became an immediate *cause célèbre*. It was bought for twenty-two theatres in the first four days. Three impressions of the book sold out immediately (and more followed quickly). It was taken up by Strauss to form the basis of the libretto for his opera *Elektra*, which had no less success internationally, as the paradigm of new music, trendy, threatening, loud and dangerous. Hofmannsthal's credo was 'let shadows emerge from the blood'. He sought to tear down the white sheets and columns of the pious image of Greek tragedy, and set its violence, disturbance and horror centre stage. His play was profoundly successful in this aim. *Electra* is violent in her hatred of her mother; the play is set in a brooding Mycenaean palace full of images of corrupt and degenerate ritual led by Clytemnestra, a sallow, pale, bloated figure covered in talismans. *Electra* dances herself to death as her mother is brutally slaughtered.<sup>26</sup> Where Jebb could see 'the bright influence of Apollo' everywhere in Sophocles' play, all 'light and purity', where Orestes' confidence is 'as cheerful as the morning sunshine', and the vengeance 'a deed of unalloyed merit' (despite it being a matricide), Hofmannsthal's *Elektra*, the critics determined, was 'bestialized', his heroine 'erotically charged', a 'slave to brute reality', with the 'insistent psychology of lewd cruelty', a decadence and perversity formed by 'sadism', 'hysteria', 'epilepsy'.<sup>27</sup> In short, 'the noble, deeply suffering heroine is turned into a disgusting, hysterical, mad woman for a public of instinct wallahs'.<sup>28</sup> It was, worst of all, 'un-Greek'. For those who saw the celebrated performances of Fiona Shaw or Zoe Wanamaker in Sophocles' *Electra* in the last decade of the 20th century, the long influence of Hofmannsthal's aggressive rereading of Sophocles will be patent.<sup>29</sup>

Hofmannsthal was a leading intellectual light in *fin-de-siècle* Vienna.<sup>30</sup> His new Sophocles was profoundly influenced by anthropology, psychology, and by new theories of dance and ritual – as well as by the fascination

<sup>25</sup> Hofmannsthal (1937) 383–4. <sup>26</sup> Discussed at length by Goldhill (2002) 108–77.

<sup>27</sup> Quotes from introduction of Jebb (1894); and the critics of Hofmannsthal are cited with background and references in Goldhill (2002) 159–60.

<sup>28</sup> Schmid (1940) 501. <sup>29</sup> For detailed discussions of these productions see Hall (1999).

<sup>30</sup> Schorske (1980) remains the best guide.

with degeneracy and the ever-present tyranny of Greece over the German soul. Anthropology, a new discipline, had uncovered a deep and disturbing similarity between the myths of the savage races and the myths of the Greeks.<sup>31</sup> The Greeks played a special role as the honoured forefathers of Western civilization, a genealogy designed to justify political and cultural hegemony, while the 'savages', without such a genealogy, deserved and benefited from the exploitation and dominance offered by Western, Christian powers. Anthropology – in the grand theories of McLennan, Main, Morgan, Tylor, Marx, Engels and others – shockingly suggested that since all human races developed along the same lines, there was no privileged race. (A best-seller such as Frazer's *The Golden Bough* was hugely important in the spread of anthropological understandings of ancient myth, and the role of such anthropology in English classical scholarship on tragedy is best seen in the work of the Cambridge Ritualists and Gilbert Murray at Oxford, who also looked to Nietzsche's writing for inspiration.)<sup>32</sup> That Greek myths were as brutal, bloody and irrational as 'savage' myths threatened the self-definition of the cultured elite of Europe. Freud's psychology too, with its recognition of sexual desire, violent feelings, and intrafamilial horrors (with women and children suddenly emerging not as 'tender' and 'noble' and 'sweet' as the ideal image would have it) was equally threatening to self-perception. (Mounet-Sully's famous and long-running performance of Lacroix's Oedipus in Paris subsequent to the Orange premiere thus provides a link between Freud and the next generation of theatrical innovation, as cultural models are woven between different intellectual and social events.)

For Hofmannsthal, Erwin Rohde, a student of Nietzsche, was a particularly influential figure in this area.<sup>33</sup> In Sophocles' *Electra*, the Furies, divine figures of revenge, make no appearance, though they had played a leading role as the chorus of the *Eumenides*, the final play of Aeschylus' great trilogy the *Oresteia*. Rohde argued that the Furies were now *inside* the soul of Electra (and Orestes). Her disturbed and profoundly aggressive feelings were the embodiment of the Furies. Hofmannsthal's *Elektra* fully instantiated this new theory of psychological disturbance (and the actor who first played the role drew on images of the madwomen in Charcot's clinic, the Salpêtrière).<sup>34</sup> This physical expressiveness was integrally tied in with new and interrelated concepts of dance, ritual and the failure of language. At the beginning of the twentieth century, dance was suddenly

<sup>31</sup> See Detienne (1981), with the framework of Stocking (1987).

<sup>32</sup> On the Cambridge Ritualists, see Ackerman (2002); Calder (1991). On Murray, West (1984); Stray (2007c).

<sup>33</sup> Rohde (1925). <sup>34</sup> For pictures and discussion see Goldhill (2002) 108–77.

(again) a hot topic. Isadora Duncan's Greek dancing caused a sensation in London and in Europe.<sup>35</sup> In 1912, Nijinsky's dancing of *L'Après-midi d'un faune* caused a riot in Paris, as did Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* in 1913 (where a woman devotee dances herself to death). Dance and ritual brought together in a heady mix anxieties about the sexualized body, the mechanized body, the irrational body. At the same time, a discomfort with language's expressive ability (the so-called Sprachkrise, paradigmatic of modernist poetics) led many artists to explore dance and ritual as a form of expression. So Reinhardt's celebrated production of Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*, which toured Europe for many years, was famous for its scenes of massive ritual, dark colours, and physical movement. Isadora Duncan, who also toured all of Europe, used Greek images as an inspiration and defence to challenge perceptions of gender, sexuality and the propriety of the body through her performances of free dance. Hofmannsthal's impassioned *Elektra*, dancing herself to death, captures these different strains of artistic and intellectual concern in one brilliant image.

There are many further ways the effect of the performance of Hofmannsthal's *Elektra* (and Strauss' opera) could be discussed. But enough has been said, we hope, to indicate first how an understanding of Sophocles, in scholarship as on the stage, is always formed within specific intellectual, artistic, social and political frames. If we want properly to understand Jebb's Sophocles, say, or Hofmannsthal's Sophocles, we need to explore their cultural and historical context. But we also hope that for all the obvious rhetorical opportunism in juxtaposing Jebb in 1900 and Hofmannsthal in 1901, and for all the insufficiencies of the brief history offered for each, it will also become strikingly clear how much of twentieth-century criticism has developed in response to the tensions we have been exploring by our juxtaposition of the two. (It is not by chance that Jebb explicitly engages with Wilamowitz, while Hofmannsthal, particularly through Rohde, turns back to Nietzsche. The argument between Wilamowitz and Nietzsche – an event of the previous generation – about the 'philology of the future' hangs over much of the later polemical development of classical scholarship.) The scholarly tradition of philological analysis has continued, of course, sometimes with Jebb's range and abilities, sometimes with a more restricted scope and ambition; Hofmannsthal's Sophocles in turn helps inaugurate a long line of criticism informed by psychoanalysis, anthropology, politics, and what is now called gender studies. One question provoked by our title *Sophocles and the Tragic Tradition* is precisely the degree to which

<sup>35</sup> See Daly (1995). For the impact of ancient drama on modern dance history, see Macintosh (2010).

contemporary criticism at the beginning of the twenty-first century relates to the criticism at the beginning of the twentieth. Can it, should it, will it escape the agendas established by nineteenth-century scholarship and its discontents?

In 1904, Karl Reinhardt joined Wilamowitz's seminar in Berlin. In 1933 he published his book *Sophocles*. Reinhardt, as Hugh Lloyd-Jones has pointed out, can be understood as the intellectual child of an (unholy) marriage of Wilamowitz and Hofmannsthal, with Nietzsche and Stefan George as godparents.<sup>36</sup> (We would want to add Heidegger into the mix, and note that since Nietzsche taught Reinhardt's father, there is also some unhealthily incestuous intellectual propagation here). Reinhardt was fascinated by the relation between god and man in *Sophocles*, and sought to escape 'the dryness and materialism into which the dominance of historicism had led German scholarship'.<sup>37</sup> His own statement of purpose, as is normal for the period, is lapidary but telling. His book is 'an attempt to examine Sophocles' work by means of comparisons, in order to rescue it from certain prevalent methods of interpretation which succeed only in obscuring it'.<sup>38</sup> He aims to read the plays to uncover 'the relationship between god and man and man and man . . . as it develops scene by scene and play by play'.<sup>39</sup> In this bare manifesto he is both setting himself against the fragmentation, the linguistic focus, and the historical approach of the most traditional commitments of the commentary, and also aligning himself with the more extensive statements of principle of the New Criticism in America. Reinhardt aimed not to explore the author's biography as a means of access to meaning, nor the reader's sentiments, but the work's structure, its 'objective form'. 'Coherence', 'integration' and 'form' became the watchwords, and Reinhardt's work helped establish the critical agenda for the next forty years.

H. D. F. Kitto, for example, in England in 1933 (with new editions in 1950 and 1960, and still in print), wrote trenchantly in his book *Greek Tragedy*: 'A book on Greek tragedy may be a work of historical scholarship or of literary criticism; this book professes to be a work of literary criticism. Criticism is of two kinds: the critic may tell the reader what he so beautifully thinks about it all; or he may try to explain the form in which the literature is written. This book attempts the latter.'<sup>40</sup> The oppositions of Kitto's prose are strongly articulated, as ever. He dismissed the historicism of a Wilamowitz, the sentiment of a Ruskin or Pater, in the name of 'form'.

<sup>36</sup> Lloyd-Jones in Reinhardt (1979) xv-xxviii.    <sup>37</sup> Reinhardt (1979) xvi.

<sup>38</sup> Reinhardt (1979) ix.    <sup>39</sup> Reinhardt (1979) 1.    <sup>40</sup> Kitto (1960) v.

For Kitto, what's more, the author of another, equally influential book entitled *Form and Meaning in Drama* (1956), form was a dramaturgical concept, and not merely analytical: he talked happily about the patterning of scenes on stage from the perspective of an audience (an interest that took institutional shape when in 1947 he helped found the first Chair of Drama at the University of Bristol).<sup>41</sup> Maurice Bowra in 1941 in his *Sophoclean Tragedy*, although he explicitly disagrees with Kitto about the value of historical criticism, nonetheless writes: 'drama seems to follow patterns, and at the end of the play we have found an idea of what the pattern is, of what the play "means" or is "about"'.<sup>42</sup> And Bowra, like Kitto and Reinhardt (who cite each other), finds meaning specifically in the relation of god and man, and in man's relation to the forces greater than himself: what Cedric Whitman in full Romantic strain in Harvard calls the 'metaphysics of humanism'.<sup>43</sup> So Bernard Knox, in one of the most influential books on Sophocles since the Second World War, *The Heroic Temper* (1964), both takes as his theme the hero as the key figure for exploring the limits of man in relation to the divine, and also seeks to explore it through the plays' 'recurrent pattern of character, situation and language'.<sup>44</sup> Knox has spoken about how his wartime experiences fighting with the resistance in Italy – oddly enough, in the next valley to the Italian Sophoclean scholar, Pietro Pucci – influenced his understanding of heroism, and of male communities: his ideas of masculinity develop from a very particular set of circumstances, but find expression through exploring 'recurrent patterns' in dramatic form.<sup>45</sup> In turn, R. I. P. Winnington-Ingram, who names Bowra, Kitto, Reinhardt and Knox among the greatest influences on him, when he collects his essays of forty years' reflection in *Sophocles: an Interpretation*, writes: 'The main function of criticism is the interpretation of individual works of art . . . each in its own unique form, quality and theme.'<sup>46</sup> Form, pattern, theme – with a perhaps inevitable self-reflexivity, there is indeed a repeated form, pattern and theme in this Anglo-American critical scholarship.

There is a self-conscious construction of a tradition of tragic criticism here over nearly half a century, where each critic strives to be aware of his own place within the tradition and within a contemporary debate (not least by citing one another), and where each appeals to integral form and thematic coherence as the keynotes of critical practice. Each sees the hero in Sophocles as a central figure for articulating the boundaries of

<sup>41</sup> See Hall (1994) xxxii–iii. <sup>42</sup> Bowra (1941) 6. <sup>43</sup> Whitman (1951).

<sup>44</sup> Knox (1964) 9. <sup>45</sup> See the remarks in B. F. Jones (2002). <sup>46</sup> Winnington-Ingram (1980) vii.

human achievement and limitation. Each wants to distinguish their work from narrower philological scholarship (while regularly citing Jebb and showing their proper training in their elegantly scholarly footnotes) – but at the same time each struggles with how to historicize their accounts. It is probably true to say that this tradition of scholarship from Reinhardt to Winnington-Ingram still represents the mainstream in as much as their works remain frequently quoted by contemporary scholars, and in as much as their polemical and fresh works seem for many students the ‘natural’ way to do criticism, that is, the expectation against which novelty should set itself.

From which all too bare account, three brief ways of stating a similar conclusion can be outlined. First, young Turks rapidly become old authorities, and finally the unacknowledged substratum of common knowledge. (Or, as one might say within a Marxist aesthetic, emergent ideology becomes dominant ideology and finally residual normative expectation.) Second, scholarly tradition always has a strange time lag, or chronological kink, in it. Reinhardt in 1933 is still writing against the charismatic influence of Wilamowitz, as he marks the change towards a new style of criticism. Winnington-Ingram, published late in his own retirement in 1980, reflects the teaching and the polemics of his long career.<sup>47</sup> We began by asserting the need for recognizing how scholars are figures of their time. The intellectual genealogy we have just provided (without the cultural and historical context we should by our own principles also have included for each) serves to indicate how difficult it is simply to locate someone ‘in time’ by a chronological indicator as misleadingly blunt as a date. Killing fathers makes a child of every scholar.

Third, the tradition of tragic criticism is in all senses of the word *constructed* (as the title of Part Three of this volume suggests). It should by now be a commonplace that no-one is without methodology: the only question is how explicit and self-aware the expression of such a methodology can or will be. From Reinhardt to Winnington-Ingram we have seen each scholar constructing his (and they are all men) own sense of his place in and against the approaches of their contemporaries and their forebears – creating and exploring a genealogy for themselves. What’s more, ‘from Reinhardt to Winnington-Ingram’ is our construction of a genealogy. Any attempt to write a history of the tradition of Sophoclean criticism, even one as truncated as this, however careful with apology and self-awareness,

<sup>47</sup> His piece on ‘Clytemnestra and the vote of Athena’, when it reappeared in Winnington-Ingram (1983), chimed with contemporary feminist scholarship: it was a remarkably prescient piece, years ahead of its time, when originally published in 1948.

will inevitably prompt from some reader a cry of 'how could you not mention so-and-so?' This complaint should not be dismissed merely as some version of scholarly point-scoring. The grounding difficulty of any such historical, genealogical account is to find a proper balance between how individuals see themselves within a historical context, how contemporary readers evaluate a critic, and how later readers looking backwards analyse the place of a critic within a broader framework of influence.

Take, for an example, the barest account of Mikhail Bakhtin.<sup>48</sup> He was exiled by Stalin – though the monograph on Dostoyevsky was published after his arrest – and despite the sympathy of Anatoly Lunacharsky, the Commissar of Education and Enlightenment from 1917–1930, he eked out an existence primarily as a poorly paid school teacher. This official disregard meant that he was at one level largely dismissed or ignored in his own time and in his own language. Lunacharsky's sympathetic review of the Dostoyevsky volume and subsequent efforts to retain some of his ideas in the public domain kept him, at best, as an underground memory. (As Emerson writes, 'Lunacharsky's account of Bakhtin's book did the fledgling scholar an enormous service. Modestly enthusiastic, politically correct, perhaps even cunningly naïve, it was instrumental in saving Bakhtin's life.')<sup>49</sup> The few other reviews of Bakhtin's work after his arrest were uniformly hostile. Nonetheless, Bakhtin wrote criticism as if he were an avatar of the grandest tradition of a unified European culture (as in a sense he was, having studied philosophy and literature in the department of Classical Philology at the University of St. Petersburg at the time when it was being made world-famous by the western-facing titans Michael Rostovtzeff and Thaddeus Zielinski); eventually, after his death, he was translated into French, where he became popular for a generation of post-modern French critics, and then into English, for an Anglo-American group of critics seeking to move deconstructionist criticism into a more socially embedded form. 'Bakhtinian' now loosely describes a style of criticism. Yet for most classicists his actual work on classics remains either a closed book, or alternatively something to be worked round to make use of his other insights. For many students, his ideas are approached second-hand, and, especially within the Anglo-American tradition, without the deep-seated radically political framework integral to the project. Indeed, his comments on drama are so exiguous and dismissive that it is hard to see how he could have become such a guide for ancient theatre. How, then, should

<sup>48</sup> The following account is indebted to Emerson (1997).

<sup>49</sup> Emerson (1997) 78. Lunacharsky's defence of Bakhtin in his essay 'Dostoyevsky's "plurality of voices"' is available in English translation in Lunacharsky (1965) 79–106.

a history of Russian criticism in the 1920s treat Bakhtin? As a nobody? A rebel looking for followers? A prophet of things to come who mysteriously anticipated by many decades the socially inflected methods of discourse analysis that engage our interests today? Or 'simply' a great thinker awaiting discovery? The active work of constructing tradition always brings its own oversimplifications. The necessity of those flawed oversimplifications is one reason why a certain blindness to one's own historical moment is a critical inevitability.

The challenge to historical criticism initiated by Reinhardt took a different turn in the last quarter of the twentieth century, as did his unwillingness to follow in the tradition of his teachers' commitments to a certain style of philology. The Paris school, led by Jean-Pierre Vernant and Pierre Vidal-Naquet, like Hofmannsthal before them, was deeply influenced by anthropology, psychology, the study of myth and the crises of language.<sup>50</sup> (As much as the generation from Reinhardt to Winnington-Ingram engaged fully with the then dominant New Criticism, the scholarship of these later decades especially in subjects beyond classics, such as psychology and anthropology, seemed firmly under the aegis of Nietzsche, as if he had simply won his battle with Wilamowitz. This had a striking impact on classics, where the arguments between traditionalists and modernists became virulent again). But the anthropology was now structural anthropology; the psychology was Freud's and Meyerson's historical psychology, and later Lacan's rereading of Freud; the study of myth was structuralist, as epitomized by Lévi-Strauss; the linguistics was now influenced by Saussure, and later by Derrida.

Three arguments were particularly influential and need outlining, although they have now become extremely familiar. First, the 'tragic moment' became a way of rediscovering tragedy for history. Vernant argued that tragedy in Athens took place at a particular historical juncture, which could be put in the crudest terms as the clash between a Homeric world of mythic norms and a civic world of legal norms. In Homer, divinities take direct part in action, from organizing the story to stopping an arrow; in the courtroom and in the democratic polity in general, humans are by definition responsible for their own actions, and judged as such. Tragedy, argued Vernant, articulates in dramatic form the tension between these concepts of the human subject. So Oedipus in Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* is an individual who struggles to make sense of his environment, to control

<sup>50</sup> See Zeitlin's Introduction in Vernant (1991) for an introduction to Vernant, and Leonard (2005) for his place in intellectual history. Also Hartog, Schmitt and Schnapp (1998) on Vidal-Naquet.

events, to do things, but is constantly enmeshed in the web of divine predetermination. The play explores the tension between human control and what might be called god's plan, and as such explores for the citizens the developing tensions within fifth-century thought about the citizen within democracy. For Vernant tragedy comes about because of a 'gap at the heart of social experience'.<sup>51</sup> Tragedy thus becomes a key way of viewing the tensions and ambiguities within fifth-century democratic ideology. In this way, tragedy is recouped for history.

Second, this analysis has a linguistic analogue. Tragic language, argued Vernant, is fissured by its integral awareness of these tensions and ambiguities within social experience. Since Hölderlin's translations of Sophocles (especially his *Antigone* (1805)) so influenced Hegel's discussion of tragedy in *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (1807), the special quality of tragic language – often linked to the sublime – had been lauded. Vernant took this privileging of tragic language in a different direction. 'In the language of tragedy', he writes, 'there is a multiplicity of levels that informs each *agon* . . . The dialogue exchanged and lived through . . . undergoes shifts of meaning as it is interpreted and commented on . . . and taken in and understood by the spectators.' Or, in short: 'Words take on different meanings depending on who utters them.'<sup>52</sup> There is a tension and ambiguity, then, within language on the tragic stage, where one character can say *kratos* and mean 'authority', and another can say it and mean 'force'. Words slip and slide – and for the audience this recognition of the fluid and dangerous power of words is a challenge to the role of language itself within the institutions of democracy, where speech making is the route to power and the means of decision making. Vernant's recognition of the lability of tragic language was a profound challenge to the traditional Victorian linguistics embodied in the philological commentary which saw its role as determining and fixing meaning, not revelling in ambiguity.

Third, these tensions were also worked out in the deep structure of the myths which the plays adapted. For Vernant and Vidal-Naquet, following Lévi-Strauss, polytheistic myths needed to be analysed as a system, a system of oppositions and relations which offered a structured view of reality. Perhaps most influentially, they argued that tragedies ought to be understood in relation to this complex of underlying myths and rituals. So, for Vidal-Naquet, Sophocles' *Philoctetes* reflected in particular the pattern and the meanings of the Athenian *ephēbeia*. The *ephēbeia* was an institution which took young men, on the point of manhood, and trained them into

<sup>51</sup> Vernant and Vidal-Naquet (1981) 4.    <sup>52</sup> Vernant and Vidal-Naquet (1981) 17.

the values of the military citizen. It was surrounded by a series of stories about military behaviour and trickery. The structure of the *Philoctetes*, and its representation of characters, argued Vidal-Naquet, are formed through the language and imagery of the *ephēbeia*. Sophocles' play, where the young man Neoptolemus is taken onto a desert island and faced by two father figures, who give him different lessons in how to be a man, and involve him in plots in which trickery challenges his sense of self, therefore expresses its questions to Athenian normative ideas through the myth and rituals of Athenian culture.<sup>53</sup>

In these interests in myth and ritual, in the powers and dangers of language, in psychology, and in the genre of tragedy as a genre of challenge and contest, Vernant and Vidal-Naquet, for all their ground-breaking analyses, develop, then, a similar set of questions to that which motivated Hofmannsthal and other anthropologically influenced thinkers on tragedy from the early years of the century. Vernant and Vidal-Naquet's work was broadly taken up, however – it would be inconceivable now to study sacrifice, say, in Greek religion, or tragic language without a recognition of their breakthroughs – but their work has also been broadly criticized and extended. Charles Segal's *Tragedy and Civilization*, a landmark book of these years, managed to combine their broadly structuralist method both with an older critical humanism (in part inherited from his teacher Cedric Whitman), and also with a delight in the close reading emphasized by the New Critics. Segal saw the structuralist analysis of the grounding polarities of discourse ('nature/culture', 'wild/tamed', 'raw/cooked' and so forth) as a tool to explore the questions which also motivated the earlier generation of Reinhardt to Winnington-Ingram: how man's limits and achievements are to be understood against the natural world and the power of the divine. Segal shows how hard it is to develop a model of radical change within the tradition of Sophoclean criticism. His work certainly reads quite differently from Jebb's Victorian prose, yet his questions show how deep his roots were in the criticism of an earlier generation.

Particularly in the Anglophone world, Vernant and Vidal-Naquet's work on the identity of the citizen further combined with what is now described as 'early second wave feminism' to produce some especially powerful studies of how tragedy engages with gender and sexuality. Froma Zeitlin and Helene Foley in America, along with Nicole Loraux in France, for example, were instrumental in exploring how tragedy's all-male performance of stories of intrafamilial violence, sexual desire, and gender conflict spoke to

<sup>53</sup> This is discussed at greatest length in Vidal-Naquet (1999).

Athenian civic anxieties and ideological projections.<sup>54</sup> Again, a *tradition* of Sophoclean criticism is under *construction* in such new work, a tradition which would need to take its fascination with Antigone as a gendered political agent back to Hegel at least, as it would need to take its interest in Oedipus as a sexualized figure back to Freud, and its interest in the psychology of family violence in Electra back to Hofmannsthal.

These last three decades of the twentieth century were also remarkable for a quite extraordinary flourishing of Greek tragedy on the stage. Greek tragedy, since its rediscovery and redrafting in operatic guise in the Renaissance, has never left the repertoire. It has also flared up in surprising reconfigurations – as in Victorian burlesque, or as in anti-war protests at the time of the founding of the League of Nations, say. But from the 1970s, there were more productions of Greek plays staged across Europe, America and the rest of the world than ever before. Almost no year passed without a new and significant production in London, Berlin, Paris, or New York. Oliver Taplin's critical studies of ancient Greek plays in action were extremely timely.<sup>55</sup> Jebb had been involved in staging Greek plays, as the authoritative adviser on 'archaeological accuracy'. The profusion of styles of production in the later twentieth century, from Richard Schechner's naked 'hippies' in *Dionysus in 69* (actually 1968), to Wole Soyinka's Yoruba drumming and dancers in *The Bacchae of Euripides: A Communion Rite* (1973), to Harrison's clog-dancing satyrs with their Yorkshire vernacular in his *Trackers* (a play incorporating the fragments of Sophocles' satyr play, premiered in Delphi in 1988), took tragedy into the heart of contemporary theatre. Sophocles changes as the corpus is re-embodied in different productions, and as the imagination of new generations is filled with new images.<sup>56</sup>

We have traced this tradition of Sophoclean criticism, and opened our introduction with it, because we believe that Sophocles is understood through it. We mean this in a strong sense. Audiences, critics, readers, directors, actors, teachers, all approach and appreciate Sophocles as historically embedded individuals, creatures of their time and place, formed and informed through their institutions, their intellectual and social contexts, their cultural horizons and expectations – and we include performances of plays and re-writings and re-imaginings of plays as a fully integral part of this formation of what should be understood by 'Sophocles'. It is hard

<sup>54</sup> See the essays collected in Loraux (1993); Zeitlin (1996); Foley (2001). <sup>55</sup> Taplin (1977), (1978).

<sup>56</sup> See Hall, Macintosh and Wrigley (2004). Also e.g. Flashar (1991); McDonald (1992); Harrigan (1995); Hall, Macintosh and Taplin (2000); Rehm (2003); Dillon and Wilmer (2005); Hall (2007c); Goff and Simpson (2007).

fully to repress the idealistic fantasy of an unalloyed, pure contact with the unalloyed, pure text of Sophocles: but it *is* a fantasy. And it is a fantasy that prevents critical self-understanding. We have used the term *constructing* tragic traditions because we want to emphasize first that the image of tragedy in general and Sophocles in particular is *constructed*, and second that it is a *tradition*: that is, it has a history which needs to be explored, and of which we are happily a part.

There are four main areas where we see this tradition of Sophoclean criticism currently developing with particular excitement, and where we intend this book to make its contribution. The first of these is in the political sphere. One of the most pressing questions in the contemporary critical debate focuses on the relation between tragic drama and the democracy in which it was produced – a question which develops out of Vernant's notion of the tragic moment but extends it into a far more developed historical contextualization. How does tragedy speak to the community in which it was written? Strong claims have been made to locate the plays fully within the institution of the Great Dionysia and to see them specifically as products of democracy.<sup>57</sup> (This is not to deny that the plays circulated to the theatres of non-democratic city-states across the Greek-speaking world with considerable rapidity, or that the plays themselves often speak in universalist tones.)<sup>58</sup> Against this, others have argued that the correct frame is a more broadly conceived *polis* culture, or, less convincingly, that there should – in the name of poetry and beauty and feeling – be no talk of politics at all. In our view, to declare smugly that tragedy has 'nothing to do with party politics' is completely to misunderstand the nature of the debate – and to trivialize it.<sup>59</sup> We are concerned rather to see at what levels and by what strategies tragedy talks to the political principles and daily practices of democracy (and not to read allegories of particular policies). Tragedy discusses agency, judgement, how feelings affect decisions, how persuasion works (and so on), and all of these areas go to the heart of the democratic political process. The first contemporary debate that seems to us to be particularly insistent, then, asks *in what ways* and *to what degree* tragedy is political.

The second debate follows on from this and concerns performance. Here too there is productive broadening of discussion. Where the first and highly influential books dedicated to staging Greek tragedy focused

<sup>57</sup> Goldhill (1986a) and (2000b) with bibliography of criticism of the position to which can be added Rhodes (2003); Carter (2004); and Hall (1989), (1996b) and (2006) 187–8; see also Winkler and Zeitlin (1990); Csapo and Slater (1995); Wiles (1997); Wilson (2000).

<sup>58</sup> See Taplin (1999). <sup>59</sup> For examples of this approach see Garvie (2007) and Griffin (2007).

on determining the characters' exits and entrances from the scripts, and the use of the basic stage devices of the *ekklēma* and the crane, more recent work has explored the cultural history of the *aulos*, say, or of the figure of the actor, or of the interface between visual imagery on pots and the stage.<sup>60</sup> In English it has been a commonplace since the Renaissance to say 'all the world's a stage'. That metaphor is not regularly used in ancient Greek, and never in Greek tragedy.<sup>61</sup> But the interconnections between tragedy as a genre and the other performance sites of the city is an area of critical enquiry that is currently blossoming. The experimental brilliance of Sophocles in the construction of his scenes, his skill at exploring performance itself through his great scenes of deceptive role-playing within the plays, his fascination with how things are seen and spoken, all feed into a discussion of what is meant by performance in the city. Sophocles in and as performance seems to us to be a major area of current concern.

Third, tragic language and Sophocles' language in particular continues to provoke serious scholarship, and often heated argument. On the one hand, better modern commentaries have moved away from the more positivistic aspects of Victorian philology; on the other, analysis of Sophoclean techniques of expression has managed to link detailed and sophisticated verbal analysis to the political and theatrical issues of the plays.<sup>62</sup> Yet the issue of ambivalence or ambiguity, highlighted by Vernant, continues to excite strongly worded disagreements, particularly where tragedy is seen as a political genre. How much ambiguity can the criticism of Sophocles bear? If we want to understand tragedy in history, how should we bring together a recognition of tragedy's address to the citizens with a recognition of the ambiguity within tragic language? How do we bring together the powerful emotions tragedy releases, the lasting images it creates, the political impact it has revealed, with the more evanescent ironies and doubts of its shimmering poetry?

The fourth debate could be called 'tradition', and this final area picks up on elements in each of the previous three topics. As we have been at pains to indicate already in this introduction, Sophocles is recreated again and again through the tradition of critical readings, dramatic performances and imaginative reworkings. The performance history of Sophocles is

<sup>60</sup> Taplin (1977), (1978); Wiles (1997); Wilson (1999); Hall (2006); Easterling and Hall (2002); Taplin (1993); Goldhill and Osborne (1999).

<sup>61</sup> See Hall (2006) 105–11.

<sup>62</sup> One might single out – perhaps invidiously – Griffith's commentary on *Antigone* (Griffith (1999)), or Budelmann's study of Sophoclean language (Budelmann (2000)). It is unclear what defence a philologist, who does not pay attention to the advances in linguistics from de Saussure to Chomsky to pragmatics, could offer for such a restricted understanding of how language works.

particularly rich. As early as the fourth century BC, the great tragic actors Thedorus and Polus took Sophocles' roles all over the Greek-speaking world,<sup>63</sup> and his plays became central to the transmission of the cultural *koinē* across the Macedonian and subsequently the Roman empires. Once Sophocles was printed in 1502, half a millennium ago, performance revival – and the rediscovery of the role that Sophoclean drama had played at Athens in both aesthetics and civic ideology – became inevitable. Sophocles' *Oedipus* prompted the first full-scale staging of a Greek tragedy in the Renaissance (*Oedipus* in Vicenza in 1585), a version of his *Electra* was banned from the London stage for its radical critique of the then Prime Minister in 1762, and his *Antigone*, as set 'melo-dramatically' to Mendelssohn's music in the Prussian empire in the 1840s, was revived in Paris, London, Dublin, Edinburgh, New York and even Australia.<sup>64</sup>

In the twentieth century, *Antigone* became one of the most significant plays in the international theatre of political protest. This tradition was inaugurated by Brecht's response to Anouilh's uneasy rehabilitation of Creon in occupied Paris in 1944 with his anything but neutral Marxist reading of Hölderlin's translation in neutral post-war Switzerland.<sup>65</sup> Brecht's *Antigone* opened with Antigone and Ismene emerging from a Berlin air-raid shelter in April 1945 to face up to what Nazism had done to the world. *Antigone* became part of the international language of politics when Judith Malina, the daughter of a Berlin rabbi, revived Brecht's version in 1966 with Living Theatre and performed it over the next twenty years in 16 countries.<sup>66</sup> Sophocles' place in pro-democratic discourse was guaranteed by the international impact of Athol Fugard's anti-apartheid play *The Island* (1973), inspired by an actual reading of *Antigone* by Nelson Mandela and other inmates of the notorious prison on Robben Island. The relationship between the image or production of Sophocles and the time and place of the production or image produces not only fascinating cultural history but also an essential insight into what Sophocles means for a community or an individual within a community.<sup>67</sup> Lewis Campbell was right when he concluded his study of Sophocles in 1879 by saying that the subject of this dramatist 'is always new and always old'.<sup>68</sup>

<sup>63</sup> Hall (2002) and (2007c). <sup>64</sup> See Hall and Macintosh (2005) 165–72, 326–36.

<sup>65</sup> On Anouilh see Fleming (2006); on Brecht, Goldhill below p. 46.

<sup>66</sup> As she remembers, 'wherever we played it, it seemed to become the symbol of the struggle of that time and place – in bleeding Ireland, in Franco's Spain, in Poland a month before martial law was declared, clandestinely in Prague – the play is uncannily appropriate to every struggle for freedom'. Malina (1984) vii.

<sup>67</sup> Goldhill (2002) 108–77; Hardwick (2003); Hall and Macintosh (2005); Leonard (2005); Fleming (2006); Goldhill (2006); Goff and Simpson (2007); etc.

<sup>68</sup> Campbell (1879) 157.

We began our introduction with Jebb in 1900. But it should be clear that a discussion of 'constructing tragic tradition' could have started in fifth-century Athens. Sophocles himself writes his *Electra* through Aeschylus' *Oresteia* (and Euripides' *Electra*, whether it is before or after Sophocles, is no less aware of its place within a tragic tradition).<sup>69</sup> Sophocles' experimental brilliance, which we mentioned above, is itself an exploration in and against tragic tradition: the long running scenes of the *Philoctetes*, say, with their brief and integral choral engagements, could not be more different from Aeschylean stagecraft. Sophocles, we are told, wrote about the chorus; his expansion of chorus numbers, number of actors and his contribution to stage-painting techniques are commented on by Aristotle. Sophocles appears to have been engaged in the explicit discussion of the formation of tragedy as a genre. It is in the fifth century that lists of victors and plays are first produced (the marking of tradition), and the genre of tragedy takes shape against epic and lyric poetry. Its further institutionalization through repertory companies, official texts, and use in education, continues through the fourth century and into the Hellenistic period, when research on the tradition of tragedy is already part of intellectual pursuits. Epigrammatists write little poems about which are Sophocles' best plays, or on the master's tomb; anecdotes about the tragedians circulate as a full biographical tradition begins to develop, in response to the plays, to contemporary political needs, to the fascination with great men of the past.<sup>70</sup> Who Sophocles was – the image of Sophocles – starts to be an issue of cultural concern from an early date, and to inform critical understanding of Sophocles' plays from the same time. Artists paint images from plays onto pots or the grandest of canvases – and the epigrammatists write of their response to the images of the plays on the canvases. The tradition of tragedy is constructed from the beginning, both within the genre itself in the intertextuality between plays, and in the place of the genre within the intellectual and artistic enterprises of the Greek world. *Sophocles and the Greek Tragic Tradition* is also and primarily about this early process of tragedy becoming a genre.

Part One of the book is entitled 'Between audience and actor', and it investigates first how Sophocles represents the activity of being an audience on stage (Goldhill), second, how an actor's shame may be depicted and conceived (Lada-Richards), and third how the process of judgement is explored in Sophocles especially through Deianeira's decision-making in the *Trachiniae* (Hall). Each of these chapters looks at the relationship between the audience and the actors on stage – but each is interested in

<sup>69</sup> See Goldhill (1986a) 138–167. <sup>70</sup> Hanink (forthcoming).

how Sophocles through such dramatic writing is exploring central tenets of democratic behaviour. Each is thus involved with the tragic genre's sense of itself as a genre – acting, the audience, deliberating, judging – and, further, with the tragedy's politics.

Part Two of the book, 'Oedipus and the play of meaning', looks at a single Sophoclean figure, Oedipus, from the different perspectives we have been discussing in this introduction. The first essay (Burian) looks at the strange ending(s) of *Oedipus the King*, and explores closure in relation to tragedy, this tragedy, and the mythic repertoire. In the second (Carey), in an interrelated discussion of the figure of Oedipus in *Oedipus at Colonus*, we see how, as Oedipus looks back over his life, Sophocles too looks back towards his earlier plays and the mythic repertoire, reflecting also on the development of the tragic myth of Oedipus. The third (Silk) analyses Sophoclean language and Sophocles' ability to produce startling effects of surprise in single closural words. This essay also looks at how this particular device is picked up and worked with by later poets, particularly poets who are deeply engaged with translating Sophocles, such as Yeats. Finally in this section (Macintosh), we move forward to see how Oedipus appears in the inter-war years in France – as Oedipus' end in the fifth century turns out to be the beginning of a long tradition of dramatic rehearsal.

Part Three, called 'Constructing the tragic tradition', takes us beyond Sophocles to develop a further perspective both on the tradition and on the different ways it is constructed. So, the first essay in this section (Valakas) looks at the ways in which theories of tragedy emerge from the tragic texts themselves – how, that is, an intellectualizing discourse about tragedy as a tradition and as a genre develops. The second (Bowie) takes us back to Aeschylus, and the work which haunted Sophocles' imagination, the *Oresteia*. The role of Delphi as oracular authority, as represented in Aeschylus' trilogy, proves a paradigm for the anxieties about divine authority and human abilities in Sophocles and the later tragic tradition. Euripides' *Bacchae* in the third essay of this section (Buxton) becomes a test case for tragic ambivalence specifically in the area of sexual identity, in which Euripides' provocative play surprisingly emerges as providing a more secure sense of identity than twentieth-century criticism has seen in it. The fourth essay (Taplin) looks at how the images of Homer and tragedy can be explored, revised and reinvigorated in an artistic medium. Tragedy's physicality can be represented in images on vases, but so too its language can have a profound effect on the visual repertoire. Finally, as in Part Two, we move forwards to look at the construction of the tragic tradition over a longer time-scale, with Plutarch and Shakespeare (Pelling).

One of the hardest things we have done in writing this introduction is to leave till last one of the organizing principles of the volume, which has meant not mentioning a particular name. It has been hard because at each moment of our argument that name provides for us a natural point of reference. This book is dedicated to Pat Easterling, who for all of us has been a remarkable guide and companion in our study of Sophocles. To start with Jebb is to start with a figure Pat has illuminated; to move on through the tradition of scholarship on tragedy means to trace the path that Pat has led us through.<sup>71</sup> Not only has she written standard works of twentieth-century Sophoclean criticism,<sup>72</sup> and numerous influential articles on metaphysics, ritual, gender, characterization, ethics, politics and poetry in tragedy,<sup>73</sup> but she is an especially sensitive and careful thinker about the complexities of influence and placement for contemporary scholars, and the importance of engagement with the manifestations of ancient culture within more recent and indeed contemporary culture.<sup>74</sup> It is striking too how many of the key figures of Sophoclean scholarship from the last forty years have been proud to have Pat as a friend, critical reader and adviser. (It was at dinner with Pat that Bernard Knox and Pierro Pucci discovered that they had been fighting in the Second World War so close to one another.) When we turn to look at how the tragic tradition is formulated in antiquity, we think immediately of Pat's work on its Homeric antecedents, on fourth-century tragedy, on Hellenistic actors, and on the scholia, the beginnings of intellectual commentary on the plays, the Byzantine contribution to the tradition and the intricacies of the ancient and medieval processes of copying the play texts out by hand.<sup>75</sup> When we say that the best of modern commentaries can deal with the complexities of ambiguity within

<sup>71</sup> See e.g. her study of Gilbert Murray (1997h), her path-breaking account of the early years of the Cambridge Greek play (1999c), and her Foreword to the second edition of Winnington-Ingram's *Euripides and Dionysus* (1997g).

<sup>72</sup> Easterling (1967b), (1968), (1973a), (1977c), (1978a), (1978b), (1981), (1993c), (1997f), (1999b).

<sup>73</sup> E.g. Easterling (1973b), (1977b), (1977c), (1984a), (1985), (1988b), (1988c), (1989c), (1990), (1991c), (1993a), (1993b), (1993d), (1993e), (1994), (1995b), (1996), (1997e), (1997f).

<sup>74</sup> It is typical, for example, that in so august an academic organ as *The Journal of Hellenic Studies*, in a review of Lloyd-Jones' edition of Sophocles' fragments, she expresses regret that the restrictive format of the Loeb series 'does not allow for mention of Tony Harrison's *Trackers*, the most striking example so far of the creative stimulus given by the rediscovery of fragments' (Easterling (1998) 213). Her Housman Lecture (2005a) explored the connection between the attraction of contemporary directors to Sophoclean drama and its religious and philosophical depth. See also Easterling (1989a) on Strauss' *Elektra*, and her fascinating study of the interactions between ancient Greek and Modernist poetry delivered as her UCL inaugural lecture (1988a).

<sup>75</sup> Easterling (1960), (1961), (1962), (1967a), (1969), (1970), (1977a), (1984b), (1987), (1989b), (1991b), (1993b), (1994), (1995a), (1997d), (1999a), (2000), (2002), (2003), (2004b), (2006); Easterling and Miles (1999); Easterling and Handley (2001).

the format of the commentary one thinks immediately of Pat's work as an editor – her own commentary on the *Trachiniae*, and the works she has helped bring to fruition in the Cambridge Greek and Latin Classics. Besides *The Cambridge History of Classical Literature*, *Greek Religion and Society*, and *Greek and Roman Actors*, Pat was the editor too of the *Cambridge Companion to Greek Tragedy*, one of the best selling and most highly regarded of that series. It is a testimony in part to the fun we had doing that volume, that all its contributors are again represented here. In some ways, this volume is an outgrowth fifteen years on of that book.

All this is the publicly known fruit of a long and very distinguished career, culminating in her role as the first woman to hold the Regius Chair of Greek at Cambridge. But we would like here also to mention a less public side of Pat. Classics is a field where big and brash egos are not unknown. But Pat's abilities as a peacemaker, as a wise counsellor, as a good friend, fond of giggling at the foolishness of the world, are legendary. When Pat comes up to you and has a quiet word, you would be very foolish indeed not to listen – as we, the editors, have personally learnt on an embarrassingly large number of occasions. And as all the authors in this volume can attest – her friends, pupils, colleagues – when Pat makes a brief marginal comment on your manuscript, it usually results in a period of reflection, and a much better argument.<sup>76</sup> The phrase 'model colleague' is often bandied about in references. It all too rarely turns out to mean the qualities Pat demonstrates, because they are all too rare. This book is dedicated to Pat on her seventy-fifth birthday, as a small token of profound affection, admiration and thanks.

<sup>76</sup> For a celebration of her impact as teacher and supervisor on a younger generation of scholars, with a more complete bibliography of her publications, see Budelmann and Michelakis (2001).

PART ONE

*Between audience and actor*



*The audience on stage: rhetoric, emotion, and judgement in Sophoclean theatre*

Simon Goldhill

Democracy – and its malcontents – requires a theory of the audience.<sup>1</sup>

In ancient Athenian participatory democracy, the audience, in its different forms, can be seen as a privileged arena in which citizenship is enacted. The citizen performs his civic duty as a juror in the law court, as a voter in the assembly, as a spectator in the theatre, and even as a *theōros* in the *agōnes* of festivals. In each case, the role of audience member is to listen, to judge, to vote (or in the case of theatre at least to observe his representative, selected by lot, voting). By fulfilling one's role as a listening, voting member of a collective audience, a citizen engages in *ta politika*, the political life of the city.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, in the classical era the discussion of persuasion spreads far beyond the formal rhetorical techniques for speakers as enshrined in the rhetorical handbooks, in order to scrutinize the intellectual and emotional practice of being in an audience – both from the point of view of the speaker (double guessing his audience) and from the point of view of being the listener (critically responding to a speaker), and, most importantly, as a dynamic exchange, a battle of wills, between the two.<sup>3</sup> Rhetoric works, which is why it is taught, practised and feared. If

This chapter, as with the whole book, is dedicated with huge affection and respect to Pat Easterling. My subject was chosen partly to revisit tragic audiences, which I discussed under her inspirational editorship in the *Cambridge Companion to Greek Tragedy*, and partly because Pat is someone I always listen to carefully, though, like many a Sophoclean character, I may not realize the full wisdom of what I am told till much later.

<sup>1</sup> I have had a further go at thinking about audiences in Goldhill (1994), (1997a), and (2000a), which has been critically discussed in Nightingale (2004) who offers a different context for ideas of *theoria*. See most recently Revermann (2006b). A very long bibliography could be given for audiences for tragedy: for two exemplary versions of the potential of audience studies see Orgel (1975) and Thomas (2002).

<sup>2</sup> A huge bibliography could be given for this: see in particular Lanni (1997) (with the added background in Lanni [2006]); Loraux (1981); Finley (1983); Sinclair (1988); Ober (1989); Cartledge, Millett and Todd (1990); Meier (1990); Hansen (1991); Boegehold and Scafuro (1994); Ober and Hedrick (1996) – each with further bibliography.

<sup>3</sup> See for discussion in particular Hesik (2000); also Buxton (1982); Ober (1989); Jarratt (1991); Wardy (1996); Ford (2002).

words have power, if the weaker argument can be made the stronger, if to be persuaded is to lose authority or self-determination to another, how can one listen and not be a victim of words? How can one properly perform one's role as a judging, responsible citizen, faced by the swirl of competing arguments which make up the political discourse of Athens?

These questions were explored in different genres with differing degrees of theoretical explicitation. Gorgias, for example, is fascinated by the psychology of the passive audience – thrilled, manipulated, led, and yet still resistant: he brilliantly imagines the total passivity of a listener to his *logos* in order to explore the power of speech.<sup>4</sup> Thucydides' Cleon mocks, cajoles and bullies the citizens in the assembly through an explicit discussion of their passivity, their capacity for pleased inaction: and Thucydides is fully aware of the self-reflexive irony of this rhetoric of inaction in action.<sup>5</sup> Demosthenes too teases and twists the Athenians with their own awareness of their reputation for a love of words and an inability to follow up plans with action: complicity as pressure towards collective action.<sup>6</sup> Yet in sharp contrast to Gorgias' image of the *logos* as a powerful master (*dunastēs*), Demosthenes – with no less slyness and rhetorical adeptness – claims 'I see that for the most part the audience is in control of the power (*dunamis*) of the speakers.'<sup>7</sup> Plato's snarling image of the crowd in democracy as a beast titillated and fed by the politicians, who are themselves slaves to the mood of the beast, articulates a philosophical disdain for the dynamic of speaker and audience in public political life, which is matched by the comic scalpel of Aristophanes' theatre, where the character Demos – the People – allows his slaves licence to flatter and steal before he finally comes to his (self-interested) senses, led as he is by an even more outrageous demagogue.<sup>8</sup> Aristotle, through the category of the enthymeme, theorizes persuasion fully in terms of the collective expectations of a mass audience, and laments the philosopher's inability to get it quite right, where a man of the street can sway a crowd.<sup>9</sup>

Plato's clever and fearful arguments against what he calls democracy's *theatrocracy* have become so fully incorporated into modern western

<sup>4</sup> See Wardy (1996), with further bibliography.

<sup>5</sup> Thucydides 3.38; the rhetoric of Thucydides, in comparison with, say, Herodotus or Tacitus, is not as thoroughly discussed as one might expect. See for the types of discussion available e.g. Cogan (1981); Crane (1996), and more recently and more congenially Price (2001); Rood (2004) and Morrison (2006).

<sup>6</sup> I am thinking, for example, of *Olynthiac* 2.12: but see more generally Ober (1989) and Hesk (2000).

<sup>7</sup> Dem. 18.277: καίτοι ἔγωγ' ὀρώ τῆς τῶν λεγόντων δυνάμεως τοὺς ἀκούοντας τὸ πλεῖστον κυρίου.

<sup>8</sup> See Aristophanes' *Knights* with the not wholly satisfactory McGlew (2002).

<sup>9</sup> Aristotle *Rhetoric* 2.22. See Wardy (1996) 108–38; and more generally Furley and Nehemas (1994).

political thinking that it seems still a quite remarkable theoretical assertion that a vote by a large group of citizens will be better founded than a decision by the single most informed or most authoritative or most intelligent individual. Yet this is a theory of the audience repeatedly promoted and projected by democracy – and required by the direct democracy of ancient Athens. What is more, modern political discussion has become obsessed, it seems, with the perils of media manipulation – spin; that is, with the ability of politicians to manipulate, persuade and use the necessary tools of democratic debate to their own advantage (a concern already hugely familiar from ancient Athens).<sup>10</sup> Without a more developed theory of the audience (the collective of citizens) and its role in decision making, it is hard to see how such a debate can progress beyond politicians' self-serving and mutually undermining claims and counterclaims of 'our truth' versus 'their manipulation'. Democracy *requires* a theory of the audience both in the sense that its institutional processes are predicated on such a theory, and in the sense that it does not yet possess such a theory in a fully worked out form.

In this chapter, I shall suggest that Sophoclean theatre is an excellent place to think about the audience of democracy. My main concern is not with the constitution and reactions of the fifth-century Athenian audience as such (nor with its heirs in the many and continuing modern responses to Sophocles' plays).<sup>11</sup> Nor is it to question the trivial rhetoric with which so many critics have continued to use the imagined audience as a bastion for their own opinions ('surely no audience would . . .', 'the audience would instantly recognize . . .'). The multiform make-up of a theatre audience (on the one hand) and its drive towards a collective response (on the other), especially coupled with an audience's ability to develop its views in discussion *after* a play as much as in the performance time of the play, create complex and temporally extended tensions which will only be oversimplified by such naive and univocal idealization of the audience as a single and instant body. Rather, I want here to look at how Sophocles dramatizes the process of being (in) an audience: how does Sophocles put the audience on stage?

Now, tragedy as a genre of staged dialogue is obviously full of audiences: every speech is addressed to someone who could be said to be its audience; even monologues are spoken before a chorus (with the exception of Ajax's suicide speech in the *Ajax* (815–65), and even that is full of vocatives

<sup>10</sup> See Hesk (2000) and from a different angle Ober (1989).

<sup>11</sup> See Podlecki (1990); Henderson (1991); Goldhill (1994); Goldhill (1997a).

addressed to the gods and the unfeeling earth and sun). What's more, tragedy is also a genre of misunderstanding or of multiple and conflicting understandings. Characters use the same words in different ways, as Vernant influentially expressed it, and the clash between these tensions and ambiguities is a motive force of the plotting of tragedy: tragic language displays the difficulties of the city's developing political language to the audience of the city through the failure of the actors on stage to avoid the violent outcome of their own misunderstandings.<sup>12</sup> All of this is fundamental to tragedy's functioning in the city as a political genre. But I want to focus in this chapter on a specific dramatic device of creating an audience on stage beyond the omnipresent chorus, and beyond the addressee of any particular speech. It is a device which Sophocles uses often and with insistent interest; it is made possible largely by the use of the third actor, an innovation which Sophocles is said to have introduced; and it demonstrates, I believe, a sustained engagement with the widest implications of democracy's audience. It is a dramatic structure from which in turn Bertolt Brecht, for example, learnt much.

This dramatic strategy is best introduced by a simple and very well-known example. The opening scene of the *Ajax* brings on stage Odysseus, sniffing around the tent of Ajax. Athene – who may or may not be seen by the audience<sup>13</sup> – lets Odysseus (and the audience) into the plot so far, and announces she will bring the mad Ajax out from the tent, much to Odysseus' discomfort, which the goddess teases him about, in the bantering style she usually adopts with her hero. This sets up the discussion between the still enraged and maddened Ajax and the goddess – which is overheard by Odysseus. He is an audience on stage, who is silent and concealed from the protagonist, and who acts as a focalizer for the audience in the theatre. When Ajax leaves, Athene turns towards Odysseus and asks (*Ajax* 118–20): 'Do you see, Odysseus, how great the power of the gods is? Who could have been found more sensible than this man? Who better at doing what time required?' But Odysseus sees something else: 'I do not know of any one. But I pity the wretched man nonetheless, even though he is my enemy, because he has been harnessed to a dire disaster. I do not look to his case more than my own. For I see that we who live are nothing more than images or a vain shadow.' Odysseus takes Athene's generalization about the gods and makes it a generalization about mortals. Where she offered

<sup>12</sup> Vernant and Vidal-Naquet (1981); in general see Goldhill (1986a), especially chapter 3.

<sup>13</sup> Taplin (1978) 185 n.12 insists she is visible to all, including Odysseus. Segal (1995) 19 thinks she is invisible to Odysseus (as does Jebb). Hesk (2003) 43–4, most recently, hedges his bets. See also Heath (1987) 165–6; Garvie (1998) 124.

him the objectification of a judgement on a once great man, now laid low ('Who [was] more sensible than this man?'), Odysseus takes his own position (ἐγώ 'I', οἶδ' 'I know', ὁρῶ 'I see') and puts it together with such potential objectification (νῖν 'him'), and through a gesture of pity or compassion discovers from the 'his' (τὸ τούτου) and the 'my' (τοῦμόν) the 'we' (ἡμᾶς) in the example. Not only does Odysseus recognize the weakness of humans where Athene declared the strength of the gods, but also this perspective allows him to bypass the aggression of human hates and violence ('even though he is my enemy'). This shift of perspective is marked in the repeated words of seeing: 'do you see?' (ὁρᾶς) asks Athene; 'I see', (ὁρῶ) replies Odysseus – but what he sees is indeed his own shadow, his own likeness: not just the emptiness of human achievement, but how each human is an image of each other in their weakness and suffering.

As several critics have argued, this short dialogue looks forward to the closing scene of the play, where Odysseus effects a closure by persuading the Greek leaders to control their antipathy to Ajax.<sup>14</sup> It also anticipates the debate about the figure of Ajax, which takes up the second half of the play, and which sets in motion strikingly opposed judgements on the worth of the hero. But the scene depends on constructing Odysseus as an audience on stage. The emphasis on what he has seen and understood of the scene, stage-managed in front of him by Athene, creates an image of the critical observer – an observer who does not simply follow the stage directions of the goddess, but takes his own view of what has happened. This image of the critical observer offers a model for the audience in the theatre, faced as they will be by Ajax's deception speech and the chorus' delighted reaction to it, and by the violent row over the worth of Ajax between Teucer, Menelaus and Agamemnon. The difference between Athene's view of the scene and Odysseus' creates a space for the audience to discover its own critical distance from the violent and extreme words on stage.

The *Philoctetes* is deeply concerned with persuasion, trust, and with staged scenes.<sup>15</sup> The audience in the theatre not only watches the extended twists and turns of the characters' interactions, but also watches their reactions to staged scenes. So the False Merchant's message prompts different responses from all the characters on stage, as we watch Philoctetes being gulled, Neoptolemus responding both to the off-stage prompting of Odysseus and to the fresh material released by the False Merchant; and the

<sup>14</sup> See e.g. Winnington-Ingram (1980) 66–72; and in most detail, Whitlock Blundell (1989) especially 60–8 and 95–105.

<sup>15</sup> See, of course, Easterling (1978a); also especially Segal (1981) 328–61; also Roberts (1989); Ringer (1998) 101–26.

chorus responding both to their master, Neoptolemus, and to the object of their pursuit, Philoctetes, as well as to the False Merchant himself. The play is filled with such complex layers of dramatic cross-currents.

But I wish to focus here on the end of the great central episode, where Odysseus returns on stage for the first time since the opening moments of the play. From the beginning of the play, we have watched Neoptolemus respond to Philoctetes, though it is often hard to tell precisely how much of his emotional response is genuine, and how much required by the plot against the hero. When Philoctetes first starts to show the painful physical symptoms of his wound, Neoptolemus seems powerfully moved (759–61):

ὦ ὦ δύστηνε σύ,  
 δύστηνε δῆτα διὰ πόνων πάντων φανείς;  
 βούλη λάβωμαι δῆτα καὶ θίγω τί σου;

Oh, oh, wretched you,  
 Really wretched, it's revealed, in all your sufferings.  
 Do you want me really to hold you and touch you somehow?

The repetitions, especially of δῆτα, indicate strongly emotional expressivity. (It would be more idiomatic to translate the second *dēta* as 'then', as it normally has a consequential force with questions: I have translated both occurrences as 'really' only to keep the force of the repetition.) Are we to see this as part of Neoptolemus' plotting, playing his role to perfection? Or is it his true emotions of pity boiling to the surface? It is very rare to see the particle *dēta* repeated in the same couplet like this (and it is also in his previous question, τί δῆτα δράσω, 'What really [then] should I do?'): is this the sign of real grief? Or an over the top attempt to convey how really, really upset he is? What is being 'revealed' here?<sup>16</sup>

Shortly after this, when Philoctetes collapses into agony, Neoptolemus goes quiet (805): Philoctetes in desperate pain cries out: 'What are you saying? Why are you silent? Where on earth are you, child?' Neoptolemus replies (806): 'For a long time in fact (πάλαι δῆ) I have been upset, grieving over your misfortune.' As Neoptolemus watches Philoctetes in agony, we watch and evaluate his reaction. It seems powerfully felt, yet thirty-five lines later he is celebrating the success of the first part of the plot as Philoctetes sleeps: no remorse or regret is evident (839–42).

Neoptolemus' silence, highlighted in these earlier scenes, becomes an even more powerful dramatic resource as Odysseus' entrance is

<sup>16</sup> Segal (1981) 335–6 followed by Pucci (2003) *ad loc.* notes the extraordinary delicacy of τί in this line: 'shall I touch you *in some way/in some place*' – the hesitancy and intimacy conveyed by this small word is indeed remarkable.

approached.<sup>17</sup> Neoptolemus, now with Philoctetes' bow in his possession, has revealed to Philoctetes the plot against him – but has refused to give back the bow since 'justice and expediency constrain me to listen to those in authority' (925–6). Philoctetes bitterly laments, and desperately pleads for recognition and the return of his bow (927–62). His speech returns three times to Neoptolemus' silence and its possible significance: 'But he will not even address me. He looks away again, as if he will never release the bow' (934–5); 'Please now be yourself still. What do you say? You are silent. I am nothing, a wretched man.' (950–1); 'May you not yet perish, until I know if you will change your judgement' (961–2): a plea that receives no answer. (Looking away, looking down, breaking visual contact becomes a trope in rhetoric as much as in poetry, and in art too, a recognized somatics of disengagement.)<sup>18</sup> This extended attempt at persuasion – at breaking through Neoptolemus' silence – prompts the chorus to ask their master what they should do, and Neoptolemus confesses that a strange sense of pity has come over him, not just now but for some time since (963–6), lines that recall his response to the physical symptoms of Philoctetes earlier. οἴμοι τί δράσω; 'Alas what am I to do?' (969), asks Neoptolemus – the archetypal tragic question – and τί δρῶμεν ἄνδρες; 'What are we to do, men?' (974). It is at this moment of hesitation – a half line – that Odysseus enters to take control of the scene.

He enters into a strident row with Philoctetes; Philoctetes has to be held down as he threatens to kill himself; by the end of the scene, Philoctetes is left quite humiliated and isolated, as the Greeks prepare to sail off with the bow. What is striking about the dramaturgy of this scene is that Neoptolemus is silent from the entrance of Odysseus to the final moment of the action. He is an audience to the row between Philoctetes and Odysseus.<sup>19</sup> His silence prompts two questions (at least). First, especially after Philoctetes has drawn attention to the significance of silence, and Neoptolemus has indicated his own growing feelings of pity, what are the emotions with which Neoptolemus watches these two older men fight? Second, especially after Neoptolemus has twice asked what to do, what *is* he going to do?

These questions are made insistent by the staging of the end of the scene. Philoctetes turns to Neoptolemus at last (1066–7): 'Child of Achilles, will

<sup>17</sup> See, with useful general background, Montiglio (2000) 247–8.

<sup>18</sup> See on art see Frontisi-Ducroux (1995); on rhetoric and audience noise see Bers (1985) and Hall (2006a) 363–6, and in general Boegehold (1999).

<sup>19</sup> Seal (1982) 29: the scene 'invites the audience to watch Neoptolemus' action, to observe him observe'.

I be not addressed by even your voice? Will you go away like this?' – a question which draws attention both to his silence and to his actions, and which acts as a moving plea once again (προσφωνεῖ 934; φωνῆς . . . προσφθεγκτός 1066–7). But Odysseus replies by addressing Neoptolemus (1068–9): 'Go! Don't look at him, noble though you are, lest you mar our fortunes.' Odysseus does not let him speak, ushers him out – and is clearly worried that his character will lead him to damage their venture. The audience is again encouraged to wonder about Neoptolemus' potential responses, as his silence is drawn attention to. So Philoctetes tries the chorus (1070–1): 'Will I really be actually left in this way deserted by you, friends? Will you not pity me?' These questions recall Neoptolemus' growing pity as well as the chorus' earlier feelings. But their answer recalls their own diffident questions earlier, addressed to Neoptolemus, of what they should do (1072–3): 'This boy is our commander. Whatever he says to you, we too must say.' They cannot act critically or with any form of self-determination, because of their role in the hierarchy. But notice their expression 'whatever he *says* to you, we too must *say*' – after 100 lines of silence, there is mounting and conflicting pressure on Neoptolemus to say something (and mounting expectation for the audience in the theatre). Will he express pity again? Will he bow to those in authority? Will he answer?

His response is perhaps something of a surprise. Neoptolemus does not address Philoctetes (though no doubt he intends Philoctetes once again to be an unacknowledged audience to his words). He replies to his crew. He does allude to his feelings, but only in passing as he indicates that he will follow his commanding officer's instructions (1074–80):

I will get a reputation for fulsome pity from him [Odysseus].  
 But, stay, if it seems good to him [Philoctetes],  
 For as much time as the sailors need  
 To prepare the boat and we to pray to the gods.  
 Perhaps in the meanwhile he [Philoctetes] will find some  
 Better thinking with regard to us. We two are departing, then.  
 When we summon you, come quickly.

This is a markedly unemotional speech after his turmoil before. He does not express pity, but notes he will get a reputation for it. He does not address a word to Philoctetes, who begged to hear him speak to him, but merely hopes – in the third person – that he will change his attitude. He is clearly bonded with Odysseus ('we two' – the dual in Greek), and after his apparently anguished questions about what to do, now he has no doubt:

he is following those in command, and leaving, and instructs the crew to join them promptly. The speech seems functional and clear. It is as if Neoptolemus in his role as audience has moved from his confusion and wavering emotion now to a certain distance from his own earlier feelings, and a clarity about what he is to do.

Yet when he returns on stage in the next scene pursued by the extremely worried Odysseus, it is, as he puts it, 'to undo all the wrongs I have done previously' (1224). They face off against each other as each threatens to draw a sword (1254–5), a reworking of the famous scene of *Iliad* 1 where Achilles, Neoptolemus' father, makes to draw his sword against Agamemnon, Odysseus' chief. Even here though, action is deferred, and it is, initially, words (λόγους) that Neoptolemus announces he is bringing to Philoctetes (1267). There is much we could say about this scene as the culmination of the thematics of persuasion, action versus words, and trust, all focused on the possession of the bow. But, above all, Neoptolemus' change of heart requires a rereading of the previous scene, his apparent hardening of spirit. Now we are encouraged to see more tension beneath his performance, more doubt within him than was expressed to Odysseus. His role as audience develops as a fully active process, part of the questions of character, truthfulness, deception, questions which the figure of Neoptolemus raises throughout the drama.

The silence of Neoptolemus in his role as audience becomes a sign to be read and reread by the audience in the theatre (and by the characters on stage): it becomes a hermeneutic crux – part of the play's fascination with speech acts (from screams, to tricks, to messages, to oracles). However the silence was read first time (hardening? deception? self-deception? desperate attempt to toe the line?), the return of Neoptolemus (which repeats again and again the language of change, reversal: αὖ, παλίντροπος, ἐν τῷ πρίν, νέον, νέον, αὖθις πάλιν (1222–32)) demands a re-evaluation of his earlier performance. Who is Neoptolemus deceiving as he leaves stage with Odysseus? Philoctetes – either because he is still fully engaged with the plot against him or because he is denying his strong feelings towards him by maintaining his silence? Odysseus – because he no longer will be able to uphold his position within the plot, but acts as if he can? Himself – because in his rejection of Philoctetes, he is either pretending he can repress the feelings that will erupt in the next scene or because he still thinks that 'obeying those in command' is an adequate criterion for ethical action? Or all of these . . . ? The complexity of ethical judgement here is created for us, the audience, by watching Neoptolemus watching – that is, by the audience on stage.

There has been an extensive discussion of 'character' in Greek tragedy, and, specifically, the issue of inwardness, to which Pat Easterling has made characteristically influential contributions.<sup>20</sup> Here we can see how Sophocles brilliantly creates a question of character for the audience, not only by Neoptolemus' change of mind (which happens off stage) but also by giving him no words to say through a crucial scene. The contrast with, say, Medea's celebrated monologue before the murder of her children is striking. Medea expresses herself volubly, as she shifts position, hardens her heart, and comes to a decision. Her articulated complexity of feelings became a standard topic for poetry and art. Neoptolemus' silence becomes a screen on which the audience projects its interpretation of what he is thinking or feeling. The device of the audience on stage becomes a way here of engaging the audience in the theatre in the processes of moral choice and doubt – wondering about character and action. The audience on stage becomes the lynchpin of the play's provocation of the audience in the theatre.

A wonderful example of the emotional side of this technique occurs in the *Oedipus Tyrannus*. The arrival of the messenger, apparently in answer to Jocasta's prayer for *lisis*, is a scene of deep narrative and linguistic ironies.<sup>21</sup> Jocasta is delighted with his message; she calls out Oedipus to hear it. The messenger, keen to help Oedipus recover from his traumatic fear, reveals the shocking fact that Polybus is not his real father (1016). Oedipus cross-examines him. The discussion between the messenger and Oedipus stretches from 988–1059 (one of the longer stretches of single line stichomythia in Sophocles). As the new information is revealed about his origin in the palace of Laius, Oedipus turns finally to Jocasta, who has been listening silently, and asks her if indeed the man who gave the baby to the messenger is the same one as the herdsman she has already summoned (1054–5). Jocasta replies with a despairing appeal to him to look no further into the matter (1056–7), and continues to try to stop Oedipus searching any more for his identity. At 1071 – less than 20 lines on – she flees the stage to commit suicide with her final words: *ιοὺ ἰοὺ, δύστηνε τοῦτο γὰρ σ' ἐγὼ μόνον προσειπεῖν, ἄλλο δ' οὔποθ' ὕστερον*. 'Aaah, aaah, wretched man. This is all I can call you. Nothing else ever more.' No more words and names, not only because she is going to kill herself, but also because whatever she might call him – husband, son – is horrifically mixed in the morass of incest.<sup>22</sup> Jocasta has realized the truth of Oedipus' identity, and

<sup>20</sup> Easterling (1973b); Easterling (1977c); Easterling (1990); see also Gould (1978); Goldhill (1990).

<sup>21</sup> See Goldhill (forthcoming). <sup>22</sup> See Goldhill (1986) 206.

the recognition has taken place during her silent observation as audience to the discussion of Oedipus and the messenger. The audience in the theatre watches not just Oedipus cross-examining the herdsman with increasing fervour and drawing the wrong conclusion of his lowly birth, but also the dawning, silent horror of the queen. Again the invitation to project the internal moral and emotional turmoil of the queen seems clear.

*Electra* uses the device of the audience on stage in the most striking way three times, and constructs through this an extraordinary self-reflexive commentary on tragic emotion.<sup>23</sup> Clytemnestra's prayer to Apollo, which closes her *agōn* with Electra, is highly conscious of its audience. She describes her prayer as κερυμμένην βᾶξιν, 'concealed, shrouded speech' (638), necessary because 'My speech is not among friends, and it is not fitting to open all to the light when *she* is standing near' (639–40). A muffled prayer is a grotesque speech act. But it receives ironic and instant response with the arrival of the Paidagogus with the false news of Orestes' death. The irony is strongly underlined when Clytemnestra responds to the announcement of good news with ἔδεξάμην τὸ ῥηθὲν, 'I have received your utterance [as an omen]' (668), the standard recognition of a cledonomatic moment, that is, when a listener turns a speaker's words into a prophecy of the future.<sup>24</sup> As Clytemnestra turns the words into an omen, she is quite unaware of what sort of omen she is ratifying – and for the audience, recognizing the frisson of such a twist on the power of words, the irony produces a self-conscious awareness of the doubleness of language, an awareness which is a defining characteristic of an audience. The Paidagogus' news, and especially his long speech that describes Orestes' fatal chariot crash, set up in this way, is delivered to three audiences: Clytemnestra, the chorus and Electra (as well, of course, as the fourth audience in the theatre). The difference in response is drawn attention to immediately: Electra cries out (674), and the queen bursts out with 'What do you say, stranger? What do you say? Don't listen to her!' Electra is to be the excluded audience. So Clytemnestra requests the whole story with 'You [Electra] do your own stuff! But for me, stranger, you tell me the truth, how he died' (678–9).

The speech is a celebrated, riveting narrative. The response is three fold. The chorus lament the destruction of the family, the loss of the child who offers the hope of generational continuity (764–5). But Clytemnestra is less univocal: 'O Zeus, what is this? Should I call it good fortune, or terrible [δεινὸν] but profitable news? It is bitter, when my own disasters save my life' (766–8). This surprises the Paidagogus, who had thought

<sup>23</sup> See Batchelder (1995); Ringer (1998). <sup>24</sup> See Fraenkel (1950) *ad* 1653; Peradotto (1969).

his news unmixed pleasure for her. She explains with the memorable line δεινὸν τό τίκτειν ἐστίν, 'it is a strange thing to give birth' (770), where the nuanced and hard to translate *deinon* ('awesome', 'terrible', 'amazing', 'strange') picks up her previous line 'terrible' (*deina*), and gives the word a different spin, indicating her difficulty of finding the expression for her confused feelings. She finally turns towards her daughter. Electra has not spoken for 110 lines. She has been the audience both to the speech and to the reactions to it. Her reaction is . . . what?

There are two general points I want to make on Electra's response. First, she takes up the role (like Odysseus in the *Ajax*) of a focalizer for the audience, and, in particular the audience on stage, the chorus (804–7):

ἄρ' ὑμῖν ὡς ἀλγοῦσα κώδυνωμένη  
 δεινῶς δακρῦσαι κάπικωκῦσαι δοκεῖ  
 τὸν υἱὸν ἢ δύστηνος ὧδ' ὀλωλότα;  
 ἀλλ' ἐγγελῶσα φροῦδος.

So did she seem to you to weep and wail  
 Terribly, like one grieving, in pain,  
 The wretched woman for her son, perished like that?  
 No, she went out laughing.

Electra has been an audience to the queen's response, and now tries to direct her audience's response to what she has been watching. *Deinōs*, 'terribly', seems to echo the queen's search for a response (*deina* 767, *deinon* 770), now with a bitter and sarcastic tone.<sup>25</sup> It should seem (*dokei*) like an act to them, she asserts: 'like [ὡς] one grieving'. The queen was laughing, declares her daughter. There was nothing in the Paidagogus' response to indicate the queen was anything but moved, nor was there anything in her exit line to indicate that she was (literally) laughing. How good an audience is Electra? Is she accurately describing her mother's arrant and finely performed hypocrisy? Or is she quick to find an emotionally overwrought and aggressive slant on her hated mother's more complex feelings? The tension between Electra's reaction to her mother, and the mother's reaction to the news, throws up a question about each. Should we really read the queen's δεινὸν τό τίκτειν ἐστίν, 'it is a strange thing to give birth' as a κεκρυμμένην βόξιν, a 'concealed utterance'? Should we really read Electra's declaration of her mother's hypocrisy as a distorted exaggeration? Electra's role as (problematic) audience on stage raises for

<sup>25</sup> As Reinhardt (1979)142 comments brilliantly (with regard to the more obvious example of 287ff.), 'to make known what she has suffered, Electra must start to imitate the voice she hates'.

the audience in the theatre a self-reflexive concern about their own role in evaluating the emotions and words in front of them. What to see in Clytemnestra's or Electra's reactions?

This leads to my second point about Electra's response, a point which will return more insistently in the second scene of an audience on stage in this play. We watch Electra responding to a speech with her customary strength of feeling: the scene is written so that we watch not only the Paidagogus' masterful performance, but also the three audiences to it, and perhaps especially the pain of Electra as a contrast to the feelings of Clytemnestra. (The multiple audience response on stage to a speech should worry the critics who assume audience response to be homogeneous in the theatre.) Yet we also know that the speech is a fiction. As an audience to a fiction, we are watching audiences to a fiction.<sup>26</sup>

This self-reflexivity becomes most pointed when the urn arrives (the second scene of an audience on stage). The speech that Electra delivers over it is one of the most moving in Greek tragedy, as she – along with the metre and sentence structure – breaks down in grief. This outpouring is watched by Orestes, the audience on stage, who in turn becomes overwhelmed by his feelings, and reveals himself in such a way that threatens the security of the venture of revenge (as the Paidagogus points out, 1326ff.). As Electra weeps, we know she is grieving over an empty urn: passionate grief over a fiction – the paradox of tragic emotion, where audiences cry over what they know to be staged action. Yet Orestes, who also knows that the urn does not contain his ashes, is also so moved by his sister's grief that he cannot control his tongue (1174–5), a reaction more powerfully felt than the chorus' conventional consolation 'remember you are a mortal and do not grieve too much' (1171–3). Critics have made much of the metatheatricality of the urn here. The urn, writes Segal paradigmatically, 'functions as a symbol of the deception of the theatrical situation per se . . . The urn embodies the paradoxical status of truth in dramatic fiction. It is a work of elaborate artifice . . . which gathers around itself the power of language to deceive or to establish truth. It functions, then, as a symbol of the play itself, a work whose falsehood (fiction) embodies truth.'<sup>27</sup> This is a strong reading of how the play's interests in *logos* and *ergon*, on deception, and on staged scenes, come together to provoke a question about tragedy's status (which Segal goes on to link to Gorgias' paradoxical pronouncement that it is better to be deceived, to give in, that is, to the enchantment of *logos* in the

<sup>26</sup> See Segal (1981) 278–91; Ringer (1998) 127–212.

<sup>27</sup> Segal (1986) 128. See also Ringer (1998); Batchelder (1995).

theatre). But the grief over the empty urn also asks what I think is a more insistent and troubling question about the audience.

Electra's emotions have the ability to sway Orestes even when he knows they are based on a falsehood, even when it threatens his own plot. As an audience in the theatre too, it is hard to watch the outpouring of her grief without being affected. Electra, in turn, has been wholly swayed by the false speech of the Paidagogus, so that she dismisses her sister's correct and overjoyed announcement of the return of Orestes. The difficulty of resisting the lure of *logos*, the difficulty of resisting the persuasion of another's emotions, reveal the fragility of the self-control of the audience on stage, and – this is where the self-reflexivity hits home – the audience in the theatre, the audience of democracy. The image of the responsible, judging, critical citizen – the bedrock of democratic decision making – is thrown hard up against the emotional distortions and self-deceptions of our watching Orestes watching Electra. We could put the question starkly for the audience watching these audiences on stage: how like Electra and Orestes are you (prepared to be)?

The final scene of the play is the most stage-managed scene of all. Orestes brings on stage – probably via the *ekkuklēma* – the dead body of Clytemnestra, shrouded, concealed. In the *Oresteia*, Orestes appeared over the dead bodies of Aegisthus and Clytemnestra to display to the citizens of Argos the end of the double tyranny (before fleeing the onset of the Furies). Here instead we have an exquisite scene of staged nastiness. Electra has greeted Aegisthus with a finely acted show of stoic grief – exactly what she had accused her mother of. It is one of the grim ironies of this play how Electra fulfils her own heated remarks to Clytemnestra (619–21): 'Hatred from you and your actions compel me by force to do these things: shameful deeds are taught by shameful deeds.' Electra shows what she has inherited and been taught as she leads a man to his death by her deceptive words. Aegisthus instructs Orestes to uncover the body. Orestes fends this off: 'It is yours to see this and to address in a loving/familial (φιλωῶς) way' (1470–1). Aegisthus calls for Clytemnestra, and, with studied irony, Orestes declares 'She is near; don't look anywhere else' (1474). As Aegisthus unveils the body, he is observed by both Orestes and Electra, an actor in their drama. Aegisthus will be taken into the house finally to be slaughtered.

Here the very brief moment of the audience on stage is constructed as a fantasy of control. The two avengers, for so long the victims, set up the scene and direct it with precision. At last they have Aegisthus in their power, and they revel in their position by their play-acting and heavy irony.

Yet the ending of the play, in typically Sophoclean style, while it may have a strong sense of formal closure, also opens up more problematic vistas. This question is usually discussed by critics in terms of the absence of Furies or the lack of moral response to the act of matricide within the play. Where Aeschylus had taken a further play to resolve the tensions set in motion by the god-ordered matricide and had brought a trial on stage to find a resolution, Sophocles' aggressive silence leaves the question for the audience in the theatre (making them the jury of the trial, as it were). The future is alluded to in a way which encourages the audience to reflect on what is to happen next: Aegisthus and Orestes talk pointedly of prophecy and who can know what the future will bring (1481, 1499, 1500). Aegisthus wonders if the house of the Pelopids will always suffer (1497–8). But what interests me most is the way in which the control of the avengers, and in particular Electra, is undercut.

Electra's role in this last scene is fascinating. She concludes her brief dialogue with Aegisthus in this way (1464–5):

καὶ δὴ τελεῖται τὰ π' ἐμοῦ· τῷ γὰρ χρόνῳ  
νοῦν ἔσχον, ὥστε συμφέρειν τοῖς κρείσσοσιν.

See! My part is being fulfilled. In time  
I have gained wisdom, so that I accede to those more powerful.

*Kai dê* indicates that she is actually doing what she says she is doing: it acts as a deictic particle drawing attention to her own performance. *Teleitai* is, as ever, difficult to translate with one English word. It implies fulfilment as well as closure; an end that can be death; a paying (back). At one level she is indicating to Aegisthus that her old life is finished, and that she will fulfil his commands. At another, as Jebb notes, she is underlining her own role in the fulfilment of the vengeance. (One could almost translate: 'Look! My part is being acted out . . .') Her irony is continued in her expressed willingness to accede to those more powerful – a double edged irony since it is not clear exactly what the more powerful forces at work in Electra's narrative here might be; and this irony marks her own sense of growing power, her sense of control. The last word of the play, however, is *τελεωθέν*, 'finished', 'consummated', 'ended'. Self-reflexive, of course, and a superb way of highlighting the tension between the end of the play and the open-endedness of the action: how ended is this end? It also reframes Electra's use of *teleitai*. How much in control of her narrative is she? How certain can she be of the end she is pursuing? The ironic ambiguity of the word *teleisthai*, which Electra manipulates, is, by the end of the play, turned against her.

Her own last word has a similar doubleness. Aegisthus asks to say a few last remarks, and Electra interrupts demanding his silence. Every character in the play has tried to shut Electra up. Now she demands silence of her enemy. She requires his instant death. 'Only this,' she declares, 'could provide release for my ills of old' (1489–90). Her final word is *lutêrion*, 'release'. This is a charged word in Sophocles. Every character who thinks they have found *lúsis*, 'release', is mistaken, and usually finds that what they thought was release is bringing them into deeper disaster.<sup>28</sup> So what happens to Electra at the end of the play? What release can she hope for once the hatred that has dominated her life no longer has an object? How much self-deception is there in this hope for release? Where Electra had expressed her control over Aegisthus through irony, here she is the victim of the irony in her own words.

Electra and Orestes set up a little staging to enact the slaughter of Aegisthus. Their superiority and control are performed in their irony and their stage-management as much as in the physical act of revenge. Yet the superiority and control of each are fragile. Neither Orestes as *mantis* of the future, nor Electra in her belief in release can throw off the pall of self-deception. Of being locked into a tragic, over-determined narrative, which is beyond their control. Electra and Orestes as audience to their own staged drama of the tricking of Aegisthus reveal the illusions of control which power gives to an audience.

*Electra* gives us multiple audiences on stage. It shows us multiple responses and multiple interpretations of audiences. It shows us the audience losing control to overwhelming emotions. It shows the illusion of control in an audience in charge. The *Electra* is a highly provocative play in many ways, but it is provocative specifically for the audience of democracy in that its images of an audience are so hard to reconcile with the ideal of the critical, controlled, authoritative citizen doing his duty in the institutions of the city. It is here that the *Electra's* self-reflexivity or metatheatricity has a political bite.<sup>29</sup>

My final example is Antigone's *kommos* in the *Antigone*, her lament as she leaves to her death in the cave. She sings in counterpoint with the chorus, and eventually Creon interrupts to hurry her off stage. We cannot be certain that Creon is on stage throughout the scene: but Griffith considers it likely that he is (his entrance is otherwise unannounced and

<sup>28</sup> See Goldhill (forthcoming).

<sup>29</sup> I am here tacitly disagreeing with Griffin's opinion that Sophocles' *Electra* is fundamentally unpolitical: Griffin (1999b). The discussions of metatheatricity in Segal (1981) and Ringer (1998) do not broach the political adequately.

unmotivated), and the lyrics continue after his entrance. I would like to consider the implications if he is on stage from 780 or from 806 onwards.

Antigone enters processing as in a funeral march, but singing her own funeral dirge (a bizarre ritual performance allowed by her strange circumstances). The traditional *kommos* is antiphonal, and involves consolation from the group to the individual mourner as well as shared, often incantatory expressions of grief.<sup>30</sup> The exchanges between the chorus and Antigone in this scene construct a delicate and subtle interplay as she mourns and they switch between consolation and condemnation, and she asks for sympathy by her laments but also successively alienates herself from her surroundings. Antigone in her first stanza (806–16) marks herself as ‘the bride of Hades’, the conventional sign of the virgin who dies before marriage.<sup>31</sup> The chorus respond with a standard consolation for young death (usually expressed for a young man, however) that she will have fame (κλεινή 817) and praise (ἔπαινον 817) for her death.<sup>32</sup> But they add: ἀλλ’ αὐτόνομος ζῶσα μόνη δὴ θνατῶν Αἴδαν καταβήσῃ, ‘but of independent will, alive, alone, bereft of mortals, you will descend to Hades’ (821–2).<sup>33</sup> The *alla* ‘but’ marks a transition from praise. She has brought about her death by her own actions, her own self-willed activity. She has set herself apart, and hence is *monē*, ‘on her own’, ‘bereft of human beings’. As Griffith notes, ‘their tone is hard to gauge’. While they console (one function of the chorus in a *kommos*), they also distance themselves from her behaviour.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>30</sup> On mourning, see in general Alexiou (2002); Dué (2003), and, best of all, Foley (2001) esp. 19–56, 145–71.

<sup>31</sup> See King (1983), (1998) and for the significance of the role of the Parthenos for Antigone, see Goldhill (1990).

<sup>32</sup> These lines have been much discussed. On the difficulty of this praise see Knox (1964) 176–7 n8. Denniston (1934) 436 suggests that the ‘livelier οὐκοῦν seems more appropriate . . . while the quieter interrogative οὐκοῦν is also possible’ and translates ‘Well, are you not dying a glorious death?’ He adds that Jebb’s strong reading ‘therefore’ here is ‘inappropriate’.

<sup>33</sup> Jebb translates ‘No, mistress of your own fate, and still alive, thou shalt pass to Hades, as no other of mortal kind hath passed.’ This translation is in line with his wholly positive image of Antigone. αὐτόνομος, however, is not a simply positive term: it means more ‘self-willed’, ‘using one’s own law’, which in democratic terms, especially for a woman, is not as grand as ‘mistress of one’s own fate’, nor as positive. Nor is μόνη δὴ θνατῶν likely to mean ‘the only one of humans [to suffer this]’. Not only is it simply and crassly untrue: how can Antigone be the first person to be put to death like this? But also and more importantly the word νόμος has been a thematically marked word for Antigone, in her separation from the community, from her sister and from her family. See 941. On Antigone’s moral status, see especially Foley (2001) 172–200; also Sourvinou-Inwood (1990) with Foley (1995).

<sup>34</sup> On the *kommos*, a much discussed passage, see Knox (1964) esp. 176–7; Reinhardt (1979) 80–4; Winnington-Ingram (1980) 136–146; Burton (1980) 118–27; Segal (1981) 177–183; Gardiner (1987) 91–3; Whitlock Blundell (1989) 147–8; and Blake Tyrrell and Bennett (1998) 97–121; all with the background of Foley (2001) 19–56; 172–200. I will not add a bibliography here on Antigone’s long final thesis, which is not relevant to my current discussion.

Antigone finds a parallel for her death in Niobe (824–33). But the chorus respond with ‘But she was a goddess and god born. We are mortal and born of mortals. And to be sure it is a great thing for one who has passed away, even to have it said of her that she received shares with demigods while living and after she died’ (834–5). The recognition of inevitable mortality is a cliché of consolation (as used at *Electra* 1171–2); if it sounds like a mild correction of Antigone’s likening herself to Niobe (*alla* . . . ‘but’), the remainder of their words still (*kaitoi*) recognize the glory of being like a demi-god. Again they both pull away and draw closer to Antigone. But she is outraged by their utterance: οἴμοι γελῶμαι. τί με . . . ὑβρίζεις, ‘Alas, I am mocked! Why do you humiliate me?’ she explodes (839–41). She rejects any of the consolation as an insult. Where the chorus called her ‘alone’, she declares herself to be ‘unwept by friends’ (847), and, in an extraordinary phrase, a ‘resident alien among neither mortals nor a corpse with corpses, neither with the alive nor the dead’ (850–1). Antigone is truly separated here from all bonds: she cannot find a home either with living or dead.

The chorus respond in emotionally-heightened lyric metre with their most outspoken condemnation of her behaviour: ‘You stepped out to the furthest extreme of boldness; you smashed your foot against the high pedestal of Justice. You paid for your father’s sin’ (854–7). She committed a transgression and in so doing indicated her inheritance from her transgressive father. Matching her (self-)isolating expression, the chorus distance themselves strongly from her justification. What she did was wrong. But their remark about her father prompts from Antigone a lament for her family’s woes. The chorus respond to this with a deeply ambivalent comment: σέβειν μὲν εὐσέβειά τις, κράτος δ’, ὅτῳ κράτος μέλει, παραβατὸν οὐδαμᾶ πέλει· σὺ δ’ αὐτόγνωτος ὤλεσ’ ὄργα, ‘There is a certain piety in showing pious reverence. But to one whose business is power, power cannot be transgressed. Your self-willed temper has destroyed you’ (872–5). They allow a certain (*tis*) piety in what she has done: the play between *eusebeia* (which I have translated ‘piety’) and *sebein* (‘show pious reverence’) recognizes that Antigone’s assertion that what she has done is morally required (*sebein*) may conform to an abstract positive idea of a relation to the gods and to the hierarchies of social order (‘reverence’). But they also recognize that what she done transgresses the dictates of power, which cannot be brooked by those in authority. There is a hesitancy, a striving for qualification in this double evaluation. But their judgement on her attitude is unswerving. Her temper is self-willed (*autognōtos* echoes *autonomos*): it is a further gloss on *monē*: her temper has left her separate from the community. Hence Antigone’s lament that follows: ‘Unwept, unfriended (ἄφιλος),

unmarried I am led forth . . . No friend (οὐδεις φίλων) laments my uncried fate' (876–82). Antigone, who earlier (523) had proclaimed herself born to *sumphilein*, 'to share in the bonds and obligations of mutual relations' sees herself finally as deprived of *philoī*, isolated even from sympathy or consolation.

The *kommos*, then, maps a flowing relationship between chorus and young girl, from conversation and consolation through to moral condemnation and isolation. At this point, Creon speaks in terms that echo what we have seen (883–90). 'No-one would stop wailing before death,' he expostulates, 'if it were necessary' (that is, if it would put off the moment). So, he upbraids the attendants, get a move on. Take her and leave her 'alone (μόνην) and deserted (ἔρημον)' in the cave. 'Anyway (ὅ οὖν),' he concludes, 'She will be deprived of her residency (μετοικίας) on the earth above.' The strange description of life as an '(alien) residency' – as a *metic* – echoes Antigone's own description (851), and his use of *monē*, 'alone', 'isolated', echoes both the chorus' and her own fears and laments. So what is the effect of having Creon watch the *kommos* and then respond as he does?

In contrast to the *kommos*, where the chorus struggle to find an adequate judgement for Antigone's actions and attitude, where praise, dismissal, consolation and hesitancy rub together, and where Antigone now laments her life, a life which she apparently willingly gave up (and even declared herself long dead [559–60]), Creon is brusque, aggressive, certain and even, as Griffith puts it, 'crass'. Where Odysseus as audience on stage in the *Ajax* attempted to offer a differently nuanced and more sympathetic response to the scene staged before him, Creon reacts in a far *less* nuanced and wholly unsympathetic manner to the scene he watches. When Antigone laments that she has no *philos* to cry for her, her *philos* Creon is watching unmoved. And we are watching him watching. This not only affects an audience's view of the king, but also works to isolate him from the action, an isolation which will increase throughout the rest of the play as his *philoī* are stripped from him one by one, until he ends up, like Antigone, alive but 'no more existing than a nothing' (1325).

One of the great contrasts in the *Antigone* has been regularly ignored by critics since Hegel. This is the contrast between the ideologues or extremists who see the world according to fixed and exclusive principles, even when these principles lead to self-contradiction and even self-destruction – Creon and Antigone, say – and the characters who try to muddle along in a more complex and less extremely coloured world: the guard who can change his mind, burble for self-preservation, and resist the polarizing certainties

of political rhetoric; or Ismene, who can care, and fight and wonder, but without the all-embracing extremism of her sister. It is they who survive, perhaps unremembered, but still alive. What we watch when we watch Creon observing the *kommos* is the increasing isolation and stubbornness of the ideologue. His distance from the action gives us the distance to observe him.

The first play Brecht worked on after the Second World War was his *Antigone*, based on Hölderlin's translation of Sophocles (and first produced in Switzerland in 1948). During the early years of the war he was drafting what became published eventually as *The Messingkauf Dialogues*. The *Messingkauf Dialogues* contains one of the longest discussions of Brecht's theories of alienation in the theatre, his desire to break the audience away from their emotional absorption in the narrative world of the theatre towards a more reflective, distanced and intellectual appreciation of what was being staged in front of them. I think one could make a case for Brecht having learnt a good deal from Sophocles, and in particular from the device of dramatizing an audience on stage. The effect of putting an audience on stage is to provide a mirror to the audience of its own processes of reaction. It works to distance the audience from a direct emotional absorption and enable it to see itself watching. It has become a standard response to literature in recent years to uncover literature's self-reflexivity, its talking of itself as art, its reflection on the status of fiction, or the materiality of form. Yet it is never likely to be enough of a conclusion to discover that literature is (again) self-reflexive. What Sophocles shows rather is that such self-reflexivity, such dramatization of the audience on stage, speaks significantly to the social context of democracy in which Athenian drama was written and performed. As Pat Easterling writes, 'What is important . . . is that the ironic play with the dramatic medium is intimately related to the central issues' of the play and of democracy: 'the collusion in which the spectators are invited to participate has nothing in the least frivolous or trivial about it.'<sup>35</sup> Theatrical self-reflexivity is a demand for the audience to be (more) self-reflective.

The role of the audience in the Assembly or Law Courts was not merely of theoretical interest in democracy but also a matter of life and death – state policy, individual careers, the future of families and the city depended on the decisions of a large group of citizens, listening to arguments and making moral, practical and policy decisions. When Thucydides comments that it was *erōs*, 'passionate desire', that led the youth of Athens to vote

<sup>35</sup> Easterling (1997c) 170–1.

for the disastrous Sicilian expedition, when Aristophanes sneers that all an orator needs to say was 'gleaming Athens' and the citizens sat on the tips of their buttocks, puffed up with pride, or when Plato describes the Assembly as a collection of cobblers making decisions about high politics, they are all expressing concern (or a harsher antipathy) for democracy's cherished principle of a collective of citizens debating and deciding, as it worked in practice in Athens. Sophocles' drama does not have such explicit political posturing. Rather, setting an audience on stage is a specific dramatic way of opening to question the role of rhetoric, judgement, and the emotions for the audience of citizens in the theatre, and in the other institutions of the city. It is an encouragement to see oneself watching, and, through such self-reflection, to explore what responsible citizenship might involve – and how difficult it might be to avoid being what Thucydides' Cleon attacks (3. 38) as mere 'spectators of speeches' (θεαταὶ τῶν λόγων), 'victims of pleasure in listening, more like spectators of media super-stars (σοφιστῶν) than citizens engaged in the political business of the city'.

*'The players will tell all': the dramatist, the actors  
and the art of acting in Sophocles' Philoctetes*

*Ismene Lada-Richards*

This article pays tribute to two of Pat's long lasting interests in the area of Greek drama: her fascination with Sophocles' *Philoctetes* and her pioneering work on theatrical performance, with particular emphasis on the figure of the actor. Starting from the now clichéd position that Sophocles' plays were written for performance, I will explore 'performance' not as the outer, contextual frame in which to place *Philoctetes* but, crucially, as a dimension inherently linked to the advancement of this play's plot. Sophocles' *Philoctetes*, I contend, betrays its dramatist's deep engagement with his own artistic medium, especially his highly self-conscious inquiry into the art of acting. It would not be an exaggeration to claim, as Goldman<sup>1</sup> does of all theatre, that Sophocles in his *Philoctetes* 'makes action out of acting'.

A caveat, however, is required from the outset. For the nature of theatrical self-consciousness displayed in Sophoclean drama is qualitatively different from that which underpins Renaissance tragedy, with its explicit 'metatheatrical' and perfectly overt tropes of self-referentiality. As Edith Hall argues in the only extensive, head-on discussion of this issue, the 'cognitive contract between Greek tragic author, actor and audience'<sup>2</sup> does not provide for explicit metadrama in the sense of open, unequivocal, references to the theatrical frame. What this acknowledgement implies with respect to *Philoctetes* is first and foremost that a contemporary Athenian audience can never be thought of as thrust into a mode of viewing *necessitating* a recognition of the play's probe into the dynamics of theatrical performance. As in all Greek tragedy, so in Sophocles' *Philoctetes*, any preoccupation with theatrical matters runs like an underwater current, well beneath the verbal surface and leaving no visible linguistic mark upon the text itself. On the one hand then, nothing prevented fifth-century spectators from simply enjoying the

<sup>1</sup> (1985) 4.   <sup>2</sup> See especially Hall (2006) 105–11.

play as the latest addition to the theatrical tradition of the *Philoctetes* myth. Simultaneously, however, there is every reason to believe that the *theatai dexioi* among the audience, those used to deriving special pleasure from being eagerly attuned to the fortunes of the tragic genre as an ever-evolving performative medium, would have found ample opportunity to feel the electrifying energy of Sophocles' musings on his own art, as it courses, in fits and starts, through the very body of the performed text. That particular section of Sophocles' audience would have been thrilled at the way the dramatist departed from the heavily political atmosphere of Euripides' *Philoctetes* (431 BC)<sup>3</sup> to fashion a play which both exploited and rewarded its spectators' growing immersion in theatrical matters, most importantly, their ever-diversifying experience of histrionic conventions and their appreciation of the full range of possibilities offered by the employment of a third speaking actor (an innovation attributed to Sophocles).

By placing the onus of *Philoctetes*' deception not on Odysseus himself (as was the case in both Aeschylus' and Euripides' *Philoctetes* plays) but on the young and noble Neoptolemus who, as Odysseus' attendant, required indoctrination into the deception plot, Sophocles was able not only to explore more suggestively the moment of transition from 'Self' to 'Other', which constitutes trans-culturally the quintessential act of the theatrical transaction, but also, in more general terms, to thematize the very process of theatrical performance. In Sophocles' hands the Euripidean 'tragedy of the betrayed patriot'<sup>4</sup> gave way to the kind of drama played at the nub of the theatrical experience, that is to say the relationship between a player (Neoptolemus) and his part. And while the Euripidean plot seems to have been fuelled by external events, such as the arrival of a Trojan embassy hoping to woo *Philoctetes* to the Trojan side (Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 52. 13 and 59.4), Sophocles' tragedy is fuelled by the momentous impact of performed agony (see §2), that is to say *Philoctetes*' horrendous suffering, upon the *psychē* of Neoptolemus, the internal spectator.<sup>5</sup>

It is with admirable subtlety, then, that Sophocles' play explores an entire nexus of questions pertaining to the histrionic self and it is precisely with this subtlety in mind that the following discussion should be read.

<sup>3</sup> Our main evidence is Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 52 and 59. Limitations of space do not allow me to note the wonderfully subtle ways in which Sophocles' play glances at his predecessors' plots.

<sup>4</sup> Müller (1993) 247.

<sup>5</sup> For Neoptolemus as both internal actor and spectator in the *Philoctetes*, see below pp. 55–61 and Lada-Richards (1998).

## I ACTORS AND PARTS

The Prologue of Sophocles' *Philoctetes* pivots around one of those supremely 'energized' moments where a play's plot requires the laying out of a subplot, a scenario to be acted out by one or more of the play's own *dramatis personae* in front of an 'internal' audience. Conscious of the need to secure Philoctetes' return to Troy, Odysseus, a figure for the playwright himself, masterminds a playlet whose explicitly avowed aim is to trick the abandoned hero into rejoining the expedition on the side of the Greeks. Crucially, Odysseus' 'internalized' drama requires a human agent, prepared to falsify himself not only by allowing his 'character' to be re-scripted into a different set of narrative circumstances in order that his presence on Lemnos may be accounted for persuasively, but also by insouciantly suspending his own moral moorings, restructuring, that is, his own set of ethical and moral values. The agent in question Odysseus has already brought with him to Lemnos: it is the young Neoptolemus, Achilles' son. In a profoundly self-reflexive way, *Philoctetes* begins where every play begins, even though such beginnings are normally hidden from the audience's full view: as the play opens we are confronted with a 'character' on the verge of *becoming* yet another 'character', at the point, that is, of replicating the quintessential theatrical experience of acting a part.

In Neoptolemus' case, however, the business of acting has a twist in the tail. For instead of looking forward to the adoption of his role, this actor balks at the realization that a discrepancy exists between his own, 'Achillean' self and the 'Odyssean' part he is supposed to perform, a role marked by 'shameful deceit' (ἀπάταισιν αἰσχραῖς) and 'trickery' (δόλοις) (1228) and permeated with a sense of *logos* instead of deed. The noble boy who, like Shakespeare's Coriolanus, abhors being 'false' to his 'nature' (*Coriolanus* 3.2.16) and lives by his wish 'to maintain an upright, honest, straightforward rectitude in his dealings',<sup>6</sup> finds himself coaxed into a mission that requires him to sunder speech and action from the workings of an innermost discourse. When he half-heartedly agrees to cooperate, he simultaneously pinpoints his greatest stumbling block, the shame he attaches to a mode of self-presentation which dissociates the inner from the outer, what 'seems' from what 'is': 'All right, then, I'll do it, leaving all sense of shame behind' (ἴτω ποήσω, πᾶσαν αἰσχύνην ἀφείς) (120).<sup>7</sup> Had

<sup>6</sup> Goldhill (1997b) 142.

<sup>7</sup> Neoptolemus' strong sense of what is *aischron* becomes a major motive for his actions in this play: see primarily 906, 908–9, 1228, 1234, 1248–9. Philoctetes himself, for his part, relies on the notion of *aischynē* to appeal to Neoptolemus' better self (cf. 929, 971–2).

Neoptolemus been a Shakespearean, instead of a Sophoclean, character, and therefore free to refer to his role in openly theatrical terms,<sup>8</sup> he might well have branded his own mission as 'a part | that I shall blush in acting' (*Coriolanus* 2.2.139–40). For, like Coriolanus, forced into the uncongenial and degrading part of a crowd-pleaser, Neoptolemus too quizzes Odysseus on 'how could one have the face to say such things' (πῶς οὖν βλέπων τις ταῦτα τολμήσει λακεῖν;) (110). Not surprisingly then, at the moment when renewed commitment to the role is required, or else the action will grind to a halt, the temporary alliance of 'character' and 'self' starts crumbling. 'Like a dull actor now', having forgotten his part and opting 'out, | Even to a full disgrace' (*Coriolanus* 5.3.40–2), Neoptolemus mouths not his 'lines' but his confusion, a condition of emotional perplexity and intellectual numbness that both he and Philoctetes describe as *aporia*,<sup>9</sup> the mental block that stifles thought and action: 'Alas, what am I to do from now on? (παπαῖ· τί δῆτ' <ἄν> δρῶμ' ἐγὼ τούθ' ἐνδε γε;.) (895).<sup>10</sup>

Throughout the play the question whether Neoptolemus is or is not 'cut out' for the part is paramount in our mind. And as we follow Achilles' son in his meanderings in and out of the behaviour zone appropriate to his Odyssean role, we are struck repeatedly by his double-voiced, double-accented discourse,<sup>11</sup> as though his inborn consciousness, the *physis* inherited from his own father, is hard at work checking upon, scrutinizing and chiding the borrowed consciousness of the 'internalized' play's villain.<sup>12</sup> Like a Brechtian actor,<sup>13</sup> Neoptolemus refuses to conceal the 'self' behind

<sup>8</sup> See Hall (2006a) 107–11 on tragedy's total avoidance of exclusively theatrical terms, such as the words for dramatic actor, role, part, the action of impersonating (or rehearsing) a character, mask, stage, and the like. Aristophanic comedy and philosophical discourse, on the other hand, use expressions such as *hypokrinesthai*, *mimeisthai* or *gignesthai* (plus accusative of another individual) to describe the 'binary relationship between the actor and the concrete individual he actually "becomes": Hall (2006a) 37.

<sup>9</sup> See 897–9, with Lada-Richards (1998) 9–11. Most interestingly, the verb διαπορεῖσθαι in the sense of losing the plot, losing the thread of one's thoughts and bringing one's speech to an embarrassing halt, can be used in a supremely artistic context. The actor/political orator Aeschines tells the Athenians how Demosthenes stood suddenly helpless (διηπορήθη) in the course of an official speech to Philip of Macedon, whereupon the king encouraged him to calm down and retrace his path, explicitly contrasting his oratorical *faux pas* to the more unforgiving case of *aporia* on the stage: 'and not to think, as though he were an actor on the stage, that his collapse was an irreparable calamity'. See Aeschines 2.34–5, with Easterling (1999a) 163–4.

<sup>10</sup> Variations on this same question recur in 908, 969, 974, offering 'a clear signal to the spectators that his moral perplexity is a significant dramatic issue' (Easterling (1997c) 162).

<sup>11</sup> Vocabulary borrowed from Bakhtin (1981) 304, whose discussion of hybrid constructions lends itself particularly well to discussions of acting.

<sup>12</sup> A separate line of inquiry would be necessary in order to investigate the internalized actor's fear of contaminating the 'self' through the enactment of the villain's part; for a preliminary discussion of anti-theatrical strands in Greek drama, see Lada-Richards (2003).

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Lada-Richards (1997b) 84.

the 'role' but stands decisively beside it, until he finally cuts off the ties by which he is attached to it (§3). However we may choose to interpret Neoptolemus' performative experience, and despite the complete absence of explicit theatrical terminology in the verbal register apportioned to him,<sup>14</sup> there is little doubt that the extremely fraught dialectic between the 'actor' and his 'role' is one of the pivots of this play's plot, the dissonance between 'internalized' actor and his adopted 'character' proving a privileged source of meaning in itself.<sup>15</sup>

Now, a seasoned actor in the classical Athenian city would have welcomed the opportunity to play as broad as possible a range of roles, however incommensurate with his own self, so as the better to showcase his histrionic versatility,<sup>16</sup> the kind of virtuosity that would earn him fame and prizes (see §3). Yet the issue of the actor's special affinity with or suitability for a given part was also very much in the foreground, either weaving its way into the dramatic texts themselves<sup>17</sup> or being commented upon as an aesthetic issue, as sources from the imperial period abundantly reveal. A short pantomime dancer in the role of Hector could be recorded as a solecism against the spectacle's performative grammar (Lucian, *Salt.* 76), just as much as, in some quarters, it could be thought aesthetically repulsive to watch a 'soft' and 'womanish' actor play the part of an Achilles or Theseus or Heracles himself 'without either walking or speaking as a hero should', that is failing to achieve a satisfactory level of coherence between artistic self and *dramatis persona* (Lucian, *Pisc.* 31; cf. *Nigr.* 11).<sup>18</sup> At times the actor's aptitude for particular kinds of roles could even be made central to the performative effect, exploited as a crucial meaning-making element of the play. As Falkner<sup>19</sup> comments on the third-century BC boxer/tragic actor who won victories in strongman parts, such as Heracles, Achilles and Antaeus, 'clearly the audience's knowledge that the actor was *especially suited* to the roles he played enhanced his popularity, if not his performance'

<sup>14</sup> See above, p. 51 and n. 8. In addition, as early as 1985 Pat spoke of the 'vague way in which the tragedians allude to their own medium, the theatre' and in general of the conscious avoidance of explicit theatrical terminology in Greek tragedy: Easterling (1985) 6.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Grube's (1985) 34 discussion of Shakespearean drama.

<sup>16</sup> See Easterling (1997c) 153; Jouan (1983); Damen (1989); Johnston (1993); Ringer (1998) *passim*; Lada-Richards (2002) 408–12.

<sup>17</sup> *Ar. Thesm.* and *Eccl.* provide excellent examples (see Lada-Richards (2002) 401–5) alongside *Frogs*, where the cowardly Dionysus, self-appointed to the role of Heracles, bravest of the brave, discovers through his own comic *pathos* what it means to be unsuitable for one's stage part; see Lada-Richards (1999) ch. 4.

<sup>18</sup> For a detailed discussion of the perceived need for an harmonious correspondence between performing 'self' and impersonated 'character' in Athenian drama, see Lada-Richards (2002) 401–7.

<sup>19</sup> (2002) 360 n. 61.

(my italics).<sup>20</sup> It would be reasonable, in any case, to speculate that, with the continuing concentration of tragic plots on an ever shrinking pool of myths (Aristotle, *Poet.* 1453a17–22), it became increasingly likely that the same actor would be called upon to incarnate a particular hero, say Orestes or Electra, more than once in his career,<sup>21</sup> thus giving rise to an incipient notion of affinity to or even association with a particular mythical character. Most importantly, however, not only do we know of star actors with a marked preference for or specialisms and reputations in certain kinds of roles.<sup>22</sup> Sophocles himself, in a scrap of theatre history that most probably relates to the period before the practice of allocating actors to poets by lot was introduced, was said to have been especially preoccupied with adapting his *dramatis personae* to the *physeis*, that is, the histrionic talents, special strengths or even characters and idiosyncrasies of individual actors.<sup>23</sup>

Since tragedy arises in the *Philoctetes* from the crippling dissonance between 'internalized' actor and his 'role within the role', a stage-oriented reading of the text against a broader theatrical background enables us to understand the play as inflected by the playwright's theatrical preoccupation with the misadventure of the player trapped in ill-befitting parts.<sup>24</sup> Philoctetes touches the very core of Neoptolemus' affliction when protesting that Odysseus 'trained well' (εὖ προῦδίδαξεν) in evil an agent 'unapt'

<sup>20</sup> *SIG*<sup>3</sup> 1080 (= *TrGF* I DID B11), translated in Csapo and Slater (1995) 200 no. 163; cf. Easterling (1997d) 222; Hall (2002) 12 n. 29 and (2006a) 55. The same applies to the perceived necessity of having an impressively able-bodied actor impersonate Ajax falling on his sword: a real gem among the tragic scholia insists that the Ajax-actor 'must be strongly built', as was Timotheos of Zakynthos (see further, n. 60). Stephanis (1988: no. 2416) dates Timotheos as fifth/fourth century BC.

<sup>21</sup> For example, Burian (1997a) 184 counts at least six plays from the fifth century entitled *Oedipus*.

<sup>22</sup> No exhaustive list can be given here but think, e.g., of Aristodemus' and Theodorus' preference for Antigone (Dem., 19. 247, with Easterling 1999a: 157 n. 14); Theodorus' reputation for emotionally heightened performances of female roles (e.g., Aerope, Hecuba and Andromache, according to Aelian, *VH* 14.40 and Plut. *Pel.* 29.5); Theodorus' and Callippides' skill in drawing an audience's tears (Plut. *Mor.* 545f. and Xen. *Symp.* 3.11); see further Lada-Richards (2002) 414–15; vocal specialisms such as those of Parmenon and Theodorus (Plut. *Mor.* 18b–c); Callippides' reputation for vulgar imitation of the gestures of the non-elite (*Arist. Poet.* 1461b26–35 and 1462a8–12, with Csapo 2002: 128–31); see also Hall (2002) 12, with n. 29, and further discussion in Hall (2006a) 48–54.

<sup>23</sup> See *Vit. Soph.* 6 (*TrGF* IV, p. 32 = Istrus, *FGrHist* 334 F36) and cf. Owen's (1936) important paper on Sophocles as tailoring singing roles to his actor's technical strengths or limitations. Most importantly, see Slater (1990) 388–9 and n.11: 'allotment itself need not be a bar to adapting the text to the capacities of the performers. Only if the text were fixed before the allotment and unalterable thereafter would the poet be unable to adapt his text to the performer's capacity', and a Greek text may well have been 'quite fluid up until the moment of performance'. On this last issue, cf. Hall (2006a) 48–52.

<sup>24</sup> Provided one bears in mind the absence of theatrical explicitness in the Sophoclean text, one may glance in the direction of Antonio's exclamation in the *Induction* to John Marston's Elizabethan tragedy *Antonio and Mellida*: 'I was never worse fitted since the nativity of my actorship' (lines 67–8). Neoptolemus' ordeal is perhaps the closest we come to the subjective experience of acting in Greek drama.

(ἀφυσῶ) and 'unwilling' (κού θέλονθ) for the task (1014–15). As for Neoptolemus himself, he can only look at his role-playing as an experience which involves the abdication of his 'own truth' (cf. Shakespeare, *Coriolanus* 3.2.122) and the accomplishment of uncongenial deeds: 'all is difficult' (ἅπαντα δυσχέρεια), he grumbles, 'when one forsakes one's own nature and does things which do not befit it' (τὴν αὐτοῦ φύσιν | ὅταν λιπῶν τις δρᾷ τὰ μὴ προσεϊκότα) (902–3).

How reductive, albeit perfectly true, is the claim that *Philoctetes* was written for performance is, I hope, becoming apparent. For, although limitations of space preclude the full-scale testing of my proposition at this point, I still contend that, in a crucial way,<sup>25</sup> the very business of performance, especially in the form of the physical action of acting, is the play's chosen vehicle for the articulation of a broader nexus of ethical and moral, linguistic and political considerations:<sup>26</sup> the ethics of language, the legitimacy of a political and rhetorical manipulation of the 'self', the clash of heroic individualism against collective values, are all filtered through the motif – albeit massively understated through the total avoidance of theatrically explicit language – of the unwilling actor, the performer uncongenial for his part.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, it is the impasse that Odysseus' playlet hits when Neoptolemus proves finally unable to perform his appointed part to the playwright's satisfaction that brings home most forcefully an elemental truth about drama, namely that 'the powers of the actor determine the playwright's art, as the possibilities of language determine the poet's'.<sup>28</sup> '[C]omposing in the medium of the actor',<sup>29</sup> that is to say writing 'for an instrument', the actor's body, with its own 'physical vocabulary of potentiality', 'just as Mozart wrote for the Stradivarius',<sup>30</sup> the dramatist knows that his theatrical voice is only as compelling as the physical voice of the player who gives it material expression on the stage. In any case, the fact that Neoptolemus has not been asked to re-signify himself as radically 'other' but is allowed to perform under his own name (and mask) (57)<sup>31</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Albeit impossible to fully illuminate, due to our meagre primary evidence on the performative front.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Easterling's comment (1997c: 170) on the 'False Merchant' scene: 'the ironic play with the dramatic medium is intimately related to the central issues of *Philoctetes*: truth and lies, loyalty and treachery, honour and self-interest, the conflicting needs, and the conflicting rhetoric, of individuals and groups'.

<sup>27</sup> Interestingly, the issue of congeniality arises with respect to the deuteragonist (see below, pp. 55–61.) in Sophocles' play, and 'there is no evidence that the second and third actors were allocated' (Hall 2006a: 49).

<sup>28</sup> Goldman (1985) 100. <sup>29</sup> Goldman (1985) 101. <sup>30</sup> Harrop (1992) 6.

<sup>31</sup> Odysseus in Euripides' *Philoctetes*, by contrast, pretends to be one of Palamedes' friends, having fled the camp in fear of Odysseus, against whom he levels the greatest insults (Dio Chrys., *Or.* 52. 8–10, surely remembered in lines 64–6 of Sophocles' play).

foregrounds even more forcefully the paradoxical condition of 'dramatic character', a being distinct from the actor but also inescapably 'of' the actor, since it is the actor's individual 'self' that provides the building blocks for its creation.

## 2 APPRENTICES AND LEADS: LEARNING FROM THE MASTER IN THE ART

After the 'False Merchant's' departure (628ff.), but especially during Philoctetes' attack of pain and its immediate aftermath (730ff.), we, the audience of Sophocles' play, have no foolproof way of distinguishing 'acting' from 'doing', histrionic from authentic performance of the self.<sup>32</sup> To which level of reality do Neoptolemus' sighs, offers of help and signs of compassion belong?<sup>33</sup> To the 'inscribed' dramaturgy of the Odyssean playlet or the primary action of the 'outer', the Sophoclean plot? Who speaks those first words of sympathy, ὦ τάλαις (oh, poor soul), as early as 339? Whose is the joy at Philoctetes' recovery expressed in 882–5? Who states 'I am not unhappy to have seen you and have made you my friend' (671), just after Philoctetes has promised to allow the boy to touch his sacred bow (667–9) in a verbal exchange whose almost palpable emotion<sup>34</sup> puts the greatest pressure on the boundary between 'performing' and 'being'?

If the difference between primary feeling and the persuasive simulation of emotion which forms the cornerstone of the professional performer's job<sup>35</sup> collapses before our very eyes in this play, what is of even greater importance is the fact that Odysseus' 'internalized' plot, such as expounded to the 'actor' in lines 54–134, had not provided for the *particular* emotions Neoptolemus experiences in the course of his playacting. The *pathos* inscribed in Neoptolemus' role was meant to be limited to heavy-heartedness and

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Easterling (1978a) 28–9: '... how far is Neoptolemus carrying out his plan to deceive, and how far is he moved by pity and shame, *before* the moment at which he breaks? [...] The answer is that we have no means of knowing for certain.' For similar considerations on different points, see Falkner (1998) 37–8.

<sup>33</sup> E.g., 339–40, 759–61, 806; the Chorus also seem to be uncertain (e.g., at 833–6), as is Odysseus' envoy, the 'False Merchant', in 589 (on which see Easterling (1997c) 170).

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Lada-Richards (1997a).

<sup>35</sup> The question of the actor's emotional experience *in* performance lies at the heart of theatre and western performance theory. For the primacy of emotion in the Greek performative tradition, see Lada-Richards (2002) 412–15. Yet even when he draws on pain that comes directly from the heart, like the famous Polus did in his fourth-century BC performance in Sophocles' *Electra* (Aulus Gellius, *Noctes Atticae* 6.5.7; see Easterling 2002: 335–6; Lada-Richards 2005: 460–2; Holford-Strevens 2005), the actor's emotional turmoil is mediated by 'aesthetic distance', so that the projected feeling is but emotion at 'a second remove', neither wholly nor unqualifiedly identical with primary, real-life, raw sensations.

anger at the Argives' alleged insult,<sup>36</sup> while the actor himself was supposed to be cool-headed and vigilant, his eye constantly on the ball (cf. 130–1), his mind fixed on the prospect of salvation (109) and gain (111), irrespective of the moral cost (108–9). Neoptolemus, however, like a bad or inexperienced actor who believes it is permissible to adapt the *role* to himself instead of adjusting *himself* to his part,<sup>37</sup> thinks nothing of playing his 'Odyssean' role on a dangerously un-Odyssean key,<sup>38</sup> *inter alia* by making *oiktos*, pity, its primary dimension. As he confesses in 965–6, his dilemma at its climax, the 'terrible pity' (οἶκτος δεινός) which has 'fallen upon him' (ἐμπέπτωκε) is not a new emotion but has been operative καὶ πάλαι, from some indeterminate moment in the past. Indeed, the calculated repetition of *kai palai* with respect to Neoptolemus' pity or moral discomfort pushes the starting point of the actor's aberrant interpretation of the role further and further back,<sup>39</sup> his ambiguous reply to Odysseus' scout in 589 (σκοπῶ κάγῳ πάλαι, 'I have been watching what I'm doing for a long time') suggesting to the audience the possibility that he never really put aside his 'qualms about the propriety of deceiving the trusting Philoctetes'.<sup>40</sup> In lines 1074–5, having nearly withdrawn himself from the Odyssean fiction, he is under no illusion as to the nature of his performative wrongdoing in the eyes of his 'director': 'I will have it said of me by this man [i.e. I will be reproached by Odysseus] that I am full of compassion (οἶκτου πλέως)', he confesses to the Chorus.

Neoptolemus' acting error<sup>41</sup> is in fact twofold. Not only does he allow his own *physis* to interfere with the performance,<sup>42</sup> to the extent that, at times, it hijacks the 'character' he is supposed to project. He also lacks

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Falkner's (1998: 28–9) suggestion that, from Philoctetes' perspective, the play might be called 'Angry Neoptolemus'; cf. *ibid.* 37.

<sup>37</sup> See Moore (1966) 77. For the very similar artistic error of Dionysus *qua* 'internalized' actor in Aristophanes' *Frogs*, see Lada-Richards (1999) 171.

<sup>38</sup> For further discussion of this point, see Lada-Richards (1998) 14–17 and (2002) 406–7. Failing to remodel one's 'self' so as to suit the 'character' is an artistic flaw often ridiculed by Lucian; see, e.g., *Nigr.* 11.

<sup>39</sup> See 913: τοῦτ' ἀνιῶμαι πάλαι; 806: ἀλγῶ πάλαι δὴ τάπι σοὶ στένων κακά. In the perspective of the tragic scholiasts, Neoptolemus' execution of his role might well have been an illustration of the actor's allegedly common inferior judgement, especially with respect to 'inadequate comprehension of the text and of the character one is playing': see Falkner (2002) 359 and *passim*.

<sup>40</sup> Easterling (1997c) 170.

<sup>41</sup> For extensive discussion of Neoptolemus' acting, see Lada-Richards (1997b) 79–84; (1998) 14–17.

<sup>42</sup> Philoctetes puts his finger on Neoptolemus' artistic failure by observing that his actions are distinctively 'Achillean': 'it is not unlike your father, either in word | or in act, to help a good man' (904–5). In the Greek tragic tradition the intrusion of the actor's extra-theatrical identity in mid-performance can only be attributed to accident when, as Lucian puts it (*The Dream or The Cock* 26), a tragic king, lavishly dressed, loses his footing on the stage and exposes himself as the pauper that he really is.

the artistic mechanism for regulating, calibrating his own emotions when plunged in the midst of overwhelming passion. In his secondary metadramatic role as an 'internalized' *theatēs* of Philoctetes' plight, Neoptolemus, untutored in the Dionysiac arts of acting and spectating, possesses none of the theatre-goer's ability to watch ἡδέως, with pleasure, things which are πικρά, bitter (Euripides, *Bacch.* 815; cf. Augustine, *Confessions* 3.2.2–4) and is consequently swept over by the tides of feeling Theatre is able to unleash. While the Dionysiac theatre's spectator is able to find pleasure amid tears (Plato, *Phlb.* 48a),<sup>43</sup> in Neoptolemus' case the hermit's anguish 'knock[s]' against his 'very heart' (Miranda's exclamation in Shakespeare, *The Tempest* 1.2.5–9) in a raw, unmediated form, as a mental, psychological and physical torment: ἀλγῶ, he exclaims (806),<sup>44</sup> at the point where vicarious identification with the suffering 'other' is registered as a primary emotion by the experiencing 'self'.

The proper way of handling an emotionally demanding part on stage is shown to Neoptolemus, the amateur actor in Odysseus' 'internalized' plot, by the lead actor in Sophocles' 'outer' play, namely the real-life protagonist entrusted with the highly taxing role of Philoctetes.<sup>45</sup> The Sophoclean spectator, then, witnesses an action wherein protagonist<sup>46</sup> instructs his deuteragonist<sup>47</sup> by means of a command performance in what is certainly one of the daunting roles in the tragic Athenian repertoire. For not only does it require of the player inexhaustible resources of physical energy (albeit to represent the most incapacitated of men), imaginative power and harrowing emotional intensity; it also demands sustained intellectual

<sup>43</sup> See Falkner (2002: 354–5), for examples of comments in the ancient scholia that emphasize the need to avoid eliciting the spectator's pain, distress or discomfort through the onstage representation of characters' suffering.

<sup>44</sup> *Algos* and its cognates are the words most commonly used in this play to convey the virulence of Philoctetes' disease (e.g., 734, 1326, 1358, 1379). On Neoptolemus' reaction, see further Lada-Richards (1998) 8; (2005) 469.

<sup>45</sup> Apart from surmising that, as the play won first prize, its protagonist cannot have been artistically incompetent, we cannot know how the original stage-Philoctetes acquitted himself. The questions, however, of 'how much depended on the actor's art rather than the writer's' and 'how far the two interacted' were very real in antiquity (Handley (2002) 166) and, overall, it must have been the case that, as the fifth century progressed, 'histrionic skill could make or mar' (Slater (1990) 394), the 'quality of the acting' making 'a difference to the success of a drama' (Slater (1990) 388).

<sup>46</sup> Theoretically speaking, the protagonist could have played either role (cf. Jouan (1983) 73). There is, however, little doubt that the role of Philoctetes is infinitely more taxing on histrionic talent (see p. 57). Owen (1936) 151 may well be right in his suggestion that it was composed with 'a very competent vocalist' in mind, the same 'very efficient singer-actor' for whom Sophocles would also have composed the leading role in his *Electra*.

<sup>47</sup> One can hardly overemphasize the fact that both protagonist and deuteragonist keep on to their respective roles with absolutely no change of mask throughout the play. As Damen (1989: 324) writes, 'That two actors in a tragedy never changed roles is in itself a striking occurrence.'

focus and that most prized discrimination which should prevent him from 'tear[ing] a passion to totters' (Shakespeare, *Hamlet* 3.2.8) or descending to alienating rant.<sup>48</sup>

Now, officially there was no scope for competition between the actors/members of the same troupe.<sup>49</sup> There is, however, good ground for believing that the protagonist took special care not to be overshadowed by his subordinates: according to Aristotle (*Pol.* 7. 1336b28–31), for example, Theodorus, the fourth-century BC tragic star, 'did not allow anyone, not even one of the minor actors, to enter before he did, because the spectators grew attached to the voices they heard first'. In Sophocles' play it could be claimed that, replete with traps for the unwary actor, the Philoctetes role is ideal for an acting demonstration, dramatizing *inter alia* the troupe-leader's superiority with respect to his subordinate /assistant players.

From the moment the actor playing the abandoned hero is seized by an attack of his disease (730ff.), his role is constantly punctuated with shrieks and wails.<sup>50</sup> But although he must ensure that with each cry and every moan he takes us ever deeper into the anguish of his pain, with suffering that comes across as ever fresh and newly piercing (or it will sound monotonous and stale),<sup>51</sup> he must also be increasingly vigilant, lest he himself surrenders to the passion. Unless Philoctetes' inarticulate screams and howls, including that most unutterable of cries in the extant tragic corpus, παπαῖ, | ἀπαπαπαπαῖ, παπα̃ παπα̃ παπα̃ παπαῖ (745–6), are filtered through the actor's brain firing on all cylinders at once, they will result in a disturbing, painful and turbulent spectacle instead of art.<sup>52</sup> And unless our actor is in perfect mastery of his turmoil in the *rhēsis* that follows his realization that he has been duped (927–62), when he travels from anger to despair, from hatred to lamentation and interlaces the tones of most abject begging (e.g. 932–3, 950–1) with the inexorable finality of cursing (961–2), he runs the risk of mispronouncing βίον (life) for βίον (bow) (933), earning himself a reputation comparable to that of the unlucky

<sup>48</sup> On a more technical level there is also the need to sing 'in a variety of metres in rapid succession' in lines 1169–1217: see Hall (2002) 6, with n. 15.

<sup>49</sup> See Sifakis (1995) esp. 23: 'The *synagōnistai* were not antagonists but assistants to the principal actors, and contributed to the success of their performance. Their work reflected on the principals, as the success (or failure) of the latter reflected on them'; cf. Jouan (1983) 68.

<sup>50</sup> E.g., 732, 739, 743–6, 754, 782, 785–6, 790, 1086, 1101, 1106, 1186–9; cf. 751–2, 755.

<sup>51</sup> In the Shakespearean repertoire, one may compare the role of Lear, where, as Goldman (1985) 14 writes, 'the actor is faced with the problem of continually reaching new and well-discriminated levels of pain'.

<sup>52</sup> On this distinction see George Henry Lewes (1875) 94.

Hegeloclus.<sup>53</sup> Playing a role of unrelenting *pathos* in front of an apprentice actor<sup>54</sup> Philoctetes demonstrates how the stage-performer can be plunged 'in the very torrent, tempest . . . whirlwind' of his passion and yet 'acquire and beget a temperance that may give it smoothness' (Shakespeare, *Hamlet* 3.2.4–7), rather than collapse under its weight and exit from the fiction.<sup>55</sup> In a play which so ingeniously sustains the impression that acting itself is an issue under scrutiny, Philoctetes' role with all the challenges inscribed in it impresses on the theatre spectator (alongside Neoptolemus) the elemental paradoxes inherent in the Actor's art. Though only 'in a fiction, in a dream of passion' (Shakespeare, *Hamlet* 2.2.504; cf. Augustine, *Confessions* 3.2.4: *in aerumna aliena et falsa et saltatoria*), he lays siege to our emotions in such a way that 'the very frame and substance of our hearts is shaken'.<sup>56</sup> And though he may be himself submerged in the characters he incarnates, heart pounding, hair standing on end in terror and eyes filled up with tears (*Ion* 535b–c), he still retains sufficient self-control to keep a 'detached', critical look on his performance.<sup>57</sup>

This is not to claim that the role of Neoptolemus in the Sophoclean plot is not impressive in its own right. It cannot be easy for an actor to enact persuasively the story of a player overwhelmed by *aporia* in mid-performance. By means of competent *hypokrisis* he must create the impression of artistic failure, the performer's half-hearted attempt to see the world through the eyes of his character. By means of a 'persuasive disposition (*pithanē diathesis*) of voice and bearing, appropriate (*prepousa*) to the underlying character and plot',<sup>58</sup> that is to say, the character of Neoptolemus in Sophocles' 'outer' play, the real-life actor/Neoptolemus must evoke the agony of his internalized 'double', the apprentice-player of Odysseus' embedded plot, who fails to fit his part to character and situation. And insofar as the professional actor/Neoptolemus plays well the boy tormented by the fear of being false

<sup>53</sup> His famous pronunciation blunder (see schol. Euripides, *Or.* 279) became the butt of parody in Aristophanes (*Frogs* 302–4) and other comic poets (Slater (2002) 37–8).

<sup>54</sup> The role of novice actor (as implied in 52–3) dovetails to perfection with Neoptolemus' status as an initiand/ephebe in the play's ritual plot: the now classic reading of the play along this line is Vidal-Naquet (1988); for the parallel unfolding of ritual and dramatic strands in the *Philoctetes*, see Lada-Richards (1998). On the practice of 'apprenticeship' in the Greek acting business, see Sifakis (1979).

<sup>55</sup> As we know it happened, for example, on the British stage with Mrs Bellamy who, while playing Jocasta in 1775 in the John Dryden/Nathaniel Lee *Oedipus*, 'was overcome by a sense of tragedy and had to be carried off the stage unconscious': report of Johan von Archenholz, in Kelly (1936) 54–5.

<sup>56</sup> Hill (1755) 10.

<sup>57</sup> See further Lada-Richards (2002) 400.

<sup>58</sup> Such is the definition of *hypokrisis* in Bekker (1814–21), vol. III, 1165, 744.1.

to his own self, the theatre spectators are artfully prompted to reflect upon the meaning of genuineness and authenticity on stage, where such notions, of an order different from that pertaining to everyday life,<sup>59</sup> are judged by the yardstick of what is compelling, what enables the mind to visualize (*phantazesthai*) the legendary character himself, 'as if the Personater were the man Personated'.<sup>60</sup> Indeed, by means of coupling, within the bounds of the same play, a Neoptolemus as *dramatis personae* fiction in an 'internalized' plot and a 'real' Neoptolemus defining himself by opposition to what he sees as the duplicity of playacting, Sophocles draws our attention to the inescapable condition of the actor, forever poised between falsehood and truth, the fiction of the 'role' and the reality of the 'self'. Like Neoptolemus in the Sophoclean 'outer' play, an actor in performance is both feigned and real, for acting is inherently both false and true: it makes us 'shed real tears on account of what we recognize as unreal feelings'<sup>61</sup> and compels us to believe that 'personated' action is 'truly done before us',<sup>62</sup> whether this be a danced re-enactment of Priam dying by the sword<sup>63</sup> or Burbage's legendary stage-deaths as a Shakespearean hero.<sup>64</sup>

Finally, no discussion of 'actors' and 'parts' in *Philoctetes* would be complete without drawing attention to the play's supreme performative irony: its outcome confirms the voice of neither protagonist nor deuteragonist but that of the tritagonist instead, since that was the actor assigned the roles of Odysseus, the 'False Merchant' and, ultimately, Heracles (cf. n. 86 below). As Damen<sup>65</sup> puts it, 'it is interesting to see the actors of the principal characters upstaged by the actor of the lesser roles, what was surely to the ancient audience in more than one way an unexpected finale'. One is tempted to add that, on a performatively self-conscious level, the

<sup>59</sup> I.e. they are neither measurable by external criteria that refer to the outside world nor subject to empirical falsification (see Sperber (1975) 91ff.), but must be appreciated as artistic qualities, elements of the dramatist's performative grammar.

<sup>60</sup> Heywood (1612) sig. B4r. We may think of the famous Timotheos of Zakynthos (see above, n. 20), capable of 'bring[ing] the audience to the point of visualizing Ajax (εἰς τὴν τοῦ Αἴαντος φαντασίαν)' (schol. Soph. *Aj.* 864) or the star dancers (pantomimes) of imperial times, whose body language leads the audience to imagine they see the character impersonated: 'We thought we saw Iobacchus himself' (Αὐτὸν ὄραβν Ἰόβακχον ἐδόξαμεν) (*AP* 16.289, 1).

<sup>61</sup> Dawson (2001) 23.

<sup>62</sup> From the character of 'An Excellent Actor', possibly authored by John Webster, early in the seventeenth century: text in Wickham, Berry and Ingram (2000) 181.

<sup>63</sup> As in Manilius' celebration of the pantomime's power to compel (*coget*) spectators to see Priam falling *ante ora*, before their very eyes (*Astron.* 5.484–5).

<sup>64</sup> See the anonymous funeral elegy (1619) for Shakespeare's actor Richard Burbage: 'Oft have I seen him play this part [i.e. of the dying hero] in jest | So lively that spectators, and the rest | Of his sad crew, whilst he but seem'd to bleed, | Amazed, thought even then he died in deed': text as printed in Wickham, Berry and Ingram (2000) 182.

<sup>65</sup> (1989) 325.

arguably superfluous to the plot 'False Merchant' episode reflects the tritagonist's eagerness to pad out his own stage-presence vis-à-vis his superior actors.

3 MORE POWERFUL THAN POETS NOW THE ACTORS ARE  
(ARISTOTLE, *RHET.* 1403B33)

The more exposed to Philoctetes' plight the 'Odyssean' Neoptolemus becomes, the more his loyalty to the Odyssean scenario within which he acts diminishes. As the play progresses, we find ourselves increasingly involved participants in the performer's losing battle to keep two vastly divergent linguistic and ethical consciousnesses harnessed to a single authorized utterance. From line 895 onwards we are increasingly confirmed in our suspicion that the uneasy *symbiosis* between impersonator and impersonated character within the play's 'enfolded' plot will be shortlived. And so it is, because the 'outer' play, which began by replicating the conditions of theatrical *genesis*, has been hosting all along the figure of a recalcitrant actor, who eventually breaks free of the fiction within which he had been 'scripted'.<sup>66</sup> The surest sign of a complete and radical reversal in the partnership between dramatist and actor can be located in line 1222, when Odysseus, the stand-in dramatist of the play's opening scene, who had so clearly defined his role as that of the speaking/commanding, as opposed to the listening/obeying, part in the relationship,<sup>67</sup> is now reduced to the role of begging his former minister for a snap preview of the plot: 'Won't you tell me . . .' (οὐκ ἂν φράσεις . . .),<sup>68</sup> we hear him shouting as Neoptolemus re-enters in a hurry, Philoctetes' bow in hand. By superseding Odysseus' authority and remodelling the play to satisfy the promptings of his own heart,<sup>69</sup> Neoptolemus acts out the transition from a figure for the actor to a figure for the playwright or, to use Thomas Hobbes' memorable distinction in *Leviathan*, moves from the status of one who only 'acteth by authority'

<sup>66</sup> Cf. Falkner (1998) 29.

<sup>67</sup> See 24–5: ὡς τὰ πῖλοιπα τῶν λόγων σύ μὲν κλύεις, | ἐγὼ δὲ φράζω, κοινὰ δ' εἰς ἀμφοῖν ἴη. Projected on the level of theatre's performative conditions, the envisaged course of action that would 'proceed from us both' (25) reflects the indispensable 'collusion' between dramatist and actor.

<sup>68</sup> Cf. Odysseus' persistent questioning in 1225, 1227, 1229, 1231, 1233, 1235, 1237. We may wish to contrast Neoptolemus' position during the 'False Merchant' scene, where the 'actor' did not feel privy to the intentions of the 'author' Odysseus' envoy: 'I don't yet know what he is saying' (580), with Easterling (1997c) 170: 'he is not yet clear about what Odysseus' covert message might be'.

<sup>69</sup> As it becomes obvious in 1278–9 and 1314ff., Neoptolemus' freshly conceived plot is a return to one of his own favourite means of dealing with a crisis: well-meaning persuasion, instead of a recourse to *dolos* (deceit) (102).

to the status of the one who 'owneth his words and actions', i.e. the author himself.<sup>70</sup>

Now, as Goldman<sup>71</sup> writes, a 'play would be flat and tame if we did not feel that its hero had an equally exigent sense of the script *he* wants to write, of his own authorial power'. In this respect, the *Philoctetes* might be said to play out its author's own feeling of the 'struggle between what he wants to make happen and what his chief character wants to do'. There is, however, I suggest, a markedly topical frame of reference which can be called upon to illuminate the story of a rebellious actor-turned-author and an authorial play overridden by an actor's act dramatized in the *Philoctetes*. For our play may be more deeply embedded in the shifting ground of theatrical performance culture towards the end of the fifth century BC than has been realized to date.<sup>72</sup>

Pat Easterling and Edith Hall have recently re-emphasized the momentous significance of changing patterns in performance practices,<sup>73</sup> starting from the second half of the fifth century, when cash prizes for leading tragic actors were first introduced at the City Dionysia (c. 449 BC), and culminating in the unprecedented privileging of the actor as a site of cultural authority in the fourth century BC.<sup>74</sup> The event that could be seen as a cultural landslide in the Greek theatre world, namely the institutionalized revival of old tragedies at the City Dionysia from 387/6 BC onwards, which 'swiftly resulted in the emergence of a repertoire' for the *tragōidoi*,<sup>75</sup> not only ensures that the questions of who controls theatrical performance or authenticates meaning *in* performance become increasingly difficult to answer but also precipitates the trend for the diminishing of the author's 'cultural capital' against that of the charismatic actor.<sup>76</sup> As Edith Hall<sup>77</sup> observes on the practice of re-performance, 'not only did it remove the

<sup>70</sup> See Hobbes (1996 [1651]) 107, ch. 16.4. Here I part company with Falkner's ((1998) 47) brilliant piece on *Philoctetes*, as he believes that after the exposure of the intrigue (915ff.), 'the play has wandered authorless'. My own contention is that what we get from 1222ff., until Heracles' final intervention, is quite simply, Neoptolemus' play.

<sup>71</sup> (1985) 162.

<sup>72</sup> Unlike the play's embedding in its political context, on which much ink has been spilt.

<sup>73</sup> See especially Easterling (1993b), (1997c) 153–4, (1997d), (1999a) 164, (2002) 331–2; Hall (2007a) 240 and (2007c). On the increasingly phenomenal power of the soloist tragic actor, see Hall (2002). For a seminal article on the changing position of the actor in the theatrical event, see Slater (1990), reworked in Slater (2002) 22–41.

<sup>74</sup> See primarily Easterling (2002). <sup>75</sup> Hall (2007a) 240; cf. Easterling (1997d) 213.

<sup>76</sup> On the importance of the actor as a force conditioning the outer limits of the playwright's freedom, see Easterling (1997c) 153: 'the main challenge to their [*sc.* the dramatists'] freedom may indeed have come, not from any state-imposed regulations but from the emergence of leading actors as "stars" who made their mark on the tradition in decisive ways'.

<sup>77</sup> (2007a) 240.

poet from competition for a prize altogether, but it gave the actor independence'. Granted that we know far too little to attempt any credible reconstruction of a linear development from an author-centred dramaturgy to the actor-centred performance culture deplored by Aristotle (*Rhet.* 1403b33; *Poet.* 1451b35–52a1). Yet by the time Sophocles composed his *Philoctetes*, the close interdependence between dramatist and actor which had sustained the theatrical endeavour from its earliest days, when the single poet-actor<sup>78</sup> held the 'monopoly' over verbal performance,<sup>79</sup> had long been sundered, with dramatists not only having abandoned acting in their own plays but also having lost their personal, choice attachment to a favourite actor, such as Mynniscus was for Aeschylus (*Life of Aeschylus* 15).

As regards the *Philoctetes*, then, my contention is that fresh insights into the dynamic between Odysseus *qua* stage-director/playwright and Neoptolemus *qua* actor can be obtained if we consider their relationship against the background of the growing prominence of actors as individuals enjoying 'an increasing amount of public attention' from about the middle of the fifth century BC.<sup>80</sup> Neoptolemus, who seeks validation or authentication of his 'self' by means of his dramatically enacted *disengagement* from the authorial plot, not only brings to mind the real-life actors' conspicuous 'assertion of their individuality'<sup>81</sup> but may also reflect the uncoupling of the fortunes of dramatist and actor in the wake of the institution of acting contests, when, as Slater<sup>82</sup> writes, acting becomes 'conceptually separate from the drama', with actors having 'an ontology in and for themselves'. Carving his own destiny, Neoptolemus performs, with growing assertiveness, his 'own' as opposed to indirect or 'borrowed' discourse, becoming the theatrically inscribed figure of the real actor who can now be victorious even in a losing play:<sup>83</sup> Odysseus' drama having been discarded as inadequate, its star performer is still determined to make his mark.

Similarly, the pervasive anxiety surrounding the 'internalized' actor's usurpation of the plot to the extent that it eludes the 'internalized' playwright's power of containment<sup>84</sup> can be thought to refract incipient

<sup>78</sup> See esp. Arist. *Rhet.* 3.1403b23–4; Plut. *Solon* 29.6; *Life of Sophocles* 4.

<sup>79</sup> See Gredley (1984). <sup>80</sup> Slater (2002) 39. <sup>81</sup> Slater (1990) 395. <sup>82</sup> (1990) 390.

<sup>83</sup> See Slater (1990) 390, on the basis of inscriptional evidence. Even in Aristotle's time, however, actors are said to be in search of dramatists whose verse would offer them good scope for sensational expression of character and passion just as much as dramatists were on the lookout for performers capable of bringing out these very same qualities inherent in their texts: *Rhet.* 1413b, 8–12; cf. Sifakis (2002) 157; Handley (2002) 167.

<sup>84</sup> Here again, I disagree with Falkner (1998) 49, who reads the play as 'wresting control of the plot from Odysseus and returning it to "Sophocles": once out of Odysseus' hands, control passes over to Neoptolemus.

frictions about the location of theatrical authority at the time of the play's first performance in 409 BC. Our play's Neoptolemus, who takes over the reins of control in order to wipe off his formerly emplotted deeds,<sup>85</sup> rescripts his own 'character' and rechannels the entire plot in a completely new direction which, from the 'internalized' author's vantage point, is considered foolish, perilous and utterly unacceptable,<sup>86</sup> can be seen as the literary forerunner of the fourth-century troupe-leader who, in taking 'directorial and managerial responsibility' for putting on the reperformed plays 'as well as acting in them',<sup>87</sup> is able to enjoy an astounding degree of sovereignty over the author's original creation.<sup>88</sup> In an important sense, Neoptolemus' initiative, unsanctioned by his set plotline and plainly contravening his dramatist's intention,<sup>89</sup> is commensurate with the real-life actor's readiness to cut off his 'textual moorings'.<sup>90</sup> Although the precedence of histrionic preference over the author's script must have been consolidated in the fourth century, aided by the official reperformance of the classical masterpieces at the civic festivals, it was undoubtedly the culmination of a much longer process, already adumbrated in the last decades of the previous century, when tragic plays were reperformed at the Rural Dionysia<sup>91</sup> and individual *rhēseis* acted in a variety of contexts, from *symposia* to lawcourts.

Moreover, the formation of a repertoire for touring actors<sup>92</sup> meant that, like Neoptolemus, the real-life lead player was able to realign the author's material to suit his own ever-changing 'purpose of playing' (cf. Shakespeare, *Hamlet* 3.2.17), that is to say, in ways that supported the needs of

<sup>85</sup> The notion of correcting and redoing what was badly done is the strongest motive for Neoptolemus' independent action in the play's later part: see 1224, 1227–8, 1233–4, 1248–9.

<sup>86</sup> Crucially, Odysseus' perspective can be taken to coincide with the play's own preferred vantage point, since his will is validated by means of its reiteration by the *deus ex machina*, Heracles, who, for obvious dramatic reasons, is played by the actor playing Odysseus himself. See Pavlovskis (1977) 119; Damen (1989) 324–5; Ringer (1998) 112–13, 122; on the Odysseus/Merchant overlap, see Falkner (1998) 35–6.

<sup>87</sup> Easterling (2002) 332.

<sup>88</sup> For detailed discussion of the range of liberties actors were thought of taking with the playwright's text, see Page (1934) and Falkner (2002).

<sup>89</sup> The tragic scholia seem to regard it as the actor's responsibility 'to be faithful to the author's intentions, and not to exceed these without textual authorisation': Falkner (2002) 355 and *passim*.

<sup>90</sup> Falkner (2002) 359.

<sup>91</sup> See Pickard-Cambridge (1988) 42–56 and Whitehead (1986) 212–22; cf. Taplin (1993) 91 and Taplin (1999) 36–7. In an important article, Pat herself argued that re-performance 'of some kind', the catalyst, that is, for the formation of artistic repertoire, independence and consequently professionalization, must have been 'a feature of Athenian practice from the death of Aeschylus onwards' before being 'formally endorsed by the city in the 380s': see Easterling (1993b) 564–6.

<sup>92</sup> Actors toured outside Attica at least as early as the last decade of the fifth century BC: see Hall (2007a) 240 with n. 55.

the performative occasion<sup>93</sup> and his desire for virtuoso display.<sup>94</sup> Finally, the dissenting actor/Neoptolemus' power to decide the fate of the entire expedition by leading Philoctetes to either *oikos* or military camp, although ultimately annulled by Heracles as *deus ex machina*, acquires a different ring when read against the backdrop of the fourth-century performance world, where star actors, commanding influence, prestige and money, became powers to be reckoned with, even in the political sphere.<sup>95</sup> Conspicuous in diplomacy, *inter alia* because of their brilliant voices, they were indeed capable of performance that could either harm or benefit the city. In the final decade of the fifth century BC, Sophocles' play was only a hair's breadth away from that new chapter in the story of the actor's meteoric rise.

The missing pieces of the puzzle notwithstanding, my contention is that Sophocles' play *does* bear the traces of its creation in a period when the text/performance dialectic was particularly fluid, in a dynamic state of realignment and recomposition. The competition between irreconcilable plotlines launched by the 'author' and his 'actor' is the theatrical correlative of a much broader rivalry between divergent modes of authorizing dramatic discourse that was already in the air. By 409 BC theatrical conditions were gradually drifting towards a cultural landscape wherein the dwindling authority of dramatist and text would vie for supremacy with the transgressive, illegitimate realities of the performance world, more specifically the rising authority of star professionals about to complete their move from the margins to the centre of the theatrical event. Even though the authorial plotline is ultimately triumphant in the *Philoctetes*, the playwright-within-the-play having 'the last word in the drama's outcome' by means of his refashioning into a 'teacher or διδάσκαλος . . . who cannot be denied',<sup>96</sup> the tortuous process of its validation cannot be easily forgotten.

#### 4 BY MEANS OF PERFORMANCE: NEOPTOLEMUS AND THE LOCATION OF DRAMATIC MEANING

More suggestively than any other classical Greek play, Sophocles' *Philoctetes* allows its audience to witness an 'actor' in the process of creating a character. And more than any other self-reflexive moment in Greek drama,

<sup>93</sup> As Pat notes (Easterling (1999a) 164), 'there is no limit to the different contexts in which drama might be performed' subsequent to the formation of individual acting repertoires and the conditions of reperformance of the old masterpieces; cf. Easterling (2002) 332; Hall (2002) 5.

<sup>94</sup> Most relevant here is Gentili (1979) 15–31; cf. Hall (2002) 12–13.

<sup>95</sup> See Easterling (1997d) 217–19; Easterling (1999a); Easterling (2002) 332; some of the sources can be found in Csapo and Slater (1995) 232–8.

<sup>96</sup> Ringer (1998) 122.

Neoptolemus' sustained, agonizing dialogue with his part foregrounds the individual actor's distinct, inimitable input in the creation of dramatic character: it is precisely who Neoptolemus 'is' and what he considers as 'the right way to behave'<sup>97</sup> which give his 'stage-character', the 'Neoptolemus' of the Odyssean 'enfolded' plot, its particular moral, emotional and intellectual colouring, its unique way of being, speaking and reacting. Any change in Neoptolemus' own way of looking at the world would have resulted in a different 'stage-character', who would have played the role conceived by Odysseus *qua* playwright in yet another key. The irreducibility and ineradicable presence of the actor's self in the theatrical event<sup>98</sup> is Neoptolemus' performative legacy, creatively woven into Sophocles' script.

Moreover, all the while we, the 'outer' play's audience, are enraptured by Neoptolemus' painful oscillation between who he is and who he is ashamed of becoming, we are skilfully invited to consider that 'Dramatic character is inseparable from performance': 'The fictitious person we watch on stage, Hamlet or Hal, or Othello, is not an object but a process. He is something we watch an actor making, not the result of making but the making itself.'<sup>99</sup> In other words, there ultimately emerges from Sophocles' *Philoctetes* a variant to the notions of acting as a predominantly mimetic practice and the actor as uniquely engaged in *imitation* of his character which form the cornerstone of the Platonic/Aristotelian view of theatrical *mimesis*. A stage Neoptolemus who fashions himself *in action* reactivates our awareness that the mental image we take away with us, as audience, at the end of a performance, whether this be an Oedipus or Lady Macbeth, is not the product of the actor's almost surgical unlocking and subsequent replay of a person 'written into', prescriptively inscribed *in* the text, but the outcome of his or her dialectical encounter *with* that text.

It cannot be emphasized too strongly that, literally speaking, Odysseus' playlet embedded in the *Philoctetes* is not entirely commensurate with a real play, staged at one of the Athenian festivals: fluid and improvisational, little more than a matrix for action and passion, character and intellect to be fitted on, it is a *sophisma* (14) rather than the polished work of a *poiētēs sophos*. Yet even in a finished work of art, stage-character is still the

<sup>97</sup> I remember these very questions as the essence of an inspiring lecture Pat gave at the University of Athens in December 1986.

<sup>98</sup> I find Wiles' view ((1987) 145) on 'the conventions of fifth-century performance' as working 'to conceal the specifics of the actor's personality' misleadingly reductive.

<sup>99</sup> Goldman (1985) 149 and 148.

distillation of the actor's *physis* and the dramatist's conception, so that what the audience is ultimately presented with is, inescapably, not Shakespeare's but Olivier's Hamlet, not Sophocles' but Polus' Electra – not Odysseus' but Neoptolemus' robber of the hermit's bow.<sup>100</sup> In ancient times as in all times, antitheatrical fears notwithstanding, a stage-player is not magically conditioned, refashioned, reconstituted by his part; rather it is *he* who conditions, defines, circumscribes and creates the character he bodies forth – by lending it his own body. Man of the theatre himself, Sophocles, the playwright-cum-player, celebrates the actor as a fellow artist. All the while foregrounding the dangers of acting when it veers out of control (§3), the fashioner of Neoptolemus, the *dramatis persona* required to replicate acting, is himself enthralled by his self-willed agents, the stage-performers whose vibrancy and force as well as physical, emotional and intellectual reserves determine so decisively a performance's overall impact. For Sophocles, acting is much more an all-encompassing experience than simple matter of 'remembering' one's instructions highlighted by Odysseus in 121: ἡ μνημονεύεις οὖν ἅ σοι παρήνεσα; Rather than merely speaking 'through the linguistic medium of another',<sup>101</sup> 'words that are but roted in' the 'tongue' (Shakespeare, *Coriolanus* 3.2.56–7), the player initiates his own chain of meanings, turning the business of acting into a signifying practice in its own right. In the successful performance that Neoptolemus fails to sustain until the end, author's 'role' and actor's 'self' appear kneaded together, having coalesced in deep and binding ways.

Finally, if Neoptolemus seems committed to the search for an authentic expression of the self among the bewildering variety of 'actions that a man might play' (Shakespeare, *Hamlet* 1.2.84), so does an actor search for that performative state of being that best enables him to honour his 'own truth' (cf. Shakespeare, *Coriolanus* 3.2.122). Like the acting Neoptolemus in Sophocles' *Philoctetes*, many an actor undertakes a journey of self-discovery and self-realization, leading to a clearer, deeper and more truthful understanding of the inner self.<sup>102</sup> And all the while shaping his character on stage, Neoptolemus enacts the most important performative truth: rather than being intrinsic to the text, encrypted in its verbal level, meanings arise

<sup>100</sup> There is no reason why this would not hold true in the cases where a role is split between two or (rarely) three performers.

<sup>101</sup> Bakhtin (1981) 313.

<sup>102</sup> Crucially, Philoctetes thinks that, by returning the *toxos* and hence scripting himself out of the Odyssean plot, Neoptolemus has also enacted the return to his own *physis*: τὴν φύσιν ἔδειξας, ὦ τέκνον, | ἐξ ἧς ἐβλαστες, οὐχὶ Σισύφου πατρός, | ἀλλ' ἐξ Ἀχιλλέως (1310–12).

*in and through performance*, generated at the point where dramatist and 'character', actor, 'role' and spectator intersect. Exploring the parameters that condition such an intersection in each particular play seems to me the most promising way of putting the truism that Sophocles' work was written *for* performance to good use.<sup>103</sup>

<sup>103</sup> I am deeply grateful to Edith Hall for comments which have greatly improved this piece.

## CHAPTER 4

# *Deianeira deliberates: precipitate decision-making and Trachiniae*

*Edith Hall*

Good counsel is the most potent of assets  
(Tiresias at *Antigone* 1050)

### DEIANEIRA DECIDES

*Trachiniae* is a tragedy about sex, and a tragedy about destiny.<sup>1</sup> But it also constitutes a sophisticated lesson in the activity entailed by practical deliberation – what the Greeks termed *to bouleuesthai*.<sup>2</sup> It is through its stress on the importance of deliberation that it reveals its intimate relationship with the workings of the Athenian democracy, where the citizen-audience of drama was also the community's executive body. The officials charged with deliberating its policies at length – the members of the Council (*boulē*) – sat together in privileged seats at the front of the theatre. And in *Trachiniae* the training in decision-making that they received takes the form of a series of examples, enacted as scenes of impulsive action, of how *not* to deliberate. These scenes are typically Sophoclean in the intellectual and affective way in which 'they activate the process of engagement' in the audience, as Pat Easterling has recently put it.<sup>3</sup> *Trachiniae*, like all Sophoclean tragedy, develops just as Stanley Kubrick recommends drama should, by letting 'an idea come over people without its being plainly stated. When you say something directly, it is simply not as potent as when you allow people to discover it for themselves.'<sup>4</sup> But *indirect* statements in classical drama are not always discovered by all its modern critics. It is rarely stressed, for example, that Deianeira does initiate a discussion about the wisdom of the

<sup>1</sup> Winnington-Ingram (1980) 73–90.

<sup>2</sup> This essay is dedicated to Pat Easterling. As someone temperamentally prone to the 'passion and haste' that Diodotus said were the enemies of good counsel (see below), I have learned a great deal from her not only about ancient Greek literature, but also about the value of *euboulia*.

<sup>3</sup> In her Inaugural Housman Lecture at University College London: Easterling (2005a). I am grateful to Felix Budelmann for this reference.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted from an interview published in *Time* 15th December 1975, 72, by Leinieks (1982) 4 n.1.

most consequential action in the entire play – whether she should send a robe smeared with Nessus' blood to her errant husband.

Deianeira describes how she came into possession of the blood, and asks for the chorus' advice. She is committed, it seems, to finding out more about the possible outcome of sending the robe to Heracles before deciding how to act. Although she feels uncertain, she states with absolute clarity that if the chorus disapprove of her plan, then she will put a stop to it (585–7):

But this action has been arranged in case I may somehow get the better of this girl with spells and charms . . . unless you think that what I am doing is foolish! If so, I shall abandon it (εἰ δὲ μή, πεπαύσομαι).

The interchange that follows is significant (588–93):

Χο. ἀλλ' εἰ τις ἐστὶ πίστις ἐν τοῖς δρωμένοις,  
δοκεῖς παρ' ἡμῖν οὐ βεβουλεῦσθαι κακῶς.  
Δη. οὕτως ἔχει ἢ πίστις, ὡς τὸ μὲν δοκεῖν  
ἔνεστι, πείρα δ' οὐ προσωμίλησασά πω.  
Χο. ἀλλ' εἰδέναι χρή δρῶσαν ὡς οὐδ' εἰ δοκεῖς  
ἔχειν, ἔχοις ἂν γνῶμα, μὴ πειρωμένη.

Cho. Well, if there is trust in actions, then I do not think that you have been badly advised.

Dei. I have trust to the extent that I can believe it, but I have never tried it out.

Cho. But you need to act on the basis of knowledge. For if you did not have experience of it, you would not be in a position to judge, even if you believed you were.

The meaning of the chorus's first response is somewhat opaque, but needs to be understood, since that is how Deianeira understands it, as an enquiry about the basis of her trust in the consequences of implementing her plan. Is it based on experience? The import of the chorus' second response has, however, not always been appreciated. Critics were long hell-bent on characterizing the chorus as women of low intelligence, who deem it proper to reassure Deianeira that she knows what she is doing when she so clearly does not.<sup>5</sup> But in a penetrating article, Solmsen showed that the chorus is actually advising not action but *caution*, and on a scientific ground. This is that the person who takes action must do so on the basis of knowledge (*eidenai*) derived from experience (*peirōmenē*, 592–3).<sup>6</sup> The

<sup>5</sup> See e.g. Letters (1953) 183: the chorus, he says 'rejoins that she can only act by experiment. The hint is is enough. She will act.'

<sup>6</sup> See Solmsen (1985).

women of Trachis are actually saying that Deianeira needs to know, on the basis of a trial, experiment, or previous experience of the action she proposes, what its consequences will be.

Unfortunately, this sensible process of deliberation is cut short by the appearance of Lichas; as the play presents the situation, the *only* reason why the chorus fails to dissuade Deianeira from sending the robe is that, with Lichas' entrance from the palace, her deliberation is interrupted by a chance event.<sup>7</sup> What becomes important is no longer Deianeira's attempt to retrieve Heracles' love (a reaction to how things really are), but her need to control her reputation (how things seem). The play here therefore adumbrates the precision of Socratic epistemology. Deianeira's commitment to deliberation before action now evanesces. She suddenly chooses, fully aware that she has no certain knowledge of the effect of the substance with which she has smeared the robe, to send it to her husband anyway.

#### PRECIPICES AND PRECIPITATE ACTION

One of the most memorable word-pictures in Sophocles is painted in *Trachiniae* by a professional purveyor of narratives, Lichas the herald, to Deianeira, the chorus, and the external audience of the play. It concerns the moment when Heracles hurled Iphitus (a guiltless youth with the misfortune to have a father who had insulted the superhero) to his death. The venue for this brutal, unpremeditated and treacherous murder was the highest turret of the fort on the rocky ridge of Tiryns in the Peloponnese, an acropolis of natural boulders that juts out dramatically from the surrounding hillscape. In this image of shocking lawlessness, Lichas stresses that Iphitus had no chance of self-defence, since when Heracles struck him in this precipitous place, the victim was out catching wild horses, 'his eye in one place and his mind in another' (272). Fifteen months later in terms of the time-frame external to the play, but only five hundred lines later in terms of its own unfolding internal narrative, it is Lichas' turn to have his death described. Hyllus relates how he was also hurled to his doom by the hero. On the very cliff-top of Mount Kenaion in Euboea, Heracles was sacrificing a hundred cattle to inaugurate a sanctuary of Zeus, dressed in the impregnated gown Lichas had brought from Deianeira. When the poison began to work, Heracles, in agony, seized Lichas by the ankle and sent him in freefall from the precipice down onto the rocks which met the

<sup>7</sup> See the detailed discussion of Heiden (1989) 91.

sea, 'and the white brains poured out with blood from his hair as his head was shattered' (781–2).

Heracles has hurled two men, guilty of no crimes, precipitately and without premeditation or fair adjudication from extreme heights to their deaths. The hero's own agony is described by Hyllus in similar terms; his shouts and screams resounded amongst the rocks, and 'the mountain promontories of Locri and the Euboean peaks', until he 'hurled himself often to the ground' (787–90). A male body crashing at great velocity to earth is an ominous picture, emblematic of the atmosphere of primeval violence that suffuses the whole play, but is different from the atmosphere in anything else that survives by Sophocles. The importance of lofty peaks in the play was well conveyed by Evelyn de Morgan in her painting *Deianera* (c. 1887), which is reproduced on the cover of this book; Charles Segal influentially pointed out that the elemental landscapes in *Trachiniae*, with their torrential rivers and high mountain peaks, serve to 'throw into relief the question of man's place in a world whose violence he both shares and subdues'.<sup>8</sup>

The sheer speed at which events can hurtle towards doom, like the physical bodies of Iphitus or Lichas, is stressed aesthetically everywhere in the imagery of the play. The chorus sings that for humans neither spangled Night, nor spirits of Death, nor wealth abides, since they 'suddenly' are gone (*all' aphaḗr bebake*, 132–4). When Deianeira departs in silence, cursed by Hyllus, the chorus sing 'See, maidens, how swiftly (*aphaḗr*) there has come upon us the oracular saying' (821–2). Deianeira, they say, had no foreboding of this when she saw the disaster of the new marriage with Iole 'speeding' (*aissoṡsan*) towards the house (843–4). They regret that Heracles' spear has brought the 'swiftly running bride' (*thoan numphan*) from Oechalia (857–9). During the nurse's account of Deianeira's suicide, she is said to have moved through the whole house, weeping, then 'suddenly' (*exaiφnēs*) she 'burst into the marriage chamber of Heracles' (913–14). But the emphasis on speed has more than an aesthetic impact. The visual image of the violent crash to earth, which is connected with the pervasive sense of velocity, expresses in physical, concrete, narrative terms what is actually one of the play's dominant *intellectual* interests: the nature and consequences of the unconsidered decision.

The subject matter of *Trachiniae* – what was done by and to its awesome hero during the last, violent episode of his life on earth – has been consistently confused with Sophocles' purpose and methods in writing it. This

<sup>8</sup> Segal (1995) 29.

has led to the play being judged a 'raw' and 'primal' artwork and indeed to its receiving an early date relative to Sophocles' other extant dramas. Many have felt not only that it depicts a far distant heroic age somehow more irrational, savage and closer to nature than the Argos of Sophocles' *Electra* or the Thebes of his Labdacid plays, but that the play itself 'is' somehow more crude, irrational, elemental and savage than *Oedipus Tyrannus*, say, or *Philoctetes*. At best, this quality has led to *Trachiniae* being described as 'if not the most baffling, then at least among the most mysterious' of Sophocles' works.<sup>9</sup> At worst, it has been claimed that it is 'not religious in tone' compared with his other dramas, even though it has 'supernatural elements'.<sup>10</sup> It has certainly not often been praised as a polished or sophisticated drama.

This general apprehension in nineteenth and earlier twentieth-century scholarship often derived from the influential set of lectures on drama published by A. W. Schlegel between 1809 and 1811. Outside Germany, the lectures were widely read in the trenchant English translation of John Black, first published in 1815 and thereafter much reprinted. Schlegel dismissed the play in a single paragraph. He was so outraged by the lack of artistry he perceived, especially in Deianeira's prologue, which he deemed 'wholly uncalled-for', that he doubted Sophocles himself could have written it at all:

The *Trachiniae* appears to me so very inferior to the other pieces of Sophocles which have reached us, that I could wish there were some warrant for supposing that this tragedy was composed in the age, indeed, and in the school of Sophocles, perhaps by his son Iophon, and that it was by mistake attributed to the father . . . although this poet's usual rules of art are observed on the whole, yet it is very superficially; no where can we discern in it the profound mind of Sophocles.<sup>11</sup>

The doubt Schlegel cast on the play's authenticity, and his conclusion that if it really was by Sophocles then 'in this one instance the tragedian has failed to reach his usual elevation', since it wholly lacks signs of his 'profound mind', lie at the head of the genealogy of criticism that frequently chose to omit the play altogether from collections of studies of Sophoclean drama.<sup>12</sup>

Writing today, a quarter of a century after Pat Easterling's magnificent commentary was published in 1982, and in the wake of several fine productions and adaptations of the play in the professional theatre and other

<sup>9</sup> Conacher (1997) 22.    <sup>10</sup> O'Connor (1923) 8.

<sup>11</sup> Schlegel (1846) 109.    <sup>12</sup> See e.g. Woodard (1966).

media,<sup>13</sup> it seems almost inconceivable that *Trachiniae* could be simply ignored in a book about Sophocles. The thoughtful study of the tragedy's rhetorical strategies by Heiden (whose debt to Easterling's edition is considerable) has also done much to stall the recycling of the hoary old clichés that the Trachis play seemed to stimulate in critics.<sup>14</sup> But in this essay I argue for its status as a cerebral and intellectually heavyweight drama, the philosophical profundity of which even today remains underestimated.

Ezra Pound's idiosyncratic 1956 version culminated in the announcement of his dying Herakles, once he has put all the available information together, 'What splendour, it all coheres.'<sup>15</sup> Subsequently it began to be fashionable to emphasize the theme of knowledge in the play. This has been expressed in terms of 'late learning' and with reference to the series of recognitions of the manner in which oracles are fulfilled.<sup>16</sup> It has also been noted how the remarkable use in *Trachiniae* of the term *metaitios* ('co-liable'), used of, for example Eurytus and Zeus (260–1), and Iole and Deianeira (1233–4), seems to reveal Sophocles wrestling, well before the philosophical distinctions were made, between efficient and instrumental causes.<sup>17</sup> But Sophocles is often 'less inclined to explain *why* man fares as he does than to show us *how* he does fare in life',<sup>18</sup> and it is often *the processes* by which some of these individuals became *metaitios*, when their ignorance is turned into disastrous action (i.e. through botched deliberation and precipitate decision-taking), in which Sophocles is interested. The idea of the unconsidered, hasty decision informs the aesthetics and epistemology of *Trachiniae*, as we have seen, but it also lends it ethico-political and metaphysical reverberations. The play's intellectual range and clout mean that it is actually one of the best examples of fifth-century tragedy's anticipation and development, through presentation in vibrant interaction, of all three foundational questions asked by Greek philosophy – 'how should we live?' and 'what is to exist in relation to the universe?' as well as 'how do we know things?'

#### DELIBERATION AS THEATRE

Deliberation scenes were of course not invented by the Greek tragedians, as Malcolm Schofield's account of *euboulia* in the *Iliad* amply demonstrates,<sup>19</sup> but deliberation about future action in the face of an uncontrollable

<sup>13</sup> Just two examples from the United Kingdom alone: Timberlake Wertenbaker's *Dianeira*, performed on radio in 1999 and published in her *Plays Two* (London 2002), and Martin Crimp's stage play *Cruel and Tender*, first performed in 2004 by the Young Vic and published as Crimp (2004).

<sup>14</sup> Heiden (1989). <sup>15</sup> Pound (1969) 66. <sup>16</sup> See e.g. Lawrence (1978), Roselli (1981), Kane (1988).

<sup>17</sup> Hoey (1973) 309. <sup>18</sup> Opstelten (1952) 234. <sup>19</sup> Schofield (1999) ch. 1.

universe has long been connected with the very birth of 'the Tragic' in Western culture. Indeed, it is customary in diachronic studies of the tragic tradition to trace the entire idiom back to the passage in the *Iliad* where Achilles speaks about the choice his mother has told him faces him between two alternative destinies – a brief but glorious life, or a long one ending peacefully at home in old age (9.410–29).<sup>20</sup> One of the reasons why the *Odyssey*, on the other hand, did not give rise to many tragedies in antiquity is connected with the famed *euboulia* of its protagonist; a hero who deliberated competently, and almost invariably achieved his goals through effective implementation of the conclusions to which his ability to deliberate had led him, does not provide much scope – at least as a protagonist – for the tragic playwright.<sup>21</sup> Many classical and Shakespearean tragedies portray at least one character in the act of deliberation, but competent deliberation that results in successful outcomes is difficult to find.

The virtue of *euboulia* designates the ability both to deliberate to one's own (and/or one's community's) advantage and 'to recognize good deliberation and the good advice arising from good deliberation'.<sup>22</sup> By the term *to bouleuesthai* I mean, throughout this essay, the combined process of giving and receiving counsel about future action, considering all alternative options and attempting to anticipate their consequences.<sup>23</sup> In *Moral Luck* (1981) Bernard Williams famously discussed the place of luck in ethical judgements; five years later, Martha Nussbaum focused attention on practical deliberation in classical Greek ethics, and stressed how important it was to Greek tragedy.<sup>24</sup> This makes it all the more surprising how little attention has been paid to deliberation scenes in Greek tragedy subsequently. It is certainly part of what Aristotle insists is the third most important constituent of tragic drama (preceded only by plot and character), namely the representation of 'intellectual activity' (*dianoia*), which has to do with both a political sense and with rhetoric (*Poet.* 1450b6–8).

Deliberation is also an aspect of tragic poetry that is interconnected with its status as theatre, since it anchors the action, however remote the time in which it was set, in the present tense, but always with an eye to future consequences – *ta mellonta*. As we watch Creon hurtle from one ill-judged decision to another in *Antigone*, it is always as if we were in the living presence of a man creating imminent catastrophe *right now*, rather than catastrophe long ago in Bronze-Age Thebes.<sup>25</sup> This temporal interface between a contextual past tense and a story physically enacted in the present

<sup>20</sup> See e.g. Beer (2004), Rutherford (1982). <sup>21</sup> See Hall (2008) ch. 3. <sup>22</sup> Stevens (1933) 104.

<sup>23</sup> See Sewell-Rutter (2005). <sup>24</sup> Nussbaum (1986) especially chs. 1–3 and 9–13.

<sup>25</sup> See Hall (2004) 77–9.

tense, on the psychological cusp between present and future, creates the uniquely spontaneous emotional impact of ancient tragic theatre. Susanne Langer argued that each art form, including drama, has its own immanent laws, and offers a distinct conceptual space or place with its own inner rhythms. Langer maintains that narrative literature provides a 'virtual past' or 'virtual memory', lyric provides a 'virtual experience', but drama – and this is crucial given that drama can today be set in the past, present, or future – provides a 'virtual future', on account of its constant orientation towards *what will happen next*.<sup>26</sup>

Even the remote time depicted in ancient tragedy (which is set in its original audience's past), or in ancient comedy (set in its original audience's present), is transformed by live enactment into a dynamic representation of the margin between 'now' and 'after now'. When we watch *Trachiniae*, however well we know the play, we are always present in Trachis, wondering how this woman who stands so visibly disturbed before us will react *right now* to the news that her husband is in love with someone else. And when Deianeira deliberates on what she should do, we do not know how she will explore her dilemma nor what she will eventually decide.

From the Persian queen's request for advice from her elders on how she should react to her dream and the omen she has seen in *Persians* (179–245), to Iphigenia's articulation of her (very limited) alternatives – whether to die willingly or unwillingly – in *Iphigenia at Aulis*, the corpus of fifth-century tragedies offers many characters engaged in deliberation, both in soliloquy and in dialogue. Aeschylean characters deliberate less than those in the other two tragedians, since his characters are more 'embedded' in the actions represented in his dramas, and their fates more 'externally' determined;<sup>27</sup> this implies that the representation of deliberation in tragedy became more sophisticated and extensive in parallel with the development of deliberation by citizens in the Council and Assembly (see p. 91 below). Yet Aeschylus was certainly interested in the metaphors that expressed the noetic activity involved in deliberation about action: he compared it with the *technai* of steering a ship (*Suppl.* 438–41) and herding a flock (of thoughts) (*Ag.* 669).<sup>28</sup> Sansone has drawn attention in particular to the Aeschylean portrait of the psychological state of *amēchania* or inability to know how to act in a difficult situation: it is a temporary lack of the deliberative faculty, when supernatural forces bring a disease or disability that makes it impossible to use the *phrēn* well.<sup>29</sup> Euripides seems to have

<sup>26</sup> Langer (1953) 215, 307, 258–79, 307.   <sup>27</sup> See Goldhill (1990).

<sup>28</sup> Sansone (1975) 27, 33.   <sup>29</sup> Sansone (1975) 67–78.

been interested in how rhetoric, where the impulse to control 'how things seem' supersedes the impulse to discover truth, can interfere with good deliberation and persuade people into immoral actions.<sup>30</sup> But deliberation as a mental *process* seems to have been an issue to which Sophocles, the only tragedian amongst the 'big three' who himself held important public offices, had given a great deal of thought. At least one crisis in most of his extant tragedies is precipitated by the inability of a character in a quandary to listen to good counsel, to discount bad, or simply to spend sufficient time considering potential outcomes: Oedipus fails to hear Tiresias, neither Ajax nor the Atreidae demonstrate much ability to anticipate the consequences of their actions, and Creon substitutes bluster for deliberation when faced with important arguments framed by both Antigone and Haemon.

Indeed, it is striking that *Antigone*, the Sophoclean tragedy which talks most explicitly about deliberation, is also the one which the ancient tradition claimed so impressed the Athenians that they voted its author into the important public office of a generalship on the strength of it.<sup>31</sup> In *Antigone* there is a stress even stronger than that in *Trachiniae* on the speed at which decisions are taken. Creon uses the language of *bouleumata* (179), but it is not at all clear what deliberation or consultation has gone on when he passes his decree (*kērugma*) prohibiting the burial of the dead. Ismene implies that it is the will of the citizens (79), but there is no evidence other than this that the proclamation was not entirely Creon's idea. Creon's 'inauguration' speech says that he has passed the law on two grounds, the first of which is that 'anyone who while guiding the whole city fails to set his hand to the best counsels' (*mē tōn aristōn haptetai bouleumatōn*, 179) is the worst of men. But in the event he is enraged when he does hear a piece of wise counsel from the chorus shortly afterwards; they say, after the guard has described the dust with which Polynices' body has been covered, that their thoughts have all the while suggested to them (*hē xunnoia boulei palai*) that the matter has something to do with the gods (278–9).

When Creon has heard Antigone defend her action in covering her brother's corpse, his furious response involves him in the first of his precipitate decisions. Without even consulting his citizens, he suddenly decides that regardless of family ties to him, 'she and her sister shall not escape a dreadful death' (488–9), although he revokes the sentence on Ismene, equally suddenly, at 771. Creon fails to benefit from several potentially helpful consultants because, as Haemon says, he never takes the opportunities that are afforded him to foresee what people might say, do, or

<sup>30</sup> Hall (2005). <sup>31</sup> The tradition as recorded in the first 'hypothesis' to *Antigone*.

criticize. The reason for this is that nobody dares to help him deliberate since his face becomes so frightening to look at when he hears things he does not want to hear (688–91). Haemon does not seem to want to use the word 'advise' (*bouleuein*) in relation to his father, perhaps on account of a widespread feeling in Greek culture that it was inappropriate for the young to *bouleuein* their elders (see p. 81 below); instead, he concludes with a statement in arguably milder language that since nobody can have complete understanding of every matter, 'it is also good to learn from those who speak well' (*kai tōn legontōn eu kalon to manthanein*, 723). The chorus hastily tries to moderate even this by saying that both Creon and Haemon should learn from each other, but Creon demands to know why he, at his age, 'should be taught' (*didaxomestha*) by one so young (727).

Tiresias has another statement to make about advice-taking: good advice has a long shelf-life, and even a man who has made a mistake can sometimes rectify it if he acts, however late, to correct it (i.e. he need not remain *aboulos oud' anolbos*, 1026). The importance of this concept to the play emerges again in Tiresias' retort to Creon's savage attack on his character – why don't people realize that *the most potent of assets is good advice and deliberation* (*euboulia*, 1050). Exactly the same term is used shortly after by the chorus, now brave enough to speak out, *euboulia dei, pai Menoikeōs, labein* ('you should accept good advice, child of Menoeceus', unfortunately textually corrupt at end of the line, 1098): they then tell him to release Antigone, immediately. He obeys, but far too late. Creon himself is quite clear in the final scene that it his own poor decisions (*bouleumatōn*, 1265) that caused Haemon's death, which was the result of his own botched deliberations (*dusbouliais*, 1269).

Creon's incompetence as a deliberator may receive uniquely explicit comment, but he is far from alone in Greek tragedy as a person who takes unconsidered decisions. Indeed, in Greek tragedy, for reasons which will be considered later, there are few wholly competent deliberators: the scene where Aethra advises Theseus in Euripides' *Suppliant Women* is an outstanding counter-example (286–364). Yet even in the numerous compromised deliberation scenes, although some of the arguments used are merely expressions of facile prejudice or strong emotion, others constitute sophisticated distinctions between knowledge and opinion, advanced reasoning from precedent, or careful assessments of likelihood. An example in *Trachiniae* of the sophistication involved is the dialogue between Deianeira and the messenger on the likely future domestic status of Iole. The messenger suggests that it is *probable* that Iole might remain not just Heracles' favourite concubine, but that she will be lodged with this status

in his marital home. It is not likely, says the messenger (*oud' eikos*, 368), that she has been sent in order to be treated like a slave, since Heracles is inflamed with desire for her.<sup>32</sup> Sophocles seems to be drawing attention to the dangers of arguments from probability, since Deianeira does not calibrate the likelihood of this for herself. She seems to accept wholesale the messenger's assessment of the likely situation, when further questioning might have elicited valuable information.

It has already been noted that the rigour of the training in deliberation that Greek tragedy offered its audience has not been a fashionable topic of research lately. Since the late 1980s it has been overshadowed by discussions of the plays' portrayal of, for example, artworks, cult, space, ritual and sociological issues. A reason for the neglect may be that extended and systematic deliberation about alternative courses of action is out of favour in modern mass media and culture (one of the few arenas in which it is fashionable to deliberate being medical ethics). Although certain rhetorical formulae within deliberation scenes have received attention, such as the 'desperation' motifs in speeches by characters in terrible dilemmas, or the rhetorical question expressing the *aporia* of the character (*ti poiēsō?*),<sup>33</sup> I have come across no systematic comparative analysis of the deliberation scenes in Greek tragedy. But it is my guess that most of them show deliberation that any student of Plato or Aristotle could immediately have identified as seriously and obviously flawed: recurring defects are that the deliberation is too brief, that it is based on false factual information that was potentially verifiable, or on prejudiced opinion rather than knowledge derived from experience.

#### DISCUSSIONS OF DELIBERATION

The topic of deliberation about future action is one which by the time of Aristotle had also become significant in rhetoric: indeed, it became one of its three main branches according to Aristotle's influential distinctions between deliberative rhetoric (which he defines as looking to the future and whose goal is expedience), epideictic rhetoric (which looks to the present and whose goal is honour), and legal rhetoric (which looks to the past and whose goal is justice).<sup>34</sup> It was also treated seriously as a method and topic in moral philosophy. No ancient treatise devoted to the topic of deliberation has survived, although Diogenes Laertius cites

<sup>32</sup> Heiden (1989) 6–7. <sup>33</sup> See R. L. Fowler (1987); McWhorter (1910)

<sup>34</sup> *Rhet.* 1.1357a 36–b 29. See Baldwin (1924), 14–15.

one, now lost, entitled *On Deliberation* (*Peri tou bouleuesthai*), which he assigns to Simon the Cobbler, the long mysterious 'workbench philosopher' and friend of Socrates whose historicity has rather unexpectedly been proven by archaeological discoveries;<sup>35</sup> Aristotle's lost works included a *Peri sumboulías*, or *On Counsel*.<sup>36</sup> That treatise presumably complemented what he has to say about deliberation in his extant works.

Deliberation is, for Aristotle, a distinctive activity; there are many things we do not deliberate about, such as the laws of nature or facts which can be certainly proven either way, such as whether a particular object is a loaf of bread, or whether a loaf has been baked for a sufficient time (*NE* 3.1113a). It is only *uncertainties* about which we deliberate, and this does not include uncertain phenomena, such as the weather, or the chance discovery of treasure, over which we have no control: we deliberate 'about things that are in our power and can be realized by action' (*NE* 3.1112a–b; see also 6.1141b). We deliberate in order to act, and this is why deliberation is prominent in the spheres of ethics and politics, which are concerned with action (*NE* 10.1179a–b). Deliberation is an act of 'figuring out' questions that complements answers derived from sensory perception or scientific proof.

Ever since Erasmus chose deliberation as a topic in his *Adagia* (1500), and in England the Queen's Counsel Francis Bacon published his treatise *Of Counsel* (1597), deliberation has been an important topic in more recent philosophy, both as part of political theory, in relation to group decision-making in democracies, and (in ways that overlap with cognitive psychology) with respect to the workings of the individual moral agent's subjectivity. A worthwhile set of contemporary philosophical studies exists attempting to define the Ideal Deliberator. Good deliberation has been defined, for example, as evaluation of ends on the basis of full and correct information (which may well require seeking expert advice from a disinterested party). Sometimes the factor that is stressed is the ability to calibrate the likelihood of outcomes on the basis of precedent and experience. Others have seen good deliberation, rather, as a system of thinking in which ends are justified according a set of norms containing a high degree of internal coherence in relation to each other. A fourth model stresses the desirability of a high degree of *stability* in the deliberator's

<sup>35</sup> Diogenes Laertius 2.122; for the other literary testimonia on Simon see Hock (1976); for the vase from what seems to have been Simon's workshop, see Camp (1986), 145–7.

<sup>36</sup> Diogenes Laertius 5.24 = Rose (1886), 6, fr. 1.88. Aristippus is also credited with a treatise addressed to the would-be adviser: Diog. Laert. 2.84.

intuitions and judgements.<sup>37</sup> Yet despite such differences of emphasis, certain fundamental principles underlie all these models, including the need for sufficient time to cogitate, and the importance of attempting to gain true information.

Analogously, a set of repeated beliefs about the nature of the Ideal Deliberator can be found scattered across archaic and classical Greek literature, even though there are differences in nuance and emphasis. Many feature, for example, in the authors whose assembled maxims were referred to by Isocrates as 'advisory literature', *ta sumbouleuonta* (2.42–3) – namely Theognis, Phocylides and Hesiod. It is often recommended, for example, that deliberation should be conducted slowly; this sentiment is directly expressed in Thucydides (1.78.1; see also Hdt. 7.10.6, Isoc. 1.34). But it is also anticipated by two passages of Theognis: his listener is enjoined to 'deliberate twice and thrice' (*bouleuou dis kai tris*, 633, an idea expanded at 1051–4). A variation on this theme was expressed by at least one character in Sophocles, who said that deliberation and running a race were not directed at achieving the same end (fr. 856 *TrGF*).

Ideal deliberators and advisers are male, since 'a woman just does not deliberate with an eye to expedience' (*Monostichoi* 106, see also 355), and 'a man who takes a woman's advice when he fears downfall actually deliberates his downfall into being'.<sup>38</sup> They must also be free: expressions of this imperative are legion, and the voices that oppose them are almost all servile themselves.<sup>39</sup> Another pole around which many ancient Greek discussions of Ideal Deliberation revolved was that of the age of the deliberator or adviser. A proverb that Harpocration attributes to Hesiod assigns deeds to youth, counsel to men in their prime, and only wishes to old men (fr. 321 MW), but Nestor's reply to Diomedes at *Iliad* 9.53–61 implies that seniority brings wisdom in counsel, and excellence in counsel becomes a topic in encomia of old age.<sup>40</sup> Men had to be in their thirtieth year in order to serve on the Athenian Council (Xen. *Mem.* 1.2.35),<sup>41</sup> and it seems that in practice men over fifty years old were given some precedence by the herald in the queue of men wanting to address the Athenian Assembly (see e.g. Aeschines, *Against Timarchus* 23, 49). The notion of valuable long memory no doubt reinforced the association in Greek minds between the age of the deliberator and the often stated desirability of considering the events of the past while deliberating about the future (see especially Andocides 3.2 and

<sup>37</sup> For an overview of these definitions and models see the accessible study of Tiberius (2000).

<sup>38</sup> Philemon fr. 177 Kock; not included amongst the fragments assigned to Philemon in KA.

<sup>39</sup> See Hall (1997) 110–23. <sup>40</sup> Stevens (1933) 105.

<sup>41</sup> See Rhodes (1985) 1 and n. 3, and further below, pp. 91–2.

3.29): the topic of age groups and deliberation is developed in Isocrates' *Letter to Archidamus* (9.14).

Another issue which arises often in literature about deliberation is the desirability of accompanying deliberation with wine. The most famous instance is Herodotus' account of Persian decision-making about grave matters, which took place initially when they were drunk, but was then reviewed when they were sober (1.133); action was only taken if both verdicts were the same. Even on this debated question of the benefits wine might offer the deliberator, the ancient voices are far from unanimous (see the argument on the subject between the slaves in *Knights* 86–100, and Antiphanes fr. 19.5–6 KA), but it is perhaps less well asked of tragedy than of satyr drama, except in so far as it relates to the issue of uninhibited speech (see p. 94 below).

From the perspective of tragedy, one of the most important topics in the literature about counsel is the relationship between deliberation and chance or luck. The *locus classicus* here is when Isocrates insists that true courage is tested during deliberations in the Assembly rather than in the face of the dangers of war, since 'what takes place on the field of battle is due to fortune, but what is decided here is an indication of our intellectual power' (6.92). The Greeks were aware that no amount of competent deliberation could ensure happiness if chance events militated against it, and it is Theognis in whose verse the earliest full statement of this conundrum is found. He sets up an opposition between the mentally inferior people whose luck is good, and competent deliberators whose bad luck means that they reap no rewards for their efforts (161–4). Herodotus' meditative Artabanus nevertheless insists on the advantages that good deliberation offers: even if a competently deliberated plan is obstructed, it is important, in hindsight, to recognize that it was chance and not lack of deliberative effort that caused the problem (Hdt. 7.10).

One Thucydidean speaker, Nicias, argues that although it is incumbent upon his audience to deliberate extensively (*polla . . . bouleusasthai*), it is ultimately more important that they enjoy good luck (*eutuchēsai*, 6.23.3). The relationship between chance and deliberation was of course to become a topic of enormous importance in Greek philosophy. The intensity of the proverbial connection between *boulē* and *tuchē* is particularly evident from the etymological play upon them in Plato's *Cratylus* (420c); Aristotle develops the theme at length in his discussion of the fortunate man in the eighth book of his *Eudemian Ethics*. The need to have good luck as well as to practise expert deliberation becomes apparent to many tragic protagonists. No amount of even the best possible deliberation could prevent a man from

suffering the sort of bad luck that afflicted Philoctetes or Oedipus, but it is certainly up for discussion whether more and more effective deliberation could have prevented Deianeira from sending the robe, just it might have prevented Creon from refusing to listen to his niece and son.

By far the most prevalent commonplace in the ancient Greek literature on counsel, however, is the injunction to 'deliberate at night', which probably goes back at least as early as the original archaic 'Phocylides' known to Isocrates as an assembler of advisory maxims (see p. 81 above).<sup>42</sup> The phrase *nukti boulēn didous* is certainly used in Herodotus, and seems to mean something similar to 'making the night a counsellor', 'taking night into one's confidence, or just 'sleeping on it', as in the Euripidean phrase *nukti sunthakōn* (*Held.* 994). The proverbial association of night and deliberation is clear in Menander's *Epitrepontes*, when Daos, in the arbitration scene, explains how he had had second thoughts about bringing up the baby he had found when he 'took counsel in the night' (252, *en nukti boulēn . . .*). This idea also forms a line of the *Monostichoi* traditionally attributed to Menander (no. 150, *en nukti boulē tois sophoisi gignetai*). It is obvious, however, that tragic deliberators are offered little opportunity for nocturnal lucubration.

When it comes to the right type of adviser to choose, stress is laid on the need for the party to be disinterested, to avoid the danger of their recommendations being more in their own interest than that of the advisee. But there is also an understanding of the importance of having had experience of a matter before being qualified to give advice on it – another common topic in the ancient literature about deliberation. For example, when in Herodotus the Spartan heralds object to putting themselves in the hands of Xerxes on the advice of the Persian Hydarnes (7.135), it is implied that a similar kind of experience is necessary before one may advise another: Hydarnes is told that his advice is one-sided since he has experienced slavery, but not freedom. A Sophoclean fragment recommending that only the person who has undergone the same experiences is in a position to advise a sufferer approaches this general thought (900 *TrGF*, *hos mē peponth' hama, mē bouleuetō*).

#### INADEQUATE DELIBERATION IN TRACHINIAE

How many characters in tragedy take or are offered the opportunity to 'deliberate slowly' or 'deliberate at night'? The answer must be, 'scarcely

<sup>42</sup> See Stevens (1933) 109, and Handley (2007) 98–100.

any'. Tragedy may, in fact, in some cases contrast the sensible decisions to which deliberators have come during protracted night-time thought and those that they take precipitately within the timescale of the play's action. Phaedra's great monologue is a clear example: a lengthy process of deliberation in the long watches of the night has allowed her to understand why people are not always able to carry out what they know is right, and also has helped her to arrive at the view that the best course of action entails silence and self-control (Eur. *Hipp.* 373–99). It is only the intolerable stress that Cypris has put her under that has now made her resolve on death as 'the most effective plan' (*kratiston . . . bouleumatōn*, 403). Although beyond the scope of this essay, the proverb 'deliberate at night' could illuminate considerably the normal practice of Greek tragic dramaturgy to confine the time enacted to less than a single day, the notorious 'unity of time' that has had such an extraordinary effect on Western drama – and literature more widely – ever since. Although there are some signs of attempts to compress significant actions into single revolutions of the sun in Homeric epic, the mysterious origins of the distinctive temporal unity of ancient tragic drama have never been properly explained. The idea that Ideal Deliberators need to sleep on their decisions may at least explain why the compressed temporal dimensions of tragic theatre proved so longstanding a convention.

At the end of the speech where Hyllus describes the killing of Lichas and the suffering of Heracles, he curses his mother, precipitately. She is convicted of having 'plotted and carried out' the murder of his father (*bouleusas' . . . drōs'*). In fact, the problem is, of course, that she neither plotted the murder (the activity denoted by the verb *bouleuein*) nor did she even competently *deliberate* (denoted by the middle form *bouleuesthai*) the action that accidentally led to Heracles' death. The audience knows that her attempt to explore the potential outcome of sending the robe was truncated. Speed and strong emotion characterize Hyllus' curse even more than Deianeira's deliberations: he allows no time for consideration of what really happened, nor to hear what she might say in self-defence, before he curses her (807–12). Everyone in this family would have done well to listen to Diodotus' warning to the inflamed Athenians during the second debate on the Mytilenean secession (Thuc. 3.42.1): 'There are two enemies of good counsel: haste and passion' (*tachos kai orgē*).

Another enemy of good counsel, however, is the failure to instigate it in the first place. Deianeira's truncated deliberation and precipitate re-adoption of her earlier plan reveal, for her, an uncharacteristic degree of initiative. In the prologue to *Trachiniae* to which Schlegel so objected, Deianeira recalls that she had remained seated, 'struck out of her wits with terror', while

the river Achelous struggled over her in her distant Aetolian homeland; before the showdown, she had prayed to die (although had done nothing to hasten it) rather than marry Achelous.<sup>43</sup> She concludes this prologue with the information that fifteen whole months have elapsed since anything has happened – fifteen months, for some of which she has lived on her own in Trachis, where she is an exile (44–5). But throughout these fifteen months, she has displayed no functioning dimension that might be called moral agency, despite the nightly anxiety attacks she has endured (29–30).

Her lack of ability to deliberate, or take autonomous initiative as a result of deliberation, is emphasized immediately after the prologue, when it is only because her *nurse* urges her to take action that the chain of events leading to the play's conclusion is instigated in the first place. Deianeira has up until today, the actual day set for the deciding of Heracles' fate, done absolutely nothing about it. She has not deliberated on the best course of action, nor aired the question with a competent adviser of any kind. The nurse tells her that she should send Hyllus on a mission to find out what has happened to his father; in doing so, the nurse 'presents the first example of enthymemic reasoning' in the play:<sup>44</sup> Hyllus, who the nurse says might reasonably be expected to go (*honper eikos . . .*, 56), should be sent to look for news of Heracles. At this moment Hyllus happens to appear, but it is only because he asks what the nurse has been saying that Deianeira explains, 'She says that when your father has been absent for so long it is shameful that you do not inquire as to his whereabouts' (65–6). 'She' – the slave-class old nurse – says.

Hyllus, thus prompted, now tells his mother what he knows about his father's whereabouts – he is not far away now, but in Euboea – and she responds by divulging the prophecy Heracles left her that this was the time at which his fate would be decided one way or another. There is reproof in Hyllus' retort that he would have gone 'long ago if I had known the import of these prophecies' (56–7). A matter of such enormity, one would have thought, might have benefited from pre-emptive thought and considered action. But it is only this ineffectual female whose attention has been focused on the crucial subject. The significance of the prophecy does not even emerge until after Hyllus has gone on his mission. Deianeira explains, not to him but to the chorus, that Heracles was so concerned that before he left, fifteen months previously, he had told her how to dispose

<sup>43</sup> Whitman (1951), 111 and 114, correctly saw that thinking about Deianeira in terms of passing moral judgement was to miss the point; the real question is her intellectual incompetence, suggested as early as the first few lines of the prologue, in which she delivers a powerfully contradictory statement.

<sup>44</sup> Heiden (1989) 32.

his estate. He was, he had said, fated either to die or to survive and live a pain-free life from fifteen months later. This prophecy had been delivered to him by no less an authority than the priestesses of Zeus who tended the ancient oak tree at Dodona in Epirus. In this household, therefore, a slave tells her mistress when and how to act, and the mistress divulges crucial details relating to personal family secrets of unparalleled importance, not to her adult son but to the local women in a town where she is stranded in temporary exile.

#### CAN WOMEN DELIBERATE?

At this point the velocity of the play suddenly increases. The fifteen months of anxiety, and the current day's talking, are interrupted by the arrival of an elderly messenger who says that Deianeira's husband will be home 'soon', *tacha* (185). Deianeira's tendency towards precipitate action is underlined: without even asking for any details about the condition in which he is returning, with whom, or whence, she orders the women to give voice to rejoicing, and they oblige by launching into a manic hyporcheme that welcomes the 'bridegroom' to the house (205–24). It is interesting to compare Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, when the chorus says that it is 'just like a woman' to give thanks for good news before the news is confirmed (483–7), revealing that precipitate joy was sometimes seen as a fault characteristic of the feminine psyche, just as ability at deliberation is a virtue characteristic only of men. For Clytemnestra, says the watchman, has an expectant heart 'capable of good deliberation like a man's' (*androboulon . . . kear*, 11).

If the Trachis play's catastrophe is set in motion by Deianeira's incompetence at deliberation, there arises the question of the extent to which this is determined by the fact that she is female. There were, as we have seen, widespread expressions of the view that women and deliberation should not be mixed. Aristotle explained that the deliberative faculty, which is not present in slaves and is undeveloped in children, is actually inoperative or 'without authority' – *akuron* – in women (*Pol.* 1.1260a). The term he uses for 'without authority' derives from the same stem as the term *kurios*, used for the male family member who had to act as legal representative and 'guardian' to every Athenian woman throughout her life. It is significant that it is only male heroes in epic, such as Odysseus (2.272–3), who are said to be proficient at both *counsel* and *action*. In a chapter on the sociology of Athenian tragedy commissioned by (and much improved under the editorship of) Pat Easterling, which I published a decade ago in the *Cambridge Companion to Greek Tragedy*, I argued that one of the

recurring plot patterns in Greek tragedy involves a woman who is left alone, to plan and execute actions unsupervised by men.<sup>45</sup> Deianeira, sing the chorus, is worn down by sleeping alone, without her husband (*eunais anandrōtoisi*, 109–10), and her problems arise directly from the absence of male supervision.

This makes *Trachiniae* one of the many extant plays in which a woman creates or exacerbates a problem in the physical absence of any legitimate husband with whom she can have regular sexual intercourse. This convention applies equally to virgins and to married women, who create problems only in the absence of their husbands. The opposite rule does not always apply; husbandless women may behave with decorum (Chrythemis, for example, in Sophocles' *Electra*, and Megara in *Heracles Mad*). But every single problematic woman in tragedy is temporarily or permanently husbandless in the true sense of the term. Aeschylus' Clytemnestra is having sex, but not with her husband; Euripides' *Electra* is married, but not having sex.

The pattern is in turn dependent upon the striking prevalence of the type of plot in which the male head of the household enacts a homecoming (*nostos*) during the course of the play. The *nostos*-plot had a masterly antecedent in the *Odyssey*, where chaos also reigns in the hero's absence, although his wife is not in that case the culprit.<sup>46</sup> There is an implicit acknowledgement that although women were transferred from household to household (by male consensus in the case of marriage and male violence in the case of war), they were essentially immobilized, in contrast with the unrestricted movements of men. Greek tragedy normally portrays static household-bound women awaiting and reacting to the comings and goings of men – Deianeira, Clytemnestra, Medea, Phaedra, Hermione, and examples can be multiplied. Play after play portrays the disastrous effects on households and the larger community of *orgai* – emotions such as anger and sexual desire or jealousy, or divinely inspired madness – on women unsupervised by men.

Without free adult men to guide their judgement, women in tragedy are also portrayed as especially vulnerable to manipulative slaves. The most interesting category of tragic slave is the old female nurses like Deianeira's, and their male counterparts (*paidagōgoi*). In their portrayal there is often a suggestion of an unhealthy degree of inter-class trust and intimacy, for example in Euripides' *Hippolytus* and *Ion*. It is no accident that the 'boorish

<sup>45</sup> Hall (1997) 103–10.

<sup>46</sup> For an interesting discussion of the relationship between *Trachiniae* and the *Odyssey*, see Davidson (2003).

man' amongst Theophrastus' *Characters* is recognizable by his habit of confiding the most important matters to his slaves while distrusting his own friends and family (4.2). Aristotle recommends that children, whose moral capacities he regards as undeveloped, 'spend very little time in the company of slaves' (*Pol.* 7.1336a 39–40).

Yet *Trachiniae*, in fact, does not altogether fit the standard model of the amoral slave and the susceptible aristocratic female, since the nurse's suggestion to send Hyllus for news, and Deianeira's request for advice from the chorus of Trachinian women, are both sensible moves. This is striking when it is remembered that this play was composed in a society where women were formally excluded from all deliberation about public policy, and indeed were regarded as scarcely capable of autonomous deliberative activity at all.

Deianeira, moreover, is not the only character whose failure to consider her actions before performing them is implicated in the creation of this tragedy. Causation in Sophocles is always complicated. Heracles, who killed Nessus as impulsively as he killed Iphitus or Lichas, must in the grand scheme of things take some responsibility for the means by which he died. This is even stressed by the repetition of the verb *baptein* by Deianeira in describing the moment when the arrow was dipped in the poison and the moment when she dipped the wool in the blood (574, 580); this links the actions that eventually give rise to the mutual ruin,<sup>47</sup> for, as Easterling has argued, repetition in Sophocles tends to be purposeful.<sup>48</sup> Since the characters of Deianeira and Heracles are likely to have been played by the same actor, some critics have argued that there is a sharp contrast created by the meek, un-authoritative Deianeira and her masterful, controlling husband.<sup>49</sup> But in one crucial respect – their incompetence at deliberation and tendency to take precipitate decisions – they are remarkably similar.

The question of Deianeira's moral culpability has exercised critics. Those who want to defend her use the remorseful Hyllus' defence of her towards the end of the play, when he three times asserts her lack of malicious *intention*. 'She did wrong without the intention' (*hēmarten ouch hekousia*, 1123); 'She did altogether wrong, but her intent was good' (*hapan to chrēm' hēmarte chrēsta mōmenē*, 1137); 'She went wrong thinking (*dokousa*) that she was applying a [love] philtre when she saw the bride in the house', 1140). Yet the story is not quite as simple as that. The play has devoted a considerable amount of 'airtime' to portraying and discussing the mental processes by which Deianeira came to commit the fatal mistake and send

<sup>47</sup> Halleran (1988). <sup>48</sup> Easterling (1973a). <sup>49</sup> E.g. Kirkwood (1941) and (1958) 110; McCall (1972).

the anointed robe. Sophocles seems here to have added a new factor – the question of Deianeira's conscious agency – to an ambiguous tradition.

Sophocles' Deianeira is certainly no Clytemnestra-like premeditative husband-slayer. But neither is she responsible solely for accidental manslaughter as she seems to have been in the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women*, where she dyed the robe with lethal *pharmaka* in a state of foolish delusion (fr. 25.17–23 MW, although the reading *aasato mega thumōi* is uncertain).<sup>50</sup> In Bacchylides' second dithyramb, which almost certainly antedates Sophocles' play, her liability seems to have been a less complex matter: she was 'the innocent victim of inscrutable destiny', and it was 'invincible divinity' (*amachos daimōn*) who wove for her a 'shrewd device of much sorrow'; she was destroyed by 'far-reaching envy and a dark cloak of the things to come' when she received the fatal portent from Nessus (Bacchylides 16.23–35 SM).<sup>51</sup> The subtlety of the ethical manoeuvring in the Sophoclean version becomes clear in comparison with these hexameter and lyric versions. His Deianeira is not guilty of premeditated murder, but nor is she an entirely passive victim of delusion or of supernatural machinations or envy.<sup>52</sup> Having seen Iole, she *decides on her own initiative* to send the robe, and also decides on her own initiative to deliberate and take advice on whether her policy is prudent. But she also decides, on a sudden impulse when Lichas enters, to rescind the impulse towards deliberation and take risk-laden action anyway. Sophocles here displays an unparalleled degree of precision and delicacy in his calibration of tragic characters' performance as moral agents.

#### TRAGIC DELIBERATION AND DEMOCRATIC POLITICS

*Trachiniae* has not often played a significant part in the discussions of the relationship between the Athenian democracy and the tragic drama it produced, a relationship which has been such a dominant feature of the scholarship on the classical theatre over the last two decades. The reason is partly to do with the play's particular content. The myth it enacts has little direct relevance to Athenian state myth, genealogy or ritual; if there is a political culture or civic institution in Trachis, we do not see or hear of it, and we meet neither the Trachinians' leader (perhaps the unnamed guest-friend with whom Deianeira says she is residing at line 40), nor

<sup>50</sup> Carawan (2000) 194.    <sup>51</sup> Carawan (2000) 197.

<sup>52</sup> One of the few critics to have sensed the complexity of Deianeira's mental processes in the play is Webster (1936) 97–9, although I do not agree with his overall picture of her character.

representatives of their citizen body.<sup>53</sup> When *Trachiniae* has been discussed in relation to Athenian society, it has therefore almost always been as a source of information about marriage or about the role and position of female slaves.<sup>54</sup> Over the last three decades much writing about Deianeira has fundamentally been akin to Dorothea Wender's caustic feminist diagnosis, that she is 'a recognizable fifth-century Athenian woman, dependent, domestic, submissive, timid, secretive, "good", and depressed'.<sup>55</sup>

Yet in the imagination of a community, feminine figures can play symbolic roles that differ from the roles allocated to them in daily life. Within a particular society, the representation of female minds sometimes has more to say about 'referred' or displaced class identity than about the contingent views on gender. It has been persuasively argued, for example, that the eighteenth century's dominant ideal of femininity, with its emphasis on feeling and morality, was a powerful factor in establishing a more general middle-class identity. The emergence of female-dominated sentimental literature really demonstrates 'an evolution of a particular ideological construction of a new class identity, displaced into a discussion of female virtue'.<sup>56</sup> Perhaps the large number of female deliberators in Greek tragedy might be 'referred' or displaced democratic subjectivities. They are part of what Pat Easterling has called Greek tragedy's 'heroic vagueness', the special idiom created by settings in the distant past and elevated poetic language, which 'enabled problematic questions to be addressed without overt divisiveness' and certainly without creating an art form in which 'hard questions are avoided or made comfortable because expressed in these glamorous and dignified terms'.<sup>57</sup>

If a performance of *Trachiniae* is considered as a site where the Athenian democratic subject flexed his intellectual muscles, a figure such as Deianeira in *Trachiniae* could be seen a mythical surrogate of the civic agent receiving advice, attempting to deliberate, and coming to a decision. This proposition stands even if the issue that she is deliberating is not so transparently political as, for example, whether or not a man perceived as a traitor should be given a burial (the issue in *Ajax* and *Antigone*). In this sense Deianeira is as much a ventriloquized surrogate of the Athenian *dēmos*, inspecting its own political practices and conduct, as Creon in *Antigone*, or the Atridae in *Ajax*, or Oedipus in *OT*. There have, of course, been some excellent challenges published recently to the idea that there was anything

<sup>53</sup> See the distinctions drawn between the ways that different tragedies engage with or offer 'images of the community' in Easterling (1997c) 28–9.

<sup>54</sup> See e.g. Beer (2004), especially 81. <sup>55</sup> Wender (1974) 2.

<sup>56</sup> Ballaster (1996) 280 and n.28; see Hall and Macintosh (2005) 91–2. <sup>57</sup> Easterling (1997c), 25.

fundamentally 'democratic' about tragedy as an art form, since it originated in Athens before the democracy was established, and since many of the political concepts it examines are also pertinent to other, undemocratic, city-states.<sup>58</sup> But the focus on deliberation, entailing audience scrutiny of – and identification with – characters who are deliberating about action, constitutes an important way in which Athenian tragedy was certainly 'to do with' the democracy: in the tyrant Peisistratus' day, the characters in tragedy may indeed have deliberated, but the audience that watched them was not the body with decision-making and executive powers – that was Peisistratus himself.

As my co-editor Simon Goldhill has trenchantly put it, the relationship between power and deliberation 'is one of the defining issues of a democratic system – where questions of political agency, cultural norms, and legal regulation combine in the most fascinating manner'.<sup>59</sup> This is the reason why the topic of deliberation in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Politics* has stimulated interest in political theorists, especially in relation to his views on whether decision-making entities are fundamentally mediating discord or expressing a collective will; Bickford's fascinating study, which draws also on Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, argues that what concerns the ancient philosopher most is the 'quality of attention' inherent in the deliberative process. The act of extensive, attentive and thoughtful deliberation is in itself part of the process of forming any political community where power is shared.<sup>60</sup>

The Athenian Council was called the *boulē*, as the place where deliberation took place. Its importance in terms of the decisions made by the city is underlined by the speed with which the oligarchs who took power in 411 ousted the democratically elected *bouleutai* and took over the *bouleutērion* to serve as their own centre of power.<sup>61</sup> The *boulē* required no fewer than five hundred citizens to serve, proportionately selected from each deme, and they were replaced every year, by lot (at least from the mid-fifth century):<sup>62</sup> it 'could thus have contained a fair cross-section of the citizen body'.<sup>63</sup> Since no man could serve more than twice in his life (*Ath. Pol.* 62.3), the chances that any particular citizen would serve at some point in his life (once he had reached the qualifying age) must have been very high, especially after pay was instituted in the later fifth century, apparently to

<sup>58</sup> See above pp. 000 and Hall (2006a) 187–8. <sup>59</sup> Goldhill (1999a). <sup>60</sup> Bickford (1996).

<sup>61</sup> Thuc. 8.69–70.1; [Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 32.3; see the fascinating remarks in Shear (2007) 102–3.

<sup>62</sup> Rhodes (1985) 4, 6–7.

<sup>63</sup> Rhodes (1985) 4. One scholiast on Aeschines 3.4 described the Council, indeed, as a 'mini-polis' (*mikra polis*).

encourage poorer citizens to sit on the Council. There is some evidence that originally only the top three property classes could serve, to the exclusion of the thetes, but this qualification for eligibility seems to have been dropped in the later fifth century, or not rigidly enforced.<sup>64</sup> The Council met almost every day (Xen. *Hell.* 2.3.11), and it considered matters relating not only to the state's finances and the scrutiny of magistrates, but the Athenian cults, festivals, navy, building programme, and care for the sick, disabled, and orphaned. To serve as a *bouleutēs* required accumulating information, assessing past actions and deliberating about future ones *virtually all day, every day*.<sup>65</sup> The 'quality of attention' required by service on the Council seems breathtaking compared with what is required of politicians, let alone ordinary citizens, today.

Members of the Council sat together in privileged seats at the front of the theatre to watch characters like Deianeira attempt deliberation. But the tragedians' interest in the mechanics and psychology of decision-making was perhaps fed even more by the real-life experience of their Athenian citizen spectators in a place where they were all *always* entitled to gather and not only deliberate but *decide* on policy – the Assembly. The relevance of the experience of the Assembly to the scene where Deianeira deliberates is illustrated by Thucydides in the several scenes in which he describes the citizens being led by strong emotions to take precipitate decisions in the Assembly, with life-or-death consequences, on the spur of the moment. These accounts underline how the Athenians acquired for themselves the name of 'mind-changers' and 'hasty deciders' (*metabouloi* and *tachybouloi*, *Acharnians* 632, 630).

Indeed, in the second debate on Mytilene in the mid-420s, Diodotus needed emphatically to fuse the two *gnōmai* 'deliberate slowly' and 'don't deliberate in anger' when he opened his response to the bellicose Cleon with the famous statement that the two things most inimical to good counsel are speed and passion (Thuc. 3.42.1). Since they were not characters in a tragedy, on this occasion the Athenians did, fortunately, have the chance to 'deliberate at night'. Diodotus' reproof was delivered just the day after the Athenians had taken an outrageously hasty decision to slaughter the entire male population of the city of Mytilene on the island of Lesbos, and within hours had sent a trireme sailing off over the Aegean to carry out the mass

<sup>64</sup> See Rhodes (1985) 2–3.

<sup>65</sup> The superb study by Peter Rhodes (1985) remains the most important single publication on the Athenian *boulē*. It is surprising that words with *boul-* stems do not merit any discussion in the lexical examination of terms to do with knowledge and understanding in Sophocles included in Coray (1993).

execution. The extreme volatility of the *dēmos*' temper is shown by what happened the very next day: after 'a sudden change of heart' (*metanoia tis euthus*, 3.36.4), they called a second Assembly. At the end of the second debate, which was of extreme intensity, they voted – narrowly – to rescind the measure taken the day before, and managed, more by good luck than good deliberation, to get a second ship to Lesbos in the very nick of time (Thuc. 3.49).

One major topic of the literature of counsel that appears first in comedy centres around what seems to have been already a gnomic expression, the incompetence of the Athenians at deliberation, *dusboulia Athēnaiōn*. Athens had a reputation for failing to make careful plans, but instead trusting to (and often enjoying) good luck. The *locus classicus* is *Clouds* 587–8, 'They say that poor deliberation is inherent in this city; it is the gods who make better all the affairs in which you have erred.' This is repeated, with the introduction, 'People in older days had a saying . . .' at *Eccl.* 473. And it is a scholion on the latter passage that records an ancient tradition explaining how the Athenians came to be so *dusbouloi*: when Poseidon failed to be selected patron of Athens, in his wrath he called down a curse on the city that would make it deliberate badly. Since Athena could not annul the curse, she compensated for it instead by granting Athens a special gift: things which the city planned badly would nevertheless turn out well.

The aetiological narrative about Athena and Poseidon may have been invented slightly later in order to explain a prevalent proverb, although the same scholiast mentions Eupolis in connection with the tradition, and Rogers argued plausibly on the basis of Chremes' prayer to Athena for good luck at *Eccl.* 476 that it was clearly known by the early fourth century.<sup>66</sup> But the image of Poseidon, sulking because things had not gone his way, is a vivid crystallization of the problem of how to deal with dissent and dissenters in a democracy. Diodotus wisely insists that the *dēmos* needs to consider all viewpoints, however much they may dislike them (Thuc. 3.43). Subsequently, most ancient discourse on deliberation refers to the difficulties deliberators have in listening to unpalatable opinions or information: this idea is well conveyed in Haemon's statement that Creon's terrifying countenance prevents his subjects from speaking honestly

<sup>66</sup> See Rogers (1902), 72–3. But the bad planning inherent in Athenian political culture is certainly present in Isocrates (8.57): 'How, if the Athenians deliberate so badly, it is asked, are they secure, and possessed of no less power than any other city? And he replies that their adversaries are as unwise as they.' Similarly, in Demosthenes 4.39–40, Athens is compared to the 'foreign boxers' whose hands are always where the last blow struck, in the way that it follows in its deliberations always just on the heels of events.

to him (*Ant.* 690–1). One of the topics in literature on deliberation is its relationship to everyone's equal right to speak their mind freely, or *parrhēsia*. Philodemus regarded *parrhēsia* as an important topic under the rubric of the deliberative type of rhetoric.<sup>67</sup> One of the arguments in favour of drinking while deliberating is in Plutarch (*Quaest. conv.* 7.10 = *Mor.* 715 F), where wine is claimed to be effective at producing *parrhēsia* and, as a result, the truth; the importance of freedom of speech to good deliberation is already to be found in an unattributed fragment of comedy (fr. adesp. 890 KA), where the speaker asserts that the wisest adviser that people deliberating about major issues can have is *parrhēsia*.

In tragedy, dissent is often articulated in scenes of dialogue, especially stichomythia. But the negative examples of deliberative activity that *Trachiniae* offers are thrown into sharper relief by the dearth of adversarial stichomythia until the appearance of Heracles, long after the seeds of death have been sown. There is no formal debate scene, and the only two sections of stichomythia involving conflict are between Heracles and Hyllus, over the immolation and the marriage to Iole.<sup>68</sup> In Trachis, women delay deliberating until it is too late and take advice from slaves. They fail both to discuss things with the adult males in their family, and to consult disinterested specialist advisers (why has Deianeira not seen fit to talk to a diviner?). They neglect to gather important information, question arguments from probability, test hypotheses, and listen to the viewpoints of witnesses. Lichas feels unable to speak an unpalatable truth, and the scenes where Deianeira begins to consider alternative actions, with Hyllus and the chorus, are both cut short before any contentious issues can be exposed. In *Trachiniae*, therefore, the problems to do with deliberation encompass nearly every topic covered in all the literature that discusses decision-making which has survived from ancient Greece.

#### THE METAPHYSICAL CONSEQUENCES

The Athenians deliberated badly but enjoyed good luck: most tragic decision-makers, including Deianeira, deliberate badly but suffer *bad* luck. Greek tragedy could theoretically have pursued a different route in which good deliberators suffered solely – and therefore more unfairly – on account of ill fortune, like Job in the Old Testament. But that did not happen. The Greek tragedians seem to have chosen, by and large, to opt for bad

<sup>67</sup> Philodemus, *Peri parrhēsiās* col. 13, ed. Olivieri (1914) 52.

<sup>68</sup> As the fascinating study of Pfeiffer-Petersen (1996), 170–5 reveals.

deliberators meeting bad luck, or, rather, for deliberators who are put in a position *through pressure of time and emotion* which makes the incompetence of deliberations inevitable. The pressure of time is often expressed through metaphors placing the deliberator on the edge of a razor, or in the pan of a set of scales, which are not comfortable places from which to review alternatives thoroughly (see e.g. *Antigone* 996, *Trach.* 82).

The underlying ideological premise here is double and contradictory. The tragic vision suggests that there is a very great deal about human life that can not be controlled even by the most competent of deliberators. But this vision is far from fatalistic. It shows deliberators failing to take the most obvious precautions and establish the most crucial facts through enquiry, as well as failing to consult relevant parties and allow time to calibrate likelihood. But this procedure allows a fissure to open up in the action suggesting that, with more careful thought, many of the great catastrophes of myth could have been averted even at the last minute, or, at the least, their consequences in terms of collateral damage could have been ameliorated. The democratic sense of authority – that the Athenians had seized control of their own destiny – thus manifests itself, however highly mediated by the vocabulary of myth and the form and sensibility of tragic drama, even when Deianeira so disastrously deliberates. Greek tragedy may be metaphysically pessimistic, but it is, socio-politically speaking, suggestive of a self-confident, optimistic, intellectually autarkic (self-sufficient) and morally autonomous Athenian democratic subject.

In a final twist to the tale, however, the philosophical depth of *Trachiniae* is surely one of the reasons why it proved popular far *beyond* democratic Athens in antiquity. Besides quotations in ancient authors, its continuing presence in the cultural imagination is proved beyond all doubt by the fact that it was adapted into the imperial tragedy *Hercules Oetaeus* attributed to Seneca. Deianeira's grave was pointed out in Pausanias' time (2.23.5); the encounter between Hercules, Nessus and Deianeira was beautifully painted as a mural at Pompeii; the story told in *Trachiniae* seems to have been incorporated in the images on the reliefs at the theatre at the North African theatre of Sabratha.<sup>69</sup> The story of Deianeira, Achelous, Heracles and Nessus was danced in the popular imperial medium of pantomime (Libanius *Or.* 64.67).<sup>70</sup> This play could be exported without difficulty far beyond the immediate cultural context of Athenian democratic

<sup>69</sup> See Caputo (1959), plate 44 fig. 77, with the connection he makes with *Trachiniae* on p. 20.

<sup>70</sup> On which see Hall and Wyles (2008).

deliberation, and this versatility and staying power owed more to its metaphysics than to its ethics.<sup>71</sup>

The cult of the divine or semi-divine Heracles/Hercules was one of the most widely recognized across the Greco-Roman world, easily transportable to every theatre where drama was produced. The ending of the play is, however, mysterious, and arguably contains no overt reference to the worship of its dying hero in the future. Some scholars have even denied that the audience will have made any connection at all with the myth of Heracles' apotheosis and the tradition of his cult on Oeta. But Pat Easterling has always insisted that an exclusive focus on the sociological dimensions of tragedy can lead us to forget the metaphysical significance of scenes involving heroes who had a continuing life in cult.<sup>72</sup> In subtle words, she has suggested that we simply can't ignore the cultic reverberations that the play will have stimulated even in its original, fifth-century audience:

What we cannot tell from our extant evidence is whether by the date of the first production of *Trachiniae* . . . the story of Heracles' death on the pyre was already associated in most people's minds with the well-known story of his apotheosis . . . The silence of the play about what was going to happen on Mt Oeta no doubt left room for different responses on the part of the original audience, depending on the flavour of their piety or their view of life, just as it has left modern critics in a state of perpetual disagreement. There can be no authoritative version of 'what happened next', because the play's design does not allow it. But if it is right to see in the story of the pyre on Oeta an ironic allusion to something familiar in contemporary cult and belief outside the frame of reference of the play then there is a suggestion, however mysterious and obscure, that *some* significance should be attached to the manner of Heracles' death . . .<sup>73</sup>

To any ancient spectator sensitive to the idea of Heracles' divinity, *Trachiniae* will always have suggested that the metaphysical imperative of the establishment of his cult partly resulted from the ineptitude of deliberating brains on the human level. Schlegel may have seen no sign of Sophocles' 'profound mind' in *Trachiniae*. But surely the tragic paradox – that the inevitability of the divine order of things is inseparable from the contingency of incompetence in the mortal sphere – is surely lent, by the play's compromised deliberations, one of its most profound expressions.

<sup>71</sup> For the relationship between these two in Greek tragedy generally, and with a focus on female suffering particularly, see Hall (2007d) 30–2.

<sup>72</sup> E.g. Easterling (1997c) 36–7. <sup>73</sup> Easterling (1982) 10.

PART TWO

*Oedipus and the play of meaning*



*Inconclusive conclusion: the ending(s) of  
Oedipus Tyrannus*

*Peter Burian*

The ending of Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus* continues to raise questions, and the answers in recent criticism have been, so to speak, bipolar. On the one hand, there are those who accept and to a greater or lesser extent welcome the openness of the ending as we have it. A decade ago already, Don Fowler suggested in an article on closure in classical literature that 'Sophocles has benefited more than any other ancient author from the modern trend toward opening out his endings.'<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, a number of critics have found the ending so incoherent that they have argued for the necessity of excisions to repair it.<sup>2</sup> Some of the complaints have to do with linguistic or stylistic anomalies, but taken together these constitute insufficient grounds for substantial ejections from the transmitted text.<sup>3</sup>

I am happy to have this opportunity to express my admiration and affection for Pat Easterling, peerless as mentor, colleague, and friend. It is a special pleasure (though a little daunting) to offer her something on Sophocles, about whom she has taught us, and continues to teach us, so much. Pat heard an inchoate version of this essay years ago at a Sophocles conference in Chicago and provided typically kind but trenchant criticism and typically warm encouragement. Without both those things, I might never have brought it to its own (perhaps inconclusive) conclusion for this volume. My thanks to the organizers of the Chicago conference, Gregory Dobrov, Christopher Faraone and Robert Wallace; and also to Robin Mitchell-Boyask and Deborah Roberts for invitations to present an intermediate version of this essay at Temple University and Haverford College. I am grateful as well to the audiences at these various presentations for many helpful comments.

<sup>1</sup> Fowler (1997) 19. The number of discussions of the final scene since Fowler's essay was published only confirms his view. I note: Serra (1999), Segal (2001) 108–22, Rehm (2002) 221–35, Wilson (2004) ch. 1, and Budelmann (2006).

<sup>2</sup> The most important antecedents of contemporary questions concerning the authenticity of the transmitted ending are Graffunder (1885) and Eicken-Iselin (1942) 275–80. Hester (1984) and March (1987) 148–54 argue for relatively small excisions, but ones that they believe eliminate the need to assume that Oedipus is required to remain in Thebes at the end of the play. Mueller (1996) has more extensive doubts about authenticity, and he in turn helped inspire Dawe (2001 and 2006) to the largest cuts in the exodos and most elaborately argued case for excision. The question of authenticity for the final choral reflection on the change in Oedipus' fortunes (1524–30) is an issue unto itself, independent of other proposed cuts. A preponderance of scholars favour deletion, but for an interesting treatment of this and other choral 'tags' as conventional elements for which many of the usual authenticity criteria may not be appropriate, see Roberts (1987).

<sup>3</sup> Davies (1991) and Serra (2003) offer convincing answers to many of the arguments for specific deletions. I will not cover this ground again, but I happily associate myself with the conclusion of

The case, then, rests primarily upon the inconsistencies the passages are said to introduce, and what to make of those inconsistencies is precisely the interpretative question to which I here attempt to provide an answer.

The most obvious and immediate source of discomfort is that the ending overturns, or at any rate defers indefinitely, the expectation made very emphatically earlier in the play that Oedipus will go into exile. Like most of what one can say about so complex a work, however, even this simple observation needs some qualification. Rachel Kitzinger usefully reminds us that it is precisely at the end of the play that the superiority of the audience's knowledge to that of Oedipus, so crucial to the particular form of irony for which this play is famous, runs out.<sup>4</sup> There was more than one way for the story to end,<sup>5</sup> and the audience cannot know with any certainty how Sophocles will close his play.

We should bear in mind that *OT* is by no means the first or last Greek tragedy to deal with a subject that has come over the centuries to be regarded as the archetype, so to speak, of the tragic tale.<sup>6</sup> In fact, of course, the very prominence of the subject in tragedy requires that it be made new each time by varying the plot to unsettle expectations.<sup>7</sup> Only Sophocles' tragedy survives, but we know of at least eleven other Greek plays entitled *Oedipus*, each of which presumably gave its own version of Oedipus' discovery that he has fulfilled his horrible destiny. Six of these can be dated to the fifth century, including versions by all three of our surviving tragedians.<sup>8</sup> Aeschylus, at least, preceded Sophocles, with an *Oedipus* as the second play of his Oedipodeian tetralogy of 467. Only a few rather unyielding

Budelmann (2006) 59 that 'individual emendations should be sufficient to deal with the issues, and interpolation (such as there is) is unlikely to be more than a matter of individual lines'.

<sup>4</sup> Kitzinger (1993) esp. 539–41; the quotation below is from 541.

<sup>5</sup> See Edmunds (1985) for a convenient summary of surviving ancient versions of the Oedipus legend (6–17) along with analogous tales from many other cultures.

<sup>6</sup> The fact that a well-known fragment by the fourth-century comic poet Antiphanes places the story of Oedipus first in a list of tragic subjects whose characters and situations all theatre-goers would immediately recognize suggests that it had attained this status already in antiquity: 'A poet need only remind. I have just to say, 'Oedipus', and [the spectators] know all the rest: father, Laius; mother, Jocasta; their sons and daughters; what he will suffer; what he has done' (fr. 191 Kock 4–8).

<sup>7</sup> For the play of repetition and innovation as a systemic feature of Greek tragic theatre, see Burian (1997a).

<sup>8</sup> The other three fifth-century versions mentioned in our sources are by younger contemporaries of Sophocles: Achaëus of Eretria, Nichomachus I and Xenocles I. A striking example of how different the various versions can be comes in fr. 541 of Euripides' *Oedipus*: 'We, having pressed Polybus' son to the ground, tear out his eyes and destroy his sight' [literally, his 'pupils']. In this version, then, Oedipus did not blind himself after discovering his true identity, but was blinded, presumably before he learned the truth. Furthermore, the scholiast on Eur. *Pho.* 61, who quotes these lines, informs us that the 'we' in question are servants of Laius; thus, the servants (one of whom speaks the lines) must have deduced that Oedipus was their master's killer and punished him for it. A play with this feature will necessarily have been radically different from *OT*.

fragments of *Laius*, *Oedipus*, and the satyr play *Sphinx* remain, but the third tragedy, *Seven against Thebes*, survives to give us some clues about its lost companions.

Although any attempt to reconstruct the plot of Aeschylus' *Oedipus* must remain speculative, what indications we have suggest, not surprisingly, that it differed considerably from that of *OT*.<sup>9</sup> Its main ingredients will have been Oedipus' discovery of his guilt, self-blinding, and cursing of his sons, as suggested by the mention of these events in close sequence at *Septem* 778–90. The Chorus explain that Oedipus cursed his sons ἐπίκοτος τροφᾶς ('angry at their care [of him], 786); this implies that the Aeschylean Oedipus had grown old, ceded his power to his sons, and made himself dependent upon them for his maintenance before his lineage and his crimes became known.<sup>10</sup> Having learned the terrible truth, he blinds himself and curses the sons he has come to hate, now also reminders of his awful transgressions. Jocasta's fate is uncertain, but her absence from *Septem*, except as part of a choral lament for her sons (926–31), suggests that (as in Sophocles) she killed herself when she learned the truth. It is entirely possible that Aeschylus' *Oedipus* ended with the death of its protagonist (as do the other two tragedies of its trilogy), although there can be no certainty. Less likely, perhaps, in a play already full of event, is the suggestion that the plot moved on to the brothers' quarrel; however, the vague reference in *Septem* 710–11 to Eteocles' dream of a division of his 'father's possessions' (πατρῶων χρημάτων) may point back to a premonition of his, not yet understood, of what was to come.

Whatever the exact run of the Aeschylean plot, it suggests something of the range of choices that were available to Sophocles, and some of what he rejected in fashioning his own drama. Sophocles surely attended the performances of Aeschylus' *Oedipodeia* as a young man. About thirty years old in 467, he was already a successful tragic poet himself. Indeed, we are told that only one year earlier he won his first victory, in what may or may not have been his first appearance at the festival, defeating none other than Aeschylus. He, and no doubt a good part of his audience, were fully aware of precedents and predecessors as he plotted his own version of Oedipus' downfall. Even with the limited information at our disposal, we

<sup>9</sup> What follows largely echoes the judicious remarks of Sommerstein (1996) 121–30, who is in general agreement with Hutchinson (1985) xvii–xxx, but see n. 10.

<sup>10</sup> I concur with Sommerstein in rejecting Hutchinson's view that Oedipus' curse is motivated simply by his horror at his sons' (but not at his daughters'?) incestuous origins. The word τροφᾶς (*Septem* 786), describing the cause of Oedipus' displeasure, seems to point to the bad 'care' of their father mentioned in the cyclic *Thebais* and later in *OC*, rather than to his sons' polluted 'birth'.

can say with some assurance that the ending he gave to *OT* is unlike any he found in any tragic predecessor, or for that matter in the epic or lyric traditions. Indeed, in the event, he seems to offer not one ending but two: in Kitzinger's formulation:

While Oedipus articulates as fully as possible, by word and action, an end where no one can follow him, Creon and the chorus make an end by imposing nonaction, silence, and darkness.<sup>11</sup>

Importantly, however, the imposition of Creon's solution does not simply actualize one possibility among others available in the tradition. It comes out of nowhere (dramatically speaking, at any rate, and very likely in terms of the tradition as well) to reverse what this play has held out as its apparent goal from first to last.

If anything seems certain about what will follow (and complete) Oedipus' peripety in *OT*, it is that he must be sent into exile, and this expectation is overturned only in the final lines, and in the movements of the actors as they depart. Creon reports in the prologue that Apollo at Delphi has indicated what must be done with the killer of Laius: drive the miasma out of the land either by banishment or bloodshed: exile or death (100–1). Oedipus proclaims the sentence of exile (not death) for the murderer, famously turning the curse against himself (236–45). Tiresias twice emphatically foretells exile for Oedipus (417–23, 455–6). Later, when Oedipus begins to suspect that he was indeed the killer of Laius, he remembers his curse and recognizes with horror that he may have condemned himself to banishment (816–20). And in the scene that will concern us here, Oedipus repeatedly begs to be cast out of Thebes. To recall just one memorable example, lines 1449–54 offer a forceful plea in which Oedipus names the proper site for his banishment:

Never let this city of my fathers be required to have me as a living inhabitant, but let me dwell in the mountains, where Cithaeron is, the one called mine, on which my father and mother placed a tomb appointed for me while still living, so I might die at the hands of those who sought to kill me.

This is the place Tiresias has already associated with Oedipus' discovery of the horrible truth: 'What corner of Cithaeron will not soon resound [with your cries] when you learn the truth about your marriage?' (421–22). This is the place meant to destroy Oedipus but which saved him instead to fulfil his terrible destiny.

<sup>11</sup> Kitzinger (1993) 541.

All this is powerful and compelling. Exile becomes Oedipus as much as mourning becomes Electra. As Charles Segal put it, 'Oedipus, recovering the origins of his life, finds his place not within the palace as the legitimate king's son, but in the wilderness as polluted murderer, parricide, incestuous husband of his mother.'<sup>12</sup> The cumulative effect of passages such as those just mentioned will surely predispose any audience to expect Oedipus' banishment, and to feel a certain unease when it is blocked. For modern readers, of course, the canonical version of Oedipus' end provided by *Oedipus at Colonus* offers a sort of explanation of Sophocles' strategy – exile is the necessary outcome, but it cannot come yet. It is, however, a tribute to the compelling power of the banishment motif in *OT* that critics have repeatedly argued for tampering with an original exile-ending to bring the earlier play in line with the later 'sequel,' perhaps at the time of the posthumous production of *OC* in 401.<sup>13</sup>

The source of the persistent discomfort about the rejection of exile at the end of *OT* has been clarified in recent decades by a reading that links the story of Oedipus' downfall intimately and powerfully to the very exile that he demands and that is denied him. Oedipus' trajectory shows many similarities to widespread rites involving the expulsion of *pharmakoi* (scapegoats). In Athens itself, the first-fruits festival known as the Thargelia began with a rite in which two men, one representing the men of the community, one the women, were draped with garlands of figs and driven from the city. Perhaps, as in the rite described in six fragments of the sixth-century poet Hipponax (5–10 West), the *pharmakoi* were beaten with fig branches and pelted with sea onions; perhaps they were even driven out with stones. (There is, however, no suggestion that the Athenian scapegoats were killed.) The rite was designed for purification; scapegoats took upon themselves any pollution that affected the community and led or might lead to disaster, for example, to a plague, as in *OT*. Those expelled were chosen from the dregs of society, people marked by physical deformity or ugliness as inferior beings, the truly wretched.<sup>14</sup>

A number of scholars have made explicit the connection of Oedipus to the figure of the scapegoat, above all Jean-Pierre Vernant, whose article

<sup>12</sup> Segal (1981) 223; cf. Segal's description of Oedipus as '[m]oving from king to pollution, from seeing to blind, from rich house to the savage mountain of the monstrous birth and rejected outcast' (246).

<sup>13</sup> The fullest exposition of this long-mooted idea is Müller (1996); objections, e.g., in Davies (1991) and Foley (1993) 529.

<sup>14</sup> The fullest account of the Thargelia remains that of Deubner (1932) 179–98; see also Parke (1977) 146–9 and Burkert (1985) 82–3. Parker (1996) 95–6 reminds us that the festival was dedicated to Apollo and was also (and perhaps predominantly) a festival of the arts, prominently featuring dithyrambic choruses.

entitled 'Ambiguity and reversal' was certainly one of the most influential contributions to the literature on *OT* in the last thirty-five years.<sup>15</sup> Vernant points out that king and scapegoat occupy symmetrical and to some extent interchangeable positions as liminal figures in Greek religious thought and social practice. Both are held responsible for the collective health of the community, and when a scourge strikes, it may be felt that the king's power to protect his people has somehow been inverted, that he has been contaminated and has passed from source of well-being to cause of destruction. He may then be sacrificed for the good of the whole, or a child of his may be sacrificed – or he may unburden all his negative power onto a surrogate, a lowly man who is made to serve as a double of the king. The scapegoat, then, is the figure of a liminality whose polarity has been reversed, as it were, and who will take the king's place in a carnivalesque overturn of social hierarchy.

Vernant's central observation is that Oedipus' fall is staged in a way that transforms him from the liminality of the exalted ruler, almost like a god, to the liminality of the polluted pariah, repository of the gods' anger. The union in one man of these two figures, one the inversion of the other, constitutes him as a riddle, an enigma that oscillates between the furthest poles of human possibility. Oedipus' role as scapegoat takes its particular form from a double role as the miasma that must be expelled from the city and the modality of the city's purification. This is suggested early in the play, in a passage typical of its tragic irony, when Oedipus speaks to his suppliants of the plague, the *nosos* that infects the city (58–64):

Piteous children, the things you have come desiring are known to me, not unknown, for I know well that you all are sick, and sick as you are, there is not one of you whose sickness is equal to mine. Your suffering affects each of you alone, and no one else, but my soul grieves alike for the city, for me, and for you.

<sup>15</sup> Vernant (1988a); Fergusson (1949) ch. 1 and Girard (1977), esp. ch. 3, are also among the early advocates of this connection. Girard's emphasis on the way in which 'the fearful transgression of a single individual is substituted for the universal onslaught of reciprocal violence' in scapegoat mythology gave new impetus to the idea that Oedipus convicts himself of murdering Laius prematurely, even though the play itself offers no final proof and indeed casts doubt on his guilt; see esp. Ahl (1991). One should not, however, exaggerate the degree to which Oedipus' guilt is in doubt. It is surely significant, for example, that in terms of Athenian law, as Edward Harris clearly shows in a forthcoming study, Oedipus' own confession to his killing at the crossroads is carefully constructed so as to imply to an Athenian spectator that he committed deliberate homicide. Nevertheless, the play does leave some gaps in the story and contradictions in the 'evidence'. Pucci (1992), by emphasizing the elusiveness of truth in a play that intertwines necessity and chance so fully, makes a far stronger argument than Ahl's for residual uncertainty and rightly sees the lack of final resolution – what he calls the play's 'endless end' – as an important element of that uncertainty.

Oedipus at this point cannot know what we do – that he *is* the city's sickness, and thus truly bears all its pain, and that only he can cure the city, by expelling himself from it.

This is so helpful a frame of reference that Vernant writes as if the play ended accordingly: 'at the end of the tragedy, Oedipus is hounded from Thebes just as the *homo piacularis* is expelled to remove the defilement'.<sup>16</sup> Indeed one might well feel a little churlish for pointing out the play's rejection of this ending. As Piero Pucci put it:

In light of these and other powerful interpretations supporting Oedipus' imminent exile, it might seem narrow-minded and literal to object that in this play Oedipus is not expelled, and does not even leave Thebes or his palace.<sup>17</sup>

Nevertheless we must confront the incompleteness of the scapegoat pattern squarely, or more precisely, its embrace and subsequent denial. If the scapegoat pattern helps us to understand what the exile of Oedipus might mean, then its contested and emphatic non-fulfilment must also convey something important. Why does Sophocles so insistently offer the solution of exile from beginning to the end, only to withhold it at the last moment?

Needless to say, a great number of answers, direct or indirect, have been forthcoming in the recent scholarship. It would be tedious to rehearse all of them, but it may be instructive to look at some representative examples. Oliver Taplin, in his stimulating *Tragedy in Action*, quotes the late Colin Macleod (who, alas, did not publish a paper on this subject) as suggesting to him that:

The entry to the house is deeply significant. Oedipus cannot escape from the place where he blinded himself and Jocasta killed herself, to death or desolation: he has to go on being humiliated and guilt-ridden where he belongs. I think this is very fine: how Sophocles eschews the grand suicidal gesture (or even exile), quietly 'refuses' it to Oedipus, to bring us something far more realistic, down-to-earth, and painful.<sup>18</sup>

Macleod is refining a more or less traditional reading, in which the final encounter of fallen king and his successor is a token of utter reversal of fortune. Oedipus, formerly all-powerful, cannot control even his own destiny and now depends entirely on the goodwill of the relative whom he had so unjustly accused of trying to usurp his rule.

The approach of George Gellie<sup>19</sup> is diametrically opposed to Macleod's. Gellie builds on the influential view of Bernard Knox that the exodos,

<sup>16</sup> Vernant (1988a) 127–8.    <sup>17</sup> Pucci (1992) 171.    <sup>18</sup> Taplin (1978) 46.    <sup>19</sup> Gellie (1986) 39.

far from emphasizing Oedipus' fall, shows his recovery and reintegration, what Knox calls the 'renewed insistence on the heroic nature' of the fallen king, the reconstitution of his masterful and imperious character.<sup>20</sup> Gellie comments:

It would have been an obvious ending to have Oedipus shuffle off slowly into the distance, expelled for his crimes as others in the play and he himself had claimed was proper justice. But Oedipus goes into the palace with Creon. Sophocles is holding fast to the new bearing of the play. It would have been bad drama to bring Oedipus back by slow degrees into a community of Thebans and at the end banish him from that community. Nor does Sophocles want his play to end simply with an act of judgement that would encourage us to interpret it too simply as a document of wrongdoing and the retribution meted out to it. The bottom of the abyss in the play was the moment of discovery. Ever since that moment the play has been climbing. . . . Of course, as the play has told us, the exile will happen; one day the *Oedipus at Colonus* will be written. But for the moment, for the purpose of this play, Oedipus is taken back into the palace.

Now clearly Gellie's view cannot be harmonized with Macleod's, but equally clearly, each seems to have seen something that most would agree is true to the experience of this text.

Malcolm Davies also accepts Knox's view of a resurgent Oedipus, but puts an entirely different spin on its meaning, one far closer to that of Kitto, for example.<sup>21</sup> Davies argues that, for Oedipus,

the outer change has been total, the inner change nil. To put it positively, his character is so strong that it has remained intact amid the rubble of his outer state. To put it negatively he has learnt nothing. The purpose of the play may well be to illustrate to the audience [and here Davies quotes Lloyd-Jones] 'the fragility of mankind, even the strongest and cleverest of whom may in a moment be struck down'. It is a lesson totally lost on the man who proves its truth. . . . He has learned nothing, I repeat, except some purely factual information as to the identity of his mother and father. To an intelligent member of the chorus or the audience, a Creon or an Odysseus, this factual information would be the starting point for a series of profound insights and illuminations regarding the limits of man's place in the world. It has to be said that the play itself gives us no grounds whatsoever for attributing any such illumination to Oedipus.<sup>22</sup>

'That is way harsh', as one of my students commented. Again, it's a statement that, while no doubt partial, is challenging and not without validity. I offer this little anthology, or perhaps cacophony, partly because I have noticed that offering a series of divergent views like this to a class stimulates

<sup>20</sup> Knox (1957) 185-96; the quoted phrase is from 194.

<sup>21</sup> Kitto (1966) 200-42, esp. 221-2. <sup>22</sup> Davies (1982) 276-7.

lively discussion – but also a certain unease. The exercise does help students see that description is always selective, and description and interpretation always intimately connected; but the implication of *aporia* implicit in the irreconcilability of expert opinions is disturbing. What I propose as a way out does not reconcile the opposing views of the end of *OT*, and therefore may not be less disturbing. It does, however, confront directly the way in which one ending is made to supplant, indeed is built upon the withholding of, another. I am suggesting that the views I have been citing, and the many others like them, are wrong initially not because of what they say about the play, but because they appear to assume that the play offers a single unequivocal verdict on the nature of the hero and the meaning of his fall. Perhaps we should read the refusal of exile as in the first instance a refusal of closure, or at any rate of a closure that carries with it some final judgement about the character of Oedipus or the significance of his fall.

The question of closure is obviously a complicated and in many ways delicate one. In the case of *OT*, I think it makes sense to talk both about elements that produce a strong feeling of *formal* closure and elements that deny a satisfying sense of what we might call *conceptual* closure. In order to speak convincingly about the conclusion of *OT*, we have to take account of both sides of the ledger, so to speak. By the formal closure, I mean primarily the stunning series of reversals that defines with almost alarming symmetry the scope and apparent finality of Oedipus' peripety. The godlike ruler who received suppliants and answered his people's prayers has become a suppliant himself (προστρέψομαι, 1446), and 'most hateful to the gods' (θεοῖς γ' ἔχθιστος, 1519). The clairvoyant who alone could solve the riddle of the Sphinx but ironically 'knew nothing' about himself (the self-described ὁ μηδὲν εἰδῶς Οἰδίπους, 397) is now blind, like Tiresias – and that because he has solved the terrible riddle of his identity at last. The ruler who prided himself on having saved his city unaided (πόλιν τήνδ' ἐξέσωσ', 443) now sees himself as having been saved (ἐσώθην, 1457) for some uniquely dreadful evil. The politician who was so quick to accuse Creon of plotting against him and to threaten him with death now finds himself subordinated to Creon and wholly dependent on his goodwill. The man who begins the play by addressing the Thebans as his children (ὦ τέκνα, Κάδμου τοῦ πάλαι νέα τροφή, 1) now suffers the painful loss of the daughters he loves, who have turned out to be a monstrous brood. One could add to this list, but this is enough to show how carefully Sophocles has reversed the terms of the play's beginning at its end.

There is also a kind of visual ring composition at work. At the outset Oedipus emerges – unbidden, full of confidence, determined to save his city – from the palace that he does not know is his ancestral home. He will receive those who come down the *eisodos* that leads abroad to all the places that mark his life's course – Delphi, Corinth, Cithaeron – until his search ends back in the palace with the terrible truth of the birth that marks the meaning of all he has done and suffered. But he will not be allowed to leave by the *eisodos* that could take him from the scene of his undoing. As Taplin puts it, the *eisodos* is exploited one last time precisely by *not* being used for Oedipus' departure.<sup>23</sup> Against his will, he is led not into exile but back to where he was born, where he usurped his father's place in his mother's bed and fathered his incestuous brood, and where he put out his own eyes. He returns home not as legitimate king (which he has proved to be) but as monster of pollution, deprived of the company of his beloved daughters and unsure what the future may hold. There is no relief (for him or us) but an undeniable formal rightness in this return to the scene of his undoing. Oedipus, who has sought to avoid this fate and with every step came closer to it, is forced to return to his beginnings: fearful symmetry indeed!

Oedipus' enclosure in his ancestral home, then, offers a kind of closure, but no real ending to the story of Oedipus. The formal emphasis on reversal is the framework into which the play's proposal of the scapegoat model, and its final withholding, must be factored. From this perspective, there is one initial conclusion we may draw without further ado: the rejection of the *pharmakos*-ending is a rejection of polis-centred closure. The plague that sets the drama in motion disappears from view as attention shifts from discovering the cause of the city's sufferings to uncovering the ruler's origins. Sophocles avoids any hint of the plague after Tiresias' accusations turn Oedipus' search inward. And so at least one reversal is notably absent in the final scene, although occasionally invoked by critics as if it were there: the *tyrannos* becoming a scapegoat and thereby saving the city. That would give us an ending such as Seneca provides in his *Oedipus* and the

<sup>23</sup> Taplin (1986) 167. Taplin's concept of 'control of the door' (Taplin (1978) 33–5) also provides a useful framework for considering ring composition in the prologue and epilogue of *OT*. At the beginning of the play, a group of suppliants assemble before the palace doors, at which point spectators would no doubt expect the leader, a priest of Zeus, to begin a prologue speech explaining the crisis that has brought them there. After a brief pause, the palace doors open of their own accord and Oedipus appears in all his strength and majesty, already aware of what the suppliants seek, already offering his aid. He stands at the palace door, fully in charge of the comings and goings. At the end of the play, on the other hand, Creon assertively controls the door, compelling the unwilling Oedipus to enter.

rationalizing Voltaire even more emphatically in his *Œdipe*, and it would imply a release, even a kind of redemption that this play is unwilling to suggest, much less to enact.

In moving from the question of who killed Laius to that of who gave life to Oedipus, the play narrows its focus from the city and a political crime to the family and monstrous deeds of parricide and incest. The word *polis* occurs in this play twenty-five times up to line 880, and not once thereafter. That is not, I suggest, a casual fact, because the intensity of the focus on Oedipus' downfall, his family, and his fate is surely a central feature of the play's dramatic effectiveness. I make this point partly in response to an intriguing, but I think finally unacceptable, suggestion put forward by Helene Foley.<sup>24</sup> On Foley's reading, the delay in deciding Oedipus' fate at the end of the play motivates the absence of any reference to the plague – Creon, she points out, 'could hardly have advocated the time-consuming journey to Delphi so blithely if the audience were reminded of the bodies of citizens dropping daily before him' – and it allows us to observe at some length two different leadership styles, 'the leadership of Oedipus, who is still trying to exercise his old mastery in a characteristic way, and the new leadership of Creon'. The assumption behind all this is that the last scene is at least implicitly political, that civic issues must lie behind any mention of the oracle, and that Oedipus' concern here is 'to insure the safety of a city that refuses to play the role assigned to it in all scapegoat myths and cults'.

The problem, as I have already suggested, is that Sophocles avoids anything resembling polis concerns in what might easily have been figured as (and is sometimes called) a political decision. Oedipus, who had earlier been so eager to save Thebes, here has hardly a word to spare about the fate of his fellow-citizens. The only mention of the city in the entire passage is Oedipus' plea at 1449–50 (which I already quoted as part of his appeal to be banished to Cithaeron): 'Never let this city of my fathers be required to have me as a living inhabitant.' (The Greek word for city here is *ἄστυ*, denoting the physical place, not *πόλις*, which would indicate the city as political community.) Foley thinks that this can refer to nothing other than the city's earlier troubles, but in context (Oedipus has just asked Creon to see to Jocasta's burial and to allow him to live and die where his parents had long ago prepared his tomb) the issues are personal and familial. Indeed, the whole question of Oedipus' pollution, increasingly treated as a personal

<sup>24</sup> Foley (1993); the phrases quoted come from 532, 531 and 536–7. Although I disagree with Foley's conclusion, her argument is usefully provocative, and I am grateful to her for prodding me to consider the polis in relation to the ending of the play.

rather than a political matter as he closes in on his own guilt, is radically and unrelentingly domesticated in the final scene, not least by Oedipus' tearful embrace of the daughters who are to be taken from him and whose future is now so clouded by the family horror.<sup>25</sup>

Oedipus' pollution is by its very nature a kind of infection that threatens the very existence of the polis, and in addition, since it involves the royal line of Thebes, it has immediate political ramifications. It is then something of a paradox that there should be so little overt emphasis on the polis at the end of *OT*. The paradox gains a particular point, however, if we recognize that both in his unwitting crimes and in his temperament, Oedipus is the paradigm of the tyrant – that is, that his identification of the state with himself is so intense and complete that his overturn excludes him from any part within it.

Although, as is well known, the Greek word τύραννος could in the fifth century still be used in a neutral sense to designate any ruler, it comes increasingly to suggest roughly what we mean by 'tyrant', and the characteristics of tyrannical rule are discussed with considerable specificity in fifth-century sources.<sup>26</sup> These include a total identification of the ruler with the state. In Euripides' *Suppliant Women*, for example, Theseus, presented anachronistically as the founder of the Athenian democracy, defines tyranny as that form of governance in which 'one man has the power and keeps the law to himself, and for himself alone' (*Supp.* 431–2). This leads the tyrant inevitably to treat any dissent as an attack on his power. His ability to act without restraint leads to the loss of all restraint, so that the tyrant acts on whims and commits the most terrible crimes with no fear of retribution – which is of course what Oedipus has unknowingly done.

Altogether, indeed, this picture fits Oedipus, though of course since his very existence is a great exception, it fits him in exceptional ways. Initially, Oedipus' total identification with the state whose rule he seems simply to have stumbled on presents him in the admirable light of his σωτηρία, the salvation from the peril that he has already provided and that he promises to provide again. And yet, there is something hyperbolic (as well as famously

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Segal (2001) 120: 'Along with [Oedipus'] change of focus comes his shift from weeping over the city's woes in the first scene to his weeping over the sufferings within his family at the play's end (66 and 1486). He has become a hero of inner vision and personal suffering.'

<sup>26</sup> O'Neil (1986) illustrates this in a careful semantic study. Edmunds (2002) esp. 67–79 reads the figure of Oedipus in relation to the ideologies of tyranny in Athens and in Greece generally. Seaford (2003) esp. 107–110 raises cogent objections to the well-known argument of Knox (1957) that Oedipus as *tyrannos* stands for Athens, that his qualities are like those of Athens, and that even his fall suggests prophetically the fall of Athens.

ironic) in his absorption of all the city's sufferings into himself (59–64 – lines that I quoted earlier in this paper and now quote again):

I know well that you are all sick, and sick as you are, there is not one of you whose sickness is equal to mine; for your suffering affects each of you alone, and no one else, but my soul grieves alike for the city, for me, and for you [σέ, singular; as if to say, for each one of you individually].

It is as if Oedipus thinks of himself as a middle term between the polis and every citizen, as fully responsible for both in his own person. In a similar and often noted hyperbole – as Knox recognized long ago, it suggests that Oedipus speaks to his people with the oracular voice of Apollo himself<sup>27</sup> – the *tyrannos* answers the chorus' prayer for salvation with the promise that he will work their safety (216–18): 'You ask; and regarding what you ask, if you will hear and receive my words and treat the sickness, you can get protection and relief from your troubles.'

Like Creon in Sophocles' *Antigone*, Oedipus moves, when challenged, from the identification of ruler with his polis to the complete confusion of his own interest with that of the state. At 625–30, for example, when Oedipus has summarily condemned Creon to death for his role in an imagined plot to seize power, Creon says (with his characteristic caution), 'I see you are not well disposed to me', and Oedipus answers, 'I am well disposed to my own interest' (τὸ γούν ἐμόν). 'What if you understand nothing?' asks Creon. 'None the less, I must rule', Oedipus replies. Creon: 'Not if you rule badly.' And Oedipus: ὦ πόλις πόλις, – 'think of the city', perhaps, or 'do you hear that, my city?' At any rate, the meaning is perfectly clear from Creon's answer: 'I, too, have a share in the πόλις, not you alone.' But for Oedipus ἡ πόλις and τὸ ἐμόν have become one and the same thing.

The other salient characteristics of the tyrant's *modus operandi* are here, too, but in the deeply ironic form of unwitting crimes: usurpation of power by killing the former king, its consolidation by marriage to the widowed queen, and the gratification of even the most aberrant and illicit lusts – in Oedipus' blithely ignorant breach of the incest taboo. The discovery of these crimes brings Oedipus low, ends his power, and plunges him from embodiment of the polis to pariah who pollutes it and can have no place whatever within it.

Oedipus remains, however, the same headstrong, headlong, commanding character he has always been: when his parentage was challenged in Corinth, when the oracle read him his destiny at Delphi, when he met the

<sup>27</sup> Knox (1957) 159–60.

old man at the crossroads, when he answered the riddle of the Sphinx. He has at last learned the truth of his identity, but his *ēthos* (the other *daimōn*, as it were, the other destiny he has inherited from his father) remains entirely unchanged. Oedipus has boldly taken his punishment into his own hands by blinding himself, to the astonishment of the chorus, who cannot understand why he did not simply end his life. And, as we shall see, he continues to try to set the terms of his new life, now demanding that he be separated from the polis with the same urgency with which he had earlier made himself inseparable from it.

As in his first confrontation with Creon, Oedipus' character is revealed by contrast with Creon, who is now in control, and who refuses the expulsion that Oedipus so passionately demands. The opposing choices of Oedipus and Creon are, of course, crucial for the question of closure, but in the end the conflict is staged primarily in terms of opposing characters or temperaments. And both characters remain very much as they were when we first saw them, despite everything that has happened since. Everybody seems now to agree on that observation, but beyond it lies the impasse that I illustrated earlier. Almost everyone tries to pin down the significance of the ending by deciding whose attitude shows greater wisdom, whose character is more admirable, whose temperament is being held up for our admiration. Either Oedipus is the resurgent hero, with his old quickness and assurance intact, indeed reinforced by his new self-awareness, while Creon remains cautious, limited, and indecisive. Or Creon is properly circumspect in dealing with matters that touch the divine, in precisely the way the play has endorsed, whereas Oedipus has learned neither wisdom nor discretion in dealing with gods or men.

In a similar vein, scholars divide on the question of what the protracted discussion between Oedipus and Creon accomplishes. Despite being reduced to blindness, destitution, and humiliation, runs one line of argument, Oedipus seeks to impose his will on Creon, peppering him with imperatives, importuning him ever more imperiously, and finally succeeding in extracting a promise that he will be allowed his exile as soon as the oracle has given explicit approval. But in an alternative reading, Oedipus peppers Creon with imperatives which are not obeyed, and demands a promise which Creon refuses to give him; Oedipus can wheedle and beg all he wants, in the end he must accept that his future is in Creon's hands, that he cannot have his way and escape from his humiliation.

The text seems to invite any number of readings of this kind, without giving us anything much to help choose among them. Indeed, examined in detail, the text is singularly uncondusive to drawing firm conclusions. The

question of whether and what Creon promises to Oedipus, of which I have just given two opposing but possible versions, is perhaps the best example (1518–20). Creon has told Oedipus that his demand for exile is something that only the gods can grant; Oedipus responds that he is most hateful to the gods, to which Creon replies, then surely you will soon get what you want (exile being for him impossible to construe as something desirable). ‘Then you consent?’ (φήσ τὰδ’ οὖν;), asks Oedipus. And Creon answers in a phrase that as far as I can see is totally ambiguous: ἄ μὴ φρονῶ γὰρ οὐ φιλῶ λέγειν μάτην, either ‘[Yes,] for it is not my custom to say idly what I do not think’ or ‘[No,] when I lack knowledge, I prefer not to speak at random.’ Similarly, although the phrase is not itself ambiguous, Creon’s rebuke at 1522–23, πάντα μὴ βούλου κρατεῖν | καὶ γὰρ ἄκράτησας οὐ σοι τῶ βίῳ ξυνέσπετο (‘Do not try to rule in everything, for even what you did rule has not followed with you through life’), has provoked diametrically opposed interpretations. It is of course extraordinary on the face of it that Creon should have to tell the fallen ruler that he should not try ‘to rule in everything’, but what precisely does it signify? Is the point here how fully Oedipus has rebounded from his terrible defeat, or how little a man in Oedipus’ circumstances has learned if he has to be told this? Does Creon’s reminder that Oedipus has lost his power amount to a needlessly sharp and clumsy jibe or is it a deserved rebuff?

In such circumstances, it is not difficult to stake out and defend a position; scholars have done so with alacrity and no doubt will continue to do so. It is another thing, however, to make your assertions stick in such slippery textual terrain. It doesn’t look as though the text has any interest at all in being pinned down at this level, on these issues, in such terms. If Sophocles had wanted to close his drama with a dominant idea, he could surely have done so, but he does not seem to have made such an effort. A scene designed to show Oedipus’ dependence on Creon and to stress his continuing humiliation would hardly be constructed around a dispute that delays his acceptance of Creon’s request to enter the palace for a hundred lines. A scene designed to emphasize the recrudescence of Oedipus’ grandeur would not be likely to insist at such length upon the tearful loss of his daughters. Instead, Sophocles gives us a scene that refuses to stay put around an outcome to Oedipus’ story, or a judgement of Oedipus’ character, or a formulation about the meaning of Oedipus’ fall.

This is one thing I meant to suggest when I said that the play’s refusal of exile is a refusal of closure. The lack of real resolution is articulated by the incomplete reversal of the *tyrannos* into a *pharmakos*, while an elaborate pattern of subsidiary reversals offers the formal impression of closure, and

a carefully crafted uncertainty as to Oedipus' future insists that the story is by no means over. Denied the redemptive role of *pharmakos*, Oedipus will enter the palace of his fathers as an outcast, accursed, execrated, his past a horror, his future unknown. But he remains Oedipus, touched in victory and in defeat with a greatness that is not moral greatness or even human greatness *par excellence*, but something uniquely his own. In reassuring the chorus that they need not fear his pollution, Oedipus seems to sense this special quality, for the phrase τὰ μὰ γὰρ κακὰ | οὐδείς οἶός τε πλὴν ἐμοῦ φέρειν βροτῶν (1414–15) means not only 'my evils cannot come to rest upon you', but also, 'no one else can bear the evils I bear'. Oedipus, though blind, is no Tiresias and does not know what the future holds, but an unmistakable note of pride in the very magnitude of his sufferings seems to assure him that, whatever his fate, it will be extraordinary (1455–58):

And yet, this much I know: that neither sickness nor anything else can destroy me; for I would never have been saved from death, except for some dreadful evil to come. But let my fate go wherever it is going.

The final encounters of the play restate Oedipus' tragedy in terms that evoke his former greatness and plumb the depths of his fall. At the outset of the drama, Oedipus was powerful and glorious beyond other men; now he must relinquish every claim to power, and even to normal human respect. There his paternal care extended to all, here he is separated from even his own unnatural children. Yet none of this has humbled him or taught him resignation. The central fact of the scene is that Oedipus survives his own ruin, and the token of his survival, what Pucci calls his 'consciousness of being a tragic model of humanity',<sup>28</sup> is on display in contrast with the cautious and essentially untragic Creon. This quality externalizes itself in the passionate, stubborn self-assurance of the language and behaviour that plumb the depths of his sufferings as they once scaled the height of his triumphs. Oedipus, the σωτήρ of the prologue, is now the beggar that Tiresias foretold, yet hardly less demanding of himself or of others. Creon, on the other hand, exercises with decency and some diffidence the power that Oedipus had wrongly suspected him of scheming to win. Oedipus' emotional impulsiveness is pitted against Creon's cautious propriety; Oedipus' forcefulness is met by Creon's restraint. Characteristically, after Oedipus blinded himself, his first thought was to exhibit his boundless wretchedness to the people (1287–91), whereas when Creon sees the maimed Oedipus, his first thought is that such pollution must be hidden

<sup>28</sup> Pucci (1992) 162.

from them (1424–31). Creon may be right by the standards of the polis, but Oedipus operates by a different standard, that of a tragic nature which makes it own rules.

The completion of the *pharmakos* pattern would provide the satisfying closure that the play as we have it refuses us; this accounts for a great part of the attraction that the pattern continues to exercise. But Sophocles has, I believe, given us something richer and stranger. By organizing his ending around both an elaborate pattern of expected reversals *and* the breach of the central expectation of the *pharmakos* pattern, he offers us an invitation to rethink what an ending can do. Deferral of the scapegoat's exile, while it withholds the pleasure of completing a compelling pattern associated with powerful ritual practice, leaves thereby an opening for the overflow of signification, for chance, for the uncertainties, ambiguities, and contradictions in which this play abounds. The completion of the *pharmakos*-pattern would tell us what to make of the tale of Oedipus; the refusal of completion leaves us in uncertainty about the future and signals that the story enacted here is not over yet. And this inconclusive conclusion sends mixed signals about what the future will hold: Oedipus' failure (so far) to achieve the desired banishment further manifests his inability to control his destiny, but at the same time his renewed self-assertion suggests that his fate cannot be encompassed even in the tremendous arc of his peripety, nor will its meaning be contained in his self-recognition and self-punishment. More than that, the play refuses to say.

Deborah Roberts observes that 'this uncertainty is particularly striking in a play that in other senses exhibits such strong closure' and meets the audience's expectations.<sup>29</sup> But, as she herself had pointed out in an earlier article, 'anti-closural' moves are typical of Sophocles:

In each of Sophocles' extant plays there is a reference to the future beyond the events of the play. Where these occur in the play's closing scene, they interfere in some sense with the finality of the ending.

And it is not just a matter of unfinished business, as in the uncertainty in *OT* about whether Oedipus will be made to stay under house arrest or eventually be allowed (or forced) to leave Thebes:

The integrity of human life and action are finally qualified not only by the changefulness of existence, but by its very continuity. Sophocles' plays show us a world full of . . . changefulness that takes his characters, with their half-knowledge,

<sup>29</sup> Roberts (2005) 143.

by surprise. In his closing scenes, he points to the continuity, itself changeful, in an allusive way that grants his audience only a similar half-knowledge.<sup>30</sup>

The inconclusive conclusion of *OT* raises larger questions about tragic practice generally, and about the meaning of 'ending' itself. Ending need not bring closure; it is not necessarily the same thing as resolution. An open ending, one that leaves significant strands of continuity in a state of uncertainty, produces tension between the narrative trajectory and the divergent possibilities opening out beyond it. Such tension can be seen as enriching our experience as readers and spectators.<sup>31</sup> Don Fowler put that possibility into memorably lapidary and provocative form: 'it is essential to the *moral* of the great literary works that ending and continuation are in tension'.<sup>32</sup> In the context of Greek tragedy, as we have seen, an ending of that kind is itself felt, at least by some, to be a provocation – and it should, indeed, provoke thought about the meaning of what has been seen or read. That is one way to understand the moral imperative in Fowler's statement.

I conclude with a line of thought provoked by Pat Easterling's recent essay 'Now and forever in Greek drama and ritual'.<sup>33</sup> Time is obviously crucial to an ending that leaves open divergent future possibilities. The tension between ending and continuity in *OT* belongs to a complex interplay of temporal frameworks. First, of course, there is the imagined past, which has itself a very complex relation to both the present – in which, apart from everything else, the stage action is taking place – and the future. Tragedy mediates between past and present in many ways. One of these, as Easterling notes, is the use of language that combines Homeric and lyric 'high styles' of the past and the contemporary vocabulary and speech patterns of the spectators. This is part of the process by which, as Vernant and others have argued, tragedy stages a dialogue or debate between the heroic past and the democratic present of Athens.<sup>34</sup> And of course the present in Greek tragedy has many aspects: there is the restricted time within which the action takes place, a 'now' generally depicted as more or less continuous within a single day (allowing for some passage of time during choral

<sup>30</sup> Roberts (1988) 188, 194. Cf. Easterling (1978a) 39: 'Sophocles likes making these ironical references to other stories at the very ends of his dramas.'

<sup>31</sup> Felix Budelmann, in a new article that came into my hands only after I had completed the text of this paper, offers a thoughtful audience-oriented interpretation, drawing upon recent narratological and psychological studies to argue for a 'mediated ending' whose new complexities may cause very different responses in different spectators but do offer 'the promise of continuity for both the city and Oedipus, and not least the first signs of psychological stability at the end of a process of coping' (Budelmann (2006) 57).

<sup>32</sup> Fowler (1989) 81; his italics. <sup>33</sup> Easterling (2004a).

<sup>34</sup> For a compact statement of this view, see Vernant (1988b).

lyrics). The 'now' of the action may also be conditioned by the spectator's present. If *OT* was produced shortly after the Athenian plague of 430, for example, the opening of the play would certainly have had a special resonance.<sup>35</sup> And beyond that, there is the inevitable interpenetration (whether by similarity or difference) of contemporary customs, beliefs, institutions of governance, forms of worship, conditions of family life, and so on, familiar to the Athenian spectator and therefore endowing the action with emotional immediacy and providing signposts for understanding. Furthermore, a given performance can have a particular application to the entire community or, more subjectively, invite, in Easterling's phrase, 'the witnesses to identify with the experiences of individuals as they go through the process of self-discovery, or maturation, or the passage from life to death'.<sup>36</sup> The choice of 'witnesses' rather than 'spectators' implies perhaps a more intense engagement with the issues of the drama.

But it is the future that is implicated in a special way in the ending of Greek tragedies, and open endings of the kind we have been examining here gesture toward the future in complex and interesting ways. The complexity begins with the fact that the future of the imagined (legendary-historical) past on display in tragedy is, from the spectator's perspective, also an imagined past. Although its futurity, then, implies that the audience does not 'witness' it, in many cases knowledge of the lore that lies behind the drama lends credence to the account presented. Most obviously, the *deus ex machina*, speaking from a position of privilege, generally confirms what the audience already knows, although that in no way implies that the significance of the divine intervention is straightforward or clear.<sup>37</sup> The

<sup>35</sup> Easterling (2004a) 150 makes the point that a revival in a city recently afflicted by epidemic would be subject to the same kind of conditioning by that circumstance. This is borne out at a great distance in time and space by the fact that recent performances of Greek dramas (particularly, in the United States at any rate, of *Trojan Women* and *Lysistrata*), whether specifically designed to have contemporary resonance or not, have been widely received as commentaries on the war in Iraq.

<sup>36</sup> Easterling (2004) 151.

<sup>37</sup> The most obvious cases are Sophocles' *Philoctetes*, where Neoptolemus agrees to take Philoctetes home, thus effectively preventing the Greeks from taking Troy, and the two begin to leave, when the deified Heracles appears and sets the myth back on the proper path; and Euripides' *Orestes*, where Orestes, with Electra and Pylades at his side, stands on the roof of the burning palace, his sword at Hermione's throat, confronting her father Menelaus on the ground below. Apollo sweeps in to put things aright, telling Orestes to drop his sword and accept Hermione as his bride, sending him off to Athens for purification, and generally imposing the traditional ending on a very different story. In the case of *Philoctetes*, one might argue that Heracles does what Philoctetes' rage cannot allow him to do, but what he must do and would, if his anger did not prevent him (see Schein (2001)), but the meaning of the reversal of direction brought about by Heracles' sudden and surprising appearance remains to be worked out, and to that extent the ending is an open one. The *deus* of the *Orestes*, on the other hand, can hardly be seen as anything other than the agent of an artificial and comic 'rescue' of a drama that has, as it were, gone out of control (see, e.g., Dunn (1996) 170–2).

ending of *OT* uses the legendary tradition in a different way, reminding the audience of possible futures, but staunchly refusing to choose among them. Instead, the task that Sophocles sets for his 'witnesses' is to consider this uncertain future in the light of the legendary past as they know it and the dramatic action as they have just now experienced it. Seen from this perspective, Oedipus is not simply a figure from the past, the meaning of whose life has already been fixed; the meaning of Oedipus belongs to the present and the future. And the spectators must actively work to find that meaning for themselves.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Pat Easterling has suggested a similar approach to the uncertainties of the luminous but mysterious account of Oedipus' death in *OC*: 'there are narrative gaps that audiences are implicitly invited to fill, and richly allusive language that can awaken different associations. It would be reductive to deny the possibility that this 'amazing' might actually invite interpretation at the same time as resisting it' (Easterling (2006) 138).

*The third stasimon of Oedipus at Colonus*

Chris Carey

If there were a Sophoclean trilogy, it would be the Theban cycle. Although the plays *Antigone*, *King Oedipus* and *Oedipus at Colonus* were composed and produced individually over a period of more than three decades, they achieve a remarkable coherence. In an act of revision probably unprecedented in the Greek theatre Sophocles uses the final play in the series, *Oedipus at Colonus*, to pull together what would otherwise be individual slices of Theban myth and in the process create a new sense of the mythic tradition and of his own corpus. The decision to end with the middle play (in terms of narrative chronology) allows the playwright to create a complex relationship between production sequence and mythic narrative. More than any other Greek tragedy (and to a degree unmatched even in Sophocles) this play creates a story which resists its own formal frame.<sup>1</sup> Nowhere is the binding quality of the final play clearer than in the third stasimon, an ode of limpid clarity but dense in intra/intertextual allusion and rich in irony, which exploits to the full both the chorus' capacity to expand the narrative focus of the play and at the same time the limitations imposed on the lyric perspective by the chorus' embeddedness in the action. In this chapter I will examine the dense texture of imagery, echo, irony and allusion in order to demonstrate the function of this song as a point of convergence for some of the key themes of Sophocles' retroactive Theban cycle. I hope also that a close reading from one of her favourite plays will appeal to the honorand, whose ability to combine fine-grained and sensitive analysis with a sense of the larger thematic and dramatic movements, structures and strategies is exemplary in every sense.<sup>2</sup>

After the rescue of Oedipus' daughters from Creon, Theseus announces to Oedipus the arrival of a stranger from Argos, whom Oedipus recognizes

<sup>1</sup> For the dense intertextual relationship with Sophocles' earlier Theban plays generated by *OC* see Markantonatos (2007) 195–230.

<sup>2</sup> My thanks are due to the editors for their comments and especially to Simon Goldhill for detailed and acute observations from which I have gained.

as his son Polynices. Oedipus dismisses outright the request that he should receive his son and is only induced to do so by Theseus' reminder of the suppliant status of the new arrival (like that of Oedipus himself) and by Antigone's emotional appeal. In a 'prequel' play so rich in echoes of the poet's earlier *Antigone*, the failure of the coming interview and the doom of the supplicant hang heavy if unspoken in the air. The dark song which follows Oedipus' agreement to an interview with his son reflects this sense of inescapable calamity. The song derives from the previous scene only in the sense that it encapsulates the cumulative misery that makes up the experience of Oedipus and his family, a misery which will not end with the play in front of us but (as the play reminds us at various points) will absorb the mutual fratricide of his sons, the consequent death of the daughter<sup>3</sup> who accompanied him into exile and who has shared his wandering, and ultimately even the complete ruin of Oedipus' persecutor in this play, Creon. In one sense it is a song which could have come at any point in the play; for it is one of the paradoxes of this play that, though it is (like its near contemporary *Philoctetes*) rich in episodes<sup>4</sup> which complicate the action, ultimately the situation changes little. However, the position is not random. This ode summarizes Oedipus' life and the story of his family, past, present and future and also subsumes many of the themes and images developed by Sophocles in his dramatic treatment of the royal house of Thebes over the three plays. It is thus ideally placed shortly before the final (for Oedipus) *peripeteia*.<sup>5</sup>

The aeolic rhythms used here are much favoured in this play. In particular the opening of the ode with its repeated glyconics takes us back to the first stasimon (668–719). The rhythmic echo, however, is tinged with irony. The first stasimon, following on Theseus' grant of asylum to the wanderer, celebrates Colonus and Attica with a praise of fertility, peace, temperate climate and divine favour. But true as all of this is (from the Athenian perspective) and important both for Athens and for Oedipus, his sufferings were neither at an end nor even at a climax. The gap between choral expectation and reality (reminiscent – though in a more muted form – of other odes of false celebration)<sup>6</sup> is underlined by the rhythmic echo in

<sup>3</sup> Goldhill (forthcoming) observes: 'When Antigone exits (1168–72) towards Thebes to try to stop the intrafamilial slaughter – sent on her way to her own death graciously by Theseus (1173–77) – the sense of further impending disaster is emphatic.' Cf. e.g. E. R. Wilson (2004) 42, 56, 65.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Seale (1982).

<sup>5</sup> An ode which asserts that it is best not to be born also has a particular force (as Simon Goldhill observes to me) just before the appearance of one of the sons, the product of Oedipus' disastrous and polluted marriage, and after the sufferings of his daughters, born of the same marriage.

<sup>6</sup> Burton (1980) 22–31, 59–61, 132–4, 170–172; Henrichs (1996) 73–85.

the third stasimon as the play comes full circle. The echo is reinforced by position: each ode follows immediately on a guarantee from Theseus of Oedipus' safety (656–67, 1208–10). The third stasimon too like the first will turn out to be a premature judgement on Oedipus' fate, though we have to wait for the end of the next epeisodion before this begins to emerge. We might expect the sudden shift to action which follows the exit of Polynices (1457ff.) to follow hard on this choral ode. To anyone (ancient audience or modern reader) familiar with Sophocles' practice this must suggest itself as an obvious possibility. It would create a multiple – and stark – contrast, reversing the grim pessimism of the ode, juxtaposing urgent movement with reflection and triggering the end of the seeming impasse by which even when granted asylum Oedipus is subject to abuse and suffering. The anticipation of change is increased by the insistence by the chorus on death as liberation. Instead the play by adding yet another attempt on Oedipus' resolve appears to negate the possibility of resolution and confirm the ode's grim view of human life as inexorably subject to unrelieved suffering.

In content like every choral ode this is a fragment. This element of provisionality must be kept firmly in view in this more than any other tragic ode. For this more than any other invites a 'parabolic' reading, with the chorus as in some sense the voice of the poet, since we know that the play belongs to the close of Sophocles' life.<sup>7</sup> But we the audience – like Oedipus – have been promised that this is the place where he will finally achieve rest (88). The end of the play will fulfil this promise, and while not diminishing in any way the appalling suffering which has made up Oedipus' life (or indeed suggesting in any facile way that his end compensates for the nature of Oedipus' life) it will complement and complicate the grim picture presented here. This is not the last word;<sup>8</sup> and this is not Sophocles but his chorus.

The song as a whole displays the move from general to particular which is common in tragic lyrics, though unusual in this play.<sup>9</sup> Although much of what is said is implicitly relevant to Oedipus, creating a continuous leakage between general and specific, it is only in the epode that we finally focus unambiguously on him. This gradual focusing is replicated in the movement of the strophe, which approaches its presentation of the miseries

<sup>7</sup> See in particular Kamerbeek (1984) 170; J. P. Wilson (1997) 5–8.

<sup>8</sup> Wilson (2004) 42 is too hasty in agreeing with the chorus that 'Oedipus lives on . . . after the proper time for all human beings to die (namely, before birth)'. Longevity has come at a terrible price in suffering, but only through physical survival has Oedipus come to a place which brings a painless end and an ill-defined but higher status after death.

<sup>9</sup> Dhuga (2005) 354 notes that the third stasimon is unusual (in this play) in its move (in itself common in tragedy) from the general to the specific.

of old age obliquely, starting with criticism of the desire for longevity (1211–14):

Ὅστις τοῦ πλέονος μέρους  
 χρήζει τοῦ μετρίου παρείς  
 ζῶειν, σκαιοσύναν φυλάσ-  
 σων ἐν ἔμοι κατάδηλος ἔσται

It is revealing to compare the very similar thoughts of Sophocles' Ajax (*Ai.*473–480):

αἰσχρὸν γὰρ ἄνδρα τοῦ μακροῦ χρήζειν βίον,  
 κακοῖσιν ὅστις μηδὲν ἐξαλλάσσεται.  
 τί γὰρ παρ' ἡμᾶρ ἡμέρα τέρπειν ἔχει  
 προσθεῖσα κἀναθεῖσα τοῦ γε κατθανεῖν;  
 οὐκ ἂν πριαίμην οὐδενὸς λόγου βροτὸν  
 ὅστις κενᾶισιν ἐλπίσιν θερμαίνεται·  
 ἀλλ' ἢ καλῶς ζῆν ἢ καλῶς τεθνηκέναι  
 τὸν εὐγενῆ χρῆ. πάντ' ἀκήκοας λόγον.

Here as in *Ajax* the yearning for long life is dismissed firmly. The desire is not just folly (σκαιοσύναν) but ingrained/incorrigible (φυλάσσω) folly.<sup>10</sup> And the chorus' rejection is unshakable: κατάδηλος ἔσται. The choral judgement here is at once both more and less extreme than that of Ajax. This passage is decidedly more pessimistic. While Ajax rejects an ignoble life, and an individual life of unremitting misery, for the elders of Colonus *any* long life is grim. But in contrast to Ajax's blunt impatience with competing views and his monochrome perspective on the world, reflected in his opening word (αἰσχρὸν), the style here is meditative. Syntax and rhythm contribute to this effect. The single sentence stretching over four successive cola and the periodic structure combine to create a measured pace. Where Ajax registers unqualified contempt for the man who desires long life amid unceasing suffering (οὐκ ἂν πριαίμην οὐδενὸς λόγου), the chorus here find foolishness.<sup>11</sup> This seemingly dispassionate evaluation will prove in the epode to be an emotional and engaged position, rather like Sappho's ἔγω δὲ κῆν' ὅττω τις ἔραται (16.3–4), which turns out to be not a dispassionate statement on the power of love but a prelude to a love/loss declaration. Though the relevance of what is said to the chorus

<sup>10</sup> For the sense of φυλάσσω here see LSJ s.v. 3: *preserve, maintain, cherish*. Simon Goldhill plausibly suggests to me that the phrase 'implies that one has to cherish and work with one's foolishness to keep desire for long life going – a sort of oblique inversion of theme of stubbornness and endurance' which emerges in the epode.

<sup>11</sup> Travis (1999) 55 is mistaken to find condemnation of *hybris* here. *Hybris* regularly involves self-assertion over the right of others; what we are offered here is self-defeating folly.

is visible in performance from the simple fact (reflected in costume, mask and movement) that this is a group of old men, for now the choral 'I' is used not to personalize the experience but to add personal authority to a commonplace reflection by presenting it as the product of individual reflection.<sup>12</sup> The first person (ἐμοί) conveys at this point not personal suffering but personal judgement. The same measured tone is maintained by the litotes in the explanatory clause which follows (λύπας ἐγγυτέρω 1218). Though the effect of the litotes here – as often – is to suggest the superlative, the restrained form contributes to the impression of thoughtful reflection. This reflective quality is underlined by the repeated insistence on the mean (τοῦ μετρίου, τοῦ δέοντος).

But as well as reflection the strophe also conveys a sense of profound weariness. Time in this stanza is not viewed synoptically as an undifferentiated *durée* but diffracted into a succession of days, each with its share of grief (λύπας). The phrase αἱ μακρὰὶ ἡμέραι 1215–16 is more than a poetic equivalent of ὁ χρόνος . . . μακρὸς (7–8; cf. *Ai.* 646). The vocabulary stretches out each day of misery. And unlike the summative ὁ χρόνος μακρὸς, which could be either subjective or objective, the language implicitly focalizes through the sufferer; time is here subjective, and burdensome.<sup>13</sup> The effect is almost as in Macbeth's weary comment (*Macbeth* V.5. 19)

Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow,  
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,  
To the last syllable of recorded time.

And suffering is not specific to the day but cumulative day on day – grief is stored up or deposited like some perverse treasure (κατέθεντο).<sup>14</sup> This weariness is a marked feature – both in word and in action – of Oedipus from the beginning of the play. The immense duration and scale of Oedipus' suffering is stressed from the outset (7–8) and is visible already in the staging of the play's opening. A key element in the play, and one which early in the fifth century had become a trope of the theatre, is the suppliant motif.<sup>15</sup> Other plays which commence with supplication suggest that the norm is a tableau. This at least is the case with Euripides, and

<sup>12</sup> Cf. esp. Aeschylus *Ag.* 750–62.

<sup>13</sup> It is from this daily cycle that Oedipus is finally released by his death (1583–4): ὡς λειοπύστα κίβινον τὸν αἰεὶ βίοντον ἐξεπίστασο. See Easterling (2006) 139 for the text here and note 17 below for αἰεὶ in this play.

<sup>14</sup> See Jebb (1900); Kamerbeek (1984) *ad loc.*

<sup>15</sup> For the *OC* as suppliant play see Burian (1974). Wilson (1997) ch. 2 struggles valiantly to remove this element but he has to work against the grain of the text and opt for a very narrow view both of supplication and of the dynamics of the suppliant play as a plot move.

it is a fair bet that this was by the date of *OC* the most familiar pattern. It usually comes in the form of what Taplin has described as a 'cancelled entry',<sup>16</sup> that is, an opening in which actors enter before the play begins to assume positions which in terms of the dramatic fiction they have occupied for some time. With the cancelled entrance comes a narrative of the prehistory of the play. In *Oedipus at Colonus*, however, the prehistory is enacted; a tired old man enters very slowly to take his place in front of the stage building, supported by a young girl,<sup>17</sup> and defines the entry as the latest step in a long period of wandering and privation (3–8). Rootless and endless wandering in exile emerges repeatedly as a major component of his suffering. Wandering is one of the defining features of the suppliant for the chorus in the first stasimon (124, 165). It is part of the defining features of his relationship with his daughters at 347 (cf. 349) in a speech which speaks again of privation. The words *mochthos* and *ponos* cluster round Oedipus from the beginning of the play (105, 165, 205, 437, 1362, 1616) and will recur in this ode (1231); the word *ταλαίπωρος*, 'long-suffering', likewise attaches itself repeatedly to him (14, 91, 740, 1280).<sup>18</sup> This tiredness and the yearning for rest reach a climax in the final sentence of the first stanza of this ode in the bold metaphor of death as an (implicitly welcome) ally – *ἐπίκουρος*. The startling paradox (where a term used for someone whose role is to protect is applied to the force which destroys) is given further emphasis by the way the ode unflinchingly stresses the grimness of death as the negation of all celebration (*Ἄϊδος . . . μοῖρ' ἀνυμέναιος ἄλυρος ἄχορος*). The sense of death as ultimate, longed for and delayed release is well enacted by the style of this sentence, which withholds the appositional *θάνατος* until the last line and closes the strophe with the long awaited end – *τελευτάν*. Both Oedipus and his audience have been waiting for this release since the prologos, when Oedipus connected the grove of the Erinyes with the ordained place of his death and identified death as a final source of rest (*παῦλαν* 88). He and we are still waiting.

The negatives which characterize death here merit further attention. Joylessness is emphatically associated with absence of song and music in a speech act which combines song and music. Though we are a long way from the bold blurring of intra- and extra-textual worlds found in *τί δεῖ με*

<sup>16</sup> For the cancelled entrance see Taplin (1977) 134–6; Halleran (1985) 80. For surviving examples cf. *Andromache*, *Helen*, *Heracles*, *Heraclidae*, and see Karamanou (2006) 171–2 for the lost *Dicrys*.

<sup>17</sup> This is well brought out by Edmunds' account of the opening (1996) 39.

<sup>18</sup> Another word which attaches itself to Oedipus is *ἀει/αἰεῖ*, with no fewer than 6 instances with reference to Oedipus' suffering and that of his daughters (104, 341, 347, 444, 746, 750). This is considerably less than the 15 examples with reference to Electra's suffering in *Electra* but still substantial.

χορεύειν in the second stasimon of the earlier *OT* (896), the association of life with song is especially fitting in the mouth of a tragic chorus. However, song is here as much metaphor for life as a selection from it. In a world where song was an embedded part of the culture at all levels, the terms ἄχορος and ἄλυρος between them would embrace the whole range of social occasion and celebration. ἄχορος deals with choral song and dance and suggests larger contexts of civic worship (including dramatic festivals), while ἄλυρος, which can include monodic and sympotic song as well as choral, incorporates private gatherings alongside other kinds of celebration. There is however an implied irony in the one song form selected for specific mention. Unlike the inclusive terms ἄχορος and ἄλυρος, ἀνυμέναιος refers narrowly and specifically to a single mode and moment, the wedding song. It shares with the other adjectives the element of celebration but adds, and negates, the notions of birth and renewal. The contrast between death and wedding ritual is a natural one. It recurs most memorably in Philetaerus fr.13:

θνητῶν δ' ὄσοι  
ζῶσιν κακῶς ἔχοντες ἀφθονον βίον,  
ἐγὼ μὲν αὐτοὺς ἀθλίους εἶναι λέγω·  
οὐκ ἂν θανῶν δῆπουθεν ἐγχελυν φάγοις,  
οὐδ' ἐν νεκροῖσι πέττεται γαμήλιος.

But in association with Oedipus, references to wedding celebration inevitably suggest his own unclean marriage, which has dogged him down the decades of misery. In relation to Oedipus in particular the adjective subtly underlines the notion that death as well as ending pleasure also liberates. With its complex combination of general and specific, positive and negative, this single word implicitly sums up the paradox of death in this stanza.

The notion of death as welcome release is resumed in the antistrophe, which opens with the most limpid presentation we have of the Greek commonplace that it is best for mortals not to be born:<sup>19</sup>

Not to be born beats  
The whole count. Or else, when he appears,  
To go back whence  
He came as quickly as possible, is by far the next.

Here any life at all is too much life. τὸ δέον (1222) has shrunk to zero. This was Oedipus' view on learning the truth in the *OT* (*OT* 1391–3):

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Kamerbeek (1984) 172.

ἰὼ Κιθαιρῶν, τί μ' ἐδέχου; τί μ' οὐ λαβῶν  
 ἔκτεινας εὐθύς, ὡς ἔδειξα μήποτε  
 ἑμαυτὸν ἀνθρώποισιν ἔνθεν ἢ γεγώς;

The joylessness of the strophe (1215ff.) is echoed in the lines which follow (1229ff.), though again in this dark stanza in a more pessimistic spirit still. Where before it was lengthy life which brought misery, here pain begins the moment youth ends. The description of youth combines generalizing cliché with pointed reference to the life of Oedipus. In part the phrase κούφας ἀφροσύνας (1230) merely restates the commonplace notion that youth is a time of irresponsibility. But the association of loss of *aphrosynē* with the onset of suffering has particular force in the case of Oedipus, who has been burdened throughout his life by the knowledge of the offences he has committed and the awareness that he inspires horror in all he meets (*OC* 203–25) and whose sufferings were inextricably tied to his intellect (*OT* 35–51, 393, 1224–30). The asyndetic list touches only briefly, with the word *phthonos*,<sup>20</sup> on the general misery of mankind; for the rest we are face to face with the extremes of violence and suffering which characterize the ruling house of Thebes and the fate of Oedipus in particular. The next scene will exemplify *stasis*, *eris*<sup>21</sup> and *machai* in the person of Polynices, who has come with an army to take his native city and oust his brother. The opening word *phonoī* embraces in itself virtually the whole past, present and future of the house. It looks back to the parricide of Oedipus on the road from Delphi to Thebes. Within the explicit narrative of this play it embraces the mutual slaughter to which Oedipus condemns his sons in the next scene. Beyond that it subsumes further deaths in the narrative implied in the intertextual link with the *Antigone* (unspoken but unmissable in Polynices' request to her to bury him and her request in turn to Theseus to allow her to return to Thebes to avert the mutual fratricide, 1405–10, 1768–72), including the suicides of Antigone, Haemon and Creon's wife.

Though formally similar to the strophe in its asyndetic list of negative adjectives, in keeping with its increased pessimism the antistrophe ends more grimly. The strophe at least contemplated the notion of release. Here however the narrative tacitly withholds release, stopping at old age as the

<sup>20</sup> In 1234–5 I incline to keep the reading of the majority of MSS. Though μάχαι καὶ φόνοι would make a natural combination and an impressive climax, the effect is to narrow the potential applicability of the sentence (by tying death exclusively to battle). Though φθόνος seems anticlimactic as last word in the list, it has the effect of restoring the general application of a sentence which has begun to look like a commentary solely on the house of Thebes.

<sup>21</sup> For *eris* of the fratricidal struggle for power in Thebes cf. 372, 422.

end (πύματον 1235; contrast 1223 θάνατος ἐς τελευτάν). Where the strophe distended time by stretching out each day of misery, the antistrophe halts time. While youth is fleeting, old age lingers. Whether ἐπιλέλογχε is taken as transitive ('gets him as its lot') or intransitive ('falls to his lot'), it stresses inexorability and the (iterative) perfective form gives it a degree of fixity; so too does ξυνοικεῖ, which makes the miseries of age a permanent companion.<sup>22</sup> The features singled out (old age is 'unsociable, unfriended' – Jebb) suggest in part the exile and the abuse and manipulation of Oedipus by his sons and Creon. However, ἀπροσόμιλον is ambiguous; it could be active or passive. As Gardiner has observed,<sup>23</sup> the elderly chorus in their sympathy for the old man (1239 Ἐν ᾧ τλάμων ὄδ, οὐκ ἐγὼ μόνος) contrive to ignore the grimmer aspects of his character and behaviour. But for the spectator behind the obvious idea of abandonment in the word ('unapproached') there is another notion lurking, 'unapproachable', hinting at the grim and unrelenting character which unites Oedipus with other Sophoclean heroes,<sup>24</sup> a character especially on display in the two scenes which flank this ode, in which Oedipus first has to be pressed by his daughter and his rescuer (the latter with appeal to Oedipus' own status as suppliant) even to allow his son a hearing and then rejects all appeals, imposing instead destruction and fratricidal slaughter. This ambiguity in the presentation of Oedipus will become more pronounced in the epode.

More overtly ironic is the description of old age as ἀκράτης. As a generalization on old age this is true and is an inseparable part of the presentation of old men in Greek literature from Homer's Priam through the chorus of *Agamemnon* to the chorus of this play, as they will stress at the beginning of the next stanza. But of Oedipus it is only half true, since it reflects his situation only at the most superficial level. He is in a purely physical sense 'powerless';<sup>25</sup> but he is also a figure who wields frightening authority without pity. His dependency is emphasized by a host of details of stage action as well as his words – his entrance led and supported by his daughter, the need for the location to be made inwardly visible to him by description, the verbal guidance which brings him to the edge of the sacred grove as he talks to the chorus, his inability to do other than implore them to allow him to stay. This aspect culminates in the attempt of Creon to take him by force or threat, another item in the motif index of fifth-century suppliant tragedy.

<sup>22</sup> This word too is full of irony for Oedipus (as Simon Goldhill observes to me); it is the nearest Athens had to a technical term for marriage (e.g. [Dem.] 59.122).

<sup>23</sup> Gardiner (1987) 114. <sup>24</sup> Cf. in particular Knox (1964), chapters 1–2. <sup>25</sup> Cf. Knox (1964) 149.

But it is only part of the truth. This suppliant is also a figure of awful power, a paradox – like humankind – as he was in his previous incarnation in Sophocles. The reshaped supplication, despite its slow tempo, rejects the typical opening supplication-tableau we associate with, for example, Euripides' *Heraclidae*, in favour of a more dynamic supplication scene like those in Aeschylus' *Supplices* and *Eumenides*, Euripides' *Ion* and the lost *Telephos* tragedies. The reshaping thus captures both aspects of the figure of the suppliant. Oedipus both finds and chooses his place of supplication. As the play progresses, it becomes explicit that the weak old man brings with him the power to save and the power to destroy both in life (whether through his power to curse or the talismanic power attributed to him by Polynices) and in death. He both possesses and can confer (or withhold) *κράτος*.

The dual aspect of the suppliant is underlined by the choice of refuge. The locus of supplication in tragedy is never random (as it might be in life) and Oedipus' association with the grove of the Eumenides reflects the nature of the suppliant. As Winnington-Ingram emphasized,<sup>26</sup> Oedipus has much in common with the deities who inhabit the grove. And despite the fact that this is a different Kultort, in the Athenian theatre the obvious intertext is the presentation of the Erinyes in Aeschylus' *Eumenides*.<sup>27</sup> Though the more overt antecedent is Aeschylus' *Orestes*, another polluted suppliant with the blood of a parent on his hands, another non-Athenian suppliant who offers the Athenians protection from invasion by his own people even from his grave (*Eum.* 762ff.), the gesture toward Aeschylus' Erinyes is at least as strong. Like him they were unprepossessing aliens welcomed by Athens; like him they were grim and unappealing, but sources of power from beneath the ground.

Thus far the applicability of the choral reflections to Oedipus, though inescapable, has been implicit only. In the epode finally what the chorus has presented as a general meditation becomes a song of lament for themselves and commiseration with Oedipus. In a vivid simile Oedipus is presented as a storm-battered headland beaten by wind and waves. The stanza takes up from the preceding the notion of woes that never end (*ἄται κλονέουσιν ἀεὶ ξυνοῦσαι/πρόπαντα κακὰ κακῶν ξυνοικεῖ*). The shift from general to particular brings with it a change in presentation. Thus far the reflections, though hinting at Oedipus, have retained their link to general human experience. Oedipus – and the chorus – stand for

<sup>26</sup> Winnington-Ingram (1980) 267. See most recently Tilg (2004).

<sup>27</sup> On this subject see in particular Morin (1996) 299–302.

man, as in a sense Oedipus had in the earlier play.<sup>28</sup> Here however, as the ode focuses on Oedipus himself, the uniqueness of his situation is brought out by the hyperbolic imagery. The comparison begins in a naturalistic way, as the vehicle presents us with a north-facing (and therefore) wave-beaten cape. Applied to Oedipus, however, the image moves from naturalism into symbolism. Oedipus is beaten not from one direction but from all points of the compass (1245ff.) – as much an island as a headland. But the description of the storms which batter him has a temporal as well as a spatial aspect. The formulation suggests not merely exposure on all fronts but at every moment of the day and night (ἁελίου δυσμᾶν, ἀνατέλλοντος, μέσσαν ἀκτῖν, ἐννυχιάν). This takes us back to, but beyond, the long successive days of suffering in the strophe, presenting every part of every day as pain. The hyperbole emphasizes the extremes of misery endured by Oedipus. The storm image here combines and subsumes the suffering of the earlier plays. The disaster which overcame Oedipus was a tidal wave (*OT* 1527). The link with the lyrics of *Antigone* is more obvious still.<sup>29</sup> The winds, the waves, the storm-battered headland recall *Antigone* 582–92, where another elaborately developed storm image represents the grim fate of the house of Labdacus which has now submerged its latest victim, Antigone:

Εὐδαίμονες οἷσι κακῶν ἀγευστος αἰὼν·  
 οἷς γὰρ ἂν σεισθῆ θεόθεν δόμος, ἄτας  
 οὐδὲν ἔλλείπει γενεᾶς ἐπὶ πλῆθος ἔρπον·  
 ὁμοιον ὥστε ποντίας  
 οἶδμα, δυσπνόοις ὄταν  
 Θρήσσησιν ἔρεβος ὕφαλον ἐπιδράμη πνοαῖς,  
 κυλίνδει βυσσόθεν  
 κελαινὰν θῖνα καὶ δυσάνεμοι  
 στόνω βρέμουσιν ἀντιπλήγες ἀκταί.

The echo of *Antigone* in *OC* – for those who catch the echo – locates Oedipus' unremitting suffering within the larger fate of his family and points to its ineluctable and destructive continuation in the next generation in the past/future of *Antigone*.

There is more here than suffering. The chorus place their explicit emphasis on Oedipus as victim, a picture strengthened by the association of

<sup>28</sup> See esp. *OT* 1193–5:

Τὸν σὸν τοι παράδειγμ' ἔχων,  
 τὸν σὸν δαίμονα, τὸν σὸν, ὦ  
 τλάμον Οἰδιπόδα, βροτῶν  
 οὐδὲν μακαρίζω.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Burton (1980) 288.

Oedipus with themselves at the beginning of the stanza. But the cape is an ambiguous image. It is buffeted and beaten, but it is as much an image of endurance as it is of suffering, since, though the suffering endures, so does the headland. In the earlier play Oedipus exemplified both the human intellect and the human spirit at its greatest but also the insubstantiality and vulnerability of the human being. Here as well as a model of the most extreme human suffering, Oedipus also exemplifies the limits of the human capacity to survive.

But endurance is not the whole story. The cape is also an image of obduracy. From Homer onward the rock is the symbol of stubbornness and insensitivity to appeal. Most famously this is the image used by Patroclus to characterize the unrelenting anger of the archetype of (at least some aspects of) the Sophoclean hero, Achilles (*Il.*16 33–5):

νηλεές, οὐκ ἄρα σοί γε πατήρ ἦν Ἰππότα Πηλεΐς,  
οὐδὲ Θέτις μήτηρ· γλαυκὴ δέ σε τίκτε θάλασσα  
πέτραι τ' ἠλίβατοι, ὅτι τοι νόος ἐστὶν ἀπηνής.

Oedipus has already shown his obduracy in his steadfast refusal to meet his son until placed under pressure from Theseus and Antigone. He yields to their entreaty. But that is the sum total of his concessions. If the ode suggests a tired old man, it misleads, because Oedipus will forcefully both reject and curse his son. This is no ordinary old man but a figure of unbending will and frightening, magnificent, severity. The awfulness of the hero he will become is there already in his harsh rejection of Polynices. His uncompromising immovability as much as his victimhood is implied (over the head of the speaker) in the storm-battered headland.

This comparison to a rock seems an inevitable metaphor not just for Oedipus but for the intractable Sophoclean hero as a type and for the forces human and divine which work on him. So it comes as a surprise to find that it is in fact highly unusual. Knox observed long ago that the Sophoclean hero in his isolation may call out to the natural world.<sup>30</sup> But (s)he does not elsewhere become a geophysical feature. The presentation of Oedipus in this stanza falls into a larger pattern observable in this play. The play as a whole is deeply interested in physical topography. So too is *Philoctetes*, a play which has so much in common with *OC*. But unlike *Philoctetes* this is topography intimately connected to the audience, even if the details are difficult for the modern to recreate. The play stands out both in the Sophoclean corpus and in extant suppliant tragedy for its precise evocation of

<sup>30</sup> Knox (1964) 33–4.

topography known to the spectators. This remains true even if – which we cannot know – Attic space is imaginatively reshaped for dramatic purposes. Other Athenian suppliant plays, even if located in a specific part of Attica, never really interest themselves in the minutiae of locale. They reflect spirit and ideology, not physical space. Even Euripides' *Suppliants*, set in Eleusis (naturally enough, as the major precinct on the road which led through Cithaeron to Boeotia), makes no significant use of its geographical location. *OC* however has a remarkable sense of specific physical topography. It is an Attic play not just in location and in spirit but in a very physical way. Though the opening act of space creation (14ff.) goes no further than the brief verbal scene-painting of Argos at the opening of *Electra* (4ff.), the careful identification and description of the grove (14–43), followed by the detailed instructions of the chorus which tell Oedipus where to place himself in the grove (167–94) map out local topography within theatrical space with unusual precision.<sup>31</sup> The same sense of topographical detail emerges in the account of Oedipus' disappearance (1586–97). Offstage space is created again with great precision in the ode which fills the time from Theseus' exit to rescue the daughters and his triumphant return, and conjures up for the audience possible places on the way to Thebes where the struggle might take place (1044–95). This sharp topographical focus is even visible in the lyric praise of Attica (668ff.),<sup>32</sup> which begins with the immediate vicinity of Colonus. In contrast to the undifferentiated praise of Attica in Euripides' *Medea* 824–45, we are asked again to think of a very particular location.

The play's interest in topography mirrors the career of its hero.<sup>33</sup> Oedipus' career is defined and determined more persistently in terms of topography than that of any other mythic figure. His exposure on Cithaeron, his killing of his father at the place where three roads meet, and now finally his acceptance and ultimately his (hidden) burial place in Attica, not just Attica but a specific locale previously predicted (*OC* 84–98) and ultimately in a precise topography (1590ff.) chosen (1520–1, 1626ff.) by a supernatural force – each critical phase of his life is precisely tied by fate to a very specific location.<sup>34</sup> Not only is his life defined in precise topographical terms, he himself is perceived in this play in topographical terms. Like Philoctetes, whose home

<sup>31</sup> For the detailed creation of the onstage space see Markantonatos (2002) 170ff. For the symbolic force of the uncut rock of v.19 and its relation to other topographical details see Budelmann (2000).

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Burton (1980) 280.

<sup>33</sup> For the suggestion that this topographical dimension is embedded in the hero's name see Goldhill (1986) 217–18.

<sup>34</sup> For a careful discussion of the topography of Oedipus' death see Easterling (2006) 141–3.

mirrors both his appearance and his marginalization from society, Oedipus, as scholars have frequently observed, partakes of the characteristics of the stage setting in which Sophocles places him, as he will in death replicate their cult status and protective role. The grove of the Eumenides is 'untouchable' (39), not to be trodden (167, 467); Oedipus too is a man not to be touched (1133–8). The grove's inhabitants inspire fear (39), as does Oedipus, once the chorus know his identity (223). Man and place are mirror images of each other. It is fitting therefore that while other Sophoclean heroes apostrophize nature, this hero is presented as a geological feature, resembling the landscape into which he will be absorbed.

The implications of the association with the grove and the comparison with the cape thus go further than imaging suffering and endurance in life; they also suggest endurance into an indefinite future. It is fitting that the one surviving Sophoclean play which explicitly addresses the heroization of its central figure presents him here as an enduring part of the landscape. There was one other victim of extreme suffering notoriously associated with a rock and who may lurk behind the image in this stanza – Niobe:

καὶ γὰρ τ' ἠὺκομος Νιόβη ἐμνήσατο σίτου,  
 τῆ περ δώδεκα παῖδες ἐνὶ μεγάροισιν ὄλοντο  
 ἕξ μὲν θυγατέρες, ἕξ δ' υἱέες ἠβώνοντες.  
 τοὺς μὲν Ἄπολλων πέφνεν ἀπ' ἀργυρέοιο βιοῖο  
 χωόμενος Νιόβη, τὰς δ' Ἄρτεμις ἰοχέαιρα,  
 οὐνεκ' ἄρα Λητοῖ ἰσάσκετο καλλιπαρῆω·  
 φῆ δοιῶ τεκέειν, ἧ δ' αὐτὴ γείνατο πολλούς·  
 τῷ δ' ἄρα καὶ δοιῶ περ ἑόντ' ἀπὸ πάντας ὄλεσαν.  
 οἱ μὲν ἄρ' ἐννήμαρ κέατ' ἐν φόνῳ, οὐδέ τις ἦεν  
 κατθάψαι, λαοὺς δὲ λίθους ποίησε Κρονίων·  
 τοὺς δ' ἄρα τῆ δεκάτῃ θάψαν θεοὶ Οὐρανίωνες.  
 ἧ δ' ἄρα σίτου μνήσατ', ἐπεὶ κάμε δάκρυ χέουσα.  
 νῦν δὲ που ἐν πέτρῃσιν ἐν οὐρεσὶν οἰοπόλοισιν  
 ἐν Σιπύλῳ, ὅθι φασὶ θεάων ἔμμεναι εὐνάς  
 νυμφάων, αἱ τ' ἀμφ' Ἀχελώϊον ἐρρώσαντο,  
 ἔνθα λίθος περ ἑοῦσα θεῶν ἐκ κήδεα πέσσει.

(*Iliad* 24.612–17)

Oedipus too will become a permanent part of the terrain. In this sense the stasimon embraces not just his personal history and character, not just the past and the future of the family, but for Oedipus a cult future extending into the present of the play's performance.

The ideas expressed by the chorus are traditional – the miseries of age, the inevitability of suffering and the consequent preferability of being unborn or dying early. They offer a bleak vision of human existence. It

is a vision which gains in persuasiveness from the chorus' sense of shared suffering with the protagonist. Nothing in the ode explicitly contradicts the sentiments expressed. But these ideas represent only one strand both of the tradition and of the Sophoclean view of human potential. And implicitly the ode offers a complementary view of experience, one which juxtaposes weakness with power and suffering with endurance, past pain with hints of a more positive future. This perspective, which is ultimately realized in the messenger's account of the end of Oedipus, is embedded ironically in the choral lament for the ills of age. This persistent hint of something else keeps in view the provisional nature of the choral song. Neither this nor anything else in the play is offered as the last word.

*The logic of the unexpected: semantic diversion  
in Sophocles, Yeats (and Virgil)*

Michael Silk

I

The feature of poetic language that I seek to elucidate here is not exactly a mechanism, nor exactly an effect, but belongs to the grey area in between. This area is often rewarding to explore, and especially with poets whose use of language might be said to be in some fundamental way elusive. I see Sophoclean language as blest with a kind of magisterial elusiveness as its determinative quality. In this respect one might distinguish it from poetic language that tends towards the exploratory, language that stretches the uses of language itself: such is Shakespeare's, Eliot's, Rilke's, Aeschylus', Pindar's.<sup>1</sup> Likewise from language that, without any disparagement, one might call creatively eccentric, like Horace's (especially in the *Odes*) or Milton's. And equally from language that might be called constructively opportunist, like Tennyson's or (very differently) Euripides'.

Magisterial elusiveness: Virgil's usage in the *Aeneid* presents a large-scale version of this (where the Virgil of the *Eclogues* is charmingly opportunist), while in English the mature Yeats largely belongs here. The elusiveness – by definition, almost – is not easy to characterize. Pragmatically, one might say it is such that the technical features one would expect to focus on in a major poet – like radically new metaphor – are often either not there or not the point; and such that it often seems hard to say what gives the verse the poetic power and subtlety one can feel it has.

Sophoclean language is a paradigm of the elusive, as the poet's more receptive interpreters over the years have acknowledged.<sup>2</sup> By way of attempting some elucidation of his poetic, and in particular of the (as I propose) characteristic feature I shall be calling 'semantic diversion', I

<sup>1</sup> See Silk (forthcoming, *b*).

<sup>2</sup> None more so than Pat Easterling, most explicitly in her 'Plain words in Sophocles': Easterling (1999b). There are hints (sometimes puzzled or reluctant) in discussions as different as Schmid (1934) 487–9, Stanford (1963) 111, Long (1968) 163, Segal (1981) 53, Lloyd-Jones (1983) 171, Dunn (2006) 187. See also, in particular, Budelmann (2000) 19–60.

take as my starting point a sensitive discussion by Felix Budelmann. In the opening chapter of his book, *The Language of Sophocles*, Budelmann argues that 'Sophoclean language . . . does not communicate a straightforward message in a straightforward way'.<sup>3</sup> More particularly, he ascribes to Sophoclean language an 'intricate blend of saying one thing and at the same time pointing to another thing it does not say'; he adds (rightly, I am sure) that Sophoclean language does this 'to a degree that Aeschylean and Euripidean language does not';<sup>4</sup> and he goes on to consider these claims with special reference to Sophocles' sentences, which sometimes (he suggests) embody a perceptible 'direction change': such sentences do not 'baffle', but they do 'militate against expectations'.<sup>5</sup>

Very properly (though he is not explicit about his procedure), Budelmann premises his argument on the need to respond to Sophoclean words in their particular order. This is noteworthy, not because it goes against the linguistic-responsive grain (it is surely what everyone does, *mutatis mutandis*, within their own language), but because generations of classical scholars have been trained to do the opposite: to suspend a reading until the syntactic unit (sentence, whatever) is complete. So *this* genitive 'is' a genitive of cause (even though it may have seemed to be a quite different kind of genitive at the time); *that* word 'goes with' this other (even though it may have set up different relationships *en route*); and *such and such* 'means' some single specifiable thing (even when the word in question never does 'mean' that, of itself) – because the wider context seems to point to it. In their denial of word-order and open response, such readings – banalizations, rather<sup>6</sup> – are calculated to obliterate a wide variety of literary realities, including the mechanisms, or effects, I am seeking to elucidate here.<sup>7</sup>

My concern (unlike Budelmann's) is not with sentences as such, but with the operations of single words (or short phrasal equivalents) within them, and especially at the end of them: operations, as will be apparent, which are widely misrepresented or ignored. Consider, as a straightforward example, Yeats's poem, 'The Seven Sages':<sup>8</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Budelmann (2000) 16–17.    <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* 17.    <sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* 40, 29, 40.

<sup>6</sup> The term 'banalizzazione' was patented by Timpanaro (1975) for a different, but ultimately related, context.

<sup>7</sup> The 'wide variety' also includes the *para prosdokian* effects discussed below, pp. 143–4. This whole area is largely untheorized, even within formal stylistics. A start was made by Riffaterre (1978): note in particular his discussions of 'retroactive reading', 'ungrammaticality' and 'competing postulations of paradigm and syntax' (*ibid.* 81–91).

<sup>8</sup> Composed in 1931 and published in 1933; text in Albright (1994) 291–2. Citations and datings of this and other Yeats poems follow Albright.

*The First.* My great-grandfather spoke to Edmund Burke  
 In Grattan's house.  
*The Second.* My great-grandfather shared  
 A pot-house bench with Oliver Goldsmith once.  
*The Third.* My great-grandfather's father talked of music,  
 Drank tar-water with the Bishop of Cloyne.<sup>9</sup> 5  
*The Fourth.* But mine saw Stella once.  
*The Fifth.* Whence came our thought?  
*The Sixth.* From four great minds that hated Whiggery.  
*The Fifth.* Burke was a Whig.  
*The Sixth.* Whether they knew or not,  
 Goldsmith and Burke, Swift and the Bishop of Cloyne  
 All hated Whiggery; but what is Whiggery? 10  
 A levelling, rancorous, rational sort of mind  
 That never looked out of the eye of a saint  
 Or out of drunkard's eye.  
*The Seventh.* All's Whiggery now,  
 But we old men are massed against the world.  
*The First.* American colonies, Ireland, France and India 15  
 Harried, and Burke's great melody against it.<sup>10</sup>  
*The Second.* Oliver Goldsmith sang what he had seen,  
 Roads full of beggars, cattle in the fields,  
 But never saw the trefoil stained with blood,  
 The avenging leaf those fields raised up against it. 20  
*The Fourth.* The tomb of Swift wears it away.  
*The Third.* A voice  
 Soft as the rustle of a reed from Cloyne  
 That gathers volume; now a thunder-clap.  
*The Sixth.* What schooling had these four?  
*The Seventh.* They walked the roads  
 Mimicking what they heard, as children mimic; 25  
 They understood that wisdom comes of *beggary*.<sup>11</sup>

I quote the poem in its entirety to make the point quite clear. 'Beggary' cannot be said to be expected. What one does expect, for this last word, is more or less specifiable – something like (in Yeatsian language) 'innocence' (cf. 8, 11, 23–5).<sup>12</sup> 'Beggary' is not baffling; it makes sense; it picks up

<sup>9</sup> The philosopher Berkeley.

<sup>10</sup> A strangely compressed pair of lines: the 'American colonies' (etc.) *were harried* (sc. by rancorous-rational England, dominating the world) and/or *did harry* (sc. harried England, therefore harried the world) – while Burke's great 'melody' challenged (or further challenged) 'it' (the world).

<sup>11</sup> Here and elsewhere, italics in English texts or translations (or bold in Greek texts) are mine – marking diversionary terms, among others.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. p. 148 with n. 55 below.

'Roads full of beggars' (18) and 'walked the roads' (24); but in terms of expectations, it imposes a last-minute diversion. Once presented, 'beggary' is (so to speak) right (one doesn't query the text), but hardly right and inevitable<sup>13</sup> – certainly not, because quite different presences had seemed to be around the corner, or even actually in view.

Compare the opening lines of Virgil's *Aeneid* (l. 1–11):

arma virumque cano, Troiae qui primus ab oris  
 Italiam fato profugus Laviniaque venit  
 litora, multum ille et terris iactatus et alto  
 vi superum, saevae memorem Iunonis ob iram;  
 multa quoque et bello passus, dum conderet urbem 5  
 inferretque deos Latio, genus unde Latinum  
 Albanique patres atque altae moenia Romae.  
 Musa, mihi causas memora, quo numine laeso  
 quidve dolens regina deum tot volvere casus  
 insignem pietate virum, tot adire labores 10  
 impulerit. tantaene animis caelestibus irae?

The point of closure reads as a surprise, which only familiarity dulls. Yes, we have heard about Juno's *iram* (4), and we have been alerted to the question of its causes (8–9), but also, most recently and more expansively, we have focused on the fact that her victim was *insignem pietate virum*, and suffered *tot . . . tot . . .*, and we know that this *virum* is to be our main concern. With a third 'so' word, *tanta*, and then *animis caelestibus*, we are given every encouragement to feel ourselves to be – still – within a parallel structure that will – still – encompass the human consequences of a god's wounded *amour propre*. That is, we are surely led to expect a rather different question from the one we get, a more intricate question, perhaps, about how such unconcern for heaven-sent injustice on earth can commend itself to heavenly beings themselves: a question about the relation of men and gods. Instead, much as Yeats refocuses on the wise man's 'beggary', Virgil refocuses – abruptly and finally – on Juno's anger, in a way that does and would indeed make sense, even without Homeric proemial precedent, but which is still identifiable as a diversion.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> If there is, in retrospect, anything 'inevitable' here, it is by virtue of the unheralded conversion of an unrhyming poem into one structured around a single gigantic pararhyming opposition – between 'Whiggery' (7, 10) and this new 'beggary' (26). But this is itself a wholly unpredictable opposition, while the pararhyming (insofar as it is perceptible) is almost as abrasive as the semantic switch to 'beggary' itself. On rhyme and pararhyme, see further below, pp. 147–9, 157.

<sup>14</sup> At the start of the *Iliad* (1.8–10) Apollo is angry, and his anger sets the narrative in motion with the plague. In the *Odyssey*, too, Poseidon is angry (1.20–1), as is – in Athena's question-begging question – Zeus (1.62). On *Aen.* 1.1–11, see further n. 19 below.

Consider now a Sophoclean example. *Antigone* 1104:

Κρ.     καὶ ταῦτ' ἐπαινεῖς καὶ δοκεῖ παρειαθεῖν;  
 Χο.     ὄσον γ', ἄναξ, τάχιστα· συντέμνουσι γὰρ  
           θεῶν ποδώκεις τοὺς κακόφρενας βλάβαι.

'Swift *avengers* from the gods cut off those who think mistakenly.' The translation belongs to Lloyd-Jones, whose English neatly succeeds in suppressing any trace of the Sophoclean diversionary manoeuvre by not only adjusting the word-order (admittedly hard to reproduce in English) but also rendering βλάβαι (which Lloyd-Jones spells Βλάβαι) as 'avengers'.<sup>15</sup> But βλάβαι doesn't *mean* 'avengers', thought Alice.<sup>16</sup> Indeed not: it means 'harm', 'damage', 'mischief' (or, in the plural, multiple instances thereof). Yes, the word is used (in one-off usage) elsewhere in Sophocles of a person, as in English one can say (as standard usage) 'she's trouble'<sup>17</sup> – but that doesn't make βλάβαι mean 'avengers'. Yes, ποδώκεις in particular, along with the run of the clause in general, leads, precisely, to an expectation that the as yet uncited subject of the verb will be the Ἐρινύες (ταχεῖαι ποίνιμοί τ' Ἐρινύες, *Ajax* 843) – and that expectation is precisely what βλάβαι contradicts.

With Lloyd-Jones's response to this usage, contrast Jebb's. Jebb translates, 'swift *harms* from the gods cut short the folly of men', cites the appropriate reference to *Ajax* 843, among other passages, and notes: 'the βλάβαι θεῶν cannot . . . be properly regarded as personified beings, and therefore we should not write Βλάβαι.' Agonizing about whether to capitalize 'personifications' in Greek texts is generally (being anachronistic) neither here nor there<sup>18</sup> – but in this case Jebb's response compares favourably with Lloyd-Jones's, which (neatly, once again) sums up the quaint, if well-meaning, cast of mind for which prediction trumps event.<sup>19</sup> Ah, if only. How many politicians, investors, newly-weds, the world over, come to know better –

<sup>15</sup> In the Loeb and the OCT, i.e. Lloyd-Jones (1994) and Lloyd-Jones and Wilson (1992).

<sup>16</sup> 'There's glory for you!' 'I don't know what you mean by "glory",' Alice said. Humpty Dumpty smiled contemptuously. 'Of course you don't – till I tell you. I meant "there's a nice knock-down argument for you!"' 'But "glory" doesn't mean "a nice knock-down argument",' Alice objected (Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass*, ch. 6).

<sup>17</sup> ἡ πᾶσα βλάβη, Soph. *El.* 301, *Phil.* 622. For the lexicographical criteria that enable one to say 'one-off' versus 'standard' or 'normal' usage, see (*mutatis mutandis*) Silk (1974) 27–56, and cf. Silk (2003) 117–18, 122–4.

<sup>18</sup> Even if editors (of texts from Hesiod to Hermogenes) feel obliged to do something about it. Cf. in general the discussion, and examples, in Stafford (2000) 1–44, especially 4–5.

<sup>19</sup> Commentators on classical texts generally think predictively, like Lloyd-Jones here. So, most recently, on *Ant.* 1104 itself, Griffith *ad loc.* capitalizes Βλάβαι, does at least translate it as 'Harms' (capitalized likewise), but adds ' = the Furies', without further comment. Compare commentators on Virgil's 'tantaene . . . irae' (above, p. 137), e.g. Austin *ad loc.*: 'Virgil has put in the forefront of the *Aeneid* the problem that constantly exercised him: the ways of god to man.' Not in *these* words, he hasn't.

and sensitive readers too. The expectation is of divine avengers, Ἐρινύες. Sophocles diverts attention from the avengers to the awful damage they create.

Apologists for the quaint-if-well-meaning might object: point taken, but surely one could analyse βλάβαι as a trope – metonymic abstract for concrete – whereby the word does, at least on one level, ‘mean’ Ἐρινύες, and is unexpected only in so far as a trope (here or anywhere) is unexpected. But any such counter is not only shamefully reductive;<sup>20</sup> in many comparable cases, it is not even available. Take *Ajax* 350:

ἰὼ  
 φίλοι ναυβάται, μόνοι ἐμῶν φίλων,  
 μόνοι ἔτ’ ἐμμένοντες ὀρθῶ νόμῳ,  
 ἴδεσθέ με . . .

We expect something like ‘loyalty’: embattled Ajax sees his crew as his last supporters. Well, he does – but it so happens that νόμῳ doesn’t mean ‘loyalty’, it means ‘custom’ (or ‘law’) – which, of course, doesn’t deter commentators and others from reversing the effect by insisting that the word must be said to mean ‘loyalty’, regardless.<sup>21</sup> ‘Custom’ (or ‘law’), here, makes slightly unexpected, and more interesting, sense; and (or but) it certainly involves no trope. Nor is there any trope in the rather different kind of diversion at *OC* 1333 (Polynices, in desperate appeal to his father):

πρὸς νῦν σε κρηνῶν, πρὸς θεῶν ὁμογνίων,  
 αἰτῶ . . .

Polynices (*in* his desperation?) appeals to what Dawe reasonably calls a ‘remarkable . . . combination of fountains and gods’ – but then, having called it that, he starts worrying about the text.<sup>22</sup> A sense of Sophocles’ diversionary practices might have given him pause. We anticipate an ordinary match for ‘fountains’, but never get it; instead, we switch to the (more important-sounding? more rhetorically urgent? more conveniently compendious?) ‘gods’.

<sup>20</sup> In effect, it equates the target of an ‘image’ with (i.e. reduces it to) the suppressed tenor – on which terms, see Silk (1974) 9–10.

<sup>21</sup> So Lloyd-Jones and, in this instance, Jebb and Garvie, among others. So too, more recently, Erp Taalman Kip (2006) 39.

<sup>22</sup> Dawe (1978) 147. It will be apparent by now that semantic diversion represents a challenge to what is widely taken to be a basic principle of, or preliminary to, textual-critical response, certainly in the classical domain: ‘Dawe rightly says that what one expects is . . .’ (this, from Lloyd-Jones and Wilson (1992) 82, on a different Sophoclean passage, *OT* 99). The premise of all such comments is: *either* the text says, or can be made to seem to say, ‘what one expects’, or we have to regard it as suspect. That premise is itself suspect, and the great services rendered to scholarship by textual scholars of the stature of those just named do not make it any less so.

Meanwhile, there are, in any case, instances that are too blatant for even inveterate well-meaners to misrepresent. *OT* 335:

Τειρ. ἐγὼ οὐτ' ἐμαυτὸν οὔτε σ' ἀλγυνῶ. τί ταῦτ'  
 ἄλλως ἐλέγχεις; οὐ γὰρ ἂν πύθοιό μου.  
 Οιδ. οὐκ, ὦ κακῶν κάκιστε, καὶ γὰρ ἂν πέτρου  
 φύσιν σύ γ' ὀργάνειας, ἐξερεῖς ποτέ,  
 ἀλλ' ὧδ' ἀτεγκτος κάτελεύτητος φανῆ;

The run of the sentence before *ὀργάνειας* suggests that what is in prospect is something like 'you would seem to resemble . . .'. Tiresias, in his obstinacy, is *behaving like*, is *as bad as*, a rock:

nec magis incepto vultum sermone movetur  
 quam si dura silex aut stet Marpesia cautes.

ὡς δὲ πέτρος ἢ θαλάσσιος  
 κλύδων ἀκούει . . .<sup>23</sup>

But no: *per impossibile*, he would make a rock 'lose its temper'. Not what we expect, but what we get.

As these various examples suggest, it is characteristic for the diversionary moment to involve formal articulation, in the shape of second (or later) place in a parallel structure, or final position in the syntactic unit, or both<sup>24</sup> – and for the straightforward reason that such articulation sets up the unfulfilled expectation and gives it time to crystallize in the first place. There are instances, however, where the articulation is less marked. *OT* 180:<sup>25</sup>

ῶν πόλις ἀνάριθμος ὄλλυται  
 νηλέα δὲ . . .

The city is 'perishing, unnumbered'. And 'pitiless . . .' A broken text, at this point, might invite a supplement like '. . . heaven does nothing to help' or '. . . people pass by and ignore the dead and dying'. But no. The actual continuation diverts us not to inactive manipulators (gods) or anxious survivors (people), but to the victims (corpses, now or imminently):

νηλέα δὲ γένεθλα πρὸς πέδω  
 θανατοφόρα κεῖται ἀνοίκτως –

<sup>23</sup> Virg. *Aen.* 6.470–1 (of Dido) and Eur. *Med.* 28–9 (of Medea). From an early period, rock(s) and stone(s) are widely associated with obstinate courage (as *Od.* 17.463) and obstinate hard-heartedness (as *Od.* 23.103); obstinacy is the common element.

<sup>24</sup> On 'articulation' in this sense, see Silk (1974) 67–73. <sup>25</sup> On the passage, see also Silk (2003) 133–4.

'pitiless families/offspring/kin lie on the ground, carrying death'.<sup>26</sup> Well, the unfortunate, plague-stricken ones are, in an unnervingly literal sense, 'pitiless' (they spread disease and don't care), though it may seem unnervingly harsh to say so. And then again, even after the new clause is complete, 'pitilessness' of gods and survivors remains unspecifically relevant to the distressing state of affairs, because it is *still* only too predictable that survivors will be pitiless and look the other way,<sup>27</sup> just as it is *still* inferential, too, that the gods must be doing the same (unless the god of death, who bulks large in this Sophoclean context, is being more actively pitiless).<sup>28</sup>

Ignoring any such hints and suggestions, however, commentators and translators satisfy expectation on a more elementary level, by converting 'pitiless' into what they think Sophocles *ought* to have said: 'unpitied'. This would make sense (albeit less interesting sense), but . . . it's not what the word νηλής means.<sup>29</sup> Distracted by such scholarly ingenuity, though, the responsive reader may well lose track of the actual *modus operandi* of the sequence. Here is a diversion in which expectation is, for once, concentrated into the opening word of the clause – after which it starts becoming clear both that the formal grammatical subject is not 'heaven', not 'survivors', but γένεθλα, and what that γένεθλα seems now to mean. But at what point this replacement meaning fully registers is not so easy to say: perhaps with γένεθλα itself, perhaps only with κεῖται. The upshot is that any sense of diversionary articulation is faint, if there at all – and that any decision about which word or words to identify as diversionary is somewhat arbitrary.

In this last instance (the sensitive analyst might agree) a degree of metonymy – recombination of selected elements – is involved.<sup>30</sup> 'Pitilessness' has something to do with the given situation, but not only, or not necessarily, as applied (to the γένεθλα). And, as indicated, some other examples are at least open to analysis in metonymic terms (as βλάβαι

<sup>26</sup> The nouns γένεθλον/γενέθλη (both restricted to verse) cover all these senses, unspecifically, and from epic onwards (LSJ *s.v.*).

<sup>27</sup> As (notoriously) at Thuc. 2.51. <sup>28</sup> Cf. Silk (2003) 133–4.

<sup>29</sup> The only evidence for νηλής = 'unpitied' is another Sophoclean passage, *Ant.* 1197 (cf. Silk, *ibid.*) – which, by distributional criteria, is almost the same as no evidence at all: cf. (*mutatis mutandis*) Silk (1974) 34–51. The misinterpretation goes back to a scholion on *OT* 180 (Papageorgius (1888) 174), νηλέα τὰ μὴ τυχόντα ἐλέους [*'pitiless, as not meeting with pity'*], τὸ αὐτὸ δὲ ἔστι τῷ ἀνοικτῶς – after which words the scholiast, without comment, switches to what is evidently part of an alternative explanation, not quite thought through, but correctly giving the word its only rightful meaning: οὐκ ἠλέουν δὲ ἀλλήλους ἴσως ὑπὸ [*'they didn't pity each other perhaps because of . . .'*] τῆς συνηθείας τοῦ κακοῦ ἢ ὑπὸ φόβου καὶ προσδοκίας τῶν ὁμοίων. Of these two trails, sadly, modern commentators have followed the former, not the latter.

<sup>30</sup> On metonymy and 'recombination', see Silk (2003) 132–4, 139–41, 143.

at *Antigone* 1104 *might* be said to be). But, in this connection, compare another Yeats example, from the opening lines of his poem on the Easter Rising in Dublin, 'Easter 1916':<sup>31</sup>

I have met them at close of day  
Coming with vivid *faces*  
From counter or desk among grey  
Eighteenth-century houses.

Though articulated only lightly (by formal position, with miniature syntactic pause, in the line), 'faces' is perceptibly diversionary. Given the portentous title, and the unspecificity of the 'them', one anticipates something like 'stories' or 'memories' – nouns to which 'vivid' might be ordinarily attached, without any trope – especially if, for the moment, the 'them' are taken to be surviving witnesses of the disturbing events the title alludes to, or perhaps loved ones of the now dead participants. But the 'them', one soon learns, are the dead themselves, whose faces are, in Yeats's own memory, 'vivid'. This makes for a peculiarly harsh metonymic effect – a suitably violent selective recombination – in that (even without benefit of etymology) 'vivid' suggests life,<sup>32</sup> whereas the 'they' are actually the dead. The technical point is worth making, though, that it is 'vivid' that is, in retrospect, metonymic, but 'faces' that is, in its immediate impact, diversionary.<sup>33</sup> In the *OT* passage, similarly,  $\nu\eta\lambda\acute{\epsilon}\alpha$  is (if one reads it so) metonymic, whereas the diversionary effect belongs to the words that follow. Such diversions, then, are themselves independent of any trope, while (as examples like Yeats's 'beggary' or Sophocles'  $\nu\acute{o}\mu\omega$  make clear) neither metonymy nor any other trope needs to be present anywhere in the sequence for a diversionary effect to exist.

## II

Semantic diversion: how may we best define it? I see it as a sudden adjustment of reference, which was always possible (is seen to be so in retrospect), but which was not apparent, and which seems to displace what *was* apparent. The particulars vary: most obviously the degree of felt displacement,

<sup>31</sup> Composed in 1916: text in Albright (1994) 228–30.

<sup>32</sup> 'Vivify', 'vivisection', 'vivacious', 'vive l'Irlande'.

<sup>33</sup> In such a case, one is perhaps reminded of the interactive metaphorical technique I called 'retrospective imagery' in Silk (1974) 167–72, and which in the earlier phase of Greek poetry I found to be particularly Pindaric (*ibid.* 168). That technique too can be found in Sophocles, as with  $\tau\acute{\upsilon}\rho\alpha\nu\nu\epsilon$  at *Trach.* 217 (which might at first seem to point to a real 'lord', perhaps even Heracles). However, none of these passages involves semantic diversion in the given sense.

but also (more significantly, perhaps) the extent to which the unfulfilled expectation continues to operate as a residue. In a case like Sophocles' νόμῳ, the residual impression is fairly strong – which is precisely why commentators convince themselves that the word itself actually 'means' what they expected ('loyalty'). In a case like Sophocles' θεῶν (*OC* 1333), or Yeats's 'beggary', expectation simply makes way for adjustment: we turned a corner, we missed a step, that we didn't anticipate; but here we are, and off we go again. The *OT* νηλέα sequence (I take it) is to be read as a momentarily more disturbing version of the same.<sup>34</sup>

A pragmatic way of identifying the phenomenon in question would be to say that here we have a 'serious' – non-humorous, non-witty<sup>35</sup> – equivalent of the humorous or witty *bon mot* that works *para prosdokian*. That familiar linguistic manoeuvre was first discussed by Aristotle in *Rhetoric* 3.10–11, under the heading of τὰ ἀστεῖα:

ἔστι δὲ καὶ τὰ ἀστεῖα τὰ πλεῖστα διὰ μεταφορᾶς καὶ ἐκ τοῦ προεξαπατᾶν.<sup>36</sup>

Just as any attempt to link diversion and tropes would be misleading, Aristotle's attempt to link τὰ ἀστεῖα and metaphor is misleading, as some of his own examples show – but his focus on 'misleading' itself is helpful, and he has the good sense to pursue it, with a sketch of the response involved:

μᾶλλον γὰρ γίγνεται δῆλον ὅτι ἔμαθε παρά τὸ ἐναντίως ἔχειν, καὶ ἔοικε λέγειν ἢ ψυχῇ ὡς ἀληθῶς, ἐγὼ δ' ἡμαρτον.<sup>37</sup>

Aristotle's examples include:

ἔστειχε δ' ἔχων ὑπὸ ποσσὶ χίμεθλα

On he strode, and under his feet were *chilblains* –

'where the listener expected "sandals" (ὁ δ' ὤρετο πέδιλα ἐρεῖν).'<sup>38</sup> From the Greeks to our own day, this kind of effect is familiar from comic writers, like Aristophanes –

<sup>34</sup> A miniature linguistic equivalent, then, to the effect that Nietzsche, following Schopenhauer, memorably characterizes as feeling 'suddenly lost amidst the cognitive forms of phenomena ["wenn er plötzlich an den Erkenntnisformen der Erscheinung irre wird"], because the principle of causation, in one of its manifestations, seems to be suspended' (*The Birth of Tragedy*, ch. 1).

<sup>35</sup> 'Serious' (used here, *faute de mieux*) is a notoriously elusive label: Silk (2000) 303–20.

<sup>36</sup> Arist. *Rhet.* 1412a19–20.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid. 1412a20–22. Aristotle in literary-theoretical mode is fixated both on metaphor (contrast Silk (2003)) and (ἔμαθε) on 'learning': see especially *Poet.* 22, *Rhet.* 3.2.7–13, 3.3.4–3.4.4, 3.10.2–3.11.15, and *Poet.* 4, *Rhet.* 3.10.2. The two fixations eventually meet in a formula (*Rhet.* 1412a25–6): ἡδία μάθησις γὰρ ἔστι καὶ μεταφορά.

<sup>38</sup> Arist. *Rhet.* 1412a31–2 (= Epic. Parod. Inc. Frag. in Brandt (1888) 98; cf. *Od.* 21.341).

ἀκούετε δὴ, ποτέχετ' ἐμὶν τὰν γαστέρα

Listen now, and lend me your *stomachs*<sup>39</sup> –

and witty writers, like Oscar Wilde:

Meredith's a prose Browning, and so is *Browning*.

I can resist everything except *temptation*.<sup>40</sup>

Such *jeux d'esprit* clearly have something in common with diversions, and above all a characteristic final articulation. However, these humorous effects tend to involve not just final articulation, but a sense of a climax, where diversion operates unemphatically or even discreetly. The distinctive difference in tone between the two modes is no doubt relatable to this formal contrast.

More fundamentally, semantic diversion is to be sharply distinguished from those unpredicted linguistic moments associated with innovative poetic language that become operative *before* any expectation is established. Yeats again:

A barnacle goose

Far up in the stretches of night; night *splits* and the dawn breaks loose;  
I, through the terrible novelty of light, stalk on . . .<sup>41</sup>

That one-word, one-syllable, metaphor, 'splits', is (yes) as unpredictable as it is painfully novel (and Yeats at once moves, by association, to enact the thought with 'the terrible *novelty* of light'). Even if 'night splits' also has a model (brought into play by assonance and stress-rhythm) in Shakespeare's 'Light thickens',<sup>42</sup> it is unforeseen and unforeseeable – but, for all that, it entails no contradiction of any definable expectation: there is simply no definable expectation yet to contradict. So this, for once, is Yeats in exploratory mode (*à la* Shakespeare).

Semantic diversion has nothing directly to do with any such exploratory uses of language: not with enactment, as such; not with the activating of inactive connotations, as such; not with defamiliarization, as such – not with any of these characteristic facets of poetic language,<sup>43</sup> as such. There is, though, at least impressionistically, something in common with what

<sup>39</sup> *Ar. Ach.* 733 (the Megarian to his hungry daughters: translation after Sommerstein), with τὰν γαστέρα in lieu of the expected τὸν νοῦν (cf. Olson *ad loc.*).

<sup>40</sup> *Intentions* (1891), 'The Critic as Artist', I, and *Lady Windermere's Fan* (1892), Act I.

<sup>41</sup> 'High Talk' (1938): text in Albright (1994) 390–1.

<sup>42</sup> *Macbeth*, 3.2. Cf. Eliot's commentary on this Shakespearean phrase in his first (1936), admirable essay on Milton: Eliot (1957) 140.

<sup>43</sup> On these features of heightened language, cf. summarily Silk (2007) 180 and in full detail Silk (forthcoming, *b*); on enactment (and, more briefly, defamiliarization), also Silk (1995).

Eliot (working, as so often, towards a formulation of exploratory language like his own) once delineated as the use of 'words perpetually juxtaposed in new and sudden combinations'.<sup>44</sup> In very general terms (we may agree), semantic diversion does belong to the realm of the 'new and sudden' – or at least to the realm of productive tension between the 'new and sudden' and prior expectation.

Most of the world's discourse – ordinary-language discourse most obviously, but not only ordinary-language discourse – is about prior expectation and its fulfilment. From the profundities of the Homeric epics to the functional listings of the telephone directory, all such language – endlessly committed to endless variations on a single theme – sets up expectations and fulfils them;<sup>45</sup> and this is the antithesis of the 'new and sudden'. In everyday conversational contexts, we find the *reductio* of expectation and fulfilment in the sometime banalities of everyday conversation for conversation's sake, designated by Jakobson (within his flawed but influential schema of language functions) as the 'phatic' function of language.<sup>46</sup> Jakobson's Dorothy Parker example is representative:<sup>47</sup>

'Well!' the young man said. 'Well!' she said. 'Well, here we are' he said. 'Here we are', she said, 'aren't we?'

All such language (Homer, the phone book, the non-referential conversation) is radically different from the diversionary, as it is from the exploratory – albeit any equation between diversionary and exploratory on that account would be grossly reductive (if not quite as gross as an equation between the conversation, the phone book and Homer). The distinction, at all events, should be insisted on.

And one other set of distinctions is in order. Semantic diversion involves, by definition, a *denotative* or *referential* switch. It is quite different from *tonal* dislocation, which again is characteristic of (some versions of) the comic, for instance the Aristophanic-comic – perhaps through sudden obscenity,

στένω, κέχηνα, σκορδινῶμαι, πέρδομαι

or sudden neologism,

<sup>44</sup> In *The Sacred Wood*: Eliot (1920) 128 ('Philip Massinger').

<sup>45</sup> On the Homeric profundities, and the secondary presence of the exploratory in Homer, see Silk (2004a) 47–61, 88–92, and Silk (2004b) 31–44.

<sup>46</sup> On the 'phatic' (an opaque term borrowed from Malinowsky), see Jakobson (1960) 355–7, and, for the 'functions' of language overall (on which cf. Silk (2003) 134–5 and Silk (forthcoming, a)), Jakobson (1960) 352–77.

<sup>47</sup> Jakobson (1960) 355–6.

φέρ' ἰδῶ, τί δ' ἦσθην ἄξιον χαιρεδόνος;

or sudden elevation,

ἐγὼ δ' ἐφ' ᾧ γε τὸ κέαρ εὐφράνθην ἰδῶν.<sup>48</sup>

Tonal dislocation is also characteristic of twentieth-century literary modernism. Take Eliot's celebrated opening lines (1917):

Let us go then, you and I,  
Where the evening is spread out against the sky  
Like a *patient etherised upon a table* . . .

The modernist subversion of a (just about) acceptably traditional lyric opening ('you and I', elemental nature, 'Anglo-Saxon' diction, rhyme) works by ostentatiously displacing the more predictable traditional by the less predictable modern (prosaic, urban, Greco-technical). Such abrasive displacement, moreover, is already prefigured in Eliot's title: 'The Love Song of *J. Alfred Prufrock*'. In English literary-modernist usage, Howard Barker is perhaps the last of the tonal-dislocating line:

GAUKROGER: How picturesque he was and diligent. Was he, Mr. Scrope? *Cunt* picturesque, your master?<sup>49</sup>

Meanwhile, though never a thorough-going modernist himself, Yeats experiments with these tonal clashes late in his career, but not always convincingly:

There all the golden *codgers* lay,  
There the silver dew . . .  
Down the mountain walls  
From where Pan's cavern is  
Intolerable music falls.  
Foul goat-head, brutal arm appear,  
Belly, shoulder, *bum*,  
Flash fishlike; nymphs and satyrs  
*Copulate* in the foam.<sup>50</sup>

After the conventional-classical 'nymphs and satyrs', 'copulate', in its cold Latinity, is acceptably disquieting; 'bum' (as anti-climactic climax to a list of body parts) is debatable; 'codgers' is merely quaint. It is of more than

<sup>48</sup> *Ar. Ach.* 30, 4, 5; cited from Silk (2000) 137 (see in detail *ibid.* 33–6, 124).

<sup>49</sup> *Victory* (1983), 1.1. Though printed as prose, the lines (as often in this play) flow in and out of English dramatic iambs.

<sup>50</sup> The opening and closing lines of 'News for the Delphic Oracle', in *Last Poems* (1939): text in Albright (1994) 385–6.

passing interest to contrast the assured control that Eliot maintains in such dislocatory manoeuvres (and the talented, though much lesser, Barker, too) with the awkwardness in the Yeats. If the diversionary 'comes naturally' to the mature Yeats, but the tonally dislocating does not, is there incidental confirmation here that the two modes are not just distinct, but belong to fundamentally different mindsets?

Unlike literary modernism, of course, and unlike Aristophanic comedy, most classical poetry – in style as in substance – operates *largely* in terms of expectation and its fulfilment, from (again) the huge predictabilities of Homer to (say) the emotive rhetoric of a Rutilius Namatianus: *hence* the force of any disruption to that stability by an Aristophanes. Exploratory usage (to clarify the relation between the categories) may work within a general context of stable expectation (as with Pindar)<sup>51</sup> or not (as with Eliot). Diversionary usage, I surmise, tends to presuppose such stability (as with Virgil, and as with Sophocles, too) – or else to require it, even if this means that the stability must be created *ad hoc* by the diversionary poet himself. This is surely the case – in an age hostile to all stabilities – with Yeats, whose usage once again repays attention.

There are marked differences between the poetic norms of the mature, diversionary Yeats and those of the youthful dreamer of the 'Celtic twilight'. Like the young Virgil –

formosam resonare doces Amaryllida silvas  
ut vidi, ut perii, ut me malus abstulit error<sup>52</sup> –

Yeats, in his first phase, conjures up a world of echoic sound and plangent consonance, as if determined to convince himself that art makes sense, and therefore life must make sense too. The end of 'The Song of Wandering Aengus' (1897)<sup>53</sup> is a case in point –

And pluck till time and times are done  
The silver apples of the moon,  
The golden apples of the sun –

with the last word so hugely predictable (while yet hugely sought), it writes itself. In Yeats's early poetry, such consonance is regularly associated with that most familiar technical resource of post-classical Western poetry: rhyme. The ultimate logic of rhyme is reassurance through the

<sup>51</sup> Like most classical poetry, Pindar's is stable in (if nothing else) its elevation: see Silk (2007) 179–80, and (on such 'stability' and its converse) cf. Silk (2000) 102–20.

<sup>52</sup> Virg. *Ecl.* 1.5 and 8.41.

<sup>53</sup> Collected in *The Wind Among the Reeds* (1899): text in Albright (1994) 76–7.

imminent certainty of fulfilment: 'done' > ('moon') > 'sun'.<sup>54</sup> It is significant, then, that in mid-career an increasingly disquieted Yeats, still casting for reassurance but increasingly unconvinced (seeking now a traditional-hierarchical 'innocence' in the unpromising context of a twentieth-century nation state),<sup>55</sup> should begin to cultivate the more abrasive, anti-traditional technique of pararhyme:

Hands, do what you're bid:  
Bring the balloon of the mind  
That bellies and drags in the wind  
Into its narrow shed.<sup>56</sup>

And from now on, Yeats is drawn into a brave new experimental world, forever on the verge of a new stability that can never be assumed, but must be forever re-established: a world of consonance and dissonance, auditory and semantic, in endless permutations. Within these experiments, diversionary moments play in and out of larger complexes. In that opening of 'Easter 1916', diversionary dissonance gives rise to an ominous pararhyme,

<sup>54</sup> Modern theorists of style almost always discuss the rationale of rhyme in terms of its local pragmatics – especially what Jakobson (1960) 367 called the 'semantic relationship between rhyming units' – and neglect the reasons for using rhyme at all. The logic of reassurance is apparent from, for instance, the well-known tendency of Shakespearean tragedy to switch from blank verse to rhyme at the ends of scenes, but especially at the end of the final scene. It does not quite follow that rhyme in itself makes for 'closure' (cf. Smith (1968) 44–51), but there is a very relevant association here: see further below, n. 56 and p. 157.

<sup>55</sup> Hence the sheer pain in lines like 'The ceremony of innocence is drowned' ('The Second Coming', 1919: Albright (1994) 235) and 'The innocent and the beautiful | Have no enemy but time' ('In memory of Eva Gore-Booth and Con Markiewicz', 1927: Albright (1994) 283–4).

<sup>56</sup> 'The Balloon of the Mind', 1917: text in Albright (1994) 2004. The development of sustained pararhyme in English is widely credited to the war poet, Wilfred Owen. The most celebrated, and most intensive, uses are indeed Owen's, in late poems like 'Strange Meeting' (early 1918), 'Futility' (May 1918), 'Exposure' (begun in December 1917, finished in September 1918): texts and datings in Stallworthy (1983), vol. 1, 148–9, 158, 185–6. The opening pararhymes of 'Exposure' ('knife us', 'silent', 'salient', 'nervous') are representative. Owen's earliest experiments apparently belong to mid-1915, in one fragment containing the pararhymes 'steel', 'still', and in another containing the extra-linear 'made meed mood' (texts/datings in Stallworthy (1983), vol. II, 449, 465–71) – in both of which the pararhyming is somewhat milder. Owen's inspiration, seemingly, was his friend, the French poet Laurent Tailhade: see e.g. Hibberd (1986) 34. Yeats's own pararhyming – in the poem cited and elsewhere – is milder still, but distinctively organized, and in any case was developed several years before Owen's first experiments. Yeats had used pararhyme as early as 1909/10, in 'The Fascination of What's Difficult' (text in Albright (1994) 142–3), which begins with 'difficult', 'rent', 'content', 'colt', 'blood', 'cloud', but ends with straight rhyme (cf. the openings of 'The Cold Heaven' (1912) and 'The Dolls' (1913): *ibid.* 176, 177–8). Notwithstanding uncertainties about the datings of some of Owen's manuscripts (see e.g. Hibberd (1986) 202–5), Yeats's development of pararhyme is clearly independent of Owen. His own ('mild') pararhyming was anticipated, in the nineteenth century, rather, by Emily Dickinson, whose poems include comparably organized rhyme-structures. Dickinson's 'I Heard A Fly Buzz When I Died', for instance, begins with mild pararhyme and ends with full rhyme (all in alternating lines): 'died', 'room', 'air', 'storm'; 'dry', 'firm', 'king', 'room'; 'away', 'be', 'was', 'fly'; 'buzz', 'me', 'then', 'see'.

in the (as one had at first thought) innocent-sounding context of ordinary rhyming:

I have met them at close of day  
 Coming with vivid *faces*  
 From counter or desk among grey  
 Eighteenth-century *houses*.<sup>57</sup>

The 'terrible beauty' acclaimed (but also feared) in the poem<sup>58</sup> – all that insistent contradictoriness – is already there in the movements of sound, and sense, in these opening lines.

Conversely, a diversionary move can be combined with more or less orthodox rhyme, but in a context of pararhyme. The melancholy opening of 'In Memory of Eva Gore-Booth and Con Markiewicz' (1927):<sup>59</sup>

The light of evening, Lissadell,  
 Great windows open to the south,  
 Two girls in silk kimonos, both  
 Beautiful, one a *gazelle*.

'Gazelle' is counter-intuitive (diversionary), because it points in an entirely different direction from 'silk kimonos' and, especially, because it belongs to a different semantic domain from 'beautiful', though in parallel structure with it (πρὸς . . . κρηνῶν, πρὸς θεῶν).<sup>60</sup> A few words earlier, formal expectation was breached in the pararhyming of 'south'/'both';<sup>61</sup> that slight formal dissonance now gives way to the reconstitution of more normal (if unwieldy) rhyme ('Lissadell'/'gazelle') – but with the dissonance simultaneously redirected from the formal to the semantic. The impression that – in Yeats, certainly – semantic diversion, like pararhyme, itself connotes some kind of underlying disquiet is strongly suggested.

In Sophocles, as the examples given indicate, diversion occurs across lyrics and dialogue; we find it on the lips of the collective chorus, as on those of the more or less interacting characters.<sup>62</sup> There are no grounds, that is, for relating it to any one type of Sophoclean-tragic

<sup>57</sup> Above, p. 142.

<sup>58</sup> 'A terrible beauty is born': the line closes the first section of the poem (16), and is repeated at the end of the second (40), and again at the end of the fourth and final section (80).

<sup>59</sup> 1927: text in Albright (1994) 283–4.

<sup>60</sup> OC 1333 (above, p. 139). 'Gazelle' is also, incidentally, metaphorical, but that, as usual, has no direct bearing on its diversionary status.

<sup>61</sup> It might be objected that, when a poet becomes a regular user of pararhyme, as Yeats now was, pararhyme is itself 'expected' – but the expectation of 'normal' rhyme must still be dominant in a period when pararhyme remains the exception, not the norm, and when, in any case, Yeats himself (as in this poem) uses both.

<sup>62</sup> Including singing characters, like Ajax (above, p. 139).

voice, nor indeed to Greek-tragic voicing as such. One might think to relate it, distantly, to the 'lack of security and misplaced certainty in and about language [that] form an essential dynamic of the texts of [Greek] tragedy'<sup>63</sup> – but, within Greek tragedy, that paradox of non- or mis-communicative communication is not distinctively Sophoclean, whereas semantic diversion seemingly is. Furthermore, the most extreme instances of mis- or non-communication in Greek tragedy are, no doubt, moments of extra-rational absurdity or madness (real or notional) or inspired paranormality; and such disturbing contexts are neither distinctively Greek nor (it would seem) are they associated with diversionary effects. That is: the diversionary mode seems alien to the fraught encounters of Hamlet and Ophelia, of Lear and Kent and the Fool, of Cassandra and the chorus, or – to take a more recent example – of the tramps in *Waiting for Godot*.<sup>64</sup>

ESTRAGON: You stink of garlic!

VLADIMIR: It's for the kidneys. What do we do now?

E: Wait.

V: Yes, but while waiting.

E: What about hanging ourselves?

V: Hmm. It'd give us an erection!

E: An erection!

V: With all that follows. Where it falls mandrakes grow.

In such a sequence there is, no doubt, a weirdly unpredictable progression; but the extra-rational premises of the dialogue mean that expectation in the ordinary sense never (once again) feels to have been properly created, therefore is never felt to be properly unfulfilled. The diversionary mode itself, meanwhile, surely begins to look like a distinctive cast of writing, belonging perhaps to a distinctive cast of feeling, which is operative beyond the conventional categories (or institutions) of genre or performance, Greek or other.

### III

With all these various distinctions and implications in mind, we can more profitably assess some other diversionary moments in Sophocles. *Trachiniae* 221:

ἰδοῦ μ' ἀναταράσσει,  
εὐοῖ,  
ὁ κισσὸς ἄρτι βακχίαν  
ὑποστρέφων ἄμιλλαν.

<sup>63</sup> Goldhill (1986a) 2–3.

<sup>64</sup> Beckett, *Waiting for Godot*, I (stage directions omitted).

'Look, it excites me, the ivy, suddenly whirling me round in Bacchic . . .'  
 In Bacchic *what?* The answer will obviously be something like 'frenzy' or 'possession' or 'power'. But no: 'whirling me round in Bacchic ἀμιλλαν: rivalry, competition.' So the members of the chorus are 'competing' with each other – or *their* group with *other* unspecified 'rival' groups – in their eagerness to yield to the power of Dionysus? Greek choruses themselves, of course, do literally compete (in Dionysiac-festival contexts – ἐν ἑορταῖς ἀμιλλαι χορῶν);<sup>65</sup> and wherever there are competitions, there will be winners (ὄπου γὰρ ἀμιλλα, ἐνταῦθα καὶ νίκη),<sup>66</sup> but also losers. In this play, there will be no immediate winners, but, almost wherever one looks, losers; the chorus, like many another Greek chorus, is blissfully unaware of *that* . . .

Yes, of course, this chain of associations (one can hardly call it a line of thought) only needs to be spelled out to prompt a disclaimer, but the point is worth making that, once the semantic confines of a sequence are forced open, associations spill out – and that here it is Sophocles who is doing the forcing. As with νηλέα in the *OT*, however, the poet's commentators compete, in scholarly ἀμιλλα, to make the diversion seem less abrupt, less diversionary, by misplaced lexicographical legerdemain. This time, Jebb is representative. He glosses Sophocles' usage with 'the Bacchic competition of eager dancers' (which is fair enough), but at once adds, 'i.e. the swift dance itself.' In support of the equation, he offers the thought, 'ἀμιλλα is often thus associated with eager speed', and by way of defending that claim, compares *OC* 1062 and *Electra* 861, regardless of the fact that two Sophoclean passages don't amount to 'often', and that, in any case, both of those passages still do, or could be said to, carry the connotation of 'competition'.<sup>67</sup> One might rather note that the semantic adjustment is highlighted by the grammatical singularity of both κισσός and με.

There are several examples in the later parts of the *OC*. One has already been cited (1333). Here are two more. *OC* 1248:

ὥς καὶ τόνδε κατ' ἄκρας  
 δειναὶ κυματοαγεῖς  
 ἄται κλονέουσιν αἰεὶ ξυνοῦσαι,

<sup>65</sup> Pl. *Leg.* 834e. <sup>66</sup> Arist. *Rhet.* 1371a6.

<sup>67</sup> The two passages refer to horses/chariots outdoing one another (to which Jebb adds *Ant.* 1065, featuring the derivative ἀμιλλητήρας). The related verb ἀμιλλᾶσθαι is indeed standard usage (among its other standard usages) of 'haste', without competitive connotations (LSJ s.v. 11: Xen., Arist. etc.) – but this cannot have direct implications for the standard usage of the noun (cf. Silk (1974) 30–1) (nor, again, can the evidence of derivatives of the verb, like ἀμιλλητήρ). It may help to 'explain' how Sophocles arrived at the use of ἀμιλλα; it does nothing to make it other than the surprising usage that it is.

αἱ μὲν ἀπ' αἰλίου δυσμᾶν,  
αἱ δ' ἀνατέλλοντος,  
αἱ δ' ἀνὰ μέσσαν ἀκτῖν',  
αἱ δ' ἐννυχιάν ἀπὸ Ριπᾶν.

Oedipus' troubles (so the chorus insist) come from 'sunset' (west), 'sunrise' (east), 'mid-day' (south), and (with almost overpowering predictability, reminiscent of Yeats's 'Wandering Aengus'), 'midnight' (north) – only, 'midnight' is not what Sophocles says, nor, actually, would it be straightforward if he had said it. In this fourfold series, the first three items *are* straightforward. The phrases for 'sunset' and 'sunrise' are versions of standard expressions for the *direction* of sunset and sunrise, namely west and east: so Herodotus uses πρὸς ἡλίου δυσμέων and ἀπὸ ἡλίου ἀνατολέων.<sup>68</sup> The next phrase, ἀνὰ μέσσαν ἀκτῖν', likewise suggests 'mid-day' and thence 'south', by virtue of μέσσαν in particular. Through a simple and familiar metonym, that is,<sup>69</sup> 'by mid-ray' evokes a cluster of 'mid-' phrases that denote noon and the noon-day sun – from Homer's μέσον ἡμαρ to Herodotus' ἡλιος . . . διεξιῶν . . . τὸ μέσον τοῦ οὐρανοῦ<sup>70</sup> – while one particular pair of 'mid-' words, μεσημβρία and μεσημβρινός, point likewise to 'noon' but also to 'south' (Xenophon's πρὸς μεσημβρίαν . . . πρὸς ἄρκτον is representative) in standard fifth- and fourth-century usage, prose and verse.<sup>71</sup>

With the final member of the series, however, things are strikingly different. For a start, while the parallel structure ('sunset . . . sunrise . . . mid-day . . .') does prepare us unmistakably for 'midnight', and while there is a perfectly good and precisely parallel phrase for midnight (μέσαι νύκτες is standard Greek from Sappho to Herodotus and beyond),<sup>72</sup> Sophocles only gives us (adjectival) 'night' (ἐννυχιάν). At the same time, the structuring of course creates a strong expectation of 'north', and though in Greek usage there is very little evidence of any association

<sup>68</sup> Hdt. 7.115.1, sim. Aesch. *Pers.* 232, Hippon. 42.5; and Hdt. 4.8.2, sim. *Od.* 12.4, [Aesch.] *PV* 707.

<sup>69</sup> I.e. ἀκτίς (the sun's beams/rays) of the sun and its properties as a whole: Pind. *Ol.* 7.70, Aesch. *Pers.* 503, Soph. *Trach.* 685, Ar. *Av.* 1092 (lyr.). The distribution suggests a high-style cliché.

<sup>70</sup> μέσον ἡμαρ: *Il.* 21.111, *Od.* 7.288, *h.Hom.Ap.* 441, Pind. *Pyth.* 9. 113, Soph. fr. 255.5 Radt, Thgn. 998 (μέσσατον); ἡλιος . . . διεξιῶν κτλ., Hdt. 2.25.1. Other periphrases include: ἡλιος μέσον οὐρανοῦ ἀμφιβεβήκει, *Il.* 16.777, *Od.* 4.400; μεσοῦσα ἡ ἡμέρη, Hdt. 3.104.3; ἡλιον . . . μεσοῦντα, Thphr. *CP* 2.4.8; λαμπρὸς ἡλίου κύκλος | μέσον πόρον διήκει, Aesch. *Pers.* 505; ἐν αἰθέρι | μέσω κατέστη λαμπρὸς ἡλίου κύκλος, Soph. *Ant.* 416; πρὸς μέσας φλογὸς | ἀκτίνας, Eur. *Ion* 1135.

<sup>71</sup> Xen. *Anab.* 3.5.15, sim. Hdt. 2.8.1: LSJ *s.vv.*

<sup>72</sup> Sapph. 168b 2–3 Voigt; Hdt. 4.181.4, 8.76.1; likewise e.g. Anan. 5.9 West, Thuc. 8.101.3, Ar. *Vesp.* 218. Likewise e.g. νύκτα μέσην, Hdt. 8.9; νύξ . . . μεσάτη, *Il.Parv.* 9 Bernabé; μεσουνύκτιος, Pind. *Isth.* 7.5, Hp. *Morb.* 2.48, Eur. *Hec.* 914; μεσόνυξ, Stesich. 82 Page (the 'Midnight Star', probably referring to the planet Mars: Bicknell (1968)).

between 'north' and either 'midnight' or indeed simply 'night' on its own,<sup>73</sup> 'north' is suggested, but – instead – by a quite unrelated and much bolder metonym. In place of the anticipated 'midnight', Sophocles' chorus give us 'night Winds', ἐννυχιάων ἀπὸ Ρῖπᾶν, where 'Winds' connotes 'north' by allusion to the fabled 'Windy' – Rhipaeian – mountains, whose location was uncertain, but which were generally thought to be northern.<sup>74</sup> The chorus' closing phrase, then, doesn't mean (that is, denote) 'north', or not in the way that the three preceding items in the fourfold series mean 'west', 'east', 'south'. It means 'north' by connotation – but however strong one takes that 'northern' connotation to be, there can be no doubt that Sophocles has diverted the point of impact quite sharply, by activating quite different connotations of the word as well. These 'so-called' Ρῖπαι, as Aristotle puts it, two generations later, are the stuff of λόγοι μυθώδεις:<sup>75</sup> fabled indeed. In an odd way, expectation is both satisfied and displaced – displaced, not least, by a sudden evocation of the remote and the fabulous, at the very limits of the known world. A striking diversion, this, to challenge the hugeness of such a majestic parallel structure, and at the climactic end of a choral ode, too. Nothing works out quite as expected for Oedipus, not even the symmetry, or the graspable limits, of his woes.

At *OC* 1662, a textual uncertainty complicates the issue, but without casting doubt on the diversionary effect itself:

οὐ γὰρ τις αὐτὸν οὔτε πυρφόρος θεοῦ  
 κεραυνὸς ἐξέπραξεν οὔτε ποντία  
 θύελλα κινηθεῖσα τῷ τότ' ἐν χρόνῳ,  
 ἀλλ' ἢ τις ἐκ θεῶν πομπός, ἢ τὸ νερτέρων  
 εὐνουν διαστάν γῆς ἀλύπητον [οἷ ἀλάμπητον] βᾶθρον.

The textual uncertainty concerns the four-syllable adjective attached to and preceding βᾶθρον:

<sup>73</sup> Notwithstanding incidental collocations like that at *Alcm.* 90 (and loose connections, like that at *Arist. Mete.* 354a28–33), night is generally associated with the west, if with any particular quarter, from *Hes. Theog.* 213–15 (where Νύξ gives birth to the Hesperides) onwards: see further n. 74 below.

<sup>74</sup> *Hr. Aer.* 19, on Scythia: ἡ χώρα . . . κεῖται . . . ὑπ' αὐτῆσι τῆσιν ἄρκτοις καὶ τοῖς ὄρεσι τοῖς Ρῖπαιοῖσιν, ὅθεν ὁ βορέης πνεῖ. See further Jebb on *OC* 1248 and Bolton (1962) 39–45. *Alcman* 90 Page Ρῖπαι, ὄρος ἀνθέου ὕλας, | νυκτὸς μελαίνης στέρνων (cited by schol. on *OC* 1248) suggests that 'Rhipae' (pl.) was already a proper name, but as the name of a single mountain; one may infer that the make-up of the referent was itself as uncertain as its location. The *Alcman* fragment also suggests that the Rhipae might be associated with night, though not (in itself) that north was associated with night (cf. n. 73 above); indeed schol. loc. cit. (in line with Greek associations, though against the text in front of him) actually says that Sophocles' ἐννυχιάων points to the west (ἐννύχια διὰ τὸ πρὸς τῇ δύσει κείσθαι: *Parageorgius* (1888) 452).

<sup>75</sup> αἱ καλούμεναι Ρῖπαι κτλ.: *Arist. Mete.* 350b7–8.

- (a) ἀλάμπητον Lγρ Q – descriptive epithet of βάθρον.  
 (b) ἀλύπητον L rell. (et fort. Pollux 3.98)<sup>76</sup> – predicative adjective attached to βάθρον, but qualifying the whole phrase.

These look remarkably like actors' variants – rather than either one being the product of scribal corruption – and, despite the best efforts of commentators over the years, it is not clear how one is to decide between them.<sup>77</sup> With either text, though, a diversionary adjustment at the end of the sentence is powerfully operative, and, as with the Πιπᾶν of *OC* 1248, it takes effect in the final segment of a fourfold parallel structure. Near the end of his long report on Oedipus' last hour on earth, the messenger tells of our hero's miraculous disappearance. Oedipus was 'done away with' – but by what or by whom? No θεοῦ κεραυνός did for him, and no ποντία θύελλα either: no *thing* brought about his end, we infer. No, it was either ἐκ θεῶν πομπός, a 'guide' from heaven, or (the parallelism urges us to suppose) some equivalent *being* from the underworld – which is now precisely what the opening words of this final possibility seem to confirm. That is: τὸ νερτέρων εὖνουν – 'the well-disposed < . . . > of <unspecified pluralities> in the lower world' – must, of course, look forward to a noun like (say) γένος, and a periphrastic phrase of a kind familiar enough in Sophoclean tragedy: θεῶν γένος (*Ajax* 398), δύστανά γένη βροτῶν (*Philoctetes* 178), θνητὸν ἀνδρῶν καὶ ταλαίπωρον γένος (fr. 945.1). Such a phrase, indeed, would recall one that Oedipus himself has used earlier in *OC* itself: πόλιν τε . . . εὖνουν . . . καὶ γένος τὸ πᾶν (772–3).

But no. The noun we actually, eventually, get is βάθρον, in a quite different phraseological complex, which substitutes for the expectation of some underworld *being* or *beings* a topographical agency – a place, a *thing* – that is not, in any ordinary sense, an agency at all. In their particular sequence, meanwhile, the words between εὖνουν and βάθρον complicate matters further. With διαστάν, 'parting', we have, at first, a fleeting

<sup>76</sup> Cf. Jebb. on *OC* 1661f.

<sup>77</sup> (a) Both variants have good manuscript authority. (b) The form ἀλύπητος is attested for Sophocles himself and the century following (*Trach.* 168, *Pl. Leg.* 958e), whereas ἀλάμπητος is not otherwise attested before the Hellenistic age: *h.Hom.* 32.5, *AP* 9.540, along with four verse inscriptions in Peek *GVI*, 662.3 (11/1 BC), 701.5 (11 BC), 1826.3 (11/111AD), 2002.5 (1 BC). (c) ἀλάμπητος is a recherché kind of formation for early poetry (but cf. e.g. ἀμάχητος, *Aesch. Sept.* 85, *Soph.* fr. 813 Radt). (d) ἀλάμπητον is a more straightforward descriptive adjective with βάθρον (which in tragedy does attract comparably physical epithets, such as αἰπεινόν *Soph. Phil.* 1000, χαλκοῖς *OC* 1591, ὑψηλόν *Ant.* 854), whereas ἀλύπητον is more surprising (predicative: 'brought about his disappearance without pain' – cf. Kamerbeek on *OC* 1662) – but in a diversionary context, that counts for little. (e) The messenger's words in 1063–4 (ἀνὴρ γὰρ . . . οὐδὲ σὺν νόσοις | ἀλγυνός) might be taken as a gloss on ἀλύπητον in particular, as well as a comment on the whole sentence in general. (f) ἀλύπητον is certainly *lectio difficilior*. Is that enough to tip the balance in its favour?

impression of some unexplained 'dispute' among the 'well-disposed' (just as Homer's Agamemnon and Achilles, once in common cause, 'parted in strife', διαστήτην ἐρίσαντε,<sup>78</sup> so, perhaps . . .) – before we grasp, with γῆς and what follows, that διαστάν points to a strange, physical, 'parting', that γῆς and βάθρον are in grammatical collusion, and that the whole sequence is now a whole – complete and at an end – albeit this new 'wholeness' is not exactly straightforward, subsuming as it does both a 'kindly pedestal' (εὐνοῦν . . . βάθρον)<sup>79</sup> and an unkindly double genitive (νερτέρων . . . γῆς . . . βάθρον). The adjective ἀλύπητον (if right) adds to the sense of dislocation (*not juste*), with an unforeseen predicative force; ἀλάμπητον (if right) makes for a slightly less eventful final phrase. Either way, and all in all, this is a remarkable piece of writing, with the mystery of Oedipus' disappearance enacted in miniature by the unfolding complications of the sequence, along with the disappearing trick implicit in the diversionary technique itself.

## IV

In his discussion of Sophoclean sentences, Budelmann ponders a possible connection between idiom and *Weltanschauung*, between the kind of restructuring that interests him and a vision of reality beyond the dramatic fiction: 'Sophocles' sentences, whose beginnings so often give wrong clues about their continuation, make it easy to believe that they react to something in the world. Like the world itself, they provide material for much speculation but remain ultimately unpredictable.'<sup>80</sup> And he restates the thought in terms of a listener's, or reader's, 'trust' in this outside reality, offering a contrast with the trivializing self-referentiality of Gorgianic prose: 'Sophoclean sentences . . . can create trust in a world that exists beyond their words. Rather than pointing at themselves as some Gorgianic sentences do, they are unpredictable and therefore often appear to reflect the equally unpredictable world beyond them.'<sup>81</sup>

One may commend this relating of style and world-view, but query the conclusion. All Greeks of Sophocles' era knew that (as Housman's parody puts it) 'life is uncertain', but it is surely no part of the Greek *mentalité* to find any comfort in the thought, such that language reflecting this

<sup>78</sup> *Il.* 1.6, with διαστήτημι as in LSJ s.v. 11.2.

<sup>79</sup> In itself as abrasive as (though distinct from) the combinations of tenor adjective and vehicle noun discussed in Silk (1974) 142–4.

<sup>80</sup> Budelmann (2000) 59. <sup>81</sup> *Ibid.* 92.

uncertainty would be likely to inspire 'trust' of any kind.<sup>82</sup> At any rate, the diversionary moments that I am concerned with seem to point in a different direction altogether. They are abrasive; they create momentary dislocation; they imply a kind of challenging open-endedness – the kind (to jump, like Budelmann, from words to worlds) that one finds in the complex of hopes and fears and mysteries that marks the closing sections of the *Oedipus Coloneus*,<sup>83</sup> and the kind summed up, more succinctly, in the closing words of *Trachiniae*. This is not the place for any comprehensive assessment of the 'resolution', or otherwise, of Sophoclean endings.<sup>84</sup> Suffice it to say that *κούδεν τούτων ὁ τι μὴ Ζεὺς* represents both acceptance of life as it is (Nietzsche's 'pessimism of strength') and a closure that is no closure.<sup>85</sup> Whatever the banality of some tragic 'last words', this is magisterial elusiveness writ large.

Σοφοκλέα ἐκ Σοφοκλέους σαφηνίζειν? – not necessarily, and, in the present case, surely not. The ultimate significance of Sophocles' diversionary language is not apparent from Sophocles on his own. I appeal to the example of Yeats to expose what I take to be its underlying logic. That logic is visible, not least, from one of his very last poems, 'The Circus Animals' Desertion'.<sup>86</sup> In this remarkable piece, Yeats reviews his whole career, and identifies the peculiar kind of higher escapism that, with great humility, he now presents as characteristic of his work from the outset. Specifically, he pinpoints a life-long ability to supplant underlying logic itself by the memorable 'images' of that logic:

Players and painted stage took all my love  
And not those things that they were emblems of.

Those masterful images because complete  
Grew in pure mind but out of what began?  
A mound of refuse or the sweepings of a street,  
Old kettles, old bottles, and a broken can,  
Old iron, old bones, old rags, that *raving slut*  
*Who keeps the till*. Now that my ladder's gone  
I must lie down where all the ladders start  
In the foul rag and bone *shop* of the heart.

<sup>82</sup> If one *were* to go down this road, one might perhaps invoke J. P. Stern's principle of 'realism' as bridge-building between the known and unknown: Stern (1973) 170–1.

<sup>83</sup> See in particular Easterling (1999b) 106 and Easterling (2006).

<sup>84</sup> On Sophoclean endings in general, see Roberts (1987) and Roberts (1988).

<sup>85</sup> *Trach.* 1278; Silk and Stern (1981) 255–6; Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, 'Attempt at a Self-Criticism', 1 ('Pessimismus der Stärke').

<sup>86</sup> Finished late in 1938, and printed as the penultimate piece in 'Last Poems' (1939): text (and dating) in Albright (1994) 394–5.

Yeats offers first a distressing list of street 'sweepings' that make up 'a mound of refuse', from 'old kettles' to 'old bones, old rags'. This sequence, though, suddenly makes way, in the final item, for a human embodiment of such 'refuse', in the shape of 'that raving slut | Who keeps the till'; and 'keeps the till' now gives rise to an adjusted 'masterful image' of, not just 'old bones, old rags', but 'the foul rag and bone shop'. That 'slut' is diversionary, and this 'shop', insistent though not fully articulated, is diversionary too. Despite the 'slut' and the 'till' that point to it, one no doubt anticipates that the 'lying down' will take place on the street, among the sweepings, in the (much more conventional) gutter.<sup>87</sup> And what that insistent 'shop' insists on is the sudden thought that the sources of inspiration are not just sordid, or prosaic, but transactional, beyond the individual – a thought that survives even when the location (of sources and of shop) finally switches back to the individual's inner reality 'of the heart'.

Revealingly, meanwhile, Yeats's diversionary move to the 'raving slut' coincides with a harsh switch to pararhyme, in what had seemed an orderly rhyming sequence ('complete'/'began', 'street'/'can', but now 'slut'/'gone'), before a formal consonance ('start' : 'heart') makes the final admission of the unwelcome underlying logic ('the foul rag and bone shop of the heart') itself 'complete', even while a larger, all-encompassing modality is itself seen to be open-ended ('I must . . .').

While resisting any facile equivalences, I think it is fair to raise the question whether the diversions in Sophocles – and not least, perhaps, their effective presence in the late and painful *OC*<sup>88</sup> – ultimately signify the hard-won ('masterful') reality of the complete that is also the open-ended: challenging and satisfying, both; magisterial and elusive, both.<sup>89</sup>

<sup>87</sup> 'We are all in the gutter, but some of us are looking at the stars': Oscar Wilde, *Lady Windermere's Fan*, Act I (1892).

<sup>88</sup> Facile equivalences apart, it is intriguing to recall that Yeats made his own version of the *OC* (*Sophocles' Oedipus at Colonus: A Version for the Modern Stage*, published in 1934, but originally produced by the Abbey Theatre in 1927). That version, based largely on Jebb's prose translation, was itself largely in prose, but includes two striking verse sequences, published as 'Colonus' Praise' (in *The Tower*, 1928: text in Albright (1994) 263–4) and 'A Man Young and Old, xi: From *Oedipus at Colonus*' (added to *The Tower* in 1933: *ibid.* 273). However, nothing in the two verse sequences, or in the translation as a whole, seems to bear on the present argument.

<sup>89</sup> The same might be said of the diversionary presence in the painfully open-ended *Aeneid*, which closes 'with waste in full view and redemption out of sight': Silk (1988) 182.

*The French Oedipus of the inter-war period*

Fiona Macintosh

In the performance history of ancient plays, one of the most productive periods in that tradition occurs during the 1920s and 1930s in France.<sup>1</sup> How do we account for the proliferation of versions at this time, and especially for the six reworkings of Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus* – by Georges du Bouhéliier (1919), Stravinsky/Cocteau (1927), Cocteau himself (*La Machine infernale* (1934; *Oedipe-Roi* 1937), as well as those by André Gide (1932) and George Enescu (1936)?

It would, of course, be possible to explain this flowering of mythical rewritings with reference to the dominant status of the (largely seventeenth-century) neo-classical tradition in France: to replicate *le grand siècle* with its dramatic highlights, any subsequent age would have to take its cues and bearings from ancient drama. Additionally, the use of ancient myth no doubt afforded opportunities to playwrights in the inter-war period to explore contemporary issues with the safety of mythical distance, just as it had done previously in France's theatrical history and exactly as it would continue to do down to the present day. During the *ancien régime*, questions of kingship were routinely explored with reference to Oedipus; and in the inter-war period, Oedipus could be invoked to challenge authority in a world where Church and State had only relatively recently been made separate in 1905. Furthermore, Oedipus in the early twentieth century had acquired further accretions: with Freud's identification of the so-called

<sup>1</sup> 1919 *Oedipe, roi de Thèbes* by Georges du Bouhéliier, dir. Firmin Gémier at Cirque d'Hiver; 1922 *Antigone* by Jean Cocteau, dir. Charles Dullin, Théâtre d'Atelier; 1927 *Oedipus Rex* by Stravinsky/Cocteau, Ballets Russes, Théâtre Sarah-Bernhardt; 1929 *Amphitryon 38* by Jean Giraudoux, dir. Louis Jouvet, Comédie des Champs-Élysées; 1931 *Asie* by Henri Lenormand, dir. Georges Pitoëff, Théâtre Antoine; 1932 *Oedipe* by André Gide, dir. Georges Pitoëff, Théâtre des Arts; 1934 *La Machine infernale* by Cocteau, dir. Louis Jouvet, Comédie des Champs-Élysées; 1935 *La guerre de Troie n'aura pas lieu* by Giraudoux, dir. Louis Jouvet, Théâtre d'Athénée; 1936 *Les Perses*, Aeschylus, La Groupe d'Antique du théâtre de La Sorbonne; 1936 *Oedipe* by George Enescu, Opéra; 1937 *Oedipe-Roi* by Jean Cocteau, dir. Cocteau, Théâtre Antoine; 1937 *Électre* by Giraudoux, dir. Louis Jouvet, Théâtre d'Athénée; 1938 *Médée* by Darius Milhaud, dir. Charles Dullin, Opéra.

Oedipus complex, myth in general, and this episode in the myth of the House of Labdacus in particular, provided a key to understanding the human psyche and its role within human activity.

Is it, then, possible to account for this mythical efflorescence in the theatre simply with reference to neo-classical precedent and/or the distance afforded to the playwright by the use of ancient subject matter? And in the case of the Oedipus plays, in particular, can we invoke the Freudian intervention alone? Plausible as all these explanations are, they provide only part of the picture: first, they fail to offer any understanding of the broader role played by classics during this period; and, secondly they ignore the power of more recent theatrical precedent in shaping this exceptionally vigorous moment in the performance tradition of ancient drama.

In many ways, it is imperative to look beyond Freud, towards the intellectual and cultural trends surrounding the First World War, which led to a reinstatement of the status of the classical past amongst the French literary and cultural elite. Indeed, the intellectual, cultural and educational developments in the first three decades of the century provide us with an understanding of the broad cultural context of the 'roaring' twenties, and can account for the readiness with which the ancient models could be both accepted and understood. To explain the dominance of Oedipus within the French tradition, however, it is necessary to look towards France's theatre history as well; and especially to the towering tragédien of the Comédie Française, Jean Mounet-Sully, whose legacy extends way beyond his death in 1916 until at least the advent of the Second World War. Indeed it is the impact of Mounet-Sully's Oedipus, both in the theatre and on the screen, that can be said to have played a central role in determining and shaping the subsequent dramatic treatments of the 20s and 30s. In many ways, these ancient/modern, insouciant Oedipuses seem tired, trivial even, and sometimes downright embarrassing to early twenty-first-century sensibilities. In part this is because they appear at the end of a tradition, of which they often appear self-consciously aware. Jacqueline de Romilly characterizes the dominant tone of the French reworkings of this period as 'irreverent'.<sup>2</sup> In order to appreciate the multivalency of this irreverence, it is vital to witness this developing Oedipal tradition against a cultural background in which the status of the classical world is being hotly contested.

<sup>2</sup> De Romilly (1960) 171, in conversation with Pierre Boyancé, Jacques Heurgon and Jacques Maudel.

## CLASSICS IN FRANCE IN THE PRE- AND POST-WAR PERIOD

Pre-war Modernism had scandalously rejected the 'classical' heritage as it was defined by the so-called Parnassiens – the group of poets during the second part of the nineteenth century, the most celebrated of whom was Leconte de Lisle. Disillusioned by the thwarting of their revolutionary aspirations and with the rise of Napoléon III, the Parnassiens had set their focus on the past (ancient Greece) and the exotic (India), and the access given by those imaginary spaces to a permanent, abstract (and so inviolable) concept of Beauty.

The Greece of the Parnassiens is evoked with close attention to historical detail; its Beauty conveyed through strict adherence to formal constraints (usually neo-classical alexandrines). Following the publication of his translation of Aeschylus in 1872, Leconte de Lisle wrote his first play – an adaptation of the *Oresteia* entitled *Les Erinnyes*, which was premiered at the Odéon on 6 January 1873. Most of the press attention focused on the poet's choice of what was considered the obscurity of the play's title, when the familiar *Les Furies* would have been expected.<sup>3</sup> Indeed Leconte de Lisle's preference for Greek spellings was so controversial – and deemed so pedantic by his critics – that it led to a heated public debate in which the classical scholar Louis Ménard intervened in his defence.<sup>4</sup> For de Lisle, Truth included historical truth as much as it did any abstract concept that he found to be woefully absent in the quotidian world created under the reign of Napoléon III.

Even if the work of the Parnassiens began to feel outmoded once the Symbolists uncovered other layers of reality beneath the historical veneer, the longevity of their impact well into the twentieth century can be gauged through the performance history of Leconte de Lisle's play. In *Les Erinnyes* the Olympians are significantly absent because the poet has translated Aeschylus' text into a play of human revenge absolutely: there are lengthy disputes between the aggrieved parties drawn from both the *Agamemnon* and the *Choephoroi*, but Leconte de Lisle has chosen to omit the final play in the trilogy altogether. The Furies appear in the prologue and dominate the ending as they emerge (just as they do in Sartre's *Les Mouches* some sixty years later) to haunt Orestes following the matricide. In marked contrast to the other late nineteenth-century versions of the *Oresteia*, *Les Erinnyes* does not show, let alone celebrate, any way out of the cyclical pattern of

<sup>3</sup> Desonay (1928) 264–5. As late as 1917, Léopold-Lacour in Gavault (1918) 243 feels it is important to draw attention to the play's title even though it was then well-established within the repertoire.

<sup>4</sup> Ménard (1887) 1. 318–19, cited in Desonay (1928) 267–8.

revenge; nor does it allow any prospect of reconciliation between the city and its avenging spirits. This angry and pessimistic text was said to have been saved only by the humanity of Jules de Massenet's score in 1873.<sup>5</sup>

However, by the time of the play's revival in the ancient Roman theatre at Orange in 1897, when it was performed in a double bill with Sophocles' *Antigone* (in the translation of Meurice and Vacquerie, which had been used for the Mendelssohn/Tieck production of 1844), it seems to have found both an appropriate performance space and an appreciative audience.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, the ongoing Dreyfus affair made this pessimistic revenge play seem chillingly topical; and the subsequent revivals of *Les Erinnyes* at the Odéon are testimony to its continuing resonance into the immediate aftermath of the war as well. Moreover, Leconte de Lisle's translations of all three tragedians (Aeschylus in 1872, Sophocles in 1877 and Euripides in 1885, which in turn inspired his rewriting of Euripides' *Ion*, *Apollonide*, which was premiered posthumously in 1896) remained the standard route for those without Greek into ancient drama well into the 20s. André Gide's encounter with his work in 1888, for example, proved seminal because he found in the Parnassien's focus on pagan beauty a welcome antidote to the strictures of Christian authority, to which the young Gide had been forced to conform since birth.<sup>7</sup>

It would not be wide of the mark to see Leconte de Lisle as the father not just of the Parnassiens, but also of the pre-war writers of the adaptations of ancient plays which were staged in the classical matinées at the Odéon and in the open-air theatres of southern France at the start of the century. In the ancient theatre at Orange alone, during the ten years following the production of *Les Erinnyes* in 1897, audiences were able to see new versions of *Alceste*, *Pseudolus*, *Iphigenia in Tauris*, *Phoenician Women*, *Hecuba*, *Helen*, *Medea* and *Cyclops*, as well as numerous other classically-inspired plays.<sup>8</sup>

What the Modernists resisted was the Parnassiens' concern with external detail – their dependence upon the archaeological findings over the last hundred years or so – and their desire to incorporate within their art works the findings of the all-encompassing German classical scholarship,

<sup>5</sup> Macintosh (2005) 158–162; Léopold-Lacour (1918) 254 on Jules Lemaitre's comments.

<sup>6</sup> Mariéton (1928). <sup>7</sup> Watson-Williams (1967) 8–16.

<sup>8</sup> 1899 *Alceste* of Georges Rivollet; 1900 *Pseudolus* of Jules Gastambide (with Gluck's *Iphigénie en Taurides*); 1902 *Les Phéniciennes* of Georges Rivollet (with Jules Lacroix's *Oedipe-Roi* of 1858); 1903 *Oedipe et le Sphinx* of Joséphan Péladan (Hugo von Hofmannstahl's *Ödipus und die Sphinx* 1906, was inspired by its performance at Orange this year); *Iphigénie* of Jean Moréas together with *Les Phéniciennes*; 1906 *Hécube* of Lionel des Rieux; 1907 *Hélène* of Roger Dumas; 1908 *Le Cyclope* of Léon Riffard and *Médée* of Catulle Mendès (which had premiered at the Théâtre Sarah-Bernhardt in 1898). For details of the Orange productions, see Mariéton (1928); and for the young poets of this period generally, see Knowles (1934).

*Altertumswissenschaft*. Indeed, for Leconte de Lisle, art and science should be inseparable, as they had been in ancient Greece. The Symbolists led the way with their resistance to scientific clarity and their discovery of what they designated the inner realism of ancient myth (myth now provided a route back to the source of all creativity rather than a means of 'recovering' an authentic history of an ancient people). It was the Cassandra scene in the *Agamemnon* that fascinated the Symbolists; not the revenge plot and its unravelling that had provided Leconte de Lisle's focus in his refiguring of the *Choephoroi*.<sup>9</sup>

Parallel developments in psychology and in anthropology showed modernist theatre practitioners alternative, and very often 'oriental', parallel realities to those of the ancient paradigms. *Iphigenia amongst the Taurians* could now be presented with reference both to Frazer's *The Golden Bough* and to contemporary travellers' tales. Modernist performances often shocked their early audiences – the Ballets Russes' production of Nijinsky's *L'Après-midi d'un faune* (1912), to Debussy's score and danced against a backdrop of Greek-style friezes by Bakst, is but one notorious example. The Modernists caused outrage because their work ruptured traditional moral codes (witness Nijinsky's simulated orgasm at the end of the ballet) and because they made deliberate breaks with deeply entrenched aesthetic conventions (such as Nijinsky's leotard and sandals and his profile, red-figure vase-style movement patterns). Dissonance and incongruity, as opposed to the Parnassiens' order and clarity, were the ideal values to which all Modernist art forms were seen to aspire.

Just as literary and cultural Modernism sought to challenge and distance itself from earlier classicizing traditions, so there was now a general resistance to the classical tradition *per se* and especially to what was seen as its outmoded hegemony within the educational system. The secondary curriculum at the end of the nineteenth century was still based on the pedagogical methods of the Jesuit Colleges of the *ancien régime*: the vast majority of pupils followed a strict syllabus of Greek and Latin grammar and exegesis, whilst only a minority studied modern languages or science. What was increasingly perceived as a fundamentally irrelevant and elitist system of secondary education led to a Parliamentary enquiry into education from 1899–1902, which resulted in the abolition of compulsory Latin from secondary schools and provided further opportunities for the study of modern languages and the sciences.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Macintosh (2005) 158–61.

<sup>10</sup> Between 1865 and 1880 62% followed the classical secondary curriculum whilst only 32% followed the modern (languages/science) curriculum. By 1894 this had become 53% classical, 47% modern;

The 1902 educational reform was broadly welcomed as a bold attempt to make France into a modern, secular republic; and with hindsight it can be seen as a prerequisite for the 1905 Act which finally separated Church from State. For some, the 1902 legislation did not go far enough in curbing the classical curriculum; for others, the abolition of compulsory Latin was primarily an attack on the Church from predominantly Jewish and Protestant reformers.<sup>11</sup> The most notorious and eloquent of the critics was Charles Maurras, one of the founders of the classicizing *École Romane* in 1891, and a founder in 1899 of the extreme right-wing party that was to remain prominent in France for the next half century, *L'Action Française*. After the Dreyfus affair, Maurras devoted his considerable literary and intellectual powers to a combination of 'belles lettres and bigotry'.<sup>12</sup> His critique of democracy, republicanism and modern French politics in general drew its so-called evidence from the experience of ancient Athens. According to Maurras, what was needed was a rejection of German Romantic ideology which had led to the Revolution, and a return instead to the order of neo-classicism which alone could orientate France during the political turmoil of the *fin de siècle*.<sup>13</sup>

During the First World War, however, Maurras's extreme anti-German and neo-classical position of the 1890s was diluted and to some extent shared by many within the beleaguered nation state. Modernism was increasingly identified with German cultural imperialism and particularly German nationalism: even Picasso abandoned Cubism because it was 'German' and was deemed to have provided the German army with the template for its camouflage helmets. In 1918, the director of the Odéon pronounced: 'By becoming aware of what the Germans wanted to destroy, the French are reattaching themselves even more tenderly, first to the soil of the Nation, secondly to national monuments and finally to their literary heritage.'<sup>14</sup> The loss of over one-and-a-half million French lives during the war had led

and by 1900 the modern syllabus was just in the majority. Zeldin (1977) 240–51. For general comment on the syllabus at this time, see Winock (2002) 307–9.

<sup>11</sup> Zeldin maintains that the classicists got much more from these reforms than 'they should', 252. For the opponents' denigration of the reformers, see Hanna (1996) 174.

<sup>12</sup> Coward (2002) 317.

<sup>13</sup> See McClelland (1970) 261–3 for Maurras' 'Note on the classical spirit' (originally published in a collection of essays entitled *Romanticism and Revolution* (Paris 1922)), in which Maurras argues that 'By a deplorable error, perhaps the result of schoolday or teacher prejudice, [Hippolyte] Taine, our master, has been misguided enough to qualify as classical the spirit which prepared the Revolution.' Instead Athenian history, argues Maurras, 'shows the superiority of aristocracies and of other regimes based upon firm authority . . .'

<sup>14</sup> Léopold-Lacour in Gavault (1918) vi–vii: 'En prenant conscience de ce que les Allemands ont voulu détruire, les Français se sont rattachés plus tendrement, d'abord au sol de la Patrie, ensuite aux monuments de l'art national, enfin au patrimoine littéraire.'

to an overwhelming conviction that culture was central to the nation's survival; and key to that appreciation and perpetuation was an understanding of the classical roots of France's culture.

Classics, thus, now assumed a new significance and provided a rallying point against Germany for both radical republicans and cultural conservatives alike. Classical scholarship and classical literature became briefly synonymous with a positive 'cosmopolitanism'; and they were held up as a means of uniting Europe, north and south, against the narrowness of German nationalism.<sup>15</sup> Now Athens, for the French republicans, was once again their political forebear: liberty, equality and fraternity all had their roots in Athens. Although the conservative classicizing trend, with its neo-royalist sympathies and its cultural nationalism, was to continue to act as the central cultural plank of Maurras's proto-fascist *Action Française* throughout the 20s, the brief 'classical' consensus during the war and in its immediate aftermath led to a second wave of significant educational reform in 1923.

This reform was designed to give the humanities and the sciences equal weight and status within the secondary curriculum. It was overseen by the conservative republican Minister of Education, Léon Bérard, who succeeded in winning over the sceptics, for whom any reform designed to put the learning of classics back into the heart of the secondary curriculum was retrograde. Bérard persuasively argued that the Revolution was an (essentially Hegelian) Graeco-Roman-French synthesis; and he succeeded, albeit briefly, in uniting the 'Athenian' democratic republicans with the 'Roman' royalists over the need for a return to the classics in order to understand France's cultural history.<sup>16</sup> The 1923 legislation overturned the earlier reforms of 1902 and made the learning of Greek and Latin once more compulsory (Latin for four years, Greek for two) in boys' secondary schools in France. In the inter-war period, therefore, classics again provided a *lingua franca* for a very significant percentage of the French population. But since the alliance was simply an emotional one, brokered only in the immediate wake of the terrible losses experienced during the war, it didn't last long. Indeed with the increasing prominence of the *Action Française*, and the growing virulence of its anti-semitic rhetoric, the classical heritage was subjected to widely divergent appropriations during the 1920s and 1930s.

#### OEDIPUS IN THE FRENCH TRADITION

It was impossible to conceive of Oedipus at the end of the century and well into the first part of the new century without reference to the

<sup>15</sup> Hanna (1996) 142-76. <sup>16</sup> Hanna (1996) 238.

performance of Jean Mounet-Sully. He first took over the role in 1881 at the Comédie Française, but the translation used in his performance by Jules Lacroix dates from 1858. More Romantic than Parnassien in spirit, Lacroix's text is nonetheless cast in strict neo-classical rhymed alexandrines; and Lacroix's aim had been to reproduce Sophocles honestly and faithfully for his age. Moreover, Mounet-Sully's first appearance in the role at Orange in 1888 inaugurated the tradition of performing ancient plays in the Roman theatre.<sup>17</sup>

Lacroix's text was equally admired by at least one theatrical critic for bringing to light the source of the boulevard melodramas that pulled in the crowds in the popular theatres of Paris.<sup>18</sup> This 'popular' element is well brought out in Mounet-Sully's accounts of his rehearsal techniques: Mounet-Sully claims to have pared down the Lacroix text in rehearsal in order to render it fully accessible to late nineteenth-century ears. He translated *Oedipus*' confrontation with Tiresias, for example, into a cabaret brawl; Jocasta in the vernacular of the street becomes for him 'une femme du peuple'. Mounet-Sully is suddenly struck by the passionate intensity of all the characters, seen thus in the raw, and claims thereby to reveal to himself the Theban tragedy in all its sublime horror.<sup>19</sup>

By stripping off the layers of self and text, Mounet-Sully is, of course, anticipating the parallel that Sigmund Freud so eloquently expressed between the experience of watching *Oedipus Tyrannus* and the practice of psycho-analysis. If Freud found the source of his psychoanalytic theory in Sophocles' treatment of the *Oedipus* myth, there is no doubt that Mounet-Sully's interpretation of the role made a considerable impact on him and his contemporaries.<sup>20</sup> Mounet-Sully also influenced the next generation of avant-garde theatre practitioners – notably Isadora Duncan, Lillah McCarthy, Ludmilla Pitoëff – as well as the writers of the next generation, and especially those who wrote an *Oedipus*, principally Bouhélier and Enescu.

What was it about Mounet-Sully's acting that enabled him to inspire the Modernists? His performance style was essentially sculptural and thus part of a long tradition in the theatre in which the ideal performer's art is comparable to a sculpture. As a sculptor himself, he was said to self-sculpt and like the Parnassiens, with whom he was a contemporary, he prized archaeological detail. He modelled his performances on well-known sculptures in the Louvre and attended lectures on classical costume by

<sup>17</sup> Lacroix (1874); Mariéton (1928). <sup>18</sup> Premaray (1858). <sup>19</sup> Vernay (1888) 138.

<sup>20</sup> Jones (1953) 194 refers to the impact Mounet-Sully's performance had on Freud. There is, however, some debate as to whether Freud actually saw the star perform in the role. See Armstrong (forthcoming).

Léon Heuzey, with practical workshops too.<sup>21</sup> This stage sculpting was dependent on the stage pictorialism of the nineteenth century and also, most importantly, on its star system. The star, Mounet-Sully's Oedipus, was thrown into sharp relief as the lonely Freudian individual in search of his own identity.

In many ways, Mounet-Sully represents the pinnacle of a long-standing tradition – the Winckelmannesque sculptural ideal. But he is also the supreme performer and thus adumbrates and even ushers in the performance styles of the succeeding generation. In 1945 Cocteau recalled Mounet-Sully in the role of Oedipus many years earlier:

Suddenly an arm emerged from behind a column. This arm brought with it a profile, similar to a Greek shepherd's crook, to Minerva's helmet, to the horse at an angle on the pediment of the Acropolis. This profile sat on top of an astonishing breastplate, on a chest full of melodious roaring.<sup>22</sup>

What is striking here is Cocteau's vivid memory (and it is a memory of an event at least thirty years previously because Mounet-Sully's last performance was in 1915 at the Sorbonne) of a bas-relief that only belatedly emerges as a three-dimensional shape as it comes out fully from behind the column. This memory may well provide us with a clue to the durability of his acting style: like the Modernists – and most famously Nijinsky in *L'Après-midi d'un faune* – the 'star' performer's frontal style of acting gives way here to a profile performance; and it was this ability to act in profile that enabled his performances to translate so well into the recently inaugurated open-air theatres of southern Europe.<sup>23</sup>

Similarly, it was this profile performance delivery that enabled his ready and successful involvement in the twentieth century's most popular and truly pioneering art form, cinema. It may be surprising that the actor, who was renowned for his extraordinarily powerful voice (he was from all accounts an accomplished baritone), turned to silent film in the last phase of his life. But his dependence upon 'gestes' and the versatility of his delivery would have made that transition a particularly appropriate one. Indeed, it is probably his cinematic work that secured his longevity; and in many ways, it is his film version of *Oedipus Tyrannus* that was his greatest legacy to the performance tradition of Oedipus in the inter-war period.

<sup>21</sup> Vernay (1888) 138.

<sup>22</sup> '... soudain, un bras sortait d'une colonne, ce bras entraînait un profil pareil à la houlette du berger grec, pareil au Casque tête de Minerve, pareil au cheval de l'angle du fronton de l'Acropole. Ce profil se dressait sur l'étonnante cuirasse d'une poitrine pleine de rugissements mélodieux.' Cocteau (1945) 5.

<sup>23</sup> See further Macintosh (2009).

Mounet-Sully's silent film of *Oedipe Roi* of 1912, in which he performed and which he directed, was released not just in France but in the USA (January 1913) and Austria (March 1913).<sup>24</sup> It was unusually long (it lasted just over one hour and is therefore longer than any other extant silent film of an ancient play of the period). It is its structure (which can be inferred from the publicity surrounding it and stills in the French Bibliothèque du Film – the film itself has not survived) that is most striking: the first act involves Oedipus' encounter with the Sphinx, in which Oedipus (we infer from the German Censor), unlike his Greek counterpart, kills the Sphinx and then decapitates her and brings the head to Thebes. Only the last two acts involve the Sophoclean play. Although both Joséphan Péladan and Hugo von Hofmannsthal had treated this part of the legend in the theatre, the film is an attempt to recast the Oedipus story in filmic terms.

What is significant in terms of the inter-war Oedipal tradition, is how the film version encouraged the viewer to 'read' the myth differently. *Oedipus Tyrannus*, the neo-Aristotelian paradigm, admired in France as the pinnacle of tragic form since Dacier's commentary of 1692 on the *Poetics*, had for obvious reasons never previously been so radically recast. But now with the very different demands of the new genre, Sophocles' retro-active plot is refigured as *Bildungsroman*. Oedipus' life as evolutionary, causal plot was, of course, central to Freud's reading of the myth which dictated a return to the 'roots' of Oedipus' trauma. But for Freud – as with the Sophoclean plot and equally with the analyst's method – that journey was always a retracing of steps rather than a linear development, unfolding in time. For Otto Rank, however, Freud's surrogate son, the encounter with the Sphinx was central to the myth because it was here that the primary trauma of birth was articulated.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, with the developments in anthropology, in which myths were being read both across time and across cultures, the Oedipus myth was liberated from the Sophoclean straitjacket in a way that it had not been since the Renaissance.

#### OEDIPUSES IN THE 20S

It is this new evolutionary structure which lies behind many of the versions of Sophocles' tragedy that appeared in France over the next two decades – Bouhéliier's *Oedipe, roi de Thèbes* (1919, directed by Firmin Gémier, at the

<sup>24</sup> For this paragraph I am indebted to Pantelis Michelakis for allowing me to see copy of various papers which will form part of his forthcoming monograph on film and Greek tragedy for Oxford University Press.

<sup>25</sup> See Rank (1924).

Cirque d'Hiver), Cocteau's adaptation, *La Machine infernale* (1934, directed by Louis Jouvet at the Comédie des Champs-Élysées), and Enescu's *Oedipe* (dating from early 1920s but not premiered until 1936). Gide's *Oedipe* (1932, directed by Georges Pitoëff at the Théâtre des Arts) may not trace the earlier episodes of Oedipus' life in sequential order, but it does broaden the Sophoclean streamlined plot to include the brothers/sons, Polynices and Eteocles and the sisters/daughters, Antigone and Ismene. However, it is the Stravinsky/Cocteau *Oedipus Rex* (1928, Ballets Russes, Théâtre Sarah-Bernhardt) that is the exception that proves the rule, with its close (albeit truncated) similarity to Sophocles' tragedy. Not only do these Oedipuses look back in various ways to Mounet-Sully's performances both on stage and on screen, but they often do so self-consciously signalling their position within a well-established Oedipal tradition.

What is striking about the first of these inter-war French Oedipuses, Bouhéliier's *Oedipe, roi de Thèbes*, is that it is another radical recasting of Oedipus for popular consumption; and more particularly, it is strongly reminiscent of a medieval mystery play, with its octosyllabic verse form, familiar style and paratactic structure. Although Bouhéliier himself had been inspired by Mounet-Sully's performances as Oedipus, he deliberately set out to resist what he deemed the restrictive, neo-classicizing alexandrines of Lacroix's text. He also strongly rejected the Parnassien, German-inspired 'scientific'/authenticating trend in the appropriation of ancient tragedy, which he felt had reduced the artist to a slavish archaeologist. Instead, he sought to remake the material for his contemporaries, just as the ancient tragedians had done; and like them, to write for an inclusive audience, in class terms.<sup>26</sup>

As early as 1901 Bouhéliier had written that 'the theatre will shortly become a place for the celebration of the sacred rites in which the people may participate';<sup>27</sup> and his collaboration in 1919 with the actor-manager, Firmin Gémier, made that aspiration a serious one. Gémier planned a genuine 'people's theatre' at the Cirque d'Hiver (he went on to become the first director of the Théâtre National Populaire); and the audience members were to be very far from the *haut bourgeois* spectators at the Comédie Française. During one performance of *Oedipe, roi de Thèbes*, Bouhéliier was delighted when a team of firemen, lured into the circus ring by the excitement generated by the performance, wandered onto the set.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Blanchart (1929) 52-3.

<sup>27</sup> Bouhéliier (1901), in Preface to *La Tragédie du nouveau Christ* cited in Knowles (1967) 302.

<sup>28</sup> Blanchart (1929) 123n. 1.

Gémier took his cue in many ways from the Austrian theatre director, Max Reinhardt, in his choice of venue, as well as in his decision to put *Oedipus* on stage together with a huge crowd of extras; but he went even further than Reinhardt in trying to recreate the performance conditions of the Festival of Dionysus in Athens. In addition to the play, with its cast of two hundred (including javelin and discus throwers and high jumpers), he sought to recreate in the interval an Olympic Games (five years before Paris hosted the Games in 1924) and to make theatre truly 'popular'. In 1919 Bouhéliier and Gémier showed radical republicans how the Athenian example could be invoked to advance the cause of liberty, equality and fraternity. Audiences loved it; but critics were less enthusiastic – this was a *Gesamtkunstwerk* that was too ambitiously inclusive.<sup>29</sup>

Bouhéliier's recasting of Sophocles is radical indeed: with three acts and thirteen tableaux which take the spectators from Corinth to Thebes, from the interior of the Theban palace to a road outside the city walls. If we look for a forebear to *Oedipe, roi de Thèbes*, the best place to start is Dryden and Lee's Shakespearean/Sophoclean/Senecan *Oedipus*. Bouhéliier's earlier scenes of domesticity between Jocasta, her nurse and the children recall the Dryden and Lee intimate scenes between husband and wife; and the political agitation of the Theban people is not unlike the scenes of the baying mob in the English Restoration *Oedipus*.<sup>30</sup> Bouhéliier's play moves effortlessly between a tragedy of state and a domestic tragedy – even the appearance of *Oedipus* after the blinding occurs in Jocasta's room, when following the Nurse's scream, a blood-besmeared *Oedipus* terrifies his own children as he claws the walls and literally [re-]pollutes his wife/mother when he touches her in desperation.<sup>31</sup>

If we detect Shakespeare as influence in these early scenes, Seneca's imprint emerges in the final scene, when Bouhéliier's blinded *Oedipus* (played by Gémier himself) wends his way into exile, as ritual scapegoat, with *Antigone* at his arm. In this final scene, as in Seneca, *Jocasta* comes centre stage, when following *Oedipus* and *Antigone*'s exit, she begins her own slow descent down the monumental staircase towards the plaintive crowd below. There in the circus ring, she begins a highly plangent, ritualized dance of agony in their midst, strikingly reminiscent of the 'hysteric' case study of *Elektra* in Hofmannstahl/Strauss' opera.<sup>32</sup>

If the parallels with Shakespeare and Dryden and Lee make Bouhéliier's text sound rather old-fashioned, the final dance of *Jocasta* was very much

<sup>29</sup> Blanchart (1929) 124.

<sup>30</sup> Hall and Macintosh (2005) 1–29.

<sup>31</sup> Bouhéliier (1919) 203.

<sup>32</sup> Bouhéliier (1919) 228.

*au courant* with its psychologically probing significance. Enescu's opera, similarly inspired by Mounet-Sully's performance, was begun in 1909, largely written in the early 20s, but not produced until 1936, when it received a monumental production at the Opéra with 350 players, including singers, chorus and dancers.<sup>33</sup> The libretto by the poet Edmund Fleg charted the fortunes of Oedipus from birth until his end at Colonus. Freud's imprint is felt in Oedipus' anxieties about incestuous dreams; and anthropological readings of Oedipus as scapegoat in Act III, following his self-blinding and departure from Thebes together with Antigone, soon give way to Christianized readings of a redeemed Oedipus by the end of Act IV.<sup>34</sup> The riddle is changed by Fleg into a question concerning who has power over destiny, but since the answer 'Man' remains unchanged, Enescu's *Oedipe* ultimately becomes a vindication of its protagonist's human-centred response. The opera's Wagnerian epic sweep and its use of leitmotifs may well draw attention to the period of its genesis; but critics at its première did not seem to find it outmoded. And as with Bouhéliier's text, Enescu/Fleg's diachronic presentation of a noble, suffering and fate-beset hero met with popular acclaim: here again was an Oedipus, in Enescu's words, in whom 'people . . . [could] find . . . something common to themselves'.<sup>35</sup>

Stravinsky's opera-oratorio, by contrast, met with no such critical acclaim at its première in 1927. Even if the repressed Freudian subtext creeps in with the echoes of Bizet's *Carmen* in Jocasta's arias,<sup>36</sup> Stravinsky produced an Oedipus out of his time – distant rather than empathetic – and in a form that was streamlined rather than prolix. Bouhéliier's text deliberately eschewed the restrictive alexandrines of neo-classical tragedy, whereas the desire for order, reason and clarity embodied by the neo-classical ideal is clearly reflected in Stravinsky's *Oedipus Rex*. Though hardly 'French', and thus representative of the very cultural diversity that provided the source of the vibrancy in 20s Paris, Stravinsky's opera-oratorio can be said nonetheless in its use of Latin to be very close to the post-war French, Catholic conservative classicizing traditions.

Stravinsky had admired Cocteau's highly compressed *Antigone*, when he saw it in 1923 at the Théâtre d'Atelier, and he asked Cocteau to produce a similarly condensed *Oedipus*. Stravinsky promptly pared down Cocteau's text even further and arranged for it to be translated into Latin by the priest, Jean Daniélou. For Stravinsky, the language had to be lapidary and elevated;

<sup>33</sup> Malcolm (1990) 156.   <sup>34</sup> Ewans (2007) 106–14.

<sup>35</sup> Kotlyarov (1984) 107/9, cited in Ewans (2007) 114. For the reception of the première, see Malcolm (1990) 158–9.

<sup>36</sup> See Walsh (2002) 24 for the allusive nature of *Oedipus Rex*.

and following Stravinsky's recent conversion to Orthodox Christianity, the music drew on plainsong and the Easter Orthodox liturgy, making Oedipus into a quasi-priestly figure as well as a kind of ritual scapegoat (as he had been at the end of Bouhélier's version and the end of Enescu's third act). Despite the numerous allusions to baroque and Romantic composers for all the characters, Oedipus, in Stravinsky's conception, is less everyman than archetype – not at all like the flesh and blood Oedipuses which are generally characteristic of the inter-war period.

The 1927 première at the Théâtre Sarah-Bernhardt in Paris was only a concert performance because Stravinsky (perhaps deliberately) continued to write the score up until the last minute.<sup>37</sup> The libretto shows that Cocteau had planned to use masks for all the characters except Tiresias, the Shepherd and the Messenger; and movement for all the other singers was to be limited to arms and heads. The masked Chorus in the original designs are half-observed by an ascending staircase upon which they are grouped in three tiers; and Oedipus and the main characters were to give the impression of 'living statues'.<sup>38</sup> Now we can see this hieratic and pared down piece as characteristic of the period; and with the visual symmetry in Cocteau's set, we can detect parallels with the cinema of the period as the Eisenstein-inspired designs by Farrah for the British première brought out some years later.<sup>39</sup> In some ways this static, highly charged, high Modernist paring down was an intensification of many of the strengths of the late nineteenth-century Comédie Française house-style; but in its use of masks it was removed from both the star system that produced Mounet-Sully and the subsequent 'demotic' versions by Gide and Cocteau himself.

#### OEDIPUSES AGAINST THE MACHINE

In many ways, Cocteau got his own back on Stravinsky's editorial sleight of hand on his libretto when his *La Machine infernale* appeared at the Comédie des Champs-Élysées in 1934. Here paratactic form replaced the hypotactic structure favoured by Stravinsky, with the Sphinx scene of Act II being presented as if in flash-back (the narratorial Voice explains that this episode in fact occurred simultaneously with the opening scene on the battlements).

This modern dress, *boulevardien* vernacular version refuses to allow its audience to forget about the ancient myth's connections with the world

<sup>37</sup> Walsh (2002) 25.   <sup>38</sup> See Nice (1991) for an excellent account of the designs.

<sup>39</sup> The British première took place at Sadler's Wells in 1961, directed by Michel Saint-Denis with designs by Abd'Elkadder Farrah.

outside the theatre: Jocasta is despised by the people because of her foreign (do we infer 'German'?) accent and her weakness for Tiresias (her analyst?), to whom she confides her dreams. The shadowy figure of Créon, who only appears in the final act, is chief of police; and in this class-obsessed, enervating city (first beset by the Sphinx, later by the plague), there is always a discontented mob fomenting trouble in the background. As the Soldier explains, it is only dead kings who communicate with the people of Thebes.<sup>40</sup>

In place of aesthetic order, then, Cocteau now substitutes mechanisms of political control. Furthermore, on both the visual and thematic levels in the first production, the Machine of the title, in which the paradigmatic Oedipus is entrapped by the Gods, was replicated on the stage in Christian Bérard's designs. Here a 4 × 4 metre platform served as the performance space and gave the illusion that the characters were being manipulated by a greater, all-seeing force.<sup>41</sup> As with the Speaker in Cocteau's libretto for Stravinsky's opera-oratorio, the Voice who provides a summary at the start of each act further serves to distance the audience from the characters whose fates they appear to be watching from afar.

For Cocteau, as he openly admitted, the character of Oedipus dominated his *oeuvre* – even when he was not the subject in hand; and this was because Cocteau's own life narrative could only be written with reference to Oedipus' own, and especially the Freudian Oedipus. Even if Sophocles' protagonist didn't suffer from the Oedipus complex, Cocteau (who had lost his father young and who had an overly close mother) felt that he himself did; and his own creative work became the space in which he sought to unearth his childhood emotions.

The Voice, in the first production the recorded voice of Cocteau himself, explains to the audience before the characters appear how the parricide and the incest have occurred. The first (explicitly and parodically) Hamlet-like act of *La Machine infernale* introduces the Freudian mother-son motif, which then reaches its crescendo in the third act, in Jocasta's vibrant red bedroom, 'red like a small butcher's shop'.<sup>42</sup> The large bed covered in white furs, with an animal skin at its foot, dominates the set; but the inclusion of the incongruous cradle transports the scene far away from the tacky venality of any low-budget pornographic film into the world of psychoanalytical theory, especially when Oedipus rests his head upon his own cradle. For the actress Marthe Régnier, who played Jocasta, this was a daring scene, upon which her reputation would either stand or fall. The

<sup>40</sup> Cocteau (2006) 63.    <sup>41</sup> Lieber in Cocteau (2006) 12.    <sup>42</sup> Cocteau (2006) 97.

critics were divided (Colette was ecstatic), but today it all feels horribly dated.<sup>43</sup> A revival at the Lyric Hammersmith in London in 1986 met with howls of derision when the set of Act III opened to reveal a vulva-like entrance to the bed-chamber.

The centrality of the episode with the Sphinx to Cocteau's version is, as we have seen, in keeping with developing psychoanalytical theory. Cocteau's Oedipus may have been at the top of his year in his studies in Corinth, but he is no cerebral hero and no swashbuckling adventurer of the kind played by Mounet-Sully in his silent film. He is arrogant, deeply ambitious, selfish and unfeeling (even in his dealings with his wife/mother); but he is more a teenager with promise than a complete wastrel. Cocteau's Sphinx gives Oedipus the solution to the riddle because of his irresistible powers of seduction; but later on this Oedipus pretends to Jocasta that he has killed the Sphinx with a knife.

Even if Oedipus fails to play the hero of the mythical and theatrical traditions, he is nonetheless acutely aware of his failing: after the Sphinx has died for him, he agonizes about how best to carry his quarry into town. He decides against carrying her body, arms outstretched, in front because it reminds him of an unconvincing tragic actor from Corinth, who took the part of a king grieving over his dead son: 'That pose was pompous and didn't move anyone.'<sup>44</sup> Finally Cocteau's Oedipus decides that Heracles with his lion is his best model and he slings the corpse over his shoulder.

This Oedipus is indeed no hero in a traditional sense: he doesn't seek to rid Thebes of the plague when it descends seventeen years later in the last act. The events only start to unravel once news arrives from Corinth of Polybus' death. Cocteau's Oedipus may grow in stature in this final act, but it is largely because he finds himself in a world ridden with class prejudice and snobbery, which he vehemently denounces in his search for the truth of his own origins.

It is undoubtedly this diachronic account of the life of a beautiful and doom-laden hero that attracted Cocteau to Sophocles' play.<sup>45</sup> When Stravinsky's opera/oratorio received its famous production (available on recording) at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées in 1952, with Cocteau as Speaker, it also included a number of *tableaux vivants* designed by Cocteau

<sup>43</sup> Lieber in Cocteau (2006) 18–20 for the play's contemporary reception.

<sup>44</sup> Cocteau (2006) 91: 'Pas ainsi! Je ressemblerais à ce tragédien de Corinthe que j'ai vu jouer un roi et porter le corps de son fils. La pose était pompeuse et n'émouvait personne.'

<sup>45</sup> In 1937 Cocteau directed his uncut version of *Oedipe Roi* at the Théâtre Antoine, with the exquisite costume designs of Coco Chanel. Oedipus' white swaddling bands wonderfully set off the body of Jean Marais (Cocteau's young lover at the time), making this Oedipus the lothario again – although this time it was Oedipus as gay icon *par excellence*.

himself (taken from his last film *Le Testament d'Orphée*). These *apparitions* punctuated the libretto and visually injected the events from *La Machine infernale* into Stravinsky's honed-down text (notably the plague, the sphinx, the bedroom scene, the daughters). If *La Machine infernale* was Cocteau's revenge on Stravinsky, this expanded production of *Oedipus Rex* showed that Cocteau had temporarily, at least, conquered the imperious Russian. In 1963, however, it seems Stravinsky had the last word when he denounced both Cocteau's *tableaux* and his Speaker.<sup>46</sup>

When Gide had seen Cocteau's *Antigone* in 1924, in marked contrast to Stravinsky, he had been appalled at what he felt was its snapshot view of its subject.<sup>47</sup> His version *Oedipe*, written towards the end of his life, was a contemporary version that did not sacrifice the Sophoclean form. The three-act structure of Gide's play bears much resemblance to Sophocles' tragedy in its retrospective unravelling of Oedipus' past; its only formal gesture towards the contemporary wide-angled versions is its inclusion of Oedipus' brothers/sons, Polynices and Eteocles, its magnification of the roles of Ismene and Antigone, and the epigraphs to each act which are drawn from *Antigone*, *Phoenician Women* and *Oedipus at Colonus* respectively.

The Oedipuses of this period are not simply aesthetically untrammelled, as we have seen; and what Gide's play shares with Cocteau's, and what makes it so very different from the Mounet-Sully model, is its self-reflexive and occasionally burlesque tone which encourages a kind of aesthetic distance. Gide's Oedipus introduces himself as a '*personne*' at the start of the play – a person (not a king) and also a character in the play. For Gide, as for Cocteau, there is a strong sense that his Oedipus is appearing at the end of a long tradition. If Mounet-Sully's Oedipus was noble and cerebral, and Cocteau's Oedipus beautiful, arrogant and sentient, Gide's Oedipus is man of action, self-made and increasingly a man on a trajectory towards intellectual discovery. Furthermore, Gide's Oedipus (like Cocteau's in the final act) is man at war with authority, especially divine authority.

For the sixty-year-old Gide especially, and for the radicals of his own and Cocteau's generations, the classical tradition provided an alternative to Christian authority. In Gide's case that meant repressed and repressive Protestantism. The inclusiveness of Hellenism, and especially its tolerance of sexual diversity, enabled Gide to negotiate his own sexual development.<sup>48</sup> Just as Cocteau's Oedipus and Jocasta are finally liberated from social

<sup>46</sup> Boucourechliev (1996) 26–31. <sup>47</sup> Jones (1950) 98, citing Gide's journal, 16 Jan. 1923.

<sup>48</sup> See Watson-Williams (1967) 13–16.

conventions and transported to the realm of 'the people, poets and the pure of heart',<sup>49</sup> Gide's hero is free of conventional belief and proud of his bastard state. For Oedipus, unlike Creon, there is nothing particularly shocking about the incestuous desires his sons have for their sisters, nor for the filial/conjugal love he feels at one and the same time for Jocasta.<sup>50</sup> Ancient Greece is liberating for France trapped in a world dominated by Christian (essentially Catholic) orthodoxy. At the end of Gide's *Oedipe*, Oedipus blinds himself in a defiant gesture of free will against the merciless and treacherous divine authority, whose structures of power on earth (typified here by Tiresias) are based on fear. Even the pious Antigone at the end of his play renounces the Church and finds God in her heart and in the company of her atheist father.

It is the very modernity of the myth that makes it important for both Gide and Cocteau; and it is the clash that it affords between conformity and independence of mind, between the modern world and the ancient spirit, that makes it urgent. The original production of Gide's *Oedipe* gestured towards 'German' archaeological accuracy under Pitöeff's direction at the Théâtre des Arts: simple as the set was, it was very Greek in conception. Pitöeff's Russian accent in the part of Oedipus was deemed problematic; and he failed miserably, to the chagrin of some critics, to wear his *peplos* authentically in marked contrast (it was noted) to Mounet-Sully. The main problem, however, was the mismatch between the aspirationally authentic Greek set and costumes and the topicality of the language and the jokes. For this reason, Gide much preferred the set for the later Darmstadt production in June 1932, where the Notre Dame de Paris was projected behind the neo-classical building in the foreground.<sup>51</sup> The modern had to be conjoined with the ancient to make this *Oedipe* speak to contemporary audiences.

The occasionally flagrant burlesque tone in both Cocteau and Gide's versions is not only one born out of deep familiarity with the classics; it is also because they are writing at a time when the avant-garde was publicly settling scores with a conservative and predominantly Catholic cultural elite, whose Classics had none of the liberatory qualities that made it so potent a force for the radicals. The 'irreverent' tone detected by de Romilly in these inter-war versions is not so much directed towards the ancient texts, nor at the Catholic Church *per se*. It is aimed primarily at those who sought to abuse both the ancient texts and the Church in their attempts to

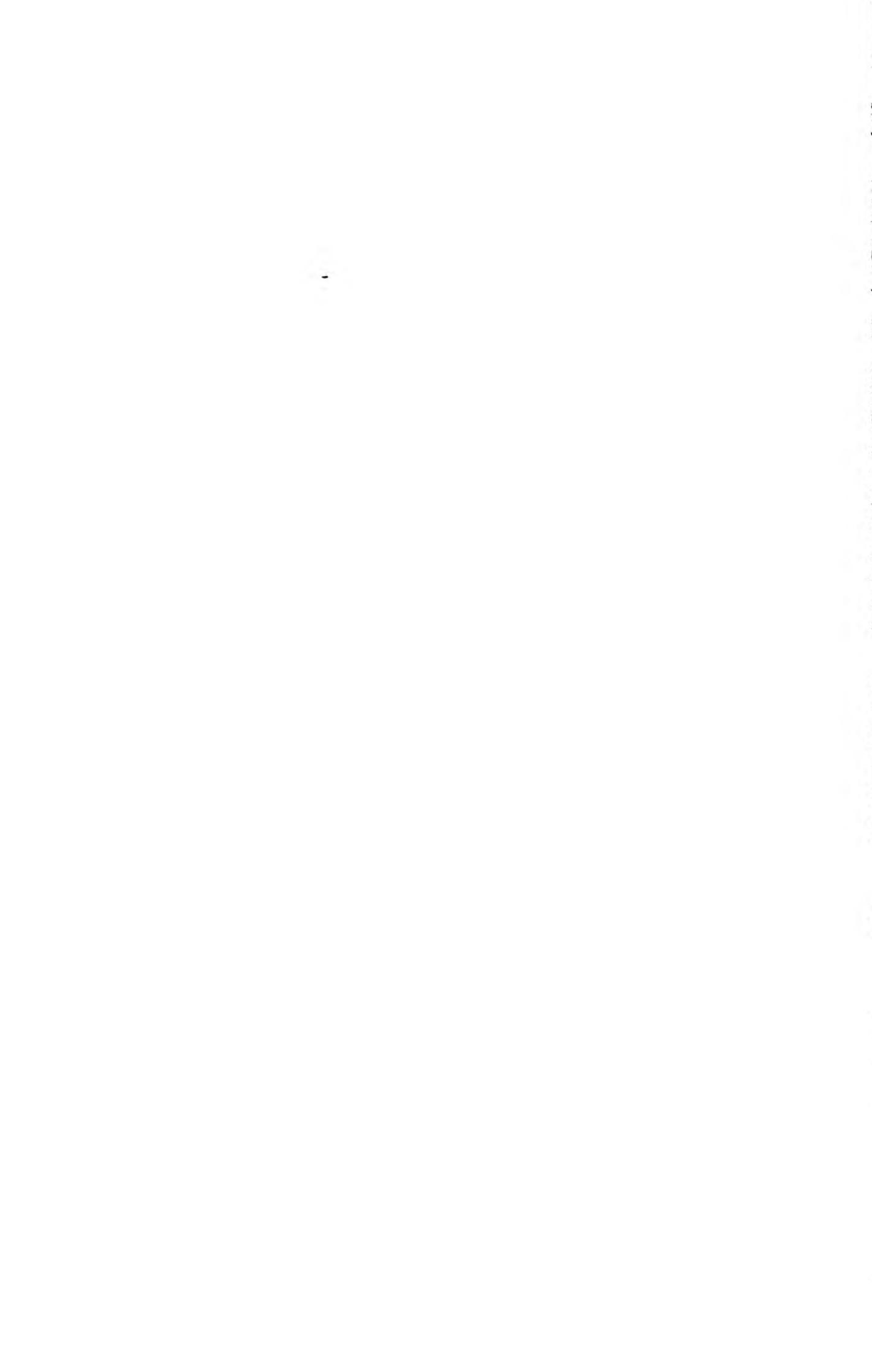
<sup>49</sup> Cocteau (2006) 134: 'Au peuple, aux poètes, aux coeurs purs.' <sup>50</sup> Gide (1942) 263.

<sup>51</sup> Knowles (1967) 217.

advance their political goals. This tone was thus profoundly radical in a way that is hard for us to appreciate and easy for us to overlook. By dethroning Oedipus and the star of the Comédie Française, by putting him in line with the ordinary man, Gide and Cocteau invite us to see Oedipus as the figure who showed his audiences how to resist the authority structures that oiled the Infernal Machine, which ultimately led France to Vichy.

PART THREE

*Constructing tragic traditions*



*Theoretical views of Athenian tragedy in the  
fifth century BC*

*Kostas Valakas*

A corollary of the ancient tradition of tragic poetry and its theatrical performance was the eventual emergence of theoretical discussions of its nature and function. The first volume of the Cambridge series *Sources of Dramatic Theory*, as edited by Sidnell *et al.* (1991), opens with passages of dismissive criticism of the arts from Plato's *Republic* 3 and 10, along with the extant first book of Aristotle's *Poetics*. These philosophical works probably date, respectively, from the 370s and early 320s BC. They are generally held to be the earliest known systematic theories of Athenian tragedy and comedy, in that they set out general critical ideas, themes, speculations and principles about poetry and the visual arts, Homer, tragedy and comedy in a systematic form. Excerpts of the alleged views of great tragedians about their art have been preserved in later texts, but there is no evidence of any theoretical texts on theatre from the fifth century itself, except for Gorgias' fragments 11 and 23.<sup>1</sup> 'However,' Sidnell notes, 'it seems likely from echoes in contemporary dramatists (Euripides, for example, and most notably Aristophanes) that such matters as criteria of poetic excellence, standards of taste, stylistic parody, suitable topics for dramatic competition, and so on, were at least the subject of cultivated conversation in Socrates' and the sophists' day.'<sup>2</sup> Traces of such late fifth-century discussions can indeed be

Since the 1980s Pat Easterling, to whom this book is dedicated, has offered me the profound human contact and interaction which should be involved in all teaching and research. The influence of her approach to Athenian tragedy can be also traced in this text.

I am grateful to the editors Edith Hall and Simon Goldhill who kindly invited me to contribute to the volume. I would also like to thank Pantelis Michelakis, Eleni Papazoglou, Pantelis Lekkas, Eleni Sakali and Evelyenia Makriyanni for their generous help and inspiring comments.

<sup>1</sup> For Aeschylus', Sophocles' and Euripides' alleged statements see, respectively, Radt (1985) 69–70, Radt (1999) 53–4, 69–70, Kannicht v.1 (2004) 114. References to fragments of the Presocratics, including Xenophanes and the Sophists, like Gorgias here, are from the 6th edn of Diels and Kranz in 2 vols. (1951–2); references to frs. of Archilochus, Theognis, Solon and a sympotic fr. of Simonides are from the 2nd edn of West in 2 vols. (1989–92); references to frs. of Sappho, Alcaeus and Simonides are from Campbell's vols. 1 (1982) and 111 (1991); and references to comic frs. are from the edn of Kassel and Austin in 8 vols. (1983–2001).

<sup>2</sup> Sidnell *et al.* (1991) 14; cf. Dover (1992) 4–12.

found in comic passages and Platonic dialogues, yet it is only reasonable to suppose that both poetological themes, like those mentioned by Sidnell, and performance matters should have concerned audiences and judges at the Great Dionysia from an early stage. My intention is to investigate the development of theoretical views of Athenian tragedy from within the tragic tradition itself in the fifth century. My main evidence will be the tragic texts and fragments themselves, including Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, *Bacchae* and other plays by Euripides in addition to the Sophoclean corpus. Equivalent fifth-century theoretical issues relating to Old Comedy will not be examined, although they are just as important for the ancient Greek theory of theatre. As Conti Bizzarro remarked, for example, fr. 152 of Cratinus, from his comedy *Odysseuses*, a parody of the Odyssean story of the Cyclops dating from the early 430s, seems to have laid emphasis on the theatrical medium of comedy.<sup>3</sup>

Words for the Athenian theatrical performances, genres and acting must have been in use throughout the century, but the special terms *theatron*, *theatai*, *drama*, *tragōidia*, *tragōidikos*, *tragikos*, *tragōidos*, *kōmōidia*, *kōmōidikos*, *didaskalos*, *didaskein*, and *hupokritēs* are first attested in Herodotus, Cratinus and Aristophanes – and the terms for comedy *trugōidia*, *trugōidikos*, *trugikos*, *trugōidos* only in Aristophanes – as late as the 420s.<sup>4</sup> The extensive

<sup>3</sup> Conti Bizzarro (1999) 16, 58–61. For critical comments on poetry, dramatists and drama in fifth-century comedy see Sommerstein (1992), Conti Bizzarro (1999) 13–26.

<sup>4</sup> The theatre: *theatron*, Hdt. 6.67.3; *theatron*, Thuc. 8.93.1. The same word often means the spectators: *theatron*, Hdt. 6.21.2; *theatron*, Ar. Ach. 629, *Knights* 233, 508, 1318, *Peace* 735, Plato com. fr. 167. The spectators: *theatai*, Ach. 442, *Knights* 36, 228, 1210, *Clouds* 521, 535, 575, 890, 1096, *Wasps* 54, 1013, 1016, 1071, 1527, *Peace* 1115, *Birds* 446, 753, 786, *Frogs* 909, 919, 1118, *Eccl.* 583, 1141; also *theōmenoi*, Ach. 497, *Clouds* 518, *Frogs* 2, *Eccl.* 888.

Tragedy: *drama* (no related adjective in fifth-century texts), Hdt. 6.21.2, Ach. 415, 470, *Peace* 795, *Thesm.* 52, 149, 151, 166, 849, *Frogs* 920, 923, 947, 1021; and *tragōidia*, Cratinus fr. 276.2, Ach. 400, 412, 464, *Knights* 401, *Wasps* 1511, *Peace* 148, *Birds* 101, 1444, *Lys.* 138, *Thesm.* 450, *Frogs* 90, 95, 798, 802, 834, 862, 913, 935, 1120, *Plutus* 423. *Tragōidein*, to make tragedies: *Clouds* 1091, *Thesm.* 85. Adjectives: *tragikos*, Hdt. 5.67.5, *Peace* 136, *Frogs* 1005, Ar. fr. 156, 9; and *tragōidikos*, Ach. 9, *Frogs* 769, *Plutus* 424; cf. *tragōidikē technē*, the art of tragedy, *Frogs* 1495. Satyr play: *saturoi*, only in *Thesm.* 157.

Comedy: *kōmōidia*, Ach. 378, *Clouds* 522, 534, *Wasps* 66, *Frogs* 15; and *trugōidia*, Ach. 499–500 cf. Taplin (1983b), Hall (2006) 330–3. *Kōmōidein*, to use as a theme in comedy, Ach. 631, 655, *Peace* 751, *Plutus* 557, cf. *kōmōideisthai*, *Wasps* 1026, *Frogs* 368. Adjectives: *kōmōidikos*, *Wasps* 1020, 1047, *Eccl.* 371, 889, Aristophanes fr. 31; *trugikos*, Ach. 628; *trugōidikos*, Ach. 886; and *kōmikos*, Alexis fr. 103.13.

The dramatist: *poiētēs* (see Herington (1985) 104–6), cf. *tragōidopoios*, *Thesm.* 30; *kōmōidopoiētēs*, *Peace* 734; *poiētis* for dramatic poetry, *Frogs* 868, 907, 1366; *trugōidopoiomousikē*, the art of comic poets, Ar. fr. 347.1. *Didaskalos*, the person who stages a play (normally the dramatist himself): Cratinus fr. 276, 3, Ach. 628, *Peace* 738; cf. *kōmōidodidaskalos*, *Knights* 507, *Peace* 737; *kōmōidodidaskalia*, *Knights* 516; *tragōidodidaskalos*, *Thesm.* 88. *Didaskein*, to stage a play and teach the performers: Hdt. 6.21.2, *Frogs* 1026; cf. *didaskesthai*, *Knights* 401. (*Didaskein*, *didaskalos*, *drama* and *theatēs* are also used in tragedy, but never clearly linked with performances. For the performance-related words *agōn*, *epideixis*, *schēma*, *sēmeion* and *theōria* see Goldhill (1999b) 1–8.)

explicit parody of Euripides' *Telephus* (438 BC) in *Acharnians* (425 BC) is a form of what we call reception of tragedy, and the preserved plays and fragments demonstrate that comic poets, at least of Aristophanes' generation, were inclined to exploit and comment on tragedy in the framework of comedy.<sup>5</sup> In fr. 342 of the older comic poet Cratinus, the coined participle *euripidaristophanizōn* makes fun of theatrical innovations that had taken place by the mid-420s.<sup>6</sup> It follows epithets describing somebody whose tendency to subtle rhetoric and gnomic expressions could equally appear either in Euripides or Aristophanes. Cratinus' critique of the younger generation of dramatists seems to be directed against their indiscriminate use of rhetoric, suggesting a theoretical principle of altering and mixing previously distinct dramatic genres. Moreover, Snell considered the *Frogs* (405 BC) as the starting point for later discussions about tragedy, poetry, rhetoric, and their influence on audiences.<sup>7</sup> He was not certain which critical ideas in the *Frogs* 'were formulated by Aristophanes himself, and which are the views of his contemporaries, or perhaps even the common heritage of his age'.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, Snell claimed that 'in the field of rhetoric Aristophanes is the source whence the genres of diction, the grand and the simple, were originally obtained',<sup>9</sup> and that Aristophanes 'created the categories by means of which Greek and then Roman literary criticism reflected on the classical writers'.<sup>10</sup> Be that as it may, it has to be stressed that Cratinus fr. 342 and Aristophanic plays parody contemporary or traditional personalities and forms of cultural life – tragedy included – in direct ways. These forms of parody, on the one hand, rely upon the awareness of theoretical speculation

*Hypokritēs* for actor only occurs in *Wasps* 1279. Tragic performers: *tragōidoi*, *Wasps* 1480, 1498, 1505, *Peace* 531, 806, *Birds* 512, 787, *Thesm.* 391. Comic performers: *trugōidoi*, *Wasps* 650, 1537, *Ar.* fr. 156, 9; and *kōmōidoi*, *Lysias* 21.4. As Pickard-Cambridge, Gould and Lewis suggested in (1988) 127–32, in the fourth century *tragōidos* and *kōmōidos* denote an actor or dancer or poet, respectively of tragedy or comedy. For discussions of the terminology see Ghiron-Bistagne (1976) 115–34, Hall (2006) 107–8.

<sup>5</sup> On Aristophanes' generation of poets and paratragedy see Dover (1972) 214–15, Foley (1996) 119 n. 7. On the parody of *Telephus* in *Acharnians*, e.g. 280–625 and 1069–1234, see Handley (1985) 373–4, 384–91, Foley (1996) 119–34, Pelling (2000) 140–5.

<sup>6</sup> Aristophanes made his debut with *Banqueters* in 427, and Cratinus won his last Dionysiac victory with *Pytine* in 423. On his fr. 342 see De Carli (1971) 71–2, Conti Bizzarro (1999) 91–104.

<sup>7</sup> Snell (1953) 113–18; cf. Csapo (2002) 131. Yet Dover rightly stresses the dependence of criticism in *Frogs* on the comic tradition of cultural parody, (1992) 1–4, 10–12, (1993) 24–37.

<sup>8</sup> Snell (1953) 115. Cf. O'Sullivan (1992) 7–22, 106–52. <sup>9</sup> (1953) 118.

<sup>10</sup> My translation from the 3rd edn (1955) 166: 'damit hat er die Kategorien geschaffen, in denen die griechische und weiterhin die römische Literarkritik auf die klassischen Schriftsteller reflektiert'. (The phrase is not included in Rosenmeyer's English trans. (1953), which was based on the 2nd German edn of 1948.) But see Dover (1993) 32: 'it is unwise to assume, when we find words used in the appraisal of poetry both by Aristophanes and by the literary critics of the Hellenistic period, that they already constituted a technical terminology in 405'.

either by intellectuals or within such cultural forms themselves, but, on the other, always express first and foremost the comic perspective. Cratinus' fragment and Aristophanic comedies thus appear to be the earliest explicit sources for – and, at the same time, travesties of – critical terminology and ideas about theatre. It is actually remarkable that Aristophanic paratragedy that is modelled on Euripides parodies both the original text and performance, as Harriott stressed.<sup>11</sup> It thus points significantly towards a comic critical preoccupation with theatre rather than the poetics of drama.<sup>12</sup>

In contrast with comedy, in tragedy and satyr drama the reflexivity – so-called metatheatricity<sup>13</sup> – involved in comments on the theatrical medium and performance never comes through explicitly. My tentative thesis in what follows is that such indirect self-references in the extant fifth-century tragic texts, combined with other forms of evidence from the late fifth century onwards, can be used as sources for exploring the creation of theoretical themes and terms which served for the reception of tragedy in comedy and philosophical criticism.<sup>14</sup> It is as early as the time of Aeschylus that the form and content of the plays offer indirect theoretical comments on theatrical 'reality' and characterization in tragic drama, the cognitive and psychological effects on the audience, the 'tragic' as a concept, the Homeric background and civic teaching of tragedy. The plays themselves seem therefore to have contributed to the development of a theory of tragedy as a specifically *theatrical* rather than *poetic* genre in fifth-century Athens. For, in practice, the very performance of a play, like any other form of art, implies at least some of the theoretical perceptions about artistic representation which it depends upon, gives shape to, and shares with its public.

#### THE ONTOLOGICAL OTHERNESS OF THE MYTHICAL WORLD OF TRAGEDY

At the beginning of Aeschylus' *Eumenides* the prophetess prays to the gods of the sacred area of Delphi on mount Parnassus (line 11). Local, Hesiodic and Athenian myths<sup>15</sup> are combined in her poetic ritual prayer to suit the mythical perspective of the play and the tetralogy. First the

<sup>11</sup> Harriott (1962) 5: 'again and again it is visual effects which Aristophanes recalls, [...] spoken parody, too, and quotation are set in an appropriate visual context.' Cf. Foley (1996) 135–7, 142.

<sup>12</sup> For the theoretical distinction between theatre and drama, theatrical and dramatic, respectively referring to performance and text, cf. e.g. Elam (1980) 2–3.

<sup>13</sup> Ringer (1998) 7–19, Hall (2006) 105–11.

<sup>14</sup> For Halliwell (1996) 332, Plato's critical themes are 'important grounds for ascribing the *first conscious* delineation of the tragic, at any rate *outside tragedy itself* (a complex observation), to Plato' (my italics).

<sup>15</sup> Sommerstein (1989) 80–2 on lines 2–7, 10, 13, 16.

priestess prays to the old patron-goddesses, recalling details from the time the oracle had been established by Gaia until it was finally entrusted by Zeus to Phoebus. Among the gods honoured at nearby shrines and altars, which clearly must have been familiar to the original audience as places of contemporary Delphic cults, the priestess also invokes Bromius, the 'general' (25) who had led Bacchant women to kill Pentheus – a detail from another Aeschylean tetralogy.<sup>16</sup> In the second section of the speech (21–33), she announces publicly – to alleged listeners, who can only be the audience of the performance – that she is to assume her prophetic seat for all Greeks who may seek divine prophecy, and asks the Delphic gods to grant her for the day an even better fortune than her 'previous entrances' (30) to the temple had brought. Lines 29–32 imply that the anonymous 'Pythia' is now just about to enter Apollo's temple, in front of which she has until this point been standing, to pray and to announce the opening of the oracle – as she would do every morning. Clearly these lines do not only imply that the dramatic time is early morning, but also that the prophetess exits from the acting area at this particular moment of the performance time. As is often the case in dramatic texts, dramaturgy is not distinguished from the actors' performance for spectators – and this was only reasonable for a dramatist competing in the Athenian theatrical contests, who normally designed and shaped both text and performance as a unique theatrical event.

Indeed, from the very beginning the acting area in front of this particular oracle is implicitly defined by the play's self-referential words: the Pythia's prayer first uses deixis to identify the scenic space with the dramatic space close to *to[d[e]* . . . *manteion* (3–4). Details recognizable to the original audience as references to the oracle, to sacred places and religious cults of Delphi in contemporary (historic) times, as well as the elements drawn from myths concerning successive generations of gods and the myth of Pentheus, essentially describe the Pythia's world in space and time: it is a theatrical 'reality', both like and unlike the mythical world of poetic narratives and the 'real' world of the spectators' experience. As in other kinds of traditional theatre, like Shakespeare's, narratives with instances of deixis in the introductory sections of ancient Greek tragedies, often including a (vague or detailed) 'word-scenery',<sup>17</sup> are combined with performance elements to constitute the ontological 'otherness' of the disguised performers and their acting space and time.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, the prophetess' mythical 'reality' is established as a material form of 'otherness' by this rich

<sup>16</sup> See Radt (1985) 116–17, 298–9 on Aeschylus' lost *Pentheus*. <sup>17</sup> Pfister (1988) 267–9.

<sup>18</sup> Elam (1980) 137–44, also 98–119. Cf. the opening parodos of Aesch. *Pers.* and *Supp.*, introductory soliloquies like the Guard's speech in *Ag.* and most Euripidean prologues, and the opening dialogues of Soph. *EL*, *Phil.*, *OC*. For such 'narrative settings' in Athenian tragedy see Kuntz (1993) 17–84.

'word-scenery', which combines brief mythical, poetic, religious and historical references with indirect allusions to the performance, as well as by the actor's role-playing, a distinct artistic use of the human body and language. All these elements demonstrate that the mythical world of theatre defining itself continuously as 'real' can only exist as a result of an ironic interplay, which Easterling described as the '*collaboration or even collusion between play and audience*'<sup>19</sup> – and the fact that the prophetess' introductory prayer is a soliloquy<sup>20</sup> only goes to strengthen the point about the silent audience's 'complicity'.<sup>21</sup>

Another major function of speeches and 'word-sceneries' identifying the theatrical world in the initial parts of a play in traditional theatre is to define themes and personages.<sup>22</sup> In the ritual prayer comprising the first two sections of the opening speech, there is emphasis on Apollo, Athena and Athens, while the speaker herself has been presented as a rather typical, anonymous religious personage with no overt individual characteristics: she is only a 'messenger' of god's prophecies (33). The stage remains empty for a while, and when the Pythia reappears she describes herself as an old woman 'crawling on hands and knees like a baby' (37–8).<sup>23</sup> The third section of the narrative (34–63) completes her theatrical picture and role, while introducing the other main figures of the play. The situation has changed; the old prophetess is now a 'messenger' terrified by what she has seen in the temple.

A man with blood on his hands was sitting inside, holding his sword as well as an olive branch with a tuft of wool, the signs of ritual supplication, and a frightening group of 'women' were asleep right in front of him (39–47): the pictures are meant to recall Orestes and his 'mother's angry bitches' from the end of *Choephoroi* (1034–8 and 1054). The Pythia's detailed description of the 'females' unknown to her (48–59) before her final invocation of the power of Loxias (60–3) makes even clearer the multilevelled function of this introductory monologue for the audience. The 'women' are first pictured (*legō, eikasō* 48–9) as Gorgons with snakes in their hair, an echo from *Choephoroi* (1048–50), which seems to recall Gorgo or Medusa, whose decapitation by Perseus was a theme in another Aeschylean tetralogy:<sup>24</sup> her severed head, a threatening mythical image in poetry and the visual arts, was also used as an apotropaic symbol called the *gorgoneion*, which took the form either of monstrous ritual masks or emblems on shields.<sup>25</sup> The following comparison is with a painting that the prophetess had seen:

<sup>19</sup> Easterling (1997c) 167 cf. 165–8; Elam (1980) 110–14. <sup>20</sup> Pfister (1988) 130–4.

<sup>21</sup> For the term see Burian (1997a) 179, 194–5. <sup>22</sup> Pfister (1988) 269, Kuntz (1993) 5, 17, 29, 38.

<sup>23</sup> Sommerstein (1989) 87. <sup>24</sup> See Radt (1985) 118, 361–4 on Aeschylus' lost *Phorcides*.

<sup>25</sup> Frontisi-Ducroux (1995) 9–12, 65–75.

the Harpies stealing the food of Phineus (50–1) – as in Aeschylus' tragedy about this Thracian seer.<sup>26</sup> Yet the Pythia confesses that her comparisons are inaccurate (49 and 51–6); unlike the Harpies, the women in the temple are wingless, black, loathsome, and their 'elaborate appearance' is wholly inappropriate for a place with statues of gods – the (almost comic) euphemism *kosmos* (55) implies theatrical costuming.<sup>27</sup> The comparison with the Gorgons and the snakes in their hair, the possible allusion to *gorgoneia*, the references to the painting of the Harpies, to the blackness of the faces and clothing<sup>28</sup> and to blood dripping from the eyes (54) of the nightmare-like women in the temple all serve to introduce the chorus' appearance, masks<sup>29</sup> and collective character. Irrespective of whether or not the anthropomorphic representation of the Erinyes was one of Aeschylus' major innovations in the *Eumenides*, as critics have argued,<sup>30</sup> this passage is a remarkable example of indirect self-referential comments in the text of a tragic performance, and we must pay attention to its implications. Before the tragic dancers appear, their impersonation of the Erinyes is already compared with and differentiated from real women, as well as pictures of mythical female monsters in poetry and the visual arts. At the same time, the image of Orestes and other echoes from the end of *Choephoroi*, along with possible allusions to other plays of Aeschylus, set the world of the *Eumenides* in the context of the tragic tetralogy and the wider tragic-performance tradition. The appearance of the tragic chorus of Erinyes is thus prefigured in the Pythia's description as an event that we can only see happening in the theatre.

It is by means of indirect comments on the 'otherness' of the theatrical world to whose constitution it contributes that this introductory monologue implies a theoretical definition of tragedy: it is a form of mythical 'reality' which resembles, involves, but also differs and distances itself from 'historical' or 'real life', the visual arts, the performance of religious rituals, and mythological poetry – as well as elements from other dramas and their theatrical enactments. If Simonides had called 'painting silent poetry and poetry painting that speaks', as Plutarch wrote,<sup>31</sup> the

<sup>26</sup> See Radt (1985) 111, 359–61 on Aeschylus' lost *Phineus* (472 BC), the first tragedy in the tetralogy including *Persae*. For the Harpies on visual artefacts and in *Phineus* see Hall (2006a) 116–18: Hall suggests that this reference to the Harpies may have specifically evoked the relation of the painted masks of the chorus of *Eumenides* with those of Harpies in *Phineus*.

<sup>27</sup> For such use of *kosmos* cf. *Pers.* 833, 849, *Supp.* 246, *Trach.* 764, *Alc.* 161, 1050, *Bacch.* 832.

<sup>28</sup> Sommerstein (1989) 91 on lines 52, 55. <sup>29</sup> Taplin (1978) 84–5, 127.

<sup>30</sup> Frontisi-Ducroux (1987) 87–8, Sommerstein (1989) 9–11, 90 on *Eum.* 48, Frontisi-Ducroux (1995) 47–8.

<sup>31</sup> *On the Fame of the Athenians* in *Mor.* 347a = Simonides 47(b) with Campbell's trans., Campbell (1991) 363.

beginning of *Eumenides* makes analogous theoretical distinctions by suggesting that the changing figures and tableaux of tragedy are comparable to and distinguishable from those in both painting and poetry. Painted artefacts and religious offerings are also evoked in the amusing papyrus fragment (78a.1–22 Radt) from Aeschylus' undatable *Theori* or *Isthmiastae*, in which the chorus of satyrs attending the Isthmian games hold painted pictures of themselves that somebody has offered them as presents: they look at them as they sing and dance in front of Poseidon's temple, then they hang them as ritual offerings with an apotropaic function at the top of the temple's façade. Although it is uncertain whether these were masks, puppets or other artefacts,<sup>32</sup> the emphasis is on the feelings of surprise and admiration of the satyrs as they realize how closely the picture resembles them: it is like Daedalus' 'living' artefacts<sup>33</sup> and 'only lacks voice' (7). However similar to the appearance of the satyrs, these painted pictures (to be later used as ritual offerings) lack the 'life' of their originals, that is the satyric chorus and their theatrical masks. As early as the time of Aeschylus, then, indirect comments on performance-related issues in plays like *Eumenides* and *Theori* or *Isthmiastae* define the ontological 'otherness' of theatre as an artistic form of world – a kind of *Gesamtkunstwerk*, as Wagner considered ancient Greek tragedy and his own modern opera<sup>34</sup> – which claims to differ from and encompass the religious rituals, visual arts and poetic performances from which it originated.

The words used for the admirable pictures of the satyrs in the theatrical context of *Theori* or *Isthmiastae* fr. 78a Radt, *eikous* (2), *eidōlon* and *mimēma* (6–7), are significant examples of vocabulary linked with artistic representation in the classical period. Surprisingly, they recur in Euripides' *Helen*, where they denote ironically both the false Helen of Troy and the heroine herself in Egypt as a double of the false Helen of Troy.<sup>35</sup> *Eidōlon*, normally meaning a phantom, in Herodotus describes a sculpture or simulacrum (1.51.5, 6.58.3). *Eikazein*, *eikō(n)* and cognates are used of picturing and likening – as in the Pythia's words in *Eumenides* 49 – including visual artefacts, comparison and inference.<sup>36</sup> In *Knights* 230–3 *skeupoioi* are said

<sup>32</sup> Green (1994) 45–6, 78–81, Zeitlin (1994) 138–9, Krumeich, Pechstein and Seidensticker (1999) 142–4.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. *Hek.* 838, Pl. *Meno* 97d6–e5. <sup>34</sup> Burian (1997b) 266–7; cf. Goldhill (1997b) 135.

<sup>35</sup> The false Helen: *mimēma* 875 (cf. *IT* 294); *eidōlon* 582, 683, 1136 (cf. *Eur. El.* 1283). The true Helen: *eikō* 73, 77; *mimēma* 74. For the appearance-and-reality antithesis in *Helen* see Segal (1986) 227–39, 247–63.

<sup>36</sup> *Eikō(n)*, image: *Med.* 1162; *Tro.* 1178. For other meanings see Dover (1993) 306 on *Frogs* 906. Paintings or painted sculptures: *Hdt.* 1.51.5, 2.106.5, 2.130–1, 2.143.2–144.1, 2.182.1, 7.69.2, *Heracles* 1002, *IA* 239, *Frogs* 537–538, *Poetics* 1448b.11 and 15, 1450b.2. Woven pictures: *IT* 223, 816. *Eikasma*, a relief, *Seven* 523.

to have refused to make a portrait mask (*eikasai*) of Paphlagon. In *Bacchae* 942 and *Frogs* 593b the verb refers to impersonating, as Pentheus and Xanthias are to 'liken themselves', respectively, to a Bacchant and Heracles. *Mimeisthai*, *mimēsis* and cognates cover a broad semantic field of imitation, including artistic modelling on an original; in Plato – from whom Aristotle received these terms – they can also denote the Homeric narrator's presentation of a character's speech, and poetic or artistic representation as a twice deceptive reflection of the true reality of the *eidē* in the *Republic*.<sup>37</sup> In a fragment of Aeschylus' *Edonoi* (57.8–9 Radt) the noun *mimoi* is used for a group of mimes who remain unseen and bellow like bulls, among musicians participating in a cultic ritual. In Aristophanes *mimēsis* can also refer to imitation or representation in terms of performance,<sup>38</sup> and Agathon's use of the term in *Thesmophoriazusae* (156) is a notable instance.

In his short career in Athens between about 416 and 406, Agathon adopted the novel kind of music, exaggerated poetic vocabulary and themes of new dithyramb as well as paradoxical elements and *embolima aismata* in tragedy, and Aristotle later praised him for composing the non-mythical play *Antheus* with wholly invented action and personages.<sup>39</sup> In the prologue of *Thesmophoriazusae* Euripides and the much younger Agathon are parodied as representatives of controversial novelties in tragedy. Disguised as a girl, the young poet rehearses at home on the *ekkuklēma* (96 and 265) a new dialogical choral song of Trojan maidens, but Euripides' Relative mocks him. Agathon thus defends his 'theoretical' position, that a poet in the process of composing poetry and drama is to perform and be transformed – like Proteus, as Vernant aptly added – into all his characters: 'If one writes about men, that element of the body is at hand. But qualities we

*Eikazein*, to liken, *Clouds* 350, cf. *proseikazein*, Eur. *El.* 559. To define by means of a picture or simile: *eikasdein*, Sappho fr. 115; *eikazein*, Aesch. *Supp.* 244, 288, *Cho.* 518, 633, *Phoen.* 420, *Knights* 1076, *Wasps* 1308, *Eccles.* 385; *anteikazein*, *Wasps* 1311; *apeikazein*, Soph. fr. 149.2 Radt, Eur. *Supp.* 146; *epeikazein*, *Cho.* 14; *kateikazein*, Eupolis fr. 337; *proseikazein*, *Seven* 431, *Ag.* 163, 1131, *Cho.* 12, *Helen* 69; cf. *exeikazesthai*, *Ag.* 1244; *eikaston*, *Trach.* 699. For *eikazein* and compounds in the sense of guessing or inferring see Easterling (1982) 93 and 225 on *Trach.* 141 and 1220.

*Eikazesthai*, to resemble, *Ach.* 783, *Bacch.* 1253; cf. *apeikazesthai*, Eur. *El.* 979; *kateikazesthai*, *OC* 338. To be represented by an artefact, *exeikazesthai*, *Seven* 445; *eikazesthai*, *Alc.* 349.

<sup>37</sup> *Mimeisthai*, to imitate ritually voices, a hymn and dance: *Hom. Hymn Ap.* 3.163; render a sound by means of *auloi*: Pind. *Pyth.* 12.36 (cf. *mimēma*, *IA* 578); make sculptures: Hdt. 2.78, 2.86.2, 2.169.5; imitate an accent: *Cho.* 564; imitate a simile: *Clouds* 559. For the vocabulary of *mimēsis* see Lucas (1968) 258–72, Verdenius (1983) 54–6; and Halliwell (1986) 51–6, 109–37, particularly for Plato and Aristotle. *Mimēsis* may have denoted 'the relation between things and the underlying reality which [the Pythagoreans] believed to be number', as Lucas notes in (1968) 268.

<sup>38</sup> *Thesm.* 850–8, *Frogs* 108–9, *Plut.* 291, 312; cf. Halliwell (1986) 113–14, Hall (2006) 30, 37.

<sup>39</sup> For Agathon in Athens see Sommerstein (1994) 159 on *Thesm.* 29. For his paradoxical *ouk eikota* cf. *Rhetoric* 1402a9–13 and *Poetics* 1456a19–25; *embolima* *ibid.* 1456a29–30; *Antheus* *ibid.* 1451b19–25.

do not have must be sought by *mimicry*' (154–6).<sup>40</sup> Here the Aristophanic Agathon uses *mimēsis* as a 'theoretical' term for what the body of the poet-performer tries to render by artistic means. This is his final 'argument': 'for the plays which we compose are necessarily similar to our nature' (*phusei*, 167). As critics note, a similar depiction of the tragedian recurs in *Poetics* (1455a29–32):<sup>41</sup> 'So far as possible, one should also work out the plot in gestures, since a natural affinity (*apo tēs autēs phuseōs*) makes those in the grip of emotions the most convincing, and the truest distress or anger is conveyed by one who actually feels these things.'

Such examples show that, although we simply cannot know how and when a technical usage of terms about art and theatre was introduced, in the case of the vocabulary of *mimēsis* and *eikō(n)* (*mimēsis kai apeikasia* in *Laws* 2.668b10–c1), as in other cases of Presocratic theoretical language and themes, Plato and Aristotle seem to have reflected and responded to the terminology used by fifth-century intellectuals rather than to have invented it. According to Vernant, *eikōn* was a new word and concept of the fifth century, and 'this innovation seems all the more significant in that it occurs at the same time as another semantic group makes its appearance to express the values of simulation and imitation: *mimos*, *mimēma*, *mimēsis*. These are terms that are applied to plastic figures, poetry, and music, but are especially linked to the institution of a new type of literary work, the dramatic spectacle, whose originality consisted in making present to the eyes of the audience so they might see directly on stage those 'fictive' characters and events that epic related in the form of a narrative.'<sup>42</sup>

Snell argued in the following three quoted passages that 'early man demands of his serious epic poetry that it speak the truth. Whenever critics make themselves heard their argument is that the poets lie: e.g. Hesiod *Theogony* 27; Solon fr. 21; Xenophanes 1.22; Pindar *Olympian* 1.28.'<sup>43</sup> As the drama detached itself from the pressure of reality, it became more closely attached to its own material: to the rules of the play, to the laws of artistic creation. The business of understanding and defining reality is now relinquished to scientific prose writing whose origins belong to the same

<sup>40</sup> Agathon T23 Snell-Kannicht, trans. Henderson (2000) 477. Cf. Muecke (1982) 54–5, Halliwell (1986) 114, Vernant (1991) 174–7; Zeitlin (1996) 383. For the comparison with Proteus see Vernant (1991) 175.

<sup>41</sup> Translated by Halliwell in Halliwell *et al.* (1995) 89. Cf. Lucas (1968) 175–7 *ad loc.* and on 1455a32, Muecke (1982) 51–4, Sommerstein (1994) 168 on *Thesm.* 149–50.

<sup>42</sup> Quotation from J.-P. Vernant's article of 1992, 'Image and figuration. Early Greek notions about likeness, the body and the self', in Zeitlin's trans. (1994) 190 cf. 304 n. 112. For the use of motifs from the visual arts in tragic texts and the important relation of fifth-century tragedy with the visual arts and related theoretical views see Zeitlin (1994), Hall (2006) 112–41.

<sup>43</sup> Snell (1953) 90. Solon's fr. 21 Diehl is 29 West.

age as those of tragedy.<sup>44</sup> 'During the early days of tragedy this change in the relation between artefact and reality is noticeable also in the products of Athenian art. [. . .] In the statuary inscriptions of the early period the image is quite simply identified with the person portrayed [. . .]: "I am Chares, the ruler of Teichiousa." In Attica, however, the usual phrasing is: "I am the image, the grave stele, or the memorial stone of such and such a man." Here we have proof that in Athens the work of art is no longer naively declared to be one with the model. [. . .] [Art] imitates reality, represents it, signifies it – and thereby becomes a different sort of reality itself.'<sup>45</sup> What Snell describes, having also taken into account the later comparison and contrast between poetry, including tragedy, and historiography in Aristotle's *Poetics*,<sup>46</sup> is a gradual legitimization of the arts, poetry, theatre, historiographical, philosophical and rhetorical prose as instruments for the investigation of different forms of reality in fifth-century Athens. This major cultural development is reflected in the fact that the Athenian democracy came to institutionalize tragedy as a spectacle which presented in public an imaginary changing world in a material artistic form, interacting with and appropriating other forms of art and discourse.<sup>47</sup> Thus, the mythical 'reality' of tragedy stood between the truths (and lies) of epic myths – with which Plato dismissively identified it in the *Republic* – and the truths (and lies) of fifth-century historiography. Contrary to Xenophanes' and Plato's critique of art, the analogy of the works of painters with the real world is asserted in a philosophical simile of epic style by Empedocles: the mixture of the four natural elements in all beings of the world of human experience is paralleled with the painters' harmonious mixing of colourful materials to produce 'forms resembling all beings' (*eidea pasin aligkia*, fr. 23.5). Similarly, from early 'historical myths' enacted in such tragedies as Phrynichus' *Capture of Miletus* and *Phoenissae* and Aeschylus' *Persae*, to Sophocles' heroic dramaturgy and Euripides' or Agathon's more 'down-to-earth' theatre, tragedy was increasingly perceived as an artistic investigation of the human condition through myth in the form of a spectacle.

#### CHANGING CHARACTERS, CHANGING SPECTATORS AND THE LIMITS OF HUMAN KNOWLEDGE

One of the later testimonies quoting Sophocles' alleged statements about his art is Plutarch's *How a Man May Become Aware of His Progress in Virtue*

<sup>44</sup> Snell (1953) 94.    <sup>45</sup> Snell (1953) 98.

<sup>46</sup> Snell (1953) 90. On poetry and historiography see *Poetics* 1451a36–b11, 1459a17–30.

<sup>47</sup> Vernant in Vernant and Vidal-Naquet (1986) 21–4, 84–8, Hall (2006) 29–30.

79b (from *Mor.* = T(S)110 Radt): 'as Sophocles said, having played out the larger-than-life aspects in Aeschylus, then the painful and sophisticated elements of his own invention, at a third stage he started changing to the kind of diction which is most expressive of character (*ēthikōtaton*) and best.'<sup>48</sup> Plutarch places emphasis on the last phase of Sophocles' career, when he was more concerned with linguistic style as a means of characterization than with aspects of the tragic text and performance which he had earlier adapted from Aeschylus or himself introduced. The *Suda* attributes to Sophocles a text *Peri chorou* with no more comments (Σ815 = T(A)2 Radt (1999) 41 l. 7). There is no telling whether the tradition of this treatise had any connection with Plutarch's remarks or, for instance, with *Poetics* 1456a25–7, where Aristotle suggests Sophocles rather than Euripides as a model for the chorus' integral role in the dramatic action and the theatrical contests. A theoretical principle of Sophocles' characterization is also hinted at in *Poetics* 1460b32–5, where Aristotle equally defends the use of either truthful or untruthful pictures for artistic purposes: 'if the criticism is that something is false, well perhaps it is as it ought to be, just as Sophocles said he created [characters] as they ought to be, Euripides as they really are'.<sup>49</sup> The context is about a fault that could be accepted only for an artistic purpose (1460b26–8), so Bowra was right to point out that the quotation does not necessarily have a moral connotation, but asserts the theatricality of Sophocles' presentation of figures as 'they ought to be in a play' by contrast to what we could call Euripides' tendency to 'realism'.<sup>50</sup> Like related Aristophanic parodies and comments, these Aristotelian references and later testimonies could also be traces of fifth-century theoretical discussions about the distinct ways in which tragedians exploited language, stagecraft and characterization through language and stagecraft.

The original aspects of the personages of Athenian tragedy are often as striking in the case of short roles with rather stereotypical features as in the case of choruses with collective traits and of main figures with complex and changing individual characteristics.<sup>51</sup> Each performance of tragedy was a new material form of an imaginary Greek-speaking world that consisted of changing situations, involving divine or human figures, mythical or invented, eponymous or anonymous men and women or personifications,<sup>52</sup>

<sup>48</sup> Trans. based on Bowra (1940) 387–98; 'changing . . . best' is his trans. *ibid.* 401. Bowra also experimented in this article on lining up preserved plays and fragments with the three alleged phases of Sophocles' work.

<sup>49</sup> Halliwell's trans., Halliwell *et al.* (1995) 129.

<sup>50</sup> Bowra (1940) 400. For 'realism' see Csapo (2002).

<sup>51</sup> For recent bibliography on 'character' in Athenian tragedy see e.g. Easterling (1990).

<sup>52</sup> Dike in Aeschylus fr. 281a Radt, Thanatos in *Alc.*, Lyssa in *Heracles*, Kratos and Bia in *Prom. Bound.*

free people and slaves from Greek and foreign cities, figures impersonated by the actors and groups impersonated by the dancers. What I would like to shift attention to is how tragedy used an epic, lyric or Presocratic terminology and imagery of 'anthropological' and 'theological' characteristics as a theoretical framework, within which personages and choruses could be constructed during the performance as theatrical characters or 'identities' in transformation, and affect the spectators as such.

A first theoretical field on which the presentation of tragic figures is often based is their inner 'self' or depth. According to Snell, the picture of humans as 'psychological' beings was introduced by lyric poets and further defined in Heraclitus fr. 45: 'you will not find out the limits of the soul (*psuchēs*) by going, even if you travel over every way; so deep is its report'.<sup>53</sup> Studying characterization in Sophocles, Easterling observed that the audience is given an 'impression of depth, of a solid individual consciousness behind the words, [. . .] often conveyed by the ambiguity with which Sophocles treats people or episodes'.<sup>54</sup> In tragedy, character depth can be also explicitly rendered by emphasis on bodily and mental states, as in the Cassandra scenes in *Agamemnon* and *Troades*, or by apostrophes to an inner 'self', as when Euripides' Medea addresses her own *thumos*, like the lyric narrator in Archilochus' fr. 128 West.<sup>55</sup> An interesting instance in *Antigone* is when the guard, at first sight an amusing popular type, describes the agitation he had felt and the circles he had done on his way, as his *psuchē* repeated to 'him' his dilemma, addressing 'him' as *talas* and *tlēmon* (227–30). Haemon's words to Creon in *Antigone* (705–11, referring to Creon, then to 'anyone' and finally to any man) imply an unexpected definition of the tragic 'self' or 'character', its components, depths and limits:

'So don't bear *within yourself one mentality (ēthos)* only, that the only thing that is correct is what you yourself *say* and nothing else. Anyone who *thinks (dokei)* that he alone has *good sense (phronein)*, or that he possesses *eloquence (glōssan)* or *moral character (psuchēn)* that nobody else has – people like this, *when opened up*, are seen to be quite empty *inside*. But for a man – even if he is wise – *to keep on learning (manthanein) much*, and *not to strain over-much (mē teinein agan)*, is in no way shameful.'<sup>56</sup>

<sup>53</sup> 45 = 35 in Kahn's trans. (1979) 44. Cf. Snell (1953) 16–18.

<sup>54</sup> (1983) 142. Cf. Segal on tragedy (1986) 79–81, 97–101.

<sup>55</sup> For 'inner self' apostrophes see e.g. *kradiē* in *Od.* 20.18, *thume* in Theognis 695–6, 877, 1029–33, *psuchē* in Simonides' sympotic fr. 21, 3 West, and *Trach.* 1259–63, *dusdaimon* in *Tro.* 98–9, *Mēdeia, skhetlia, thume*, respectively in *Med.* 401–9, 873–81, 1056–8, *thume* in Neophron's *Medea* fr. 2.1–9 Snell-Kannicht.

<sup>56</sup> Griffith's trans. (1999) 243–4 with nn. *ad loc.* and on lines 175–7. Cf. Dodds (1951) 139, and 159 n. 20 on this passage, *Ant.* 176 and *Alc.* 108.

These lines evoke also the other field on which tragedy centres its anthropological and theological pictures, that of the human capacity of knowledge, a central subject of philosophical and scientific thought from Heraclitus onwards. Long remarked that 'in Heraclitus alone we find three new epistemological terms, *phronēsis* (fr. 2), *gnōsis* (fr. 56), *oiēsis* (fr. 46)'.<sup>57</sup> 'He introduces new *-sis* nouns to denote mental states, and he uses new *-ia* nouns for the same purpose: ignorance is *amathiē* (fr. 95), disbelief is *apistiē* (fr. 86)'.<sup>58</sup> As Long pointed out, such abstract nouns invented by Presocratic philosophers and medical writers in the late sixth and early fifth centuries were exploited by the tragedians, Herodotus and Thucydides, the sophists, and Aristophanic parodies of intellectuals.<sup>59</sup> So, tragedy's theoretical preoccupations with the degrees and limits of the human consciousness and self-consciousness of personages and choruses are articulated both by such vocabulary related to understanding, learning, seeing or perceiving,<sup>60</sup> and by recurrent themes or plot patterns such as deception or self-deception, appearance and reality.

In related Homeric examples the epic narrator defines the meanings and ironies of such motifs. Self-deception and disillusionment are already significant themes in the plot of the *Iliad* with respect to Agamemnon, Patroclus, Achilles and Hector;<sup>61</sup> a god's or a hero's deceptive action, human self-deception, appearance and reality are further stressed in the plot of the *Odyssey*; the suitors are among those deceived by Odysseus disguised as a beggar, and can only recognize him as the king when he reveals himself and punishes them with death. In tragedy the meanings and ironies of such themes are based on the spectators' previous knowledge of the myth enacted in a play, but are also enhanced as the audience watch the spectacle representing the themes, the personages and the chorus concerned.

In the *Agamemnon*, Clytemnestra's fatal deception of Agamemnon and Cassandra in the scene of the purple fabrics is succeeded by the pictures of Cassandra's prophetic madness, awareness and self-awareness; the king can realize neither how he lives nor how he dies; in the end the queen can sense the presence of the royal house's daemon in herself (1497–1504), and her deception can be understood by the audience as an ominous self-deception, in accordance with the chorus' earlier gnomic expression *pathei mathos*, 'learning through suffering' (177). Xerxes in *Persae*, Creon

<sup>57</sup> Long (1968) 17.   <sup>58</sup> (1968) 24.

<sup>59</sup> (1968) 14–26. Cf. 51 n. 78: *amathia* in Soph. fr. 924 Radt is used as in Heraclitus fr. 95, the Protagorean word *euboulia* in *Ant.* 1050 and 1098 as in Pl. *Prt.* 318d, *aboulia* in *Ant.* 1242 as in Democritus fr. 119.

<sup>60</sup> Rutherford (1982) 148–52, Griffith (1999) 41–3.

<sup>61</sup> Rutherford (1982) 145–7, 153–60.

in *Antigone*, and Polymestor in *Hekabe* are just as important examples of thematic patterns in which words and acts of *hybris* or *atēlata* express outrage and self-deception, that lead to belated understanding and to self-destruction. The idea is elaborated in the second stasimon of *Antigone* (582–625), where the chorus of Theban elders sing about the *ata* of Oedipus' family and the *apata* (deception, 617) caused by human desires as explaining Antigone's situation; but they themselves are ironically deceived, too, as what they say could in fact shed light on the situation of king Creon, who is present.<sup>62</sup> This example implicitly clarifies a main role of any tragic audience: as each spectator watches the heroes and the chorus trying or failing to understand and act accordingly, he/she is always just as liable to be deceived, but he/she knows more about the myth, therefore is in a position to see, to a varying degree, their self-deceptions, and feel the ironies.

Seers and prophecies (like Tiresias in the Theban plays, as well as the Delphic oracles in *Oedipus Tyrannus*) and even gods in person (such as Aphrodite and Artemis in *Hippolytus*) are frequently deployed to display the power of divine foreknowledge as opposed to the limits and ambiguity of human understanding. For tragedy, as for Heraclitus, 'human nature (*ēthos*) has no set purpose (*gnōmas*), but the divine has'; 'the lord whose oracle is in Delphi neither declares nor conceals, but gives a sign'; 'most men do not think things in the way they encounter them, nor do they recognize (*ginōskousin*) what they experience, but believe their own opinions'.<sup>63</sup> The opposition between divine and human intelligence produces utmost irony in *Bacchae*, where Dionysus initially explains (to the audience) that he disguised himself as a foreign priest in order to deceive and punish his relatives, the members of the Theban royal house who denied his divine nature. Human self-deception and belated realization reach here their extremes: king Pentheus, hybristically opposing and mocking the Stranger and the god whose cult he serves, becomes so paranoid that he dresses like a woman and joins the Bacchantes on Cithaeron, where Agave kills him. Coming back to the palace in a state of ecstatic frenzy, Agave cannot recognize her son's head in her arms until her father Cadmus later makes her look at it.

As is evident from Dionysus' role in *Bacchae*, the tragic motifs of deceptive action or self-deception, and subsequent knowledge coming late, can

<sup>62</sup> Griffith (1999) 219–20. On the 'fallibility' of the chorus see Gould (1996) 231.

<sup>63</sup> Trans. Kahn (1979): fr. 78 = 55 Kahn (pp. 55–6), fr. 93 = 33 Kahn (pp. 43–4), fr. 17 = 4 Kahn (pp. 29–30). Cf. Dodds (1983) 187.

be combined with the imagery of appearance and reality.<sup>64</sup> This antithesis was evoked in very different philosophical frameworks, as in Heraclitus: 'the hidden attunement is better than the obvious one' (fr. 54); 'nature (*phusis*) loves to hide' (fr. 123); in Parmenides: 'learn all things, both the unshaken heart of well-rounded truth and also what seems to mortals, in which is no true conviction' (fr. 1, 28–30); and in Anaxagoras: 'phenomena are a sight of the unseen' (fr. 21a).<sup>65</sup> Snell observed that, for Heraclitus, appearances 'are symbols in which the wise man catches a glimpse of the profound secrets of life'.<sup>66</sup> If we take into account such imagery in the plays, the spectator is similarly meant to experience theatrical appearances as symbols of characters' deeper 'reality'. In tragedy the recurrent antithesis is first made explicit in *Seven against Thebes*, when the messenger says that the prophet Amphiaraus, allied against his better judgement with Polynices and the Argives in the siege, 'does not wish to appear (*dokein*), but to be (*einai*) most brave' (592).<sup>67</sup> Eteocles, though modelled on the Iliadic Hector, is the heroic defender of Thebes against his brother, and in the end he realizes the fulfilment of their father's curse (655): 'transformed from what he *seems* to what he *is*,' if I may paraphrase Bacon's words, he discovers 'the mirror image of his brother' in himself.<sup>68</sup> In such plays as the *Seven against Thebes*, *Ajax*, *Trachiniae*, *Oedipus Tyrannus* as interpreted by Vernant,<sup>69</sup> *Philoctetes*, *Medea*, *Hippolytus*, *Heracles* and *Bacchae*, dramaturgy and structure take the form of a more or less explicit cognitive process, recalling Heraclitus' maxims 'it belongs to all men to know themselves and to think well' and 'I went in search of myself'.<sup>70</sup> Similarly, tragic myth and performance from the Areopagus scene of *Eumenides* to the formal *agōnes logōn* can evoke a public investigation,<sup>71</sup> in which the action, motives, past, and inner conflict of a personage are re-examined from different viewpoints. It is within such a process, to be shared by personages, chorus and audience, that conflicting aspects in the theatrical 'identity' and action of a hero or

<sup>64</sup> Vernant (1986) 246–55, Segal (1997) 218–40. For scenes based on the 'role-playing' as opposed to the 'reality' of tragic personages see Hall (2006a) 53–4.

<sup>65</sup> Heraclitus in Kahn's trans. (1979), fr. 54 = 80 Kahn (pp. 65–6), fr. 123 = 10 Kahn (pp. 33–4), Parm. 1, 28–30 in Guthrie's trans. (1965) 9, Anaxagoras 21a in Guthrie's trans. (1965) 324, in connection with Alcmaeon fr. 1 and Eur. fr. 574 Kannicht. Cf. Democ. fr. 117 and Gorg. fr. 26; Guthrie (1971) 4, 199–200.

<sup>66</sup> Snell (1953) 146.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. *Ag.* 788–9, 838–40, *OT* 1189–92, *Heracles* 112–13; Heinimann (1945) 109.

<sup>68</sup> Bacon (1983) 32. On the Iliadic background of Eteocles and Thebes in the play see Havelock (1982) 294, Garner (1990) 24–7.

<sup>69</sup> Vernant in Vernant and Vidal-Naquet (1972) 101–31.

<sup>70</sup> 116 = 29 Kahn and 101 = 28 Kahn, both in Kahn's trans. (1979) 41–2.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. the phrasing in *OT* 1214; Vernant in Vernant and Vidal-Naquet (1972) 21–40, Cardedge (1997) 14–5, 20, Goldhill (1997b) 132–40.

heroine are gradually revealed against appearances and redefined. The irony resulting from the appearance-and-reality antithesis is equally enhanced in tragedies focusing, like the *Odyssey*, on the recognition of personages, later called in *Poetics* (chs. 10–11 and 16) *anagnōrīsis* or *anagnōrīsmos*. Recognition scenes tend to reveal the changed ‘identities’ of the personages involved: this is particularly significant for the spectators’ liability to sense the tragic lies, truths, acts and ironies in the extant plays about the ‘heroic’ deceptions and self-deceptions engaged in by Orestes, Electra, and female choruses.

Yet tragedy’s theoretical interest in the extent and validity of human knowledge is further demonstrated by the essential emphasis on information and comprehension defined from different viewpoints. As in epic and lyric poetry, remarkable variations of major motifs in the words of personages can serve to define their different approaches. However, since there is no epic or lyric narrator to authorize or dispute what is said and shown in the theatre, the spectators have to judge in each case from what they hear and see.<sup>72</sup> Creon’s edict about the corpse of Polynices in *Antigone*, oracles in many plays and themes in the formal *agōnes logōn* are repeated in contrasting variations, often recalling the relativism introduced by Protagoras, who taught parallel and equivalent forms of truth: his lost work *Antilogiai*, for instance, investigated two opposite arguments on each subject.<sup>73</sup> In Euripides’ *Helen* and *Iphigenia in Tauris* we find a most ironical development of this technique. Each heroine introduces herself in the prologue, and her presence for years as a foreigner in the place where the play is set is asserted by local characters and the chorus of enslaved Greek women. Nevertheless, an intimate relative, whom the heroine believes to be dead, and other personages coming from afar take for granted, respectively, that Helen left Troy with them and Iphigenia was sacrificed at Aulis. Both plays reveal how a circle of deception and confusion, in which men and gods can be equally entangled, threatens the mental, moral and physical integrity of a ‘real’ heroine, until she manages to escape on a ship with her intimates, using not only deceptive rituals, but also violence. By analysing, distinguishing and exposing to our judgement different forms, viewpoints and levels of ‘reality’ in a manner of judicial or sophistic investigation, fifth-century tragic theatre can be seen to operate on the theoretical basis of Protagorean relativism (which Plato categorically rejected).

<sup>72</sup> Hall (1997) 120.

<sup>73</sup> On frs. 5 and 6a see Guthrie (1971) 177, 181–2, Kerferd (1981) 83–93, 100–5.

Thus, tragedy seems to have exploited poetic and philosophical themes in order to establish a theatrical anthropology as the theoretical framework within which it could achieve a key generic theoretical purpose: that is, to represent pictures of the dynamics and limits of human nature as open processes of illusion and disillusionment, in which only the spectators could see, hear, share, judge and be affected by all the conscious or unconscious signs and steps of the characters of heroes and choruses.

A paradoxical cognitive and psychological effect of tragedy on the audience was described by Gorgias, who visited Athens as an orator on behalf of his Sicilian city Leontini and as a teacher of oratory in 427 BC.<sup>74</sup> It is often acknowledged that Empedocles' student introduced a Sicilian 'art' and theoretical basis of rhetoric to late fifth-century Athens,<sup>75</sup> and that he also influenced oratory, other prose forms, poetry and drama, as well as Plato's and Aristotle's critical terminologies and theories of poetry and rhetoric. On the other hand, judging from undated fragments, it is difficult to tell to what extent his sophisticated style and theory of *logos* had been influenced by earlier poetry and drama.<sup>76</sup> The short fr. 23 from Plutarch's *On the Fame of the Athenians* (in *Mor.* 348c) comments on tragedy as 'a hearing and spectacle causing admiration', and describes any listener who is 'not insensitive' as being 'vulnerable to the pleasure' of its words. However adapted the original can be, it suggests Gorgias' interest in tragic drama as a kind of rhetorical performance, but also as a theatrical spectacle, with a paradoxical effect on the audience. The main argument, condensed in a rather enigmatic form, is that tragedy operates as a paradoxical *deception* (*apatē*): for the more deceptive a performer is, the more just (*dikaioteros*) he proves, and the more a spectator is deceived, the wiser (*sophōteros*) he becomes. So, the tragic performance is a *theatrical apatē* – in the sense of a 'deceptive order of words', as Parmenides had called his depiction of the world of human experience (fr. 8, 52) – but, instead of doing wrong, it leads to better understanding, and thus proves to be a legitimate form of deception.<sup>77</sup>

Fr. 11, the *Encomium of Helen*, composed before 415 BC<sup>78</sup> as an exercise for a rhetorical handbook, is an interesting example of sophistic use of epic

<sup>74</sup> Kerferd (1981) 44–5.    <sup>75</sup> Guthrie (1971) 179–81.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. Arist. *Rhet.* 1404a24–9; Long (1968) 8 with n. 17, 155 with n. 19, Verdenius (1981) 127, Halliwell (1986) 16, Kennedy (1989b) 184.

<sup>77</sup> On the relation with Parmenides' fr. and Aeschylus' oxymoron *apatēs dikaias* ('just deception', fr. 301 Radt) see Untersteiner (1969) 141–2; Verdenius (1981) 124.

<sup>78</sup> For the echoes in *Troades*, performed in 415, see Orsini (1956), Goldhill (1997b) 145–7.

myth,<sup>79</sup> with theoretical remarks on *logos*, rhetoric, poetry, philosophical discourse and the visual arts. Four possible reasons are examined in order to explain Helen's situation and defend her innocence: *Tychē* imposed by the gods, Alexander's 'barbarous' violence, persuasion (*peithō*) as a result of *logos*, and desire as a result of pleasurable sight. A central argument of the narrator is that words can never exactly correspond to 'realities' nor appeal to reason, but all forms of *logos* have a divine and magical power over the human soul: their compellingly deceptive and persuasive nature as means of communication has the cognitive and psychological effect of triggering opinions and feelings (8–14). Comparably, sight impresses the soul with images (*eikonas*, 17) that can cause fear, mania or desire, like the attraction Helen may have felt at the sight of Alexander's body, but such images are not unlike visual artefacts that cause pleasure (15–19). So, if Helen was in fact not fated to follow Alexander nor to be abducted by him, she was only deceived either by his *logoi* or by her senses, and therefore cannot be blamed.

Gorgias thought that there is always a gap between language and the reality to which it refers, but, like Protagoras, he believed that one should search for a kind of rhetoric which could describe a 'truth' relatively better – and more 'ethically' – as the beginning of this text suggests (1–2);<sup>80</sup> he seems, therefore, to have taken an interest in poetry and art, which, in his relativistic view, could be closer to truths than lies, or more accurate epistemologically, given that they are meant to be as deceptive and persuasive as possible. Frs. 11 and 23 help us define to some extent Gorgias' late fifth-century theoretical points about Athenian tragedy in the context of his sophistic relativism (which Plato opposed strongly). First, for Gorgias, the human senses, the visual arts and all forms of *logos* – including ritual magic, the performance of poetry and rhetoric, cosmology and other philosophy – create deceptive appearances. Secondly, in spite of their deceptive and ambiguous nature, appearances generated by the senses, the arts and *logos* are legitimate in that, paradoxically, they are powerful components of the only attainable, however limited, level of human 'knowledge', that of subjective opinions, and produce strong feelings in the human soul. Thirdly, for each human receiver the cognitive and psychological effect of such deceptive appearances is bound to be a change to a different degree or of a different quality, and result in a different opinion.

<sup>79</sup> Cf. Guthrie (1971) 63–8 on the myth in *Pl. Prt.*, 277–8 on Prodicus' myth of Heracles, and 284 on Hippias' *Trojan Discourse*.

<sup>80</sup> Kerferd (1981) 79–82, 95–102.

THE GENERIC INVENTION OF THE TRAGIC AS A THEORETICAL  
CONCEPT FOR THE THEATRE

A number of tragic scenes, particularly deception scenes in late fifth-century plays and those with the Stranger in *Bacchae*, have been used for metatheatrical interpretations. Easterling, for example, used Athena's 'directorial' role in the prologue of *Ajax* and details from the course of the action to show that 'the presence of a god on stage is primarily to be associated with the power to shape the play'.<sup>81</sup> The goddess has invited Ajax's rival, Odysseus, who can hear but not see her (14–7), to watch, against his will, and laugh at their common enemy's madness scene, that she will stage (66–9, 74–82). She singles out her shocking deception and derision of the insane hero as an exceptional scene, quite like a 'play within the play':<sup>82</sup> for as she has harmed Ajax's eyes and mind (51–70) he cannot harm nor even see the silent spectator Odysseus (83–8). The second time she summons the madman (71–3, 89–90), he comes out of his tent. Ajax sees only his patron goddess, and speaks to her with gratitude (91–3, 117). As he replies to her continuing questions about his acts and victims, he expresses pride and satisfaction: not only did he take vengeance against those who had dishonoured him, but he will continue torturing Odysseus in the tent (94–117) – in the world of his delusions. The beginning of this play is clearly about the unbearable 'zero degree' of human self-consciousness. The innovation in the myth was, by contrast, to show later the hero committing suicide not in his madness, as in the epics, but in full knowledge of the change in himself and the human world, a realization coming as a result of Athena's deception. Moreover, her excessive number of questions throughout (75–81, 90–109, 118–20) match Odysseus' initial search for and questioning about Ajax (1–50), implying a level of legal investigation.

Leaving aside significant staging matters and dramaturgical, anthropological and theological questions raised by this Sophoclean prologue, I want to concentrate on Athena's and Odysseus' final short dialogue after Ajax exits, as a 'theoretical' introduction to tragedy. Athena asks Odysseus to behold the power of the gods, and poses a last rhetorical question to point to the change that has happened to Ajax (118–20): who else could act at the right moment for the benefit of the Greeks in Troy in the past as providently as Ajax could? Apart from the pity added to the fear which Odysseus

<sup>81</sup> (1993a) 84; cf. 81–5 with nn., Ringer (1998) 31–3. On theatrical 'metaphysics' and ironies in the scene see Lowe (1996) 526–8.

<sup>82</sup> For the term see Pfister (1988) 223–30; Ringer (1998) 33–7 on the prologue of *Ajax* as an example of this technique.

has felt so far (78), he also articulates what he realized both about Ajax's *atē* and about himself (121–4) while he watched as a silent spectator: 'I can see (*horō*) we all are but phantoms or a shadow' (125–6).<sup>83</sup> For Odysseus, the spectacle of his mad enemy deceived and mocked by the goddess of wisdom has a 'cognitive' and 'psychological' impact, which affects and changes not only his image of the power of Ajax and all humans, but his self-image, too. This will be proved when he dares demand an honourable burial for the hero at the end of the play. For the moment, the radical effect that the madness scene had on Odysseus can make the spectators sense and reflect on the effect that this theatrical experience has had on themselves. As the Salaminian chorus remark in their final lines, 'mortals can understand many things when they have seen them' (1418–19).<sup>84</sup>

In her moralizing speech at the end of the prologue (127–33), Athena tries to palliate Odysseus' fatalism by advising him to be moderate and sensible, and her argument about humans includes Ajax: 'One day can weigh down everything a human being is and has | [and] lift it up again' (131–2).<sup>85</sup> Three key ideas of the epics, lyric poetry, Heraclitus, Herodotus and tragedy are united in this image of *hapanta tanthrōpeia*, 'the human condition'. First, that all men are ephemeral and therefore not safe.<sup>86</sup> Secondly, there is a free adaptation of a powerful Homeric, lyric and Aeschylean picture of god or Zeus, weighing the fates of two opponents on his golden scales and deciding that the opponent whose fate sinks is bound to fail.<sup>87</sup> Here the agent is not a god, but a tragic day, evoking the central Sophoclean theme of time. Moreover, the image of broken balance is completed with the restoration of equilibrium, as in the close parallel of *Antigone* 1158–60. Thirdly, like those messenger's lines in *Antigone*, Athena makes us perceive a general picture of all human life as a series of dialectical reversals,<sup>88</sup> a picture which Ajax later recognizes and depicts in his central 'deception' speech as a pattern in the whole universe. Athena's words to Odysseus imply a theoretical definition of what the genre of tragedy is specifically about: a reversal of balance in the life of changing powerful heroes, a transformation shown by performers and experienced by spectators in the theatre. The passage could be seen as

<sup>83</sup> For the fatalistic traditional picture in 124–6 see Stanford (1963) 73–4, Garvie (1998) 136 *ad loc.*

<sup>84</sup> Garvie's trans. (1998) 121.

<sup>85</sup> Ewans' trans. (1999) 7. I have changed his word 'or' into [and], as in the original.

<sup>86</sup> Simonides 521 Campbell, Pind. *Pyth.* 8.95–6, Hdt. 1.86.4–6, *OT* 1186–96, *Prom. Bound* 547–50. See also n. 83.

<sup>87</sup> *Il.* 8.69–74, 16.658, 19.223–4, 22.209–13, Archil. 130 West, Theognis 157–8, Aesch. *Psychostasia* from the Memnon tetralogy in Radt (1985) 114 and 374–7, *Pers.* 345–6, Soph. fr. 576, 4–6 Radt. Cf. the lyric and tragic motif of *rhōpē* (inclination) in Alcaeus 141.3–4, *Ag.* 250–4, with Easterling's n. (1982) 83 on *Trach.* 82.

<sup>88</sup> Heraclitus frs. 88, 110, 111, Hdt. 1.207.2, *Ag.* 1327–30, Soph. fr. 871 Radt, *Trach.* 129–36.

an antecedent of the theme of the core change in the tragic plot in *Poetics* 13 (1452b28–1453a39), though the main subject of that chapter is what kind of change of fortune is logically 'proper' for the 'best' tragedy.

Aristotle remarks in *Poetics* (1451b6–7) that poetry has a more philosophical stance than history, because it describes universals, namely general situations and characteristics of the human nature. Taking this into account, Vernant specified that it was precisely tragic aspects of the human existence and action that the imaginary world of tragedy represented as universal phenomena. As Vernant argued, the Athenian invention of tragedy was at the same time the invention of a tragic consciousness and vision of the world, a tragic discourse and thought, a 'tragic man', a 'tragic god'.<sup>89</sup> Gould, on the other hand, centred on the unheroic chorus: 'the sense that the human condition embraces both the individual and the group, and that all experience [. . .] is to be lived through, perceived, and recollected collectively as well as individually, is so essential a part of the Greek tragic theatre that [. . .] we cannot perceive "the tragic" otherwise.'<sup>90</sup> To express it from a different perspective, by exposing to the sight and hearing of the audience a chosen world-view centred on changing human characters, the tragedians, their actors and choruses invented and developed the tragic as a theoretical concept closely related to the theatrical, comparable to the universal principles that the Presocratics invented to explain the natural and human universe. What we call the tragic seems to have been invented as a *conscious* theoretical generic focus: it involved a novel universal picture of the human being as an ever-changing entity that unified manifold anthropological roles – social, powerful, civilizing, but also deceptive, self-deceptive as well as destructive, and this picture was instantiated in a form accessible to the senses within the novel context of the collective theatrical experience. In the prologue of *Ajax*, the parodos and the Cassandra scene of *Agamemnon*, the stasimon after the discovery of Oedipus' identity in *Oedipus Tyrannus*, or the speeches of the heroine in *Medea*, for instance, we can see how each tragedy defines in its own implicitly self-referential ways a generic focus on the performance of threatening events as an interactive process through which heroic personages, the chorus and spectators experience, each in their own different capacity, an ambiguous, open-ended change of identity, rather than just a painful one. Things that only happen in tragedy, like multiple coincidences and self-deceptions, divine epiphanies and the final 'miraculous' interventions of *ex machina dei* in the time of Euripides, can ironically persuade the spectators

<sup>89</sup> (1986) 83–8, 255–70. <sup>90</sup> (1996) 233.

that they are far outside, though fully entangled in, the changing tragic world.

In Aristophanic comedy a myth integrated within 'real life' in Athens normally defies all limits, and experiments with achieving what is unattainable for humans, either personally or politically. The equally political and Dionysiac genre of tragedy is, by contrast, a celebration of the instability, dynamics and limits of human nature, knowledge and power. The effect of such a celebration on the participants seems to be considered in the indirect self-referential comment of the nurse's words in Euripides' *Medea* 192–200:

While [men of old] invented songs (*humnous*) for festivities, banquets and dinners to lend our life delight for the ears, no one has discovered how to put an end to mortals' bitter griefs with music (*mousēi*) and song (*ōidais*) sung to the lyre. It is because of these griefs that deaths and terrible disasters overthrow houses. It would have been a gain for mortals to cure these ills by song (*molpaisi*).<sup>91</sup>

#### WHO SHOULD BE THE DIDASKALOI OF THE POLIS?

'Homer', whose divine inspiration was stressed by Democritus,<sup>92</sup> played an essential part in Athenian education and culture.<sup>93</sup> A significant theoretical point often implied in tragic plays and fragments preserved from the fifth century, long before it was raised in the *Poetics*,<sup>94</sup> is that tragic theatre adapted to its generic purposes Homeric or other epic elements as models for its mythical world, form and content. As the previous passage from *Medea* shows, tragedy's uncommon references to itself, tragedians or performances – mostly in Euripides and usually in a gnomic context – are disguised under terms of epic or lyric colouring about poetic forms and performances, such as *aidēlōide*, *aidos*, *choros*, *molpē*, *mousa*, *muthoi*, in order to suggest the remaking of traditional mythological poetry, as well as of its self-referential comments.<sup>95</sup> The complex intertextual issue about the large-scale relation of tragic vocabulary, syntax, elevated style, imagery, structure, plot patterns, thematic motifs and characterization with the

<sup>91</sup> Kovacs' trans. (1994) 301, 303. Cf. Mastronarde (2002) 201–2 on lines 190–204.

<sup>92</sup> Fr. 21 cf. frs. 17 and 18; Segal (1986) 90.

<sup>93</sup> Goldhill (1986a) 139–42. Besides, Protagoras' fr. A30 and Hippias' frs. 6, 9, and A10 suggest that they used the Homeric epics in their teachings about language and literature; cf. Verdenius (1981) 127 with nn. 64–6, Kerferd (1981) 40–1.

<sup>94</sup> For the relation and comparison of tragedy with the epics see *Poetics* chs. 3–5, 8, 13.1453a30–33, 23–24, 26.

<sup>95</sup> Easterling (1985) 6, Iakov (1998) 23–31, 67–8, Hall (2006) 111–12. Mythical poets and musicians in tragic frs. and lost tragedies: Hall (1997) 119–20. Theoretical themes and views about poetry in the poetic tradition: Verdenius (1983), Halliwell (1986) 9–15, Murray (2006).

Homeric epics has been discussed at length from Hellenistic times to the present, in juxtaposition to religious, lyric, artistic, legal, political, Presocratic, scientific, medical, sophistic, rhetorical, comic, oral Attic and other dialectal elements in the plays.<sup>96</sup> According to Athenaeus' *Deipnosophistae* 8.347d, Aeschylus himself allegedly called his plays 'slices from Homer's great banquets' (T(O)112a Radt; cf. 112b), and he is known to have produced theatrical adaptations of epics and lyric poems about the Trojan war, its aftermath, and Thebes, probably for the first time in the form of tragic tetralogies.<sup>97</sup> In many fifth-century tragedies as early as the *Seven against Thebes* (467 BC), in satyr plays, like Euripides' *Cyclops*, and in fourth-century tragedies, plot or character details were clearly drawn from epic and related lyric poetry. Recent critics have shown how tragedy regularly constructed for its dramatic and ideological interests a world of Homeric inspiration, with its main heroic characteristics and figures modelled on epics.<sup>98</sup> For Easterling, it is remarkable that 'the essentially aristocratic bias of the Homeric poems and of much choral lyric poetry could so easily be reinterpreted to suit a democratic society. The notion of the 'best people' (as Louis Gernet pointed out)<sup>99</sup> could be transferred from one kind of elite, an aristocracy, to another, the citizen body, and whenever a *choros* performed on a ritual occasion, even if it was composed of some select group, it could always in some sense represent the wider community.'<sup>100</sup>

The political role of Athenian theatre as an institution is highlighted as a general theoretical principle in *Acharnians* 498–500, where Dicaeopolis addresses the spectators and vindicates a drastic political role for comedy, *trugōidia*, as comparable to tragedy: 'I am ready to address the Athenians about the city while making comedy. For even comedy knows about what's right.'<sup>101</sup> In Athena's speech addressing the people of Attica in *Eumenides* 681–710, before the jury vote on Orestes' case, the goddess preaches the political moderation and stability of Athens between the extremes of tyranny and anarchy; she emphasizes that the allegedly new legal institution of the Areopagus warrants the safety of the polis, and is superior to the political institutions of the Scythians and the Peloponnesians. This

<sup>96</sup> See the extant ancient scholia on tragedies (e.g. Polemon is said to have called Sophocles 'tragic Homer': T(T.11b)115a, 115b and 116 Radt). Cf. Herington (1985) 106–38, 213–16, Garner (1990), Goldhill (1997b).

<sup>97</sup> For the *Seven against Thebes*, the *Oresteia* and tetralogies centred on Achilles, Odysseus, Ajax and Memnon see Radt (1985) 111, 113–14, Herington (1985) 138–50. See also n. 68.

<sup>98</sup> Knox (1964) 50–2, 121–5, Vernant in Vernant and Vidal-Naquet (1972) 13–17, Easterling (1984b) and (1985), Goldhill (1986a) 142–67, Burian (1997a) 193–4.

<sup>99</sup> Gernet (1968) 333–43. <sup>100</sup> Easterling (1997c) 172; cf. 165–6, and (1997e).

<sup>101</sup> Henderson's trans. (1998) 119. Cf. Sommerstein (1992) 29–30. On the comparable cultural, political and educational roles of comedy and tragedy in *Ach.* see Foley (1996) 135–40.

rather general political message is a prime, though unusually evident and authoritative, example of tragedy's role as teacher of the polis.<sup>102</sup> Athena's speech stands among three other key political statements in the court scene. First, the chorus of the Erinyes have earlier defended the rights of the murdered mother, and disputed the oracle (622–56): for what Apollo calls 'Zeus' oracle' prescribed Orestes' vengeance against his mother for the death of his father, while Zeus himself had deposed his own father Cronus. Secondly, Apollo refutes the chorus' disarming questions by his main – patriarchal – argument in defence of Orestes, that a mother has no rights, since she is not a child's parent, as a father is, but only a nurturer of the father's seed (657–61). Thirdly, after Athena announces the verdict of acquittal as a result of equal votes, Orestes makes a speech as a restored political leader, and vows Argos' alliance with Athens in proof of his gratitude before he exits (754–77). The four statements suggest an institutional political role as a firm theoretical principle of the tragic genre: by 'giving voice' to representatives of different social groups, even cities, and depicting under the cover of myth the positions, conflicts, compromises or consensus of those groups and communities, it offers both implicit propaganda and critique of contemporary social and political stereotypes, mentalities and practices.<sup>103</sup> Along these lines, the intellectual 'Enlightenment' discerned in Euripides' theatre,<sup>104</sup> along with the more indirect and ambiguous critique offered by Sophocles' *Electra* and *Philoctetes*, appear to have ironically mythologized, demythologized and denounced the alienating effect of Athenian politics and education on the condition of women and young people during the Peloponnesian war. In 405 BC, the *Frogs* projected onto Aeschylus' theatre an Aristophanic idealized picture of flourishing traditional morality (1010–42), in order to present the dead Aeschylus' and Euripides' tragedies as opposite poles in terms of ethical content and effect.<sup>105</sup> But central social themes of tragedy such as powerful heroes and gods, epic wars, power relations, gender conflict, violence, deception, justice, law and persuasion had been already clearly exposed by Aeschylus' plays in the decades subsequent to the Persian wars.<sup>106</sup> Moreover, his addition of the Areopagus tribunal after the scenes at Delphi in *Eumenides* was a 'political' choice inconceivable for the heroic ideology of the *Odyssey*<sup>107</sup> – though definitive with respect

<sup>102</sup> Sommerstein (1989) 215–19 on lines 690–5, Cartledge (1997) 18–22, 26, Easterling (1997c) 167–8.

<sup>103</sup> Cartledge (1997) 22–35, Hall (1997) 118–26, Pelling (1997b) 218–35. <sup>104</sup> Dodds (1951) 181–9.

<sup>105</sup> Snell (1953) 128–32, Dover (1993) 18–24, Lada-Richards (1999) 216–311, Csapo (2002) 131–3.

<sup>106</sup> Gagarin (1976) 87–118, Buxton (1982) 58–90, Winnington-Ingram (1985) 295, Vidal-Naquet in Vernant and Vidal-Naquet (1986) 106–14.

<sup>107</sup> Goldhill (1986a) 153–4.

to post-Aeschylean myths of the Atridae. His texts are the earliest extant sources to entail fifth-century theoretical issues about Athenian tragedy both as a theatrical genre and a political successor to the Homeric epics.

To conclude, I shall turn to the *Frogs*, Platonic dialogues and Aristotle's *Poetics*, and focus on their restrictive reception and critique of the theatrical devices and politics of tragedy as the 'teacher' of the polis next to 'Homer'. Aiming to achieve a polar antithesis between the parodic pictures of the two poets in the comic underworld, *Frogs* not only shifts attention to their moral impact on the polis (1008–88), but sets as a theoretical rule tragedy's moral education of the audience above its political role: both tragedians agree that the criteria for admiring dramatists are their 'skill and good counsel, and [to what extent they] make people better members of their communities' (1008–10),<sup>108</sup> while Aeschylus defines the poet as a teacher of adults (*didaskalos*) who 'must conceal what is evil' and teach 'most of all what is good' (1053–6). Still, the Aristophanic Aeschylus evokes these theoretical criteria only to prove that Euripides had corrupted both tragic personages (1043–64) and the Athenians (1064–88). The *Frogs* undervalues the confrontational aspect of tragedy – certainly of Euripidean tragedy – in order to promote a more conventional moral and educative theory of poetry and theatre.<sup>109</sup> Thus, Dionysus and Aeschylus criticize and mock Euripides' novel education of the audience (954–70), as well as what he calls a 'democratic act' (*dēmokratikon* 952) in his plays, the fact that he had 'the wife speak, and the slave just as much, | and the master, and the maiden, and the old lady' (949–50).<sup>110</sup>

Plato similarly disputed the moral value and refuted the political pluralism of tragedy's critical representation of social oppositions and conflicts. The Platonic Athenian in *Laws* stigmatizes so strongly the wicked 'theatrocracy' which has replaced aristocracy and has not acted even as a democracy of free men, but given freedom of speech to all (3.701a1–7), that there can be no doubt that the influence of tragedy remained just as powerful in the fourth century. In *Gorgias* Socrates described tragedy to Callicles as a demagogic performance of rhetoric, which could only flatter the youth, women and men, slaves and free people alike (502c9–d9).<sup>111</sup> The suggestion that, if one leaves out singing, rhythm and metre, the rest are *logoi* to the public (502c5–8), recalls Gorgias' definition of poetry as rhetoric in verse (fr. 11 par. 9). Yet Socrates argues that music, lyric, choral and tragic

<sup>108</sup> Henderson's trans. (2002) 161. <sup>109</sup> Snell (1953) 115–16.

<sup>110</sup> Henderson's trans. (2002) 153, 155. Cf. Hall (1997) 93, 125–6.

<sup>111</sup> As Goldhill (1997a) 61–4 points out, the passage does not presuppose the presence of women, children and slaves in the audience of tragedy.

performances do not aim to improve the mob, but just to grant it pleasure: tragedy would rather silence what is beneficial than displease its audience (501b1–502c4). In the *Republic* (595a–608b cf. *Sophist* 233c10–236d4) Plato denounced the arts, Homer and tragedy, literature and theatre as ontologically, cognitively, morally and politically deceptive *mimēseis*, to be treated as cautiously as sophistries, and categorically denied their educative capacity even as a theoretical possibility: a logically and ethically coherent system for the education of citizens ought to be entrusted exclusively to the elite of philosophers.<sup>112</sup> In fact, the Athenian of the *Laws* describes in superlatives the interlocutors as poets, and the *politeia* to be constituted by their dialogue about legislation as the most beautiful, the best and truest tragedy, a *mimēsis* of the most beautiful and best kind of life (7.817b2–5).

Consequently, Aristotle's *Poetics* seems not only to have silenced the implicit content of political pluralism that tragedy might have retained in the fourth century and had actually had before,<sup>113</sup> but also to have prescribed no such content for tragedy in the future. Even so, our earliest philosophical text about poetry, epics and tragedy is a valuable synthesis of fifth- and fourth-century theoretical themes, which first discusses the origins and development of ancient Greek drama in defence of the art and ethics of tragedy as rationally organized poetic *mimēsis*. Although Plato is never mentioned, the critical positions of the *Republic* about *mimēsis* and about tragedy as Homer's successor are reconsidered,<sup>114</sup> in an attempt to revoke the so-called 'ancient quarrel between philosophy and poetics', to which Plato had committed himself (*Republic* 607b5–6). The *Poetics* defends the ontological, cognitive and ethical status of all forms of *mimēsis*, including poetry and the visual arts, with reference to their natural origin, and to the pleasure that they offer as a result of their role in understanding and learning (1448b4–24). Aristotle exploits Gorgias' theoretical comments in *Encomium of Helen* on the cognitive and psychological role of visual artefacts and *logos*, as well as on the *pathēmata* or *pathē*, *phobos*, *eleos*, *ekplēxis* and *hēdonē* which they raise in the receiver (fr. 11 pars. 8–19). He never uses Gorgias' and Plato's (dangerous) term *apatē*, yet he follows their logocentric views of poetry and tragedy as rhetoric. According to his own teleological scheme of the natural development of poetic *mimēsis*, the form of tragic myth and performance in which *logos* in iambics became 'protagonist' was the final and perfect poetic instantiation of the 'dramatic'

<sup>112</sup> Ferrari (1989) 120–41, Halliwell (1996) 337–47.

<sup>113</sup> Hall (1996b) 304–6; Too (1998) 103–14; on the status of tragedy in the early fourth century see Easterling (1993b) 567–9 and Hall (2007c).

<sup>114</sup> For the Platonic background of the *Poetics* see Halliwell (1986) 19–27, 331–6.

shape that Homer had given to epics (1448b24–1449a28). The main purpose of the preserved book is to secure the authority of tragedy: Aristotle defines rational rules, mainly about what he finds essential for the 'best' tragedy – the composition of dramatic myth as a poetic text. He rejects illogical or exaggerated elements either in the text or in the performance, like Euripides' *ex machina dei* and the unjustified role of some of his choruses, as endangering the logical coherence of the whole.<sup>115</sup> In this way the perfect poetic genre is to be protected from the preferences of audiences and actors, whom he, too, like Plato, never appears to trust enough.<sup>116</sup>

Apart from reflecting Aristotle's doubts about the representation of Athenian social oppositions in tragedy,<sup>117</sup> the opening of the final evaluation of tragedy above the epics in *Poetics* offers a rare instance of criticism of fifth-century performers and performing styles. For although the prize for the best tragic actor established in the Great Dionysia from 449 BC<sup>118</sup> demonstrates the decision of the Athenians to evaluate acting alongside the art of the tragedians, the first known theory of performance is found in Plato's early fourth-century *Ion*.<sup>119</sup> In this dialogue Socrates foreshadows Plato's later critique, by posing the question of how a victorious *rhapsōdos* and *hupokritēs* (536a1) of the Homeric epics can be so ignorant about the Muse's divine possession of the poet, the performer and the spectator involved in a performance. Starting the comparison of epic and tragedy in *Poetics* (1461b26–1462a4), Aristotle refers to critics who stress the elevated status of epics and their audience as opposed to the low-taste populist over-sophistication of tragic performances: they are like dithyrambic performances<sup>120</sup> in which the aulos-player moved up and down absurdly to appear convincing. Although the critics remain anonymous, the passage recalls the idea of the Athenian in *Laws* that the art of tragedy would mostly appeal to educated women, to youths and the mob, whereas old men would find most pleasure in the performance of epics (2.658d3–8).<sup>121</sup> At this point Aristotle adds that the opposition of the elevated epic genre to tragic performances, appealing to a low-taste audience by indulging in vulgar exaggerations, was paralleled by the anonymous critics with the sharp contrast between acting styles of two subsequent generations of actors in fifth-century Athens: as the performing style of Callippides (an Athenian who made his *début* in the 420s) was compared by the famous

<sup>115</sup> 1454a33–b18, 1456a23–32, 1460a5–b2, 1461b27–1462a4.

<sup>116</sup> 1461b26–1462a4, cf. 1449a7–9, 1451b33–8, 1453a30–9. <sup>117</sup> 1454a16–24, 1462a9–11.

<sup>118</sup> Pickard-Cambridge (1988) 72–3. <sup>119</sup> Ferrari (1989) 92–9. <sup>120</sup> Lucas (1968) 252 on 1461b30.

<sup>121</sup> Lucas (1968) 251 on 1461b27 refers to this passage; cf. *Gorg.* 502b1–d9, *Rep.* 3.397a1–b2, *Laws* 2.658b7–659a4 and 7.817c4–5.

Mynniscus from Chalkis (allegedly one of Aeschylus' actors) to a monkey's much exaggerated gesturing,<sup>122</sup> so was tragedy criticized for its vulgarity. To refute such criticism and define the superior artistic value and pleasure of tragic poetry against the epics (1462a14–b15), Aristotle counter-argues that Callippides was rightly reviled for imitating the gestures of low-class women, but the poetic art of tragedy should not be blamed for bad acting, which can also occur in a performance of an epic rhapsode or lyric solo-singer (1462a5–11). Aristotle here establishes a clear antithesis between poetry and acting in favour of the former.<sup>123</sup> He actually concludes that the superiority of tragedy to epic would be evident, if simple reading were substituted for bad acting (1462a11–14 cf. 1450b16–20). So, the *Poetics* underestimates the primacy of the tragic performance, its chorus, its Dionysiac and democratic contexts, and offers the first systematic poetological theory of writing and reading tragedy as mythological poetry rather than theatre. Aristotle's reception, defence and systematization of tragedy as a reading genre seems to prepare for the turn in the Hellenistic scholarly approaches to literature as text. This should not obscure the fact that fifth-century tragedy was 'visibly obsessed, already from the earliest evidence to which we have access, by the question of its own generic status', as Most remarked.<sup>124</sup> The form and meanings of the tragic texts themselves, as well as later sources, transmit fifth-century theoretical themes and terminology about tragedy as a distinctly theatrical genre within the 'performance culture'<sup>125</sup> of the Athenian democracy – at the crucial early stages of the history and the theory of ancient Greek theatre.

<sup>122</sup> For Mynniscus and Callippides see Ghiron-Bistagne (1976) 142–4, Csapo (2002) 127–31.

<sup>123</sup> Cf. Halliwell (1986) 340–3. <sup>124</sup> Most (2000) 19.

<sup>125</sup> Cartledge (1997) 6, Goldhill (1997a) 54, (1999b) 8–10.

*Athens and Delphi in Aeschylus' Oresteia*

Angus Bowie

Jean-Pierre Vernant famously defined the 'tragic moment' as follows:<sup>1</sup>

The tragic turning point thus occurs when a gap develops at the heart of the social experience. It is wide enough for the oppositions between legal and political thought on the one hand and the mythical and heroic traditions on the other to stand out quite clearly. Yet it is narrow enough for the conflict in values still to be a painful one and for the clash to continue to take place. A similar situation obtains with regard to the problems of human responsibility that arise as a hesitant progress is made toward the establishment of law. The tragic consciousness of responsibility appears when the human and divine levels are sufficiently distinct for them to be opposed while still appearing to be inseparable. The tragic sense of responsibility emerges when human action becomes the object of reflection and debate while still not being regarded as sufficiently autonomous to be fully self-sufficient.

This article will consider the way in which the *Oresteia* emblemizes this change in the manner that Greek culture and Athenian tragedy in particular thought about the role of the divine in the causation and evaluation of events, of the part played therein by oracles, and of the growing importance of the role of humans alongside that of the gods. It is the first text we have which makes the problematic nature of prophetic speech and its authority so prominent a theme, and points the way forward to further examination of these topics in later writers in tragedy and other genres.

In the *Iliad*, the possibility is always open that fate may be altered. This can be seen when Zeus suggests saving Troy, Sarpedon and Hector, and Hera or Athena make the formulaic reply ἔρδ' ἀτὰρ οὐ τοι πάντες

An earlier version of this paper was given at a conference in La Plata, Argentina and published as Bowie (2007). I am grateful to the editor of the conference volume for permission to publish this much expanded and revised version in honour of Pat, to whom I have come to owe so much throughout my whole career.

<sup>1</sup> Vernant (1988b) 27.

ἐπαινέομεν θεοὶ ἄλλοι ('do it, but you'll get no approval from the rest of us gods').<sup>2</sup> This implies that he could change what has been stated to happen, but he never does. Similarly, there are a number of times where an unplanned outcome is prevented by a divine intervention, introduced with the formula καὶ νύ κεν (+ optative) . . . εἰ μὴ ὄξυ νόησε X., and an unordained event is avoided.<sup>3</sup> In the *Odyssey* too, there is no serious doubt that the fated return of Odysseus will take place, as is made clear at the very start (1.16–17):

ἀλλ' ὅτε δὴ ἔτος ἦλθε περιπλομένων ἐνιαυτῶν,  
τῷ οἱ ἐπεκλώσαντο θεοὶ οἴκόνδε νέεσθαι . . .

But when, as time went round, the year came when the gods had spun as his fate that he should return home . . .

Poseidon confirms this when he assures Zeus that (13.132–3):

νόστον δέ οἱ οὐ ποτ' ἀπηύρων  
πάγχυ, ἐπεὶ σὺ πρῶτον ὑπέσχεο καὶ κατένευσας.

I made no attempt to take away his return, since at the start you promised it and nodded in agreement to it.

Herodotus continues to make much of the way that oracles will come true, with the story of the accurate foretelling by Delphi of Croesus's downfall prominently placed at the start of the first book: 'the tales of Herodotus, with their implicit messages of the proper response to divination and reminders of the miraculous fulfilment of earlier prophecies, themselves serve to reinforce belief in divination'.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, that he is so keen to reinforce this belief is a sign that certainty about oracles, caused no doubt in large part by the failure of some foretold events to come about and by failures in interpretation, was not solid. Even the emblematic Croesus tested oracles to see which were reliable: Delphi and Amphiaraus passed the test, but that means that famous oracles like Dodona and the Branchidae at Miletus did not.<sup>5</sup> The trend in disbelief can be traced through Protagoras' agnosticism about the gods and the possibility of knowledge about them,<sup>6</sup> and in Thucydides' remark concerning the oracles about the Peloponnesian War: of the fact that the war lasted twenty-seven years he remarks (5.26.3) τοῖς ἀπὸ χρησμῶν τι ἰσχυρισσάμενοις μόνον δὴ τοῦτο ἐχυρῶς ξυμβάν ('for those who put any trust in oracles, this was the only one which proved

<sup>2</sup> Cf. 4.29, 16.443, 22.181. <sup>3</sup> Cf. e.g. 3.373–4, 5.311–12.

<sup>4</sup> On oracles in Herodotus in general, cf. Harrison (2000) 122–57 (and also 223–42); the quotation is from p. 157.

<sup>5</sup> Hdt. 1.46–9. <sup>6</sup> Frs. 4 and A 12 DK; cf. Guthrie (1969) 226–49.

accurate'): this may not be as thoroughly sceptical as some have thought,<sup>7</sup> but it points again to worries about the nature of oracular truth.

As for tragedy, in Sophocles<sup>8</sup> we find in the *OT* a pattern similar to that in Herodotus: the play is a demonstration of the fulfilment of a problematic oracle, which refutes the sceptical remarks of Jocasta about the truth of oracles (698–725). In *Philoctetes*, the precise terms of the oracle are not made clear, and it seems to be used opportunistically by Odysseus in different ways in different circumstances: it is as if the oracle is a useful thing to appeal to in the course of his own attempts to get the bow and Philoctetes, in which he has full confidence.<sup>9</sup> Heracles appears at the end to ensure that Philoctetes goes to Troy, but in general in Sophocles' extant plays, the gods leave mortals to find their own way to what is ahead.

Euripides, perhaps not surprisingly, has more directly challenging scenes where oracles are concerned, none more so than the words of the *deus ex machina* Castor after the killing of Clytemnestra (*Electra* 1244–8):

δίκαια μὲν νυν ἦδ' ἔχει, σὺ δ' οὐχὶ δρᾶις.  
 Φοῖβος δέ, Φοῖβος – ἀλλ' ἀναξ γάρ ἐστ' ἐμός,  
 σιγῶ· σοφὸς δ' ὦν οὐκ ἔχρησέ σοι σοφά.  
 αἰνεῖν δ' ἀνάγκη ταῦτα· τάντεῦθεν δὲ χρῆ  
 πράσσειν ἅ Μοῖρα Ζεὺς τ' ἔκρανε σοῦ πέρι.

She has her just deserts, but what you did was not just. Phoebus, Phoebus – but he is my master, so I say nothing. He is a wise god, but did not give you a wise prophecy. You must accept this, and in future do whatever Fate and Zeus have in store for you.

Wise Apollo gives unwise prophecies, yet we must accept it and whatever else fate may have in store for us. The idea that an oracle is a clear and, if not unambiguous, at least authoritative statement of what should be is here considerably eroded. In *Ion* too, Apollo has raped Creusa and allowed her to suffer for many years, but when she comes to ask the god about the child she abandoned, the god's servant, Ion, tries to put her off using the oracle, in order to save the god shame (367–73)

αἰσχύνεται τὸ πρᾶγμα· μὴ ξέλεγχέ νιν . . .  
 οὐκ ἔστιν ὅστις σοι προφητεύσει τάδε.  
 ἐν τοῖς γὰρ αὐτοῦ δώμασιν κακὸς φανείς  
 Φοῖβος δικαίως τὸν θεμιστεύοντά σοι  
 δράσειεν ἂν τι πῆμ'. ἀπαλλάσσου, γύναι.  
 τῶι γὰρ θεῶι τάναντί' οὐ μαντευτέον.

<sup>7</sup> That the passage does not imply a blanket dismissal of all oracles is argued by Marinatos (1981).

<sup>8</sup> On oracles in Sophocles, cf. e.g. Knox (1957) 33–52; Kirkwood (1994) 72–82; Parker (1999).

<sup>9</sup> Cf. 68–9, 112–15, 610–21, 984–90, 1054–80, 1324–47, 1418–30; Gill (1980).

He is ashamed of what he did; do not show him up . . . There is no-one who will act for you in this matter because, if the god were shown to be wicked in his own house, he would rightly harm the man who helped you. Leave it alone, lady. We must not consult the god against his will.

Prophecy is no longer a means of helping blind mortals to cope with events, but a means of preserving the god's reputation, whatever he has done; now the mortals must divine when it is right to ask the oracle a question. Apollo's failure to appear at the end for fear of reproach (1557–8) leaves us with a most uncomfortable image of the oracular god.

This is a trend that is prefigured and probably to some extent inaugurated by the *Oresteia*. There is nothing quite as unsettling as in Euripides, but important questions are asked. Before turning to the play, and having looked with Vernant at the social and psychological factors, we can consider briefly the question of the political relationships between Athens and Delphi around this time.<sup>10</sup>

#### UN PEU D'HISTOIRE

The years leading up to the production of the *Oresteia* appear to have seen a shift in the role played by Delphi in Greek political life. As Robert Parker has argued, in the fifth and fourth centuries Delphi was consulted less and less by states on matters other than cultic ones: 'it is hard to prove that the Athenians consulted an oracle on any important issue of public policy after the Persian wars'.<sup>11</sup> It was as if rhetoric had become a 'secular mode of divination, probing past and future by the light of "probability", through "signs" no longer magical . . . Politics and generalship were becoming professions and skills . . . In many traditional contexts for divination the new professionals would have been devaluing their expertise if they had accepted that there was no clearly preferable choice in human terms . . . To consult an oracle with a view to doing what the god "ordered" could perhaps be seen as a surrender of the right of self-determination.'<sup>12</sup>

Historically, the evidence for Athens' relationships with Delphi around this time is slight.<sup>13</sup> If she did not consult the Oracle, Athens took an interest in it. In the year after the *Oresteia*, the Spartan desire to protect Doris from the Phocians led to victory at Tanagra, but an Athenian victory

<sup>10</sup> On tragedy's relationship with contemporary historical events, cf. Hall (1996a) 7–9; Bowie (1997), esp. 39–45; Sourvinou-Inwood (2003) 15–53.

<sup>11</sup> Parker (1985) 320. Bowden (2005) 109–33 (with the Concordance of Athenian consultations at 168–9) wants to make less of the distinction between religious and political consultations: 'Delphi's role in revealing the will of the gods to the Athenians was . . . a vital part of their political and military activities, as well as their religious life' (133). Cf. also Daux (1940).

<sup>12</sup> Parker (1985) 323. <sup>13</sup> Meiggs (1972) 298–300; cf. Parke and Wormell (1956) 1.184–6.

at Oenophyta shortly afterwards gave them control of Boeotia, Phocis and Eastern Locris. This enabled them to restore Delphi to the control of the Phocians. There may also have been an alliance between Athens and the Amphictyonic League. For a decade, Athens held sway, until Coronea in 446 finally gave the Spartans the chance to restore Delphic autonomy. In 458, therefore, the question of Delphi was in the air at Athens.

What I want to show in this study is how the *Oresteia*, in the matter of political problems, also figures this growing preference for local debate over reference to an oracle.<sup>14</sup> I will be arguing for a privileging of Athens over Delphi, and of Athenian procedures over Delphic. This privileging can be seen most clearly of course in the way that Delphi is unable to solve the problem of Orestes' matricide, and the matter has to be referred to Athens for its ultimate and successful resolution: the unusual shift from one place to another in a tragedy marks the importance of this event.<sup>15</sup> But such privileging of Athens over Delphi does not appear simply in the conclusion of the plot. It is also figured in the emphasis that is placed throughout the trilogy on the idea of the problematic and indeed even deficient nature of oracular consultation and interpretation in the solution of legal and political problems.<sup>16</sup> Equally important, this is also reflected in the imagery of the play.

#### INTERPRETING SIGNS

One of the topics that is important in this context is that of the interpretation of signs, which features strongly especially in the *Agamemnon*,<sup>17</sup> and recurs regularly throughout the trilogy. What is important here is the way that oracular language is woven into this emphasis on ambiguity.

The problem of interpreting signs is announced in the very first scene, where the beacon-signal is interpreted in two ways by the Watchman. The beacon may bring him ἀπαλλαγὴν πόνων, 'freedom from his troubles', a phrase which frames the first part of his utterance (1, 20), but equally clearly there is trouble ahead: 'if the house had a voice, it would speak most clearly' (37f.), but it does not: the ambiguity is not dispelled. He concludes

<sup>14</sup> For the corresponding marginalization of independent seers in matters of politics in the fifth century, cf. Burkert (1962).

<sup>15</sup> Taplin (1977) 375–9.

<sup>16</sup> On divination in the *Oresteia* generally, in addition to general studies of Aeschylus, cf. esp. Staehlin (1912) 25–40; Vicaire (1963); Kamerbeck (1965) 33–4; Peradotto (1969); Wartelle (1978) s.v. 'devins'; Roberts (1984) 126–31; Vogt (1998) 41–4; Goldhill (1992) 60–3. On Delphi in tragedy, cf. Bowden (2005) 40–64.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. esp. Goldhill (1984) 8–98.

equally ambiguously μαθοῦσιν αὐδῶ κού μαθοῦσιν λήθομαι ('I choose for my part to speak to those who know and understand, and to those who do not to forget', 39).<sup>18</sup> The problem is encapsulated in the ambiguity of φάος: there is a 'light', but it is not necessarily 'salvation'.

Within this demonstration of ambiguity, the language used of the beacon has an oracular tinge to it. He refers to λαμπάδος τὸ σύμβολον (8), and σύμβολον is a technical term in the interpretation of difficult signs and omens:<sup>19</sup> compare for instance [Aesch.] *PV* 485–7:

κάκρῖνα πρῶτος ἐξ ὄνειράτων ἅ χρῆ  
ὑπαρ γενέσθαι, κληδόνας τε δυσκρίτους  
ἐγνώρισ' αὐτοῖς ἐνοδίους τε συμβόλους.

I was first to interpret from dreams what must happen during waking hours, and I explained chance remarks that are difficult to understand and symbolic encounters on journeys.<sup>20</sup>

Again, in 9–10, the Watchman talks of αὐγὴν . . . φέρουσιν ἐκ Τροίας φάτιν | ἀλώσιμόν τε βάξιν ('the torch-signal bringing a tale of Troy, the tidings of her capture'): φάτις and βάξις are both used of oracular speech,<sup>21</sup> as for instance in *Ag.* 1132 ἀπὸ θεσφάτων τίς ἀγαθὰ φάτις βροτοῖς στέλλεται; ('but from oracles what good message ever comes to men?'), and *Soph. Tr.* 86–7 θεσφάτων βάξιν.

This question of interpreting oracular signs recurs in the Chorus' account of the omen of the eagles who tear apart the pregnant hare that preceded the expedition to Troy. The whole passage of Calchas' interpretation stresses the doubleness of the portent of the eagles. The word we have already discussed, σύμβολον, recurs in another ambivalent passage at 144 τούτων αἰνεῖ ξύμβολα κρᾶναι, δεξιὰ μὲν κατάμομφα δὲ φάσματα ('she [Artemis] consents to fulfil that which the encounter portends for this undertaking, the signs that appear favourable yet betoken disapproval'): φάσμα is a regular word for divine portents.<sup>22</sup> Again, an omen poses a problem of interpretation and, when it is interpreted, poses an even greater problem.

There is thus a homology between this passage and that concerning the beacon. Each 'sign', beacon and omen, is shrouded in uncertainty and is set about with acts of vengeance. The beacon looks to Clytemnestra's vengeance on Agamemnon for his killing of Iphigenia; the hare omen

<sup>18</sup> For convenience, text and translations of *Agamemnon* are generally from Fraenkel (1950); important divergences are noted.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. LSJ s.v. 111.1–2. A radical reading of *symbolon* and cognates in the trilogy is to be found in Degener 2001; I have not seen Lallot 1974; Reynolds 2004.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. also *Ar. Birds* 721 σύμβολον ὄρνιν. <sup>21</sup> Cf. LSJ s.v. 1.1 and 1 respectively. <sup>22</sup> LSJ s.v. 4.

precedes an expedition which is in revenge for Paris' abduction of Helen; this will result in Artemis' vengeance on the eagles/kings through the sacrifice of Iphigenia, which itself causes Clytemnestra's revenge. In each case, the omen is an aspect of the power of an individual, divine or human, to dictate what is to happen. There is no way of avoiding this vengeance, and each act leads into another in classic vendetta fashion. Not only are omens hard to understand but, though their interpretation offers answers to particular problems, they also fail to bring closure or offer solutions to sequences of violent acts: something more is needed to bring the sequence to an end.

These two examples set the scene for this analysis of sign-interpretation throughout the play, and I want now to look at some of the major examples of the particular phenomenon of the problematic and deficient nature of oracular speech and interpretation, before contrasting it with the new processes instituted at Athens by Athena. I shall be especially interested in the specific evocations of Delphi, though more general references to divination will also be discussed.

#### CASSANDRA

A natural place to start is the scene with Cassandra later in *Agamemnon*, which contains many features which evoke, not just prophetic discourse generally (hardly surprising in a scene with a prophetess), but the procedures of divination specifically associated with Delphi; alongside these are also evoked physical features of that shrine.<sup>23</sup>

The notion of prophecy is strongly evoked by the Chorus' lyrics which separate Agamemnon and Clytemnestra's entry into the house from Clytemnestra's return to deal with Cassandra (975–83):

τίπτε μοι τόδ' ἐμπέδως  
 δεῖμα προστατήριον  
 καρδίας τερασκόπου  
 πωτᾶται,  
 μαντιπολεῖ δ' ἀκέλευστος ἄμισθος ἀοιδά,  
 οὐδ' ἀποπτύσας δίκαν  
 δυσκρίτων ὀνείρων  
 θάρσος εὐπειθῆς ἱ-  
 ζει φρενὸς φίλον θρόνον;

<sup>23</sup> For a discussion of the previous scholarship on this scene, cf. Mitchell-Boyask (2006) 270 n.2.

Why is it that so constantly this dread, as a guardian in front of my *auguring* heart, flutters to and fro; that a chant unbidden and unhired *plays the prophet*, and I cannot spurn it, like *dreams without clear meaning*, and let assuring trust settle on the *throne* of my mind?

τερασκόπου<sup>24</sup> and the *harax* μαντιπολεῖ clearly point to divination;<sup>25</sup> the speakers cannot control themselves; the dreams are 'hard to interpret'.<sup>26</sup> Even the word θρόνος may in such a context be significant, since it is the word regularly used for the seat of the Pythia in the *lebēs* atop her tripod.<sup>27</sup> The dread and the way that the words come 'unbidden, unpaid for' are reminiscent of descriptions of divine possession, where the seer is not in control of his or her words and body.<sup>28</sup> The whole process is apparently fraught with difficulty and a sense of things hard to understand.

This idea of the inadequacy of prophecy to the situation returns in the next stanza, in similar fashion. First, in 995–1000:

σπλάγχνα δ' οὔτοι ματαί-  
 ζει πρὸς ἐνδίοις φρεσὶν  
 τελεσφόροις δίναις κυκλούμενον κέαρ.  
 εὐχομαι δ' ἐξ ἐμᾶς  
 ἐλπίδος ψύθη πεσεῖν  
 ἐς τὸ μὴ τελεσφόρον.

Man's inward parts do not vainly bode – the heart, in eddies that bring fulfilment, whirling against the mind which is conscious of just retribution. But I pray that from my expectation it may fall as a falsehood to the ground so as to bring no fulfilment.

And again at the very end (1025–33):

εἰ δὲ μὴ τεταγμένα  
 μοῖρα μοῖραν ἐκ θεῶν  
 εἶργε μὴ πλέον φέρειν,  
 προφθάσασα καρδία  
 γλῶσσαν ἂν τάδ' ἐξέχει·  
 νῦν δ' ὑπὸ σκότῳ βρέμει  
 θυμαλγῆς τε καὶ οὐδὲν ἐπελπομέ-  
 να ποτὲ καίριον ἐκτολυπεύσειν,  
 ζωπυρουμένας φρενός.

<sup>24</sup> Used of Cassandra (*Ag.* 1440), Apollo (*Eum.* 62) and Orestes (*Cho.* 551).

<sup>25</sup> On αἰοιδά Lloyd-Jones (1979) 69 notes that 'the Chorus compares its presentiment of evil with a song of a different nature; the comparison is made easier because the presentiment is called a prophecy, and prophets often put their predictions into verse'.

<sup>26</sup> For κρίνω of omens etc., cf. LSJ s.v. 11.5. ἀποπτύσας might also evoke the expression ἀπέπτυσσα used absolutely to mean *absit omen* (cf. Eur. *Hipp.* 614; LSJ s.v. ἀποπτύω 2).

<sup>27</sup> Cf. e.g. *Eum.* 18, 29, 616; *IT* 1254, 1282. <sup>28</sup> Cf. n. 32 below.

And did not established destiny prevent my portion from winning more from the gods, my heart outrunning my tongue would pour this out; but as it is, it mutters in the dark, pained to the core and without hope ever to accomplish any timely purpose, while my mind is ablaze.

In these passages we have the idea that their prophetic forebodings offer no solutions – they know the forebodings are correct, but can only hope they will not be fulfilled – then (more contentiously)<sup>29</sup> the idea that the gods will silence a potential seer, to prevent too much knowledge being revealed. All the Chorus can do is mutter darkly, its prophesying powerless against the forces that surround it, embodied by Clytemnestra who comes out again after this stanza. This prelude to the Cassandra scene foreshadows the way in which Cassandra's own prophecies are similarly powerless.

The scene begins with further play on the idea of intelligibility. The Chorus declare Clytemnestra's first words to Cassandra a σαφή λόγον ('clear speech', 1047),<sup>30</sup> but Cassandra seems not to understand. Clytemnestra raises the possibility that she is χελιδόνος δίκην | ἀγνώτα φωνήν βάρβαρον κεκτημένη ('like a swallow, possessed of an unintelligible foreign tongue', 1050–1), and asks her if she cannot understand to signify as much with her hand (1060–1), which leads the Chorus to say she is in need of ἐρμηνέως . . . τοροῦ ('a clear interpreter', 1062).

Cassandra's first words are then a mixture of eastern cries and appeals to Apollo, and the Chorus take her language as initiating a kind of prophetic session (1083–4):

χρήσειν ἔοικεν ἀμφὶ τῶν αὐτῆς κακῶν  
μένει τὸ θεῖον δουλῖαι περ ἐν φρενί.

She is going to prophesy, it seems, about her own miseries. The divine gift abides in the mind, though it be enslaved.

When it is clear that she will prophesy whether they will or not, they somewhat primly say (1098–9):

ἦμεν κλέος σοῦ μαντικὸν πεπυσμένοι  
ἴημεν<sup>†</sup>, προφητὰς δ' οὔτινας ματεύομεν.

<sup>29</sup> The passage is very difficult, but the inability to speak out about the future seems clear and leads well into Clytemnestra's entry.

<sup>30</sup> There are ominous verbal echoes here of their response to Clytemnestra's first speech at 615–16 αὐτῆ μὲν οὕτως εἶπε, μανθάνοντί σοι | τοροῖσιν ἐρμηνεῦσιν εὐπρεπῆ λόγον.

We have heard of your renown as a seer; but we don't need any prophets, thank you.

Prophetic language then pervades the scene.<sup>31</sup>

But it is not only her words that evoke prophecy. Cassandra, as we are told later, is dressed, not simply as a captive, but as a prophetic priestess: at 1265 she is wearing σκῆπτρα καὶ μαντεῖα περὶ δέρηι στέφη ('sceptre and mantic garlands round my neck', 1265), which she casts to the ground, along with her χρηστηρίαν ἐσθῆτ' ('prophetic garb', 1270).<sup>32</sup> There is, I suppose, no reason why a prophetess should not travel across the sea in her priestly clothing, but the presence of that clothing helps to make this scene resemble a more formal prophetic session than if Cassandra had been dressed less symbolically.<sup>33</sup>

That this is a scene evoking prophecy is fairly obvious, but what of the way in which Aeschylus has woven a small number of specifically Delphic aspects into it?<sup>34</sup> We have already noted the possible Delphic aspect of her inspired and difficult speech, but there are clearer indications.

The most striking Delphic echo occurs before the prophesying begins, when Clytemnestra says she has not time to bandy words with the dumb Cassandra, because (1056–7):

τὰ μὲν γὰρ ἐστίας μεσομφάλου  
ἔστηκεν ἤδη μῆλα †πρὸς σφαγὰς πυρός†.

'For they, the sheep, are already standing before the hearth at the omphalos, for (?) slaughter'.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. 1105 τούτων διδρὶς εἰμι τῶν μαντευμάτων; 1112–13 οὐπω ξυνηκαῖ νῦν γὰρ ἐξ αἰνιγμάτων | ἐπαργέμοισι θεσφάτοις ἀμηχανῶ; 1130–5 οὐ κομπάσαιμ' ἂν θεσφάτων γνώμων ἄκρος | εἶναι . . . | ἀπὸ δὲ θεσφάτων τίς ἀγαθὰ φάτις | βροτοῖς τέλειται; κακῶν γὰρ διαί | πολυεπεῖς τέχνηαι θεσπιωιδῶν | φόβον φέρουσι μαθεῖν; 1140 φρενομανῆς τις εἰ θεοφόρητος; 1154 πόθεν ὄρους ἔχεις θεσπεσίας ὁδοῦ | κακορρήμονας; 1160–1 νῦν δ' ἀμφὶ Κωκυτόν τε κάχερουσίους | ὄχθους ἔοικα θεσπιωιδῆσειν τάχα.

<sup>32</sup> For garlands on the tripod and the Pythia, cf. *Eum.* 39 πολυστεφεῖ μυχόν; *Ar. Wealth* 39 and schol.

<sup>33</sup> Her appearance in priestly garb is unlike her few artistic representations, where she is not so represented. She appears in essentially two scenes, her rape by Ajax and her death at the hands of Clytemnestra. According to Prag (1985) 58–60, in representations of her rape by Ajax, she is regularly wholly or partly naked, uniquely amongst rape-victims in Greek art. When she is not naked, her clothes are falling off her; in none of the pictures is she shown as a priestess. There are only two representations of her death, but again in neither is she dressed as a priestess. On a seventh-century piece of bronze sheathing from the Argive Heraeum (Athens NM unnumbered; Prag 1985 pl. 37a), she is dressed in the same way as Clytemnestra, and on a fifth-century red-figure kylix by the Marlay Painter (Ferrara T.264 (2482); Prag 1985 pl. 37b), she is clad only in a himation, with nothing underneath. That Cassandra comes on stage in full prophetic kit is thus perhaps striking. In the end, however, she is dishevelled: ἰδοῦ δ' Ἀπόλλων αὐτὸς ἐκδύων ἐμὲ | χρηστηρίαν ἐσθῆτ' (1269–70).

<sup>34</sup> The bibliography on procedures at Delphi is naturally very large. There is a very useful collection of material in *TheoCRA* III.17–31. Cf. esp. Amandry (1950); Parke and Wormell (1956) 1.16–45; Burkert (1983) 116–30; Maurizio (1995); Price (1985).

'All is darkness here', as Denniston and Page say of the text, but the phrase ἐστίας μεσομφάλου at least is clear. Of μεσομφάλου, Fraenkel writes that 'the not infrequent examples of the word in the three great tragedians (Ion and Agathon play with the pompous word) clearly support the view that the epithet referred originally to the Omphalos in Delphi . . . It had its origin presumably in the sacred poetry of Delphi.' He argues then that 'Aeschylus purposely used the word here in an arbitrarily generalised sense'. I would however more happily think that Aeschylus used it 'purposely' with some point in mind. Verrall suggested that Clytemnestra here mocks Apollo's priestess with a word from the vocabulary of Apollo's cult, to which Fraenkel wryly replies that 'unfortunately Aeschylus can never be ingenious enough for Verrall'.<sup>35</sup> Nonetheless, though I do not think that there is mockery here, I prefer to follow Verrall's insight: the phrase ἐστία μεσόμφαλος is unusually grand for the palace hearth. Pindar may refer to the ἄσπεος ὀμφαλὸν θυόεντ' ('fragrant *omphalos* of the city', fr. 75.3) in Athens, but that is natural for a city's religious centre: it is a different matter to refer to the hearth of a house, even of a palace, in such grand tones. In the context of a prophetic figure like Cassandra, is it not possible that the phrase evokes Delphi?<sup>36</sup> In representations on vases, reliefs and coins, the *omphalos* regularly stands as a synecdoche for Delphi.<sup>37</sup> Though *omphaloi* were used for sacrifice elsewhere, there seem not to have been any sacrifices of sheep actually at the *omphalos* at Delphi, but sacrifice preceded consultations, and here too there are victims waiting, sheep, as at Delphi.<sup>38</sup> The crucial murder in the play thus takes place in a location that is symbolically loaded.

A less striking point may be that Cassandra is a nubile young woman. According to Diodorus 16.26.6:

It is said that in ancient times virgins delivered the oracles . . . In more recent times, however, people say that Echeocrates the Thessalian, having arrived at the shrine and beheld the virgin who uttered the oracle, became enamoured of her because of her beauty, carried her away with him and violated her; and that the Delphians because of this deplorable occurrence passed a law that in future a virgin should no longer prophesy but that an elderly woman of fifty should declare the oracles and that she should be dressed in the costume of a virgin, as a sort of reminder of the prophetess of olden times.

<sup>35</sup> Fraenkel (1950) 482. <sup>36</sup> Cf. the Triclinian scholion μεσομφάλου ἤγουν ἐν Πυθίαι.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Jacquemin (1999) 7–8: the *omphalos* appears in eleven of the twenty-one Italic representations of the myth of Orestes at Delphi.

<sup>38</sup> Eur. *Ion* 228–9 ἐπὶ ἑ ἄσφακτοῖς | μήλοισι δόμων μὴ πάριτ' ἐς μυχόν.

In *Eum.* 38, the Pythia refers to herself as a γραῦς ('old woman'). In art, the precise age of the Pythia is not always easy to decide, though she tends to look younger rather than older.

We have already noted the ecstatic speech with which she begins. Whether or not the Pythia spoke in such a way or not is much disputed,<sup>39</sup> but such partially intelligible language is a cross-cultural feature of divination, the strange language serving to guarantee that the utterance is divine, not controlled by the seer.<sup>40</sup> Possession and unusual speech are features of divination that are regularly mentioned in ancient Greece.<sup>41</sup>

As if to clinch the Delphic aspects, there is the most explicit reference to Delphi in the later exchange at 1252–5:

ΚΑ. ἢ κάρτα ἴδρ' ἀνὶ παρεκόπτης χρησμῶν ἐμῶν.  
 ΧΟ. τοὺς γὰρ τελοῦντας οὐ ξυνῆκα μηχανήν.  
 ΚΑ. καὶ μὴν ἄγαν γ' Ἑλληνί' ἐπίσταμαι φάτιν.  
 ΞΟ. καὶ γὰρ τὰ πυθόκραντα· δυσμαθῆ ὄδῳ.

Ca. Clearly you have in very truth lost the track of my oracles.

Ch. Yes, for I do not understand who they are who will accomplish the design.

Ca. And yet I know the speech of Hellas all too well.

Ch. Yes, and so do the Pythian ordinances; but still they are hard to understand.

This explicitly associates Cassandra's words with those of the Pythia, and indeed with the problems of understanding words from Delphi.

We have here then a scene of prophecy, with certain Delphian overtones. However, what is noticeable about it is that the prophecy does not succeed: the Chorus are quite incapable of understanding what Cassandra is saying to them. There are moments when things seem to become clearer, but obscurity descends again, prompting the Chorus to make the comparison with the Delphic oracle. This incomprehension of prophetic language thus picks up the problems with prophetic language and prophesying that we have seen so far. Prophecy, through its unclarity, does not seem to provide solutions, but to complicate. The whole scene is in some ways reminiscent of a famous episode described by Plutarch, when things went badly wrong at Delphi after an inauspicious initial sacrifice:<sup>42</sup>

The Pythia went down into the *adyton* unwillingly, they say, and half-heartedly; and at her first response it was clear from the harshness of her voice that she was

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Maurizio (1995) 69–72 for a survey of opinions. For the ancient evidence, cf. *TheoCRA* 111.28–9.

<sup>40</sup> Maurizio (1995) 83–6.

<sup>41</sup> For ecstatic or 'enthusiastic' prophesying generally in Greece, cf. *TheoCRA* 111.12–14, and 30–1 for Delphi.

<sup>42</sup> *Mor.* 438b.

not responding properly and was like a labouring ship, as if she was filled with a mighty and baleful spirit. Finally she became hysterical and with a frightful shriek rushed towards the exit and threw herself down, with the result that not only the members of the deputation but also the *prophetes* Nicander and the cult officials that were present fled.

Like Cassandra's, the Pythia's voice is anomalously unusual,<sup>43</sup> and the sacrifices in both cases are anomalous; neither prophetess has long to live.

Though we here enter the realm of speculation, the final tableau of the play may also have had Delphic overtones. It would be most natural to imagine that Agamemnon is seen on the *ekklēma* in his bath, covered by the garment in which he was killed,<sup>44</sup> with next to him Cassandra in her prophetess's robes: Clytemnestra calls her the *τερασκόπος* . . . *θεσφατηλόγος* ('augress and prophetess', 1440–1). The garment covering Agamemnon, as in normal death ritual of which the scene is a parody,<sup>45</sup> was presumably a robe, but it is repeatedly described as a kind of net.<sup>46</sup> The natural interpretation of this would be that these references are purely imagistic, the idea of the funeral garment being a net pointing up the parody. One piece of evidence gives one pause, however. On the Boston Oresteia Krater, ascribed by Beazley to the Dokimasia Painter and datable to between 475 and 450, Agamemnon is covered by a gauzy garment which clearly shows his naked form. Vermeule writes of it as follows:<sup>47</sup>

This robe is the most remarkable feature on the vase. It is a long tube of filmy embroidered material without any normal opening for the head and hands, like a fishnet or pillowcase dropped over the victim from above. . . . Vertical wavy crinkles in the material, upright rows of embroidered dots, and the level enriched hem, all set off the soft slant of Agamemnon's collapse. There is no other robe like this in all Greek art, nor mentioned in Greek literature before the famous robe of treachery in Aeschylus' *Oresteia*.

It is a pity that the relative chronology of play and vase is uncertain, but this opens the possibility that the robe on stage was not simply described as, but actually looked like, a net.

If that were so, Agamemnon covered in his net-like garment, his prophetess beside him, could be a parody, not just of a funerary rite, but of the

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Price (1985) 137.

<sup>44</sup> This seems the most likely scenario, though how it was achieved is debated: cf. Taplin (1977) 325–7.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Seaford (1984).

<sup>46</sup> Cf. *δίκτυόν τι γ' Αἰδου* . . . *ἄρκυς* (1115–16); *ἄπειρον ἀμφίβληστρον, ὡσπερ ἰχθύων* (1382); *ἀράχνης ὑφασμα* (1492); for Aegisthus, Agamemnon is caught *τῆς δίκης ἐν ἔρκεσιν* (1611). See most recently McNeil (2005).

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Vermeule (1966); quotation on p. 4; cf. fig. 4.

*omphalos* and priestess of Delphi. The *omphalos* was itself covered with a net-like object, as is testified by Euripides' *Ion*, who says it was στέμμασι γ' ἔνδυτον, ἀμφὶ δὲ Γοργόνες ('bound with fillets, with Gorgons round it'),<sup>48</sup> and Strabo, who says δαίκεται δὲ καὶ ὀμφαλὸς τις ἐν τῷ νάῳ τεταϊνιωμένος καὶ ἐπ' αὐτῷ αἱ δύο εἰκόνες τοῦ μύθου ('there is also shown a kind of navel in the temple, which is draped in fillets, and on it are the likenesses (of the birds) of the myth').<sup>49</sup> This is also clear from representations, such as the fourth-century *omphalos* in the Delphi museum, and the South Italian vase of about 370, where it is a cone-shaped stone covered in what looks like a thick, knotted netting.<sup>50</sup>

The speculative nature of this suggestion may be mitigated a little by the fact that this scene has, as has often been noted, its counterparts in the final tableau of *Choephoroi*, both in terms of staging and of language, and also in the tableau that opens *Eumenides*. The former has again a pair of bodies revealed on stage, and the robe-net reappears. It is not now covering a body, but Orestes again refers to it as a net a number of times,<sup>51</sup> and asks for it to be spread out like a hunting-net: ἐκτεῖνατ' αὐτὸ καὶ κύκλῳ παρασταδόν | στέγαστρον ἀνδρὸς δείξαθ' ('stretch it out, and standing in a circle display the net that captured the man', 983–4). Orestes speaks of his journey to Delphi: παρεσκευασμένος | ξὺν τῷιδε θαλλῷ καὶ στέφει προσίξομαι | μεσόμφαλόν θ' ἴδρευμα ('equipped with this suppliant branch and this woollen ornament, I will go to the shrine where stands the navel-stone at the centre of the earth', 1035–6). He now wears the fillets earlier worn by Cassandra, but more importantly the phrase μεσόμφαλον ἴδρευμα picks up Clytemnestra's ἐστία μεσόμφαλος (*Ag.* 1056).<sup>52</sup> As we shall discuss below, at the start of *Eumenides*, we again find two figures, Orestes and Apollo, next to the *omphalos* with its net and fillets, and now, circling the *omphalos*, the Furies, seen in the first two plays only in frenzy by Cassandra (κῶμος . . . συγγόνων Ἐρινύων, 'a *kōmos* of Furies bred in the race', *Ag.* 1189–90) and Orestes (σμοιαὶ γυναῖκες αἶδε Γοργόνων δίκην, 'terrifying women, like Gorgons', *Cho.* 1048).<sup>53</sup> The Pythia refers to them as a θαυμαστὸς λόχος | . . . γυναικῶν . . . οὔτοι

<sup>48</sup> *Ion* 224.

<sup>49</sup> 9.3.6. Why Strabo calls the figures the eagles which circled the earth to find its centre but Ion calls them Gorgons is not clear, but the Gorgons will be significant later, as we shall see.

<sup>50</sup> On the *omphalos* and for illustrations, cf. Roscher (1915), Hermann (1959), *TheoCRA* 111.23–4.

<sup>51</sup> It is τὸ μηχανήμα, δεσμὸν ἀθλίῳ πατρί, | πέδας τε χερσῶν καὶ ποδοῖν ξυνωρίδα (981–2); Orestes asks if he is to call it an ἄγρευμα θηρῶν, ἢ νεκροῦ ποδένδυτον, and decides δίκτυον μὲν οὖν | ἄρκυν τ' ἂν εἴποις καὶ ποδιστήρας πέπλους (997–1000).

<sup>52</sup> Orestes' phrase ἐγὼ θ' ἀλήτης τῆσδε γῆς ἀπόξενος (1042) is almost a quotation of Cassandra's earlier prophetic line that he will arrive φυγὰς θ' ἀλήτης, τῆσδε γῆς ἀπόξενος (*Ag.* 1282).

<sup>53</sup> For the attractive emendation σμοιαί, cf. Garvie (1986) 344; West (1990) 263.

γυναῖκας, ἀλλὰ Γοργόνας λέγω· | οὐδ' αὖτε Γοργείοισιν εἰκάσω τύποις  
 ('an extraordinary band of women . . . not women, I mean Gorgons, yet I  
 can't compare them to the figures of Gorgons', *Eum.* 46–9); like Orestes,  
 she twice compares them to the Gorgons that Ion describes by the *omphalos*.  
 In language, staging and symbolism then these three 'revelations' are linked  
 together.

#### ORACLES AND VIOLENCE

We have so far looked at the problems of comprehending oracular discourse and of its inability to solve problems. When we move to the second play of the trilogy, prophetic speech is not simply shown to be problematic or ineffective, but is particularly associated with the vengeance which characterizes the trilogy until the trial at Athens.

The failure of oracular discourse to resolve problems fully is brought out in two scenes, one serious, the other comic. When Orestes interprets Clytemnestra's dream of the snake taking clots of blood from her nipple, he sees it as perfectly clear: κρίνω δέ τοί νιν ὥστε συγκόλλως ἔχειν ('I interpret it as fitting at every point', *Cho.* 542); it is ἐμοὶ τελεσφόρον ('brought to a *telos* in me', 541), and ἀπλοῦς ('simple', 554). The Chorus call him a τερασκόπων 'interpreter of signs' (551). This may be true, but the problem is that it is only τελεσφόρος in the sense that Orestes will bring about the intended conclusion to *this* part of the story. It will not bring a *telos* in the sense of an end to the slaughter, a point which is unintentionally hinted at by Orestes' mention of the Erinyes, gleefully looking forward to her 'third draft of neat blood' (577–8). He does not see that his interpretation could lead to a *fourth* 'draft of neat blood' for the Fury: he will be next to be pursued. Prophecy, even when as apparently clear as it is here, once again does not offer a solution, merely a continuation of the sequence of vengeful response to vengeful response.

This hinting at the limitations of prophetic activity and discourse is raised in humorous form, in the scene with the nurse Cilissa. Speaking of all the trouble she had with the young Orestes, which she thinks is now all wasted, she says (*Cho.* 755–9):

οὐ γάρ τι φωνεῖ παῖς ἔτ' ὦν ἐν σπαργάνοις,  
 εἰ λιμός, ἢ δίψη τις, ἢ λιψουρία  
 ἔχει· νέα δὲ νηδὺς αὐτάρκης τέκνων.  
 τούτων πρόμαντις οὔσα, πολλὰ δ' οἶομαι,  
 ψευθεῖσα, παιδὸς σπαργάνων φαιδρύντρια . . .

A child still in swaddling clothes does not speak to say whether it is hunger, thirst or a need to pee that is the trouble. A child's bowels are a law unto themselves. I had to be a *prophetess* of all this, and often, I know, got it wrong and had to become a washer-woman of the child's clothes . . .

Again, we have a situation where there is no speech to guide one and signs must be read, but this is difficult and leads (here at any rate) to minor disasters. Prophecy is an unreliable business. The point is then reinforced shortly afterwards, when, in reply to Cilissa's despairing remark that the 'hope of the house is gone', the Chorus tell her οὐπω κακός γε μάντις ἂν γνοίη τάδε ('not yet; it would be a *bad* prophet who would form that judgement', 777).<sup>54</sup> Cilissa once again shows herself as deficient in prophecy, and we are reminded that words and signs are not necessarily a guide to truth and reality.

Much more frequent now is the association of Apollo and prophecy with violent revenge. Apollo threatens Orestes with an appalling catalogue of diseases and horrors that will afflict him if he does not avenge his father (269ff.). Orestes justifies his coming murder of his mother as what Λοξίας ἐφήμισεν, | ἄναξ Ἀπόλλων, μάντις ἀψευδῆς τὸ πρὶν ('Loxias prophesied, Lord Apollo, a prophet who has not lied before', 558–9). He also says that Apollo will preside over the killing (583), and as he goes mad claims τὸν πυθόμεντιν Λοξίαν ('Loxias, the seer at Delphi', 1029–32) was the chief instigator.<sup>55</sup> The Chorus also attribute the killing to Apollo's commands (952ff.). When it comes to the killing of Clytemnestra, it is to Apollo's oracles that Pylades, in his only words, points to strengthen Orestes' resolve (900–1):

ποῦ δαὶ τὸ λοιπὸν Λοξίου μαντεύματα  
τὰ πυθόχρηστα;

Where does that leave Apollo's oracles, given at Delphi?

Apollo is thus constantly kept before our eyes as the one who decreed a murder in response to the previous murder of Agamemnon.<sup>56</sup> We are thus reminded of Clytemnestra's prophetic beacon and Artemis' omen of the eagles, which also continued a sequence of omen-justified murders.

But for all Orestes' confidence in Apollo as the solver of his problems, that god is not going to provide such an easy solution, just because he made

<sup>54</sup> For this interpretation, cf. Garvie (1986) 254.

<sup>55</sup> It is perhaps worth noting that he and Pylades imitate the dialect of Parnassus (563), home of Apollo's Delphic oracle (and Pylades), in order to carry out their trick.

<sup>56</sup> Were M's Φοῖβος in *Ch.* 32 correct, one could add 32–41 to this list, but this is probably an error: see Garvie (1986) 57–8.

the prophecy: Orestes must answer to other powers too. As he sets off for Delphi, he says that Apollo told him to go to 'no other shrine' (1038–9), but, as we shall see, he will in fact have to: Delphi is not enough.

#### DELPHI IN *EUMENIDES*

At the start of the next play, we finally come to Delphi itself. Here we find motifs that have appeared before, and also see in reality a number of things which have been perceived so far only in language and symbol. We have the Delphic priestess in oracular garb preparing to prophesy. The interior of the shrine is not at first shown to us, but when she comes scrambling out the Pythia describes what she has seen (39–44):

ἐγὼ μὲν ἔρπω πρὸς πολυστεφῆ μυχόν,  
 ὁρῶ δ' ἐπ' ὀμφαλῶι μὲν ἄνδρα θεομυσῆ  
 ἔδραν ἔχοντα προστρόπαιον, αἵματι  
 στάζοντα χεῖρας, καὶ νεοσπαδῆς ξίφος  
 ἔχοντ', ἐλαίας θ' ὑψιγέννητον κλάδον  
 λήνει μεγίστῳ σωφρόνως ἔστεμμένον,  
 ἀργῆτι μαλλῶι.

I went into the shrine with its many fillets, and I saw at the *omphalos* a polluted man in a suppliant posture, his hands dripping with blood, holding a recently used sword and a tall branch of olive properly garlanded with a long skein of wool, a bright fleece.

At 64, when the Pythia leaves, the interior of the temple is finally revealed to us, with Apollo standing beside Orestes (65) at the *omphalos*. The Furies will fill out the picture when Orestes has fled (164–8):

φονολιβῆ θρόνον  
 περὶ πόδα, περὶ κάρα,  
 πάρεστι γὰρ τ' ὀμφαλὸν προσδρακεῖν αἱμάτων  
 βλοσυρὸν ἀρόμενον ἄγος ἔχειν.

I can see that the throne is dripping with gore from head to foot, and that the navel of earth has gained for its own a horrible pollution of blood.

This opening is striking in at least two ways. First, the brief appearance of a character, their disappearance leaving the stage empty and their scrambled return is unparalleled in extant tragedy.<sup>57</sup> Secondly, the revelation of the interior of the stage-house at the *start* of the play is unusual.<sup>58</sup> That this

<sup>57</sup> Taplin (1977) 362.

<sup>58</sup> The method by which it was achieved on stage has been the subject of much debate. The theories are reviewed by West (1990) 264–9, who suggests that all problems can be solved if we are prepared to countenance the existence of portable screens.

play starts with such dramatic and innovative staging, where the other plays ended with such a tableau, might suggest that Delphi is to be the scene of the triumphant escape from the sequence of bloody scenes: where Apollo had earlier left the faithless Cassandra to her fate, he now promises to stand by Orestes. However, it is soon clear that Apollo is not in a position to protect Orestes at Delphi, and that shrine must be abandoned. Even the fact that Orestes has been purified at Delphi (ποταίνιον γὰρ ὄν πρὸς ἐστίαι θεοῦ | Φοίβου καθαρμοῖς ἠλάθη χοιροκτόνοις, 'for when it was still fresh, it was washed away at the hearth of Phoebus with purifications through pig-sacrifice', 282; cf. 237, 445–52) is insufficient: the Furies are not impressed, and more is needed. Apollo had confidently told Orestes to go to no other hearth (*Cho.* 1038–9), but he now tells him to go to Athens and clasp the παλαιὸν βρέτας ('ancient statue', 80): the *omphalos* has proved an insufficient sanctuary, another religious object must be sought. Athens is ready to play its key role, and this is marked by another unusual piece of dramaturgy, the move from the initial location of the play to another (235).

#### RESOLUTION AT ATHENS

Apollo's inability to free Orestes of the Furies at his prophetic shrine takes on a different and more comic form in the ensuing trial at the Areopagus: here Delphi, in the form of Apollo, and Athens confront each other face-to-face. At Delphi, Apollo confidently predicts there will be δικαστὰς . . . καὶ θελκτηρίους | μύθους ('jurors and persuasive words', 81f.); he seems to be taking control, but the 'soothing words' will be Athena's not his. His advocacy of Orestes, as has often been noticed, is patchy in quality. In their first exchange, the Furies rather take his arguments to pieces, even if he does manage in the end to silence them: it is hard to disagree with Sommerstein's conclusion that 'the audience thus probably saw Apollo's argument as a clever and specious but fallacious piece of forensic pleading; and so apparently do half the all-male jury'.<sup>59</sup> The wise prophet is less sure-footed when faced with open debate before an audience; privileged and dark sayings have little place here. Orestes and he win the narrowest of victories on the vote, but even this is not enough. The Furies see no reason to be bound by this vote and threaten dire destruction, and it is again the goddess of Athens who succeeds in persuading them not to follow that course. Athens not only provides the solution Delphi could not, but it is her goddess who makes the crucial arguments which persuade the Furies,

<sup>59</sup> Sommerstein (1989) 208. On Apollo in the trilogy and for a survey of earlier views, cf. Roberts (1984) 60–72. On the potentially unsatisfactory aspects of the court case and its verdict, cf. Pelling (2000) 174–7.

in a way that Apollo's scornful and violent rejection of them at Delphi had no chance of doing. Rhetorical argument, not Delphic invective, proves the more efficacious. Debate and voting thus seem to be privileged over oracles. True, Apollo foretold what would happen, but it is Athena who ensures it, along with the mortal voters.

#### PSEPHOMANCY?

It is tempting here to pursue this idea of the voting-pebble which resolves the problems of the trilogy, though we again enter uncertain ground. The *psēphos* may have played a role in prophesying at Delphi, in a form of 'cleromancy', or prophecy by the drawing of lots. There are a number of references in scholia and lexica to μαντικάι ψῆφοι ('mantic pebbles') connected with Delphi. Philochorus writes that θριαῖ δέ εἰσιν αἱ μαντικάι ψῆφοι ('the Thriai are the mantic pebbles'), and tells us that they were discovered by the Thriai nymphs, connected with Parnassus.<sup>60</sup> *H. Herm.* 552–68 elliptically refers to the activity of the Thriai, to whom Apollo attributes a lesser form of divination which he gives to the young Hermes: they are μαντεῖης ἀπάνευθε διδάσκαλοι ἦν ἐπὶ βουσί | παῖς ἔτ' ἐὼν μελέτησα ('teachers apart<sup>61</sup> of divination which I practised when still a child looking after the cattle', 556–7). Apollodorus 3.10.2 specifically calls it τὴν διὰ τῶν ψήφων μαντικὴν ('prophesying with *psēphoi*'). Hesychius refers to a φρυκτὸς Δελφίς (presumably 'Delphic bean'),<sup>62</sup> and three ancient writers tell, in very similar language, of divination by *psēphoi* at Delphi. So for instance Nonnus:<sup>63</sup>

ἐν τούτῳ τῷ ἱερῷ ἦν ὁ τρίπους καὶ αἱ ψῆφοι αἱ μαντικάι. καὶ αἱ μαντικάι ψῆφοι ἦσαν ἐν τῇ φιάλῃ τοῦ τρίποδος. ἠνίκα οὖν ὁ μαντευόμενος ἠρώτα περὶ τῆς μαντείας, αἱ ψῆφοι ἤλλοντο καὶ ἐκινουῦντο ἐν τῇ φιάλῃ. τότε οὖν ἡ (προφητὴς) ἐνεφορεῖτο καὶ ἔλεγεν ἃ ἠθελεν ὁ Ἀπόλλων.

In this shrine was the tripod and the mantic *psēphoi*. And the mantic *psēphoi* were in the bowl of the tripod. So when the one making the consultation put the question to the oracle, the *psēphoi* leapt and moved in the bowl.<sup>64</sup> Then the priestess was inspired and said what Apollo wanted.

<sup>60</sup> *FGrH* 328 F 195 (see also Jacoby's note). For their inspiring mantic ability, cf. Call. *Hecale* fr. 74.9 Hollis, ὡς Θριαῖ τὴν γρῆνν ἐπιπνεῖουσι κορώνην (cf. also schol.).

<sup>61</sup> Apparently 'teachers of a divination different from that I now practise'.

<sup>62</sup> φρυκτὸς Δελφίς κλήρος. ἐχρῶντο δὲ τοῖς κλήροις μαντευόμενοι ἐν Ὀλυμπίαι.

<sup>63</sup> Westermann, *Mythographoi Graeci* App. Narr. no. LXXII, p. 384; cf. Suda s.v. πυθῶ; Eudocia, *Violarium* 265, 778.

<sup>64</sup> Quite what is meant by this is uncertain: suggestions include the shaking of the bowl until a lot jumped out or, more probably, the moving of the lots in the bowl before one was selected.

A *phialē* is often depicted in the hand of the Pythia or Apollo.<sup>65</sup> The evidence, though late, is consistent.<sup>66</sup>

This evidence was treated sceptically until the discovery of an early fourth-century inscription concerning religious relationships between Delphi and Sciathos. There we read that . . . αἴ κ' ἐπὶ φρυκτῶ παρήϊ, τὸ μὲν δαμόσιον στατῆρα Αἰγίναϊον, τὸ δὲ ἴδιον . . . ('. . . if anyone presents himself for the two beans, the charge to the state is an Aeginetan stater, to an individual . . .').<sup>67</sup> Amandry took this to refer to prophecy by lots, suggesting that this method of using beans or *psēphoi* was the normal method for the bulk of enquiries, with the grand sessions of full divination conducted by the Pythia being reserved for certain times of year or special occasions. The system may well have been that questions were put in a form that allowed a yes/no answer, and that the two pebbles represented those answers. There are a number of parallels for this,<sup>68</sup> the most striking occurring in 352/1, when Athens consulted the oracle on the matter of whether a region of the sacred plain of Eleusis should be cultivated.<sup>69</sup> Two questions ('is it better for the Athenians to cultivate . . .?': 'is it better . . . not . . .?') were inscribed on two lead tablets, which were shaken in a bronze hydria. One was put into a sealed silver hydria and the other into a gold one. Apollo was asked to choose one of the hydriae, and the Athenians acted on its wording.<sup>70</sup>

This interpretation of the Sciathos inscription has been disputed,<sup>71</sup> but the alternative explanations, that ἐπὶ φρυκτῶ<ι> should be read to make a reference to a burnt sacrifice,<sup>72</sup> or that the lots were drawn to determine which of two consultants with the right to *promanteia* should go first,<sup>73</sup> do not seem more persuasive. Certainty is impossible, but this text allied

<sup>65</sup> See Amandry (1950) 66–77 for examples.

<sup>66</sup> Eur. *Ion* 908–10 δὸςτ' ὀμφάν κλαροῖς, translated by LSJ (s.v. 11 2) 'deliver an oracle by lot', does not belong here. As Paley says, it is equivalent to δὸςτ' διδῶις ὀμφάν τοῖς κληρουμένοις as in Aesch. *Eum.* 32 ἴτων πάλῳι λαχόντες.

<sup>67</sup> Amandry (1939) 195–200 (on lines 15–17). <sup>68</sup> Amandry (1950) 149–68.

<sup>69</sup> *IG* 11<sup>2</sup> 204 = *LSS* 41, discussed by Bowden (2005) 88–95.

<sup>70</sup> The use of the verb ἀναίρειν (lit. 'pick up') as a regular verb for the god giving an oracular response is taken to support this idea, with *psēphos* or 'bean' understood: when Chaerephon asked about Socrates' wisdom, πολλῶν παρόντων ἀνείλεν ὁ Ἀπόλλων ('in the presence of many, Apollo made the choice'; Xen. *Apol.* 14). Maurizio 1995 80 n.70 notes, however, that this verb is 'used to introduce less than ten percent of all recorded oracles . . . ; since the oracles introduced by *anairein* are evenly distributed throughout the corpus, are in both prose and verse, and pertain to a variety of matters, it is near impossible to draw any conclusions about the use of this verb'.

<sup>71</sup> See the careful discussion by Rougemont in *CID* 1.126–8. Suárez de la Torre *TheoCRA*, 3.17 also rejects Amandry's ideas.

<sup>72</sup> Sokolowski (1948) 981–4; cf. *LSCG* no. 41 *ad loc.* <sup>73</sup> Pouilloux (1952).

with the ancient evidence offers some support for the idea that this simpler method of divination was available.

If this interpretation of φρυκτώ in the Sciathos inscription were right,<sup>74</sup> it would give us a nice contrast between a very familiar form of divination at Delphi, where two beans or pebbles were used, and this civic vote at Athens, where there are rather more pebbles<sup>75</sup> and two urns.<sup>76</sup> The contrast between Athens and Delphi could not have been stronger. The Athenian system is superior in its avoidance of a simple yes/no answer given by a single individual. At Delphi, it is true, a god is doing the speaking or picking, but at Athens it is *both* the city's goddess *and* its citizens who decide: there is a social aspect which Delphi's simpler system lacks. The choice is taken away from one person, god or human, who can command, for strongly held personal reasons and in ambiguous terms, whatever they want; instead, it is given to the representatives of the generality, who debate and then vote by majority verdict. The problem of individual justice that has dogged the tragedies is thus given a potential solution. The debate is open and (relatively) clear, not secret, mysterious and hard to fathom, as in the case of spoken oracles.<sup>77</sup> The case, as Athena says, is simply too complex for any simple resolution, by a god or mortal (*Eum.* 470–2).<sup>78</sup>

<sup>74</sup> For the use of *psēphoi* and *klēroi* in divination generally, cf. Ehrenberg, *RE* 13 (1927) 1451–67; Eur. *Phoen.* 838; Iamblichus, *Myst.* 3.7 (scorning the attributing of a divinity's powers of divination to ψηφίσια); Apollod. 3.10.2; Frazer on Paus. 7.25.10 (divination by dice in Achaëa); Williams on Call. *H.Ap.* 45; Bouché-Leclercq (1879–82) 1. 192ff.; Amandry (1950) 27–8, 62–4, 133; Fontenrose (1978) 427–8, 431; Parke (1967) 86–8; Parke and Wormell (1956) 1. 15 n.23. For Dodona, cf. Cic. *De div.* 1.76 *vas illud, in quo inerant sortes.*

<sup>75</sup> On the vexed question of how the voting actually worked, see the contrasting views of Sommerstein (1989) 221–6 and Seaford (1995) 205–21.

<sup>76</sup> The bean was also used elsewhere than the courts in Athens: cf. Hdt. 6.109 ὁ τῶι κῶμαι λαχῶν Ἀθηναίων πολεμαρχεῖν; Thuc. 8.66.1 βουλή ἢ ἀπὸ τοῦ κῶμου; Arist. *AP* 8.1 (with Rhodes (1981) *ad loc.*), 64.1 etc.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. Peradotto (1969) 20–1, who contrasts the use of language in the *Agamemnon*, which implies, through frequent *klēdomes* (unintentionally significant remarks), 'a belief that language accomplishes only what the gods have preordained to happen', and that in *Eumenides*, which 'concentrates upon the secular, civilizing efficacy of language': the *peithō* of Athena is 'a paradigm of language free of superstitious dread . . . and its use contrasts sharply with the passivity and fatalism which *klēdomancy* involves'.

<sup>78</sup> Interestingly, this replacement of the Delphic by the Athenian *psēphos* in the determination of decisions would seem to revive an old quarrel between Athena and Apollo. According to some sources, Athena invented, or took from the Thriai, divination by pebbles, which proved so popular that Apollo grew angry and Zeus pronounced such divination invalid: Apollo's comment was πολλοὶ θριοβόλοι, παῦροι δὲ τε μάντιες ἄνδρες (cf. *Etyim. Magn.* 455.34f.; Steph. Byz. s.v. Θρία Zenobius, 5.75). When and where this tradition comes from is unascertainable, but even if it is a later Attic creation, the fact of the opposition of the two gods over *psēphoi* is perhaps notable.

## NEW JUSTICE

If Athens is privileged over Delphi as I have argued, this is not to say that Delphi is rendered unimportant, any more than the Furies and their form of justice are.<sup>79</sup> The supersession of Delphi in this way may seem striking and even troubling, as hybristic perhaps as Peisetaerus and the Birds trammelling of the power of Zeus in *Birds*, but it is in fact no more than what was actually happening in reality at this time. Furthermore, Apollo plays his part, however insecure his forensic performance may be.

Both he and Athena attribute everything to Zeus. Apollo says he has never prophesied anything ὃ μὴ κελεύσαι Ζεὺς Ὀλυμπίων πατὴρ ('that Zeus, father of the Olympians, has not ordered', 616–18), and Athena, after thanking Persuasion for helping her soothe the Furies, says ἀλλ' ἐνίκησε Ζεὺς ἀγοραῖος ('but Zeus of the Agora has triumphed', 973). This is conventional enough, but it is something of a surprise, given that we have had no sense that any gods apart from Athena, Apollo and the Furies have been actively involved. Perhaps this is not a major problem, but there is a question of over what sort of justice Zeus or the gods generally are presiding or have presided. From *Agamemnon* onwards, Zeus has been repeatedly claimed as the upholder of justice, but this must be the justice that preceded the new form instituted by Athena, the justice of vengeance. It seems inescapable therefore that there has been a change amongst the gods as amongst the mortals in the administration of justice: we see Apollo and Athena shifting from acceptance of one system to acceptance of the other, and must presume that Zeus, before or during the trial, has somehow undergone a similar change of view.<sup>80</sup>

We can support this idea of change in the gods by again considering the voting-scene in *Eumenides*, this time in a contrast with Agamemnon's description of the gods' decision about Troy (*Ag.* 813–17):<sup>81</sup>

<sup>79</sup> For this idea, cf. Bowie (1993). Cf. Shapiro (1996) on the continued importance of Apollo at Delos in Athenian religious propaganda even after the transfer of the treasury to Athens in 454. Delphi will also have a role in the determination of the future, uncertain though that quest will continue to be (cf. Goldhill (1992) 63).

<sup>80</sup> Cf. e.g. Sommerstein (1989) 22–5, 269 (on 973–5). See also, Gantz 1981.

<sup>81</sup> There is another scene in this play which contrasts with Athenian voting, the confused debating of the Chorus in *Agamemnon*, where again the chorus members speak individually in turn. In that scene too, prophecy and voting were evoked. The Chorus is forced to have recourse to prophetic attempts to interpret Agamemnon's cries: ἦ γὰρ τεκμηρίοισιν ἐξ οἰμωγμάτων | μαντευσόμεσθα τάνδρος ὡς ὀλωλότος; (1366–7). One of the chorus members says, not very helpfully, ψηφίζομαι τι δρᾶν (1353). But of course there is no voting, only confusion, inaction and death leading to more death.

δίκας γὰρ οὐκ ἀπὸ γλώσσης θεοὶ  
 κλύοντες ἀνδροθνήτας, Ἰλίου φθορᾶς  
 ἐς αἱματηρὸν τεῦχος οὐ διχορρόπως  
 ψήφους ἔθεντο· τῶι δ' ἐναντίωι κύτει  
 ἔλπις προσήιει χειρὸς οὐ πληρουμένωι.

For the gods, without hearing from any tongue the parties' cases involving the deaths of men, cast with no wavering verdict their votes into the bloody urn for the destruction of Ilium, while to the opposite urn (mere) expectation of the hand came near, and it was not filled.<sup>82</sup>

The absence of proper pleading and of any balanced consideration is very troubling here: was there nothing to say for Troy, no-one to say it? The contrast with, say, the council in *Iliad* 4 is striking.<sup>83</sup> Goldhill sees the gods having access to a kind of Derridean *hors-texte*: 'they have direct access to the signified without recourse to an intermediary of communication by the removal of the function of the exchange of signifiers . . . they can bypass the signification in language'.<sup>84</sup> Fraenkel similarly gives the gods the benefit of the doubt: 'to avail himself of the evidence of human witnesses in forming his judgement would be unworthy of the Lord of all Justice'; he refers also to 'the purification of the idea of God'.<sup>85</sup>

I am less sanguine. I cannot see anything transcendently meritorious in this court procedure, nor any superiority in the divine over the human: such a court is no model for mortals. The method of voting is exactly that of Athens – two urns with a single vote to be put in one of them by each voter – which makes the contrast all the greater between the ruthless vote οὐ διχορρόπως by the gods<sup>86</sup> and the measured and thoughtful way in which the jurors vote very much διχορρόπως in Athens. δίκας γὰρ οὐκ ἀπὸ γλώσσης θεοὶ κλύοντες contrasts strongly with Athena's command to the jurymen ἀπὸ γνώμης φέρειν | ψήφον δικαίαν, ὡς ἄλις λελεγμένων

<sup>82</sup> Text and interpretation are problematic. The above text is that of West (1998), defended and explained in (1990) 204–5: Dobree's Ἰλίου φθορᾶς is combined with Ahrens' linking of ἀνδροθνήτας with δίκας. West's interpretation is that the passage is similar to the oft-quoted *Symp.* 934–7 οὗτοι δικάζει ταῦτα μαρτύρων ὑπο | ἄρης (= οὐκ ἀπὸ γλώσσης) . . . ἀλλὰ πολλά γίνεται πάρος | πεισμάτ' ἀνδρῶν (= δίκαι ἀνδροθνήτες): there is no court case, the gods 'watch the Greeks and Trojans fighting and they decide that the Greeks, with justice on their side, shall have the better of it' ((1990) 205). I am not sure that *Symp.* 937 is as strong evidence as 935, but even if this interpretation is right I would still want to argue that this justice is less satisfactory than that which Athena has instituted. There seems to have been no process undertaken by the gods by which to decide who had justice on their side, and whether or not there were complicating circumstances, as there were in the case of Orestes.

<sup>83</sup> *Il.* 4.31–49. <sup>84</sup> Goldhill (1984) 66–7. <sup>85</sup> Fraenkel (1950) 375.

<sup>86</sup> There are echoes too of the death of Iphigenia, where those who presided over it are called βραβῆς ('judges', *Ag.* 230), and where Agamemnon ordered the servants to silence her βίαι χαλινῶν ἔ' ἀναύδωι μένει ('by force and the voiceless power of the bridle', 238).

('cast in sincerity'<sup>87</sup> a just vote, now that sufficient arguments have been given', *Eum.* 674–5).

These lines of Agamemnon are not of course an authoritative description of what we can be sure happened, but a remark by a human character in the play. We have seen that it is precisely in the use of imagery like this that the play makes its points. What Agamemnon describes suits well the confident and trenchant imposition of one's will that has characterized the 'judicial' process, human and divine, until Athena's innovation.

Athena's justice thus not only modifies justice on earth, by incorporating men of the city from outside a ruling family, men whose grumblings about the war and its costs went largely ignored in *Ag.* 445–58, but also transforms justice in heaven too. The interpretation of signs will now be about deciding on the facts of the case: 'divination' and interpretation will still be needed, power will be abused, and mistakes will be made, but the socializing of justice will create a much more civilized and social procedure in which all, human and divine, Olympian and Chthonic, male and female will be symbolically involved. Here, as elsewhere, Aeschylus is in fact pointing forward to later tragedy's concern with specifically human evaluation of and decision-making about events.<sup>88</sup>

We may not want to go as far as the Chorus in *Agamemnon*, which asks ἀπὸ δὲ θεοφάτων τίς ἀγαθὰ φάτις | βροτοῖς τέλλεται; ('but from oracles what good message ever comes to men?', 1132–3), but we are now firmly in a world where prophecy is no longer the only possible solution to problems. Later tragedy will, as we have seen, take this idea a good deal further.

<sup>87</sup> So Lloyd-Jones (1979). Sommerstein (1989) 212 refers to the phrase γνώμη τῆς δικαιοσύνης in the diction oath; he prefers δικαίως to the MSS' δικαίαν, but the point here is not affected.

<sup>88</sup> Cf. Hall and Goldhill in this volume.

*Feminized males in Bacchae: the importance  
of discrimination*

*Richard Buxton*

It is universally agreed that religion is the principal issue which Euripides' *Bacchae* is 'about'. The play, it is again universally agreed, confronts interpreters with two interrelated questions. The first is theological: what are the characteristics of the Euripidean Dionysus? The second concerns the god's worshippers: what is the nature of Dionysiac cult as it appears in this tragedy? As soon as scholars come to grips with these two questions in detail, however, the consensus evaporates.

On the theological point, the spectrum of starkly contrasting views is well enough known.<sup>1</sup> For R. P. Winnington-Ingram, 'Euripides recognised, but hated Dionysus.'<sup>2</sup> No less forceful arguments have been mounted on the other side, often in conjunction with the idea that the (assumed) Euripidean 'scepticism' about the gods might have been reversed at the end of his career.<sup>3</sup> For E. R. Dodds, however, the Euripidean Dionysus was 'beyond good and evil', since the playwright intended 'to enlarge our sensibility' rather than to produce a pro- or anti-Dionysus tract.<sup>4</sup> Recent scholarship has tended to follow Dodds in concentrating less on the question of Euripides' attitude to Dionysus, and more on the complexity of the dramatic text.<sup>5</sup>

Regarding the god's worshippers, critical attention has focused on the relationship between, on the one hand, Dionysiac cult as represented in the play, and, on the other hand, real-world Dionysiac cults, especially in relation to such high-octane issues as the presence or absence of *omophagia*, and conceivably cannibalism, in real-world rituals.<sup>6</sup> Against Dodds, who maintained, following Jane Harrison, that the tearing and ingestion of the

<sup>1</sup> For a helpful orientation up to the time when he was writing, see Oranje (1984) 7–19. Mills (2006) 80–102 is a recent *mise au point*.

<sup>2</sup> Winnington-Ingram (1948) 179; for the doxography of this view see Bierl (1991) 177 n.2.

<sup>3</sup> See Roux (1972) 226–7; Bierl (1991) 177 n.1.

<sup>4</sup> Dodds (1960) xlv–xlvii. <sup>5</sup> On this scholarly trend, see Bierl (1991) 179–81.

<sup>6</sup> For a lively contribution to the debate, see Bremmer (1984).

god's surrogate by his worshippers constituted a central emotional element in the god's rite, Albert Henrichs and Dirk Obbink, among others, have argued for a more sceptical view.<sup>7</sup> Another issue which has been insistently pressed and contested has been the question of how far Dionysiac cult in the play reflects the language and action of Dionysiac mysteries. Richard Seaford, in particular, has repeatedly urged that we should note a significant similarity between the mythical dismemberment-and-reconstitution of Dionysus and the *sparagmos*-and-reassembly of Pentheus in *Bacchae*, a similarity which, according to Seaford, finds its analogue in the structure of the Dionysiac mysteries.<sup>8</sup>

Religion is not the only topic which modern critics have universally agreed to be fundamental to *Bacchae*: another is gender.<sup>9</sup> No one disputes the significant presence of certain themes in the play: the disruptive role played by a community's women when they fall under the influence of Dionysus, an empowerment which enables them to reverse the 'natural' order and to rout men (emblematically, *Bacch.* 763–4); the sensitivity of the ultra-masculine/militaristic leader Pentheus towards any hint of submission to women;<sup>10</sup> the strikingly and (to Pentheus) unnervingly feminine appearance of Dionysus in his role as 'the Stranger'; the feminizing of Pentheus in virtue of his wearing of the apparel which typifies the god's maenadic devotees. Yet here again, as soon as we move beyond the recognized generalities, scholarly voices are raised in dissonance. Interpretation of the Bacchant's disruptiveness is inseparable from the controversy about how we are to explain the frequent occurrence of dominant, often threateningly aggressive behaviour by women as portrayed generally in myth and specifically in tragedy, and how such imagined behaviour relates to women's real-life 'secluded' role as evidenced by custom and law.<sup>11</sup> A second dispute concerns the absence or presence of women in the theatre of Dionysus, an issue which must inevitably affect how we reconstruct an ancient audience's reaction to the female and feminized characters in *Bacchae*.<sup>12</sup> Then again, Pentheus' cross-dressing finds itself at the centre of

<sup>7</sup> Harrison (1927) 118–19; Dodds (1951) 270–82, cf. Bremmer (1984) 267 with n. 2; Henrichs (1982) 143–7, with the long n. 53 on pp. 218–20; Obbink (1993) 65–86; Seaford (1996) 37.

<sup>8</sup> See e.g. Seaford (1981) and (1996) 39–45. <sup>9</sup> Cf. Mills (2006) 11–13.

<sup>10</sup> See Bierl (1991) 205 n. 78.

<sup>11</sup> Bremmer (1984) sees maenadism as a temporary, legitimized escape from the normal confinement/seclusion of women's existence. For Zeitlin (1982), women who worship Dionysus are liberated, yet at the same time their perceived wildness confirms the threat they pose to men. On the generally problematic quality of the notion of 'seclusion', see above all Gould (1980); though Gould's analysis, for all its originality, takes too little account of the difference between myth and tragic myth.

<sup>12</sup> Henderson (1991); contrast Goldhill (1997a).

several interpretative debates, especially concerning theatricality, initiation, and psychology.<sup>13</sup> Gender is central to *Bacchae*, but *how* it is central is a far from settled question.

In the present paper I discuss a circumscribed problem which impinges on both religion and gender: the feminization of male characters, both divine and human. Consideration of this limited issue will, however, enable us to examine a broader aspect of the interpretation of *Bacchae*, relating to differentiation. The several forms in which different dramatic characters imagine the god Dionysus as appearing, and the varied ways in which Euripides presents the categories of male and female as overlapping, have been widely taken to constitute yet one more example of the play's general collapsing of distinctions (god/man/beast, mountain/city, old/young, hunter/prey, far/near, individual/group, native-born Greek/barbarian incomer, etc.) under the 'sign' of Dionysus.<sup>14</sup> For Simon Goldhill, 'Dionysus works to invert the oppositions by which the city defines itself, undermining differences'; for Jean-Pierre Vernant, through Dionysus' epiphany 'toutes les catégories tranchées, toutes les oppositions nettes . . . au lieu de demeurer distinctes et exclusives, s'appellent, fusionnent, passent des unes aux autres'; for Charles Segal, 'Dionysus operates as the principle that destroys differences'.<sup>15</sup> Such a view is the overwhelmingly dominant orthodoxy, and it has much to recommend it. Nevertheless I shall argue that, if we place exclusive emphasis on *Bacchae*'s dramatization of the collapsing of distinctions, we risk obscuring another fundamental aspect of the play's meaning, namely that which is concerned with the *upholding* of distinctions in spite of the enormous pressures which pull in the opposite direction. My argument will be that, in respect of feminization, we need to register both generic differences between gods and heroes, and specific differences between one god and another, one hero and another.

Concomitantly I shall insist that we must stress another differentiation: that between *this* retelling of a myth and all other actual and possible retellings. Tragedy is not the whole of mythology, nor is *Bacchae* the whole of tragedy. The fact that a mythological character is in some way associated

<sup>13</sup> See pp. 244–7.

<sup>14</sup> Very widely, but not absolutely universally. I think here of a comment by Michelle Gellrich, that Dionysus 'does not so much destroy or confuse distinctions as configure the nondifferentiation out of which such distinctions eventually arise' (in Goff (1995) 53). Now that the tide of deconstruction has ebbed, one sometimes comes across assertions like this, expiring on the shore. (I am grateful to Seaford (1996) 31 n. 25, for citing the comment, with due scepticism.)

<sup>15</sup> Goldhill (1986a) 266; Vernant in Vernant and Vidal-Naquet (1986) 255; Segal (1997) 234; cf. Henrichs in Carpenter and Faraone (1993) 24–6, citing a range of critics who take the 'subversion of opposites' approach.

with feminization elsewhere in Greek mythology *may* be relevant to this play, but is not necessarily so.

My overall case will therefore be that, in this of all plays – precisely because it is a work which often invites us to notice the eliding of distinctions – it is of cardinal importance to *discriminate*, in order to avoid what Nicole Loraux brilliantly called 'the vertigo of limitless association'.<sup>16</sup>

#### ZEUS

Whatever the explanation for Zeus's absence from the tragic stage as a directly participating character, his agency behind the scenes is felt in many tragedies, whether that agency is readily intelligible (as for example in *Prometheus Bound*) or whether he strikes the other characters – and the audience – as *somehow* active behind the scenes, but also inscrutable (as for example in *Trachiniae*).<sup>17</sup> In *Bacchae*, the case differs from either of these models. Zeus's agency is – with the exception of one passage – presented as insignificant for the development of the stage action, an insignificance which corresponds to the all-dominant, manipulative presence of his son Dionysus, beside whom everything else, even the power of the supreme god, seems unimportant. The solitary exception proves the rule. At line 1349 Dionysus, at last in epiphany, observes to Cadmus that πάλαι τάδε Ζεὺς οὐμὸς ἐπένευσεν πατῆρ, where τάδε seems to embrace not only the play's action, in particular the self-vindication of Dionysus, but also the future events just predicted by Dionysus, and indeed the order of the cosmos within which such events can take place and, up to a point, have meaning.<sup>18</sup> What is significant for us here, however, is that, even as Dionysus alludes to Zeus's 'nodding' governorship of the cosmos, he also cites Zeus's role *as a parent*. *Bacchae* is a family drama: Semele is a mother, Pentheus a son and grandson, Cadmus a husband and grandfather, Agaue a daughter and mother, Dionysus a son – and Zeus is a parent. And in contrast to *Trachiniae*, where the problematic involvement of Zeus in the unfolding of the play's total action is every bit as dramatically relevant as his father-son relationship with Heracles, in *Bacchae* Zeus' parenthood of Dionysus is his principal role. 'Parenthood' – not 'fatherhood'. Of course

<sup>16</sup> Loraux (1995) 120.

<sup>17</sup> Ken Dowden (2006) 112 speaks of tragic characters who 'struggle to find meaning in acute crises and grope for the mystery of Zeus'.

<sup>18</sup> τάδε: note the similarly charged demonstrative in the last line of *Trachiniae*: κούδεν τούτων ὁ τι μὴ Ζεὺς. 'Up to a point': cf. the remark of Winnington-Ingram (1948) 146, quoted with evident approval by Dodds *ad loc.*, that 'The appeal to Zeus is an appeal to ultimate mystery'.

Zeus is Dionysus' father. But because he is an *immortal* father (cf. 1340–1), he is not limited by the constraints of merely human biology. And the most distinctive quality of Zeus' parenthood in *Bacchae* is that he is a mother.

In the first line of the play Dionysus describes himself as Διὸς παῖς. For the chorus at 417 their beloved god is ὁ δαίμων ὁ Διὸς παῖς. At 581 Dionysus identifies himself as ὁ Σεμέλας, ὁ Διὸς παῖς. For the chorus at 603 Dionysus is Διὸς γόνος. In none of these cases, even 581, is it explicit that Zeus' role is here that of the father, though the balanced expression in 581 does strongly tend that way. At 1340–1 (ταῦτ' οὐχὶ θνητοῦ πατρὸς ἐγγεγῶς λέγω | Διόνυσος, ἀλλὰ Ζηνός) and 1349 (πάλαι τάδε Ζεὺς οὐμὸς ἐπένευσεν πατήρ), sure enough, Zeus is unequivocally cited as Dionysus' father. But this is far from being the whole story. By recalling the myth of Zeus's sewing of the prematurely born Dionysus into his thigh, the chorus cast Zeus in the role of Dionysus' second mother. After the initial birth by Semele (ὄν ποτ' ἔχουσ' ἐν ὠδίνων λοχίαις ἀνάγκαισι πταμένας Διὸς βροντᾶς νηδύος ἔκβολον μάτηρ ἔτεκεν . . ., 88–92), a second parturition follows – λοχίαις echoing λοχίαις, ἔτεκεν matching ἔτεκεν – with, this time, Zeus's body as the container of the baby (λοχίαις δ' αὐτίκα νιν δέξατο θαλάμαις Κρονίδας Ζεὺς, κατὰ μηρῶ δὲ καλύψας . . . ἔτεκεν, 94–9).<sup>19</sup> Within the play the authenticity of the event is contested, not only by Pentheus (242–7) but also by Tiresias (286–97), for whom the μηρὸς detail can be explained away as a play on words. But such denials cut no ice with the chorus, who re-emphasize Zeus's maternal role when they go so far as to imagine the very words spoken by Ζεὺς ὁ τεκῶν as he summoned the newborn to enter his body: ἦθι, Διθύραμβ', ἐμὰν ἄρσενα τάνδε βᾶθι νηδύν (526–7). What kind of feminization is this? It is a matter, not of form or dress, but of function. Zeus does not *look* feminine; rather, at one key moment, he *acts* like a woman in her physiologically most distinctive capacity.

Within the wider network of Greek mythology, Zeus's motherhood is not unique. The closest parallel is the birth of Athena: in that case, Zeus' swallowing of Metis leads to the parturition of Athena through the head.<sup>20</sup> The reason for Zeus's action lies, of course, in his wish to avoid being supplanted by the child whom Metis is carrying in her womb. Nicole Loraux explains the logic: 'By incorporating the mother into himself, Zeus bypasses the [potentially threatening] son, who is replaced by a daughter totally devoted to the rights of the *aner*.'<sup>21</sup> Loraux goes so far as to describe

<sup>19</sup> In 94, λοχίαις is preferred to the MSS reading λοχίαις by both Dodds and Diggle.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. the altar of Zeus Lecheates at Aliphera in Arcadia, the alleged location of the birth (Paus. 8.26.6).

<sup>21</sup> Loraux (1995) 13.

Zeus's 'maternities' as 'well-known'.<sup>22</sup> Perhaps, but not all scholars evaluate their importance in the same way. Ken Dowden's recent account of the supreme god understandably places enormous weight on Zeus's role as father of gods and men, but passes over the point about maternity.<sup>23</sup> At the other extreme, Marcel Detienne's brief entry on 'Zeus' in Bonnefoy's mythological dictionary devotes, with carefree idiosyncrasy, more space to this one trait than to all the others put together.<sup>24</sup> We need to strike a balance. In myth, Zeus's femininity, as incorporated in the act of child-bearing, is just one possible mode of action for the supreme god; it is not 'typical', since in terms of sheer quantity it is enormously outweighed by accounts of Zeus's serially adulterous fathering of offspring, presumably an expression of one sort of male fantasy about virility. Not typical: but it *is* a possibility, which extends his power rather than limiting it; it is, for example, perfectly compatible with his exercising of the supreme act of aggressive violence – the lightning strike – which he carries out in his role as the quintessentially virile lover of Semele.

Why is this possibility – the non-limiting maternalization of Zeus – highlighted in *Bacchae*? Surely because it suits the context of a play which explores in other ways too the overlap between the masculine and the feminine. Dionysus, the god who, as we shall see, also embodies elements of femininity but in his own quite different style, is born not from one womb but two.<sup>25</sup>

#### TIRESIAS AND CADMUS

'The two old men, Teiresias and Cadmus, . . . dress as maenads and prepare to form a chorus;' they are, Goldhill continues, 'old men dressed as women.'<sup>26</sup> These comments seem uncontroversial enough, and could be paralleled dozens of times in the scholarship on the play. For example, in his commentary Seaford observes that Tiresias and Cadmus are 'dressed, like the maenads, with fawnskin, crown, and *thyrsos* (176–7)'.<sup>27</sup> As a description of what the two men are wearing this is entirely accurate: in lines 176–7

<sup>22</sup> Loraux (1995) 12.

<sup>23</sup> Dowden (2006) 29: 'The function that has above all preserved Zeus since Indo-European times is that of *father*' (italics in original).

<sup>24</sup> Detienne (1981).

<sup>25</sup> How unlike Athena, the ultra-masculine virgin who has no contact whatever with the female womb; cf. Burkert (1985) 143. About the possible connotations – initiatory? – of the wound in the thigh, I am not concerned here. On this see e.g. Burkert (1969) 23–5; Lambrinouidakis (1971); Obbink (1993) 78.

<sup>26</sup> Goldhill (1986) 273; cf. 262: 'the spectacle of the two old men, dressed as women . . . '.

<sup>27</sup> Seaford (1996) on 170–369.

Tiresias indeed states that he and Cadmus have made a pact to bear the *thyrsos*, to wear the fawnskin, and to wreath their heads with ivy. But what of the gloss 'like the maenads'? Clearly, Tiresias and Cadmus are marking themselves out as *adherents of Dionysus*, whose symbols – *thyrsos*, fawnskin, ivy – they sport. But these attributes are not exclusively the privilege of the god's *female* devotees: they may also be borne by the god's male celebrants: as described by Cyllene in Sophocles' *Ichneutae*, the satyrs worship Dionysus clad in fawnskins and holding *thyrsoi*.<sup>28</sup> Other characters in *Bacchae* – the chorus throughout, and Pentheus in one memorable scene – do indeed wear the full regalia of the maenad, which distinguishes them both as devotees of Dionysus and as female/feminized; but not Tiresias and Cadmus. Gyorgy Karsai has it absolutely right when he speaks of the two old men 'déguisés en bacchants' – not 'en bacchantes'.<sup>29</sup> The point is easy to miss. Even that doyen of Dionysiac scholars Albert Henrichs was in two minds over the matter: whereas in one fine article he allowed himself inadvertently to say that 'Cadmus, Teiresias and Pentheus in Euripides's *Bacchae* dress as maenads . . .',<sup>30</sup> in another he expressed the matter more accurately, referring to 'Cadmus and Teiresias, who carry thyrsi and wear fawnskins *without donning women's clothes* . . .'.<sup>31</sup>

Why does this matter? Because it highlights the importance of differentiation within this play. It is vital, in order to appreciate the way the play develops and the action builds to a climax, to note the difference between the appearance of Tiresias and Cadmus, on the one hand, and that of the chorus and Pentheus, on the other. Just as the Herdsman's description of the maenads will be trumped by the later narrative of the Newsbringer,<sup>32</sup> so the appearance of Tiresias and Cadmus – the willing, conscious pair of male devotees – will be thrown into relief by the later guise of Pentheus, comprehensively transvestite and out of his normal mind.

What impression do the appearance and demeanour of Tiresias and Cadmus make, if not one of transvestism? The text is unambiguous. The point which is repeatedly stressed is not their gender but their age. Tiresias refers to himself as a πρέσβυς and to Cadmus as γεραιτέρω (175); Cadmus' hair is grey (185); the theme of old age is a refrain: γέρων γέροντι (186), γέροντες ὄντες (189), γέρων γέροντα (193), γῆρας (204); the god does not distinguish between a man who is young and one who is γεραίτερον (206–7). When Pentheus arrives on the scene, not once does his mockery of the old men express itself as: 'Why are you dressed as women?' On the

<sup>28</sup> F 314 Radt, lines 225–6; see Easterling (1997b) 43. <sup>29</sup> Karsai (1992) 201.

<sup>30</sup> Henrichs (1982) 224 n.97. <sup>31</sup> Henrichs (1984) 69; my italics. <sup>32</sup> See Buxton (1989); (1991) 41–6.

contrary, what rankles is their age: they are behaving indecorously, in a way unbecoming their years: τὸ γῆρας ὑμῶν . . . γῆρας πολιόν (252, 258). Tiresias readily acknowledges his and Cadmus' age, but maintains that dancing for the god is an imperative (324). As the two leave the scene leaning on each other for support, their signature tune γέροντε echoes once more about them (365). This is why, from the point of view of ordinary civic behaviour, they can be seen as ridiculous. Seaford helpfully quotes a passage from Plato's *Laws* (665) in which Cleinias, reacting to the Athenian's suggestion that there should be a chorus of 'the third age' singing for Dionysus, exclaims: 'What? Please explain: a chorus of elderly men dedicated to Dionysus sounds a very odd idea, at any rate at first hearing.'<sup>33</sup> B. Zimmermann accurately summarizes the point of the scene in *Bacchae*: 'Their Dionysiac costume and desire to dance are almost grotesquely incongruous with their frailness.'<sup>34</sup>

Another issue needs to be addressed before we leave the alleged gender-crossing in the Euripidean presentation of Tiresias and Cadmus. If we move beyond this play to the wider network of Greek myth, we find, so far as I am aware, no connection whatever between Cadmus and feminization. But with Tiresias things are very different. In order to resolve their dispute about whether males or females enjoy sexual intercourse more, Zeus and Hera consult Tiresias who has, uniquely, experienced the act from both sides. In his no-holds-barred structuralist analysis of the Tiresias myth, Luc Brisson meticulously catalogued and examined different narratives of the episode in which Tiresias had changed sex from male to female as a result of (in the best-known version) striking two copulating snakes with his staff, and subsequently changed back from female to male when he did precisely the same thing on an identical occasion.<sup>35</sup> As always, there are variations: Tiresias either kills the snakes, or wounds them, or strikes them with his staff, or tramples them.<sup>36</sup> More intriguing are the variants according to which Tiresias directs his aggression first against the female (after which he himself becomes female), and then, in the mirror-episode, against the male (after which he becomes male again).<sup>37</sup> Equally revealing is the variant in which Tiresias becomes female *after seeing Athena naked*.<sup>38</sup> A mere *lapsus memoriae* on the part of a myth-teller? If so, it is a significant one, since

<sup>33</sup> Seaford (1996) on 170–369. <sup>34</sup> Zimmermann (1991) 125.

<sup>35</sup> Brisson (1976). <sup>36</sup> Brisson (1976) 24.

<sup>37</sup> Brisson (1976) 24–5, referring to his versions A07 (schol. Hom. *Od.* 10. 492) and A08 (Eustath. on Hom. *Od.* 10. 494): 'ce premier épisode acquiert une cohérence accrue, si Tiresias se voit affecté du sexe du serpent qu'il vient d'agresser.'

<sup>38</sup> Brisson (1976) 52 with n. 25, on Tzetzes schol. *ad Lyc.* 683.

the parallelism between the entwined snakes – masculine conjoined with feminine – and Athene – the masculine goddess par excellence – can hardly be missed.<sup>39</sup> Brisson cogently infers that Tiresias' role is as mediator both in the sphere of divination, between gods and humans, and in the sphere of gender, mediating between the sexes in his own person.<sup>40</sup>

This, then, is one aspect of Tiresias' mythical personality. But it is not the whole of that personality; nor should we regard it as necessarily relevant to every appearance of this complex mythological figure in every narrative in which he occurs. In *Oedipus Tyrannus* what counts is Tiresias' capacity for divination, his simultaneous frailty and power, his proximity to and distance from the seat of political authority, and above all his blindness.<sup>41</sup> In *Antigone* his role as a prophet and his relationship to the polis are again focal. And in neither case, I suggest, is his mythical history of gender-crossing of any dramatic relevance. It could be argued that the case is less clear-cut in *Bacchae*, because, elsewhere in the play, gender-crossing *is* obviously a dramatic issue. Nevertheless, nothing in the text of this scene entitles us to detect echoes of Tiresias' *own* gender-crossing. It would have been easy enough for Euripides to introduce it had he wished to do so – perhaps by making a link with those snakes which *are* of dramatic relevance (the snakes which play around the maenads; the snakes into which Cadmus and Harmonia will turn); but he did not do it. Not every myth about Tiresias should be made to tell the same story.

#### DIONYSUS

*Bacchae* is dominated by changes of form, and many of these concern the god himself. At the start of the prologue he establishes that he has taken the μορφήν of a mortal in exchange for that of a god (4), a point which he re-emphasizes at the end of the speech (since the audience needs to be in no doubt about it in order to grasp the logic of the plot): 'I have taken and keep the εἶδος of a mortal, and have altered my μορφήν to the nature of a man' (53–4).<sup>42</sup> As the action unfolds, changes in the god's perceived form multiply. For Tiresias, Dionysus is a liquid, who/which can be poured out as a libation of wine (284). To the Servant he is a θήρ (436). The metaphor

<sup>39</sup> See though the comments of Loraux (1995) 216–18, advising against a too ready assumption of Athene's bisexuality. The whole of Loraux's chapter on 'What Tiresias saw' (211–26) – indeed the whole book from which it comes – repays careful study.

<sup>40</sup> Brisson (1976) 53. <sup>41</sup> Cf. Buxton (1980).

<sup>42</sup> This couplet alone should be enough to explode the fantasy interpretation (by Verrall and others) according to which the Stranger is a mere mortal adept of the god. If it is not enough, Dodds (1960) xlviii–l completes the demolition.

comes closer to reality when the god creates the semblance of a bull in order to delude his adversary (618); when Pentheus has fallen completely under the god's power, the final stage of the imagined metamorphosis occurs: 'You seem to be leading me as a bull, with horns upon your head. Have you been a wild beast all along? At any rate, now you have become a bull (τεταύρωσαι γὰρ οὖν).' (920–2) By implication, Pentheus has recognized the truth of Dionysus' words from an exchange during their first dialogue:

ΠΕ. ὁ θεός, ὁρᾶν γὰρ φῆς σαφῶς, ποῖός τις ἦν;  
 ΔΙ. ὁποῖός ἤθελ' οὐκ ἐγὼ ἴτασσον τόδε.

(477–8)

Dionysus' form is mobile, fluid and unbounded: as the chorus expresses it in the coda, *πολλαὶ μορφαὶ τῶν δαιμονίων* (1388).

One of these many possible *μορφαὶ* is that of femininity. Whereas the feminization of Zeus concerns function, that of Dionysus concerns form. The point of departure for *Bacchae's* exploration of Dionysus' femininity is how his appearance is perceived – not his way of dressing, but something more intimate: the look of his face and body, especially his skin colour and hair. Even before the Stranger enters, Pentheus singles out aspects of the mysterious incomer's appearance which he has heard about (233) and which already fascinate him: long, fair, scented hair, and a vinous complexion, a look which lends him 'the graces of Aphrodite' (235–6). Pentheus categorizes the Stranger as *θηλύμορφος* (353), a double-edged quality which makes him both resemble women and, allegedly, appeal to them sexually (353–4). This impression formed on the basis of hearsay is reinforced during the first dialogue between the king and his adversary. After a neutral's-eye-view confirmation by the Servant that the Stranger's appearance is *οἰνωπός* (438), as well as an allusion to his smiling countenance, Pentheus gives his own face-to-face appraisal of the Stranger: attractive *ὡς ἐς γυναικας* (the double edge again), long hair 'full of desire', white skin: not the appearance of a (masculine) wrestler, but that of one in search of Aphrodite (453–9).

The perception of Dionysus as feminine is not, of course, confined to the Euripidean representation.<sup>43</sup> Evidence from many parts of the mythological tradition confirms that the god's gender might be seen as ambivalent, though the nature of this ambivalence, and the tone with which it is presented, varies greatly from context to context. In Aeschylus' *Edonians* he is called by Lycurgus, evidently with contempt, *ὁ γύννης* – surely (though

<sup>43</sup> Some relevant scholarship: Delcourt (1961) 24–7; Otto (1965) 175–7; Bremmer (1992); Jameson (1993) 44–64; Csapo (1997).

this is only a fragment) a close parallel to the situation in *Bacchae*.<sup>44</sup> The god's effeminacy gets the full comic treatment in Aristophanes' *Frogs*, in relation to his wearing of the κροκωτός.<sup>45</sup> In Philochorus he is called θηλύμορφος; a line from an Orphic *Hymn* styles him ἄρσενα καὶ θῆλυν, διφυῆ.<sup>46</sup>

Walter Otto used a parallel from the world of heroes in order to illuminate Dionysus' femininity, noting that in the *Iliad* Paris is addressed by Hector as γυναιμανές (3.39) – the very epithet used of Dionysus in the first, fragmentary *Homeric Hymn* to the god (17).<sup>47</sup> However, the comparison needs to be handled with caution: a word can vary greatly in connotation, and even denotation, from context to context. In Hector's mouth γυναιμανές is an insult, being prefaced by the all-embracing rebuke Δύσπαρι. In the *Hymn*, on the other hand, γυναιμανές evidently expresses admiration for some aspect of the god's power. But this could well be a reference to Dionysus' tendency to drive women 'mad' in a sense quite other than the sexual sense – a reference to the general Dionysiac capacity to 'intoxicate'. In any case, far more important is the fact that Dionysus is a god and Paris a mortal man. To link a mortal man with 'woman-madness' is (at least in Hector's eyes) to diminish his masculinity; but to link a god with the same quality may be a way of expressing awe for his power.

A feature of Dionysiac imagery which has sometimes been linked with his femininity is a shift in the iconographical tradition: although the god was at first represented as a bearded adult, around 425 BC this convention was decisively replaced by his depiction as a beardless youth.<sup>48</sup> This has been interpreted by some as a change from a 'more masculine' to a 'more feminine' Dionysus. Taking an assumed equivalence between femininity and youthful maleness as his cue, Jan Bremmer identified a pattern according to which certain mythological figures – he cites, among others, Theseus and Achilles – progress from a young and 'feminine' stage to a stage at which, as fully adult male warriors, they perform exploits in the world of action.<sup>49</sup> Bremmer detected the same pattern in the representation of Dionysus in general, and in *Bacchae* in particular. Now Theseus and Achilles are heroes, while Dionysus is a god. Can Bremmer's pattern span this fundamental divide? The stories that Dionysus was raised as a girl by Ino and Athamas

<sup>44</sup> Aesch. F 61 Radt.

<sup>45</sup> *Ar. Ra.* 46, cf. *Th.* 134ff. On the complexity of the Heracles/Dionysus interplay, see Loraux (1995) 129.

<sup>46</sup> Philochorus: *FGrH* 328 F 7; Orphic *Hymn* 42.4. <sup>47</sup> Otto (1965) 176.

<sup>48</sup> On all this, see the excellent paper by Tom Carpenter in Carpenter and Faraone (1993) 185–206.

<sup>49</sup> As Bremmer acknowledges (1992) 196–7, the case of Kaineus is more complex. The references to Theseus and Achilles are at Bremmer (1992) 196 n.20.

(Apollod. 3.4.3), and that he appeared to Minyas' daughters first in the form of a girl (Ant. Lib. 10), certainly lend support to Bremmer's general case. But how relevant are these mythological episodes to *Bacchae*, in which they play no part? As always, we need to test an approach based on the mythical tradition against the evidence of each specific text.

Let us, then, turn back to *Bacchae*, and in particular to the dramatic context within which Dionysus' femininity is portrayed. For most of the characters the femininity of the god/Stranger goes unremarked, because it is not what strikes them as significant. It is principally Pentheus (although not exclusively he – cf. the Servant at 438) who focuses his perceptions on the physical look of the Stranger; and it is *exclusively* Pentheus to whom this look seems to evoke strong associations of the feminine. Even for Pentheus, however, that femininity is not a constant preoccupation: as the play progresses – and, in particular, after the earthquake and the manifestation of the bull – it will be the Stranger's wildness, and specifically his appearance as a bull (922), which force themselves onto the king's attention. The time when the Stranger's femininity does strike Pentheus is earlier in the tragedy, when the captive's compliance predominates over his aggression, and when Pentheus is in any case preoccupied by the issue of gender in quite another way – because the women's abandoning of the city constitutes a subversion of the established order. In other words, Dionysus' femininity, like that of the other characters in the play, is a theme moulded by and responsive to the needs of the drama.

#### PENTHEUS

From the point of view of stagecraft, and arguably from every other point of view as well, the feminization of Pentheus is the most powerful realization of the theme to be found anywhere in the play. In keeping with his desire to get close to the women topographically, Pentheus compliantly agrees to Dionysus' suggestion that he must also make himself resemble them physically. His dress will be the full, feminine, maenadic costume. Like Cadmus and Tiresias, Pentheus will carry the *thyrsos* and wear the fawnskin (835, 941–4). But, unlike them, he will also wear the full-length *peplos* (821, 833, 935ff.), let his hair fall loosely (831, cf. 928ff.; interpreted by Dodds as the wearing of a wig), and wear a belt (935) and, over his hair, a *mitra* (833, 929, 1115–16).<sup>50</sup> Again quite unlike the emphasis of the Tiresias and Cadmus scene, the verbal weight falls repeatedly upon the femininity of the deluded

<sup>50</sup> Wig: Dodds (1960) on 831–3. *Mitra*: Brandenburg (1966) 62, 140; Bremmer (1992) 193.

king. We find it in the preparatory dialogue scene before the dressing takes place: ἐς γυναῖκας ἐξ ἀνδρὸς τελῶ; (822), τίνα στολήν; ἢ θῆλυν; (828), θῆλυν . . . στολήν (836), θῆλυν . . . στολήν (852), γυναικόμορφον (855). We find it in the following dialogue, when Pentheus' costuming is completed: σκευὴν γυναικὸς μαινάδος βάκχης ἔχων (915), τί φαίνομαι δῆτ' οὐχὶ τὴν Ἴνουῦς στάσιν / ἢ τὴν Ἀγαυῆς ἐστάναι . . . (925–6). We find it in the chorus' triumphant cries as Pentheus is led off to the slaughter: τὸν ἐν γυναικομίμῳ στολᾷ (980).

Pentheus' transvestism has fascinated scholars.<sup>51</sup> The episode seems to act like a mirror, reflecting back to interpreters that which interests them most in Greek theatre and in Greek religion. Three examples of this mirroring correspond to influential interpretations which may be described respectively as 'theatrical', 'initiatory', and 'psychological'.

What interests Froma Zeitlin, in her book *Playing the Other*, is the theatrical, mimetic aspect of Athenian drama: above all, the implications of the twin facts that female characters, 'the radical other', are astonishingly (in socio-cultural terms) prominent in the plays, and that they are played by male actors.<sup>52</sup> What of the rather more elaborate kind of role reversal, that which involves a male actor impersonating a male character who dresses up as a woman? Writing of comedy (specifically *Thesmophoriazousae*) Zeitlin observes that 'the exhibitionist donning of female costume focuses the problem of mimesis at its most ambiguous and most sensitive spot, where social and artistic rules are most in conflict with each other . . . [F]eminization attracts to itself all the scorn and abuse that the culture – and comedy – can muster.'<sup>53</sup> But not all representations of feminization should be seen as equivalent to each other. Zeitlin stresses the gulf in *Bacchae* between the feminizations of Dionysus and Pentheus: whereas the former manipulates his own femininity to gain mastery, the latter's powerlessness is enacted when he dresses up as a woman.<sup>54</sup> Zeitlin draws large conclusions from this and related evidence (evidence about, for example, 'masculine' women, and about the perceived association between women and 'artifice'): Dionysus, and his theatre, are profoundly linked with the feminine, which is 'a model of both weakness and strength'.<sup>55</sup> In Zeitlin's view we can use this paradox to help us address the vexed question of Greek drama's social function, by holding that 'theatre uses the feminine for the purposes of imagining a fuller model for the masculine self . . .'<sup>56</sup>

<sup>51</sup> On transvestism as a general cultural phenomenon, see the splendid article by Miller (1999).

<sup>52</sup> E.g. Zeitlin (1996) 346. <sup>53</sup> Zeitlin (1996) 385–6. <sup>54</sup> Zeitlin (1996) 342.

<sup>55</sup> Zeitlin (1996) 346, 345. <sup>56</sup> Zeitlin (1996) 363.

The keyword of the second approach is 'initiation'. Pentheus' robing as a woman has been seen as a failed rite of passage, reflecting actual Greek rituals involving cross-dressing. Charles Segal articulates this point of view: '[The robing scene] resembles a number of initiatory rites in classical Greece and elsewhere where the male initiand temporarily wears the clothing of the opposite sex, entering the liminal or in-between period in which he has no identity, or rather has both male and female identities at the same time, before the definitive passage to the male side.'<sup>57</sup> A variant of this position is adopted by Richard Seaford, who argues that 'in the *Bacchae* the adoption of maenadic dress by Pentheus, which is not required by the plot, is one of a whole series of his experiences that reflect mystic initiation'.<sup>58</sup>

Thirdly, psychology. A variety of approaches might be included under this heading, embracing Pentheus' sexual motivation, his mental health, and the profiling of his authoritarian personality.<sup>59</sup> However, the most influential of these approaches is still that of Dodds, who read the representation of Pentheus in terms of repression and the unconscious. '[H]e is the dark puritan,' Dodds wrote, 'whose passion is compounded of horror and unconscious desire.'<sup>60</sup> What enables Dionysus to bend Pentheus to his will is 'the Dionysiac longing' within the king, a longing which can be translated as 'a deeper, unacknowledged lust to pry into the women's doings'.<sup>61</sup> As for the dressing up of Pentheus in female garb, Dodds explains this in part as a reflection of cult: 'The specific ritual reason for the disguising of Pentheus is perhaps that the victim of the womanish god . . . must wear the god's livery', in part in terms of the horrific psychology of revenge and domination: 'the stage business with Pentheus' costume (925-44) is the counterpart of the stage business with the Stranger's costume at 493-7; for the outrage then done to his person the Stranger now takes a fantastic revenge on the pretext of playing the valet . . .'.<sup>62</sup>

We can and should learn from each of these approaches; though I have some reservations.

Zeitlin's mimetic approach is, to me, more convincing when she moves from particular plays to large-scale generalizations, and less convincing when she redescends to the particular. Still, she valuably forces us to confront the cultural realities of a scene of male transvestism in *this* kind of theatre. The second approach, that via initiation, highlights a ritual pattern which is undeniably present in Greek culture, namely the use of gender

<sup>57</sup> Segal (1997) 169. <sup>58</sup> Seaford (1998) 129.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. the interpretations reviewed by Oranje (1984) 7-19. <sup>60</sup> Dodds (1960) on 222-3.

<sup>61</sup> Dodds (1960) nn. on Scene 3 (c) (p. 172), and on 821-38.

<sup>62</sup> Dodds (1960) nn. on 854-5, and on Scene 4, 912-76 (p. 192).

reversal as a marker of change of status. However, we should note now the criticisms of Heslin, who rightly stresses the *variety* of contexts in antiquity for which we have evidence for male/female cross-dressing, a variety which does not lend itself to being reduced to the schema 'initiation to manhood', though it *is* more easily equated with a more general 'involvement in a rite of passage' (e.g. marriage or mourning).<sup>63</sup> As for the suggestion of an initiation into the Dionysiac mysteries, the danger here is that one may overlook the glaring truth that an initiand's passage 'from anxiety to joy'<sup>64</sup> does not correspond to the emotional trajectory either of the *Bacchae* in particular or of tragedy in general: for in tragedy, death carries overwhelmingly more weight than salvation.<sup>65</sup>

Still compelling after half a century – and not incompatible with either of the other two approaches – is Dodds' psychologizing reading. It would certainly be possible to play the character of Pentheus this way in the theatre, and it would make a wonderful story for a director to tell; and in telling it s/he would not be going against the grain of the text. Indeed in the very words of the play we find that Pentheus displays an interest in sex and gender which at first seems to be belied by his public, authoritarian stance, but which later opens the psychic gates to Dionysus' invasion. The wearing of female clothes offers a perfect corporeal analogue for what is happening to Pentheus' mind: his body will come to resemble what he has hitherto been, fascinatedly, rejecting. *Odit et amat*.

All I would myself add to these discussions of Pentheus' transvestism is the most obvious-sounding of points, which follows from my argument elsewhere in this paper: that the king's cross-dressing must be seen in its dramatic context. Like the feminizations of Zeus and Dionysus, and like the (as I have argued) relative *non*-feminization of Cadmus and Tiresias, the feminization of Pentheus belongs at a certain phase of the plot, after which the play moves on. Already in that same ode where the chorus sings of τὸν ἐν γυναικομίμῳ στολᾷ (980), a shift is being prepared, as the Bacchantes imagine the words with which Agaue will react to being spied on: 'He is not born from the blood of women, but from a lioness, or he is descended from the Libyan Gorgons.' (988–90). In the perception of the maenads of Cithaeron, it is neither a woman nor a man who has come to disturb them, but a θήρ (1108). When he returns to normal consciousness

<sup>63</sup> Heslin (2005) 211. <sup>64</sup> Seaford (1994) 287.

<sup>65</sup> On Seaford's more general point, that Dionysiac ritual, above all Dionysiac mysteries, constitutes the nucleus of the development of Athenian drama (Seaford (1994) 281), one may note the calmly shrewd words of the honorand of this volume: 'surviving Attic tragedy is not easily understood in relation to any master plot-pattern' (Easterling (1997b) 52). The identical comment might be made about some of the work of George Thomson, Seaford's direct intellectual ancestor.

Pentheus tries to dispel the illusion of his false identity – his identity as a woman – by removing the *mitra* (1115–16), in the hope of returning to his masculine state. But in vain: his head, ripped from his body, is ‘like that of a mountain lion’ (1141–2). One last time the chorus evoke Pentheus’ wearing of *θηλυγενῆ στολάν* and wielding of the *thyrsos* (1156–8). But thereafter the king’s feminization is forgotten. For the first part of the next scene he is to Agaue a wild beast, prey, something hunted, a lion (1202–15); to Cadmus he is a dead boy (1226). After Agaue’s recognition of the truth, she too shrinks from the identification of the head with that of a lion (1284) – and certainly neither she nor anyone else refers to Pentheus’ dressing up as a woman. While it is theoretically possible that some reference was made to Pentheus’ transvestism in the lost part of the play, it is surely far more likely that the matter was ignored, the play’s action and meaning having now passed beyond that point – beyond his feminization, beyond also his metaphorical transformation into a lion, and back to his starting point as a man: son, grandson, suffering human victim.

Zeus is not Dionysus. Zeus and Dionysus are not Tiresias, Cadmus, or Pentheus. Nor is any of the mortal characters like any other. In this highly discriminating play, the upholding of distinctions is every bit as crucial as the collapsing of boundaries.

#### FEMINIZATION AND THE TRAGIC TRADITION

The above account of *Bacchae* could be contextualized in many ways. In a book whose title includes the phrase ‘the Greek tragic tradition’, an obvious context to choose is that of the remainder of the corpus of Greek tragedy. Gender, after all, is one of the great tragic themes: there is hardly a play which does not explore in some way or another the relationship between male and female.

A note frequently sounded in tragedy is that of the divide between the sexes. In *Seven against Thebes*, Eteocles maintains that it is for men to make sacrifice to the gods and to engage with the enemy; women should be quiet and stay in the house (*Sept.* 230–2).<sup>66</sup> In Aeschylus’ *Suppliants* the plot strongly contrasts the *θηλυγενῆ στόλον* of the Danaids with the *ἀρσενοπληθῆ . . . ἔσμὸν* of the sons of Aegyptus (*Supp.* 28–30).<sup>67</sup> In Sophocles’ *Electra*, the eponymous heroine is told by her sister that ‘you are a woman, not a man, and weaker than your adversaries’ (*El.* 997–8).

<sup>66</sup> Macaria in *Heraclidae* takes the identical view of a model woman’s conduct (*Held.* 476–7), as does Ajax in the play named after him (*Aj.* 293).

<sup>67</sup> Cf. *Supp.* 392–3.

But tragedy would not be tragedy unless it also *explored* stereotypes, pushing them to or beyond their limits. In this spirit, tragedians often evoke various kinds of *overlap* between male and female. In *Agamemnon* the possibility that a woman can behave mannishly is raised from the outset in relation to Clytemnestra's ἀνδρόβουλον . . . κέαρ (*Ag.* 11); the Chorus later praise her for talking like a prudent man (γύναι, κατ' ἄνδρα σώφρον' εὐφρόνως λέγεις, 351); when in *Eumenides* Athena ultimately asserts the father's role against the mother's in parenthood, this is merely the culmination of a contrastive theme adumbrated repeatedly in the preceding action of the trilogy. *Medea* is rich in generalizations about women, but highlighted too is the possibility of reversals in gender expectations: 'It is the thoughts of *men* that are deceitful . . .' (*Med.* 412). The issue of woman's cunning, on display throughout *Medea*, is present also in Euripides' *Suppliants*, where Aethra observes that such cunning may involve a subtle elision of the gender boundary: 'It is reasonable for women, if they are wise, to get everything done by men' (*Supp.* 41–2). In *Orestes*, when Electra devises a plan to get the better of Menelaus by seizing his daughter Hermione, Orestes praises his sister in cross-gender terms: she possesses φρένας . . . ἄρσενας, yet her body shines out ἐν γυναιξὶ θηλείαις (*Or.* 1204–5). What infuriates Oedipus in *Oedipus at Colonus* is his sense that that his sons are staying at home ὥστε παρθένοι, whereas his daughters are out in the world helping their father through action (*OC* 337ff.).

The preceding example from *Oedipus at Colonus*, involving the image of the stay-at-home male, leads us to the particular kind of gender overlap which is my concern in this paper: feminization. We can divide tragic feminization – apart from that in *Bacchae* – into two main types. The first is akin to the image of the (allegedly) cowardly stay-at-homes Eteocles and Polynices mocked by Oedipus. Its stereotypical embodiment is Aegisthus, styled by Cassandra as ἀναλκιν and οἰκουρόν (*Ag.* 1224–5) and, later in the trilogy, by Orestes as a woman with a mind that is θήλεια (*Cho.* 304–5). The motif became Aegisthus' trademark. The Euripidean Electra, gloating over his corpse, recalls that the Argives used to refer disparagingly to 'the woman's man', not 'the man's woman' (*El.* 931), and wishes that she herself may have a husband who is not παρθενωπός and who possesses a masculine character (948–9).

The other type of tragic feminization relates to 'the heroic temper', Bernard Knox's term for the distinctive set of traits characteristic of the central figures in Sophoclean drama, rock-like when wheedled by the persuasions of lesser mortals or buffeted by the unforeseeable blows of misfortune.<sup>68</sup> In the case of heroic Sophoclean males, any weakening of their

<sup>68</sup> Knox (1964).

unshakable resilience can seem to them to amount to a diminution of their masculinity. So it is for Ajax, when he claims, or pretends, to be acquiescing in the wishes of Tecmessa, and in so doing to have become feminized: ἐθελύνθην στόμα | πρὸς τῆσδε τῆς γυναικός (*Aj.* 651–2). On the whole, though, *Ajax* is a man's play, and the gender divide remains strong throughout. The same cannot be said of *Trachiniae*. Heracles, the archetype of male derring-do, twice undergoes subjection at the hands of a woman. The first instance is an episode reported rather than enacted, when we learn of his former year-long enslavement to the Lydian queen Omphale (*Tr.* 69–70, 252ff., 356–7). However, although other, predominantly later versions of the myth involve the fascinating extra detail of Heracles' exchanging of clothes with Omphale, Sophocles' version, perhaps more 'seriously', focuses not on cross-dressing but on slavery, a motif developed later in the play through the fate of captive Iole.<sup>69</sup> The second instance of feminization in the play grows out of the central action in which the pain-ridden Heracles is reduced to a husk of his former adventure-driven self. This reduction is described by Heracles through the explicit language of feminization. After asserting that 'a woman, female and with no masculine nature' has been alone responsible for his downfall, he likens his shouts and lamentations to those of a παρθένος: in a word, he has become female: νῦν δ' ἐκ τοιούτου θῆλυς ἡῤῥημαι τάλας (*Tr.* 1062–3; 1071–2; 1075).

Where do we place *Bacchae* against this background? Quite simply, there is nothing comparable to this play in the rest of the extant tragic tradition, in relation either to the multiplicity of types of feminization which it depicts, or to the dramatic prominence which the theme enjoys. Neither the Sophoclean depictions of the weakened, 'feminine' hero, nor the references to womanish-cowardly Aegisthus in various tragedies, can begin to rival the emotionally devastating power with which the feminization of a mortal is enacted through the transvestism of Pentheus – though *in comedy* there is no shortage of scene-stealing mortals who cross-dress. Again, the highlighting of the ambivalent appearance of Dionysus cannot be matched elsewhere in the extant tragedies – though *in comedy* we need look no further than *Frogs* for an equivalent. Could we say that Euripides was demonstrating his originality by pushing at the boundaries of the tragic genre (and, incidentally, stretching the boundaries of gender too), in ways which other tragedians did not? Even as we formulate such a suggestion, however, the fragment from Aeschylus' *Edonians* mentioned above – in which Dionysus is slightly called ὁ γύννις – should remind us, if reminder were needed, that what we have is merely a tiny sample of the total tragic corpus.

<sup>69</sup> Motif of exchanging clothes: see Boardman (1994).

Rather than hazarding a possibly illusory comparative point, then, I prefer to conclude with a comment on Euripides himself. To the very end of his career he retained an astonishing capacity to exploit and extend the possibilities of tragedy, in a continuing effort to draw out central human significance from the depiction of the paradoxical. The feminized male is a paradox; in *Bacchae* it is made to yield insights into the nature of existence, both human and divine.

*Hector's helmet glinting in a fourth-century tragedy*

Oliver Taplin

The history of Greek literature, not least of Tragedy, arranges itself conveniently, and in significant ways misleadingly, into neat centuries before and after the roughly-calculated birth of Christ. According to this periodization the fourth century BC emerges as something of a desert for poetry, apart from Comedy – a hundred years of prose. And, encouraged by the sparseness of surviving examples, it is generally supposed that the poetry of the time was rather second-rate: in between the exuberant creativity of the titanic fifth century and the sophisticated ingenuity of the Alexandrian third century comes a fallow, stunted period. In keeping with this, it is assumed without much argument that the tragedies of the fourth century were stagnant, drearily repetitive, merely recycling the old forms and tones in the overwhelming shadow of the previous 'golden' century.

Thus, to give a recent instance, Martin West assumes that it is unthinkable that the fourth-century tragedian Carcinus might have set iambic trimeters to the musical score in the newly-published *Medea* fragment in the Louvre: that must have been the work of later sensationalizing singers.<sup>1</sup> But why take it for granted that Carcinus could never have dreamt of departing from the conventions laid down by the great masters of the fifth century? Sung trimeters might produce a startling tension between the conventional rationality of speech and the emotive expression of song. And is it really plausible to suppose that the subversive novelty of the Hellenistic poets came out of nowhere? When, in about 300, Rhinthon put on plays that were a combination of tragedy and comedy ('*phlyakes*'),<sup>2</sup> and in Doric dialect to boot, was he breaking the fifth-century tragic mould

<sup>1</sup> West (2007), a valuable improvement on Bélis (2004). The attribution to Carcinus is probable rather than certain, given the numerous post-Euripidean reworkings of *Medea*. In the version in the Louvre papyrus *Medea* somehow sent the children away from Corinth, 'entrusting them to their carer (πιστεύσασα . . . τροφῶν)' (line 5). This might, I suggest, be connected with the novel version of the story depicted on an Apulian volute-krater in Princeton. On this *Medea* is shown together with an old *paidagogos* in the sanctuary at Eleusis: see Taplin (2007) no. 94 on pp. 238–40.

<sup>2</sup> On Rhinthon and phlyax plays see Taplin (1993) 48–52.

in a totally unprecedented manner? In this contribution I shall look at the evidence for one play, the *Hector* of Astydamos, in order to open up the notion that the tragedies of the fourth century, or at least the best of them, simultaneously looked back to the great masters of the previous era and cultivated the novelty and artistic self-consciousness that would develop into the Hellenistic second flowering.

A lecture given by Pat Easterling in 1990 was for me the eye-opener towards realizing the dynamic potential of fourth-century tragedy.<sup>3</sup> The scales fell away, the encrustations of periodized prejudices accreted through a combination of the surviving corpus of plays, the prologue of *Frogs*, Aristotle's prejudice against οἱ λοιποὶ, and Nietzsche's proclamation of the assassination of Tragedy at the hands of Socrates and Euripides. But the creative age of Greek tragedy did not, she insisted, end in 405; it flourished through the fourth century, and even beyond.<sup>4</sup> Restricting attention only to Athens, the competitions for new plays continued; and actors, playwrights, choregoi and the rest continued to invest enormous energies and expenditure in these prestige activities. As the Attic orators, Plato, Menandrian comedy and a whole host of other evidence demonstrates loud and clear: Tragedy remained big business.

Among the playwrights, the names to be conjured with, besides Carcinus, included Chairemon, Theodectas and Astydamos. Yet – unless *Rhesus* were to be by one of them, which is unlikely, although not impossible – the surviving fragments of their plays take up just a handful of pages in *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta*, volume 1. It is beyond doubt that at least some of their texts were still circulating in later antiquity; and it is more than possible that they are represented here and there in the more than 100 pages of unattributed papyrus fragments in *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta*, volume II (Adespota). But the attribution of tattered scraps to individual authors is bound to be a hazardous activity.

The productive career of Astydamos (the younger) spanned the period from the 370s until at least 340.<sup>5</sup> He was much celebrated – not least by himself – and was even honoured with a bronze statue in the Theatre of Dionysus.<sup>6</sup> Among the scatter of known play-titles was a *Hector* – the only tragedy that we know of with this title. The premiere of this play is

<sup>3</sup> Easterling (1993b) is the published version of her paper at a conference held in Nottingham in 1990.

<sup>4</sup> See Le Guen 1995, and 2001.

<sup>5</sup> His first victory in 372 has the distinction of being recorded in the Parian Marble as well as in the didaskalia – see T3. The existence of his father, Astydamos the elder, is shadowy – see *TrGF*, vol. 1, no. 59.

<sup>6</sup> For his self-praise see T2 a, b; for the statue T8 a, b, and Goette (1999).

cited by Plutarch as a notable occasion in theatre history, alongside the masterpieces of Aeschylus and Sophocles.<sup>7</sup> Yet there is only one securely attributed fragment: a scholion on *Iliad* 6. 475 quotes some words as put in the mouth of Hector by the tragedian Astydamos (60 F 2). The text transmitted is far from flawless, but it can be taken as virtually certain (as is universally agreed) that it said δέξαι κυνήν μοι πρόσπολ(ε),<sup>8</sup> and then, after five lost syllables to complete the line, we have καὶ φοβηθῆ παῖς, which surely had a μή before it, as was realized by Cobet. So the gist of these words adds up to good sense: 'Take my helmet, servant, . . . so that the boy is not frightened.'

Scrap though this is, it reveals something highly significant about Astydamos' play: it was one of those few tragedies that followed in the footsteps of the *Iliad* itself. At the same time it emerges clearly that it departed from the great model – a simultaneous homage and rivalry. Hector's removal of his helmet – the emblem of κορυθαίολος Ἑκτωρ – so that his infant son is not scared by it, is one of the most poignant and famous moments in the entire epic. It is precisely because it is so well known that Astydamos' discrepancy immediately leaps out: in the family scene of the *Iliad* Hector lays his helmet on the ground (6. 472–3, κατέθηκεν ἐπὶ χθονί); and at the end of it he picks it up again (494). There is no attendant there for him to hand it to. This may seem like a small detail, but, given the status of the epic scene, it becomes a conspicuous change.

Many tragedies were, of course, 'Homeric' in various significant ways. There is even one surviving, Sophocles' *Ajax*, that has detailed and complex interplays with the Hector and Andromache scene from *Iliad* 6.<sup>9</sup> But Astydamos' *Hector* evidently took the more rare step of actually dramatizing the same plot-material as the Homeric archetype. The great precedent for this was Aeschylus' '*Achilles Trilogy*', which even, according to the most likely reconstruction, followed the monumental sequential structure of the *Iliad* by basing the three plays on books 8 and 18–19 and 24 respectively. At the same time the Aeschylus was boldly different from Homer: Achilles received the embassy in silence, for example; his laments for Patroclus were homoerotic; Priam came to ransom Hector in the company of a whole chorus of Trojans (Phrygians); Hector's body was weighed against gold. The only other example we have of a tragedy directly covering the same

<sup>7</sup> F 1 (h) = *De glor. Athen.* 349f.

<sup>8</sup> Porson emended κοινήν to κυνήν. The ε at the end of πρόσπολ(ε) might be the last syllable of that word, or, more likely, the first letter of the following word after elision.

<sup>9</sup> The subject of a subtle analysis in Easterling (1984b). While the shield of Ajax, and the sword given him by Hector, are important in the play, Sophocles avoids alluding to his helmet.

ground as part of the *Iliad* is the *Rhesus*. That intriguing and underrated play also departs from, as well as concurring with, the epic. Few other playwrights had the self-confident audacity to set themselves up against the poem that everyone learnt at school, and frequently heard performed by rhapsodes. The self-praising Astydamos did not hold back in modesty.

Despite the lack of secure attestation, it is hardly a wild speculation to take it that the play included the death of Hector as well as his final departure to battle – indeed it is hard to see how else it might have developed. In other words, *Hector* would have contained within a single day events that in the *Iliad* are set several days apart. If it also covered the return and lamentation of Hector's body immediately after his death, again a likely reconstruction, then that would be a further major departure from the *Iliad*.

In contrast to the single book-fragment, there is an unusually rich pool of possibly related papyrus fragments. It so happens that we have no fewer than four dramatic or quasi-dramatic papyri that handle the story of Hector's fatal day. Three of them are standardly, if tentatively, attributed to Astydamos' play as *TrGF*, vol. 1, 60 F \*\*1h?, \*\*1i??, and \*\*2a?<sup>10</sup> The fourth Hector fragment is classified among the *Adespota* in *TrGF*, vol. 11 as F649.

Before turning to these in some detail, I shall add to the melting pot a monumental later fourth-century Apulian vase, now in the Antikenmuseum in Berlin (Fig. 1). The vessel stands a little over a metre in height, and is a fairly typical funerary volute-crater of the period around 330 BC; it is attributed to the Underworld Painter, the best of those who followed in the wake of the highly talented and prolific Darius Painter. It was first published by Luca Giuliani in 1988, and then more fully in 1995.<sup>11</sup> While his account is superb on matters of art history and iconography, it is open to improvement on questions of literary associations. I shall make a case for thinking that this painting has a more significant bearing on Astydamos, and hence on fourth-century tragedy, than has been appreciated so far in the twenty years that it has been known.

The lower scene unmistakably depicts the departure of Hector to battle, with the warrior reaching out to his infant son Astyanax. Giuliani was so taken by the immediate association of this tableau with Homer that he even insists that the woman holding the baby must be the nurse, as in the *Iliad*

<sup>10</sup> The double asterisk marks the attribution as conjectural, the question-mark as dubious. These three fragments are sensibly discussed by Xanthakis-Karamanos (1980) 162–9.

<sup>11</sup> Giuliani (1988) 18–24; (1995) 43–5, 122–32. This is no. 101 on pp. 252–5 in Taplin (2007) (bibliography etc. in 290 n. 78).



Fig. 1 Apulian volute-crater, Antikensammlung, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin.

(6.399–400, 466), and that the woman behind her (head missing) must be Andromache. It is ironic that such a champion of pictorial priorities should allow a literary consideration to run counter to iconographic expectations: in fourth-century Apulian vase-painting it is always (so far as I am aware) the serving-woman who stands behind the mistress, and never the other

way round. And surely the basic pictorial pathos requires that it should be the mother herself who holds the child, and who stands close to her departing husband.

This displacement of the nurse would, in any case, hardly be a major departure from the Iliadic model. The helmet is another matter. Giuliani notes its centrality, and, again with *Iliad* 6 in mind, says that it is 'the key to the meaning' of the whole.<sup>12</sup> I suggest that this is even more the case than he realizes. It was not until I saw the painting in reality that I realized just how conspicuous the helmet is:<sup>13</sup> not only is the charioteer holding it up, so that it is positioned in the very centre of the whole composition, it is painted in yellow-gold, with its crest in white, in such a way as to make it stand out – glinting. This draws the eye to a key divergence from the *Iliad*, the same differentiation as has already been encountered in Astydamos fragment 2 (60 F2). While the fragment gives no indication of the identity of the *prospolos* to whom Hector hands his helmet, it might well have been his charioteer.<sup>14</sup> And in that case we have a remarkable coincidence connecting the scene on the vase to the one and only certain fragment of *Hector*. Mere chance? It is more likely that both reflect a particularly memorable moment in the same tragedy.

The upper register of the painting does not consist of a frieze of gods, as is common on kraters of this sort, although it does include a couple of intrusions from the divine sphere. Given the Trojan setting, the identity of the central 'swooning' figure is obvious: this has to be Cassandra possessed by a fit of prophetic vision.<sup>15</sup> The tripod and the laurel branch she holds are clearly tokens of her divine inspiration. The seated woman caring for her may be her mother Hecuba, and the regal figure to the left of the tripod may be Priam, although neither of these identifications is definite. There is also no clear identification for the Trojan with two spears and a trumpet, who wears an eye-catching animal skin. Might he be Paris? There was probably another Trojan warrior at the left-hand end, but all except his shield is lost. Finally there is the right-hand figure with the wreath and laurel branch; he is observing the omen in the top right-hand corner, an eagle with a snake in its talons. This makes him in all likelihood Helenus, the male sibling-equivalent of Cassandra. Neither of these portrayals of

<sup>12</sup> Giuliani (1995) 122. <sup>13</sup> This was in Berlin in 2005, in the course of preparing *Pots and Plays*.

<sup>14</sup> It is unlikely, although not inconceivable, that the horse-drawn chariot was actually brought onto the stage during the course of the tragedy.

<sup>15</sup> Giuliani (1995) 126 with notes 391–2 points to the similar portrayal of her on a comparable piece, Geneva HR 44 = Trendall and Cambitoglou (1992) 17/77.

Cassandra and Helenus practising their seercraft occurs, as it happens, in the *Iliad*. So if this painting is at all closely related to any particular telling of the death-of-Hector myth, then it was something other than the Homeric epic.

The question of how far some of the fourth-century Apulian mythological vase-paintings are related to tragedy is a complex one which I have recently tried to advance in some detail.<sup>16</sup> In the relatively short time that this particular vase has been known it has already divided opinion. Richard Kannicht has advocated the connection, even calling the picture 'huius fabulae [*Hector*] compendium'.<sup>17</sup> Luca Giuliani, on the contrary, has been keen to play down connections with tragedy, although he does not claim there are none, while also making the most (as seen already) of associations with the *Iliad*. This all fits with his theory that the myths were mediated for the viewers of the vases by scholarly explications from professional funeral orators. In *Pots and Plays* I have pointed to weaknesses in this theory, and argued that the bearing of Homer on this vase, and on the comparable Berlin *Rhesus*, should be seen as indirect, not direct.<sup>18</sup> The tragedies in question allude to the *Iliad*, while also deliberately departing from the canonized epic version: the vases do the same, following the playwright's affiliations, though not necessarily in every detail.

With all this in view, it is time to turn to the three papyrus fragments that have been conjecturally attributed to Astydamos' *Hector*, always bearing in mind the point that we know of no other tragedy from the fifth or fourth centuries that dealt with the story of the farewell and death of Hector. First F ii, published by Grenfell and Hunt in 1901.<sup>19</sup> In the first four lines someone (the *prospolos* of fragment 2?) makes an announcement calling for an urgent response; in reply Hector – it cannot be anyone else – calls for his armour to be fetched, including the captured shield of Achilles. He then tells someone to get out of the way, and stop inhibiting valour. Andromache? It has been held against the attribution to Astydamos<sup>20</sup> that his arming-scene was related to *Iliad* 6, which in Homer comes before the eventual capture of Achilles' armour from the body of Patroclus. But there is no reason why Astydamos should have stuck with that sequence of events: in his play the death of Patroclus may well have happened before

<sup>16</sup> Taplin (2007). <sup>17</sup> *TrGF*, vol. 1, 352; Kannicht and Gauly (1991) 139.

<sup>18</sup> On the funeral orator theory see Taplin (2007) 21–2; on the *Rhesus* see 163–5.

<sup>19</sup> Amhurst Papyrus no. 10 in Grenfell and Hunt (1901) no. 10; Page (1941) no. 29a.

<sup>20</sup> e.g. Page (1941) 161.

the play began.<sup>21</sup> In that case, the arming scene of F 1i could have come before the final farewell to Andromache and Astyanax. And that fits with the armed Hector on the Berlin vase as well.

The fragments collected as F 1h were first published by Eric Turner in 1955.<sup>22</sup> Although they are pretty scrappy, there are some nuggets of interest to be retrieved from fr.1, column 2. After nine very damaged lines there is the indicator ΧΟΡΟΥ ΜΕΛΟΣ, followed by parts of two or more lines that are not in iambic trimeters, and might possibly be stichic galliambics. I am becoming increasingly persuaded that the insertion of ΧΟΡΟΥ is the result of the spread and reperformance of drama, both tragedy and comedy.<sup>23</sup> Local choruses could not usually be expected to learn and rehearse the playwright's original lyrics: the 'instruction' is, in that case, a textual indication that at this juncture, where there was originally a choral ode, the chorus should simply sing something suitable from their 'repertoire', as a kind of entr'acte.<sup>24</sup> It is strange, however, to find a metre other than iambic trimeter (or trochaic tetrameter) following immediately after a choral song. This tragic fragment would seem to be the work of a playwright with the innovative confidence to depart from the conventional formal norms as laid down by the fifth-century classics. And galliambics (or any form of ionics) would be an exotic and virtuoso metre, probably with Trojan colouring, whether they were spoken, chanted or sung.<sup>25</sup> If this is, in fact, the work of Astydamas, then this all contradicts the easy assumption that the conventions of tragedy, as set by the fifth-century masters, became fossilized, and were subserviently followed by the dramatists of the next century.

Furthermore, whoever delivers these lines clearly refers in the nominative to the seer Helenus: ὁ θνηπόλος [. . .] μάντις Ἑλενος (line 12). Quite a coincidence with the vase. I propose, then, that the tragedy which is scappily preserved in F 1h is the same as that in which Helenus saw and interpreted the omen of the eagle and snake, which is the same as the one with Hector's glinting helmet. We still cannot tell, however, whereabouts in the play this omen came, and whether it was before or after Hector's farewell scene. Nor can we know how Helenus interpreted the sign, except that it is likely to have somehow prefigured Hector's death.

<sup>21</sup> F 1h, fr. 2 has something about how Thetis brought new armour from Hephaestus. This might have come from before Hector's arming scene.

<sup>22</sup> Hibeh papyrus no. 174 in Turner and Lenger (1955) 9–14. <sup>23</sup> Cf. Revermann (2006) 281.

<sup>24</sup> This, rather than laziness and indifference, might also be the explanation of the *embolima* that Aristotle complains about at *Poetics* 1456a25.

<sup>25</sup> This metrical line in a more resolved form, as known from Catullus 63 and an anonymous Greek precedent, was associated with the cult of Cybele.

Thirdly, F 2a, published by Bruno Snell in 1937.<sup>26</sup> This looks to be part of a fairly standard messenger speech, narrating the final confrontation between Achilles and Hector in battle. Hector throws his spear first, but misses; Achilles is elated and strikes at Hector's shield, which had formerly been his own, but does not break through. So it is certainly possible that this came from Astydamos' *Hector*. It looks rather conventional, more in keeping with F 11, and less with the more enterprising F 1h.

It is quite likely, then, that one or two or even all three of these papyrus fragments come from Astydamos' play. And none of them is incompatible with the Berlin vase. Against the connection between the vase and the tragedy Giuliani (129) makes the point, however, that in the composition of the painting Cassandra is distinctly conspicuous, and yet that 'she does not appear from the known fragments to have played any part in the tragedy'. This is where Adespota F 649 comes in: Cassandra most certainly has a central and extraordinary role in that.

This strange Oxyrhynchus fragment of rather more than 30 lines was first published by Revel Coles in 1968; it has, not surprisingly, attracted a fair amount of discussion, including some characteristically shrewd observations from Pat Easterling.<sup>27</sup> The piece is clearly dramatic or quasi-dramatic: it allocates parts explicitly to Cassandra, Priam and Deiphobus. More than that, there is an 'implicit stage-direction' at line 11: Deiphobus enters asking what is this alarming noise that has drawn him outside, and Cassandra is amazed to see him (13). This is firmer evidence than is usually acknowledged that this is a passage from a play for performance; if it is not, then it is in some sense masquerading as one. The piece also includes a chorus, with words attributed to it (lines 5–7) – further *prima facie* evidence for theatrical performance. The metre is predominantly iambic, trimeters or part-trimeters. If, as has been suggested, there are also dochmiac elements, then that is a keynote tragic metre.<sup>28</sup>

The layout of the papyrus is peculiar, including indentations and, apparently, blanks within lines. But the most striking and unprecedented feature in terms of both performance implications and palaeography is the instruction  $\omega\Delta\text{H}$  ('singing'), given a line to itself, and repeated no fewer than seven

<sup>26</sup> Strasburg Papyrus WG 304, 2 in Snell (1937) 84–9; Page (1941) 29a.

<sup>27</sup> Coles (1968) 110–18; *POxy.* no. 2746 in Coles (1970). Discussions include Gentili (1979) 63–87; Kannicht and Snell (1981) 221–2; Hall (2002) 18; Easterling (2005b) 32–3. I am grateful to Franco Ferrari for showing me an unpublished article on this fragment: he argues from anomalies of metre and of layout in favour of a Hellenistic resetting of an extract of tragedy for performance by a virtuoso singer.

<sup>28</sup> Dochmiacs are favoured by Gentili and others, but 'parum probabiliter' according to Kannicht and Snell (1981) 222.

times. Every time it is followed by an indented line which is definitely or probably attributed to Cassandra. By far the most likely explanation is that  $\omega\Delta\text{H}$  is an instruction telling the performer of Cassandra to introduce some singing at this point. Bearing in mind the analogy with  $\text{XOPOY}$  (see p. 258 above), it is possible that the author had originally composed some words for these snatches of song, but that in this version of the text they were left to the initiative of the performer. In any case, this libretto clearly calls for a virtuoso singer. And, given that the scene is indebted to the celebrated Cassandra scene in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, it is a more than plausible conjecture that the singing here was meant to give expression to enigmatic glimpses of her prophetic vision in some form.<sup>29</sup>

Despite the damaged state of the fragment, there is no doubt what Cassandra is singing (or talking) about: the final, fatal duel between Hector and Achilles. It is going badly for Hector, and the end seems near. Given Cassandra's visionary powers, her recurrent singing, and the clear influence of the Aeschylus, we can be sure that she is not simply watching the battle, nor reporting it as a direct eye-witness. It is possible that she is having some kind of pre-vision of what has not yet happened. But, in view of the participation of Deiphobus, it is far more likely that she is purveying some sort of paranormal or 'televisionary' narration of the duel, even at the same time as it is actually happening outside the walls of the city.

When Deiphobus enters it seems that she is amazed because she had 'seen' him on the battlefield ( $\pi\rho\acute{o}$   $\pi\acute{\upsilon}\rho\gamma\omega\nu$ , 16) – something which he finds baffling and crazy (14, 17). Clearly this is some sort of reworking of the sequence in *Iliad* 22 where Athena deceives Hector into facing Achilles by taking on the reassuring form of Deiphobus (226–46); then, when Hector turns to Deiphobus for a replacement spear (299–300), he is not there. It would seem that here in this dramatic fragment Cassandra's special vision has seen Deiphobus along with Hector on the battlefield, but that her vision turns out to have been tricked, like Hector's in the *Iliad*: Deiphobus was inside the walls all along. It may strike us as a rather contrived, ludic device to have Cassandra, the visionary who always tells the truth, taken in by a supernatural trick played by a god: but it is also an ingenious and ironic twist that plays on the standard cliché. Here she sees the 'truth' in a deluded version.

So we have a highly ingenious and unpredictable alternative to the standard messenger speech. Instead of the direct eye-witness reporting after the event, we have an instantaneous paranormal vision, garnished

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Easterling (2005b) 32–3.

with snatches of possessed song. And the vision even includes a detail which is the result of divine trickery, and which is set straight within the on-stage framing. Reality impinges in a kind of double-take on the flawed 'televisionary' version of events which are happening elsewhere. This is clever – clever with a kind of self-consciousness which goes beyond anything readily comparable from fifth-century tragedy. Besides Cassandra in *Agamemnon*, the false merchant in *Philoctetes*, or the palace miracles in *Bacchae* come to mind as examples of playing on differing versions of 'dramatic reality'. But this Cassandra scene is more overtly tricky.

Could Adespota F 649, with its allusive, hypersophisticated way of narrating the duel of Hector and Achilles, possibly come from the same play as the straightforward report in 60 F 2a, discussed above? It is not inconceivable that the same event was narrated twice, once in a 'televisionary' mixture of speech and song, and the other time in a plain conventional eye-witness narrative: the second might provide a kind of 'key' to the enigmas of the first. But it still seems an improbable duplication, and it is hard to see how the ordinary messenger speech would not be tedious after the colourful version heard from Cassandra. So, if we assume that one, but only one, of these alternative narratives comes from Astydamos' play, then which is it more likely to be? Up until now, the answer has been unanimous: 60 F 2a is more like what one might expect from a fourth-century tragedy, while Adespota F 649 fits more with what we take to be characteristic of the Alexandrian or 'post-classical' – 'aetate inferiorem'.<sup>30</sup>

No-one has yet, so far as I know, brought the Berlin vase (which dates from c. 330) to bear on this question. The case has already been made for connecting the lower scene with Hector's glinting helmet in Astydamos' *Hector*. We have also registered the coincidence between Helenus in the upper frieze and in F 1h, fr. 2. Well . . . right in the centre of the upper frieze, her feet above Hector's spear and her arm above the crucial helmet, is Cassandra. Her pose, her branch and the tripod all indicate that she is to be envisaged as in some kind of prophetic state. The woman caring for her suggests how completely the seizure has overcome her body.<sup>31</sup> If there is a particular non-Homeric narration of the Hector story informing this vase – as is surely very likely, *pace* Giuliani – then it is absolutely clear that Cassandra's prophesying was central and prominent within it. The inclusion of Helenus and his laurel-branch, playing the masculine seer, strongly suggests that omens and prophetic vision and their interpretation

<sup>30</sup> Kannicht and Snell (1981) 222.

<sup>31</sup> Priam's first line in Adespota F 649 alludes, it seems, to her physical collapse.

were central motifs within this version. So, although it involves a chain of conjecture (inevitably), there is a coherent case to be made for reckoning that Cassandra and her visions were significant in Astydamos' famous tragedy.

Then what about Adespota F 649? The orthodox case against connecting this papyrus with Astydamos, and in favour of dating it to appreciably later, rests on a combination of linguistic and technical grounds. Coles, in the first publication, pointed to several verbal features that are not found in surviving fifth-century tragedy, eg θάρσησον in line 1, ἴσως to mean 'equally' (8), ἤχος (11). Kannicht (222) has also emphasized the frequent, though variable, occurrence of mute plus liquid lengthening syllables. These observations are undoubtedly valid: but do they entail an Alexandrian rather than a fourth-century date? I suspect that we simply do not have enough fourth-century material to pontificate on these matters, especially when it concerns a purposefully strange scene where some linguistic oddities would not be inappropriate.

Secondly, it is claimed that there are features of dramatic and performance technique that do not belong in the imitative and fossilized dol-drums of fourth-century tragedy, but are much more like what we might expect from the self-conscious, novelty-admiring era of Callimachus and Lycophron. It is true that we do not have an extended visionary narrative from fifth-century tragedy, although Aeschylus' Cassandra is a fundamental precursor. It is true that we do not have a classical text with repeated instructions to an actor to add in their own sung contributions – although the increasing use of ΧΟΡΟΥ with time may suggest that this is a textual convention rather than a compositional technique. It is true that the scene is highly virtuosic in its multi-voice lyric dialogue. But again, there are some sorts of precedent in, for example, the 'kommos' of *Choephoroi*, or Sophocles' *Electra* 1398–1436, where three voices and the chorus are complexly interwoven and punctuated by stage action.

To pull the threads together. The general assumption of scholars has been that fourth-century tragedy was conservative and unadventurous. But we always had the lively and unconventional *Rhesus* as a warning that this might be patronising and simplistic. Even the one sure fragment of Astydamos' *Hector* suggested an intriguing tension with the canonical narrative of *Iliad* 6, a tension that was both intertextual and translated into performance. This is now confirmed by the whole composition of the scene on the Berlin vase, which is (as I hope to have shown) closely related to Astydamos' play. A play that included different kinds of prophecy or vision from both Deiphobus and Cassandra looks like one with interestingly

varied tonal registers, and one with some complex variations on premonition and sight. A swooning Cassandra further suggests some unusual lyric, whether in monody or lyric dialogue.

So, even without recruiting Adespota F 649, there is a good case for claiming that Astydamos' *Hector* was a sophisticated and innovatory play, one which set itself up in simultaneous affinity and contrast with both Homer and the great tragedians of the fifth century. If the singing Cassandra papyrus were to come from this work, then that would push the case even further. It would demonstrate that Astydamos' tragedy was a lot more interesting and unpredictable than the dismissive standard picture has supposed. It did not come after the demise of creative tragedy (so not 'the end of an era'), but developed and exploited that canon. At the same time it might, I suggest, have been in some ways a forward-looking precursor, reaching out towards the era of daring literary inventiveness that we think of as Hellenistic.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>32</sup> I think of Pat Easterling as a good person shining in a naughty world, and I welcome this opportunity to offer homage to her reliability and humanity.

*Seeing a Roman tragedy through Greek eyes:  
Shakespeare's Julius Caesar*

*Christopher Pelling*

## I

For anyone acquainted with Sophocles and the Greek tragic tradition, reading the classic critical discussions of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* is an eerily familiar experience. We seem to have heard versions of so many of these debates before. Is a play not broken-backed if the title figure – Caesar, Antigone, Ajax – is removed half-way through? Who is the leading figure, Caesar/Antigone/Phaedra or Brutus/Creon/Hippolytus? Or is it better to think of plot being more important than character, just as (on one reading) Aristotle's *Poetics* might seem to invite? But, if so, is there not a strange incoherence of plot in this play (or in *Antigone*), where Brutus seems to hear the news of Porcia's death twice (or Polynices is buried twice)? Should we talk rather of the unifying effect of a tragic idea or patterning, with thematic parallels between the first half, affecting the decisions facing Caesar (or Ajax, or Amphitryon and Megara in *Heracles*), and the second half, with those facing Brutus (or Agamemnon, Menelaus, and Odysseus, or Heracles and Theseus)? What about the supernatural dimension, with all those significant portents? If Heaven is involved, does that in any way reduce the responsibility or freedom of the human agents? Or is there something superhuman about the mortal agents themselves, which may help to explain why the force of an Ajax/Agamemnon/Pompey/Caesar can drive events and dominate the stage even more after their deaths than in their lifetimes? What are we to make of the strange language and rhetorical formalities, Caesar's (or Oedipus') solemn self-namings for example? Should we think in terms of language – imagistic systems, for instance, of tides/butchery/hunting/nets/sacrifice – as important to dramatic unity, or at least reinforcing a unity that might otherwise seem problematic? Has Shakespeare/Sophocles managed to navigate successfully the difficulties of turning the history of a tyrant's fall into genuine tragedy? But is Caesar/Oedipus/Creon so uncomplicated a 'tyrant' anyway? Should we rather see

him as a public man, one concerned above all to do what is in the state's interest and fill a gap which the state requires? If so, though, where does that leave the notion of 'genuine tragedy'? Is *Julius Caesar* (*Helen*, *Ion*, *Philoctetes*) to be classed formally as a 'tragedy' at all, or should we seek some other label?

Some of those are questions that might naturally arise with any complex and multiply-structured literary work; some are more distinctive. If there is a 'Greekness' about the play, we might wonder how to explain it. Direct influence is increasingly recognized as a possibility. There were translations of Greek plays, though a smaller number than of Seneca; there were even a few – a very few – sixteenth-century productions.<sup>1</sup> Emrys Jones has argued that Shakespeare may have known some Euripides, in Latin or in English translation: one of his two main examples comes from *Julius Caesar* itself, for he suggests that the exchange of Agamemnon and Menelaus in *Iphigenia in Aulis* may have been the model for the quarrel of Brutus and Cassius.<sup>2</sup> Inga-Stina Ewbank has suggested similarly that 'some form of first-hand contact with Aeschylus has left traces in Shakespeare's dramatic imagination';<sup>3</sup> Louise Schleiner argues strongly that Latin translations of the *Oresteia* and of Euripides' *Orestes* have influenced *Hamlet*; Purkiss finds traces of Medea in *Macbeth* which are 'in a profound sense both Euripidean and Senecan'; Dewar-Watson suggests that Shakespeare may have known a Latin version of Aristotle's *Poetics*; Maguire argues for the influence of Euripides' *Helen* on *All's Well That Ends Well*.<sup>4</sup> If we turn to indirect influence, some filtering of Greek tragic effects through Seneca is certainly plausible,<sup>5</sup> and a few of those features – the supernatural dimension, the imagistic patterns – are certainly as Senecan as they are Greek; but the structural issues, and those relating to plot, character, and unity, still feel more Greek than Roman. In this chapter I shall try to take further the old idea that this 'Greekness' may in part be owed to the play's main source, Plutarch's *Lives* of *Julius Caesar*, *Brutus*, and to a lesser extent *Antony*.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Smith (1988) 199–264, especially 203 (19 translations of six Euripidean plays and 18 of three Sophoclean plays before 1600) and 215–31 (three sixteenth-century productions, including – probably – one of a Latin translation of *Antigone* in St John's College, Cambridge in the early 1580s). On translations and parallel Greek–Latin editions of Euripides, see also now Maguire (2007) 98–100.

<sup>2</sup> Jones (1977) 85–118. His other example is *Titus Andronicus*, where he suspects the influence of *Hecuba*.

<sup>3</sup> Ewbank (2005) 50–52 (quotation from p. 52).

<sup>4</sup> Schleiner (1990); Purkiss (2000) 43–6 (quotation from p. 45); Dewar-Watson (2004), also raising the alternative possibility that Shakespeare was familiar with Aristotle's tenets via authors such as Fletcher, Jonson, or Sidney; Maguire (2007) 97–104.

<sup>5</sup> On which see esp. Miola (1992).

<sup>6</sup> Thus Thomson (1952) 243, stressing the 'very considerable debt which [Shakespeare] owed to Plutarch. But Plutarch himself – and here lies the extreme interest and importance of the matter – was only

'Tragic' influences on Plutarch's own writing are increasingly recognized;<sup>7</sup> perhaps we can see how first Plutarch may be adopting a tragic filter for his own presentation of biography and history, then Shakespeare – with a sensibility which is itself informed by the 'tragic tradition' which goes back ultimately to the Greeks – may pick up various of these elements himself and recast them in more directly dramatic form.

This is a return to an old interest, one first fostered when I was writing a 'Green-and-Yellow' commentary on the *Life of Antony* and was benefiting immensely from the patience, sensitivity, and learning of the series editors Pat Easterling and Ted Kenney. It was a founding principle of that series that texts, including historical texts, should be read as literature, and that other, later literature could contribute illuminatingly to the close reading of a commentator's chosen work. Pat Easterling was firm in reassuring me that *Antony and Cleopatra* could properly figure large in a commentary on Plutarch's *Antony*: the present essay is more of the same, and I hope that it will also be an example of how reception criticism, one of Pat's distinctive interests, can illuminate not merely the text that draws on a classical original but also that original itself. What Shakespeare found in Plutarch's *Lives*, he not surprisingly saw, sensed, and reflected upon more thoughtfully and suggestively than most readers, perhaps than anyone. It repays Plutarchans as well as Shakespearians to listen to those suggestions and to weigh that thoughtfulness.

## 11

*Plutarch, Amyot, North*

Shakespeare, famously, had 'small Latin and less Greek'.<sup>8</sup> But it is Latin that marks the critical moment of the play, where Caesar exclaims *Et tu, Brute*: even that, however, might seem to miss the full implications of the original. This is one of the few passages that are not inspired by Plutarch

the channel or medium of the Greek tragic spirit' (cf. also 250 – but that 'only' overstates). Cf. also Daniell (1998) 85. Notice however that Plutarch is not one of the 'four indirect routes from Athens to London' identified by Stump (1983): those are (1) Seneca, Terence, and Donatus, (2) Heliodorus, (3) Sidney, and (4) Cinthio and Whetstone.

<sup>7</sup> E.g. de Lacy (1952); Mossman (1988) and (1992); Braund (1993) and (1997); Zadorojniy (1997); Duff (1999) esp. 41–2, 61–2, 123–6; Pelling (2002) index s.v. 'tragedy and tragic texturing', esp. 111 n.27 and 197–206.

<sup>8</sup> The phrase of Ben Jonson, in his ode 'to the memory of my beloved master William Shakespeare, and what he hath left us'. Jonson goes on to toy with calling forth 'thund'ring Aeschylus, Euripides, and Sophocles' to life again, to hear and admire. If there is anything in the argument of this paper, they might also have found much to recognize.

as a source. The phrase was used on the London stage before Shakespeare<sup>9</sup> and may have been circulating as a Latin tag, but he may well also have known, or been told, of the original phrase in Suetonius. That is, in Greek, *kai su teknon* – ‘you too, child’. That ‘child’ may hint at the allegation that Brutus was Caesar’s biological son, the result of his affair with Servilia forty years earlier: that allegation is certainly one that Shakespeare knew anyway, from ch. 5 of Plutarch’s *Brutus*, and he had his own reasons for suppressing that aspect.<sup>10</sup> But the ‘you too’ phrasing in the original is suggestive too. There may well be something of the evil eye about that *kai su*. It is found on curse tablets, and it is the sort of thing you would say when someone tried to cast a spell on you: you turn it back on the person who is casting it. It wishes ‘the same to you’.<sup>11</sup> It is not clear that *et tu* would carry the same implication.

Still, Shakespeare did not need Greek to read Plutarch, and to make him his major, almost indeed his only,<sup>12</sup> source for *Julius Caesar*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, and *Coriolanus* (and also for *Timon of Athens*, built up from a single chapter of Plutarch’s *Antony* with some extra material from his *Alcibiades*). He knew Plutarch in the 1579 translation of Sir Thomas North. Yet North did not know Plutarch in the original either, but in the great French translation of Amyot of 1559. So Shakespeare’s Plutarch is two removes from the original. The most extraordinary result of that double distancing comes in *Antony and Cleopatra*, where the two marvellous scenes of Enobarbus’ desertion eventually go back to a false reading in Amyot’s version of Plutarch’s Greek.<sup>13</sup> There is nothing quite so dramatic (in every sense) as that in *Julius Caesar*, but still one or two oddities are worth

<sup>9</sup> It was used in *The True Tragedy of Richard Duke of York* in 1595, four years before *Julius Caesar*, and perhaps earlier: MacCallum (1910) 180, Humphreys (1984), 24–5, Garber (1997) 54–5.

<sup>10</sup> Or almost suppressing it: there may be an indirect hint at III.1.225–6, where he proclaims to Antony that he has reasons so powerful ‘That were you, Antony, the son of Caesar | you should be satisfied’. On Shakespeare’s reasons for avoiding the theme see below, p. 282.

<sup>11</sup> Russell (1980); though note also the caution of Brenk (1999) 197–210. Woodman (2006) 183–4 prefers to think that Caesar was alluding to a proverbial expression that ‘you too will taste power’, and that this too would suggest ‘that one day he would suffer a violent death similar to that which he was now inflicting on Caesar’.

<sup>12</sup> Martindale and Martindale (1990) 129 emphasize that ‘[t]his fidelity to a single source is unusual for Shakespeare’: in the English history plays, for instance, he uses and supplements Holinshed with distinctly more freedom.

<sup>13</sup> That is, his reading the present tense *metaballomenos* (‘changing his mind’, or ‘repenting’) rather than the aorist *metabalomenos* (‘after changing sides’) at *Ant.* 63.4. See my comm. (1988) on that passage. All Amyot citations are taken from the Pleiades edition of G. Walter (Paris, 1951). With one exception (n. 17, for reasons given there), North citations are taken from the Wordsworth edition of *Plutarch: Selected Lives* by J. Mossman (Ware, 1998). References to Plutarch are to the chapter-divisions used in modern editions, and restored by Mossman in her edition of North; Amyot divided and numbered his chapters differently. Chapter sub-sections follow Ziegler’s Teubner and

noticing. One is in the final scene, where Brutus calls upon Volumnius in the name of their shared past to help him in his suicide:

Good Volumnius,  
Thou know'st that we two went to school together;  
Even for that our love of old, I prithee  
Hold thou my sword-hilts whilst I run on it.  
(V.5.25–8)

This too rests on a mistranslation. Plutarch's Greek has Brutus reminding Volumnius 'of his studies and his training', his *logoi* and his *askēsis* (52.2), and this picks up on the introduction of Volumnius as 'a man of philosophy' (48.2). The phrase has special point after the discussions of Brutus and Cassius themselves on the philosophical acceptability of suicide (ch. 40). Brutus is calling on Volumnius to accept that, from some philosophical viewpoints, there are times when suicide is right. But there need be no suggestion there that they had studied *together*: that idea comes from Amyot ('et le priant en mémoire de l'étude des lettres et des exercices qu'ils avaient pris ensemble') and is taken over by North ('prayed him for the studies' sake which brought them acquainted together').<sup>14</sup> One can see why Shakespeare welcomed the idea. It recalls the earlier shared schooldays with Casca (I.2.292–3), something which is pure Shakespearian invention but may be there to prepare for this later passage; it also helps the sentiment of events running full circle, one most explicitly phrased by Cassius at V.3.23–5 as he muses on his birthday ('Time is come round, | and where I did begin, there shall I end'). But, like Enobarbus' desertion, the touch is owed to Amyot, not to Plutarch.

More striking, though, are the cases where Amyot and North might have been expected to give Shakespeare the wrong impression, but do not. It is as if Shakespeare can sense the real Plutarch, or at least sense danger, even when his translators stray.<sup>15</sup> Take that philosophical discussion of suicide, V.1.93–121, based on ch. 40 of the *Brutus*.<sup>16</sup> This is one of the passages where

Flacelière–Chambry's Budé editions: Perrin's Loeb has longer sub-sections, so that (e.g.) *Ant.* 12.6 in Ziegler is 12.4 in Perrin.

<sup>14</sup> The idea has survived into the modern translations: Scott-Kilvert has 'appealed to the memory of the years they had spent together as students of philosophy', Perrin 'reminding him of their student life', Flacelière–Chambry 'pour lui rappeler leurs études et leurs exercices communes'. Have memories of Shakespeare here influenced the later translators?

<sup>15</sup> For a similar case in *Coriolanus* (I.4) where Shakespeare's adaptation reconstitutes Plutarch's original meaning see Pelling (1997) 22 and n.27 = (2002) 400 and 410 n.35.

<sup>16</sup> Some of the curiosities here in Shakespeare's rendering of North, North's of Amyot, and Amyot's of Plutarch have long been recognized: cf. MacCallum (1910) 184–5, Brower (1971) 232–3 ('Rightly understood, Shakespeare comes closer than North to the original'), Miles (1996) 113–4, Cantor (1997) 71–2; and especially Braden (2004) 192, who makes the important point about the suppression of 'a whiff of Christian hope'.

Shakespeare's language, often even in minor details of rhythm and phrasing, is particularly close to North's version. That makes the divergences even more telling. One is that Shakespeare's Brutus is more equivocal than Plutarch's on what he has decided to do. Plutarch's Brutus makes it clear that he has now changed<sup>17</sup> his mind from the time when he 'did greatly blame and reprove Cato for killing of himself, as being no lawful nor godly act': now he is 'of a contrary mind', and 'will rid me of this miserable world'.<sup>18</sup> It is clear that Shakespeare's Brutus too will not live on, but Shakespeare leaves it in suspense exactly what that may mean: it could just imply a plunge into battle in quest of a valiant death. Brutus then thanks Providence 'because I gave my own life to my country on the Ides of March, and now have lived (*ezēsa*) another life because of it that is free and glorious' (*Brut.* 40.8): or, at least, that is what Plutarch's Brutus does, but not Amyot's or North's, as they substitute a future tense, 'I shall live', for the aorist – 'je donnai aux Ides de mars ma vie à mon pays, pour laquelle j'en vivrai une autre libre et glorieuse', 'I gave up my life for my country on the Ides of March, for the which I shall live in another more glorious world'.<sup>19</sup> As Brutus is proclaiming his intention to kill himself if he loses, this 'more glorious world' must now be that of the afterlife, as

<sup>17</sup> Or perhaps rather, if we think of North rather than Plutarch, 'is now changing'. North's version of the beginning (40.7) is 'Brutus answered him, being yet a young man, and not overgreatly experienced in the world: I trust, (I know not how) a certain rule of Philosophy, by which I did greatly blame and reprove Cato . . .'. 'I trust' might conceivably not be present tense, but the shortened version of 'I trusted' (MacCallum (1910) 181, Humphreys (1984) 217), but even if so it could easily be misunderstood. Plutarch's original has an unambiguously past tense (and means something different anyway, though it is not clear exactly what: 'I was led, I know not how, to give utterance to a large claim in philosophy', or to 'launch a vast dispute'. North is here misled by a vagueness in Amyot.) In Plutarch's original this is therefore something that he thought as a youth; it is not a view he holds now. If North's tense is read as present, it 'makes it seem that Brutus performs a moral about-face in the middle of the speech' (Miles (1996) 114). As Miles also brings out, North's punctuation suggests (*pace* Mossman, whose modern punctuation begins the speech at 'being') that the 'being' clause is outside the quotation, and North may be regarding the 'youth' his Brutus is still claiming (at the age of 43!) as an explanation of that inconstancy. Shakespeare again sensed the inappropriateness, and he dropped the mention of Brutus' youth; but he was understandably misled by North's 'I trust' to make Brutus initially agree with Cato, 'I do find it cowardly and vile . . .', and thus to highlight that 'moral about-face' in the way he goes on: 'No, Cassius, no'.

<sup>18</sup> North's version of Amyot's ' . . . mais me délivrerai des misères de ce monde', strengthening Plutarch's simple 'I will depart'. The misleading 'more glorious world' that follows in North carries on that idea, but it is Amyot's figure, not Plutarch's.

<sup>19</sup> There is yet another oddity here, as Amyot initially translated it correctly as 'pour laquelle i'en ay depuis vescu': that is still the reading in the 1565 edition. The alteration to 'j'en vivrai' was made in subsequent editions. It is possible that Amyot intended 'vivrai' as a future-in-the-past (I gave my life in order to go on to lead . . .), as Miles (1996) 114 may imply (though the French experts whom I have consulted are dubious about this). Even if so, Plutarch's Brutus is making a stronger claim. His life really has been free and glorious since the Ides, and it was not just an objective. I am most grateful to Jenny Yee and Wes Williams for their help here.

North's phrasing makes even clearer than Amyot's.<sup>20</sup> If Shakespeare had been tempted by the idea, it would not be the only Christianizing moment in the play, as we shall see (below, pp. 280–1). But he is not:

But this same day  
Must end that work the ides of March begun.  
(V.1.112–13)

No new beginning for Brutus as in North, just that idea of full circle: it is not quite what Plutarch's original said, but the translators' misrendering has certainly fallen away. As for Cassius' response, he 'fell a-laughing' in North (Amyot's 'se prit à rire'). That is not out of keeping for the Cassius of North who would 'jest too broadly with his friends' (*Brut.* 29.2), but hardly the thing for either the moment or the man in Shakespeare, where Cassius is the one who seldom even smiles (I.2.204–5). 'Smiling' in fact is what they talk of now: 'If we do meet again, why, we shall smile' (V.1.117 ~ 120). Yet that too is truer to the genuine Plutarch (*emeidiasen*, 'smiled') than it is to the translators.

Examples could be multiplied, extending to imagery and theme as well as particular adaptation. Take the picturing of the murder as sacrifice, something important to the righteous self-image of the conspirators – 'Let us be sacrificers but not butchers, Caius . . .' (II.1.165) – and another feature that goes with the Christianizing.<sup>21</sup> The idea of sacrifice is there in the original Plutarch too, for *Caesar* describes the violence with imagery both of the hunt and of sacrifice:

He was run through like some wild beast, rolling to and fro in everyone's hands, for each person there needed to begin the sacrifice and taste of the slaughter. (*Caes.* 66.10–11)

(The word is *katarkhesthai*, often used of sacrifice: LSJ *s.v.* 11.2, 'begin the sacrificial ceremonies' . . . 'sacrifice, slay'.) But it was not there in Amyot ('. . . car il était dit entre eux que chacun lui donnerait un coup et participerait au meurtre') and so it is not there in North either, who has

For it was agreed among them, that every man should give him a wound, because all their parts should be in this murder.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>20</sup> This is in keeping with the 'heavily loaded Puritan approach' (Denton (1997) 190) that North brought to his translation: Denton's paper is most illuminating on the ways that North intrudes his own moral and political colouring. For a further instance see n. 36.

<sup>21</sup> Kaula (1981); see below p. 281.

<sup>22</sup> Brower (1971) 214 notes a further case where Amyot and North have shied away from pagan ideas of 'sacrifice'. At *Brut.* 10.1 potential conspirators tell Cassius 'they need to have a man like Brutus as if to initiate the sacrifice' – *katarkhesthai* again – 'and validate the justice of the case by his very

North's language of 'parts' – his rather than Plutarch's – may even have suggested to Shakespeare the language of metatheatre that follows at precisely the point where all are bloodied from the strike (III.1.111–6); but it could not have been North that suggested the figure of sacrifice. That was Shakespeare's own, and once again it recreated what Plutarch's translators had suppressed.<sup>23</sup>

The most interesting example concerns the apparition that twice visits Brutus. What is it, exactly? In Shakespeare it seems to be at the same time 'Caesar's ghost' – the stage-direction, confirmed by Brutus' own words at V.5.16 – and Brutus' own 'evil spirit' (IV.3.279). That is not untrue to Plutarch, for the last chapter of *Caesar* talks of 'the great *daimon* of Caesar' that now ranges so widely to secure revenge, and then has the apparition introduce itself as 'your evil *daimōn*, Brutus' (*Caes.* 69.2, 4). But it is again untrue to the translators, who obscure the spiritual depth that the word *daimōn* carries for Plutarch.<sup>24</sup> North's version of that 'great *daimōn* of Caesar' has 'his great prosperity and good fortune that favoured him all his lifetime'; Amyot's had a little more of the supernatural, but is still weaker than the original – 'cette grande fortune et faveur du ciel qui l'avait accompagné tout le long du cours de sa vie'. No reader could have interpreted the translations as suggesting the demonological equivalence of the two spirits: yet that is what Shakespeare has, and once again it is important to him. The two men's fates are becoming one, as history replays; Caesar's spirit is indeed ranging for revenge (III.1.270). Brutus knows it himself.

O Julius Caesar, thou art mighty yet!  
Thy spirit walks abroad, and turns our swords  
In our own proper entrails.<sup>25</sup>

(V.3.94–6; cf. V.5.49)

presence'. North has '... to make every man boldly think, that by his only presence the fact were holy, and just', corresponding to Amyot's 'saint et juste'.

<sup>23</sup> Thus Liebler (1995) 100 is only half right to say that all the sacrificial imagery is 'Shakespeare's embroidery over the plain presentation in Plutarch' (so also Bryant (1982) 98–9, 'the butchery that Shakespeare's Brutus (though not Plutarch's) would attempt to dignify by calling it a sacrifice', Humphreys (1984) 15, and Miola (2000) 104–5): Shakespeare's embroidery, yes, but the 'plain presentation' is not Plutarch's but his translators'. This again is recognized by Brower (1971) 227, though he missed the further use of *katarkhesthai* in *Caes.* 66.10.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Thomson (1952) 195–205, an insightful discussion, though it underplays the complexities to say that 'Shakespeare confused [my italics] Caesar's daemon with that of Brutus' (204); Daniell (1998) 91–2. Contrast Bryant (1982) 102, 'Plutarch had called him simply Brutus' evil spirit.' Once again (cf. last note), North, yes; Plutarch, no.

<sup>25</sup> That last phrase recalls Lucan's *in sua uictrici conuersum uiscera dextra* (1.3), as Chris Kraus points out to me: she wonders if this may have influenced Shakespeare's supernatural suggestions, given that *fortuna* in Lucan is 'nearly enough divine'. There is nothing improbable in the notion that Shakespeare drew on Lucan: cf. Bullough (1964) 11–12, 36 and esp. Jones (1977) 273–7.

True, Shakespeare need not have drawn the idea of 'Caesar's ghost' directly from Plutarch, for it may well be that the anonymous play *Caesar's Revenge*, featuring just such an apparition of Caesar's ghost, predates Shakespeare's play by a few years.<sup>26</sup> It is still remarkable that Shakespeare and Plutarch should have merged the two spirits together in so similar a way. Perhaps one might think of a friend carefully conning the Greek and alerting Shakespeare to nuances that North had missed, or of Shakespeare consulting a Latin translation of Plutarch as well as North,<sup>27</sup> but such scholarliness hardly fits the hurly-burly of rushed theatrical practicality. More likely, once again we should simply accept that the sensibilities of the two writers, and their sense of the dramatic possibilities of the tale they told, took them along uncannily similar paths.

### *The shaping of the story*

Many of the more routine techniques of story-telling are similar too. That could be illustrated through matters, for instance, of compression of time, or transfers of actions to different characters (such as the transfer of the squabble over which wing each general should command: between Brutus and Cassius in Plutarch, *Brut.* 40.10, between Antony and Octavian in Shakespeare, V.1.16–20).<sup>28</sup> That is familiar ground, but there are times when one can trace the similarities particularly closely. In I.2, for example, Shakespeare fuses several Plutarchan episodes together, most notably the Lupercalia incident with the triumph over Pompey's sons.<sup>29</sup> Plutarch knew that those two events were separate and keeps them apart in *Caesar* (56.7–9, 61–2), understandably enough as he wishes to trace the mounting discontent; but he can do his own fusion too, and thus in the rapid version in *Antony* (12.6) Plutarch displaces to the Lupercalia the instance where Caesar, annoyed by a popular demonstration, drew the toga down from his neck and invited his enemies to strike. Shakespeare puts it there too (I.2.261–4), presumably finding this economical *Antony* version dramatically attractive,<sup>30</sup> and preferring it to the more detailed account in *Caesar* which makes it clear that the toga-display was a separate, earlier incident

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Schanzer (1954); Bullough (1964) 33–5, 50, 209–11; Humphreys (1984) 26–7.

<sup>27</sup> Daniell (1998) 91–2.

<sup>28</sup> More on this transfer below, p. 280. For analysis of such techniques in Plutarch see Pelling (2002) 91–115.

<sup>29</sup> Jones (1970) 18–23 and 43–50 comments brilliantly on the dynamic qualities of Shakespeare's dramatic compression in this scene.

<sup>30</sup> So Bullough (1964) 39. There was no need for Muir (1977) 118 to think that Shakespeare draws this from Appian.

(60.6). The displacement is clearly a matter of deliberate choice both in Plutarch's *Antony* and in Shakespeare.

Of course Shakespeare had to deal with bigger problems of 'shaping' as well, and ones that were different from those that would face him when he returned to Plutarch for *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Coriolanus*. For each of those later plays he would be handling a single Plutarch *Life*, and despite all the subtle renuancings and adaptations the basic themes would retain their Plutarchan stamp. With *Julius Caesar* things are much less close. Shakespeare here draws from several different *Lives*, combining the last few chapters of Plutarch's *Caesar* with the whole of his *Brutus* and a smaller amount of *Antony*. All those *Lives* have their own textures and unity, and their welding together was a very unstraightforward matter.

Yet it is that welding that raises many of those questions that make the play, and the criticism of the play, seem so Greek. For one question we naturally ask about Shakespeare's play is the one we ask about those Greek tragedies where the (or a) central figure disappears halfway through, *Ajax* and *Hippolytus* and *Antigone*. What gives 'unity',<sup>31</sup> and how are the different halves tied together? We may find a similar force driving throughout – Aphrodite, say, or Ajax, powerful dead as he was alive; and we have already seen a hint of the importance of Caesar's spirit in the second half of *Julius Caesar*. Or, as I suggested in my opening paragraph, we can look for thematic links: we can even find them in that dominance of the spirit, for Pompey's spirit was sensed in parts of the first half, and destroyed Caesar; now Caesar's spirit destroys Brutus. We may also remember Cassius' words at I.2.146, playing with the names: "Brutus" will start a spirit as soon as "Caesar" . . . In all future time, will there be further days when people will indeed think back, perhaps even seeing a 'Caesar bleed in sport' on a stage (III.1.114), and find a Brutus' spirit still alive too? There is indeed 'a tide in the affairs of men' (IV.3.216, cf. III.1.256), and the same 'affairs' come back in different form.

Nor is it hard to see the same type of crisis recurring with Brutus as with Caesar. Shakespeare's Caesar is so frail: the man who could not swim across the Tiber (I.2.100–18), who has to call Antony to come to his other side 'for this ear is deaf' (I.2.212), who 'had a fever when he was in Spain' (I.2.119) and now collapses at the Lupercalia (I.2.247), who looks so vulnerable in his nightgown (II.2). But there is also the Caesar who speaks of himself in the third person, all that 'illeism'<sup>32</sup> – 'Caesar will go forth': and when

<sup>31</sup> Or, better, 'unities'. But the term is of course highly problematic: see esp. Heath (1989).

<sup>32</sup> It may well have been suggested by Caesar's use of the third person in his *Commentaries*, a familiar grammar-school text (thus e.g. Holland (1964), 138; Velz (1978) 9–10; cf. Womersley (1987) for a

he speaks as Caesar, whether in first person or in third, he sounds quite different. 'Danger knows full well | that Caesar is more dangerous than he' (II.2.44–5); 'I am as constant as the northern star . . .' (III.1.60): there is a grandeur about that, so different from the frail and vulnerable inner person, and when he is struck down not merely the inner person but also the outer 'Caesar' is destroyed, leaving that Caesar-shaped gap at the top of the state which is impossible to fill. So there is the man; there is also the role he has to play, and it is no coincidence that there is so much *theatricality* in the play, most strikingly in the metatheatre of III.1.111–16 but also in all that literally cloak-and-dagger material, as the conspirators come together and unmuffle to reveal the true figures beneath their outer disguise (reversed so expressively when Caesar muffles his face as he falls, III.2.188).<sup>33</sup> They have their roles to play too.

When we come to Brutus, things are not so different.<sup>34</sup> There too we see a difference between the inner Brutus, a very private person, and the outer role that the pressure of circumstances puts upon him. That is the best way of explaining the familiar problem about the second half of the play, when Brutus seems to hear the news of his wife's death twice, and to react very differently on the two occasions. The private, inner Brutus is distraught and devastated; the outer shell, though, must be put on, and when the news comes publicly the response has to be different:

Why, farewell, Porcia. We must die, Messala,  
With meditating that she must die once,  
I have the patience to endure it now.  
(IV.3.188–90)

possible specific echo of the *Commentaries* at II.1.204), but if so Shakespeare was not the first to pick up the hint: 'Caesar' also uses the third person in Kyd's *Cornelia* of 1594, translated from Garnier's French (Rees (1955) 136–7; Martindale and Martindale (1990) 131–2); so does *Caesar's Revenge* (p. 272 and n. 26); so had Muret's *Julius Caesar* as early as 1544 (Brower (1971) 219). The use Shakespeare makes of it is anyway distinctive, spotlighting 'the difference as well as the tension between the public and the private selves of the characters' (Viswanathan (1969) 410). 'Shakespeare's Caesar engages in conscious self-dramatization as the great man' (Martindale and Martindale 151). Nor, significantly, is it just Caesar who speaks of himself in the third person, but also Brutus, Cassius, Porcia, and even Titinius. Role-playing is everywhere.

<sup>33</sup> There are other unmufflings too, as when Porcia reveals her wound (II.1.300) or Ligarius throws off his kerchief (II.1.321): neither gesture is found in the Plutarch originals (*Brut.* 13.5–6, 11.3). A similar point lurks in 'untired' at II.1.226, where there is a pun on the 'tires' or costumes that actors might normally wear: Miles (1996) 124. The most decisive unmuffling comes when Antony 'plucks off the mantle' from Caesar's corpse at III.2.199.

<sup>34</sup> On this Stewart (1949) 46–55 was especially acute. Miles (1996) 123–48 similarly stresses 'constancy' as a theme that links Caesar and Brutus, seen for instance in Brutus' refusal to pardon Lucius Pella (IV.3.1–6) just as Caesar was unforgiving to Publius Cimber (III.1.33–73): 'the constancy of Brutus, Caesar's mirror-image . . .' (134). Jones (1970) 77–8 writes of 'structural rhyming' that links the ends of the two halves of the play.

– itself an echo of similar words which Brutus spoke himself over Caesar's corpse, 'That we shall die, we know . . .' (III.1.99).<sup>35</sup> Theme and moment are alike coming back in Brutus' own crisis. So possibly Shakespeare was not quite so out of tune with those 'same to you' suggestions of *et tu Brute* after all.

Some of those ideas are themselves Plutarchan, the idea for instance that however offensive people found Caesar's power they soon came to realize the necessity for a ruler:

Howbeit Caesar's power and government when it came to be established, did indeed much hurt at his first entry and beginning unto those that did resist him: but afterwards, unto them that being overcome had received his government, it seemed he rather had the name and opinion only of a tyrant, than otherwise that he was so indeed. For there never followed any tyrannical nor cruel act, but contrarily, it seemed that he was a merciful physician, whom God had ordained of special grace to be governor of the empire of Rome, and to set all things again at quiet stay, the which required the counsel and authority of an absolute prince.<sup>36</sup> And therefore the Romans were marvellous sorry for Caesar after he was slain, and afterwards would never pardon them that had slain him . . . (*Comparison of Dion and Brutus* 2.2–3. North)

If that perception manages to coexist with an appreciation for Brutus' high moral ideals, that too is already there in the narrative of Plutarch's *Brutus*. This is not the only time that Plutarch's concluding epilogues allow a perspective which, if not wholly absent from the preceding narratives, was at least more muted there.<sup>37</sup>

Just as important, though, is the matter of technique. This sort of patterning is extraordinarily Plutarchan: so often a man's greatest or most critical moments come back in his own crisis and death. That is true of Plutarch's as well as Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*: even the charge of aiming at tyranny comes back at Antium (*Cor.* 39), and *Coriolanus* can handle it

<sup>35</sup> A transposition from Plutarch here reflects that continuity, for this public impassivity is presumably borrowed from Brutus' response to the news of Porcia's fainting on the Ides (*Brut.* 15.9). Plutarch himself does not say when Porcia died, or when the news of her death reached Brutus. Here in the play he recalls himself swiftly 'to our work', just as in that Plutarch passage he would not allow himself to be distracted from his business as praetor. This is still the same husband, and the contrast of the private and the public reactions reworks the same masking of inner emotion.

<sup>36</sup> The translation here is a considerable expansion of the original, which has 'It seemed that the situation required monarchy, and Caesar had been given by Providence itself as the gentlest doctor for the state's sickness'. The expansion is largely due to Amyot, but 'governor of the empire of Rome' and 'the counsel and authority of an absolute prince' are more the elaboration of North himself. If we find a moulding to contemporary regal ideology in the play (below), a certain amount is due to the translators as well as to the playwright: cf. Denton (1997), esp. 205–7 on North's hostility to the commons and 'market place politics', and already MacCallum (1910) 140–1, 162–3.

<sup>37</sup> Duff (1999) 243–86; Pelling (2002) 186–7, 360, 376–7.

no better there than he could at Rome. It is true of *Antony* too, again both in Plutarch and in Shakespeare. As Cleopatra hoists the dying Antony into the monument, Plutarch's description echoes an earlier, lighter moment, when the two were playing by the Great Harbour of Alexandria, and Antony was fishing (*Ant.* 77 ~ 29.5–7). 'Here's sport indeed', says Shakespeare's Cleopatra (*A&C* IV.15.32), recollecting that same earlier moment (II.5.12–18). There are many other examples.<sup>38</sup> Even when Shakespeare is restructuring Plutarch drastically, he does so in a distinctively Plutarchan way.<sup>39</sup>

Not that the audience has to wait for the end for such scenic echoes to be sensed. Brutus has stolen from Porcia's bed, and she pleads with him on her knees; Caesar, in his nightgown, faces the pleas of the kneeling Calpurnia. In each case, the domestic scene shows a wife who can penetrate to an inner uncertainty; in each case, though, the public figure must go forth, and put those uncertainties aside. There is the further scenic recall when the conspirators – kneeling in Shakespeare, whereas they were standing in Plutarch – show Calpurnia's fears to have been wise. Slight adaptations of Plutarch again help the point. In Shakespeare it is Caesar who 'is superstitious grown of late' (II.1.194), pointing that inner apprehension; in Plutarch it was Calpurnia (*Caes.* 63.11). That baring of the neck at the Lupercalia is another significant gesture, preparing in Shakespeare (as it did in Plutarch's *Caesar*) for the real strike at the throat on the Ides; it also, though, recurs in the quarrel scene when Cassius too, very theatrically, bares his breast and offers a dagger (IV.3.99–106), bidding Brutus 'strike, as thou didst at Caesar'. At that point it is a *false* re-enactment of the Ides, just as the gesture at the Lupercalia was a false anticipation, but one which like that will soon give way to the bloodier equivalent, with Cassius dying by the same sword as killed Caesar (V.3.45–6 ~ *Caes.* 69.3). The rhythm is reasserting itself, just as it does when Cassius too grows superstitious as the time for battle approaches (V.1.75–91) or muffles himself as he dies (V.3.44), and just as it does when Brutus too calls for his nightgown (IV.3.229, 237, 251).<sup>40</sup> And if the appeal to the gowned Brutus comes not from a loving wife (for she is no more) but from Caesar's ghost, that too reflects that unsettling intimacy and interlinking of Caesar's spirit and his own.

<sup>38</sup> Some are collected at Pelling (2002) 180–2, 375, 406.

<sup>39</sup> So my argument may be seen as a response to the challenge of Jones (1970) to widen source-criticism to include 'structural debts' as well as 'narrative substance' (p. 21: he is referring particularly to *Julius Caesar*, though his point is the need to broaden the search beyond Plutarch). Jones himself regards the relevant Plutarch *Lives* as 'rambling and shapeless' (106–7).

<sup>40</sup> These, then, form further examples of Jones' 'structural rhymings' (n. 34).

Once again, though, even these adaptations of Plutarch are highly Plutarchan in manner. He too has a feeling for gesture: he has Decimus Brutus lead Caesar by the hand as he goes to his doom, just as Cinna a few pages later will dream of Caesar leading him, once again by the hand and once again lethally (*Caes.* 64.6, 68.3). As it happens, Shakespeare did not find room for this, for the action is moving too fast in another direction;<sup>41</sup> but in the technique he would have recognized something of his own. Plutarch has many other 'mirror scenes' too: within *Brutus* the apparition that visits Brutus has a counterpart in the dream of Artorius that warns Octavian to withdraw before the battle (*Brut.* 36.5–7 and 48.1, 41.7): providence is preserving the one as surely as it is destroying the other. If we draw instances just from the *Lives* that Shakespeare certainly knew well, we might also think of the arrivals of Coriolanus at the house of Attius Tullius and of his womenfolk before Coriolanus himself, or of the cavalcades of Antony at Ephesus and Cleopatra at Tarsus (*Cor.* 23 and 34, *Ant.* 24 and 26). And, once again, this is not just the stuff of Plutarch, but of Greek tragedy too – all those significant gestures (Heracles tows his children and then is towed by Theseus, not unlike Caesar with Decimus: *Eur. Her.* 632, 1424); all those mirror scenes, strikingly in the *Oresteia* but in many other plays as well.<sup>42</sup> This was the literary world in which Plutarch was immersed, and it is no surprise to find the same techniques in his own writing.

So we may already sense a filter through which Shakespeare might glimpse something of that world; perhaps also something of the reading that shaped Shakespeare's own dramatic sensibility. That Greekness of the play may not be so surprising after all.

### Caesar

The real-life Caesar was anything but frail. This vigorous man in his mid-fifties was planning to leave for Parthia three days after the Ides, something that Shakespeare knew from Plutarch (*Brut.* 22.2, *Caes.* 58.6) but suppressed; and this – again, so Plutarch says (*Caes.* 58.6–7) – was to be only the start of his ambitious plans for world conquest. So where does that bodily frailty of Shakespeare's Caesar come from? It is indeed from Plutarch, but from an unexpected direction. It comes from the time,

<sup>41</sup> Had Decimus led Caesar off it would have left no room for the 'last supper' with his supposed friends (II.2.126–7). But anyway this Caesar, once his public mask is on, is not one to be led.

<sup>42</sup> See esp. Taplin (1978) chs 5 ('Actions and gestures') and 8 ('Mirror scenes'), and (1977) index s.v. 'mirror scenes' and 'plot patterns'.

a very embarrassing time, when Caesar failed to rise to his feet when the whole senate was coming to meet him. Later all manners of excuse were found: that he had not noticed (hard though it is to overlook the approach of six hundred men); that it had been an attack of diarrhoea, and that if he got to his feet there might be a danger of a sudden flux (as Cassius Dio so delicately puts it, 44.8.3); that he had had an attack of dizziness, perhaps connected with his epilepsy. That last reason is mentioned by Plutarch:

Notwithstanding, it is reported, that afterwards to excuse this folly, he imputed it to his disease, saying, that their wits are not perfect which have this disease of the falling evil, when standing on their feet they speak to the common people, but are soon troubled with a trembling of their body, and a sudden dimness and giddiness. But that was not true. For he would have risen up to the senate, but Cornelius Balbus one of his friends (but rather a flatterer) would not let him, saying: 'What, do you not remember that you are Caesar, and will you not let them reverence you, and do your duties?' (*Caes.* 60.6–8. North)

So for Plutarch, Caesar *did* want to get to his feet, and was dissuaded by his officious friends who advised him to make a spectacle of his power. So it is the false excuses, especially the dizziness and the epilepsy, which leave an impression of frailty: that is what Shakespeare seizes on – and he borrows this incident too to add to that mix of Lupercalia and triumph (I.2.244–52) – but he turns it from falseness to truth.<sup>43</sup>

Just as interesting is the analysis Plutarch preferred, the advice of Caesar's friends. For that ties in to a major theme of the *Caesar*, the way that Caesar himself was so extraordinarily able *but was finally destroyed by the mistakes and excesses of his friends*: friends whom he knew he could not abandon.

He was much disliked also for the desperate parts and madness of Dolabella, for the covetousness of Anitius, for the drunkenness of Antonius and Cornificius, which made Pompey's house be pulled down and builded up again, as a thing not big enough for him, wherewith the Romans were marvellously offended. Caesar knew all this well enough, and would have been contented to have redressed them: but to bring his matters to pass, he pretended he was driven to serve his turn by such instruments.<sup>44</sup> (*Caes.* 51. North)

<sup>43</sup> Once the frailty has been accepted as a theme, Shakespeare adapted other Plutarchan details: the Tiber swim may well have been inspired by the very different item at *Caes.* 49.7–8, where Caesar's strong swimming enables him to escape at a dangerous moment in the harbour of Alexandria. But the adaptation has the effect of reversing Plutarch's point.

<sup>44</sup> 'He pretended . . .' misrepresents the Greek, which simply has 'he was forced to make use of those who did his service': Amyot gets it right, though that 'pretended' may have been put into North's mind by the immediately preceding 'pour parvenir aux fins où il prétendait'. 'Pretend' will be in the sense 'put forward as a reason' (*OED* s.v. 6), and it lacks the sense of falsity it would carry today; but it is still less clear-cut than Plutarch's original.

Caesar owed so much to these friends: as so often in Plutarch, the same factors build a man's greatness and then bring him down. It is a perceptive analysis both of human nature and of Roman politics, and it is one that in a different mood Shakespeare might have welcomed. Think of those history plays, where it is the manoeuvrings of the great men at the court which eventually explain as much as the best efforts, often extremely well-intentioned efforts, of (say) a Henry VI. He might have welcomed too some of the other Plutarchan strands which trace strengths that turn into weaknesses: the wavering enthusiasm of the people now that he is humiliating their tribunes rather than championing them; Caesar's own soldierliness and his popularity with the troops – but now their excesses too are turning opinion against him (*Caes.* 51.2). But in fact the great soldier of the past is sensed in Shakespeare's play only when the military man Antony speaks, in particular when he recalls the summer evening when Caesar overcame the Nervii (III.2.171–3), and there it is to inflame the people, not to trace any alienation.<sup>45</sup> Nor, for all the talk in the play of 'flattery', is there much on the difficulties for Caesar that the flatterers caused, generating such envy by their excessive veneration (*Caes.* 57.2–3). Balbus' bad advice is part of that picture, and it too is suppressed.

So Plutarch is himself analysing the pressures of rule and their destructive quality on the individual, a version of the theme that Shakespeare's own patterning, with those outer shells and inner persons, is exploring too. But Plutarch is exploring it in a very different way, dwelling on the *particular* political factors that were causing Caesar such problems. In the play it is not these pressures themselves that form the interest, it is Caesar's own perception of his position: it is he, not any friend, who proclaims that 'always I am Caesar' (I.2.211). He himself defines what being Caesar amounts to: 'Caesar shall go forth' (II.2.48). It is symptomatic that, when Artemidorus urges him to read the schedule first because it touches Caesar nearer, he replies so grandly that 'What touches us ourself shall be last served' (III.1.8). Plutarch's Caesar had responded very differently, trying as hard as he could to read it, but prevented by the crowd of 'the number of people that did salute him' (*Caes.* 65), the physical emblemization of those pressures he faced. Once again, the reality of those pressures absorbs Plutarch; Caesar's perception of his role dominates the play.

If Plutarch is more interested in where the pressures come from, Shakespeare is more interested in where they will lead, picking up those hints

<sup>45</sup> The suppression of the soldierly theme again extends to minute details: 'the common slave' of I.3.15 is in North 'a slave of the soldiers' (*Caes.* 63.3). Shakespeare's suppression of the soldierliness contrasts with North's tendency to exaggerate the language of valour and courage that he found in Amyot (Brower (1971) 211–2).

from the *Comparison of Dion and Brutus* of the importance of Philippi as the birthplace of the principate. 'Here was a Caesar! When comes such another?' proclaims Antony at the end of the forum scene (III.2.253, cf. the plebeian at III.2.112), and a moment later news arrives that Octavius has arrived in Rome: the stony determination with which Octavius enforces his will to command the right wing (V.1.16–20: above, p. 272) is a harbinger of the future, and the noble humanity of Antony at the play's end also does something to mark him out as the next victim.<sup>46</sup>

It is more difficult to gauge what that future may imply: it is particularly difficult for a modern audience, less steeped in regal ideology and with different religious views from those at the Globe; but even the Globe would not have found it easy. Calpurnia's dream is here important: 'for she dreamed that Caesar was slain, and that she had him in her arms' (North's version of *Caes.* 63.9), in the classic ancient gesture of female mourning. In Shakespeare

She dreamt tonight she saw my statue,  
Which, like a fountain with an hundred spouts,  
Did run pure blood; and many lusty Romans  
Came smiling, and did bathe their hands in it.  
(II.3.76–9)

The change to a statue is doubtless to be related to those other statues, old Brutus' statue which bears the graffiti (I.3.146), then Pompey's statue by whose 'basis' Caesar will fall (III.1.116, 2.189–90). They all convey spirits that are, or will be, active well beyond the men's deaths. The first implication is of course that the bloodshed will be not merely Caesar's, but also that of many others: 'blood and destruction shall be so in use . . .' (III.1.264). But what are we to make of Decius' reinterpretation, as he flatters Caesar into coming to the Senate?

The dream is all amiss interpreted;  
It was a vision fair and fortunate;  
Your statue spouting blood in many pipes,  
In which so many smiling Romans bathed,  
Signifies that from you great Rome shall suck  
Reviving blood, and that great men shall press  
For tinctures, stains, relics, and cognizance.  
This by Calpurnia's dream is signified.  
(II.2.83–90)

<sup>46</sup> Thoughts of the future are there as early as the beginning of I.2, when Caesar reminds Antony to 'touch Calpurnia' in the holy chase to cure her barrenness. There is nothing of that in Plutarch, but it hints at the dynasty that Caesar might hope to found: Humphreys (1984) 11.

The disingenuousness is blatant; so is the Christianizing of the imagery.<sup>47</sup> An audience's first response will be that the interpretation is simply wrong, even blasphemous. It is not the only Christian figuring in that scene or at the time of the killing,<sup>48</sup> and if Caesar is so hybridically cast in the mould of Christ himself that may secure, and justify, his fate. Yet is Decius so simply and straightforwardly wrong?<sup>49</sup> The violence will lead to the principate, and cement the monarchy that the conspirators abhor; and the principate will bring the imperial peace, and all that will come with it.<sup>50</sup> 'The time of universal peace is near', proclaims Octavius at *A&C* IV.6.5, conjuring up not merely the Roman empire but that wider, Christian peace born of a 'love' very different from that of Cleopatra and Antony: a 'new heaven, new earth', but in a sense that Antony could not have imagined (*A&C* I.1.17 ~ Revelation 21.1). The hints of the future are more muted in *Julius Caesar*, but they are there, and different viewers may well have heard and interpreted them in different ways.

### *Brutus and Cassius*

Different spectators doubtless also took various views of the moral issue. What, though, *is* that moral issue? In antiquity it was above all a question of *ingratitude*.<sup>51</sup> can it ever, no matter what the circumstances, be justified to strike down one to whom one owes so much? That was the moral problem Shakespeare found emphasized by Plutarch himself.

Furthermore, the greatest reproach they could<sup>52</sup> object against Brutus, was that Julius Caesar having saved his life, and pardoned all the prisoners also taken in battle, as many as he had made request for, taking him for his friend, and honouring him above all his other friends, Brutus notwithstanding had imbrued his hands in his blood. (*Comparison of Dion and Brutus* 3.4. North)

<sup>47</sup> Kaula (1981); cf. Miola (2000) 103–4, Royle (2006) 213–14. We might also compare the 'strange echoes of the Gospel narratives' that Jones (1977) 60–1 finds in *Coriolanus*.

<sup>48</sup> In this scene Daniell (1998) notes the biblical antecedents for Calpurnia's dream in the dream of Pilate's wife (n. on II.2.3, referring to Matthew 27.19); for the power of seeing the godlike face (II.211–12); for 'the link between royal figures and the heavens' (30–1); for the 'taste of death' (33); for Decius' 'Caesar, all hail' (58, 74), recalling Judas' 'Hail, master'. The ninth hour (II.4.23) is also the Gospels' time for the crucifixion. There is also the 'last supper' at the end of II.3 (above, n. 41), and Brutus and Antony ascend to 'the pulpit' in III.2.

<sup>49</sup> Compare Sinon at Verg. *Aen.* 2.192–4, telling the Trojans that if the Wooden Horse is brought into the city then 'Asia will even come to the walls of Pelops waging a great war, and that is the fate that awaits our descendants'. Sinon is deceiving; but he tells the truth, and the Romans will a thousand years later conquer Greece and avenge their Trojan ancestors.

<sup>50</sup> See Girard (1991), with stimulating remarks on this bloodshed as 'foundational violence'.

<sup>51</sup> Rawson (1986).

<sup>52</sup> The Greek is stronger, using the present tense: people *do* reproach Brutus for this.

Yet there is little of this in Shakespeare. 'Ingratitude' is raised, certainly – but by Antony, in the forum scene (III.2.186), and it is part of his skilful and tendentious rhetoric. There is little too on the honours Caesar had paid Brutus<sup>53</sup> – no mention, for instance, of the past bad feeling when Caesar preferred Brutus to Cassius for the urban praetorship, something of which Plutarch had made a great deal (*Brut.* 7, *Caes.* 62). Any quarrelling between the two is delayed to the scene at Sardis, and the past relations of the pair are marked only by love (I.2.31–5). This, presumably, is also a reason why the possibility is suppressed that Brutus might be Caesar's biological son. The play is simply not about that sort of clash between personal ties and public good.

Just as Brutus' past favours are suppressed, so are Cassius' past grudges, and not just his resentment about the praetorship. For Plutarch Cassius was reputed to be

. . . a choleric man, and hating Caesar privately, more than he did the tyranny openly . . . It is also reported that Brutus could evil away with the tyranny, and that Cassius hated the tyrant, making many complaints for the injuries he had done him. (*Brut.* 8.5–6. North)

Prominent among those 'injuries' was Caesar's purloining of some lions that Cassius was bringing to Rome for a spectacle, a story that ended sadly when they savaged the town-dwellers of Megara (*Brut.* 8.6–7). Shakespeare does give more of a personal tinge to Cassius' feeling of outrage than to that of Brutus, but this is in his indignation that Caesar should be so great *when Cassius is not*, that the frail man is the Colossus when he is as nothing. The sense of affront is self-directed, but it is not connected with past honouring or dishonouring.

Not, of course, that these two characters see things altogether the same way. Shakespeare makes them more different than they were in Plutarch: Plutarch makes Caesar's 'lean and hungry' remark a comment on both Brutus and Cassius (*Brut.* 8.2, *Caes.* 62.10, *Ant.* 11.6): Shakespeare makes it refer to Cassius alone (I.2.193), picking up the one point where Caesar eyes Cassius in particular and comments 'I like not his pale looks' (*Caes.* 62.9). The lean pallor points to the intellectual,<sup>54</sup> something that links Cassius and Brutus together; Shakespeare's separation of the two prepares for Cassius' greater perceptiveness later in the play, when in exchange

<sup>53</sup> As MacCallum (1910) 234 noted, explaining in terms of Shakespeare's wish to suppress an 'unpleasant circumstance' in order 'to portray a patriotic gentleman of the best Roman or the best English type'. That is not wholly wrong, perhaps, though we would doubtless wish to make Shakespeare explore that 'patriotism' critically, not just 'portray' it.

<sup>54</sup> Pelling (1988) on *Ant.* 11.6.

after exchange with Brutus he judges matters better: this spare Cassius 'is a great observer, and he looks | quite through the deeds of men'. But, whatever their differences of temperament, past honours and favours are not what these differences concern. For both the issue is the one posed by the monarch and the monarchy itself<sup>55</sup> – for Brutus more a question of what Caesar may become (II.1.10–34),<sup>56</sup> for Cassius one of what Caesar is already. The issue is one of regicide, not of ingratitude.

Other displacements of Plutarchan material are here telling. One idea that clearly had to go was any suggestion that Cassius might have been aiming for tyranny himself (*Brut.* 29.5). That episode of Cassius' lions may not be lost completely, for lions feature on the streets of Rome, forming part of the weird supernatural accompaniment to the death of the 'lion in the Capitol' (I.3.20–2, 73–4, II.2.17, 46).<sup>57</sup> And Brutus is allowed a striking image to express his horror at the notion of living under a king:

Brutus had rather be a villager  
Than to repute himself a son of Rome  
Under these hard conditions as this time  
Is like to lay upon us.

(I.2.171–4)

That too is Plutarchan in origin, but drawn paradoxically from the thinking of Caesar himself. As a young man he was making his way to Spain.

In his journey it is reported, that passing over the mountains of the Alps, they came through a little poor village that had not many households, and yet poor cottages. There, his friends that did accompany him, asked him merrily, if there were any contending for offices in that town, and whether there were any strife there among the noblemen for honour. Caesar speaking in good earnest, answered: 'I cannot tell that,' said he, 'but for my part, I had rather be the chiefest man here, than the second person in Rome.' (*Caes.* 11.3–4. North)

So for Shakespeare the issue is the general one of the justifiability of rebellion: the affront to free persons, whatever their past experience, of having a fellow-human – any fellow-human – who is so powerful; and that is where the contrast comes in between the weak, frail old man and

<sup>55</sup> That, indeed, is probably what the audience expected of a Roman play: in his outstanding essay on 'Shakespeare and the Elizabethan Romans' Spencer emphasized that 'the moral purpose of history in general, and of Roman history in particular, was directed towards *monarchs*' (his italics: Spencer (1957) 30). Spencer goes on to demonstrate that there was no single, dominant view on the rights and wrongs of the assassination (33–4).

<sup>56</sup> More on this at Pelling (2006) 3–5. Miola (2000) 104 rightly comments that the rest of the play does not encourage confidence in human judgement of what anything 'may become' in the future.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. Muir (1977) 125; Daniell (1998), 87–8.

the 'Caesar', the position and the idea as much as the person. And the more frail the ruler, the sharper the contrast. It is the dramatist's way of presenting the moral question with the clarity of extremes.<sup>58</sup>

Nor is it hard to relate this to 1599, the date of the play, and a government already nervous of the Earl of Essex two years before his open rebellion against the aging Elizabeth; nor to see this as part of the lively contemporary debate on Republicanism. If we were in danger of missing the point, there are other hints of Elizabeth too: for instance the words of Porcia: 'I have a man's mind, but a woman's might', II.4.8. We inevitably think of Tilbury and Elizabeth's speech just eleven years earlier – 'I know I have the body of a weak, feeble woman; but I have the heart and stomach of a king . . .'. Would not the original audience think of Elizabeth too?

Shakespeare does this sort of thing all the time. In *Coriolanus* he gives the differences over grain even more prominence than Plutarch had done, at a time when the midlands suffered from a series of bad harvests and famines.<sup>59</sup> In *Antony and Cleopatra* the extraordinariness of the power of a woman, dominating so much of the world, would have its contemporary ring as well, even now that Elizabeth herself was dead: that legendary Victorian response to Lillie Langtry's Cleopatra – 'how very different from the home life of our own dear Queen' – is not perhaps so off-key after all, even if the original 'dear Queen' with which an audience might draw comparisons was Elizabeth rather than Victoria.

That, however, suggests my final point about Plutarch: for it is striking how little he does himself along such lines. With *Caesar* in particular, it must have been tempting, for Caesar was a particularly thought-provoking figure for Plutarch's own generation. 'The epoch of Trajan felt the attraction of a Caesar who was also a conqueror', as Syme put it.<sup>60</sup> In 107 Trajan himself issued a series of commemorative coins featuring Caesar along with the later emperors, and another series in which Caesar figured along with the great Republican heroes, including Brutus.<sup>61</sup> All these names meant a great amount to Plutarch's own day.

<sup>58</sup> Just as the lawyer Edmund Plowden phrased it in extremes when writing in 1578: 'The king has in him two bodies, viz. a body natural, and a body politic. His body natural (if it be considered in itself) is a body mortal, subject to all infirmities that come by nature or accident, to the imbecility of infancy or old age, and to the like defects that happen to the natural bodies of other people. But his body politic . . . is utterly void of infancy, and old age, and other natural defects and imbecilities which the body natural is subject to, and for this cause, what the king does in his body politic cannot be invalidated or frustrated by any disability in his natural body.' (Quoted by Wells (1996) 104–5.)

<sup>59</sup> See esp. George (2000); more on this in Pelling (2002) 254 and (1997) 6 = (2002) 389–90.

<sup>60</sup> Syme (1958) 434. <sup>61</sup> *BMC Imp.* III<sup>2</sup> 141 nos. 30–1, 142 nos. 696–8.

Yet whenever Plutarch comes near to stressing a theme with a particularly contemporary application, he shies away. I have argued this elsewhere,<sup>62</sup> and one example will suffice. Plutarch was writing *Caesar* and *Brutus* probably around 110. The great Trajanic theme of the day was Dacia: that was where he was engaged, that looked likely to be the key to his glory. Dacia becomes relevant to Caesar too, at the time of those massive last plans (above, p. 277): but notice how Plutarch describes it:

For he was determined, and made preparation also, to make war with the Persians. Then when he had overcome them, to pass through Hurcania (compassing in the sea Caspium, and Mount Caucasus) into the realm of Pontus, and so to invade Scythia: and overrunning all the countries and people adjoining unto high Germany, and Germany itself, at length to return by Gaul into Italy, and so to enlarge the Roman Empire round, that it might be every way compassed in with the great sea Oceanum. (*Caes.* 58.6–7. North)

As several authors make clear, the plan was to attack Dacia first and then go on to Parthia (North's 'Persians'): so Dacia is passed over at the beginning. Then, if we trace this massive loop of the empire on a mental map, we are taken all the way around the Black Sea, then into 'people adjoining unto high Germany, and Germany itself'. Those 'people adjoining unto high Germany' are the Dacians. The obliquity is staggering.

Why Plutarch does it this way is another question. Probably it is something to do with his moralism, preferring the bigger, more timeless themes rather than those narrowed down in place and time; probably once again he aligns with Greek tragedy, concerned as it is to make points about the nature of democracy or of war, rather than comedy, with its sharper points about the deficiencies of Cleon or the rights and wrongs of the Peloponnesian War. For the moment, let us just notice how the comparison with Shakespeare can bring out something interesting about Plutarch too, something which certainly invites an explanation, whatever that explanation may be.

### III

In my last section I quoted Ronald Syme, and in a lecture in 1984 Syme proclaimed that one might be able to write a biography of Cicero, but never of Caesar:<sup>63</sup> the man was just too enigmatic, and too enmeshed in the general history of Rome. When he died five years later, among his papers was found a draft for – a biography of Caesar, and one for which he had signed the contract back in 1980, four years before he said that

<sup>62</sup> Pelling (2002) 253–65. <sup>63</sup> Syme (1985) 12 = (1988) 703.

the thing was impossible. There are about forty manuscript pages of the draft.<sup>64</sup> It is not always easy to see exactly what Syme would have said, partly because of his handwriting and partly because some of the notes are in extreme telegraphese. A tantalizing example is on the first page, when Syme is talking about Shakespeare's play: 'Is the play intended to carry any political lesson? (Probably/Surely not.)'

Whatever one makes of that, it is striking that he starts from Shakespeare. He was clearly going to return to the theme in an Epilogue, and argue that Shakespeare got closer to the truth about Caesar than most of the 'proper' historians and biographers, both modern and ancient (he is very dismissive about the biographical tradition of Suetonius and Plutarch). Of course Syme knew all about Shakespeare's rewritings and falsifications – all that frailty, all that age. So what did he mean? That epilogue itself survives only in the briefest sketch, but we can piece together something from Syme's other writings. In his review of Matthias Gelzer's biography of Caesar he had criticized him for producing a 'depersonalised Caesar', a version where 'the avid and passionate aristocrat' failed to emerge.<sup>65</sup> Syme clearly felt the attraction of a different type of Caesar, a man whose personality impinged more clearly on politics. What does he mean by that? Not, it seems, an awareness of the wider side of Caesar, the man of letters and so on; nor of the love life. At least by the time of the 1984 lecture, it was more the quest for finding and satisfying Caesar's own inmost being than for conquering the world; and in this, Caesar – at least this Caesar of late Syme – fails. He ends, writes Syme in this manuscript, as 'the heroic and tragic figure of ambition, failure, and disillusionment' – a rather Sophoclean figure, perhaps, if one thinks of the Creon of *Antigone*, or even of Ajax (though 'ambition' might not be the right word in either case). That disillusionment is central to Syme's portrait of Caesar; in the 1984 lecture he develops a brilliant picture of a Caesar in his last days who is simply tired, has nowhere to turn, eventually dismisses his bodyguard and faces an assassination danger which he knows is there; and who does so because he is just tired of life. At least death was some sort of answer. 'We might almost say that this man was looking for assassination.'<sup>66</sup>

That is a tragic figure, if Syme is right; and its tragic quality may explain why Syme was drawn to Shakespeare. There is even a contrast in Syme too of the outer position and a personal uncertainty. But the contrast is not the same as Shakespeare's contrast; and I am not sure that Syme's portrait,

<sup>64</sup> I am most grateful to Mark Toher for sharing with me his work on these papers of Syme, and for discussing their implications.

<sup>65</sup> Syme (1944) 92 = (1979) 150.    <sup>66</sup> Syme (1985) 14 = (1988) 706.

if I have reconstructed it rightly, is a very good reading of Shakespeare's Caesar; nor, for that matter, of the historical Caesar either, though that is not a question for this essay. In the play Caesar's private uncertainties and superstitions do not seem to convey any such tiredness of life; it is his nervousness of assassination, not his welcoming of it, that one senses. But paradoxically it may be a better reading of Plutarch, that purveyor of despised biography. It is a remarkable feature of his *Caesar* that, at the end, we are left very unclear how several of Caesar's actions are to be explained – and the most crucial actions here are ones that Shakespeare ignored. He did refuse a bodyguard, even when his friends offered to serve (*Caes.* 57.7), saying that it was better to die once than to spend one's life anticipating it.<sup>67</sup> At dinner the night before the killing, he was asked which death was best, and replied 'The unexpected' (*Caes.* 63.7): again, nothing of that in Shakespeare. Yet – again, as Plutarch puts it – this was not a case where fate was so unexpected; it was just that no precautions were taken (*Caes.* 63.1). Rumours and warnings were coming in, and Caesar feared at least Cassius, if not Brutus too (62.6–10); he was aware of the dangers posed by the behaviour of his friends and his troops (51: above, p. 278); his friends were urging the need for a bodyguard; the Ides were something to be feared. And yet he goes forth. After a life where Plutarch's Caesar has been a man of clear, decisive motives, he has become enigmatic at the end, and one reading of his demeanour might indeed be Syme's.

If Syme was sensing Plutarch through the filter of Shakespeare, was Shakespeare also sensing Greek tragedy through the filter of Plutarch? So many of the features we have been noticing are the stuff of Greek tragedy: the mirror scenes, the recurrent imagery and its reification (the blood, the hunting down), the awful symmetry that bonds apparent adversaries in a shared fate, the patterning that reasserts itself as the cycle turns, the emblematic gestures, the statues marking the presence of continuing power, the interlinking of the human and the supernatural, the placing of a dominant political ideology under the severest of tests, the struggling against the continuing past, the ambivalent relevance of a distant future. Naturally, the apparent structural break cannot work in biography in precisely the same way, as the subject is hardly going to die half-way through his own *Life*: but even here we can notice how often death is not the end of a Plutarch biography, as the closing pages trace how the themes work themselves out in the next generation or with the survivors whose fates have become one

<sup>67</sup> Compare 'Cowards die many times before their deaths; | the valiant only taste of death but once' (II.2.32–3). But Shakespeare does not mention the issue that occasioned the remark in Plutarch, the refusal of the bodyguard.

(*Caesar* itself does that, and so does *Antony*).<sup>68</sup> Nor is it unusual for a *Life* to have strong divisions marking off phases of a career, most strikingly with the two halves of *Pompey* (46), tracking first the triumph and then the calamity.

Plutarch was thoroughly imbued with Sophocles and the tragic tradition both directly from the plays and from all those other genres that they had already influenced (especially historiography). Nor, to repeat, is this the only path by which the tragic manner could reach Shakespeare: Seneca will evidently be important too; Jones may be right about *Iphigenia in Aulis* and the quarrel scene.<sup>69</sup> But, for most of this play, the eyes that produced so Greek a vision of Roman cataclysm were surely seeing it through Plutarch's glass.<sup>70</sup>

<sup>68</sup> Pelling (2002) 365–86.   <sup>69</sup> Above, p. 265.

<sup>70</sup> Many thanks to the editors for their patience and help, and to Mark Toher, Jenny Yee, Wes Williams, and Chris Kraus for discussion. Some sections draw on a lecture given in 2001 to the Friends of Classics, then published in three short articles in their journal *Ad Familiares* in 2002–3.

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