Monody and Dramatic Form in Late Euripides

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ABSTRACT

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This study sets out to reveal the groundbreaking use of monody in the late plays of Euripides: in his hands, it is shaped into a potent and flexible instrument for representing emotion and establishing new narrative and thematic structures. Engaging with the current scholarly debate on music, affect, and characterization in Greek tragedy, I examine the role that monody plays in the musical design of four plays of Euripides, all produced in the last decade of his career: Ion, Iphigenia in Tauris, Phoenician Women, and Orestes. These plays are marked by the increased presence of actors’ song in proportion to choral song. The lyric voice of the individual takes on an unprecedented prominence with far-reaching implications for the structure and impact of each play. The monodies of Euripides are a true dramatic innovation: in addition to creating an effect of heightened emotion, monody is used to develop character and shape plot.

In Ion, Iphigenia in Tauris, Phoenician Women, and Orestes, Euripides uncouples monody’s traditional and exclusive connection with lament. In contrast to the work of Aeschylus and Sophocles, where actors’ song is always connected with grief and pain, in these four plays monody conveys varied moods and states of mind. Monody expresses joy, hope, anxiety, bewilderment, accusation, and deliberation. Often, and simultaneously, it moves forward narrative exposition. The scope and dramatic function of monody grows and changes: passages of actors’ lyric become longer, more metrically complex, more detached from the other characters onstage, and more intensely focused on the internal experience of the singer. In the four plays under discussion we see a steadily increasing refinement and expansion of the form, a development that rests upon the changes in the style and function of contemporary music in the late fifth century.
By 415 B.C., many formal features of tragedy had become highly conventionalized, and determined a set of expectations in the contemporary audience. Reacting against this tradition, Euripides successively redefines monody: each song takes over a traditional *Bauform* of tragedy, and builds upon it. The playwright uses the paired monodies of *Ion* to pose a conflict of ideas that might otherwise be conveyed through an *agon*. In *Iphigenia in Tauris* the heroine’s crisis and its resolution are presented in lyrics, rather than as a deliberative *rhesis*. In *Phoenician Women*, Antigone, Jocasta, and Oedipus replace the Chorus in lamenting the fall of the royal house. Finally, the Phrygian slave in *Orestes* sings a monody explicitly marked as a messenger speech that inverts the conventions of the form to raise questions about objectivity and truth in a disordered world.

In examining these four plays, I hope to show some of the various potentials of this new Euripidean music as a major structural element in tragic drama, insofar as it can heighten emphasis, allow for the development of emotional states both subtle and extreme, reveal and deepen character, and mirror thematic movements. Euripides establishes monody as a dramatic form of considerable versatility and power. The poetry is charged with increased affect and expressivity; at the same time it articulates a new self-consciousness about the reciprocal capacities of form and content to shape one another. Here we may discern the shift of sensibility in Euripides’ late work, which proceeds *pari passu* with an apparent loosening of structural demands, or what one with equal justice might recognize as an increase in degrees of freedom. As the playwright repeatedly reconfigures the relationship between form and content, the range of what can happen onstage, of what can be said and sung, expands.
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for my parents
She was the single artificer of the world
In which she sang. And when she sang, the sea,
Whatever self it had, became the self
That was her song, for she was the maker.

- Wallace Stevens, “The Idea of Order at Key West”

In Wallace Stevens’ poem “The Idea of Order at Key West,” two men stand by the sea and listen to a woman sing. Through her song the woman becomes the maker of her own world. She binds the disparate elements of emotion and sensation together in a formal composition. This anonymous singer enlarges, shapes, orders, and even creates experience not only for herself, but also for the men who hear her.

Why does the individual voice raised in song move us so powerfully? To explain why song functions as it does is necessarily somewhat speculative. For the purposes of this project, the question may be considered from two perspectives, linguistic and aesthetic. As an adaptive strategy for communication, song is a concentration of those elements universal to human speech that are routinely heightened when emotion itself is high: strong variations in pitch and volume, rhythmical emphasis, and the repetition of sounds and syntactical units. From the standpoint of aesthetics, song draws upon a set of conventions and variations played off against these conventions. Every song is a work of art within a particular tradition, heard by every audience in a specific way based on its prior encounters and expectations. This is particularly true of Greek tragedy, a stylized genre built up of a set of recognizable conventions, performed before an audience highly attuned to these conventions.
This project sets out to reveal Euripides’ groundbreaking use of monody, or solo actors’ song, in his late plays: in his hands, it is shaped into a potent and flexible instrument for representing emotion and establishing new narrative and thematic structures. Engaging with the current scholarly debate on music, affect, and characterization in Greek tragedy, I examine the role that monody plays in the musical design of four plays of Euripides, all produced in the last decade of his career: *Ion*, *Iphigenia in Tauris*, *Phoenician Women*, and *Orestes*. These plays are marked by the increased presence of solo actors’ song in proportion to choral song. The lyric voice of the individual takes on an unprecedented prominence with far-reaching implications for the structure and impact of each play. The monodies of Euripides are a versatile dramatic innovation: they are used to shape plot, to display states of heightened emotion, and to develop character. How do these actors become the “artificers,” to borrow the word of Wallace Stevens, of the world in which they sing?

In *Ion*, *Iphigenia in Tauris*, *Phoenician Women*, and *Orestes*, Euripides uncouples monody’s traditional and exclusive connection with lament. In contrast to the work of Aeschylus and Sophocles, where actors’ song is always connected with grief and pain, in these four plays monody conveys varied moods and states of mind. Monody expresses joy, hope, anxiety, bewilderment, accusation, and deliberation. Often, and simultaneously, it moves forward narrative exposition. In the four plays under discussion we see a steadily increasing refinement and expansion of monody as a form, a development that rests upon the changes in the style and function of contemporary music in the late fifth century. The scope and dramatic function of actors’ lyric grows and changes: passages of actors’ lyric become longer, more metrically complex, more
detached from the other figures onstage, and more intensely focused on the internal experience of the singer.

My argument stands at the crossroads of two paths of inquiry: the study of dramatic form, on the one hand, and, on the other, the synthesis of affect, emotion, and character. These terms require some clarification. By form I mean the structure of the drama as created by the playwright, the way that a play develops over the course of an individual performance. Greek tragedy comprises a set of conventional and clearly recognized building blocks, or Bauformen, including the agon, the iambic rhesis, the choral ode, and the messenger speech. By 415 B.C., these formal features of tragedy had become highly conventionalized, and determined a set of expectations in the contemporary audience. As I hope to show, monody in the late plays of Euripides is always placed in self-conscious relation to these familiar elements of Attic tragedy.

Turning to the second cluster of terms, I have taken care to avoid the word “character” to indicate one of the dramatis personae, or πρόσωπα, in a given play. Yet neither is “character” intended to convey the modern Western notion of a consistent, lifelong pattern of reactivity and of moral stature that above all constitutes the essence of a specific human being. In recent work on characterization in Greek tragedy, scholars have emphasized the difficulty of defining or evaluating character and the artificiality of divorcing it from other aspects of a literary work. Figures in Greek tragedy are idealized and fictionalized constructs, distinct from “real-life” people; the vision of the playwright is at all times shaped by social, cultural, and literary conventions.¹ Nonetheless, I believe that monody in the late plays of Euripides does represent a qualitative shift in concepts of

individual emotion, sensation, and causation in tragedy. I propose that monody allows what is most distinctive about the singer at that moment to be brought out with particular strength and clarity of outline. Through song, Euripides reveals the private, inner emotional state of the figure onstage, and gives to it a place of central interest and importance.

Emotion in everyday life, both for its expression and for its recognition, is certainly among the tasks humans are best and most intuitively adapted for; yet that intuitive sufficiency does not apply in quite the same measure to emotion expressed in drama. Indeed, there is some risk of circular reasoning in the proposition that monody is used by Euripides for the expression of emotion, since we are likely to recognize moments of high emotion precisely insofar as they are marked by delivery in song. Helpfully, other indicators of emotion also occur. Some of these are strategies imitated from life, such as the increased presence of interjections and irregularities of rhythm. The language of Euripides’ monodies, as I hope to demonstrate, emerges as unique when compared with passages where the plain transmission of information is evidently the main purpose: words and phrases are more figurative and more vividly imagined. And of course it is natural to assume strong emotion in a figure on the dramatic stage who has just undergone an overwhelming experience. And yet, to take only one counter-example, Ion’s opening monody has no prelude, and for all he knows he is arising to a day as serene as any other: here I think it is indeed the very use of song that takes the lead in signaling to us that he is in a moment of inspiration. In this and other instances I hope that my use of the term “emotion” may without undue distortion cover states of exaltation and heightened awareness as well as grief, rage, or fear.
To my knowledge, no single published work discusses actors’ lyric in Euripides from a literary standpoint, although there do exist stimulating discussions of the monodies in individual plays. My project draws together several strands of analysis. The philological tradition has produced important books about the formal and metrical elements of tragedy, including analysis of the Bauformen that make up the “architecture” of the genre. Other scholars have approached the role of lyric in drama from a variety of critical perspectives that consider its language and imagery, its links to established poetic and philosophical traditions, as well as its resonances with the political, social, and cultural developments of the Athenian polis in the Classical period. Their work on the songs of tragedy has focused on issues of gender, group identity, democracy, religion, and myth. Finally, recent work on music has enhanced our understanding of the style and ideological implications of the “New Music,” for which Euripides was both lauded and criticized by his contemporaries.

Drawing on these quite different schools of criticism, what I hope to offer here is an integrated study of the aesthetic qualities of monody: how actors’ song contributes to the unity of each play as a self-contained and self-referential dramatic work. My aim is not to reconstruct the “original” music of these tragedies, for which very little concrete evidence survives. Yet attention to such elements as meter, setting, wordplay, imagery,

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and theme, as well as to the more advanced techniques of irony, ambiguity, and internal tension, can make available to us a richer set of readings – and of stagings – for a particular text. For a full appreciation of their complex role in Euripides’ dramatic art, monodies must be considered both as formal poetic compositions and as expressive vehicles for emotion and character.

As Eugenie Brinkema has written, “The turning to affect in the humanities does not obliterate the problem of form and representation.” Monody, by its synthesis of lyrical structure and emotional expression, brings together the formal and affective dimensions of tragedy. Scholars have discussed the radical nature of Euripides’ formal experimentation, and have also remarked on the complexity of the figures, particularly female ones, in his plays. These are not separate assessments, but need to be taken together. Euripides’ novel use of monody in his late plays provides a means to the creation of more complex characters; and his desire to dramatize the internal emotional states of these characters in turn drives him to expand the boundaries of monody as an artistic form.

The Emergence of Monody

In Walter Jens’ comprehensive study of the Bauformen of tragedy, Wilfried Barner examines the formal features of monody. After a survey of the length and positioning of passages of actors’ song in all three tragedians, Barner arrives at a definition of monody as “eine vom Schauspieler gesungene (‘lyrische’ oder ‘melische’) Partie von größerem Umfang und relativer Eigenständigkeit,” “a portion sung by an actor

\footnote{Brinkema (2014) xiv. On the interdependence of affect and form see further Gregg and Seigworth (2010).}

\footnote{Barner (1971).}
The terms “Umfang” and “Eigenständigkeit,” literally “extent” and “independence,” obviously leave some room for interpretation. For our purposes, monody will be defined as a passage of solo actor’s lyric of at least ten lines, which is either uninterrupted or only briefly interrupted by the chorus or by other actors. Monody stands in contrast to other musical arrangements, where voices alternate more frequently and the individual sections by each participant are shorter. Such arrangements, which I refer to as a “lyric dialogues,” may take the form of an *amoibaion*, where one actor sings in alternation with another singing actor or chorus, or an *epirrhema*, where an actor sings in alternation with a speaking actor or chorus. The formal distinction in most cases corresponds to one of function: in a lyric dialogue, the focus is on communication, even if that communication is frustrated or incomplete, while in monody the emphasis is on the individual experience of the singer.

The term “monody” in its etymological sense (“solo song”) refers only to the mode of delivery, and is not restricted to tragedy; thus, for instance, the poems of Sappho, Alcaeus, and Anacreon are sometimes called “monodic” by modern scholars, because they were sung by a single voice to musical accompaniment. The word was occasionally used in this wider sense even in antiquity. Plato, in a passage from the *Laws*, discusses the regulation of musical contests in the education of children; in this section he also examines μονοθης and χοροθης, without making any explicit connection to tragedy.  

Yet the earliest examples of the term in comic writers do refer specifically to tragedy. The first reference comes from the *Horai* of Cratinus, dated to the mid 420’s

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7 Barner (1971) 279.

B.C.E. 9 Two lines, transmitted as one fragment, twice mention monody: βούλει
μονωδήσωμεν αὐτοῖς ἐν γέ τι, “Do you want us to sing just one monody for them?,” and
οὐκ ἂν μονωδήσειν ἐκπεπληγμένος, “He would not sing a monody while struck out of
his wits.” Because of the lack of surrounding context, it is not entirely clear where the
joke lies; the word ἐκπεπληγμένος, “struck out of his wits,” could indicate a situation of
suffering or, perhaps, of incapacitating inebriation. But in Aristophanes the terms
μονωδία and μονωδεῖν always refer to tragedy. 10 In the Frogs monody is a central part of
the competition between Aeschylus and Euripides; once he has mocked the choral lyrics
of Euripides, Aeschylus parodies the style of his rival’s monodies (τὸν τῶν μονωδίων
τρόπον, 1330). 11

These references in the comic dramatists constitute our only fifth-century
instances of the term μονωδία and its cognates. Although many monodies in tragedy are
self-referential, the tragic poets do not use the terms μονωδία or μονωδεῖν. Aristotle in
the Poetics avoids the words altogether; in his system of classification monody seems to
be included under the heading of τὰ ἄπο τῆς σκηνῆς, “what comes from the stage,” which
is contrasted with music from the Chorus. 12 Based on this evidence, it seems that
μονωδία and μονωδεῖν emerged as technical terms for solo actor’s song in tragedy over

421 B.C.E, describes Cratinus as already dead. Aristophanes has taken some comic license with his
account: he claims that Cratinus died during the last Spartan invasion, outraged by the smashing of a full
wine jar. The Spartan invasion took place in 425 B.C.E., and the last recorded victory of Cratinus was in
423 B.C.E., so the chronology cannot be quite correct, but probably gives a good estimate. Cf.
Sommerstein (1985) 165-166.

10 Peace (421 B.C.E.) 1012: εἶτα μονωδεῖν ἐκ Μηδείας; Thesmophoriazousai (411 B.C.E.) 1077:
ὁγάθ ἕκαστον με μονωδήσας; Gerytades (c. 408 B.C.E.) fr. 162 PCG: θεράπεθε καὶ χόρταζε τῶν μονωδίων.
Cf. Kassel and Austin (1983 - ) fr. 162 PCG.

12 Aristotle, Poetics 1452b.
the course of the late fifth century. This dating coincides with the period in which
Euripides composed his most inventive monodies.

Monody in Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Earlier Euripides

There are no monodies in the six certainly genuine and complete plays of
Aeschylus.\textsuperscript{13} In general, actor’s lyric is much less common than in the work of Sophocles
and Euripides; rather, the musical contribution of the Chorus is central to the thematic
and imagistic coherence of each drama.\textsuperscript{14} Aeschylus also composed three powerfully
effective scenes of lyric dialogue: the lamentation of Xerxes in \textit{Persians}, the exchange of
Orestes and Electra in \textit{Choephoroi}, and above all the Cassandra scene in \textit{Agamemnon}.\textsuperscript{15}

The highly emotional content of these scenes anticipates the subject matter of later
monodies: Xerxes laments his fall from glory; Orestes and Electra grieve for their dead
father and make ready their plan for revenge; Cassandra communicates fantastic sights
visible to no one else. Yet Aeschylus’ lyric dialogues differ from later monody because
of the integral and expansive role of the chorus, who respond to the solo singer and shape
the movement of the scene. The focus in these exchanges is on communication, or, in
Cassandra’s case, on frustrated communication, rather than on the experience of the
individual in isolation.

\textsuperscript{13} The uncertain authorship and date of \textit{Prometheus Bound} makes it difficult to draw conclusions about
Aeschylean practice, or even practice that necessarily influenced Euripides. For the question of authenticity
cf. Griffith (1977) and ([1983] 2000). The play contains two scenes of actors’ lyric: the lament of
Prometheus and the monody of Io. Certainly these lyric scenes are unlike anything in the other six plays
attributed to Aeschylus, and seem closer to the techniques of Sophocles and especially of Euripides. In
\textit{Seven Against Thebes}, it is possible that Antigone and Ismene appear in the last scene and may have joined
in song with the Chorus in their final lines, but I do not accept this passage as original. On the ending of
this play cf. Dawe (1967), Flintoff (1980), and Orwin (1980).

\textsuperscript{14} Scott (1984).

\textsuperscript{15} \textit{Persians} 907-1077; \textit{Choephoroi} 306-480; \textit{Agamemnon} 1072-1177.
No hero in Sophocles is restricted to purely iambic lines: Ajax, Oedipus, Antigone, Creon, Electra, and Heracles all sing in lyrics. In a recent monograph, Sarah Nooter proposes that the heroes of Sophocles’ plays appropriate the language of lyric poetry in order to create an authoritative poetic identity that draws vatic inspiration from the gods. This lyric is highly marked by its imagistic and imaginative language. As Simon Goldhill suggests, Sophocles manipulates transitions and juxtapositions between registers, that is, “between lyric voices and iambic voices, between sung and spoken voices, between collective and individual voices, and even between sequential or fragmented individual voices and collective choral voice,” for dramatic effect. In each of Sophocles’ plays, the lyrics of the hero express a radical isolation from the other figures on the stage. Yet there exists a tension between heroic isolation and the powerful effect that the intransigence of the hero has on the community. The songs of characters in Sophocles are in each case embedded in a larger musical part that includes exchange with the Chorus or with other actors, even if the soloist temporarily ignores them.

Euripides seems to have been fascinated by the potential of monody from his earliest plays. The quantity of actors’ lyric increases steadily over the course of his

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17 Nooter (2012).


19 I use “hero” in the now standard sense defined by Knox (1964), as the character central to the action of the play who is fierce, unyielding, unteachable, and unwilling to accept the limitations of the human situation. Cf. Scott (1996) and Nooter (2012) 10-11, who speculates that “an ancient audience would recognize the hero in a Sophoclean play partly by his capacity to slide from spoken lines into song.”

career, as demonstrated by the research of Eric Csapo.\textsuperscript{21} In plays produced before the mid 420’s B.C.E. (*Alcestis, Medea, Heracles, Hippolytus*), the actors deliver on average 13.3\% of all song. In the following decade (*Andromache, Hecuba, Suppliant Women, Electra, and Heracles*), although the overall percentage of music to speech in each play remains relatively constant, the portion of song presented by actors is significantly higher than in the early plays, constituting on average 37\% of song in each play.\textsuperscript{22} In the late plays (*Ion, Trojan Women, Iphigenia in Tauris, Helen, Phoenician Women*, and *Orestes*), the actors deliver on average 47.1\% of all song. Over the forty years of Euripides’ career, the percentage of song delivered by actors rises from about one eighth of the music in each play to almost half.

Jane Beverly in an unpublished dissertation examines the form and placement of monody in Euripides’ early plays.\textsuperscript{23} These monodies cluster in three main positions: before the parados, in the first or second episode in pairing with another monody, or in the final scenes of the play. Female singers far outnumber male singers in these plays, and the positioning of monody seems to be affected by gender as well: women tend to sing earlier in the play, while men’s songs are reserved for the end. Monodies are usually sung in situations of loss and grief, as in Aeschylus and Sophocles, and frequently employ dochmiacs and anapests. There is some movement over time towards greater length, more astropic form, and more varied meter. As demonstrated in meticulous detail by Beverley, the monodies of Euripides composed before 415 B.C.E. bear out

\textsuperscript{21} The following figures are all taken from Csapo (1999).

\textsuperscript{22} Three of the plays written before 415 B.C.E. have no monody: *Medea, Children of Heracles*, and *Heracles*. Medea sings melic anapests before she comes onstage (96-96, 111-114, 144-147, 160-167), but never delivers a full monody; cf. Mastronarde (2002) ad 96-130. Hall (1999) 116 attributes this lack of monody to Medea’s being a “manly” woman.

\textsuperscript{23} Beverley (1997) 24-26.
Edith Hall’s thesis that monody is primarily the mode of expression for royal women, and that the songs draw heavily on lament.\textsuperscript{24}

The practices of Aeschylus and Sophocles, and also of Euripides in his early and middle years, are in contrast to the innovative approach to monody taken by Euripides in his late plays. As I hope to demonstrate, in the plays produced after 415 B.C.E. – in particular \textit{Ion}, \textit{Iphigenia in Tauris}, \textit{Phoenician Women}, and \textit{Orestes} – Euripides departs from the model of actors’ lyric established by his predecessors and followed in his own previous work. Monody is not restricted to women, to royalty, or to situations that would require lamentation. Instead, the monodies of these four plays constitute a departure from tradition, both formally and in the information they convey about the singer.

\textbf{A New Voice}

Several scholars have had a particular impact on my approach to actors’ lyric in the late plays of Euripides. Shirley Barlow, in her wonderful slim volume \textit{The Imagery of Euripides}, devotes a chapter to monody and lyric dialogue.\textsuperscript{25} Barlow contends that the function of imagery in monody is to reflect the individual obsessions or preoccupations of the singer; imagery may thus become the vehicle for the irrational or the unacknowledged. The visual horizons of actors’ lyric are deliberately restricted, by comparison with the sweeping perspective of the Chorus. Barlow does not identify any progression in the use of monody over the course of Euripides’ career; I hope to complicate this picture by discussing Euripides’ increasingly complex and self-conscious experimentation with the form.

\textsuperscript{24} Hall (1999).

\textsuperscript{25} Barlow (1971).
Hugh Parry does not address monody in his discussion of the lyric poems of Greek tragedy, but his chapters on the structure and function of choral song in Euripides have informed my own thinking.\textsuperscript{26} Parry sees lyric as a way of expressing intensely imaginative experiences, and his readings emphasize the evocative interplay of effects within a simple, tight structure. He writes that Euripides’ choral odes are imagistic rather than symbolic, and that the themes most characteristic of the odes have a new emphasis that sets them apart from those of the other tragedians: nostalgia, escapism, and a simple, even naïve, moralizing.\textsuperscript{27} Euripides deliberately exploits the distance of the lyrics from the action in order to create suggestive tensions between innocence and experience, imagination and realism, fantasy and harsh irony. Lyric in Euripides “emphasizes, often despite itself, that there is no transcendental reality other than the lyric’s imaginative transformation of pain and brutality.”\textsuperscript{28} Actors’ lyric shares with choral lyric the expression of intensely imaginative experiences, but, I will argue, defines a new focus on the inner state of the individual.

Edith Hall argues that social distinctions within tragedy were reflected in different modes of musical expression, including monody.\textsuperscript{29} Solo song is a marker of high social status, indeed almost always of royalty inherited by blood. When slaves sing, it is usually the case that that they are members of the aristocracy who have fallen upon hard times, as in the cases of Hecuba, Andromache, and Electra. Those born into slavery – with the exception of the Phrygian slave – do not use lyric. But it not all aristocrats who sing:

\textsuperscript{26} Parry (1978).
\textsuperscript{27} Parry (1978) 61.
\textsuperscript{28} Parry (1978) 203.
\textsuperscript{29} Hall (1999), expanded in (2006) 288-320.
Hall’s conclusions are that “singing in Euripides seems to be a female (and barbarian) prerogative,” and that, although some males in Euripides do sing, singers in Euripides are generally “the ‘others’ of the free Greek man in his prime.” While I think that Hall’s thesis is broadly correct, the exceptions to her rule deserve further exploration. Ion and the Phrygian slave in particular merit consideration – in what way do these two male singers, one of royal blood but serving in the temple of Apollo, one born a slave and explicitly effeminate, challenge expectations about monody?

Eric Csapo’s article “Later Euripidean Music” synthesizes large amounts of data to demonstrate that over the course of his career Euripides shifted the musical burden of his plays from the Chorus to the actors. This quantitative increase, Csapo posits, responds to a desire on the part of playwrights, musicians, and actors to display a musical range and virtuosity beyond the reach of the amateur chorus, and developed together with the increasing professionalization of actors and musicians in the fifth century. Csapo argues that New Music represents not a decline in Classical culture, but an innovation and enrichment of the tragic repertoire. He suggests that the increased prominence of solo song in late Euripides is, in part, a function of the exigencies of dramatic competition. I would like to offer a complementary explanation: the New Music matched the sorts of plays that Euripides wanted to write. Monody in particular was uniquely suited to conveying emotion, especially the intense and highly volatile emotions of individuals in extreme circumstances.

30 Hall (1999) 112.

31 Csapo (2000).
Sarah Nooter has explored the “poeticity” of heroes in Sophocles with particular attention to actors’ lyric in six plays.\textsuperscript{32} Nooter analyzes not only song, but also passages of heightened language that are marked as lyrical by their emotional intensity, use of repetition and word play, dense imagery, and expansive range of reference. These passages, Nooter argues, would for a contemporary Athenian audience evoke the non-dramatic lyric genres of ancient poetry, and through this association would confer “lyric personality” or “vatic authority” upon the singer. Nooter traces a progression from earlier heroes (Ajax, Heracles, Oedipus at Thebes) who gain “authority” through poetic language” to later ones (Electra, Philoctetes, Oedipus at Colonus) who gain actual “power” through their use of heightened language. I have drawn on Nooter for her discussion of the influence of other genres of poetry on actors’ song, although I believe that for Euripides monody is as prominently positioned against the conventions of \textit{tragic} poetry as against other lyric genres.

The two volumes by Mattia De Poli are of great use for the textual and metrical problems of the monodies considered here.\textsuperscript{33} For each monody, De Poli has provided a full text and scansion, with copious notes detailing the manuscript evidence, the conjectures of other scholars, and his own reasoned opinion. De Poli offers much specific, factual information, and I have used his text and colometry as a basis for my own literary consideration of monody. The second half of De Poli’s study locates the monodies in the existing tradition of Greek lyric poetry. He divides Euripidean monodies into “mimetic” – those that closely resemble another genre of ancient poetry, such as

\textsuperscript{32} Nooter (2012). She excludes \textit{Antigone} on the grounds that the play features two figures, Antigone and Creon, who meet her definition of speaking poetically.

\textsuperscript{33} De Poli (2011) and (2012).
epinician or paean – and “diagetic” – those that relate a narrative. This broad division is not necessarily exhaustive. For example, Creusa’s monody in the Ion combines the formal elements of a paean, ironically undercut with a narrative of her rape at the hands of Apollo, while the Phrygian slave in Orestes combines topoi of epic and choral lyric with the conventions of the messenger speech.

Naomi Weiss’s recent book deals with the role of choral performance in later Euripidean tragedy. Building on studies of the chorus in Greek drama, Weiss examines the dramatic function of mousikē (music, song, and dance) and choreia (choral song and dance) in four plays from the last fifteen years of Euripides’ career: Electra, Trojan Women, Helen, and Iphigenia in Aulis. She demonstrates that Euripides combines elements of the New Music with the styles and motifs of traditional lyric poetry, and contends that this mix of old and new is a central element of his increasing experimentation with the language and performance of mousikē. I share Weiss’ interest in musical innovations in the late plays of Euripides, and employ a similar methodology of close textual and metrical analysis. Weiss examines plays where most song is choral; my own project, by contrast, focuses on plays where mousikē is more the province of actors. Her discussion is thus complementary to the account of monody that I offer here.

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The approaches of these scholars are appealing in their own ways, and have informed my thinking about the role of monody. In each chapter I discuss the monody or monodies in one play by looking at choice of singer, positioning, meter, strophic form,
language, and imagery; I then offer an interpretation that locates monody in the larger
design of the drama. In these four plays, Euripides successively redefines monody: each
song takes over a traditional Bauform of tragedy, and builds upon it. The playwright uses
the paired monodies of Ion to pose a conflict of ideas that might otherwise be conveyed
through an agon. In Iphigenia in Tauris the heroine’s crisis and its resolution are
presented in lyrics, rather than as a deliberative iambic rhesis. In Phoenician Women,
Antigone, Jocasta, and Oedipus replace the Chorus in lamenting the fall of the royal
house. Finally, the Phrygian slave in Orestes sings a monody explicitly marked as a
messenger speech that inverts the conventions of the form to raise questions about
objectivity and truth in a disordered world. In these plays, monody becomes a site of
formal innovation and experimentation. At the same time, it facilitates the creation of an
individual voice of broad and expressive range, one both internally coherent and distinct
from all others.

Chapter 1: Ion: Monody as Agon (c. 414 B.C.E.)

The first chapter presents Euripides’ use of monody as the vehicle for a contest of
ideas in Ion. In this play there is no formal agon, where two figures set forth arguments in
a direct struggle for dominance. This arrangement is in contrast to many of Euripides’
plays, where an agon of alternating iambic speeches poses conflicting views: in Hecuba,
for instance, the aged queen contends with Agamemnon about the death of her daughter
Polyxena, while in Medea the heroine and Jason debate the legitimacy of their marriage.
Despite the lack of an explicitly marked agon, in Ion the central conflict of the play does
receive its most explicit expression through the diametrical opposition of passionately
held views. These views are expressed at length, but in song and separately, in the monodies of Ion and Creusa.

The basic action of the play is as follows: Ion, a youth abandoned at birth, has served at the temple of Apollo for his entire life. Creusa, who, unknown to them both, is his mother, has come to the temple with her husband to beg for a child, full of bitter reproaches against the god for raping her many years before. Misunderstanding the answers of the oracle, Creusa takes Ion to be her husband’s son by a secret relationship, and determines to kill him. Ion discovers her plot, and is on the point of murdering Creusa when the Pythian priestess emerges to unravel the mystery of Ion’s parentage. A concluding epiphany of Athena puts to rest all further questioning, and reconciles mother and son.

The play contains two monodies. In the prologue, the orphan Ion sings a paean to Apollo, the transcendent god at whose temple he serves. Through his monody the young man is characterized by his devotion to Apollo, his concern with purity and propriety, and his position as an orphan. Creusa has had a much more direct and troubled experience of Apollo, repeatedly alluded to in the opening scenes. At the pivotal moment of the play, she delivers a musical accusation against the ingratitude of the god who once raped her and left their infant son to die. Is Apollo benevolent and bright, or graceless and cruel? Because the god himself never appears onstage, the incompatible perspectives of these two humans demand reconciliation.

In the two monodies, Euripides brings together the legalistic exposition typical of agonistic *rhesis* and the emotionality of lyric song. The songs are separated by nearly eight hundred lines. Creusa does not hear Ion’s monody, nor does Ion hear Creusa’s. Yet
because they are the only two passages of extended actors’ lyric in the play, the two monodies are weighed together in the mind of the viewer. By virtue of the play’s temporal structure, this re-imagined *agon* is not brought to a point of rhetorical contention, to be fought out face-to-face. Instead it is stretched across the scenes between the songs, and is left suspended over the remaining scenes as well. Actors’ lyric returns in the exodus, which enacts the reunion of mother and son. With the resolution of the play, Ion and Creusa accept the role that the inscrutable god has played in bringing both sorrow and joy to their lives.

Chapter 2: *Iphigenia in Tauris*: Memory and Movement (c. 412 B.C.E.)

In *Iphigenia in Tauris*, Euripides composes two monodies that highlight two critical stages of the heroine’s emotional journey from stasis to purposeful action. The virgin Iphigenia, rescued from her father Agamemnon’s attempt to sacrifice her and magically transported by the goddess Artemis to the distant realm of Tauris, is held as a captive priestess, forced by the king to herself oversee human sacrifices. Her brother Orestes and his friend Pylades arrive by chance in Tauris; after recognizing each other by signs, Orestes and Iphigenia determine to escape.

In her first monody, which opens the play, Iphigenia mourns the unfulfilled potential of her young life, where each status was cancelled, each promised doing undone. This vivid portrait of Iphigenia’s inner state creates a background for the scenes that follow, where she hides her true feelings and narrowly avoids sacrificing her own brother. Iphigenia’s second monody, delivered after the reunion scene with Orestes,

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36 There is no direct evidence for the year in which *Iphigenia in Tauris* was first produced, but most scholars agree on a date somewhere between 415 and 412. Cf. Matthiessen (1964), Cropp (2000) 60-61 and Kyriakou (2006) 39-41.
marks a shift in her mind and a crisis in the plot. Here we see Euripides taking the
traditional form and turning it to new and innovative purpose: monody becomes a vehicle for deliberative thought and decisive action, acting as a rhesis wherein the heroine formulates a plan for the future. Iphigenia’s resolve is expressed not through a reasoned weighing of options in iambic trimeter, but through song. The heroine’s second monody represents not only emotion, but motion of the mind as well, a preparation for the leap forwards and the leap itself. The two monodies thus mark two points in the inflection of Iphigenia’s character, as a passive victim finds her purpose as the head of her family.

Chapter 3: *Phoenician Women*: the Lyric Voice of a Shattered House (c. 410 B.C.E.)

In *Phoenician Women* actors’ lyric takes on a role of unprecedented importance in the shaping of plot and in the development of character, counterposed to and to some extent replacing choral lyric. The Phoenician women who make up the Chorus are outsiders to Thebes; by contrast, the figures who sing stand at the very heart of the city, its inmost, incestuous natives. Antigone, Jocasta, and Oedipus are inextricably bound up in the ruin of their house. Monody translates the dramatic movement of the play into something distinctively inward and personal: all action is concentrated into reaction.

The play constitutes Euripides’ unorthodox version of a familiar myth, introduced by Jocasta in the prologue. Here, she has not committed suicide, even after the discovery that she has married her son; Oedipus too is alive, living secluded in the palace. Jocasta relates that Eteocles and Polyneices had agreed to share power in Thebes, ruling in alternate years. Eteocles, too much in love with being a tyrant, has refused to yield his power, and Polyneices has now returned with an Argive host to claim his right to the throne. In the action of the play, Jocasta fails to reconcile her two sons. The brothers fall
by one another’s hands on the battlefield, and Jocasta commits suicide upon seeing the two bodies. Antigone accompanies the corpses of her mother and brothers onto the stage, and summons her father Oedipus from the house to share her grief. In the final scene of the play Creon exiles the aged Oedipus, who leaves Thebes accompanied by Antigone.

*Phoenician Women* contains four scenes of actors’ lyric, positioned at the beginning and end of the play. Framing the quarrel and combat of Polyneices and Eteocles, these four passages of lyric vividly portray the effect of the catastrophe on the individual members of the family. In place of the expected choral parados, Antigone and an old servant observe the attacking army from the walls; Antigone sings with increasing excitement about the sight on the plain below her. After a brief choral song, Jocasta welcomes Eteocles into the city, and sings a monody that mingles joy and sorrow, celebration and persuasion, calculated to divert her son from his murderous path. More than one thousand lines later, after the deaths of Polyneices, Eteocles, and Jocasta, Antigone delivers a monody emphasizing her inadequacy, as a sole mourner, to grieve for the destruction of the royal house. The play concludes with paired duets of Antigone and Oedipus, in which the scattered remains of the family are brought together through song, thereby achieving a partial victory.

The three scenes of lyric featuring Antigone – the *teichoskopia*, her monody of lament over the corpses, and her duets with Oedipus – trace her progression from a sheltered maiden to a distraught mourner and finally to a mature woman who takes charge of her own and her father’s fate. As in the case of Iphigenia in *Iphigenia in Tauris*, the multiple songs of this virginal heroine show a progression from powerlessness to agency. Euripides here experiments with monody not only as a structural device to shape
plot and create meaning, but also as a vehicle for the development of a complex female figure.

Chapter 4: Orestes: Monody as Messenger Speech (408 B.C.E.)

Orestes stands as the culmination of a decade of experimentation with monody as a versatile dramatic form. As in Phoenician Women, Euripides presents a radically transformed version of a well-known myth. Orestes has murdered his mother Clytemnestra, and suffers the torments of the Erinyes. He and Electra are in danger of being sentenced to death by the Argive assembly. They expect help from Menelaus and from Tyndareus, to no avail. Then, with the aid of Pylades, the siblings devise a desperate plot: to kill Helen and hold her daughter, Hermione, for ransom. When the conspirators attempt to commit the murder, however, Helen mysteriously vanishes. Her disappearance is reported not by a messenger in an iambic rhesis, but by an anonymous Phrygian slave in a virtuosic monody: the tonal and rhetorical ambiguities in his song underscore the increasing fragmentation and chaos of the plot.

To this point, the songs of the first two-thirds of the play have drawn on patterns familiar from other works about the house of Atreus: Electra sings two laments in exchange with a sympathetic female Chorus, while in their odes the Chorus explore the mythological background of the house’s present woes. The sudden intrusion of the Phrygian Slave undermines the existing musical structure of the play. The monody overturns the expectations of the audience through its unprecedented combination of the traditionally antithetical genres of monody and messenger speech. The Phrygian represents an unprecedented type of narrator in tragedy, offering instead of an objective
reporting of events a “polyphonic” account that draws on a multiplicity of genres and styles.

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In examining these four plays, I hope to show some of the various potentials of this new Euripidean music as a major structural element in tragic drama, insofar as it can heighten emphasis, allow for the development of emotional states both subtle and extreme, reveal and deepen character, and mirror thematic movements. In the last decade of his career, Euripides establishes monody as a dramatic form of considerable versatility and power. The poetry is charged with increased affect and expressivity; at the same time it articulates a new self-consciousness about the reciprocal capacities of form and content to shape one another. Here we may discern the shift of sensibility in Euripides’ late work, which proceeds pari passu with an apparent loosening of structural demands, or what one with equal justice might recognize as an increase in degrees of freedom. As the playwright repeatedly reconfigures the relationship between form and content, the range of what can happen onstage, of what can be said and sung, expands.
**Ion: Monody as Agon**

Apollo stands at the center of *Ion*. He has set the plot of the play in motion, and directs its progress through his agents Hermes and Athena; his image is always before the audience, in the form of his temple; and the men and women who occupy the stage repeatedly attempt to justify, criticize, or influence his actions. Yet, because Apollo himself never appears, he remains unknown and unknowable. Like his Homeric counterpart, he acts from afar. Mortals must puzzle out this complex, ambiguous god as best they can: is he a divine embodiment of purity and light, or callous, cruel, ruled by all-too-human passions?¹

The debate about the nature of Apollo is carried on primarily through the juxtaposition of competing accounts. The play lacks a formal *agon*, where opposing arguments may be brought into direct conflict.² Rather, the cases for and against the musical god are presented in musical form, through the monodies of Ion and Creusa.³

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¹ Modern scholars, too, are divided on the issue of Apollo’s goodness. Assessment of Apollo’s morality has shifted over the course of the last century: earlier scholars tend to favor the view that Apollo is above blame, while more recent writing emphasizes ambiguity and the simultaneous existence of multiple perspectives. On the former view cf. Murray ([1913] 1965) and Wasserman (1940) 589, who exonerates Apollo from guilt for the rape of Creusa because a god cannot be judged by human standards: “a strong virility is just one aspect of his epiphany.” Spira (1960), Burnett (1962) and (1971) 127-129, Willetts (1973), Sinos (1982), Gellie (1984), Farrington (1991), and Rabinowitz (1993) 195-201 all agree that, within the framework of the play, Apollo’s behavior presents little problem, since Creusa indict Apollo not for sexual misconduct but for neglecting the child that he sired, and the play shows this criticism to be misguided. For a more nuanced discussion cf. Wolff (1965), Lloyd (1986), and Giannopoulou (1999-2000).

² This is unusual for Euripides. Lloyd (1992) 3 identifies thirteen explicitly marked *agon* scenes in the extant corpus. The other plays that lack an *agon* are *Heracles, Iphigenia in Tauris, Helen*, and *Bacchae*.

³ The monody of Creusa has attracted more scholarly attention than that of Ion. Both monodies are discussed by Barlow (1971) 45-50 and Furley (1999-2000). The poetic qualities of Creusa’s monody are explored by Larue (1963), Rutherford (2012) 261-267, and Rynearson (2014). Kearns (2103) compares the experience of rape described in Creusa’s monody to Pindar’s *Pythian* 9. Weiss (2008) examines Creusa’s monody from a psychoanalytical perspective, tracing the processes of repetition, regression, and the re-experiencing of trauma in the play. Segal (1999) sees the two monodies as complementary visions of male and female adolescence; the play dramatizes the rites of passage whereby each character reaches maturity.
The solo lyric mode of the two monodies demands that they be interpreted in apposition, despite the scenes that separate them. Similarities of meter, diction, imagery, and theme focus attention on the disparity between the radically different points of view expressed by the singers. Ion’s monody praises a benevolent god in a peaceful, ordered world. Creusa – although she has not heard Ion’s monody – denies and contradicts this song of praise, offering in its place a vision of a pitiless deity and a world arbitrary and full of pain.

The attitudes presented in the monodies are diametrically opposed. Each singer offers a position which is absolute and internally consistent. In this way the two monodies create what amounts to an emotionally charged agon, witnessed by the spectators if not recognized by the dramatis personae. The agon as a Bauform of tragedy is, by scholarly agreement, a set of paired speeches composed in iambic trimeter and delivered within a single scene. By these strict formal criteria, the contrasting monodies of Ion do not constitute an agon; nonetheless, the conventions of the agon may shed light on the combative relationship between the two songs.

The musical agon of Ion characterizes the figures of Ion and Creusa through the competitive presentation of their world-views. As Donald Mastronarde has discussed, any contest of arguments raises questions about the sufficiency of language and of human constructs within a given play; here the issue at stake is the ability of mortals to understand and to judge the actions of the gods.

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5 Mastronarde (2010) 223. Foucault (2001) 27-74 sees the entire play as a debate about παρρησία, or free speech: who has the right, the duty, and the courage to speak the truth?
inconclusive, because both participants are arguing from a partial understanding of events and their consequences.

Michael Lloyd in his monograph on the *agon* in Euripides draws a distinction between the *agones* of Euripides’ early and late plays. In the earlier plays, “it is obvious which side is in the right, and tension derives from uncertainty about whether an obviously sympathetic character will win his or her case.” In the late plays, by contrast, there are usually good arguments on both sides, and interest is focused more on the conflicting ideas and their articulate expression. The *agon* depicts a central conflict of the play in a vivid and compelling manner, and offers the fullest and subtlest possible account of a given point of view.

It is exactly this depiction and account that the two monodies of *Ion* set out to achieve. The further action of the play is built upon the confrontation of these stark attempts to define the nature of Apollo; the logical tension between the attitudes of Ion and Creusa demands some degree of resolution. Only after the exchange of songs can the characters, and the audience, come to an understanding that incorporates both the beauty and the harshness of the god.

The conflict is not confined to the lyric portions of the play. Hermes in the prologue presents one view of Ion’s birth and nurture; his narrative will be called into question by the human characters who later appear. Ion and Creusa come together onstage in two scenes to debate and discuss the god’s actions, in the first episode (236-451) and in the exodus (1250-1548). In these scenes the argument is carried forward through rapid stichomythic exchange as well as longer speeches in iambic trimeter. The forum is public, even legalistic: Ion and Creusa respond to one another and to the

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interjections of the Chorus. In the final scene, Athena in her epiphany seems to remove the impasse by confirming Ion’s divine parentage, but her *ex machina* pronouncement cannot completely expunge what has come before (1553-1618). Ultimately, no account of Ion’s conception, birth, and nurture emerges as more true than any other; in these iambic scenes various versions of the story coexist, collaborate, and compete for authority.

The monodies, by contrast, focus on private, subjective experience. Ion’s monody is delivered in complete solitude; Creusa in her violent outburst of song seems to have forgotten the other characters onstage. Each character is, for the duration of the monody, alone with the god. The language appeals to the imagination rather than the intellect, and makes use of a wide imagistic repertoire: metaphor and extended simile; compound adjectives; a wealth of vocabulary that draws attention to sound, sight, and movement; the jarring juxtaposition of pictorial elements. This sensory detail gives the monodies a dream-like immediacy. Ion’s song wells up from him spontaneously, as an expression of his quiet joy. When Creusa finally breaks her long silence, she not only remembers the pain of the rape and of abandoning her child, but relives it, excruciatingly.

The contrasting songs also create a complex web of meta-poetic allusion. Monody connects mother and son to each other, but also to Apollo in his role as the god of music. The privileged connection that Ion and Creusa have to Apollo is underscored by the very act of singing. Both monodies formally resemble the paean, Apollo’s particular genre; the refrain of Ion’s monody explicitly invokes Apollo by his cult title Παιάν (125-128 = 141-143), while Creusa employs the traditional structures of a praise hymn ironically to set

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off her scathing indictment of the god.\textsuperscript{8} Monody allows Ion and Creusa to approach the god directly through his own preferred modality.

This chapter falls into four parts. First I explore Ion’s monody, which presents the god as unequivocally glorious, but at the same time hints at the limitations of the young man’s life. Then I discuss the first episode, in which Ion and Creusa seek to apply human moral standards to the conduct of the god. The necessity, and the impossibility, of reconciling the human demand for justice with the amorality of the gods have long been recognized as a core concern of Euripides’ work.\textsuperscript{9} In this instance, Ion and Creusa deploy the terms of “justice” and “injustice” in debate, at once intellectual and impassioned; this exploration will be counterposed to the form of expression inherent in the monodies. In the third section of the chapter I examine Creusa’s monody, in which she first debates with herself about whether to speak out, and then lays her grievance at the foot of the god. The final section deals with the exodus, where the conflict is first heightened and then, after the recognition of mother and son, reconciled within a larger gratitude.

**Ion’s Monody (82-183)**

The monody of Ion is highly unusual in position, content, and form. Discussions of the monody have focused on Ion’s unusual status as a male singer whose monody occurs before the opening choral song. In extant tragedy this is the only full-fledged male monody before the parodos. Two examples exist of men singing early in their respective plays, both of which highlight the unique nature of Ion’s song: Prometheus and

\textsuperscript{8} Cf. Larue (1963), Swift (2010) 61-103.

\textsuperscript{9} Many scholars have written about the depiction of the gods in Euripides, and the discussion continues in lively fashion. I have found particularly helpful Giannopoulou (1999-2000), Wildberg (1999-2000), Hartigan (1991), Mikalson (1991), Vellacott (1975).
Hippolytus. In *Prometheus Bound*, immediately after the opening scene with Hephaestus, Bia, and Kratos, the first utterance of Prometheus is a mixture of iambics and lyrics (88-127), and leads directly a lyric *amoibaion* with the Chorus of Oceanids (128-192). The authorship and date of this play has been so much disputed that it cannot be seen as a clear predecessor to *Ion*; indeed, the author of *Prometheus Bound* seems to me to have been familiar with Euripides and even to have imitated him in his use of monody. In *Hippolytus*, Hippolytus upon his first entrance directly after the prologue sings three lines of lyric (58-60) in praise of Artemis, and then joins the secondary Chorus of youths in a hymn (61-72). Hippolytus’ solo is very short, but the parallel with *Ion* is significant: in both cases the play opens with the young hero’s lyric praise of the deity that he especially worships; as the play progresses, the morality of that god is profoundly called into question.

The subject matter of Ion’s monody – contentment in his work and calm contemplation of a benevolent deity – is unique in extant tragedy. Several explanations have been offered for the atypical nature of the song, all of which emphasize the creation of dramatic irony and foreshadowing. Ion sings of being Apollo’s son; he is in fact Apollo’s son, more truly than he knows. The monody shows us what Ion’s life has been like up to this point; it opens a window on his past existence. The monody gives us, as Anne Burnett observes, “the closing moments of [Ion’s] enchanted childhood.” It evokes the serenity and solitude of Ion’s life, while also recognizing the outside forces.

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10 The unusual style and content of Ion’s song may be seen more strongly in contrast with the monody of Hecuba in *Trojan Women*, which also comes before the parodos and opens with recitative anapests. The effect in both cases is to isolate the solo voice as the center of interest, and then to deepen and develop the themes introduced in the monody through interaction with the Chorus. Hecuba’s monody is an impassioned lament, signaled by the opening words, ἄνα δόσδάταιον (“Up, wretched woman!” 98), entirely different in tone from Ion’s reverent address to the sun.

11 Burnett (1971) 104.
that will soon disrupt it. K.H. Lee writes that there is in Ion’s song “a sense of complete immersion in the present, with the contentment that that brings.”\(^{12}\) Soon his history and future prospects will occupy Ion’s mind. Hermes in the prologue has informed the audience that on this day Ion’s time as a servant in the temple of Apollo is to come to an end. The play portrays a young man on the brink of manhood, and dramatizes his transition into the adult world, whose complications and moral ambiguities will shake his pure and simple faith.\(^{13}\)

I would argue that the monody is more nuanced in its presentation of Ion’s inner state. He is not as tranquil as he appears: underneath his pious calm we may discern a preoccupation with his unknown parents, with the trauma of his early life, and with his own identity and status.\(^{14}\) As I will discuss in the next section, this desire to know the truth will propel the relationship between Ion and Creusa in the next scene, where the story of Creusa’s “friend” prompts Ion to think about the mystery of his own conception, birth, and abandonment.

Ion’s monody is unusual not only in terms of positioning and subject matter, but in terms of form. The song continues for one hundred lines, quite long for a monody, and has a clear metrical structure. The orderly progression of the monody matches its subject


\(^{13}\) Cf. Beverly (1997) 81. The figure of the young man on the edge of manhood is frequent in tragedy (cf. Hippolytus, Neoptolemus, and Orestes in all of his appearances). Rynearson (2014) discusses Ion’s connection to these other young male characters, focusing especially on the parallels with Orestes in the Oresteia. Some scholars wish to connect this phenomenon to the annual ceremony of the ephebeia and the formation of Athenian ideology, e.g. Winkler (1985), Goldhill (1987). For the connection in Ion between generational passage and civic myth cf. Segal (1999).

\(^{14}\) As noted by Pedrick (2007) 89, who comments that Ion “has no relationship to his origins in the past” and is an “artifact of abandonment,” eager to set off on a quest for his true identity. Hoffer (1996) 291 discusses Ion’s attitude to his status as a temple slave, which combines “naïve contentment with wistful longing.”
matter: on the surface, Ion’s world is calm, precise, and predictable.\textsuperscript{15} In contrast to many of the monodies in Euripides’ later plays, which are astrophic and dizzying in the variety of meters they employ, here the poet offers a unified composition.\textsuperscript{16} The monody falls naturally into three large metrical sections: it begins with recitative anapests (82-111); develops with a lyric strophe and antistrophe, punctuated by a short refrain, repeated twice (112-143); and finishes with a long epode of lyric anapests that echoes the opening movement and brings the song to a close (144-183).\textsuperscript{17} The two anapestic sections, one chanted, one sung, neatly frame the strophic pair and refrains. In the central strophic section Ion reaches his greatest heights of expressivity and emotion, but even here the poetical flights are contained within the metrical systems of the rest of the monody, relying principally on spondaic anapests. There is some evidence that spondaic meter was associated with the paean; in performance it also has the effect of slowing the tempo of the song and enforcing a measured predictability.\textsuperscript{18}

Each metrical section has its own focus and primary topic; the musical structure of the song thus moves in tandem with its thematic development. Four subjects are addressed. In the first twenty-nine lines, Ion summarizes his status, in anapests (82-111). Then he moves to a section of elevated lyric, addressed, daringly, to his holy broom

\textsuperscript{15} The taut structure of the monody is noted by Barlow (1971) 46-48 and Beverley (1999) 80-95, and mentioned by De Poli (2012) 99-105.

\textsuperscript{16} The clear structure of the monody is thus in tension with the characteristics of late Euripidean music as identified by Csapo (2004) 228, including voluble rhythm and melody, strange vocabulary, and chaotic syntax. Certainly the effect here is not to create “a dizzying effect of giddiness, if not outright hysteria.” These generalizations may be truer of Creusa’s monody, but, as we shall see, her emotionality is balanced by the forward thrust of a persuasive argument.


\textsuperscript{18} Rutherford (1995) discusses ancient musicological sources that contrast the calm singing of the paean with the disorderly dithyramb.
(strophe, 112-24), which concludes with a brief direct invocation of the god (refrain, 125-127). He turns his attention to the sprinkling of water that purifies the steps of the temple (antistrophe, 128-140). The strophe-antistrophe pair is brought to a close by a repetition of the paeanic refrain (refrain, 141-143). Finally, in a section of freer, astrophic lyric anapests, he wards off the birds that threaten to defile the temple with their droppings (154-181). At the end of each section there is a kind of σφραγίς, or poetic seal, which reinforces the divisions of meter and of theme, and stamps on Ion’s work a sacral quality.\textsuperscript{19}

The preoccupations and prejudices in Ion’s conception of Apollo, and, necessarily, in his conception of life, are developed as the song proceeds. Let us therefore move through the sections of the monody in detail.

The opening anapestic section, a self-contained movement both metrically and thematically, itself falls into four parts, each rounded off by a concluding paroemiac: a description of sunrise (82-88), the activity in the temple precinct (89-93), instructions to Ion’s fellow attendants (94-101), and Ion’s own tasks (102-111). The absence of Doric forms suggests that this part was not sung, but delivered in recitative.\textsuperscript{20} The sections increase in length, and move from the outer fringes of Ion’s perception to a contemplation of what is nearest to him, his own work and worship. Ion begins with a reverent depiction of the rising sun and the physical setting of Delphi. He greets the morning as the first light touches the temple and the surrounding landscape:

\begin{verbatim}
ἀρματα μὲν τάδε λαμπρὰ τεθρίππων
’Ηλιος ἕδη λάμπει κατὰ γῆν,
ἀστρα δὲ φεύγει πυρὶ τῶδ’ αἰθέρος
\end{verbatim}

\textsuperscript{19} Cf. Lee (1997) ad 112.

\textsuperscript{20} De Poli (2011) 175.
This shining four-horsed chariot, Helios, already shines on the world, and at this celestial fire the stars flee into holy night. The peaks of Parnassus, untrodden, shining the day in reflection, receive the sun’s wheel for mortal men.

These lines descend from heaven to earth. Ion first contemplates the movement of celestial bodies: the sun, the stars, the darkness of night. The images of light that cluster in the description of Helios (λαμπρά, λάμπει, καταλαμπόμεναι) suggest the sun’s gathering strength, and signal Ion’s connection to Apollo. The repetition and variation of light vocabulary have thematic significance as well as musical effect: the bright god is the center of Ion’s life. His awareness then moves to the natural world beyond the reach of human activity, represented by the “untrodden” peaks of Mount Parnassus. From this distant vista he turns his focus to the familiar scene of the temple and its daily activities:

σμύρνης δ’ ἄνυδρου καπνὸς εἰς ὀρύφους
Φοίβου πέταται.
θάσσει δὲ γυνὴ τρίποδα ζάθεον

21 I have used the text of De Poli (2011) for the monodies, substituting iota subscript for adscript, and that of Diggle (1981) for all other portions of the play. The translation throughout is my own.

22 Ion connects Helios with Apollo, here repeatedly referred to as Phoebus, “Shining One.” For Ion, Apollo has never yet been a bringer of pain, only of beauty and brightness. Barlow (1971) 47 writes that “the language of light here indirectly conveys to the audience not only Apollo’s presence but also Ion’s idealism and the vulnerability of his innocence.” Swift (2010) 92 sees the imagery of light and sun as typical of the paean.

23 Lee (1997) ad 86 comments, “In fact, the summit of Parnassus is not visible from Delphi and Ion is probably speaking here of the cliffs, the Phaidriades, which rise to two peaks to the north-east of the temple and which were the mountain’s famous characteristic … If so, he embroiders his picture, since the Phaidriades do not catch the morning sun until well after sunrise.” I think this degree of geographical awareness is too much to expect of the average Athenian theatergoer. Ion evokes the mythical world of the god’s shrine in traditional images that would be familiar to everyone, even those who had never visited Delphi, as today one may summon thoughts of Paris by the Eiffel Tower.
The smoke of myrrh, undiluted, 
floats upward to the peaks of Phoebus. 
The Delphian priestess sits on the sacred tripod, 
rendering sound into song for Greeks 
from the torrents Apollo utters.

Ion then addresses the attendants of the shrine, directing them to perform their ritual tasks. If the attendants are played by mute actors, they may have entered with Ion, or subsequently during the first lines of his monody. They do not speak, and serve principally to create the sense of a well-organized, prosperous, bustling temple, soon to be open for its daily business. Here we see Ion confident and in command; he may be a servant, but he is respected and his orders are obeyed. Ion’s service is of a very special kind and altogether distinct from domestic slavery, as the ensuing dialogue with Creusa will show. The idea of serving, both menial and exalted, will be developed throughout the four sections of the monody and constitutes one of its principal themes.

Ion instructs the attendants to ready themselves for their work in the temple:

```
ἀλλ’, ὦ Φοίβου Δελφοὶ θέραπες,
tὰς Κασταλίας ἄργυροειδεῖς 
βαίνετε δῖνας, καθαραῖς δὲ δρόσοις
ἄφυδρανάμενοι στείχετε ναοὺς·
στόμα τ’ εὕφημον φρουρεῖτ’ ἀγαθὸν,
φήμας τ’ ἀγαθὰς
```
As the address to Helios emphasized light, these lines introduce another image of central thematic importance: purity. The waters of Castalia are “silvery” (ἄργυροειδεῖς), and its dews are “pure” (καθαραῖς). All words uttered in the presence of the god must be “well-omened” (εὐφημον) and “good” (ἀγαθόν, ἀγαθάς), as exemplified by Ion’s own monody, which he presents as an offering to Apollo. Through his own song he gives an example to his fellow servants of how the god must be addressed. In addition to euphony, Ion also emphasizes the importance of offering hospitality fit for those who come to the temple.

Ion then summarizes his own three-fold task: to sweep the floor, cleanse the temple with sacred water, and ward off the birds that threaten to defile the holy precinct:

But for me, my work, from childhood on, I labor always: with laurel boughs and holy garlands to keep the entrances pure and the temple floor wet with cleansing water; and the flocks of birds that befoul the ritual offerings, with my arrows I frighten them into flight.
Each of these tasks will be further developed in its own section of the monody. The anapests conclude with a statement of Ion’s status as an orphan and a servant of Apollo:

\[ \text{ὡς γὰρ ἀμήτωρ ἀπάτωρ τε γεγος} \]
\[ \text{τοὺς θρέψαντας} \]
\[ \text{Φοίβου ναοὺς θεραπεύω.} \]

(109-111)

Being motherless, fatherless, I care for this shrine of Phoebus which has nourished me.

The opening anapestic section of the monody thus introduces in light, impressionistic strokes the character of the young man – that is, what is most distinctive about him at this initial moment of the play. He is devoted to Apollo; he rejoices in the beauty of the natural world; he is exacting, almost fastidious, in his quest for purity; he knows his duty to visitors and to the temple where he works; and he thinks of himself as motherless and fatherless, alone but for the protection of the god. These traits will be extended and expanded upon in the lyric strophe and antistrophe and in the final section of free lyric anapests.

When the other servants have left the stage, Ion moves from recitative into lyrics. The strophe and antistrophe are complementary in subject matter, and develop Ion's tasks as introduced in the anapestic section. The strophe is a prolonged address to the broom that Ion uses to sweep the temple. This ordinary domestic object is elevated to a holy status because it is associated, in Ion’s eyes, with the service of Apollo. The broom becomes an extension of Ion himself, hard-working and humble.

\[ \text{ἀγ’, ὦ νεθαλές ὦ} \]
\[ \text{καλλίστας προπόλευμα δά-} \]
\[ \text{φνας, ἃ τὰν Φοίβου θυμέλαν} \]
\[ \text{σαίρεις ὑπὸ ναοῖς,} \]
\[ \text{κήπων ἐξ ἀθανάτων,} \]
\[ \text{ἵνα δρόσοι τέγγουσ’ ιεράί,} \]
Come, O you, bloom-fresh,  
O you instrument of loveliest laurel,  
who sweep this precinct of Phoebus  
before the temple,  
cut from undying gardens  
where holy streams, sending forth  
an unfailing flow, water  
the holy locks of the myrtle.  
With you I sweep  
the threshold of the god,  
day after day, when the swift wing  
of the sun arrives, serving every day.

The broom is made of laurel, Apollo’s sacred tree, and grew beside the waters in  
the god’s precinct, like Ion himself. It is “bloom-fresh” (νεηθαλές), a neologism which  
draws attention to its everlasting youth. The broom remains close to divine immortality:  
it comes from undying gardens (κήπων ἐξ ἀθανάτων) where the fresh spring never fails  
(ἀέναον). The broom becomes what Shirley Barlow terms an “obsessive object,” an  
article which acquires a significance beyond its immediate use as a stage prop because of  
the way it is described by its owner. The ritual of sweeping is timeless, predictable, and  
meaningful beyond its basic goal of tidiness. For Ion the broom symbolizes the unity of  
worship and servitude in his daily life: just as the lowly broom can become holy through  
its service to the temple, so he, though a menial, glories in his work.

26 LSJ s.v.  
27 Barlow (1971) 48. This seems to be a favorite technique of Euripides: Ion’s broom may be compared to  
the torch carried by Cassandra in Trojan Women (308-341) or the jug of water in Electra’s monody in the  
Electra (lines 140-143). The object in each case both symbolizes and makes visible a major thematic  
concern of the speaker: servitude, marriage, poverty.
The short refrain that links strophe and antistrophe praises Apollo and reestablishes the high subject matter of the song. This formal invocation of the god is less personal than the rest of the monody. The meter is entirely spondaic, a slow, measured rhythm appropriate to worship. The *anadiplosis* of the god’s title and in the reference to his parentage give the refrain a hymnic solemnity.²⁸

ō Παιὰν ὦ Παιὰν,
εὖαίον εὖαίον
εὕης, ὦ Λατοῦς παῖ.

(125-127 = 141-143)

O Paian, O Paian,
goodly life and long
be yours, O Leto’s son!

The repetition of ὦ Παιὰν ὦ Παιὰν explicitly links Ion’s monody to the cult songs sung throughout the Greek world in honor of Apollo.²⁹ In fifth-century Athens, the paean would immediately evoke certain ideas, chief among them a sense of community and solidarity.³⁰ The singing of the paean is a collective, choral approach to the god, thanking him for his aid or asking for salvation in a time of crisis. Ion’s solitary paean – and, later, Creusa’s – is abnormal, and places him beyond the normal religious rhythms of human society.

The antistrophe develops Ion’s praise of Apollo and makes more specific his role as Ion’s guardian.

²⁸ Plutarch *The E at Delphi* 388f-9b calls the paean to Apollo “well-ordered and chaste” (τεταγμένη καὶ σώφρωνα μοδα). On the differences between Apollonian and Dionysia music in this passage cf. Hunter (2011).

²⁹ On the paean as a genre see further Käppel (1992) 32-86, Rutherford (1995) and (2001) 3-136, and Swift (2010). In the fifth century, the performance of the paean with song and dance was primarily associated with healing and with celebration, but could also be used apotropaically, in the symposium, or to accompany a sacrifice. The refrain consists of molossoi, which are characteristic of hymns, cf. Owen ([1939] 2003) ad 125–7, West (1982) 55–6.

Noble is the work, O
Phoebus, serving you before your house,
honoring your seat of prophecies;
and glorious is my work, to pair
these hands as slaves to the gods,
no mortal masters, but deathless ones.
Well-omened work, I never tire of labor.
Phoebus is my maker, my father;
for I praise the one who tends me,
the one who helps me, and call him by the name
of father, of Phoebus, all through his shrine.

In this passage, words denoting labor and servitude occur six times in a positive
ccontext: πόνον, λατρεύω, πόνος, δούλαν, πόνους, μοχθεῖν. In particular the adjective
κλεινός (glorious) grants to Ion’s work a glory (κλέος) that is both heroic and religious:
Ion’s service becomes an honor because of his bond with the god. This bond is expressed
in the vocabulary of paternity. Ion calls Phoebus his maker and father (γενέτωρ πατήρ).
In what sense does the young man mean these terms? Of course, Hermes has already
stated the literal truth of this claim. Yet Ion does not know his own parentage, and in fact
suspects that he may be the result of an unchaste mortal union, and so he cannot mean
γενέτωρ in strictly biological terms.31 Rather, his experience of serving the god represents
to him a filial relationship; he uses physical paternity as a metaphor for his strong

31 Ion tells Creusa, “Perhaps I came into the world as some woman’s wrong” (ἀδίκημά του γυναικός, 325).
spiritual connection to Apollo. Ion’s wish is to call Apollo his father, but Ion is a servant
(λατρεύω) and Apollo’s care for him is primarily to feed him and supply his livelihood
(τὸν βόσκοντα). Ion’s love for his parent Apollo is asymmetric, as any mortal’s love for a
god must be. The emotional bond that develops between Ion and Creusa, semi-divine son
and mortal mother, will by the conclusion of the drama complement his distant worship
of the deity.

The repetition of the paeanic refrain closes the strophe and antistrophe pair, and
introduces the final lyric section. Ion announces that he has finished his sweeping, and
will now move on to his second task, cleansing the floor of the temple with sacred water:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ἀλλ’ ἐκπαύσω γάρ μόχθους} \\
\text{δάφνας όλκοῖς,} \\
\text{χρυσέων δ’ ἐκ τευχέων ρέω} \\
\text{γαίας παγάν,} \\
\text{ἄν ἀποχεύονται} \\
\text{Κασταλίαις δίναι,} \\
\text{νοτερὸν ὕδωρ βάλλων,} \\
\text{ἴσιος ἀπ’ εὐνᾶς ὄν.}
\end{align*}
\]

But I will pause my labors
with the laurel boughs,
and from golden cups I will
pour
the stream of the earth,
what the whirls of Castalia let flow,
casting down fresh water,
I, holy from my bed.

The emphasis again is on purity, both of the water and of Ion himself. He has
ordered the other temple attendants to bathe themselves in preparation for their service in
the shrine, but he himself needs no such cleansing: he is holy “from his bed”
(ὅσιος ἀπ’ εὐνᾶς ὄν). Ion spends all of his days in the temple precinct and sleeps there as
well. \(^{32}\) The other temple attendants have contact with the outside world, and so must

\(^{32}\) As he tells Creusa, “All the god’s precinct, wherever I fall asleep, is home to me” (315).
purify themselves before they cross the boundary between secular and sacred to serve the god. Ion has no experience, no human relationships, outside the temple. Like the Pythia, Ion remains pure because he withdraws from the natural cycles of worldly life. “Holy from my bed” indicates also his chastity; he is sexually pure, although not entirely naïve about the relations between men and women. He equates his own purity with the purity of the shrine and of the god. The action of the play will demonstrate that Ion is purer than the god he serves, at least in human terms.

Perhaps it is to raise and resolve this very point – the relation between human purity and divine holiness – that Ion speaks here of ὡσία, “holiness”. He declares that he is ὡσίος, but this is a word more properly applied to the sphere of the divine than to mortal behavior. Ion naïvely believes that what constitutes pious behavior or “holiness” among men is the same as what is required of gods. When confronted with the possibility of a rape committed by Apollo, he forcefully rejects the suggestion, and his lingering doubts are only removed by the epiphany of Athena. Yet gods are not bound by Ion’s restricted version of purity. Creusa’s story is true, and Ion must accept that his god is capable of acts which are by mortal standards harsh and without pity. Yet the view presented in Ion’s lyrics is true as well: Phoebus is beautiful, golden, the source of light and music for mortals. In this way Ion’s monody sets up a series of associations that will be challenged by the action that follows, most directly by the perspective expressed in Creusa’s monody.

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33 He questions Creusa about her “friend” in the first episode; after she has been revealed as his mother, he speculates that a mortal liaison, not a divine rape, led to the birth (341, 1523-1527).

34 For Ion’s disbelief cf. lines 339, 341, 436-451, 1523-1527.
Ion’s wish is that his service will never cease, or that it will cease “with a good fate.” These simple, pious lines bring the strophic section of the monody to an end:

εἴθος οὖτως αἰεὶ Φοίβῳ
λατρεύων μὴ παυσάμαιν,
ἡ παυσάμαιν ἀγαθῇ μοῖρῃ.

May I never cease
to serve Phoebus thus forever,
or else cease with a good fate.

Ion now comes to the third and most elaborately presented of his tasks, as he notices and reacts to the birds who threaten to defile the temple with their droppings. The structural break is signaled by the introduction of lyric anapests, a new meter that will make up the rest of the song, and by the extra metrum cry of ἔα ἔα (154). Although this section lacks strophic responsion, the lines are nevertheless clearly organized into thematic units. After an opening description, Ion addresses three birds in particular: the eagle (158-160), the swan (161-169), and the unspecified nesting bird (170-178). Each bird is carefully described in details that display both the wildness of the natural creature and its connection to divinity.

Until now, Apollo’s temple has been a world unto itself. Here, for the first time, outside forces threaten to disrupt the serenity of the sacred precinct. Ion believes the intruders intend violence, and he responds with violence. Purity must be maintained at all costs. Just as Ion enforced silence and well-omened speech upon his fellow attendants, he must now restrict access to the sacred space.35

ἔα ἔα·
φοιτῶς’ ἡδὴ λείπουσίν τε.

35 Hoffer (1996) has explored at length the themes of patriarchal oppression, cultural hegemony, violence, and ideology at work in the Ion. Ion’s monody, he writes, emphasizes “the connection between purity and the domination by which purity is enforced” (291).
πτανοὶ Παρνασσὸς κοίτας.
αὔδοὶ μὴ χρύμπτεν θυριγκοῖς
μηδ’ ἐς χρυσῆρεις οίκους. (154-157)

Ah! Ah!
They have come, the birds of Parnassus,
they have already left their nests,
I give the warning: do not come near
the cornice-stones and the golden temple.

The eagle, the first intruder, is marked for its physical power and its connection to
Zeus.

μάρψω σ’ αἳ τόξοις, ὁ Ζηνός
κῆρυξ, ὄρνιθων γαμφηλαῖς
ἰσχὺν νικῶν. (158-160)

Now I will draw my bow against you,
O you herald of Zeus, though you conquer
the strength of birds with your crooked beak.

The second bird, a swan, is a singer, like Apollo. The swan may claim divine patronage
through music and through its attendance at the birth of Apollo on Delos, but these
associations will not save it.36

ὁδε πρὸς θυμέλας ἄλλος ἐρέσσει
κύκνος: οὐκ ἄλλαι φοινικωφαὴ
πόδα κινήσεις;
οὐδέν σ’ ἀ φόρμιγξ ἀ Φοῖβο
σύμμολπος τόξων ρύσατ’ ἄν.
πάραγε πτέρυγας:
λίμνας ἐπίβα τάς Δηλιάδος:
αἰμαξεῖς, εἰ μὴ πείσῃ,
tάς καλλιφθόγγους φόδας. (161-169)

This other rows toward the precinct,
a swan. Won’t you ply to another place
your bright red feet?
Even Apollo’s lyre
as your accompaniment
wouldn’t save you from my bow.
Avert your wings!

161-169

36 Cf. Aristophanes, Birds 769.
Go to the shores of Delos;
or if you disobey, you will bloody
the lovely-sounding songs of yours.

Here Ion draws a contrast between the two stringed instruments of Apollo, the lyre and the bow. The syntax pits Apollo’s lyre directly against Ion’s bow. This puts Ion in the position of a θεόμαχος, one who fights against a god, which alerts the audience to the fact that something is wrong. Ion, who sings this challenge, approximates simultaneously both Apollo the musician and Apollo the archer (ἐκβολός, “far-shooting”). He urges the swan to leave Delphi and fly to Delos instead, and to avail himself of the temple and lake there, and, if he does not, threatens him with death. The last two lines, if the text is correct, threaten physical violence. The blood that Ion envisions darkening the song of the swan picks up the detail of the bird’s red feet from several lines earlier, creating a strong visual picture of white feathers sprinkled with crimson. The vivid image emphasizes the impiety of the bloodshed – impure within the space of the temple precinct – that Ion considers. The conflict between Ion and the swan thus suggests a conflict in Ion’s conception of Apollo, where Apollo’s purity exists in tension with the threat posed by the musical bird.

37 Lloyd (1992) 36, cited by Lee (1997) ad 164, suggests that this is an allusion to the formulae of the ἀποπομπή, or ritual dismissal, of a malevolent power, which requires the naming of an alternate victim.

38 The manuscripts have αἰμάξεις, a reading defended by Lee (1969). The emendation αἰμάξεις as adopted by Diggle (1981) 97 and Beverley (1997) 95 would enrich the musical imagery of the passage: the swan changes its song to a cry of pain and lament. The possibilities are discussed by De Poli (2011) 186-187, who ultimately supports the manuscript reading.

39 As pointed out by several commentators, actual swans have black feet and are mute (cf. Lee (1997) ad 162). Euripides includes these details because they are traditional as well as sensually arresting. This striking image looks ahead to the bird that reveals in death the poison plot of Creusa (esp. 1205-1206). The threat that Ion poses to the bird at the beginning of the play will be resolved in the bird’s sacrifice to save the young man’s life, cf. Elderkin (1940).
A repetition of the cry ἕα ἕα introduces the third and final attacker. The bird is left deliberately unspecified. Ion identifies it as καινός, “new,” “newfangled,” or even “strange,” and supposes that its intent is to build a nest for its young within the temple precinct. The use of καινός, a word often applied to the daring flights of the New Music, may indicate a change in the auletic or vocal effects of the monody at this point. The movements of Ion and of the birds the stage could perhaps have been matched by mimetic effects on the pipes to emphasize Ion’s mounting distress:

ἔα ἕα:
tίς ὅ’ ὄρνιθων καινός προσέβα; 
μῶν ύπὸ θριγκοῦς εὐναίας 
καρφηρᾶς θήσων τέκνοις; 
ψαλμοὶ σ’ εἰρέσουσιν τόξων. 
οὐ πείσῃ; χωρὸν δίναις 
tαῖς Ἀλφειῶν παιδοὺργεῖ 
ἡ νάπος Ἡσθμον, 
ὡς ἄναθήματα μὴ βλάπτηται 
ναοῖ θ’ οί Φοίβου. 
κτείνειν δ’ ὕμᾶς αἰδοῦμαι 
tοὺς θεῶν ἀγγέλλοντας φήμας 
θνατοῖς. 

(170-181)

Ah! Ah!
What is this strange new bird approaching?
Won’t it set a woven nest under the eaves for its young?
My singing bow will ward it off.
You won’t obey? Go rear your family by the whirls of Alpheus or the Isthmian grove, so the dedications remain unharmed, and the temple of Phoebus.
But I feel shame to kill you, who bear the prophecies of the gods to humankind.

Ion engages with this third bird at greater length and with more emotion because the threat that it poses is more dangerous. It wants to make the temple its home, to raise

its chicks in the sacred space. This unknown bird is a maternal figure. The passionate force that Ion turns against the nesting bird prefigures the *agon* that he will enter into with Creusa at the climax of the play. The monody concludes with Ion’s prayer:

οῖς δ’ ἔγκειμαι μόρθοις
Φοῖβῳ δουλεύσω, κοῦ λήξω
τοὺς βόσκοντας θεραπεύων.  (181-183)

But held by his labors,
I am a slave to Phoebus, nor will I cease
to tend the place that cares for me.

We have seen that the monody presents what matters most to Ion at the opening of the play. First and foremost the song conveys his devotion to Apollo. The god’s name is invoked thirteen times, twelve times as Φοῖβος, once as Ἀπόλλων, while the cult title Παιάν and the matronymic Λατοῦς παῖ mark the refrain.\(^{41}\) The repeated use of the god’s name and titles give the song the quality of a hymn. As William Furley has discussed, hymns in tragedy show the conception of divinity held by the singer or singers; in this case the monody expresses Ion’s special connection with the god. He sees Apollo as exclusively benevolent, beautiful, and bright, a view not so much false as naïve and simplistic, and underscored by his desire for connection.\(^{42}\) Yet in its exuberance, the song nonetheless participates in the lyric vitality of the god.

Ion’s second great theme is his own work. Words for labor and service occur throughout the monody: πόνους (103), μοχθοῦμεν (104), θεραπεύω (111), λατρεύων (123), πόνον (128), λατρεύω (130), πόνος (131), δούλαν (132), πόνους (134), μοχθείν (135), μόχθοις (144), λατρεύων (152), μόχθοις (181), δούλευω (182), θεραπεύων (183). Ion’s tasks are defined by adjectives such as καλὸν (128), τιμὸν (130), κλεινός (131), and

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\(^{41}\) At lines 90, 93 (Ἀπόλλων), 94, 104, 111, 114, 129, 136, 140, 151, 164, 178, and 182.

\(^{42}\) Furley (1999-2000).
Although he is a slave, Ion’s servitude is to him not a lowly occupation; it is holy because of the god whose temple he tends. This attitude of pious humility will shortly be tested by argument and by event.

A third preoccupation, closely related to the theme of work, is sacred purity. Ion’s three tasks – sweeping, washing, and guarding against the birds – emphasize cleanliness, organization, and exclusion. For Ion order is associated with sanctity; hence the clustering of words like σεμνός (107), ὅσιος (150), ζάθεος (91), and ἱερός (85, 104, 117, 120). The purity of the temple depends on the establishment of boundaries. The attendants must wash themselves before crossing into the precinct and must maintain ritual silence within its walls. Access is restricted not only for humans, but for animals as well. The wildness and fertility of nature, represented by the birds, must be kept out – but no boundary can hold them. The paradox is irresolvable, for sacred purity cannot be permanently achieved. Ion’s frustration at the birds is a preliminary and premonitory sign that his stance is not proof against all assaults.

Finally, Ion’s song makes repeated reference to his status as an orphan and to the role of Apollo and the temple as foster parents. References to parentage conclude each of the three metrical sections of the monody. At the end of the opening anapestic section Ion describes himself as “motherless and fatherless” (ἀμήτωρ ἀπάτωρ, 109); later he declares that Phoebus is his parent (Φοῖβός μοι γενέτωρ πατήρ, 136; πατέρος ὄνομα λέγω, 139); and in the last lines of the song he reiterates his devotion to serving the ones who have reared him (τοὺς βόσκοντας θεραπεύων, 183). Presumably these references are meant metaphorically, and are defining instances of dramatic irony. Yet at the same time parentage is a personal concern of Ion’s, as he tries to define his own identity in
traditional terms. Ion begins the play with an idealized vision of Apollo as his sole parent; Creusa’s allegations against the god strike at the heart of the young man’s faith. Of course, what he does not know is that, had there been no divine violation, Ion himself would not exist. What is denied in Ion’s mind has, at the outset, already been literally incorporated.

These four themes – the brilliance of Apollo, sacred purity, humble work, and the mystery of his parentage – lay the groundwork for the drama as a whole. Over the course of the play, Ion must resolve the challenge that the truth of his birth poses to Apollo’s purity. The song presents a state of idealization and serenity which cannot stand, but which nonetheless defines an aim.

Parodos and First Episode (184-236, 237-451)

The subsequent scenes set off by contrast the unique dramatic and poetic qualities of Ion’s monody. In the parodos, the Chorus complicate Ion’s initial henotheistic vision, and offer in its place a pantheon where Apollo is merely one god among many. In the first episode, the dialogue of Ion and Creusa prepares for the coming conflict; an agonistic element is introduced, but indirectly. Where the two monodies present fully realized visions of the god, the stichomythic exchange in the first episode introduces Ion and Creusa’s opposing views through the exchange of stories. Ion’s monologue, delivered after Creusa leaves the stage, shows how the young man’s unquestioning adoration of Apollo has been challenged and changed by his interaction with Creusa.

These three scenes stand out against Ion’s monody formally as well as dramatically. On the level of poetic technique, the modes of choral song, dialogue, and monologue all lend themselves to different possibilities of expression from those inherent
in solo song. Ion’s monody, I have argued, is a lyrical outpouring of his state of mind. His preoccupations are introduced obliquely and through imagery, rather than through exposition. The song of the Chorus resembles the monody in its lyrical vocabulary and its sense of immediacy, but expresses collective rather than individual impressions. In Ion’s dialogue with Creusa, the focus is on the interaction between the two characters; each line responds to the question or statement that it immediately follows. Though the monologue echoes the monody in its exploration of Ion’s inner state, here Ion moves forward through logical reasoning rather than through free association. Comparison with these three scenes thus highlights the distinctive nature of the opening monody.

The final anapestic section of Ion’s monody gives way directly to the entrance song of the Chorus, which begins in the same meter. In performance, the shift from a single voice to multiple voices would be strongly felt; the continuity provided by the anapestic meter allows differences of imagery and theme to emerge more strongly.

The monody establishes the personal significance of Delphi for a servant who has grown up in its precinct. The visual elements of the temple are familiar to Ion, and for him call for no description; indeed, they are all he has ever known. The Chorus, by contrast, judge the temple as outsiders, focusing on visual detail rather than religious experience, and on collective appreciation rather than personal contemplation. In the absence of elaborate set decoration, words are the essential vehicle of expression. The women of the Chorus encourage one another to “look” and “see” specific aspects of the

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44 Scene painting became more elaborate over the course of the fifth century, but any visual details conveyed by the skene building itself, or by panels fixed to it, were likely to have been missed by spectators sitting beyond the first few rows.
temple, and respond to confirm that they too “behold” what is pictured (ἰδοὺ τάνδ, ἄθρησον, 190; ὀρῶ, 194; ἄθρησον, 201; σκέψαι, 206; δερκόμεσθα, 208; λεύσσεις, 209; λεύσσω 211; ὀρῶ, 215). The vocabulary of vision punctuates short descriptions in the present tense of individual sculptural groups; the Chorus describe the works of art as though the myths they represent are taking place before their eyes.

On the level of theme, the distinctive relationship of the young hero to Delphi and his patron god is heightened by comparison with the Athenian women. The outsiders’ perspective offered in the parodos emphasizes the private, emotional nature of the monody. Where Ion concentrates exclusively on Apollo, their attention moves quickly from one sculptural group to another: Heracles (190-193), Iolaus (194-200), Bellerophon (201-204), the rout of the Giants (205-207), Athena (205-211), Zeus (212-215), and Dionysus (216-218). Apollo, who surely was depicted on the temple, is conspicuous by his absence from the description. Instead, the Athenian women of the Chorus emphasize their relationship to Athena, “my goddess” (ἐμὰν θεόν, 211). The polytheism of the Chorus is a shift in perspective, and proposes a corrective to Ion’s exclusive dedication to Apollo.

In the first episode, Creusa’s bitterness at the god opposes Ion’s reverence even more starkly. This is the first scene of iambic dialogue in the play; the two mortal characters are shown in dynamic interaction with one another. Ion and Creusa are contrasted not only in their view of Apollo, but in their means of expression: Ion is consistently open and direct about his thoughts and feelings, while Creusa utilizes indirection and partial truth to move tentatively forward. A contrast therefore emerges

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between Ion’s monody, with its apparent order and clarity, and the veiled nature of Creusa’s speech. Solo song has already been established in the play as a mode wherein a character expresses unfiltered emotions. Dialogue, with its structure of give and take between two characters, now emerges as an alternative form of communication.

For the audience, Ion is already a partially known entity, distinguished, as we have seen, by his devotion to Apollo, his concern with purity and propriety, and his position as an orphan. His emotional state is apparently calm and content, but he has some doubts about his identity and his position in the world. Ion’s interaction with Creusa fills out this portrait. He is sensitive to Creusa’s distress and instantly sympathetic to her suffering (241-246, 307). He shows himself highly conscious of social distinctions, and repeatedly comments on Creusa’s nobility and status (236-240, 262-263, 293); he bluntly states his own position as a slave (τοῦ θεοῦ δοῦλος, 309). The meaning of “slave” has shifted since his monody: for Creusa, the term is clearly pejorative, and from her position of regal anger she cannot appreciate Ion’s attitude of reverential “servitude” to Apollo. Her nobility confers an authority that Ion instantly notices and respects, and must take into consideration. The dialogue, then, encourages Ion to review and ultimately to question his contentment with being a slave in the temple.

Creusa, by contrast, is mysterious. Her words suggest that she is both angry and afraid, but not until her monody will she express the extent of her rage and shame. In her opening lines, although preoccupied with her memory of the past, she is courteous to Ion and grateful for his concern (246-251). She answers the young man’s inquiries, and expresses pride in her great lineage (260-261, 264). In turn she is curious about his background (309). Her deepest concerns are implicit in her statements and questions. Her
most obvious preoccupation is with having a child; that is the overt motivation for her visit to the temple (304). Even before she reveals the reason that she seeks a prophecy, she repeatedly alludes to motherhood: she considers Ion’s mother fortunate to have such a son (308), and, when she learns that he is an orphan, pities him as well as the mother who bore him (312, 324). The paternal longing that Ion expressed in the monody dovetails with the maternal longing felt by Creusa to create a strongly ironic effect. Creusa’s own thoughts return again and again to deep injustice of her impregnation, childbirth, supposed infanticide, and subsequent childlessness. The sight of the temple, the name of the Long Rocks, and the story of Ion’s birth all remind her of her past and present sufferings (249-251, 286-288, 306, 330). Her pain and her yearning are expressed through ambiguous speech, as again and again she begins to tell her story and then restrains herself.

The iambic interaction between Ion and Creusa in the first episode reinforces the conflict that the monodies will reveal in lyric form. The agon is not between the characters themselves, who establish a delicate sympathy. Rather, the account of Apollo put forth in Ion’s monody is challenged by Creusa’s story of the god’s harsh neglect of her “friend.” Yet Ion does not completely abandon his former reverence: although convinced by her account, he still scruples to accuse the god directly. He forestalls Creusa’s desire to question and accuse the god: Apollo will not prophesy about a matter he wants concealed because the matter causes him shame (αἰσχύνεται τὸ πράγμα, 365-367). Ion’s rebuke to the god will not be public, but private.

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After Xuthus and Creusa depart, Ion is left alone onstage. The ensuing monologue, like his monody, is delivered in part to himself, and in part to the silent god. The reverent, lyrical tone of his monody may be contrasted with this angry and troubled speech in iambic trimeter. Here his central concern is not divine holiness, but human concepts of wrongdoing and retribution. The conversation with Creusa has profoundly disrupted Ion’s belief in Apollo’s goodness; his monologue conveys the bewilderment, disbelief, disappointment, and anger he now feels.

In the opening section of the monody, as we have seen, form and content come together to create a sense of unhurried tranquility. Well-articulated descriptions of the natural landscape, the temple precinct, and the tools of Ion’s service embody timelessness and calm. Copious adjectives fill out the narrative: the peaks of Parnassus are “untrodden,” the waters of the Castalian spring are “silvery,” Ion’s broom is made of laurel that is both “fresh-blooming” and “lovely.” Syntactical structures are well-defined, connections are not interrupted, and the periods and clauses unfurl in leisurely fashion. There are hints of anxiety in Ion’s preoccupation with his identity, but, at least on the surface, everything is right and good, clearly illuminated by the bright sunshine of Apollo.

The young man’s paean was calm, orderly, organized; now his speech is disjointed, and his words can barely keep pace with his rapidly changing feelings. The vocabulary of the opening lines sets up the contrast with the monody. Where the song emphasized light and visibility, here Ion wonders at Creusa’s silence (σιγῶσ’, 432) and her “hidden” words (κρυπτοῖσι, 430). Instead of reverence, she offers “abuse” (λοιδορῶσ’, 430).

Cf. Shadewalt (1926) 227-230, who writes that the monologue creates a sense of deep alienation and estrangement ("tiefen Befremdens").
Ion does not pursue these troubling thoughts, but pushes them away: “But what concern have I with Erectheus’ daughter?” (433-434). He resolves instead to return to his temple tasks, filing the golden vessels with water (434-436). But he cannot perform his usual activities with the same untroubled conscience. Abruptly he breaks off – the caesura is strongly marked, as though he cannot even complete the verse – and instead turns his thoughts to Apollo’s conduct:

νουθετητέος δέ μοι
Φοῖβος, τί πάσχει· παρθένως βία γαμῶν
προδίδοσι; παῖδας ἔκτεκνούμενος λάθρα
θηήσκοντας ἄμελεῖ; μή σὺ γ’· ἄλλ’, ἐπεὶ κρατεῖς,
ἀρετάς δίωκε.

I must rebuke Phoebus – what is he doing? To force a girl to bed and then abandon her! To leave a child to die that has been born in secret! No, not you! But, since you have power, seek the virtuous path.

Ion does not speak in a high poetic register, but addresses the god familiarly and almost an equal. The verbal adjective νουθετητέος gives the sense of personal rebuke or scolding, and may have an informal tone, as of a parent chiding a child.48 The expression τί πάσχει and the imperative μή σὺ γ’ are colloquial, furthering the impression of a conversation between intimates.49 The incredulous questions, short, asyndetic sentences, and strong sense pauses within individual lines convey Ion’s agitation.

The monologue shows Ion moving away from his own isolated world. Out of Creusa’s hearing, Ion responds to her earlier charges against the god. He attempts to define and censure Apollo’s misconduct in the idiom of human morality, with terms such as “base” (κακός, 441), “punishment” (ζημιοδοσία, 441), “just” (δίκαιον, 442), “laws”

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48 As seems to be the case at Bacchae 1256.
(τοὺς νόµους, 442), and “injustice” (ἀδίκίας, 447). This legalistic language contrasts with the vocabulary of the monody, where Apollo’s goodness was expressed primarily through visual imagery and the phenomena of the natural world. The shift in register prepares for Creusa’s monody, where the metaphor of accusation and defense will be taken to its extreme.

Creusa’s Monody (859-922)

Creusa’s monody is the structural and emotional center of the play. It has long been admired for its lyrical intensity and for the concentrated beauty of its imagery. More recently, the monody has been appreciated for its realistic portrayal of Creusa’s mental anguish. The monody stands out so distinctly from the rest of the play that it has often been discussed as a self-contained tour de force. I hope to show that Creusa’s monody is enriched by competitive engagement with the monody of Ion. Through the juxtaposition of the two songs Euripides focuses attention on the contradictory nature of Apollo.

The monody is the third and climactic telling of the rape, and of the birth and abandonment of Creusa’s baby. Hermes in the Prologue gives a detached, third-person account: he states that Apollo “yoked Creusa by force,” but does not speculate on the

50 The central position of the monody is unusual – it bisects the play almost exactly at its midpoint. The typical pattern in the plays of Euripides is for women to sing in the first third of the play, and men to sing in later episodes; in Ion this pattern is reversed. See further Beverley (1999) 7-19, who notes that in the plays produced after 415 B.C. it becomes much more common for women to sing in later episodes, e.g. Iphigenia in Tauris (869-899), Antigone in Phoenician Women (1485-1538), Electra in Orestes (982-1012), and Iphigenia in Iphigenia at Aulis (1279-1335, 1475-1499). The effect here, I believe, is to mark through the change in mode a critical turning point in the action of the play.


emotional consequences of the union (ἔζευξεν γάμωις βία, 10-11). In the first episode, Creusa gives a more emotional version of what happened, but the emotional force is displaced onto her “friend” (338-358). The monody provides direct, unrestrained access to Creusa’s experience. She breaks her long silence in a supreme moment of agony.

The monody is also a pivotal point in the action, marking Creusa’s transition from passive victim to vengeful agent. The song is the culmination of Creusa’s feelings of grief about the loss of her child; it is also the moment when her anger and her desire for revenge break forth and become a motivating force in the plot, as she pivots from a private anguish to declared agon. As Creusa reveals the truth of her past, she sets herself against Apollo, Xuthus, and especially Ion as the agents of her pain and humiliation. The Old Man has already suggested that she kill her husband and his bastard son (843-847); after the monody Creusa herself contrives the stratagem of the poisoned cup.

In the monody, then, in order for engagement to break through inaction, song must first break through silence. Creusa’s internal struggle is expressed through the formal arrangement of the monody. Her monody is more varied and extreme than Ion’s in its metrical structure, as in its thematic content. There is no strophic responsion, and the divisions between thematic sections are not clearly marked by metrical shifts. Nevertheless, it does have an overall formal unity. As in Ion’s monody, anapests are the dominant meter: Creusa’s song is composed almost exclusively of anapestic metra and paroemiacs, with an occasional admixture of dochmiacs. The constant anapestic meter

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53 The theme of speech, song, and silence is explored also through the figure of Apollo, the singing god who remains silent throughout the play, cf. Hartigan (1991).
recalls the traditional form of the paean and emphasizes through musical means the connection between Creusa’s song and Ion’s.

In Ion’s monody, as we have seen, the predominance of long syllables reinforces the mood of measured calm, especially in the refrain invoking the god directly (125-127 = 141-143). When Creusa calls on the god, she does so in entirely spondaic metra, as though parodying the traditional refrain of the paean (ὦ Λατοῦς παὶ, 885; ὡή, τὸν Λατοῦς αὐδῶ, 907). In other parts of the song, Creusa’s anapests are more heavily resolved. In the description of the rape, the runs of short syllables support a sense of hurry, even of panic (e.g. the twelve consecutive short syllables in line 889, after the entirely spondaic lines 886-888). The greater variation and flexibility of the anapestic meter in Creusa’s monody emphasize her labile emotional state.

Thematically, the monody falls into two unequal parts, delineated by a shift in meter: Creusa first makes up her mind to break her silence (859-880), and then, at much greater length, delivers her charge against Apollo (881-922). In the first section, Creusa wavers between song and speech; this alternation of modes dramatizes the battle between her sense of shame (αἰδοῦς, 861) and her drive to reveal the truth. The movement from the hesitant first section to the more determined and hostile second section is underscored by the change from recitative to lyric anapests. The passages of dochmiacs in the center of the lyric section create variety at two moments of extreme agitation, the description of the consummation of the rape and the direct invocation of the god that immediately follows this revelation (894-896, 906). The two sections of the monody are also

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55 Cf. Lourenço (2011) 31: “It is tempting to view the insistent use of anapestic phrases consisting mainly or entirely of long syllables . . . as somehow indicative of a more contained level of grief than that expressed in dochmiac and iambic-trochaic.”

distinguished by a change in who is addressed: Creusa’s inner struggle in the first section becomes an outward accusation against Apollo in the second section.\textsuperscript{57} As in Ion’s monody, where his attention gradually expands to include the temple servants and the birds that threaten the temple, Creusa moves from a contemplation of her own inner state to an active engagement with the outer world.

As we move through the monody in detail, we may observe the ways in which Creusa defines her adversaries and sets herself against them. Creusa begins with an apostrophe in sung lyrics.\textsuperscript{58} By turning away from her onstage audience and speaking to her own soul, she engages once again in the battle that presumably has gone on for many years:

\begin{quote}
\textit{ὦ \psiυχά, πῶς σιγάςω;}
\textit{πῶς δὲ σκοτίας ἀναφήνω}
\textit{εὐνάς, αἰδοῦς δ᾽ ἀπολειφθῶ;}
\end{quote}

My soul, how can I be silent?
Or how illumine the dark coupling, leave behind my shame?

These lines are overwhelmingly composed of long syllables. The decision to speak out is fraught with anxiety, and cannot be made lightly; the spondaic rhythm builds suspense. To tell her story, Creusa will have to abandon silence and darkness (σιγάςω, σκοτίας), which throughout the play have been set against truth and light, as, for example, when Ion in his monologue suspects Creusa’s silence (σιγός’, 432) and her

\textsuperscript{57} Cf. Schadewalt (1926) 217-218, who comments that the initial addressee, Creusa’s own soul, shifts to the second person over the course of the monody.

\textsuperscript{58} The Doric alpha in ψυχά suggests that these lines, as well as the following two lines of paroemiacs, were sung (860-861).
“hidden” words (κρυπτοῖσιν, 430).\textsuperscript{59} In her song there can be no hiding, and no silence. In the immediacy of lyric song, Creusa cannot lie, or evade, or disguise a thought.

First and foremost in this lyric section Creusa is concerned for her αἰδώς, which we have to struggle to render in English, usually choosing “shame” and sometimes “modesty,” and connecting it with her strong inhibition against speaking out, even to herself, or to the god who knows all too well what has happened. But the term has a much broader and deeper acceptation: it includes, as its complementary side, “honor,” a woman’s honor as it used to be understood. In a traditional patriarchy, if a woman engages in sexual relations, which she may have no power to refuse, her honor is regained or lost by what happens subsequently, specifically by what the man does; and its state of repair is evaluated by her family and society. Honor therefore is not a characteristic of an individual alone, but of the individual within a social web of mutual obligations, extending widely into the community and deeply backwards and forwards in time.

After this emotional beginning, Creusa pauses in her aria – the next nineteen lines are delivered in recitative, not sung (862-880). The address to her soul seems to have been a false start. To leave shame behind is no easy matter. Before she can passionately denounce the god, must she not abandon her modesty as a wife and as a woman?

The struggle between silent shame and song is couched in the terms of an \textit{agon}, initiated with a series of rhetorical questions. Now that her husband has become her

betrayed (προδότης), no obstacle remains (ἐμπόδιον κόλυμ'), and she no longer must contend as in the contest of virtue (ἀγώνας . . . ἀρετῆς).  

τί γὰρ ἐμπόδιον κόλυμ′ ἔτι μοι;  
πρὸς τίν' ἀγώνας τιθέμεσθ᾽ ἀρετῆς;  
οὐ πόσις ἦμον προδότης γέγονεν;  

(862-864)

What still blocks or hinders me?  
What contest of virtue is placed in my path?  
Has my husband not become my betrayer?

In what follows, Creusa explicitly sets herself against two adversaries. She names both Xuthos and Apollo as betrayers, using the same word, προδότης, to frame the recitative system at 864 and 880.  

Xuthus has violated his duty as husband by attempting to bring a bastard child into the house. Apollo has defeated her even more cruelly; in her exchange with the Old Man, she refers to the rape as a “terrible contest” (ἀγώνα δεινόν, 939) where she “joined” or “grappled” with Phoebus (ξυνῆψ’, 941). In the scenes prior to the monody Creusa was willing to grant that Apollo could partially redeem himself (425-428); now that he has given a child to Xuthus, but not to her, the betrayal is complete and irremediable.

The audience recognizes that Creusa is more hobbled in this agon than she knows. In fact, of course, neither Apollo nor Xuthus has betrayed her in the way she imagines. They are, indeed, not entirely blameless, and could perhaps be convicted of lesser charges: Xuthus believes that Ion is his son, and plans to adopt him, and Apollo has caused Creusa years of suffering. But in her chief complaint Creusa is in error. By

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60 ἀρετή here may retain some of the original sense of its derivation from Ἀρης, in which case “contest of battle” would form a part of the connotation of the phrase.

61 For the word προδότης (“betrayer”) used to refer to martial infidelity cf. Medea 206, Aicheis 180, and Hippolytus 590.

62 Cassandra in the Agamemnon, another victim of Apollo’s lust, also describes her struggle against the god’s advances in terms of wrestling (Ag. 1202-1209).
making her mistake the central theme of her song, the poet undercuts her argument. Apollo has not abandoned his son and left him to die, and he has not granted to Xuthus the favor he denied Creusa. The tension between the factually flawed content of the monody and its intensely sympathetic tone raises questions about the adequacy of human constructs in understanding the ways of the gods.

I would argue that in this scene the language of the *agon* has both theatrical and meta-theatrical significance. In a less explicit way, Creusa is engaged in an agonistic “contest of virtue” against Apollo as a singer: in form as well as content, she opposes the unfeeling paean that she imagines Apollo playing on his lyre (905-906). As Larue has demonstrated, the power of Creusa’s monody derives in part from the adaptation of the traditional hymnal style to express feelings of loss and anger. This blasphemous inversion is more marked because Ion’s monody has already demonstrated the form of a worshipful and reverent paean. Thus Creusa’s monody contradicts Ion’s song of praise as well, even though she herself has not heard it. Creusa is not aware of the *agon*, which is nonetheless joined between the two paeans, as it takes place in the space of the theater only. Her conflict with Apollo and his creature Ion will become more marked as the song continues.

Once the metaphor of the *agon* has been introduced, Creusa lists her grievances:

- στέρομαι δ’οίκων, στέρομαι παίδων,  
- φρονδαὶ δ’ ἐλπίδες, ὡς διαθέσθαι  
- χρήζουσα καλῶς οὐκ ἐδυνήθην,  
- σιγῶσα γάμους,  
- σιγῶσα τόκους πολυκλαύτους.  

(865-869)

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63 Contra Lee (1997) ad 863, who writes that “the metaphor from athletic competition is very common in Euripides . . . and scarcely felt.”

64 Larue (1963).
I am stripped of my home, stripped of my children, all hopes abandoned, hopes that all might be well, that I couldn’t fulfill, silencing the marriage, silencing the birth, full of wailing.

Creusa invokes three witnesses for her denunciation of Apollo. The all-seeing sun, often called as a witness to oaths, is here omitted, perhaps because of the connection between Helios and Apollo. Instead Creusa calls first upon the “starry seat” of Zeus (τὸ Διὸς πολύαστρον Ἕδος), who as the guarantor of justice and as Apollo’s father has power over his son. In second place she invokes Athena, Apollo’s older sister, specifically in her role as protectress of the Acropolis and of “my cliffs,” where both the rape and the abandonment took place. As Thorburn notes, Apollo’s assault upon Creusa represents a violation against Athena herself; a virgin has been raped under the cliffs that are sacred to the virgin goddess. The Tritonian lake in North Africa, the birthplace of Athena, anticipates the theme of childbirth in Creusa’s song. The invocation of Athena also looks forward to the goddesses’ epiphany in the exodus. Athena, whose clear pronouncements dispel the ambiguity about Ion’s past and future, emerges as an alternative model of divine guidance. At the end of the play, Creusa and Ion will leave Apollo and his riddling oracles to live in the city of Pallas. Apollo thus is in some ways replaced by Athena, as Delphi is replaced by Athens; the god of private contemplation and private grievance gives way to the goddess of communal civic engagement.

After the tricolon crescens of the oath, addressed to the gods and to nature, Creusa returns to her own experience with a parenthetical plea for sympathy. If the

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65 For oaths to the sun cf. Medea 752, Choephoroi 985. On the unusual addressees of this oath cf. Delcourt (1938).

66 Thorburn (2000) 42.

67 For Lake Tritonis as the birthplace of Athena cf. Eumenides 293; as the first place she visited cf. Lucan 9.350-354.
unstated metaphor of the three witnesses is a legalistic *agon*, the more overt metaphor for Creusa’s motivation is medical. Consequently, she steps back from explicit combat in order to invoke pity, also a potent weapon. She resolves to tell the story of her rape so that, when she has thrust the burden from her heart, she will be “easier” (ῥάιων). The metaphor is taken from the realm of medicine, and I have translated it as “healed”:

Apollo is not only the god of music, but of sickness and healing as well. The monody will be a purgation of the pain and anger that Creusa has carried for so many years; her “sick” or “suffering” spirit (ἀλγεί) will pass through a crisis and begin to mend.

In the first episode Creusa seeks to conceal her weeping when she sees the temple of Apollo (245-248); now she calls attention to the tears that stream from her eyes, as she thinks of how she has been plotted against by men and by gods (κακοβουλευθείσ’):

> My eyes drop tears, and my soul is sick, schemed against by men and by gods,

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whom I will reveal as
graceless betrayers of beds.

Creusa moves into full lyrics for her condemnation of Apollo. Turning from the
parenthetical lament about her pain, Creusa returns to her agonistic argument. This
second section of the monody itself falls into two parts: Creusa accuses Apollo of
misconduct in the past (881-906), and in the present (907-922). In the first section of the
monody Creusa fought with her own soul and her sense of shame, a performed
ψυχοµαχία; in the second section each accusation begins with a cry that makes explicit
her engagement with Apollo (ὦ, 881; ὡ, 907). In this way Creusa’s internal conflict is
externalized as an attack against the god. The second section of the monody takes the
form of the speech for the prosecution in a trial; to approach her adversary more
forcefully, the condemnation is delivered not in speech, but in song.69

The transition to lyric is strongly marked, in that it coincides with the first
description of Apollo in his role as god of music. Creusa’s song sets itself against the
invoked song of Apollo in a contest of performance; she will undermine his paean with
her lyrical accusation:

ὦ τὰς ἐπταφθόγγου μέλπων
κιθάρας ἐνοπάν, ἄτ’ ἀγραύλους
κεράσιν ἐν ὑψώχοις ἀγχαῖ
μουσάν ὡμινος εὐσχῆτους,
σοὶ μομφᾶν, ὃ Λατοῦς παῖ,
πρὸς τάνδ’ αὐγάν αὐδάσω. (881-886)

O you who make the seven strings of the kithara
sing out, a sound that rings in the rustic soulless horn,
with the Muses’ harmonious hymns,
against you I will speak out, O child of Leto,
towards the rays of this sun.

69 Cf. Rynearson (2014), who sees Creusa’s monody as a self-conscious echo of Clytemnestra’s defense in
the trial-like scene at the end of Agamemnon, where she blames the father for the loss of the child they
shared (Agamemnon 1523-1530).
In the final line, Creusa declares that she will speak out (αὐδάσω) towards the rays of the sun (πρὸς τάνδ’ αὐγάν). By speaking “towards” the sun she is also speaking against Apollo in his role as god of light. The language recalls Ion’s hymn to the glories of the rising sun (ὦ Λατοῦς παῖ, 127 = 143). The repeated imagery of light emphasizes the difference between Ion’s conception of Apollo and Creusa’s: where Ion apostrophizes the bright god of morning, Creusa calls to the full and blinding light of midday, which will reveal the truth of the god’s misconduct.

The first lines of sung lyric draw attention to sound and music; the next passage concentrates instead on visual imagery.

ήλθές μοι χρυσῶ χαίταν
μαρμάρων, εὐτ’ ἐς κόλπους
κρόκεα πέταλα φάρεσιν ἐδρεπον
ἀνθίζειν χρυσανταγη· (887-890)

You came to me with hair that sparkled gold, while I was harvesting saffron-yellow petals in the folds of my cloak, the blooms reflecting a golden light.

The interpretation of these lines has been the subject of much debate. How is Creusa’s adversary Apollo portrayed? Certainly the language emphasizes the visual glory of Apollo’s epiphany; the detail of the golden flowers ablaze with the golden radiance of the god is an arresting image of overwhelming sensuality. After the spondaic rhythm of the opening lines, the run of short syllables in line 889 creates a sense of excitement, like a sudden quickening of breath. For Burnett, the beauty of Apollo in this passage hints that Creusa was in fact attracted to the god; she gave in to his seduction more willingly than

Larue (1963) 132 comments that these references to Apollo’s beauty ironically recall the traditional language of hymns to the god; Swift (2010) 96 emphasizes the ways in which the perverted imagery of light undercuts the usual praise of Apollo.
she would like to think.71 Weiss comments that this passage suggests an “unacknowledged wish fulfillment.”72 On the other end of the spectrum, Scafuro writes that the absence of explicit and unambiguous language of violence is in accord with the modesty of Creusa’s character, but there is no doubt of sexual assault.73 Kearns goes so far as to call Apollo a “brutal rapist.”74 Some scholars take a middle position, drawing attention to the tension between beauty and violence in the scene.75

These interpretations all seek to find within Creusa’s narrative a factual account of the rape. But, of course, the actual original experience is beyond recovery. Creusa’s description of the rape is reconstructed as a rhetorical device, not an objective history, and the power of the monody as a form for her accusation lies in its subjectivity. As her behavior in the early parts of the play suggests, Creusa has long brooded in solitude upon the rape, her pregnancy, the birth of her son, and his supposed death. In the lonely, rageful years that have passed, the memory has been reworked; in the process, as Scafuro writes, “some of its features may have been altered, some softened, some emphasized, in an attempt, over the years, to create a memory that is acceptable, inhabitable or even publicly presentable.”76 The account is a persuasive strategy deployed against the god. Creusa’s attack in this *agon* depends on eliciting the sympathy of her audience, and here the lyrical beauty of the lines makes the violence of the god more striking.


74 Kearns (2013) 63.

75 Cf. Thorburn (2000) 40, who sees the golden imagery as temporarily blinding to the audience as well as to Creusa.

76 Scafuro (1990) 145.
Creusa describes the consummation of the rape in oblique and impressionistic terms:

\[
\begin{align*}
\lambda\varepsilon\upsilon\kappa\omicron\varsigma & \; \delta^{\prime}\;\varepsilon\mu\nu\phi\varsigma \; \kappa\alpha\rho\pi\omicron\omicron\varsigma \\
\chi\epsilon\iota\rho\dot{\omicron} & \; \varepsilon\iota \; \acute{\alpha}\nu\tau\rho\omicron \; \kappa\omega\acute{t}\alpha\varsigma \\
\kappa\rho\rho\alpha\upsilon\gamma\acute{\alpha} & \; \acute{\Omega} \; \mu\acute{a}\tau\acute{e}r \; \mu^{\prime} \; \acute{\alpha}\nu\dot{\omega}\acute{\delta}\acute{\sigma}\acute{\sigma} \acute{\alpha} \\
\theta\dot{e}\varsigma & \; \acute{o}\mu\epsilon\upsilon\nu\acute{n}\acute{e}\acute{t}\acute{a}\varsigma \\
\acute{\alpha} & \; \acute{\gamma}e\acute{s} \; \acute{\alpha}n\acute{a}i\delta\acute{e}\acute{i}a \\
\Kappa\acute{u}p\rho\tilde{r}\acute{i} \; \chi\acute{a}r\acute{i}n \; \pi\acute{r}\acute{a}\acute{\ss}\acute{\ss}o\acute{n}. \\
\end{align*}
\]

(891-896)

Entwining my pale wrists, while I shrieked
– “O Mother!” – you, a god, my lover,
led me in shamelessness to bed in a cave,
to do the grace of the Cyprian.

In this section, sympathy is created through the inversion of language describing maidens and marriage.\(^{77}\) The detail of Creusa’s “pale wrists” (\(\lambda\varepsilon\upsilon\kappa\omicron\varsigma \; \kappa\alpha\rho\pi\omicron\omicron\varsigma\)) recalls the traditional formula of the Athenian wedding ritual, specifically the moment at which the groom takes possession of the bride.\(^{78}\) The cry to her mother, introduced as a sudden vocative, emphasizes the maiden’s fear and unwillingness.\(^{79}\) The intrusion of dochmiacs in lines 894-896, after three entirely spondaic lines, accentuates the high emotionality of the moment. The change in rhythm substitutes for explicit language: the phrases “bed in a cave” (\(\acute{\alpha}n\tau\acute{r}\omicron \; \kappa\omega\acute{t}\alpha\varsigma\)), “lover” or “bedfellow” (\(\dot{\omicron}\mu\epsilon\upsilon\nu\acute{n}\acute{e}\acute{t}\acute{a}\varsigma\)), and the reference to Aphrodite (\(\Kappa\acute{u}p\rho\acute{r}\acute{i}\dot{d}i\)) are the only direct references to the actual act of intercourse.\(^{80}\)

The rape is only the first of Creusa’s complaints against the god. Equally painful is the memory of the birth and abandonment of her child. The double use of “wretched” (\(\delta^{\prime}\upsilon\sigma\tau\alpha\nu\acute{\omicron}\;\ldots\;\delta^{\prime}\upsilon\sigma\tau\alpha\nu\acute{\omicron}\nu\)) frames the description of Creusa’s own sufferings. Over the

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\(^{77}\) On perverted marriage imagery in this passage cf. Chiu (2005).

\(^{78}\) The gesture \(\chi\epsilon\iota\rho\;\acute{\epsilon}\acute{p}i\;\kappa\alpha\rho\pi\acute{o}\) indicates possession of one person by another, cf. Lee (1997) ad 891.

\(^{79}\) Contra Burnett (1962) 91, who argues that Creusa’s reluctance is only a conventional gesture to show that she was not a loose woman; in fact, she was receptive to Apollo’s advances.

course of the passage Creusa moves from agent (δύστανός in the nominative) to passive victim (δύστανον in the accusative):

τίκτω δ᾽ ἂ δύστανος σοι
κοῦρον, τὸν φρίκα ματρός
eἰς εὐνὰν βάλλω τὰν σάν,
ϊνα μὲ λέχεσι μελέαν μελέοις
ἐξεύξω τὰν δύστανον. (897-901)

And I, wretched, bore you a boy,
whom I cast with a mother’s shudder
into your bed, the one where you yoked me to you,
miserable, a bed of miseries, in my wretchedness.

After exposing the infant in the place of his conception, Creusa laments his fate as food for scavenging birds:

οἱμοι μοι· καὶ νῦν ἔρρει
πτανοίς ἀπρασθεῖς θοίνα
παῖς μοι καὶ σός, τλάμον. (902-904)

Alas! And now he is gone,
mauled as a meal for the birds:
my son, reckless one, and yours.

The “winged creatures” (πτανοίς) that she fears recall the birds of Ion’s monody. Throughout the play birds are a symbol for liminality, for the space between outside and inside, profane and sacred, nature and civilization. Here the birds define the boundary between known and unknown, by crossing it, and between life and death. By exposing him to the birds, Creusa has given her child over from the human world to the wild nature and the gods.

But the symbolism of birds in the play is twofold: they are, on the one hand, rapacious scavengers who will feast on an infant; on the other, they are the messengers of
the gods, whom Ion scruples to shoot. In Ion’s monody, as we have seen, the birds are connected to the divine realm, and their appearance prefigures that of Xuthus and Creusa. Here too the birds are the agents of the gods. Creusa believes that they are like Apollo, singers who feel no pity for her child; but in fact her fear, like Ion’s threat, is founded on a misunderstanding. The birds force mortals, with their moralism and their tidy dichotomies of justice and injustice, to come to terms with mystery and myth.

A second charge against Apollo in his role as god of music frames this section of the monody (cf. µέλπων, 881; κιθάρας, 882; σοι, 885). The ring composition emphasizes again the contrast between Apollo’s paean and Creusa’s. The word Creusa uses, κλάζεις, is closer to “shriek” than to “sing” – in Homer it is used of the cry of the eagle and the barking of dogs – and the alliteration of k in line 905 adds to this sense of dissonance. In Book 1 of the Iliad the verb is used of the noise of Apollo’s arrows; there is perhaps a sense, as in Ion’s monody, of the god’s two personae, as musician and as archer, coming together.

σὺ δὲ κιθάρι κλάζεις
παιδανας µέλπων.
(905-906)

But you shriek with your lyre,
singing your paens.

The final section of the monody begins with another direct address to attract attention. The cry of ωῆ (907) is stronger than ὦ (881), and shows Creusa’s mounting courage and aggression. The passage repeats many of the same words used in earlier

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81 In a clever turn, Ion, whom Creusa feared would be threatened by birds as an infant, as an adolescent still perceives them as a threat.
83 L.S.J. s.v. Of the eagle, Il. 12.207; of dogs, Od. 14.30; of arrows, Il. 1.46.
sections of the monody: αὐδόσαν (893) and αὐδῶ (907); χρυσῷ (887) and χρυσέους (909); τάνδ᾽ αὐγὰν (886) and αὐδάν (911); ἡχαρίστους (880), χάριν (896), and χάριν (914). Creusa is concerned with speaking and being heard; with the falsity of Apollo’s golden exterior; with the beams of the sun, both witnesses to Apollo’s transgression and stand-ins for the god; and with the demands of faith and reciprocity. As in Ion’s monody, where the insistent accumulation of words indicates the young man’s deepest preoccupations, Creusa’s fixations are made increasingly clear through diction and vocabulary.

In mock-hymnal form, Creusa lists the usual attributes of Apollo in his role as patron of Delphi. Where the first lyric section focused on Apollo’s wrongs in the past, this section concentrates on his wrongs in the present. The change from past to present is intensified by a change in the epithets by which Creusa calls upon the god. He is no longer simply the god of music, but the god of oracular prophecy, whose temple is immediately visible on the stage. Creusa has been forbidden from entering the temple, and will not enter it in the course of the play. The mention of the Apollo in his oracular role is a summoning. Creusa imagines Apollo inside the temple, just out of her reach; his proximity makes his refusal to appear and answer her charge all the more worthy of censure.

ωή, τὸν Λατους αὐδῶ, ὁς ὁμφάν κληροίς, πρὸς χρυσέους θάκους καὶ γαίας μεσσήρεις ἐδρας. (907-910)

85 Cf. lines 369-380. Mastronarde (2010) 253-254 comments on the spatial inversion of the play; Creusa, a woman, operates in the open, while interior spaces, such as the temple and the tent where Ion holds his feast, are heavily identified with the male. Weiss (2008) describes the Delphic shrine as a womb, where all of Ion’s needs are met; his process of “rebirth” takes him beyond infancy into the real adult world.
You, you, I call on you, Leto’s son,  
who deliver your voice  
by the golden chair, your holy seat in the earth’s deep core.

Since Apollo himself will not come forth, Creusa again turns to the daylight as a substitute for the god. Her final charge is that Apollo has given favor to Xuthus, although he had no cause for offering him χάρις:

ες ους αοιδαν καρυξω·  
ιω κακος ευνατωρ,  
δς τω μεν εμω νυμφεωτα  
χαριν ς προλαβην  
παιδ εις οικους οικιεις  

(911-915)

To your ears I will announce this cry:  
base lover, from my husband  
you received no grace,  
but you settle a son in his house.

The supposed son of Xuthus is contrasted with the child of Creusa (μεν, 913 and δ’, 916):

ο δ’εμως γενετας και σος, άμαθης,  
οιωνοις έρρει συλαθεις,  
σπαργανα ματεροσ έξαλλάζας.  

(916-918)

And that son, born of me and of you,  
unfeeling one, he is gone, preyed on by birds,  
leaving behind the swaddling bands of his mother.86

The monody ends with an image of Apollo’s own birth and infancy. The effect of the allusion is to connect Leto with Creusa, and Apollo both with his own abandoned son and with his father Zeus. The fullest version of the myth is told in the Homeric Hymn to Apollo. Leto, pregnant with Apollo, was turned away from countless lands as she sought to bear her son; at last she found refuge on the floating island of Delos. For nine days and

86 The adjective άμαθης is difficult to translate. It may have a negative connotation, “ignorant, stupid,” “without moral feeling,” or a more neutral one, “without knowledge, untaught.” Here the closest parallel seems to be the use in Hercules Furens 347, where Amphitryon accuses Zeus of cruelty and injustice. Cf. L.S.J. s.v.
nine nights she struggled in painful labor, until the goddess Eilethysia arrived to ease her
birthpangs. Thus far the myth provides a parallel for Creusa, who conceived, bore, and
exposed her child in pain and isolation. Here the similarities end, for once Apollo was
born Leto rejoiced, and the other goddesses helped to wash and dress him, and to feed
him with ambrosia. Creusa adds the detail that Leto gave birth in the gardens of Zeus,
thereby emphasizing the god’s presence in Leto’s ordeal; Zeus watches over the mother
in her labor and accepts Apollo as his rightful son. The persuasive strategy is indirect, but
powerful: Apollo should taken pity on Creusa, who suffered as his own mother did; and
he should, like Zeus, have acknowledged and protected his own son.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{μισεῖ σ’ Ἄδος καὶ δάφνας} & \\
\text{ἔρνεα φοίνικα παρ’ ἄβροκόμαν,} & \\
\text{ἔνθα λοχεύματα σὲμὺ ἐλοχεύσατο} & \\
\text{Λατώ Δίασι σὲ κάποις.} & \\
\end{align*}
\]

(919-922)

Delos hates you, and the shoots of laurel
beside the palm with its delicate leaves,
where Leto gave birth to you,
a holy birth, in the gardens of Zeus.

In summary, Creusa in her monody uses a number of rhetorical strategies to
present her case against Apollo: she ironically undercuts the conventions of the paean,
calls for witnesses, addresses the god directly, elicits sympathy by describing her own

87 Homeric Hymn to Apollo 14-125.

88 Athena declares that Apollo caused Creusa to give birth “without illness” (ἠνοσον, 1595), but, as
Creusa’s account makes clear, the birth was not without emotional suffering.

89 Homeric Hymn to Apollo 120-124.

90 The reading of κάποις, “gardens,” as the final word in the monody is not certain. The manuscripts have
discusses three other passages in which these “gardens of Zeus” appear; she posits that the audience would
have understood this as a fitting place for a divine marriage and resultant birth. The evocation of an
idealized mythical pattern would thus be brought into contrast with the force used by Apollo against the
unwilling mortal woman.
sufferings, and adduces mythical parallels in support of her argument. Her song creates tremendous sympathy, but at the same time the factual error at the center of her argument detracts from her case. She cannot “win the debate” against Apollo in any meaningful sense.

The monody is also agonistic in the larger context of the play, in counterpoint to the much lighter portrayal of Apollo in Ion’s monody. Apollo is the most important figure in both songs: but he is addressed very differently by the two singers. As we observed, Ion thinks of the god in terms of brilliance, and refers to him by his title Φοβός. His personal reverence is emphasized by the number of times he calls upon the god with this epithet. Creusa, by contrast, only addresses Apollo in the vocative twice, and never by his proper name (ὡ Λατοῦς παῖ, 885; τὸν Λατοῦς, 907). She too emphasizes the brightness and golden gleam of the god, especially in the description of the rape, but here imagery of light is blinding, overwhelming, and a source of fear.

Creusa’s monody also echoes Ion’s in her concern with parentage. This is the driving mystery of the play, and the need to resolve it is the force linking mother and son. The theme is signaled in the opening recitative section, as Creusa laments that she is deprived of children (στέρομαι παίδων, 865) and recalls the birth of her lost son (τόκους πολυκλαύτους, 869). She twice thinks of her own mother, from whom she withheld the truth of her rape, pregnancy and labor (ὡ μῆτερ, 893; φρίκα ματρός, 898). Even Apollo is referred to by his matronymic, in preparation for the lines associating Creusa with Leto (ὡ Λατοῦς παῖ, 885; τὸν Λατοῦς, 907).

The theme of song is also common to both monodies. Ion describes the melodious chanting of the Pythia on her sacred tripod, communicating the prophecies of Apollo to

mortals (91-93), and compares the singing of the swan to the music of Apollo’s lyre (164-
168). Creusa twice depicts Apollo singing (881-884 and 905-906). There is an ironic
disparity between the imagined song of Apollo and the performed song of Creusa: his
song is initially fair-sounding (ὕµνους εὐαχήτους, 884), but later in the monody he is
described as “shrieking” (κλάζεις, 905).

These shared themes are in tension with the very different diction and syntax of
the two monodies. Ion does not speak of himself for a full twenty lines, and even then
uses the universalizing first-person plural (ἡµεῖς, 102). He describes his tasks and
narrates their execution, rather than directly revealing his own inner state; still, his
feelings do emerge obliquely, in the repetitions of certain words and ideas. By contrast,
Creusa’s song focuses obsessively on herself and her sufferings, and is delivered in first
person active. The verbs of hesitation in the first part of the monody - σιγάσω (859),
ἀναφήνω (860), ἀπολειφθῶ (861), κρύψω (874) – give way to more determined
vocabulary: ἀποδείξω (879), αὐδάσω (886), τίκτω (897), βάλλω (899), αὐδῶ (907),
καρύξω (911). The emphasis on her own experience is central to Creusa’s argument: after
she takes possession of her own past through narrative, she can move into the realm of
action in the present.

The monody of Creusa is thus agonistic on several levels. On the level of explicit
legalistic argument, Creusa battles first with her own soul and sense of shame in the
recitative section; then, in the lyric section, she accuses Apollo directly. Performatively,
through the very act of singing, Creusa throws down a challenge at the feet of the
gnomically silent god of music. Her harsh anti-hymn contradicts the exalted hymns of
praise sung to or by Apollo.
The *agon* that pits Creusa against Ion exists only in the minds of the audience. The questions, “Who is my father?” on the one hand, and “Where is my child?” on the other, are complementary. The yearning for a reconciliation of purity and pollution implicit in Ion’s song and in his work is made explicit as a personal demand by Creusa. The combative relationship, this metatheatrical *agon*, between diametrically antithetical, apparently irreconcilable points of view forces the action forward. In the final scene of the play, this indirect *agon* of song will become an performed *agon* of violence.

**Exodos**

The exodos first enacts and then resolves the conflict prefigured by the monodies. Creusa’s plot to kill Ion has been discovered, and the rulers of Delphi sentence her to death by stoning (1222-1225). She takes refuge at the altar of Apollo to claim protection as a suppliant. When Ion and his retinue enter in pursuit of Creusa, she identifies these men as ἄγωνισταί, “adversaries,” reintroducing the programmatic language of the *agon* (καὶ μὴν οἶδ᾽ ἄγωνισται πικροί / δεῦρ᾽ ἐπείγονται ξυφήρεις, 1257-1258). This desperate *agon* will be Creusa’s last stand against the god, even as she calls upon him.

In the argument between Ion and Creusa, two competing concepts of morality – human justice and divine holiness – are brought into direct opposition. Ion declares that Creusa crouches at the altar of the god to avoid “paying the penalty” for her deeds, a metaphor of crime and fitting punishment (ὡς οὐ δίκην δόσουσα τῶν εἰργασμένων, 1280). Creusa opposes him with a religious argument, calling her body “sacred” (ιερὸν τὸ σῶμα, 1285). Is she saying that she has been made forever sacred by the god’s intimate
and fruitful embrace? This is indeed to cast a different light on the past trauma. Or is she
asserting simply that her body is sacred because of where she now places it?

Ion too claims a special relationship to Apollo, declaring that he is “of the god”
(τὸν θεόν, 1286), referring to his service in the temple, his longstanding relationship
with (devotion to) the god, and also his righteous revenge against Creusa. Creusa argues
that the balance has shifted: now, as a suppliant, she is the one who belongs to the god
(οὐκοῦν τὸτε ἱερὸν· νῦν δ’ἐγὼ, σὺ δ’οὐκέτι, 1291). Ion draws a contrast between Creusa’s
impiety and his piety in seeking to kill her (οὐκ εὐσεβεῖς γε· τὰμὰ δ’εὐσεβη τὸτε ἦν,
1290), and criticizes the laws that protect suppliants as unjust (τοὺς νόμους, 1312;
ἐνδίκοις, 1316).

The terms of justice and injustice, piety and impiety, alternate in this dialogue:
Ion speaks of δίκη and νόμος, while Creusa defends herself as ἱερὸς. Yet Ion also uses
the vocabulary of εὐσέβεια, “piety”: he claims to have both human and divine justice on
his side. Here Ion is in the wrong, as the intervention of the Pythia will show. Creusa has
taken refuge at the altar of the god and put herself under his protection, however
unwillingly; and the god, making good his earlier negligence, will save her.

The exodos dramatizes the victory of divine justice over human justice, which is
marked by weakness, fear, and the desire for revenge. The central portion of the scene
dismantles the case built up by Creusa in her monody. The Pythia enters and forestalls
Ion’s attempt to drag Creusa from the altar, and in so doing the priestess’ account of Ion’s
adoption convinces Creusa that this is the son she once abandoned. Two of Creusa’s

92 For the audience, of course, the genitive may be understood as a patronymic, an instance of
foreshadowing and dramatic irony.
central accusations against Apollo – that he left his child to die, and that he granted a son to Xuthus rather than to her – are shown to be false.

And yet, wonderfully, Creusa is not defeated by this revealed truth, but by virtue of it, emerges victorious. She has stood silent for eighty lines. The musical arrangement of the scene reverses the pattern of her monody: where previously she broke her silence to reveal the truth she knew (859), here she breaks her silence to accept a greater one.

The recognition scene that follows takes the form of an *epirrhema*, where Creusa sings in astrophic lyrics and Ion responds in iambic trimeter (1439-1509).93 The resolution of the conflict is reinforced through an inversion of the language that appeared in Creusa’s monody, or rather of its valence: the same words and images now appear in a positive context.94 As she and Ion embrace for the first time, Creusa rejoices at finding her child. Images of light displace the vocabulary of secrecy and concealment that began Creusa’s monody (σιγάσω, 859, σκοτίας, 860). Creusa declares that Ion is “better” or “stronger” to her than the light of the sun (κρέισσον, 1439). The association between the sun and the god Apollo is made clear by the next clause, “the god will forgive me” (συγγνώσεται γὰρ ὁ θεός, 1440). For what, exactly, will the god forgive her? For saying that the light of a lost child is greater than his? For her previous error of judgment? In this phrase Creusa acknowledges some degree of guilt for her mistaken accusations against the god. Now that her son has been revealed, she has begun to revise her earlier view of the Apollo.

93 On the duet cf. Cyrino (1998), who comments that the arrangement of the scene highlights Creusa’s greater emotional intensity in contrast to the calmer reflections of Ion. Creusa does, however, accept comfort from Ion, unlike the singing heroines described by Chong-Gossard (2003). On the staging of the scene cf. also Mueller (2010).

94 Swift (2010) 100.
ὦ τέκνον, ὦ φῶς μητρὶ κρείσσον ἥλιον
(συγγνώσεται γάρ ὁ θεὸς), ἐν χεροῖν σ᾽ ἔχω,
αἰελπτὸν εὐρήμη, ὅλον κατὰ γὰς ἐνέρων
χθονίον μέτα Περσεφόνας τ᾽ ἐδόκουν ναιείν. (1439-1442)

My child, light stronger for your mother than the sun
(the god will forgive me), I hold you in my arms,
a discovery beyond hope, who dwelt, as I thought,
under the earth with Persephone and those below.

The imagery of brightness appears again in Creusa’s address to the air. In her
monody, words of speech were associated with distress, as when she called to her mother
to save her from Apollo (αὐδὸσαν, 893), or with accusation (τὸν Λατοῦς αὐδῦ, 907).

Here her cry is one of joy:

ἰὼ ἰὼ λαμπρᾶς αἰθέρος ἀμπτυχαί,
tίν᾽ αὐθὴν ἀἄσω βοάσω; πόθεν μοι
συνέκυσ᾽ ἀδόκητος ἥδονά;
πόθεν ἐλάβομεν χαράν; (1445-1448)

O O enfoldings of bright ether,
what voice shall I call, shall I shout aloud?
From where has this unexpected joy come to me?
From where did I receive this delight?

Ion’s miraculous appearance has restored light not only to Creusa, but to the
whole royal house of Athens:

ἄπαιδες οὐκέτ´ ἐσμὲν οὐδ᾽ ἀτεκοί·
δὸμ᾽ ἐσπιοῦται, γὰ δ᾽ ἔχει τυράννος,
ἀνηβα δ´ Ἐρεχθεύς·
ὁ τε γηγνέτας δόμος οὐκέτι νύκτα δέρκεται,
ἀελίου δ´ ἀναβλέπει λαμπάςιν. (1463-1467)

No longer am I childless, without an heir.
The heart of the house is secure, the land has a ruler,
Erectheus is young again.
The house of the earth-born no longer looks upon the night,
but its sight is restored by the rays of the sun.
The epiphany of Athena puts an end to all questioning of the god. Ion is convinced that he is the son of Apollo (1607-1608). Creusa’s change of perspective is even more radical. She now praises the god and his temple:

τὰ μὰ γὰρ ἄκουσον· αἰνῶ Φοῖβον οὐκ ἀίνουσα πρὶν,  
οὔνεξ ὦ ποτ’ ἡμέλησε παιδὸς ἄποδίδοσι μοι.  
αἰδὲ δ’ εὐσποι πύλαι μοι καὶ θεοῦ χρηστήρια,  
δυσμενῇ πάροιθεν ὄντα. νὸν δὲ καὶ ρόπτρων χέρας  
ηδέως ἐκκηρημάμεσθα καὶ προσενέπω πύλας.  

(1609-1613)

Hear me now. I praise Phoebus, though before I did not,  
Because he returns the child that he once neglected.  
These temple doors and the shrines of the god, once my enemies,  
are lovely to me. Now it is sweet for me to grasp the door handle  
with my hands and to address the gates.

Conclusion

We have seen that Ion and Creusa engage in an indirect *agon* of song about the nature of Apollo. We must now ask whether the two monodies give us an objective frame of reference for interpreting the behavior of the god and the events of the play. Do they have transcendental validity, or are they merely the subjective beliefs of two flawed human characters?

Euripides, as usual, does not provide a simple answer. The points of view expressed by the two songs are marked as highly subjective. In each case, the character has only a personal and limited understanding as a basis for argument. Ion sings of his relationship to Delphi and to Apollo, but also expresses anxiety about his identity and his place in the larger world. Creusa’s monody is not only an emotional recounting of past trauma, but a sophisticated rhetorical invective delivered against the silent god. Her argument is based on a false premise, and she abandons her anger when her child is restored to her at the end of the play.
Yet it is because of this very subjectivity that the monodies are dramatically effective. Song allows access to the inner state of the characters more directly than is possible in iambic dialogue. And, because the preoccupations of the characters are put forth so vividly, the monodies elicit tremendous identification and sympathy. Ion’s solo allows the audience to join with the young man in his love and devotion to the god. Creusa does win a partial victory in the *agon*, even though she loses on the facts of the case. She engages the emotions and arouses pity through the imagistic and melic register of song. Here Euripides shows his empathetic *bona fides* with and for women, not as an iconoclast, but as a formal innovator expanding the registry of roles granted a full and public voice.

Apollo is no vaporous and idealized being from outside the human world; like all the Greek gods, he is an embodiment of forces and contradictions. From the standpoint of human morality, therefore, he must be an ambiguous figure. He is sickness and healing, cruelty and benevolence, justice meted out and immeasurable fate. With the resolution of the play, the pain of past experience is not wiped clear; instead, through the mysterious action of the god, the characters pass through disillusion to a more mature piety.
Figure 1. Lyric Structure of *Ion*. Text of Diggle (1981).
When *Iphigenia in Tauris* begins, the heroine is literally isolated, on an island in time as well as in space: just as she cannot escape from the barbarian land where she presides over gruesome rites of slaughter, she cannot leave behind the pain of her own past. It is as though Iphigenia had actually been slaughtered in Aulis, and has been condemned forever to dwell within that instant, suspended between life and death, folded in a secret dimension that opened up when the knife touched her throat.

The life course that was apparently her destiny, the royal family she was born into, the glorious marriage she expected, these things had proved to be fragile or false, betrayed by fate and by her father’s misdeed. Change seems impossible: only an unforeseen, unforeseeable event can shock her into motion. To escape from the prison of the past, she must *pari passu* envision and desire an alternate future. The arrival of Orestes and Pylades propels her to purposeful movement: Iphigenia alone can come up with a plan that will save the last descendants of the line of Atreus.

The play dramatizes Iphigenia’s passage from stasis to decisive action. In her role as priestess she is constrained to repeat upon others the sacrifice that was once performed on her, never healing, trapped in an endless process of remembrance and of re-enactment. It is only when she rediscovers her family and re-positions herself within it

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2 Cf. Chiu (2005) for a psychological interpretation of Iphigenia’s inability to move forwards.
that she can move forwards. This re-positioning involves several stages, traversed through questioning and through song.

The two monodies in the play are the definitive statements of the beginning and end of stages of the heroine’s emotional journey. In her first monody – which contains two extended lyric sections, as can be seen in Figure 2 – Iphigenia mourns the unfulfilled potential of her young life, where each status was cancelled, each promised doing undone. She mirrors her own situation by singing in a language of paradox, where every charged term is promptly undermined by its negation: her father who was no father, her wedding which was no wedding, her homeland which is no homeland. This first monody establishes her paralyzed state.

Her second monody, delivered after the highly emotional reunion scene with Orestes, marks a shift in her mind and a crisis in the plot. Here we see Euripides taking the traditional form and turning it to new and innovative purpose, as monody becomes a vehicle for deliberative thought and decisive action. The playwright builds on the convention of the “deliberation” or “desperation” speech, as evidenced, for example, by Orestes’ address to Pylades in the Prologue (93-103). In Iphigenia’s monody, Euripides not only dramatizes the process of thought but highlights it through the song. Iphigenia’s words are urgent and immediate; yet at the same time they are rational and lead to a solution.

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3 Hall (2013) 27-46 has discussed Iphigenia’s exceptional status as a “quest heroine.” In Hall’s definition, a quest heroine 1.) stars in a plot not teleologically directed at romance, sex, marriage, or parenthood, 2.) travels through large spaces purposefully, 3.) has a special relationship with a god or goddess, 4.) exerts moral, intellectual and/or spiritual agency, and 5.) possesses psychological stature.

4 On page 112.

5 Both Mannspurger (1971) and Fowler (1987) discuss speeches of deliberation and desperation as specific types of tragic rhesis.
As a consequence of this marriage of passion and logic, Iphigenia is shown to contain within herself a diversity of attitudes and potential.\(^6\) Despite the heroine’s enduring *aporia*, this second monody is hardly an expression of powerlessness – on the contrary, it is a forceful articulation of her reawakened sense of purpose.\(^7\) Once Iphigenia is able to share with her brother the story of her sacrifice, she can situate her own experience within the larger context of her family’s fate. Orestes’ present troubles, more pressing than her own past suffering, compel her to think of the future: she picks up the dropped thread of her life as she joins her fate with his.

This chapter falls into two parts: first a discussion of Iphigenia’s memory of Aulis as presented in the early scenes of the play, especially in her two lyric passages in alternation with the Chorus in the parodos, which I together consider as a single monody; then a consideration of the “deliberative monody.” In the parodos, Iphigenia and the Chorus utilize a vocabulary of musical terms to emphasize the rituals and rhythms of an idealized past life in Greece. In verses rife with oxymoron and internal contradiction, the women in tandem lament the loss of their families, friends, homeland, and their participation in the ceremonies of civilized society. This loss is articulated as the heroine and the Chorus call up again their old songs, now gone; the absence of these happy songs is emphasized as they are invoked through onstage performance.

Euripidean Choruses often lament the loss of their role in cult in the hope of future reintegration; here the *topos* is given particular force by the participation of

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\(^6\) Cf. Mastronarde (2010) 223, speaking of Phaedra: “While the juxtaposition of . . . different modes is sanctioned by the formal conventions of the genre, Euripides seems to go farther than others in asking his audience to accept that these modes are capacities within a single person and that the search for any single unity of *éthos* is futile.” Cf. also the discussion in Di Benedetto (1971) 5-24, esp. 17: “Anche del punto di vista stilistico la diversità del modo di esprimersi di Fedra quanto, malata, si trove sul suo letto e quando invence si rivolge alle donne del Coro è molto sensibile.”

\(^7\) Contra Chong-Gossard (2008) 104.
Iphigenia, whose life was stalled at the moment of ritual transition between virgin and wife. The heroine’s extended passages of lyric show her imprisoned by the memory of Aulis, which separated her forever from the life she should have led as a young noble woman. The effect of the lamentation is strongly ironic: it is performed for a man whom the audience knows to be still living, by a woman who considers herself dead. This irony signals the dramatic development that is to follow, where Orestes moves towards greater passivity and Iphigenia towards greater action. Meanwhile, the following scenes lead both Iphigenia and Orestes through despair to greater knowledge: each thinks the other is dead, and each is wrong.

The second part of the chapter examines Iphigenia’s remarkable deliberative monody, in which she moves from passive victim to the agent of her own rescue. The unique nature of this second monody may be seen more clearly in contrast with Iphigenia’s first song, as well as with instances of deliberation in iambic trimeter elsewhere in the play. The monody revisits and reverses patterns of imagery that have been developed in earlier scenes: travel and escape, fortune and misfortune, and the role of “chance” (τυχή). In marked contrast to Orestes’ inconclusive deliberative speech in the prologue, Iphigenia’s song casts her growing authority and determination into sharper relief.

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9 Cf. Mossman (2005) on the power and emotional authenticity of women’s voices in tragedy, and how speech creates a sense of interiority.
Memory and Iphigenia’s First Monody

The significance of Iphigenia’s first monody becomes evident through comparison to the other versions of the Aulis story in the play. In the opening scenes, Iphigenia is obsessed and imprisoned by the memory of the central moment of her life, her sacrifice at the hands of her father. The play will signify dramatic progression through a series of recognizable forms – iambic rhesis, lyric song, and iambic dialogue – that retell the same story but vary in the emotion they express. Over the course of the play, six times she remembers and six retells her experience at Aulis: in the prologue (24-29); in her first monody, which takes the form of lyric exchange with the Chorus in the parodos (214-217); after she has resolved to kill the two young Greeks who have been captured on the shores of Tauris (361-371); when questioning Orestes, his identity still unknown, about the fate of the house of Atreus (563-566); in her letter (783-786); and finally in her lyric duet with her brother (852-867).\(^\text{10}\) The story is sometimes embellished, sometimes told in brief; but the past remains always before the heroine’s eyes.\(^\text{11}\)

Her first monody is the second version of the Aulis story, but it the longest and set apart from the five other retellings through its use of lyric. The conventions of the poetic medium in the monody allow for a particularly immediate, open expression of Iphigenia’s grief. This emotionality established in the monody extends backwards to the prologue and forwards to subsequent scenes. Each telling of the story is different,

\(^{10}\) All versions of the Aulis story in this play engage with previous accounts of the myth. For extensive discussion cf. Lübeck (1993), Aretz (1999), and Wright (2005) 56-157. Caldwell (1974-1975) and Sansone (1975) explore parallels with the Oresteia; O’Brien (1988) examines the relationship between the sacrifice at Aulis and the courtship of Pelops and Hippodamia.

\(^{11}\) Cf. Creusa in Ion, who also tells the story of the rape and the abandonment of her child various times and before various audiences, and who is also imprisoned by this memory; in both plays Euripides makes the monody of the heroine the most unrestrained and emotional re-telling of the event, a necessary step before she can move forward and build a new relationship with the relative she thought was lost.
determined by its particular motivation, onstage audience, and mode of delivery. In the prologue, the focus is on exposition: Iphigenia relates the bare facts of her history without commenting on her own feelings. In her first monody, by contrast, she is much more open: she pities herself and explicitly calls for the pity of others. Faced in the first episode with the prospect of preparing the two Greek strangers for sacrifice, Iphigenia steels herself by recounting again the horrors she suffered at the hands of her own people. In her questions to Orestes and in her letter, the fourth and fifth retellings of the story, she is brief and contains her own emotion – she is, after all, facing a supposed stranger. At last reunited with her brother, she relates the misery of her false marriage with great pathos in the sixth retelling, drawing a parallel between her father’s murder of his daughter and her own preparations to slaughter her brother. Under the dictatorship of the past, Iphigenia has come to the brink of repeating Agamemnon’s crime, but at the last possible moment disaster is averted. In saving Orestes, Iphigenia breaks the cycle of kin- killing that has for generations plagued the house of Atreus. This sixth and final retelling lays to rest the obsessive remembering of her own past, and prepares her for change.

These six retellings reveal the dramatic significance of the first monody: it is the first time Iphigenia speaks about her sacrifice in terms that reveal her own feelings about the event. The monody is related to the other versions of the Aulis story through complex patterns of similarity and contrast, both formal and thematic. In addition, the outpouring of emotion in the monody seems to affect a change in Iphigenia’s ability to express her own feelings. In the third telling, after the monody, she reveals new details of her experience at Aulis, and even re-experiences the event through first-person speech. The fourth and fifth versions of the story move from a private expression to a public one.
Finally, in the sixth retelling the dramatic irony that has marked the play until this point is collapsed in the long-awaited reunion between brother and sister. Each retelling, as we shall see, engages in different ways with the themes of paralysis, death as suspended or frustrated life, and understanding and error; each forms an essential step in Iphigenia’s journey from stasis to decisive action.

The first presentation of the Aulis story brings into sharper focus the special intensity achieved through the use of monody, where Iphigenia’s obsessive focus on her own suffering is expressed through the language of lyric. The brief, unadorned, chronological, prosaic version of Iphigenia’s history in the prologue provides a template against which all future versions of the story are measured. Here Iphigenia’s exposition is clear and matter-of-fact. The narrative proceeds in linear fashion from the past to the present:

καὶ μ᾽ Ὄδυσσέως τέχναις
μητρὸς παρείλοντ᾽ ἐπὶ γάμιος Ἀχιλλέως,
ἐλθοῦσα δ᾽ Ἀὐλίδ᾽ ἢ τάλαιν᾽ ὑπὲρ πυρᾶς
μεταρσία ληφθεὶσ᾽ ἐκαινόμην ξίφει.
ἀλλ᾽ ἐξέκλεψε μ᾽ ἐλαφὸν ἀντιδοῦσά μου
"Ἀρτεμίς Ἀχαιοῖς·"

And by the arts of Odysseus
I was taken from my mother on the pretext of marriage to Achilles. I came to Aulis, wretched, and lifted high above the pyre I was about to be slaughtered with a sword; but Artemis stole me away, and gave to the Achaeans a deer in my place.

In the short clause describing the actual moment of the sacrifice, only one adjective, “wretched” (τάλαιν’) and the passive participle “lifted” (ληφθείσ’), show Iphigenia as a victim. Her emotions remain unexpressed and unexplored. The event seems to be fully in

12 I have used the text of De Poli (2011) for the monodies, substituting iota subscript for adscript, and that of Diggle (1981) for all other portions of the play. The translation throughout is my own.
the past, buried and no longer affecting the present. Iphigenia does not speak of her own fear or of her anger at her father and the other Greek captains. She does not attribute responsibility to Artemis, who both demanded Iphigenia’s sacrifice and saved her from death. She shows neither resentment nor gratitude towards the goddess.\textsuperscript{13}

In her first monody in parodos, by contrast, Iphigenia expresses the sadness and anger that were only hinted at in her monologue. Although the song takes the form of a κομμός, or lyric exchange, the two sections sung by the heroine may be considered monodic by virtue of their length (c. 30 lines) and because each expresses a single, unified thought.\textsuperscript{14} In her first passage of lyric, Iphigenia laments for Orestes, whom she presumes dead on the evidence of her dream (143-177).\textsuperscript{15} After the response of the Chorus, who offer dirges for the dead man, Iphigenia grieves for her own misfortune in a second lyric passage (203-235). Yet throughout the song, the dramatic activity of interplay is retained; the Chorus does not so much answer Iphigenia as second what she says.

Iphigenia’s first monody is traditional in form and content; its innovation lies in its relationship to the other versions of the story presented in the play. The formal pattern of the monody – a lyric lament in alternation with the Chorus – recalls the earliest passage of actors’ lyric in Greek tragedy, Xerxes’ \textit{amoibaion} with the city elders in \textit{Persians}. Euripides seems to have been especially fond of structuring his parodoi as


\textsuperscript{14} Cf. De Poli (2011) 157-173. The assignation of lines in this passage is vexed. L gives 123-136 to Iphigenia and 137-142 to the Chorus, but 126-136 must belong to the Chorus because the women identify themselves as slaves of the priestess. In what follows I use the division of lines favored by Kyriakou (2006).

\textsuperscript{15} On the dream and its interpretation cf. Trieschnigg (2008).
sorrowful duets between heroine and Chorus; he experimented with this technique in three plays produced within a few years of *Iphigenia in Tauris: Electra* (168-212), *Trojan Women* (153-229), and *Helen* (164-251). In all of these cases, the monody, placed early in the play, reveals with particular intensity the emotional state and preoccupations of the enthralled central figure, and establishes a close relationship between her and the Chorus.

Compared to these other plays, however, the monody of Iphigenia is rendered more complex because it is heard as one of a series of recounted versions of the heroine’s central calamity. Moreover, Iphigenia is granted a second monody that, through contrast with the first, shows the very process of change in how she sees and situates herself, including an evolution in the relation of chorus to heroine. As we have seen, Euripides uses a similar technique of multiple retellings to explore the emotions of Creusa in *Ion*. In that play, Creusa’s monody is the climactic version of her story, and all previous versions look forward to it and create suspense for its final outpouring; in addition, the monody stands in opposition to Ion’s monody in the opening scene. Iphigenia, by contrast with Creusa, is granted a lyric voice almost immediately. She is the only figure in the play who expresses herself through lyric song; there is no one with whom she can be brought into a lyric conflict, except her own later self.

In the first monody, the two passages of lyric express Iphigenia’s turmoil and reveal retrospectively her self-possession in the prologue. It is both her strength and her depth of feeling that have been established. In the scenes that follow, Iphigenia overmasters her emotions so successfully that she narrowly avoids sacrificing her own brother.

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16 All three of these passages are discussed by Weiss (2014). In each play, Weiss argues, Euripides draws on the dynamics of traditional female chorality in order to present the relationship as one between a (potential) chorus leader and her chorus.
The parodos is structured as an exchange of lyric sections between the heroine and the captive women of the Chorus. The song creates an intimate connection between Iphigenia and the Chorus: they share a background as displaced Greeks, and in Tauris they are in a similar position of bondage and vulnerability. The unity of thought and feeling is expressed through related meters: the parodos consists almost entirely of lyric anapests, with the substitution of some dactyls and many spondees to create a slow, measured tone appropriate for lamentation. On the level of diction and vocabulary, the Chorus and Iphigenia share a common language of contradiction: in the land of Tauris, nothing is as it should be.

The entrance of the Chorus establishes their identity as free-born Greek maidens who now serve as slaves at the temple of Artemis (123-142). They ask Iphigenia for news, and invite her to tell them about the source of her distress. She responds to their request directly:

ὦ δµωαί,
δυσθρηνήτοις ὡς θρήνοις
ἐγκειμαι, τὰς οὐκ εὐµούσου
μολπᾶς βοῶν ἀλύρωις ἐλέγοις, αἰαί,
ἐν κηδείας οἴκτοισιν,
αἰ μοι συµβαίνουσ’ ἄται
σύγγονον ἀµῶν κατακλαιοµένα
ζωᾶς. οἶαν ἰδοίµαν
ὁµην ὅνειρον
νυκτὸς τὰς ἐξῆλθ' ὄρφνα.

O attendant women,
how I lie wrapped in ill-chanted chants,
the cry of unmusical song with lyre-less laments, alas,

17 Chong-Gossard (2008) 168-171 discusses the solidarity between the Chorus and Iphigenia. The women of the chorus benefit from keeping Iphigenia’s plans secret and from deliberately misdirecting Thoas, and are rewarded for their “positive” deceit by return to Greece. Cf. Foley (1993) 142, who comments that lamentation in the remote, apolitical context of the Taurian land serves to solidify bonds between the helpless and beleaguered women.

in piteous wailing for my loved ones,
weeping for the disasters that have fallen upon me,
for the life of my brother.
Such was the dream vision I saw
coming in the dark of the night now ended.

The parodos emphasizes Iphigenia’s arrested state through a series of phrases in
which one term negates or contradicts the other: ‘ill-chanted chants’ (δυσθρηνήτοις
θρήνοις), ‘unmusical song’ (οὐκ εὐμούσου μολπᾶς), ‘lyre-less laments’ (ἀλύροις
ἐλέγοις). The usual acts of mourning which a sister should perform for a brother are
impossible in this context: there is no corpse, and Iphigenia’s own mis-interpretation of
her dream is the only evidence of Orestes’ death.19 In the perverted lineage of Atreus, not
even death takes place as it should.

Iphigenia then describes the rituals of burial – pouring libations of milk, wine, and
honey (157-169).20 She performs these rites alone, without the other members of her
family, far from her homeland:

โอ κατὰ γαίας Αγαμεμνόνιον
θάλος, ός φθιμένοι τάδε σοι πέμιο.
δέξαι δ’ οὐ γὰρ πρός τύμβον σοι
ξανθὰ χαίταν, οὐ δάκρυ’ ὄισω.
τηλόσε γὰρ δή σὰς ἀπενασθῇν
πατρίδος καὶ ἐμᾶς, ἔνθα δοκήμασι
κείμαι σφαξχείσα, τλάμων. (170-177)

Oh child of Agamemnon below the earth,
as to one dead I send you these offerings.
Accept them: for to your tomb I shall not bring
a golden lock of hair, I shall not bring tears.
For I have been sent far away from your homeland,
and from mine, where they suppose that
I lie slaughtered, poor sufferer.

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Iphigenia’s actions commemorate her own death in addition to that of Orestes: the mourner as well as the mourned man is thought of as dead, “lying slaughtered” on a foreign shore (κεῖµαι σφαχθείσα). Iphigenia’s first monodic passage thus becomes her own performed funeral lament. For many years, as the prologue reveals, she has remained in a liminal space between life and death. To be far from her homeland is for her a kind of death. The supposed loss of Orestes removes all hope that she will ever escape this state of suspension: she will never leave Tauris, will never return to life in Greece. The monody expresses her complete despair through the language of paradox, in which every potential movement is annihilated by its anti-movement. These contradictions suggest an untenable dramatic condition: Iphigenia will have to move from stasis to action, whether death or rebellion against her condition. As we shall see, this transformation occurs in the second monody and takes effect immediately after it.

Iphigenia sings of a death, a funeral, and a house that have all been perverted; the Chorus respond with language that echoes hers.

ἀντιψάλµους φῶς ὕµινν τ’ Ἀσιητᾶν σοι βάρβαρον ἄχαν δεσποίνα γ’ ἔξωθάδασω, τάν ἐν θρήνοις πούσαν νέκυσι μελοµέναν, τάν ἐν μολπαίς Ἄιδας ὑµεῖς δίχα παιάνων. (179-185)

Antiphonal songs, the barbarian cry of Asiatic hymns I shall cry forth in response to you, my mistress, music in laments proper for the dead, music which Hades chants in songs, without paeans.

The Chorus situate themselves in musical alternation with Iphigenia, a “twanging” (ψαλµός) set against (ἀντί) her lament. Their lyrics are “Asiatic” and “barbarian” (Ἀσιητᾶν, βάρβαρον): in inhospitable Tauris, there is no place for the proper Hellenic
songs of mourning.\textsuperscript{21} Their cries of despair and death are contrasted with hymns (\(\nu\mu\nu\varepsilon\iota\)) and with the paean (\(\delta\iota\chi\alpha\\pi\alpha\iota\nu\omega\nu\)), usually a communal performance of joy or thanksgiving.\textsuperscript{22} Since these contradictory references to song take place within the context of an onstage musical performance, i.e., are self-referential, the effect is to heighten the contrast between absent and enacted music, music here standing for all the activities of life that it rightly accompanies. In the next section of the monody Iphigenia’s references to song will further develop this dichotomy.

The Chorus concludes with a final oxymoron describing Iphigenia’s situation: some divine force presses upon her things that should not be pressed (\(\sigma\pi\varepsilon\upsilon\delta\varepsilon\iota\\delta’\\alpha\sigma\pi\omicron\upsilon\delta\alpha\sigma\tau\iota\’\\\varepsilon\pi\iota\\\sigma\iota\\\delta\alpha\iota\mu\omega\nu\), 201-202). The \(\delta\alpha\iota\mu\omega\nu\) to which they attribute Iphigenia’s misfortunes carries several shades of meaning: it is at once an unspecified divine power and Iphigenia’s personal and personified fate.\textsuperscript{23}

The first exchange between heroine and Chorus thus establishes the misery and hopelessness of Iphigenia’s current situation, now that Orestes has died. In the second exchange, she imagines Orestes’ death as the culmination of the series of misfortunes that began with the sacrifice at Aulis. The confines of her world have shrunk to the size of her own obsessively remembered past.

Iphigenia’s response, which takes up the language of the Chorus (\(\delta\alpha\iota\mu\omega\nu\) and \(\delta\upsilon\sigma\delta\alpha\iota\mu\omicron\nu\\delta\alpha\iota\mu\omega\nu\)), suggests that the evil refers more generally to the disastrous legacy


of the house of Tantalus. In her second lyric passage, she narrates her own part in this familial misfortune:

\[
\text{ἐξ ἀρχὰς μοι δυσδαίμων}
\]
\[
\text{δαίμων τὰς ματρὸς ζώνας}
\]
\[
\text{καὶ νυκτὸς κείνας· ἐξ ἀρχὰς}
\]
\[
\text{λόχαι στερράν παιδεῖαν}
\]
\[
\text{Μοῖραι συντείνουσιν θεαί·}
\]
\[
\text{ἄ μναστευθεῖσ' ἐξ Ἐλλάνων,}
\]
\[
\text{ἂν πρωτόγονον θάλος ἐν θαλάμωι}
\]
\[
\text{Λήδας ἀ τλάμων κούρα}
\]
\[
\text{σφάγιον πατρῷα λώβα}
\]
\[
\text{καὶ θῆμ’ οὐκ εὑγάθητον}
\]
\[
\text{ἐτεκεν ἐτρεφεν εὐκταίαν·}
\]
\[
\text{ἴππειοι δ’ ἐν διφροσι}
\]
\[
\text{ψαμάθων Αὐλίδος ἑπέβασαν}
\]
\[
\text{νόμφαιον, οἴμοι, ὅσνυμφοιν}
\]
\[
\text{τῷ τὰς Νηρέως κούρας, αἰαί. (203-217)}
\]

From the start my fate has been ill-fated,
since the night I came from my mother’s womb;
from the start the goddesses of Fate,
attendants at my birth,
have drawn tight for me a harsh upbringing.

I was wooed by the Greeks,
the firstborn shoot in the chambers
of Leda’s daughter, a wretched girl,
sacrificial offering for a father’s atrocity
and joyless victim of his vow –
for this I was born and nurtured.

In horse-drawn carriages
they set me on the sands of Aulis,
a bride who was no bride – ah, me! –
for the son of the daughter of Nereus, alas.

In contrast to the earlier description of the sacrifice in the Parodos, here Iphigenia uses elaborate rhetorical devices, including anaphora (ἐξ ἀρχὰς, ἐξ ἀρχὰς), alliteration (θάλος ἐν θαλάμωις), and asyndeton (ἐτεκεν ἐτρεφεν εὐκταίαν). She invites pity through her description of herself as unfortunate (ἄ τλάμων κούρα) and through interjected cries (οἴμοι, αἰαί). Where previously she placed no guilt on Agamemnon or the Greek captains,
here she speaks of her father’s action as an “atrocity” (πατρὸς λώβα) and her sham marriage as a disastrous contradiction in terms (νόμφατον δύσνυφον).

Now Iphigenia has no share in the life of a Greek woman: she is marriage-less, childless, city-less, friendless (ἀγαμὸς ἀτεκνὸς ἀπολῶς ἀφιλῶς, 220).24 The perversion of her current existence is expressed through the terms and imagery of music:

οὐ τὰν Ἀργεί μέλπουσ’ Ἡραν
οὐδ’ ἵστοις ἐν καλλιφθόγγοις
κερκίδι Παλλάδος Λαθίδος εἰκώ
<κατ> Τιτάνων ποικίλλουσ’, ἀλλ’
αἰμορράντων δυσφόρμιγγα
ξείνων αἰμάσσουσ’ ἄταν βομοῦς
οἰκτρόν τ’ αἰαζόντων αὐδάν
οἰκτρόν τ’ ἐκβαλλόντων δάκρυν.

(221-228)

I do not sing for Hera at Argos,
nor on the sweet-voiced loom
do I portray Attic Pallas and the Titans,
embroidering them with my shuttle,
but I bloody the altars
with the streaming blood of strangers,
a fate unfit for the lyre,
while they wail with piteous cries
and shed piteous tears.

Iphigenia sets up a contrast between joyful music, associated with longed-for life in Greece, and the mournful, dissonant music of her present life among the Taurians. Her singing (μέλπουσ’) for Hera at the loom, itself a sweet-voiced instrument (καλλιφθόγγοις) has been replaced by the piteous wailing of sacrificial victims (αἰαζόντων) and sounds that do not suit the lyre (δυσφόρμιγγα). Her only activity –

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24 Cf. Finkelstein (2010), who traces Aeschylus’ novel use of alpha privatives and negated language in the Oresteia in order to show that the proliferation of these words emphasizes the destruction of social and sexual relations. At 113-123 Finkelstein discusses the afterlife of this vocabulary in Iphigenia in Tauris. Euripides, she argues, deliberately echoes the language of the Oresteia to create a connection between the Taurian land, the chthonic Erinyes, and the Underworld: alpha privatives thus characterize the land of the Taurians as a kind of underworld from which Iphigenia and Orestes must escape.
bloodying the altar with the blood of strangers – is compelled, forced upon her. The monody ends with a renewed lament for the dead Orestes (229-235).

Iphigenia’s first monody thus demonstrates the full extent of the heroine’s grief and loss, as well as the dramatic conditions with which the play opens, signified by her internal conflict. Language of paradox, including musical negation, emphasizes her complete deracination. This fuller exposition of Iphigenia’s inner state creates tension for the scenes that follow and establishes the vital role that monodic song plays in the dramatic development of the play. Orestes’ death has killed her as well: it is a second Aulis, a second death of hope and the family. She is now a ruthless killer of others, so much so that she will narrowly avoid sacrificing her own brother.

Coming after the account of the sacrifice in the Prologue, the first monody precedes two further tellings in iambic verse of that same sacrifice. These two accounts, the third and fourth versions of the Aulis story, explore the conflict between the emotionality of the first monody and the “hardening of heart” that Iphigenia experiences after she concludes that Orestes is dead.

Immediately after the Parodos, a Herdsman arrives from the shore, bringing news that two young Greeks have been captured and must now be prepared for death. Iphigenia’s subsequent speech is essentially a soliloquy in the presence of the Chorus, as signaled by the opening address to her heart (ὦ καρδία τάλαινα, 344). She asserts that the death of her brother has hardened her heart towards all strangers (334-350). The pity she once felt for helpless Greeks has become anger and a desire for revenge, especially against those she blames for her current state: Helen and Menelaus. Their hated names remind her of Aulis:
οἴμοι — κακῶν γὰρ τῶν τότ’ οὐκ ἀμνημονῶ —
ὸςας γενείου χείρας ἐξηκόντισα
γονάτων τε τοῦ τεκόντος, ἔξαρτωμένη,
λέγουσα τοιάδ’, ὁ πάτερ, νυμφεύομαι
νυμφεύματ’, αἰσχρὰ πρὸς σέθεν· μήτηρ δ’, ἐμὲ
σέθεν κατακτείνοντος Ἀργείαί τε νῦν
ὑμνοῦσιν ὑμεναιόσιν, αὐλείται δ’ πᾶν
μέλαθρον· ἡμεῖς δ’ ὀλλόμεσθα πρὸς σέθεν.
Ἀδής Ἀχιλλεὺς ἦν ἄρ’, οὐχ ὁ Πηλέως,
ὅν μοι προσείσας πόσιν, ἐν ἀρμάτων ὁχισι
ἐς αἵματηρὸν γάμον ἐπόρθμενος δόλῳ. (361-371)

Alas – for I cannot un-remember the evils of that day – how many times I darted forth my hands at the cheek and at the knees of my father, clinging to them, saying: “Father, I am led into a shameful marriage by you. Now, as you kill me, my mother and the Argive women sing wedding hymns, and all the house is filled with pipe-music – but I am destroyed at your hands. Achilles was Hades, then, not the son of Peleus, whom you offered to me as a husband, then brought me in the shelter of a carriage to a bloody wedding, by deceit.

In this passage the narrative precision of the Prologue and the emotionality of the monody are carried forward to create an account of striking intensity. The memory begins in the past tense (ἐξηκόντισα), but is made more vivid through the switch to the present tense in Iphigenia’s direct address to Agamemnon (νυμφεύομαι, ὑμνοῦσιν, αὐλείται). As in the Parados, musical imagery emphasizes the terrible perversion of the civic, sacred, and familial rite. While Iphigenia pleads for her life, Clytemnestra, ignorant of the truth, raises the joyful wedding hymn at home with the women of Argos (ὑμνοῦσιν ὑμεναιόσιν), and the whole house is filled with the music of the aulos (αὐλείται). The juxtaposition of the names of Achilles and Hades (Ἀδής Ἀχιλλεὺς) conflate the intended bridegroom with death. Just as Iphigenia is caught between life and death, so she is caught between girl and woman, trapped forever in her virgin status. This third retelling

continues the emotional memory of the Parodos, and contrasts the pain Iphigenia felt at Aulis with her self-proclaimed pitilessness in the present. As Iphigenia herself says, she “cannot unremember” what happened at Aulis (οὐκ ἄμνημον, 361). Her straightforward speech in the Prologue, her lamentation in the Parodos, and her passionate monologue in the First Episode establish her state of paralysis. She cannot escape from the grip of the terrible memory.

The next two recountings of the Aulis story, although brief, mark a crucial turning point in her effort to come to terms with the past. For the first time, Iphigenia tells her story to strangers. Where previously she has had only herself and the enslaved women of the Chorus as an audience, now the two young Greeks present her with an opportunity to share her story and to gain new information in return.

In their long dialogue in the Second Episode, Orestes and Iphigenia conceal their true identities. The effect is one of increasing tension and dramatic irony, as time and time again the recognition is tantalizingly approached and then deferred. In her series of questions about the fate of the ruling family of Argos, Iphigenia asks first about Electra, and then about herself:

Iph. τί δέ; σφαγείσης θυγατρός ἔστι τις λόγος;
Or. οὐδεὶς γε, πλὴν θανοῦσαν οὐχ ὀρῶν φάος.
Iph. τάλαιν᾽ ἐκείνη χώ κτανόν αὐτήν πατήρ.
Or. κακῆς γυναικὸς χάριν ἂχαριν ἄπώλετο. (563-566)

Iph. And is there any report of the daughter who was slaughtered?
Or. None, except that she died and no longer looks upon the light.
Iph. Wretched girl, and wretched too the father who killed her.
Or. She perished as thankless thanks for an evil woman.

At this point Iphigenia makes no move to correct Orestes. She hopes to hear, perhaps, that she still lives in some sense, in the memories and intentions of her family, but
Orestes’ reply tells her that to them she no longer exists. She is no longer mourned and sought. Therefore what he has said is essentially true – although she does “look upon the light,” she is dead, trapped in the land of the Taurians with no hope of rescue.

Her next line, that Agamemnon is also unfortunate, reverses her earlier expressions of anger against her father. She has heard that he is dead, slaughtered by his wife; that his wife is dead; that Electra lives, but – she imagines at this point – that two of his three children are dead. The family of Atreus has all but disappeared. Her grief and pity now extends beyond herself; she mourns her sufferings within the larger context of her destroyed family. Here Iphigenia moves beyond the description of her own misfortune as displayed in the first monody; the seeds of change exist in the outward extension of her sympathy.

These two abbreviated versions of her own sacrificial slaughter, in her stichomythia with Orestes and in her letter, constitute the fourth and fifth retellings of the Aulis story. Together they create suspense for the outpouring of her second monody, as we shall see in the following section, and for the rest of the play, through dramatic irony. In the first monody Iphigenia has displayed the full agony of her betrayal, and in the second she bids farewell at last to the paralyzing memory of Aulis and prepares herself for change.

Part 2: Movement

In the first monody, then, Euripides presents Iphigenia’s inner state at the beginning of the play. This state is complicated by the overwhelming dramatic irony of her situation: her grief is based on a misapprehension. Like Creusa’s monody in Ion, the first monody creates a distancing effect, as the compelling tone of the song stands in
tension with the factual error of its content. Thus the first monody contains an emotional and dramatic potential energy, soon converted to action. The innovative second monody occurs once Iphigenia sees more clearly. The formal change from a conventional monody of mourning to a unique monody of deliberation parallels the change in the play between stasis and action.

The alternation between plainer speech and unrestrained song – between the iambic scenes and the two monodies – moves in tandem with the action of the play. Euripides uses the pattern of song and speech to explore the two extremes of Iphigenia’s emotional state: desperation and the rebirth of hope. The two monodies assume places of special importance in the drama. When she is convinced that Orestes is dead and her last hope of rescue is lost, Iphigenia gives vent to her grief in her first monody. Ironically, this new depth of misery hardens her heart for the killing of the unknown Greeks. Her second monody acknowledges the relationship between the two intended murders, and finally quells the drive towards further incestuous violence.26

The change in mood embodied by the second monody is ushered in by the fifth and sixth versions of the Aulis story: Iphigenia’s letter and her reunion duet with Orestes. Iphigenia finally asks about her central concern, the fate of Orestes (567-569). When she learns that he has not died and that her interpretation of her dream was false, her behavior shifts. She quickly offers a plan, which, as she says, will benefit both the strangers and herself (578-580). The stratagem of the letter is presented as something long prepared and pondered, kept in readiness for just such an opportunity (584-590). Despite her stated helplessness, Iphigenia never fully abandoned the hope that a Greek sailor might land on the shores of the Taurian land and carry her message back to Greece.

In the stichomythia with Orestes in the previous scene, Iphigenia learns that she is considered dead, and chooses not to dispute it by revealing herself. But now in her letter she announces that she is simultaneously alive and dead: the report of Orestes’ survival has brought back the possibility of change, of reintegration into the Hellenic world. She is both “slaughtered” (σφαγείσ’) and “living” (ζῶσ’): 

Iph. ἄγγελλ᾽ Ὀρέστι παιδὶ τάγαμέμνονος· Ἡ ἥν Αὐλίδι σφαγείσ’ ἐπιστέλλει τάδε ζῶσ’ Ἰφιγένεια, τοῖς ἐκεῖ δ’ οὐ ζῶσ’ ἐτι.

Or. ποῦ δ’ ἐστ’ ἐκεῖνη; κατθανοῦσ᾽ ἤκει πάλιν;

Iph. ἦδ’ ἤν όραὶς σὺ· μὴ λόγον ἐκλησσέ με. Κόμισαι μ’ ἐς Ἄργος, ὃ σύναμε, πρὶν θανεῖν ἐκ βαρβάρου γῆς, καὶ μετάσησον θεᾶς σφαγίων ὕπ’ οἴσι ξενοφόνους τιμᾶς ἔχω.

Or. Πυλάδη, τί λέξω; ποῦ ποτ’ ὅνθ’ ἡρήμεθα; (769-777)

Iph. Announce these things to Orestes, son of Agamemnon: She who was slaughtered at Aulis sends you these words, Iphigenia, who lives, although to those there she lives no longer.

Or. Where is she? Has she come back from the dead?

Iph. She is the one whom you see! Don’t interrupt my words. Take me to Argos before I die, brother, away from this barbarian land, and release me from the sacrifices of the goddess where I officiate over the slaughter of strangers.

Or. Pylades, what shall I say? Where do we find ourselves?

The recounting of the contents of the letter thus shows an intermediate stage in Iphigenia’s journey from stasis to movement: no longer fully without hope, she is now entering into the passage from death to life. The part that death still has of her derives not only from the physical entrapment from which she calls to be released and the sacrificial rites she presides over, but from her family’s belief.

Once the recognition between the two siblings has been achieved, Iphigenia tells the story of Aulis for the sixth and final time. She is no longer dead, or even trapped between death and life, but has fully come back to life. In sharing the memory with her
brother, and in receiving his sympathy, she is finally able to let go of the past that has
held her captive for so long. The two siblings lament the fate of their family, Iphigenia in
lyric and Orestes in trimeter:

Or. γένει μὲν εὐτυχοῦμεν, ἐς δὲ συμφορᾶς,
οὐ σύγγον’, ἡμῶν δοστυχῆς ἔρυ βίος.
Iφ. ἐγώδ’ ἀ μέλεος, οἶδ, ὅτε φάσγανον
dέρα ἰῆκε μοι μελεόφρων πατήρ.
Or. οἶμοι. δοκὼ γὰρ οὐ παρῶν σ’ ὀρᾶν ἐκεῖ.
Iφ. ἀνυμέναιος, ὦ σύγγον’. Ἀχιλλέως
ἐς κλισιάν λέκτρων δόλιων ἀγόμαν·
παρὰ δὲ βομὸν ἦν ἀδίκους καὶ γόοι·
φεῦ φεῦ χερνίβων ἐκείνων· οἶμοι.
Or. ὄμωξα κἀγώ τόλμαν ἦν ἔτλη πατήρ. (850-859)

Or. In our birth we are fortunate, but in our circumstances,
sister, our life has been one of ill fortune.
Iph. I know it, miserable as I am, I know that my
miserable-minded father thrust the knife at my throat.
Or. Alas! For I seem to see you there, though I was not present.
Iph. Without wedding songs, brother,
I was brought to the deceitful tent for the bed of Achilles.
By the altar were tears and cries of lamentation.
Ah, ah, the lustral vessels there! Ah me!
Or. I too cry in sorrow at the bold deed which our father dared.

Chong-Gossard has stated that female lyric in recognition duets often has a
component of persuasion: “the female singer . . . must prove a truth about her past to her
male kin before the drama can go forward or be resolved.”

27 Cyrino argues that

Iphigenia’s greater emotional intensity in this scene is highlighted by her use of lyric, in
contrast to Orestes’ more “rational” trimeter, and that the song ultimately places her in a
subordinate position to Orestes.28 I would argue that Orestes does respond emotionally to
Iphigenia, and that he in some ways it is he who is subordinate to her in the planning
scene that follows. Through the recollection of her experience, Iphigenia makes Orestes a

witness to Agamemnon’s violation, therby persuading him of its veracity. Her brother empathically enters into her memory – he imagines his sister at the moment of her sacrifice, and exclaims with sorrow. The two siblings focus their grief also on their father, whose miserable state of mind (μελεόφρων) led to an act of terrible daring (τόλμαν). Orestes’ participation in this final telling of the Aulis story is crucial, for his presence makes possible Iphigenia’s release from the land of the Taurians.

In her last passage in the exchange, Iphigenia recognizes that a moment of change has come. She turns away from what has come before and looks instead to the future:

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ἀπάτορ´ ἀπάτορα πότιμον ἔλαχον.
ἄλλα δ´ ἔξ ἅλλων κυρεῖ
δαίμονος τύχα τινός.  (864-866)
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My portion was an unfatherly, unfatherly fate.
But different things are emerging,
by some divine stroke of chance.

These alpha-privatives - ἀπάτορ´ ἀπάτορα – are the last that Iphigenia uses to describe her own situation in the play. As we have seen, alpha-privatives have been associated in the language of Iphigenia and of the Chorus with the state of limbo in which the characters find themselves. Their disappearance signals a shift towards activity, towards a full experience of living.

The second monody embodies the shift in Iphigenia’s attention from the past to the future. With Orestes and Pylades standing silently onstage, Iphigenia embarks on an extended passage of lyric, her second monody. The monody is short, thirty-two lines in all; its meter is almost entirely dochmiac. The relative simplicity of form allows Iphigenia’s inner state to stand out more vividly and suggests all the more the dramatic

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29 I follow De Poli (2012) in classifying lines 869-899 as an independent monody rather than a continuation of the lyric dialogue with Orestes.
innovation that the monody affects. All that has been revealed to this point has set the stage for her extended, meandering meditation, which includes a purposeful yet open-ended consideration of the facts as they are, a setting of goals, and a weighing of possibilities.

The monody falls into two sections: in the first part of the song, Iphigenia reflects on her narrow escape from repeating her father’s crime and slaying her brother (869-872); in the second and longer section, she deliberates about the various paths by which the Greek exiles might escape from the Taurians. The shift from past to future is thus contained and condensed within the monody itself.

Hall emphasizes that this monody is not simply a section of a standard reunion duet, “with formulaic musings on the vicissitudes of fortune and worry about the future.”\(^{30}\) Rather, Iphigenia deliberates in an intensely introspective fashion about alternative courses of action. In the midst of an address to Orestes, she pauses to take stock of herself, calling upon her own “wretched soul” (ὦ μελέα ψυχά, 881). Μελέα, she says, using the same word for her soul trapped in this aporia that she has just used to describe her father’s mind at the moment of her sacrifice – a remarkable turn of empathy. This capacity to empathize is a further sign that Iphigenia is no longer imprisoned in the past. Her hard-heartedness has dissipated, as she expands her pity to include the other members of her family.

Iphigenia has realized that some chance or shift of fortune (τύχα τινός) has taken place. Now she wonders what this fortune will be, and how her own choices will affect the outcome. The insistent series of questions – τίς, τίς, τίνα – indicate desperation, but the use of the strong first-person indicative verb πέμψω indicates her agency. The

\(^{30}\) Hall (2012) 37.
alliteration of p-sounds, which necessitate frequent short intakes of breath, might have in performance given a sense of breathless excitement to these lines:

ά δ´ ἐπ’ αὐτοῖς τίς τελευτά;  
tίς τόχα μοι συγχωρήσει;  
tίνα σοι πόρον εὑρισκένα  
πάλιν ἀπὸ πόλεως, ἀπὸ φόνου πέμψαν  
pατρίδ’ ἐς Ἀργείαν,  
πρὶν ἐπὶ ξέφος αἴματι σῷ πελάσαι;  
tόδε τόδε σὸν, ὦ μελέα ψυχά,  
χρέος ἀνευρίσκειν. (874-882)

What ending will there be for these things?  
What fortune will come to me?  
What path will I find for you,  
to bring you from slaughter in a foreign land back to our Argive homeland,  
before the sword draws near to your blood?  
This, this, my wretched soul, you must find out.

Iphigenia has taken responsibility for their escape from the Taurians. It is her task (τόδε τόδε σὸν . . . χρέος ἀνευρίσκειν) She considers the various plans they might undertake:

πότερον κατὰ χέρσον; οὐχὶ ναί,  
ἀλλὰ ποδὸν ῥυπά.  
θανάτῳ πελάσεις ἰρα βάρβαρα φύλα  
καὶ δὶ ὀδοὺς ἀνόδους στείχον· διὰ κυανέας μᾶν  
στενοπόρου πέτρας μακρὰ κέλευθα να-  
ioσιν δρασμοῖς. (883-892)

Should it be on land? Not by ship, but by the rushing of feet.  
Then you will come close to death from barbarous tribes, traveling also along pathless paths.  
But the route for ship-borne flight through the narrow passage of the dark rocks is long.

The alternatives she proposes — by land or by ship — are both uncertain and dangerous.

The alpha-privatives in this passage - ὀδοὺς ἀνόδους, πόρον ἀπορον — are applied not to
Iphigenia, but to the journey that is to come. Her relentless focus on herself has been replaced by a focus on the means of escape, and the introduction of dual forms (δυοῖν τοῖν μόνοιν Ἀτρείδαιν) emphasizes the shift in her thinking. Iphigenia’s command of geographical knowledge shows her intelligence and resourcefulness. Yet she soon lapses into a seeming hopelessness:

\[\text{τάλαινα τάλαινα.} \]
\[\text{τίς ἂν οὐν τάδ᾽ ἂν ἢ θεός ἢ βροτός ἢ} \]
\[\text{τί τοῖν ἀδοκήτων} \]
\[\text{πόρον ἁπόρον ἡξανύσας δυοῖν} \]
\[\text{τοῖν μόνοιν Ἀτρείδαιν φανὲ}\]
\[\text{κακῶν ἔκλυσιν;} \quad (893-899)\]

Miserable, miserable!
What, whether god or mortal
or something unexpected,
will appear as a release from evils,
accomplishing the unpassable passage
for the only two descendants of Atreus?

Here Iphigenia’s monody ends with lines that recall the “desperation speech,” but she breaks with the conventional pattern in the scene that follows, as, with assistance, she overcomes desperation in favor of decisive action. Hall has classified this monody as a form of the “deliberation speech,” which may be distinguished from a “desperation speech,” as described by R.L. Fowler. A typical “desperation speech,” in Fowler’s definition, consists of a series of questions that are rhetorically posed and rejected, one after the other. And yet, unlike a desperation speech, Iphigenia does deliberate about whether she should take action, but about how that action should be taken. By ending her song with an open question – what will appear to us as a release from these evils? – rather than with a statement of hopelessness, Iphigenia leaves open the possibility of a solution.

Of the thirty-six monodies in the corpus of Euripides, this is the only one that has the act of deliberation as its central theme and a successful action as its outcome.\textsuperscript{32} Euripidean monodies often contain rhetorical questions, which in most cases contribute to a sense of hopelessness: so, for example, Phaedra in \textit{Hippolytus} wonders how she can turn aside her misfortune, but finds no solution (668-679); Polymestor in \textit{Hecuba} searches here and there to lay hold of his enemies, but is foiled in his blindness (1056-1082); the Phrygian in \textit{Orestes} wishes to fly either to the sky or to the encircling sea, both clearly impossible (1368-1379). In other cases the options proposed in the monody are immediately criticized or forestalled, as when Hermione in \textit{Andromache} considers various ways of committing suicide after she has been detected in her plot to murder Andromache (846-850), but is rebuked by the Nurse for her excessive and unnecessary fear (866-878). The closest parallel to Iphigenia’s monody may be the opening section of Creusa’s song in \textit{Ion}, discussed in Chapter 1, where Creusa argues with her own soul about whether she should speak or keep silent (859-864). In \textit{Ion} Creusa’s hesitation creates suspense for the scathing indictment of Apollo that follows; in this case Iphigenia’s deliberation becomes the sole matter of the monody.

Thus Iphigenia is unique among figures in other plays who pose questions in song. Within the play, she is distinguished from Orestes, who also deliberates, but in iambic trimeter, and without a successful outcome that leads to action. In the second scene of the Prologue, Orestes considers how he and Pylades might enter the temple precinct and steal the statue of Artemis. He proposes several options, but soon gives up hope of ever succeeding in this difficult venture:

\textsuperscript{32} I follow De Poli (2011) in his listing of the thirty-six monodies.
So I have come, trusting in your words, here to an unknown, inhospitable land. But I ask you, Pylades – for you are my partner in this labor – what shall we do? For you see the high fortifications of the walls. Shall we ascend on scaling ladders? How then could we avoid detection? Or should we loosen the bronze-made bolts with crowbars, of which we know nothing? But if we are caught in the act of opening the gates and devising a means of entry, we will die. No, before we die let us flee on the ship by which we sailed here.

Orestes’ speech of deliberation does not lead to decisive action. Only when Pylades reproaches him for his cowardice does he agree to hide in a nearby cave until nightfall (104-105); even then, no definite plan is advanced, and the onset of Orestes’ madness drives the pair out of hiding and into the hands of the Taurians. Orestes in the Prologue thus establishes a model for ineffective deliberation that will be reversed and corrected by Iphigenia’s second monody. She, not her brother, will devise a means of stealing the statue and escaping to Greece. Thus the monody signals in dramatic terms the contrast between Iphigenia and Orestes, and constitutes the critical moment in which she realizes her potential for action.
After Iphigenia’s song, Pylades urges the siblings to cease from sorrowing and face the problem at hand: how can they escape? Pylades has not fully recognized the change in her will; the iambic exchange that follows convinces him utterly. Iphigenia does not reply directly, but instead asks about her sister Electra. Orestes answers that she is married to Pylades, and leads a prosperous life (915); in response to further questions, he declares that Pylades is a cousin of the house (919). These facts allow Iphigenia to accept Pylades as a member of her family (922). She later refers to him as one of her “dearest” (φιλτάτους, 1065); his fortune is now tied to hers, and he must be saved as well.

Now that her task is clear, Iphigenia thinks of a stratagem that will use elements of truth to deceive the king. Orestes’ eager questions bring out the details of her plan: to bring both statue and victims down to the sea for fictitious rites of purification, and then escape on board ship. In her monody she asks her own soul for a “discovery” that will save the last descendants of Atreus (εὑρυμένα, 876); now she has hit upon just such a “novel discovery” (καινὸν ἐξεύρητι). The verbal repetition emphasizes the connection between the aporia of her song and the solution she has now found.

This scene marks Iphigenia’s last exchange with the women of the Chorus. Her second monody marks a shift in her allegiance: she is no longer only one of many captive women, but a sister and a sister-in-law whose first responsibility is to her family. Thus she is awake, alive, newly embracing of her identity. She asks the Chorus to conceal her plan, appealing to them on the basis of their shared femininity: “we are all women, a group concerned for one another, most firm in looking after our common welfare” (1061-1062). She further promises that if she survives, she will bring them to Greece (1067-
Although Iphigenia has no further interaction with them, their loyalty to her is rewarded: Athena in her epiphany guarantees their safe return.

Conclusion

In this play, the poet uses the two passages of monodic lyric to emphasize Iphigenia’s drastic shift in thought and in action. Iphigenia’s first monody, placed early in the play, shows her to be intelligent and sensitive, as well as closely connected with the Chorus; at the same time, she is trapped in the moment when her promised life was stolen from her. The second monody marks the moment when Iphigenia moves from thinking only about herself and her past to thinking of others and of the future. The use of monody to highlight the act of deliberation is unique to this play and to this heroine; by expressing the process of Iphigenia’s thought in song, Euripides emphasizes her status as a woman called to action.

Both monodies invite the audience to see through Iphigenia’s eyes. Music arouses the emotions; it not only permits, but even induces a degree of empathy. The direct presentation of grief in Iphigenia’s first monody expresses the truth of her experience at that particular moment. Insofar as her song allows her to be known, the first monody has built up a credit which is paid forward into the second monody. At other points, as in her dealings with Thoas, Iphigenia is capable of sophisticated rhetoric and intentional deceit.33 By contrast, in her lyrics she does not lie or attempt to conceal her feelings. It is her unadulterated experience that emerges, and the direct connection between her thought and her deed.

33 Cf. Hartigan (1986), who examines the connection between salvation and deceit in the play.
Figure 2. Lyric Structure of *Iphigenia in Tauris*. Text of Diggle (1981).
Phoenician Women: The Lyric Voice of a Shattered House

Phoenician Women, produced ca. 411-409 B.C.E., is remarkable in that actors’ lyric occupies a more prominent position than choral lyric.¹ In total, actors’ songs make up 18% of the play, concentrated into four scenes: the epirrhema between Antigone and the Old Servant in the teichoskopia (103-192); Jocasta’s monody celebrating the return of Polyneices (301-354); the monody of Antigone (1485-1538), which leads into her first amoibaion with Oedipus (1539-1581); and the second amoibaion of Antigone and Oedipus, which concludes the exodos (1710-1757).² These four scenes are placed in two pairs quite near the beginning and end of the play, distant yet in a number of evident ways counter-posed to each other. The contrasts thus set up constitute an arc which spans the entire work.

Phoenician Women is a complex and diffuse play. The plot involves a large ensemble of figures drawn from the myth of the house of Labdacus: Jocasta and Oedipus, their sons Eteocles and Polyneices, but also their daughter Antigone, Jocasta’s brother Creon, the prophet Tiresias, and his son Menoeceus. The sheer number of speaking roles necessitates a reduction in any one individual’s influence on the course of events; indeed, the characters seem helplessly caught up in a catastrophe beyond their control. What then constitute the organizing principles of the action? I would argue that it is the strong

¹ Csapo (1999) gives the percentages for choral song and actors’ song as follows: choral song makes up 13.6% of the play, choral song plus recitative 14.2%; while actors’ song makes up 14.4%, and actors’ song plus recitative 17.6%. The total percentage of the play delivered to musical accompaniment is thus 31.8%. The roles may be divided in several ways, but it is likely that all three actors would be called upon to sing in the course of the drama, which presupposes highly trained or even professional performers with great vocal ability. Mastronarde (1994) 16.
formal element of actors’ song, concentrated at crucial points in the development and assigned to crucial figures, that provides the necessary foregrounding.

Some scholars see the apparent disorder of the play as part of a deliberate strategy on the part of Euripides. Donald Mastronarde describes *Phoenician Women* as an example of “open composition,” consciously playing against expectations of unity and simple order.\(^3\) To extend this approach, in an apparently episodic plot, the placement of actors’ lyric reveals a consistent strategy. The four scenes of actors’ lyric by their positioning serve to underscore the analogies between disparate events; the scenes are distributed in a chiastic pattern, situated at the beginning and end of the play, as can be seen in Figure 3.\(^4\) The two scenes of lyric dialogue are counterposed in form and content, as are the two extended monodies.\(^5\) The middle portion of the drama, by contrast, develops through iambic argument rather than music: here the focus is on the intense ideational *agon* between Eteocles and Polyneices, on the prophecy of Tiresias and the suicide of Menoeceus, and on the reports of the battle and death of the two brothers. The songs of the Chorus are woven through this central section, but their contributions are of a different order than those of the singing actors, reflecting on the history and implications of the house’s disorder. The actors’ lyric with which the drama begins then returns, but in a minor key; the analogies between the opening and closing scenes of lyric thus lead the audience toward a recognition of latent connections of similarity and contrast.

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\(^3\) Mastronarde (1994) 3.

\(^4\) On page 173.

\(^5\) Cf. Ludwig (1954) 130-135 on symmetrical positioning of the lyric scenes in the play.
The singers in this play are a young woman, just beyond childhood; a mother; and an old, blind man. Although the songs differ in tone and content, they share an emphasis on the values of community, family, and religion. The common concerns of the singers are symptomatic of the larger political and social situation in Thebes, where adult men are manifestly unable to provide stable and enduring leadership. It falls to the characters on the fringes of civic life – women, children, old men, and foreigners – to try to keep the fabric of the family and of society from disintegrating entirely. Jocasta and Antigone can provide continuity only through the customary duties of womanhood: marriage, motherhood, and lamentation. Traditional female roles, however, are confounded by the incestuous history of the royal house: Jocasta is the mother not only of Polynoeices, Eteocles, and Antigone, but of Oedipus as well. Antigone, too, cannot fulfill her expected role in religious, social, or familial life, and the end of the play she relinquishes her prospective future as a wife and mother to become the lifelong virginal companion of her aged father. Male attempts at leadership, the focus of the iambic scenes in middle of play, all fail disastrously. Oedipus in the exodos, ghostly and weak, is proof of this failure.

In what follows I will treat each of the four scenes of actors’ lyric in some detail. Actors’ lyric gives the tragedy its contours, both by their structural relationship within the play and by their continuity of theme. The teichoskopia and the monodies of Jocasta and Antigone emphasize the isolation of the individual members of the house; the final duet reunites what remains of the family through the shared experience of grief. The three scenes of lyric featuring Antigone – the teichoskopia, her monody of lament over the corpses, and her duets with Oedipus – trace her progression from a sheltered maiden to a distraught mourner and finally to a mature woman who takes charge of her own and her
father’s fate. As in the case of Iphigenia in *Iphigenia in Tauris*, the songs of this virginal heroine show a progression from a position of powerlessness to the assumption of a greater agency. Euripides here experiments with monody not only as a structural device to shape plot and create meaning, but also as a vehicle for the development of a complex female figure whose varied and varying state of mind constitutes a center of interest in the play.

The Chorus

In order to understand the special position given to actors’ lyric in this play, a few words must be said about of the nature of the Chorus. Because their contribution has been much discussed by other scholars, I refer to them only insofar as their songs provide parallels and contrasts to the scenes of actors’ lyric. Their songs are shaded in blue in Figure 3. In a play of 1776 lines, the five songs of the Chorus amount to only 224 lines. Why so few? I submit that Euripides has deliberately shaped the role of the Chorus in order to emphasize by contrast the lyric of the actors, particularly that of Antigone. Antigone’s first two lyric scenes usurp the place that would ordinarily be occupied by a choral song: the position immediately following the Prologue and the position after the speech of the Second Messenger, who relates the disastrous news of the three deaths of Eteocles, Polyneices, and Jocasta. Structurally, the playwright gives to Antigone, rather than to the Chorus, the principal lyric voice of the play.

The women who make up the Chorus are, as the name of the play suggests, *Phoenician* women, on their way from Phoenicia to Delphi. These women, who are not native to Thebes, stand outside the troubles of the royal family. They are transients; the siege prevents them from continuing their journey to Delphi, and temporarily traps them
within the city. In fact, they are not yet a chorus: only at Delphi will they take up their cult post as a real chorus, singing and dancing in honor of the god (234-238; cf. χορὸς γενοίµαν, 236). Although they feel sorrow for the descendants of Oedipus, who are distant kin through their shared descent from Cadmus, they remain largely uninvolved in the action. For them the duel of Eteocles and Polynoeices has no lasting consequence; presumably, after the brothers’ death they will continue on their way to Apollo’s holy temple.

In their distance from the action of the play, the songs of the Chorus are linked by a continuity of thought and theme; taken together, they create a thematic background of deep pessimism. As Marilyn Arthur has described, the choral odes explore the connection between the present ills of Thebes and Cadmus’ original crime at its founding – that is, between the present and the distant, mythological past. This “song cycle,” Arthur posits, locates the roots of disorder in the necessity for violence which is a precondition for the founding of this city, and, indeed, for all human civilization. Building on Arthur’s analysis, Helene Foley has described the “contrapuntal relation” between the action of the play and the choral odes, which tell the history of Thebes in mythical terms. The difference in perspective between the Chorus and the actors is underscored by distinctions in the meters, syntax, and imagery that their songs employ.

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6 Cf. Rawson (1970) on the importance of the Chorus’ identity as “exiles” from their native land and Murnaghan (2005) on the more typical role of female choruses as supportive to women like Antigone who have not reached the telos of marriage.


8 Foley (1985) 111.

9 The choral odes are characterized by verbal repetitions and simple syntax. Mastronarde (1994) ad 206-260 speaks of their “almost monotonous clarity.” The odes contain a range of meters: the parodos is predominantly glyconic, with some lecythia at its end; the first stasimon is in a regular iambic-trochaic
If the Chorus are outsiders to Thebes, the actors who sing stand at the very heart of the city, its incestuous natives. They must make sense of the house’s calamity not as mythology, but as lived experience. The audience of the play is thrust into this lived experience from the outset; the Choral perspective develops more gradually, and with a tranquility of observation entirely absent from the songs of the actors. Jocasta tries to reunite her family using the persuasive techniques both of iambic speech and of monodic song. Antigone’s role is somewhat different, because it is so powerfully lyrical. In Mastronarde’s text of the play, she has 223 lines; 178 of them – that is, 80% – are in lyric meters. Her dominant mode is song. Her three scenes of lyric trace an emotional arc from youth and inexperience to knowledge and sorrow.

**Phoenician Women and Seven Against Thebes**

Euripides highlights the prominent role of actors’ lyric in *Phoenician Women* through elaborate inter-textual – and inter-musical – engagement with Aeschylus’ *Seven Against Thebes*. This play, produced in 467 B.C., deals with the same portion of the Theban myth as *Phoenician Women*. Euripides may have seen the original production in his youth; however, it is doubtful that many members of Euripides’ audience, more than fifty years after the original performance, could be counted on to appreciate sophisticated relationships of similarity and contrast.\(^\text{10}\) Here we are in a remarkably fortunate position,

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\(^\text{10}\) However, the *agon* between Euripides and Aeschylus in Aristophanes’ *Frogs* (405 B.C.) takes for granted that Euripides was intimately familiar with the work of his great predecessor; as the poet himself says, “I know him well and have long examined him” (ἐγνώσα τοὺς καὶ διέσκειμαι πάλαι, 836). Cf.
as recent work by Marcel Lech has made a strong case that *Seven Against Thebes* was re-performed in Athens between 411 and 405 B.C.\textsuperscript{11} The date of the *Phoenician Women* is uncertain, but most scholars place it around 409 B.C.\textsuperscript{12} This would mean that not only did Euripides create his own version of the myth with the older drama in mind, but that both he and his audience might have recently seen a staging of Aeschylus’ play with which to compare it.

The possibility of a re-performance of *Seven Against Thebes* is tempting to imagine, but ultimately beyond proof. Even if we do not assume a recent re-performance, scholars have traced numerous allusions in Euripides’ work to Aeschylus’ earlier treatment.\textsuperscript{13} In an influential chapter, Helene Foley offers a sequential comparison of scenes in *Phoenician Women* with their predecessors in *Seven Against Thebes*, and concludes that the later play acquires its meaning in large part by calling attention to its differences from the earlier poetic text. Froma Zeitlina and Barbara Goff have described the emphatic and self-aware intertextuality of the shields of the Argive attackers in Euripides’ play; here the shields lack any observer capable of reading and deciphering their emblems, an instance of the breakdown between signifier and signified in the world of the drama. The roles of men and women in the two plays have been discussed by Anna Lamari, while Simon Goldhill has analyzed the different depictions of the city of Thebes. Most recently, Isabel Torrance discusses the ways in which Euripides responds to

\textsuperscript{11} Lech (2008).

\textsuperscript{12} Mastronarde (1994) 12.

Aeschylus in describing – and not describing – the attackers and their shields. Building on the work of these scholars, I would suggest that Euripides has adapted the meters and thematic concerns of the choral songs of *Seven Against Thebes* and transformed them into scenes of solo lyric in his own play. The Theban women who make up the Chorus of Aeschylus’ play become the Theban women – Jocasta, Antigone, and to some extent the feminized Oedipus – of Euripides’ play. This change has the effect of redefining the emotional center of the work: instead of a focus on the impact that the war has on the community at large, the main interest of *Phoenician Women* derives from the experiences of the characters most affected by the brothers’ quarrel but pathetically unable to influence its outcome: Jocasta, Oedipus, and above all Antigone. The impulse towards death and disorder that has destroyed Thebes is given form in the progression of the four scenes of actors’ lyric.

*Teichoskopia* (88-201)

The *teichoskopia*, the view from the wall by Antigone and an aged servant, introduces actors’ song as a mode of central importance in the play. The epirrhematic dialogue in this scene, and especially Antigone’s two extended flights of song, takes the place of the choral meditation the audience might usually expect at this point. By situating the lyrics of Antigone immediately after the Prologue delivered by Jocasta and before the parodos, the playwright ensures that the voice of the actor is the first lyrical point of entry into understanding the danger that besets Thebes.

Scholars both ancient and modern have called the authenticity of the *teichoskopia* into question, but it is now generally accepted that the scene belongs to the original
play. For the purposes of this study I treat it as genuine, basing my decision on considerations of both formal and thematic integrity. The scene serves several important dramatic functions. It presents the initial emotional state of Antigone, whose youthful exuberance will subsequently be undone by her family’s fate. Her words illustrate the strength and ferocity of Polynoeices and his army, and emphasize the justice of their cause. As we shall see, the lyric dialogue also looks forward to the shared lament of Oedipus and Antigone in the exodos, whose connection to the earlier scene is signaled by the repeated gesture of an old man and a young woman joining hands. In addition, by its very setting, the teichoskopia establishes the paramount importance of the theme of boundaries. There is a sense in which the entire play is staged at the wall.

Close literary precedents for the teichoskopia are few and unmistakable. The two literary precedents would almost certainly have been present and relevant to the viewing audience, as well as in the mind of the poet, are the teichoskopia in Book III of the Iliad, where Helen identifies various Greek heroes in response to Priam’s questions, and the parodos of Aeschylus’ Seven Against Thebes, where the Chorus describe the sights and sounds of the Argive army attacking the walls of the city. A more distant comparandum may be found in Sophocles’ Antigone, produced ca. 440 B.C. Euripides’ allusions to these similar scenes in earlier literature at times reinforce and at times reframe the

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15 Using formal arguments that take into account vocabulary, meter, and lyric structure, Mastronarde (1994) ad 88-201 concludes that the teichoskopia is of a piece with the rest of the play. For a summary of thematic arguments and a persuasive defense of the scene cf. in particular Burgess (1988).

16 For an analysis of this joining of hands as a “significant action” cf. Altena (1999-2000).
apparent meaning of the action.\textsuperscript{17} Given the high canonical status of the prior poetry, everything that Euripides does in constructing this scene stands out against this backdrop: therefore, this \textit{teichoskopia} is noteworthy as much for what it omits as for what it includes.

The \textit{teichoskopia} of \textit{Phoenician Women} resembles the scene in the \textit{Iliad} in its basic situation: two characters, a young woman and an old man, stand on the high walls of the city and observe the enemy soldiers on the battlefield below. Euripides reverses the structure of the scene, as here it is the young woman who asks questions and the old man who answers them. Antigone inquires about everything she sees, while the Old Servant twice justifies his knowledge, which comes from first hand-experience as a negotiator in the Argive camp (95-98, 142-144). The disparity in experience and point of view between the two characters is signaled on a formal level through the juxtaposition of the Old Servant’s lines of trimeter and Antigone’s flights of lyric.\textsuperscript{18} Antigone’s first utterance, a series of breathless short syllables, defines the contrast between the Old Servant and herself. She is young and he is old, yet she requires his help to climb onto the palace roof:

\begin{verbatim}
ὀρεγέ νον ὀρεγε γεραιὰν νέη
χείρ ἀπὸ κλιμάκων
ποδὸς ἱχνος ἐπανέλλον.
\end{verbatim}

(103-105)

Stretch out, stretch out your hand from the ladder, aged to young,

\textsuperscript{17} Burnett (1971). Cf. Ieranò (2002) on the relationship of the \textit{teichoskopia} in Homer and the parodos of \textit{Seven Against Thebes}.

\textsuperscript{18} Cyrino (1998) discusses scenes in which Euripides uses lyric dialogue to establish the singing character as more vulnerable, subordinate, and feminized in contrast to the responding speaker. She notes that the one example of a male/female duet on terms of equality is the lyric dialogue between Antigone and Oedipus at the end of \textit{Phoenissae}; as we shall see, the shared song in this passage looks back to the exchange between Antigone and the Old Servant, where the balance of knowledge and of lyric is decidedly unequal.
helping me to place the track of my foot.\textsuperscript{19} The Old Man reassures Antigone, telling her to “have courage” (\textit{θάρσει}, 117) and encouraging her to ask about what she sees (118). The pointed change from the literary precedent of the \textit{Iliad} presents Antigone from the first lines of the scene as a sort of anti-Helen: chaste, innocent, inexperienced, and unknowing.\textsuperscript{20} Euripides’ substitution of the old man for the Priam-figure also underscores the absence of Oedipus. Just as it should have been the king of the city planning its defense, so it ought to be the king standing on the wall and taking stock of the attacking army. Oedipus, weak, old, polluted, and unable to see the army ranged against his city, cannot fulfill his proper role, and Eteocles is nowhere in evidence.

Antigone and the Old Servant’s position on the walls recalls the scene in the \textit{Iliad}, but at the same time this setting calls into question the function of walls in Euripides’ play. In the \textit{Iliad}, the walls of Troy are crossed by Trojan warriors and by Priam, but never by the Greeks; at the same time, the Greeks’ inability to breach the city during Achilles’ lifetime surely resonated with the original audience’s knowledge that the walls would one day be breached and the city sacked. The physical division between inside and outside is dichotomous and absolute, and corresponds with a matching conceptual division. This is not the case in the incestuous, unrighteous city of Thebes, at war with itself, where the boundary between inside and outside – like that between native and foreign, or between ally and enemy – is continually called into question. Over the course of the play, the walls of Thebes, unlike those of Troy in the \textit{Iliad}, are revealed to be

\textsuperscript{19} I have used the text of Mastronarde (1994) for this scene. Translations are my own.

\textsuperscript{20} Antigone is also, as we shall see, implicitly in contrast with the women of the Chorus of \textit{Seven Against Thebes}, whom Eteocles rebukes for their clamor and effrontery (181-202). Cf. Caldwell (1973), Byrne (1997) and Von Fritz (2007) on the character of Eteocles.
permeable. In the *teichoskopia* Antigone looks over the walls and wishes to be transported beyond their confines to embrace her brother on the battlefield; Polyneices, a declared adversary, enters the city alone under the truce brokered by Jocasta; Menoeceus leaps from the walls onto the battlefield in his attempt to save the city by self-sacrifice; Jocasta and Antigone leave the city and enter the fray of battle to intervene between the two brothers; in the exodos the corpses of Jocasta and her sons traverse the walls; and in the play’s final moments expulsion from the city is decreed for the body of Polyneices, while Antigone and Oedipus are driven out into permanent exile. By recalling the *teichoskopia* of the *Iliad* in this early scene, Euripides sets into high relief the contrasting characteristics of this city and these walls.

*We have already seen how, in consequence of the unusually strong shadow presence of Homer as one antecedent model text, the *teichoskopia* operates with a paired rhetoric of what it is and what it is not. A similar allusive game can be posited with Aeschylus’ *Seven Against Thebes*: that is, the *teichoskopia* of the later work can be usefully examined in contrast to the parodos of the earlier. Clearly, the imagined presence of Aeschylus’ pattern behind that of Euripides is not nearly as straightforward as in the case of Homer, and it is by the richness of the plausible ideas it generates that any analysis in those terms stands or falls.*

*There is, as I have suggested, some evidence that the *Seven Against Thebes* may have been re-performed shortly before the premiere of *Phoenician Women*, and that therefore a re-working of defining scenes and situations can be viewed partially as a response. As one example, Barbara Goff writes that, in contrast to *Seven Against Thebes*,

\[21\text{ Cf. Goldhill (2007) on the walls of Troy and Thebes.}\]
the action of *Phoenician Women* has been “turned over to the interventions of women and the young.” This change in focus, she suggests, can be seen as part of a larger project of testing and rejecting the various available literary models.”

Of course, the Chorus in *Seven Against Thebes* do try to intervene, and dominate the end of the play with their lamentation. The identity of the singer, a virgin and a native of Thebes, remains constant across the two plays: Euripides’ innovation consists in giving the initial musical scene of the play to a single woman, rather than to a group.

In both plays, the scenes by the wall serve primarily to delineate the initial emotional state of a principal character. Euripides challenges the expectations built up by Aeschylus by introducing solo lyric to his version of the scene. He presents the coming siege through the eyes of the excited, impressionable, and inexperienced Antigone. He is by this procedure adding a layer of dramatic irony to the scene, of the sort that calls for additional pity.

Antigone, as a virgin and a member of the royal family, should exist in an enclosed, peaceful realm, apart from war and suffering. Only her mother’s permission has allowed her to leave her maiden chamber and observe the army, and throughout the scene she is supervised by a male guardian. Her first perspective on the action is characterized by both literal and figurative distance: she stands far above the army, does not know the names of the warriors or what the devices on their shields represent, and is unable to understand the consequences that would follow if the city fell. Despite her

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23 Cf. Blok (2001) for a historical approach to proper behavior for an unmarried Greek woman, as well as Foley (1985) 117, who compares the Servant’s concern for the propriety of Antigone to Eteocles’ emphasis in *Seven Against Thebes* on the proper place of women.
agitation, she finds order and brightness in the scene on the battlefield. Yet her youthful vision of order is based on formulaic and naïve expectations, and on an implicit sense of safety that cannot withstand experience. The wall she stands upon proposes a set of isomorphic boundaries that prove, in essence, illusory; for there is at this juncture in Thebes no proper dichotomy between in and out, us and them, right and wrong.

In *Seven Against Thebes*, the parodos portrays the panic of the Chorus at the sounds of the approaching Argive army (78-181). Nowhere in that play is there actor’s lyric, whereas the Chorus have a leading role. Indeed, their lyrics account for nearly fifty percent of the total lines of the play, and their dominant presence is clearly visible in Figure 4. As Theban maidens – not visitors from a distant city – the Chorus are directly affected by the action taking place onstage. Indeed, as W.G. Thalmann has argued, the Chorus “represent the whole life of the city, its relations with its land and with its gods.” If the city is saved, these maidens will marry, bear children, and create a society free from the disastrous influence of the Labdacids. At the moment when the play begins, however, their lives have been entirely disrupted by the war.

In Euripides’ play, the Chorus of Phoenician women have no such vested interest in the outcome of the dynastic struggle of the house of Oedipus. Rather it is Antigone who represents the future life of the city, the possibility of marriage, childbirth, and social

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26 In the ending as it stands, it is possible that Antigone and Ismene appear in the last scene and may have joined with the Chorus in their final lines, but I do not accept this passage as original, discussed further below. On the ending of the play cf. Dawe (1967), Orwin (1980) and Flintoff (1980).

27 On page 174.

order. Accordingly, her lyric scene— which echoes the corresponding scene in *Seven Against Thebes* in meter, placement, and content—conveys what the siege against Thebes means for the women of the city.\(^{29}\) Yes here Euripides creates an atmosphere not of uncontrolled panic, but of mingled anxiety and admiration.

The parados of *Seven Against Thebes* falls into two parts, with some overlap of content: first the Theban women express panic at the imminent attack of the Argives, and then beseech the gods to come to the aid of the city. Instead of a stately progression onto the stage, the maidens rush in from all quarters, singing in excited astrophic dochmiacs.\(^{30}\) They cannot see over the wall, and instead describe the sounds they hear, making the off-stage world vividly present in the space of the theater.\(^{31}\) They sing of the clang of shields, the tramping of horses, the rattling of armor, the whirring of spears, the clatter of chariots, and the crash of stones against the walls of the city:

\[
\text{ἒ ἓ ἓ ἓ,}
\text{ὀτὸβον ἀρμάτων ἄμφι πόλιν κλών:}
\text{ὦ πότνι Ἡρα.}
\text{ἐλακὸν ἄζονων βριθομένων χρόσι.}
\text{Ἀρτεμὶ φίλα, ἓ ἓ ἓ ἓ,}
\text{δοριτινάκτος αἰθήρ δ' ἐπιμαίνεται.}
\text{τί πόλις ἄμμι πάσχει, τί γενήσεται;}
\text{ποί δ' ἐτὶ τέλος ἐπάγει θεός};
\]

(150-157)\(^{32}\)

Ah ah ah ah!

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\(^{29}\) Although the positioning is somewhat unusual, the form is familiar from other plays of this period. As we have seen, the *amoibaion* featuring a male voice speaking in trimeters and a female voice singing is used in the lyric duet of Ion and Creusa in *Ion* and of Iphigenia and Orestes in *Iphigenia in Tauris*.

\(^{30}\) Cf. Haldane (1965) on imagery of sound, and Hutchinson (1985) ad 78-108, who comments that the dochmiac meter here contrasts with the spoken anapests often used to mark the entrance of the chorus in Aeschylus.

\(^{31}\) Cf. Edmunds (2002) on the use of sound to create a sense of off-stage space in this passage. In particular the synesthetic phrase κτύπον δέδορκα ("I see the crashing," 103) brings what is outside the walls into the space of the theater — the Chorus can both see and hear the attacking army, while the audience can do neither.

\(^{32}\) I have used the text of Page (1972).
I hear the rattle of chariots encircling the town.
O lady Hera!
The hubs are creaking beneath the axles’ load.
Beloved Artemis! Ah ah ah ah!
The air rages at the shaking of spears!
What is happening to our city? What will the future bring?
To what final end does the god lead us?

The initial impact of their song is to create a mood of fear, disorder, and impending disaster. Their agitation is conveyed verbally by the repeated cry ἔ ἔ ἔ ἔ, by the invocations to Hera and Artemis, and by a series of rhetorical questions (τί, τί, ποί). After this chaotic opening, the maidens appeal in more orderly fashion to the Olympian gods, who may have been present onstage in the form of statues (128-180). Eva Stehle argues that the metrical progression of the parodos, which moves from astrophic dochmiacs to strophic dochmiacs and ultimately to strophic cretics and iambics, represents a struggle “to mold terror into religiously pleasing appeal to the gods.” The success of this struggle is an omen of the city’s survival.

If the musical shape of the parodos of Seven Against Thebes signifies a progression from chaos to greater order, the teichoskopia of Phoenician Women moves in the opposite direction. Over the course of the scene, the music becomes increasingly complex, even frenzied. The Old Servant speaks in trimeters throughout, while Antigone, after a few spoken trimeters, sings twelve brief astrophic systems, culminating in a final outpouring of lyric that some scholars have classified as an independent monody. Antigone’s lyrics feature predominantly dochmiacs, with an admixture of syncopated iambic, anapestic, dactylic, and enoplian elements. The dochmiac meter, first attested in

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33 Wiles (1993).
the parodos of *Seven Against Thebes*, again underscores the differences between Euripides’ play and his Aeschylean model. Here too the effect is to create a sense of agitation, but it is individual rather than collective. As the scene progresses, this individuality, even isolation, becomes even more pronounced: Antigone’s lyric sections become both longer and more divorced from her interlocutor, directed increasingly not to the Old Servant but to herself and the natural environment.

Where the focus of the parodos of *Seven Against Thebes* was on the sounds of the approaching army, from her very first lyric sections Antigone draws attention to sight and spectacle. As soon as she appears on the roof, she sees the whole plain “flashing with bronze” (*κατάχαλκον ἅπαν / πεδίον ἀστράπτει, 110-111*). She inquires about the different warriors by pointing out details of their armor. Hippomedon, for instance, is conspicuous for his white plume and his bronze shield (119-121). His glorious appearance excites not only terror but wonder as well:

\[ ἐ ἐ, ὡς γαῦρος, ὡς φοβερὸς εἰσιδεῖν, γίγαντι γηγενέται προσόμοιος ἀστερωσός ὡς ἐν γραφασίν, οὐχὶ πρόσ-φορος ἀμερίῳ γέννα. \] (127-130)

Ah, ah! How proud, how fearful to see, like an earthborn giant in a painting, dazzling-faced, not resembling the mortal race.

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36 The *teichoskopia* may also be compared to the long central episode of *Seven Against Thebes*, where Eteocles hears and responds to descriptions of the seven shields of the seven attackers. In *Phoenician Women* the warriors and their shields are not riddles to be deciphered, but objects of spectacle. The focus of the scene is Antigone’s point of view. Attempts to interpret Euripides’ description of warriors, gates, and shields as symbolic have been unsuccessful, and, as Foley (1985) 128 writes, “the lack of significant pattern becomes a statement in itself.” The attacking army does not suggest the construction of a cosmology, like the shield of Achilles in the *Iliad*, or the workings of a familial curse, as in Aeschylus. Cf. Taplin (1980) on the shield of Achilles and Goff (1998) 138 on the polysemy of the *teichoskopia* in this play.
Here again *Seven Against Thebes* lurks behind the Euripidean text. There the shield of Hippomedon is described by the Scout as “not made by a lowly craftsman” (ὁ σηματουργὸς δ’ οὐ τις εὔτελής, 491), bearing as its ensign the monster Typhon breathing dark smoke, surrounded by coiling snakes (493-496). The image of the giant appears as well in *Seven Against Thebes*, when the Scout speaks of Capaneus (γίγας, 424). There the warriors are terrible, boastful, violent; here, although the passage is textually difficult, the sense seems to be that Antigone cannot compare Hippomedon’s appearance to anything she has seen in real life, but to something seen only in art. It is the warrior himself, not his shield, that is ecphrastic. Shirley Barlow suggests that Antigone’s words evoke contemporary highlighting and painting techniques, and invite the audience to imagine what is not present to their eyes. Euripides includes the images and language of *Seven Against Thebes* only to place them at one remove: Antigone sees the entire plain as a painting.

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Euripides’ engagement with Aeschylus’ *Seven Against Thebes* in the *teichoksopia* is pointed and omnipresent; a more subtle contrast may be drawn in the way he depicts the central figure, that is, between the Antigone of *Phoenician Women* and the one of Sophocles’ earlier play. In the prologue of Sophocles’ *Antigone*, Antigone appears outside the walls of the city alone, without a male chaperone, determined to defy Creon’s edict and bury her brother Polyneices. Her sister Ismene begs her to remember that she is

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39 Cf. Saxonhouse (2005) for a comparison of “political action” in the two plays.
a woman and must be ruled by those in power (49-68), but Antigone is adamant. From the very first lines of the play, Sophocles’ Antigone stands forth as a strong-willed woman, committed to performing the rites that she believes are dictated by family, duty, and religion. In her confrontation with Creon she appeals with confidence to the universal, unwritten laws of the gods (450-470). After she has been sentenced to death, however, Antigone laments her own fate in an antiphonal lament with the Chorus (806-802). By contrast, Euripides’ Antigone in Phoenician Women begins the play as a well-behaved, well-guarded maiden. Unlike Sophocles’ Antigone, who moves into the register of lyric song only before her own death, Euripides’ Antigone sings from her first entrance, but about the seemingly superficial topics of brightness and appearance.

Looking forward, Euripides’ Antigone will sing two more passages of lyric in the exodos. In these final scenes she will surpass her prototype in Sophocles’ play both in musical ingenuity and in the depth of the grief she must convey.

* *

To return to the Phoenician Women, the teichoskopia culminates in two extended passages of lyric. Although addressed to the Old Servant, these passages are long, self-contained, and thematically coherent; that is, Antigone has moved, over the course of the scene, from epirrhematic dialogue towards monody. Antigone feels a connection to the warriors on the field and even wishes to be among them. When Antigone finally catches sight of Polyneices, she sings of her desire to escape from the walls and embrace her brother on the battlefield. Her longing is expressed with fierce tenderness:

όρδο δή τ’ οὐ σαφῶς, ορδὸ δέ πως
μορφής τύπωμα στέρνα τ’ ἐξηκασμένα.

ἀνεμώκεος εἴθε δρόμον νεφέλας

I see him, yes, but not clearly, I see somehow
the outline of his form and the likeness of his chest.
If only I could speed through the air on my feet,
like a cloud before the wind,
to my own dear brother – throw my arms
around his beloved neck at last –
a wretched exile. How marvelous he is
with his golden armor, old man,
flashing like the rays of the burning sun!

Antigone cannot see her brother clearly, and the “outline of his form” and “likeness of his chest” are insufficient to satisfy her longing for him. Antigone’s language foreshadows events to come: her wish to be among the warriors prepares for the later scene in which she and Jocasta will physically enter the battlefield, and her desire to touch Polyneices will be grimly fulfilled in the exodos, where she embraces the body of her brother, now a corpse.\footnote{Cf. Lamari (2007) 17 on female agency in the play.}

But in this first scene, ignorant of what is to come, she is dazzled by the beauty of his golden armor. Her lyrics emphasize the visual, rather than the moral, implications of his panoply.

Antigone in the teichoskopia has been agitated, even at times afraid, but has never voiced any specific dread about what will happen to her if the city falls.\footnote{Cf. Chong-Gossard (2008) 101, who comments that “Antigone is disturbingly unafraid” in this scene.}

This is in strong contrast to the Chorus of Seven Against Thebes, who imagine in horrifying detail the plunder and rape that await Thebes if the besieging army is successful. They foresee the women taken captive and led away, “young and old together, dragged by their hair...
like horses, their clothes being torn off” (327-329); and, after the sack, “slave-girls new to suffering will endure captive coupling with a fortunate man . . . the end of their wretched afflictions” (363-368). Only in her final outburst of lyric does Antigone express something resembling the fear felt by the Chorus Seven Against Thebes. This is the longest and most metrically complex passage in the scene, including dochmiac, iambic, and dactylic elements. After the Old Servant has identified Capaneus, who has threatened to sack the city, Antigone envisages what may happen if the attacking army succeeds in conquering the city:

O Nemesis, and deep-resounding thunder of Zeus, and blazing lightning fire, lull to sleep this presumptuous boasting; this is the man who says he will give the women of Thebes as spear-captives to the women of Mycenae, to the Lernaean trident, and to the waters of Amymone, dear to Poseidon, casting them into slavery. Never, never, o lady Artemis, golden-haired offshoot of Zeus, may I endure that slavery.

Antigone invokes Nemesis, the personified goddess of retribution, against the blasphemous words of Capaneus, as well as the lighting and fire of Zeus in his role of
guarantor of justice. Her address to Artemis recalls the words of Aeschylus’ Chorus, who call upon the goddess to protect the city (154). She seems finally to have entered into the expected emotional state of a virgin in a city under siege.

Yet even here Antigone’s fear of becoming a spear-captive (αἰχμαλωτίδας) and being sold into slavery (δουλείαν) is held at a distance. The fate that she foresees for herself and the other women of Thebes is service to Mycenean women (Μυκηνήσιν) beside the springs of Lerna and Amymone; that is, domestic tasks such as washing and water-carrying, not sexual subjugation, humiliation, or mistreatment. Her expectation is thus very different from the vivid evocations of future rape and slavery voiced, for instance, by Andromache in the Iliad, Tecmessa in Ajax, or the Chorus in Trojan Women, as well as by the women of Seven Against Thebes. Antigone is made to seem so naïve that she cannot even imagine the sexual dimension of the horrors that await the women of a captured city.

These are Antigone’s last lines in the scene; perhaps in response to her words about future captivity, the Old Servant urges her to go back to her maiden chamber inside the house (κατὰ στέγας / ἐν παρθένωσι, 193-194). He has heard that the women of the Chorus are arriving, and worries that they will speak ill of Antigone if she is found outside of the confines of the palace (196-201). This concern for propriety echoes the opening lines of the teichoskopia, where the Old Servant explains that only her mother’s permission allows Antigone to leave her maiden quarters (παρθενωνας, 89).43 The temporary license granted to Antigone has now run its course, and she will not appear

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again until her mother’s urgent summons to leave behind “choral dances and girlish pursuits” and accompany her to the battlefield (χορείαις . . . παρθενεύµασιν, 1265).44

We have seen that through sophisticated engagement with Homer, Aeschylus, and Sophocles, Euripides has created the teichoskopia to emphasize his unique portrayal of Antigone. The scene emphasizes by contrast her inexperience at the beginning of the action; the extent of her change over the course of the play is thereby thrown into relief.45

Antigone’s final lyric outburst in the teichoskopia gives way to the parodos. The effect of the parodos is to present an entirely new understanding of the current situation, one that takes into account the mythological past, the rhythms of divine worship, and the geographical extent of the Hellenic world, from the Tyrian Sea to Sicily. The songs are contrasted both formally and in their content: the solo voice yields to a collective chorus; excited dochmiacs give way to simple, uniform glyconic cola; and the perspective of a young girl hopelessly caught up in her family’s conflict broadens to include the detached observations of outsiders.

Parodos (202-260)

The three lyric scenes that open the play – the teichoskopia, the parodos, and Jocasta’s monody – set up through differences of meter, vocabulary, syntax, and imagery a corresponding difference in perspective between actors and Chorus.46 Antigone’s monody, as we have seen, establishes her as young, inexperienced, hopeful, and naïve


45 Chong-Gossard (2008) 109-110 proposes that the teichoskopia may be compared to Ion’s opening monody in Ion in its emphasis on the innocence of a central character.

46 Mastronarde (1994) ad 202-260 describes the verses of the parodos as characterized by repetition, both of content and of words, and by simple syntax.
through sophisticated contrast with figures from Homer, Aeschylus, and Sophocles.

Jocasta’s monody similarly plays on audience expectation, using the familiar tropes of the “recognition duet” to enhance the audience’s perception of the queen’s isolation. Situated between these two scenes of actors’ lyric, the parodos introduces a new mode, choral lyric, and a new understanding of the house’s calamity.

The parodos defines the emotional distance of the Chorus from Antigone and the Old Servant and from Jocasta. The Old Servant’s last words in the teichoskopia suggest that the women of the Chorus are gathering because of the confusion that reigns in the city; but the women who enter are nothing like the agitated women in the parodos of Seven Against Thebes. This Chorus introduce themselves as Phoenician maidens sent by the Agenoridae of Tyre to serve as “first-fruits” in the temple at Delphi (ἀκροθίνια Λοξία, 203). There they will attend upon the god, a holy service entirely different from the slavery awaiting the captured women of Thebes, which Antigone cannot fathom. The Chorus’ journey to Apollo’s city has been interrupted by the war, and they have taken refuge at Thebes. After the agitation and anxiety of Antigone’s lyrics, their tone in the first strophe-antistrophe pair is calm, even tranquil: the wind on the sea as they sailed made “the loveliest sound” (κάλιστον κελάδη, 213) and they themselves are offered as “loveliest gifts” to the god (καλλιστεύματα, 215). In the second strophe-antistrophe pair their thoughts turn to the war that has come to the city. They sing of their sympathy for the people of Thebes because of their shared kinship as descendants of Io, for “sorrows are common among friends” (κοινὰ γὰρ φύλων ἄχη, 243). Although they feel fear at the might of Argos and at what the gods may bring (256-258), they recognize the justice of Polynices’ cause and do not blame his actions (258-260).

47 Cf. Podlecki (1962) on the transition between the two halves of the ode.
The Chorus’ objectivity as outsiders and their consequent state of emotional
distance is unusual, and has a direct consequence in defining by contrast Jocasta’s
anxious isolation. After the serene, expository parodos, Jocasta’s monody once again
creates a heightening of excitement and emotionality. The monody is the third
consecutive musical scene in the play. For nearly two hundred and fifty lines, with only a
short iambic interlude marking Polyneices’ entrance, the play has been delivered in song.
However, the two modes, choral song and solo song, remain separate. Antigone makes
her exit before the Chorus enters; and, although the Chorus call Jocasta out from the
house, they do not interact with her: they share neither her joy at seeing Polyneices nor
her sorrow at his long absence. In other plays of this period – *Ion, Iphigenia in Tauris,*
*Orestes* – Euripides creates a strong bond of sympathy between the female protagonist
and the female Chorus. Jocasta, by contrast, is isolated from these foreign women, who
have no part in the life of Thebes or of its royal family: she rejoices and grieves alone.

Jocasta’s segregation from the women of the Chorus is of crucial importance to
Euripides’ portrayal of the myth. The central role played by Jocasta in the battle at the
seven gates may have been Euripides’ own innovation.48 In contrast to *Seven Against
Thebes* or in Sophocles’ *Oedipus Tyrannos,* in this play Jocasta has not committed
suicide after Oedipus’ true identity is revealed. She has raised her children, cared for her
blind husband, and shared the burden of rule with her brother Creon.

As we shall see, Jocasta’s alienation is also conveyed through costuming and
staging. Her monody is remarkable for its wealth of “internal stage directions,” details of

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48 We do not know Jocasta’s fate in the *Thebaid,* and in the Lille fragment of Steischorus the name of the
mother does not survive; she is only referred to as δῖα γυνᾶ, “noble lady” (232). Most scholars assume that
this refers to Jocasta, but for the argument that Steischorus presented Eurygeania, the second, non-
In the monody, Jocasta’s position, at once solitary and authoritative, is conveyed visually and aurally by her distance from the women of the Chorus.

Jocasta’s Monody (301-354)

The monody reveals, both by its form and content, the liminal and isolated position that Jocasta occupies in all spheres of her life. The monody progresses through a sequence of topics: Jocasta emerges from the palace (301-303); embraces and dances around Polyneices (304-316); describes the effect of the separation on herself and on Oedipus (317-336); laments her son’s foreign marriage and the ceremonies in which she had no share (337-349); and finally curses the cause of the current conflict and reiterates her own woes (350-354). In its overarching movement from reunion to lamentation, the monody touches upon several themes, which recur and undergo various poetic transformations over the course of the drama. These themes are couched as antitheses: youth vs. age, male vs. female, light vs. darkness, native-born vs. foreign, joyful dance vs. the sorrowful gestures of mourning. The interplay of these opposing forces provides structure and unifies the disparate portions of the song. Each of these antitheses underscores many successive domains of Jocasta’s life where she occupies an inverted or perverted position.

The metrical progression of the monody is well adapted to the shifting emotions that the song contains. In its overall shape, the monody presents an alternation of dochmiac and iambic rhythms; by comparison with the aria of Antigone later in the play,

49 For the “grammar” of dramatic technique and gesture cf. Taplin (1977) and Halleran (1985).
the meter in this first monody is relatively straightforward. Dochmiacs become predominantly associated with Jocasta’s personal suffering, while iambic and other meters underscore the wider effect of the separation on the family and on the city. This division of meters accompanies the movement in the song between personal and public sorrows. The monody’s exploration of the contradictions and inversions that permeate Jocasta’s role in the city and in her family situate her further and further beyond the pale of ordinary life, compounding the isolating effects of meter, costuming, and staging.

Let us now move through the substance of the monody in some detail, noting in particular how Jocasta’s emotions are couched in thematic terms. As in the teichoskopia, the first lines of the song introduce the contrast between youth and age and the theme of generational passage:

Φοίνισσαν βοῶν κλύουσα
ω νεάνιδες, γηραιῷ ποδὶ
tρομεράν ἔλκω ποδὸς βάσιν·

Hearing your Phoenician cry,
young women, I drag the trembling step
of my foot with aged tread.

Jocasta’s opening lines suggest that she emerges with a halting step and uneven gait. Once she has seen Polyneices, she immediately reaches out to touch him, in a visual reminder of the emotional bond between mother and son.52

50 Jocasta’s halting entrance is accompanied by dochmiacs, an unusual meter to express the ills of old age; when she sees her son at 304, the rhythm shifts to pure iambic, and in 312-317 her dance of joy is marked by syncopation. The lamentations which focus on Jocasta herself (318-326) are almost entirely dochmiac, while the description of Oedipus’ despair (327-336) is more varied. The pure iambic rhythm returns for the lament over the foreign marriage (337-343), but as Jocasta sings of her own absence from the wedding ceremony she once again shifts to dochmiacs. The concluding lines initiate a new dactylic rhythm, which adds solemnity to Jocasta’s final curse.

51 I have used the text of De Poli (2011) for both Jocasta’s and Antigone’s monodies, substituting iota subscript for adscript. Translations are my own.
ἰὼ τέκνον, χρόνῳ σὸν ὅμα μυρίαις τ’ ἐν ἀμέραις
προσείδον ἅμφιβαλλε μαστὸν ὀλέναις ματέρος,
παρηίδον τ’ ὄρεγμα βοστρύχων τε κυανόχρωτα χαί-
τας πλόκαμον, σκιώζον δὲραν ἁμάν.
ἰὼ ῥό, μόλις φανεῖς
ἀελπτα κάδοκητα ματρὸς ὀλέναις. (304-311)

Oh, my child, after all this time,
after many days, I see your face.
Throw your arms around your mother’s breast,
and bring close to my face your outstretched cheek
and the dark curly locks of your hair, shading my neck.
Oh, oh, you have only just appeared in your mother’s arms,
unlooked-for, beyond hope.

In following section, Jocasta enacts her feelings of joy and pleasure:

τί φῶ σε; πῶς ἀπαντα
καὶ χερσὶ καὶ λόγοις
πολυέλικτον ἁδονάν
ἐκείσε καὶ τὸ δεῦρο
περιχορέουσα τέρψιν παλαιῶν λάβω
χαρμόναν;

What shall I say of you? How in every way,
both with hands and with words,
dancing about you, to that side and this side,
a much-whirling pleasure,
shall I take the delight of joys long missed?

Jocasta begins with a question (τί φῶ σε;). The sense is not “What shall I say to you,”
which would require a dative, but rather “What shall I say of you,” or “How shall I
describe you?” Jocasta’s wish, more fully articulated in the following line, is to capture
her son in words (λόγοις) just as she caresses him with her hands (χερσὶ). The
transference of epithet in the phrase “much-whirling pleasure” (πολυέλικτον ἁδονάν)
emphasizes the excitement of Jocasta’s movements as she dances around her son

52 This act of touching will be repeated by Antigone in the exodos, when she caresses the corpses of her
mother and brothers.
The language may also allude to the musical daring of these lines, in the “whirling” imagery often associated with the New Music.\(^{54}\)

Jocasta’s initial recognition of her son is marked by motifs familiar from other scenes of reunion: she dwells on his face (σὼν ὅμμα); urges him to embrace her (ἀμφίβαλλε ... ὥλέναισι); and emphasizes her long yearning for their meeting (μόλις, ἀελπτα καδόκητα).\(^{55}\) The specificity with which Jocasta describes her son’s appearance and the shadow cast on his cheek by his curling hair (παρηίδων ... δέραν ἀμάν) prepares for the contrast, later in the monody, with Jocasta’s own shorn hair and wretched clothing. But Euripides raises the hope of a recognition scene only to leave it tantalizingly unfulfilled. Unlike in Ion or Iphigenia in Tauris, where a man and woman are reunited at the climax of the play, this early scene does not lead to a reintegration of the family. Jocasta’s wishful words emphasize how far the house of Thebes stands from any joyful reconstitution.

As Jocasta begins to sing of the effects of Polyneices’ absence on the royal house, her shift from joy to bereavement is underscored by the return of the dochmiac meter with which the song began. These lines contain her strongest condemnation of Eteocles’ behavior. In her expository speech in the Prologue she has avoided passing judgment, but here she states that Polyneices has been driven into exile by his brother’s “outrage” (λώβα). Although later in her peacemaking efforts she calls his attack “senseless” (569-570), in her monody she does not condemn Polyneices harshly for bringing an army to

\(^{53}\) Cf. Podlecki (1962) 370: “She must here be supposed to go through some choral steps with appropriate gestures as she sings.”

\(^{54}\) Cf. Csapo and Slater (1994) 333.

the gates of his native city, or for threatening his family and the populace with
destruction. Indeed, she imagines that even now, in his role as general, Polyneices is
desired by all of Thebes:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ἰὼ τέκος,} \\
\text{ἔρημον πατρῷον ἕλπες δόμον} \\
\text{φυγάς ἀποσταλεὶς ὁμαίμου λόβῃ,} \\
\text{Ἥ ποθεινός φίλοις,} \\
\text{Ἥ ποθεινός Θῆβαις.}
\end{align*}
\]

(317-321)

Alas, my child,
you left your paternal house desolate,
driven into exile by your brother’s outrage,
much desired by your dear ones,
much desired by Thebes!

Still in dochmiacs, Jocasta describes her own miserable appearance. This passage
of the monody contains not only stage directions, but clues about costume. Jocasta’s
white hair, and the white robes she once wore as queen, are contrasted with the black rags
in which she now appears:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ὅθεν ἐμὰν τε λευκόχρωα κείρομαι} \\
\text{δακρυόεσσαν ἰείσα πενθήρη κόμαν,} \\
\text{ἄπεπλος φαρέων λευκῶν, τέκνον,} \\
\text{δυσόρφναια δ᾽ ἀμφὶ τρύχη τάδε} \\
\text{σκόττε ἀμείβομαι.}
\end{align*}
\]

(322-326)

For this I have cut short my white hair
and unbound my locks, weeping in grief;
no longer dressed in white garments, my child,
I have changed my robes, putting around my body
these rags, dusky and dark.

This reference to her shorn, unbound hair recalls the very different description,
earlier in the monody, of Polyneices’ luxurious dark locks (κυανόχρωτα χαίτας πλόκαμον
308-309). The words make clear the visual differences between mother and son, whose
opposite costuming would set them against one another as types on the stage. Jocasta’s
pointed references to her own appearance and costume also suggest a degree of self-awareness: in this scene she takes on a particular role, that of a mother in a “reunion scene,” one which she will later cast off in favor of an arbitrating role, as the situation requires. Does Jocasta in this monody give us an uncomplicated portrait of her own emotional state and motivation? She has, as she tells us in the Prologue, orchestrated this moment (81-83). Her words, movements, and gestures are carefully calculated to draw sympathy from her estranged son.

By commenting on her attire, Jocasta also draws attention to the perversion of ritual that marks and mars the house of Oedipus. The queen wears the traditional clothing of mourning, close-cropped hair and dark robes, even though no one in the family has died. Jocasta’s words ring strangely in their immediate context, because her sons are still alive; not until the end of the play will her tone of grief fit the current situation. Her actions, whirling and dancing, are also jarringly out of place for a woman dressed in mourning. The monody foreshadows the deaths not only of Eteocles and Polyneices, but of Jocasta herself, who will stab herself with the weapons of her slain sons. These antitheses between youth and age, between son and mother-grandmother, are especially striking in light of the imploded, incestuous generational structure of the house of Laius.

In the following section, where Jocasta speaks of her son’s foreign marriage, the theme of proper behavior for men and women is brought together with issues of foreign and native birth, and we are again reminded of the complicated family structure of Thebes’ royal house. The anaphora of the word “foreign” (ξένοισιν, ξένον) emphasizes

56 As we observed in the previous chapter on Iphigenia in Tauris, Iphigenia in the parodos draws on the language of mourning with a strongly ironic effect; she mourns for herself, still alive in the land of the Taurians, and for her brother, who, the audience knows, is not yet dead.
the distress Jocasta feels at Polyneices’ exogamous match: it constitutes disaster (ἄλαστα) and “ruin” (?family) for the family.

σὲ δ’, ὦ τέκνον, καὶ γάμοισιν δή
κλῶ ζυγέντα παιδοποιῶν ἀδονὰν
ξένοισιν ἐν δόμοις ἔχειν
ξένον τε κηδος ἀμφέπειν,
ἄλαστα ματρὶ τῶν Λα-
ἶω τε τῶν παλαιγενεί,
γάμον ἐπακτόν, ἄταν. (337-343)

But you, oh my son, I hear
that you are yoked in marriage
and have the pleasure of siring children
in foreign halls,
that you seek a foreign alliance,
a disaster for your mother here
and for your ancient ancestor Laius,
an alien marriage, ruin.

For the royal house of Thebes, with its history of incest, a foreign bride threatens to bring an end to the concentrated power of the family. This concern with exogamy is over-weighted, given the pathologic endogamy of the house; Jocasta’s song draws attention to the way that the family of Oedipus closes in upon itself, and foreshadows the brothers’ mutual slaughter.

The marriage is ruinous not only because the bride is of foreign birth, but also because the ceremony took place in a foreign land. Jocasta laments her own absence from the wedding, which is figured as the absence of the usual sacraments: the light of torches, the cleansing water of the ritual bath, and the song that accompanies the bridal procession. Instead, Polyneices’ marriage took place in darkness, without purification, and in silence:

ἐγὼ δ’ οὔτε σοι πυρὸς ἀνήψα φῶς
νόμιμον ἐν γάμωις, ὡς πρέπει
Polyneices’ absence is painful to Jocasta not only because of his lost place in the family, but because of his absence from the rituals of civic life. His position as a son, brother, and husband must be marked by traditional ceremonies integrating him into society.

Jocasta’s reunion with Polyneices in the first portion of the monody introduces contrasts between youth and age, between joy and sorrow, and between polis and individual, and also raises uncomfortable implications about the nature of Jocasta’s affection for her son. In the second half of the song, categories that should remain separate blend, shift, and even exchange places. In Jocasta’s description of Oedipus, even male and female roles are inverted.

In a passage of more varied meter, the focus of the monody expands to include Oedipus, powerless over his children and over the city. The old king is not onstage to greet Polyneices or to persuade his sons to come to terms. Rather, Jocasta, by arranging the truce and presiding at the meeting of the two brothers, has taken upon herself a role of political and familial leadership that would ordinarily be performed by the father. Oedipus, weak and blind, cannot provide a solution to the catastrophe that threatens Thebes:
ὁ δ’ ἐν δόμωι πρέσβυς ὀμματοστερῆς
ἀπῆνας ὀμοπτέρου τὰς ἀποζυγείσας δόμων
πόθον ἀμφιδάκρυτον ἀεὶ κατέχων
ἀνήξε μὲν ξίφους
ἐπ’ αὐτὸχειρά τε σφαγάν
ὑπὲρ τέραμνα τ’ ἀγχόνας,
στενάξων ἀράς τέκνοις-
σὺν ἀλαλαίσι δ’ αἰὲν αἰαγμάτων
σκότια κρύπτεται. (327-336)

He in the halls, the old man deprived of sight,
in never-ending, tearful longing
for the pair of brothers
now unyoked from the house,
first took up the sword
to inflict slaughter by his own hand,
then hung nooses from the rafters,
groaning for the curses on his children.
With continual cries of woe and sorrow
he hides himself in the dark.

Whereas Jocasta takes on the political function of a man, Oedipus lives like a
woman: he is secluded within the house, weeping and mourning. His attempts to end his
own life, by hanging and with a self-inflicted sword wound, are typically associated with
female suicide. With Oedipus thus rendered powerless, it falls to Jocasta to assume his
kingly and paternal role. Her attempts to mediate between the brothers and to advise them
politically contrast also with her mode of song, traditionally figured as feminine. The
familial relationships of the line of Laius are perverted both in generation and in gender.

In the final section of the monody, Jocasta compares the unknown agent that has
caused these evils to a κῶμος, a reveling band. Throughout the play, as Arthur has
discussed, the calm, all-seeing god of Dephi is contrasted with war-maddened Ares and

58 Cf. Swift (2009) on the distortion of sexual relationships within the play.
anarchic Dionysus. Here, the abstract τὸ δαιμόνιον stands in for the proper name of any one god; the image of a wild, unstoppable, irrational force bursting in upon the house combines the fury of Ares and the riot of Dionysus.⁶⁰

May it be damned, whether it was the sword or Strife or your father who caused these things, or if the divine realm has burst furiously in upon the halls of Oedipus; for upon me has come the pain of these evils.

The curse closes the monody. In its movement through a sequence of disparate topics, Jocasta’s song resembles the second, “deliberative” monody of Iphigenia in Iphigenia in Tauris: the queen uses the musical form to think through her situation in an immediate and emotional manner. Unlike Iphigenia, however, Jocasta does not arrive at a solution to the current crisis, and all of her ingenuity in the ensuing agon fails to bring about reconciliation between her sons.⁶¹ Rather, the overall progression of thought and mood in the monody is one of growing distress, as Jocasta’s initial delight gives way to imprecation and grief: her last word, and the last word of lyric for nearly two hundred lines, is grief, ἄχη. She is eloquent but without the ability to influence her own situation, as are all of the singers in this play. Where in Iphigenia in Tauris solo song expresses deliberation and resourcefulness, here monody is used primarily as a vehicle for the

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⁶⁰ Cf. Aeschylus, Agamemnon 1189, κόμος Ἐρινύων.

⁶¹ Mastronarde (1986) 205 discusses Jocasta’s role in the agon: her persuasive strategy is both optimistic and rational, and combines traditional wisdom with sophisticated theorizing about the order of the universe. Cf. Foley (2001) 280-283 on Jocasta as an arbitrator.
emotions of a woman who has been stripped of her traditional role as mother and wife and has instead been forced to act as the head of the family. Not only is Jocasta’s status as a mother complicated by the incestuous history of the house, but she also inverts the typical roles of wife and husband, embarking on a walk in life that is wholly solitary and without precedent.

The monody paints Jocasta’s isolation in thematic, compositional, and theatrical terms. This portrayal is especially poignant when we view the song as a failed attempt at reconciliation; in this way the monody continues the pattern already introduced by Antigone’s inability to connect with the Old Servant in the teichoskopia. Jocasta’s powerlessness is expressed formally through the variation of the usual pattern in a scene of reunion. Jane Beverley traces “typically Euripidean” scenes of recognition where a male and female character experience the joy of reunion, the woman in lyric, the man in iambic trimeters.62 Beverley suggests that, given this frequent pattern, the original audience would have expected that Jocasta would sing in lyrics, while Polynoeices would respond and reassure her in iambic trimeter. Instead Euripides composes a monody. Jocasta and her son are conspicuously not brought together in an expression of shared emotion.

Indeed, Jocasta’s account is calculated to induce feelings of pity and shame in her son, whose absence has led to this situation. As Foley writes, “in this play it is primarily the voices of women, of the very young and the very old, of those who stand outside or above the passions of politics, that remain in tune with the patterns of continuity in city

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62 Beverley (1997) 129. We have observed this type of scene already between Creusa and Ion in Ion and between Iphigenia and Orestes in Iphigenia in Tauris; it also occurs between Helen and Menelaus in Helen.
and family life.\footnote{Foley (1985) 144.} Polyneices has abandoned his duty as a son and a leader, and in fact threatens the very city whose safety should be his hereditary concern. The ensuing agon dramatizes the selfishness of the brothers and their lack of civic and familial feeling. Jocasta’s attempts to appeal to their better nature fail entirely. For all of the monody’s rhetorical vigor and structural complexity, Jocasta remains confined from impacting the events of the play. Her song has fallen upon deaf ears.

Antigone’s Monody (1485-1538)

More than a thousand lines and the entire crisis of the play intervene between the monody of Jocasta and that of Antigone. After the paired speeches of the second messenger, which present the duel of Polyneices and Eteocles as well as their deaths and the suicide of their mother, Antigone returns from the battlefield, followed by a procession with the three corpses. The Chorus indicate her entrance in five anapestic lines and then fall silent (1480-1485). As can be seen by comparison with Figure 4, the scene of actors’ lyric that follows takes the place of the expected Choral song: the role of reflecting upon the catastrophe of the house in lyric is filled instead by Antigone.

The aria of Antigone (1485-1529) moves directly into her summoning of Oedipus (1530-1538) and their lyric exchange (1539-1581), in which Antigone sings the majority of the lines. Although the monody in this case cannot be separated entirely from the larger lyric system of which it forms a part, it is distinct from the duet in form and in content. Antigone’s forty-five lines of solo song are focused almost exclusively on herself and her own grief, as she tries to make sense of this latest disaster in the history of the house’s misfortune; the entrance of Oedipus, anticipated already by the language of
Jocasta’s monody, marks an expansion of her awareness and also suggests a purpose that will shape her future, as the two remaining members of the house are united in their shared suffering and in the necessity of exile.

Beverley describes the progression of themes in Antigone’s monody as “grief-by-numbers” and concludes that the piece is characterized throughout by a “flabby emptiness.”⁶⁴ If there is an inadequacy to Antigone’s lament, it is because she must alone communicate the grief of her entire family and, indeed, of her entire city. The expression of communal grief requires the preservation of communal structures. In Thebes, destroyed by generations of incest and civil strife, these structures cannot hold: to a significant extent, it is the loss of these very structures that Antigone mourns. Euripides represents the breakdown of the domestic and civil order through the broken meter and expression of the monody. Actors’ lyric serves here better than choral lyric could, perhaps, in that it allows the expression of a point of view that is both more emotional and more disrupted.

Beverley’s charge of emptiness also misses the careful formal integration of the monody into the larger movement of the play. The monody and ensuing duet structurally balance the lyric scenes in the first part of the play. Antigone’s monody engages directly with the vocabulary, imagery, and themes of Jocasta’s monody; as we shall see in the next section, Antigone’s exchange with Oedipus reverses the roles of Antigone and the Old Servant in the teichoskopia. The exclamations of joy and sorrow that marked Jocasta’s monody (312-317) are countered in Antigone’s monody by the language of unmixed grief. The gestural and visual symbols of mourning (322-326) are presented in a new context as here they are performed over visible, tangible corpses. The focus is again

on Polyneices, whose body receives the most attention. Jocasta’s mourning for her son was proleptic; Antigone laments deaths that have now occurred. Jocasta’s opening monody, viewed in retrospect, emerges as a grim foreshadowing of the events to come, the queen’s threnody not only for Polyneices but also for herself and her whole family.

Where the metrical shape of Jocasta’s monody is relatively simple, Antigone’s monody employs varied and startlingly original rhythmical effects. The song begins with a long passage of basically dactylic meter as Antigone describes her own state of desperation and grief (1485-1507). As the content becomes even more passionate, the meter changes to include aeolic, choriambic, and iambic rhythms (1508-1529). In this central section, no single rhythm persists for more than three consecutive lines, and rhythmical changes frequently occur from one line to another. When Antigone turns away from her solitary lament to summon Oedipus, the meter becomes still more varied: dactyls return, along with new iambic-doichmiac and ionic elements (1530-1545). She relates the news of the three deaths in a long passage which returns to the basically dactylic rhythm of the opening, with a strong admixture of anapests (1546-1581). The diversity of meters and the rapidity of rhythmic changes underscore the extremity of Antigone’s emotional state: in fact, this is among the most metrically complex and heterogeneous monodies in extant Greek tragedy. If we look not simply at the specific meters used, but more globally at their sheer number, we may ask ourselves if this is not a representation of the number of areas of breakdown in the family and in the community.

The first lines of the monody signal the connection to the song of Jocasta through specific verbal echoes:

οὐ προκαλυπτομένα βοτρυχώδεος ἀβρὰ παρηήδος
Not veiling the delicate skin of my cheek, adorned with curls,
nor concealing in virginal modesty
the crimson beneath my eyes, the reddening of my face,
I rush forth as a bacchant of the dead,
hurling the covering from my hair
unbinding my fine-woven saffron robe,
an escort of the dead, filled with groans.

Where Jocasta identified herself as an old woman with trembling step (302-303),
Antigone emphasizes her virginal status (παρθενίας) as she is borne onstage in a Bacchic rush (φέρομαι βάκχα). The description of Polyneices’ cheeks and hair (308-309) are recalled by Antigone’s reddened eyes, blushing cheeks, and loosened tresses and by the exact repetition of the words παρθενίας and βόστρυχος. The dark and light colors that were so pronounced in Jocasta’s monody here become more vivid and violent: Antigone’s eyes and face are red (φοίνικ’, ἐρύθημα) and her robe is saffron, a color associated with festal activity (κροκόεσσαν). Both women dance: Jocasta’s dance around her son momentarily liberates her from age and grief (316-317), while Antigone’s Bacchic dance makes manifest in movement her agitation and distress. And Jocasta’s image of the “reveling band” of disaster (κατεκώμασε, 352) is here grimly fulfilled by Antigone, the “bacchant of the dead” (βάκχα νεκών). The rush of words is conveyed through a fluid sequence of dactyls and creates a sense of agitation; we may imagine that the music and the movements of the actor added to this effect.

65 Mastronarde (1994) ad 1489 comments that such frantic motion is typical of distraught women in tragedy and ultimately descends from Homer’s simile for Andromache.
This opening exclamation is focused entirely on Antigone, and takes the form of an asyndetic series of first-person verbs and nominative participles (προκαλυπτομένα, αἰδομένα, φέρομαι, δικοῦσα, ἀνεῖσα, ἀγεμόνευμα). Antigone’s status as a distraught virgin, emphasized in her opening lines, places her in an unusual category as a monodist. Unlike the other virginal singers in Euripides, Electra and Iphigenia, Antigone is not joined by a sympathetic female chorus as she laments the downfall of her house.66 As in Jocasta’s monody, the emotional distance of the Chorus of Phoenician Women helps to define Antigone’s radical isolation from the traditions and rituals of her community. The absence of the usual antiphonal female exchange makes Antigone’s appeal that Oedipus share her grief all the more striking.

Antigone’s isolation may also have been conveyed visually by the staging of the scene. It is possible that she entered first, followed by a funeral procession conveying the bodies of Jocasta, Polyneices, and Eteocles.67 An unmarried woman, unaccompanied, pulling from her head the veil that marks her modesty, is shocking. As a maiden, Antigone normally would only display herself in the context of ritual occasions, in particular in festivals where she would participate in choral dances. Just as in the agon Jocasta takes on the male role of political mediator, Antigone must take on the responsibility of leading the dirge for the dead, which would ordinarily be filled by a wife or mother. The circumstances of the disaster at Thebes have forced the women of the house to act in ways that conflict with their usual societal roles. When Jocasta calls Antigone to accompany her to the battlefield, she explicitly asks her to leave behind the

66 In this way Antigone recalls Cassandra in *Agamemnon*, whose increasingly explicit appeals the Chorus cannot, and will not, share.

dances of maidens (χορείας, παρθενεύωμασιν, 1265). The exodus dramatizes the reversal of the motif of Antigone as a secluded maiden, as she abandons all hope of marriage and children and dedicates herself to a life of exile.

To return to the text: the references to dead bodies (νεκών, νεκροῖς) draw Antigone’s attention to the three corpses, and she turns from the description of her frenzied self to consider her own relation to the dead and to the ruin of the family. Like Jocasta, Antigone focuses on the bodies of her kinsmen, especially on that of Polyneices, and draws a causal connection between Polyneices, Thebes, and destructive strife (cf. 321, 351-353).  

Alas, ah me!
Oh Polyneices, your name was fitting. Alas, Thebes!
Your strife – not strife, but slaughter upon slaughter – has destroyed the house of Oedipus, brought to fulfillment in fearsome bloodshed, in baneful bloodshed.

The aural impact of the passage depends on pathetic repetition and polyptoton (φόνῳ φόνος, αίματι δεινῷ, αίματι λυγρῷ). This technique is parodied by Aristophanes in Frogs, and seems to have been associated particularly with Euripidean monody.  

Repetition enhances Antigone’s lament also in the next section (τίνα, τίνα; δύσκρυσι δύσκρυσιν; ὁ δόμος, ὁ δόμος; δυσζωνότων ξυνετός). The reoccurrence of significant words – slaughter, blood, tears, the home – here emphasizes that the

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68 The self-perpetuating force of the family’s curse recurs as well outside of the two monodies cf. 70, 624, 765, 811-812, 1053, 1255.

catastrophe is not single but multiple, affecting the younger generation as well as the older, the male line as well as the female.

As we observed, Jocasta’s monody moves from self-description through a series of questions as she describes Polyneices and the emotional effect that their reunion has upon her (τί φῶ σε, 312). Antigone also employs aporetic interrogatives (τίνα, τίνα); but where Jocasta seeks to express delight through dance (πολυέλικον ἄδονᾶν, 314), Antigone searches instead for an appropriate song of mourning for her unparalleled situation, bereft at one stroke of three members of her family. The pleasure that Jocasta felt at seeing her son (χαρμονᾶν, 317) is echoed by the pleasure taken by the Erinys (χάρματ’):

τίνα προσφιδόν
ἡ τίνα μουσοπόλον στοναχὰν ἐπὶ
δάκρυσι δάκρυσιν, ὦ δόμος, ὦ δόμος,
ἀγκαλέσωμαι,
τρισσὰ φέρουσα τάδ’ αἴματα σύγγονα,
ματέρα καὶ τέκνα, χάρματ’ Ἑρινύος;

What song, or what Muse-inspired groan with tears upon tears, oh house, oh house, shall I call upon for aid, bearing these three bloody corpses of my kin, mother and children, to charm the Erinys?

In the following lines Antigone describes the Sphinx, who throughout the play is considered one cause of the present evil and of the wholesale destruction of the house of Oedipus.⁷⁰

ἀ δόμον Οἰδιπόδα πρόπαρ ὀλεσε,
τᾶς ἀγρίας ὀτε

⁷⁰ As in the Third Stasimon, cf. also 1689, 1728. The Chorus at other points delve deeper into history to find the origin of crime, following the line of violence to the serpent of Ares, killed by Cadmus. Antigone, focused on the immediate troubles of her natal family, looks no farther than her father’s own deeds.
Antigone progresses through a free association from her own song (προσῳδόν) and the riddling song of the Sphinx (μέλος) that long ago set Oedipus on the path to murder and incest. Why this comparison? Antigone in the opening lines of the monody cast herself as the lone member of a Bacchic band; she is never joined in lamentation by the Chorus; and she can find no example, either Greek or barbarian, for a woman who has suffered as she has. The only model she has for such a predicament is the monstrous Sphinx, the “singer” of others’ destruction and, consequently, of her own. Antigone puts herself in the place of the Sphinx, making music a marker of both the beginning and the culmination of the house’s woes. The disaster that started with a riddle delivered in verse now reaches its inevitable conclusion in Antigone’s lamentation.

The next lines are uncertain, both textually and metrically. There seems to be a transition from the primarily dactylic rhythm of the opening verses of monody to a more varied system of choriambics, iambics, and ionics. The content—the uniqueness of the present situation and of Antigone’s fate—is thus echoed by the increasingly complex metrical effects:

71 In this passage I follow Mastronarde (1994) ad 1508-1514 in deleting πάτερ in 1508 and in preferring the first-person verb ἔλελίζω in 1514 to the second- or third-person verb transmitted in many manuscripts. It makes dramatic sense that Antigone continues to focus on herself in this passage, as she has until this point and as she continues to do until her explicit appeal to Oedipus in 1530. The verb ἔλελίζω may have two possible meanings: it is either a reduplicated form of ἑλίσσω, “I whirl around,” or a derivative of ἑλευ, “I cry in pain, I keen.” Although the former seems to have been a favorite Euripidean word (cf. Orestes 358, 1432; Bacchae 569; Iphigenia in Aulis 1055; parodied by Aristophanes at Frogs 1314), in my translation I have chosen the second meaning, which better accommodates the direct object.
Alas, ah me, ah me!
Who else, Greek or barbarian
or descended from ancient nobility,
has endured so many evils
of mortal bloodshed,
such sorrows as are here made manifest,
such as you keen, wretched woman!

Antigone denies that any other mortal woman has endured what she has endured.

The only creature that has felt comparable grief is the nightingale:

What bird, on the long-leaved branches
of an oak or a fir tree,
will sing her lonely mother’s lamentation
to accompany my sorrows?
With cries of woe I lament, even before it comes,
the lonely life that I will live for the rest of time
amidst streaming tears, I will cry out!

As with her reference to the Sphinx, Antigone is searching for an analogue to her
own situation, and can only find it in the artificial and inhuman world of literary topos.

The nightingale, who sings alone and at night, is a traditional image dating back to
Homer, and described most fully in Helen (1107-1121). Antigone’s reference to the
nightingale may also here have a connection to the innovative musical effects of her
lyrics. The musical ingenuity of the nightingale is described by Pliny in his Natural
History as astonishing in its variety, characterized by a great range of pitch and volume,
very long and very short notes, broken or prolonged bursts of music, and every effect that
can be produced by man with a flute (tibia). Here Antigone draws also upon the
association between the nightingale and songs of mourning. But where the nightingale is
traditionally figured as a mother lamenting her child (μονομάτρος), Antigone laments her
own mother and her brothers.

In the final lines of her monody, Antigone describes her inadequacy, as a sole
mourner, to lament the three corpses that lie before her. This aporia leads directly into
her summoning of Oedipus, who will share her grief.

τίν’ ἐπὶ πρῶτον ἀπὸ χαῖ-
tας σπαραγμοὶς ἀπαρχὰς βάλω;
ματρὸς ἔμαξ ἢ διδύμοισι γάλακ-
tὸς παρὰ μαστοῖς
ἡ πρὸς ἀδελφῶν
οὐλόμεν’ αἰκίσματα νεκρῶν; (1524-1529)

Over which of these first
shall I first cast my offerings,
tearing out my hair?
Beside the twin milk-bearing breasts of my mother,
or the terrible wounds of my brothers’ corpses?

We have observed that the main themes of Antigone’s monody – her distress, the
agents responsible for the destruction of the house, and the unique nature of her fate –
recall and reverse the main themes of Jocasta’s monody. In this way, Euripides uses the

72 Cf. Odyssey 19.518-522; Aristophanes Birds 210-216; Sophocles Oedipus at Colonus 617-673; Euripides
fr. 88.

paired monodies, separated by almost the entire action of the play, to show the progression of the family’s misfortunes. The monody also responds to Antigone’s lyric lines in the *teichoskopia*, and resembles the earlier passage in that it too takes the place that would usually be occupied by a choral song. Where the *teichoskopia* emphasized Antigone’s modesty, curiosity, and naiveté, here her maidenly restraint has been definitely cast aside, and her youthful exuberance has turned to weighty sorrow, a burden which must be borne out of time and out of joint. On the level of formal craft, the agitated and broken music of the song expresses both grief for a personal loss, and a pain, harder to articulate, for the destruction of domestic and social institutions.

Duet of Antigone and Oedipus (1539-1581)

We have seen that Antigone’s monody both stands in for the expected Choral song and also recalls in structure and content the monody of Jocasta. In the monody, Antigone laments the unique nature of her fate (1508-1514) and explicitly calls for a witness and a fellow mourner who will sing in accompaniment to her woes (συνωδός, 1518). The Chorus of Phoenician women cannot join with her in lamentation; they remain outside the family’s strife and their sorrow. The only other mortal alive who has suffered as Antigone has is Oedipus. Her shared song with her father in the exodos constitutes a long-awaited emotional union, but not one of joy; the scattered individual members of the house can only be brought together through grief. The lyric duet begins as a traditional lament, with the innovation that Antigone’s lines revisit the account of the Second Messenger from the previous episode. By combining elements of a messenger speech with those of a lament, Antigone uses narrative as a platform to reach a higher
level of expression and emotion. Because her song constitutes a second treatment of the tragic event, she is granted a degree of freedom in her lyric departure from it.

Among modern scholars it has commonly been agreed that the exodos of *Phoenician Women* is riddled with later interpolations, some based up on other plays of the Theban cycle, that are inconsistent with one another and with other parts of the play. In the text as it stands, Antigone will defy Creon by burying the corpse of Polyneices; and she will go to Mount Cithairon and become a Bacchant; and she will accompany her father into exile. Yet the play as a whole is a pastiche of different versions of the Theban legend, and the process of identifying interpolations can be quite subjective, as they tend to rely on considerations of literary taste. Elizabeth Craik has recently argued for the “fundamental integrity” of the exodos, marking only two lines in the entire final scene as spurious, while Francis Dunn proposes that the heterogeneity of the scene, the inclusion of its different and conflicting details, is in fact part of a larger narrative strategy and therefore genuine.  

In what follows I use the text of Mastronarde, who accepts the entire scene until line 1736 as genuine.

From a musical perspective, the lyric dialogue between Antigone and Oedipus is integrated into the larger formal design of the play by ring composition; the duet recalls and reverses the interaction between Antigone and the Old Servant in the *teichoskopia*. In the earlier scene, Antigone seeks the guidance, protection, and wisdom of the old man. Here it is she who knows what has happened on the battlefield, and who responds to the questions of her aged father with a new knowledge born of disaster. The themes of the

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75 Mastronarde (1994) ad 1736-1757.
duet also recall the monody of Jocasta: just as Jocasta moves from monody to attempted interaction in the political sphere, so Antigone takes on a new and successful role as guide to her father and, in the subsequent scene with Creon, as a decisive agent in shaping her own future.

Oedipus has been mentioned repeatedly during the play as secluded in the house and distraught by what is occurring onstage (cf. 66, 88, 327-336, 376-378, 611, 614, 873-877, 1088-1089). Lowell Edmunds has traced language in the play that describes Oedipus as a ghost or revenant, abject and weak but with the daemonic power to do harm. 76 Now this shadowy figure is displayed before the audience. Oedipus is called forth by Antigone like a spirit from the Underworld in a combination of cretics, choriambs, dactyls, and dochmiacs. 77 The ensuing duet, which marks an emotional climax and a coming together of survivors, is also the most rhythmically inventive and complex passage in the play.

Av. ὀτοτοτοῖ, λείπε σοὺς
dόμους, ἀλῶν ὀμμα φέρων,
pάτερ γεραιε, δεῖξον,
Οἰδίπόδα, σῶν αἰώνα μέλεον, ὦς ἐπὶ
dόμασιν ἀέριον σκότον ὀμμασι
tοίς βαλῶν ἐλκεῖς μακρόπνουν ζωάν.
κλύεις, ὦ κατ᾽ αὐλάν ἀλαίνον γεραιῶν
πόδ᾽ ἦ δεμνίοις
dύστανος ιαύων;

An. Aiaiai, leave your house,
aged father, bearing your blinded sight,
reveal your miserable life,
you who have cast a dark mist over your eyes
and drag your deep-gasping life within the house.
Do you hear, wandering with aged step
across the court, or lying on your wretched bed?


77 The vocabulary of these lines echoes the scene in Aeschylus’ Persians where Darius is summoned from the Underworld (cf. Persians 633-680).
Oedipus in his response compares himself to an invisible phantom (ἀφανὲς εἴδωλον), a ghost from below (νέκυν ἐνερθέν), or a winged dream (πτανὸν ὄνειρον). This tricolon presents Oedipus as a being from another world, one who has transcended the three ages of man – infancy, maturity, and old age – dictated by the Sphinx’s riddle.

Οι. τί μ’, ὦ παρθένε, βακτρεύμασι τυφλοῦ
ποδὸς ἐξάγαγες εἰς φῶς
λεχήρη σκοτίων ἐκ θαλάμων οἴκ-τροτάτοις δακρύοις,
πολιόν αἰθέρος ἀφανὲς εἴδωλον ἢ
νέκυν ἐνερθέν ἢ
πτανὸν ὄνειρον; (1539-1545)

Oe. Why, daughter, have you dragged me,
supporting my blind footsteps with a staff,
into the light by your pitiful tears,
from the shadows of my chamber,
bed-ridden, grey-haired, invisible
as a phantom of the air, a spirit from below,
or a winged dream?

The meter of the passage responds to the varied rhythms of Antigone’s invocation and surpasses her verses in complexity. Antigone in the teichoskopia was answered by the reserved trimeters of the Old Servant, and Jocasta in her monody sang without accompaniment from the Chorus or response from Polyneices. Now for the first time in the play a lyric singer is able to find a partner at a matching level of intensity. Antigone is no longer a μονοφόδος, a solo singer. She has found her συνοφόδος at last.

That Antigone’s partner in song – her συνοφόδος – should be male is extraordinary. The amoibaion between Antigone and Oedipus is the only instance of a shared lyric

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78 For lines 1539-1566 I have followed the text of Mastronarde (1994).
79 Oedipus’ response contains a series of ionics, iambs, dochmias, dactyls, and paroemias.
lament between a male and a female character in extant Euripides.\textsuperscript{80} Is the effect to emphasize the distance between the two characters, or to join them in a supreme moment of grief? Helene Foley writes that “Antigone and Oedipus sing past each other, and at cross purposes,” and that “the babbling old man has no interest in his daughter’s attempts at heroics.”\textsuperscript{81} Monica Cyrino, by contrast, argues that the lament does bring the two figures together, and that the primary effect is to demonstrate their shared weakness. The status of Oedipus, she writes, is diminished by his participation in the lyric duet: his grief is represented as “an essentially feminine experience . . . by allowing him the lyric expression normally reserved for the female character in an actors’ duet.”\textsuperscript{82}

Many scholars have proposed that lament in tragedy is predominantly a female genre; men who participate in songs of mourning are thereby “feminized,” shown to be weak and powerless.\textsuperscript{83} The contrary position has also been voiced; Ann Suter has argued that men perform almost as many laments as women in tragedy, and that in fact a man’s lament often leads to his redemption and reintegration into society.\textsuperscript{84} In Phoenician Women the effect of the shared lament, it seems to me, is to reaffirm the weakness of Oedipus, which has already been established a theme in the play; at the same time, the

\textsuperscript{80} Cf. Chong-Gossard (2008) 58-61. In Euripides’ Electra 1177-1237 Orestes and Electra sing together in exchange with the Chorus; the meter of the passage, which is predominantly in lyric iambics, does not approach the complexity of this passage, and the presence of the Chorus adds an additional element that sets the singers together against an outside perspective. This shared lament in Phoenician Women may be compared with the duet of Hecuba and Polyxena in Hecuba (154-215); there it is the parent who shares information, and the child who reacts. On lyric laments where a female character sings and a male answers in trimeter cf. Chong-Gossard (2008) 25-63.

\textsuperscript{81} Foley (1985) 142.


\textsuperscript{84} Suter (2008). Curiously, she does not include the scene under discussion in her appendix of the forty-two laments in extant tragedy. Cf. also Chong-Gossard (2008) on men’s song in Euripides.
lament demonstrates the paradoxical power of Antigone. She conveys information, gives comfort, and takes the lead in deciding how she and her father will leave the city. Her lament takes center stage. Although her life will be one of sorrow and exile, through song she becomes mistress of her own fate.

If in her monody Antigone filled the role of the Chorus, in her opening exchange with Oedipus she takes on the role of messenger (ἀγγελίας 1546):

An. δυστυχὲς ἀγγελίας ἔπος οὐση, πάτερ· οὐκέτι σοι τέκνα λέουσει φῶς οὐδ᾽ ἀλοχος, παραβάκτροις ἂ πόδα σὸν τυφλόπουν θεραπεύμασιν αἰὲν ἐμόχθει, ὧν πάτερ, ὦμοι. (1546-1550)

An. You will endure the unfortunate utterance of my news, Father; no longer do your sons see the light, nor your wife, who would always tend and guide your blind footstep with a staff, Father, alas.

Antigone’s lyrics recapitulate the content of the second messenger speech, but in a more emotional and pathetic mode (1427-1479). The Second Messenger, who reports the duel of the brothers and Jocasta’s suicide to Creon and the Chorus, identifies himself as a follower of Eteocles (1461). As a soldier and a Theban, his fate is tied up in the outcome of the battle, but he is not himself one of its principal players. Antigone is at once observer, participant, and narrator of the action she relates, as well as the person most intimately affected by its outcome.

The emotional connection between Antigone and her father is underscored by the shared vocabulary of lamentation (ὦμοι, which begins Oedipus’ passage and concludes


86 Euripides’ manipulation of monody as messenger speech will be explored more fully in the monody of the Phrygian slave in Orestes, discussed in the next chapter.
Antigone’s) and by the repeated terms emphasizing their familial relationship (ὦ τέκνον, ὦ πάτερ).

Oe. ὃμοι ἐμὸν παθέων· πάρα γὰρ στενάχειν τάδ’, ἀντεῖν.
trισσαί ψυχαί· ποιὰ μοῖρα
πώς ἔλιπον φάος; ὦ τέκνον, αὐδα.

Av. οὐκ ἔπ’ ὑνείδεσιν οὐδ’ ἐπιχάρμασιν,
ἀλλ’ ὀδύναισι λέγω· σος ἀλάστωρ
ξίφεσιν βρίθων
καὶ πυρὶ καὶ σχετλίαις μάχαις ἐπὶ παῖδας ἔβα σοῦς,
ὦ πάτερ, ὁμοί. (1551-1559)

Oe. Alas for my sufferings! For I should groan, I should wail.
Three lives! By what fate did they leave the light?
My child, tell me.

An. I say this not to reproach or mock you,
but with pain; your avenging curse,
bristling with swords and fire and grievous battles,
came down upon your sons.
Father, alas.

In the next passage, Oedipus and Antigone complete one another’s lines, in
principally dactylic meter:

Oe. Αἰαὴ. Ἀν. τί τάδε καταστένεις;
Oe. τέκνα. Ἀν. δι’ ὀδύνας ἔβας·
εἰ δὲ τέθριππά γ’ ἔθ’ ἀρματα λεύσσων
ἀελίου τάδε σώματα νεκρῶν
ὀμμάτος αὐγάς σοις ἐπενώμας;
Oe. τῶν μὲν ἐμὸν τεκέων φανερόν κακόν·
ἄ δὲ τάλαιν’ ἄλοχος τίνι μοι, τέκνον, ὠλετο μοίρα; (1560-1566)

Oe. Ah me! An. Why do you groan?
Oe. My children. An. You go through pains;
But what if, looking to the four-horsed chariot of the sun,
you could cast the beams of your eyes
upon the corpses of the dead!
Oe. The evil fate of my sons is manifest;
but my wretched wife, child, by what fate did she perish?
Antigone in her response narrates the suicide of Jocasta, describing her mother’s death as a final act of solidarity with her sons. Because of its length, De Poli has classified this section as a self-contained monody. However, Antigone’s lines do form an essential part of the longer lyric system: her extended expository passage, couched in the highest poetic register, directly answers the question posed by Oedipus. She sings events that took place elsewhere, but whose physical, tangible results are present in the form of the corpses at her feet. Unlike her flights of song in the teichoskopia, which were increasingly detached from the Old Servant, Antigone is now completely immersed in the relationship with her onstage interlocutor. This change underscores Antigone’s journey from naïveté to full engagement with the fate of her family.

δάκρυα γοερά
φανερά πάσι τιθεμένα,
tέκεσι μαστόν ἔφερεν ἔφερεν
ικέτις ἱκέτιν ὅρομένα.

ηῷς ὤς ἦν Ἡλέκτραισι πῶλαις τέκνα
λωτοτρόφον κατὰ λείμακα λόγχαις,
κοινὸν ἐνυάλλοις,
μάστηρ, ὡς τε λέοντας ἐναύλους,
μαρναμένους ἐπὶ τραυμάσιν, αἴματος
ἡδὴ συχράν λαβάνα φονίαν,
ἀν Ἁλαχ Ἀιδαῖς, ὡσπερ ὤς Ἀρης·
χαλκόκροτον δὲ λαβοῦσα νεκρῶν πάρα φάσγανον εἰςω
σαρκάς ἐβασεν, ἄχει δὲ τέκνων ἔσεσ’ ἄμφι τέκνοισι.
πάντα δὲ ἐν ἀματι τῶδε συνάγαγεν,
ὁ πάτερ, ἀμετέροις δόμοισιν ἄχῃ θεός
ὁς τάδε τελευτᾷ. (1567-1581)

Her tears and wails were manifest to all;
rushing forth the suppliant bore, she bore
her suppliant breast to her children.
But the mother found her sons
by the Electran gate,
in a meadow where the lotus blooms,
fighting with spears in a kindred battle,

87 De Poli (2011) 256-257.
like lair-dwelling lions, eager for wounds,
a murderous libation of blood already cold,
owed to Hades, poured out by Ares.
Then, taking from the corpses a sword of hammered bronze,
she thrust it into her flesh, and in grief for her children,
around her children she fell.
The god has brought together on this one day,
oh father, all pains for our house,
he who brings these things to completion.

If we compare Antigone’s account of the action to that of the Second Messenger,
emotionality and passion stand out in contrast to measured description. In the
Messenger’s version, Jocasta arrives in time to witness the last moments of her sons’
lives and to take an emotional farewell from each. Once both men have breathed their
last:

μήτηρ δ’, ὡσὶν ἐςεὶδε τήνδε συμφοράν,
ὑπερπαθήσασ’, ἤρπασ’ ἐκ νεκρῶν ξίφος
κάπραξε δεινά· διὰ μέσου γὰρ αὐχένος
ὡθεῖ σίδηρον, ἐν δὲ τοῖς φιλτάτοις
θανούσα κεῖται περιβαλοῦσ’ ἀμφοῖν χέρας. (1455-1461)

But their mother, when she saw this disaster,
in grievous distress snatched a sword from the corpses
and did a dreadful deed. Through the middle of her throat
she thrust the iron blade, and now lies dead
among those she loved, having thrown her hands around both.

Here Jocasta’s suicide is recounted in smooth, paratactic clauses, where aorist
verbs follow each other in logical succession to convey as clearly as possible the
sequence of events (“she saw,” “she snatched,” “she thrust,” etc.). There are no
descriptive adjectives, only participles or those adjectives commonly used as substantives
(δεινά, τοῖς φιλτάτοις, ἀμφοῖν). Although the content is shocking, the mode of delivery
remains calm.
In Antigone’s lyric, by contrast, words and sounds pile up to create an effect of chaos and disaster. For instance, Antigone’s opening phrase is rendered almost incoherent through asyndeton, alliteration, and a lack of syntactical subordination, while the presence of the lyric alpha makes it at first difficult to distinguish between neuter plural and feminine singular, or between Jocasta’s action and its effects: δάκρυα γοερὰ φανερὰ πᾶσι τιθεμένα, literally “tears wails clear to all making,” which only in retrospect can we understand as “she made tears and wails that were clear to all” (1567-1568).

In Antigone’s next lines, one verb is repeated for aural effect and to add emotional weight (ἔφερεν ἔφερεν, 1569), while the polyptoton of the significant word “suppliant” emphasizes Jocasta’s inability to save her sons (ἰκέτις ἰκέτιν, 1570). The alliteration of lambda in the phrase λωτοτρόφον κατὰ λείμακα λόγχαις draws attention to the pastoral setting in which Jocasta finds her sons; the poignancy of meadows and lotus flowers would be out of place within the plainer style of the Messenger’s speech (1572). The simile of “mountain-dwelling lions,” while not unconventional for fighting warriors, emphasizes the bestiality of the scene in contrast to the solemn, religious mood appropriate to the pouring of libations (ὡστε λέοντας ἐναύλους, 1574; ψυχρὰ λοιβὰν φονίαν, 1576). The actual act of Jocasta’s suicide – the section of the narrative exactly parallel to the lines of the Messenger, quoted above – through a rushing run of dactyls conveys the speed of Jocasta’s final act, too swift for Antigone to stop. By having the same story related twice, first in spoken iambic trimeter by the Messenger and then in sung lyric by Antigone, Euripides, marrying poetic register to musical form, draws dramatic force from the difference in their perspectives. The second telling assumes the first, elaborating upon it in passionate variations; after the Messenger has related the plain
facts of the event, Antigone illustrates through her far-reaching song the terrible emotions that accompanied it.

Exchange with Creon (1582-1709) and Lyric Tailpiece (1710-1766)

The duet of Antigone and Oedipus is brought to an abrupt end by Creon, who calls for an end to piteous wailing (οἰκτρων μὲν ἤδη λήγεθ᾽, 1584). In the iambic scene that follows, Antigone completes her transition from sheltered maiden to become the active and mature head of what remains of her family. Over the course of the play, attempts to confine Antigone to a traditional role have failed; here she definitively abandons the prospect of marriage to Haemon, competes with the king about questions of justice, and convinces her father to accept her help. Once she has taken upon herself the role of attendant and guide, her solidarity with Oedipus is expressed by a final return to lyric.

Oedipus, banished from Thebes, wonders who will guide him: the logical options, Jocasta, Eteocles, and Polyneices, all lie dead (1616-1618). He does not mention Antigone as a possibility. At this point, where resolution seems impossible, Antigone interrupts the conversation of the two men to express her own views. She challenges Creon’s right to pass decrees on members of her family (1639-1645) and enters into an iambic argument with him about the fate of her brother’s corpse (1646-1682). The issue remains unresolved; when Creon departs, the focus shifts from the issue of burial to the more pressing question of whether Antigone will accompany Oedipus into exile. The ensuing conversation between father and daughter is accepted as genuine by almost all editors; we are therefore on surer ground in our interpretation. In iambic dialogue Antigone convinces Oedipus by degrees to accept her as his companion in exile. At first
Oedipus tries to dissuade his daughter, saying that such an action would be shameful (αἰσχρὰ, 1691). She opposes him, contending that in fact if done with modesty, the action would be noble (γενναία, σωφοσούνη, 1692). Oedipus tacitly accepts her help, asking her to lead him so that he can touch the corpses of his wife and sons (1693-1698). After he has physically acknowledged the dead, Oedipus at last openly asks Antigone to minister to him in exile (ὑπηρέται πατρί, τῇςδε κοινοῦσθαι φυγῆς, 1707-1709).

Once this conclusion has been reached, father and daughter sing a final duet in iambic-trochaic meter. 88 This song accompanies the characters from the stage, and brings to a pathetic conclusion the themes of exile, wandering, and weakness that have been prominent throughout the play. The song contains familiar motifs of mourning: Antigone urges her father to go forth into wretched exile (ιθ’ ἐσ φυγὰν τάλαιναν, 1710), while he refers to himself as “wandering in miserable exile” (δυστυχεστάς φύγας ἀλαίνειν, 1723-1724); father and daughter are both “unhappy” (ἀθλία, 1715; ἄθλιοι, 1716) and have suffered terrible things (δεινὰ δείν᾽, 1725); and Oedipus walks “like a dream in strength” (ὁστ’ ὄνειρον ἰσχύν, 1722). These final lyric lines complete the ring composition of the lyric scenes of the play, as Antigone, who entered by grasping the proffered hand of the Old Servant, here stretches forth her own hand to help her aged father (ὁρεγε χέρα φίλαν, 1710).

I am in agreement with the majority of editors, who consider nearly the last twenty-five lines of the play to be spurious (1737-1763). 89 In the passage as it stands,

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88 Cf. Mastronarde (1994) ad 1710-66. A modulation from trimeter to a higher metrical register is not uncommon at the end of a tragedy: e.g. Aeschylus’ Suppliants, Eumenides; and laments in Persians and Seven Against Thebes; Sophocles’ Antigone and Oedipus at Colonus. Euripides is fond of closing actors’ anapests (Prometheus Bound, Medea, Electra, Orestes, Bacchae), trochaic tetrameters (Ion), or actors’ song in responsion with the Chorus (Hecuba).

Antigone again laments the maidenly pursuits she has left behind (ἀπαρθένευτ, 1739), declares that her loyalty to her father has given her glory (1741-1742), and predicts her own death as punishment for burying the body of Polyneices (1743-1746). Oedipus, in his lines, advises Antigone to go to the sacred precinct of Dionysus in the mountains (1751-1752) and mourns the fall of his fortunes (1758-1763). These sentiments, except for the novel suggestion that Antigone become a maenad, have been expressed already in the course of the exodos, and neither add to nor detract from the emotional impact of the scene. If genuine, they continue the theme of Antigone’s maturation: she looks back to the life she has left behind and forward to her new role as the helper of her father. Yet for our purposes, the authenticity of these lines is of minimal consequence; whether at line 1736 or at line 1763, the play ends with actor’s lyric. The final scene belongs to Oedipus and Antigone, whose shared grief and shared strength in the face of that grief, expressed through song, brings the play to its intimate conclusion.

Conclusion

Structurally and thematically, the four scenes of actors’ lyric in *Phoenician Women* unify an intricate plot by marking the devolution of the play from anxiety and partial hope to despair and mourning and finally to a partial resolution founded on the shared suffering of Antigone and Oedipus. Each scene serves a discrete function as required by its particular context. In the *teichoskopia*, the emotional state of Antigone in her innocence stands out against the backdrop of similar scenes in earlier literature and

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90 Dunn (1996) has explored the ways in which Euripides in *Phoenician Women* becomes immersed in the difficulties of seeing or choosing an ending; the play lacks the gestures of closure familiar from Euripides’ other works (e.g. a god or prophecy) and the final scene is open and inconclusive. What closure there is comes, I think, from the formal ring composition provided by the duet of father and daughter.
establishes an initial state of innocence and naiveté that will contrast with her suffering and knowledge in the exodos. Jocasta’s monody raises hopes of a reunion scene only to disappoint them, leaving her isolated in fearful anticipation. Over one thousand lines later, in Antigone’s monody, the horror and the grief that Jocasta was trying to ward off and deny has come to pass; further, through comparison with mythological figures, Antigone declares herself to be unique in the nature and extent of her pain. Finally, in the paired duets of Antigone and Oedipus, the disiecta membra of the house are gathered together through shared song. At this moment of supreme loss, Antigone steps beyond her sole suffering by taking upon herself the dual roles of messenger and comforter to her father. Thus, in giving voice to the disorder at the heart of the city, the four scenes of actors’ lyric paradoxically create a superordinate coherence within the play itself.
Figure 3. Lyric Structure of *Phoenician Women*. Text of Mastronarde (1994).
Figure 4. Lyric Structure of *Seven Against Thebes*. Text of Page (1972). *Likely spurious*
Orestes: Monody as Messenger Speech

Orestes, produced in 408 B.C., stands as the culmination of a decade of experimentation with monody as a versatile dramatic form. The percentage of song delivered by actors in Orestes is the highest for all extant Greek tragedy. The Chorus sing only two brief odes in a play of 1693 lines (316-347, 807-843). By contrast, nearly three quarters of the music of the play is delivered by actors, culminating in an extended monody by an anonymous Phrygian slave. This monody, I will argue, overturns the expectations of the audience through its unprecedented combination of the traditionally antithetical genres of monody and messenger speech. Operating almost as a microcosmic play-within-a-play, the song creates an atmosphere within which themes of pervasive uncertainty and unease will flower. Accordingly, it is to that monody that this chapter will devote most of its attention.

As Peter Euben has written, the plot of Orestes “develops with explosive shifts of mood and attitude. So discordant are the episodes in themselves and in relation to one another, and so agitated are the speeches and the speakers, that the play threatens to disintegrate entirely.” In a play that consistently violates conventions and expectations of dramatic form, the monody of the Phrygian constitutes a crisis. As I will demonstrate, the audience has been primed to expect a messenger speech; they come to this messenger

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2 Csapo (1999) 413. 68.2% of the music in the play is delivered by the actors, or 72.6% if recitative is included. Despite the play’s length, the total percentage that is in lyric (22.9%, or 31.1% including recitative) is on par with Euripides’ other works of this period.
3 If we accept Electra’s monody as genuine; discussed further below.
speech with specific expectations about what type of information it will contain, and about the manner in which this information will be conveyed. The Phrygian is completely unsuited to this role. By combining the forms of monody and messenger speech, the playwright sets up a number of obstacles that prevent knowledge of “the facts” of what happened. Any desire for a straightforward progression, for the presentation of information in a satisfactory and unified way, is denied. The disjointed, aporetic monody is of a piece with the rest of the play; it exposes more clearly than any other scene the widening gap between words and their meanings. The whole play thus emerges as deeply “polyphonic,” a set of contradictions that defy simple resolution. By removing the omniscience of the spectators, the playwright draws the audience together with the principals of the plot in their groping search for purpose, coherence, and understanding.

Much criticism of Orestes has focused on the divided nature of the plot. The first third of the play (1-724) describes an attempted rescue: Orestes and Electra wait as suppliants for their expected savior, Menelaus. When Menelaus proves unable to stay the execution of his niece and nephew, the middle of the play (725-1097) constitutes a second major dramatic movement, developing by contrast an example of loyal friendship, as Pylades pledges his support to the siblings. The opening two thirds of the play thus present an unorthodox version of the aftermath of Orestes’ killing of his mother Clytemnestra. However, after Orestes is sentenced to death by the Argive assembly at the beginning of the fourth episode, the plot takes an unexpected turn, introducing a third movement, the plan for revenge (1098-1690). Orestes, Pylades, and Electra resolve on desperate action: to kidnap and kill Helen, or die trying. This chain of events appears to

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be completely Euripides’ invention.⁶ As Froma Zeitlin has written, here the play “attempts to escape its mythic frame and freely formulate its own actions and reactions.”⁷ It is at this climactic moment of tension and uncertainty that Euripides introduces the singing Phrygian slave.

Whereas in *Phoenician Women* the placement of actors’ lyric lent shape and unity to an apparently disordered plot, in *Orestes* Euripides skilfully plays upon the precedent built up by the music in the first portion of the play to make the *tour de force* of the Phrygian’s monody all the more shocking. As I will briefly show, in the scenes antecedent to the Phrygian’s appearance, the use of familiar forms sets off by contrast the monody that will follow. The Chorus of Argive women reflect on the history and sufferings of the royal house, following the example of the female choruses of many of Euripides’ earlier plays.⁸ Their two odes are extremely short; in total, their songs make up sixty-seven lines, half as many as the monody of the Phrygian. In the first stasimon the Chorus pray that the Erinyes will be appeased (316-355), while in the second stasimon they comment on the instability of human fortune as illustrated by the Tantalids (807-843). These songs are not without beauty or thematic import; but neither do they present a novel understanding of the house’s calamity.⁹ The lyric scenes of Electra also conform

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⁷ Zeitlin (1980) 53. In the second half of the play, she writes, the characters, “casting about for a totally novel device to break the claustrophobic deadlock of their earlier efforts to cope with the stubborn refusal of circumstances to conform to the mythic paradigm, resort to a series of other scripts” (58).

⁸ For instance, those of *Medea, Hippolytus, Trojan Women, Andromache, Hecuba, Electra, Helen,* and *Phoenician Women.*

⁹ Critics have tended to dismiss the relevance of the choral odes to the main action of the drama, beginning with the declaration of Verrall (1905) 216 that “of the Chorus we need say little, and would gladly say nothing.” An important reevaluation of the odes may be found in Fuqua (1978), who explores the ways in which the choral songs are integrated with the main action of the drama through their sophisticated mythological references.
to a recognizable pattern. The parodos takes the form of an *amoibaion* between Electra and the Chorus (140-207). In her monody, assuming that it is genuine, Electra mourns her own and the house’s woes (960-1012). ¹⁰ This arrangement, where a central female figure sings an *amoibaion* with a sympathetic female chorus as well as a monody of lament, is recognizable from other plays, and matches almost exactly the pattern of the *Iphigenia in Tauris*. Indeed, a lyric role of lamentation seems to be typical of Electra as a figure on the tragic stage. ¹¹ In *Orestes*, then, her opening *amoibaion* and subsequent monody would conform to an audience’s expectation of her role.

The parodos, the first stasimon, and the monody of Electra constitute the entire musical contribution of the first two-thirds of the play. After Electra’s monody, at the beginning of the fourth episode, all musical expectations are overturned. Electra takes on the role of a vengeful Fury, calling down destruction upon her own house and family in song; and the monody of the Phrygian slave is a *coup de théâtre* unparalleled by anything else.

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¹⁰ Some scholars have argued that the lyric lines assigned to Electra at 960-1012 are not in fact a monody, but a choral ode adapted for a solo singer at a later date. Biehl (1965), West (1987), Diggle (1994), and Damen (1990) consider the passage a choral song, while De Poli (2012) 28-29 treats the song as a monody. On actors’ interpolations in tragedy cf. Page (1934) and Hamilton (1974). The argument for a choral attribution is well supported, but does not vitiate our major point: all possible assignations of the song – to Electra, to the Chorus, or to both – resemble traditional musical structures. If the song were a monody, it would be familiar because of Electra’s role as a singer of lamentations in the plays of Aeschylus, Sophocles, prior Euripides, and, presumably, other fifth century tragedians. If the song were a choral ode, it would be orthodox in its position as an act-dividing song, in its metrical structure of strophe, antistrophe, and epode, and in its dependence on tropes of lamentation (960-970), the workings of divine envy (φθόνος, 974), and longed-for escape (982-986). Finally, if the song were a duet shared by Electra and the Chorus, it would mirror the pattern of the parodos in this very play, where the heroine and the women of the house also bewail in alternation the woes of the royal family. In all three cases the song would be of a piece with the earlier lyric scenes in defining a traditional structure for the opening two-thirds of *Orestes*.

¹¹ Electra sings in every one of her appearances in extant tragedy. In Aeschylus’ *Choephoroi* she delivers an extended opening monody (86-120) and then is joined by the Chorus in a lyric *amoibaion* (121-125). In Sophocles’ *Electra* she sings an opening monody (86-120) and then a lyric *amoibaion* with the Chorus (121-125). Perhaps it is no coincidence that this play featuring Electra has the highest percentage of music delivered by actors in the extant plays of Sophocles, given by Csapo (1999) as 5.2%. Similarly, in Euripides’ *Electra* she sings first by herself (112-167) and then in alternation with the Chorus (167-212) in the parodos. Cf. Hall (1999) 115-116 on figures who are “pre-programmed” to sing in tragedy, and Loraux (2002) on Electra as a mourner in the plays of Aeschylus and Sophocles.
in the extant tragic corpus. What, given this radical shift in register, knits together the
tonally and formally disparate elements of the play?

The Monody of the Phrygian Slave (1369-1502)

In an influential chapter, Shirley Barlow proposes that the dramatic modes of
monody and messenger speech are diametrically opposed. Monody, Barlow argues,
conveys through lyric the inner emotional state of a single figure, while in a messenger
speech the personality of the speaker is suppressed in the service of a clear account of
fact. Barlow finds this difference articulated in particular through imagery:

“Where imagery in monody conveys the irrational and subjective attitudes which
characterize the singer of that monody, that of the messenger must seem to
convey a rational account of objective fact, the existence of which has nothing to
do with him personally, except in the sense that he happened to observe it . . .
Stylistically, [the mode of the messenger speech] bears the same relation to lyric
imagery as a black and white etching to a painting.”

What is the effect, then, when we encounter a monody that is, simultaneously, a
messenger speech? The impact of the Phrygian’s monody depends first on its similarity
to traditional messenger speeches; against this backdrop, the differences inherent in the
lyric mode stand out more clearly. This hybridity – of speech and song, narration and
emotion, objectivity and subjectivity – has profound implications for our understanding
of the play as a whole. The composite of monody and messenger speech temporarily
stops the urgent, accelerating plot in its tracks. The levels of irony thus created forced the
audience into an active position, where they must decide for themselves which, if any, of
the play’s competing voices can claim authority.

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12 Barlow (1971) 61.
As the longest single monody in Greek tragedy, the song of the Phrygian slave has been an object of much study. The most comprehensive treatment is that of James Porter, who addresses criticism of the “outlandish novelty” of the Phrygian’s monody and demonstrates that it is in fact a carefully structured and coherent scene. Porter’s analysis has informed my own thinking, and my comments on certain aspects of the monody will be briefer as a result of his work. Porter concludes that Euripides uses the agitated lyrics of the monody to “give expression to the troubled, almost surrealistic atmosphere that has pervaded his play from its very beginning” and that “only such a report as the Phrygian’s monody could communicate the frenzied helplessness and frustration, the darkly surrealistic confusion that comes to dominate Orestes in its later scenes.” The confused futility of the song, Porter argues, reflects the moral confusion of the protagonist Orestes and of the play.

Since the publication of Porter’s monograph, several influential studies have treated the messenger speech as a Bauform of tragedy. J.M. Bremer and Malcolm Heath expand upon Barlow’s view of the messenger speech as an impartial means of conveying

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13 The Phrygian’s song is interrupted six times by the Chorus, but because of the continuity between the different sections de Poli (2011) 293-316 classifies it as a single monody, rather than an epirrhematic dialogue.


16 On messenger speeches cf. di Gregorio (1967), Bremer (1976), Heath (1987), de Jong (1991), Barrett (2002), Dickin (2009). According to the Appendix in Barrett (2002) 223-224, there are thirty-six messenger speeches in the extant tragic corpus. In making this list Barrett draws on the criteria of de Jong (1989): the figure in question is not one of the principal characters, and is in fact more often identified by a function (messenger, shepherd, servant, etc.); the narrative of this figure contains verbs in the past tense; and there is usually dialogue involving the figure that precedes the speech itself. Most plays contain at least one messenger speech, while several (Antigone, Trachiniae, Bacchae, Helen, Iphigenia in Tauris, Orestes, Phoenician Women, and Rhesus) contain two or more.
information that the audience is meant to accept as true.\textsuperscript{17} Monographs by Irene de Jong and James Barrett have complicated this picture through a detailed exploration of the conventions and implications of the messenger speech.\textsuperscript{18} De Jong, a narratologist, argues against the functionalist view of earlier scholars. She demonstrates that messenger speeches subtly characterize the figures who deliver them; the speeches are produced by individuals, all of whom have loyalties and judgments that are evident in their words and influence the way in which they convey their news.\textsuperscript{19} For de Jong, “No narrative is ever objective.”\textsuperscript{20} More recently, Barrett has proposed that the narrative voice of the messenger closely resembles that of the epic poet, and that this appropriation of Homeric form conveys powerful authority upon the speaker.\textsuperscript{21} As messenger speeches constitute tragedy’s most sustained attention to extended narrative, Barrett suggests, they engage with contemporary philosophical discourse on language, persuasion, rhetoric, and truth.

De Jong and Barrett agree that a messenger speech in tragedy has certain defining features: it is a long, continuous speech in iambic trimeter, in which a figure who does not feature prominently in other scenes of the play reports in the first-person events that have taken place offstage. Both de Jong and Barrett include the monody of the Phrygian in appendices listing all of the messenger speeches in Greek tragedy, but neither

\textsuperscript{17} Bremer (1976) and Heath (1987).

\textsuperscript{18} De Jong (1991) and Barrett (2002). Yoon (2012) in her work on anonymous figures in tragedy omits discussion of messengers entirely; her analysis of the Phrygian focuses on the stichomythic scene with Orestes, where she sees the slave as a foil who calls into question the morality and heroism of the protagonist: “It is the state of the tormenter, not the victim, that is of interest” (82). Yet Yoon’s analysis of figures who are free of determination by the mythical tradition may be brought to bear on the question of the messenger’s perceived objectivity.

\textsuperscript{19} De Jong (1991) 29-40. Her remarks are especially pertinent in the case of “false” messengers, such as Lichas in \textit{Trachiniae} and the Paidagogos in Sophocles’ \textit{Electra}.

\textsuperscript{20} De Jong (1991) 60.

\textsuperscript{21} Barrett (2002) xvii.
discusses the scene in any detail. Barrett acknowledges that as a messenger the Phrygian “hardly performs according to conventional expectations.”²² This is an understatement: the Phrygian contradicts in almost every particular Barrett’s theory of the messenger as a omniscient and emotionally detached epic narrator embedded in the tragic text.²³ And of course the Phrygian violates the central tenet of de Jong and Barrett’s foundational definition, in that he delivers a long, semi-continuous *song* in an unparalleled variety of lyric meters.

It is this very refusal to conform to expectations, this violation of formal constraints, I suggest, that constitutes the “message” of this unconventional messenger. The monody of the Phrygian derives its dramatic power from the conflict between narrative objectivity and the subjectivity of lyric. The Phrygian conveys essential information, but in an emotional, agitated, disorganized, and distorted manner; his wishes and fears are overlaid upon the bare facts of what happened. Thus he tells two tales simultaneously, and the audience must look through one properly to decipher the other. Throughout the monody we are led to seek beyond the words of the Phrygian for an account that is different and less prejudiced.

Yet this different, less prejudiced account never appears. What really happened to Helen? The monodic messenger speech of the Phrygian instantiates in lyric form the radical critique of objectivity and truth that has marked the play from its opening scenes. The playwright leaves the audience in doubt as to Helen’s fate for more than three hundred lines, from the moment when her cries are heard from within the house (1296)

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²³ Seidensticker (1982) 114 sees the scene as a caricature of a messenger speech; to me Euripides’ handling of the conventions does not seem purely parodic in intention or in effect.
until the epiphany of Apollo (1625). And when Apollo appears on the machine to announce Helen’s deification, the mystery remains. If Helen is now a goddess, as Apollo declares, then she is no longer “alive;” no longer among mortals as the wife of Menelaus and the mother of Hermione. She is both dead and not dead. In retrospect, the slave’s report approaches the truth more nearly than Euripides led the audience to believe. The Phrygian is in this way akin to a riddling oracle, directing and misdirecting the attention of the spectators through the competing voices at work in his monody.

I have suggested that the narrative style of the Phrygian is unique in Greek tragedy. There are in tragedy figures who lie and whose lies are known in advance by the audience, such as the messenger in Sophocles’ Electra; and there are figures who lie and whose lies are revealed subsequently, such as Lichas in Trachiniae. Messengers may also adapt their words to different interlocutors, as when the soldier in Antigone is reluctant to speak openly in front of Creon, or when the herald in Agamemnon announces the triumph of the army to Clytemnestra, revealing only to the Chorus the suffering entailed by the war and the journey home. In each of these cases the messenger delivers a false or partial report because of concerns clearly articulated by the action of the play, of which the audience is fully aware; the messenger’s actual knowledge of events is not in doubt.

The monody of the Phrygian, by contrast, is deeply ambiguous. Does he set out to deceive, to obscure and conceal information?24 Does he simply not know what has happened? Is he “unreliable;” and, if so, in what sense? Most scholarship on reliable and unreliable narrators focuses on works of modern prose fiction; the term was coined in

24 When he appears onstage, the Phrygian is in flight for his life, and imagines Orestes and Pylades in hot pursuit. Electra and the hostile Chorus surround the palace, blocking all routes of escape. The subsequent scene with Orestes reveals that the Phrygian is willing to say whatever is necessary; his twisting monody, then, may be an attempt to distract the Greeks long enough to win their sympathy and save himself— at least, this would be one plausible way to play the scene on the modern stage.
1961 by Wayne C. Booth, a critic of American literature, and is defined by M.H. Abrams as a narrator “whose perception, interpretation, and evaluation of the matters he or she narrates do not coincide with the opinions and norms implied by the author, which the author expects the alert reader to share.” This is clearly insufficient to describe the Phrygian. In drama, the competing voices of the various figures onstage make the “opinions and norms” of an implied author difficult, even impossible, to identify; the audience must judge whether an internal narrator, such as a messenger, is reliable by comparing his account to information gleaned from other scenes and characters.

If the term “unreliable” cannot be applied to the Phrygian, how may we describe the style of his narrative? The inconsistencies in the Phrygian’s song, its abrupt shifts of tone, are part of a larger strategy by the playwright. The overall effect of such an eclectic construction, beyond unsettling or even incongruous, is to frustrate any hope the audience may have in the possibility of learning the truth from the Phrygian as a reliable source. If most figures in tragedy have one voice, one claim to authority, the Phrygian is polyphonic. His song contains multiple systems of meaning that are by convention self-sufficient, self-contained, and mutually exclusive: as we shall see, his language is at times epic, tragic, comic, choral, and monodic. The coexistence of these forms leads to a clash between the opposing forces of objectivity and subjectivity, even truth and falsehood.

The effect of the monody is both hysterical and histrionic: that is, the slave’s narrative is disrupted by emotion and yet artfully shaped towards the desired impact upon his onstage audience. What I call his resultant “polyphonic” voice as a narrator is conveyed through a number of synergistic techniques, both rhetorical and dramatic. The

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wishes and fears that color his song are expressed by direct avowal, and would have been enhanced in performance by mimetic show. They are also expressed by extra-syntactical means, through pauses, exclamatory breaks, and forays into unexpected meters and genres. In its abrupt and forceful juxtaposition of different elements the monody combines lamentation with reminiscences of epic and of earlier tragedy. Through the unprecedented combination of monody and messenger speech the poet foregrounds the competing voices of the Phrygian’s song. Indeed, Euripides contrives to make this implicit competition, this battle at the level of form, the center of interest in the scene.

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Euripides’ use of monody is all the more unsettling because the Phrygian does conform to many of the conventions associated with messengers elsewhere in the corpus of Euripides. He is a slave and a member of the royal retinue, which places him in the company of the messengers of, for instance, *Medea*, *Ion*, *Helen*, *Bacchae*, and *Iphigenia in Tauris*. He is anonymous, and appears only in this scene. He declares that he has been an eyewitness to the events he now relates, and explains his position vis-à-vis the action. He reiterates his claim to autopsy through first-person verbs and vocabulary emphasizing sight and vision. He reports action that has taken place offstage to ignorant listeners who are eager to hear the outcome of his story. With the glaring exceptions of his mode of his delivery, and his failure to declare plainly what actually happened, he fulfills the expected role of messenger.


Euripides has carefully crafted the circumstances that precede the monody so that the audience will anticipate a messenger speech. Orestes and Pylades enter the palace, intent upon the murder of Helen (1216-1245). Electra and the Chorus are stationed outside as guards (1246-1295). Then, from within the house, the voice of Helen is heard: she twice cries out that she is being murdered, in words that suggest a violent death (ὦλλυμαι κακῶς, ὑνήσκω, 1301). In other plays, such cries faithfully convey what is happening offstage.\(^{28}\) Electra’s savage song of triumph encourages Orestes and Pylades in their bloody work (1302-1310). A potential obstacle appears in the form of Hermione, but, deceived by Electra, she too walks into the snare (1313-1335).

All of these details indicate that the conspirators stand victorious: Helen is dead, Hermione taken prisoner. In a short strophe, the Chorus hope that none of the Argives will arrive before they receive conclusive proof of what has happened:

\[
\begin{align*}
πρὶν \text{ ἐπίμως} \ ιδω \ τὸν \ Έλένας \ φόνον \\
καθαμακτὸν \ ἐν \ δόμιοι \ κεῖμενον, \\
ἡ \ καὶ \ λόγον \ τοῦ \ προσπόλων \ πυθώμεθα: \\
\end{align*}
\]

Before I truly see the slaughter of Helen lying bloody within the house, or even hear the speech of one of the servants. Their words virtually promise one of two possibilities: either the corpse of Helen will be displayed on the ἐκκύκλημα, or an attendant will shortly appear to deliver a messenger speech. The impression that the climactic event has already taken place is reinforced by the last lines of the strophe, where the Chorus declare that justice has been served, using a verb in the past tense (ἐβα, 1361):

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\(^{28}\) Perhaps the most famous example is the murder of the king in *Agamemnon* (1343, 1345). The cries of Polymestor in *Hecuba* as he is blinded may recall these lines (1035-1038).

\(^{29}\) I have used the text of De Poli (2011) for the monodies, substituting iota subscript for adscript, and that of Diggle (1981) for all other portions of the play. The translation throughout is my own.
By justice the vengeance of the gods has come upon Helen; for she filled all of Hellas with tears, through the accursed, accursed Paris of Ida, who led Hellas to Ilion.

Their song complete, the Chorus anticipate a new scene: “What are the doors about to disclose?” (1366). But there is no tableau on the ἐκκύκλημα or trustworthy messenger in the style of the rustic who appears earlier in the play. Instead a nameless, terrified barbarian emerges from the palace, and in his agitated song and dance tantalizingly promises and delays the true account that the Chorus, Electra, and the audience await.

As we have seen, the lines preceding the entrance of the Phrygian set up a series of expectations associated with the messenger speech as a type scene. The sudden entrance of the Phrygian strikes the first blow against these expectations. The manner of his appearance has been the subject of much debate.30 Certainly its main effect is to shock and amaze.31 Does the slave enter at a run from the palace doors, or daringly leap from the roof of the skene building? There is an apparent contradiction: the words of the Chorus (1366-1368) indicate that the doors of the palace are rattling, and that someone will soon open them and emerge, but the Phrygian seems to say that he has escaped by way of the roof, not by the front door (1371-1372). The ancient scholiast maintains that

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in the original production the Phrygian jumped from the roof of the *skene*, but that later actors inserted the explanatory lines of the Chorus to avoid the hazard of this unconventional entrance; other ancient commentators argue that the Phrygian’s words should be interpreted differently, and that he refers to a roof inside the palace which is not visible to the audience. Modern scholars have defended both positions. My own view is that the entrance indeed takes place via the roof of the *skene* building; an ingenious professional, as Euripides certainly was, could contrive technical means to ensure the safety of the actor. Like the entrance of Medea on the chariot of the Sun, the dramatic effect of such an unconventional entrance would be powerful, and would immediately signal that this messenger is in a class of his own.

After this exceptional entrance, the Phrygian’s aria extends over 133 lines of text, divided into six astrophic sections by the one-line interruptions of the Chorus. The first two passages of lyric borrow the language, imagery, and metrical forms of other genres, combining conventions of monody, choral lyric, lament, and epic. These passages establish the identity of the singer and his multiple voices as a narrator. In the subsequent four passages of lyric, the Phrygian relates the events that took place inside the palace. By this point, however, the information that he presents has already been called into question; he is sympathetic to Helen, and portrays Orestes and Pylades as military heroes, views that are in tension with earlier scenes in the play. This choice of narrator and of

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34 The Chorus interject at 1380, 1393, 1425, 1453, 1473. I follow West (1987) in marking line 1394, which is absent from many ancient copies of the play, as spurious. The six lyric passages increase and then decrease in length: 10 lines, 11 lines, 29 lines, 34 lines, 26 lines, 28 lines. Detailed discussion of the text and meters of the monody can be found in Biehl (1965) and De Poli (2011) 293-316. Webster (1967) 17-20, Willink (1986) ad 1366-1502, and Porter (1994) 178-183 protest against the tendency to exaggerate the frenzy of the monody.
mode is inseparable from Euripides’ decision that the deceptive, yet true, account of Helen’s “death” should culminate in a cryptic “disappearance.” 35 By undermining the clarity of the Phrygian’s report, Euripides contributes to the confusion surrounding the fate of Helen. What has happened, and how much of the monody can be believed?

The first lyric section of the monody serves to establish some basic features of the singer, chief among them his subjectivity as a narrator. In this opening passage, Euripides combines conventions drawn from three areas: the stereotypical portrait of the cowardly and deceitful barbarian, the poetic inventiveness of a lyric singer, and the presumed objectivity of the messenger. The Phrygian begins in medias res, still in fear for his life:

\[
	ext{Ἀργέϊον ξίφος ἐκ θανάτου}
\text{πέφευγα βαρβάροις ἐν εὐμάρισιν,}
\text{κεδρωτὰ παστάδον ὑπὲρ τέραμιν}
\text{Δωρικὰς τε τριγλύφους,}
\text{φρουδὰ φροῦδα, Γᾶ Γᾶ,}
\text{βαρβάροις ὀρασμοῖς.}
\text{αἰαὶ· πᾶ φύγω, ξέναι, πολιὸν αἰθέρ’ ἀμπτάμενος ἦ}
\text{πόντον, Ὁκεανὸς ὃν}
\text{ταυρόκρανος ἀγκάλαις}
\text{ἐλίσσων κυκλοὶ χθόνα;}
\]

(1369-1379)

I have fled from the death of an Argive sword in barbarian slippers of deerskin, above the cedar beams of the porch and the Doric cornices, gone, gone, Earth, Earth, in barbarian escapes. Alas! Where may I flee, foreign women, flying up to the bright air or to the sea, which bull-headed Ocean encircles, whirling the land in his embraces?

35 Given the multitude of myths that surround Helen, the audience could accept that she would in fact be saved by the gods, spirited away as her eidolon is in Euripides’ Helen. The existence of the eidolon myth would further complicate expectations about Helen’s fate in this play.
In performance, the costume, mask, and gestures of the actor would offer immediate clues as to the rank, ethnicity, and emotional state of this unnamed figure. He is a foreigner, a slave, and a eunuch. In the vocabulary, imagery, and diction of his this opening passage, the Phrygian conforms to many of the stereotypical features of barbarians on the Greek tragic stage. His barbarian slippers (βαρβάροις ἐν εὐμάρισιν) and his barbarian flight (βαρβάροισι δρασμοῖς) typify him as luxury-loving, effeminate, and cowardly. The term εὐμάρις denotes an Asiatic shoe made of deerskin, and gives an exotic flavor to his opening lines. The repetition of individual words (φροῦδα φροῦδα, Γᾶ Γᾶ) and extrametrical cry (αιαῖ) emphasize his excessive emotionality. The meter – a complex mixture of dactylic, iambic, bacchic, cretic, and ithyphallic elements – conveys his extreme agitation. The initial impression is of a figure completely overwhelmed by terror, unable to deliver a clear account of what has happened.

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36 Seidensticker (1982) 105 suggests that the Phrygian may still be carrying the fan with which he was lately wafting breezes around his mistress.

37 As may be inferred from Orestes’ comment that he is neither a woman nor a man (1528). The explicit term εὐνοῦχος is nowhere used. A possible model for Euripides’ choice here may be found in Phrynicus’ lost play Phoenician Women (476 B.C.), which was set in Persia and dealt with the aftermath of the battle of Salamis; the Persian defeat was reported in the first scene by a eunuch. Cf. TrGF I F 8-12 and Garvie (2009) ix-xii.

38 The concept of the barbarian as “other” on the Greek stage has been discussed in particular by Hall (1989) 121-133, who argues that the tragic “discourse of the barbarian” was essential to the formation of civic ideology in Athens in the fifth century. The topic is revisited in Hall (2006) 184-224. On barbarians in tragedy cf. Bacon (1961), Saïd (1984), de Romilly (1993).

39 On the Phrygian’s gender cf. line 1528. A female messenger would be highly unusual: among tragic messengers, only the Nurse in Sophocles’ Trachiniae and the servant in Euripides’ Alcestis are female. The cowardice of barbarians was a popular topos in comedy, cf. Long (1986) 141.


41 Hall (1989) 119 comments that this is the most extensive use of lyric repetition by a barbarian in tragedy.

42 For metrical analysis cf. De Poli (2011) 293-316.
Yet the urgency of the Phrygian’s opening words is undercut by descriptive detail. In eleven lines he uses only one verb to describe an actual event (πέφευγα), surrounded by seven adjectives and a metaphor personifying the ocean that surrounds the earth. A high frequency of “narrative verbs” (third-person aorists, imperfects, and pluperfects) is a defining feature of the conventional messenger speech; their absence here immediately signals that the Phrygian is not performing his expected role.\(^{43}\) A wish to escape the present situation is a familiar topos from Euripidean lyric, in all other cases delivered by a female singer or a female chorus, aligning the Phrygian with women rather than with men.\(^{44}\) Such elaborate descriptive language is unprecedented for a messenger, and unusual even for a monodist. Unlike, for instance, Creusa’s vivid evocation of Apollo in Ion, where the image of the god’s shining hair conveys the mixture of awe and horror that she felt at the time of the rape, here the Phrygian’s desire to escape is expressed in conventional and ornamental terms that draw on the language of choral lyric.

In addition to the confluence of roles, in the Phrygian’s opening lines we are confronted with several anomalous features that at times reinforce and at times subvert the conventions associated with a messenger speech. First, the Phrygian does not come out of the palace with the intention of relating the news of Helen’s disappearance; he has to be guided into the role of messenger by the Chorus. After his first lyric passage, the Chorus interrupt to ask for clear information: τί δ’ ἔστιν, Ἑλένης πρόσπολ’, Ἰδαῖον κάρα; (1380). As he continues in his song, they again request a narrative that is “clear” and moves through “each thing” in sequence (σαφῶς λέγ’ ἠμῖν αὖθ’ ἐκαστα τὰν δόμοις;

\(^{43}\) Dickin (2009).

\(^{44}\) E.g. Hippolytus 732-741, Iphigenia in Tauris 1138-1142, Bacchae 402-416; cf. in this play 982-987.
The Chorus is as frustrated as the audience in their expectations: the Phrygian refuses to conform to a standard pattern.

Second, the principal news that the Phrygian reports, the mysterious disappearance of Helen, is withheld until the very end of his song. In all other messenger speeches in extant tragedy, the outcome of events is made known to the spectators in advance of the messenger’s extended account. In this same play, for instance, the loyal rustic who delivers the news of the Argive decree declares to Electra in his second line that “the Pelasgians have decided by vote that you, wretched woman, and your brother are to die on this day” (857-858). The peasant then explains and elaborates on this central point. The Phrygian is the one exception to this rule. The crucial piece of news – that Helen has inexplicably vanished – is not disclosed until the final lines of the monody. And until this revelation, it is impossible to separate extraneous details in the Phrygian’s account from the item of greatest consequence for the action of the play.

Third, the song of the Phrygian presents information that is not already known from another source. This is typical of a messenger, but not of a monodist. In other plays, monodists sing of their woes and relate in detail the history of their sorrows, often including a degree of narrative. Usually, however, the audience is already familiar with the general outline of events from a prologue or from another earlier scene in the play. This is the case, for instance, in Ion, where Creusa in her monody recapitulates the information conveyed by Hermes in the prologue. Creusa’s account does provide new details, but the song’s principal contribution lies in its expression of Creusa’s emotional torment, both at the time of the rape and in her present moment of grief. Here the Phrygian relates information that is new to the Chorus, to Electra, to the audience, and, it

turns out, even to Orestes, who in the next scene seems to think that he has actually succeeded in killing Helen (1512, 1354). The onstage and offstage audiences are united in their ignorance of what is presented in the monody, making the frustrating delays, inconsistencies, and misdirection of the Phrygian’s song a matter of utmost importance.

As we have seen, the lines preceding the entrance of the Phrygian set up the expectation of a messenger speech; instead, the first passage of the monody delivers an elaborate song that displays the excessive emotionality of a barbarian, the lyrical ingenuity of a monodist, and the traditional topoi of a choral singer. In the second passage of the monody, Euripides departs still more from the conventions of the messenger speech by introducing elements drawn from lament, epic, and earlier tragedy. Shifts of tone are rapid: in a short space the song is charged with several attitudes, applicable to several subjects, and bearing the different weights of various allusions.

For example, the Phrygian conflates his fear in the present crisis with grief for the homeland he has left behind:

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Τιόν Τιόν, ὠμοί μοι,
Φρύγιον ἄστυ καὶ καλλίβωλον Ἡ-
δας ὅρος ἱερόν, ὥς σ’ ὀλόμενον στένω
ἀρμάτειον ἄρμάτειον μέλος
βαρβάρῳ βοᾷ διά τὸ τάσσ᾽ ὀρνι-
θόγονον 'ὅμμα κυκνοπτέρου
καλλοσύνας, Λήδας σκύμνον, Δυσελένας Δυσελένας,
ζεστῶν περγάμων Ἀπολλωνίων Ἐρινόν.
ὀττοτοῖ
ιαλέμων ιαλέμων
Δαρδανία τλάμων, Γαυνυμήδεως ἰπποσύ-
να, Δίως εὐνέτα.
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(1381-1393)

Ilion, Ilion, alas for me,
the Phrygian city and the holy mountain
of Ida with its lovely soil,
how I groan for you, destroyed,
– a chariot, chariot melody –
with the barbarian cry
because of the bird-begotten face
of swan-plumed beauty,
the cub of Leda,
evil Helen, evil Helen,
for the polished Apollonian towers
an Erinys. Ottotoi!
Wretched Dardania of dirges, of dirges,
for the horsemanship of Ganymede,
the bedfellow of Zeus.

Lamentation in tragedy is often figured as an act proper to barbarians and to
women.\textsuperscript{46} The features of lament in this passage align the Phrygian with other Trojan
mourners, both monodic and choral. Solo singers include Andromache and Hecuba in the
Iliad, and Hecuba, Polyxena, and Cassandra in earlier tragedy. In this play there is no
woman who could express the sorrow of the captured city; Helen, the only woman of
Troy in Argos, is also the cause of the disaster, as the Phrygian acknowledges. Troy’s
sole mourner is a slave, whose disjointed song is a far cry from the laments of previous
monodic mourners, all female and all royal. Trojan choruses are featured in eleven of the
surviving tragedies from the fifth century; in Orestes, the Phrygian takes on this choral
role, but as a monodist.

This anonymous barbarian becomes the voice of grief for the loss of Troy, an
event that has been in the background of the play but never before addressed directly and
with sympathy.\textsuperscript{47} In this passage traditional aural features of lamentation are especially
pronounced, particularly anadiplosis (Ἴλιον Ἴλιον, ἀρμάτειον ἀρμάτειον, Δυσελένας
Δυσελένας, ἰαλέμων ἰαλέμων) and pathetic ejaculation (ὦμοι μοι, ὀττοτοῖ). There is only

19-56 on the role of women in lamentation.

\textsuperscript{47} Electra in the prologue discusses the Trojan War and the resentment it has occasioned among the
Argives, mentioning Helen’s reluctance to show herself before the fathers of those who died at Troy (56-62, 98).
one verb, a first-person indicative in the present tense, explicitly establishing the tone of mourning (στένω). The “chariot melody” (ἀρμάτειον μέλος) that the Phrygian claims to be singing is a traditional lyric form used by Stesichorus, delivered in a high register and associated with the music of the pipe; here the introduction of the technical term draws attention to the mode of the song and to the certain accompaniment of the aulos.  

Euripides emphasizes simultaneously the matter expressed and the means of expression, generating a sense of estrangement through the shifts of tone, genre, and attitude within this single passage.

Some scholars have argued that meter, form, and content here come together to create an allusion to Cassandra in Aeschylus’ Agamemnon. The two figures are juxtaposed in various ways: like Cassandra, the Phrygian is a foreigner and a slave, recently arrived from Troy, and both figures sing, predominantly in dochmiacs, to a frustrated and initially uncomprehending Chorus. But whereas Cassandra enters the palace to face certain death, the Phrygian has just escaped from the palace with his life; the riddling knowledge of the prophetess is countered by the account of the Phrygian, who cannot or will not see beyond his own fear. Cassandra’s prophecies look back in time to past crimes and forward to her own death and the cycle of vengeance that will

48 West (1987) ad 1384, with a longer treatment of Stesichorus in West (1971) 309-311. The aulos in tragedy has various associations, ranging from sweet and joyous to mournful (cf. Bacchae 380 and 127-128, Electra 879, Trojan Women 126). The instrument is called Phrygian at Bacchae 127-128 and both Phrygian and barbarian at Iphigenia in Aulis 576-577.


50 After the varied meters of his first lyric passage, the Phrygian settles into a principally dochmiac rhythm. For metrical analysis cf. De Poli (2011) 293-316. The introduction of a dactylic rhythm emphasizes the epic resonances of lines 1381 (Τλον Ἰλον, ὃμοι μοι) and 1392-1393 (Δαρδανία τλάμων, Γανυήδεος ἱπποσύνα), with their Asiatic place and proper names.
consume the house; the Phrygian knows nothing beyond what has just happened, and
even about these events his testimony is uncertain. The evocation of Aeschylus’ earlier
play therefore creates a double effect: it connects the monody to other canonical
narratives of the fall of Troy, while simultaneously emphasizing the break with tradition
represented by this singer and his song.

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The first two passages of lyric thus establish the Phrygian as the antithesis of the
detached, objective messenger that the audience has been led to expect. In the subsequent
four passages of lyric, the slave describes the events that took place within the palace.
Although the monody from this point on is predominantly narrative, the Phrygian never
lays aside his subjectivity as a monodist. Indeed, this subjectivity is constantly
emphasized by discrepancies, contradictions, and linguistic signals of prejudice and
misprison. The orderly succession of events is interrupted by allusions to other genres
and other myths. The seeming chaos that ensues creates a space where meaning can be
created, not directly from the Phrygian’s words, but indirectly, through the tension
between the different tones, references, and points of view in the passage.

After another interjection from the Chorus, who again ask for an account of what
took place in the house (1393-1394), the Phrygian begins his third passage of lyric:

αἰλινον αἰλινον ἄρχαν θανάτου
βάρβαροι λέγοντεν,
αἰαί, Ἀσιάδι φωνα, βασιλέων
ὅταν αἵμα χυθῇ κατὰ γὰν ξίφεσιν
σιδαρέοισιν Ἀιδα.
HELLON ὡς δόμους,
ἲν’ αὐθ’ ἐκαστά σοι λέγω,
λέοντες ἴηλλανες δύο διδώμων·
to μὲν ὁ στρατηλάτας πατὴρ ἐκλῆζετο,
ὁ δὲ παῖς Στροφίου, κακόμητις ἄνηρ,
oīōs Ὄδυσσεύς, σιγὴ δόλιος,
pistōs δὲ φίλοις, θρασύς εἰς ἄλκαν,
ἐχυντός πολέμου, φόνιος τε δράκων.
ἐρροι τὰς ἡσύχου
προνοίας κακούργος ὁν.
οὗ δὲ πρός θρόνους ἐσὼ μολόντες ὡς
ἐγημί' ὁ τοξότας Πάρις
γυναικὸς, ὃμμα δακρύοις
πεφυμένοι, ταπεινοὶ,
ἐξονθ', ὁ μὲν τὸ κεῖθεν, ὁ δὲ
τὸ κεῖθεν, ἄλλος ἄλλοθεν πεφραγμένοι.
περὶ δὲ γόνυ χέρας ἵκεσιος
ἐβαλον ἐβαλον Ἑλένας ἁμφόω.
ἀνά δὲ δρομάδες ἐθορὸν ἐθορὸν
ἀμφίπολοι Φρύγες
προσεῖπε δ' ἄλλος ἄλλον
πεσόν ἐν φόβῳ,
μὴ τις εἶ ἤν δόλος.
kαδόκει τοῖς μὲν οὖ,
tοῖς δ' ἐς ἄρκοντάταν
μηχανὰν ἐμπλέκειν
παῖδα τὰν Τυνδαρίδ' ὁ
μητροφόντας δράκων.

A cry of woe, a cry of woe,
the barbarians call the beginning of death, aiai,
in an Asiatic tone,
whenever the blood of kings is poured
upon the earth with iron blades
for Hades.
They came into the house –
so that I may tell each thing to you –
two twin lions of Hellas;
as for the one, a general was called his father,
as for the other, the son of Strophius,
a evil-plotting man, like Odysseus,
deceitful in silence,
trusty to his friends, bold for the fight;
intelligent in war, a deadly serpent.
May he be cursed for his quiet preparation,
the evil-doer.
Coming in towards the throne
of the wife of Paris the archer,
their faces befouled with tears,
they sat down, abasing themselves,
one on this side, one on that,
each fencing her in from another direction.
And around the knees of Helen
they cast, they cast their suppliant hands.
Up they sprang, up they sprang, the frantic
Phrygian attendants;
and one would speak to another, falling in fear,
that this was some deceit.
To some there seemed to be none;
to others it seemed that
the mother-slaying snake
was weaving the daughter of Tyndareus
into his plot, hemmed in with nets.

This section is longer than the first two and more complex in its blend of motifs,
conventions, and genres. The passage opens with poetic features familiar from the
previous lyric sections: anadiplosis (αἴλινον αἴλινον), alliteration and assonance (αἴλινον
αἴλινον ἀρχάν), pathetic exclamation (αιαί), and references to the Phrygian’s foreignness
(βάρβαροι, Ἀσιάδι φωνῇ). The opening cry of woe (αἴλινον αἴλινον) and the reference to
the death of kings (1397-1399) continue the impression that Helen has been killed, and
that the Phrygian is the singer of her lament. The main item of news seems clear. The
Phrygian now undertakes to tell “each thing” to the eager Chorus (ἕκαστά σοι λέγω), a
transition marked formally by the prominent placement of a narrative verb in the third-
person (ἠλθον) and metrically by the shift to a more regular iambic meter.51 He seems to
have stepped into his role as messenger at last.

Euripides has the Phrygian further conform to the conventions of a messenger
speech by establishing at the outset the spatial relationship of the principals. The central
tableau comprises Helen on her throne, with Orestes and Pylades kneeling in supplication

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51 In particular lines 1408-1413 are in a fairly regular iambic meter.
on either side.\textsuperscript{52} Around these three static figures, the slaves are scattered in frantic
motion. Their actions are conveyed through a rush of verbs and participles: they run,
cluster in confusion, spring up, address one another, and fall in fear (δρομάδες, ἔθορον
ἔθορον, προσεῖπο, πεσών). Lines 1414-1416, with their two anadiploses, one describing
the three Greeks, one the slaves (ἐβαλον ἐβαλον, ἔθορον ἔθορον) are rendered in a
sudden rush of resolved short syllables. These lines emphasize the pictorial contrast
between Helen, Orestes, and Pylades, on the one hand, and the slaves on the other,
rendering the scene as vivid and dynamic as a described dance.

Throughout the passage the Phrygian’s words echo against the backdrop of earlier
literature, creating a disjunction between what he says and what the audience can accept
as plausible. The Phrygian at first does not name Orestes and Pylades, but describes them
obliquely with animal similes drawn from the world of epic: together they are “two twin
lions” (λέοντες δύο διδύμω) and Pylades is a “deadly snake” (φόνιος τε δράκων).\textsuperscript{53} He
explicitly compares Pylades to Odysseus in his deceit and his silence (οἷος Ὄδυσσεύς,
σιγᾷ δόλιος), and refers to Helen as the wife of Paris (ὁ τοξότας Πάρις γυναικός).\textsuperscript{54} The
Phrygian, presumably, means these comparisons sincerely; he fears the two Greeks, and
his recent experience merits the curse against Pylades’ “quiet preparation.”\textsuperscript{55} Yet for the
audience, the epic resonances of the passage throw into relief the absurdity of Orestes and

\textsuperscript{52} Cf. Barlow (1971) 63. In this play, we may compare this passage to the similar “scene-setting” in the
earlier messenger speech of the rustic (879-883).

\textsuperscript{53} De Jong (1991) 84-91 writes that a messenger’s use of epithets, adjectives, and brief similes may reveal
his incredulity at the enormity of the events he is watching, and mentions in this context the Phrygian’s
words describing Orestes and Pylades.

\textsuperscript{54} Zeitlin (1980) 60-61 comments that the reference to Odysseus also establishes a connection to the
Odyssey, which creates a new series of palimpsestic allusions.

\textsuperscript{55} More cunningly, he may be painting Orestes and Pylades in flattering terms to win the sympathy of
Electra and the Chorus.
Pylades’ attack. Against the background of the *Iliad*, the *aristeia* of these would-be warriors, whose opponents are a woman and her unarmed servants, emerges as distinctly unheroic.\(^{56}\) Their deeds – if locking slaves in a closet constitutes a “deed” – are immortalized in song not by an omniscient bard, but by a confused, cringing slave.

If the audience is unable to accept the heroism ascribed to Orestes and Pylades, they may also doubt the virtue that the Phrygian attributes to his mistress. In the fourth passage of lyric, the Phrygian describes the tranquil domestic scene of Helen spinning wool, fanned by her slaves:

Φρυγίοις ἔτυχον Φρυγίοις νόμοις
παρὰ βόστρυχον αὖραν αὖραν
Ἦλένας Ἦλενας εὔπαγεὶ κύκλῳ
πτερίνῳ πρὸ παρθένοις ἁίσσων
βαρβάροις νόμοισιν.
ά δὲ λίνῳ ἥλακάτα
δακτύλιοις ἔλισσε.
νήματα δ᾽ ἔτει πέδῳ,
σκῦλον Φρυγίων ἐπὶ τῦμβον ἡγάλ-
ματα συστολίσαι χρήζουσα λίνῳ,
φάρεα πορφύρεα,
δῶρα Κλυταμήστρα.
προσεῖπε δ᾽ Ὄρέστας
Λάκκαναν κόραν· Ὁ Διὸς παῖ,
θές ἱγνός πέδῳ δεῦρ’ ἀποστάσα κλισμοῦ,
Πέλοπος ἐπὶ προπάτορος ἔδρα
πολαιάς ἐστίας,
ἐν’ εἰδῆς λόγους ἐμοῦς,
ἄγει δ᾽ ἄγει νιν’ ἀ δ᾽ ἐφεῖ-
πετ’, οὗ πρόμαντις ὄν ἴον κακὸς Φωκεῦς:
Οὐκ ἐκποιῶν ἤτ’ ἄλλ’ ἀεὶ κακοὶ Φρύγες.
ἐκλήσε χ’ ἄλλον ἀλλοσ’ ἐν
στέγαις, τοὺς μὲν ἐν σταθμο-
σιν ἵπποισι, τοὺς δ᾽ ἐν ἔξειδραίσι, τοὺς δ’ ἐκεῖσ’ ἐκείθεν ἄλλον ἄλ-
λοσε διαμόσας ἀποπρό δεσποίνας.

With the Phrygians in Phrygian custom

I happened to be wafting
around the locks of Helen, of Helen
the breeze, the breeze, with a round feathered fan,
before her cheeks, in barbarian custom.
And she with her fingers
was twisting the thread on her distaff,
but she put her yarn down on the ground,
wishing to make with her thread
purple cloths from Phrygian spoils,
adornments for the tomb, a gift for Clytemnestra.
Orestes addressed the woman of Sparta:
“Child of Zeus, arising from your chair
place your footstep here on the ground,
toward the seat of the ancient hearth
of Pelops, my ancestor,
so that you may know what I have to say.”
He led, he led her; and she followed,
no prophet of what was to come;
but his accomplice, the evil man from Phocis,
went away and did other things:
“Won’t you
get out of my way?” But Phrygians are always base.57
He shut them up, one here, one there, in the house;
some in the stables of the horses, some in the halls,
hither and thither, here and there,
dispersing them far from their mistress.

Here again the Phrygian’s words allude to earlier literature: the scene of Helen at her
loom is taken from the Iliad, while the theme connects her also with Penelope, the
virtuous weaver of the Odyssey. The narrative unwinds at a leisurely pace: the main verb
“she put her yarn down” (νήµατα ἵετο) is nestled between two descriptive passages, so
that Helen’s action seems to takes place without haste or fear. Yet the anadiploses convey
excitement and agitation, in seeming contrast to the peaceful and luxurious atmosphere of
the chamber (Φρυγίοις . . . Φρυγίοισι, αὖραν αὖραν, Ἑλένας Ἑλένας). Helen’s calm,
virtuous action, weaving a gift for her sister’s grave, is rendered sinister by the detail that
she uses the spoils of Phrygia, the land destroyed for her sake (σκύλων Φρυγίων).

57 West (1987) ad 1447 comments that the translation, “but Phrygians are always cowards,” does not make
sense, but this pronouncement seems to me subjective. I follow De Poli (2011) in accepting the manuscript
reading of ἅει.
Throughout the play Helen has been vilified by Electra, Pylades, Orestes, and Tyndareus. The slave seems to be the only figure who does not hate her. The sympathetic description of Helen in the monody invites the audience to contrast what the Phrygian says with what has already been said by other figures in the play. For the first time the possibility arises that Helen is, like the Phrygian, a victim of fortune.\(^{58}\) In this passage the two views of Helen stand awkwardly side-by-side, forcing the audience to make their own judgment about this mysterious and contested figure.

An explicit admission of bias comes in the Phrygian’s words about his own countrymen. Parallel construction juxtaposes Pylades and the Phrygians, playing on the multiple meanings of the adjective κακός (κακὸς Φωκεύς, κακοὶ Φρύγες). In both cases the term has a moral force, but with a different valence: applied to Pylades, it carries the sense of “evil, pernicious, destructive,” while as an epithet of the Phrygians it connotes baseness and cowardice. Why does the Phrygian admit his own lack of courage in this way? Or – if the phrase is articulated by the Phrygian not in his own voice, but still reporting the speech of Pylades – why does he bring this charge forward? One reason, perhaps, is to disarm the hostile Greeks onstage, Electra and the Chorus. In his stichomythic scene with Orestes, the Phrygian similarly emphasizes his cowardice in order to save his life (1507, 1517).\(^{59}\)

He begs, pleads, flatters, and lies. The slave is willing to do and say anything to protect himself, which brands him as κακός. But throughout the play Orestes, joined by Electra and Pylades, has been engaged in the same...

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\(^{58}\) For a thought-provoking defense of Helen as a sympathetic figure in this play cf. Vellacott (1975).

\(^{59}\) The scholiast comments that the ensuing scene is “unworthy of tragedy and of Orestes’ situation,” Σ ad 1512: ἀνάξια καὶ τραγῳδίας καὶ τῆς Ὀρέστου συμφοράς τὰ λεγόμενα. See further Seidensticker (1982) 109, who examines comic and “burlesque” aspects in interaction between Orestes and the slave, as well as Gregory (1999-2000).
quest, struggling to save his life in a series of increasingly desperate ploys. Only his lofty rhetoric of justice distinguishes him from the slave. If the desire to live at all costs is κακός, then the Greeks are little better than this barbarian.

The fifth passage of lyric, like the second, begins with a lamentation; the Phrygian then resumes a more orderly account of events:

Mother Ida, mighty, mighty mother,
aiai for the murderous sufferings and the lawless evils which I have seen, I have seen in the palace of the kings. Drawing swords from beneath the darkness of their purple cloaks, each one darted his eye in a different direction, lest someone should happen to be present. Like mountain-dwelling boars, standing opposite the woman they addressed her: “You will die, you will die, your base husband kills you, having betrayed the son of his brother
to die in Argos.”
And she screamed, she screamed, omoi moi.
Hurling her white arm against her breast
she beat her wretched head with blows;
then she brought, she brought the golden-sandaled
track of her foot in flight;
but Orestes, thrusting his fingers into her hair,
getting in front of her with his Mycenean boot,
bending back her neck to the left shoulder,
was about to plunge the black sword
into her neck.

The Phrygian reports the words first of Orestes and Pylades, in unison, and then of Helen.

Direct quotation is a feature found in many of Euripides’ messenger speeches, and the
assumption in all other cases is that the messenger faithfully reports the words of the
absent speaker. But here a verbatim account would seem to be impossible: the Phrygian
is singing, while Orestes, Pylades, and Helen, presumably were not. In his report, the
Greeks use the same anadiplosis that has been typical of his own language throughout the
monody (κατθανῇ κατθανῇ), while Helen echoes his previous cries of distress (ὦμοι ὤμοι).
We may imagine that the actor at this point would enhance his performance by
mimicking the voices of the principals, exploiting the difference between the threatening
tone of the men and the high-pitched scream of Helen for dramatic effect. Events,
actions, and even the words of others are filtered through his own emotional and poetic
perspective.

The sixth and final passage of lyric concludes the account of events within the


With a cry, bursting the doors and the doorposts of the house with crowbars, where we were waiting, and each of us ran to help from another part of the house, one with stones, one with javelins, one holding the hilt of a sword in his hands. But Pylades came against us, not to be turned aside, like Hector the Phrygian or Ajax with his triple crest, whom I saw, I saw in the gates of Priam; and we came together at the points of our swords. But then, then it was clear what the Phrygians were like, how much less than we were in the might of Ares than the spear-point of Hellas.
one man gone in flight, one dead,
one bearing a wound, one pleading for a delay of death.
Under darkness we escaped;
corpses were falling, some were about to fall, some were already killed.
Wretched Hermione came into the house
just as her mother was sinking to the ground in slaughter,
the wretched woman who had borne her.
These two, just like running Bacchants without thysoi,
snatched her up, a mountain cub, in their hands.
Then they advanced again towards the daughter of Zeus,
to slay her; but she was gone from the chamber,
and vanished throughout the house,
Zeus and earth and light and night,
whether truly by drugs or the arts of magicians
or the thefts of the gods.
What happened next I do not know,
for I stole out of the house with a runaway foot.
Menelaus, having endured many terrible, many terrible sufferings
took back his wife Helen from Troy to no purpose.

This concluding section is the most frenetic of all, its disordered language matching the
disordered action within the house. The total defeat of the Phrygians is conveyed in one
virtuosic line of iambic trimeter, an unexpected return to the usual meter of a messenger
speech (νεκροὶ δ᾽ ἐπιπτον, οἱ δ᾽ ἐμελλόν, οἱ δ᾽ ἐκεῖντ᾽). The attackers are described in
similes drawn from both epic and tragedy: Pylades is like Hector or Ajax, while the two
men together, incongruously, are likened to Bacchants, which heightens the sense of
frenzy. In the midst of this confusion, the Phrygian finally reveals the arrival of
Hermione and the disappearance of Helen. The account is maddeningly unclear: he
reports that Helen was gone “out of the chamber” (ἐκ θαλάμων ἐγένετο) and was “unseen
throughout the house” (διαπρὸ δωμάτων ἄφαντος), but he does not describe the manner
of her disappearance, and can only speculate as to its cause. Finally, he admits what the
audience has suspected all along: he does not know what happened next.

61 Orestes barely predates Euripides’ Bacchae; the language may also have drawn on plays about the birth
and exploits of Dionysus by Aeschylus, Sophocles, or other playwrights.
Conclusion

We have seen that Euripides has constructed the monody of the Phrygian in order to draw attention to the disparity between his report and what the audience would expect to hear. Aurally, the song is characterized by apostrophe, asyndeton, alliteration and assonance, internal rhyme, compound adjectives, interjections and pathetic ejaculations – that is, upon the formal hallmarks of lyric verse. The Phrygian’s language repeatedly makes reference to his outlandish appearance, his excitable nature, his exotic foreignness, and his cowardice. These poetic devices, no doubt originally enhanced by virtuosic vocal delivery and musical accompaniment, establish a sense of emotionality and agitation that are substituted for an orderly progression of narrative.

The content of the song, as well as its form, unsettles the expectations of the audience by at times following and at other times frustrating the conventions of the messenger speech. Ethical allegiances are also called into question: whom should we trust, care about, admire, or execrate? The Phrygian begins in medias res, without first stating the principal item of news that he has come to report. He has in fact not come in order to report anything at all, but has escaped from the house in fear for his life, and feels himself to be in danger throughout his exposition. His actual account of events is confused and does not proceed in an ordered chronological sequence. Instead of a distanced and objective narrative, he offers above all a personal commentary on events, in a course still unfolding, which he barely has the presence of mind to share. His description is rich in sensory detail, but the information he presents is distorted by his own fear.62 This sense of confusion and disorientation is compounded by a complex

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mixture of generic styles, drawn from the conventions of monody, choral lyric, lament, and epic.

The effect of what I have termed the “polyphonic” narration of the Phrygian is to draw attention to the uneasy coexistence of illusion and reality in the world of the play. Because the Phrygian’s narrative cannot be taken at face value, events and their motivations are called into question. The result is an elaborate structure of ironies. The polyphony of this narrator demands that we question the other narrators within the play, in particular Orestes, whose protestations of justice ring hollow. In the final scene of the play, these competing voices are silenced by the epiphany of Apollo, but the sense of unease initiated by the monody remains, undercutting the god’s attempts to solve the crisis of the play.⁶³ On a stage crowded with self-interested and unappealing characters, there appears to be no one with whom the audience can sympathize.

Form and content work together in the monody to open an ironic distance between the words of the Phrygian and any possible consistent construction we may put upon them. Here there are no facts, only interpretations; and Euripides constantly blocks attempts at interpretation. Everything the Phrygian relates is filtered through his compromised, fractured point of view. His words compete with what has already been established by earlier scenes in the play, as well as with the implications of his own tale.

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⁶³ The concluding pronouncements of Apollo have struck many critics of the play as deeply unsatisfying. Verrall (1905) 257 declares the epiphany “absurd, unreal, meaningless, impossible,” and modern scholars have tended to agree with this view. Burkert (1974) finds the entire play deeply pessimistic. Euben (1986) 242 writes that “the very arbitrariness of the ending, together with the idealized unity it contrives to establish, only emphasizes the impossibility of harmony and order.” For Roberts (1988) 192, the final scene ties up loose ends “with an exaggerated completeness” and “suggests the arbitrariness and artificiality of endings.” Dunn (1996) 171 comments that the god “imposes a ‘resolution’ that resolves nothing, to prescribe a conclusion that is totally oblivious of all that has gone before.” Seidensticker (1996) 392 concurs, arguing that Apollo’s intervention “has no meaningful connection with the dramatic action that precedes it,” and that its “glaring absurdity . . . only serves to intensify the general impression of senselessness and futility.” Wohl (2015) 128 writes that the ending “seems to make a mockery of the play’s fraught politics and to retroactively vitiate all its human dilemmas and decisions, stripping them of consequence and meaning.”
He says that Helen is virtuously weaving grave-gifts for Clytemnestra; but Electra in the
prologue accuses Helen of making only a token offering to honor her sister’s death. He
pronounces Orestes and Pylades fierce and brave, like the warriors of the Trojan War; but
in his account these “heroes” triumph over two defenseless women and a group of
terrified slaves. He admits that he and his fellow Phrygians are κακοί, base; but this moral
charge simultaneously implicates Orestes, Pylades, and Electra. He declares, finally, that
Helen has not died, but mysteriously disappeared – but here the audience has no external
knowledge that could contradict this revelation. The whole monody has built up to this
final point. There is no information in which we can put our trust.
Figure 5. Lyric Structure of *Orestes*.
Plutarch, in his *Life of Nicias*, relates that during the disastrous Sicilian Expedition of 415-413 B.C.E. many soldiers died in the stone quarriers or were taken captive and sold into slavery. Miraculously, some Athenians escaped this fate:

εἴνοι δὲ καὶ οἶ Εὐρυπίδην ἐσώθησαν. μάλιστα γάρ, ὡς έοικε, τὸν ἐκτὸς Ἐλλήνων ἐπόθησαν αὐτοῦ τὴν μοῦσαν οἱ περί Σικελιάν· καὶ μικρὰ τῶν ἄφικυκνομένων ἐκάστοτε δείγματα καὶ γεώματα κομιζόντων ἐκμανθάνοντες ἀγαπητῶς μετεδίδοσαν ἄλληλοις. τότε γοῦν φασὶ τῶν σωθέντων ὀκάδε συχνοὺς ἀσπάσασθαι τὸν Εὐρυπίδην φιλοφρόνως, καὶ διηγεῖσθαι τοὺς μέν, ὅτι δουλεύοντες ἀφείθησαν ἐκδιδάξαντες ὅσα τῶν ἐκείνου ποιημάτων ἐμέμνηντο, τούς δ', ὅτι πλανώμενοι μετὰ τὴν μάχην τροφῆς καὶ ὑδάτος μετέλαβον τῶν μελῶν ἄσαντες.

Some were also saved by Euripides. For it seems that the Sicilians, more than anyone besides the Greeks, passionately desired his music. They learned by heart the little samples and morsels of it which visitors brought to them from time to time, and communicated them to one another with delight. In the present case, at any rate, they say that many Athenians who reached home in safety greeted Euripides with affection, and recounted to him, some that they had been set free from slavery for rehearsing what they remembered of his poems; and some that when they were wandering about after the battle they had received food and drink for singing his songs.¹

Plutarch’s anecdote begins with the provocative claim that defeated soldiers were “saved by Euripides” (ὁι Ἐυρυπίδην ἐσώθησαν). This “salvation” depends in the first place on Euripides’ status in the Hellenic world: snatches of remembered song were a valuable commodity that could be offered in exchange for food, drink, and even freedom. But Plutarch’s story also invites us to imagine other ways in which the defeated Athenians might have been “saved” by Euripides. That the captive soldiers chose to rehearse selections from Euripides in particular may not have been motivated simply by those songs’ popularity among their Sicilian captors. The situation in which the Athenian soldiers found themselves – abandoned and enslaved on a foreign shore – was one that

closely resembled the situation of many of Euripides’s own plays. It is not implausible that men familiar with Euripidean tragedy would recognize their own plight as if foretold there, framed in dramatic terms, and take solace in the choral songs of slaves or the plaintive monodies of lost Greeks which they had heard at home in Athens.

In Plutarch’s story, the defeated soldiers explicitly become actors by reciting and singing tragic verses. Through this enactment, the soldiers are transformed into tragic figures in their own right. Certainly, like the women of Troy, they are the ill-starred victims of a military catastrophe: but they are more than this as well. For, insofar as they are the free citizens of a democracy, they are complicit in their own fate. The Athenians are “saved” by Euripides not only by virtue of the reception of their performances by their Sicilian captors, but by the very act of performance. Their experience of pain, isolation, and loss becomes meaningful through its expression in tragic form. Indeed, by realizing the tragic potential of their miserable circumstances, the captive Athenians become not only actors and tragic figures, but, to a degree, tragedians. The drama is theirs to embody, and the prize is theirs to win or lose. Their metamorphosis into poets is reinforced by the detail that upon their return the grateful veterans describe their “re-stagings” to Euripides himself. The playwright has taught them not only specific scenes and songs, but how to construct an effective tragedy.

It is of course impossible to know which scenes or songs these Athenian soldiers performed in their captivity, but they may well have been monodies. The Sicilian Expedition coincided with the period in which, as we have seen, Euripides developed monody as a musical form to convey the inner state of the individual in extremis. In the plays we have examined, solo song can express fear, anger, grief, betrayal, humiliation,
an appeal for mercy – all emotions and motivations that would resonate with a defeated Athenian soldier in Sicily. In his hour of need, the music he had heard at the City Dionysia came back to him not as entertainment, but as a means to take his own situation and turn it into theater.

At the end of the fifth century, the Athenians were living through a tragedy of their own making. The last ten years of Euripides’ career were marked by political instability, social upheaval, military disaster, and a general loss of faith in the traditional institutions of civic life. Euripides’ musical compositions doubtless reflect this crisis. Given the conventions of Athenian drama, this reflection is oblique rather than direct; Euripides alludes not to specific events, real and current, but to flaws in the moral coherence of the polity, such that the experience of the individual in isolation is set against a tyrannous disorder. But the conflict is yet more intimately positioned in these plays, for fault lines run through each central member of that polity. It is not illogical, then, that soldiers suffering the chaos of Athenian defeat, itself the result of an unprecedented breakdown of reasoned political decision-making, chose to express themselves in songs uniquely fitted to the shock of abandonment and grief, betrayal and failure. That monody could redeem those experiences by giving them adequate aesthetic form is an enduring legacy of Euripidean drama, one that can be seen in nearly every type of subsequent expressive art from opera to popular song. It is this development of personal song as a means of spiritual survival that allowed the Athenians at the nadir of defeat to be “saved by Euripides.”
Bibliography


