Melizein Pathe or the Tonal Dimension in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*:

Voice, Song, and *Choreia* as Leitmotifs and Metatragic Signals for Expressing Suffering

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Since the 1990s, the traditionally text-focused field of classical philology has experienced the advent of a new paradigm of performance, especially Greek philology, particularly in drama research, where an emphasis on the media beyond the text—the consideration of voice, choral arrangement, musicality, lyric poeticity, performativity, and rituality as they pertain to a total work of art—has become apparent.[1]

As is well known, the chorus represents a multimedia and multimodal element, performing songs comprising voiced content, dance as a rhythmic bodily movement, and musical accompaniment. Chorality is predominately associated with ritual, honoring the gods and educating via a comprehensive explanation of the world steeped in mythical contexts. Tragedy

[1] For *choreia* and performance, see e.g. Calame (1997); Nagy (1990: esp. 339-381); Bierl (2001 [Eng. 2009]); for lyrical poeticity, see Nooter (2012); for silence, see Montiglio (2000); for *euphemia*, see Gödde (2011); for *goos* and lament, see Holst-Warhaft (1992); Dué (2006: esp. 8 n. 21 [for further literature]); and generally Alexiou (2002). In most cases the Teubner edition by M. L. West (1998) serves as a textual basis; the translations are my own, only in few places they are partially based on Lloyd-Jones (1979).

emerged from the chorus; ancient theater did not, as was generally accepted, involve dramatic dialogue with choral intermissions; rather the chorus was the decisive element, to which interactive figures were later added.[2]

In Aeschylus, the chorus remains still dominant, determining a broad section of the action in *Agamemnon*. Thus the first part of *Oresteia* provides, so to speak, the choral basis, a musical and multimedia prelude for a comprehensive approach and eventual solution to a fundamental and communal conflict, particularly since we also find lyric and musical passages of considerable length sung in monody. Additionally we should be aware of the fact that, next to the visual element, the acoustic aspect is of great importance for the ancient theater, even if the term theater (from θεᾶσθαι, "to watch") leads us to downplay the audible aspect.

In the following, I will demonstrate that especially the voices and the music, the choral and *choreia* arising from combined voice and dance, present key motifs of Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*. The acoustic element, as will be argued, does not merely represent one of many themes and discourses like sacrifice, clothing, marriage, etc., folded into the texture of *Agamemnon*, accentuating the whole cloth of the plot;[3] rather, in Aeschylus, steeped in a choral and song-centered culture, it becomes the central expressional method for directing *pathos* and creating a foundational sense for the audience. Through continual metatragic referencing at the vocal and

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[2] See generally Bierl (2001: 11-106 [Eng. 2009: 1-82]).

[3] See Ferrari (1997); for a similar technique in the *Persians* and *Suppliants*, see Gödde (2000a and 2000b); for the *Oresteia* are the following discourses, motifs, images and metaphors represented as decisive: light-dark (Goldhill [1984]), sacrifice (i.a. Zeitlin [1965 and 1966]), libation, animals in general (i.a. Heath [1999]) (esp. birds, snakes, lions, dogs), agriculture, hunting (Vidal-Naquet [1988]), sickness and health, fire, beating, wind; for their interplay, see esp. Lebeck (1971); for all see Raeburn and Thomas (2011: Ixv-Ixix). For musicality, see so far Moutsopoulos (1959); Haldane (1965); Fleming (1977); Wilson and Taplin (1993).

musical level, Aeschylus layers meaning with other discursive elements and, in doing so, directs the audience's reception regarding the foreshadowing, the dramatic art, and plot developments in scenarios of increased *pathos* as well as the subsequent solution.[4]

When we regard a play through this metatheatrical and self-referential lens, we do not commit a postmodern anachronism or trendy projection. Already the ritualistic choral song, be it the dithyramb, paean or hymn, from which the tragic choral theater developed, refers continually to its own performance and composition. Obviously it required such self-referential indices to strengthen again and again its own enactment.[5] Increasingly such self-references to voice, musical accompaniment, and dance in drama were employed as the fundamental way to heighten meaning.[6]

Due to an Aristotelian dogma, metatheatricality and the self-referential-consciousness of a play within a play in ancient tragedy went unrecognized until in the 1980s an awareness slowly grew that this aspect also played a significant role. Although such assertions first met with heavy

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[4] For choral self-referentiality, see Henrichs (1994/1995) and Bierl (2001: esp. 37-51 [Eng. 2009: 24-36]). For the relationship to metatheatricality, see Bierl (2001: 43-45 [Eng. 2009: 29-31]).

[5] See Bierl (2001, esp. 45-54, 300-314 [Eng. 2009: 31-38, 267-280]). The Greek song-theater incorporated, as is known, all genres of song culture. See Swift (2010).

[6] See i.a. Segal (1997 [1982]: 215-271); Foley (1985: 205-258); Bierl (1991: 111-218); Henrichs (1994/1995); Ringer (1998); Dobrov (2001); Dunn (2011); Torrance (2013). For the Old comedy, see Bierl (2001: esp. 37-86 [Eng. 2009: 24-66]); Dobrov (2001); Slater (2002); for the satyr play, see Easterling (1997: esp. 42-44); Bierl (2001: 64-86, esp. 76-79 [Eng. 2009: 47-66, esp. 58-61]); Kaimio *et al.* (2001); Bierl (2006); Lämmle (2013: 155-243). Research addressing the chorus and musicality are recently legion; i.a. for Euripides' *Helena*, see Barker (2007) and Ford (2010).

resistance, they are now commonly acknowledged.[7] The initial work on the *Oresteia* using this

metatheatrical bent comes from Wilson and Taplin, while earlier the theme of musical references

was treated rather positively as one among many:[8] Taplin first, like many other critics, decidedly

rejected every metatheatrical reference in tragedy, but then revised his position in 1993, at least

when it came to the *Oresteia*, which represented for him and Wilson, to cite the title of this

influential article in their own words, the "aetiology of tragedy."[9] Wilson and Taplin rightly

stressed the theme of the dissolution of the choral order and its final reintegration as a sign of

order, in which the incorporation of the Erinyes represents the quintessence of the tragic in a self-

reflective mode, i.e., to make dread fruitful for the polis. In this tonal vein, Gödde recently

clarifies, in a comprehensive interpretation, the meaning of *euphemia* in the *Oresteia* and

emphasizes how the ritual expression means not only a command for holy silence but also, as a

whole, a performative expression, to determine things also loud and clear as good, to drown out

and soften dangers, following ritualistic patterns, particularly sacrifices in this case.[10] The

following general analysis will expand upon these useful insights encompassing the voices and

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[7] See Kullmann (1993) and Radke (2003). Radke's blanket criticism of this approach fails to convince, because she

completely ignores attempts to relocate the question on a new basis; see Bierl (2001: esp. 37-86 [Eng. 2009: 24-66])

and Kaimio *et al.* (2001). One cannot simply disqualify research regarding the metatheatrical dimension, especially

regarding the *Bacchae,* as postmodern or post-structural. For these questions, see also Segal's handling of them in the

epilogue to the second, expanded edition of Segal (1997: 369-378, esp. 370-375) and his brilliant answer (*BMCR*

98.5.26) to Seaford's critical review (*BMCR* 98.3.10).

[8] Wilson and Taplin (1993); for works regarding music in the *Oresteia*, see Moutsopoulos (1959); Haldane (1965);

Fleming (1977).

[9] See Taplin (1986); but Wilson and Taplin (1993); see also Belfiore (1992: 26-30).

[10] See Gödde (2011: esp. 95-127). For the power of words, see Peradotto (1969).

the *choreia* in performative, aesthetic, and metatragic perspectives.[11] We will see that Aeschylus composed *Agamemnon* along an ongoing conflict, inscribed into the texture of the play, between *euphemia* and *dysphemia*, between attempts of mitigating and silencing the horror of pure and object voice through aesthetic voice, ritual practice, and kinesics and the violent outbreak of *pathos* conveyed by shrieking cries, *goos*, and distorted body movements. Tragedy means the display of terror, horror, and suffering. Therefore in view of the abundance of woe and disruptive energy all euphemizing tendencies are bound to fail. But in this genre violence and lament, *pathos* and *goos*, though terrible, are acted out in musical, vocal, and aesthetic forms and underscored with self-referential markers. As will be shown, this quintessential paradox of *pathos* made beautiful is constitutive of tragedy.

Choreia and music represent *paideia* in archaic song culture, a proper upbringing to "the good" with the help of positive content and movements or, using reverse psychology, in effect, with negative, ugly behavior transgressing the norm.[12] The *mathein*, learning and knowledge, constitutes a central theme particularly in *Agamemnon.* Again and again the motto "learn from pain" (πάθει μάθος) is hammered home (177).[13] But of course, the figures of the play do not yet learn and understand everything; they clearly suffer from the dreadful events and express this pain on the stage with genre-appropriate voices, sounds, vocals, and music.

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[11] Good remarks and examples can also be found in Loraux (1990: 263-268).

[12] For both tendencies, see Bierl (2001: esp. 30-37 [Eng. 2009: 18-24]). Only on the former, educational aspect of "becoming virtuous," see Collins (2013). Plato's *Laws* Books 2 and 7 present an important, if philosophically constructed reflection of the archaic behaviors; see now Peponi (2013).

[13] See Aesch. *Ag.* 250: τοῖς μὲν παθοῦσιν μαθεῖν …; see also *Ag.* 709-711: μεταμανθάνουσα δ' ὕμνον/ Πριάμου πόλις γεραιά/ πολύθρηνον ("and learning a different tune Priam's aged city, a tune of many sorrows," trans. Lloyd-Jones [1979]). See also *Ag.* 39.

The constant connection to the vocal and choral in *Agamemnon* must therefore be put in the context of the polis religion and its tendency to conceal and sugarcoat the tragic reality through performative, musical, ritualistic, and rhetorical means. By collectively regimenting voices and kinesics, i.e., through a literal politics of the body, the polis tries to foster order, which proves impossible in the face of mounting troubles.

Let us now look in particular—going through all instances in the text—at how voice, song, and the *choreia* are employed in *Agamemnon* as dramatic signals and metatragic means to underscore the internal political situation in Argos and to allow the tragedy to present to the public an aesthetic expression of suffering and the subsequent attempt to overcome it. The striking frequency of these occurrences makes it highly probable that choral, vocal, and musical self-references are not just one motif among others, but a central means in *Oresteia* to create and convey what tragedy is all about: the performative display of terror and *pathos* in an aesthetic manner, involving all senses via vocal as well as, of course, visual media—within the parameters of a choral song culture.

The Watchman as Individual Choreut

At the start, the watchman lies on the roof, desperately looking for the fire signal installed by Clytemnestra. He sings and whistles (ἀείδειν ἢ μινύρεσθαι 16) to stay awake; were he to cease these vocal and musical activities, "incising this remedy against sleep" (ὕπνου τόδ' ἀντίμολπον ἐντέμνων ἄκος 17), he would fall asleep; his singing is a drug,[14] both cure and poison, because he

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[14] See Fraenkel (II 1950: 13 ad 17). For pharmaceutical notions regarding singing as a healing root sap, see Bollack and Judet de la Combe (I 1981-2001: 22-55 ad 17).

cannot help crying and lamenting the misfortune of the house (18).[15] Out of this choral *aoide* and *molpe* that due to his isolation have already become perverted and unofficially private, emerges a *goos,* a lament, something a man actually should not employ, because it is unseemly and against the official music and kinesics imposed by the new rulers.

When the appointed fire signal finally appears in the sky, the watchman greets it enthusiastically as "a flambeaux, that invokes daylight at night (φάος πιφαύσκων) and as the establishment of numerous choirs in Argos (χορῶν κατάστασιν/ πολλῶν ἐν Ἄργει)" (23-24).[16] The watchman therefore receiving the agreed upon signals (*semata*) forwards them to Clytemnestra (σημαίνω τορῶς 26)—the *Agamemnon* as prelude of the trilogy becomes thus a hermeneutic and signal interpretation: the Trojan war is won; Clytemnestra should in all haste leap from bed (27) and "shout for joy the *ololygmos*, the good-sounding cry of thanksgiving at these torches" (ὀλολυγμὸν εὐφημοῦντα τῆιδε λαμπάδι/ ἐπορθιάζειν 28-29). The *ololygmos* clearly is not only a nicely sounding cry of celebration,[17] but also the shrill cry of women who, in a crisis situation, performatively drown out the moment of danger.[18] Especially just before the

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[15] For the application of Derrida's (1972: 69-198 [Eng. 1981: 61-171]) famous analysis ("Plato's Pharmacy") of *pharmakon* regarding writing in Plato's *Phaedrus* to voice, see Dolar (2006: 46-47).

[16] Denniston and Page (1957: 69 ad 23): "a common way of celebrating success," see also Fraenkel (II 1950: 17 ad 23f.), with reference to Eur. *Alc*. 1154-1155, *HF* 763-764, and Soph. *El*. 278-280.

[17] According to Fraenkel (II 1950: 18 ad 28) and Raeburn and Thomas (2011: 70 ad 27-29). They, however, address the "problematic" character of this call regarding the killing of a relative as well: see Aesch. *Ag*. 587, 595, 1118; *Ch*. 387, 942. As an expression of joy, see Deubner (1941: 10).

[18] See Deubner (1941: 14) (the discharge of fearful tension); Burkert (1985: 74) (moment of crisis and decision). See also Gödde (2011: 98-116) ("fear of danger" and "joy over the happy outcomes that … should be virtually evoked during the simultaneous 'discharge' of feelings of fear") (100). Particularly in female choruses: Sappho fr. 17.16 V.

ritual slaughter of the sacrificial animal, an act normally accompanied by a chorus, such a cry emerges from the women in attendance (cf. ἐπορθιάζειν 29).[19] Thus with this ritual cry that becomes a vocal and self-referential leitmotif, Clytemnestra will not only celebrate the victory finally come but also very soon introduce and accompany her perverted sacrificial ritual of murder.[20]

The signal becomes the starting point for a chain of frightful events, which the watchman's diction implies with tragic irony; he himself as tyrannical subject first initiates the order according to agreed upon ritual procedures. He serves as the tail end of a communication structure that should unleash the signal for the citizens to celebrate the longed-for victory. After a long, sleepless watch, he is freed from suffering; and, using the typical "performative future,"[21] he utters his intention to start dancing the opening number out of joy and relief, the proem of a horrible hymn (φροίμιον χορεύσομαι 31).[22]

(now according to the most recent Sappho Papyrus find P. GC. inv. 105, fr. 2 col. II, 9-25, completed by Ferrari [2014: 15]) and Alcaeus fr. 130b.20 V. (in celebration). For its nearness to a cry of lament, "howling," see Connelly (2014: 267). On *ololygmos* in *Agamemnon*, see also Amendola (2005).

[19] See Burkert (1983: 5, 12, 54 [on *ololyge*]) and Burkert (1985: 72, 74).

[20] For perverted sacrificial ritual in tragedy, esp. in the *Oresteia*, see Zeitlin (1965); Zeitlin (1966); Burkert (1966: esp. 119-120); Pucci (1992); Henrichs (2000: esp. 180-184); Henrichs (2006: esp. 67-74); Gilbert (2003); for the beautiful sacrifice in *Agamemnon*, see Gödde (2010: 232-237). In general see also Bierl (2007: 33-37).

[21] For the performative future, see the references in Bierl (2001: 329 n. 77 [Eng. 2009: 294 n. 77]).

[22] Loraux (1990: 263 n. 40): "il revient en effet au veilleur de dire le prologue, mais, à vouloir danser, il anticipe l'entrée du choeur au vers 40."

Admittedly, he dances the *choreia* isolated from the collective citizenry, which is tantamount to an anomaly.[23] The appointed contrivance concerning signals together with this reaction of spontaneous joy represents an initial overture, a prologue for *Agamemnon* and a prelude for the entire trilogy. He himself holds to the ritual norm of the polis doctrine handed down by the ruling house, to rejoice in *euphemia* and to dance, the actual reaction and task of the citizen chorus. At the same time, because he cannot deliberately attempt to euphemize all the terrible facts with cries of jubilation (cf. εὐφημοῦντα 28), he prefers to remain silent regarding other matters, which is also a part of *euphemia*, implying sometimes holy silence. "A steer, a big one, steps onto the tongue" (βοῦς ἐπὶ γλώσσηι μέγας/ βέβηκεν 36-37), forbidding further speech.[24]

The house itself, so the watchman thinks, would, if it had a voice (φθογγὴν λάβοι 37) and speech to form words, speak the clearest (37-38). In the last one and a half verses he suggests how he would like to subtly communicate everything for those in the know, those who have learned, by such vocal means. Simultaneously he wants to keep the uninformed, those who have not learned, in the dark (μαθοῦσιν αὐδῶ κοὐ μαθοῦσι λήθομαι 39). The simple watchman thus acts almost like an initiate of a secret cult: the esoteric can be spoken among the insiders, but for the uninitiated the *lethe* precept holds fast: do not speak the unspeakable (*arrheton*) and remain silent.[25]

In doing so, the watchman holds to the rules handed down by a tyrannical polis. The *euphemia* will be split, according to customs, between the rulers and the ruled: 1) in a loud, performative shout of jubilation that helps to hide and drown out all the negative aspects and fears during this

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[23] *Contra* Fraenkel (II 1950: 19 ad 31).

[24] For a parallel, with Fraenkel (II 1950: 23 ad 36f.), see i.a. Thgn. 815.

[25] For nearness to the diction of the mysteries, see also Bollack and Judet de la Combe (I 1981-2001: 40-41).

crisis situation of deciding whether everything will turn out well—particularly for inside the house, wondering if the revenge will go off smoothly as a sacrifice; 2) and in silence regarding all foreboding. The spontaneous and joyful reaction of the watchman's dance applies only to his personal relief from effort.[26]

The Marginal Chorus Assumes Its Authoritative Voice in the Parodos: A Web of Polyphonic Voices and *Parathelxis*

In contrast to the watchman, the choral group of old men is a typically marginalized chorus.[27] Above all it is a chorus that, due to old age and its politically oppressed status under the recently established tyranny of Clytemnestra and Aegisthus, scarcely dances and exerts little authority in its songs. At first it gropes completely in the dark when trying to analyze the situation. It talks in riddles; with enigmatic images it anticipates things that, at this point, remain completely unknown.

In the *Oresteia* we find ourselves in a web of motifs that at times are counterfactually placed in relation to one another without the modern causal nexus.[28] The parodos (40-257) weaves such a locutionary web.[29] Images and events are jumbled, which at first make little sense.[30] The excessively long song constitutes the basis of the play, where the motifs of good and bad sound, the tension between the authoritative, euphemizing voice and the voice of *pathos* that is

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[26] See also Gödde (2011: 98-103).

[27] See Gould (1996); on the parodos, see Bollack and Judet de la Combe (I 1981-2001: 42-345) and Schein (2009).

[28] See Käppel (1998: esp. 25-38).

[29] See Käppel (1998: 47-137).

[30] See also Ferrari (1997).

constantly under the threat of being silenced are highlighted by a meandering chorus endeavoring to drown out itself the dysphemic ground of suffering that constantly breaks through the surface. The chorus is eager to endow the events with higher sense but through the fusion of embedded voices that tend to underscore the choreuts' doing in the orchestra in a self-referential manner the audience loses track of the old men's 'big narration.'[31] While Clytemnestra concerns herself via linguistic and ritualistic manipulation with the course of the future, the *telos* of the coming events, and Cassandra foresees the future through prophecy, the chorus tries, in a type of 'prophecy after the fact,' to present their understanding of the terrible things that happened integrating the chain of motifs starting with the departure for war. Singing of two vultures nurturing a squawking brood (49-59), the chorus partially anticipates the bird signal of the eagle (112-120) that follows in the actual narration of the departure.

Birds, like stars, typically lend themselves to choral projections.[32] The two vultures can thus be understood in a self-referential manner: they are, in a way, metaphorical chorus leaders, circling high in the air. The verb στροφοδινοῦνται (51) can relate to the circles of the round dance; the vultures emit cries of lament (κλάζοντες 48) and aggression, not only because they cannot care for their chorus, the citizens of Argos so to speak, but even more because they cannot care for their own brood, in other words Helen and Iphigenia.[33] A god hears the *goos* as the squawking of birds (οἰωνόθροον γόον 56). *Goos* in *Agamemnon* always stands in contrast to the

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[31] On the concept of ventriloquism linked to the emission of different voices in the parodos that are fused, incorporated, and cannot be located, see Dolar (2006: 70). I owe this reference to Sarah Nooter, who presented a beautiful paper on the parodos, titled "Choral Voices and Ventriloquism in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*," on the occasion of the conference at Emory (20 Sept. 2014).

[32] See Wilson (1999/2000) and Csapo (1999/2000).

[33] Thiel (1993: 42) at first sees only the war cry that only later changes to a cry of lament.

positive song expressing joy. A chorus inherently sings and dances from joy, for which reason the verb *paizein*, to move cheerfully as a child, serves as the terminus technicus for its activity. Yet in tragedy, song and dance often, in light of the excessive suffering, express *pathos*.[34] In typical fashion the vehicle (bird) and tenor (Greek war leaders) already overlap in a concrete and simultaneously enigmatic semantic. Reacting to the shrill (ὀξυβόαν 57) cry of these metics (τῶνδε μετοίκων 57)—both war leaders have already set forth to exact revenge, rendering the term μέτοικοι both resultative and proleptic—,[35] one of the gods sends "the wrathful Erinys" to the "transgressors," the Trojans (ὑστερόποινον πέμπει παραβᾶσιν Ἐρινύν 58-59). Likewise, Zeus Xenios sends Atreus' sons, robbed of their honor, after Paris (61-62), in order to exact revenge for his transgression, the abduction of Helen.

At the beginning of the trilogy the war appears to be over, yet according to the choreuts, neither the sacrifices of Clytemnestra nor the tears of *goos* can drown out, charm away, or cover up this wrath (69-71) (παραθέλξειν cf. 71). Choral performance as an aesthetic and authoritative *aoide* is likewise a *parathelxis*, which exercises a magical and charming effect over its recipients, touching also the gods here. The *Oresteia* continually thematizes precisely this beguiling enchantment, a drowning out of the *goos*-songs of tears as well as the mitigating strategies involving ritual practices such as sacrifice. Through aesthetic singing, also based on the voice, one tries to erect a "wall" against the uncanny and dangerous voice, turning "it into a fetish object." Silencing the *goos*, the dysphemic emission of corporeality, the aesthetic fetish

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[34] Bierl (2001: 85 [Eng. 2009: 66]).

[35] Different in Fraenkel (II 1950: 37 ad 57), who relates the adjective to the far height, where the birds live in the air. At the end of the trilogy the war leaders will be referred to as metics, like the Erinyes metamorphosed into Eumenides (*Eum.* 1044). In this sense the chorus sounds all too optimistic, thinking the plaguing spirits will soon fall outside the house, i.e., like metics, and lie there (μέτοικοι δόμων, πεσοῦνται πάλιν *Ch.* 971).

nevertheless hints at the constitutive gap of absence that can never be closed. Any hope for a cure

through the symbolic and beautiful form proves to be pure "illusion" since a singing voice cannot

restore any "profound" and deeper meaning but simply obfuscated and concealed *pathos*.[36]

The choral "we" now sings that due to their old age they remained at home and therefore offer

no eyewitness accounts of the events at Troy (72-74). With sticks (75) one "creeps along the way

with a three-foot gait" (τρίποδας μὲν ὁδοὺς στείχει 81). The pronouncement directly reflects the

actual movement of the chorus over to the orchestra; the weak chorus members act both like

children (81) and elders, "a dreamlike image appearing in the daylight" (ὄναρ ἡμερόφαντον 82),

simultaneously living and already dead. The authority and strength are missing.

As they inquisitively approach the palace gate to ask Clytemnestra after her reasons for the

sacrificial fire,[37] the old men find it locked and reflect now at length, assuming authority finally

as a chorus (104-106):[38]

> κύριός εἰμι θροεῖν ὅδιον κράτος αἴσιον ἀνδρῶν
>
> ἐκτελέων – ἔτι γὰρ θεόθεν καταπνεύει
>
> πειθώ, μολπᾶν ἀλκάν, ξύμφυτος αἰών –
>
>
> I have the authority to sing of the power of the heroes, who decamped beneath auspicious
>
> signs—as my age still animates me with the persuasion of words from divine
>
> inspiration, the strength of the choral song.

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[36] See also Dolar (2006: 30-31).

[37] See Käppel (1998: 48-53).

[38] See Fraenkel (II 1950: 59 ad 104) and Denniston and Page (1957: 77 ad 104).

Divine inspiration[39] (θεόθεν καταπνεύει 105) impels the chorus, despite its age, to *peitho*,

persuasion, and "the power of choral song" (μολπᾶν ἀλκάν 106). The chorus also, in its own

opinion, possesses *peitho*, with which it, like Clytemnestra, insists upon sovereignty in

interpreting things. *Peitho* is, as I understand it here, the persuasive ability to assess things on the

basis of a theological consideration according to traditional ethical standards and, in doing so,

also to palliate and euphemize them, because it is, allegedly, the will of the gods so that people

finally follow these standards. That which the chorus claims with these words is exactly the

prophetic, hermeneutic, and cajoling capacity due the collective citizenry of the chorus with its

authoritative voice. However, claim and reality diverge. The chorus tries to endow the prior

events with meaning, yet, despite all the embellishment, negative factors continually appropriate

its voice, the hymnic praise brimming with lament.

In the chorus' voice, the past events become a web of enigmatic references, which refer to the

course of events both impending and already passed.[40] The concrete omen of the two birds, the

eagles, before the departure of the 'raptors,' seizing and ripping apart a pregnant hare (109-120),

the chorus attempts to read, according to Calchas's embedded words (126-138 and 140-155), as a

positive symbol of Troy's fall, but also as an expression of terrifying violence, which befalls the

young woman, i.e., Iphigenia, who stand in close connection with Artemis. The refrain-like

intercalary verse αἴλινον αἴλινον εἰπέ, τό δ' εὖ νικάτω (121, 139, 159), functioning both as

exhortation in prayer and lament, is, in a certain way, a magical means to express the hope that

the good will prevail in a moment where the story focuses on the slaughter of a vulnerable

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[39] See Fraenkel (II 1950: 64-64 ad 106).

[40] See Ferrari (1997: esp. 24-43).

sacrificial victim.[41] The choral voice typically tries to drown out and cajole over the ritual cry of lament that is vehemently and paradoxically emitted in the first part of the verse. In an emblematic manner this juxtaposition of voices can stand for the tragic paradox and the dramatic course of events in the entire *Oresteia*.

As the parodos is, by and large, a narration and hardly an authoritative explanation, we find the latter in the direct, embedded speeches of the authoritative and articulate prophet Calchas (126-138 and 140-155).[42] His voice cannot be attributed to a new figure but is appropriated by the chorus, assuming simultaneously different voices. As an expert regarding the proper theological sayings and the appropriate practices, Calchas also delivers an interpretation that, in the reproduced quote, remains as inscrutable as the chorus' telling, both voices blurring into a heterogeneous mixture.

Speech is a signifying mechanism that makes possible ambivalent and contrary explanations. The contrasts, oppositions, and tensions in the song are then laid drastically bare. The chaste Artemis (Ἄρτεμις ἁγνά 134) rebukes the winged hounds of her father Zeus—a conflict then arises already in the divine heaven. She is angry with them, "because they sacrifice the wretched hare, before the birth along with her own offspring" (αὐτότοκον πρὸ λόχου μογερὰν πτάκα θυομένοισιν 136 [cf. 134-136]). Artemis hates this sacrificial meal of the eagles (137), yet this feeling of unease is almost magically drowned out by the refrain-like verse of reflexive

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[41] See Henrichs (2005: esp. 198): "In tragedy, ritual remedies usually fail, and instead of being the solution, ritual becomes part of the problem. That is why Kalkhas is so concerned, and why his words are apotropaic."

[42] For the feature of embedded direct speeches of Calchas in the parodos that "suits the distinctive prophetic and epicizing style of choral lyric in *Agamemnon*," see Schein (2009: 393-395 [citation 395]). See also Fletcher (1999: esp. 30-32): "… the prediction of Calchas is a device by which the poet insinuates his voice into the discourse of the chorus in order to remind us of where the drama is headed" (31).

instigation αἴλινον αἴλινον εἰπέ, τὸ δ' εὖ νικάτω sung anew (139). *Menis*, Wrath, presiding over

the house, cunningly recalls these things and avenges the child (οἰκονόμος δολία, μνάμων Μῆνις

τεκνόποινος 155), all of which Clytemnestra, who becomes an Erinys, embodies. The speech of

the prophet Calchas is described as a vocal utterance (ἀπέκλαγξεν 156), an authoritative oracle in

piercing sound tantamount to dreadful songs:[43] he mixes a horrible fate with great good (156)—in

tune (ὁμόφωνον 158) with these fateful words the chorus emits its euphemizing and self-assuring

verse again: αἴλινον αἴλινον εἰπέ, τὸ δ' εὖ νικάτω (159). As said above, the utterance addresses

bad and good things simultaneously. The passage contains its own poetic and lyric tonal coloring

through Calchas, and the chorus can again, through its speech act of exhortation, try to tip the

scales in the direction of the good (159).

   Also the famous hymn to Zeus (160-183) is, as a command, such a magical device to drown

out and charm over the dreadful reality employing voice and music in ritual praxis. As an

authority against Artemis, it is possible that evil arises from Zeus as well. The chorus emphasizes

that whoever now "gladly sings the triumph of Zeus" (Ζῆνα δέ τις προφρόνως ἐπινίκια κλάζων

174), "wins insight into everything" (τεύξεται φρενῶν τὸ πᾶν 175), because the god brings men

"to the way of thinking" (τὸν φρονεῖν βροτοὺς ὁδώ-/ σαντα 176-177) and therefore bestows them

with the principle of *pathei mathos* (177), "making it a valid law" (τὸν πάθει μάθος/ θέντα κυρίως

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[43] Gödde (2011: 121) describes κλαγγή, like in the case of Cassandra (1153) as "prevalent, piercing, sometimes

animalistic sounds." Often they are combined with horrible songs, see also Schein (2009: 391). The acoustic urgency

Gödde (2001: 121 n. 85) interprets as "a sign for the unavoidable and destructive truth of the prophecy." Fraenkel (II

1950: 95 ad 156f.), following Headlam, refers the expression to the volume and excitement of the voices.

ἔχειν 177-178).[44] Just as the chorus claims to be κύριος (104), that is, to possess the authority of explanatory song, so does Zeus embody nothing other than the abstract formula, which the watchman already emphasized. *Pathos* is at hand, it brings the violent (cf. 183) insight of submission. Yet, if pain and sorrow gain the upper hand, the belief in the proper world order is finally lost. However through grace, *charis* (182), paired with violence, the gods force people beneath the yoke of the proper world order and way of thinking. The aesthetic charming over, obfuscating the dangerous object voice, is only partially successful, while the chorus becomes the mouthpiece of Zeus himself and thus the medium of the quintessential tragic experience: to convey suffering in aesthetic forms and to communicate thoughtful insights in view of the overwhelming *pathos*.

Faced with the dilemma of the calm sea at Aulis, given the choice set forth by Calchas either to lose his leadership position or sacrifice his daughter, Agamemnon, according to the chorus, chooses—again in embedded direct speech—the way of vocal mitigation (206-217): the dreadful virgin sacrifice, described in the parodos (184-257), shall be good because it is right (217).[45] Therefore Agamemnon also conjures up a good outcome. Although the misdeed is before his eyes, Agamemnon enters upon the virgin sacrifice before her wedding (προτέλεια 227) to ensure the departure of the ships, an expression of his madness. The final tableau about Iphigenia's death becomes again a subtly nuanced metatheatrical *mise en abyme* of the struggle over the politics of voices between the people in power and the oppressed in *Agamemnon.* Even if you silence the

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[44] Raeburn and Thomas (2011: 87 ad 176-8) maintain that, on the basis of *brotoi,* the assertions refer to humanity in general and so the public, which sympathizes with the protagonist. Lesky (1972: 163) sees the expression *pathei mathos* as a "keyword of Aeschylean tragedy."

[45] Fraenkel (II 1950: 126 ad 217): "Behind the phrase seems to lie a regular concluding formula from the language of prayer." West's emendation ἀπὸ δ᾽ αὐδᾶι (216), on the contrary, acknowledges the wrongness of the sacrifice.

voice of *pathos* it will always break through and find expression through other channels, in particular the visual. The leaders do not respond to the appeals and vocal pleas of the girl (λιτὰς δὲ καὶ κληδόνας πατρώιους 228) directed at her father (228-230).[46] Conversely, Agamemnon performs a prayer (εὐχάν 231) and authoritatively orders (φράσεν 231) the perverted sacrifice of his daughter like a goat.[47] Above all her "pretty-beaked mouth" (στόματός τε καλλιπρώιρου 235) should be kept from uttering "a curse against the house" (φθόγγον ἀραῖον οἴκοις 237), that is any curse that might stand against the positively colored discourse of power.

Now gagged, Iphigenia can no longer speak; however, even mute, the visual signals of supplication come through, piercing like an arrow. Desiring to speak out her dirge, she resembles a stark, muted image (242) full of eroticism, from which we can still read the gestures. She lets her saffron-robe stream downwards (239) and stands naked in front of him. This symbolic gesture not only indicates that Iphigenia, like the girls in Brauron, leaves maidenhood, but also that she is about to speak the unvarnished truth before her imminent death as a victim to be killed on the altar. To some extent this scene foreshadows Cassandra unveiled later in the play, when she, as anti-bride, speaks openly about her cruel end, the perverted sacrifice (1269-1330). Through her silent body language and gaze Iphigenia's communicative intention, her desire to address each of her sacrificers with supplicating and cursing voice, becomes clear,[48] especially as she so often

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[46] For the power of words and esp. cledonomancy, see Peradotto (1969).

[47] See Henrichs (2006: 67-74).

[48] With Lacan (1966: 808, 817 [Eng. 2006: 684, 692]), who, in his graphs of desire, defined the voice, alongside the gaze, as embodiment of his *objet petit a*, we could argue that, when voice is violently silenced, Iphigenia uses the other of these dangerously suggestive, hypnotic, ruinous, threatening media that produce emissions like darts and arrows (ἀπ' ὄμματος βέλει 240). See Dolar (2006: esp. 39-42). For the gaze (just like the voice) as a drive reaching "its aim without attaining its goal"—"its arrow comes back from the target"—in the typically Lacanian gliding

sang the pure and faithful song with the right timbre in rooms full of beautiful tables covered with

rich sacrifices (240-246); namely "the virgin, yet unwed, sang with holy voice" (ἔμελψεν, ἁγνᾶι

δ᾽ ἀταύρωτος αὐδᾶι 245) for the triple offering of her father, a libation to thank Paean, the

musical substantiation of the healing god, Paean-Apollo (παιῶνα 247). Her song used to be a

song of hope for salvation, auguring happiness, a song of ritual celebration that palliated

everything, but now, when she wishes to sing a song of curse, understood as *dysphemia*, she is

violently silenced.[49]

Justice is embodied by Zeus. With a little resignation, the password to suffer and to learn (cf.

177) and thereby not to complain (250) follows: Δίκα δὲ τοῖς μὲν παθοῦσιν μαθεῖν ἐπιρρέπει·

"Justice sways the balance, bringing to some learning by suffering." As said above, in view of the

excessive suffering tragedy—and thus also the chorus in *Agamemnon*—can only communicate

some insight into the deeper mechanisms of justice under Zeus. Only via a final speech-act, the

appeal that "action" (πρᾶξις), i.e., the course of the dramatic events in the trilogy, "may be

prosperous" (255), the chorus can try to conceal and charm away the dread of the present anew.

Hope is vain, and even though the chorus knows that the tragic reality can only mean lament, the

wish for a good outcome metadramatically anticipates the denouement of the trilogy in

Eumenides.

Clytemnestra's Appearance

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signification process ("*glissement incessant du signifié sous le signifiant*" ["incessant sliding of the signified under

the signifier"], Lacan [1966: 502, Eng. 2006: 419]), see Dolar (2006: 74).

[49] See Degener (1996).

Yet in the face of excessive suffering the mitigating mantra of Zeus' religion continually

threatens to turn suddenly into lament. However, in view of Clytemnestra's eventual appearance,

one prudently prefers to remain silent in the face of the boundless *pathos* and to accept the

theological rhetoric of the context. As a reaction to the 'good messages' that lead to "hopes of

happy tidings" (εὐαγγέλοισιν ἐλπίσιν 262), joy and tears permeate the chorus, but do not elicit

dancing (270). One asks skeptically, if the longed-for victory over Troy is not just rumor (φάτις

276)[50] and that maybe Clytemnestra simply lends belief to her dreams (ὀνείρων φάσματ᾿ εὐπειθῆ

σέβεις 274). But the queen is completely sure, and thereby appears to associate the signal chain of

torch fire with the divine. For her it is clear: there are conquerors and the conquered, separated

like vinegar and oil (322). Eros, that is sexual lust, and lucre (341-342) are the only motivating

forces that bring about the fall of a victor, and Clytemnestra, like the chorus in the parodos,

affirms her wish for a happy outcome (τὸ δ᾿ εὖ κρατοίη 349).[51]

The Force of Peitho's Voice

In the first stasimon (355-487), the chorus attempts anew to thank the gods for their favor with

pious prayer (354).[52] Prayer and the authoritative word try to create a sense with which to

explain, theologically, the events as Zeus' justice. "Wretched Peitho," the personification of

persuasion, the blandishment, according to the chorus, is a violent force (βιᾶται δ᾿ ἁ τάλαινα

Πειθώ 385), Ate's cure is an illusion (386-387).[53] No matter how much one wants to mitigate,

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[50] See Bollack and Judet de la Combe (III 1981-2001: 108-116).

[51] Fraenkel (II 1950: 178 ad 348f.) sees in this expression a sort of "travesty" of the adages in the parodos.

[52] See Bollack and Judet de la Combe (I 1981-2001: 369-493).

[53] For this see Käppel (1998: 141-142) and Lloyd-Jones (1979: 50 ad 386).

heal or moderate with voice, pain always breaks through. In this way, the past is further discussed in narrative, especially once again in the fusion of voices, while the inlaid perspective of the "prophets of the house" (409) —"almost a chorus within a chorus" since their cited voice is embedded in the choral song —helps to make everything enigmatic through polyphony and hybridization.[54] Menelaus had to bear Helen's infidelity in silence; she has left with Paris, and Eros and Pothos, the desire for the absent mistress of the house, find expression in "beautifully formed statues" (εὐμόρφων δὲ κολοσσῶν 416) that mean illusion, danger, and misery. But their charm is hateful for the husband since he suffers from the absence of all the power of Aphrodite (414-419).[55]

Such hallucinations of sorrow are deception arising from dreams (ὀνειρόφαντοι δὲ πενθήμονες … δόξαι 420-421), unable to be grasped (420-425). Out of Eros grow war and death. The fallen are grieved over; one can only euphemize and praise (εὖ λέγοντες 445) heroic deaths, yet in reality, doing so is mere delusion. The Erinyes pursue whoever kills (463)—later they become actors in the *Eumenides*, not just the narrative-explicating chorus. As the herald comes, the chorus once again expresses the wish that the good may join to the appearance of good (εὖ γὰρ πρὸς εὖ φανεῖσι προσθήκη πέλοι 500).

Suffering Bursts out of the Façade: the Paean of the Erinyes

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[54] See Fletcher (1999 [citation 36]).

[55] See Bollack and Judet de la Combe (I 1981-2001: 429-437). See also Karamitrou (1999). For κολοσσός as double and substitute, see Bollack and Judet de la Combe (I 1981-2001: 432-435).

The herald returned from Troy's realm of death is likewise anxious to let everything appear in the correct light for the leadership. Silence is the only "remedy against harm" (πάλαι τὸ σιγᾶν φάρμακον βλάβης ἔχω 548)—according to the chorus. Lament and foreboding are to be hidden.

After the report, the chorus is now ready to accept the victory (οὐκ ἀναίνομαι 583). Even old men learn well (εὐμαθεῖν 584)—yet in the victory the suffering is not absent. Clytemnestra exults out of joy (ἀνωλόλυξα μὲν πάλαι χαρᾶς ὕπο 587); this renewed *ololygmos* (595) is her method of self-assured suppression of the crisis and functions to introduce the sacrifice of atonement that turns out to be a perverted sacrifice of murder. The chorus clearly recognizes that Clytemnestra, as translator for clear interpreters (τοροῖσιν ἑρμηνεῦσιν 616), has the tonal and semantic sense making process under control (615-616). With *peitho* and a complacent (εὐπρεπῆ 616) speech, she declares the situation officially and explains everything in ritual form.[56]

Responding to the choreuts' inquiry after the state of other fighters, particularly Menelaus, a dimension of pain also cracks the herald's surface. Yet he tries to fight off this pain: "it is not fitting to mar a blissful day of good news and sounds with the tongue of bad report" (εὔφημον ἦμαρ οὐ πρέπει κακαγγέλωι/ γλώσσηι μιαίνειν· 636-637). That would mean blasphemy—"apart is the honor paid to the gods" (χωρὶς ἡ τιμὴ θεῶν 637)[57]— since the men try to let the gods appear in a good light. Ambivalence must be done away with, molded into the positive.

In light of the dead, "loaded with such sorrows" (τοιῶνδε μέντοι πημάτων σεσαγμένον 644), the herald underlines, "it is proper" for him "to intone this triumph song of the pursuing Erinyes" (πρέπει λέγειν παιῶνα τόνδ' Ἐρινύων 645), that is a song that emphasizes wrath and negativity.

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[56] See Bollack and Judet de la Combe (III 1981-2001: 241-243).

[57] See Bollack and Judet de la Combe (III 1981-2001: 250-251).

The paean is a song in crisis to vanquish danger.[58] The paradoxical connection of a song of

healing in the key of the Erinyes metatheatrically lays bare the tension between paean and *goos*,

between a song of happiness and one of lament.[59] The juxtaposition of both song genres is again

emblematic of the tragic paradox of the *Agamemnon*. Mixing "good with the bad" does not find a

suitable enunciation, since the gods might react with awful voices, wrath and anger (648-649).

The rulers and their subjects are eager to cover the negative with good and beautiful voices that is

consonant with the ritual melodies. But in tragedy Dionysus is responsible for this mixture of

both positive and negative contents and form, or in other words, for the paradoxical condition

constitutive of the genre. Despite all endeavor to tidily separate both conditions and drown out or

conceal *dysphemia*, the figures will become entangled in the typically tragic concatenation.

In the second stasimon (681-782),[60] the chorus sings pseudo-etymologically (cf. ἐτητύμως

681) about Helen, destroyer of ships, men, and cities (ἑλέναυς ἕλανδρος ἑλέπτολις 690). Zeus

punished the Trojans who brought forth the "wedding song"—"loudly and discordantly"

(ἐκφάτως 705-706), which they had to sing as brothers-in-law (707-708). Troy must now change

the tune and "learn a different one" (cf. μεταμανθάνουσα 709), i.e., learn from pain, the wedding

song changed into "a hymn of many sorrows" (ὕμνον … πολύθρηνον 709-711), meaning the song

of joy veers into *goos* and threnody, the present mood. The tragic *metabole* is underscored by

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[58] See Käppel (1992); for this see Gödde (2011: 119-120), who finds that the deictic τόνδ' refers not only to the

words previously mentioned but also to the entire report, which, due to the "paradoxical" mixing of victory and

sorrow, finds likewise its expression in "the triumph song [= paean] of the Erinyes" (120).

[59] Fraenkel (II 1950: 321 ad 645) speaks of a "blasphemous paradox" and refers to *Ag.* 1144 and 1386-1387. Good

and evil are mixed (*Ag.* 648), while Clytemnestra still thought to be able to separate vinegar and oil from one another

(*Ag.* 322-323).

[60] See Bollack and Judet de la Combe (II 1981-2001: 1-156).

references to sounds and melodies in a self-referential manner. Helen, "the heart-wrenching flower of Eros" (743), came as "Erinys that brings tears to brides" (749) in her fully erotic form. From happiness can "insatiable woe" quickly arise (βλαστάνειν ἀκόρεστον οἰζύν 756). Despite all foreboding the chorus still tries to distance itself from the other tonality of lament (757).

As Agamemnon finally appears, the first greeting, the overture and proem (φροίμιον τόδε 829), is directed at the gods; he likewise invokes the good: "what is good, that it remains good for long, for this one should take counsel" (τὸ μὲν καλῶς ἔχον/ ὅπως χρονίζον εὖ μενεῖ βουλευτέον 846-847). Otherwise one should apply remedy for the resistance of illness, even such as those having to do with health and healing songs (φαρμάκων παιωνίων 848) (cf. 848-850). Afterwards Clytemnestra is able to allow Agamemnon to enter the house upon the red carpet, symbolic for the way of blood (855-974).

The Lyre-free Dirge of the Erinys Bursting out Spontaneously from within

In the third stasimon (975-1034) evil premonition now ultimately seizes the mood of the chorus,[61] after again and again trying to align its utterances with the principles of the leadership and to speak well accordingly. Its song is suddenly devoid of optimism, of a good mood; rather it sounds now like the prophecy of negativity, dream images of fear. Absent any instruction, the negative songs emerge spontaneously from within, intoning the threnody of the Erinys, the lyre-less (988-993):

πεύθομαι δ' ἀπ' ὀμμάτων

νόστον αὐτόμαρτυς ὤν·

τὸν δ' ἄνευ λύρας ὅμως ὑμνῳδεῖ

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[61] See Bollack and Judet de la Combe (II 1981-2001: 199-289).

θρῆνον Ἐρινύ⟨ο⟩ς αὐτοδίδακτος ἔσωθεν

θυμός, οὐ τὸ πᾶν ἔχων

ἐλπίδος φίλον θράσος.

I recognize with my eyes

the return, I am a witness myself;

without the lyre, intones my breast nevertheless

from inside out the threnody of the Erinys completely without instruction,

without possessing in any way the confidence of hope.

All attempts to allow the healing songs along with theological and ritual meaningfulness as well as with assurance to prevail fail in the face of reality. From the chorus, now acting as a prophet, streams a spontaneous, internal voice, witnessing dream images of terror and premonition. Now the most internal part intones hymnically a threnody that an Erinys, soon Clytemnestra, defines. The heart of the chorus is whipped in circles by the dynamic whirlpool twisting towards the end (τελεσφόροις δίναις κυκλούμενον κέαρ 997), spinning like a chorus in a round dance. The old bodies after all begin to express themselves in dancing figures. The circular movement of the dance self-referentially reflects the storm of feelings. Spontaneously, "self-inspired," and without instruction by a choral trainer, the *chorodidaskalos* (cf. αὐτοδίδακτος 992),[62] the chorus turns to a threnody and expressive melody of lament. From the demanded yet tentative quest for meaning directed toward melodies of moderation and happiness, springs an uncontrollable dance, implying chaos and horror. It is certainly questionable if the dance actually took place or is merely

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[62] See Hom. *Od*. 22.346-347: *autodidaktos* (referring to Phemius); see Fraenkel (II 1950: 446 ad 992).

projected, metaphorically, upon internal turmoil. Be it as it may, this song clearly underscores the

tragic development in metatheatrical terms. A chorus in tragedy typically sings about its change

of mood when the *pathos* cannot be pushed back again, in choral and musical terms. It is still a

dirge of Erinyes who become only metaphorically visible. But this internal song and dance

anticipate already the terrible songs of the Erinyes who act out their theatrical epiphany as a real

chorus in the last play of the trilogy. The second antistrophe culminates in the thought that

incantation cannot call back a dead man (πάλιν ἀγκαλέσαιτ' ἐπαείδων 1021). Singing

incantations, the ἐπῳδαί, means exactly the charming speech act of 'singing upon' the horrible

reality, thus initiating a reversal. To bring a dead man back to life is as impossible as to drown out

evil or "timely wind off a ball of wool" (καίριον ἐκτολυπεύσειν 1032) where good and bad are

garbled. Only Zeus can bring order and restrain the speech and phonetic production (1029),

otherwise "the heart outstrips the tongue and pours this song forth" (1029). It murmurs (βρέμει

1030) in darkness, full of sad thoughts, in the appropriate sound of Bromios anticipating the cruel

and tragic murders carried out under the auspices of the god of tragedy.

 While the self-referential voice, musicality, and *choreia* have until now mainly concerned the

chorus itself, which has been shown striving to win vocal and ritualistic control over the events in

an authoritative way—and simultaneously failing to do so—, we have already seen in the

watchman and Clytemnestra indications that likewise as individuals they are portrayed through

these metatheatrical features. Now, with Cassandra, such characterization comes to the fore.

The Voice of Prophetic Cassandra: *Goos* vs. *Euphemia* (1035-1371)

Foreseeing via prophetic insight her own fate, the young Cassandra emits the voice of *goos*.[63] At

first, however, she remains silent upon the stage after her arrival with Agamemnon, physically

embodying the exact silence continually stressed by the watchman and others.[64] Faced with her

persevering silence, the others guess that as a barbarian she does not understand Greek.

Clytemnestra even suggests another form of communication, "instead of her voice" (ἀντὶ φωνῆς),

Cassandra should communicate via sign language with her "barbarian hand" (καρβάνωι χερί

1061). A *hermeneus*, a translator and interpreter, seems necessary (1061). Yet Cassandra, just like

Clytemnestra, understands everything crystal clear—unlike the chorus—and can explain

herself.[65] Clytemnestra then threatens to yoke the girl with a brutal bridle (χαλινόν 1066) and

leaves lest she incurs defeat at the hands of this young seer. The chorus, however, takes pity on

Cassandra and through an *amoibaion* (1072-1177) engages with her directly.

Suddenly, Cassandra bursts into an inarticulate and urgent lament that rolls into an invocation

of Apollo, its significance nearly disabled by its pure tonal character (1072-1073). Her appeal to

the god becomes an imploring invocation of pain and threnody as she clearly foresees her death

upon entering the house. Her invocation confuses the chorus; the god of healing and purification,

the god of paeans, the very remedy against pain, has, on the surface, nothing to do with lament

and threnody (1074-1075. Cassandra's shrill outburst ὀτοτοτοτοῖ ποποῖ δᾶ (1072) bleeds into

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[63] For the Cassandra scene, see i.a. Reinhardt (1949: 97-105 [parallels and differences between Agamemnon and

Cassandra; connections to the forthcoming *Eumenides*]); Knox (1972: 109-121 [Cassanda's role as third actor]); esp.

Lebeck (1971: 28-39, 47-56, 61-62, 84-85) and Mitchell-Boyask (2006); for the entire scene, see also Thiel (1993:

289-347).

[64] For Cassandra's silence, see Thalmann (1985: 228-229) and Montiglio (2000: 213-216). For silence in general, see

Dolar (2006: 152-162).

[65] Clytemnestra is described as a *hermeneus* in *Ag.* 616.

"Apollo! Apollo!" (ὦπολλον ὦπολλον 1073)—the loud, inarticulate scream at first echoing all

purely emotional Greek cries, devoid of any communication, a pure and spontaneous exclamation

expressed performatively to avert crisis.[66] Here Apollo becomes a typical epiclesis, seemingly

devoid of sense, a cry personifying the deity. To summon specifically Apollo's complementary

divinity, i.e., Dionysus, likewise associated with barbaric epiphany, one slips into fury through

inarticulate ejaculations, short and often repeated, with phonetic combinations like *iakch-*, *bakch-*,

eua-, *eiu-*, *ie-*, *iy-*.[67] The personified ὦπολλον ὦπολλον cry merges with the pure lament

ὀτοτοτοτοῖ ποποῖ δᾶ in senseless and purely emotional complaint[68]—the enunciated o-sounds

melting into one—and becomes an appellation of the god himself, connoting nothing other than

impassioned performance. Simultaneously, these repeated ejaculations of phonetic combinations

contain some "poetic function" as Roman Jakobson defines it.[69] The appalled chorus asks why

she utters cries of woe to Loxias, who has nothing to do with dirges (1074-1075). Cassandra

performs, as perverted lyric bard, for Apollo, but since she frenetically addresses her forthcoming

woe at his hands, she slips into the Dionysiac dimension of *mania* and *pathos*, singing—from the

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[66] For the scream that "epitomizes the signifying gesture precisely not signifying anything in particular," see Dolar
(2006: 27-29 [citation 28]); as voice, although standing at the intersection between body and language, it is neither
part of the body nor of language; see Dolar (2006: 73).

[67] See also Versnel (1970: 27-34).

[68] For the scream as expression of pain, see Bollack and Judet de la Combe (IV 1981-2001: 429-431 and 432).
Heirman (1975) calls it a "glossolalia." For the voice "as an authority over the Other and as an exposure to the
Other" and, qua drive, as excess between "emission and exposure," see Dolar (2006: 80-81).

[69] Jakobson (1960: esp. 358 [= *Selected Writings* III: 27]). See Tambiah (1985: 165) and Bierl (2001: 287-299, esp.
293 with n. 503, 331-346, esp. 335 with n. 92 [Eng. 2009: 254-265, esp. 259-260 with n. 503, 296-310, esp. 299 with
n. 92]).

choral perspective—for the absent yet present Dionysus. The genre is constituted by this oxymoronic overlap here thematized in self-referential manner.[70]

The chorus therefore views this scream as *dysphemia,* a vocal utterance inviting the god to witness a *goos*-situation against ritual decency (ἥδ' αὖτε δυσφημοῦσα τὸν θεὸν καλεῖ,/ οὐδὲν προσήκοντ' ἐν γόοις παραστατεῖν 1078-1079).[71] Here *goos* implies not the celebratory voice of the collective, rather the singular voice of a wailing, lamenting girl threatening to overthrow the existing order with her intensity. Cassandra associates, pseudo-etymologically, the cry with *apollymi* (ἀπώλεσας, "you destroyed" 1082)*,* retroactively allocating to it a sense derived from the Greek language. As a barbarian she possesses the power of vocal communication without a translator. Apollo's actions destroyed her, so Cassandra complains, despite standing beneath his aegis.

Sight through Sound

A prophetess blessed by the god, Cassandra sees the house as a "slaughterhouse of men" (ἀνδροσφαγεῖον 1092). The chorus supposes her gifted, like an animal, with a keen sense of smell that allows her to recognize the blood and murder imbuing the house (1093-1094). The remark actually constitutes a more cynical defence: in the eyes of the chorus, Cassandra is like a bloodhound (κυνὸς δίκην 1093)—young women were often compared with other untamed animals[72]—as an actual person could not possibly know these things. Yet, in reality she possesses a keen sense of prophecy.

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[70] See Loraux (1990: 265).

[71] See Gödde (2011: 121).

[72] See Calame (1997: 238-244) and Seaford (1987: 111 [128 in reference to Cassandra]).

The chorus repudiates Cassandra: we seek no prophets at all (1098-1099). In her mind's eye images swell, finding only vocal expression in this acoustic space—Cassandra sees Agamemnon's murder in the bathtub (1100-1104, 1107-1110), yet the chorus, already left in the dark by the vision's meaning, fails to understand her insinuating and mysterious language (ἄιδρίς εἰμι 1105), still caught, for obvious reasons, in the realm of *euphemia*. The chorus remains ignorant (οὔπω ξυνῆκα 1112), emphasizing its uncertainty due to the mystification of Cassandra's vague prophecy (νῦν γὰρ ἐξ αἰνιγμάτων/ ἐπαργέμοισι θεσφάτοις ἀμηχανῶ 1112-1113).

In the vision of murder, Cassandra stresses that the *stasis*, insatiable discord, should be celebrated with an *ololygmos* (στάσις δ' ἀκόρετος ... κατολολυξάτω 1117-1118). *Stasis* as the action of positioning oneself (from ἵστημι) simultaneously recalls the choral *katastasis,* the formation of a chorus (cf. χορῶν κατάστασιν 23) and thus the choral group.[73] The chorus in and of itself is a paradoxical phenomenon, the establishment of a social group divided from the larger polis entailing both harmony and strife.[74] Thus we could understand a choral group of violent agents "whom family cannot sate" (1117), bursting out in the terrible *ololygmos* cry, particularly as Clytemnestra and the Erinyes use to howl in the same sound-formation.[75]

As it is, the chorus interprets the remark as a call for an Erinys to likewise cry out in joy (Ἐρινὺν .../ ἐπορθιάζειν 1119-1120), missing that Clytemnestra is herself the Erinys. Cassandra

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[73] For *katastasis*, 'establishment' of choral performance traditions in Sparta, see Nagy (1990: 343-344); for *stasis* as "*constitution* and *division*," see Nagy (1990: 366-367); on the passage, see Loraux (1990: 267); for the meaning 'choral group,' see *Ch.* 458 and *Eum*. 311.

[74] See Nagy (1990: 366-367), esp. the citation (367): "In sum, the ritual essence of the choral lyric performance is that it is *constitutive* of society in the very process of *dividing* it."

[75] Fraenkel (III 1950: 505 ad 1117) however puts forth three contrary reasons against this opinion, likewise Bollack and Judet de la Combe (IV 1981-2001: 452-454).

wails in a loud voice, evoking her own fate as well, pouring out and mixing her pain with the horror pertaining to others (τὸ γὰρ ἐμὸν θροῶ πάθος ἐπεγχέασα 1137).[76] The ὀλολύζειν alongside her other vocal yet inarticulate cries (ἐπορθιάζειν, θροεῖν) confuses further and appears the phonetic expression of insanity, rebelling against the rational order of the polis, and the religion of Zeus. But let us remember: in connection with Clytemnestra, exactly this *ololygmos* proved the leitmotif denoting not only celebration but also the high-pitched cries of women performatively drowning out the moment of danger in a crisis, especially during a sacrifice.[77] Clytemnestra celebrated Agamemnon's homecoming with this shrill cry (ὀλολυγμὸν …/ ἐπορθιάζειν 28-29)— her shout anticipating the murder of the same, an act notoriously stylized as a sacrifice. The Erinyes and Cassandra, notionally, do the same in their performance, ironically thematizing yet again the slaughter as ritual sacrifice, connoting it euphemistically.[78]

Insanity, Lament, and Paradoxical Chant

Now the chorus turns away disgusted, striking up a song against the allegedly insane girl (1140-1145):

φρενομανής τις εἶ θεοφόρητος, ἀμ-

φὶ δ' αὐτᾶς θροεῖς

νόμον ἄνομον, οἷά τις ξουθά

ἀκόρετος βοᾶς, φεῦ, φιλοίκτοις φρεσίν

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[76] For threnody as libation (see ἐπεγχέασα M [ἐπεγχύδαν Headlam, accepted by West and Judet de la Combe]), see Bollack and Judet de la Combe (IV 1981-2001: 466-467).

[77] See Aesch. *Sept*. 268-269; see above nn. 17-20.

[78] For the motif of sacrifice, see Zeitlin (1965); Zeitlin (1966); Burkert (1966: esp. 119-120); Pucci (1992); Henrichs (2000: esp. 180-184); Henrichs (2006: esp. 67-74).

Ἴτυν Ἴτυν στένουσ' ἀμφιθαλῆ κακοῖς

ἀηδὼν μόρον.

1140-1145

You are out of your mind, divinely possessed;

you cry forth about yourself

a song that is no song, like a vibrant-throated bird

wailing insatiably, alas, with a heart fond of grieving,

the nightingale lamenting 'Itys, Itys!' for a death

in which both parents did evil.

In the chorus' eyes, Cassandra's inarticulate raving and purely vocal shouts of lament indicate a crazed and possessed disposition, shrugging off these horrible and haunting sounds as only a song thwarting the precepts of *euphemia*, of ritual euphony, which the polis and its rulers, anxious to put the previous and painful events in a positive light as well as simply drown them out through performance, demand of the chorus. For this reason, the chorus terms these piercing, near animal-like utterances a *nomos*—a typically paradoxical and oxymoronic intensification, at least for tragedy, as the melody presents no such *nomos*, lacking, as it does, the harmonic and celebratory euphony of the official order, posited likewise through voice and music.[79] And yet it remains a

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[79] For *nomos* as law, cult law, ritual, and song form, see also Plato's *Laws*, where the *choreia* and music, along with the *nomoi*, are put in place for the raising and instilling of positive behavior and attitude toward the polis and the divine cosmos. For *nomos* as musical terminus and song genre (Plut. [*De Mus*] 1132d), see Nagy (1990: 355): "a lyric composition that followed a set mode of melodic pattern." See also Nagy (1990: 87). For the oxymoron, see Fraenkel (III 1950: 519 ad 1142).

lyrical monody, a song by a single person (1140-1142)—one could hardly define it otherwise in the theatrical and musical genre of tragedy—dominated by lament. The chorus afterwards compares Cassandra's song to the famous Itys-lament of the nightingale, perpetually bewailing the death of her son. Cassandra replies that, in comparison, the gods gave the nightingale a sweet-sounding, bright life (or fate) (λιγείας βίος [μόρος Pauw, accepted by West] ἀηδόνος 1146), as they blessed Aedon with feathered form.[80] Whereas Aedon-Procne's metamorphosis—the name Aedon (from ἀείδω, 'to sing') encapsulating and embodying her melodious new existence[81]—functions as a cloak, paramount to the feathers, a musical and melodic beautification, a cleaver awaits to brutally split Cassandra open (1146-1149). The minced, dichotomous voice, which, through the theatrical medium of chants, conveys the *pathos* of corporeality in all its urgency to

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[80] For Aedon and a self-referential, metapoetic tradition, see Hom. *Od.* 19.519-523 (in her desperation and pain, Penelope compares herself to Aedon, Pandareos' daughter. Aedon, struck by insanity, killed her own son Itylos—in the Attic version Procne killed her son Itys to avenge her sister Philomela raped by Procne's husband Tereus) and the remark from Nagy (1996: 59-86) (the nightingale as a "model for Homer" [59]). Bollack and Judet de La Combe (IV 1981-2001: 470-474) speak of a separation between the literary comparison and the mythic figure since the notion of a beautiful lament is already attested in Homer. For the nightingale as a beautiful singer of lament, see also *Hymn. Hom.* 19.16-18 and the compilation of passages by Bollack and Judet de La Combe (IV 1981-2001: 472). The highlighted myth spreads its motifs: in her youthfulness, Cassandra resembles Itys, murdered like she will be; she also resembles Philomela, who suffered from masculine love and rape; while Philomela wove a tapestry, she laid bare her song through suffering (Ov. *Met*. 6.424-674). In the archaic tradition, a poet could describe himself as a nightingale: e.g. Bacchyl. 3.97. Later it served as a synonym for song (Callim. *Epigr*. 2.5). For reference to the Tereus-Procne-Philomela myth, see also McNeil (2005: 14-17). For the nightingale as a motif, see Barker (2004). For nightingale and weaving as metapoetic metaphors, see Papadopoulos-Belmehdi (1994: 155-156).

[81] She is λιγεία "sweet-sounding" (1146), just as she, despite her lament, "sings beautifully" (καλὸν ἀείδῃσιν) in Homer (*Od.* 19.519).

the audience, proleptically externalizes the imminent, and bodily concrete, cleaving. And yet, she still sings in the typically paradoxical manner of tragedy, beautifying the horror. The brutal death she envisions epitomizes, in a self-referential manner, Cassandra's attempt to split this *palintonos harmonia* of *goos* and euphony—she sings until the very end. Despite the other characters' efforts to split up everything neatly into opposite and suppress the non-euphemic *goos*, the oxymoron constituting tragedy remains intact.

For this reason the chorus wonders whence Cassandra derives her divine-driven madness, so that she "sounds out these fearful things in song, at once in ill-omened tones and notes loud and shrill" (τὰ δ' ἐπίφοβα δυσφάτωι κλαγγᾶι/ μελοτυπεῖς ὁμοῦ τ' ὀρθίοις ἐν νόμοις; 1152-1153)[82] (see 1150-1153). For the chorus, the music of *goos*, though opposing in its fearsomeness the ritual order, remains aesthetically pleasing and melodic, even as it spells out the truth of an imminent and truly horrible fate that ridicules all civilization and divine well-being. Within such a paradox hide the poetics and aesthetics of tragedy in its entirety.[83]

Gradually the chorus must admit to understanding Cassandra perfectly (τορὸν ἄγαν 1162), something even a child would be capable of doing (1163); the chorus' reaction as interior recipients is subsequently reflected as a bite in the soul (1164-1166). The chorus, continuing to stress the seer's divine inspiration, inquires after the "divinity that renders you ill-thinking …

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[82] This eventually becomes an allusion to the *nomos orthios* (Haldane [1965: 39] and Fleming [1977: 231]); for this see Suda s.v. ἀμφιανακτίζειν, a quote from Terpander PMG 697; see also Nagy (1990: 358). In contrast see Bollack and Judet de la Combe (IV 1981-2001: 482), where they talk of a conscious transformation. For the poetry of ruptures, breaches, and innovation, see Bollack and Judet de la Combe (IV 1981-2001: 475-477). See also Fleming (1977). Regarding the verb μελοτυπεῖς, Bohrer (2006: 180) emphasizes the notion of the musical transformation from horror to beauty in harmony as "rededication/new coinage" ("Umprägung") and "creative minting."

[83] See Loraux (1990: 265) and Bohrer (2006).

assailing you very heavily and causing you to sing of woeful, deadly suffering" (τίς σε

κακοφρονεῖν τίθη-/ σι δαίμων ὑπερβαρὴς ἐμπίτνων/ μελίζειν πάθη γοερὰ θανατοφόρα 1174-

1176), i.e., to impart to her "lamenting, death-tolling tales of woe in such melody"—the

quintessential melody of tragedy. The chorus itself still felt the exposure to some interior power

only moments ago (988-1000). The music emanates from within, spontaneously manifesting

itself as we are in a tragedy continually referring to its own paradoxical medium, the horrible yet

beautiful sound of suffering.

Cassandra as Prophetic Anti-bride and the Terrible Music of the Internal Chorus of the

Furies

Cassandra subsequently makes clear that her prophecies will not remain obscured by some

beautiful, chaste veil and cloak (ὁ χρησμὸς οὐκέτ' ἐκ καλυμμάτων/ ἔσται 1178-1179)—or, put

differently, by euphemistic sound and enigmatic words—rather they will rush forth, like light,

shining, and tumbling to sunrise, an even greater amount of woe will roll, wave-like, beneath the

rays of the sun (1180-1183). The visual fuses synaesthetically with the acoustic, both break free

to expose the *pathos* in sound bites laid bare in the light. She draws a clear line to the

Anakalypteria ritual of a young bride's marriage (νεογάμου νύμφης δίκην 1179).[84] For some time

now this entire scene has been regarded as drawing heavily from a wedding scene, reflecting and

subverting it, with Cassandra as the bride of Agamemnon to some extent, but much more as one

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[84] See Fraenkel (III 1950: 540 ad 1179). See also Raeburn and Thomas (2011: 193-194 ad 1178-9); Seaford (1987:

124); Rehm (1994: 47-48); Mitchell-Boyask (2006: 277).

of Apollo.[85] Yet Cassandra is a tragic and paradoxical bride, repudiated by her groom and doomed to join in unity with Hades in death, singing therefore dirges instead of *hymenaia*. Her melody is not that of a bride, rather, as with Helen (1156-1161) a horrible and blunt *goos*. The oxymoronic expression μελίζειν πάθη (1176) epitomizes the tragic paradox; Cassandra displays immense suffering but tragedy renders it in lyrical, musical, and highly aesthetic tones. The horrible imparted with beautiful notes—the violence embedded in language aesthetically transposed into lyric beauty. Cassandra's words outdo the chorus' "Erwartungs-Angst" (expectation anxiety) with "Erscheinungs-Schrecken" (appearance terror), a horror actualizing and transforming the mythic violence into tragic violence that takes on an epiphanic quality.[86] It is well known that violence cannot be acted out on the tragic stage. It therefore finds its enactment through *pathos*-song, lyrical, musical, and aesthetic tones simultaneously expressing terror and horror.

Lament and the ritual of death superimpose themselves upon the wedding ritual, causing these two song genres to bleed into one another. Leaving her parents' house and traveling to that of her bridegroom's is a *rite de passage*, acted out as crisis.[87] The bridegroom lifting the veil when he carries the bride across the threshold clearly relates to these events, the unvarnished character of truth. Cassandra, as anti-bride and prophetess, pursues the same requisite way into the house, meeting death, the "gates of Hades" (1291), becoming a bride of Hades. Like a bloodhound, she

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[85] See Jenkins (1983); Seaford (1987: 127-128 [bride of Agamemnon]); Rehm (1994: 44, 50-52); Mitchell-Boyask (2006 [bride of Apollo, foil for the initiatory pattern, Cassandra as bride of Hades and surrogate of Iphigenia, Cassandra as Erinyes]); see also Debnar (2010).

[86] See Bohrer (2006: 178-181).

[87] See Alexiou (2002 [1974]: 120-122) and Seaford (1987). For Cassandra as a virgin facing marriage, see Debnar (2010).

already perceives the signs with her olfactory sense (1090-1094), the traces (ἴχνος κακῶν/
ῥινηλατούσηι 1184-1185) which portend the dreadful events.

Cassandra provides the reason:

τὴν γὰρ στέγην τήνδ᾽ οὔποτ᾽ ἐκλείπει χορός

ξύμφθογγος οὐκ εὔφωνος· οὐ γὰρ εὖ λέγει.

καὶ μὴν πεπωκώς γ᾽, ὡς θρασύνεσθαι πλέον,

βρότειον αἷμα κῶμος ἐν δόμοις μένει,

δύσπεμπτος ἔξω, συγγόνων Ἐρινύων·

ὑμνοῦσι δ᾽ ὕμνον δώμασιν προσήμεναι

πρώταρχον ἄτην, …

1186-1192

There is a chorus, a group of singers and dancers, that never leaves this house.

They sing in unison, but not pleasantly, for their words speak of evil.

Moreover, this revel-band, drinks human blood, thus emboldening itself,

and then remains in the house,

hard to send away—the band's of the house's kindred Furies.

Besetting the chambers of the house, they sing a hymn

of the ruinous folly that first began it all.

The chorus of Erinyes, whose consonance sounds evil, refuses to release the house from its fangs.
As it speaks ill and reveals itself in no way to be *euphemia*, Cassandra refers to it openly, without
whitewashing. In tragedy Cassandra cannot help imagining the Erinyes working in terms other
than chorality.

This imaginary, internal chorus of the Erinyes has tasted the blood of men, not wine. It rages as a mad, perverted *komos*;[88] the reveling procession of uncivilized monsters enter not from the outside, but sit in the house, besieging it internally, a wild troop of blood-drunk ghosts of vengeance avenging murdered relatives. The hymn perverts the celebratory content, especially that of the epithalamion, specifically in terms of guilt and delusion, whence vengeance and revenge started, i.e., the adultery of Atreus' wife with Thyestes (1189-1192). Cassandra and the chorus already brought about something similar, hinting at past motifs. The chorus, witnessed only by Cassandra in her manic fantasy, becomes a real, active chorus in the *Eumenides*.[89] At first, though, the chorus is merely internal and metaphoric, transferring song and dance components to the adept acting as a soloist. The choral culture transposes even visions musically, with choreographed images that for the recipients witnessing the performance are "good to think with."[90] Even an oath confirming the truth of what Cassandra says can no longer, in the chorus' eyes, be a παιώνιον (1199), a "holy song of salvation." Unvarnished truth cannot halt the course of tragic events or direct them towards salvation, despite the fact that, were the chorus to believe Cassandra, they could intervene, vehemently, at the last second. Yet its members are too old and fragile for such ventures.

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[88] See Fraenkel (III 1950: 544 ad 1186ff).

[89] See Fraenkel (III 1950: 543 ad 1186ff): "Here the poet, with magnificent simplicity, has erected one of the supporting pillars of his great edifice. In this passage the choir of the Erinyes makes its entry in to the trilogy, which it is to dominate until the end. The tale of the monsters who, surfeited with the blood of their victims, chant their sinister song looks forward to the choruses of the *Eumenides*, in particular to the δέσμιος ὕμνος." Indeed, in Aesch. *Eum.* 264-266 the chorus of the Erinyes is envisaged to drink blood.

[90] A modification of a famous quote ["bonnes à penser"] from Lévi-Strauss (1966: 89) from *The Savage Mind*: "Animals are good to think with."

What lies behind Cassandra's accurate analysis, which so mercilessly unmasks that which should remain hidden? Eros and Himeros, those sex-crazed deities, bear the blame (see also 1441-1442, 1446). As personifications of desire they are usually involved in aesthetic fetishizations that tend to conceal the truth of a void that cannot be filled. As she acted against these gods, she unveils the truth. Her lover Apollo, the divinity responsible for purification, healing, enlightenment along with the euphemistic, celebratory paean, seeks revenge against Cassandra, who did not keep her promise to unite with him in love. The god employs his own tool, prophecy, as punishment. Apollo, however, chooses a rather treacherous variant, bringing about her downfall through a perverted form of prophetic artistry. Having lied to Apollo, she becomes an Apollonian priestess no one believes, leading to her destruction (1202-1212).[91] As she serves him, Apollo in this scene becomes a perverted bridegroom, lifting the veil of mystery that usually attends oracles and prophecies (1178-1179). In doing so, Apollo allows Cassandra to see clearly the totality of her horrible end in this false relationship with Agamemnon—leaving her only to intone a *goos*.

In the end the chorus by and large believes her. Cassandra's last, dismissed seizure manifests itself anew in preludes of torsion, contortion, and gyration (στροβεῖ ταράσσων φροιμίοις 1216), a perverted form of the choral circle dance distilled in a single person (1214-1216). "The violent pains of true prophecy" (δεινὸς ὀρθομαντείας πόνος 1215) presented in bright tones, upright and correct as a phonetic utterance, characterized by mystification no longer murky, wracks her body and whirls her around, in a proem of pain. In response, the girl winds and twists herself as a solo dancer, modeling herself partially on the choral round dance of the Erinyes. Consequently, this

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[91] For a punishment on the god's own ritual domain, see Dionysus in *Bacchae* with Bierl (1991: 210-215) and Bierl (2013: 214).

performance foreshadows or preludes the song (*phroimion*), the truly terrible hymn, the actual murder performed as a dreadful and perverse scene of sacrifice in the house[92] and the real hymn of the Erinyes forthcoming in the *Eumenides*.

    After Cassandra spells out the certain murder at the hands of Clytemnestra, who will kill with a precursory *ololygmos* (cf. 1236), the chorus leader once more warns her to obfuscate the truth, "to lull the mouth to sleep, so that it becomes *euphemon* and does not utter an ill-omened word" (εὔφημον ... κοίμησον στόμα 1247). Cassandra rejects the idea that a healer or a paean (Παιών 1248),[93] i.e., Apollo manifest as the god of choral paean, will still aid such good words (1248). Again the chorus puts this unvarnished truth aside, hoping it proves false (1249). According to Cassandra, supplication and prayer (cf. κατεύχηι 1250) no longer help. Gripped anew by seizure, she spells out her own death and divests herself of the Apollonian trappings of her prophetic skill, namely the staff and fillet (1265-1267).

    Apollo himself, as Cassandra portrays him, strips away her prophetic clothes (Ἀπόλλων αὐτὸς οὐκδύων ἐμὲ/ χρηστηρίαν ἐσθῆτ᾿ 1269-1270) like a bridegroom.[94] In Apollonian garb, Cassandra was ridiculed as an enchantress, a beggar, a starveling (1274), because no one wanted to believe her. As Agyios, Apollo as bridegroom leads her not into the house, but down the path of death (1276). Although she must have experienced the god in full, enthusiastic *eudaimonia*, the chorus

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[92] See φροίμιον τόδε 829, φροιμιάζονται 1354. Fraenkel (III 1950: 557-558 ad 1216) interprets it as "a prelude" … "at the start of a new access of trance" (558); in a similar way, see Raeburn and Thomas (2011: 198 ad 1215-16). The *prooimion* "'the front part of the song'" is a "prelude" and initial "framework" for a hymnos sung by the *kitharodos* beginning an *oime* for an Apollinian *nomos*; typically Apollo is addressed in prayer; see Nagy (1990: 353-356 [citation 353]).

[93] See also Fraenkel (III 1950: 577 ad 1248), who associates the paean, the cry to avert danger, as well.

[94] See also Mitchell-Boyask (2006: 278).

views her merely as a miserable and wise woman (1295), "possessed" by Apollo (cf. 1297), as she proceeds fearlessly to the altar, like a crow whom the god impels (1297-1298). When she enters the house she recoils from the smell of blood (1306-1309), the chorus regarding the awful stink as the smell of sacrifice and Syrian fragrances (1310-1312)—again, for a moment, we switch from the mainly acoustic (and, of course, visual) to the olfactory.

Cassandra's Voice and the Bird Metaphor

As she enters, Cassandra stresses that she will not "to twitter unpleasantly and cry out in pain, like a bird before a bush, out of fear" (οὔτοι δυσοίζω θάμνον ὡς ὄρνις φόβωι 1316), recalling again the bird-metaphor of the nightingale. In the end she somehow rebukes the accusation of disgusting sounds, emphasizing that she dies with her head held high and with hope of vengeance (1316-1320). Proceeding inside, the cries (see οἰμώγμασι 1346) spill from the house, cries the chorus designates—along with the act of murder—again as "prelude/opening song" (see φροιμιάζονται 1354) for the grotesque *pathos*-hymn concerning the tyranny over the entire city.

According to Clytemnestra, Cassandra died after singing a swan song: "while she, after singing, swan-like, her final dirge of death" (ἡ δέ τοι κύκνου δίκην/ τὸν ὕστατον μέλψασα θανάσιμον γόον 1444-1445). In comparing Cassandra to the Apollonian bird, Clytemnestra contemptuously references the girl's prophetic gift (cf. 1440). Even in death she cedes completely to the tonal and atonal lament of death and with her *melos* foils every attempt to gag her like other victims, to stop her voice from ringing out a curse (*ara*), opposing Clytemnestra's euphemizing and rhetorical attempts with her *goos*.

External observers associate the suffering girl with escalating bird metaphors developing the metapoetic level of voice and music.[95] As she morphs from the swallow (1050) to the nightingale with its eternally modulating *goos* (1145) and finally the gorgeous swan, Cassandra's ever-increasing prestige becomes clear. The swallow stands for the chirping migratory bird,[96] arriving from other lands, singing in a barbaric way no one understands. The nightingale is associated with nightly song production, with lament and harmony, metapoetic modulations of sounds,[97] Dionysian filicide, sexual threatening and tragic fate. Penelope also compared herself with the bird of lament (*Od.* 19.518-523). As a swan, Apollo's bird (Aristophanes' *Birds* 772), Cassandra sings her last Apollonian song—the swan being a prophetic medium for Apollo (Plato's *Phaedo* 85b2)—before her death, her voice full of sadness yet entrancing, not because she fears death and so laments, rather she perhaps presages her death and a better life in the underworld (cf. Plato's *Phaedo* 84e3-85b4).[98] We should perhaps also understand her swan song as a distraught

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[95] For the list of animal comparisons with Cassandra, see Raeburn and Thomas (2011: 183 ad 1050-2): in addition to birds: predators (1063); horse (1066); blood hound (1093).

[96] The raped Philomela, sister of Procne, morphs into a swallow. See also Hünemörder (2001, online http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/brill-s-new-pauly/swallow-e1105330): "Their singing (technical terms: χελιδονίζειν, τιττυβίζειν, ψιθυρίζειν, τραυλίζειν, τρύζειν, κωτίλλειν) is sometimes interpreted as a barbarous chatter (e.g. … Aristoph. *Av*. 1681)."

[97] See above n. 80.

[98] Perhaps she even hopes "to go to the god" and be reunited with him. See Plato's *Phaedo* 85a2. Although Plato makes use of the swan for his own philosophical purpose, we can interpret the metaphor based on a common Greek understanding to emphasize her imminent death and closeness to Apollo. See also Fraenkel (III 1950: 684 ad 1444f.) (our passage is the first instance where the notion of the swan song before death is attested); for the swan as another metaphor for poets and singers, see Eur. *HF* 691 and *Bacch*. 1365.

expression of her erotic connection to Apollo,[99] whose son, the song-loving Kyknos (swan),

drowned himself in the Eridanos, bereft over the loss of his love Phaeton, and became a swan.[100]

For Clytemnestra, the girl's love connection to Agamemnon, who will follow her in death,

emphasizes this erotic component above everything else (1440-1443, 1446).

The chorus later takes up this image of a bird, connected with choral singing. It describes

anew the daemon besetting the house of the Atridae as a force rending its heart (κράτος ...

καρδιόδηκτον 1470-1471), like a hostile crow standing over a corpse, intoning an ugly hymn of

victory. The melody, like Cassandra's voice and song, runs counter to the appropriate prayer,

composed cacophonously (ἐπὶ δὲ σώματος δίκαν {μοι}/ κόρακος ἐχθροῦ σταθεὶς ἐκνόμως/ ὕμνον

ὑμνεῖν ἐπεύχεται 1472-1474) (see 1468-1474).[101] In a coded way, this utterance zeroes in on the

perverted choral dancer and singer, Clytemnestra, who takes up on the Erinyes hymn (1191).[102]

Crows are notorious for their cawing, an ineloquent singing devoid of purpose.[103]

In conclusion: alongside the visual impression we witness Cassandra's entrance into the

palace, her own personal Hades, acoustically through the cacophony of voices. The Trojan girl,

cursed with the gift of prophecy, first composes her song as a lament with an inarticulate and

naked voice. The tragic "pathos formula" (Warburg) conveys a discordant, terrible song through

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[99] Fraenkel (III 1950: 684 ad 1444f.) notes that Clytemnestra's poetic expressions "breathe a lovely, tender

melancholy, which for a moment makes it seem that it is the poet himself who speaks and not Cassandra's enemy."

[100] See Ov. *Met.* 2.367-380, where Cycnus is the son of Sthenelus. Of course, there is no proof that this story was

known as early as in Aeschylean times.

[101] For ἐκνόμως/ ὕμνον ὑμνεῖν (1473-1474), see θροεῖς/ νόμον ἄνομον (1141-1142).

[102] See the paean of the Erinyes: παιῶνα τόνδ' Ἐρινύων (645).

[103] See Pind. *Ol.* 2.97 κόρακες ὣς ἄκραντα γαρυέτων.

lament.[104] The cries penetrate, in a way, the bodies and souls of the audience; the chorus, as an audience stand-in and communication partner, attempts to modulate the sounds of woe towards another tonality in accord with the vocal and motion-based order of the polis. In the extensive repertoire of musical mediums in the theater, the *choreia*, music, and voice again become a self-referential discourse that accentuates the action. The *pathos* constitutive of the tragedy manifests itself in a paradoxical music as anti-music. To change McLuhan's famous sentence "The medium is the message," we could say the scream as the medium is the message that "pertains to its voice;"[105] the faster it varies its volume, the stronger the effect upon the amygdala, the subcortical center of neurons with which humans process emotions, especially anxiety, fear, and terror. The modulated cry itself, cutting down to the marrow, has within its tonal structure, arrayed as it is with sounds devoid of all significance, a "poetic function" (Jakobson) in the sense of an aesthetic of dreadful things.[106]

As the scene progresses, the sound as purely atmospheric expression transforms into a voice that acoustically paints images upon the audience's mind's eye through poetic utterances. Cassandra's symbolic words—the symbolic contents is in her case very different to the purely aesthetic embellishment that conceals the truth—, at first, remain enigmatic because they allude to unimaginable grotesqueries of horror. From a murky voice devoid of semantic meaning, emerges slowly a voice heralding via signs the coming events, anticipating through the prophetess' foresight the fated death to take place backstage.

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[104] Warburg (1906: 56).

[105] McLuhan (1964: 23 and 23-35); for the twist see also Dolar (2006: 191 n. 1).

[106] Jakobson (1960: esp. 358 [= *Selected Writings* III: 27]).

Coda: **The Chorus Finds Its Voice and a Preview of the Rest of the Trilogy**

In clashing with Aegisthus, the chorus finds its true voice following the catastrophe and rears up

against the looming tyrant. Aegisthus threatens violence and learning the hard way. These public

words against the rulers will become "the source of tears" (1628). Aegisthus continues that the

chorus has a "tongue diametrically opposed to Orpheus" (1629): the mythical singer, so he yells

at the chorus "led all things with the rapture of his voice, but you will be led in rebellion by your

child-like barkings" (ὁ μὲν γὰρ ἦγε πάντ' ἀπὸ φθογγῆς χαρᾶι,/ σὺ δ' ἐξορίνας ⟨ν⟩ηπίοις

ὑλάγμασιν/ ἄξηι 1630-1632). Aegisthus accuses the chorus of leaving the path of lyrical

musicality leading to joy and aligning now with Cassandra's *goos* through its howling, which

poses anathema and danger for the system.[107]

Agamemnon lies deceased in the spider's web (1492, 1516), woven, according to Aegisthus,

from a robe both of the Erinyes (1579) and justice (1611). Metapoetically speaking, this is the

poetic and musical web of the tragic performance[108] wrapped about the protagonist. Since the

political and musical order collapsed, the *logos* of the text and the entire tragic tradition, the

choreia itself along with harmonic music, threaten to cease to exist at the end of *Agamemnon*.

Yet, in light of later developments, the imminent deconstruction of tragedy is merely a

phroimion in *Agamemnon*, an overture for the hymn of violence that the Erinyes will sing and

dance themselves as the active chorus in the orchestra of the *Eumenides*. First in the *kommos* of

the *Choephoroi* (*Ch.* 306-478) comes anew the horrid song of lament invoking the help of the

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[107] See also Nooter (2012: 8).

[108] For the metapoetic weaving of Penelope and weaving as poetic metaphor, see Papadopoulou-Belmehdi (1994: esp. 111-184); Nagy (1996: 39-86); Bierl (2004: esp. 110-111); Clayton (2004).

dead Agamemnon,[109] simultaneously a source of hope for the chorus because "a god can lend a more beautiful ring to our song tones (κελάδους εὐφθογγοτέρους)" (*Ch.* 341); "in place of a sad threnody at the graveside, a paean" (ἀντὶ δὲ θρήνων ἐπιτυμβιδίων/ παιὼν) may bring reunion with Agamemnon (*Ch.* 342-344).[110] For the chorus, revenge becomes anew the celebratory song of *ologymos* (ἐφυμνῆσαι … ὀλολυγμὸν) (*Ch.* 386-387). In the chorus' imagination, "this hymn" (ὅδ' ὕμνος), that is, the song of the *kommos*, arises with both Agamemnon and the underworld divinities from beneath the earth (*Ch.* 475) and becomes manifest in the orchestra. It sings the cruel truth that the remedy of the house lies in auto-destruction, in revenge exerted by Orestes; the hymn anticipates the triumph over the present situation of woe, also expressed in musical terms: the "distress inbred in the family and the discordant, unmusical, bloody strokes of ruin" (πόνος ἐγγενὴς/ καὶ παράμουσος Ἄτας/ αἱματόεσσα πλαγά) (*Ch.* 466-468).[111] The stroke itself is then introduced by the chorus with the call for an *ololygmos* (ἐπολολύξατ') (*Ch.* 942), marking the perverted sacrifice all over in the trilogy.[112]

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[109] The choral group is present as formation, a *stasis* (*Ch.* 458; cf. *Ag.* 23) that accompanies the protagonists with terrifying sounds of lament, the evil tones piercing the ear (*Ch.* 451-452).

[110] It is worth nothing, how also here "… the image of hoped-for reversal … is here shaped completely acoustically" (Lesky [1943: 45]). See also Sier (1988: 116 ad 343).

[111] For παράμουσος, "discordant," see *Ag.* 1187 (the imaginary chorus of the Erinyes). For the notion of the invocation of the dead, the so-called necromancy, via the medium of *goos* mostly on behalf of orientally drawn specialists, magical priests and *goetes*, *agyrtoi*, *magi*, see esp. the occult scene in the *Persians* (598-680, esp. the song 623-680), the *kommos* of the *Choephoroi* (306-478), and in general Ogden (2001: esp. 95-148, 161-268) and Johnston (1999: 82-125).

[112] For the murder of Orestes and the celebration as supporting, ritualistic acclamation with cross references to Clytemnestra's deed in *Agamemnon*, see also Sier (1988: 135-136) and Aesch. *Ch.* 386-387.

In the moment when the deed is done, terror strikes Orestes' heart, "fear prepared to sing and the heart to dance in anger to the tune (ἄιδειν ἕτοιμος, ἢ δ' ὑπορχεῖσθαι Κότωι)" (*Ch.* 1024-1025).[113] Out of Cassandra's visionary imagination of the Erinyes-*komos* and then from Orestes' head at the end of the *Choephoroi*, comes an actual, theatrical chorus that threatens to unhinge not only the tonality of the *nomos* but also the entire political order. Its violence again manifests itself musically, vocally, and in the choral dance, above all in the famous binding song (ὕμνον … δέσμιον *Eum.* 306) (*Eum.* 307-396).[114] Only a god such as Athena can once again incorporate the chorus into the order and overall sound structure using *peitho*, enshrouding the Erinyes in red robes (φοινκοβάπτοις ἐνδυτοῖς ἐσθήμασι *Eum.* 1028), through which they finally become Eumenides, who can bring *aoidai*, joyful songs (*Eum.* 954) or tears (*Eum.* 954-955).

Tellingly, the final song reflects the Panathenaic procession performed by the festival chorus of the entire polis, which withdraws with celebratory cries (ὀλολύξατε νῦν ἐπὶ μολπαῖς *Eum*. 1043, 1047)[115] singing the *nomos* (*Eum.* 1032)[116] in *euphemia* and before the gathered population celebrating (εὐφαμεῖτε δὲ χωρῖται/ and πανδαμεί *Eum.* 1035, 1039). From lament (*goos*), and imminent destruction with the *ololygmos* serving as a howl to drown out the crisis, finally comes

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[113] Loraux (1990), referencing Nagy (1990: 351), points out that with this very word the subordination and "supporting role" of the dance with the choral song is expressed (see *hyporchema*). "The supporting role of a given component of choral lyric can entail an intensification of virtuosity for the performer" (Nagy [1990: 351]), for which reason a manic dance accompanies a song of horror.

[114] For choral self-referencing via speech-act theory, see Prins (1991); Bierl (2001: 81-83 [Eng. 2009: 62-65]); Henrichs (1994/1995: 60-65); in reference to magical practices, see Faraone (1985).

[115] See Belfiore (1992: 27 [with n. 59]) and Bowie (1993).

[116] βᾶτε νόμωι, a conjecture by Merkel accepted by Murray. It is rejected by West and Sommerstein, but the argument of this paper might suggest a defense of it.

a victory celebration, a triumphal song (paean), joyful *choreia* expressed through the jubilant *ololygmos* reestablishing now the community following the terrifying events.

Conclusion

The *Oresteia* begins with a deconstruction of opposites, plummeting the established order into a critical decision stage, and progresses towards a happy ending—the chasm closes, everything returns to its rightful place. At the heart of the trilogy, the *choreia*, aligned with the theological order, serves, through its musicality, tonality, vocal expression, and bodily movement, not only as an accompanying motif, but also as a self-referential key to understanding the play in its entirety. The focus on the naked voice as a theatrical medium, i.e., the special focus on the acoustics beyond the visual display that constitutes actual theater (cf. *theasthai*), comes particularly to the fore in the first act of the trilogy. Next to the θέα, a show in the sense of a θέατρον—i.e., a showroom and the assembly of spectators[117]—Attic tragedy is also an ἀκοή, a place of listening or ἀκουστήριον—an auditorium and the assembly of *listeners*.[118] Sounds and voices engender *pathos* and transport an acoustic sense respective the action, along with all the aspects of visual presentation—gestures, bearing, bodily presence, masks, costumes, objects, and overall staging— all of which generates, in the mind of the public, internal images.

   Tragedy is not merely plot, as Aristotle defines it with *mythos* and *mimesis*, but also, and above all, a performance, a play, the showing and externalization of pain. Especially in the *Agamemnon*, the presentation and development of the background, that is the prelude to the plot

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[117] See Bierl (2001: 306 [Eng. 2009: 272-273]).

[118] For the term and development in the *Oresteia* from an auditory to a visual theater, see Fischer-Lichte (2004: 347-352) and Fischer-Lichte (2007: 134-138) (regarding the staging of Peter Stein in the year 1980, the respective trilogy transferred from a audio-speech space to a visual space).

of the *Oresteia*, opens up into a special tonal space of lament and its overcoming that then is increasingly taken over by the normal dominance of the ascendant visual space.

    A wide chasm exists between choral, musical poeticity, and the horrible experience of pain, yet they meet in the tragic aesthetic of horror. In tragedy, pain, and its accompanying lament, become beautiful. This rift shapes the tragic language, especially the songs of the chorus and the performed expressions of pain—also ascribable to the general tension between Dionysus and Apollo. Oxymoronic formations that bind musical aesthetics with their opposites point directly to this genre's fragility, accompanied by the tragic paradox. The performative display of contradictions using sound, voice, and pointed formulations in a way clarifies this aesthetics of horror in miniature *mises en abyme*, in order to lead the recipient through the plot by means of this metatragic underscoring.

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